

charged on the 8th December but several of which subsequently failed to operate.

137. On the Singora road the advance of the enemy column was delayed by the engagement at Ban Sadao and by demolished bridges and it was not until 0430 hours 10th December that contact was again made about the frontier a few miles north of Changlun. Our forward troops withdrew and the 1/14 Punjab Regt., with some artillery and engineers attached, took up a position behind a stream a little south of Changlun Cross Roads. The Commander 15 Brigade was told by the divisional commander that he must hold the enemy north of Asun at least until the morning of 11th December. He asked for an additional battalion and was given the 2/1 Gurkha Rifles from the 28 Brigade. This battalion took over the Asun outpost position.

138. During the 10th December the covering troops of 6 Brigade withdrew to Kodiang without incident, carrying out important demolitions on the railway before they went. This withdrawal entailed the evacuation of the State of Perlis, as a result of which Britain was accused by one of the Perlis Ministers of State of violating her treaty by abandoning the State.

139. At about 0800 hours 11th December the 1/14 Punjab Regt. was attacked in the Changlun position but succeeded in driving the enemy back. By midday, however, the enemy attacking from the right flank had penetrated into the middle of our position and the Commander of the Covering Force decided to withdraw behind the Asun outpost position, calculating that he would be able to reach there before the enemy tanks could negotiate the damaged bridges. At 1430 hours, however, he was ordered by the divisional commander to occupy a position  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Asun with a view to imposing further delay on the enemy. At about 1630 hours, when the force was moving back, covered by a rearguard, occurred the first of many incidents which showed the influence of the tank on the modern battlefield, especially against inexperienced troops. Suddenly with little warning twelve Japanese medium tanks followed by infantry in lorries and other light tanks attacked the rear of the column. Few of the troops had ever seen a tank before. The tanks advanced through the column inflicting casualties and causing much confusion and approached the bridge in front of the Asun outpost position. The demolition exploder failed but the leading tank was knocked out by anti-tank rifle fire and blocked the road. The blitz was temporarily stopped, but at considerable cost in men and material. Some 200 men of the 1/14 Punjab Regt. with the Brigadier, all of whom had been cut off, rejoined the following day, but the battalion was temporarily rendered ineffective.

140. By 1830 hours the tanks, followed by infantry, had come on again and broken into the outpost position held by the 2/1 Gurkha Rifles. Shortly afterwards the Battalion Commander decided to withdraw all his three companies. But communications had been broken and of the forward companies only 20 survivors ever rejoined. The losses of the battalion in this action were over 500.

141. On the Perlis road, as may often happen with inexperienced troops, a demolition was prematurely exploded behind the covering and outpost troops. For various reasons it was not

repaired in time although there was no contact on this front and all the transport, guns and carriers of the covering and outpost troops and seven anti-tank guns in the main Jitra position were lost.

142. Withdrawals are admitted to be among the most difficult operations of war even for seasoned troops and the above incidents, which have been described in some detail, serve to illustrate the great difficulty of conducting them successfully with inexperienced troops. They had a profound influence on the Battle of Jitra. At the same time I am of the opinion that some of the trouble might have been avoided had the commanders reacted more swiftly to the problems created by the appearance of tanks on the battlefield.

143. *The Kroh Front*—The advance was continued early on the 9th December. Our column was still opposed by the detachment of the Thailand Armed Constabulary which was now some 300 strong and which adopted guerilla tactics. As the leading troops approached Betong, however, in the afternoon all opposition ceased. Here the column stopped for the night.

144. At first light on the 10th December Krohcol embussed in the 2/3 Australian Reserve M.T. Coy. and moved forward towards the Ledge position. When about 4 miles short of its objective the advanced guard came under fire from Japanese troops. It continued to advance rapidly for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles and then was held up. An encounter battle developed in which there was heavy fighting with considerable casualties on both sides, but again the issue was decided by Japanese tanks which made a surprise appearance on this front. The 3/16 Punjab Regt. fought splendidly in this engagement as it did also the following day. The 10 Mountain Battery and 5/14 Punjab Regt. (less one Company) had now arrived at Kroh and the Commander Krohcol ordered them up to a position about 10 miles north of Betong. He also reported the situation to the Commander 11 Indian Division saying that he might have to withdraw. The latter in his reply imposed on him the rôle of stopping, and not merely delaying, the enemy.

145. During the afternoon of the 11th December the enemy made repeated attacks on the forward troops of Krohcol but were repulsed with heavy losses. The battalion casualties, however, after three days' and nights' fighting were past the 200 mark. The commander Krohcol estimated that he was opposed by four enemy battalions and reported accordingly to Headquarters 11 Indian Division. It was the night after the affair at Asun recorded above and in reply the Commander 11 Indian Division sent a personal message to the effect that the object of Krohcol must now be to ensure the safety of the whole division by preventing the enemy from debouching on to the L. of C. about Sungei Patani. The Commander Krohcol was given full permission to withdraw as necessary to the Kroh position, where his stand must be final.

A detachment of anti-tank guns was sent to this front.

146 *The Kelantan Front*—Civil plans during the first day of war had gone smoothly under the capable direction of Mr. Kidd, the British Adviser. During the 8th December all European women and children were withdrawn