

PAKISTAN - CHOOSE WAR - : - OPERATIONS - IN - J&K

THE - PRE - EMPTIVE - STRIKE

The level of violence along the East Bengal borders had been rising steadily since April 1971. As already described, it had, by the end of November, escalated into an almost intolerable burden of physical attrition and degeneration of morale of the Pakistan armed forces in that theatre. The military rulers of Pakistan finally realised that they could not win that war, nor sustain it for long. They had either to backdown and seek a compromise with the hated "traitor" Mujib, or else 'defend the East by attack from the West', which was the accepted doctrine and the basis of their war planning for years. Seeking a political compromise at that late stage would perhaps have discredited the military rulers so seriously as to jeopardise their hold over the country, and Bhutto was waiting in the wings to take over.

Yahya, therefore, opted for war. With the sudden and secret, pre-emptive air attacks on a large number of IAF bases in the West in the afternoon of 3 December 1971, the conflict entered the decisive phase of full-scale war.

MILITARY - GEOGRAPHY - OF - THE - WESTERN - FRONT

The Western Front was characterised by a terrain as diverse and varied as the habitants. The terrain configuration lent itself broadly to three divisions: the mountain region in the north covering broadly the State of Jammu & Kashmir, the plains of Punjab in the centre and the desert tracts of Rajasthan in the south. The northern area had a common border with or proximity to several countries in the region like China and USSR, which gave it its geo-political importance.

In the north, the Ladakh range separated the valleys of the Indus and the Shyok. The Zaskar range barred routes south of the Indus, with an average crest height of 5800 metres. Further south lay the Greater and Lesser Himalayas. The Pir Panjal range formed part of the latter. It protected the Kashmir Valley from the south and west and included such important passes as Haji Pir (2639 metres) and Pir Panjal (3494 metres). These remained passable for a few summer months only.

The major rivers draining this region were the

Indus, Jhelum and Chenab: The main arteries of communication generally followed the alignment of these rivers. Roads of lesser classification proceeded towards Western Tibet from Eastern Ladakh. As the borders were sealed, these roads in the frontier regions were in disuse. However, they constituted potential routes of enemy ingress that need guarding. Besides these major axes, there were several historical trade routes and narrow valleys which served as potential infiltration routes.

Movement of men, animals and material in this rugged terrain posed difficulties because of steep slopes, snow and ice, lack of oxygen at high altitudes, above tree line, and occurrence of frequent avalanches. The favourable period for military operations was limited to the warmer months from April to November. Troops needed acclimatization. Additionally, weapons and equipment required special care and calibration to counter intense cold and rarefied atmosphere.

The central region comprised the plains of the Punjab and northern part of Sind and Rajasthan. This was the heartland of Pakistan, encompassing in its fold, the richest agricultural land, the most developed communication system and the heaviest population densities. Being an area of great politico-military significance, it got enveloped in all the conflicts between India and Pakistan. It was a flat alluvial plain with no major land features for miles, except the rivers. However, there were numerous man-made features like canals, ditch-cum-bunds and headworks, which left this area susceptible to artificial flooding.

The Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej were the three main tributaries of the Indus river that travelled through this area. The major arteries in Pakistan ran generally from north-east to south-west. The highly developed communication network conferred the advantage of 'interior lines' on Pakistan, particularly in the region bordering the southern POK and the Jammu province. South of the Sutlej lay the canal irrigated areas, which earlier were semi desert. The main routes of ingress from Pakistan to India were from Shakargarh to Gurdaspur; Narowal to Dera Baba Nanak over the bridge on the Ravi; Lahore to Amritsar via Attari (the Grand Trunk Road); Kasur to Firozpur over the Hussainiwala bridge; and, across the Sulaimanke Headworks to Fazilka.

On account of extensive irrigation network and waterlogging, cross country movement of armour and other heavy vehicles was limited in the central zone.

Existing canal systems could also be effectively used at selected locations to create obstacles by artificial flooding. South of Ferozpur, however, the canal system was not very dense, hence the mechanized forces could operate with greater freedom and armour.

In the southern zone, most of the land on either side of the international boundary consisted of series of sand hill ridges, some times covered with stunted brushwood, where cultivation was almost impossible. While the rainfall was negligible, the temperature varied between 4°C and 15°C in winter and from 25°C to 50°C in summer. It was a sparsely populated, featureless tract occasionally interspersed with rocky outcrops. The region suffered from acute shortage of water, almost all the available water being brackish. Further south, the Rann of Kutch was salt covered hard ground during dry season, but turned into a shallow sea or bog during and after rains.

In the southern sector, the communications near the border generally ran along the Nara Canal from north to south. The area between the Thar Desert and the Indus river tract - generally south of Nawabshah - covered the oldest canal network systems. Because of the proximity of the canal system, the green belt of this region in Pakistan lay close to the international boundary, in contradistinction to its location in India. The main routes of ingress lay along Sadiqabad - Tanot - Rangarh - Jaisalmer; Munabao - Gadra Road - Barmer; and Gadra City - Gadra Road - Barmer. Limited ingress was also possible in the Kutch Sub-sector, particularly during the period of inundation.

The desert posed serious problems of mobility, water, navigation, camouflage and concealment. Construction of field defences, maintenance of health of troops and the serviceability of weapons and equipment also faced special problems. These special problems required long and elaborate preparation before any major offensive could be launched in the southern zone by either side.

Pakistan suffered from a basic strategic weakness, in that its main L of C from Karachi to Lahore ran parallel to the front. This veritable jugular of Pakistan could be cut by any major westward thrust from the long border from Barmer to Bikaner Sectors. It, however, remained an incipient threat in 1971, as the long and careful preparations required were never made by India.

DISPOSITIONS OF FORCES

Pak-Deployment

The pattern of deployment of the opposing forces, particularly in the plain and desert sectors, changed with the political climate and the threat of war. By and large, most of the Pakistan Army formations had been identified, though some of the groupings and affiliations remained unknown till after the cessation of hostilities. However, certain key concerns like Pakistan's 7 Inf Div and 1 Armd Div gave the Indian planners many an anxious moment by successfully concealing their locations and tasks.

According to the Indian assessment Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) was held by 12 Inf Div and part of 23 Inf Div, augmented by a large number of para-military forces like Karakoram, Gilgit and Northern Scouts deployed along the Cease Fire Line in a holding role. The 12 Inf Div was occupying an extended sector from Muzzaffarabad in the north to Kotli in the south. Most of 23 Inf Div and the bulk of the newly-raised 17 Inf Div were located opposite Chham bin the southern POK and available for offensive action.

In November 1971, a significant increase in vehicular traffic and other activities was observed opposite Punch. It was then estimated that the 7 Inf Div (GHQ Reserve) was perhaps being inducted opposite Punch for an offensive(1). The reported induction of 7 Inf Div was not, however, found to be correct(2).

The 1 Corps of Pakistan, which was located in general area Marala - Sialkot - Zafarwal, comprised 15 Inf Div and 8 Inf Div supported by 8 (Indep) Armd Bde - all in the holding role for the offensive phase. The strike element, consisting of the 6 Armd Div(3) and the 17 Inf Div(4) was expected to be located in the general area of Daska - Pasrur(5).

Pakistan's 4 Corps was holding a sector from Lahore to Bahawalpur. In this Corps' sector, 10 Inf Div and 3 (Indep) Armd Bde was located in the general area Lahore, 11 Inf Div in Kasur area and 105 (Indep) Inf Bde Gp in Sulaimanke.

The newly-raised 33 Inf Div was reported to be located in general area Bahawalpur-Sukkur, from where it could be employed for operational tasks either in the Bahawalpur or Sind Sectors(6).

The 18 Inf Div, which was responsible for the defence of the Sind Sector, was stretched from

Rahimyar Khan to Naya Chor and on to Badin(7).

Prior to operations, the 1 Armd Div was reported in area Sahiwal - Okara with one of its Brigades probably in area Pakpattan Haveli(8). The information on its moves was generally vague, and right up to the end of war its precise location was not known(9).

Indian Forces in the West

In J&K, the 15 Corps, comprising 3, 10, 19, 25 and 26 Inf Divs, 121 (Indep) Inf Bde Gp and 3 (Indep) Armd Bde had been deployed. The 3 Inf Div was responsible for the defence of Ladakh. The 121 (Indep) Inf Bde Gp was responsible for the defence of Kargil and the 19 Inf Div for the Srinagar Valley. Occupying an extended sector from Punch to Naushehra was 25 Inf Div. The 10 Inf Div was located in general area Akhnur, while 26 Inf Div and 3 Indep Armd Bde were located in Jammu area(10).

Further south, the 1 Corps, consisting of 36, 39 54 Inf Divs and 2 and 16 (Indep) Armd Bdes, was holding the general area Thakurpur - Pathankot - Samba. The 39 Inf Div was deployed in a defensive role, the remainder of the Corps being available to undertake offensive operations in the Shakargarh - Sialkot sector(11).

India's 11 Corps, which was responsible for the defence of the Punjab and Ganganagar district of Rajasthan, comprised 15 Inf Div located in Dera Baba Nanak - Amritsar Sector, 7 Inf Div in general area Khalra - Khemkaran, 14 Inf Div in Firozpur - Jalalabad Sector, F Sector in general area Fazilka - Ganganagar - Anupgarh, and 14 (Indep) Armd Bde distributed between Ganganagar and Ajnala areas(12).

The 1 Armd Div, which was Army HQ reserve, was located in general area Mukatsar(13).

While all the above formations came under the Western Command at Simla, the 12 Inf Div, and 11 Inf Div, deployed in Jaisalmer and Barmer Sectors respectively, were placed under the Southern Command at Pune.

The Bikaner and Kutch Sectors were looked after by ad hoc Sector HQ and had a mixture of regular infantry and Border Security Force, with little or no supporting arms by way of armour and artillery.

These Indian and Pakistan army formations fought hard in the 14 days of fierce struggle during the 1971

The notable battles and actions along the border are described one by one in the lengthy sections that follow:

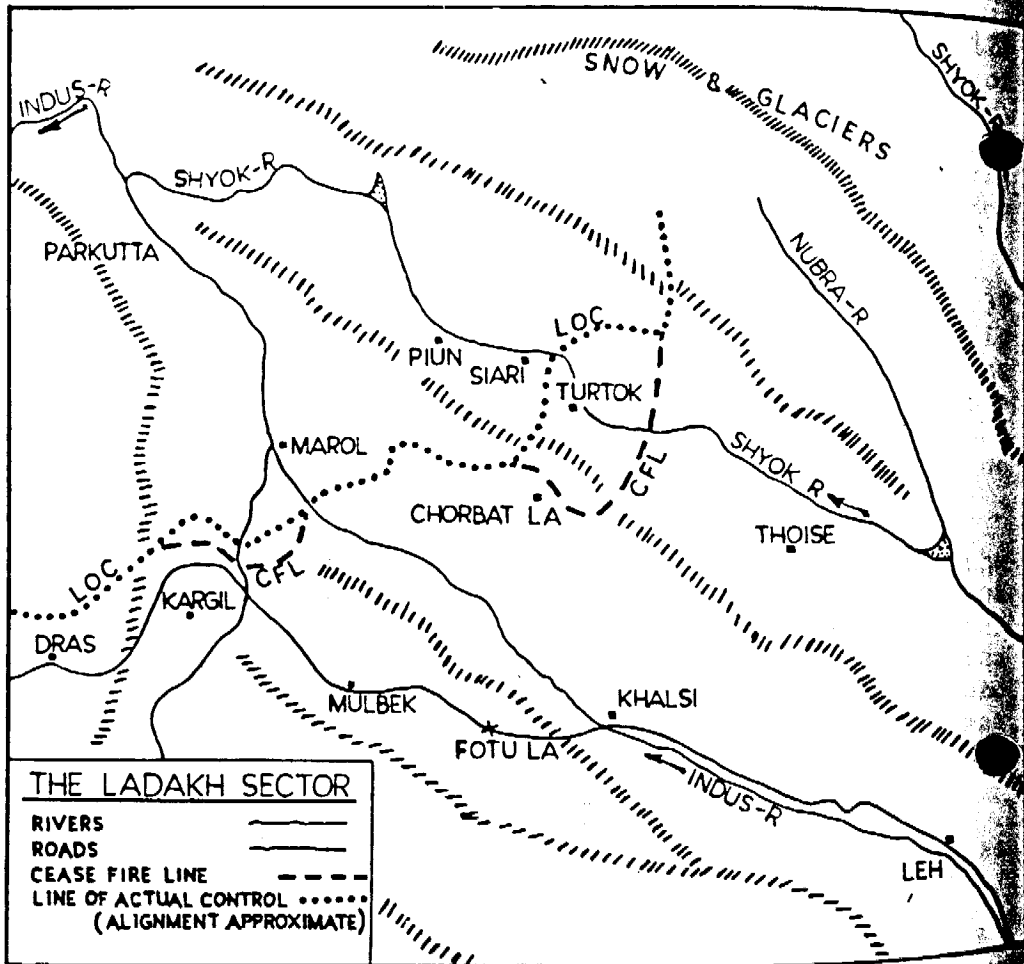
OPERATIONS IN THE PARTAPUR SECTOR

The northern-most area that saw fighting during the 1971 War was the Shyok valley, known generally as the Partapur Sector. It fell under the operational responsibility of Maj Gen S.P. Malhotra, GOC 3 Inf Div and Lt Gen Sartaj Singh, GOC 15 Corps.

The Shyok Valley, running south-east to north-west was long and narrow with steep gradients on the flanks. To the north lay the Karakoram range with peaks going higher than 8,000 metres and few passes. The fertile Nubra valley coming from the giant Siachen glacier of the Karakoram range joined the Shyok valley near the village of Partapur. To the east and the north east lay the Chinese occupied area of Aksai Chin. The ancient caravan route from Leh to Yarkand in China skirted the Aksai Chin area and crossed the fabled Karakoram Pass to enter Sinkiang. Arising from near the Karakoram Pass the Shyok river flowed on from Partapur through Thoise and Turtok to its junction with the Indus, beyond which lay the major Pakistan base of Skardu. To the south, the Shyok valley was separated from the Indus valley by the Ladakh range, and the Khardungla, much higher than the highest peak in Europe, was the main route from Leh into the Shyok Valley.

The climate on this roof of the world is very dry and very cold, and the air rarefied. There is very little oxygen for the troops to undertake major exertion. The temperature at the heights where the Indian troops clashed with the Pakistanis in December was as low as minus 25°C. The terrain was one of the most difficult in the world. The land was broken and rugged, and cut by deep, narrow gorges and ravines. On either side of the valley were steep, rocky mountainous features ranging in height from about 5,500 to 7,000 metres, making it impossible to undertake wide outflanking moves. Rainfall was minimal, and the vegetation confined to the river banks in summer.

The Partapur Sector was connected with Leh by a steep and indifferent pony track across the Khardungla. The Partapur garrison was maintained by airlift upto Thoise, where a fair weather airfield existed. Thoise was linked with the Cease Fire Line



by jeep and pony tracks. The L of C from Thoise long, there was lack of road communications and roads, such as they were, were little more than tracks. Hence, logistic maintenance of forward troops had to be by animal transport and on manpack basis and at places by rafts(14). The position of Pakistan was no different. "Its forward posts close to the cease fire line near Biegdangdo were connected with the military base at Skardu by about 135 km of indifferent jeepable road up to Turtok and from there by foot or animal transport(15). Thus on either side the communications were primitive, lengthy and hazardous and inhibited a major thrust by either Pakistan or India.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the Shyok valley was militarily important to India as its loss would enable China and Pakistan to link up through the Karakoram Pass, and Leh would be gravely threatened. Small Indian patrols were, therefore, being sent regularly over the glacier to check any Aksai Chin type moves by Pakistan. Pakistan, on its part, had been sending parties to probe the area and, if possible, to hold the high points.

The whole of the Partapur Sector was allotted a total of five companies of the Ladakh Scouts and one support company. Two of these were deployed against the Chinese in the east. Only three companies, and two sections each of 81 mm mortars and MMGs, were available for offensive action against the Pakistanis(16). To relieve the regular troops from static guard duties and to hold the firm bases, an irregular force - named Nubra guards - consisting of approximately 500 local men, was raised. These men were given training in handling of rifles for a period of 15 days only(17), and were organised in four companies. Used to the thin air and the intense cold since birth, and intimately familiar with the hills, they proved invaluable as para-military troops.

The Indian commanders decided to seize the initiative in this area, and so an operation to capture Chalunka and advance to Turtok was planned. Chalunka and Turtok were fairly big villages. Pak strength at the time was estimated at approximately three companies of the Karakoram Scouts and support elements distributed over the area. The defenders had 2-3 companies at Chalunka and one at Piun(18). Later some troops were inducted from the Gilgit Scouts(19). The recruitment for the Karakoram Scouts was confined to Baltis and Gilgitis. Most of the personnel were illiterate. Their training was poor and even the JCO could not read maps(20).

The operation started with the capture of Pt. 18402 overlooking the valley early in the morning of 8 December. The Pakistani troops defending Pt. 18402 put up a fight, but soon withdrew after four of them were killed. A firm base was then established in the area of Pt. 18402, and on the night 8/9 December the Old Post was captured after some fighting.

At 0800 hrs on 8 December, the defenders had withdrawn from Tebenala also, (south of the river) and did not offer opposition again until Chalunka was reached(21).

Then began the second phase. The objective was the Chalunka complex of defences. The assault was commenced at 2200 hrs on 9 December 1971 by G and K Companies of the Ladakh Scouts and two platoons of the Nubra Guards under command of Maj C. Rinchen, MVC, S:M(22). Stiff resistance was offered by the Karakoram Scouts who had deployed about a company supported by 3" mortars and MMGs. After an exchange of firing throughout the night, the Indian troops charged the enemy's bunkers and assaulted the MMG nest. The post was overrun by the attackers at 0700 hrs on 10 December(23), and the Karakoram Scouts fled. The Pakistani casualties were 14 dead and 2 JCOs, and 6 ORs made prisoners, while there were no casualties on the Indian side(24). The prisoners revealed that their leaders never expected an Indian attack on this axis, and when they were surprised by the Indians, they felt completely demoralised and started vacating post after post without offering much resistance.

A two-pronged attack was next made to capture two small positions, named OP 1 and CP. The defenders could not withstand the mortar fire, and the outflanking moves of the Indian troops demoralized them completely. They surrendered OP 1 at 1715 hrs on 10 December as their routes of withdrawal had been cut off. At the same time, CP position was occupied as it had been abandoned by the demoralized defenders without a fight(25).

The Indian troops had by then fought for a number of days and nights in extremely cold climate and difficult terrain, and at heights at which, few other troops had ever fought. They halted for a short time to reorganise and commenced the advance to Turtok along both the banks of the Shyok river at 0930 hrs on 11 December. The Pakistani platoon at Turtok was contacted at 1630 hrs the same day. Although the defending troops had mortar support and were in prepared positions, they could not resist long, and Turtok fell at 0430 hrs on 14 December 1971 without any casualty on either side(26). Troops of Gilgit

Scouts who were inducted into the area abandoned their trenches and fled(27). The Indian troops moved forward of Turtok under the leadership of Maj Rinchen and captured Tyakshi NJ 7924 and Puchtang NJ 7726 on 16 December and Thang NJ 7832 on 17 December without much opposition from the enemy(28).

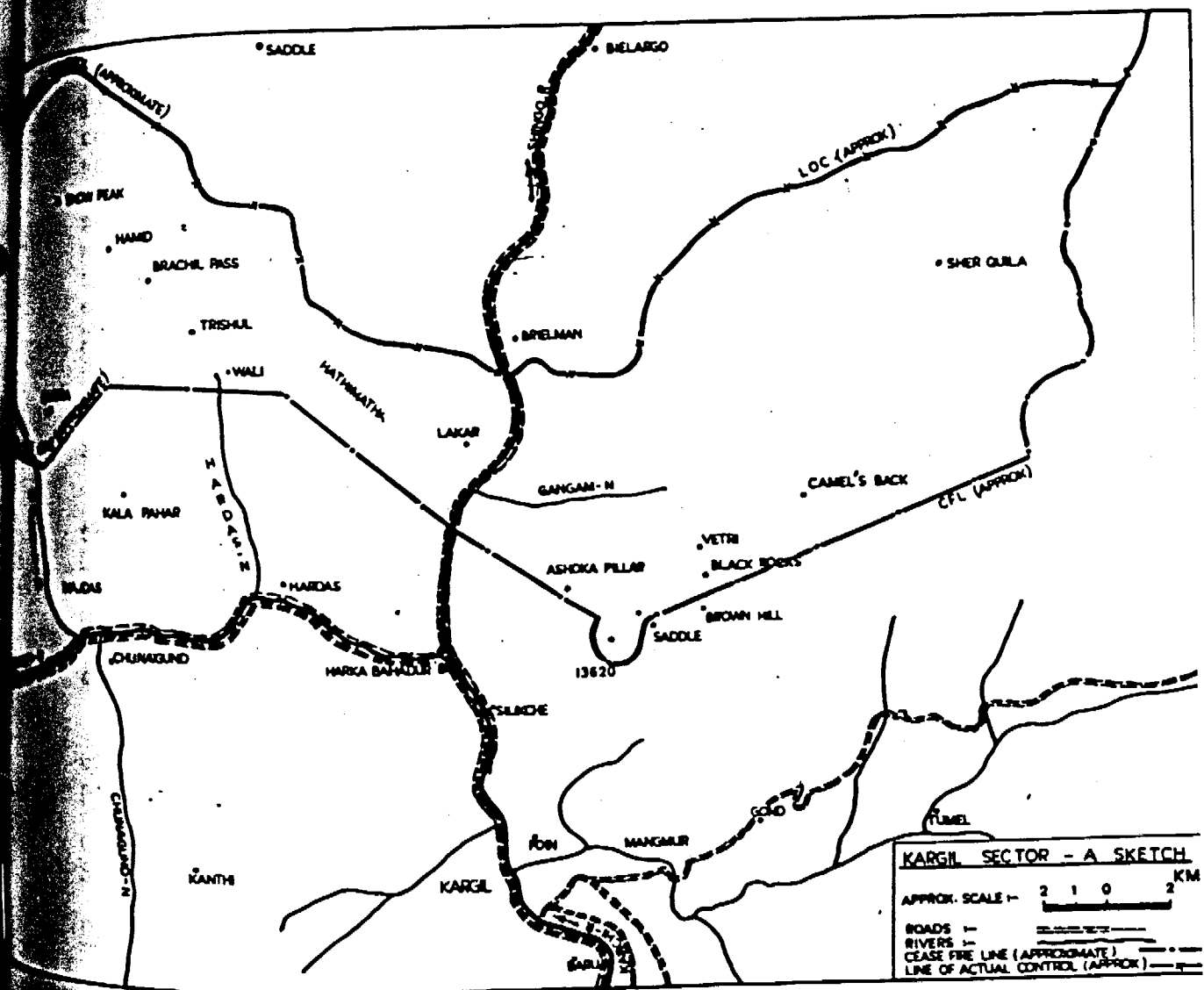
The offensive operations undertaken in the Partapur Sector were distinguished by the tactical skill and gallantry of Indian troops who fought the Pakistani troops in some of the most difficult terrain, and under conditions of extreme cold. They operated at heights between 4,880 and 5,500 metres, and captured a platoon locality at a height of 5609 metres - perhaps the highest picquet ever captured in the history of warfare. It was amazing that only three companies of Ladakh Scouts supported by four coys of irregulars (the Nubra Guards) with only 15 days of military training, worsted approximately three companies of the enemy and dislodged them from well-entrenched defences which they had time to develop over a period of 23 years (since 1948)(29).

The operation took place during hours of darkness when it was still colder(30). The troops spent several nights in the open and in spite of fatigue and prolonged exposure to cold, fought and continued their advance from 7 December till the declaration of cease fire on 17 December when they captured about 804 sq km of POK, comprising five villages with a population of about 1,400 Muslims who joyously welcomed the Indian troops and gave full cooperation. All this was achieved at the cost of only 3 wounded by enemy action, whereas 45 casualties were suffered due to frostbite. The Pakistani casualties were 19 killed and 36 captured.

While the Indian performance in this Sector was extremely creditable, it is strange that Turtok defences were contacted at 1630 hrs on 11 December, and the place could be occupied only some 60 hrs later, and neither the attackers nor the defenders suffered a single casualty in the fight. If the Indian advance had started on 4 December instead of 8 December and if Turtok had not held up the advance for almost three days, perhaps Piun also could have been taken, opening the much shorter route from Kargil base to the Shyok front over the Chorbat La.

OPERATIONS - IN - THE - KARGIL - SECTOR

Kargil lies on the Srinagar-Leh road. The sector was bounded by the Deosai Mountains in the north-west, Ladakh Range in the north-east, Zaskar Range in the south and the Great Himalaya Range in the



KARGIL SECTOR - A SKETCH
 APPROX. SCALE - 2 1 0 2 KM
 ROADS - ————
 RIVERS - - - - -
 CEASE FIRE LINE (APPROXIMATE) - - - - -
 LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (APPROX) - - - - -

South-west, and covered an area of approximately 6,720 km. It extended from Balti in the north to Zaskar in the south and from Zojila in the west to Fotula in the east. Dras, Shingo, Indus and Suru are the major rivers of the region. The ground of the region is rugged and cut by deep and narrow gorges and ravines.(32)

The POK area opposite Kargil Sector was served by a jeepable road from Gilgit via Skardu to Gangam. But the tenuous road communication in the sector limited Pakistan's capability to induct regular troops in the area, especially in the winter(33). The Pak commanders had, however, taken adequate defensive measures by laying minefields on all likely approaches and developed fortifications around the picquets mostly located at heights ranging from 3960 to 4880 metres(34). Their strength in the sector was 10 coys comprising about two wings of Karakoram Scouts and one of Northern Scouts(35). What worried the Indian planners most was the potential threat to the Srinagar-Leh highway near Kargil, as the Pak posts between Zojila and Haniskot overlooked the highway which was the lifeline of the Indian troops in the area.

The 121 (I) Inf Bde Gp which was responsible for the defence of the sector, had three battalions - 7 Guards, 18 Punjab and 2/11 GR. In addition, three more battalions - 5/3 GR stationed at Leh, 9 J and K Militia at Battalion HQ and 13 J and K Militia at Dras - were available in the area to support any action(36).

The main tasks allotted to the force were to ensure the security of the Srinagar-Leh Road and prevent enemy infiltration astride the road by capturing the overlooking hills and the area up to Olthingthang near the confluence of the Indus and Suru/Shingo rivers(37).

Operations

The task was to be carried out in eight phases, which, however, did not go according to plan. The initial operations visualized the capture of the Brachil Pass by the 18 Punjab and of Camels Back, Post 12 and Black Rocks by 2/11 GR(38).

The Brachil Pass position, situated at a height of 4260 metres, was a vast complex extending over 1,000 metres and comprising the left shoulder, the Pass itself and the Pakistani post Bahar on the right shoulder. The complex was being defended by about a company(39). The troops of 18 Punjab advanced

undetected by the enemy and attacked the post at 0530 hrs on 7 December. The defenders opened up with MGs and other automatic weapons. The Punjabis showed indomitable courage and fought uphill from bunker to bunker in the face of heavy small arms fire and were able to capture the left shoulder of the Pass at 1000 hrs on 7 December, after almost five hours of hand-to-hand and bunker-to-bunker fighting(40). The Pak troops now concentrated efforts on defending the Bahar post on the right shoulder, but could not stand up to the relentless assault of the Indian force. By 1600 hrs on 7 December, the whole complex was in the Indian hands(41).

The Pakistani Post 12 (No 185859) located east of the Shingo river at a height of approximately 4040 metres was strongly fortified, and was held by two platoons and a section of MMGs. On the night of 6 December, 2/11 GR took a difficult approach to the post and, not deterred by small arms and LMG fire, closed in with the enemy. After fierce hand-to-hand fighting the Battalion captured the post at 0845 hrs on 7 December, followed by the reduction of Black Rocks and Post 28 (Hamid), the same day(42).

Though the Brachil Pass was captured, the Pak troops still interfered with the movement of the Indian troops on the spurs and the pass. As the capture of the Pass had been scheduled to be completed by 0200 hrs on 7 December but was, in fact, accomplished only by 1600 hrs that day, the delay had enabled the defenders to set up additional posts, especially west of the Shingo river, and also to hinder the launching of the second phase of the operations by the 7 Guards, who were to pass through the Pass and advance towards Olthingthang(43).

To facilitate its movement the 7 Guards captured Post 29 (Ghora), which was located on the spur leading to Karkit Nala from the Hamid post, at 1630 hrs on 7 December. An ad hoc platoon of the 7 Guards and the 18 Punjab evicted the Pakistanis the same day from posts 30, 31 and 32(44). The next day, the Guards captured the Trishul post located at a height of about 3280 metres and dominating the entire area in the Brachil Pass complex(45). They then tried to cut off the Pak rear by capturing Pt. 3985, but could secure it only after a bitter fighting on the night of 10 December(46). In order to consolidate the position west of river Shingo, two posts, Wali and Malik located east of Trishul on ridge connecting it with Hathimatha, were captured by a company of 18 Punjab on 14 and 15 December respectively, after fierce fighting(47).

Attention was now devoted to the posts located on the east of the Shingo river. The post at Pt. 13,620 was tactically vital and, therefore, most coveted. It was playing havoc with the Indian troops and stores in the plateau area since the start of the hostilities(48). From this post, termed as "The Watch Tower of the Sector", the troops commanded a clear view of the Kargil base(49). On the eastern side of the Shingo river, Post 13 (Laila) covered the approach to Pt. 13,620 from the north and joined it with Black Rocks. This post was captured by 0215 hrs on 9 December as a prelude to the capture of the important post of Pt. 13,620 held by a Pak coy(50). The continuous shelling of the post by the Indian artillery and infantry mortars, four air strikes (two on 7 and two on 8 December) and the cutting off of the water supply to the post, all combined to demoralise its garrison. The 2/11 GR assaulted the post on the afternoon of 9 December but found it already vacated(51).

All this fighting in the past three days had enabled the Indian forces to establish themselves up on the west and east of the Shingo river. However, the main objective of marching to Olthingthang had not yet been achieved. It was, therefore, decided to open a new attack along the west bank of the Shingo, so that Indian troops could advance to Bielargo, located on the Gangam-Olthingthang-Skardu road. It was appreciated that once Bielargo was in Indian hands, it would not only cut off the L of C available to the Pak troops but also help in the reduction of their posts to the east of Brachil Pass(52). However, before a new front could be opened, it was considered expedient to eliminate the Pak post called Ashoka Pillar (NO 170855) which Pakistan had occupied to dominate the Indian 13 and 14 posts and the road Leh-Kargil-Chunagund. The 2/11 GR carried out the task on 9 December(53). It was also found necessary to clear the hostile positions astride the bank of the Shingo river. The 5/3 GR cleared Posts 16, 17 and 18 on the eastern bank by 1800 hrs on 11 December. On the western bank, extensive minefields and wire obstacles had been laid in front of Posts 19, 20, Lakar and 43. While the 5/3 Gr captured Posts 19, 20 and Lakar on the night of 12 December, a coy of the 18 Punjab succeeded in capturing Post 43 on 13 December(54). The Indian troops extended their hold to the east of the Shingo river by the capture of Sherquila by 9 J and K Militia on 15 December(55). On the left of that river, some Pak posts, though encircled by the Indian troops, still held out in the Hathimatha complex (Posts 21, 22, 23 and 24). When the Punjabis failed to capture the complex by attack, a siege was laid to deny water to the defenders.

Finally, a company of 5/3 GR attacked the complex from the rear and captured it on 17 December(56):

This cleared all the hurdles to the march to Bielargo. This, however, could not come off due to the Cease Fire. By the end of the operations, the Indian forces had captured 36 out of 80 Pak posts in an area of approximately 110 sq km in this sector. The enemy line of defence had been shattered, and the Brigade was poised for an offensive up to Olthingthang(57):

During the operations the Pak troops suffered 114 killed and 1 JCO and 31 ORs made prisoners of war. The Indian casualties were 55 killed, 195 wounded and 28 missing(58):

OPERATIONS - IN - THE - KASHMIR - VALLEY

The 19 Inf Div under Maj Gen E. D'Souza, was deployed to defend the Kashmir and Guraiz Valleys. Its area of responsibility extended from Chorpanjal in the south to Karobal Gali in the north and from Zojila in the east to Bugina Bulge in the west. The divisional boundary ran along approximately 338 km of the Cease Fire Line, and the troops were spread out over a number of widely dispersed picquets and posts. The difficult terrain and climate imposed severe restrictions on logistics.

Deployments and Plans

Pakistan's Northern Scouts manned the areas of Minimarg, Kel and Bor; their artillery consisted of detachments of 3.7" howitzers. On the Tangdhar Sector, Pakistan had deployed three battalions, including one battalion and 2 coys at Bugina Bulge, and four companies of Tochi Scouts, two of Dafal Mujahids and one regular company in the Lipa Valley, with four 105 mm batteries and one medium battery. The vital Uri Sector was held by seven regular battalions of the Pak Army and five 105 mm batteries and 2 medium batteries.

The Pakistani posts were well sited and strongly fortified. Fire by 57 mm and 3.5 rocket launchers and recoilless guns had little effect on the bunkers, which were generally inter-linked with communication trenches, making it easy to move the troops and weapons from one bunker to another. These strong structures could be destroyed only by direct hits by mountain guns or precision shooting by medium artillery.

The 19 Inf Div of the Indian Army divided the

whole of its area of responsibility into three sectors - the Northern Sector, the Tangdhar Sector and Uri Sector.

The Northern Sector or the BSF Sector, covered the area Karobal Gali to Bugina Bulge. There was no road communication worth the name in this area, which was sparsely populated. The only threat to the area was from the infiltrators. With the onset of winter, even this threat was minimised because snow closed the passes through which lay the infiltration routes. This Sector was looked after by four battalions of BSF and a battalion of 1 J and K Militia.

The Tangdhar Sector extended from the Bugina Bulge to Tutmari Gali. Lipa Valley, which lies to the south of Tangdhar and north of river Jhelum, formed part of this area. This Sector was held by the 104 Inf Bde with four battalions - (9 Sikh, 8 Raj Rif, 6 Raj Rif and 3 Bihar) and about one BSF battalion.

The third Sector, designated the Uri Sector, covered the area Tutmari Gali to Chorpanjal. The 161 Inf Bde with six infantry battalions (8 Sikh, 7 Sikh LI, 5 Mahar, 4 Raj Rif, 3 Maratha LI and 2 Assam) was responsible for the defence of this Sector.

The 268 Inf Bde with three infantry battalions (12 Grenadiers, 4 Mahar and 2 Guards) was kept as Divisional reserve(59).

The Division took a number of steps to prevent infiltration by aggressive patrolling of gullies and routes and keeping them under surveillance. As the major threat of infiltration was appreciated in the Gulmarg-Kaunrauli area, the Kilo Gulf Sector was established under the command of Brig A.J. Texeira with HQ at Paro (NM 245079). The counter-infiltration measures taken by the formation were effective and successful.

Three operations which had been planned before the outbreak of hostilities and were intended to improve the defensive capability of the Division were as follows(60) :-

- i) Op Ghazab - capture of Ghasla Top and Ring Contour (NL 851382 to NL 862383);
- ii) Op Hasti - capture of Jhandi Mali (NL 9916).
- iii) Op Shikar - capture of Jayshri Pt. 10944(NM 2003) complex.

It was, however, stipulated by the higher

authorities that since the overall stance of the Western Sector was a defensive one, the preplanned operations would not be launched without their prior approval(61). Consequently, on the night of 3 December, when the hostilities commenced, only one operation - Op Ghazab - could be mounted with complete surprise and was, therefore, successful. The other two could not be launched until a day later, causing loss of surprise and providing time to the enemy to reinforce his positions. Predictably, they ended in failure.

The Northern, or the BSF Sector did not witness any major offensive action. However, nine Pak posts were occupied, as a result of which 177 sq km of POK area was captured(62).

The Tangdhar Sector and Lipa Valley

In the Tangdhar Sector, both India and Pakistan tried to outmanoeuvre each other. It was here that one of the preplanned operations, named OP Ghazab, was launched by Indian troops on the night of 3 December, when Ghasla Top was attacked. The Tochi Scouts and Dafai Mujahids manning the defences initially resisted the attack, but were forced to withdraw from the location. The attack for the capture of Ring Contour was mounted through Ghasla Top(63). Due to intense automatic fire from LMGs, the Indian commander had to manoeuvre the commando platoon to assault the post from the rear. This succeeded and the defenders vacated the post at 0800 hrs on 4 December. They left behind 20 dead, and 1 JCO and 14 ORs were taken prisoner. The Indian casualties were 8 ORs killed.

The success in capturing Ghasla Top and Ring Contour on the night 3/4 December was followed up by 'Op Tanaji', which initially envisaged a sortie across Tutmari Gali to clear up the area upto Kaiyan(NL 9834)(64). Since, however, the enemy defences in the area were strongly held, the operation was enlarged to include clearance of the Lipa Valley from the east up to Katha Kazinag Nala, and capture of the Pak positions of Shishaledi (NL 875371), Wanjal(NL 885381) and Jamua(NL 923384) in Phase I, and of Brithwali Gali(NL 887287) in Phase II(65).

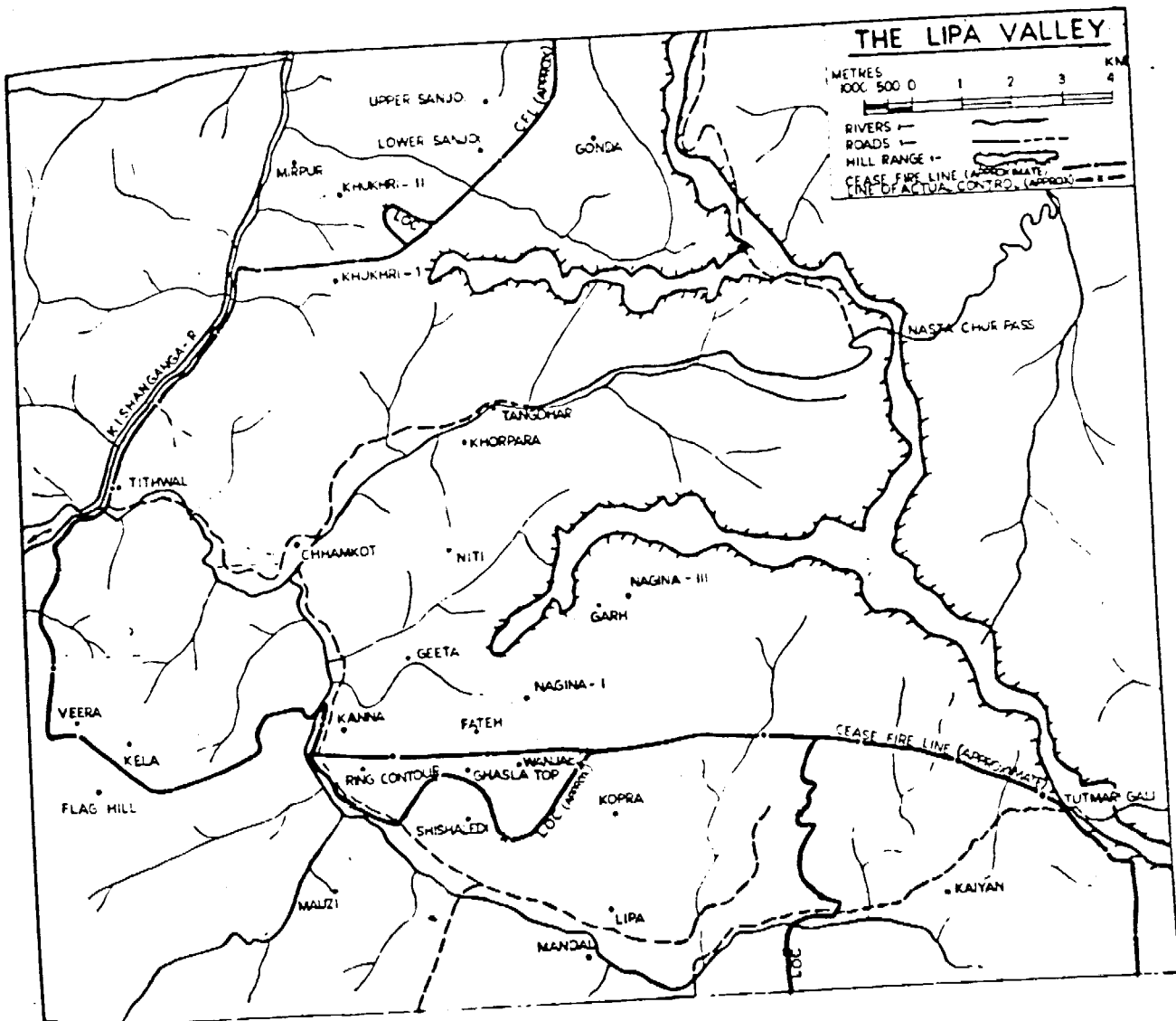
The 104 Inf Bde was entrusted the following tasks in the Lipa Valley :-

- i) Lipa Valley West - to capture suitable spurs proceeding southwards from Sari Ridge with the aim of neutralizing enemy threat into the Tangdhar Valley from Sudpura Gap(NL 8439).

THE LIPA VALLEY

METRES
1000 500 0 1 2 3 4
KM

RIVERS ———
ROADS ———
HILL RANGE ———
CEASE FIRE LINE (APPROXIMATE) - - - - -
LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (APPROXIMATE) - - - - -



ii) Lipa-Valley-East - to seal all routes of infiltration across the Tutmari Gali into the Srinagar Valley by debouching from that Gali into the Lipa Valley and occupying important heights.

Operations across the Tutmari Gali were not expected by the Pakistanis in view of the imminence of winter and the difficult terrain. Two coys of the 9 Sikh launched a surprise attack on Thanda Pani and Kaiyan from the Tutmari Gali and captured them on the night on 5 December, and another post further west(66) the next day. Apart from its own mortars, the Battalion had a battery of 4.2" mortars also.

On 7 December, the 9 Sikh was joined by its two remaining coys. On the nights of 9, 10, 13 and 14 December, the Battalion captured some more positions(67). The Pakistanis counter-attacked one of the Picquets (9718) twice on 15 December, but were beaten back, mainly due to the precision shooting of the medium guns. That day the battalion captured Seranwali Baihk, which had been reported to be strongly held by the enemy. As 3 Maratha LI had secured Pathri(NL 9732) after a sharp engagement by 2200 hrs on 17 December, 9 Sikh were poised to secure the southern flank. But the Cease Fire intervened, and the task of clearing the Lipa Valley had to stop short at this point(68).

The second part of Phase I of 'Op Tanaji' had visualized the capture of the Pak posts of Shishaledi, Wanjal and Jamua. On the night of 8 December, two companies of the 8 Raj Rif, supported by two commando platoons, assaulted Shishaledi from a steep approach on the west. The attack was, however, foredoomed to failure as the Pak strength had not been correctly assessed. Besides, the defenders displayed great fire discipline and withheld fire until the Indian troops were only about 69 metres from their defence perimeter. Then, before the Indian troops could close in for the 'kill', the defenders lit up the area and opened up with intense small arms fire(69). The Rajputs used 3.5" rocket launchers and two 57 mm recoilless guns in vain to knock out the bunkers. The attack was halted on the Pak side by the obstacle wire. Even the two reserve coys which were launched from the north could not retrieve the situation(70). The Rajputs fought gallantly throughout the night of 8 December, but had to call off the attack at 1000 hrs the next day. Although the Pak casualties were heavy, the Indian casualties were also grim and totalled 2 JCOs and 35 ORs killed, 2 Officers, 2 JCOs and 65 ORs wounded, and one Officer and 3 ORs missing(71).

The Wanjal Complex, consisting of four different localities, was held by a coy of the 16 POK and Pl of the Tochi Scouts. The task of reducing the complex was entrusted to 3 Bihar, who were supported by three commando platoons(72). Precision shooting by two medium guns and direct fire by mountain guns destroyed a number of Pak bunkers on 14 December(73). The 3 Bihar launched the attack on that night and pressed it home with determination. They encountered a minefield, but the engineers breached lanes through it(74). After a hand-to-hand fight lasting about half an hour, the Biharis captured the objective, and by 0430 hrs on 15 December, the whole of the Wanjal Complex was in Indian hands. The Pak troops counter-attacked twice during the day, but were repulsed by artillery and infantry mortar fire(75).

The rest of Phase I of 'Op Tanaji', which was envisaged to be completed by 20 December by the capture of Ziarat, Shishaledi and Jamua, had to be suspended due to enforcement of the Cease Fire from 2000 hrs on 17 December. For the same reason, Phase II of the operations, which contemplated the capture of Brithwali Gali by 22 December, was also given up(76).

The 9 Sikh were relieved from the area of Tutmari Gali on 14 December. The Battalion then cleared the heights dominating Naukot, which were strongly held. The defenders fought hard throughout the night of 15 December and made a strong but futile counter-attack the next morning(77). Soon after came the Cease Fire.

The Uri Sector

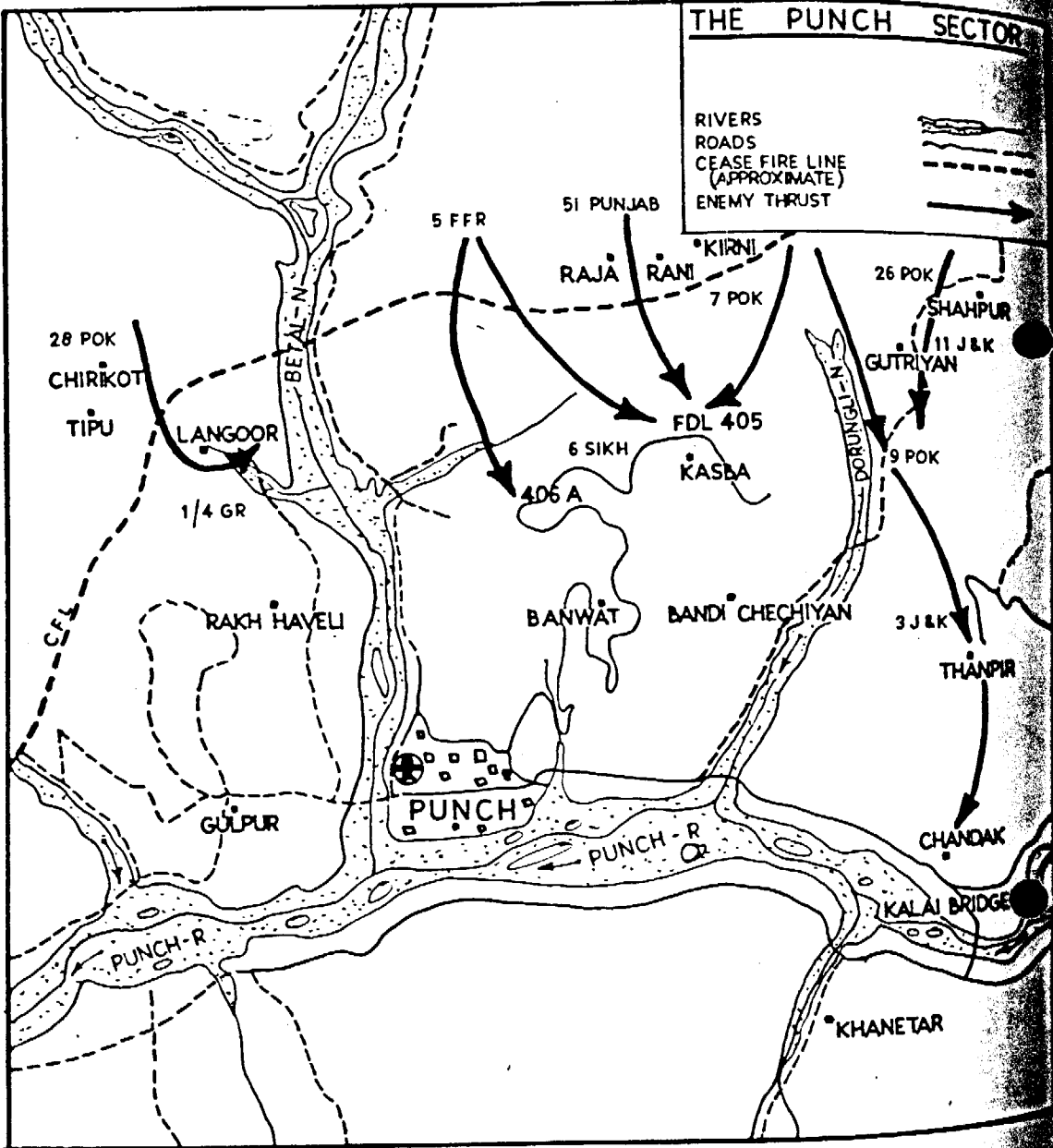
In the Uri Sector, 161 Inf Bde was deployed astride the main road and the Jhelum river. The Brigade initiated two well-planned offensive operations - 'Op Hasti' and 'Op Shikar'(78). But, as already stated, these operations could be launched only on the night of 4 December, depriving the assaulting Indian troops of the element of surprise and resulting in their failure.

For the execution of 'Op Hasti', 8 Sikh posed a threat to Jhandi Mali from the rear in the evening of 4 December. The attacking troops were slow in their march. Their enemy in the meantime, reinforced the post, and the Battalion Commander was forced to pull back the troops(79).

'Op Shikar', which was launched by 7 Sikh LI on the night of 4 December to capture the Pak post Jayshri (Pt. 10944), also failed(80). This post

THE PUNCH SECTOR

RIVERS
ROADS
CEASE FIRE LINE
(APPROXIMATE)
ENEMY THRUST



consisted of three mutually supporting defensive locations. The original plan was to attack the entire complex simultaneously. However, the Company Commander changed the original plan and decided to attack each location in turn. Unfortunately, the fire plan was not modified accordingly. As a result, the defenders were able to launch a counter-attack from the third location and to throw back the Sikhs.

Conclusion

The operations of the 19 Inf Div were thus a mixed bag of success and failures. Of the three planned operations, only one succeeded, resulting in the capture of Ghasla Top and Ring Contour. In the East Lipa Valley also the Division had some easy successes due to relative unpreparedness of the Pak troops. The discomfiture of Shishaledi was offset by the gains in the Wanjal Complex. In the Uri Sector, two planned offensive operations failed due to loss of surprise and inept execution.

However, as 19 Inf Div was basically deployed for the holding role, it could plan only a few limited offensive tasks. They, in certain places, were aimed at providing cushion to important tactical features; in other places, it appears that the object was just to capture more territory which, it was visualised (consequent to the precedent set in 1965), would be utilised as bargaining counter during post war negotiations. The offensive tasks therefore did not fully take into account the indispensable administrative factors. As a result, the requirements of troops to hold the areas captured were not matched by the administrative resources. Subsequent build up was hampered by the tenuous axis of maintenance passing through Tutmari Gali a 11,000 ft (3,830 metres) high snow-bound and avalanche prone bottleneck.

The above defect, coupled with the unfortunate and perhaps the untimely relief of 9 Sikh by another battalion not fully familiar with the areas to be kept under surveillance, resulted in Pakistani encroachments and reinforcements, which went undetected till March 1972. Much of the embarrassment and agony of May 1972 could, perhaps have been averted if sufficient forethought had gone into administrative planning and the existence of an inconvenient enemy 'pocket' (81) in Kaiyan Bowl had not been ignored.

THE OPERATIONS IN THE PUNCH SECTOR

Topography

Pakistan had tried hard, but in vain, to capture

Punch in the 1947 and 1965 conflicts. It made a third bid in 1971. Capture of Punch would bring her political prestige. Strategically, it promised to Pakistan access to the gullies over the Pir Panjal Range which, in turn, would make infiltration easier into the Kashmir Valley. It would also serve to enlarge the Haji Pir Bulge, already occupied by Pakistan.

Punch (about 1000 metres or 3350 feet above sea level), a district Headquarters, lies in the south-western corner of the J and K State. It is about 55 km (34 miles) from Uri via Kahuta (about 13 km from Punch) and 96 km (60 miles) from Srinagar via Shopyan. Punch is surrounded on all sides by high hills.

The Haji Pir salient, held by Pakistan, separates Punch from Uri. Pakistan had excellent lateral roads in the area, as the terrain on its side was easier, sloping down to the plains. Pakistan could therefore, concentrate at will, moving troops along the front.

The area was generally hilly and forested, rising to the Pir Panj rising to the Pir Panjal Range. While the Punch town and the valley were about 1000 meters above sea level, the mountain ridges were about 1800 metres high, and became still higher nearer the range. Most of the nalas drained into the Punch river.

The Cease Fire Line in this Sector ran from south-west (the Punch river) to north-east (Betar Nala). The Punch river flowed out from India to Pakistan across the CFL, while the Betar Nala came in from the Pakistan-occupied area across the CFL. Besides these two main water-courses, there were two other nalas - Tatan-Di-Rangar and Chirikot - both of which originated in Pakistan held territory across the CFL and flowed into Indian territory. These stony nalas had little water most of the year. All these water-courses provided excellent infiltration routes to the Pakistanis.

The Defended Localities

From 1947 onward, the Punch area was defended by HQ 93 Inf Bde. The only link of the Brigade with its Division (the 25 Inf Div) was through the Kalai Bridge on the Punch river. The Brigade had divided the Punch area into three parts before the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971:-

- i) Gulpur Sector, i.e. area to the west of Betal Nala.

- ii) Banwat Sector, i.e. area to the east of Betal Nala.
- iii) Doda Sector, i.e. area to the east of Dorungli Nala.

In its overall plan, the Brigade had assigned the responsibility for the defence of the Gulpur area to 1/4 GR, of Banwat area to 6 Sikhs and 8 Jats, and of Doda area to 11 J and K Militia. Subsequently 13 Mahar from 33 Inf Bde had also been brought into the Punch Sector in the middle of November 1971.

Pakistan had started preparing for an offensive in the Punch Sector in November 1971. Her troops had been seen building up in area Kahuta (NR 1685) by the Indian forward defended localities, which observed vehicular movement in hundreds. The Pakistanis were constructing new tracks and repairing old ones, and a lot of digging on picquets was seen, to strengthen the defences(82). The movement of armed troops and loaded mules was also seen, and it could be easily presumed that Pakistan was bringing in extra troops and stocking defence stores and extra ammunition.

On the outbreak of war on 3 December 1971, Pakistan made an all-out effort in all the Brigade defended sectors to effect a break-through. The Indians were, however, well prepared. They had increased the defence potential of their picquets along the Cease Fire Line by laying mines, improving field fortifications, and positioning reserves.

The Gulpur Sector

The Gulpur defended area, bounded by the Betal Nala on the east and the Punch river on the south, was in the form of a triangle. The Cease Fire Line formed its base and the junction of the Betal Nala and the Punch river its apex.

The area comprised a series of spurs and ridges, starting from certain high points in the Pak-held territory across the Cease Fire Line and gradually sloping down to the Punch river and the Betal Nala on the Indian side(83). On this side, Punch town was only about 8 km away from the CFL as the crow flies. So, this defended area was important to the defence of Punch town in many ways. First, it denied physical domination of Punch town from the north-west. Secondly, it covered the infiltration routes along the beds of the Punch river, Betal Nala and Tatan-di-Rangar Nala and Chirikot Nala. Thirdly, it dominated the old Kahuta-Punch road, and denied its use to Pakistan for movement of troops towards Punch town.

The Pak threat to Gulpur was estimated at a brigade strength supported by adequate artillery. It was also apprehended that the enemy might bring tanks up the Punch river. Adequate precautions were taken to guard against this possibility also. The existing anti-tank minefield was extended up to the water line, and a number of recoilless gun and rocket launcher teams were created to act as tank hunting parties(84).

The 1/4 GR was responsible for the defence of the Gulpur defended area - which included localities 412A (Langoor), 412 (Agni), 413 (Durga), 415 (Lata, Bhim, Hathi), 417 (Sarla, Sumi, Baaz), and 418 (Ujagar) - as part of 93 Inf Bde Sector. Some new defended localities which were prepared and occupied by the outbreak of hostilities were Bump, Rakh Haveli, Veer and Niti (414).

The Pakistani Defence Sector beyond the CFL was divided into two parts by the Tatan-di-Rangar Nala. The area north of it was held by 28 POK and south of it by 5 FFR. Tipu 1, 2 and 3 and Babar 1, 2 and 3 were the strongest Pak positions near the CFL(85).

At 2000 hrs on 3 December, the Pakistan Army started heavy shelling of the area west of Betal Nala, and Punch town to the east across the Nala. By 2030 hrs the mortars of 1/4 GR had joined in the fray and started effectively engaging the Pak troops(86). Indian artillery also started pounding the Pak positions(87). The first Pak attack on Langoor position overran the listening posts, breached the minefield and penetrated inside the entrance to the locality. But the fire control of 1/4 GR was excellent, and Indian artillery wrought havoc and broke the Pak attacks by murderous fire, and drove them out(88).

Another attack launched in the early hours of 4 December was also repulsed by 0300 hrs(89). The Gurkhas claimed that Pakistan suffered about 45 casualties in the attack. In this operation, L/Nk Nar Jung Gurung was found killed with no less than 56 bayonet wounds.

After this encounter, the Pakistanis restricted activity in this Sector to intermittent shelling of the Indian positions. No serious effort was made to capture the posts. Indian artillery continued to pound the Pak positions and strong raiding parties were sent almost every night till the end of the war to keep the Pak troops under surveillance(90).

The Banwat Sector

The Banwat Sector included a hill complex which dominated Punch town. The defence of this Sector was necessary to protect the town from any assault from the east and north-east. The complex culminated at Picquet 405, which included Tund (NR 206777) and Helipad (NR 199779) and was the highest point in the complex. This Picquet and the Picquets 406 and 406A were considered grounds of tactical importance and the 6 Sikhs, were entrusted with the task of defending this area. To the south of the Sikhs was located the 8 Jat Bn. It was put under the 93 Inf Bde on 26 November so as to give depth to the defence of the 6 Sikh(91).

Pakistan had built up heavily on the other side of the CFL in this Sector also with a view to attacking Punch from the north-eastern side. Chand Tekri (NR 192799) and Munawri Tekri (NR 191808), nick-named 'Raja' and 'Rani' respectively, were the two vital Pakistani positions in the area, which was being held by the Pakistanis in brigade strength (7 POK, 5 FFR and 14 POK). On the afternoon of 3 December, the 7 POK troops deployed at 'Raja' and 'Rani' Picquets were relieved by regular troops (coy ex 51 Punjab Regt)(92).

The pattern of attack on the 6 Sikh was similar to that on the 1/4 GR. On 3 December, the Pakistanis started an intensive shelling of the Indian defended area(93). Helipad and Tund were subjected to heavy and continuous shelling with guns of medium calibre. As a result all L of C were cut off near the Brigade Signal Exchange, and radio communication was resorted to.

The 6 Sikh had anticipated the attacks because of the development of a road from Kahuta to Picquet 'Rani' and the Pak build-up in general. The 6 Sikh had also, therefore, improved their preparedness. Extra platoon defence locations outside the existing minefields had been prepared to give depth to the company defence positions. Overhead shelters had been put up on the trenches and listening posts. The mine density on all approaches to various platoon and company defence localities was three. The field engineers had constructed a road of tactical importance from Punch to the base of the brigade ground to facilitate the speedy replenishment of ammunition and evacuation of casualties.

The Pakistan Army launched a full-blooded attack on Helipad and Tund between 0300 and 0600 hrs on the night of 3/4 December, with three battalions - 7 POK,

5 FFR and 14 POK(94). There was fierce hand-to-hand fighting lasting nearly two hours. The Helipad fell to the Pak troops at 1030 hrs. The remnants of the two platoons defending it withdrew to the main defences under very heavy odds and the Pak pressure. The platoons facing Kalas and Kasba approaches held their ground(95) and took heavy toll of the Pak troops and beat back the attack(96). In view of the mounting threat to the area, two platoons of the 8 Jat were sent to reinforce it. The attackers then attempted to isolate the area at 1500 hrs by establishing a road-block between Pts. 405 and 406. But the attempt was foiled by artillery and MMG fire, inflicting heavy casualties(97).

At 1530 hrs on 4 December the Pakistanis moved a mountain battery (3.7-in howitzer) with 40 mules to area Bhai-Bhai(98), and resumed the offensive in the night of 4/5 December. They even managed to disrupt all the Indian lines of communication. The attacks were, however, beaten back again by effective shelling and air strikes(99). Though the Pakistanis remained in occupation of the Helipad, the fire from the Indian MMG and LMGs was too effective for any further advance(100). The gunners did a magnificent job in bringing down accurate fire of entire divisional artillery on the Pak concentration/assembly area, FUP (Forming up place) and all approaches to Picquet 405. The artillery available for this battle of Punch comprised two mountain batteries, one field battery, two light batteries and one medium battery(101).

Artillery shelling went on from the Pak side also and they still continued to probe the Indian defences to gain some ground at any cost. They had orders to capture Punch in the evening of 10 December as revealed by 2/Lt Golap Khan (a Bengalee Officer) of 51 Punjab Regt, who crossed over to India on 7 December. But all Pak efforts failed, and the Indian troops cleared the area north-east of Tund and also Kasba Spur(102). Pakistani losses were so heavy that they broke contact with Pt. 405 and also withdrew from Helipad at 0500 hrs on 6 December. The Helipad was reoccupied at 0900 hrs by two platoons of the 6 Sikh, "The area was found covered with a sheet of blood and considerable amount of ammunition"(103).

The attackers tried to occupy Helipad again at 2235 hrs on 7 December, and formed up with two companies each at the Helipad, Kasba and Kalas approaches. They were dispersed by heavy artillery fire(104). Another attempt, at 0200 hrs on 9 December was again driven back(105).

The 6 Sikh won one MVC, five Vrcs and two Mention-in-Despatches for gallantry in the defence of

Punch(106). Pakistan lost approximately 304 men killed. The 7 POK Bn lost 174 killed, the 5 FFR lost 1 Officer, 3 JCOs and 70 ORs killed; the 51 Punjab suffered, 1 JCO and 60 ORs killed. The casualties suffered by the 14 POK are not known(107). The 6 Sikh lost 8 killed and 33 wounded(108).

As stated earlier, the 8 Jat was occupying the area to the south of the Sikhs. The area was subjected to shelling at 2003 hrs on 3 December, followed at 2115 hrs by an assault to Bandi Chechiyan from the side of the Kasba Spur. The attackers, in battalion strength, also sent a coy to the position along Dorungli Nala(109). Indian mortars and MMGs engaged and broke up the attack. The Pakistanis returned twice to attack Bandi Chechiyan, first at midnight of 3/4 December and then at 2000 hrs on 4 December(110). Both the attacks were made in battalion strength, comprising elements of 16 AK Bn, 2 FF Bn, and two Mujahid Coys(111). These attacks were repulsed by the 8 Jat, which also extended effective support to the Sikhs on 4 December during the Pak attacks on Picquet 405(112). On 6 December, one platoon of the Jats surprised and chased away the Pak troops trying to interpose between Picquets 406 and 406A(113). Thereafter, the Jats were not bothered again.

The Doda Sector

In the 93 Inf Bde defence lay-out, the 11 J and K Militia was assigned the Doda Complex to the east of Dorungli Nala. In this defended area, Gutriyan and Shahpur were two vital positions. They were held by D Coy of the 11 J and K Militia.

The Pak offensive in the Sector started with the shelling of Gutriyan and Shahpur at 1930 hrs on 3 December. Two determined attacks followed before midnight. But both were beaten back by the plucky defenders. The skill and heroism involved in these fierce little actions can be appreciated only by a detailed account. The third attack, therefore, is described below in some detail.

At 0230 hrs on 4 December the Pakistanis launched another attack, with the battle cry "Ya Ali" and "Pakistan Zindabad"(114). In spite of heavy shelling and small arms fire, some Pak troops entered into the defended locality and lobbed grenades into the Indian MMG and LMG bunkers, and wounded the gunners. The MMG received a direct hit from a rocket launcher, and the enemy succeeded in occupying one portion of the Militia post(115). The Picquet Commander organised an immediate counter-attack with

whatever strength was left, and after a hand-to-hand fight recovered the fallen area. L/Hav Jagdish Singh fired a light machine gun and at point blank range, killing all the intruders and earned for himself the Vir Chakra. Some of the attackers had infiltrated into the middle of the defended locality. They were spotted by the Company Commander who charged them with 3 ORs(116). The Pak assault leader, who was identified as Company Commander Capt Mohd. Sharif Khan, was wounded and taken prisoner alongwith 5 ORs of Pakistan's 26 AK Bn(117). The attackers left behind a large number of dead bodies, arms and equipment in the area which were recovered later(118). Thus ended the Pak initiative in this area.

The Pakistanis attacked Shahpur also with two companies at 2030 hrs on 3 December, even as they launched the attack on Gutrain(119). Three attempts were made to capture Picquet Shahpur and Shahpur OP. In one of these attacks the attackers managed to come within a few metres of the crawl trenches of the Picquet, but were repulsed. All these attacks were beaten back with heavy casualties.

A part of the Pak force penetrated through the 11 J and K Militia defended sector and attacked Thanpir at 0615 hrs on 4 December in two to three company strength with complete surprise and surrounded the Picquet(120). At this time Thanpir was held by only one platoon. After grim hand-to-hand fight, the numerous attackers managed to capture the feature at 0800 hrs(121). The Militia lost 11 killed and 10 wounded(122). The Pak troops occupied Chandak village also. The occupation of Thanpir endangered defence of Punch and the brigade defended sector from Rajauri and Mandi Valleys, and threatened the strategic Kalai Bridge which was the Brigade's life line.

A grave situation was created. As Thanpir provided close observation into the Mandi Valley and the administrative installations at Khanetar, Punch and Surankot, the reinforcement of the fighting units and the replenishment of ammunition were seriously hampered. It was, therefore, necessary that immediate counter-measures be taken to dislodge the Pak troops from Thanpir.

Hence, at 0645 hrs on 4 December the Commander 93 Inf Bde requested the Commander 33 Inf Bde to move one company forthwith to Thanpir(123). The 13 Mahar had been inducted into the Punch Sector on 25-26 November 1971(124). As part of the 93 Inf Bde the Mahars were originally meant to counter-attack Picquet 405 (held by 6 Sikh) in the event it fell to the Pak troops. But their help was not needed there and the

Sikhs defended the Picquet by themselves. So the Mahars were diverted and ordered to clear the Chadak Area(125). A & D Coys of the Battalion proceeded from Sandi Chechiyan to Kalai Bridge, concentrated at Chandak, and started the assault at 1500 hrs on 4 December. Chandak Spur was cleared of the infiltrators in about two hours. The Battalion was then ordered at 0700 hrs on 5 December to capture Thanpir(126).

The operation started at 0800 hrs. The assault echelon (a Company) followed a difficult route so as to avoid enemy fire. It took the knife-edge ridge from Chandak to Thanpir. Another coy was moved from Chandak Spur to the north east. Both coys finally converged to face Thanpir from the south. A BSF coy with one BOP Officer from the 11 Fd Regt climbed up the spur and posed a threat to the Pak's eastern flank. A Para Commando Group was also made available and ordered to climb along Nagali Spur, posing a threat from the west(127).

As the Pakistanis did not expect an attack along this precipitous slope, they were completely taken by surprise. Thanpir was captured at 1800 hrs on 5 December, removing the threat to Punch from the east. The Pakistanis fled, leaving behind 20 dead, and a large number of arms and ammunition, including one recoilless gun of Chinese origin. The body of the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Nazir Ahmed Khan, CO, 26 AK Bn, was recovered alongwith the body of his Battery Commander, Major Javed(128).

With the capture of Thanpir on 5 December the threat to the Punch Sector was eliminated. Thereafter the Pak forces made no serious attack on Punch. The infiltrators who had penetrated into the whole area and posed considerable threat, were successfully flushed out.

Conclusion

Thus the 1/4 GR in the Gulpur Sector, the 6 Sikh and the 8 Jat in the Banwat Sector, and the 13 Mahar further east in the Thanpir and Chandak Sectors successfully checked the Pak advance on Punch. The Pak design of capturing Punch was indeed frustrated in the first few days of the war, though she continued to direct her artillery towards the Indian forward defended localities till the end of the war.

It is apparent from a study of the above operations that the Indian Army had clearly anticipated that Pakistan would make a serious effort to grab Punch in the event of a war. The Indian plan

was sound, well co-ordinated and well executed. Brigade had deployed the units in such a manner that no gaps were left in the defences and one could effectively support the other. The Sikhs from the Banwat Sector came to the help of the Gurkhas in the Gulpur Sector when the latter were in trouble at the Langoor Picquet; the Jats helped the Sikhs when they were in trouble at Picquet 405; and 13 Mahar were placed in readiness to take up the offensive at Picquet 405 in case the Sikhs failed to hold it. All over the Sector, the artillery gave good support to the infantry and often, by itself, broke up the attack before it really got under way. These factors helped the valour of the Indian troops to smash all attacks on Punch by a determined enemy force more than double in numbers.

THE BATTLE FOR DARUCHHIAN

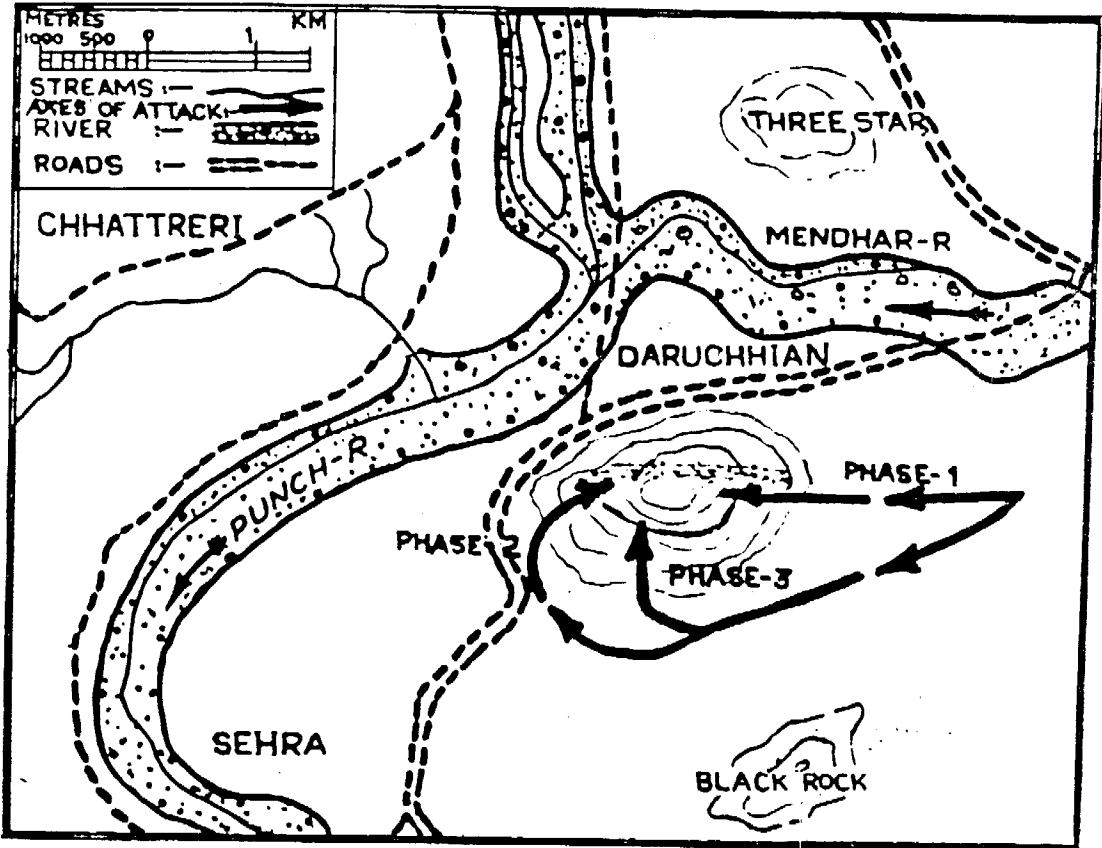
When the Pakistani offensive in the Punch area had failed, it was decided to improve the Indian defensive posture in the area by conducting local and limited actions along the Cease Fire Line. One such attack was made by 21 Punjab with a Company of the 9 Raj Rif(129), in the area opposite Madaripur on the night of 10/11 December, and Nangi-Tekri (NR-0565), Jungle Tekri (NR-0466), and Bump (NR-052649) features were captured, which served the purpose of harassing the Pak troops using the Dwarandi-Daruchhian Road. Nangi Tekri was captured after fierce hand-to-hand fighting. This was followed up with the capture of Jungle Tekri and of Jungle Bump, not without some fierce fighting.

Another such feature which it was decided to capture was Daruchhian (NR-0556), which commanded the Kotli-Balnoi Road between the Punch river and the Cease Fire Line. It was a vital Pak position, for its capture would have led to the fall of the nearby locality of Three Star as well. Hence, it was certain that the defenders would react violently to any Indian attempt to capture it(130).

Daruchhian was a cone-shaped feature, narrow at the top with precipitous projections. It was covered with forests on all sides except the south-west spur which had a thinly scattered growth of low scrub.

The Pak strength at Daruchhian was not more than two platoons. These troops were supported by the picquets nearby - Three Star (NR-0557) in the north and Black Rock (NR-059543) in the south. On every spur of Daruchhian the defenders had prepared pill boxes and bunkers which were sited behind natural rocks and were almost impervious to air strikes.

DARUCHHIAN



artillery fire(131). Five or six of these pill boxes or bunkers were manned. Automatic weapons covered all the major approaches(132). The bunkers were so close to each other that once the objective was reached, artillery fire could not be directed on to it without inflicting casualties on own troops.

The mission to capture Daruchhian (NR-0556) was assigned to the 14 Grenadiers. The 6/11 GR Commando Platoon was deployed north of Daruchhian to stop Pak re-inforcements by establishing a block between Mule Shed and Daruchhian(133). In the south a platoon of the 7 Mahar was to interpose between Black Rock (NR-059543) and point 471 and engage the Pak troops if necessary(134).

The main offensive against Daruchhian was to be executed by 14 Grenadiers in the following three phases:-

1. Phase I - B Coy to capture the OP position (Apex) by H plus 4 hrs.
A Coy less a platoon was in reserve(135).
2. Phase II - C Coy was to capture the West Spur by H plus 8 hrs. Platoon of A Coy was in reserve.
3. Phase III - D Coy was to capture the South-West Spur by H plus 10 hrs. It had in reserve the Coy of the 6/11 GR.

The troops were poised for the assault, H hour was fixed for 2335 hrs on 13 December 1971(136).

The Battle

Commencing Phase I at 2335 hrs on 13 December, B Coy of the 14 Grenadiers moved swiftly and captured the right portion of the OP position (the Apex). But the defenders brought down heavy artillery and machine-gun fire from very strong bunkers, taking a heavy toll of the Company. The Company did not have bunker destruction parties which could crawl close to them and destroy them. The defenders had mined the approaches and dug up small fire trenches in front which were heavily mined and booby-trapped(137). When the Indian troops under fire tried to take position in these dugouts, the mines and the booby-traps caused them heavy casualties. When the Company was only about 18 metres(138) from the objective the attack lost momentum and the men were ordered to stay put and contain the Pak troops(139).

Phase II commenced at 0100 hrs on 14 December, C Coy advanced without opposition two-thirds of the distance to its objective(140). It had come from behind and caught the Pakistanis unawares. But it lost surprise when it charged the bunkers, instead of halting some distance from the objective and sending assault teams crawling up to the bunkers to destroy them with grenades(141). There was hand-to-hand fighting, and both sides suffered heavy casualties(142). But the heavy volume of fire brought down on the Company arrested its further advance(143), and thus Phase II also got bogged down.

While this battle was going on, D Coy was ordered to launch its offensive from the south-west. It could take its position only at 0454 hrs, and was then subjected to heavy shelling(144). A Coy which had been ordered to move to area Mule Shed (NR-052566) at 0130 hrs, lost its Officer Commanding, Second-in-Command, and two others by enemy shelling during their forward movement(145), and had to fall back. B Coy of the 6/11 GR moved to the Mule Shed area at 0540 hrs to replace the Grenadiers. But it was still some distance away from the area when it became daylight. The defenders started pouring down observed automatic and artillery fire, and did not permit the Company to achieve its purpose. Shells with VT Fuzes caught the Indian troops out in the open and inflicted very heavy casualties on them(146).

The Pak reinforcements also arrived at first light and began attacking the C Coy location on the west spur from both sides. A number of counter-attacks were beaten back with a lot of Pak casualties. But the Company was also being gradually decimated(147).

The position at 0400 hours on 14 December was depressing. The B Coy had suffered heavy casualties at the Apex position. The C Coy had captured two-thirds of the objective on the west spur. Though it had not had many casualties, it was pinned down by heavy enemy fire. The D Coy remained dispersed on south-west spur due to the Pak shelling; so did the Commando Platoon 6/11 GR. The A Coy had been rendered ineffective due to loss of its officers. The only troops available to the CO, Lt Col Inderjit Singh, were B Coy 6/11 GR. The Commanding Officer moved to Mule Shed with the intent of linking up with C Coy. He thought this move would not only reinforce C Coy but also block the route for the Pak troops to reinforce Daruchhian Top. He planned to wait till the night and link up with C Coy who were well lodged behind the Pak troops, and then attack(148). But, except the leading platoon, the rest of B Coy 6/11 GR turned back. The Commanding Officer could not move

any further and requested the Brigade Commander to
take control of the battle(149).

At this juncture, Brig Hari Singh, Commander 120
Bde, asked for an air strike at 1130 hrs on 14
December and ordered C Coy to charge through and the
Commanding Officer to assault the objective with coy
6/11 GR. But when he was informed that the Gurkha
Company was not with the Commanding Officer(150), and
he was powerless to influence the course of the
battle(151), the Brigade Commander called off the
operation(152).

Thus, the attack turned out a dismal
failure(153). The Indian casualties in the operation
were - killed 5 Officers, 2 JCOs and 18 ORs, wounded -
1 Officer, 3 JCOs and 15 ORs and missing - 2 Officers,
2 JCOs and 71 ORs.

Conclusion

The attack on Daruchhian was ill-planned. The
Commanding Officer of 14 Grenadiers was not given
sufficient time to carry out patrolling of the
objective or obtain necessary intelligence about the
enemy strength or rehearse his attacking troops(154).
The protestation that 13th was an inauspicious number
for him(155), was brushed aside and he was ordered to
mount the attack on the night of 13 December. As far
as the attack itself was concerned, the wisdom of
launching it from several divergent axes is
questionable. The Commanding Officer alone can not be
blamed for this - the plan had had the approval of the
Brigade as well as the Divisional Commanders.

25 Inf Div claimed that the Battalion Commander
had been sounded about the plan to capture Daruchhian
"so that he could plan it with thoroughness"(156).
This, however, is not borne out by the facts.
Firstly, till as late as 11 December, the 14
Grenadiers were distributed over Galutri (NR 3440),
Punch, Pir Bidesar and Bhimbergali(157). Secondly,
when the Commanding Officer's request for postponement
of the attacks to the night of 14 December was turned
down, he was told that if he could not carry out the
task, it would be given to another Battalion the next
morning(158). There were tactical mistakes galore,
and some poor leadership at different levels. The
defensive position was strong and very well prepared,
and the Pakistani defenders fought exceptionally well.
With the strength of hardly a Company in all, they
repulsed the Indian attack with five Coys. It was a
bright little achievement for Pakistan, to off set her
major discomfiture at Punch.

THE BATTLE OF CHHAMB

Topography of Chhamb

The terrain in Chhamb was generally open. Cut up by seasonal Nalas running here and there. The Chenab River, flowing north-east to south-west, was a major obstacle to trans-river movement, with only one road bridge near Akhnur town. The Manawar Tawi flowed north to south and drained into the Chenab above the Marala Headworks. The Manawar Tawi was fordable at the Mandiala, Chhamb, Darh and Raipur crossings. The area west of this river was gently undulating and suitable for the employment of armour. The southern portion of Chhamb area was lowlying both to the east and west of the Manawar Tawi, with abundant growth of tall Sarkanda reeds. When the water level in the rivers was high, this area became boggy. At other times it was fairly dry and hard. To the north, the area consisted mostly of low hills and ravines. In the background rose the steep Kalidhar Range. These hills in the north and the river Chenab in the south, formed a funnel towards Akhnur, where all roads and tracks converged, to lead towards Jammu across the river.

Tactically, Pakistan had advantageous position in Chhamb. The southern flank of an attack was secured by the Chenab, while the Indians were at a disadvantage as they had the river behind them, which was a major obstacle to movement.

The old Cease Fire Line in the Chhamb Sector emerged from the hills west of Dewa and ran through the plain west of Manawar, where it joined the international border. The village of Chhamb lay near the intersection of the Cease Fire Line and the international boundary between the districts of Sialkot and Jammu.

Chhamb was politically important to India, and strategically important to both. If Pakistan took the initiative and made a thrust through Chhamb, it could threaten Jammu. On the other hand, an Indian pre-emptive thrust could block the movement of Pakistani forces from the Kharian-Jhelum complex towards the Lahore and Sialkot Sectors. And if it reached the Marala Headworks, it could threaten Sialkot from the rear, and not far to the west, cut the Islamabad-Lahore-Karachi main railway line.

In the Chhamb Sector across the river Chenab, there was the Chicken's Neck (Akhnur Dagger) - a piece of Pakistani territory which pointed towards the one and the only bridge across the river Chenab at Akhnur, connecting Punch, Rajauri and Nowshera with Jammu.

Should Pakistan succeed in capturing Chhamb from the west or through the Chicken's Neck and then proceed to capture Akhnur and the Akhnur bridge, it would cut off the main road communication of the Indian troops employed west of the Chenab for the protection of the general areas of Nowshera, Rajouri and Punch. And once the bridge across the river Chenab at Akhnur was in Pakistani hands, it would place the western half of the Jammu Province at the mercy of Pakistan and open the way for operations directed at Jammu from the west.

Pakistan had an edge in the Chhamb offensive in other respects too. With Sialkot in the vicinity, Pakistan could easily switch over its forces from the Punjab for the Chhamb offensive and easily bring them back to the Lahore area when required - the advantage of interior lines. It could launch a surprise attack in this area in preponderant strength with logistic and other support easily available. On the contrary, under the Cease Fire Agreement, India could not induct additional troops into Jammu and Kashmir.

Deployment and Plan of 10 Infantry Division

Ever since the Indo-Pak Conflict of 1965, 10 Inf Div had the operational responsibility for Chhamb and Sunderbani-Kalidhar Sectors. In 1971, it was operating under 15 Corps, and its task for the defensive phase was to delay the enemy in area west of the Manwar Tawi for at least 48 hours and then to fall back on the divisional main defences based on the prepared positions of Kalit (NW-6866), Troti (NW-6962) and Dhon Chak (NW-7059) west of Jaurian. The main battle was to be fought on the Tam Ka Tilla (NW-6867), Troti and Dhon Chak Line(159). However, on 1 November 1971, the GOC 10 Inf Div was told that loss of territory in this Sector was not acceptable, and that he should deploy one infantry brigade group in the Chhamb area. Accordingly, the 191 Inf Bde was inducted into this Sector and pushed forward west of the Tawi on the night of 2/3 November(160).

The role of the Division, however, remained an offensive one and in the offensive phase it was to advance towards Tanda-Gujarat (NW-8478). The General Officer Commanding, Maj Gen Jaswant Singh, continued to plan for offensive action, and adopted what was termed as "forward poise"(161). It was expected that eventually 191 and 52 Inf Bdes would hold the firm base, and 68 Inf Bde would establish, a bridgehead across the Cease Fire Line. It was expected that war with Pakistan would break out on 4 December(162). But on 1 December it was suspected that Pakistan was likely to launch a pre-emptive attack within the next

72 hours(163). This forced the Indian higher command to reverse its operational plans. Besides, on political grounds also the Indian forces were asked, as late as 1 December, to forget about the offensive and remain on the defensive in this Sector(164). It was obviously too late at this stage to make any meaningful preparation for effective defence.

As it turned out, the 191 Inf Bde established the contemplated firm base west of Tawi, and the 68 Inf Bde (comprising 5/8 GR, 9 Jat and 7 Kumaon) was earmarked as the assault echelon in Phase I of the offensive and was kept concentrated at Akhnur for the offensive task(165). The armoured regiment with which it was to break through was 9 Horse(166). Of the other brigades in the area, 52 Inf Bde was located at Akhnur to ward off any Pak attack on the bridge through the Pakistani salient of Chicken's Neck(167). The remaining brigade - 28 Inf Bde - was located on the north-east flank of Chhamb and was responsible for the defence of the area from Sunderbani to Laleali and down to Dewa(168).

The 191 Inf Bde occupied defences on the line Mandiala Heights (NW-5365) - Gurha (NW-5263) - Phagla-Barsala (NW-5258) - Jhanda (NW-5254) - Manawar (NW-5665) - Chhati Tahli (NW-5957) - Nawan Hamirpur. The screens/patrols were maintained up to the International Border and Cease Fire Line. The Brigade had the following infantry battalions under command: 5 Sikh, 5 Assam, 4/1 GR and 10 Garh Rif(169).

Mines had been laid all along the Cease Fire Line. However, the minefield from Barsala (NW-5258) to Jhanda (NW-5254) was only a dummy minefield, as it was through this area that the Indian Army had planned to launch its offensive. When there was change of plan on 1 December, protective minefields were hastily laid to cover the frontage of companies in the dummy minefield area. This task had not been completed when Pakistan started the offensive on the night of 3 December 1971(170).

Considering the possibility of a threat through Chicken's Neck, 3/4 GR of 52 Inf Bde was located at Syphon, east of Akhnur, while the AMX Squadron and 9 Jat of 68 Inf Bde were earmarked for offensive action against the flank of any enemy force advancing towards Damana (NW 9351) from Chicken's Neck(171).

As it was still the intention to go on the offensive at the earliest opportunity, more troops were not committed to the ground, though counter-attack tasks were assigned to 68 Inf Bde(172).

Pak Strength, Dispositions and Plan

It was a formidable enemy the Indian troops were up against in Chhamb. Opposite the 10 Inf Div Sector, Pakistan had 23 Inf Div commanded by Maj Gen Iftikhar Khan, a very bold and competent officer(173). It consisted of 4 POK Bde, 7 POK Bde, 20 Inf Bde, 111 Inf Bde and 66 Inf Bde ex 17 Inf Div(174). These enemy forces were backed by 17 Inf Div deployed in the depth area of Jalalpur (NW 3536) - Peroshah (NW 3045), with one battalion located at Marala Headworks (NW-6141)(175). The regiments of armour identified were 11 Cav, 26 Cav and 28 Cav. The tanks in the south were mainly of the 26 Cav. An armoured brigade comprising 10 and 11 Cav was located at Kharian, poised to back Pak troops in this Sector. Besides, about ten regiments of artillery were concentrated in the area(176).

In the big offensive Pakistan launched from the night of 3 December, it employed 4 POK Bde in the north with a view to attacking 8 J and K Militia in the 707, Laleali and Dewa complex. The 7 POK Bde was employed in the hill area opposite the Indian Division on defensive tasks(177). The rest of the forces were used in the offensive in Chhamb. The 66 and 111 Inf Bdes were to capture the west bank of the Tawi(178). While this was in progress, 13 AK Bn and 47 Punjab were to carry out a wide outflanking move towards the north with the intent of establishing a bridgehead astride the Mandiala Crossing on the east bank of Manawar Tawi by first light of 5 December(179). The troops that attacked Manawar were possibly composite battalions ex 20 Inf Bde(180). The PAF aircraft were to provide close support to ground forces and attack the Indian gun areas, ammunition points and other installations in depth(181).

The balance of troops deployed in the Chhamb Sector was clearly in favour of Pakistan. India had deployed the 10 Inf Div, comprising the 28, 52, 68 and 191 Inf Bdes with two armoured regiments and one medium and one field regiment of artillery in support. Pakistan had committed its 23 Inf Div, consisting of four inf bdes - 4 POK, 7 POK, 20 and 111 Inf Bdes - and also placed under its command the 66 Inf Bde of the 17 Inf Div, making a total of five brigades for the offensive. These were supported by two armoured brigades and by the Artillery Brigade of 17 Inf Div and a medium regiment, giving a definite superiority to Pakistan, particularly in armour and artillery. The IAF aircraft were to provide support to the land forces.

Operations West of Manawar Tawi River







The Pak artillery started shelling all the border posts and the Brigade defended Sector at 2050 hrs on 3 December 1971. Heavy concentration of artillery fire was brought down on Jhanda (NW-5254) Manawar (NW5665), Moel (NW-4760) and Pir Jamal (NW4863), while all the BOPs were engaged with SA and MMG fire(182).

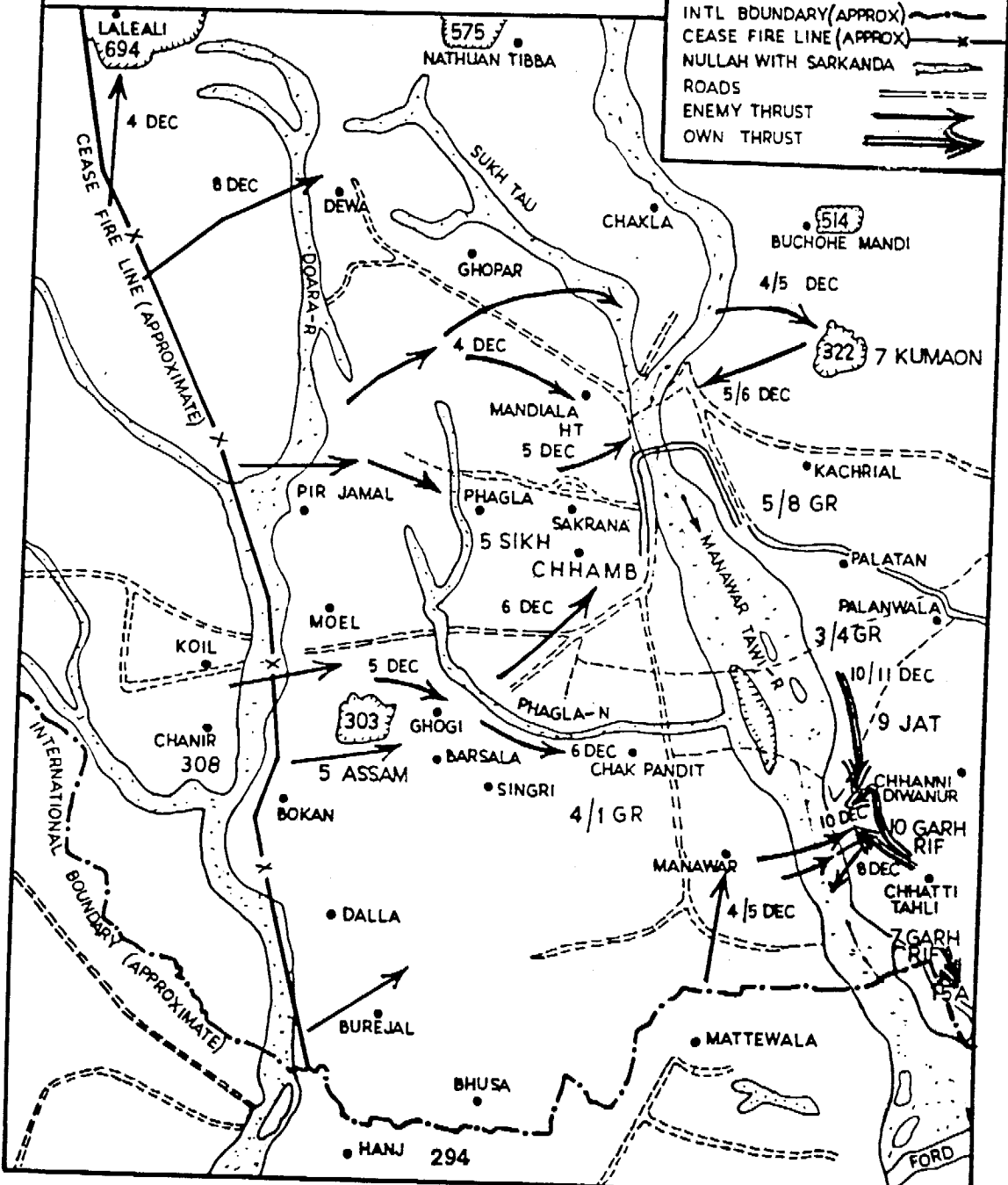
The enemy's operational plan and orbat, found later (on 6 December) on the body of the Adj. 47 Punjab, revealed that, in the big offensive Pakistan launched from the night of 3 December, it employed five infantry brigades of the 17 and 23 Inf Divs, supported by three armoured regiments (11 Cav, 26 Cav and 28 Cav) and nine artillery regiments (seven field and two medium). As already mentioned, Pakistan's 66 and 111 Inf Bdes were to capture the west bank of the Tawi. While this was in progress, 47 Punjab and 13 AK Battalions were to carry out a wide outflanking move towards the north with the intent of establishing a bridgehead astride the Mandiala Crossing (NW-5565) on the east bank of Manawar Tawi by first light of 5 December(183).

On the night of 3 December, the first to be attacked (at 2130 hrs) were Pir Jamal and Moel. While the Pir Jamal post had to be withdrawn under heavy artillery and SA fire, Moel withstood the attack inflicting 25 casualties on the enemy. Of the protective screens of Pussa (NW-5252) and Rana (NW-5452), held by 4/1 GR, Pussa was overrun by the Pak armour and infantry, while Rana was ordered to be vacated(184). Then started probing attacks in the area held by 5 Sikh - Pt.303 (NW-522607), Phagla (NW-5263) and Mandiala (NW-5465)(185), but the Indian artillery and SA fire did not let the attackers make any headway. As the night advanced, the enemy formed up at Nadala (NW-6351) and Marchola (NW-621531) and brought down heavy concentration of artillery fire on 10 Garh Rif posts of 15 Alfa (NW-6153) and Garadh (NW-6451)(186). The Pak troops attacked Ghogi (NW-5158) though only to be repulsed by 5 Assam, suffering about 30 casualties(187). The Pak forces also made infantry and armour attacks on Manawar (NW-5665) and Jhanda (NW-5254) posts of 4/1 GR fist at 0035 hrs and again at 0300 hrs that night, but were beaten back with heavy casualties(188). The Indian artillery contributed significantly with its heavy and accurate shelling(189).

Throughout 4 December there was heavy shelling by Pakistanis. The PAF was also very active and there was an air raid almost every 30 minutes(190). On the

THE CHHAMB SECTOR

INTL BOUNDARY (APPROX) 
 CEASE FIRE LINE (APPROX) 
 NULLAH WITH SARKANDA 
 ROADS 
 ENEMY THRUST 
 OWN THRUST 



ground there was heavy fighting all over the front. There was build-up of armour in the Moel (NW-4760) - Bokan (NW-4857) area. The first to experience the weight of their pressure was the 5 Assam. There was a tank battle north of Paur (NW-5057), in which an Indian Captain was killed. At 0700 hrs, the 5 Assam reported that Paur had been occupied by the enemy, though B Sqn of the 9 Horse contradicted it. The uncertainty did not allow any attempt being made at a counter-attack(191).

Pakistan gained further successes on 4 December. She re-inforced her armour in the area Moel (NW-4760) -Bokan (NW-4857) and attacked both the places at 1330 hrs, with infantry and armour. Unmindful of heavy casualties - 70 at Bokan and 20 at Moel - she forced the Indian posts to withdraw, and then overran the Burejal post (NW-5053), presumably killing 2 officers and 23 ORs of the 5 Assam(192). By 1530 hrs, the attackers forced the withdrawal of the Dalla Post which had been depleted by heavy shelling. Attacks on Manawar (NW-5665) and Jhanda (NW-5254), launched at 1500 hrs on 4 December, and made with infantry companies supported by armour, were however repulsed by 4/1 GR.

While these operations were taking place on the west bank of Manawar Tawi river, the Pakistanis had already succeeded in executing their plan of outflanking the 5 Sikh defences towards the north. Manoeuvring infantry and tanks, they captured Mandiala North at 1230 hrs on 4 December 1971. In spite of bitter hand-to-hand fighting, the Pakistani troops succeeded in overrunning the position. It was an important strategic gain for them. They must have perceived that the northern part of this Sector was thinly defended, and that the bias of troop deployment by India was towards the south. Using the Sukh Tan Nala they could easily cross the Manawar Tawi at Mandiala Crossing (NW-5565), thereby turning the defences of 191 Inf Bde(193). The 9 Para Commando and troop C Sqn of the 9 Horse, which were already there, were not sufficient to counter the threat that had arisen from this development. The 7 Kumaon of 68 Inf Bde, along with a squadron of 72 Armd Regt were ordered to occupy a defended area to protect the Mandiala Crossing and the Mandiala Bridge instead of attacking the Mandiala Heights(194).

But the movement of the 7 Kumaon did not go through smoothly. For one thing, the Battalion was unacquainted with the terrain, and, consequently, recess had to be carried out and layout groups established at the proper places. For another, even as it was moving up on foot, it was caught by heavy

enemy artillery fire. The 7 Kumaon and Group 9 Para Commando, supported by C Sqn of the 72 Armd Regt, a troop of the 9 horse and 216 Med Regt met the attack by the 47 Punjab and 13 AK Battalions. The Kumaonis fought from unprepared positions and were completely in the open. The battle lasted six hours - till 0800 hrs on 5 December - in which there was also hand-to-hand fighting. The 7 Kumaon lost 2 JCOs and 19 ORs killed, and 5 officers, 1 JCO and 42 ORs wounded, while it claimed to have inflicted far heavier losses(195). But the position was not restored. Then the 4/1 GR, counter-attacked Mandiala North (NW-5466) at 2030 hrs on 4 December. But the attack did not make much progress again because of very heavy enemy shelling, in which the Company Commander, Maj Gian Singh, was wounded and the senior JCO of the Coy was killed(196).

The night of 4/5 December was crucial. Exploiting the capture of Mandiala North (NW-5466), the Pak commander contrived to infiltrate the 13 AK and the 47 Punjab to the east to Mandiala Crossing (NW-5565) through Sukh Tan (NW-5366) and overran a part of the 9 Para Commando position(197). Though the Para Commandos promptly counter-attacked and ejected the enemy, inflicting approximately 200 casualties(198), a part of the 13 AK bn sneaked towards the Mandiala Bridge (NW-5564) and captured it at 0830 hrs on 5 December(199). Using the Sukh Tan Nala, the Pak armour now tried to cross the river and descend on the Mandiala Crossing and thereby turn the defences of 191 Inf Bde. This attempt was foiled by 9 Horse. However, the Pak attack had spilled over to the gun areas of 216 and 30 Med Regt. Though the latter managed to ward off the attacks, two of the three forward batteries of 216 Med Regt were rendered ineffective. The Pak attack was so fierce and devastating that it seemed to the stragglers of 216 Med Regt that "all the (Indian) troops in the area (Mandiala Crossing (NW-5565) - Chapreal (NW-5666) - Kachrial (NW-5863) had been butchered"(200).

Realizing the gravity of the situation, Brig R.T. Morlin, Commander 68 Inf Bde picked up one coy of the 9 Jat and led them personally along with a sqn of the 72 Armd Regt and finally succeeded in establishing them on the line of the river covering the Mandiala Crossing (NW-5565). The 7 Kumaon, which had been placed under the 191 Inf Bde had substantially regrouped in area Kachrial (NW-5864). They were also moved forward and deployed on the east bank. The Pak infiltrators still lurking in area Kachrial (NW-5864) were cleared on 5 and 6 December(201).

The Indian problem now was how to regain the

Mandiala Bridge (NW-5564) so as to stabilize the position and make at least the east bank secure(202). With this aim in view, a two-pronged counter-attack was launched - two tanks of the 9 Horse and a platoon of the 5 Sikh (of 191 Inf Bde) attacking the Bridge from the west, and 5/8 GR (of 68 Inf Bde) and 72 Armd Regt attacking it from the east(203). The Bridge was recaptured by 1030 hrs and the line was stabilized by 1530 hrs of 5 December. The Indian troops dug down and prepared defences on the east bank from Mandiala Bridge (NW-5564) to Buchohe Mandi (NW-5767)(204).

By 2100 hrs the 9 Jat secured the three eastern crossings of Chhamb (NW-580601), Darh (NW-5860) and Raipur (NW-5858). The 5/8 GR, which was now placed under command of the 191 Inf Bde firmed in astride the Bridge on the east bank of Tawi(205). In the final act of this operation, the 7 Kumaon combed the area Kachrial (NW-5864) - Chapreal (NW-5666) and killed 13 of the infiltrators left behind by 47 Punjab and 13 AK(206).

On the 5 Sikh, the 5 Assam and the 4/1 GR fronts, ding-dong battles raged throughout the day and night of 5 December. There were Pak air attacks and intense shelling throughout the Sector. Repeated Pak attacks were repulsed with heavy casualties, but, undaunted, they returned again and again in greater strength. They launched major attacks on 5 Sikh positions of Pt.303 (NW-522601), Phagla (NW-5263) and Gurha (NW-5365). In the attack at Pt.303, the Company Commander, Maj D.S. Pannu, was killed. The Pakistanis had captured Mangotian (NW-5455) which 4/1 GR recaptured on 5 December(207). And when the enemy attacked Jhanda and Mangotian again at 1700 hrs, employing both infantry and armour, the Gurkhas repulsed the attack(208). The 5 Assam also withstood repeated attacks. The attacks on Ghogi (NW-5158) and Barsala (NW-5258) were repulsed with heavy casualties. But when Ghogi was attacked the third time that day, it fell at 2130 hrs. The 5 Assam counter-attacked and regained the position in less than an hour, though in the process they lost Maj Makin, and 10 ORs were wounded and 4 missing. Pakistan lost about 60 killed and 2 ORs were taken POW(209). The gallantry of the Indian forces in this Sector is highlighted by the fact that the infantry and armour were fighting the enemy west of the Tawi river without any significant artillery support, as 216 Med Regt had been rendered ineffective and the rest of artillery, including HQ 10 Arty Bde had been moved east of Manawar Tawi during the night of 5/6 December.

In the morning of 6 December, the Pakistanis attacked Pt.994 (NW-5260)(210) at 0430 hrs with two infantry companies supported by armour. The attack failed suffering 25 casualties(211). The attackers rallied and launched another major attack on this position at 0620 hrs, this time with a full infantry battalion supported by tanks. There was severe fighting in which the Indian troops were worsted(212). The 5/8 GR, one platoon 5 Sikh and two tank troops of 9 Horse were ordered to counter attack(213). The tanks overran the objective. But 5/8 GR failed to marry up with the tanks, as the Gurkhas were unfamiliar with the terrain. By mistake they had actually assaulted another ridge about 550 metres NE of the target. They married up with the tanks only when 5 Sikh guided them(214). This incident serves to explain some of the reasons for loss of time and frittering away of resources on the Indian side(215).

In view of the casualties suffered in personnel and tanks it now seemed necessary to the Indian commanders to stabilize the position and to create a reserve. Large-scale readjustments were, therefore, ordered at 1115 hrs on 6 December in the whole of the 191 Inf Bde Sector. The primary task before the Indian Army was to counter attack and recapture Mandiala North (NW-5466). But the mounting enemy pressure would not permit this to be done. The Pak forces attacked Gurha (NW-5365) with one infantry battalion supported by one squadron of armour and captured it at 1530 hrs on 6 December. Through consistent probing the Pak Commander had by then discovered that only a dummy minefield existed in front of the 5 Assam position. The war of attrition so consistently waged by him had begun to pay off. He captured Ghogi (NW-5158) at 1600 hrs. Exploiting this success, he presumably infiltrated between the 5 Sikh position at Pt.303 (NW-522607) and Ghogi along the tactical gap in the minefield which 10 Inf Div had purposely left for its projected offensive(216). He could now attack Indian positions more easily, and captured Barsala (NW-5258) and then attacked Pt.951 (NW-5255) with one infantry battalion and a squadron of Pattons and forced the defending company to withdraw at 1715 hrs(217). The Pakistanis had been hammering away at Mandiala South (NW-5465) and after being beaten back twice, finally succeeded in capturing it at 1730 hrs(218). The 102 Fd Coy, which had been positioned at Extension (NW-5464) was forced to abandon it and withdraw to the east of Manawar Tawi(219).

These successive reverses were only partially redeemed when, using the tanks of 72 Armd Regt in assault role, a Coy of 5/8 GR, which had been inducted

in the area in the night of 5 December, counter-attacked Gurha and captured it in about an hour of fighting(220). The 5 Sikh, too, reoccupied Extension by 1900 hrs. But this was not enough. Between the three crucial hours of 1600 and 1900 of 6 December the Pakistanis overran the Ghogi company position, and occupied Singri (NW-5358). They then pressed on to Chak Pandit (NW-5558), and 4/1 GR was forced to withdraw its HQ from there towards the Darh Crossing (NW-5860). Disrupting the communications between 4/1 GR and 101 Fd Coy the Pakistanis compelled the latter to abandon Malke Camp (NW-5457)(221). The tanks of 72 Armd Regt did inflict heavy casualties on the advancing enemy, but it was apparent that the Indian resistance had collapsed and the position of 191 Inf Bde had become untenable. Deploying 9 Horse south of Chhamb in order to check the enemy follow-up, the Brigade crossed over to a prepared defended Sector in the Kalit (NW-6866), Troti (NW-6962) area(222) on the east bank of Manawar Tawi, using all the three crossing sites of Chhamb, Darh and Raipur. The eastern edge of the Mandiala Bridge was blown up at 2400 hrs on 6 December and thus the fate of the Chhamb, territory west of Manawar Tawi was sealed, and it was lost. Fortunately, the Pak Commander was not quick enough to follow up the withdrawal of 191 Inf Bde and made no attempt to cross Manawar Tawi on the night of 6/7 December and during the day of 7 December.

Operations on the East Bank of Manawar Tawi

Prior to the withdrawal of 191 Inf Bde, 68 Inf Bde had been deployed along the east bank of Manawar Tawi from Buchohe Mandi (NW-5767) to the Raipur Crossing in hurriedly prepared defences. No Battery Commander or Observation Post parties were made available till after 48 hours(223). The few troops of tanks available at Darh and Raipur Crossings were still under the control of 52 Inf Bde. The fact also needs to be underscored that Manawar Tawi was no obstacle in the military sense (as other rivers of the Punjab like Chenab, Ravi etc. were) and the western bank completely dominated the eastern bank. It was, therefore, no easy task for the Indian troops to prevent the enemy from gaining further territory in the area(224). However, the Indian Army had already ceded considerable territory and any further enemy ingress had to be prevented at all costs.

With the blowing up of the Mandiala Bridge, and the capture of territory west of Manawar Tawi, and the withdrawal of 191 Inf Bde from there, the Pakistanis held the northern axis in sufficient strength. On the night of 7/8 December, one Pak infantry battalion supported by armour, attacked the defences prepared by 7 Kumaon on the eastern bank of the Manawar Tawi, astride Mandiala Crossing (NW-5565). The Kumaonis answered with effective artillery and RCL fire and broke the attack(225). The same night the Chhamb (NW-580601), Darh (NW-5860) and Raipur Crossings (NW-5858) were also attacked, and at Raipur Crossing the attackers succeeded in securing a foothold. A counter-attack, however, beat them back and the situation was retrieved. But with unabated tenacity the Pakistanis attacked C Coy of 10 Garh Rif at Raipur Crossing next morning (0605 hrs) with approximately three companies. They reached the Company locality, but, after hand-to-hand fighting, were compelled to beat a retreat, leaving behind 37 dead bodies and six prisoners of war(226).

On 8 December, they kept attacking one or the other of the Indian positions on the east bank, and at 0630 hrs overran a part of the 9 Jat localities at the Raipur Crossing. The situation was however stabilized after hand-to-hand fighting. The Pakistanis continued shelling and probing attack at the Crossings during the night of 8/9 December. The Indian Air Force had, however, become active since the morning of 8 December, and during the night of 8/9 December, the Indian bombers attacked the area west of Manawar Tawi. Again, from 0330 hrs to 0800 hrs on 9 December, when the Pak armour was trying to probe the Crossing sites, the Indian aircraft engaged them with telling effect.

The main battle for Darh (NW-5860) and Raipur Crossing (NW-5858) was joined around midnight of 9/10 December. The Pakistanis infiltrated some parties through the gaps between the Indian company positions and attacked both the Crossings from the front and the rear. They had succeeded in forming a bridgehead east of the Tawi. They enlarged it at the Darh Crossing by attacking and overrunning the Coy of 9 Jat with armour and infantry. The Jat Company Commander was killed. The 9 Jat Company at Raipur also, was over-run and its Company Commander killed in action. Simultaneously, the Pakistanis attacked the 10 Garh Rif Company at the Raipur Crossing with infantry supported by armour, and overran two platoon locations. By the morning of 10 December the Pak forces thus established a bridge-head 915 metres deep and 3660 metres wide, which included the Darh and Raipur Crossings(227).

The 3/4 GR launched a counter-attack(228) with armour but most of the tanks of 72 Armd Regt and 9 Horse which had rushed forward from Kachrial (NW-5863) - Lam (NW-6260) and Khaur (NW-606611), got bogged down(229). The Battalion could not make any advance, and was, therefore, ordered to dig down and contain the enemy by preventing any further ingress.

It appeared absolutely necessary to throw the Pakistanis back somehow, otherwise they might expand their lodgement northwards with infantry at night, marry up with armour and then break out towards Khaur (NW-606611), Lam (NW-6260) Syphon and Pahari Wali, which seemed to be their objectives. Indian commanders, therefore, decided to launch a counter-attack from north to south on the axis Chhamb Crossing - Darh Crossing (NW-5860), using the Chhamb locality as a firm base. At 1700 hrs on 10 December 5/8 GR supported by B Sqn 72 Armd Regt made the assault; 7 Kumaon were in reserve; 10 Arty Bde provided fire support, while 3/4 GR gave fire support from the area Palatan (NW-5961). An effective smoke screen was laid by 10 Arty Bde on the western bank of Manawar Tawi, stretching from the Mandiala Heights to the Darh Crossing(230). In this way, the flanks were held firmly and the enemy infantry was separated from his armour, facilitating their eventual destruction.

The start of the counter-attack was not encouraging. Seven of the 11 tanks got bogged down. The ground between the Indian positions, and Darh (NW-5860) and Raipur Crossings (NW-5858) was boggy and unsuitable for armour. Hence RCL screens were established to seek and destroy Pak armour, and the infantry was thrown into the attacks. Darh Crossing was secured by 1930 hrs on 10 December(231). The Pak troops withdrew from the Darh Crossing to the Raipur Crossing. The 3/4 GR was ordered to secure the Raipur Crossing. However, in the mean time, D Coy, 10 Garh Rif, reoccupied the southern location of the Raipur Crossing without a fight, though the Officer Commanding, Lt Col Onkar Singh was fatally hit by a bullet in the stomach. Apparently the Pakistanis had withdrawn from the area for various reasons. For one thing, the Indian air strikes were hampering the Pak build-up in the lodgement area. For another, constant Indian artillery fire effectively interfered with enemy's build-up consolidation. Perhaps the most important factor was death of the redoubtable Pak commander, Maj Gen Iftikhar Khan, in a helicopter crash. Thus the Indian defensive line in the Chhamb area was stabilised by mid-night of 10/11 December on the eastern bank of Manawar Tawi.

After a long period of lull, when D Coy, 10 Garh

Rif, position was engaged by the enemy on 16 December with tank and medium machine-gun fire from across the river, the Company not only silenced the fire but went on to capture Nathukulian on 17 December(232). The 7 Garh Rif too, captured Sangam and 15 Alfa Posts the same day(233).

Operations in the Hills North of Chhamb

In the hilly sector north of Chhamb, the Indian forces had the task of defending the area bounded by Pt.707, (NW-4473), Laleali (NW-4571), Dewa (NW-4968) and Nathuan Tibba (NW-5171). This task devolved on 8 J and K Militia which moved its headquarters on 3 December from Dewa to Nathuan Tibba. It was reinforced by a Coy of 5 Rajput during the night of 4/5 December, and was directly supported by 863 Lt Bty of 86 Lt Regt(234).

The pattern of Pak attacks in this sector also was the same as elsewhere in Chhamb. Here, as indeed in the entire Chhamb area, the enemy hurled his forces in overwhelming numbers and with tremendous artillery support. On the night of 3 December, the Pakistanis first brought down intense MMG, mortar and artillery fire on Pt.707, Laleali and Red Hill (NW-453693). This was followed by assaults on these positions as well as on Dewa. The first to be attacked was Pt.707 at 0100 hrs on 4 December. The assault with an infantry battalion overran the forward posts(235). The Indian troops answered with an immediate counter-attack, and evicted the enemy, taking a heavy toll of 50 lives. This was not enough to discourage the Pakistanis and they attacked these picquets repeatedly till 8 December. The 8 J and K Militia were, however, well prepared. The Battalion had laid wire and mine obstacles to cover the main approaches at all points, and its companies were sited for all round defence.

In the afternoon of 4 December, Laleali (NW-4571) and Pt.707 (NW-4473) were attacked by a battalion each, while Dewa (NW-4968) was attacked from the south with two infantry companies and a squadron of armour. All these attacks were beaten off. A Pak air OP was shot down by small arms fire. The Pakistanis attacked Red Hill (NW-453693) the same day but this assault was also repulsed(236).

The Pak Army became more active on the night of 4 December. It attacked Dewa thrice with infantry and armour, and Red Hill twice. But, 8 J and K Militia threw back all these attacks inflicting heavy casualties(237).

Next day (5 December) a Pak platoon succeeded in infiltrating in the Betal (NW-5471) area where it attacked the wagon lines of the battery of 86 Lt Regt. Company 5 Rajput counter-attacked from Nathuan Tibba (NW-5171) and threw back the Pakistanis, who, it was identified, belonged to 6 AK Battalion of 23 Inf Div of Pakistan. That night another platoon of Pak troops infiltrated at another place, but the Indian troops attacked them and, supported by artillery and mortar fire took a toll of 50 dead(238).

The Pak commander was now concentrating mainly on Dewa and Laleali. He attacked Dewa again three times on 6 December but was beaten back each time. On 7 December it was Laleali which received his main attention and was attacked twice. In the first attack the Pakistanis succeeded in over-whelming the forward defended localities. However, both the attacks were repulsed with heavy casualties. But Pak tenacity paid off on 8 December, when two infantry battalions and armour were hurled into the attacks on Dewa, which, starting from 0815 hrs, were made successively in wave after wave. In spite of stiff resistance by Indian troops and fierce hand-to-hand fighting, Dewa ultimately fell to the attackers at 1445 hrs that day(239).

This was an important gain for Pakistan in this area, as it finally removed the Indian threat on the northern flank. After the capture of Dewa, the Pak troops contented themselves only with probing actions till the Cease Fire on 17 December.

Conclusion

The concept of operations in Chhamb was flawed from the beginning. One wonders how Maj Gen Jaswant Singh, GOC 10 Inf Div was able to sell the idea of an offensive in Chhamb to Lt Gen Sartaj Singh, GOC-in-C 15 Corps and Lt Gen K.P. Candeth, the Army Commander, Western Command. Jaswant Singh was known to be a good planner, but the operations in Chhamb revealed some limitations. He nursed hopes of driving deep into Pakistani territory and turning towards Sialkot, without realizing that a strong enemy force was deployed on the other side of the Cease Fire Line(240). In this specific case, the posture of "forward poise" was adopted. The 191 Infantry Bde was deployed forward near the Cease Fire Line and asked to act as a firm base for the launching of an offensive with 52 and 68 Inf Bdes. But these two brigades were well behind. The 52 Inf Bde was deployed at Akhnur lest Pakistani forces should break out from the Chicken's Neck area. This amounted to a wastage of the 52 Inf Bde as the 26 Inf Bde which had been made

responsible for Chicken's Neck, automatically guarded Akhnur. The 68 Inf Bde continued to be located east of the river Manawar Tawi until 191 Inf Bde was defeated and thrown back across that river.

The decision of change in posture had far-reaching consequences for this Sector, where the Commanders had been so obsessed with the idea of offensive action that steps were not taken to familiarize the troops with the terrain in case the need arose to go on the defensive. The 68 Inf Bde is a case in point. In view of its future role - attack - the Brigade confined its recce and planning to the offensive operational role. Subsequently, when it had to occupy defences in this Sector to stave off further Pak ingress into Indian territory, it rued the time wasted on offensive plans(241). Nor did 72 Armd Regt, which had been affiliated to this Brigade, recce the area(242).

The 191 Inf Bde made the enemy fight hard and delayed his advance before yielding area west of Manawar Tawi. Pakistan had gained absolute local superiority. However, the Pak commanders did not realize that 191 Inf Bde had disintegrated and was incapable of launching a counter-attack. Otherwise, if on the night 6/7 December they had followed up their success, they could have made considerable gains even east of the river. On the eastern bank, 68 Inf Bde gave a good account of itself even though it had not reconnoitred the area. From 8 December the Indian Air Force pounded the enemy fiercely. The Pak forces vacated Darh and Raipur positions for these reasons and also because the plans of Pak 111 Bde miscarried. It attacked these positions on the night 9/10 December, but was not able to coordinate with armour, and Pak tanks failed to fetch up. The Pak troops were exposed. They also knew that the Indian Army was preparing to mount a major counter-attack. Hence, they withdrew quickly, choosing to go while the going was good.

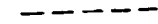
THE BATTLE FOR CHICKEN'S NECK

Chicken's Neck - an area of about 170 sq km - was a dagger-shaped Pakistani salient into the Jammu and Kashmir State. It was bounded by the river Chenab in the west and the Chandra Bhaga or Ghag Nala in the east. The roads in this area generally ran north-south. It was linked with the Sialkot Sector by means of ferries in area Saidpur (NW-7540), Gondal (NW-7039), Majwal (NW-6540) and Gangwal (NW-6647). The area was open and tankable. This salient was of great strategic importance. It provided Pakistan with the shortest approach to the bridge at Akhnur over the

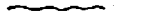
THE CHICKEN'S NECK SECTOR

SKETCH NOT TO SCALE

ROADS



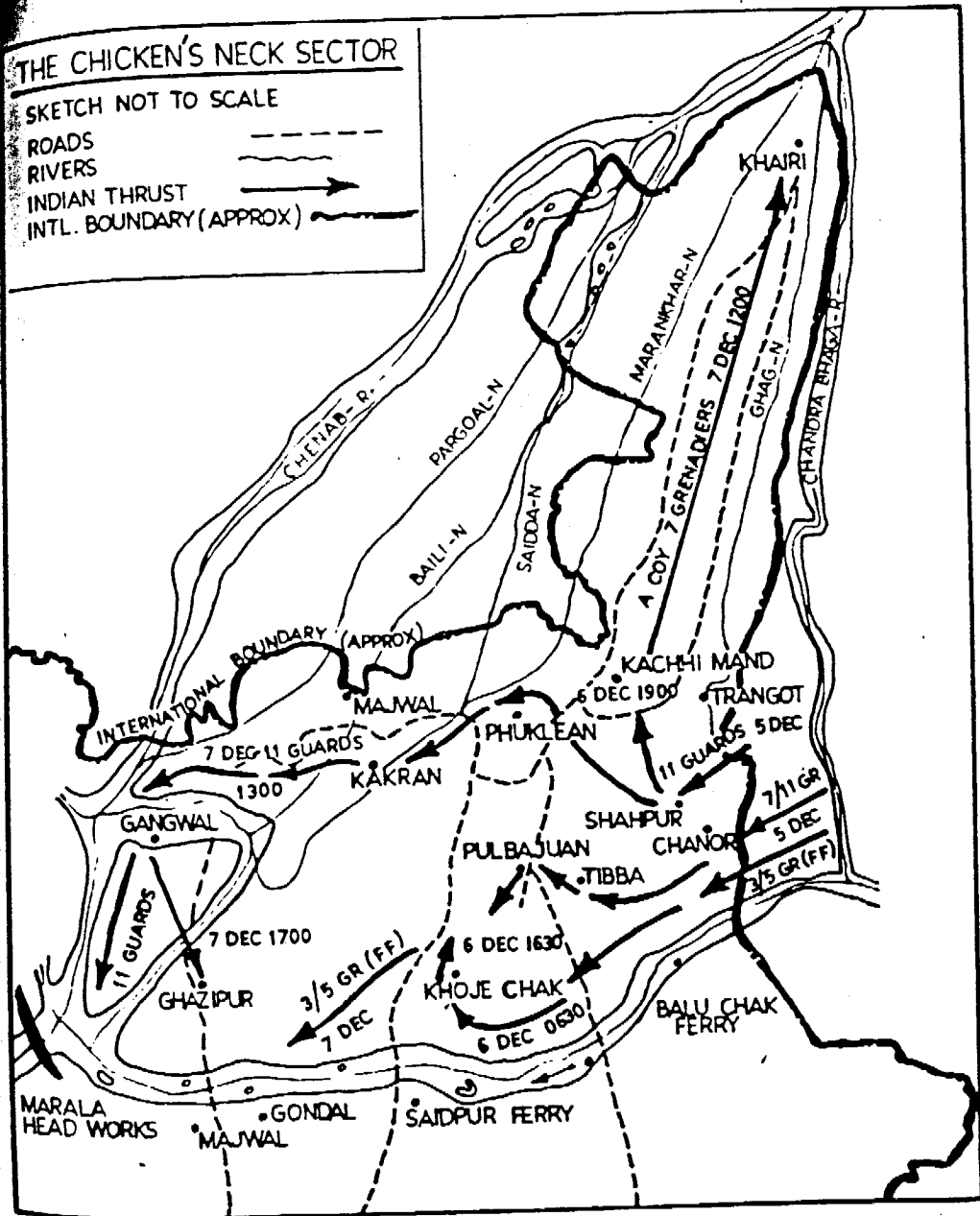
RIVERS



INDIAN THRUST



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Chenab, as well as to Jammu, and rendered vulnerable the forces of 10 Inf Div deployed in the Chhamb-Jaurian complex.

In order to obviate this threat, a battalion had been deployed at Syphon, east of Akhnur, and 10 Inf Div had moved an AMX tank Sqn in conjunction with 9 Jat ex-68 Inf Bde to take offensive action against the flank of any Pak force advancing from the Chicken's Neck towards Damana.

Offensive action to capture the Chicken's Neck salient had been planned by India well ahead of the actual date of the start of the hostilities. On 4 December, the codeword "Glowworm" was issued for the capture of Chicken's Neck, and it was decided to commence the operations on the night of 5/6 December. This operation was to go in conjunction with 1 Corps and 10 Inf Div offensives elsewhere(243). Anticipating enemy air activity against the troops, armour and artillery, Combat Air Patrol was arranged over the area Jammu-Chicken's Neck. The operation was conducted by Brig Mohindar Singh, Commander 19 Inf Bde under the direction of Maj Gen Z.C. Bakshi, GOC, 26 Inf Div.

The area was found to be held by elements of one coy of 34 Punjab and Chenab Rangers(244). As they expected attack from the north and east, they had dug in defences including communication trenches, in the line Golpat (NW-8454) - Kachhi Mand (NW-7851), and each location was stocked with sufficient ammunition. Minefields were laid, though the vehicle lanes were not closed. Conceivably the Pak commander had planned to reinforce the area with a regular battalion once he came to know the direction of the threat. Later, depending upon the situation arising from 1 Corps and 10 Inf Div operations, he could react with a brigade from south of Chenab river, moving his counter-attack force through Saidpur, Gondal and Balu Chak by ferries(245). However, as all the routes of reinforcement near the ferry sites were blocked, he just could not bring up any reinforcements. The 19 Inf Bde, with 11 Guards, 3/5 GR(FF) and 7/11 GR as its integral battalions, and supported by armour and artillery, forestalled the probable moves by the enemy and inflicted a fairly swift and crushing blow.

In the first phase of the operation, area Nala Bend (NW-7944) was to be captured by a silent attack by 7/11 GR at 2230 hrs on 5 December. As the area Khoje Chak (NW-7545) was tactically important, since its loss would cut off Pak troops in the Chicken's Neck and would prevent reinforcements from south of the river Chenab(246), Phase I also envisaged that

after the capture of Nala Bend by 7/11 GR, B Group 9 Para Commando, under command of 3/5 GR(FF), would infiltrate and establish themselves astride Road Khoje Chak (NW-7545)-Saidpur Ferry, south of Ghag Nala (NW-7343) by 0600 hrs on D plus 1. The 7/11 GR were, however, able to accomplish their task only by 2310 hrs - 40 minutes late, although the Nala Bend was found unoccupied by the enemy. The 3/5 GR(FF) and 9 Para Commando also wasted time and achieved their objectives 6 hours late. Both received orders to move forward at 2316 hrs. However, this Battalion made thorough preparation for navigation and route marking, lest maintenance of direction should prove difficult(247). As the ground was not known, the Battalion could reach its area only at 0930 hrs(248), against the scheduled time of 0600 hrs.

Now started the second phase of the operation. The 7/11 GR who had captured Nala Bend were thereafter to capture Tibba (NW-7945) by 0300 hrs, on D plus 1. With the support of armour the Battalion occupied Tibba at 0015 hrs on 6 December, ahead of schedule, without encountering any enemy, though the position was found fully prepared and mined(249).

In the third phase, 11 Guards were to capture Pak Chanor (NW-8077) by 0600 hrs, on D plus 1. Supported by two troops of tanks, the Guards cleared Chak Naun (NW-8048) and Kulian Raiyan (NW-8047) in a matter of three hours and captured Chanor (NW-8077) at 0330 hrs(250) without opposition. The defenders it seems, were unnerved by the sound of tanks, and vacated fully prepared positions after firing a few shots as a token. By 0400 hrs the Battalion had exploited up to Shahpur (NW-7848)(251), and cleared the place.

In the next phase (fourth), 7/11 GR were to capture Pul Bajuan (NW-7746) by 0700 hrs on D plus 1. However, they carried out their task well ahead of schedule and occupied the post by 0351 hrs(252). The Battalion encountered no opposition though here, as at Nala Bend and Tibba, the positions were found to have been fully dug and prepared by the Pak troops(253).

In fifth phase, it had been planned that 3/5 GR(FF) would capture Khoje Chak by 1000 hrs on 6 December. As already mentioned, the battalion could establish itself astride the road Khoje Chak-Saidpur, south of Ghag Nala by 0930 hrs - three-and-a-half hours behind schedule. After reaching the area, 3/5 GR(FF) launched the attack with two companies astride the road Khoje Chak-Saidpur. One Sqn of Central Indian Horse was inducted to be at hand for any counter-attack by the enemy. Since neither OC 3/5

GR(FF) nor 8 Cav were aware of this, 8 Cav fired a few rounds against the tanks of Central India Horse. Fortunately no damage was done. The 3/5 GR(FF) experienced difficulty in finding and maintaining direction. An artillery shot on Khoje Chak helped the Battalion determine its position, and Khoje Chak was secured by 1600 hrs on 6 December, six hours later than the planned time(254). In the meanwhile the Para Commandos had entrenched themselves at the Saidpur ferry site. Another team of the Para Commandos dug itself down at the Gondal ferry site on the night of 6/7 December.

In view of the developing situation in Chhamb, where the Pakistani Army had begun to pose a threat to the east bank of the Manawar Tawi, 3/5 GR(FF) were withdrawn from 26 Inf Div and placed under command of 10 Inf Div. The Battalion, therefore, pulled out from the area, which was now handed over to 11 Guards.

In the sixth phase, 11 Guards started their advance from Shahpur at 1100 hrs on 6 December towards Phuklean (NW-7649), which they captured at 1400 hrs that day - more than twelve hours ahead of schedule(255).

All that remained to be done was to mop up the area and take adequate measures to ward off any possible counter-attack across the Chenab from the south. This was done. One Sqn Central India Horse and one coy 7 Grenadiers (Mech.) moved into the area. The Pakistanis had neither armour nor effective anti-tank weapons. The 11 Guards on the other hand were accompanied by two troops of tanks(256). They not only captured Phuklean but also Kakran (NW-7449) and Gangwal villages. The 7 Grenadiers, a mechanised infantry battalion, captured Kachhi Mand (NW-7851) and cleared it by 1900 hrs on 6 December(257). Next day the Battalion mopped up the area north of line Kacchi Mand Trangot (NW-8150) and cleared 15 posts and 20 villages by 1320 hrs. The PAF made heavy air strikes on 6 December on the Indian troops with Mirages, Sabres, and MiG-19 aircraft and inflicted some damage on Indian personnel and vehicles(258). The Indian aircraft on CAP mission effectively engaged them and warded off further enemy attempts to impede the operation(259).

In this operation, the deployment of troops and the actual fighting were carried out with ease and smoothness, even in the hours of darkness. This speaks well of the standard of night training of the Indian troops. Night operations made the task of the enemy air force difficult and minimized casualties on the Indian side. The operations took 48 hours to

complete when it could perhaps have been finished much quicker. In consequence, the Pak garrison was allowed to slip away almost unharmed. Also, it is difficult to understand why the operation had to be conducted from widely separated axes of attack in seven phases when the Indian forces, equipped as they were with tanks and armoured personnel carriers, could have exploited the fire power and mobility thus provided and blocked the ferries quickly, mopping up the small enemy force in the area from south to north. Perhaps the Indian commanders expected stiffer resistance by strong Pak forces and so proceeded cautiously, step by step.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Official Records.
2. On 15 December 1971, the Bengalee defectors helped reconstruct the moves of the 7 Inf Div. In actual fact it moved from Peshawar on 26 November 1971 and had arrived in Chhanga Manga on 5 December 1971. It was subsequently concentrated in the area Mandi Sadiq Ganj - Bahawal Nagar from Arifwala area. On or about 16 December 1971, it was poised for an offensive opposite Ganganagar. From Official Records.
3. The exact location of components of 6 Armd Div remained undisclosed, though a few individual units like the 11 Cav (23 Inf Div Sector) had been correctly identified. In the event the 6 Armd Div remained uncommitted. From Official Records.
4. Intelligence relating to the 17 Inf Div was also inadequate. HQ 17 Inf Div less two brigades was reported in Daulat Nagar. Subsequently, it was revealed that this formation did not function as a whole but it was split and the brigades allotted to various formations. From Official Records.
5. Sukhwant Singh, p.24.
6. By 12/13 December, it was clear that the 33 Inf Div was made responsible for the defence of Hyderabad-Badin Sector. From Official Records.
7. Captured maps/prisoners of war, however, indicated that the bulk of the 18 Inf Div was located in area Rahim Yar Khan. From Official Records.
8. From Official Records.
9. Nevertheless, the reported deployment of the 33 Inf Div in area Bahawalpur together with the 1 Armd Div in Okara area imposed considerable caution on the Indian Field Commanders. From Official Records.
10. From Official Records.
11. From Official Records.
12. From Official Records.
13. From Official Records.
14. From Official Records.
15. Sukhwant Singh, p.23.

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. From Official Records.
32. From Official Records.
34. Ibid.
35. From Official Records.
36. From Official Records.
37. From Official Records.
38. From Official Records.
39. From Official Records.
40. Ibid.
41. From Official Records.
42. From Official Records.
43. Ibid.
44. From Official Records.
45. From Official Records.
46. From Official Records.
47. From Official Records.
48. Ibid.
49. From Official Records.
50. From Official Records.
51. Ibid.
52. From Official Records.
53. Ibid.
54. From Official Records.
55. From Official Records.
56. Ibid.
57. From Official Records.
58. From Official Records.
59. In this Sector, the Indian divisional reserve was the 268 Inf Bde and it alone could carry out major offensive tasks, but the formation could not be committed to any such task because of the uncertainty about the location of the enemy's 7 Inf Div, and any unexpected move it might make. Whatever offensive tasks and raids the 19 Div undertook, as well as the partial clearance of the Lipa Valley, were undertaken by the reserves created through readjustment from within the forces already committed to the ground.
60. From Official Records.

61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. NL 970349.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid. It is not necessary to discuss here the controversy which erupted in 1972 about the exact Indian gains in the Lipa Valley which clouded Gen D' Souza.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. From Official Records.
78. From Official Records.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. On 18 December 1971 when the ceasefire was declared the presence of an uncleared Pakistani pocket in Kaiyan Bowl was, it is claimed, reported by forward troops to HQ 19 Inf Div. As this pocket was completely dominated by Indian troops and hence was at their mercy, its significance was perhaps ignored by the GOC. Taking advantage of the winter conditions and a limited thinning out of Indian troops, Pakistan not only reinforced the 'pocket' but successfully encroached into the Indian territory in Jamua-Gabdori area. In May 1972 heavy fighting broke out in the 'pocket' where Pakistanis launched a full scale attack with almost two battalions supported by medium and field guns, and re-took Seranwali Baihk from the outnumbered Indian troops. On either side, the contestants suffered heavy casualties.
82. From Official Records.
83. From Official Records.
84. Ibid.
85. From Official Records.
86. Ibid.
87. From Official Records.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. From Official Records.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. From Official Records.
95. Ibid.

96. From Official Records.
97. Ibid.
98. From Official Records.
99. From Official Records.
100. From Official Records.
101. Ibid.
102. From Official Records.
103. Ibid.
104. From Official Records.
105. Ibid.
106. From Official Records.
107. From Official Records.
108. From Official Records.
109. From Official Records.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. From Official Records.
113. From Official Records.
114. Ibid.
114. From Official Records.
115. From Official Records.
116. From Official Records.
117. From Official Records.
118. Ibid.
119. From Official Records.
120. From Official Records.
121. From Official Records.
122. From Official Records.
123. From Official Records.
124. From Official Records.
125. From Official Records.
126. From Official Records.
127. Ibid.
128. From Official Records.
129. The operation was conducted by 21 Punjab of 93 Bde, 25 Inf Div.
130. From Official Records.
131. "In an area like that you don't have to make pill boxes or bunkers, they are naturally there". - Lt Gen Kundan Singh's interview.
132. "The enemy gun area was at Balnoi between Mendhar and FDL" - Lt Gen Kundan Singh's interview.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. The CO, Lt Col Inderjit Singh, had asked for an additional day for reconnaissance but he says that the Brigade Commander Brig Hari Singh, over-ruled him, telling him that there were 30-40 men sitting on the FDL in a demoralized state and therefore there was no necessity for recce. The CO had also protested that December was an inauspicious number for him therefore asked for permission to launch the attack a day later.

137. Ibid.
138. Lt Gen Kundan Singh does not agree that the Indian troops were about 18 metres from the objective. He argued when interviewed "if it were so they could throw grenades". He added "Mines are not laid 20 Yards (18 metres) from bunkers. Wires or mines should be at least 40 yards (36 metres) away".
139. Ibid.
140. From Official Records.
141. From Official Records.
142. From Official Records.
143. From Official Records.
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid.
146. From Official Records.
147. From Official Records.
148. From Official Records.
149. Ibid.
150. "The Gurkhas did not have rapport with the Grenadiers. Ideally only such additional troops should be assigned to a battalion as are akin to each other". Lt Gen Kundan Singh in an interview.
151. The Commanding Officer wanted to wait till night when he would have linked up with C Coy who were well lodged behind the enemy.
152. From Official Records.
153. From Official Records.
154. It is recorded that at the time when the battle was raging, the Brigade Commander was 'nearby', but it is not stated where exactly he was and how he was guiding the battle. He ordered C Coy and also the Commanding Officer, to make a final bid and attack the objective in broad day-light. The air strike made at 1130 hrs on 14 December at his instance obviously failed to register any impact. As apprehended by the Commanding Officer, the attacks made by him and the C Coy at the behest of the Brigade Commander could not achieve the objective and the attack had to be called off.
155. Lt Gen Kundan Singh confirmed in the interview that Lt Col Inderjit Singh, Co, 14 Grenadier, had such misgivings.
156. From Official Records.
157. From Official Records.
158. Ibid.
159. From Official Records.
160. From Official Records.
161. The so-called 'forward poise' had the approval of Lt Gen Sartaj Singh, GOC 15 Corps, Lt Gen K.P. Candeth GOC-in-C Western Command, Gen SHFJ Mandkshaw, Chief of Army Staff. It was, however, not correct to call it as such because

though the 191 Inf Bde was asked to occupy a firm base so that the divisional offensive could be launched, in actual fact it was only a defensive posture which this Brigade presented as the other Brigades were not yet ready to launch the offensive into enemy territory. From Official Records.

162. From Official Records.
163. From Official Records.
164. From Official Records.
165. Ibid.
166. From Official Records.
167. From Official Records.
168. From Official Records.
169. From Official Records.
170. From Official Records.
171. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
173. From Official Records.
174. From Official Records.
175. Ibid.
176. Ibid.
177. Ibid.
178. Ibid. The 65 Bde attacked from the west through area Pir Jamal and Moel towards Mandiala Heights, Gurha, Phagla and Pt.994. The 111 Bde attacked area Barsala, Pt.951 and Jhanda from the west and south.
179. This was confirmed by the enemy's operational plan and Orbat found on 6 December on the body of the Adjutant 47 Punjab. From Official Records.
180. From Official Records.
181. Ibid.
182. From Official Records.
183. From Official Records.
184. From Official Records.
185. From Official Records.
186. From Official Records.
187. From Official Records.
188. From Official Records.
189. From Official Records.
190. Ibid.
191. From Official Records.
192. From Official Records.
193. From Official Records.
194. From Official Records.
195. These events remained unknown to HQ 191 Inf Bde due to loss of radio contact. From Official Records.
196. From Official Records.
197. From Official Records.
198. From Official Records.
199. From Official Records.
200. From Official Records.

201. From Official Records.
202. From Official Records.
203. From Official Records.
204. Ibid.
205. From Official Records.
206. From Official Records.
207. From Official Records.
208. From Official Records.
209. From Official Records.
210. The attack was on Pt.904, not Pt.303. It, however, seems both are one and the same picquet. From Official Records.
211. From Official Records.
212. From Official Records.
213. From Official Records.
214. Ibid.
215. From Official Records.
216. Ibid.
217. From Official Records.
218. From Official Records.
219. Ibid.
220. From Official Records.
221. From Official Records.
222. From Official Records.
223. Ibid.
224. Ibid.
225. From Official Records.
226. From Official Records.
227. From Official Records.
228. The capture of Chicken's Neck on 7 December and consequent removal of threat to Akhnur had released the troops deployed there, and 3/4 GR of 52 Inf Bde had been moved forward and placed under command of 68 Inf Bde.
229. From Official Records.
230. From Official Records.
231. From Official Records.
232. From Official Records.
233. From Official Records.
234. From Official Records.
235. From Official Records.
236. From Official Records.
237. From Official Records.
238. From Official Records.
239. From Official Records.
240. Lt Gen Jasbir Singh said in the interview that he warned Jaswant Singh of the presence of Pak 23 Div and armoured manoeuvring across the CFL, but the latter discounted these reports and stubbornly held to the view that the territory opposite was thinly held.
241. From Official Records.
242. From Official Records.
243. From Official Records.
244. Ibid.

- 245. From Official Records.
- 246. From Official Records.
- 247. From Official Records.
- 248. Ibid.
- 249. Ibid. Also From Official Records.
- 250. The time stated is 0300 hrs. From Official Records.
- 251. From Official Records.
- 252. Ibid. 0330 hrs according to Official Records.
- 253. Ibid.
- 254. From Official Records.
- 255. From Official Records.
- 256. Ibid.
- 257. From Official Records.
- 258. 4X1 ton vehicles 1 jeep and 2 APCs - Ibid.
- 259. Ibid.

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