

## 1962 War - Operations in the Walong Sector (A View from the Other Side of the Hill)

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### Background

While the Chinese main offensive in the Eastern Theatre was directed against the Tawang – Bomdi La Sector, the subsidiary was launched in the Walong Sector. The Chinese aim was to annihilate the Indian troops deployed in Walong Sector and in the process advance upto their claim line of 07 Nov 1959, i.e. almost the foothills. Initially on the Indian side, Walong Sector was the responsibility of 5 Infantry Brigade which was part of 4 Infantry Division. It was the Assam Rifles which manned the border posts. In response to occasional Chinese incursions through the Lohit Valley, 2 RAJPUT was moved into the area. In Mar 1962, it was replaced by 6 KUMAON.<sup>1</sup>

Walong, a small hamlet, is situated in the vicinity of Tri Junction of Tibet, Myanmar and India. It lies astride the ancient trade route. The terrain in the area is characterised by high mountains, narrow valleys and dense forests. The valley is divided by the Lohit River, a very fast flowing stream about 100 metres wide at its narrowest point and is 20-30 feet deep. There was no bridge and movement from one bank to the other was by a cable called ‘a twine.’ There are numerous small branches joining in, both from the East and West, emanating from steep narrow valleys. From the valley floor-around 700m, the mountain peaks rise to approximately 5000m, with vast variation in the temperatures.

Please refer to Map ‘P’. Walong is about 30 km from the Tibetan border (McMahon Line) and approximately 200 km from the road-head (in 1962) at Teju on our side of the border involving a march of 14 stages over a goat track. A track from Walong also led towards Kibithoo along the Western bank of Lohit River. Onwards, it hit the McMahon Line; crossing into Tibet, culminating at Rima, an administrative base on the Chinese side of the border. The supply line and transportation of troops was only by air. Teju airfield was the nearest airlift point. There was an airstrip at Walong, capable of handling only light aircraft like Otters or Caribous. After 1000 hours, even an Otter could not operate due to strong winds.

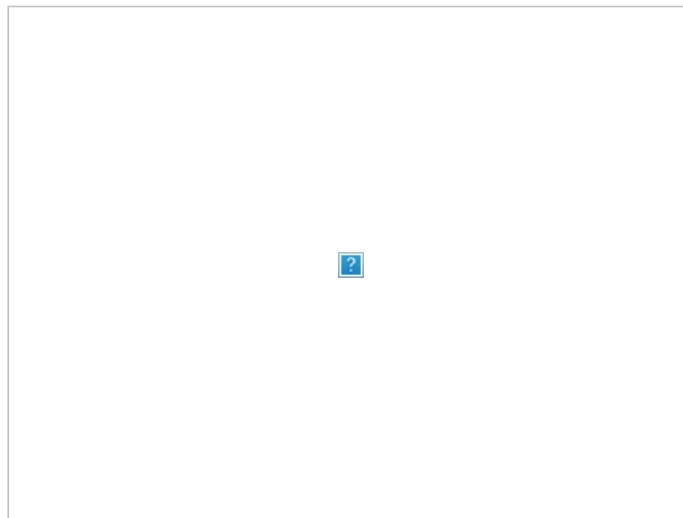
Operations in Walong Sector can be divided into three distinct phases as under :-

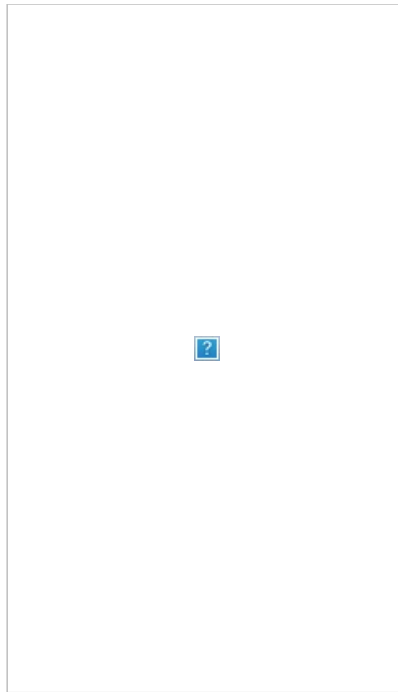
- (a) Initial Operations: 18 – 24 Oct.
- (b) Reorganisation and Build-Up: 25 Oct – 13 Nov.
- (c) Main Battle: 14 – 21 Nov.

### Initial Operations: 18 - 24 Oct

Please refer to Sketch ‘Q’. In the first week of Sep 1962, 6 KUMAON had been moved up and located a few km short of the International Border (IB). A Company was deployed forward at Di chu. Remainder three companies occupied defended localities; B Company at East Ridge, C Company at Kibithoo and D Company at Ladders.<sup>2</sup> By end September, 4 SIKH was also in the process of induction. Two of its companies had been air lifted into Walong.

In the meantime, Chinese activities had increased across the IB. Tactical Headquarters of Chengdu Sub Area with 153 Regiment and one reinforced battalion had staged forward.<sup>3</sup> On 18 Oct, a reconnaissance patrol of 6 KUMAON reported presence of two Chinese officers and about 50 men in the area of Hill 100 (on the McMahon Ridge). On 21 October, light signals were observed on the Chinese side.





At 0015 hours (h) 22 Oct, the Chinese launched an attack on Kibithoo held by a company of 6 KUMAON, with a battalion size force, duly supported by mortars and machine guns. The battle lasted for almost four hours. The Chinese ultimately were able to breakthrough, by sheer weight of numbers. 6 KUMAON withdrew to occupy a defensive position at Walong, leaving behind a screen position at Ashi Hill ex D Company, under Lieutenant Bikram Singh. In the early hours of 23 Oct, the Chinese attacked the screen position. At 0400 h, the same day, screen position was ordered to withdraw. By 24 Oct morning, the Chinese had contacted the main defences at Walong.<sup>4</sup> By this time, 4 SIKH had occupied a defended area at Walong along with two companies of 2/8 GR. Hereafter, there was a lull in the battle for some time, except for patrol clashes.

### **Reorganisation and Indian Build-Up: 25 Oct - 13 Nov 1962**

Initially, 5 Infantry Brigade was responsible for the Walong Sector. As a sequel to the reorganisation, after the fall of Tawang, a new formation 2 Infantry Division was raised with Major General MS Pathania as the GOC. The newly raised Division was assigned the responsibility of the whole of NEFA, less Kameng (Tawang) Sector. Consequently, 181 Infantry Brigade was allocated for Walong Sector. However, later on GOC's insistence, entire 181 Infantry Brigade was moved out and 11 Infantry Brigade under Brigadier NC Rawley was moved to Walong. Further, to bring the Brigade to full strength, 2/8 GR was ordered to move to Walong. Half way through the move, they were replaced by 3/3 GR. Even 3/3 GR was shuttled up and down till it was finally brought into Walong. Finally, 11 Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier NC Rawley assumed the responsibility for Walong Sector on 31 Oct 1962. It will be seen that there were far too many changes in the order of battle and responsibility which was detrimental to the development of a brigade defended sector at Walong.

### **Chinese Build-Up**

As a result of operations conducted from 22-24 Oct, Chinese had captured Kibithoo, a post on the Indian side of the border (McMahon Line) and were occupying Ashi Hill, separated from Indian troops by Namti Nullah. Through aggressive patrolling, Chinese had also gained control of Green Pimple (12500), Tri Junction (13250) and, were operating on the West Ridge and the Avalanche Ridge; thus posing a threat to the western flank of Indian positions in Walong. Chinese patrols were also operating in Satti Valley, thus posing a threat to the eastern flank.

Subsequent to the raising of Indian 2 Infantry Division and induction of 11 Infantry Brigade into Walong Sector, Chinese ordered the move of 130 infantry Division (Commander Dang Zhanlin) located at various places around Cheng-Tu (Chengdu) (Ya-an, Lo-shan etc.) in Sichuan province for offensive in the Walong Sector. On 28 Oct, the GHQ PLA nominated Ding Headquarters (HQ) under Comrade Ding Cheng for overall command and control of operations in the Walong Sector. Ten days were given with effect from 29 Oct, to complete all preparations for the offensive. 130 Infantry Division had the following troops available to it <sup>5</sup> :-

- (a) 388 Infantry Regiment.
- (b) 389 Infantry Regiment.
- (c) 390 Infantry Regiment.
- (d) Engineer Regiment.
- (e) Composite Artillery Battalion of 134 Infantry Division.
- (f) Anti-aircraft Battalion of 135 Infantry Division.

The PLA high command carried out detailed appreciation of the task. Operational instructions issued to lower formations emphasised the following <sup>6</sup>:-

- (a) As Indian defences were expected to be well prepared and held in strength, the operational plans were to be based on encirclement and outflanking movements. The break-in points were to be selected with due deliberation.
- (b) Superior fire power, both of artillery and supporting weapons was an essential prerequisite. Anti aircraft weapons were to be organised to interfere with the adversary's air supplies as also for security of own troops.
- (c) For effective command and control, line and wireless communications were to be ensured.
- (d) Chengdu Military Sub Area and Tibet Military Command were assigned the responsibility of logistics support for the offensive. Adequate resources were to be earmarked for constructing road up to Walong.

### **Chinese Logistics Build-Up**

Please refer to Map 'R'. The logistics chain involved a move of nearly 1300 km to a road head at Shugden which was approximately 90 km from Rima, the launch area for the offensive. Rima was 4-5 days of marching distance from the road head. Chengdu Military Region organised 17 and 20 Motor Transport Regiments for building-up the logistics for the operation. Chengdu Military Sub Area mobilised 7169 civilian workers, 835 livestock, 634 mules and horses; and to further augment the effort 130 Division deployed five infantry battalions (altogether 1800 personnel) to ferry the stocks for impending operations. The total strength for logistics build-up exceeded that of the combat troops; such was the magnitude of the logistics effort.<sup>7</sup>

### **Chinese Plan of Attack**

The plan for capture of Walong was finalised on 7 November at Ding HQ and forwarded to the Central Military Commission (CMC) who in turn communicated their final approval of the plan on 09 Nov. Salient points of the plan were as under (Sketch 'Q')<sup>8</sup> :-

- (a) Main attack was to develop from West of Lohit River with a subsidiary attack from the East.
- (b) 388 and 390 Regiments were to attack simultaneously from the West. After initial penetration into the Ladders - Maha Plateau - Tri Junction localities, Walong was to be isolated; prelude to its subsequent capture.
- (c) 389 Regiment (less a battalion) was to advance keeping East of the Lohit River. After clearing Dong Heights, it was to progress operations towards Walong, in conjunction with 388 Regiment.
- (d) 153 Regiment which was already in contact was to provide firm base and subsequently complement the operations of 388 and 390 Regiments.
- (e) 2nd Battalion of 389 Regiment alongwith the reinforced battalion of Chengdu Military Sub Area (less 3rd and 5th Companies) were to act as reserves.
- (f) 5th Company of the reinforced battalion was to launch a feint attack initially and was to subsequently protect the western flank of the offensive.
- (g) The Artillery Group to support the offensive was composed of the composite Artillery Battalion of 134 Division, 122 mm mortar company and 82 mm mortar company of 153 Regiment.
- (h) All preparations were to be completed by 1800 h on 13 Nov. The date for the offensive was fixed as 18 Nov, which in the event had to be advanced to 16 Nov.
- (j) Logistics set-up and rear command office were established by 12 Nov. One week's supplies and ammunition were to be stocked by 15 Nov.

### **Indian Dispositions**

By the first week of Nov, 11 Infantry Brigade had established itself finally with its full complements. Due to cross attachments, the homogeneity of the units was adversely affected. The profile of the Brigade Defended Sector by 14 Nov was as under<sup>9</sup>:-

- (a) Brigade Tactical HQ was in general area Tri Junction with administrative echelons at Walong Camp.
- (b) 4 SIKH was deployed on both sides of the Lohit River with the Battalion less 'D' Company on the West and the 'D' Company on the East in the area of High Plateau, the latter under command 3/3 GR. On the West, a company each was deployed at Patrol Base, Ladders and Maha Plateau, with the Battalion HQ in the Area West Ridge.
- (c) 3/3 GR was also deployed on either side of the Lohit River. Two of its companies were in the area of Lachman Ridge and Ladders with other two in Dong Plateau and Dong Hill, and Battalion HQ in the area of Dakota Hill on the East bank.
- (d) 6 KUMAON had taken up defences in the area of Tri Junction and West Ridge on the West, after withdrawing from Kibithoo.
- (e) 4 Dogra was deployed in the depth astride the Avalanche Ridge, guarding the Western approach to Walong.



From the above deployment, it may be noted that two companies of 3/3 GR deployed on the West bank of Lohit River were under command 4 SIKH; while two companies of 4 SIKH on the East bank were under command 3/3 GR. This is what the Chinese understood from the above arrangement :-

*“.....3rd Gorkha Rifles (3/3 GR) in the East of the river had its two companies deployed on the West of the river which were under command of 4th Sikh Regiment (4 SIKH). However, 4th company of the Sikh Regiment was deployed to the East of the river, on the base set-up on the forward slope of the position held by the Gorkha Battalion. Indian forces attempted to achieve the aim of restraining each other by adopting difficult patterns of organisational cross deployment.”<sup>10</sup>*

## **6 KUMAON Attack - Prelude to the Main Battle : 14-15 Nov 1962**

Please refer to Sketch 'Q'. As part of consolidation and extension of the Firm Base, the Chinese had secured the Green Pimple spur on 06 Nov, posing a threat to Walong from the West. Despite repeated attempts by 6 KUMAON to retake it, the Chinese held firm. Similarly, enemy attempts to advance along West Ridge had been blocked by 6 KUMAON. Green Pimple was dominated by Yellow Pimple and Yellow Pimple was dominated by Tri Junction. Tri Junction thus became a ground of great tactical importance as it opened several approaches to the enemy, besides providing an approach to own troops to the enemy positions on Ashi Hill. By about 10 Nov it could also be observed that the Chinese preparations for their offensive were nearing completion.

After carrying out an assessment of the situation the Brigade Commander (Brigadier Rawley) came to the conclusion that it was essential to secure Green Pimple through Tri Junction and Yellow Pimple. At this stage the Brigade Commander was ordered to relieve 2/8 GR, while its replacement 3/3 GR had still not been fully inducted. Keeping in view the urgency of the situation the Brigade Commander decided to readjust positions within the brigade defended sector and relieve two companies of 6 KUMAON to join the parent unit at Firm Base thus concentrating the whole of 6 KUMAON on the western flank. 6 KUMAON was then tasked to capture Green Pimple and thereafter to occupy a battalion defended area from Green Pimple to Tri Junction. The progress of the attack is best described in Brigade Commander's own words <sup>11</sup>:-

*“6 KUMAON commenced their advance from Firm Base on the morning of 14 Nov. Second Lieutenant Khetri was commanding the leading platoon up the ridge the Chinese saw them and headed for Yellow Pimple. From Yellow Pimple the Chinese opened up on to the lower slopes of Tri Junction and at the same time other Chinese troops tried to get up to Tri Junction. Khetri with his men dashed up the slope, reached the top and then dashed down the spur leading to Yellow Pimple. Thus the vital ground that was Tri Junction was secured. This now formed the base for Phase 2, i.e. the attack on Yellow Pimple.*

*6 KUMAON continued their attack and made slow but steady progress. By mid-day, however, they began to suffer fairly heavy casualties and I ordered one company of 4 DOGRA who were concentrated on the ALG to start moving up. By approximately 1430 h, 6 KUMAON casualties increased considerably and I realised that inspite of the fact that they were still making progress, they would not be able to carry out Phase 3 the next day, i.e. capture of Green Pimple. At this stage I ordered the whole of 4 DOGRA who were still in the process of concentrating on the ALG to move upto Tri Junction. By last light, inspite of suffering heavy casualties 6 KUMAON managed to reach within 50 yards of the top of Yellow Pimple. I was hoping that by first light they would have captured the whole of Yellow Pimple and would be in a position to prepare for the final phase which was to capture Green Pimple.*

*6 KUMAON by now was considerably reduced in strength, since they had started the operation. They had started the operation as a weak Battalion and had suffered heavy casualties. During the night, at approximately 2200 h, the enemy opened up with automatic weapons. At exactly 1 AM all hell broke loose. He counter attacked with, I consider a minimum of one regiment plus. The night was lit up almost like one of the main roads of Delhi. You must not forget that Chinese are all equipped with automatic and semi-automatic weapons. The right company of 6 KUMAON was overrun almost immediately. The second company 6 KUMAON on the spine between Yellow Pimple and Tri Junction fell back slowly under continuous pressure. The noise was absolutely deafening and continued without a break till 0750 h on 15 Nov when their counter attack was finally held. At this moment I looked at my watch as there was complete silence. When the counter attack was finally held the Chinese had pushed us back after continuous fighting of over seven hours up to less than 50 yards of the top of Tri Junction. In this fighting, lasting almost the whole night, 6*

*KUMAON suffered heavy casualties.”*

Thus ended the brave but ill-conceived spoiling attack by 6 KUMAON. It was to have far reaching effects on the main battle that was to follow. 6 KUMAON had suffered very heavy casualties and needed to be relieved and given rest. 4 DOGRA who were just arriving at the ALG were also fed into the battle piecemeal without any tactical gains. The result was that Brigade's left flank was almost open and the Brigade had no reserves. Incidentally, Chinese accounts do not talk of this battle which raged on 14 and 15 Nov.

### **The Main Battle : 16 Nov 1962**

The PLA 130 Division, which had been tasked to capture Walong commenced its move from the assembly areas across the IB on 13 Nov and got into the battle positions by last light 15 Nov. Ding Tactical HQ deployed itself in the area of Green Pimple. **In order to exploit initial success and deny Indian side an opportunity to regain balance, the Chinese higher command advanced the D Day for the main offensive to 16 Nov.**<sup>12</sup>

The Chinese launched the main attack on 16th morning, engaging all the forward localities, supported by artillery, mortars and machine gun fire. 6 KUMAON localities in the area of Track Junction and a portion of 4 DOGRA Defended Area were attacked by 390 Regiment which had divided itself into three echelons. The troops of both the units put up stiff resistance which involved even close quarter fighting. They succeeded in stalling the initial Chinese attack, inflicting heavy casualties.

Simultaneously, 388 Regiment attacked A Company of 4 SIKH which was deployed at Maha Plateau. By 0530 h, the position had been overrun. Next, the Delta Company of 3/3 GR came under attack. It beat back two successive Chinese attacks. Subedar Kharak Bahadur Gurung distinguished himself in this fighting. By 1500 h, the locality had been surrounded. The remnants decided to breakthrough and fall back. In the process, the Gorkhas suffered heavy casualties including the Company Commander Captain KN Bavadam. The Chinese were able to penetrate the forward line of defences and drive a wedge between the 6 KUMAON and 4 SIKH Defended Areas. By the afternoon, two Chinese regiments had linked-up to tackle the depth localities of 6 KUMAON and 4 DOGRA.

On 15 Nov, 3/3 GR Company deployed at Ladders Post inflicted heavy casualties when the Chinese attacked it. This

locality was mutually supporting with A Company of 4 SIKH at Dong Hill, on eastern bank of the River. On the 16 Nov morning, Chinese 389 Regiment attacked Dong Plateau, crossing the River using rubber dinghies. The Company position fell but not before it took a heavy toll of the enemy. Due to the loss of this locality, Ladders position lay exposed. It held on till 1630 h, and was ordered to withdraw thereafter, as the position had become untenable. While most of its personnel were able to escape, Major Chand the Company Commander was taken prisoner.

Meanwhile on the eastern flank, A and B Companies of 3/3 GR were under intense pressure. By 1430 h 16 Nov, orders were given for them to withdraw. These troops suffered heavy casualties and many were captured, as they were ambushed by the Chinese who had cut-off the routes of withdrawal. C Company of 4 SIKH deployed on High Plateau which by now was isolated was attacked on 16/17 Nov and was overrun.

By the evening of 16 Nov, the 11 Brigade Sector had crumbled. 390 Regiment had seized Walong airfield by the last light. Chinese 153 Regiment cleared the left over pockets of resistance. Some of the troops like the platoon of 6 KUMAON at the West Ridge fought to the finish.

### **The Withdrawal**

The overall situation as it prevailed in Walong at around 1100 h on 16 Nov (based on personal papers of Brigadier Rawlley, the Brigade Commander) is given in the succeeding paras.<sup>13</sup>

#### **On the West Bank**

(a) The defended localities of Tri Junction, Patrol Base, Lachman Ridge, Mithun Track, Maha Plateau and West Ridge had fallen. The occupation of the West Ridge gave the enemy the capability to observe and bring down small arms and artillery fire over the Dropping Zone (DZ), Advance Landing Ground (ALG) and the Brigade HQ at Walong itself.

(b) Ladders position held by C Company of 3/3 GR had been considerably weakened in strength and was low on ammunition but was holding on in stubborn resistance.

(c) Firm Base held by the two companies of 4 DOGRA, stood surrounded by the enemy. There was no contact between them and the Brigade HQ.

(d) 71 Heavy Mortar Battery was left with few rounds of faulty ammunition and was under enemy observation.

#### **On the East Bank**

(a) High Plateau held by D Company of 4 SIKH under the command of Lieutenant Yograj Palta had fallen.

(b) 3/3 GR less two companies along with a company of 4 SIKH holding Dong Plateau, Dong Hill and Dakota Hill stood encircled.

There were only two companies of 4 DOGRA at the Brigade HQ that were available to the Brigade Commander, which had so far not come in contact with the enemy. The situation all along the front was grave. The troops had been in action since 21 Oct, i.e. for 26 days and were now exhausted. Having had to fight a most unequal

battle, under most unfavourable conditions without combat air support, they were hungry, cold, many were wounded, low on ammunition, had no winter clothing and had been on a starvation diet for many days.

As would be apparent from the above, the position of the Brigade on the morning of 16 Nov was truly untenable. Lieutenant General BM Kaul, GOC IV Corps had been in Walong since 15 Nov and had seen the situation first-hand. **The Brigade Commander recommended withdrawal to the Corps Commander. The Corps Commander was reluctant. He (General Kaul), as the Chief of General Staff at Army HQ had been an accomplice of the politicians and bureaucrats in the formulation of the 'Forward Policy' and the order to 'throw the Chinese out', was now in a dilemma. He refused to order withdrawal. Tactical logic of the Brigade Commander and hopelessness of the situation were of no avail. Thereupon, the Brigade Commander accepted his directions of continuing the fruitless struggle, provided the Corps Commander stayed on. He told him in no uncertain words that he would not allow him to take off in his aircraft. Thereupon the Corps Commander agreed to permit a withdrawal and offered Brigadier Rawley a lift in his aircraft back to safety. The offer was politely refused by the Brigade Commander who then put into motion the process of withdrawal of his Brigade or what was left of it to Hayuliang, a distance of 105 km from Walong.<sup>14</sup>**

The orders for withdrawal were issued at 1200 h on 16 Nov. Due to the prevailing tactical situation (all units and sub-units were not in communication and enemy troops were swarming all around), the plan of withdrawal could not percolate to all sub-units.

**Withdrawal Plan.** The outline plan of withdrawal was as under :-

- (a) All troops on the East bank of Lohit River to abandon positions and withdraw along East bank to join the Brigade Column at Hawaii (HQ of Arijaw District of Arunachal Pradesh).
- (b) All troops on the western flank of the Brigade Defended Sector to abandon positions at 1400 h on 16 Nov.
- (c) Brigade HQ, supporting arms and services to cross the Brigade check point (CP) between 1500-1600 h on 16 Nov.
- (d) 4 SIKH to commence thinning out at 1700 h and abandon positions by 2000 h on 16 Nov.
- (e) Successive layback positions to be taken-up by one company of 4 DOGRA at Area DZ Ridge and one company of 6 KUMAON at Yepak Ridge. 6 KUMAON layback position at Yepak Ridge to remain in position upto first light 17 Nov.
- (f) Laybacks to be in position by 1400 h on 16 Nov and to abandon positions after withdrawal of 4 SIKH, excluding 6 KUMAON layback at Yepak Ridge.
- (g) Brigade CP to be located at Yepak - Lohit River Junction.
- (h) Brigade column to RV at Area Satti Camp (located approximately 10 km further South of Brigade CP).
- (j) All troops to move self-contained for four days.
- (k) All guns to be destroyed/rendered unserviceable.

**Conduct of Withdrawal.** It was far from a smooth operation. Chinese troops having sensed the victory were close on the heels and ambushed the withdrawing troops, wherever possible. Salient points are mentioned below :-

- (a) At approximately 1200 h the Brigade Commander ordered one company of 4 DOGRA located at Mortar Position to reinforce Firm Base. This company was ambushed about 1000m West of Firm Base at 1300 h. However, the company managed to break contact with the enemy and moved along the Yepak Ridge to the Brigade CP.
- (b) 4 SIKH withdrew from their positions at about 1400 h and moved to the Brigade CP.
- (c) 3/3 GR less two companies commenced withdrawal at about 1430 h. This column was later ambushed in the area of the Danti-Lohit River Junction on 18 Nov. Thereafter, the column disintegrated into smaller groups.
- (d) By 1700 h, the tail of the Brigade column had cleared the Brigade CP.
- (g) During Night 16/17 Nov all troops holding layback positions cleared the Brigade CP.

The move of the Brigade column from the Brigade RV to Hayuliang was covered by troops holding successive delaying positions. It is creditable that each of the withdrawing battalions, inspite of the casualties suffered and trauma of defeat, managed to occupy successive covering positions with their remnants to facilitate the withdrawal. Command and control was maintained throughout. One can say that this withdrawal which is the most difficult of the operations of war was carried out in the best tradition of the Indian Army. The remnants of the battalions held series of delaying positions. The Chinese followed-up closely as far as Chingwinty. The tail of the Brigade column cleared the covering troops provided by 82 Infantry Brigade at Hayuling by 1030 h on 21 Nov 1962.

### **The Pursuit (As viewed by the Chinese)**

By about 1600 h on 16 Nov it was quite clear to the Chinese that they had broken through the Indian 11 Infantry Brigade defences and that the withdrawal had commenced. Ding HQ then ordered the troops to switch over to pursuit and search operation. On 17 Nov, GHQ sent a telegram to the Ding HQ instructing as under<sup>15</sup>:-

*"Fiercely chase fleeing Indian troops upto the traditional and customary line of the border and carry out thorough*

*mopping up operations.”*

130 Division in turn tasked 389 Regiment and two battalions (1st and 2nd) less a company of 390 Regiment to undertake pursuit, commencing around first light of 17 Nov. Thus Indian 11 Infantry Brigade troops got 16 Nov (AN) and Night 16/17 Nov to get away almost unhindered, except for observed small arms and artillery fire on Indian positions and small groups of Chinese troops who had managed to infiltrate during the night. During the withdrawal, especially on the East bank of Lohit River there were a number of ambushes and skirmishes in which 3/3 GR and 4 SIKH troops withdrawing along the East bank without the support of any fall back positions suffered considerable losses. Chinese troops maintained continuous pressure till they reached the designated line by about 1200 h on 21 Nov. There they received orders to stop the pursuit and switch over to search operations in the areas captured by them.

It is worth mentioning that Chinese troops engaged in pursuit and search operations also faced tremendous hardships on account of logistics. Chinese account mentions that some units ran out of food and water. Troops had to sustain themselves by eating wild plants to satisfy their hunger and used grass to protect themselves from cold at night. For instance, 1st company of 389 Regiment (operating on the East bank of Lohit River) during ten days ran out of food successively four times and had no water for three days. Because of hunger and cold, out of a total strength of 129 men, almost 90 per cent suffered from dysentery and bleeding of lips. On 26 Nov, 3rd Platoon of this company seems to have ambushed a column of 3/3 GR, inflicting 39 casualties [killed and wounded, including the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel NB Jadhav who was wounded and taken a Prisoner of War (PW)]. The Division commenced retreat from the Indian territory on 01 Dec 1962.<sup>16</sup>

## **Casualties**

The casualties suffered by the Indian and Chinese troops during the battle of Walong are given at the Appendix. The killed and wounded of both sides (Indians – 642, Chinese – 752) are comparable. Out of an Indian garrison of 2191, one third of the force was either killed or wounded and over 300 taken PsW. The Chinese too paid an exorbitant price for their victory as they too suffered colossal losses. Eventually of course, the numerical superiority and tactical advantage that the Chinese had gained the initial stages (failure of 6 KUMAON attack) decided the outcome.

## **An Assessment**

Although Walong was a subsidiary thrust of the Chinese offensive in the East, it turned out to be the bloodiest battle of the War. Initially, Chinese had catered for only one Indian battalion (6 KUMAON) plus some Assam Rifles troops to be defending this Sector and accordingly built up a Regiment plus a reinforced battalion to launch the offensive. However, after Phase I (20-24 Oct) it became known to them that India had reinforced this Sector by another battalion and subsequently built it up to a Brigade. Chinese reacted quickly and moved another Division (130 Division) with additional artillery and air defence troops from Chengdu, a distance of nearly 1300 km across high mountain ranges and three major rivers, and concentrated this force around Rima by 07 Nov, in a matter of 10-12 days. It was a remarkable logistics feat.

Indian commanders seem to have been oblivious to the above developments as no intelligence on Chinese moves, strength, dispositions and intentions was forthcoming from the IB or the Military Intelligence. It would be relevant to recapitulate some of the Indian actions at the tactical level during this period :-

- (a) Initially, the Sector was defended by one battalion (6 KUMAON) and 'A' Wing (6 platoons) of 2 Assam Rifles. They were holding Kibithoo and areas to the West and East of it, generally on the McMahon Line.
- (b) By 18 Oct, another battalion (4 SIKH) was inducted but without a brigade HQ to control or deploy the troops according to a battle plan.
- (c) After the Chinese attacked and captured Kibithoo and surrounding areas on 22 Oct, 6 KUMAON was withdrawn and ordered to defend Walong.
- (d) On 29 Oct, it was decided that HQ 181 Infantry Brigade would be responsible for this Sector. This was changed to 11 Infantry Brigade by 31 Oct, i.e. the day the new Commander reached this Sector with his rover group (brigade commander's party) to assume command of this Sector.
- (e) The deployment had a mix of troops from different units as has already been brought out.
- (f) While the Chinese were almost ready to launch their offensive with a Division plus, 6 KUMAON (the only reserve) was launched into an attack to capture Green Pimple on 14 Nov which was a failure. 4 DOGRA who were just arriving at the ALG by air were also fed into this attack.
- (g) The Chinese not only foiled this attack but followed it up by their main offensive by advancing their D Day by two days to 16 Nov.
- (h) The brigade having launched all its reserves in this attack was totally unbalanced and unprepared to face a Division plus size well-coordinated offensive. The result is well-known.
- (j) To top it all, India decided to keep its Air Force out of battle, while its Army was receiving a battering on ground. This is inexplicable!

Notwithstanding the above, 11 Infantry Brigade put up a tough and a determined fight but the odds were heavily weighed against them. The decision of withdrawal was a timely decision. Had it been delayed by a few hours, the fate of this brigade would have been the same, if not worse, as that of 7 Infantry Brigade on the Namka Chu.

The battle of Walong also proved that man to man, Indian soldiers were more than a match against the

Chinese, even under the most adverse circumstances. Even in defeat, they upheld the honour of the Nation, the Army and their Regiments. The reasons for defeat are to be found elsewhere. And lastly, the martyrs of this battle need to be remembered and honoured.

## Endnotes

1. Official 1962 War History @History Division, Ministry of Defence, Govt of India. 1992, p 234, accessed on internet on 01 May 2014..
2. Ibid., p. 236.
3. A History of Counter Attack War in Self Defence at Sino-Indian Border, Beijing Military Science Publications 1994, Chapter 5, Section 3.
4. Brigadier NC Rawlley's Papers in USI Archives.
5. Op. Cit. 3.
6. Ibid.
7. ibid.
8. ibid.
9. Op. Cit. 1.
10. Op. Cit. 3.
11. Op. Cit. 4.
12. Op. Cit. 3.
13. Op. Cit. 4.
14. Ibid.
15. Op. Cit. 3.
16. Ibid.

## Appendix

### Casualties Suffered by Indian and Chinese Troops during the Battle of Walong

#### Indian Casualties

The casualties suffered by the units of 11 Infantry Brigade are tabulated below and these tell their own story :-

| Unit                  | Strength | Killed | Wounded | PsW | Total   |
|-----------------------|----------|--------|---------|-----|---|
| 4 SIKH <sup>£</sup>   | 519      | 83     | 117     | 40  | 240   |
| 4 DOGRA <sup>*</sup>  | 537      | 110    | 31      | 74  | 215   |
| 6 KUMAON <sup>@</sup> | 696      | 115    | 109     | 167 | 391   |
| 3/3 GR <sup>%</sup>   | 439      | 56     | 21      | 64  | 414   |
| Total                 | 2191     | 364    | 278     | 345 | 987<br>(44 per cent of<br>the total strength) |

Source : Brigadier (Later Lieutenant General) NC Rawlley's personal Papers held in USI Archives. The figures are also generally borne out by respective regimental histories.

£Lieutenant Colonel AL Bahl, CO 4 SIKH with remnants of his battalion marched for eight days and reached Teju.

\*Lieutenant Colonel RS Pathania, CO 4 DOGRA was wounded.

@Lieutenant Colonel CN Madih, CO 6 KUMAON was taken PW.

%Lieutenant Colonel NB Jadhav, CO 3/3 GR was wounded and taken PW.

#### Chinese Casualties

The Chinese casualties (as gleaned from Chinese sources) are given below :-

|  |  | Officers | Soldiers | Total |
|--|--|----------|----------|-------|
|--|--|----------|----------|-------|



|     |                |    |     |     |
|-----|----------------|----|-----|-----|
| (a) | <b>Killed</b>  | 26 | 172 | 198 |
| (b) | <b>Wounded</b> | 68 | 486 | 554 |
|     | <b>Total</b>   | 94 | 658 | 752 |

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Remarks</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">These casualty figures are for the second phase of operations commencing on 14 Nov 1962 and do not include the casualties which they would have suffered during Phase One commencing on 20 Oct during patrol clashes and capture of Kibithoo on 22 Oct</p> |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|

Source : Chinese Book, A History of Counter Attack War in Self Defence Along Sino-Indian Border, Beijing Military Science Publications, 1994.

\*This article is in continuation of the three earlier articles “1962–Battle of Se-La and Bomdi-La”, “1962–The Battle of Namka Chu and Fall of Tawang” and “1962 – War in the Western Sector (Ladakh)” published in Oct-Dec 2011, Apr-Jun 2013 and Jul-Sep 2013 Issues of USI Journal respectively.

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