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Stilwell and the Chindits  
His quarrels with Lentaigne

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Monograph by  
Miss Hughes

Deposited by  
Brigadier M. R. Roberts.  
April 1964

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The quarrels between Generals Stilwell and Lentaigne.

April - July, 1944.

In the first instance the disagreement between Generals Stilwell and Lentaigne should be seen against the background of British and American high-level strategy: in terms, for example, of Mountbatten's desire for amphibious operations against Rangoon, rather than for a campaign in Northern Burma, of his distrust in American ability to capture Myitkyina before the monsoon, and of his opinion that, even if the town were captured, the effort might not be justified; in terms, too, of the American desire for land operations in Northern Burma and for the development of Myitkyina as an oilhead in connection with the support for the Pacific campaign through China. Psychologically, Stilwell's dislike of the 'Limeys' (the British) was exacerbated by the nagging pressure of time which decreed that Myitkyina be captured before the monsoon, and the American Commander's agitation was increased by the slow progress of his own and the Chinese as well as the British troops.

The differences of opinion between Stilwell and Lentaigne have been considered under the following headings:

A. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH ATTITUDE TO THE WAR IN BURMA AT THE STRATEGICAL LEVEL:

- (1) The disagreement about the abandonment of the Indaw area which found expression in Stilwell's telegram of the 25th April to the Supreme Commander. (Pages 2 - 8)

B. THE QUARRELS OF A TACTICAL NATURE:

These concern complaints about the following:

- (i) The evacuation of BLACKPOOL (Pages 9 - 15)
- (ii) 77 Brigade and the capture of MOGAUNG (Pages 15-26)
- (iii) 111 Brigade's alleged non-compliance with the orders issued by Stilwell (Pages 27-35)
- (iv) The slow progress of MORRIS Force (Pages 36-38)

A. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH ATTITUDE TO THE WAR IN BURMA AT THE STRATEGICAL LEVEL.

At the JORHAT conference of the 3rd April, 1944, at which MOUNTBATTEN, SLIM, STILWELL and LENTAIGNE were present "it was agreed that [Stilwell] should continue his advance on MOGAUNG and MYITKYINA". The psychological effect <sup>on Stilwell</sup> of this decision and especially of Slim's promise that he would not ask <sup>him</sup> Stilwell for the help of his 38th Division on the KOHIMA front may be seen from the entry in Stilwell's diary for 3rd April:

" Jorhat at 10.00. Big gang gathering. Supreme Commander, Slim, Lentaigne, Old, etc. etc. Talked to Slim after Chow ~~Louis~~ came. "Conference" - usual slop. Reviewed the situation. Much to my surprise, no question of help from us. On the contrary, Slim and Supreme Commander said to go ahead."

Stilwell's attitude to the much-desired Myitkyina can also be seen from his confidential admission to Slim that he was going to try and capture the town by the 20th May but that the Army Commander was not to tell anyone either of this ambition or of the proposed date for its realisation. As a further example of Stilwell's attitude, the entry in his diary for May 17th may be quoted. On this day, Myitkyina airfield was taken and one reads:

"We may have 89th [Regiment] in by morning - WILL THIS BURN UP THE LIMEYS".

The British point of view, as expressed by SEAC's staff, was that Myitkyina probably could not be taken without extra reinforcements for SEAC and, if taken, could probably not be held. It was questioned also whether it was worth taking. On the 14th April Mountbatten was expressing the opinion to the C.O.S. and the J.S.M. that the "capture of Myitkyina [was] still doubtful" and might well depend on the scale of cooperation by YUNNAN force. An examination was made

ACSEA/WD/Vol.15

Slim,  
Feat into Victory,  
272.

Stilwell Papers,  
267

Slim,  
Feat into Victory,  
273.

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of the possibility of capturing Mogaung - Myitkyina in July or August 1944. Mountbatten's view on overhead strategy was, however, "that the conquest of Northern Burma down to the line Katha - Bhamo" was "impossible to carry out by the given dates" and "the right method" was "the capture of Rangoon and the re-opening of sea communications by an operation, mainly air-borne against the Prome - Rangoon area." On the 21st April Mountbatten stated, "we think we can reach Mogaung but Myitkyina is still doubtful."

EAC WD/Vol.16/  
SAC, 1755

ACSEA WD/Vol.17/  
radio 23614  
Marshall personal  
to Sultan,  
information Stilwell,  
and SAC (44) 190

The American concern at this period was with aid to the Pacific campaign through China, the construction of a road and pipeline to Myitkyina and the establishment of air facilities there.

(i) The disagreement about the abandonment of the Indaw area.

On the evening of the 3rd April and on the morning of the 4th, Lentaigne met his brigadiers at Aberdeen for a conference. He sketched the picture on the Kohima front and heard the opinions of the officers commanding. Calvert (77th Brigade) was reluctant to give up Broadway and White City. Fergusson (16th Brigade) wanted to make another attack on Indaw. Lentaigne opposed Fergusson's plan because Indaw airfield was not all-weather and would not therefore, be of use in the monsoon. Calvert's wish to stay on in White City was also to be unfulfilled, as the block was soon to be evacuated. The final abandonment of Wingate's plans had a psychological effect on his commanders which cannot be discounted in an investigation into their morale and movements under Lentaigne's leadership.

M. Calvert,  
Prisoners of Hope,  
pp. 101-103

This 'abandonment' of Wingate's plan is a mystery. It is frequently stated but in fact Wingate's orders from the outside show that he was keen to push on to Myitkyina

*M. Calvert*

Lentaigne's Appreciation:

After the 4th April and before his meeting with Stilwell on the 16th April, Lentaigne drew up an appreciation of future operations. The primary task of the L.R.P.G's was to help Stilwell and the Chinese Army in India (C.A.I.). Since the monsoon would soon put Dakota strips out of action, Lentaigne considered that the L.R.P.G's must be within light plane range of the American airstrips and a block must, therefore, be established further to the north. White City was for the moment to be reinforced.

On the 16th April, Lentaigne met Stilwell and future plans were discussed. Stilwell was most anxious that the Indaw area should not be given up. As Lentaigne cabled to Lushington on the 17th April.

" Have visited Stilwell who presses that we keep the front door at INDAW open while he forces the garden gate at MYITKYINA and MOGAUNG."

Sultan telegraphed the same day to Timbermann that Stilwell had wired a message which was substantially as follows:

" While LENTAIGNE, who is visiting my headquarters, and I were in discussion it came to light that he may have to leave his present position unless he can be reinforced by one division to be flown into the INDAW area. Otherwise the L.R.P.G effort will be exhausted and they will withdraw on us, and bring large numbers of Nippones with them into the MADAUNG area. In my opinion it is very important to keep a force in the Indaw area to give me the flank support that was promised. Request from the Supreme Commander if it is not possible for the L.R.P.G's to stay and have the nineteenth Indian Division flown in as reinforcement for them.

Lentaigne Papers/Personal  
Diary, entry for  
17th April.

As far as Lentaigne was concerned, there appears to have been no friction between him and Stilwell at the meeting for he wrote of it in his diary 'all very friendly and helpful'. The decision to abandon White City, which was the occasion of Stilwell's later telegram complaining that he was not in agreement with Lentaigne must have been taken after the 19th April for it was on this date that Mountbatten announced the impossibility of giving 19th Division as a reinforcement for the L.R.P.G. effort in support of Stilwell.

HS/AL/1200/93 C:  
Barton's Narrative,  
p. 381.

SACSEA WD/Vol.16/  
Writers No.1800

SACSEA File 1237(6)

SACSEA WD/Vol.16

Ibid  
SAC (44)183

Mountbatten was, however, anxious to give Stilwell "every possible assistance" and therefore would ask Giffard "whether he would agree to placing the four L.R.P.Gs now in the Indaw area, under operational control of Stilwell to cooperate close in with his Chinese and American forces moving on Myitkyina".

HS/WD/Burma/122/1/D:  
HQ 111 Ind Inf Bde.

On the 20th April Slim visited Lentaigne and plans for future operations were doubtless finalised as a signal (No. O.2027) dated 20th April was issued with important orders. It reads as follows:

HS/WD/Burma/122/1/D:  
HQ 111 Ind Inf Bde.

"Secret(.) Future ops(.) 14 Bde (.) Phase one (.) Two colns take over rôle floater colns WHITE CITY forthwith and move NORTH without delay and without tasks en route (.) Come under comd CALVERT pending full relief (.) Phase two (.) Arrange relief with CALVERT (.) By 24 April or earliest after (.) Report date (.) Provide cover until 111 Brigade est block HOPIN NAMMA area target date 3 May (.) 16 Brigade (.) Start pulling out from INDAW ops 26 April in order start emplaning BROADWAY ABERDEEN 4 May latest (.) Two to four colns act close floaters ABERDEEN during INDAW ops and on evacuation leave necessary mules and equipment make 6 N.R. mobile (.) Leave animals and equipment 3/9 G.R. 81, 82 colns at BROADWAY (.) Routes BROADWAY as selected by comd but last part up KANKKWE valley (.) 77 Brigade (.) Continue clear any build up against WHITE CITY until relief by 14 Brigade when bde consisting 25, 20, 50, 38, 80, 36, 63 Colns will move NORTH towards MOGAUNG by route EAST ry INDAW MOGAUNG (.) No offensive tasks during move (.) 111 Brigade (.) Continue cover rd PINBON - BANMAUK minimum one coln (.) This will follow remainder bde when ABERDEEN closed (.) 48 and remaining colns will move NORTH through ABERDEEN towards HOPIN (.) Attack area about 30 April (.) WHITE CITY (.) Grn will be 10, 12, 43, 29 and 35 colns with 14 Bde floater (.) Hold until 16 Bde evacuated by air but NOT to prejudice grns safety (.) BROADWAY and ABERDEEN kept open until 16 Bde evacuated and if possible until WHITE CITY abandoned (.) Stocks reserves allowed dwindle from 1 May (.) MORRIS force orders later (.) ACK."

It will be seen from this order that operations in the Indaw area were to cease and that White City was to be abandoned either when the new block further north was established or once 16th Brigade had been evacuated by air. Although Lentaigne's message of 17th April to Lushington indicates that Lentaigne was aware of the importance to Stilwell of keeping "the front door at Indaw open", it is possible, since Lentaigne considered the meeting with Stilwell "friendly" that the final

decision to evacuate the Indaw area was taken only after the 19th April when it became clear that the 19th Division was not available to be flown into Indaw. In any case, on 25th April General Stilwell directed Sultan to telegraph Timberman as follows:

SACSEA File 1237(6)

CRAX 1970  
Timberman from Sultan.

*Who is Timberman?*

"I am told that British Broadcasting Corporation broadcast statement recently that Lentaigne and I are in complete accord. This is not true. When Lentaigne was here, he merely told me what the plans were. It was an accomplished fact. A copy of the orders was sent to me by SLIM. About them I had nothing to say. I wanted the long range penetration groups to hold the block. They are going to withdraw and I am being put in the position of agreeing with it. I am in accord with what LENTAIGNE is about to do in the sense that I will cooperate and help carry out the orders of the Supreme Allied Commander. For the change in the L.R.P.G. plan and the consequent opening of the flank Southwest of MOGAUNG I refuse to be made responsible in any way. Inform Supreme Allied Commander."

SACSEA File 1237(6)

Writers No.27:  
Sultan from Timberman.

*Appendix*

Mountbatten was "much disturbed" by Stilwell's message since "it was his understanding that complete agreement had been reached between himself, Stilwell and Slim at JORHAT on the employment of L.R.P. Brigades". He asked that a radio be sent to Stilwell substantially as follows:

"If present plans for use of L.R.P. Brigades are in conflict with your desires, Mountbatten suggests that you and Slim get together and settle this matter. In the event that complete agreement cannot be reached, he wishes Stilwell to let him know exactly what are the points of disagreement."

WD 14th Army:  
Army Comd .... left by air for MAINGKWAN to meet Gen. Stilwell picking up Lentaigne at Sylhet.

As a result of this difference of opinion on plans for future L.R.P. operations, a conference was held at MAINGKWAN between Stilwell, Slim and Lentaigne on the 1st. May.

SEAC WD/Vol.18/ ?

SAC 9th Meeting  
4th May 1944.

It was decided that the objective of the C.A.I. would remain the capture of the line Mogaung - Myitkyina. 3rd Indian Division would attempt to hold White City until a new block was established at HOPIN when the remainder of the force would advance on MOGAUNG.

3rd Indian Division, less the elements already flown out, would, on the establishment of the Hopin block, come under the operational control of General Stilwell, but would probably have to be withdrawn during the monsoon. General Stilwell was informed that he should not base any plans on the hope of getting an additional division, though the fly-in of one from 4 Corps was discussed.

After the meeting General Stilwell telegraphed Timberman:

"Yesterday I had a conference with Lentaigne and Slim and we arranged everything".

This message was passed on to Mountbatten who, through Lushington, informed Lentaigne:

"I now hear that you have had a meeting with Slim and Stilwell and that all is arranged. Presume your immediate anxieties are being taken charge of and that no further action is required from me."

A Combined Operation Instruction of 14th Army and 3rd TAC (No.1) dated 6th May gave effect to the conclusions of the 1st May conference. On the 16th May ~~orders were issued placing~~ 3rd Indian Division <sup>came</sup> under command of Stilwell's Chinese Army in India (C.A.I.). From now on, Stilwell would issue orders to Special Force and, in fact, his first Directive is dated for the day ~~before~~ ~~he~~ ~~officially~~ took command.

In his first Directive for the Commanding General 3rd Indian Division, Stilwell stated that the general plan was to "close in on MOGAUNG from north, southwest and southeast, liquidating Jap resistance, and retaining the base at NAWKWIN". The NAWKWIN (Blackpool) garrison was "to remain in place" and "all other available strength" of the 3 Indian Division was to "march on Mogaung and attack".

SACSEA File 1237(6)  
CRA. 2495

Ibid,  
SAC 2065, 3rd May

HS/WD/Burma/49/1/E:  
Hq. 3 Ind. Div. (May)  
Appendix C.60.

HS/AL/1200/93/C:  
Barton's Narrative,  
Appendix "NN", p.532.

The Directive continued:

"Pending arrival of this opportunity, the mission of the 3rd Indian Division will be to make an active defense of the NAWKWIN block, to attack any enemy force that attempts to pass it on east or west, to maintain strong combat patrols along the railroad to northeast and southwest, and to make detailed plans for a co-ordinated move against MOGAUNG. A reconnaissance in force, to consist of not less than 2 columns of the 77th Brigade, will move at once to develop enemy strength and dispositions in the MOGAUNG area, operating generally south and east of the railroad."

It will be noticed that 2 important points of the above order are the insistence on the defence of the NAWKWIN (Blackpool) block and the demand for a "reconnaissance in force" to move at once to develop enemy strength and dispositions in the MOGAUNG area. Since Stilwell maintained that his orders had not been carried out in either respect, it will be well to investigate firstly his grievance about the early evacuation of Blackpool and secondly his complaint that a "reconnaissance in force" had not been undertaken.

RS/AL  
Barton  
p. 106

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B. THE QUARRELS OF A TACTICAL NATURE

(i) The evacuation of Blackpool:

By the 20th April the new plan for the employment of 3rd Indian Division had been worked out: it meant the abandonment of the Indaw area and a move to the north to assist C.A.I. Lentaigne considered that the Chindits must be within light-plane distance of the American air-strips, and, with this end in view, a new block was to be established in the PINBAW area.

On the 25th April instructions were issued for the establishment of this block. The task was allotted to 111 Bde, with 26, 90, 41, 46 and 30 Colns under command. The block was to be seized by the night 5/6th May and held until the 22nd at least. 14th and 17th Brigades were to lend support: 14th Brigade (acting as floater protection to White City till the 14th May, after which date it was to move north) being responsible from the 22nd for the western protection of the block; 77th Brigade was to begin to move north on the 3rd and from the 22nd May protect the block from the east.

The War Diary of 111th Brigade shows that the brigade was not much behind schedule in the establishment of the block, which took place on the 7th May. Masters left his "soft elements" at MOKSU SAKAN under 30 Column and intended to use 41 Column as "floater" and 26, 90, and 40 Columns for the establishment of the block.

According to Tulloch, Stilwell was "obdurate" that 3 Indian Division's task should be to hold Clydeside (the name given to the block before it was changed on 16th May to Blackpool) and prevent enemy movement north up the railway as long as possible. According to the American Commander, agreement had been reached with

HS/AL/1200/93/C:  
Barton's Narrative  
p. 404

HS/WD/Burma/122/1/D:  
111 Bde. Extracts  
from letter O/Comd  
Profound to G.O.C.

HS/WD/Burma/49/1/E  
HQ. 3 Ind Div.  
15 May: O.8701  
from Tulloch.

Slim and Lentaigne to hold Clydeside up to and including the monsoon. He did not wish the block moved until further orders. At this date, Stilwell did not, in Tulloch's opinion, wish any withdrawal to take place until his own plan had been achieved.

Considering that Stilwell attached such importance to the defence of the block, the need for its evacuation must be explained as Stilwell himself considered on 25th May, when the matter was raised at a conference between the American commander and Lentaigne. The following reasons may be offered:

- (i) Faulty defensive tactical disposition coupled with the misfortune of having to dig in under fire.
- (ii) Lack of adequate 'floater' protection on account of the early start to the monsoon and heavy rains which slowed down the movements of the brigades on whose close co-operation the defence of the block had been planned.
- (iii) Failure of air supplies.

Stilwell's complaint that the Blackpool block was given up too early seems to have been justified, but an investigation into the above-mentioned points shows that under these circumstances the decision to abandon the block was unavoidable.

(i) Faulty defensive tactical disposition of the establishment of the block under fire.

A possible site had been chosen by air reconnaissance but on investigation from the ground this proved to be unsuitable and Masters O/C 111 Bde (code name PROFOUND) chose one further to the South\* of Lentaigne's suggested position. The choice of site had given him not "a few headaches", as Lentaigne's messages had seemed to conflict and the General apparently had some photographs which the Brigadier had not. Many side-

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\* Barton, p.452 says 'West'.

valleys north of Blackpool were rumoured to be occupied by the enemy, so that the choice of site was limited. Masters had in fact to decide whether to occupy a site "in spite of its defects or remain in the shelter of the jungle and do further recces". He decided "not to risk being discovered and ordered an immediate occupation..."

Michael Calvert criticised the position of Blackpool, maintaining that it was too close to the enemy's front line, which meant that the reserves always to be found immediately behind such a line could be brought up against the block with little inconvenience to the Japanese. "At Blackpool", he writes "the artillery was already present, and had hardly to make any move to start its bombardment - whereas at White City, which was about the right distance behind the lines, the enemy had to form a base, build up his artillery, and generally redeploy new forces, all the time being harassed and weakened by our lighter forces".

As regards the establishment of the block, Masters had written on the 28th April that it was "essential to start the block early daylight and have twelve hours daylight and air support before the Japs [were] likely to do anything serious". As it was, when the troops arrived, they met opposition and had to dig in under fire.

(ii) The lack of adequate 'floater' protection.

Owing to the lack of 'floater' protection, neither the airstrip nor the block could be easily defended which meant both that the landing of aircraft was extremely hazardous and also that the Japanese were able to bring their artillery close in to the block.

On the 13th May Masters wrote that he had employed 81 Column outside the perimeter on strip protection and

Prisoners of Hope,  
p. 162.

HS/WG/Burma/122/1/D:  
111<sup>th</sup> Ind. Inf. Bde.

Ibid.

that about 120 men had worked all night on the strip itself; he could not denude the actual fortress any more. "Protection is not strong" he explained "but I can do no more until some 'floaters' turn up". He reported in a similar vein on the 19th:

Ibid.  
 "Due to the absence of floaters in the early stages the Japs were left free to scrounge round here at their leisure, which they proceeded to do with the utmost impudence. We saw them wandering round recceing and they put up a flag on the hill to the N.E. and OPS for their guns even closer ... The shelling every morning and evening was fairly heavy ... The 75mm gun was firing at about 1,000 yds, I should think, and in effect we were being sniped at with field artillery."

Masters' orders had been to act offensively, as well as defensively in the area, but lack of floater protection was the explanation for this failure, too:

Ibid.  
 "I have been unable to be at all offensive, I fear but I have patrolled the road at night occasionally. Now, when some of the floaters arrive, I shall start attacking the road in some strength and can make it all but impassable ... I fear that while I was hanging on here and establishing myself the enemy was slipping past."

The lack of support from 14th and 77th Brigade in conjunction with whom the defence of the block was planned needs some investigation.

#### Orders and Movements of 14th and 77th Brigades

##### (a) 14th Brigade

According to the order of 28th April, 14th Brigade was to act as floater protection to White City until the 14th May; on the 15th it was to begin to move north. On the 15th a signal was sent by 3rd Ind Div. instructing 14th Bde that on arrival at Clydeside it was to keep open the routes from the block south and west of Indawgyi lake and north of Clydeside lying north of the railway. It was to operate against the road and railway south from Clydeside, including NAMYIN CHAUNG.

After the capture on 17th May of Myitkyina airfield, 14th Brigade's orders were changed: it was now "to move at greatest speed" to take over the western protection of Blackpool (whilst 77 Brigade took over the eastern).

On the 22nd the brigade was given orders to take over Blackpool with 3/9 G.R. and 7 Nigerians under command.

57 and 93 Colns of 3/9 G.R. arrived at Blackpool on the 20th. Other columns of the Brigade became delayed by encounters with the Japanese in the KYUSANLAI Pass: 74 Column of the 7th Leicesters and 61 Column of the Beds & Herts (joined on the 24th May by the 64 Column) were involved in the Pass on the 22nd May. 84 and 65 Columns of the Yorks & Lancs reached NANMUN on the 23rd and 24th May respectively and did not set off to the assistance of Blackpool until the 26th by which time the block was about to be evacuated.

(b) 77th Brigade

On the 17th May, 77th Brigade reached LAMAI, from where Blackpool was clearly visible across the NAMYIN valley. On the 25th May, Calvert was ordered to assist Blackpool with at least two columns, but 3/6 Gurkhas had already begun to move north for the attack on MOGAUNG, 81 and 82 Columns were under command at Blackpool, and this therefore left 1 South Staffords and 1 Lancashire Fusiliers. They were, however, very strung out with the flooded NAMYIN CHAUNG between them and the block. Repeated attempts to cross the chaung failed and the most Calvert could do was to mortar the gun positions and this he described as "rather ineffectual". "It was", as he wrote afterwards, "most galling not to be able to do more, but I am quite certain it was not possible".

Ibid.  
O.2358

The defence of a block which had been planned on the assumption of active support by 14 and 77 Brigades became impossible when this support did not materialise.

(iii) Failure of air supplies

The official Summary of Operations records that from the 20th May until the withdrawal from the block (on the 26th) not one single D.A.S. sortie could be flown. On account of the very bad weather, night supply-dropping was out of the question and because the enemy AA positions were so close to the block, daylight supply-dropping was also virtually impossible. Attempts to supply the block were made by R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. Dakotas in the face of enemy fire but these were too hazardous: during one, eleven of the 12 aircraft were hit. Blackpool garrison had, therefore, to face a full-scale enemy attack with fast-dwindling supplies of food and ammunition and with <sup>in</sup>adequate air support for such lightly-equipped troops as the L.R.P.Gs.

The meeting between Stilwell and Lentaigne on 25th May

On account of the failure to get supplies to Blackpool by air and the consequent shortage of ammunition, Lentaigne requested Stilwell at a conference convened for the purpose on 25th May to grant him leave to give permission to the commander of the Brigade to evacuate Blackpool should this become necessary for the safety of the garrison.

To Stilwell's contention that General Wingate had considered blocks such as Broadway and Aberdeen could be held through the monsoon, Lentaigne replied that these had been established in places where the enemy was unable to bring up artillery, whereas Blackpool was within easy reach of enemy fire. When Stilwell asked if Lentaigne considered the block could be held, were it possible to

get ammunition and supplies through, Lentaigne stated that the garrison and floaters would have been able to hold the block had supply drops not failed. The question of support by 14 and 77 Brigades was also raised by Stilwell and Lentaigne explained that 14th Brigade had been detained in the Kyusanlai Pass and that 77 Brigade's strength was depleted. In view of these facts, the decision to evacuate should be left to the commander of the block. After Stilwell had pointed out that more casualties might be incurred in a hazardous withdrawal than by remaining in the block, and after Lentaigne had remarked that equally effective results could be obtained by offensive action which he was prepared to continue against the road and railway on the part of 14, 77, and 111 Brigades, Stilwell asked for half an hour's break in which to consider the problem of evacuation since he thought that this might have a marked effect on his plans. He requested Lentaigne to produce a sketch showing how he proposed to continue operations, should the block be lifted.

Stilwell was apparently unconvinced by Lentaigne's explanation of the necessity to evacuate the block though he sent out the following orders to G.O.C. 3rd Indian Division to do so:-

- "1. Based on my estimate of our own and the enemy situation, there is insufficient data in your report of this date to convince me that:-
- (a) It will be safer for the Blackpool garrison to attempt to break through Japanese resistance in order to escape than to maintain Blackpool for the present.
  - (b) Maximum efforts have been made by the 77 Bde and other floater columns in the vicinity to disperse the Japanese build-up against Blackpool.
- .....

4. However, on your representation that on account of the basic limitations of the L.R.P.Gs and of lack of ammunition and food, a serious situation exists in the NAWKWIN block, permission is given you to vacate the position in case of emergency  
....."

HS/PAL/1200/93/C:  
Barton's Narrative,  
Appendix "00", p. 534.

(11) 77th Brigade and the capture of MOGAUNG

During the course of the conference on 25th May, Stilwell had asked for information about the two Columns of 77 Brigade which had been ordered to operate against Mogaung and General Bpatner had stated that, on the 16th, 3 Indian Division had been ordered to make two columns carry out an armed reconnaissance against Mogaung but it did not appear that they had started to move until the 22nd.

The orders and movements of 77 Brigade against Mogaung must be investigated, but before doing so it will be well to consider the state of the Brigade at the time.

(a) State of 77th Brigade prior to the movement on Mogaung

The following exchange of telegrams and Calvert's replies to them show that both higher command and the particular commander estimated that the brigade was not in a fit state for further strenuous fighting:-

On the 28th April Calvert was asked whether his troops were capable of another effort. The message enquired whether his troops were "physically capable [of] one more effort and subsequent walk out to American roadhead" because Fourteenth Army considered his "troops [were] now finished and should be flown out". Calvert was to confirm which was the case. Skones (C/O 3/6 G.R.) had telegraphed in connection with the above message that if the Commanding Officer's opinion were required, his was the same as Fourteenth Army's. He added that if the effort were vital to the success of operations, then it could be made but he did not consider it advisable. Calvert confirmed two days later that he agreed with the Fourteenth Army opinion that the Brigade should be flown out but the day after signalled

3050/88/A

Report of  
Operations of  
Ind Inf Bde  
p.36

that, on account of the difficulty in obtaining aircraft, he was prepared to march out through Stilwell's line of communications. Nevertheless he added:

"If, however, flying out from Broadway does not in itself harm Special Force Ops and can be planned as properly scheduled op, recommend withdrawal that route sooner than lose men through sickness in HUKAWNG valley."

A reply was sent to Calvert on 1st May to the effect that an attempt would be made to evacuate 25, 20, 50, 38, 80, 36, 63 from Broadway and that if this were possible, Calvert would be informed. It was not. The next day Calvert learned that until the Chindwin front was cleared it was impossible to send fresh troops to hold the area in the Irrawaddy valley dominated by the Chindits and Special Force's rôle was now to help Stilwell to capture and hold the line Mogaung - Myitkyina.

Ibid, p.37

HS/AL/1200/93/C:

Barton's Narrative,  
p. 409.

The strength of the brigade was 2277 all ranks; casualties had amounted to 46 officers, 10 V.C.Os and 692 other ranks killed, and 279 sick evacuated.

Calvert stated in his report that they all felt tired and were dispirited because they had to give up all they had gained. "What we really needed", he wrote, "was a damn good rest and freedom from responsibility and state of readiness for even a short while" for, as he had written earlier "weariness and lack of sleep makes cowards of us all".

(b) Orders and Movements of 77th Brigade.

According to the Report on Operations, the Brigades movements were substantially as follows:-

Between the 3rd and 18th May the brigade marched to LAMAI (east of Hopin, the area for the new block). The monsoon set in on the 10th, and movement in the hills (including slippery climbs up and down 4,000 ft) was slow and difficult and one battalion had to manhandle its mortars 3,000 ft down a slippery path.

The Brigade reached LAMAI by the 18th May. On the 17th May C.A.I. had captured Myitkyina West airfield and support was, therefore, required from 77 Brigade in order to ensure that the airfield was held. Consequently on the day the brigade reached Lamai it received the following message from 3rd Indian Division:-

"... Myitkyina strip occupied and being consolidated by air (.) Vital that our block on rly be held (.) Move at greatest speed to take on Eastern protection (.) One bn will be detached to reconnoitre N.E. towards MOGAUNG either up rly valley or via area SUMERING SC 5522 (.) bns must rpt MUST report daily positions and objectives."

Calvert decided to allot the reconnaissance task to 3/6 Gurkhas. Although Boatner maintained that the 'reconnaissance' did not begin until 22nd May, it would appear that it had actually begun by the 19th May, but that there was misunderstanding as to the meaning of the word. According to an information report in the War Diary for HQ 3rd Indian Division, the Brigade was concentrated at Lamai on the 18th but 36 and 63 columns (3/6 Gurkhas) were moving towards MANSEN on the 19th to cover the ridge tracks. Mansen was to be the base for the reconnaissance. By the 21st, 3/6 G.R. had reached Mansen and were reconnoitring East and North. Here they received information that there were about 4,000 Japanese in the MOGAUNG area and Calvert was "chary" of ordering them any nearer Mogaung:

"Reference your 02976 3/6 Gurkha Rifles have been ordered MAWSE SC 5121 and forward elements probably moved there. From HAWSE (sic) they are reconnoitring East and North. Fairly reliable information of enemy NYAUNGBINTHA. LAITANG SC 5024 SUMKRUNG. WASU SC 6026. LAKUM SC 6633 Totally up to 4,000. Therefore feel chary of ordering them any nearer MOGAUNG without support. Lanc Fusiliers and S Staff now en route in NAMYIN valley having just descended 4,000 feet. Therefore request permission Kings Regt coln to come under command and move North of TAUGNI to MANSEN and then further North East .... I will order Gurkhas towards MOGAUNG beyond MANSEN but would like further message from you."

WD 3 Ind Div  
18 May  
No. 0.2537

IS/WD/Burma/49/1/E:  
HQ 3 Ind Div.  
ppx A.19

IS/WD/Burma/119/1/E:  
HQ 77 Ind Inf Bde  
21 May: No.0122

Ibid,  
21st May,  
TOO 1435

TOO 2010

AL/3050/88/A  
Report on Ops of  
77 Ind Inf Bde,  
p. 43

On the same day Calvert received a message saying that, according to C.A.I's information, MOGAUNG was "practically empty", and about six hours later he was told that it was "essential" for 3/6 G.R. "to recce towards MOGAUNG to find enemy disposition". Lentaigne hoped soon to give orders for the advance of 77 Brigade and another brigade to MOGAUNG in conjunction with Stilwell's move from Myitkyina. The promise of another brigade in support did not materialise. In his Report on Operations Calvert states that he understood the word 'reconnaissance' to mean 'reconnaissance by patrols, whose duty was to see and not be seen'. These, he maintained, went off and did very well. Stilwell, had however, meant by 'reconnaissance' that the whole battalion should move on Mogaung and fight for information.

HS/WD/Burma/119/1/E:  
HQ 77 Ind Inf Bde  
22nd May, TOO 1306

On the 22nd May Calvert sent a message suggesting that he should take the Brigade to seize the high ground S.E. of Mogaung as a preliminary to a final assault, but by that time the situation at Blackpool had deteriorated and on the 24th May he was informed:

Ibid,  
24th May, TOO 1750  
No. 02881

".... Now require 3/6 G.R. attack MOGAUNG withdrawing to hill if strongly opposed. Remainder Bde continue dislocation enemy L. of Cs and harassing their artillery in sector PUINBUZU 1895 [sic - PYINBU-ZU ?] so maintaining object of holding block and isolating the enemy."

HS/AL/3050/88/A  
Report on Ops of  
77 Ind Inf Bde,  
p. 44

Although Calvert himself admits that 3/6 Gurkhas moved more warily than they ought to have done, due perhaps to the absence of their C.O. (Lt.Col. SKONE) who had been evacuated on account of a painful bone-growth in his heel, Calvert actually anticipated his orders for the move of the whole brigade against Mogaung. Already by the 25th May he had moved the Staffords north to Mansen to help 3/6 Gurkhas and had also given a warning to the Lancashire Fusiliers to move north as soon as he heard that Blackpool had fallen. Moreover, he and

Ibid, p.45

Colonel Rome had discussed a plan of attack, and Rome had set off on the 27th May. It was not until the 28th that Calvert received his orders from 3 Indian Div (now known as AMITY) to attack Mogaung with the whole brigade less 81 and 82 columns, whose return Calvert had been denied.

Plan of attack on MOGAUNG

Ibid, p.44

The plan which Calvert had discussed with Rome was as follows: Colonel Rome was to go on ahead with 3/6 G.R. over the hills via WAJIT and NGAKAHTAWNG and seize a base for the attack; Calvert had WAJIT in mind as a possible one. His information and map reading led him to the conclusion that the enemy would hold the line of hills WASU - WAJIT - NGAKAHTAWNG - LAMUWEYAN, and he proposed that these should be the brigade's first objectives. He also intended to seize TAPAW ferry both for use as a bridgehead for the column which was supposed to be coming from Myitkyina and as a line of retreat from Mogaung, should things go badly. The area might also be suitable for sea-plane evacuation if light-plane strips could not be made.

Preliminary moves of 77th Brigade towards Mogaung.

On the 29th May, Brigade Headquarters, complete with sick and wounded, moved from LAMAI to PANKAWKYANG, (a distance of some 16 miles) in one day and down 4,000 ft.

By the 30th, Brigade Headquarters had reached TINGMONGYANG, where a light-plane strip was made for the evacuation of the wounded. The same day the Lancashire Fusiliers arrived after what Calvert described as "a prodigious march from CHIROPYANG area up 4,000 ft and down 4,000 ft again" Colonel Rome and 3/6 Gurkhas,

overcoming all obstacles of weather, marsh and enemy patrols, reached LOIHINCHE on the 31st May. After carrying out a river crossing through the 5ft deep PANDAWNG HKA, Calvert and the Lancashire Fusiliers reached WAJIT on the 1st June. The paths had been knee - or even waist - deep for miles.

Movements such as these carried out under considerable difficulty do not seem to justify Stilwell's complaint on the 1st June:

"Your delay has enabled enemy consolidate and reinforce and may lead to heavy pressure from Mogaung."

By comparison, the Chinese regiment due to co-operate in the attack on Mogaung was more blameworthy. It did not arrive from TUMBONG HKA until the 20th June.

Colonel Rome had decided that West LAKUM (rather than WAJIT) would be the best place for the base which he and Calvert considered necessary for the attack on Mogaung, and on 1st June he successfully attacked LAKUM. Calvert uses the words "speed and boldness" to describe this achievement. It was unfortunate that the Japanese dug in across the line of hills in the LAMUN area separating Calvert from Rome. The Lancashire Fusiliers and Brigade Headquarters had reached NGAKATAWNG (in the LAMUN area) on the 2nd June; 3/6 G.R. had cut a route across the top of the hills and Calvert had occupied the hills above NGAKATAWNG on the 1st with one company. Despite opposition and though tired, Calvert's party with full packs, casualties and the difficulty of manhandling loads and climbing 1,200 feet, pushed on to LOIHINCHE, where the Brigade was to concentrate. Brigade Headquarters reached LOIHINCHE on the 4th June and that morning Calvert intended to push on to LAKUM, leaving an element of Lancashire Fusiliers and Brigade Headquarters at Loihinche. This element was too tired

to move on further for the present. The capture of TAPAW FERRY, which had formed an essential part of Calvert's plan, had been successfully carried through on the 4<sup>th</sup> by Captain Butler, commanding the Lancashire Fusilier commando platoons, accompanied by some Kachins and Burfifs - about sixty men in all. The 77th Brigade was now well dug in along the ridge with marsh affording rear protection. From the high ground at LAKUM WEST the whole of MOGAUNG town 2 miles away could be seen across the plain and the problem now was how to make the attack.

Plan of attack on Mogaung town:

Between Calvert at LAKUM and his objective, MOGAUNG, lay the WETTAUK CHAUNG. Calvert's first idea was "to make a bridgehead over Wettauk Chaung ... seize KYAINGYI and KYAINGALE and use them as the next base for our attack on MOGAUNG proper." This method would, however, have exposed the left flank to an attack from LOILAW and would have meant an attack down the road across the open to Mogaung. To march straight into Mogaung and seize it was also inadvisable as at least one battalion would have to be left to look after sick and wounded and stores at Lakum and quick relief by an approaching Chinese regiment, which was a condition of success, could not be relied upon. Furthermore, an undefeated enemy, capable of attacking the battalions seizing Mogaung, would be left in the area. The alternative, which Calvert chose, was to move north to TAPAW road, use this as a base and make the TAPAW - PINHMI - MOGAUNG road the axis of the attack with PINHMI Bridge as the crossing over the Wettauk Chaung.

SACSEA/1170/2:  
Summary of operations  
... Special Force,  
p. 20.

AL/3050/88/A:  
Report on Ops of  
77th Inf Bde,  
p. 49

The attack:

In accordance with the latter plan, the S. Staffords were ordered to attack along the ridge and the Gurkhas along the eastern edge of the hills. The Staffords cleared the hills as far as PINHMI and a company of Gurkhas seized the pass where the Tapaw road crossed the hills. The Lancashire Fusiliers captured PINHMI on the 10th June.

The next position from which the enemy had to be cleared was the triangle formed by the PINHMI road, a track to the north and a stream at the base. This triangle is referred to as the Court House triangle and its capture covered the period 11th - 12th June. Calvert's plan was for the Lancashire Fusiliers to seize it and for the Staffords to push towards the river so that the brigade could rest its north flank along the <sup>bank</sup> ~~latter~~. The Lancashire Fusiliers succeeded in their task after a very long and hot day's fighting in which they lost one officer and 2 O.Rs killed and 8 wounded. The enemy left ten dead. The Staffords reached their objective only after the considerable physical effort of ploughing through swamp and covering five times the distance on the map and on account of the gallantry of Captain Wavell, who lost his hand during the attack. The following day (the 12th) Calvert sent in the Gurkhas to secure the position on the river. He now had all three battalions up but the south was guarded only by a defence company with a platoon at YWATHITGALE, a platoon at PINHMI and a platoon at the pass. Mogaung should now have been quickly taken; in view of Stilwell's complaints about the delay in capturing the town, the fact that it was not immediately overcome calls for investigation.

Until the 12th June 77th Brigade may be said to have pushed on at the greatest speed that its exhausted condition and the difficult terrain allowed. From the 12th to the 17th June, however, the brigade was virtually static. The main reason for the delay in the capture of Mogaung was the inadequacy of L.R.P. groups for the operation. A light brigade is not adapted for a prolonged assault on a well dug in enemy. Calvert, for example, considered that with some armoured vehicles Mogaung could have been captured after the seizure of PINHMI bridge on the 10th. As it was, the delay enabled the Japanese to reinforce the town on the 12th with two battalions. Allied reinforcements would have enabled Calvert to capture Mogaung earlier. These were promised\*, but either did not materialise, or arrived late. The 114th Chinese Regiment had been due to arrive on the 3rd June from TUMBONGHKA. The first battalion of it did not, however, arrive until the 18th June and a second on the 19th. 77th Brigade was, moreover, exhausted by its efforts up to the 12th June. Calvert reports that after ~~that~~ the series of attacks of the 11th/12th "all the bn comdrs." came to him and said that "however much they were willing, these last series of attacks had exhausted their men and the casualties had reduced their numbers greatly." Since the beginning of the operation over the hills until the phase ending with the capture of PINHMI bridge, 77th Brigade's casualties were five officers killed and three wounded as well as fifty-three O.Rs killed and one hundred and sixty-six wounded. Calvert states that his attacking strength of rifle companies was down to five hundred and fifty. It must be remembered too, that his three battalions had been fighting and operating for fourteen weeks.

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\* See page 19.

AL/3050/88/A  
p.55

Ibid, p.60

Ibid, p.57

Ibid, pp.51 &57

From the 13th to the 17th June, the brigade consolidated and waited for reinforcements to come up, trench feet in the meanwhile immobilising the column and malaria and casualties from shelling further weakening its ranks. Calvert sent Colonel Rome to explain the position and Stilwell promised to speed up the Chinese. On the 15th Calvert was forced to order a general withdrawal to PINHMI to rest but on the 18th he ordered an attack on NAUNGYAIKTAW as the fire from the enemy garrison there was decimating his men. The assault was successful.

After the arrival of the awaited Chinese regiment, Calvert prepared for the final assault on Mogaung which he was most anxious to carry out before more Japanese reinforcements arrived or, as he wrote, "the daily wastage from shelling, trench feet and sickness left ... no one to attack." Even now, despite Chinese support, the brunt of the attack was borne by 77th Brigade since the Chinese tended to weaken their strength by spreading themselves too wide, sending the 2nd Chinese battalion to LOILAW and 3rd Chinese battalion to cross the NAMYIN between YWATHIT and LOILAW and then proceeding round west of Mogaung, which was a matter of days. On the 23rd June NATYIGON and the railway bridge, key points for the capture of Mogaung, were taken at the high cost of fifty killed and a hundred wounded. Mogaung was now there for the taking with only a weak 77th Brigade and a spread-out Chinese regiment to exploit the situation. On the 25th June Mogaung fell at last but 77th Brigade had lost one-third of its strength, not counting many sick and many who later died of wounds in India.

Calvert had estimated that Mogaung could be captured by the 6th or 7th June but it is difficult to

see how under the circumstances this would have been possible. Despite Stilwell's accusations, Mountbatten does not seem to have been dissatisfied with the brigade's achievements, and sent a message of congratulation to General Stilwell to be passed on to 77th Brigade. Slim considered 77th Brigade's movements slower than anticipated but thought that weather and casualties should be taken into account.

iii) 111th Brigade's alleged non-compliance with the orders issued by Stilwell

On the 23rd June Stilwell sent the following complaint to Lentaigne:

"The Commanding General directs that you explain in writing what steps you have taken to comply with orders issued by this headquarters dated June 8, June 11 and June 17, as pertains to 111 Brigade. He further directs that you explain in writing why the mission assigned has not been accomplished."

Before repeating the order of the 8th June and considering the Brigade's reaction to it, <sup>its</sup> ~~the~~ position ~~of the~~ brigade at the time of the instructions may be stated.

On the 31st May 111 Brigade H.Q. re-assumed command of 41, 26, 81, 30, 39, 66, 57 and 93 columns which had been put under 14th Brigade while it reorganised. The brigade was given the task of protecting the northern half of the INDAWGYI lake until all casualties were cleared. (14th Brigade was responsible for the southern half). Masters writes of the brigade's stay on the lake that they all "felt slack" and that "About one man died per day from cerebral malaria or other disease due to weakness." The brigade, weak as it was and encumbered by casualties was not, therefore, in a fit state for prolonged operations. Like 77th Brigade, it had been many weeks in the field without rest and the men were tired.

On the 7th June the brigade was given warning of its next move which would probably be to "advance on Mogaung from west and link with 77 Bde." Evacuations of casualties were to be cut to a minimum in order to ensure an early move. The Commander of 111th Brigade (Lt.-Col. Masters)

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\* When given orders to move from the northern end of the Indawgyi Lake, 111 Brigade had over 200 sick and wounded.

WD. TAC H.9.

3 Ind. Div.

June '44

Appendix 13.

SACSEA 1170/2:  
Summary of  
Operations, p.20

HS/WD/Burma  
122/1/E:

111th Brigade.

HS/WD/Burma  
122/1/F:

Letter  
15th June

HS/WD/Burma  
122/1/F:  
0248 hrs.

was requested to inform Lentaigne when he was ready. The next day Masters signalled that he expected "complete evacuation morning 10th...." He stated that clothing was needed to complete re-equipment. Socks, groundsheets and gascapes were specified. No mortars had been received and food supplies were down to a minimum owing to failures in supply drops. Masters suggested the route LAKHREN - PADIGAHTAWNG - PAHOK - PYINDAW - MANYWET as the most likely one; 3 hours later he was given the warning for his next move:

Ibid.  
2137. 1400 hrs.

Ibid. 4814

"Warning order of probable next move to advance from W. on MOGAUNG. On Code word JERUSALEM 93 Coln to LAKHREN SC 2744. 1 Coy. offensive patrol MANWE. 1 Coy. hold PADIGAHTAWNG SC 3539 remainder hold LAKHREN. 41, 81 Colns under SCOTT move PAHOK SC 3933. 26, 30 Colns under HENNING recross INDAW C. move LAKHREN track junction SC 420373. 66 Coln remain NAWKU till relieved by 14 Bde then follow 39. 39, 48 Colns move LAKHREN - PADIGAHTAWNG in reserve.

WD. TAC HQ.  
3 Ind. Div.  
June 44

G - 3/JCC/fra

Stilwell's order of the 8th June to Lentaigne was that 111 Brigade should "move without delay, from present location in vicinities MOKSO SAKAN and north end of INDAWGYI Lake, to area PAHOK SC 3933 - SAHMAW SC 4826." On arrival the brigade was to destroy all enemy located, prevent enemy movement south-west from the area MANYWET - MOGAUNG and prevent enemy movement north-east towards the area MANYWET - MOGAUNG.

HS/WD/Burma  
122/1/F.  
0245 hrs.

On the 9th June the brigade received its orders "to operate in area PAHOK SC 3933 - PAHOK SC 4738 - SAHMAW SC 4826" with the object of preventing enemy movement either north-east or south-west, destroying any enemy or dumps the brigade might find in the area. It was

Ibid. 1748 hrs.

informed that speed in movement was essential in order to counteract the slow advance of the Chinese.

Masters issued an order of the day saying that the brigade had been honoured with "an important task in [the] climax of [the] operations against Mogaung" and commanded his men to put aside personal fatigue, to overcome all difficulty and hardship and to close with the enemy. The "undoubted courage, resolution and above all cheerfulness" of everyone would, he said, complete the task.

Move from MOKSO to LAKHREN

Contrary to Stilwell's contention, the brigade seems to have responded quickly to the orders of 8th June. 93 Column had been sent ahead to LAKHREN on the 8th and the rest of the brigade moved out of MOKSO on the 10th. If the actual mileage covered was less than expected, this was due to the impossible tracks. Masters' own description of the first ten miles of it and the signals sent out show the difficulties with which the brigade had to contend. Masters wrote to Lentaigne that the first ten miles track and marching from MOKSO was "quite unbelievably bloody." Cold, wet rain soaked the men and mosquitoes bit them; no one could sleep on that account alone. The track averaged six inches of mud and was sometimes as much as 3 ft. 6 ins. deep. One column marched 10 miles in water up to the waist. Animals had frequently to be unloaded and reloaded and goods carried for up to 400 yards. Wet and rubbing sand wrought havoc on the men's feet.

The following information signals indicate the difficulties of communications:  
From 93 to 48. Track PADIGAHTAWNG disused and probably useless. LAKHREN on map overgrown and probably useless. MOKSO trk. leads to present village.

12th June,  
1335 hrs.

14th June  
1050 hrs.

From 66 to rear 14: Track MOKSO - NAWKU very bad state.  
From 81: Track very bad, deteriorating, 32 sick.  
From 81: "...track improved, men tired owing to incessant attention mosquitoes."

1151 hrs.

By the 15th, 26, 30, 93, 81, 41 and 48 Columns were all at LAKHREN; the track had, however, to be cut to PADIGAHTAWNG, and no further advance could be undertaken until rations had been received.

On the 11th Stilwell had again stated the PAHOK - SAHMAW area to be the brigade's objective.

War Diary  
TAC HQ.  
3 Ind. Div:

"Chinese Army in India.

June 1944

11th June 1944

"....3rd Indian Division, employing 77th Brigade will seize and hold MOGAUNG attacking from east to south in conjunction with 38th Division attacking from north and west. 11th Brigade moves from present location to general area PAHOK SC 3933 - SAHMAW SC 4826 - MANYWET SC 5436 and secures right (west) sector of Division area, destroying all enemy located, and preventing enemy withdrawal from north or north-east...."

HS/WD/Burma/  
122/1/F:  
1010-123.

On the 16th it was impressed upon Masters that 77th Brigade needed relief and that he should get some columns on the move immediately. Most of 11th Brigade had reached PADIGAHTAWNG by the 19th. This was not rapid movement. 14th Brigade had been slow to relieve 11th Brigade on the NAWKU pass, a wait for supplies at LAKHREN had caused a twelve-hour delay and isolated encounters with parties of Japanese had retarded the advance.

The next objective in accordance with Stilwell's order of the 17th June was SAHMAW at which point blocks were to be established on the road and railway. Stilwell's order read:

War Diary  
 Tac. HQ.  
 3 Ind. Div.  
 June 1944.

1. The mission of 111 Brigade as stated in para. 3(c) of Field Order No.16 dated 11th June 1944 is amended by the addition of the following:-

"111 Brigade will without delay establish blocks on the road and railroad at SAHMAW SC 485260 and on the road at NAMPADAUNG SC 4526. These blocks will prevent enemy withdrawal from north and north-east or enemy advance from south and south-west."

IS/WD/Burma/  
 22/1/F:

In a letter written on the 23rd June - the day on which Stilwell complained of 111th Brigade's inactivity and failure to comply with his orders - Masters reported on the movements and condition of his men. He stated that on arrival at PADIGAHTAWNG with 30 Coln. on the 19th June, he found 81 and 26 Columns there with patrols out to the east and south. He "pushed 26 and 30 down to LOINAM - SAWNGHKA - SAWNGCHING area and 81 to "hill" PAHOK - both of them to exploit forward.." 30 Column hit a strongly defended position at LOINAM - SAWNGHKA on the 20th June, and it took them "4 attacks spread over 24 hrs to turn the enemy out which they did at 1430 21 June." They lost 7 killed and 11 wounded. 26 Column, further south, encountered small patrols round SAWNGCHING, as did 81 Column round HKAMATYANG". His forces were diminishing and his men were in bad shape. 81, 41 and 26 Columns were each the fighting strength of a company. The men, Masters reported, "have no go in them now, and only the exceptional officer can get things moving at all." One of Master's officers gave it as his opinion that his men were in a worse state than those he brought out in the previous year.

It is against this background that the exchange of signals between Lentaigne and Masters on the 23rd and Stilwell's complaint of that date must be considered.

Two messages stressed the importance of pushing on towards SAHMAW:

03110 "Secret(.) to attain final objective essential you commence operating against road and railway earliest(.) realise men tired but sooner objective achieved the sooner they can rest.

03122 "Secret(.) Your maximum effort must now be directed to blocking the road and railway in the area SAHMAW. Withdraw from north or advance from south.

Masters evidently felt that he could not do more than he was already and he offered to resign in favour of Lt. Col. Scott:

4813 "Your 03116 [03110?] Consider everyone doing best. Have been frequently overruled requests for all Cols for rest(.) SCOTT who is no quitter states his men worse condition than remnants 1943 Cols(.) Effect is all operations very sticky(.) Suggest I hand over command to Scott."

His offer was refused and AMITY'S reply promised him support in "any action" he might take. Thereupon Masters signalled that his strength in the area was one battalion and two companies; two companies were at LAKHREN and the six N.R. were due on the 29th June. He stated that he would be "taking grave security risk to enforce offensive action to pinning down Jap reserves" and holding the ridge and approaches to it which he understood were his orders and which were designed to cover the concentration of six N.R. and 14, 3(W.A.) and C.A.I. Brigades. His effective strength was now but "a putty sword" and he repeated that he definitely could not guarantee both stronger offensive action and

protection of the ridge and its approaches. He requested, and was granted, permission to exercise his judgment as to what he could undertake.

0.2814.

On the 27th June orders were issued by AMITY which stated that the plan was to stabilise the monsoon line through HWAWANG - TAUNGI - MANSEN - WAJIT. 111th Brigade's striking area was to be SAHMAW and NAMPADAUNG "while keeping route to LAKHREN." This order was confirmed on the 29th and D-Day was planned for the 3rd July. In order to operate against the line of the road and railway, 111th Brigade ~~erected~~ <sup>moved</sup> south into the hills, Masters considered that before he could descend into the railway valley, he had to have a foothold on the ridges overlooking it, and for this he chose Point 2171. The battle for this point was in fact the last in which the brigade took part and the reference, in Master's account to his 'decrepit force' provides but further proof that it was unfit for sustained operations.

Masters writes:

"The orders to cut the railway near or at Taungni came after some weeks....at Padigahtawng, and I moved my decrepit force south through the mountains. Before descending into the railway valley I had to have a firm foothold on the ridges overlooking it; I chose Pt. 2171 as that place, and advanced on it from the back valley floor to the west. The attack went fairly fast considering the difficulties and I think we had it on the third day."

0/93/c:  
Morton's Narrative,  
p.505.

111th Brigade was hampered not only by its own weakness but also by "the almost complete failure of air support", which was due in part to a sudden alteration of the U.S.A.A.F.'s command and *tasks* as a result of the grave situation at Myitkyina. After 14th Brigade had taken over the position, 111th Brigade was withdrawn so that unfit personnel could be evacuated. It is significant of the state of the brigade that these comprised the majority and that the only fit men were the Gurkhas who were organised into one company named 111 Company. This company took up guard duties at an American casualty station in Pahok and the rest of the brigade proceeded to Mogaung where it arrived after its capture and thence to Myitkyina whence it was flown north to India.

At a meeting on 30th June at SHADAZUP at which Mountbatten was present Stilwell complained to Lentaigne about 111th Brigade's activities directed on SAHMAW. He said that the brigade had failed to obey his orders to attack and hold SAHMAW with the result that the Japanese had occupied the place in strength. Stilwell attributed this to the brigade's slow move from the Lake area. Lentaigne accounted for it by pointing out that the brigade could not move until casualties had been evacuated and that such evacuation was delayed by bad weather. The brigade had also had to wait for certain equipment. Movement once begun was difficult as the tracks over the mountains from the lake to the railway area were deep in mud and impossible for miles unless revetted; all mule-loads had to be manhandled. General Lentaigne further indicated that the orders had been for the SAHMAW - PAHOK area and not definitely

TAC HQ.  
3 Ind. Div.  
War Diary  
June 44  
Appendix 19.

SAHMAW and that it had been left to the discretion of the commander on the spot to select the place for operations. Colonel Cannon supported Lentaigne's statement on this point and General Stilwell gave way.

It would appear that Stilwell was justified in complaining that the brigade had moved slowly but that he could not with similar justification complain that it had disobeyed his orders; the brigade had attempted to carry them out but exhaustion and casualties coupled with monsoon road conditions had hampered its operations as much as those of 77th Brigade. Both brigades, as Mountbatten himself appreciated, were due for evacuation.

(iv) Stilwell's complaints about MORRIS Force

On the 27th May Stilwell telephoned to say that he wanted to see Lentaigne immediately. When Lentaigne arrived Stilwell spoke heatedly about Morris Force's disobedience to orders in not proceeding at once to the East bank of the river at Myitkyina. The orders to which he referred are those of the 25th May:

"G - 3/JCC/fra (CHIH HUI PU) dated 25th May:  
To: Commanding General, 3rd Indian Division.

1. This is to confirm the verbal instructions of Commanding General, Chinese Army in India given you by Colonel Cannon \* on 25 May 1944.
2. Morris Force will advance North on East side of Irrawaddy River and attack WAINGMAW from the South and clear all enemy from river line East of MYITKYINA.  
By Command of Lieutenant-General STILWELL."

In order to appreciate the position of the brigade on the receipt of these orders it may be helpful to indicate some of its previous movements. The day after Myitkyina airfield was captured by the American forces, Morris Force, which was under orders to proceed to KAGAM, was instructed to establish a road block near KAZU. This instruction was issued on the 18th May. On the 20th orders were received for both 49 and 94 Columns to attack KAZU. As 94 Column was very scattered at the time, to get to the rendezvous, it had to march all night and then go straight in to attack an unreconnoitred position. KAZU lay south of the NAM TABET river whose north bank was held by the Japanese. 49 Column took up a position opposite KAZU bridge; 94 Column moved 1½ miles to the west to the village of HKACHENG. On the 22nd May Brigadier Morris ordered 49 Column to cross to the

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\* Stilwell's Chief of Staff.

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north bank while 94 Column held the southern one. He himself moved to SIMA. 49 Column found the north bank unoccupied and three platoons remained there, leaving the animals and part of the column on the southern side of the river. This proved most unfortunate because the river rose, the bridges were washed away and the only means by which the animals and the rest of the Column could get to the north side was over the suspension bridge, four miles north of SIMA. This was the main cause of the delay in executing the orders issued by Stilwell on the 25th May to attack WAINGMAW. According to the War Diary of 4/9th Gurkhas, the animals of 49 and 94 Columns arrived at KAZU at 1 a.m. on the 24th May and were "unable to cross owing to spate"; 49 Column was unable to return KAZU owing to swollen streams. It was then decided that the three rifle patrols of 94 Column on the North bank should join 49 Column and come under the command of Russel. The animal party and the remaining two patrols were under Cane. On the 25th May Russel's party joined 49 Column and Brigadier Morris and moved on Myitkyina by a hill route north of Sima. Cane's party had arrived at N' TING "very fatigued" on the night of the 26th.

On the 27th orders were received for the entire MORRIS Force to close on Myitkyina and join the Americans. On the 30th, 49 and 40 Columns were at HOTON and moved straight in to take over Waingmaw, which was reported to be unoccupied. They found a Japanese garrison in occupation, and as the two columns had many animals, they were unable to defend themselves and were forced to withdraw. The animal party under Cane was still behind and did not join Morris until the 1st June. Although all the columns were very tired, because they had been ordered to take the maximum offensive

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action against WAINGMAW, they planned another attack, this time from the South. This was made on the 2nd June. When it was obvious that no further advance could be made, the force withdrew to Hoton very short of ammunition as no drop had been received. Morris Force was then ordered to clear MAINGNA, north of Nyitkyina.

Such activities indicate that Morris Force did its best to execute orders but Stilwell nevertheless thought fit to send a signal to Mountbatten to "report officially an unsatisfactory response by the Third Indian Division" to his orders. He complained, inter alia, that Morris Force had been ordered to move on Waingmaw at utmost speed, but the order had been disregarded. The complaint was passed on by Mountbatten to Giffard with orders to investigate it. Slim did so forthwith. He came to the conclusion that Morris Force had taken longer to cover the 18 miles than estimated but that he had had delays in signals, that his force had been divided by a flooded river and that he had been delayed by rain and a detour made to avoid opposition. Slim was satisfied that in the circumstances Brigadier Morris had made every effort to carry out his orders quickly.

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Barton's Narrative, p.522.