

Results of the Arakan Campaign.

47. As already mentioned (paragraph 24), the objects of the Arakan campaign were to improve our general situation and engage and destroy Japanese forces. Our success had led me to hope that we could clear the whole of the Mayu Peninsula, but the need for providing reinforcements (5 and 7 Indian Divisions) for the Imphal Front frustrated this.

Although this further advance was not possible, the objects of the campaign had been generally achieved. Maungdaw had been firmly established as a base; the Mayu Range, including the important Tunnels area, together with the eastern foothills, was firmly in our hands; and the lateral road was in daily use.

55 Japanese Division, despite reinforcements, had been outfought and was weak and tired. In spite of the reduction in the strength of 15 Indian Corps by three divisions (the 5th, 7th and 36th), operations after their withdrawal went according to plan. To sum up, the Japanese offensive, from which they confidently expected great results, had been defeated, and we had captured our objectives. Last, but not least, we had established a moral ascendancy over the enemy which promised well for the future.

Operations in the Kaladan Valley.

48. The Japanese threatened our left flank during the previous year's operations by advancing up the Kaladan River, and I was determined that this should not happen again. 81 (West African) Division was, in consequence, moved across into the Kaladan Valley to protect the left flank of 15 Indian Corps.

Our ability to supply troops by air made it possible for a division to operate down this valley, but the physical difficulties of moving into the valley were great. A jeep track 73 miles long had to be built from Chiringa to Daletme across four mountain ranges. It was begun on the 18th November and finished on the 17th January—an engineering feat which reflected the greatest credit on all ranks.

49. 81 (West African) Division concentrated in the Satpaung—Daletme area in January and started its move down the Kaladan at the end of that month. They captured Kyauktaw by the 3rd March and were then advancing on Apaukwa when a strong Japanese counter-attack developed from the south-east. The advance had to be stopped in order to meet it. The enemy captured our position near Kyauktaw and the Division withdrew to positions south of Kaladan Village. Thereafter, it continued its rôle of flank protection in the Paletwa area.

50. In April, this Division (less one battalion left at Paletwa, where it was joined by two battalions of Indian troops, one of which was withdrawn later) was moved westwards across the Arakan Yomas to the east of the Kalapanzin River, to provide closer protection to the left flank of 15 Indian Corps. Subsequently, it was withdrawn via Buthidaung—Taung Bazaar to the neighbourhood of Chiringa.

51. The battalion left in the Kaladan was later reinforced by Headquarters 6 (West African) Brigade and another battalion. One Indian battalion also remained in the area. The rôle of this force was to frustrate attempts

which the Japanese were making to infiltrate across the hills into the Sangu Valley. It was later withdrawn into this valley and, in June, was providing detachments along the Sangu River, which were successful in driving back, with considerable losses, small enemy forces which had penetrated this area.

The Chin Hills.

52. The link between Arakan and the Imphal Front is the Chin Hills; the strategic importance of which lies in the fact that it covers the approaches to Chittagong and Aijal, via Lungleh. It also flanks the Japanese lines of communication through Gangaw to Kalemoyo.

53. The Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills lying west of them, were garrisoned by two detachments of Levies, each with a stiffening of one regular battalion; Headquarters being at Aijal. The rôle of these detachments was to interrupt the enemy's communications and to hamper his movements in the area Aijal—Champai—Falam—Haka. Early in November 1943, however, just before the assumption of command by Admiral The Lord Louis Mountbatten, the enemy advancing in some strength, had, though they suffered severe casualties in gaining these minor successes, driven our Irregulars out of Falam and Haka and caused our regular troops to withdraw from Fort White.

54. Early in April, another battalion was added to the Chin Hills detachment, which then became the Lushai Brigade. This force has performed its task very satisfactorily, laying ambushes, obtaining information, and inflicting considerable losses. It was reinforced by an additional battalion in June, and ordered to interfere with the Japanese communications along the Imphal—Tiddim road.

The Chindwin.

55. 4 Corps (Lieut.-General G. A. P. Scoones), with Headquarters at Imphal, had been responsible for the defence of the Indian frontier east and south of Manipur since 1942. The area for which the Corps was responsible extended from its boundary with Northern Combat Area Command (N.C.A.C.) on the line Mawlu—Taro—Wakching (40 miles east of Jorhat) down to and inclusive of the Chin Hills. In November 1943, 23 Indian Division had its Headquarters at Tamu, and 17 Indian Light Division with its Headquarters was on the Imphal—Tiddim road at Milestone 102. 20 Indian Division, with its Headquarters at Shenam, about 10 miles south-east of Palel, was engaged in patrolling across the Chindwin. At the end of December the whole of this Division had been concentrated in the Tamu area, its Headquarters having moved forward to Sibong. This Division relieved 23 Indian Division which was withdrawn from the Imphal Plain for rest and training; having been in the forward area without relief since June 1942.

56. The task which I had allotted Fourteenth Army on this sector of the front was to carry out offensive operations with the objects of:—

(a) Clearing the Chin Hills as far as the foothills south-east of Tiddim.

(b) Dominating the area between the Yu and Chindwin Rivers, south of the Tamu—Sittaung road.