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OPERATIONS IN ASSAM AND BURMA FROM 23RD JUNE, 1944 TO 12TH NOVEMBER, 1944.

NOTE.—A set of maps for this Despatch is on separate sale at 1s. 0d. net. This set of maps also covers the operations described in the other Army and Air Despatches of the Burma Campaign from 16th November, 1943 to 12th September, 1945.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on the 14th August, 1945, by GENERAL SIR GEORGE J. GIFFARD, G.C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C., Commander-in-Chief, 11 Army Group, South-East Asia Command.

PART I.—OPERATIONS.

Introduction.

1. My first Despatch* covered the period from the formation of 11 Army Group, 16th November, 1943, to the re-opening of the Kohima - Imphal road on the 22nd June, 1944, when at 1245 hours, at Milestone 109, the leading troops of the 2 British Division (33 Corps) met the forward troops of 5 Indian Division (4 Corps), and thus shattered the Japanese dream of conquering India. This Despatch describes the operations from the 23rd June, 1944, to the 12th November, 1944, when I handed over command of 11 Army Group to Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese.

2. The re-establishment of our communications with Imphal opened a new phase in the campaign. The Japanese invasion of India had been stopped; it remained to throw the enemy back whence he had come. In the words of the Prime Minister, the defence of the Imphal Plain and our subsequent successful offensive "constituted the greatest collision which had yet taken place on land with Japan and has resulted in the slaughter of between 50,000 and 60,000 Japanese. The climax was the final eviction of the Japanese from India with the almost total loss of five of his best divisions." My earlier Despatch dealt with "The defence

of the Imphal Plain"; this Despatch deals with "Our subsequent successful offensive" which drove the enemy back, not merely across the Indo-Burmese frontier, but across the Chindwin River, and opened the way for the re-conquest of Central Burma.

3. In the operations I am about to describe, the Japanese retreat began as a well-planned and orderly withdrawal. Gradually, as our pressure grew, the pace of the withdrawal increased until the enemy forces were split up into small, disorganised parties. Hungry, harassed, beaten; abandoning their wounded, their guns and their transport, and even deserting in small, but increasing numbers; the Japanese were driven in defeat over the border, down the far side of the mountain wall, and back over the Chindwin, which they had crossed in triumph and with such high hopes less than five months earlier.

Topography and Climate

4. The formidable nature of the terrain was one of the features of this campaign. Battles were fought at 5,000 feet and over, often in almost impenetrable jungle; and troops, loaded with full equipment, struggled up from nullahs 2,000 feet below in the face of heavy small arms, grenade and mortar fire. Yet, hazardous and difficult as the nature of the country made every movement or operation, tanks often proved the decisive factor in the fighting up and down these mountain ranges, where they climbed almost precipitous slopes to blast Japanese bunkers at a range of ten yards.

5. As if still further to test the magnificent fighting spirit of the troops, another enemy was advancing steadily upon us: the torrential monsoon rain that turned tracks into leech-

* Operations in Burma and North-East India from 6th November, 1943 to 22nd June, 1944.

laden streams and chaungs into treacherous torrents; rain that washed away our already exiguous roads, turned rivers into raging floods and grounded our supporting air forces. "The Economist," in its issue of the 15th April, 1944, wrote "The monsoons are on their way, and it would be turning a new page in military history if either side campaigned through the rain-sodden and malaria-ridden months ahead." That "new page in military history" has been turned.

Instructions for Monsoon Operations.

6. On the 8th June, the Supreme Allied Commander* issued a Directive which included the following:—

(a) The broad mission of South-East Asia Command (S.E.A.C.) in Burma was:—

"To develop, maintain, broaden, and protect the air link to China in order to provide a maximum and timely stock of P.O.L. to China in support of Pacific operations; so far as is consistent with the above, to press advantages against the enemy by exerting maximum ground and air effort, particularly during the current monsoon season, and in pressing such advantages to be prepared to exploit the development of overland communications to China. All these operations must be dictated by the forces at present available or firmly allocated to S.E.A.C."

(b) The general tasks allotted to me were:—

(i) To secure Eastern Bengal and Assam up to my boundary with Northern Combat Area Command (N.C.A.C.) (General Stilwell's forces).

(ii) Provide the necessary ground forces for the defence of Ceylon.

(c) My specific tasks during the monsoon were as follows:—

(i) *Arakan.*

Maintain an active defence on the general line Maungdaw - Tunnels Area - Taung Bazaar during the monsoon. Prepare to capture Akyab by an advance starting as early as possible in the next dry season.

(ii) *Chindwin.*

First Priority. Re-establish communications on the road Dimapur - Kohima - Imphal not later than mid-July.

Second Priority. Clear Japanese forces from the area Dimapur - Kohima - Imphal Plain - Yuma - Tamanthi.

Third Priority. Prepare to exploit across the Chindwin in the Yuwa - Tamanthi area after the monsoon.

(d) Northern Combat Area Command would come under the direct command of the Supreme Allied Commander from the 20th June, and the boundary between Northern Combat Area Command and Fourteenth Army would be Wakching - Kaiyaw Naukkon (both exclusive Northern Combat Area Command) - Taro - Lonkin - Indawgyi Lake - Lake Indaw (all inclusive Northern Combat Area Command).

(e) The following reinforcements and withdrawals were to be made:—

(i) 82 (West African) Division would be concentrated in India during August.

(ii) 22 (East African) Brigade would arrive in Ceylon during July.

(NOTE: This is an independent brigade; 11 (East African) Division and 28 (East African) Brigade (independent) were already in Ceylon in June.)

(iii) 19 Indian Division would be available as a relief when one British or Indian division returned to India for rest.

(iv) The first brigade group of 36 British Division to be ready to move under the command of Northern Combat Area Command by the 1st July (the remainder by the 20th July), in relief of Special Force.

(v) 3 Commando Brigade would be withdrawn from Imphal as soon after the 1st July as operations permitted, but might again be made available at a later date for operations in Arakan.

7. In accordance with this Directive, I issued operation instructions to the Commander, Fourteenth Army, Lieut.-General W. J. Slim*, for operations during the monsoon and the move of 36 British Division which was to go by road and rail to Ledo and thence by road to the Myitkyina area.

To complete the picture, the rôle allotted by the Supreme Allied Commander to General Stilwell's forces in North Burma (Northern Combat Area Command) was to protect the Mogaung - Myitkyina area by establishing an outpost line; Lonkin - Talawgyi - Kazu - Fort Harrison - Seniku.

The Chinese Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.) had orders from the Generalissimo to cross the Salween River and join General Stilwell's forces in the Myitkyina area.

8. Such were our tasks: but before continuing the narrative, a word about communication and roads is necessary. I shall give an account of road construction in a later section, when discussing engineering work, but the tracks which did duty for roads in the forward area may conveniently be described here, as they will be frequently referred to in subsequent paragraphs:

(a) A road from Palel to Tamu existed, but it rapidly deteriorated when the monsoon started, and to quote from my Chief Engineer's report "The mud had to be seen to be believed". In these conditions, only 4 x 4 lorries† were permitted to run south of Palel, though the rule had to be relaxed occasionally for specialist vehicles.

(b) The road south from Tamu down the Kabaw Valley can only euphemistically be called a road—it was a sea of mud varying in depth from six to eighteen inches. In the worst places corduroy roads, over which jeeps and 30-cwt. 6 x 6 lorries† could pass, had to be built.

* Now Field-Marshal Sir William J. Slim, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

† A 4 x 4 lorry is a four-wheeled vehicle, all four wheels of which can be driven by the engine. Similarly, a 6 x 6 lorry is one in which the power can be transmitted to all of its six wheels.

* Now Vice-Admiral The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, K.G., P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O.

(c) The Sittaung track from Palel to the Chindwin was not a road at all. It was passable for jeeps and 4 × 4 vehicles as far as the Yu River. There a ferry, beyond which only pack or porter transport could be used, was established. Owing to the amount of blasting which would have been necessary, it was not possible to clear a track with bulldozers.

(d) The road to Tiddim was worse, if possible, than the Kabaw Valley road. It was commanded on either side by scrub-covered hills up to 8,000 feet, and some of the more mountainous sections resembled toboggan runs down which vehicles slid on mud instead of snow.

These conditions must be remembered when judging the speed of our advances along the Tiddim road and the Kabaw Valley. We had to overcome not only a determined enemy, but Napoleon's fourth element.

Situation on the 22nd June and subsequent operations.

9. (a) Arakan. 15 Indian Corps (Lieut.-General A. F. P. Christison).*

(i) 25 Indian Division: Maungdaw - Tunnels Area.

(ii) 26 Indian Division:

One Brigade—Bawli Bazaar - Goppe Bazaar - Taung Bazaar.

One Brigade—Taungbro - Tumburu.

One Brigade—Cox's Bazaar.

(iii) 81 (West African) Division:

Divisional H.Q. and one brigade—Chiringa.

One brigade taking up new positions to protect the eastern approaches of the Chiringa - Singpa track, with detachments on the Sangu River to block enemy attempts to penetrate into that area.

(b) Imphal Front (4 and 33 Corps). 4 Corps (Lieut.-General G. A. P. Scoones†).

(i) 17 Indian Light Division, with one brigade of 20 Indian Division under command, was engaged in attacking 33 Japanese Division in the Bishenpur area. Two battalions and one mountain battery had cut the enemy's line of communication about Milestone 33 on the Imphal - Tiddim road by making a wide turning movement from the east, and had then driven north to positions four miles south of Bishenpur. This bold attack on the enemy's rear had thrown them into considerable confusion and inflicted heavy casualties.

(ii) While these operations were in progress south of Imphal, 5 Indian Division, which had taken over the area north of Imphal from 17 Indian Light Division, was attacking the enemy on the road to Kohima. After clearing Kanglatongbi it reached Milestone 109, where it made contact with 2 British Division of 33 Corps driving down from the north.

(iii) 20 Indian Division was engaging the enemy in the Ukhrul sector, with one brigade in the area 16 miles west of the village

astride the Japanese communications, and one brigade on the Imphal - Ukhrul road clearing enemy positions about Milestone 17. The third brigade of this Division was with the 17 Indian Light Division. 50 Indian Parachute Brigade (two battalions) was in action south of the Imphal - Ukhrul road, east of Wangjing.

(iv) 23 Indian Division was engaged with the enemy in an area some three miles east and south-east of Palel.

(c) 33 Corps (Lieut.-General M. G. N. Stopford).*

(i) 7 Indian Division, which had been on the left flank of 2 British Division, was, after the junction of 33 and 4 Corps, ordered to move east on Ukhrul.

(ii) 2 British Division and 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade were responsible for the protection of the Kohima - Imphal road south and north of Milestone 79 respectively.

(iii) 23 L.R.P. Brigade (Long-Range Penetration Group) was clearing the tracks leading down to Ukhrul from the north, and cutting the enemy's routes to the east.

10. Although the picture at the end of June was one of Japanese retreat on all sectors of the Imphal front, I must emphasize that our success had only been achieved after hard fighting and severe losses on both sides. Indeed, the Army Commander described it as the bitterest fighting he had seen in this or any other war. Even when it must have been obvious to the Japanese High Command that our communications to Imphal were about to be re-established, they issued orders to their 33 and 15 Divisions that Imphal was to be taken at all costs. We captured the orders in which the Commander, 33 Japanese Division, informed his troops "The fate of the Empire depends on this battle. You will capture Imphal but you will be annihilated". 33 Japanese Division made a series of heavy attacks, but they were met with steady valour by our 17 Indian Division who saw to it that the "annihilation" of the enemy commander's prophecy was fulfilled.

What was left of the enemy's 33 and 15 Divisions was driven into the inhospitable country south of Bishenpur and south-east of Palel. Elements of 15 Japanese Division, however, had reinforced 31 Japanese Division which then attacked in the area between Ukhrul and Imphal. This attack failed.

The Situation at the End of June.

11. *North Burma.* 22 Chinese Division, which had captured Kamaing on the 16th June, was continuing its advance southwards in the face of opposition by part of 18 Japanese Division between Kamaing and Mogaung.

77 L.R.P. Brigade (Special Force), assisted by a Chinese regiment, captured Mogaung on the 26th June, the enemy losing severely in men and material, which included some medium artillery. This was a particularly fine action by 77 L.R.P. Brigade against most stubborn resistance by units of 53 Japanese Division. The capture of Mogaung was important, as it opened the way for further operations southward.

* Now General Sir A. F. Philip Christison, Bart., G.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

† Now General Sir Geoffrey A. P. Scoones, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C.

* Now General Sir Montagu G. N. Stopford, G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

Myitkyina was still holding out against Chinese and American troops and Morrisforce (part of Special Force), which were heavily engaged.

The brigades of Special Force were much scattered and were operating in widely separated areas. 14 L.R.P. Brigade was in the area 28 miles west-south-west of Mogaung, 111 and 3 (West African) Brigades in contact with 38 Chinese Division were 20 miles west-north-west of the same place. This Force, which comprised the Long-Range Penetration Brigades flown into North Burma in the Spring, had come under General Stilwell's command on the 20th June, when General Stilwell was transferred from the command of General Slim to that of the Supreme Allied Commander.

On the Salween front, the Chinese Expeditionary Force was engaged 12 miles south-south-west of Lungling.

12. *Arakan.* During the month, 25 and 26 Indian Divisions and 81 (West African) Division had completed their moves to their monsoon positions with little interference from the enemy. Since then, operations in this area had been confined to active patrolling.

13. *Imphal Front.* The opening of the Kohima - Imphal road on the 22nd June completed the first task set by the Supreme Allied Commander in his instructions of the 8th June.

14. Though the opening of the road solved many of our administrative difficulties, it also created a new set of problems. 2 British Division, though its morale was high, had suffered severe casualties and was tired. It was clear that the Division could not continue to fight without reinforcements and the necessary time and facilities to train them. All expedients to bring units up to strength were temporarily exhausted. The Corps Commander considered that the Division should be withdrawn from active operations until the Autumn. A rest area was therefore prepared but, as will be seen, 4 Brigade had to be used temporarily to relieve 20 Indian Division and, later, 5 Brigade was called upon to support 23 Indian Division.

5 and 7 Indian Divisions had to resume their proper compositions, which had been upset when reinforcements had to be flown in during the early stages of the battle. 161 Brigade, which belonged to 5 Indian Division, had been under command of 7 Indian Division, and 89 Brigade of 7 Indian Division had worked with 5 Indian Division. These two Brigades had to return to their own Divisions.

15. The operations against Ukhrul consisted of cross-country advances eastwards by 33 and 89 Brigades of 7 Indian Division, from the Kohima - Imphal road, in co-operation with an advance north-east by 20 Indian Division along the main Imphal - Ukhrul road. This was complicated initially because 20 Indian Division and 89 Brigade were under command of 4 Corps, while 33 Brigade was under 33 Corps. However, as soon as the advance got under way, the Commander, 33 Corps assumed control of the whole operation.

16. By the end of June, 20 Indian Division had reached a point eight miles west of Ukhrul and 7 Indian Division, further north, were clearing the area four miles south-east of Karong.

23 L.R.P. Brigade, advancing southwards, had driven the enemy back to a line eight miles south of Kharasom.

South of Imphal, 17 and 23 Indian Divisions were still engaged in bitter fighting in the Bishenpur and Palel areas respectively.

The monsoon had broken, and the troops had to work under very arduous conditions of rain and mud in the mountains and jungle.

17. On the 30th June, the institution of a new boundary between 4 and 33 Corps, and the consequent transfer of 20 Indian Division (less 32 Brigade) from 4 Corps to 33 Corps, marked the beginning of a new phase of operations. This boundary gave the area between Imphal and Ukhrul inclusive to 33 Corps, and left 4 Corps with Imphal and the areas of 5 Indian Division (Imphal - Bishenpur), 17 Indian Light Division (Bishenpur) and 23 Indian Division (Palel).

The Situation in early July.

18. *Chin Hills and Chindwin.* As a result of our continuous pressure in the Imphal Plain, there were signs at the beginning of July that the Japanese forces in Manipur were giving up their plan for a final attack on Imphal.

19. On the 3rd July a brigade of 7 Indian Division captured Ukhrul from the west, while a column of 23 L.R.P. Brigade entered the village almost simultaneously from the east. The fall of Ukhrul was important since it was the focal point of all communications in that area; its capture removed all threats to Imphal from the north and north-east.

20. On the 29th June, I had wired to General Slim that 31 Japanese Division would probably be withdrawn to the south of Ukhrul, but that the enemy might make a final desperate attempt to capture Imphal from the general direction of the Tiddim and Tamu roads. Although we had sufficient strength to defeat any such attempt, our task of clearing the enemy west of the Chindwin would be facilitated if we could develop a real threat to his communications. I therefore directed him to consider whether the advance on Ukhrul could be continued south-south-east to Humine and Myohtit at the head of the Kabaw Valley. This would give 31 Japanese Division no chance to recover and would threaten the communications of 15 Japanese Division at Thaugdut and Tamu.

21. On the fall of Ukhrul, General Slim issued an Operation Instruction, dated the 5th July, directing 4 and 33 Corps to destroy the Japanese forces west of the Chindwin River. 4 Corps, with 5 and 17 Indian Divisions and one brigade of 20 Indian Division under command, were to clear the area west of the general line Imphal - Shuganu. 33 Corps, with 2 British, 7, 20 and 23 Indian Divisions, 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade, 23 L.R.P. Brigade and 50 Indian Parachute Brigade under command, were to clear the area east of this line.

22. By the 10th July, it had become clear that the Japanese had begun a general withdrawal from their three main concentration areas about Bishenpur, Palel, and Ukhrul. They had not captured Bishenpur or Palel.

23. *North Burma.* Although General Stilwell was now no longer under General Slim's command, I must review the operations as a whole, as they had, of course, to be co-ordinated. I

shall, therefore, throughout this Despatch briefly describe the Allied progress in North Burma.

24. Early in July, after the successful clearing of the Kamaing—Mogaung road, there were signs that the enemy intended to fight successive delaying actions in Taungni and Pinbaw, and then make a determined stand at Hopin. The Myitkyina garrison seemed likely to fight it out, but no major reinforcements were being sent to its assistance. As I have already said, the task allotted to Northern Combat Area Command was to capture the Mogaung—Myitkyina area and to establish an outpost line to cover it.

25. Concurrently with General Slim's Operation Instruction, General Stilwell issued orders to the Mogaung and Myitkyina Task Forces. The former, composed of 22 and 38 Chinese Divisions, with parts of 50 Chinese Division and Special Force, subsequently joined by 36 British Division, was to capture the area from Lonkin to Taungni. The latter, comprising parts of 30 and 14 Chinese Divisions, a United States regiment, and a small detachment of Special Force, was to capture the area from Talawgyi to Seniku.

Operations in July.

26. 15 Indian Corps. Operations in Arakan during the month were confined to active patrolling in which several very successful small actions were fought. Some idea of the difficult conditions on this front can be gathered from the fact that the weekly rainfall sometimes exceeded 20 inches.

27. 4 Corps—*Bishenpur Area.* By the end of June, 5 Indian Division had finished mopping up on both sides of the southern sector of the Kohima—Imphal road and had concentrated at Imphal, except for one brigade which had been sent to join 17 Indian Light Division in its operations in the Bishenpur area. During the first week in July these two Divisions cleared the area north of the Silchar—Bishenpur track. To the south, enemy resistance showed signs of weakening—many positions being evacuated in the face of our continued frontal pressure and attacks against his flanks. 33 Japanese Division was, however, reinforced by tanks and a composite regiment drawn from their 53 and 54 Divisions and made a determined stand between the 12th and the 16th July on hills overlooking the track from the south. After sharp fighting, 5 Indian Division pressed southwards through these hills and reached an area three miles west of Ningthoukhong. By the 18th, one brigade had established itself three miles west of Milestone 24 on the Tiddim road.

28. In the meantime, 17 Indian Light Division was attacking strongly held Japanese positions about Ningthoukhong. The enemy held these till the 16th, when, assisted by the operations of 5 Indian Division, 17 Indian Light Division captured the village. The enemy were closely pursued and we captured much equipment, including 12 tanks. By the 18th, we were following a retreating enemy, having regained four miles of the Tiddim road. On this date, 5 Indian Division assumed responsibility for operations on the Tiddim road with one brigade of 17 Indian Light Division under command. The remainder of 17 Indian Division was withdrawn into reserve.

29. The Japanese withdrawal down the Tiddim road was steadily and successfully pressed. By the 25th July the enemy had been driven out of the Imphal Plain and, by the 1st August, a flanking movement to the west reached the road at Milestone 44.

Thus, by the end of July, 20 miles of the Tiddim road had been recovered, with considerable loss to the enemy in men and material: captured equipment included 21 tanks. The advance had been made in spite of the destruction of bridges and the laying of minefields and booby traps. The enemy was much helped by continual heavy rain, which turned every stream into a serious obstacle and greatly increased the difficulties of movement off the road.

30. 33 Corps—*Ukhrul Sector.* During the first few days of July responsibilities for the protection of the line of communication, the defence of Imphal, the mopping up of enemy parties and operations for the capture of Ukhrul were redistributed between 4 and 33 Corps. 33 Corps had already taken over from 4 Corps the responsibility for operations against Ukhrul on the 30th June, and 20 Indian Division came under its command.

31. Until the 4th July 2 British Division continued to mop up the remaining parties of the enemy who were still resisting fiercely in certain areas to the east and west of the main road. With the eastward advance on Ukhrul in full swing, however, operations on the Kohima—Imphal road ceased, and 2 British Division, less one brigade which was operating in the Palel—Tamu sector under 23 Indian Division, was disposed for the protection of the main road.

32. At the beginning of July, the two brigades of 7 Indian Division, which were advancing towards Ukhrul from the west, made good progress in spite of bad weather, which greatly handicapped not only the marching men but also the air supply on which they depended. It was said at the time that for every two feet a man climbed up the muddy slippery tracks he slid back one. On the 2nd July, they made contact with 23 L.R.P. Brigade, which was advancing from the north to attack Ukhrul and block the enemy's escape to the east. The third brigade of 7 Indian Division moved back to Kohima, which was to be its rest area.

33. Ukhrul was captured on the 3rd July, but opposition in the area was by no means at an end, as the Japanese continued to hold out in strongly entrenched positions, north, south and west of the village. On the 6th one brigade of 7 Indian Division captured the highest hill feature north of Ukhrul while the other moved south and south-east to block all exits. The other enemy positions were assaulted successively and, by the 10th July, all resistance had been overcome.

34. 7 Indian Division continued its advance along the Ukhrul—Humine track, enemy road blocks being passed and left for troops in rear to remove. By the 17th, our leading troops had reached Milestone 22, four miles south of Maoku. The Division was then withdrawn to rest at Kohima and was relieved by 4 Brigade of 2 British Division.

35. The second phase of these operations, which took place concurrently with the first phase which I have already described, was the advance of 20 Indian Division along the Imphal-Ukhrul road to join the forces about Ukhrul and sever all possible lines of escape of the enemy. Like the first phase, the period was one of great activity, and much fierce fighting. A Japanese force some 2,000 strong had been isolated and was trying to escape to the south-west. Bitter fighting developed between a desperate enemy trying to fight his way out of the net thrown round him and troops equally determined to hold him. Very heavy casualties were inflicted, but our losses were not light. The enemy's forces were gradually compressed into a small area and 20 Indian Division made contact with 7 Indian Division on the 11th July.

36. On the 17th July, 20 Indian Division was withdrawn from the Ukhrul sector after destroying the remnant, about 300 strong, of this Japanese force and capturing all its guns and transport. The Division was now concentrated to rest and refit about Wanjing, 16 miles south-east of Imphal, where it could, if necessary, easily move in either direction and act as a reserve to 23 Indian Division on the Tamu road or to 5 and 17 Indian Divisions about Bishenpur. 50 Indian Parachute Brigade (two battalions) which had been operating most successfully on the flank of 20 Indian Division across the tracks running south from the Imphal-Ukhrul road, was similarly withdrawn for rest and re-organization in India.

37. The operations of 23 L.R.P. Brigade, which belonged to Special Force (Long-Range Penetration troops), but which had not been flown into North Burma with that formation in March, deserve special mention. In their advance south from Kharasom to the Ukhrul area, they operated in eight small columns across exceptionally difficult country and inflicted severe casualties on 31 Japanese Division retreating from Kohima. Four of these columns, advancing from the north, co-ordinated their movements with those of 7 Indian Division on Ukhrul from the west. The other four columns moved to the east and south-east of Ukhrul to cut the enemy's communications.

By the 11th July, all tracks leading east towards Homalin on the Chindwin had been blocked and many enemy destroyed, our own casualties being negligible. In the third week in July, 23 L.R.P. Brigade was concentrated at Ukhrul before being withdrawn to India.

38. *23 Indian Division—Tamu Sector.* By the middle of July, the enemy had been driven from the Ukhrul area, and the operations ended with the complete rout of the Japanese, who retreated down the tracks to Humaine and Tamu abandoning guns and lorries and leaving many dead. With the withdrawal of 20 Indian Division and 23 L.R.P. Brigade, interest switched to the Tamu sector where 23 Indian Division was engaged in driving the enemy from his strongly prepared positions east and south-east of Palel.

For some time past, the enemy had been active in this sector, but his counter-attack failed to make any headway. His only success was early in the month when a small raiding party reached the Palel airstrip at night and damaged three aircraft. By the middle of

July, however, he had lost the initiative and was being driven back. The fact that over 100 Japanese were taken prisoner in one week was some evidence of decreasing morale.

39. The opening of 23 Indian Division's offensive down the Tamu road in the middle of July began another phase of the campaign to drive the Japanese forces across the Chindwin. The situation on the 24th July was that one brigade, after making a wide turning movement via the Sibong track, had outflanked the enemy's positions, established blocks on the Tamu road south of Sibong and in the Lokchao bridge area, and achieved complete surprise. The enemy was thus caught between these blocks and the two brigades advancing on them from the north which, on that date, had captured the strong Japanese positions at Tengenupal after severe fighting. The enemy's defence in this area disintegrated and they withdrew, abandoning much heavy equipment, including some guns. By the 25th, we had cleared an enemy block at Milestone 49 and were exploiting to the south-east.

40. 23 Indian Division continued its advance down the Palel-Tamu road supported by tanks, over-running successive enemy positions and capturing nine guns. 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade, an independent formation, operating north of the road, protected the left flank of 23 Indian Division. Enemy casualties in the last week of July had been heavy and his stubborn resistance had been fruitless.

41. On the 31st July, 33 Corps assumed command of 5 and 17 Indian Divisions and took over responsibility for the Tiddim road sector. On the 1st August, Headquarters, 4 Corps, was withdrawn to India for rest and training in mobile operations.

Summary of Operations in July.

42. *Arakan.* Apart from local patrolling in typical monsoon weather, there was no activity on either side.

43. *Chin Hills and Chindwin.* Our troops continued to press the Japanese withdrawal:—

In the Ukhrul sector, the enemy were driven back to a point 18 miles south of Ukhrul.

In the Palel area, 23 Indian Division reached a point five miles north-west of Tamu.

On the Imphal-Tiddim road, 5 Indian Division reached the area 21 miles south of Bishenpur, capturing a number of guns, tanks and armoured cars in this advance.

44. The general situation at the end of July was that the Japanese were still retiring and it seemed likely they might decide to hold the line Tiddim-Kalewa and northwards, along the Chindwin River, for the rest of the monsoon. Rain continued to hamper our operations, floods and continual landslides impeding our progress and breaking our communications.

45. *North Burma.* Operations against Myitkyina had continued. 77 L.R.P. Brigade (Special Force) which had been operating under General Stilwell's command in the Mogaung area, and some columns of 111 L.R.P. Brigade, had been withdrawn to India by air. On the 19th July, 14 L.R.P. Brigade captured Ngusharaung, an important

2,000-foot height seven miles north-west of Taungni (20 miles south-west of Mogaung). One brigade of 36 British Division had been flown into North Burma and was concentrating in the Mogaung area.

Planning for Operations—Winter 1944-45.

46. In accordance with instructions received from the Supreme Allied Commander, I issued an Operation Instruction on the 29th July to the Commander, Fourteenth Army, directing that plans be made for the following post-monsoon operations:—

(a) *Arakan*: An offensive/defence to secure with minimum forces our present forward positions in the Maungdaw - Tunnels Area and to prevent enemy penetration in the Kaladan Valley, which might endanger the operations of our Air Forces and our line of communication west of the Mayu Range.

(b) *Imphal Front*: A phased plan (which contemplated certain airborne operations) with the following objectives:—

(i) Seizure of Kalemmyo - Kalewa.

(ii) An airborne assault against the Ye-U area, to gain a quick exit into the Mandalay Plain, to be followed by ground operations to open the Kalewa - Ye-U road so that heavy equipment, including tanks, could be brought forward for an advance on Mandalay.

(iii) Capture of Mandalay - Pakokku.

(iv) Consolidation along the general line Pakokku - Mandalay - Maymyo - Kyaukme - Lashio (in conjunction with Northern Combat Area Command).

(c) I informed the Commander, Fourteenth Army, that the Northern Combat Area Command forces would advance to capture the Katha - Bhamo area and later Lashio, and that the Chinese Yunnan Force would advance along the old Burma Road to capture Hsenwi and Lashio.

(d) *South Burma*. A plan which did not affect the operations covered by this Despatch.

Operation Instructions affecting Operations in August.

47. On the 6th August, the Commander, Fourteenth Army, gave 33 Corps the following tasks:—

(a) To pursue the enemy on the lines:

Imphal - Tiddim - Kalemmyo - Kalewa.

Tamu - Indaingyi - Kalewa.

Tamu - Sittaung.

(b) To occupy Sittaung in order to deny the use of the Chindwin River to the enemy.

(c) If opportunity offered, to capture Kalewa and establish a bridgehead in that area.

He was told that air supply could be provided for a maximum of five brigades.

Operations in August.

48. *Tiddim Road Sector*. 5 Indian Division maintained the impetus of its advance down the Tiddim road during the month, in spite of stubborn resistance by Japanese rearguards; the 75th milestone, which marks the Indo-Burmese frontier, was passed; and successive enemy positions—many of

them of great natural strength—were overcome by a combination of frontal assaults, and wide turning movements through the jungle-clad mountains. By the 4th August, the number of captured tanks had risen to 32, and by the end of the month a further 10 tanks, 200 M.T. and 12 guns had fallen into our hands. On the 31st August, our troops were engaged with the enemy about Milestone 96.

These operations were distinguished by the highly successful co-operation of air, tanks, artillery and infantry, which inflicted severe casualties on the enemy and maintained the speed of the advance.

49. *Lushai Brigade*. This independent Brigade of three battalions had been given the task of raiding the Japanese flanks and rear during their withdrawal down the Tiddim road. It had been ordered by 33 Corps at the end of July to intensify its operations southwards from Milestone 60 almost to Tiddim. The operation was most arduous as the Brigade had to advance eastwards by bad tracks across steep hills and deep valleys in the height of the monsoon. During August, assisted by detachments of Chin Levies, it was actively engaged with the enemy and caused him much damage.

Some idea of the damage inflicted can be gauged from the fact that, in one week alone, one battalion killed 92 of the enemy, wounded many more, and destroyed a large number of lorries. The operations undoubtedly assisted the advance of 5 Indian Division.

To facilitate co-operation, the Lushai Brigade was placed under 5 Indian Division for operations from the 15th July. It continued to be dependent on air supply.

50. *Tamu - Sittaung Track and Kabaw Valley*. Operations to clear the enemy from the Palel - Tamu road were very successful, and our forces occupied Tamu on the 4th August. This village fell to 5 Brigade, of 2 British Division, which had been placed under command of 23 Indian Division and held in reserve in the Palel area. The village was found in an indescribable state as wounded, sick, dying and unburied dead Japanese officers and men abandoned by the enemy were lying in confusion in the houses and the streets. The large quantity of abandoned equipment included six guns and seventeen 3-ton lorries in good condition. The capture of Tamu was important as it is at the entrance of the Kabaw Valley and lies at the junction of the tracks leading east to Sittaung on the Chindwin, and south to Kalemmyo.

51. On the 7th August, 11 (East African) Division, which had been concentrating in the Palel area since the end of July, took over from 23 Indian Division, which was gradually pulled out to rest in Shillong. 25 (East African) Brigade advanced along the track to Sittaung meeting little resistance to start with; 26 (East African) Brigade started down the Kabaw Valley.

The advance continued and, by the end of the month, 25 (East African) Brigade had reached Milestone 28 on the Sittaung track having destroyed the enemy. 26 (East African) Brigade also made good progress, and successfully overcame many difficulties, particularly at the crossing of the Yu River which was in full flood. By the end of August they

had reached the Sunle - Htinzin area, though their concentration was hindered by swollen streams. The third brigade (the 21st) of the Division was protecting the road in the rear.

52. *Ukhrul Area.* At the end of July, command of the Ukhrul area had passed from 20 Indian Division to 4 Brigade of 2 British Division.

6 Brigade of this Division was responsible for a sector of the main Kohima - Imphal road, and 5 Brigade was operating in the Tamu sector under 23 Indian Division. 4 Brigade was operating in the Ukhrul area with patrols as far as Humine.

In the middle of August columns were directed on Homalin to destroy what was left of the enemy between the Angouching Range and the Chindwin. At the end of August these columns were actively engaged in clearing this area despite rising streams. The other two brigades of 2 British Division were withdrawn to Kohima.

53. *Myothit - Thaugdut Area.* On the 10th August "Tarcol", a special force of two battalions and a detachment of engineers, was formed from troops of 20 Indian Division to drive the enemy from the Myothit - Thaugdut area.

In the third week of August, "Tarcol" was increased by an additional battalion. Having successfully crossed the difficult Yu River, this force was, at the end of the month, advancing on Tonhe, after destroying weak enemy parties which they met.

Patrols from an Indian battalion of this column reached the Chindwin River on the 30th August, the first troops to do so since the Japanese crossed it at the opening of their offensive in March.

Summary of Operations in August.

54. *Arakan.* Activity limited to patrolling.

55. *Chin Hills and Chindwin.* During the month, the advance along the Imphal - Tiddim road had continued. By the end of the month our troops had crossed the Assam-Burma frontier and reached a point 21 miles south of the border. Numbers of tanks, guns and vehicles had been captured.

The Japanese were constructing defences in the Tiddim area and appeared likely to make a stand.

Further east, British and Indian troops advancing to the south-east had captured the village of Tamu on the 4th August. 11 (East African) Division, which then took over from them, had begun operations east and south of Tamu and, by the end of the month, were within four miles of Sittaung. To the south they had reached Htinzin.

56. At the end of August, the Japanese were holding positions astride the Tamu - Sittaung track, the track Tamu - Yuwa, in the hills to the east of the Tamu - Kalemyo road, and astride the road at Yazagyo.

57. North of Tamu, "Tarcol" had captured the village of Thanan, 12 miles north-west of Thaugdut, and were advancing on Tonhe.

58. *North Burma.* Myitkyina was captured on the 3rd August after a siege lasting 78 days. The greater part of the garrison of 6,000 was annihilated, although some troops escaped down the Irrawaddy on rafts.

Chinese forces crossed the Irrawaddy east of Myitkyina and moved down the Myitkyina - Bhamo road to Kazu where, at the end of August, they were consolidating.

About 20 miles west of Kazu, detachments of Kachin Levies were in contact with the enemy along the east bank of the Irrawaddy.

36 British Division was advancing down the railway south-west of Mogaung and had captured the village of Pinbon.

50 Chinese Division had completed its concentration in the Mogaung area.

Events in September.

59. *Tasks allotted to 15 Indian Corps—Early September.* On the 4th September, General Slim in an Operation Instruction warned the Commander, 15 Indian Corps, that Fourteenth Army would launch large-scale offensive operations across the Chindwin into Central Burma about December and that his rôle would be:—

(a) To secure his present positions in Arakan, including Maungdaw.

(b) To keep open the sea line of communication through the entrance to the River Naf.

(c) To destroy any Japanese force which might launch an offensive in the Arakan. (It was possible that the enemy might attack in Arakan as a counter to our offensive across the Chindwin.)

(d) To exploit any withdrawal or excessive thinning out of the Japanese forces opposing him.

These orders amplified the Operation Instruction which I had issued on the 29th July regarding our post-monsoon operations. It became necessary, however, to amend these orders at the end of September, but I shall deal with this in a later paragraph.

Operations in September.

60. *Arakan Front—15 Indian Corps.* In pursuance of the Corps policy of anticipating the enemy on important tactical features, and with the object of securing bases for operations directly the monsoon was over, moves were made by 25 Indian Division during September. As events proved, it was not always possible to anticipate the enemy, and sharp fighting on a small scale was frequently necessary to evict him. By the middle of September units of 25 Indian Division were firmly established along the main spine of the Mayu Range. Small but violent enemy counter-attacks on the nights 14th/15th and 15th/16th were heavily repulsed, as was another determined attack at the end of the month. The situation then was:

25 Indian Division:—patrolling to the east and south-east down the Kalapanzin River, after having advanced well south of the Tunnels Area.

26 Indian Division:—one brigade in the Taung Bazaar and Goppe Bazaar areas respectively, with one brigade in reserve.

81 (West African) Division:—continuing its concentration which had begun some three weeks previously in the Singpa area (five miles west-north-west of Mowdok).

61. *Chindwin Front—33 Corps: (a) 5 Indian Division (Imphal-Tiddim Road).* The advance down the Tiddim road continued. On

the 7th September, the enemy, in greater strength than before, were met in the area of Milestone 114. This position was captured on the 8th, after air and artillery bombardment.

62. The Manipur River, which was in full flood, was reached on the 15th September. This was expected to be a serious obstacle to our advance. The Divisional Commander had, however, anticipated an opposed crossing, and had sent a brigade back to Imphal to move round the enemy's flank via the Shuganu track and turn his defences. The operation was brilliantly successful and the enemy were forced to abandon their strongly prepared positions covering the river. A combination of clever tactics, air supply and hard "foot slogging" had deprived the Japanese of their opportunity to check our advance.

63. Tuitum was occupied on the 17th September. Heavy rainfall, with consequent deterioration of the roads, delayed the arrival of bridging equipment, but ferrying began on the 18th. The enemy's opposition was reduced to the shelling of the main crossings.

64. By the 20th September, we were attacking strong enemy positions about Tonzang, the first town of any size after leaving the Imphal Plain. By the 22nd, a double advance from the north and south made the Japanese evacuate this place without opposition, but severe punishment was inflicted on their retreating columns. Tonzang was full of enemy dead and much equipment was captured.

65. By the end of the month, the leading brigade of 5 Indian Division was south of Milestone 147, after overcoming hostile rearguards.

66. 33 Corps: (b) 11 (East African) Division (Kabaw Valley). During the first three weeks of September, this Division (less one brigade) advanced down the Kabaw Valley, in very bad weather.

67. One brigade, capturing successive enemy positions, fought its way down the Tamu-Sittaung track, and reached Sittaung on the 4th September. Bases from which extensive patrolling was carried out were established across the flooded Chindwin River. At the end of the month, this brigade was relieved by units of 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade and concentrated in readiness for future operations.

68. By the end of September, 11 (East African) Division (less one brigade) had successfully attacked and captured strongly constructed and well stocked enemy positions three miles north of Yazagyo and was engaged in clearing the area.

The progress made during the month was remarkable in view of the destruction of communications by the continuous rain which strained our administration to the utmost. It was found necessary to employ the infantry and other combatant troops on roadmaking and similar works.

69. The situation at the end of September was:—

One brigade had captured an enemy position one mile north of Yazagyo, and was engaged in clearing the area.

One brigade, some 25 miles to the north-east, was pushing forward against opposition three miles west-north-west of Mawlaik on the Chindwin side of the Mawku Range

which separates the Kabaw and Chindwin Valleys.

One brigade, concentrated in the Sittaung area.

70. *Lushai Brigade*. Throughout the month, the Brigade continued its successful raids and ambushes on the Japanese line of communication, and in one week one battalion killed 111 Japanese, wounded 56, destroyed 29 vehicles and damaged 20 others; during the same period, a detachment of Levies destroyed 50,000 gallons of petrol.

71. On the 17th September, Japanese positions west of Haka were attacked, but there was strong opposition and the arrival of enemy reinforcements forced us to withdraw; not, however, before an enemy supply column had been successfully ambushed and a bridge over the Manipur River, near Falam, destroyed.

72. 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade. This Independent Brigade, consisting of four—later five—battalions, was reorganized early in September to provide a screen west of the Chindwin to protect divisions which were resting in the Imphal area. Its rôle also included the protection of the rear and flank of our formations operating south and south-east of Imphal.

It operated under command of 33 Corps in the general area Tamanthi-Sittaung-Ukhrul, but confined its operations across the Chindwin to patrolling. A battalion of this force relieved 25 (East African) Brigade in the Sittaung area at the end of September.

73. *Tarcol*. This small composite force, to which I have already referred, was withdrawn during the month. The Homalin-Thaungdut area had been cleared of the enemy and a battalion left in Thaungdut. A conservative estimate of the Japanese/J.I.F. (Japanese-inspired Indian Fifth Column) dead found in the area in which "Tarcol" had been operating was over 1,000—mainly from starvation. Many abandoned lorries also were discovered near Humine.

Summary of Operations in September.

74. *Arakan*. Certain moves were carried out directly the monsoon slackened to secure areas of tactical importance, and small but determined enemy counter-attacks were repulsed.

Part of 55 Japanese Division, formerly opposed to our forces in the Maungdaw area, was withdrawn during the month.

75. *Chin Hills and Chindwin*. The advance of our troops down the Imphal-Tiddim road and, further east, down the Kabaw Valley continued. 5 Indian Division after crossing the Manipur River was entirely, and 11 (East African) Division in the Kabaw Valley was partly, dependent on air supply.

On the Tiddim road, the village of Tuitum was occupied on the 17th September, and by the end of the month our leading troops were only seven miles from Tiddim. Thus a distance of 62 miles had been covered in one month against determined opposition and under severe weather conditions. The Japanese suffered heavy casualties during their retreat, and the withdrawal of the Headquarters of 33 Japanese Division across the Chindwin indicated that they were not likely to put up a very serious resistance, though it was expected

that they might make some stand in the Tidim area. If they did so, their forces would be threatened by the advance of our troops down the Kabaw Valley.

76. The East Africans had advanced a further 15 miles down the Kabaw Valley towards Kalembo, and had reached a point 26 miles south of Htinzin. Bad weather was a greater obstacle to their advance than the enemy.

Other East African troops had occupied Sittaung on the Chindwin on the 4th September and established a bridgehead on the eastern bank of the river. They were relieved in this area by an Indian formation at the end of the month.

77. *North Burma.* 36 British Division, moving down the Myitkyina—Mandalay railway, had entered Hopin unopposed on the 7th September. They found 500 Japanese bodies in the precincts of the village. By the end of September, patrols had reached Mohnyin.

Chinese troops in the Kazu area had advanced eleven miles south of the village.

78. *Order of Battle (Moves).* The last of the Long-Range Penetration Brigades of Special Force was withdrawn from Burma into India during the month.

17 Indian Light Division left 33 Corps for India.

2 British Division and 20 Indian Division were resting at Imphal; 7 Indian Division was at Kohima and 23 Indian Division at Shillong.

79. *Record of 33 Corps.* In the six months ending September, 33 Corps, which first took the field at Dimapur in April, had done sterling work. During an advance of nearly 300 miles to the Tiddim area and about 270 to Yazago in the Kabaw Valley, 9,746 of the enemy were killed and 459 Japanese and 331 J.I.F. prisoners taken. 81 guns and 1,284 vehicles had been captured.

80. *Revised Task for 15 Indian Corps.* On the 28th September, the Commander, Fourteenth Army, in view of the re-grouping of the Japanese forces in Arakan, issued a fresh Operation Instruction to 15 Indian Corps. The bulk of 55 Japanese Division had been transferred from North Arakan into the lower Irrawaddy Valley, leaving a force of approximately four battalions in the forward area. Three more enemy battalions belonging to 54 Japanese Division were on Akyab Island and in the lower Kaladan Delta, and five battalions were in the coastal area between the Barongas and Cheduba Island. Thus the enemy was in no position to launch a serious attack. The tasks allotted to 15 Indian Corps on the 4th September were, therefore, changed and the Commander was ordered—

(a) To secure the area Chittagong—Cox's Bazaar to prevent the enemy's interference with our preparations for a future airborne offensive.

(b) To secure the estuary of the Naf as a base for light coastal forces and landing craft.

(c) To carry out reconnaissance, bombardments and raids from the sea along the whole Arakan coast to force the enemy to lock up troops in this area.

(d) To exploit any withdrawal or thinning out of the Japanese forces in Arakan.

Operation Instructions issued during October.

81. On the 1st October, the Army Commander issued an Instruction to 33 Corps which stated that:—

(a) His intention was to concentrate Fourteenth Army eastwards in the Shwebo—Mandalay Plain, to bring the enemy to battle and destroy him.

(b) The tasks of 33 Corps were:—

(i) To capture the area Kalembo—Kalewa.

(ii) To establish a bridgehead over the Chindwin at Kalewa.

(iii) To advance eastwards as quickly as possible and capture the Ye-U area with the object of establishing air strips.

(c) 4 Corps was concentrating in the Imphal area and would be flown into the Ye-U—Shwebo area at a later date.

The troops allotted to 33 Corps were 2 British Division, 5 and 20 Indian Divisions, 11 (East African) Division, and the Lushai Brigade, but 5 Indian Division would be withdrawn into Army reserve when Kalembo had been captured.

221 Group R.A.F. would be responsible for air support, and air supply would increase progressively from 244 tons per day on the 1st October to 364 tons from the 1st November onwards.

82. On the 6th October, I told the Commander, Fourteenth Army, that 3 Commando Brigade (four Commandos) would be placed under his command from mid-October, and that they were to be employed to encourage the enemy to believe that amphibious operations were imminent on the Arakan coast.

83. I issued an important Instruction to the Commander, Fourteenth Army, on the 11th October, regarding Allied operations in Burma, 1944-45. In this, I repeated a Directive received from the Supreme Allied Commander, which stated that:—

“Allied Forces in South-East Asia Command will conduct concerted offensive operations with the object of destroying or expelling all Japanese forces in Burma at the earliest date. Operations to achieve this object must *not*, however, prejudice the security of the existing air supply route to China, including the air staging port at Myitkyina, and the opening of overland communications.”

I confirmed in more detail the objectives for which I had ordered plans to be prepared in my Instruction of the 29th July.

The Fourteenth Army Order of Battle was:—

33 Corps—2 British Division, 5 Indian Division initially, 11 (East African) Division, 20 Indian Division, 254 Indian Tank Brigade, Lushai Brigade, 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade (subsequently transferred to 4 Corps). 4 Corps—7 and 19 Indian Divisions, 50 Indian Parachute Brigade for a specific airborne operation. 255 Indian Tank Brigade, which was to move to Imphal in October. 28 (East African) Brigade, due to move to Imphal in November.

I have given the composition of each Corps, but the allotment of divisions to Corps was, of course, left to the Commander, Fourteenth Army.

I include, for information, the composition of Northern Combat Area Command.

36 British Division.

5332 Brigade (two U.S. regiments, one Chinese regiment).

Chinese Army in India.

Chinese Expeditionary Force (when released by the Generalissimo).

Fort Hertz Kachin Levies (re-enlisted for service under Northern Combat Area Command).

Chinese-American airborne units.

84. I issued the following administrative orders:—

(a) The Tamu - Indainggyi - Kalewa - Ye-U road to be improved to a capacity of 300 tons daily and to an all-weather standard.

(b) The construction of the Manipur Road - Imphal pipeline to be continued as rapidly as resources permitted.

(c) Inland Water Transport on the Chindwin to be used to the maximum extent possible.

(d) Before the outbreak of the monsoon in 1945, reserve stocks to be built up forward of Kalewa for 45 days, plus 15 days' working stocks.

Operations in October.

85. *Arakan—15 Indian Corps.* On the front of 25 Indian Division, there was no renewal of the fighting which occurred at the end of September, and activity in the coastal sector and east of the Mayu Range was reduced to vigorous patrolling and artillery fire.

On 26 Indian Division's front, however, the Japanese attempted a reconnaissance in force of our left flank. A raiding force drawn from all three regiments of 55 Japanese Division penetrated into the Goppe Bazaar area and between the 6th and the 8th October we repelled attacks at Panzai and in the vicinity of Goppe. Our counter-attack was quick and strong and by the end of the week the enemy had been dispersed into the hills, losing two-thirds of his strength killed and much equipment.

Our patrols were active in the area during the rest of the month.

86. 3 *Commando Brigade* arrived at the end of October and assumed responsibility for the Teknaf Peninsula south of 26 Indian Division's boundary.

87. 81 (*West African*) *Division.* Early in the month, the Japanese based on Daletme and Paletwa showed considerable activity, but 81 (*West African*) *Division* continued its advance eastward to the Kaladan. They occupied Mowdok and drove the enemy out of Labawa, six miles to the north-east. After this, resistance became sporadic and by the 25th October units of both brigades had reached and crossed the Kaladan and were in contact with the enemy on the east bank. At the end of the month one brigade had begun to advance down the Kaladan River, while the other was moving south down the Pi Chaung.

88. *Situation in Arakan at the End of the Monsoon.* Although the monsoon prevented major operations by either side, we had before it ended seized the initiative and occupied several important positions beyond our front line in the Mayu Peninsula. At the same time, 81 (*West African*) *Division* had moved across to the Kaladan Valley and captured Mowdok,

thereby controlling the routes from the Kaladan into the Sangu Valley, and removing a threat to our airfields and base.

89. *Chindwin Front—33 Corps: (a) 5 Indian Division (Tiddim - Kalemio Road).* Enemy resistance in scattered pockets both east and west of the road continued, and by the 4th October the battle for Tiddim was developing. Tiddim lies some 5,600 feet above sea-level, 162 miles from Imphal. At about Milestone 149, the road leaves the Manipur River and climbs 3,700 feet in the next ten miles, the first six of which consist of a series of steep hairpin bends. The Japanese were holding strongly dug-in positions about Milestone 158, with a forward position at Milestone 152. They were also entrenched at Valvum (6,000 feet) and Sialam Vum (8,000 feet), which are strong natural features about three miles and seven miles east of Tiddim respectively.

90. By the 10th October enemy resistance at Milestone 152 had been broken and operations, which, in spite of bad weather, were receiving strong air support, were in progress against stubborn and fierce opposition in the Milestone 158, Valvum and Sialam Vum areas. A wide turning movement, by an infantry brigade, found the enemy also strongly entrenched at Tuibal, thirteen miles east of Tiddim.

91. We pressed our attack with great vigour throughout the following week. The final assault on the positions at Milestone 158 covering Tiddim was supported by a co-ordinated attack by tanks and Hurribombers. A thick mist hid the advancing tanks, while the noise of their engines was drowned by the roar of low-flying aircraft. Complete surprise was achieved and the position was captured. Tiddim was occupied on the 18th October, by which date the Valvum, Sialam Vum and Tuibal positions had also been captured.

92. After the occupation of Tiddim, one brigade continued the advance along the Tiddim - Kalemio road, strong resistance at Milestone 7 being turned by a detachment from Valvum. The Japanese, however, again made a determined stand at Milestone 11 and to the north of it.

93. Meanwhile another brigade, west of Tuibal, was attacking positions on the Dolluang - Kennedy Peak track, in conjunction with detachments of the Lushai Brigade which had come up behind the enemy from the south-west. Successful air strikes were a feature of these operations.

94. By the end of the month, good progress had been made against the main enemy positions in the Vital Corner - Fort White area, "Vital Corner" being the name given to the bend, about Milestone 13, where the road, after running due east and west, turns sharp south. One brigade had successively captured enemy positions from Sialam Vum, through Milestone 11, to Khum Vum, a 7,000 foot mountain about four miles south of the road, and had established a block at Milestone 14. A second brigade was making a shallow right hook to the south of the road, while the remaining brigade of the Division was engaged in a deeper turning movement farther south to cut off the enemy in the Fort White area. Vital Corner was thus virtually surrounded and the reduction of its defences with maximum air and artillery support was in progress.

95. *33 Corps : (b) 11 (East African) Division (Kabaw Valley and Chindwin).* During the first fortnight of October, the brigade which had been operating in the Sittaung area on the east of the Chindwin was moving into and down the Kabaw Valley. The brigade already in the valley entered Yazagyo on the 4th October and then cleared the tracks, which lead from the Tamu - Kalemmyo road across to the Chindwin, of small enemy detachments. To the north-east, the third brigade of 11 (East African) Division had unsuccessfully attacked strong enemy positions north-west of Mawku, on the Chindwin River six miles north of Mawlaik.

96. In the third week of October, two brigades were moving forward against opposition, one brigade south of Yazagyo and one to the north-east of it. The third brigade had launched an attack against the enemy positions on the ridge north-west of Mawku and, after confused fighting, had captured all but one position, which was subsequently surrounded and the enemy in it destroyed. The stores and ammunition captured indicated that the Japanese had intended a prolonged stand in this area.

97. At the end of October, two brigades were continuing their advance south to Inbaung, after destroying enemy positions on the hills to the east of the road. The third brigade was fighting in and around Mawku Village.

98. *Lushai Brigade.* Early in October, the brigade regrouped in order to stop the southern exits from the Tiddim and Kennedy Peak areas, and at the same time continued its operations against the enemy's Falam and Haka lines of communication. These operations ended in the occupation of Falam on the 18th October, Haka falling four days later. These two places had been captured by the Japanese just a year before.

Summary of Operations in October.

99. *Arakan—15 Indian Corps.* During the early part of the month, there was considerable fighting in the Taung Bazaar and Goppe Bazaar areas with a strong hostile detachment of all arms. It was severely defeated by 26 Indian Division. The Japanese object had probably been either to cross the Goppe Pass to Bawli and thus prevent our tanks from entering the Mayu Valley, or else to establish a firm base at Goppe from which raiding parties could operate.

100. The enemy in Paletwa and Daletme had also displayed increased activity in the Mowdok area, probably in an attempt to mislead us as to their strength in the Kaladan. They had not, however, succeeded in delaying the advance of 81 (West African) Division which, by the end of the month, had occupied Daletme and was pushing southwards down the Kaladan Valley towards Paletwa.

101. Activity in the coastal sector was confined during October to extensive patrolling by both sides.

102. *Chindwin Front—33 Corps.* The advance of 5 Indian Division down the Tiddim road ended with their entry into Tiddim on the 18th October, after strong enemy positions had been captured north and east of the village. The advance then continued in a south-easterly direction towards

Fort White and Kalemmyo. By the end of the month, strong defences in the Kennedy Peak area were attacked and a turning movement to cut off Fort White was in progress.

103. Falam and Haka had been occupied during the month by elements of the Lushai Brigade, the small Japanese garrisons withdrawing southwards under pressure.

104. In the Kabaw Valley, troops of 11 (East African) Division entered Yazagyo on the 4th October. The advance southwards was held up during the middle of the month by heavy rains, but subsequently continued. By the end of October, the Division, less one brigade, was fighting in the area thirteen miles north of Kalemmyo. The brigade operating down the Chindwin Valley, after capturing strong enemy positions north-west of Mawku, was engaged in the vicinity of the village itself. The situation at the end of October was that the Japanese had withdrawn from the Chindwin River, north of Paungbyin, and were occupying positions in the Atwin Yomas, north-west of Mawlaik. It appeared possible that, when driven from these, they might try to hold the escarpment which divides the Chindwin from the Mu River.

105. *North Burma.* Rapid progress was made during the month in our southward advance down the railway. On the 21st October, 36 British Division occupied Mohnyin, the Japanese apparently being taken by surprise as large quantities of stores, ammunition and supplies fell into our hands. After overcoming slight opposition at Mawhun, Mawlu was captured on the 31st October. The enemy abandoned large trenched areas in Mawhun without fighting, but put up a stiffer resistance at Mawlu, which incidentally had been the stronghold of one of our Long-Range Penetration Brigades during the Spring.

38 Chinese Division, advancing down the road towards Bhamo from the Kazu area, was only twenty-four miles north-north-east of Bhamo by the 31st October.

Operation Instructions issued prior to the 12th November.

106. On the 6th November, the Commander, Fourteenth Army, instructed 4 Corps to employ one brigade group with the object of:—

(a) Capturing Pinlebu by an overland advance.

(b) Patrolling in the direction of Indaw - Katha and establishing contact with Northern Combat Area Command.

(c) Patrolling to the rail/road in the area Wuntho - Indaw.

(d) Gaining information as to the practicability of routes from the Chindwin River to the line of the rail/road for the passage of large forces, including medium tanks.

Leading units of this brigade group were to cross the Chindwin not later than the 20th November and the roads Tamu - Tonhe and Tamu - Sittaung were to be improved to the standard of "Fair-weather class 5, one-way" by the 15th December and the 15th January respectively.

107. Before relinquishing command, I issued three Operation Instructions:

The first, dated the 6th November, directed that 15 Indian Corps, formerly under

Fourteenth Army, would come under command of 11 Army Group from midnight 15th-16th November. 15 Indian Corps' Order of Battle would be :—

- 25 Indian Division.
- 26 Indian Division.
- 81 (West African) Division. (Provision of a third brigade under consideration.)
- 82 (West African) Division. (On arrival in Arakan.)
- 50 Indian Tank Brigade.
- 3 Commando Brigade.
- Corps Troops.

The reason for this change was to free the Commander, Fourteenth Army, from responsibility for Arakan, in view of the important operations he was about to undertake in Burma.

108. On the 9th November, I issued orders for the formation of a command and staff for the lines of communication, to centralise the lines of communication under a separate Commander and thus relieve the Commander, Fourteenth Army, and Commander, 15 Indian Corps, of responsibilities for their rear areas. The new Line of Communication Command was to comprise the existing 202 and 404 Lines of Communication Areas and the Fort Hertz Area. The rear boundaries of Fourteenth Army and 15 Indian Corps were to be adjusted as the progress of operations dictated, in order to relieve the forward Commander of administrative responsibilities.

109. My third Operation Instruction dated the 9th November, was addressed to the Commander of 15 Indian Corps.

The general objects I gave to him were :—

- (a) To clear Arakan to the line (inclusive) Akyab—Minbya as early as possible, in order to release troops for other purposes.
- (b) To secure the area Chittagong—Cox's Bazaar.

The specific tasks were :—

- (a) A land advance in Arakan down the Mayu Peninsula, the Kalapanzin Valley and the Kaladan Valley, to destroy or expel the Japanese within the area north of the general line Foul Point—Kudaung Island—Minbya. This advance was to start as soon as possible.
- (b) An amphibious assault on Akyab Island about the 15th January, supported by the maximum sea and air bombardment.
- (c) Consolidation to secure firmly the area north of the general line Akyab—Minbya.

110. My object in issuing the above Instruction was twofold :—

- (a) To tie down and destroy in Arakan Japanese forces which might otherwise be used against Fourteenth Army.
- (b) By destroying the Japanese forces in Arakan it would be possible to release forces for other operations which the Supreme Allied Commander was anxious to undertake.

Operations from the 1st to the 12th November.

111. *Arakan*—15 Indian Corps. 25 and 26 Indian Divisions continued their active patrolling and other minor operations with steady success. The leading brigade of 82 (West African) Division arrived to relieve troops in the Kalapanzin area.

81 (West African) Division continued its advance down the Kaladan in spite of considerable enemy resistance and reached the outskirts of Paletwa.

112. *Chindwin Front*—33 Corps: (a) 5 Indian Division (*Tiddim—Kalemyo Road*). It will be recalled that, at the end of October, 5 Indian Division having cut in behind the Japanese and launched a converging attack, was assaulting their positions at Vital Corner, while one brigade was carrying out a wide turning movement against Fort White. The beginning of November saw the capture of Vital Corner and the final breakdown of all enemy resistance northwards from Milestone 14 to Sialam Vum inclusive, the enemy suffering heavy casualties. We resumed our advance down the road and finally stormed Kennedy Peak, the 9,000 foot mountain just south of Milestone 15, on the 4th November after two attacks had failed. A sharp action was then fought for the positions dominating the road between Milestones 22 and 23. Point 8225 was successfully assaulted on the 7th November and Fort White occupied without further opposition. In spite of the mountainous country, tanks were able to play an important part in the fighting.

113. The brigade moving to outflank Fort White had, in the meantime, cleared the enemy from a 7,000 foot feature three miles down the Fort White—Falam track (Point 7480). Then, after an initial failure, they gained the main road and established a road-block near Milestone 25, where later they gained touch with the brigade advancing along the road itself. Stiff resistance was met at Vownalu Mual (Milestone 29), and again at Milestone 31 where we were held up for two days. However, on the 11th November the advance was resumed, Numbers 2 and 3 Stockades falling without opposition. Forward elements pressed on to Milestone 40, but the main body was delayed by stiff resistance east of Number 2 Stockade.

The third brigade of the Division was engaged during this period in blocking tracks, and a heavy toll was taken of the Japanese trying to escape by these routes.

114. 33 Corps: (b) 11 (*East African*) Division (*Kabaw Valley and Chindwin*). Early in the month, the leading brigade, with tank support, cleared the enemy from all his positions south of Yazagyo and then inflicted further heavy casualties as he was successively driven out of positions further to south. The enemy next stood three miles north of Indaingyi (six miles north-east of Kalemyo) where his positions were only captured after all the defenders had been killed.

The brigade in support was following up closely, having sent detachments (a) to clear the track leading from the Kabaw Valley to Mawlaik and (b) to block the tracks from the west and thus destroy enemy parties escaping from 5 Indian Division in the Dolluang area.

Meanwhile the brigade pushing down the Chindwin had overcome strong resistance in the vicinity of Mawku and, on the 11th November, occupied Mawlaik. It then advanced astride the river.

11 (*East African*) Division reached Kalemyo on the 15th November, and thus ended this phase of the operations.

115. 4 Corps. The leading division (19 Indian) of 4 Corps entered the forward zone early in November, and concentrated in the area of the Tamu - Sittaung track.

268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade was transferred from 33 to 4 Corps. The order not to operate east of the Chindwin was cancelled and part of the Brigade was disposed on the east bank of the river.

Summary of Operations, 1st to the 12th November.

116. Arakan—15 Indian Corps. There was no fighting on an important scale. 81 (West African) Division reached the outskirts of Paletwa in its advance down the Kaladan. The leading brigade of 82 (West African) Division had arrived in Arakan.

117. Chin Hills and Chindwin—33 Corps. On the 4th November, a brigade of 5 Indian Division had captured Kennedy Peak, much equipment falling into our hands. Troops of this Division had then encircled Fort White, and forced the enemy to evacuate his positions on the 8th November. No. 2 and 3 Stockades were taken without opposition on 11th November.

118. Troops of 11 (East African) Division, which had been advancing down the Kabaw Valley, linked up with those of 5 Indian Division on the 13th November and Kalembo fell on the 15th.

119. North Burma. After consolidating their positions at Mawlu, 36 British Division had almost reached Pinwe, six miles north of the important junction of Naba, by the 12th November. Meanwhile, 38 Chinese Division had occupied Myothit, sixteen miles north-east of Bhamo, meeting only slight opposition.

120. On the 3rd November, Lungling fell to troops of the Chinese Expeditionary Force, having changed hands at least four times during prolonged fighting over many months. It is important to note that, when the Bhamo area was finally cleared, we should have a potential fair-weather route from Burma to China, through Myothit, Tengchung and Lungling, although an all-weather road would not be open to us until Namhkam was taken. Thus we were already within measurable distance of achieving one of our objects—the re-opening of land communications with China.

Naval and Air Co-operation.

121. (a) Light coastal forces, comprising for the most part heavy draught motor launches, resumed operations off the Arakan coast in October, in support of 15 Indian Corps. The main operational base was Chittagong, but an advanced base was also established in the Naf River, 115 miles south of Chittagong. There were several successful guerilla operations, and several enemy aircraft which attempted to intervene were destroyed.

These small craft harassed the Japanese lines of communication and made successful attacks on the enemy's supply ships.

Flotillas of landing craft, whose crews had been trained by the Royal Indian Navy, were employed off the Arakan coast early in November in landing small raiding parties.

(b) As air operations have been described in detail in the Despatches of the Air Commander-in-Chief, I have said little of what was

done by the Air Forces during the period covered by this Despatch. This Despatch would, however, be incomplete without some special remarks on the co-operation between the Army and the R.A.F.

The outstanding feature of the operations has been the closeness of the co-operation between the Army and the R.A.F., and the battle may well be described as a true combined operation in which neither Service could have succeeded without the other.

These combined operations may be considered under the following headings:—

- (a) Strategic.
- (b) Tactical.
- (c) Administrative.

Strategically the sustained and very successful attacks on the enemy's air forces, aerodromes and communications combined to destroy his air forces and to restrict the power of his ground forces. These successes gave our own forces freedom of manoeuvre and hampered those of the Japanese so severely that he was short of ammunition, stores and equipment during the battle. The long flights in bad weather over difficult country were splendid achievements by all ranks of the R.A.F.

Tactically, co-operation grew ever closer as the battle continued and the R.A.F. assumed the rôle of mobile heavy artillery which could not be got forward over the roads of Burma. There is no doubt that the low-level attacks with bombs and machine guns on the hostile defences were decisive in enabling the infantry to close with the Japanese. As time went on communication between the forces on the ground and the supporting aircraft improved until it was possible for commanders on the ground to direct them on to small targets entirely concealed by the jungle from the air.

Finally, the Army did not feel happy in attacking Japanese defensive positions unless they had the co-operation of the fighter-bomber.

Close as was the co-operation in the actual fighting, success could not have been achieved without the transport of troops, the continued supply from the air and the evacuation of casualties.

Apart from the fly-in of Special Force there were many noteworthy movements of troops, especially those of 5 and 7 Indian Divisions and 2 British Division, large parts of which were flown to Imphal and Dimapur.

These large-scale movements by air defeated the Japanese plan which counted on containing our troops in Arakan when they began their offensive across the Chindwin.

I have written in my earlier Despatch of the magnificent work done in supplying 4 Corps by air. The pursuit of the Japanese by 11 (East African) Division down the Kabaw Valley was likewise made possible by air supply. There were numerous other smaller supply operations.

The greatly increased evacuation of casualties by air gave a great fillip to the morale of the troops. The figures of 56,800 sick and wounded casualties flown back during the year November 1943-November 1944 speak for themselves.

The Army, as can be seen, has great cause to be grateful to the R.A.F., and once again I want on behalf of 11 Army Group to thank

all ranks of the R.A.F. from the Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, to the latest joined airman for their magnificent support and co-operation.

Lessons of the Campaign.

122. (a) The operations which I have described in this Despatch have emphasised the lessons which I mentioned in my first Despatch, particularly the need for first-class basic training of the junior leaders and the rank and file, physical fitness and good discipline.

(b) They have also shown that it is possible for troops to operate in the monsoon if air supply is possible.

I should like, however, to add a word of warning about the possibility of campaigning at full scale in the monsoon. In the operations for which I was responsible, we were compelled by the Japanese offensive to fight in the monsoon.* We did so successfully, and drove the Japanese back from the positions they reached in and about Imphal. The cost was high, all divisions, especially 2 British Division, were much reduced in strength by sickness and both officers and men were much exhausted.

The pursuit which continued until the end of November was, with the exception of 5 Indian Division, made by fresh troops, who then had to be withdrawn to rest.

The time limit for troops operating in the monsoon in the Burmese jungle appears to be about three months, after which they need rest in a rear area. The conditions under which troops operate in the dry weather are so infinitely better and the communications both air and ground so much more reliable that it is in my opinion uneconomical to use more troops than are absolutely necessary under monsoon conditions. It may be vital to fight in the monsoon, but a high wastage rate must then be expected and operations in the dry weather will be reduced or delayed by the need for resting and reinforcing those formations which operated during the monsoon, unless there are available very large reserves to take their places.

(c) The increasing accuracy of air bombardment of tactical targets in jungle. This was of the greatest help as divisions which were wholly supplied by air had frequently a very limited supply of artillery ammunition.

(d) The increased ability of brigades and larger formations to leave the road and move by tracks through the jungle to attack the enemy's flanks and rear.

Intelligence.

123. *Enemy Strengths and Dispositions.* As mentioned in my first Despatch, the Japanese strength in Burma had increased from four divisions to nine in the twelve months ending June, 1944. One additional division (the 49th) arrived in this Theatre in October.

124. *Enemy Casualties and Morale.* The total number of enemy killed (actually counted) between July and October amounted to 8,859 on the Fourteenth Army front and 3,724 on the Northern Combat Area Command front. No captured documentary

evidence is available regarding the number of wounded and sick, but it was undoubtedly high.

These severe losses added to those of the earlier months, coupled with the steady and increasing pressure which we maintained on his retreating divisions, must have weakened his morale. Though the individual officer and man will doubtless continue, in accordance with Japanese tradition, to resist fanatically when occupying defensive positions, I have no doubt that the standard of training and will to battle will deteriorate and that we shall not again meet Japanese forces of their former standard.

PART II. RE-ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS.

Availability of Infantry Formations.

125. (a) I mentioned in my first Despatch* the acute shortage of infantry, especially British, reinforcements, and I of course discussed the situation with the Supreme Allied Commander on many occasions. On the 24th June, I wrote to him that I had been examining his instructions of the 8th June, to exact the maximum effort during the monsoon season. I pointed out that there were two major difficulties to overcome:—

(i) The need to withdraw certain divisions, which had been engaged for long periods in active operations, for rest, re-organization and training.

(ii) The general shortage of reinforcements.

(b) My examination showed that we had two alternatives, each bound to affect operations. Either we had to—

(i) Accept the necessity for resting formations, and thereby reduce the number available for operations, or

(ii) Decide against any rest, and thereby so reduce the efficiency of formations that, by the end of the Winter, they would be unfit for further fighting.

(c) The general reinforcement situation was such that—

(i) It appeared that we could not maintain 2 British Division at war strength.

(ii) Special Force must be substantially reduced.

(iii) We should have the greatest difficulty in finding a formation to replace 36 British Division, about to relieve Special Force, when its replacement became necessary.

(d) I, therefore, recommended that—

(i) We must accept the fact that some divisions would have to be rested during the coming Winter.

(ii) The programme of rest should be planned on the basis of using nine divisions; three in the Arakan, with one in reserve, and four in Assam, with one in reserve.

I added that I should leave no stone unturned to discover ways and means for improving the supply of reinforcements.

126. This letter was followed by a discussion with the Supreme Allied Commander and the Commander-in-Chief, India. In consequence, I decided that in future we should try

* War Office footnote: See also the Supreme Allied Commander's Report, South-East Asia, 1943-1945, Part A., para. 59; Part B., paras. 185-186 and 201-203.

* Operations in Burma and North-East India from the 16th November, 1943 to the 22nd June, 1944.

to keep two divisions resting in addition to one division in G.H.Q. (India) reserve. Initially, one of the nine active divisions would be in Army Group reserve.

I also decided that only one division (17 Indian) would leave the Fourteenth Army area for rest and re-organization and that the others would remain in the Shillong—Imphal area. The following formations would move back into India Command: H.Q. 4 Corps, 50 Parachute Brigade, 23 L.R.P. Brigade, 268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade, and three Armoured Corps units.

127. By this time our air supremacy, and our improved strategical situation, justified the disbandment of a considerable number of light A.A. batteries. The officers and men thrown up in consequence were available to train as infantry and, added to increased reinforcements from England, enabled me to bring 2 British Division up to strength.

The relief of 36 British Division did not arise during the period covered by this Despatch.

128. As a result of the experience gained from the operations of Special Force, I had decided that the future rôle of such a force be either—

(a) To provide mobile infantry brigades specially equipped to make turning movements away from roads and tracks or protect flanks in exceptionally difficult country.

(b) Deeper penetration as a Special Force capable of continuous mobile operations for long periods.

I also considered that a change of name, to conform with these rôles, was desirable and the term "Penetration Brigade" was substituted for "Long-Range Penetration Group".

129. Taking into consideration our available manpower and the desirability of providing at least one Penetration Brigade by the end of the year, I asked the Commander-in-Chief, India, early in August—

(a) To re-form initially four brigades, of which one would be entirely British.

(b) To re-form two more British brigades later, if reinforcements became available.

I estimated that one brigade would thus be ready for operations by mid-December and the other three a month later. The period of re-organization and training of Special Force had to allow for the re-formation of its ancillary services, as these brigades had to be self-contained.

130. A month later, after consultations with the War Office and the Commander-in-Chief, India, it became clear that we should have to reduce Special Force to four brigades, and this I recommended to the Supreme Allied Commander.

During October the decision to form an Air Landing Brigade and to provide a third brigade for 36 British Division further reduced the possibility of forming Penetration Brigades, because reinforcements for the two former formations could only come from Special Force. I agreed, therefore, that this Force should consist only of three Brigades.

Formation of an Indian Airborne Division.

131. In August, the Supreme Allied Commander asked the Commander-in-Chief, India,

to examine the problem of forming an airborne division, the raising of which was supported by the War Office. The main points in the Commander-in-Chief's reply were—

(a) The division could be formed and trained by the 15th February, 1945, subject to the conditions given in (b) to (e) below.

(b) A British parachute brigade from outside India must arrive fully trained by the 15th November.

(c) 26 Indian Infantry Brigade to be made available as an air landing brigade at the expense of making up 36 British Division to three brigades. (A brigade from Special Force was later substituted for 26 Brigade as an air landing brigade and the latter remained allotted to 36 British Division).

(d) 875 glider pilots to be available by the 1st December.

(e) Transport aircraft equivalent to twenty squadrons to be made available by the 15th January.

During the prolonged discussions regarding the formation of an Indian airborne division I had provided India Command with my proposals for the re-organization of 50 Indian Parachute Brigade which I assumed would provide the nucleus of such a division.

44 Indian Airborne Division was finally formed by India Command on the 1st November.

Conversions of Divisions to a Standard Divisional Basis.

132. As I wrote in my first Despatch, our earlier operations had shown that divisions organized and equipped for special rôles were uneconomical and wasteful. Later we had had experience of the unsuitability of a division, such as the 2nd British or 25th Indian, equipped solely with mechanical transport, for warfare in mountainous jungle country and of the tactical disadvantages inherent in a Light Division of two brigades such as the 17th Indian.

To overcome this, the organization of a Standard Division—details of which are contained in my first Despatch—was produced, and the Commander-in-Chief, India, had accepted my recommendations.

Army and Corps Commanders were given a free hand to select the most suitable time for the re-organization of their divisions.

When I relinquished command all divisions, except Special Force of which I have already written, had either re-organized or were re-organizing.

17 Indian Light Division.

133. 17 Indian Light Division was the only large formation to be rested and re-organized outside the area of Fourteenth Army. I had decided that this Division should be rested in India because it had been in the forward zone for 3½ years and had to be completely re-organized.

Among other changes it had to absorb a third brigade and to change the composition of its brigades from three Gurkha battalions to brigades of one British, one Indian and one Gurkha battalion. The Division was to be ready for service again by February.

Arrangements for Internal Security in re-occupied Burma.

134. As we advanced into Burma, we had to find troops for internal security in re-occupied territory, until such time as the police force could be re-created.

I had of course no intention of detaching battalions from infantry divisions on such duty. The most suitable type of unit was one composed of officers and men who had had experience in the Burma Frontier Force or Burma Military Police. I, therefore, arranged with the Commander-in-Chief, India, for 2 and 4 Burma Regiments to be trained for this duty and earmarked for Fourteenth Army. I said that I should probably need more battalions.

I also asked the Commander-in-Chief, India, to obtain the agreement of the Government of Burma to disband the Northern Kachin Levies and to re-form them into two Kachin battalions for use later for internal security.

Re-organization of the Chain of Command.

135. I had come to the conclusion in August that future operations would make continued control of the Arakan operations by Headquarters, Fourteenth Army, impossible. I therefore ordered that a re-organization of command should be examined on the following basis:—

(a) That the command of 15 Indian Corps should pass from Headquarters, Fourteenth Army, to H.Q., 11 Army Group.

(b) That H.Q., Fourteenth Army, should be reconstituted as a mobile Field Army H.Q., for the command of two Corps, and be relieved of the responsibility for the lines of communication.

I was also examining the formation of a new headquarters to be known as H.Q., L. of C. Command, to be located at Comilla. I intended that the Commander of the Lines of Communication should command both the existing Areas (202 and 404) of the L. of C. and thus free the Commander, Fourteenth Army, and Commander, 15 Indian Corps, from the work which the control of the lines of communication involved.

136. As a result of this examination, I gave the following orders:—

(a) H.Q., Fourteenth Army, to be re-organized.

(b) H.Q., L. of C. Command, to be set up, the commander of which would assume control directly under H.Q., 11 Army Group, of the existing 202 and 404 L. of C. Areas.

(c) Establishments of H.Q., Sub-Areas, to be standardised to simplify the future adjustment of boundaries of sub-areas.

(d) Two Advanced Echelons, 11 Army Group, one of which already existed, to be formed to assist H.Q., 11 Army Group to control general administration on the L. of C. The date selected for the transfer of 15 Indian Corps to command of 11 Army Group and the formation of H.Q., L. of C. Command, was the 15th November. H.Q., Fourteenth Army, moved to Imphal at the same time.

137. In re-organizing Command and Administration I was looking ahead. I foresaw that when the re-occupation of Burma was complete, the commander of these Ls. of C. would probably extend his command to include the whole of Burma and that 202 and 404 Areas

(64487)

would then be transferred to the command of the Commander-in-Chief, India. The flexibility of the organization should admit of future adjustments and extensions.

138. This examination of the organization of the L. of C. confirmed my opinion that some re-organization of the establishments of reception camps, reinforcement camps, feeding and welfare arrangements generally on the L. of C. was overdue.

It was not, however, possible to start this re-organization for lack of men, as all British personnel likely to be available were to be absorbed in the formation of H.Q., L. of C. Command, and the re-organization of Headquarters, L. of C. Areas and Sub Areas. I had, therefore, to defer these measures until the manpower situation had improved.

Changes affecting East African Forces.

139. (a) It was necessary to re-organize 11 (East African) Division to bring it as far as possible into line with an Indian Standard Division.

(b) 22 and 28 (East African) Brigades, which formed part of the garrison of Ceylon, were on a different establishment from the brigades of 11 (East African) Division. It was always my intention to re-organize these two Brigades so that they should be inter-changeable with those of 11 Division. It has not, however, been practicable to make this change.

I foresaw, however, that additional brigades would be needed both in Fourteenth Army and 15 Indian Corps. I therefore arranged to withdraw 22 and 28 (East African) Brigades from Ceylon. This left Ceylon with three locally enlisted battalions only.

Re-organization of Armoured Formations.

140. I mentioned in my first Despatch that major changes in the organization of tank brigades were necessary and that—

(a) all regiments should be re-equipped with medium tanks,

(b) a troop of flame-throwers should be included in each squadron, and

(c) an infantry battalion should be included in each brigade.

The Commander-in-Chief, India, has agreed to this re-organization and an infantry battalion has been provided for each brigade, but we are still short of medium and flame-throwing tanks.

Command Changes.

141. There are two other important changes, the policy in regard to which was decided while I was Commander-in-Chief, 11 Army Group, although it was not put into effect until after I had left. Since, however, I was closely associated with this policy, I should, I consider, mention these two changes in this Despatch. The first was the appointment of an Allied Land Commander-in-Chief. The second was the transfer of Headquarters, Allied Land Forces to the vicinity of Calcutta.

142. As long as General Stilwell operated under the command of General Slim no difficulties regarding command arose. When, however, General Stilwell came under the direct command of the Supreme Allied Commander, there was a duplicate chain of command as General Slim operated under my orders and General Stilwell under the Supreme Allied

Commander. I pointed out the grave disadvantages of such a system and urged the Supreme Allied Commander to arrange for the appointment of a commander of the Allied Land Forces. He eventually agreed to my recommendation and put forward his proposals to the Chiefs of Staff in September.*

143. It had originally been intended that the headquarters of 11 Army Group which, under the new organization was to become H.Q., Allied Land Forces, should go to Kandy. I pointed out in my first Despatch the grave disadvantages of placing this headquarters at a place so far distant from the area of operations to which both signal and other communications were so bad.† I continued therefore, to press during the summer for the move of H.Q. 11 Army Group, to the neighbourhood of Calcutta. The Supreme Allied Commander finally approved this proposal and arrangements were made to move my Headquarters to Barrackpore. The Commander-in-Chief, India, with that readiness to help which always distinguishes him, moved H.Q., Eastern Command, to provide my staff with the necessary accommodation and offices.

144. The need for the closest co-operation between the Army and the Air Forces at all levels of command had led the Supreme Allied Commander to set up a committee to examine and report upon the best method of improving co-operation.

Its principal recommendation was that army and air headquarters should be alongside each other at all levels down to and including composite group level. I strongly supported this proposal, which involved the following re-organization of air commands:—

(a) Eastern Air Command absorbed Third Tactical Air Force and was to work in conjunction with Advance Headquarters, Allied Land Forces.

(b) 221 Group became a Composite Group for co-operation with Fourteenth Army.

(c) 224 Group was to provide support for 15 Indian Corps in the Arakan.

(d) 10 U.S.A.A.F. was to continue to operate with Northern Combat Area Command.

In each case, the army and air headquarters were to be located together. Operations subsequent to those covered by this Despatch have shown the wisdom of these decisions.

PART III.—ADMINISTRATION.

Adjutant-General Questions.

145. *Reinforcements.* I have already mentioned the shortage of infantry reinforcements in discussing the availability of formations, but the demand for all types of reinforcements has continued to exceed the supply. The general position has, except that of certain highly technical trades, however, improved since the situation described in my first Despatch.

* *War Office footnote:* Additional particulars regarding the re-organization of the command of the Allied Land Forces in South-East Asia are set out in the Supreme Allied Commander's Report, South-East Asia, 1943-45, at Part A., para. 43; Part B., paras. 170-172; 226-227; 231 and 268-269.

† *War Office footnote:* The views of the Supreme Allied Commander and his reasons for the move to Ceylon are set out in Part A., paragraphs 12-14 of his Report, South-East Asia, 1943-45.

Shortages, although a very severe handicap, have not made it necessary to withdraw units but it has been necessary to send some British infantry drafts to reinforcement camps without previous jungle training in order to maintain battalions at minimum fighting strength. This does not mean that drafts are sent forward wholly untrained since they are given some training by the camp training staffs.

146. *Releases.* As a result of the announcement of the scheme for the "Re-allocation of British Manpower" on the cessation of hostilities in Europe, instructions were issued to units early in November, together with provisional Class A release rolls. Personnel fell into three categories:—

(a) Surplus to manpower requirements.

(b) Those called out for vital post-war reconstruction.

(c) Compassionate cases.

147. *Repatriation.* The reduction, in September, of the period of overseas service to 3 years and 8 months caused widespread satisfaction. The numbers affected, however, were large and their despatch had to be spread over the following four months, except in the case of the officers and men of the Royal Corps of Signals. The repatriation of Signal personnel had unfortunately to be delayed and spread over the period January to March 1945, whilst officers had to wait longer and were to be sent home between February and April as the replacements had to arrive before repatriates left their units.

148. *Leave.* (a) The opening, in August, of the Indian Army leave scheme for officers filled a long felt want. All British officers and British other ranks who had completed 5 years' service abroad were eligible, but the number was so large that leave could only be granted to those with 8 years' overseas service. Even so, it is likely that it will take over 12 months to send these officers home, owing to the limited number of passages.

(b) A special war leave programme was arranged between July and October. This enabled Indian other ranks, whose leave was overdue, to go to their homes.

Medical.

149. *Evacuation of Casualties.* While Imphal was still surrounded, all casualties had to be flown to the base hospitals as described in my first Despatch. I had always pressed for the movement of sick and wounded to hospital by air, but until operations in Arakan and Imphal this year there had never been enough aircraft. Their increasing use on this important duty reduced the number of men who had to travel by the old types of transport. As we advanced down the Tiddim and Tamu roads, airstrips were constructed for use by light aircraft in the first place, and, later, by cargo aircraft as the strips were enlarged and their surfaces improved. Casualties were sent to a central air maintenance area in Imphal and thence by returning supply aircraft to the base hospitals. All casualties from the Tiddim road were flown back. From Tamu, sick and wounded travelled both by air and road.

On the Arakan front, the movement of casualties by air was limited almost entirely to those of 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley, since water transport was available for other formations.

Our casualties from North Burma (36 British Division) were also flown back, at first by light aircraft and later by returning heavy transport planes, to our forward base hospitals in the Ledo area.

150. The organization needed when large numbers of casualties are moved by air was being studied during the past six months. A start was made to reduce the wasteful "ribbon" distribution of hospitals, which had hitherto had to be maintained along the L. of C. solely for transit purposes, and to concentrate beds in large hospital centres. This policy, as it develops, will allow a much larger number of cases to be retained in the Fourteenth Army area until they are fit to return to their units, and thereby avoid the many drawbacks in their evacuation to base hospitals in India.

151. The following is a summary in round figures of casualties moved between the 25th June and the 12th November:—

	<i>Within Fourteenth Army</i>	<i>Ex- Fourteenth Army</i>	TOTAL
By Road ...	26,300	—	26,300
By Rail ...	22,300	—	22,300
By Air ...	29,800	3,000	32,800
By Sea ...	9,500	15,100	24,600
By River ...	3,900	12,800	16,700
	91,800	30,900	122,700

Note.—All casualties are sent by river to the railheads of the India Command.

152. *Incidence of Disease.* The period June to November has witnessed a steady fall in the sick rate. The daily rate per

thousand of 4.2, at the peak period in June, compares favourably with the peak figure of 6.0 in 1943. In November, the incidence was only 3.0 compared with 5.0 per thousand in the same month last year. This reduction was mainly due to the fall in the malaria rate, which is due to a steady improvement in malaria discipline.

153. D.D.T. had not been used on a scale adequate to show its capabilities, but experiments were being made.

154. Apart from malaria, there were two other somewhat serious outbreaks of disease; dysentery, which reached its peak in June and July, and scrub typhus, which caused much sickness between August and October. The dysentery died down in October, but emphasised once more the necessity for maintaining a high standard of sanitation. Effective preventive measures against scrub typhus have been discovered by the medical officer who was lent to South-East Asia Command by the Colonial Office and attached to my headquarters.

155. Since my first Despatch, the consulting physician, surgeon, malariologist and psychiatrist have arrived at this Headquarters and their advice has proved most valuable.

156. *Casualties.* The following table gives a summary of our battle casualties from the 1st July to the 1st November and, for comparison, a statement showing the Japanese casualties during the same period. The numbers of enemy killed are those whose bodies were actually counted and they do not include the casualties inflicted by our air action:

CASUALTIES 1ST JULY, 1944 TO 1ST NOVEMBER, 1944.

	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing</i>
<i>Fourteenth Army fronts.</i>			
British	583	2,001	110
Japanese	8,859	—	234 prisoner
<i>Northern Combat Area Command</i>			
British*	513	1,389	47
Japanese†	3,724	—	246 prisoners

* Special Force and 36 British Division.

† Figures include casualties inflicted by American and Chinese forces.

The Japanese losses in killed alone exceeded our total losses in killed, wounded and missing.

Welfare and Morale.

157. *British Troops.* The morale of the troops has reached a high level, for they have shown their superiority over the Japanese.

The main interest of the British troops is centred in repatriation. Service in a distant Eastern Theatre is unpopular and the British soldier looks forward to going Home. The handling of this important question by the Government appeared in the eyes of the men unsympathetic, but the reduction in the period of service overseas has convinced the men of the sincerity of the Government.

The grant of Japanese Campaign Pay and War Service Increment and the White Paper on Release were generally welcomed.

158. "Mail" and "Rations" improved greatly; the film situation also improved and additional Kinema Sections were allotted to

South-East Asia Command. "Live Entertainment" remained inadequate, for there were too few E.N.S.A. shows and Indian Concert Parties. Radio entertainment was increased to thirty hours per week. The newspaper "S.E.A.C." grew in popularity, its circulation by November having reached some 30,000 copies daily. Travelling facilities for men going on leave continued, however, to be bad, in spite of strenuous efforts that were made to improve them. Shortage of railway equipment and rolling stock caused many of the difficulties.

159. I wish to mention three institutions in Imphal which did much to alleviate conditions in the forward area:—

(a) An Officers' Club was opened, the popularity of which proved that it filled a long felt want.

(b) Toc H Canteen, known as "The Elephant Arms", had an average nightly attendance of 1,000 British soldiers. The attached leave hostel was also popular.

(c) The Y.M.C.A., which had remained open throughout the battle, also had an average daily attendance of a thousand. I wish to pay tribute to the Reverend Walter Corbett and his wife for the devoted service they rendered to the troops.

(d) I also wish to mention the splendid work of the Women's Auxiliary Service (Burma). This Service operated mobile and static canteens in the forward areas and on many occasions worked right up with the leading formations. The value to morale of a women's service operating canteens in the interests of the troops in forward areas and under monsoon conditions was inestimable.

160. *Indian Troops.* The discipline and fighting spirit of Indian troops has been throughout of the highest quality.

The re-opening of leave on a large scale, and the improvement in economic conditions in the villages, did much to relieve the Indian soldier's mind, but there are still complaints of the irregularities of the postal services, the failings of the family allotment system and graft and exploitation by petty local officials.

The Commander-in-Chief, India, has taken all possible steps to put these matters right.

161. *African Troops.* The morale of both East and West African troops has been satisfactory. They require more training. Owing to the shortage of formations, they had to be committed to action before they were entirely ready for war.

Supplies, Transport and Maintenance.

162. *Movements and Transportation.* A full description of the lines of communication was given in my first Despatch. The main tasks of the Movements and Transportation Directorates during the period of this Despatch were:—

(a) The maintenance of Fourteenth Army in Assam and Arakan.

(b) The building up of stocks on both the Imphal and Arakan fronts for the post-monsoon offensive.

(c) The movement of formations under the relief programme.

163. *Tonnages Handled.* (a) *Assam Line of Communication.* The average monthly tonnage of stores for Fourteenth Army, excluding P.O.L., carried between June and November was 31,200, an increase of some 3,000 tons over the monthly average for the previous six months. This increase was creditable in view of the difficulties caused by the monsoon. The completion in August of the American 6-inch pipeline from Calcutta to Dibrugarh has released wagons needed formerly for aviation spirit. I hope that the Assam line of communication will now be able to carry all the traffic, and that the tonnage which can be handled in railheads and depots will be the limiting factor, rather than the capacity of the river, rail and road systems of the lines of communication.

(b) *Chittagong Port.*

The average monthly import of stores, excluding bulk P.O.L., was 51,000 tons. This figure is lower by 10,000 tons than the

average of the previous three months, and is explained by the smaller number of ships using the port. On the other hand, the average tonnage discharged per ship per day increased.

(c) *Arakan Ports.*

The average monthly imports into Cox's Bazaar, Ultaklali and Maungdaw totalled 23,600 tons, which was an increase of 4,500 tons over the average of the previous three months. This increase in tonnage, in spite of the difficulties of working in the monsoon at these small ports, is noteworthy.

164. *Opening of Maungdaw Port.* A new channel into the mouth of the Naf River was discovered, and it was found possible to bring ocean-going ships for the first time to Maungdaw. This saved much overland transport.

165. *Monsoon Reliefs.* The following is a summary of the major moves completed, or in process during the monsoon:—

(a) *Divisions.*

(i) One division from Assam to India.

(ii) One division from Ceylon to Assam.

(iii) One division from India to Assam.

(iv) One division from India to Arakan.

(b) *Brigades.*

(i) Six brigades from Assam to India.

(ii) One brigade from Arakan to India.

(iii) One brigade from India to Assam.

(iv) Two brigades from India to Arakan.

(v) One brigade from Ceylon to Assam.

(vi) One brigade from Ceylon to Arakan.

The details of these moves are given in Appendix "A", as the times and methods are interesting and instructive.

166. An interesting experiment in transportation was the use made of "jeep trains" by 36 British Division in their advance down the railway.

This new method of haulage was first tried in July on the Myitkyina - Mogaung section of the line, as no locomotives were available. It was found that a jeep, fitted with flanged wheels, could draw some 40 tons of freight and "jeep trains" have since formed part of the transportation organization in that area.

167. *Air Supply.* When discussing "Organization" in my first Despatch, I stated the need for a permanent organization to handle the movement by air of troops and supplies, and I mentioned that my proposals were, at that time, being considered by the Air Commander-in-Chief, South-East Asia Command, and the Commander-in-Chief, India. The last six months has seen the birth of the Army Air Transport Organization, with headquarters at Comilla alongside the recently formed Headquarters, Combat Cargo Task Force. These two Headquarters, the one Military and the other R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F., worked as a whole, the Army staff being under command of 11 Army Group and the Air staff under Eastern Air Command. The main duties of the Commander of this new organization were:—

(a) To control all the Rear Airfield Maintenance Organizations in South-East Asia Command.

(b) To ensure that the requirements of forward formations for air supply or air

transport were met in accordance with the policy laid down by Headquarters, 11 Army Group.

(c) To advise and assist formations dependent on air supply, and formations training or preparing for air transported operations.

168. Rear Airfield Maintenance Units were formed and the existing Air Supply Companies, renamed Air Despatch Companies, were re-organized to handle daily, 80 tons of stores for air dropping. The duties of these companies included the collection of stores from the nearest depot, packing, loading and the provision of crews for dropping stores. Each Rear Airfield Maintenance Organization also included an Air Despatch and Reception Unit which was a combined passenger and freight section to control the loading of aircraft and to exercise general flying control on the airstrip.

169. I emphasised in my first Despatch the vital part played by air supply in Arakan and at Imphal during the first half of the year. As it was obvious that the success of our future operations would be equally, if not more, dependent on air transport, I was determined that the system of control which I have briefly outlined should be introduced as soon as possible. In spite of the shortage of manpower and other difficulties, it was introduced on the 18th October. As our operations expand changes may become necessary, but the organization is sufficiently flexible to allow this.

170. The extent to which formations were supplied by air is best illustrated by the total monthly tonnages dropped or, when airstrips were available, landed. In June, the figure was 5,854 tons; this fell to 4,019 tons in August, when only two divisions were operating on the Chindwin front and only two brigades of Special Force were in North Burma; it then rose steadily, and by November, when 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley, certain brigades of 33 and 4 Corps on the Chindwin, and 36 British Division in North Burma were being supplied by air, reached 10,573 tons.

The airfields upon which transport aircraft were based were:—

<i>Airfield.</i>	<i>Formations Served.</i>
Dinjan ...	Fort Hertz.
Moran ...	36 British Division.
Sylhet ...	Special Force, 4 and 33 Corps.
Agartala...	Lushai Brigade, 4 and 33 Corps
Comilla ...	81 (West African) Division.
Chittagong	Corps Troops, 4 Corps.

171. *P.O.L.* In the early part of the year the supply of petrol and lubricants had been difficult, but by decreasing consumption and by increasing our bulk storage and methods of distribution this had improved.

Imperial requirements increased during the last six months from 11½ million gallons to nearly 14½ million per month, but decreased consumption during the monsoon enabled us not only to meet the increase, but to build up our reserve stocks to 30 million gallons by the 1st November. To make this possible we had to:—

(a) Increase the storage of *P.O.L.* in bulk at Chittagong port from 11 million to 20 million gallons.

(64487)

(b) Increase the capacity of tanks at airfields and army depots by 3½ million gallons.

(c) Increase the capacity of our rail cars by 485,000 gallons.

(d) Greatly extend our pipelines.

172. *Situation as regards Rations.* The supply of fresh meat for Indian troops is still difficult. In October, the supply of sheep and goats only permitted the issue of meat on three days with another half day in Assam and on two days in Arakan during the month. There is little hope of improvement, but I hope to compensate for the loss of protein in the ration by issuing dehydrated fish.

The production of dehydrated goat meat has improved, but is still insufficient. The Commander-in-Chief, India has been asked to increase production and to arrange to import dehydrated meat, if the religious objections of Hindus and Mohammedans can be satisfactorily met.

During October, there were larger stocks of frozen meat in India and frozen meat was flown in to British and African troops of Fourteenth Army. Cold storage plants in forward areas are being built.

173. A new Field Service scale of rations for Indian troops was introduced on the 1st November. The new scale is not only more lavish than the old, but it is designed to give a higher calorific value to meet arduous conditions in this Theatre.

174. Various projects to increase local supplies of fresh food to reduce the tonnage on the lines of communication are being developed. In spite of the shortage of labour and agricultural equipment, much progress has been made and I expect that we shall produce vegetables, livestock and salted fish in sufficient quantities for our needs in 1945.

Maintenance.

175. (a) The supply of vehicles, particularly jeeps and load carriers, is unsatisfactory. Fighting units are not yet fully equipped and only by strict economy and careful control of issues is it possible to maintain formations engaged in operations. Administrative units in rear areas inevitably go short, with a consequent loss in efficiency.

(b) The design and provision of equipment which can be carried by air has been thoroughly examined. R.E.M.E. are making machine trailers which can be carried by air for their workshops in forward areas. These are improvised from existing equipment until those designed in the U.K. arrive. The Wireless Testing Trailer is reported as being up to the standard of the Home pattern. The selection and preliminary trials of vehicles, other than these, for air transport are made by the staff of G.H.Q., India, to specifications supplied by my staff.

(c) I have set up a committee to examine and if possible reduce the number of modifications which are demanded in equipment.

The Engineering Effort. A. Road Communications.

176. *The Arakan Road.* At the beginning of July the policy in Arakan was to provide a new single-way brick road alongside the existing one-way road, the latter to

be used in its less worn sections for passing places.

By September, the road was nearly finished, but maintenance of the completed section was so abnormally heavy that it was decided to waterproof the surface with bitumen. In view of the probable future operations, this was eventually not done.

Between July and November, therefore, no major road work was done in Arakan other than the widening of the coast road, and the bulk of the engineers were employed in maintenance. 22,000 local labourers, excluding military supervisors, were employed.

177. Imphal Front. Before the Japanese offensive in March caused a stoppage of work, the following all weather two-way roads were being built:—

Imphal - Tiddim.

Palel - Tamu.

Tamu - Witok - Mau.

178. Imphal - Tiddim (164 miles). It was originally intended to improve this road to an all-weather standard and as we advanced much work was done on it.

By September, half the distance had been finished, but the difficulties in maintaining an all-weather standard were out of proportion to the value of the road. I, therefore, decided to concentrate all road building resources in labour and material on the Tamu - Witok - Kalewa route to the Chindwin; though some had to be left to maintain the Tiddim road at a standard adequate to support the force on that line.

179. Palel - Tamu (43 miles). As soon as operations permitted, the construction of this road to a two-way, all-weather Class 30 standard was restarted and it was hoped to finish it by the end of the year. This was later altered to Class 70 to permit of the passage of loaded tank-transporters, and the date of completion was extended to April 1945. By November 1944, satisfactory progress had been made, 2,500 military and 2,000 local labour being employed.

180. Tamu - Witok - Kalewa (112 miles). Planned before March as a two-way, all-weather road from Tamu to Witok, this road was subsequently extended to be two-way, fair-weather Class 70 to Kalewa.

The road was virtually finished by November. An all-weather Class 70 road from Tamu to Kalewa on a different alignment was also planned, but by November reconnaissance only had been made.

181. The "Breach Road" (Bongaigaon - Pandu). The Bongaigaon - Amingaon railway has been cut during the monsoon every year except one during the past thirty-two years, and communications in Assam have been interrupted for many months on each occasion.

To provide an alternative route for traffic it was decided to improve to two-way, all-weather standard the road from Bongaigaon to Jogighopa (21 miles) on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River and from Goalpara on the south bank to Pandu (93 miles).

These roads, which were virtually finished by November, should provide a good alternative route if the railway should be breached in future.

182. Road Construction. In planning all-weather roads in forward areas the problem has been their construction during the monsoon at a sufficient rate to ensure the adequate support of operations and their subsequent maintenance.

"Bithess", a bitumen-impregnated sheet of heavy jute sacking which was used to cover airfields and prevent penetration of water into the ground, is now being used on roads. It provides an all-weather surface suitable for all but tracked vehicles and can be laid at a rate double that of metalling and tarring road surfaces.

The Engineering Effort. B. Airfields.

183. Few new airfields have been built, but the demands for the expansion of existing airfields, and their conversion for use by heavier types of aircraft, strained my engineer resources to the utmost, in spite of the arrival of new mechanical equipment.

The principal changes have been:—

Cox's Bazaar. Enlarged to accommodate an additional heavy bomber squadron and a fighter squadron.

Chittagong. Enlarged to take two heavy bomber squadrons, a U.S.A.A.F. Lightning squadron, a R.A.F. Wing and an Air Staging Post.

Hathazari. Some twenty miles north of Chittagong. Constructed for one transport squadron.

Fenny. Doubled in size to accept four U.S.A.A.F. Medium Bomber squadrons and one long-range Fighter squadron.

Shamshernagar. Fifty miles south of Sylhet, previously known as Tilagaon. Completely re-designed from a bomber base to an Air Transport and Air Service Centre. The U.S.A.A.F. lent me an airborne aviation engineer company and a group of engineers to help in building this airfield. Their assistance was valuable and the co-operation between the American, British and Indian engineer units engaged, exemplary. I have mentioned this project in some detail because, not only is it the largest airfield in India, but it was the model of the new airfields which we subsequently built.

Sylhet, was expanded for the U.S.A.A.F. from a two squadron Heavy Bomber to a four squadron Transport field.

Tulihal, near Imphal, has been enlarged from a fair-weather Fighter to an all-weather four squadron Transport field. Constructed entirely with "Bithess", it is now regarded as the best airfield in the Fourteenth Army area.

I have referred only to major construction in the rear areas. There was, of course, much other less important work, and work on maintenance during the monsoon was heavy.

184. The construction of forward airfields continued in co-operation with Headquarters, Third Tactical Air Force. An important fact which saved much work was our ascendancy in the air. Dispersal areas were no longer needed and this reduced the mileage of taxi tracks and roads, labour and material.

185. Airfields in North-East Assam. Much work was still done on the numerous airfields built for the U.S.A.A.F. in

this area. Although no new airfields were made, the size of the task can be measured from the following figures which shows the major works finished by mid-November at the eleven main airfields in Assam:—

Runways and taxi tracks, 38 miles.

Number of aircraft standings, 506.

Aircraft parking aprons, 60 acres.

Roads, 111 miles.

Accommodation, for 33,000 officers and men.

Covered storage, 67 acres.

186. It will be remembered that I am writing of the monsoon and of an area where the rainfall is the heaviest in the world. The amount of new construction, involving the clearance of thick jungle, and of maintenance under severe climatic conditions, both in Assam and Arakan, reflects the greatest credit on our airfield engineers.

187. *Airfields in Ceylon.* The improvement and extension of the nine main airfields on the Island continued.

As a matter of convenience, it was decided that, from August, the Engineer-in-Chief, South-East Asia Command, who is at Kandy, should relieve my Chief Engineer of the technical responsibility for the works in Ceylon, the latter's duties being henceforth limited to stores and personnel. The responsibilities of the Chief Engineer, Ceylon Army Command, and of the Air Ministry Works Department, were unaffected by this change.

188. *Airfields in North Burma.* As I have mentioned the operations under General Stilwell, this section of my Despatch would be incomplete without reference to the airfield construction undertaken by the United States Army Air Engineers in North Burma.

As General Stilwell's forces advanced his engineers built three airfields in the Hukawng Valley. On the afternoon of the capture of Myitkyina airfield, 10 U.S.A.A.F., on whom rested the responsibility of building forward airfields, landed by glider the first company of a battalion of airborne aviation engineers. The rest of the battalion followed in transport aircraft within a week. The airfield was in full use two days after its capture and has since been completely reconstructed and greatly expanded.

The concentration of aircraft on Myitkyina airfield was very heavy, nearly 2,000 landings and take-offs being made daily by heavy transport aircraft. More airfields in this area were clearly necessary and three more Engineer Aviation battalions were flown in with their full equipment. By November, three all-weather Transport airfields had been built and two others were nearly finished.

The movement and supply of the engineers at work on these airfields was airborne throughout, as no suitable communications existed overland. To construct five large airfields under monsoon conditions was a noteworthy feat of engineering work. To have done it as an airborne operation was outstanding.

The Engineering Effort. C. Oil Pipelines.

189. The 4-inch pipeline joining Chittagong and Chandranathpur, mentioned in my first

Despatch, was finished as far as Comilla by November. Construction of the final link between Comilla and Chandranathpur was in progress. This will give an unbroken line from Chittagong to Manipur Road. The extension of this line to Imphal was begun at the end of September.

190. The American so-called "Infinity Line" from Calcutta to Kunming reached Myitkyina in October. From Ledo there are two 4-inch lines for aviation and motor spirit respectively.

The construction of the second American 6-inch pipeline from Chittagong to Tinsukia, forecast in my first Despatch, was also started. This line will follow the British 4-inch line and the operation of both will be under one control and for the mutual benefit of ourselves and our Allies.

191. The elaborate pipeline system in the North-East Assam airfields area was handed over to the Americans at the end of July.

Civil Affairs Burma.

192. On the 23rd June, the British Military Administration in Burma had under its control the Fort Hertz and Sumprabum areas, the Hukawng Valley, the western fringe of the Chin Hills District and the northern fringe of the Arakan Division.

On the 12th November, the area included the whole of the Myitkyina District, the northern part of the Bhamo and Katha area of the Upper Chindwin District and all but the southern area of the Chin Hills District. The area under administration in Arakan remained unchanged.

193. The principal centre of activity in Civil Affairs was the Myitkyina District, where the advance of the forces of Northern Combat Area Command brought important new tracts under British control. The main tasks were the restoration of law and order, the care of refugees, the feeding and clothing of destitutes, the organization of medical services, the provision of labour for the Armed Forces and, last but not least, the restoration of confidence among the local inhabitants. Although a great deal was done, the British Military Administration was handicapped by the restriction on the number of Civil Affairs officers allowed to work in the area. The civil population suffered in consequence: had more staff been allowed, action to relieve hardship could have been taken more rapidly and effectively.

194. The chief problem in the Hukawng Valley was the shortage of food, and relief camps had to be organised on a large scale. Seed and agricultural tools were imported, but immediate relief was given by developing the local salt production to the maximum, and thus setting free much air transport for other supplies.

195. During the earlier part of our re-occupation of North Burma, the British Military Administration was handicapped by the movement southwards of large sections of the Shan and Burmese inhabitants. This was due in part to Japanese propaganda and in part to the fear of Chinese troops and the Kachin Levies. They gradually returned as confidence was restored, but, in the interval, there was a shortage of potential subordinate officials,

police, and agricultural labour. Nevertheless, a police force was organized, order restored, crops sown, and "collaborators" brought to trial.

196. In the Kabaw Valley and the Naga and Chin Hills, the work of the Military Administration was largely confined to the organization of Intelligence, the provision of labour, and general liaison between the Army and the local population.

In Arakan, the British Military Administration continued to administer the northern area.

197. The Civil Affairs Service depots for relief supplies and stores were at Chittagong for Arakan, at Manipur Road and Imphal for the Chin and Naga Hills and Upper Chindwin, and at Ledo and Moran (seventy miles southwest of Ledo) for the Northern Combat Area Command area. The difficulty, of course, lay in moving these supplies forward to distribution centres; and Army air and road transport had to be borrowed, until such time as Civil Affairs Service transport companies could be formed.

198. In spite of the shortage of transport, the paucity of communications and bad weather, the whole of the relief supplies for the population of the re-occupied areas were successfully distributed, including some 6,000 tons of rice, 1,500 tons of salt, and large quantities of milk, cloth, etc.

The chiefs, headmen and local inhabitants of the areas released from Japanese occupation were found for the most part to have behaved loyally during our absence and, with a few exceptions, our return was greeted with satisfaction.

Main Administrative Lessons.

199. *Air Supply.* The need of foresight, of standardising drops, of giving the Air Supply Depots ample warning of any change of plan, and of economising resources, were all of paramount importance. As operations went on, formations became more skilful in choosing dropping zones, and pilots more efficient at dropping on them. The necessity for alternative dropping zones was clearly brought out. Finally, the importance of salvaging all parachute material and containers was emphasised.

200. To meet the uncertainties of supply-dropping in the monsoon, orders were given that, as soon as there was a failure to drop supplies, all ranks and mules were to be put on half rations until dropping could be resumed. All troops carried three days' reserves and they could therefore carry on for six days: in addition they had their emergency rations. These precautionary measures turned out to be wise. It so happened that the maximum number of days on which supply-dropping was impossible consecutively was five, but on one occasion the margin was narrow. In a final attempt on the sixth day, the aircraft found only one gap in the cloud over the whole area. Under this gap was the dropping zone.

201. *Vehicles.* The value of the 30 cwt. 6 × 6 vehicles has been shown. It had the cross-country performance of a jeep, except on narrow tracks, and nearly the capacity of a 3-tonner.

As regards specialist vehicles, experience has shown that they should either all be 4 × 4 or that their equipment should be capable of

being fitted on to a standard chassis. The latter is preferable as, should the specialist vehicle be damaged, its equipment can be quickly transferred.

The highest standards of maintenance and traffic discipline are essential to maintain efficiency under the conditions I have described.

202. *Salvage.* Owing to the length and complexity of the lines of communication, it was found unprofitable to send back many types of salvage. Instead, workshops were set up which manufactured from this salvage a large assortment of articles, and thereby saved transport.

203. *Welfare.* Good administration in units in the provision of food, recreation, etc., was vitally important in the monsoon for the quick restoration of morale after battle. Cinemas are possibly better than E.N.S.A. parties in this Theatre and I hope that before long each brigade will have its own. Corps "Welfare Shops" proved very popular.

Under monsoon conditions, arrangements for the periodical withdrawal of troops from the line in order to have hot baths and a change of clothing are essential and have a high moral value.

204. *Conclusion.* The administrative machine stood up well to the strain of fighting a war and administering a great expanse of territory with inadequate resources and under difficult conditions. Much improvisation has been necessary and all Services have shown great resource and ingenuity in doing their many duties. Their success reflects the greatest credit on all concerned.

PART IV. CONCLUSION.

205. "This Army has by its aggressive operations guarded the base of the American air line to China and protected India against the horrors of Japanese invasion." With these words Mr. Churchill put in clear perspective the vital part that Fourteenth Army has played during the last six months in the struggle against Japan. The crushing of the Japanese offensive against Kohima and Imphal and our pursuit of his retreating columns to the Chindwin were, of course, one battle. We have inflicted upon the enemy a major defeat. It is the first time the Japanese have been driven back so far—and they will go further. The facts speak for themselves and they will give encouragement and assurance to those who fought against a ruthless and cunning enemy, against disease and in rain and heat through the jungles and mountains of Assam and Burma, to inflict the first great land defeat on Japan.

I have quoted the words of the Prime Minister. I also quote a few sentences from an address delivered by His Excellency the Viceroy, Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, when he visited the troops during the course of the campaign: "You will find that, when the history of the war comes to be written, the recent fighting will be put down as one of the turning points of the war, when the Japanese were routed and their downfall really began. Not only have you inflicted a tremendous defeat on the enemy but, even more, you have dealt a damaging blow to their morale—and it is the breaking of the enemy's morale that finishes wars in the end."

206. This Despatch brings to an end the account of my command of 11 Army Group, and I cannot finish it without paying tribute to the magnificent team of officers and men who made up the forces under my command.

Though it is outside the period covered by my two Despatches I must refer briefly to the six months in 1943 in which I commanded Eastern Army out of which Fourteenth Army was born.

In those early days, deficiencies in equipment; shortage of trained reinforcements; lack of welfare arrangements; long service overseas; inadequate leave due to lack of accommodation and transport; indifferent rations; much sickness; slow mails; an apparent lack of interest at home in what was being done and endured on the Burma Front; and an exaggerated opinion of the efficiency of the Japanese had combined to lower the morale and destroy the confidence of the Army.

Without confidence and high morale, equipment and weapons, however good, are useless, and the re-creation of these two qualities was the first task to which we all had to address ourselves during the monsoon of 1943. Confidence could be created by training and improved equipment, morale by confidence and care for the spiritual and physical well being of the troops.

All through that monsoon, the Commander-in-Chief, India, did all that was possible to improve the training and, with his limited resources, the welfare of the troops.

Much was accomplished, and by October, 1943—when direction of the operations was about to pass to the Supreme Allied Commander; Fourteenth Army was about to be formed, and the weather moderated sufficiently to allow us to move—the work done during the monsoon began to bear fruit. Operations started, slowly at first, but with gathering momentum as their first encounters with the enemy showed the troops that the Japanese soldier, though tough and prepared to die rather than surrender, was not so skilful as themselves nor so well equipped.

The Army must have contained almost more diverse races than any other, even in this war, when so many nations have fought as Allies.

There were battalions from British county regiments distinguished in our history, and officers and men from every county in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales serving in other arms or with units of the Indian and African forces.

The Indian units of which the bulk of Fourteenth Army was composed, came from many famous regiments, recruited from races whose names have been household words since first we went to India: Rajputs, Dogras, Sikhs, Jats, Mahommedans from the Punjab, Gurkhas,

Garhwalis and Madrassis to mention but a few of those who volunteered to fight for the King Emperor.

To the Army were added later divisions from our West and East African Colonies, composed of Hausas, Yorubas and Ibos from Nigeria; Kanjarga, Dagartis and Ashantis from the Gold Coast; Mendis and Timinis from Sierra Leone; Mandingos from Gambia; Nyasas and Yaos from Nyasaland; Manyamwezi and Manyema from Tanganyika; Akamba, Nandi and Kavirondo from Kenya; Baganda and Achole from Uganda; Somalis from Somaliland; Awemba and Angoni from Northern Rhodesia and many others too numerous to mention. All these men had volunteered to fight for the King.

The success of Fourteenth Army is the best testimonial to its officers and men and I cannot add anything to it. Victory was achieved by fine leading by all commanders from the highest to the most junior section leader; by the skill of the men in the ranks; by high courage in battle; by steady endurance under conditions of climate and health worse than almost anywhere in the world; by a determination to defeat the enemy, and by that spirit, which alone enables an army to exert its maximum strength, of co-operation among all ranks and arms.

It has been an immense source of pride to me to watch the growth of confidence and skill which enabled the officers and men of Fourteenth Army to inflict the first major defeat upon the Japanese and by unrelenting pursuit to drive them with crippling losses in men and material in disorder across the Chindwin.

207. Once again I should like to thank General Sir Claude Auchinleck* and the staff at his Headquarters for their generous and unflinching help, without which 11 Army Group could not have driven the Japanese back from the frontiers of India.

I also wish to give a final word of thanks to my own staff for their hard work and fine team spirit, upon which I was able always confidently to rely however acute the crisis or hard the work.

I want especially to mention my two principal Staff Officers, Major-General I. S. O. Playfair, M.G.G.S., and Major-General E. N. Goddard, M.G.A., whose wise advice, good judgment and unflinching loyalty were a great support to me.

Finally, I have no doubt that the defeat of the Japanese forces in Burma is due to the balanced judgment, determination and skill of Lieut.-General Sir William Slim, upon whom fell the burden of the fighting.

* Now Field-Marshal Sir Claude J. E. Auchinleck, G.C.B., G.C.I.E., C.S.I., D.S.O., O.B.E.

APPENDIX "A"
MAJOR OPERATIONAL MOVES

Formation	From	To	Started	Finished	Method of Movement
11 (East African) Division	Ceylon	Manipur Road	20th May	24th August	4 flights by sea to Chittagong, then by rail to Manipur Road. 2 flights by sea to Calcutta, thence by rail/river/rail to Manipur Road.
3 (West African) Brigade	Tinsukia	Dhond	22nd August	6th September	Rail/river/rail
23 L.R.P. Brigade	Manipur Road	Bangalore	5th August	21st August	Rail
111 L.R.P. Brigade	Tinsukia	Dehra Dun	8th August	18th August	Rail
268 Indian Lorried Infantry Brigade.	Manipur Road	Ranchi	25th August	4th September	Rail/river/rail
23 Indian Division	Manipur Road	Shillong	1st August	31st August	Rail/road
77 L.R.P. Brigade	Tinsukia	Dehra Dun	19th July	6th August	Rail/river/rail
17 Indian Light Division	Manipur Road	Ranchi	29th August	2nd October	Rail/river/rail
14 L.R.P. Brigade	Tinsukia	Bangalore	1st September	19th September	Rail/river/rail
255 Indian Tank Brigade	Ranchi	Manipur Road	14th September	13th October	Rail
19 Indian Division	Nasik	Manipur Road	7th October	6th November	Rail/river/road
2 (West African) Infantry Brigade Group [82 (West African) Division].	Ranchi	Dohazari	9th October	20th October	Rail/road/sea
Headquarters 4 Corps	Imphal	Ranchi	10th October	22nd October	Rail/road
3 Special Service Brigade	Colombo	Chittagong	2nd October	24th October	Rail/sea
28 (East African) Brigade	Colombo	Imphal	8th November	29th November	Sea/rail/road
71 Independent Brigade Group.	Chittagong	Cocanada	7th November	20th November	Sea/rail
50 Tank Brigade	Poona/ Secunderabad	Chittagong	1st November	30th November	Road/rail/sea
82 (West African) Division less 2 (West African) Infantry Brigade Group.	Ranchi	Dohazari	31st October	1st December	Road/rail/sea



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