

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 Tamarthi-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