

the numbers which could be flown into Burma. In April, therefore, arrangements had to be made with India Command to restrict the flow of reinforcements until the congestion in Comilla could be reduced.

396. An innovation occurred in February, when I accepted into Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia 3,000 British infantry reinforcements direct from the ship for two months' training at the reinforcement camps at Comilla. This was done at the request of India Command, who were unable to cope with the sudden increase in reinforcements who had only received unit training in the United Kingdom. The majority of these men had been transferred from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and the Royal Air Force, and excellent material they proved.

397. Battle casualties caused a sharp increase in the demands for both British and Indian infantry reinforcements in March, particularly officers. India Command responded promptly, sending forward large drafts, some of which were drawn from British battalions employed in internal security and frontier defence rôles. These were augmented at the end of the month by a special draft of some thirty majors and captains who were flown to Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia from battalions in India at my urgent request.

398. I have already mentioned in various places in this Despatch the major changes in organization which took place and I do not propose to go into more detail except in regard to the formation of areas, etc., in L. of C. Command. The following figures, however, are of interest as indicating the amount that was done in this direction. Between the 12th November, 1944 and the 3rd May, 1945, the total number of units of all types raised was 753, reorganized 627, and disbanded 407. As regards L. of C. Command, its organization continued to expand as the liberation of Burma progressed. The Headquarters had been raised in November. In January and February, five additional L. of C. Sub-Areas were established in Burma. No. 505 District for North Burma and No. 1 Area, South-East Asia Command, for Rangoon, were raised in March. The H.Q. for 505 District moved into Shwebo early in April, while the move of No. 1 Area into Rangoon has already been described in Section XXIII of the Despatch. In April No. 2 Area, South-East Asia Command and No. 555 Sub-Area were raised in anticipation of the requirements of future operations.

399. Several new leave schemes were introduced during the period under report, in addition to the normal leave system already in force in the theatre. In November 1944, a scheme was started under which British Service personnel could be granted 28 days' leave in the United Kingdom, and, in the following month, this was extended to include British personnel of the Indian Army. In December, too, a scheme providing for 61 days' leave in the United Kingdom, in lieu of reversion to the Home Establishment on long service grounds, was introduced, eligibility being the same as for repatriation. In February, leave travel by air to the United Kingdom was started in cases where operational requirements demanded the quick return of the men concerned. This air travel was extended in March to apply to all leave schemes.

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400. A scheme for the repatriation of Southern Rhodesian troops was approved in February, and in April a similar scheme came into force, whereby all East and West African other ranks with between two and a half and three years overseas service could either be repatriated or granted home leave.

401. In April a warning order was issued to formations that release would start any time after the 1st May. This order gave the phasing of Groups 1 to 11.

402. The outstanding factor affecting morale generally was that both British and Indian troops now felt a complete sense of mastery over the Japanese. It was this confidence, born of success in battle, that carried them on so triumphantly. Various other factors had their effects, differing with the nationality of the troops concerned.

403. In the case of British troops, the increased publicity given to the theatre was welcomed, but certain announcements by politicians and in the Press, were received with misgivings. The 28 days' home leave scheme, mentioned above, came in for considerable criticism, which was not in fact justified. The operational and transportation (shipping and aircraft) situations were such that unfortunately only a small proportion of those entitled could avail themselves of the scheme. Moreover, men due for repatriation, who had completed more than three years' overseas service, felt that they had a prior claim on the accommodation absorbed by the leave personnel who had a good deal less overseas service. The Earl of Munster's report was favourably received. The reduction in and final abolition of postal charges on letters was appreciated. The Government's post-war gratuity proposals had an unfavourable reception. The supply and quality of cigarettes was bad.

404. Although the morale of Indian troops was maintained at a very high level, the inefficiencies of the Indian postal system, the non-receipt of family allowances by relatives, and various examples of victimisation and petty extortion by village officials continued to worry the Indian soldier.

405. West African morale was good and the troops gave a good account of themselves in action. Repatriation and home leave became the main topic of interest of the West African troops, but a clear statement of policy on the subject was still awaited when I relinquished command. The increase in expatriation allowance, and the extension of the free postal concession to West Africans, were appreciated.

406. The morale of the East African troops was good and the introduction of the home leave scheme was welcomed. Relations with Europeans, which had deteriorated somewhat in the middle of the period under report, improved again later.

407. During April, 1945, it was learnt that there were about 350 Allied prisoners of war in Rangoon gaol. Plans were immediately made for their evacuation in anticipation of the early capture of Rangoon. Actually the first prisoners to be released were a party of 350 British, Indians and Americans whom the Japanese were trying to march out of Burma (see Para. 255). This party was discovered near Pegu on the 30th April, having been

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