

From our railhead at Dimapur, a long road line of communication leads up to, and beyond, Imphal. Before the Japanese advance in March, a division was fighting beyond Tamu, which is 195 miles from railhead, and another was engaged south of Tidim, 300 miles from railhead. Imphal is 135 miles from Dimapur.

192. The maintenance of Special Force was entirely by air. For this purpose, bases at airfields in East Bengal were originally organized and stocked, but at a later stage in the planning, the base was transferred to the Surma Valley, and from the airfields there maintenance by supply-dropping and -landing has been carried out throughout the operations.

193. The building up of stocks on both the northern and southern lines was a matter of some anxiety during the earlier part of the period. On the southern line, the capacity of the port of Chittagong, in spite of progressive expansion, barely kept pace with the needs of the forces, while on the northern line of communication, the total capacity available until April was only just sufficient for maintenance. Reserve stocks of many commodities, especially petrol, fell to dangerously low levels.

194. A supply difficulty which exists in both Assam and Arakan is that, with the exception of the rice crop which barely meets the needs of the civil population, no foodstuffs are obtainable in either area. In Bengal last year, this caused famine; and in parts of Assam the local inhabitants can barely support themselves. This imposed on the Army the need for importing fresh meat, vegetables, fruit, etc., from distant areas over difficult lines of communication; and of having to supply large quantities of tinned and dehydrated substitutes to rectify deficiencies in the fresh ration.

195. I have already mentioned the extent to which air supply has developed, but the subject is of such outstanding importance that the following figures are of interest. From the 8th to the 21st February, when the Japanese attack severed the communications of 7 Indian Division, a total of 923 tons of supplies of all types was dropped on the surrounded elements of that division. The month's total for February of air-dropped supplies in Arakan was 2,710 tons. In April, the total tonnage dropped was:—

Arakan, 1,316 (for 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley).

Special Force, 1,073.

From the 16th April to the 22nd June (the date of the re-opening of the Kohima—Imphal road), the amount flown into Imphal for 4 Corps was 13,155 tons. Nearly 10,000 casualties were evacuated by air from Imphal between these dates.

196. The operation of road transport between railhead (Dimapur) and Imphal, and forward thereof, is also of interest. A "round the clock" or L.G.O.C.* system has been

adopted which works throughout the twenty-four hours. Vehicles run independently, drivers being changed at intervals which give them adequate rest. The following figures cover the month of January:—

Number of task vehicles	...	1,321
Tonnage delivered	...	47,304
Total mileage run	...	4,463,454
Average daily mileage per vehicle	...	110
Casualties:		
(a) Miles per accident	...	19,239
(b) Vehicles evacuated	...	103

At this time, as already mentioned, divisions had to be supplied up to 300 miles from railhead. Much of this is narrow and dangerous mountain road and I think the above figures demonstrate the efficiency of Indian lorry drivers.

197. The importance of labour in an undeveloped Eastern Theatre cannot be overstated. The construction of hundreds of miles of railways, roads, and pipelines; the preparation of new airfields and the expansion of existing ones; transportation works on the lines of communication, including port development; the expansion of hospitals, depots and camps in rear areas, etc., all mean an unending demand for more and more labour.

On the 1st May, the figure of organized labour employed by Fourteenth Army was over 178,000, while demands for a further 18,600 were under examination. In addition to this, some 200,000 civilian (contractor) labour was employed on Army projects. These figures include labour supplied to the United States forces. In spite of this total of nearly 400,000, the deficit on this date was 31,400.

198. As regards supplies, the two most pressing problems have been the provision of fresh foodstuffs, and of petrol.

I have already mentioned that dehydrated meat and vegetables were being supplied to meet the inadequacy of fresh supplies. I may add that every encouragement and assistance is given to units to grow their own vegetables where this is practicable.

A Local Resources branch of the staff, assisted by an agricultural expert borrowed from the Government of Assam, which is bringing some 18,000 acres under vegetable cultivation, was established. Pig breeding, goat rearing, and chicken farming have also been planned on an extensive scale.

199. The supply of petrol and lubricants, including those for aviation, has caused some anxiety. The monthly quantities, to be supplied through Army channels, were estimated last May to exceed eleven and a quarter million gallons, of which nearly half was high grade aviation spirit.

In spite of the progressive improvement in the capacity of our lines of communication, which has been more than doubled since December 1943, it has not been found possible as yet to do more than provide the quantities for maintenance. The ever increasing demands of our Allies in Upper Assam have continued to tax our oil resources. I do not foresee much improvement in the situation until more pipelines have been finished.

* L.G.O.C.—London General Omnibus Company (which was absorbed into the London Passenger Transport Board).