

309. From the brief description of the Ls. of C. it is plain that the main problem throughout the period of this Despatch was the maintenance of Fourteenth Army. The difficulty of this problem was not only qualitative but quantitative. Requirements of course varied with the number of formations and nature of operations; but, as an example, during April, 1945, the daily maintenance tonnage required by Fourteenth Army, including R.A.F. and Civil Affairs (Burma) requirements, averaged 2,090 tons (long) per day, while the equivalent requirement by 15 Indian Corps was 84 tons per day. (The size of 15 Indian Corps at this period had been reduced to allow the maximum tonnage for Fourteenth Army.) Of these amounts, the quantities delivered by air averaged, for Fourteenth Army 1,845 tons, and for 15 Indian Corps 16 tons.

310. To sum up, we were entering Burma by the back door, with wholly inadequate land communications. We were fighting an enemy who had a first rate port behind him and good rail and road communications, since he was operating with his supply system on the same lines that Burma's internal supplies were carried in normal times. We were enabled to conquer him as a result of the tremendous effort that was put into overcoming the administrative difficulties and in particular by supplementing the inadequate land Ls. of C. with an air L. of C., developed to an unprecedented extent. The details of this conquest of the administrative problem set by the natural and geographical peculiarities of the Theatre are the main burden of this part of this Despatch.

#### SECTION XX (paras. 311-334) THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN LINE OF COMMUNICATION

Formation of L. of C. Command: Supply routes to the Advanced bases: The Assam Railways: The problem of replacement vehicles: The development of the Chindwin I.W.T. link: Changes in the organization of the L. of C.: Changes in the organization of Supply and Transport: Further changes in the organization of the L. of C.: The development of the Burma Railways: Petrol distribution: Some statistics.

311. I propose to deal with the development of the land Ls. of C. first, as a proper understanding of the difficulties and limitations of these Ls. of C. is essential to any real comprehension of the administrative aspect of the campaign as a whole, including the air supply aspect. I regard it as absolutely essential, too, that it should be realised what a prodigious effort had to be put into the land Ls. of C., as the spectacular results of air supply and the successful capture of Rangoon, with the consequent restoration of a more normal L. of C. tend to obscure the extent and duration of this effort.

312. The organization and development of the Northern line will be described first. When I took over command in November 1944, orders had already been issued for the formation of L. of C. Command, which actually took place on the 15th November. The two L. of C. Areas 202 and 404, were transferred from the command of Fourteenth Army to the new L. of C. Command, the Commander of which,

Major-General G. W. Symes, was directly responsible to me. Hitherto H.Q., Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia (or H.Q., 11 Army Group as it had been called before it became an Allied Command) had been represented by Advanced Echelon North at Manipur Road and Advanced Echelon South at Comilla. These Advanced Echelons were almost entirely concerned with movements and with the processing of stores, etc., along the complicated L. of C. To ensure continuity and relieve Commander, L. of C. Command of purely movement problems these Advanced Echelons were retained under the new organization. Fourteenth Army was thus relieved of L. of C. responsibilities and could concentrate on the main offensive. The boundary between Fourteenth Army and 15 Indian Corps and L. of C. Command very nearly coincided with the political boundary between India and Burma with a deviation south-east of Chittagong. The whole of L. of C. Command lay in India, 202 Area consisting of most of Assam, including Manipur State, while 404 Area consisted of that part of Bengal lying east of the Meghna River, and a part of Assam lying to the south of Shillong.

313. The system of maintenance at this time on this L. of C. was that supplies were sent forward from the India Base by rail and Inland Water Transport to the Advanced Bases at Gauhati on the Brahmaputra, and at Manipur Road (Dimapur) in Assam. It can be seen that this was not a simple, straight run-through. In India Command there was the transshipment at the Ganges Ferry at Mokameh Ghat and, for stores coming by rail from Calcutta, the change from broad to metre gauge railway at Parbatipur. Further transshipments were necessary at the Brahmaputra ferries at Dhubri Ghat, Amingaon or Tezpur or at the I.W.T. transshipment points at Pandu or Neamati. The distribution from the Advanced Bases was affected by motor transport (L. of C. Transport Column) to Tiddim, and thence *via* Tamu to the Corps Maintenance Areas.

314. The Assam Railway system worked well on the whole, any occasional shortfall on stores tonnage being quickly rectified by increased despatches later. Where target figures were not reached, it was usually due to a temporary shortage of wagons or to the lack of stores ready to load. Only one serious accident occurred during the period of this Despatch, when a buckled rail caused a derailment and the loss of 18 wagons by fire. Throughout the period there were extensions and improvements made to the transshipment, marshalling, reception and departure yards. Engine shed accommodation and yard layouts were improved and the ferry and personnel ghat lines developed.

315. When control of the L. of C. was taken over from Fourteenth Army by H.Q., Allied Land Forces, South-East Asia in November through L. of C. Command, the responsibility for and control of the movement of replacement vehicles forward of Calcutta also passed from H.Q., Fourteenth Army to my H.Q. This not only freed Fourteenth Army from all responsibility in rear of the Army boundary, but, through the closer control which my H.Q. could exercise, being on the spot, it resulted