

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 Kalemyo 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