Assam—each of which is served by a separate line of communication, connected by poor lateral communications (though air supply is now an important factor which can be, and has been, used to unite these separate lines).

The natural advanced base for the Arakan front is Chittagong. This port was prepared for demolition in 1942 and many "denial" measures were actually carried out. It only narrowly escaped being occupied by the Japanese in the summer of that year; and in fact, our subsequent advance in October 1942, when we passed from the defensive to the offensive, began while Chittagong was still under sentence of death. Both the port and advanced base at Chittagong had then to be developed while active operations were in progress, and while they were both having to perform their administrative functions to the forces in the field. These forces rose to a strength of two divisions, and, incidentally, had a sick rate of over 6 per 1,000 *per diem*. Not only was there no all-weather road in Arakan, but no road at all worthy of the name. We were, therefore, compelled to rely largely on coastal shipping and inland water transport and, for many months, there was a serious shortage of both types of vessels. The difficulty was eventually overcome to some extent by the construction of a road which had to be surfaced with bricks, the coal for which had to be imported from India. Ordinary metalling was impossible, owing to the absence of stone.

148. While we were on the defensive, Mymensingh was being prepared as an advanced base, but was only about half finished when our strategy changed. We were not sufficiently certain of success to discontinue construction and, in the light of subsequent events, it is fortunate that we continued to build.

149. On the Imphal Front, we had to construct a large advanced base in virgin jungle, under the most adverse climatic and weather conditions. This base at Manipur Road, or Dimapur as it is sometimes called, had to start work while its construction was yet incomplete.

As a site for a base, Dimapur possessed almost every conceivable disadvantage: heavy rainfall; unhealthy climate; and uneven ground (which did not become apparent until the dense jungle had been cleared). Moreover, it lies on a narrow tongue of land between two rivers, both of which are liable to overflow during the monsoon. To these local topographical disadvantages must be added the further one of the liability to interruption of the railway to Assam by the rivers and streams which pour down from the huge catchment area of the Himalayas, the foothills of which the railway skirts. In 1942, the railway was cut by floods from the 24th June till the 30th November.

150. The railway system, which is metre gauge, had never previously had to tackle more than a moderately heavy seasonal load of cereals and tea. It now had to undertake a much increased load of civil traffic and had to be further pressed to meet the needs not only of the large Imperial forces operating on the Northern and Southern Fronts, but also of the Sino-American forces based on Ledo and, last but not least, the air ferry service to China. Concurrently, road and river transportation had been developed to take some of the strain.

151. The Northern and Southern Lines of Communication areas are divided by the Garo and Jaintia Hills and the only lateral communication connecting them is the hill section of the Bengal and Assam Railway.

152. The whole area was without airfields and so low-lying as to render airfield construction difficult. It entailed, not only the transportation of heavy tonnages of engineer stores, but also of coal, since much surfacing had to be done with burnt brick.

The move and maintenance of forces by air, as well as our probable future commitments, have necessitated a large increase in airfield construction, but I shall deal with this subject in greater detail later on.

153. I propose to deal with the work of my Administrative Services under the following main headings:—

(*a*) Adjutant-General questions.
(*b*) The Lines of Communication.
(*c*) Supply and Maintenance.
(*d*) The Engineering Effort.
(*e*) The Civil Affairs Service, Burma.

Adjutant-General Questions.

154. *Manpower.* The "divisional slice" in this Theatre has averaged 56,000, excluding civil labour, and 70,000 including it, whereas, I believe, the "divisional slice" in Normandy is 40,000. The high figure in the Burma campaign is mainly due to the large administrative "tail", comprising numerous engineer and labour units, which are needed to overcome the physical difficulties on our lines of communication.

155. *Reinforcements.* The demand for reinforcements is heavy, owing to the high sick rate which is, however, much lower than anticipated, and to the time lag between demand and arrival, due to the distances which reinforcements have to cover over a long and indifferent transportation system.

Reinforcement has been below wastage; but, apart from British infantry, in which the shortage is most acute, it has not been so serious as to impair fighting efficiency. Broadly speaking, the numbers available have been in excess of battle casualties, but they have not been sufficient to meet the total wastage and thus keep reinforcement camps full.

156. British reinforcements for Fourteenth Army are provided by General Headquarters, India, from (*a*) the British Base Reinforcement Camp at Deolali, (*b*) personnel freed by the disbandment of units, e.g. A.A. Brigades, and (*c*) returning sick from hospitals in India. Except for (*c*), who go direct to reinforcement camps in the Fourteenth Army area, drafts pass through 52 Training Brigade, where they carry out a two months course of hardening and jungle training. Indian reinforcements, from Regimental Centres and Depots, pass through either 14 or 39 Indian Training Divisions to Fourteenth Army reinforcement camps. There are twelve such camps in the Army area, consisting each of two British and eight Indian Sections. Each Section is 300 strong, and the total capacity of each camp is thus 3,000. Training staffs are available in each camp to keep reinforcements at a proper state of efficiency.