

reserve of 30 days for a force of three divisions, together with a generous complement of non-divisional troops and labour.

Much other work had to be done to improve the communications in Assam. A new railhead and advanced base was made at Ledo; an additional river port was made at Doinaigon on the Brahmaputra north of Jorhat, and the railway was extended to meet it; many additional crossing places were made on the railway and the control system improved; the ferry capacity over the Brahmaputra at Gauhati ferry was greatly increased; and other improvements to the railway, road and telegraph system carried out.

12. The transportation problem would have been an extremely difficult one in any event. It was further complicated in 1942 by the following events. There was an exceptionally heavy monsoon which caused extensive flooding and interruption of railway communications north of the Brahmaputra and elsewhere; and also resulted in continual landslides on the road to Imphal, which was the sole line of communications to a large part of the force. This was followed by the worst malaria epidemic which India had known for many years; there was a particularly high incidence amongst lorry drivers and transportation personnel, which had a cumulative effect in worsening the situation. Finally, from August onward, the rebellion organised by Congress after the breakdown of the Cripps negotiations in April was directed especially against our communications to N.E. India.

The Japanese raid into the Bay of Bengal (see paragraph 5) in April caused for some time the practical closing of the Bay of Bengal and the eastern ports to shipping and threw extra strain on the railways. The port of Chittagong was closed altogether and much of the port equipment was removed in May, when a Japanese attack on Chittagong seemed probable.

13. The transportation and other difficulties enumerated above naturally had a considerable effect on the efficiency of the troops. Those in Manipur, who were dependent on the Imphal road for supply, had to subsist on less than full rations for a considerable portion of the summer, and the resultant malnutrition increased their susceptibility to malaria and other disease. It was impossible also, owing to the breaking of the road, to provide satisfactory medical accommodation and equipment or to evacuate the sick to better conditions. This again increased the sick rate. Many of the troops had been through the exhausting Burma campaign and should have been relieved and rested had the reliefs or transport facilities been available. In October, November and December, when conditions began to improve, some 20,000 sick had to be evacuated from Eastern Army area. This was in addition to some 15,000 who had been evacuated before the rains, when the army returned from Burma.

The disturbances caused by Congress in August threw a fresh strain on the army, which had to be used for internal security instead of its legitimate work of training and equipping for the dry weather season. The equivalent of 58 battalions had to be employed; of these 24 belonged to the Field Army and the equivalent of 7 were formed from Reinforcement

Camps and Training Centres; the remainder were battalions already allotted to internal security duties. The employment of units from Reinforcement Camps and Training Centres resulted in delay to the flow of reinforcements to formations on the Eastern Frontier which were already seriously below strength owing to the high incidence of malaria.

I should like to pay a tribute to the admirable spirit and discipline shown by the troops engaged on the unpleasant task of restoring order during these troubles. The civil services, armed and unarmed, worked in close co-operation with the military forces in dealing with disorders. The work of the police, who were often isolated, was generally admirable, and their steadfastness greatly lightened the burden thrown on the troops.

#### REFUGEE PROBLEM.

14. Besides the troops evacuated from Burma, India had to deal with some 400,000 civilian refugees from Burma in varying states of distress. Some came by sea from Akyab, before it fell into Japanese hands; large numbers came through Imphal; and others by the Hukawng valley route to Ledo. The arrangements to feed and transport these numbers presented a very serious problem, while from the security aspect it was necessary to set up some organisation to try and prevent the infiltration of enemy agents. The arrangements for the reception of refugees were placed by the Indian Government under Major-General E. Wood, who received invaluable assistance from the organisation controlled by the Indian Tea Association. The Imphal route, by which the majority of the 180,000 refugees entered Assam, was comparatively easy; but the route up to the Hukawng valley from Myitkyina by Maingkwan and Shingbuiyang to Ledo was from Shingbuiyang onwards only a difficult mountain track with several rivers to cross. After the rains began, mud and swollen rivers made this route practically impassable from end of May onwards, and a number of the refugees were marooned at Shingbuiyang for the monsoon period, having to be fed by air; while some perished in the attempt to get through. Other parties who attempted to reach Ledo from Fort Hertz via the Chaukan pass were only rescued with considerable difficulty.

#### CHINESE FORCES IN INDIA.

15. When the Japanese broke through to Lashio in April part of the Chinese forces in Burma were cut off from return to China. Part of these sought to reach India. One Division, 38th, which had been operating with the British forces, reached Imphal in good order about 6,000 strong. Part of the remainder of the Chinese Fifth Army eventually got through to India by the Ledo route; others made their way north-east into the Kachin country north-east of Myitkyina and returned to China by mountain tracks, though only after considerable losses from starvation and disease.

General Stilwell himself, the American Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, had been cut off in Burma and had to make his way on foot to Assam.

16. I decided to place all Chinese troops that had reached India in a camp at Ramgarh that