

this area. Although no new airfields were made, the size of the task can be measured from the following figures which shows the major works finished by mid-November at the eleven main airfields in Assam:—

Runways and taxi tracks, 38 miles.

Number of aircraft standings, 506.

Aircraft parking aprons, 60 acres.

Roads, 111 miles.

Accommodation, for 33,000 officers and men.

Covered storage, 67 acres.

186. It will be remembered that I am writing of the monsoon and of an area where the rainfall is the heaviest in the world. The amount of new construction, involving the clearance of thick jungle, and of maintenance under severe climatic conditions, both in Assam and Arakan, reflects the greatest credit on our airfield engineers.

187. *Airfields in Ceylon.* The improvement and extension of the nine main airfields on the Island continued.

As a matter of convenience, it was decided that, from August, the Engineer-in-Chief, South-East Asia Command, who is at Kandy, should relieve my Chief Engineer of the technical responsibility for the works in Ceylon, the latter's duties being henceforth limited to stores and personnel. The responsibilities of the Chief Engineer, Ceylon Army Command, and of the Air Ministry Works Department, were unaffected by this change.

188. *Airfields in North Burma.* As I have mentioned the operations under General Stilwell, this section of my Despatch would be incomplete without reference to the airfield construction undertaken by the United States Army Air Engineers in North Burma.

As General Stilwell's forces advanced his engineers built three airfields in the Hukawng Valley. On the afternoon of the capture of Myitkyina airfield, 10 U.S.A.A.F., on whom rested the responsibility of building forward airfields, landed by glider the first company of a battalion of airborne aviation engineers. The rest of the battalion followed in transport aircraft within a week. The airfield was in full use two days after its capture and has since been completely reconstructed and greatly expanded.

The concentration of aircraft on Myitkyina airfield was very heavy, nearly 2,000 landings and take-offs being made daily by heavy transport aircraft. More airfields in this area were clearly necessary and three more Engineer Aviation battalions were flown in with their full equipment. By November, three all-weather Transport airfields had been built and two others were nearly finished.

The movement and supply of the engineers at work on these airfields was airborne throughout, as no suitable communications existed overland. To construct five large airfields under monsoon conditions was a noteworthy feat of engineering work. To have done it as an airborne operation was outstanding.

The Engineering Effort. C. Oil Pipelines.

189. The 4-inch pipeline joining Chittagong and Chandranathpur, mentioned in my first

Despatch, was finished as far as Comilla by November. Construction of the final link between Comilla and Chandranathpur was in progress. This will give an unbroken line from Chittagong to Manipur Road. The extension of this line to Imphal was begun at the end of September.

190. The American so-called "Infinity Line" from Calcutta to Kunming reached Myitkyina in October. From Ledo there are two 4-inch lines for aviation and motor spirit respectively.

The construction of the second American 6-inch pipeline from Chittagong to Tinsukia, forecast in my first Despatch, was also started. This line will follow the British 4-inch line and the operation of both will be under one control and for the mutual benefit of ourselves and our Allies.

191. The elaborate pipeline system in the North-East Assam airfields area was handed over to the Americans at the end of July.

Civil Affairs Burma.

192. On the 23rd June, the British Military Administration in Burma had under its control the Fort Hertz and Sumprabum areas, the Hukawng Valley, the western fringe of the Chin Hills District and the northern fringe of the Arakan Division.

On the 12th November, the area included the whole of the Myitkyina District, the northern part of the Bhamo and Katha area of the Upper Chindwin District and all but the southern area of the Chin Hills District. The area under administration in Arakan remained unchanged.

193. The principal centre of activity in Civil Affairs was the Myitkyina District, where the advance of the forces of Northern Combat Area Command brought important new tracts under British control. The main tasks were the restoration of law and order, the care of refugees, the feeding and clothing of destitutes, the organization of medical services, the provision of labour for the Armed Forces and, last but not least, the restoration of confidence among the local inhabitants. Although a great deal was done, the British Military Administration was handicapped by the restriction on the number of Civil Affairs officers allowed to work in the area. The civil population suffered in consequence: had more staff been allowed, action to relieve hardship could have been taken more rapidly and effectively.

194. The chief problem in the Hukawng Valley was the shortage of food, and relief camps had to be organised on a large scale. Seed and agricultural tools were imported, but immediate relief was given by developing the local salt production to the maximum, and thus setting free much air transport for other supplies.

195. During the earlier part of our re-occupation of North Burma, the British Military Administration was handicapped by the movement southwards of large sections of the Shan and Burmese inhabitants. This was due in part to Japanese propaganda and in part to the fear of Chinese troops and the Kachin Levies. They gradually returned as confidence was restored, but, in the interval, there was a shortage of potential subordinate officials.