

had previously been an Italian Prisoner-of-War camp. Here they would be re-equipped and trained by the United States forces.

Towards the end of September I received through the American staff a request from the Generalissimo that additional troops should be flown from China into India to make up the force at Ramgarh to a complete corps of two divisions, which, after equipment and training, would operate from India into Burma. I accepted this proposal after approval by His Excellency the Viceroy and His Majesty's Government. The troops were flown in during October, November and December, and by the end of the year the numbers of the Chinese force at Ramgarh amounted to approximately 30,000.

#### MILITARY SITUATION DURING SUMMER:

17. By the end of June immediate anxiety for the safety of India had lessened. The 5th and 2nd British Divisions were arriving, though neither was yet complete, much anti-aircraft artillery and other units had reached India, and the air strength was gradually increasing. The Eastern Fleet was still incapable of disputing command of Indian waters with a Japanese fleet; but the enemy had shown no signs of mounting an expedition against India, and the monsoon weather made this improbable for some months. India therefore had a breathing space to reorganise, train and prepare.

The 23rd Indian Division was gradually formed in Manipur, and the 1 Burma Division, which was now renamed 39th Indian Division, was withdrawn to Shillong to refit and reorganise. The two Indian armoured divisions which were being formed began to receive some equipment. A force was sent to Ceylon at the end of June to replace the two Australian brigades which were withdrawn.

18. Meanwhile, however, events in other theatres affected India's preparations. The operations to capture Madagascar had delayed the arrival of reinforcements and equipment, but had removed a potential menace to India's line of communications with the United Kingdom.

The reverse suffered in the Western Desert in June and the close approach of Rommel's army to the Nile delta caused the diversion of units and equipment, especially aircraft and tanks, from India to the Middle East. Though India was still far from secure, the danger to Egypt was obviously far more threatening; and on the 30th June I cabled to General Auchinleck offering any assistance that India could afford. He asked for an anti-tank regiment, which I sent, together with 100 carriers and other aid.

A danger more nearly affecting India arose from the German advance towards the Caucasus, which threatened Persia and Iraq and the Persian Gulf. A large proportion of the garrison had been moved across to Egypt to meet the threat to the Delta, and it seemed to me that the only way to reinforce Persia in time to halt a German advance through the Caucasus, should the Russians fail to hold the Caucasus—as at one time seemed possible—would be to send troops from India, weak though her defences were. I therefore offered to make available one or both of the two newly arrived British divisions (2nd and 5th) and an

armoured brigade. Eventually the 7th Armoured Brigade and 5th Division were despatched to Iraq. They left India in September

#### MEETING IN CAIRO.

19. Early in August I received a summons to meet the Prime Minister and C.I.G.S. in Cairo, where the whole position in the Middle East was to be discussed. I also accompanied them to Moscow for conversations with the Soviet Government and General Staff.

So far as India was concerned, the main outcome of these discussions was the decision to relieve the Middle East Command of responsibility for Persia and Iraq, so as to enable it to concentrate on the defeat of Rommel's army and the removal of danger from the Nile Delta. The command of Persia and Iraq, which secured the western frontier of India, had already passed during the war from Middle East to India and then back again. It was now suggested that they should again be placed under the C.in-C., India. I was willing to accept this additional responsibility, provided that the R.A.F. allotted to these countries was under the control of the A.O.C.-in-C., India. Difficulties arose about this, and it was decided to create a separate Command, P.A.I.C., directly under the War Cabinet. It was decided that India should retain the 2nd British Division which had been provisionally held in readiness to reinforce Persia and Iraq.

#### EXPANSION OF THE AIR FORCE.

20. As has already been indicated, the air strength in India in March was almost negligible. To build it up, much more was, of course, required than the supply of air squadrons or aircraft. A programme to construct over 200 airfields had to be undertaken, which threw a heavy strain on the material resources of India (such as cement), on the transportation system by rail and road, on the engineer personnel and supply of labour. In March there had been only some 30 to 40 airfields suitable for operation, even in fair weather; by the end of November the number was approximately 150. A large programme of signal construction was also necessary; repair and salvage organisations had to be brought into being; schools for training had to be arranged, and many other establishments formed. Nothing but a rudimentary warning system existed in Eastern India, and much work was required before it was even reasonably effective.

No details of the expansion need be given. By the end of 1942 there were 29 squadrons operational and another 20 forming, in addition to 2 squadrons of transport aircraft and 1 P.R.U. squadron. This was much short of the minimum force considered necessary for the security of India, but a great improvement on the defencelessness of March. Balloon barrages were established at Calcutta and Jamshedpur.

The Indian Air Force took part in the expansion, and is being raised from 4 squadrons equipped with obsolete machines to 10 squadrons with modern aircraft.

21. Air operations during the monsoon from June to October were naturally on a small scale; but were notable for the skill and determination with which crews operated in bad weather. Targets on the Burma coasts, in the Chindwin valley and on Akyab Island were