

Partly owing to the above mentioned difficulties and partly owing to the conditions of the campaign, there is no doubt that the wounded have suffered very considerable hardship. The D.M.S., Colonel Treffrey Thomson, and his staff, have made every effort to improve matters but would be the first to agree that there has been much in the medical situation to cause them very serious concern.

Apart from the difficulties met in dealing with our own casualties the virtual breakdown of the civil medical services has imposed considerable additional strain on the military organisation. Furthermore, the arrival of Chinese troops with practically no medical organisation at all has rendered it necessary to provide not only stores and equipment that could ill be spared but also medical units, staff and beds in our own hospitals.

51. *Amenities.* A great deal has been done in the face of much difficulty by Lieut.-Colonel A. Campbell, Chief Amenities Officer, to provide some small amount of amenities to the troops.

52. *Canteens.* No canteen organisation existed before the war, and although a Defence Services (Burma) Canteen was set up in January or February with the assistance of India, it never really got started.

As will easily be realised the canteen situation was a potent contributory factor in lowering the morale of both officers and men.

53. *Transportation.* The Director of Transportation arrived in the country on 29th January. There were no military transportation units whatsoever, except a Docks Operating Company which did very good work.

The railway administration was not to be convinced of the necessity of raising some military units, operating under military control, to run the railways in the operational area. India was unable to provide them and it was not found possible to raise them locally. Experience elsewhere suggests that if this had been done, the railways would have stood up to the strain better than they did. The same remarks in general apply to the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, but the personality of the Manager, Mr. Morton, assisted by some British officers enabled the organisation to do some excellent work in the later stages after it had been taken over by the military. The lesson is that transportation must be organised for war.

## VII. THE INTERNAL SITUATION.

54. *Civil Officials.* In view of the fact that I and most of my staff were entirely new to Burma we were naturally dependent on civil officials for assistance in those cases where local knowledge was required. I should like therefore to pay a tribute to the unfailing support and assistance I received throughout from the Honourable Mr. John Wise, Defence Counsellor, and by Mr. Potter, head of Military Finance.

55. *Internal Situation.* As regards the internal situation there were from the beginning, many alarmist reports. There is no doubt that the enemy had thoroughly organised their sympathisers in Burma before the outbreak of war, and received very great assistance from them. On the other hand, a larger proportion of the population and subordinate officials remained loyal than many of the British

officials expected, and though there were many treacherous attacks on our troops there were also many cases of willing assistance being given to stragglers and others.

The worst feature of the situation was the attitude of undisciplined elements towards the unfortunate Indian population who were robbed and maltreated in a most shameful manner, in spite of the efforts of many well disposed Burmans to help them.

With the progress of invasion and the organisation of the so-called Free Burma Army, the situation naturally grew worse, but it is fair to say that during the period covered by this report, the traitor forces achieved remarkably little, though their presence was a constant threat which imposed a corresponding strain on our military organisation.

56. *Martial Law.* Throughout the period covered by the Report, the Government were opposed to the institution of Martial Law, partly owing to its association in the minds of the people with the civil rebellions of former years.

During the last days of Rangoon when looting, arson, etc., were already rife, it was decided to hand over the town to the military. A military commandant was appointed, but this was too late in the day to enable him to make any material improvement in the situation.

57. *Policy as regards Evacuation.* The policy of H.M.G. as regards evacuation was quite clear. If it proved to be impossible to hold Rangoon it was essential that the demolition of the oil refineries, oil storage and other important installations should be as complete as possible. It was also laid down that it was not desirable that the Army should become bottled up in Rangoon, which was in itself indefensible, but that it should if necessary withdraw in order to carry on the war in Upper Burma.

This would in any case retain for a time the possession of the oilfields, cover the projected road to India, protect important aerodromes, and perhaps most important of all, ensure our continued co-operation with the Chinese forces. A considerable period was also required to complete the necessary arrangements for the denial of the oilfields to the enemy. As regards the oil it was found possible by moving certain plant from Rangoon to develop a very considerable output of M.T. petrol and 87 octane spirit in the oilfields—amounting possibly to about two million gallons a month—a most valuable example of foresight on the part of my staff.

58. *Demolitions.* At that time all the information available pointed to the fact that if it was not possible to hold Rangoon and the oilfields, the greatest service that could be rendered to the Allied cause would be a complete denial of the oil and refinery resources of Burma. It had been suggested that the Japanese war effort might collapse for lack of oil.

This involved very detailed planning and a vast amount of highly technical preparatory work. This was carried out under the general supervision of Mr. Forster, whose enthusiasm and drive combined with his previous experience, was most valuable. He was most ably assisted by Captain Scott, R.E., and members of the various oil companies who had