

originally earmarked for the assault on Akyab, but that the operation was in fact carried out by 25 Indian Division, which had advanced down the Arakan coast. 71 Brigade of 26 Indian Division was doing Combined Operation training in India at Cocanada with 41 Beach Group. The speed of 15 Indian Corps' campaign necessitated their early return to Burma. Ships fitted out at Calcutta were rushed to Vizagapatam where the Brigade and Beach Group were embarked, and then sailed to Chittagong where they arrived on the 4th January. In spite of bad weather, vehicles were discharged, waterproofed and re-embarked, and the force mounted by the 8th January, when the convoy sailed on to stage at Akyab. This convoy was followed shortly afterwards by the remaining Ramree assault convoys, which sailed on the 17th, 18th and 19th January.

343. Due to the combined results of our own bombing, the Japanese denial measures and general neglect during the occupation, the port and accommodation facilities at Akyab and Kyaukpyu were found to be almost negligible. At Akyab the main stone jetties and approaches required extensive repairs, and the removal of two ships sunk alongside was necessary. In addition considerable new construction was required. Development began on the 15th January. By the 12th February, seven pontoon jetties had been built, and a fortnight later the stone jetty had been sufficiently repaired to be used for personnel. A new solid timber piled wharf 600 feet long and twelve feet wide was built in a space of six weeks, and by the end of April, not only had a wreck at the main jetty been removed but the jetty itself had been completely repaired, all the stone for which had had to be imported. For all this work, only one Port Construction Company was employed, which carried out its task more efficiently, despite shortages of material. The target set for the development was 1,200 tons daily before the monsoon and 800 tons daily during it. By the beginning of April, the target had been exceeded and on the 3rd April a record discharge of 2,406 tons was achieved. The initial working of the port in the early stages was by 41 Beach Group but the responsibility was handed over early in February to a Port Commandant.

344. At Kyaukpyu there were no existing facilities at all. Development as a beach port began on the 21st February. Despite the fact that only one Port Construction Company was available, and that it had to do most of the sorting of stores besides its proper work, by the end of April five pontoon jetties with Bailey Bridge approaches had been built, a timber pier 130 feet long with a 122 foot pontoon head had been completed, and a start made on a trestle jetty. As in the case of Akyab, the initial working of the port had been by 41 Beach Group who soon handed over to the Port Commandant. The target port capacity was the same as for Akyab, but with very incomplete facilities. This target was early exceeded, a record discharge of 1,767 tons being achieved on the 17th March.

345. The development of Kyaukpyu port and the Ramree Advanced Base was complicated by the fact that in March it became necessary

to switch the maintenance of 15 Indian Corps' mainland operations to them. As the development of the Base was then in its early stages, the requirements of 15 Indian Corps could not be met in full without prejudicing its completion. Priority was given to the development of the Base, as this was now essential to ensure the readiness of the airfields for the supply of Fourteenth Army as it advanced southwards towards Rangoon, and the 15 Indian Corps Commander's plan for destroying the enemy had to be modified considerably. I have already referred to the necessity for taking 15 Indian Corps off air supply at this time, since all transport aircraft were required for the maintenance of Fourteenth Army.

346. Bulk petrol tankage projects were planned for both Akyab and Kyaukpyu, with a target completion date of the 1st May. In the case of Akyab, however, this was accelerated to the 15th April; and the first tanker discharged on the 21st, just in time for the intensive air supply effort to support Fourteenth Army in the last critical stage of their advance. Nevertheless, the situation gave cause for anxiety. Squadrons were greatly exceeding the rates of maximum effort, which resulted in abnormal consumption of petrol, oil and lubricants. Although the actual consumption was far in excess of estimate, our petrol stocks just held out. Aero engine lubricants were flown in from Chittagong and even from Western Bengal, and the emergency was met.

347. In the meantime the various landing operations on the Arakan coast had taken place. The operations at Kangaw, the success of which will be remembered from Part I, were maintained by Naval landing craft and I.W.T. from the Base Maintenance Area which had been established at Myebon. The operations against Ru-Ywa were mounted and maintained from Myebon and Kangaw. The Tamandu operations were maintained from Akyab, and the Letpan landing by Naval landing craft and I.W.T. from Ramree.

348. The last important event on the Southern L. of C. was the mounting of the modified Dracula operation from Ramree in April. This was done under supervision of 453 Sub-Area. With the very limited port facilities available, this task caused considerable interference with the build-up of the Advanced Base, but as progress was well advanced by this date, the repercussions were not serious. To start with, the only available facilities at Kyaukpyu were a small beach and a rickety jetty. I.W.T. creek steamers were used for the embarkation of personnel while "Z" craft and ramped cargo lighters were employed for loading vehicles and stores. The weather fortunately remained calm and the mounting was carried out in accordance with the programme in spite of a number of last minute changes due to the rapidity with which the whole plan had been prepared.

349. In spite of the meagre facilities available, and the additional strain put on the port by the mounting of Dracula, the discharge of maintenance cargo ships was maintained at a most satisfactory rate. The work done in