

Indian Division. The 4th Corps was in fact responsible for the whole front up to the Chinese Yunnan frontier, excluding the portion held by the Chinese American Task Force.

When the Army in Burma withdrew in June, 1942, it passed through rearguard positions on the high ground about Shenam between Pael and Tamu. The enemy did not pursue across the Chindwin, and we moved forward again later to our present positions. During the monsoon, in order to avoid malaria, our forces were held back on the high ground about Shenam.

In the dry season 1942-43, the 23rd Indian Division with Headquarters at Tamu patrolled across the Chindwin to the east, and the 17th Indian Light Division was fifty miles down the Tiddim road. The latter was watching the enemy in the Kalemmyo area, and maintaining contact with our levies in the Chin Hills. This Division, during the summer, had one brigade forward in the Tiddim area. The rest of the Division was kept at Shillong carrying out training.

The course of events on this front was similar up to early November to that in Arakan, *i.e.*, nothing of importance was attempted by either side beyond patrol activity. In early November, however, the enemy showed signs of moving, and there was evidence of Japanese reinforcements reaching this area.

On the 5th November the enemy advanced into the Chin Hills with between five and nine companies of infantry. Our Irregulars after a gallant resistance were driven out of Falam, and the Japanese occupied that place and Haka, twelve miles south of it. A week later the enemy advanced from the Dolluang area, and on the 13th November drove back our weak detachments on the road to the north of Fort White, thereby isolating the latter post. The enemy strength in this area was two to three battalions with some field artillery. Our forces consisted of one Indian battalion, much below strength, with one company of a Gurkha battalion under its command; also one section of a mountain battery (3.7" howitzers).

They were holding very extended positions, and the enemy attack came from the north-west after an encircling movement successfully hidden from us. It was clear that the Japanese had detailed knowledge of our positions, and so were able to advance from a direction least exposed to the fire of our troops.

During the fighting which ensued the enemy suffered heavily while our losses were light. We evacuated the Fort, which lying in the valley bottom was of little tactical or strategic value, and retired to positions on Kennedy Peak.

#### 4. *The Chin Hills.*

Between the 4th Corps front and Arakan, lie the Chin Hills. This area was very thinly held by the Chin Hills Battalion and the Chin Levies. The Chin Hills Battalion was a part of the Burma Army and stayed in the Chin Hills after we evacuated Burma. Its officers were British, and it had one company of Chins and three companies of Gurkhas or Kumaonis. The Chin Levies were irregular troops with a small number of British officers, and one of

the reasons for keeping regular troops as far south as Tiddim was the desirability of providing support and backing for these irregulars.

The strategic value of the Chin Hills area was that it covered tracks leading through Lungleh to Chittagong and to Aijal. It also lay on the flank of the enemy line of communications through Gangaw to Kalemmyo. Communications, however, in the area were bad. Except for the road south from Imphal, which was being built and was often blocked during the monsoon, there was only a porter track leading into the area from the west. Supply of troops in the area had therefore to be carried out to a great extent by air.\*

Except patrol activities and the Japanese advance to Falam and Haka in early November there were no operations of importance in this area.

#### 5. *Chinese Forces and the U.S.A. Task Force in India.*

Earlier Despatches from the India Command have described how Chinese Forces first came to India in 1942. Their training was carried out here by the United States Army. A road from Ledo in Assam to connect eventually with the Burma-China Road, was also commenced by us and carried on by the U.S. Forces.

The two enterprises have since become closely allied, since two of the Chinese Divisions (22nd and 38th) moved to Ledo, and the construction of the road has been protected by the 38th Chinese Division. Part of one regiment of this Division was located in advance of roadhead and was maintained by air. The 22nd Chinese Division completed its move from Ramgarh to Ledo in October, and was available to support the 38th Chinese Division if required. A third Division (30th) was in process of arriving from China by air in November.

During the monsoon progress on the Ledo Road was slow. Nearly all the engineering effort was absorbed in repairing washouts and adding extra shingling to the surface of the road already built. By the 15th November the road had been surveyed up to 99 miles from Ledo, bull-dozer were working at the 79th mile, and 48 miles of metalling had been completed.

As soon as more rapid progress at roadhead became possible, the Chinese 38th Division advanced southwards towards the upper reaches of the Chindwin. Some minor clashes occurred with weak Japanese detachments in the Hukawng Valley, but up to the 15th November no serious opposition had been offered to the advance. By then the advanced elements of the 38th Chinese Division had reached the Tarung Hka about Ningbyen and the Tanai Hka south and south-east of Shinbuiyang. There were signs that the enemy was strengthening his forces in this area.

#### 6. *North Burma.*

On the left flank of the Chinese American Task Force, based on Ledo, we held the country up to the Salween River with a very small number of troops based on Fort Hertz. This area was not controlled by the U.S. Forces.

\* See also paragraph 20 below which gives details supply dropping carried out by the R A F