

steamers and proceeded upstream for Sittaung. The Headquarters 17 Division, 7 Armoured Brigade, the embarkation and administrative staff from Shwegyin and the animal transport were ferried across to Kalewa, which was at this time held by the 63 Infantry Brigade.

75. *The Transport Problem.* By the 9th May, staging camps on the route to Tamu had been established at Kalewa, Imbaung, Yezagyo, Khampat and Witok and the Army and Corps Troops were steadily marching from camp to camp as were the thousands of refugees which were now across the Chindwin.

Transport was the great problem. Fortunately the Commander 4 Corps who was now in command in Assam was able to place at my disposal a G.P.T. company which proved of inestimable value. I must also mention here the excellent work done by the 7 Armoured Brigade, whose high morale and great fighting capacity I have frequently stressed. During the withdrawal it was necessary to take from the 7 Armoured Brigade nearly all their vehicles for use in the general pool both east and west of the Chindwin, and after their tanks and remaining vehicles had been abandoned at Shwegyin, this Brigade continued to find drivers not only for the vehicles brought across the Chindwin but also to supplement the drivers of G.P.T. companies working north and south of Tamu. Six to seven hundred men were employed in this way. No praise is too high for the work done by this formation.

76. *Final Stages of the Withdrawal* While the withdrawal of the main body had been in progress the 2 Burma Brigade was still moving up the Myittha Valley and on the 4th May orders had been issued by wireless for it to reach Kalemio by the 14th May. The G.P.T. company placed at my disposal by the Commander of 4 Corps enabled this move to be accelerated and the Brigade was moved north by M.T. from Manipur River, crossing on the 13th May.

77. The withdrawal now continued without incident. Tactically, the principal anxiety of the Commander 1 Burcorps was that the enemy, moving up the Chindwin, which was parallel to the road Kalemio-Tamu, might cut in and get astride his line of withdrawal. Even a small enemy force could have imposed a serious delay at this stage. Fortunately this threat did not develop.

78. On the 11th May, Lieut.-General N. M. S. Irwin, Commanding 4 Corps came to see me at my Headquarters near Tamu. I had already been informed that my army would withdraw through his covering force on the Lokchao River north of Tamu. I discussed with General Irwin his plans for the movement of my force to the Imphal area, which had received the approval of the Commander-in-Chief in India.

79. On the 14th May, Headquarters 1 Burcorps moved to Tamu and the next day I moved my Headquarters out of Burma to Kangpokpi, thirty miles north of Imphal. All troops of the Burma Army arriving in India now came under command of 4 Corps.

The withdrawal of 1 Burcorps, which was skilfully conducted, proceeded according to plan and by the 17th May all formations were successfully concentrated in the Tamu area.

At 1800 hours on the 20th May I placed the rear guard of 1 Burcorps under command of 4 Corps and my task came to an end.

PART VII—ADMINISTRATION

80. I have already mentioned the administrative situation as it was affected by the fall of Rangoon. The back loading of supplies and stores to Central and Upper Burma had been put in hand by General Hutton in January, and as a result reserves were available in the Mandalay area when Rangoon was lost. In the final stages of the evacuation, however, supplies and stores were, in view of the Japanese threat to the Rangoon-Mandalay railway, back loaded up the Irrawaddy Valley. The results of back loading on this line with the railway ending at Prome were twofold:—

(a) A large number of locomotives and a good deal of rolling stock were inevitably lost.

(b) Supplies and stores had to be transferred to ships and flats on the Irrawaddy and considerable stocks were accumulated in the Prome area.

81. *Administrative Appreciation.* At the end of March a review of the stock situation in Burma was prepared by my administrative staff. The conclusions reached in this review were:—

(a) *Supplies.* The stocks of imported supplies together with present stocks plus future purchases of indigenous supplies were sufficient to feed the army for six months from 1st April. There was, however, the important proviso that the estimate must be reduced if:—

(i) Sources of indigenous supplies could not be held.

(ii) There was a further loss of stocks through enemy action.

The importance of this proviso was soon demonstrated. Large quantities of supplies were lost when the enemy captured Prome and there were further losses in the bombing and subsequent fires in Mandalay.

On the Toungoo front, the withdrawal to the north of that town surrendered to the Japanese some of the best rice growing areas in Burma. It will be seen that no great reliance could be placed on future purchases of indigenous supplies. The collection of these supplies became more and more difficult as the civil organisation disintegrated under enemy air attack.

(b) *Petrol and Oil.* Excellent work had been done by the administrative staff and the oilfield engineers in initiating the production of spirit and the manufacture of drums. Stocks held amounted to 1,000,000 gallons of petrol and 89,000 gallons of lubricants. By the 28th March production was at the rate of 1,100,000 gallons of spirit per month which was likely to rise to 1,600,000 gallons by the 16th April and 2,000,000 gallons by the first week in May. Requirements were estimated at 1,300,000 gallons a month. Provided the oilfields could be held the petrol and oil situation was satisfactory.

(c) *Medical.* There were sufficient stocks for six months except in the case of a few items which could be flown in.