

all—crocodiles. No food, no drinking water to be obtained anywhere. It can hardly be possible that in their decision to quit the Island the Japanese could have been fully aware of the appalling conditions which prevailed. It proved to be beyond even their endurance to exist for more than a few days. Prisoners taken out of the mangroves during the operations were found to be semi-dehydrated and in a very low physical condition.

33. The Minor Landing Craft crews with Army machine gun units embarked also had a hard time. It was found possible to relieve the Army personnel about every four days but, owing to shortage of spare crews, many of the Royal Marines and Sailors had to remain in their craft for the whole 14 days of this operation.

34. The provision of these widespread units with food, water, cigarettes, etc., and their craft with fuel and repair facilities, presented a formidable administrative problem. Largely by the allocation of a B.Y.M.S. or an L.C.I.(L) as a "Mother Ship" to each block and by the co-operation of the Army "Q" Staff, these difficulties were overcome and after the first few days the standard of rations became, on the whole, quite acceptable.

35. Thus concluded the operations for the capture of Ramree Island. Of the 1,200 to 1,500 Japanese in occupation on the day of landing, only a few escaped. The remainder were either killed in battle or drowned in the mangrove swamps. Only twenty prisoners were taken in spite of all efforts of persuasion towards the close of Operation "Block," when many Japanese troops, without hope of relief or escape, had reached the final stages of exhaustion.

Conclusion.

36. The Naval "set-up" on Ramree Island was very satisfactory. Senior Officer Advanced Force "W" and Staff devoted their attentions to the Planning of Operations, the control of H.M. Ships and Craft, and to co-operation with the Army and the R.A.F. The Senior Officer Assault Group, Captain E. T. Cooper, D.S.O., Royal Navy, and his Staff were fully employed in the execution of the Operations, the maintenance of craft, and the training and supervision of their crews.

37. Co-operation with the 26th Indian Infantry Division, under the able leadership of General Lomax, worked very well indeed. It is no exaggeration to say that throughout the period of our stay on the Island no moves in battle were ordered by General Lomax without the knowledge of the Naval Staff. Similarly, the proper employment of H.M. Ships and Craft was often the subject of joint consideration.

38. This excellent co-operation was made easy by the fact that all three Services worked

together under the same roof, used the same mess, and shared the same camp. General Lomax and his staff were always most co-operative and often visited ships and craft employed in support of the Army. The R.A.F. also co-operated fully and effectively.

39. This satisfactory state of affairs is reflected in the following signal received from General Christison, the 15th Corps Commander, on occasion of Ramree Island being declared free of enemy organised resistance:—

"Congratulations to you all and especially 71st Indian Infantry Brigade and Naval Forces on liquidation of the Garrison of Ramree.

I have been most impressed by the soundness of your joint planning and the gallant show by all ranks and ratings in execution. Well done."

The following congratulatory message was also received from General Christison:—

"Hearty congratulations to all officers and ratings on the splendid success of Blocking Operations. You have done good work."

40. The contribution made by destroyers in support of the Army was an important factor in the operations. A total of 64 shoots were carried out, 35 with F.O.B. observation in direct support of the leading Infantry, and seven with Air O.P. observation. Communications with the F.O.Bs. were good throughout, and in addition to the engagement of targets, a great deal of valuable information was passed back in a steady stream from F.O.Bs. via the destroyers, to Combined Headquarters at Kyaukpyu.

41. The standard of gunnery in destroyers was high. Great credit is especially due to H.M.S. *PATHFINDER*, Lieutenant-Commander J. F. Hallifax, Royal Navy, for their excellent shooting and overall contribution to the success of the Operations.

42. Commander R. W. W. Ashby, D.S.C., R.N.V.R., Senior Officer Arakan Coastal Forces deserves recognition for his share in the very fine performance put up by his M.Ls. Also Commander E. J. C. Edwards, D.S.C., R.N.V.R., Commander M/S, Bay of Bengal, for leadership and devotion to duty in command of the B.Y.M.S.

43. Special mention should be made of Captain E. T. Cooper, D.S.O., Royal Navy, who, as Senior Officer Assault Group, was responsible for the successful execution of all the Combined Operations described in this report.

44. On the Staff side, the work of Lieutenant-Commander R. M. P. Williamson, Royal Navy, in particular, was very valuable.

(Signed) ERIC BUSH,
Captain, Royal Navy.

LONDON

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