

of the war against Germany by the commencement of the period of this Despatch had a tonic effect on India. No less heartening had been the Allied recovery in the South West Pacific, where the Japanese were being driven back, had lost heavily in aircraft and shipping and were clearly finding it difficult to maintain and protect the widely dispersed commitments they had undertaken.

These events had not failed to have their effect on our fighting forces; they were reflected in their high morale and general desire to get at the enemy. Many difficulties, however, had hindered the development of our resources and communications in India and particularly in the north-east. Delays in the provision of stores and materials, shortage of labour, limited transportation capacity, natural obstacles to constructional work due to the forests and climate in Assam and Burma, and disease—all had handicapped progress. During the winter and spring of 1942-43 a succession of major projects had in fact accumulated and competed for the limited engineer and transport resources available, and though progress was made, completion forecasts were seldom realised. At the onset of the monsoon in June, 1943, much still remained to be done of what had been planned in the previous year. Such then was the situation in June, 1943.

Part I of this Despatch deals with plans that have been prepared and examined during the period.

Part II describes such operations as have taken place on land, sea and in the air. For various reasons which were unavoidable, those on land and sea were insignificant. In the air, however, there were operations on an important scale throughout the period.

Part III contains an account of progress in organisation, training and administration, both in regard to land forces and those preparing for amphibious operations, also in regard to the air forces and the building up of their widespread ground organisations. So much effort was expended in these directions during the period, and the range of activities was so wide, that I have in this part of the Despatch gone into considerable detail. The importance of building a firm foundation on which to base future operations was so great as to justify the inclusion of a full record of the work done. The new South East Asia Command was to depend almost entirely on India as its base for the prosecution of future operations against the Japanese.

PART I—PLANS FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS.

I. The Basis of Planning during the Period June—November 1943.

Coincident with my appointment as Commander-in-Chief in India, the intention to set up a new South East Asia Command was announced. This Command was to relieve the India Command of responsibility for the conduct of operations against the Japanese in this theatre. Later, in August, Admiral the Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Allied Commander.

Although this would relieve me in due course of the planning and execution of future operations against the Japanese, there was much to

be done during the intervening months, if continuity of effort was to be preserved until the new Command started to function and thereafter. During this time, therefore, at my Headquarters much work was done in the framing and examination of plans. These plans conformed with the decisions of the Washington and Quebec Conferences, and while at work on them I was in close touch with the Allied Chiefs of Staff.

Meanwhile, intensive training and preparation for the future continued in India. On the eastern frontier and along the lines of communication leading to it development proceeded so far as monsoon conditions would allow. The progress of these preparations and of work on the lines of communication is recorded in Part III of this Despatch. Before describing the progress of planning it is necessary, however, to explain the overriding effect of the meagre resources of India and of the severely limited capacity of the lines of communication on any military operations undertaken on the eastern frontier.

Although these conditions may apply to any theatre of war they exerted a particularly serious influence in this theatre for the following reasons:—

Firstly, the original conception of the load to be placed on the lines of communications, though based on sound reasoning at the time, had proved to be too small.

Secondly, in addition to securing the purely military needs of the land and air forces engaged with the enemy, including the large demands of the air transport route to China, the lines of communication had to cope with heavy civilian requirements, such as those of the tea and jute industries, indispensable to the war effort of the Allied Nations.

Thirdly, the normal economic life of Assam and Eastern Bengal had also to be sustained and this entailed the transportation of large quantities of commodities over the railways, rivers and roads which constituted the lines of communication serving the China-Burma-India theatre of war.

This was the maintenance situation, and on the 7th August I issued an instruction to my Long Term Administrative Planning Committee to examine the problem. Any feasible short term measures for expansion were also to be examined, and an account of these as well as the results of the examination by the Long Term Planning Committee will be found in Part III. On the 17th August, my Quarter Master General's Staff (Transportation Directorate) produced two documents on the provision of Transportation Stores in India for 1944-45. The first of these documents described the foundations on which our administrative preparations for the operations of the South East Asia Command were built, whilst the second afforded some idea of the magnitude of the transportation problem involved.

In reading, therefore, the account of operational planning which follows and the record of administrative progress and development set out in Part III of this Despatch, the above facts require to be remembered as their influence affects all plans for operations based on India against the Japanese whether on the land, the sea or in the air.