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## OPERATIONS IN ASSAM AND BURMA FROM 23RD JUNE, 1944 TO 12TH NOVEMBER, 1944.

*NOTE.*—A set of maps for this Despatch is on separate sale at 1s. 0d. net. This set of maps also covers the operations described in the other Army and Air Despatches of the Burma Campaign from 16th November, 1943 to 12th September, 1945.

*The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on the 14th August, 1945, by GENERAL SIR GEORGE J. GIFFARD, G.C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C., Commander-in-Chief, 11 Army Group, South-East Asia Command.*

### PART I.—OPERATIONS.

#### Introduction.

1. My first Despatch\* covered the period from the formation of 11 Army Group, 16th November, 1943, to the re-opening of the Kohima - Imphal road on the 22nd June, 1944, when at 1245 hours, at Milestone 109, the leading troops of the 2 British Division (33 Corps) met the forward troops of 5 Indian Division (4 Corps), and thus shattered the Japanese dream of conquering India. This Despatch describes the operations from the 23rd June, 1944, to the 12th November, 1944, when I handed over command of 11 Army Group to Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese.

2. The re-establishment of our communications with Imphal opened a new phase in the campaign. The Japanese invasion of India had been stopped; it remained to throw the enemy back whence he had come. In the words of the Prime Minister, the defence of the Imphal Plain and our subsequent successful offensive "constituted the greatest collision which had yet taken place on land with Japan and has resulted in the slaughter of between 50,000 and 60,000 Japanese. The climax was the final eviction of the Japanese from India with the almost total loss of five of his best divisions." My earlier Despatch dealt with "The defence

of the Imphal Plain"; this Despatch deals with "Our subsequent successful offensive" which drove the enemy back, not merely across the Indo-Burmese frontier, but across the Chindwin River, and opened the way for the re-conquest of Central Burma.

3. In the operations I am about to describe, the Japanese retreat began as a well-planned and orderly withdrawal. Gradually, as our pressure grew, the pace of the withdrawal increased until the enemy forces were split up into small, disorganised parties. Hungry, harassed, beaten; abandoning their wounded, their guns and their transport, and even deserting in small, but increasing numbers; the Japanese were driven in defeat over the border, down the far side of the mountain wall, and back over the Chindwin, which they had crossed in triumph and with such high hopes less than five months earlier.

#### Topography and Climate

4. The formidable nature of the terrain was one of the features of this campaign. Battles were fought at 5,000 feet and over, often in almost impenetrable jungle; and troops, loaded with full equipment, struggled up from nullahs 2,000 feet below in the face of heavy small arms, grenade and mortar fire. Yet, hazardous and difficult as the nature of the country made every movement or operation, tanks often proved the decisive factor in the fighting up and down these mountain ranges, where they climbed almost precipitous slopes to blast Japanese bunkers at a range of ten yards.

5. As if still further to test the magnificent fighting spirit of the troops, another enemy was advancing steadily upon us: the torrential monsoon rain that turned tracks into leech-

\* Operations in Burma and North-East India from 6th November, 1943 to 22nd June, 1944.