

JAP RESISTANCE BECOMING WEAKER IN MANIPURAssam-BurmaFront,3rd April.

Since the beginning of April

it has been obvious from Japanese broadcasts that the enemy had planned an offensive in the Chin Hills with the object of cutting off and annihilating the 17th Division. At that time this Division was fighting its way North from Tiddum, writes a 14th Army Observer. The 17th Division covered the withdrawal of the Burma Army in March and April, 1942, and so staunch and courageous was their rearguard action that the army came out ^{without} great losses, and the Division inflicted very heavy casualties in such bloody battles as Prome Road, Shewdaung and Sittaung. The Japanese force moved against the 17th Division at the beginning of the second week in March. Its Chin Hills forces split into two, crossed the Manipur River to the South of Tiddim, and drove into the hills to the North. Their plan was to cut the road, which they did in several places, and isolate the 17th Division.

In this they failed. Drawing in its horns, the 17th Division concentrated and has for three weeks fought its way Northwards towards Imphal, clearing blocks as they appeared, wiping out Jap strong-points, never losing its cohesion. For those three weeks the Division has been cut off by road from Imphal. It still is, but the Jap resistance is becoming weaker every day. During this long fight up to the tortuous road the Division has been maintained by air, and kept itself intact. Its success may be judged by the fact that it has saved and evacuated 80 to 90 per cent of its transport, which cannot leave the vulnerable road. Its casualties now being brought out by air are very much smaller than the number it has inflicted. And not only does 17th Division claim a high percentage of the 2600 Japs killed during the present operation, but also 2000 casualties between the retreat from Burma and the time this latest action began.

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