

A few years before the war Russia built a railway-line to the Iranian frontier. Iran adjoins Baluchistan, a country within the borders of India and under British domination. A railway-line runs from Zahidan to Quetta in Baluchistan, connecting there with a line to the Indian port of Karachi.

Countless camels had worn a rough way over rock and sand from Zahidan north-west, then north-east through Iran to the Russian border. It was 800 miles long, but of this only about 200 miles was passable for trucks. The job was to build a motor highway over the other 600 miles of mountain and desert, some of the mountains being 7,000 ft. high.

Since no machinery was available it had to be made entirely "by hand." But haste was advisable, since a German push in Russia might have cut the west Persian route.

The job was completed in eight months, an average of three miles a day. Four foreign contracting firms, represented respectively by a Dane, a Norwegian, a Czech, and an Australian, built the road with the assistance of Greek, Yugoslav, Belgian, Russian, Turk, Italian, Bulgar, and Rumanian supervisors. Workers were recruited from Iranian towns and villages. Water and food for men and beasts were carried by camel.

Mountain passes had to be widened. In one valley eight miles of raised roadway was laid with twelve-foot protection ditches to divert flood-waters. In winter it was difficult to work because of the intense cold in the mountain passes and the snow drifted by a constant north wind. In summer the temperature reached 130 degrees, which compelled a long noon-day stop.

As with the Burma road, there were difficulties with civilian merchants. More than 1,600 dollars had to be paid for an urgently needed truck tire, and 160 dollars for a car battery. But river-beds were paved, drains were laid, and hundreds of bridges built. Despite the hodge-podge of nationalities, the workers got along together without trouble.

Now, it is said, the quantity of jute, rubber, hessian, iron and steel, copper, tin, and mercury that India can send Russia is limited only by the number of available trucks. Already more than one thousand trucks, most provided by India, are employed to capacity. This number is to be greatly increased.

The political effects of the route may be lasting. A round trip can now be made in ten days. The first such link between India and Russia it represents a rapprochement which the British Government, for political reasons, would scarcely have encouraged before the war.

A New Vitamin

In these days of restricted wartime diet vitamins have become of first-rate importance on the food front. Extensive publicity has made us familiar with vitamins A, B, C, and D. Science now presents another vitamin—Vitamin H. Like vitamins already known, it is remarkable in being required only in minute quantities. Less than one-hundredth part of an ounce is sufficient for a man's whole lifetime. Yet the symptoms of deficiency are alarming. In rats, prolonged lack of the vitamin results in emaciation and, finally, death. In man, deficiency is characterized by baldness, dermatitis, ashy pallor, lassitude, and muscular pain. All these symptoms disappear with spectacular speed on administration of the vitamin.

The new vitamin is widely distributed, though in minute quantities, in both plants and animals. In animals it is apparently stored in the liver, just as vitamin D is stored in the liver of the cod. In plants it is found in yeast, grain, and fresh vegetables. Vitamin H is fairly resistant to cooking, but the best safeguard against deficiency is a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables.—*Monthly Science News*.