

were poor according to our standards the fact that an abundance of rice was available in Northern Thailand made this region particularly suitable for an offensive by the Chinese. Unfortunately this offensive, though practicable, never took place. The Generalissimo did not consider the Sixth Army by itself to be strong enough to undertake it, and the course of operations in the south rendered it more important to use the Fifth Army to relieve 1 Burma Division towards Toungoo than to deploy it further north on the chance that an offensive would be undertaken in time to relieve the situation. Actually the last division of Sixth Army had only just begun to reach its forward positions in the Northern Shan States at the time of the fall of Rangoon.

30. *Relations with the Chinese* Finally I should like to pay a tribute to the Generalissimo for his wholehearted support and co-operation throughout the operations and to the senior officers of the Chinese forces under my command whose fighting spirit and appreciation of the problems involved, and the difficulties under which we laboured, evoked my warmest admiration. In particular I should like to mention—

Lt.-General Kan Li Chu, Commander, Sixth Army.

Lt.-General Lu Kuo Ch'uan, 93 Division.

Major-General Fisher T. How, Chief Liaison Officer at my H.Q.

Colonel Gordon W. K. Chu, Assistant Liaison Officer at my H.Q.

It may be desirable to mention in conclusion that we treated the Chinese throughout on a basis of complete equality and did everything possible to overcome the difficulties arising from lack of mutual confidence in the past and from the series of military reverses we suffered in Burma and elsewhere, which naturally lowered our prestige.

IV. AIR SUPPORT.

31. *Preparations.* It is unnecessary here to refer in detail to air operations which will no doubt be described by Air Vice-Marshal D. F. Stevenson, who arrived in Burma to assume command on about 1st January. His predecessor, Gp. Capt. E. R. Manning, R.A.F., had done everything possible to prepare aerodromes and to ensure the successful employment of the large air force it was hoped would be made available in this theatre.

32. *Weakness of Air Forces.* Actually, however, these forces never arrived in sufficient strength materially to affect operations on land, though the outstanding successes of the fighters of the A.V.G. and our own forces achieved a very considerable mastery of the air over Rangoon. The air battle of Rangoon was a brilliant example of the achievement of well trained personnel and aircraft of high performance against vastly superior numbers. This success has perhaps led to the impression that during the operations covered by this report we were in the happy position of having air superiority. This is definitely incorrect and in the battle zone our troops were subject to frequent attack from the air throughout the operations.

Had a sufficient number of bombers been made available a very effective use of these might have been made against the enemy's communications with Malaya. Unfortunately the

weakness of our land forces resulted in the loss of the aerodromes which were so well placed for the purpose of offensive air operations and in the end lost us much of the warning system, already referred to above, to which our successes in the air were very largely due.

33. *Close Support.* As regards the close support of our land forces every effort was made by the A.O.C. to make the best use of the small forces available. Their inferiority in numbers, however, rendered it necessary to employ most of them in operations against the enemy air forces or in "beating up" enemy aircraft on the ground. These latter operations were conducted with very marked success. In addition to keeping in check the enemy's aircraft which endeavoured to attack our troops on the ground, very successful co-operation was given during the period immediately after the loss of Moulmein. Subsequent intelligence reports show that very considerable casualties were inflicted on the enemy. Co-operation with the Army was made especially difficult by the thick jungle and lack of intelligence which rendered it almost impossible to indicate suitable targets even when aircraft were available. Owing to the thick country, air reconnaissance was seldom instrumental in obtaining information of positive value, except of movements on the rivers or coastal waters and on certain roads which were visible from the air.

34. *Withdrawal of R.A.F. from Rangoon* Owing to the loss of the ground warning system after the battle of the River Sittang, it was decided to withdraw a good deal of the R.A.F. to Akyab or Calcutta and the remainder to Magwe. This, while based no doubt on sound operational grounds, was naturally disheartening to the troops and resulted in some unfair criticism of the R.A.F. The aerodrome at Highland Queen close to Rangoon was in fact retained in use until just before the arrival of the enemy forces in its immediate vicinity.

Finally I should like to pay tribute to the unfailing support and encouragement I received throughout from Air Vice-Marshal D. F. Stevenson and to the assistance he gave me in the appreciation of military problems

V. NAVAL CO-OPERATION.

Close co-operation with such naval forces as were available, the control and escort of shipping, and the appreciation of naval problems, was obtained through the medium of Captain J. I. Hallet, R.N., and subsequently of Commodore C. M. Graham, R.N.

35. *The Burma Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.* The B.R.N.V.R., then in its infancy, consisted of a few armed launches. Its officers were British and Burman and the ratings were almost wholly Burman. It maintained an examination service at the mouth of the Rangoon river, carried out minesweeping and furnished a Mergui Archipelago patrol. During the operations on the Tenasserim Coast every possible assistance was given by these craft both in reconnaissance and in the withdrawal of our forces from Mergui, Tavoy, and Moulmein which is referred to elsewhere. In spite of their inadequate numbers they undoubtedly proved a considerable deterrent to coastal operations of the type employed by the enemy with so much success off the coast of Malaya. Eventually, owing to desertions, and