

available in quantity until after the war with Japan had broken out, and units were then required to employ them in action before they had time to learn the efficient use of them. Owing to the fact that in peace there were no major frontier problems in Burma, the Burma Frontier Force were not ready or trained for serious war and units were further handicapped during action by the fact that they had an excess of baggage and transport, and that their peace time system of administration was quite unsuitable for war. These factors affected the efficiency of the Burma Frontier Force and as a consequence it offered little resistance to the enemy.

114. *Jungle Warfare.* As regards the British and Indian Army units, the jungle has never, whether in India or Burma, been regarded as a "good training area." In the former this was understandable at a period when practically all the troops available were earmarked for Mid-East. In Burma it was incomprehensible. Jungle warfare was obviously inevitable if Burma were attacked and it is well-known to require a very high standard of training.

115. *Organisation and Equipment.* As regards organisation and equipment, most of the units in Burma, or which came to Burma from India, were on a mixed scale of M.T. and Pack. This I am now convinced was thoroughly unsound as units tended to get tied to roads and were unable to move across country with the same freedom as the Japanese. It introduced a road bound mentality among both officers and men. It has also provided the enemy with an admirable form of tactics, which consists in placing road blocks at suitable defiles behind our lines, so placed that they had to be cleared up before M.T. could pass.

In a country like Burma, or in any country without many roads and not normally passable to M.T., battalions should be organised entirely on a pack basis, and not with an unduly high scale of transport. All M.T. should be concentrated into a brigade unit which is tactically and administratively self-sufficient and can, if necessary, be sent to another part of the battlefield. Unless this is done, even late in the day, we shall continue to have units tied to roads and incapable of operating away from them. This organisation is equivalent to the regimental organisation which exists in foreign armies, for which it is essential we should devise some adequate substitute.

116. It is for consideration whether the demand for mechanisation and a high standard of equipment has not been overdone in recent years. For service in Europe or in the Middle East, it is no doubt justified though the Germans still retain horse transport in the infantry battalion. The Japanese have shown that a highly trained and disciplined army can achieve great things with a very light scale of equipment and no M.T. This was not only the case in the jungle and hills, but also on the plains east of Pegu and latterly both north and south of Prome. The secret, I believe, lies in the N.C.Os. of the Japanese Army, they are very highly trained, enforce very strict discipline and are given great privileges. Their soldiers are veterans and not raw recruits.

117. If all the Indian Army units did not show themselves to the best advantage in the campaign, it must be attributed to:—

(a) The presence of large numbers of recently joined and very young recruits in the ranks.

(b) A number of very recently joined officers who did not know their men and whose knowledge of Hindustani was hardly sufficient to get their confidence quickly.

(c) The effect of units being thrown into battle before they had time to collect themselves.

(d) The utterly strange conditions of warfare in the jungle.

(e) A distrust, often exaggerated, of units of the Burma Army.

As regards the latter many officers and men of all classes did well, and some units, but as a whole they were a source of serious weakness to the force of which they formed a large proportion throughout the operations.

118. *Achievements of the Army in Burma.*—There is no doubt, however, that although some units and some individuals may have failed, the Army in Burma, as a whole, fought extremely well. For many months they withstood the onslaught of superior numbers, with little reinforcement, no rest, and practically no hope of relief. During most of the time they have suffered heavily from enemy air attack and have received little or no support from our own air forces. They have had no canteens, few amenities and practically all lost their complete kit early in the campaign. The climatic conditions have been very trying. The fall of Singapore has undoubtedly had a depressing effect on morale. Discipline has naturally suffered to a considerable extent; this however has been largely due to the lack of any provost units to check straggling in the early stages.

Finally, it is fair to say that owing to the losses and hardships they had sustained, two brigades of the 17 Indian Division, i.e., about one-third the Imperial Forces that I handed over to General Alexander, were undoubtedly in no shape for a long and arduous campaign in the defence of Upper Burma, and I should like here to express my admiration for what they have achieved under his leadership. The position, however, was by no means hopeless. The remainder of the force available consisting of the Armoured Brigade, the weak 1 Burma Division (containing the 13 Indian Infantry Brigade and 1 and 2 Burma Brigades), the 63 Indian Infantry Brigade and three British battalions, had not been heavily engaged and there was also every reason to anticipate that the large Chinese forces now appearing in the field would give a good account of themselves.

*Report by General the Honourable Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, K.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C., on Operations in Burma from 5th March, 1942, to 20th May, 1942.*

1. The following is a report on the operations of the Allied Forces in Burma from my arrival in that country on the 5th March, 1942, up to the 20th May, 1942, by which date the rear guard of the Imperial Forces had withdrawn into India.

2. I arrived by air at 12.00 hours on the 4th March at Dum Dum aerodrome Calcutta, where I met the Commander-in-Chief in India,