

6. *Plans for the Recapture of the Andaman Islands.*

The principal value of these islands to us would be in connection with operations further south towards Sumatra and Malaya. In particular, the facilities their possession would afford for photographic reconnaissance and intelligence was a factor that might even make their capture an essential preliminary to other operations, either in this direction or towards the Burma coast. A summary of the situation regarding intelligence and photographic reconnaissance, and the influence thereon of being able to use the Andamans, was cabled to the Chiefs of Staff on the 11th October, 1943.

A further important consideration was the denial of the Andamans to the enemy as a useful forward base for refuelling submarines. At the same time, the fact that operations against the Andamans involved certain risks was not lost sight of, and it was fully realised that their possession might prove a liability as well as an asset. Lying within a semi-circle of enemy air centres, the airfield in the Andamans might be difficult to operate in the face of enemy bombing, and there was thus a risk of our troops being left without air support. Moreover, though the islands might not be difficult to capture, the reinforcement of isolated forces there might be a constant drain on our resources.

On the 13th August, I suggested to the Chiefs of Staff that if an assault on Malaya was definitely decided on for 1944-45, it would be desirable to divert resources from the capture of Akyab to the capture of the Andamans in the spring of 1944. By the 4th September an outline plan had been prepared which showed that the operation could be undertaken, subject to certain modifications, with the forces needed for the assault on Akyab.

This proposal, however, being inter-related with plans for other amphibious operations was still undecided when responsibility passed to the South East Asia Command.

7. *Plans for Operations against Sumatra and Malaya.*

After the Washington Conference in May, 1943, an outline plan was prepared for the capture of North Sumatra. This was to be immediately followed by a landing near Penang, with the object of reconquering the Malay Peninsula. The Chiefs of Staff accepted this as a basis for more detailed staff study, which commenced at my Headquarters accordingly. In the meantime the Quebec Conference called for a study of:—

(a) Operations against Northern Sumatra for the spring of 1944

(b) Operations through the Malacca Straits and Malaya for the direct capture of Singapore.

With regard to the first, the conclusions reached were that the forces would be far in excess of those required for the capture of Akyab; and that isolated long range penetration operations, without the support of main forces could not achieve the capture of Sumatra. Regarding the second, this was at first scheduled for as early a date as might be practicable, but was subsequently deferred to the end of 1944 or early in 1945. Both these projects now

took priority in consideration over the dual operation that was earlier being examined and was still under examination in November.

8. *Moulmein and the Isthmus of Kra.*

A study of possible operations through the Moulmein area or Kra Isthmus in the direction of Bangkok, was commenced as a result of the decisions of the Quebec Conference. A target date for the late spring of 1944 was given. Preliminary examination however was not very favourable.

9. *A Bomber Offensive on Japan from China (American Plan).*

Early in September, I received information from Washington of an air plan for a bomber offensive to accelerate the defeat of Japan, which had been prepared at Quebec by the American Air Planning Staff.

The general idea was to bomb Japan itself with a bomber force built up at Changsha. This force was to be maintained by a fleet of transport aircraft based on Calcutta, with a staging area at Kunming.

I cabled to Washington on the 8th September my comments on this plan, making clear the obstacles to it. The scheme postulated an increase in capacity of the port of Calcutta that was more extensive than anything previously envisaged. There were no administrative or constructional plans in existence for any such major port development. The idea also demanded the development of 45 airfields in the Calcutta area, for which suitable sites (near existing communications) could not be found in the time, and the petrol lift was beyond the capacity of existing transportation facilities.

Later in September, I received from American H.Q. in New Delhi their reactions to the above Quebec Air Plan. They agreed with me that the original plan was administratively unsound, and put forward an alternative scheme for bombing Japan with aircraft based partly on Calcutta and partly in China. The effect of this would be that India would have to prepare seven airfields by August, 1944.

On examining this alternative plan, the conclusion was reached that it also could not be achieved by the date given. Moreover, a special P.O.L. port on the Hooghly would be required, and the port capacity of Calcutta itself would have to be increased. I ordered a reconnaissance of the various possibilities of this plan to see how much could be done.

10. *Future Operations Southwards from North Burma for the Reconquest of the Country.*

The Quebec Conference decisions received on the 26th August included instructions to study future plans for these operations. The possible date was to be November, 1944, and examination was put in hand on the following assumptions:—

(a) That land and air operations for the capture of Upper Burma would be launched in mid-February, 1944.

(b) That offensive operations would be carried out on the Arakan coast in the spring of 1944.

(c) That we capture either Akyab or North Sumatra in the spring of 1944.

(d) That an airborne and other forms of attack on Rangoon would be included.