

Comparing the Conference recommendations with the total Army strength available in Burma in December 1941 (see *Appendix G*), and omitting the Burma Frontier Force and the Territorial and Auxiliary forces, the shortages were approximately—

- 3 field batteries;
- 1 anti-tank battery; and
- 1 company light tanks

out of the immediate requirements, and the whole of the additional requirement.

Apart from this, up to the outbreak of the war with Japan, Burma remained short of:—

- Rifles;
- Mechanical transport vehicles;
- Officers for the General Officer Commanding's staff and services; and
- Medical personnel.

24. A Burma Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve under the command of Commander K. S. Lyle, R.N., had been raised in 1940. It had two or three patrol boats operating off the Tenasserim Peninsula, and was also responsible for mine-sweeping the Rangoon approaches and for examination services. There were several other craft building at Rangoon, but these had been held up mainly owing to the delay in obtaining engines and fittings from England. The force was under the Commander-in-Chief, China, for operations, and under the Governor of Burma for administration. It was not under the General Officer Commanding, though co-operation was very satisfactory.

25. In November 1940, air strength in Burma was practically non-existent. The Singapore Conference had recommended the following:—

- 1 general reconnaissance squadron;
- 2 bomber squadrons; and
- 1 fighter squadron.

No. 60 Squadron, equipped with Blenheim bombers, arrived from India in February 1941; in August 1941, one flight was reorganised as a fighter flight and equipped with Brewster Buffaloes. Later, a complete Buffalo squadron, No. 67, was sent from Malaya in November 1941, and the whole of No. 60 Squadron reverted to bombers. There was a Burma Volunteer Air Unit, but this had not got further than a small training organisation. This merely gave Burma two squadrons, which was admittedly very weak, and, actually, when war broke out, most of the Blenheim squadron, No. 60, was in Malaya for bombing practice.

On the other hand, the American Volunteer Group of the International Air Force started to train in Burma in August 1941, and there was an understanding, amounting practically to an agreement, with General Chiang Kai-shek that, if Burma was attacked, part, or the whole, of this American Volunteer Group would be detailed for the defence of Burma. Actually, two of the American Volunteer Group squadrons were sent to Kunming when war with Japan broke out, and one to Mingaladon, near Rangoon.

It was my opinion that the defence of Burma depended largely upon holding Malaya, and that the defence of the latter must have priority. I also considered it unlikely that the Japanese would attack Burma solely in order to cut the Burma Road to China. They knew that this must involve war with Great Britain, and in all probability with the Dutch and perhaps also the United States. If they were

going to face this, they would be much more likely to start attacking Singapore than Burma. Admittedly, we were working on probabilities and not certainties, but, in view of the weakness of our air forces, it was essential to concentrate the maximum effort and not try to be equally strong in two places.

The American Volunteer Group.

26. The American Volunteer Group consisted of three single-seater fighter squadrons which were equipped with Tomahawks up to the time I handed over command.

Doubtless the United States will not forget the help that was freely given to the American Volunteer Group by the Burma Government and by the Royal Air Force. They were given the sole use of the Royal Air Force aerodrome at Toungoo, allowed to use Mingaladon aerodrome, near Rangoon, for testing Tomahawks after erection, and were offered the use of further aerodromes if required. Permission from London was given on the 22nd August, 1941, for the American Volunteer Group to carry out operational training in Burma, and they were given assistance in many other directions.

On the 31st October, 1941, the British Ambassador, Chungking, represented to the Foreign Office that the situation in China was very serious. We were asked what we could do to help, and suggested that we might form a British fighter squadron with volunteers from the Royal Air Force to form part of the International Air Force, and possibly a bomber squadron as well. It was pointed out that this proposal would mean a reduction in our own effective fighting and bombing strength. The suggestion was approved by the Chiefs of Staff, provided I was satisfied they would be able to operate effectively as part of the International Air Force and that I could accept the detachment from the Malaya defences. These squadrons would have been largely dependent on the American Volunteer Group organisation for their maintenance. Pending a detailed examination of the maintenance arrangements in China, volunteers for these squadrons were not called for and actually they were never formed, but many preliminary steps were taken, including the movement of vehicles, spares and bombs. A telegram to the British liaison mission in Washington, and a personal telegram from me to General MacArthur in Manila, resulted in a very fair stock of spares being received by the American Volunteer Group before war broke out. But for this, it is very doubtful if they could have gone on working for more than two or three weeks.

I found that the pilots of the American Volunteer Group were not satisfied with their Tomahawks when I visited them in September 1941. This was largely corrected before war broke out, partly by giving details of the successes of the Tomahawks in the Middle East, and partly by a test carried out between a Buffalo and a Tomahawk, which showed the latter to be considerably superior in speed, climb and in manoeuvrability over some 10,000 feet.

Aircraft Warning System.

27. There was an air observation corps under General Officer Commanding, organised in five groups, each under an ex-inspector of police, the observers being local Burmans and Anglo-Burmans. This Observer Corps did good work, and, according to later reports, warnings of the attacks on Rangoon were received in time