

paid to Burma at the end of March his dispositions in the event of a withdrawal north of Mandalay being necessary, and we decided that a part of the Imperial Forces might withdraw with the Chinese on Lashio and possibly even into China.

In the end the sudden break through of the enemy into the Shan States and quick capture of Lashio, together with the enemy threat up the Chindwin against the road into Assam, led to the whole of the Imperial Forces withdrawing by Kalewa and Tamu into India. This was agreed with the Chinese who decided to withdraw the Fifth Army up the Irrawaddy valley on Bhamo and Myitkyina.

24. The defence of the Andaman Islands was included in the defence of Burma during most of this period. Its military importance lay in its seaplane base, in the possibility of establishing an aerodrome there, and in its potential value to the enemy as a submarine base. The original garrison was one British company. For security against a Japanese raid a battalion of Gurkhas was added early in January. When it became obvious that Rangoon could not be held, it was decided to withdraw the whole garrison, which was successfully carried out on 12th March. On 23rd March the Japanese occupied Port Blair.

Akyab was held till early in May when Japanese infiltration by land and sea and attack by air made it obvious that it would require an effort disproportionate to its military value to hold it any longer, since it could no longer be used as an air base. The garrison and naval patrol were therefore withdrawn.

SUMMARY OF BURMA CAMPAIGN.

25. The loss of Burma has been from a strategical point of view our most serious reverse of the Japanese war. It has deprived our Chinese allies of a flow of munitions to continue their long resistance; it has made the establishment of air bases within effective range of Japan a matter of extreme difficulty; it has exposed India to a serious threat of invasion; and it has had a disastrous effect on British prestige in the East. The reasons for this reverse merit some examination.

26. The unpreparedness of Burma for war and its causes have already been mentioned; and I have recorded my conviction that to place the control of operations in Burma under a Far Eastern Command instead of under India was an error from the military point of view which it would require strong political reasons to justify.

27. From a geographical point of view the defence of Burma against an attack from Thailand was an awkward commitment. The fact that there was practically speaking only one means of entry into the country, by the port of Rangoon, was a source of weakness; and this port lay within a comparatively short range of enemy airfields in Thailand. The long narrow strip of Tenasserim, over 400 miles long and nowhere much more than 40 miles broad, was not easily defensible, while in the enemy's possession it was a threat both by air (there were several excellent aerodromes) and by sea.

If Moulmein in Upper Tenasserim fell, and here again the ground gave little scope for defence in depth, Rangoon was very closely threatened; while a force defending Rangoon against an enemy advancing from the line of the Salween River had the disadvantage of

fighting on a front parallel to its communications and with its base close behind, almost outside, its right flank.

If ever there was a country where attack was the best form of defence it was Burma. Unfortunately the means were not available.

28. Such plans and preparations as had been made for the defence of Burma suffered from three misconceptions:

(a) that the main attack would be directed against Kengtung in the Southern Shan States, the only place to which there were good communications in Thailand—a motor road from a railhead at Lampang. Actually the Japanese made no attempt to use this obvious route.

(b) that our air force would be able to prevent the enemy using the limited approaches to the frontier. The whole experience of this war is that air forces cannot prevent the use of a road or railway; and anyway there were no bombers in Burma.

(c) that the natural difficulties of the country on the frontier, few and indifferent tracks, hills and thick jungle and the formidable natural obstacle of the Salween River, would restrict the numbers the enemy could employ and dictate the direction in which he used them. Actually, we found ourselves up against a new feature in warfare—an enemy fully armed, disciplined, and trained on the continental model using the mobility, independence of communications and unorthodox tactics of the savage in thick jungle. It was perhaps little wonder that our troops were out-manoeuvred and became bewildered.

29. British military authorities have seldom realised that an Intelligence system cannot be improvised and requires to be built up over a period of years. The study of Intelligence in peace is not encouraged and officers who specialise in it are apt to be regarded with suspicion. The operations in Burma are a striking example of the penalty we pay in war for this neglect.

30. There was never sufficient naval force to give any effective naval support during the Burma Campaign; and its absence made the G.O.C. always anxious about a landing near Rangoon. Actually the Japanese made no attempt at sea-borne invasion nor were any ships from convoys to Rangoon ever lost from enemy action.

Commodore Graham, R.N., with small forces did some good work in the protection of Akyab and the coast to the south in the later stages of the campaign.

The situation as regards air support has been sufficiently indicated in the narratives of General Hutton and General Alexander. I constantly endeavoured to obtain air reinforcements for Burma but they were not available.

The operations are a striking example of the importance of an adequate warning system, which conditions in Burma made it extremely difficult to organise.

The Japanese air force did not show itself particularly efficient or formidable in Burma, either in bombing or fighting. Our small air forces, skilfully and boldly handled, were more than a match for the enemy as long as good airfields and warnings were available.

Casualties and material damage from air attack were small but the moral effects were