

136. The Supreme Allied Commander had, on the 4th November, directed that plans were to be prepared and executed to accomplish the above object as follows:—

(a) A land advance, to start as soon as the drying of the ground allowed it, down the Mayu Peninsula and the Kalapanzin and Kaladan Valleys, with the object of clearing the area north of a general line Foul Point—Kudaung Island—Minbya.

(b) An amphibious assault on Akyab Island to take place as early as possible, with the aim of clearing the island by the end of January.

(c) Consolidation of the area north of the line Akyab—Minbya, but no exploitation to take place south of Myebon without the Supreme Allied Commander's authority.

These instructions had been passed on to the Commander, 15th Indian Corps, by General Giffard in an Operation Instruction dated the 9th November.

137. General Christison's plan to fulfil these directions for the clearing of Northern Arakan was as follows: 25 Indian Division (Major-General G. N. Wood) was to clear the Mayu Peninsula, and seize Foul Point and Kudaung Island. 82 (West African) Division (Major-General G. McL. S. Bruce) was to operate inland, as left flank guard to 25 Indian Division's advance, along the general axis of the Mayu River as far as Htizwe. This entailed the capture of Buthidaung and the crossing of the Kalapanzin River. On arrival at Htizwe, the Division was to turn east, over the Kanzauk Pass, and relieve 81 (West African) Division in the Kaladan Valley, and thence continue south towards Myebon. About 30 miles further inland, separated from 82 (West African) Division by a considerable range of hills, 81 (West African) Division (Major-General F. J. Loftus-Tottenham) consisting of only two brigades, was allotted the task of clearing the Kaladan Valley as far as Myohaung, by an advance down the axis of the Pi Chaung and the Kaladan River. After Myohaung, it was to hand over to 82 (West African) Division, and withdraw into Corps reserve at Chiringa as the first step towards the reduction of formations in Arakan. 26 Indian Division (Major-General C. E. N. Lomax) with 3 Commando Brigade under command, was to capture Akyab by a seaborne assault mounted from Chittagong and then to exploit eastwards through the chaung country to the line Minbya—Myebon, while 82 (West African) Division came down the road from Myohaung. It will be seen from this plan that the main thrust was down the coast where our mobility could be exploited, while the two African divisions inland kept the enemy spread on a broad front, preventing him from concentrating in the coastal sector and safeguarding the land communications, first of 25 Indian Division and later of the rear of 15 Indian Corps. We thus would eliminate the threat of Japanese outflanking operations, hitherto a worry.

138. As far as the timings of these operations were concerned, the advance of 81 (West African) Division was to begin first, and it was to secure the general line from Kaladan Village westwards to the Pi Chaung by the 1st December. The advance in the Mayu sector was not due to start until the 12th

December, by which date the country would dry up sufficiently to allow the movement of armour and guns, and for air support to be given from fair-weather strips. Nevertheless, 15 Indian Corps carried out what amounted to a preliminary offensive prior to this date. All ground which we had voluntarily vacated west of the Kalapanzin River prior to the monsoon was re-occupied, while, in the coastal sector, 25 Indian Division reached Udaung 13 miles south-east of Maungdaw. The first objective allotted to 25 Indian Division and 82 (West African) Division when the main offensive opened was the general line Indin—Htizwe, which was to be secured by the 31st December.

139. In the matter of ground communications, the advantage lay with the Japanese in that they controlled the mouths of the Mayu, Kywede and Kaladan Rivers, the Htizwe—Kanzauk jeep track, and the road south from Kyauktaw, on the Kaladan, to Myohaung. These advantages were, however, counteracted by the fact that our advance down the coast could be based on the sea, while, further east, the Kalapanzin waterway from Buthidaung could be used to supply any parallel advance in that area. In the Kaladan Valley, the enemy's river and road communications were offset by the fact that 81 (West African) Division was on air supply, with the consequent freedom of manoeuvre which it allowed.

140. The plan of 25 Indian Division was, briefly, for 74 Brigade to advance down the coastal plain, "cutting its tail" as it went and being supplied from the sea, while 53 Brigade advanced down the Kalapanzin Valley, being supplied by air until the Kalapanzin River could be opened for Inland Water Transport from Buthidaung. 51 Brigade was to follow, and clear enemy pockets which had been bypassed in the Mayu hills. The essence of this plan was our refusal to present General Sakurai with his favourite target—a vital maintenance road in our rear. The Divisional Artillery was supplemented by the support of two destroyers which, as events proved, filled a most useful rôle in shelling enemy hill positions defiladed from our own guns. The chief task during the planning period was to procure sufficient boats to maintain the advance of 53 Brigade and to arrange for their overland transportation through the narrow tunnels on the Maungdaw—Buthidaung hill road across the Mayu Range to the Kalapanzin River. Some 650 craft were required for this project.

141. In 82 (West African) Division, 4 Brigade had already relieved a brigade of 26 Indian Division in Taung Bazaar. The remainder of 82 (West African) Division was to concentrate just prior to D-Day (12th December) astride the Buthidaung road, immediately east of the Mayu spine, whence a simultaneous advance was to be made by 2 Brigade, with tank support, on Buthidaung and by 1 Brigade further south on Baguna. 1 Brigade was then to cross the Kalapanzin River and capture the high ground on the east bank. This feature dominated the river and the 53 Brigade "regatta," mentioned at the end of the preceding paragraph, could not start until it was