

Indian Infantry Brigade was at that time concentrated near Hlawga station but was still without its transport which, although the ships were then coming up the river, could not join it for 24 hours. Apart from 2 R.T.R., less one squadron, now withdrawn to Hlegu, one British battalion split up in detachments in Rangoon and Syriam, one squadron tanks and a company of 1 W. Yorks on the Prome road, there were no other troops of any value available.

108. *General Alexander arrives.* While still at Divisional H.Q. I heard that General Alexander had arrived, and I therefore suspended any action on my instructions until he had been able to visit Divisional H.Q. and judge the situation for himself.

It is necessary here to mention that on 22nd February, I received a telegram from A.B.D.A. Command stating that the War Cabinet had decided that, in view of the proposed large increase in the Army in Burma, Lieutenant-General Alexander should be appointed as Commander-in-Chief Burma, and that I should remain as C.G.S. after his arrival. I remained therefore in Burma till the end of April.

X. CONCLUSION

109. *Enemy Organisation and Methods.* Perhaps the most important characteristic of the Japanese soldier is his ability to live almost entirely on the country and to dispense with the enormous administrative organisation in rear of the fighting troops that is required by most armies.

He achieves this by being tough. He can live for five days on the rice he actually carries and he has been taught that he must reduce his expenditure of ammunition to that which he can carry. He uses any means of transport available—porters, civilians, bullock carts, boats, captured M.T., etc., but has little in the unit. His troops do not expect to be carried everywhere in M.T. The other main point is his insistence on the offensive spirit and the tactics of envelopment. Quite small forces will work round the rear of a much larger force and may succeed in defeating it entirely by bluff.

They are very thorough. There is no doubt that their officers have carefully studied the terrain of Burma and know far more about the jungle tracks than our own troops. They have arranged long ago for an intelligence service, for local guides, etc. They do not hesitate to fight in plain clothes or enemy uniform if it suits their purpose and, although they may deny any deliberate policy of committing atrocities, both officers and men often kill or maim prisoners or wounded after capture in a most brutal and coldblooded manner. They neglect enemy wounded completely—even more than they do their own.

Owing to the weakness of their administrative organisation, there is likely to be a considerable pause between the main phases of an operation. Furthermore if they lose the initiative they may well run short of either food or ammunition, or both. They are extremely careless as regards protective dispositions and in the presence of an enterprising enemy could be made to pay dearly. They do not like being attacked and when the day comes to take the offensive there is little doubt among our troops of their ability to defeat them.

In the jungle they make great use of whistle signals and battle cries, a method which our troops have tried to imitate. It is worth considering whether bugle calls would not also be valuable. They make great use of night for infiltration and to avoid being caught in the open by armoured fighting vehicles.

110. *Reasons for Loss of Rangoon.* The main reasons for the loss of Rangoon may be summed up as:—

(a) Reinforcement too late and in insufficient numbers.

(b) Inadequacy of defence preparations in practically every respect.

(c) Unsuitable organisation and training of our own forces.

(d) The superior numbers, preparations and training of the enemy.

The battle east of the River Sittang really settled the fate of Rangoon, but the enemy preferred to await reinforcements before pushing on. The decision that the 7 Australian Division could not be spared to go to Burma and the diversion at the last moment of the East African Brigade, a strong Brigade which had seen service, removed any prospect of retrieving the situation.

The inadequacy of the defence preparations in Burma has been sufficiently brought out by the narrative above. Without a sound foundation of this kind it is very difficult to make the best use of reinforcements thrown in at the last moment and throughout the campaign there has been the immediate menace of an administrative breakdown.

We had failed to secure the support of the local population or to arrest the leaders of disaffected elements. Owing to our failure to reinforce in time the enemy was nearly always a march ahead of us. It is easy to see that even one more infantry brigade received early in January would have sufficed to turn the scale in practically every battle from Kawkaik to Rangoon.

Throughout the operations the enemy was in superior numbers, usually about two to one on the actual battle front. Any idea that the Army in Burma during this period was driven back by inferior numbers is entirely incorrect.

111. *Training.* The lack of troops specially trained and equipped for jungle warfare, as compared with the specialist troops brought against them, or indeed troops sufficiently trained to take part in operations against an organised enemy in considerably superior numbers, was a very important factor.

112. *Burma Rifles.* Attempts had been made to turn the personnel of the Burma Rifles into regular soldiers of the standard pattern. Had they been suitably organised, trained and equipped as a frontier corps specially for jungle warfare, and placed under selected officers they might have been invaluable.

113. *Burma Frontier Force.* The Burma Frontier Force came under Army control for operations only at the commencement of the war. The Frontier Force had recently been expanded and was composed largely of good Indian material, but had few officers. It would have paid to have sent many of the good E.C.Os. available to the Frontier Force instead of to the Burma Rifles. The fire power of battalions was restricted by an insufficiency of mortars and automatics, which were not