

etc., from one site to another. The fact that the requirements and views of the British, Americans, Indians and Chinese were involved and did not always coincide still further complicated the problem and introduced the danger of international friction. The wonder was not that projects were seldom completed by the target date but that so much got done.

38. I gave orders for a through road from India to Assam to be constructed, in order to assist the supply problem and to avoid the necessity of all wheeled vehicles being sent to Assam by rail instead of under their own power. This Assam access road ran through Bihar and north Bengal, but progress in construction was slow due to lack of resources.

MEDICAL.

39. The medical situation continued to require constant enlargement of hospitals in the operational area and strained India's inadequate resources to the utmost. Malaria remained the chief problem. During the Arakan operations casualties from malaria were extremely heavy, and the sick rate in Assam was also high. Weekly admissions to hospital in Eastern Army reached 10,000 in June, of which over half were due to malaria.

A Medical Mission from the United Kingdom visited India to investigate our shortage of medical personnel, and made valuable recommendations.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

40. By the end of 1942 the supply of food-grains in India was obviously short of her needs, and we had great difficulty in obtaining foodstuffs for the Armed forces. I was compelled to draw the attention of the Government of India to the dangers of the food situation; and in January had to make a reduction in the flour ration of the Army.

CEYLON AND OCEAN BASES (ADDU ATOLL, DIEGO GARCIA, COCOS ISLANDS).

41. These continued to remain the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief, India, but there is little to record of them during the period. The enemy made no attack or threat against any of them. There were some changes in the garrison of Ceylon, the 16th British Brigade of the 70th Division (see paragraph 8 of my previous Despatch)* being moved from Ceylon to rejoin its Division.

Ceylon was a valuable training ground for jungle warfare. At Addu Atoll A.A. guns were installed and airfields developed, the health situation was much improved.

INTERNAL SITUATION.

42. The internal situation in India during the first half of 1943 was quiet. The operations in Sind against the Hurs, undertaken to guard vital railway communications and restore public order and confidence (see paragraph 23 of my last despatch),* ended on June 1st, when martial law was removed. The head of the sect, the Pir Pagaro, was tried and executed.

The situation on the North-West Frontier of India gave no trouble during the period.

Recruiting continued at a generally satisfactory rate, but it became obvious that the Indian Army had reached its expansion limit

on a voluntary basis; the intake was now only sufficient to maintain the existing strength. The intake of Indian officers for the Army and the R.A.F. was disappointing both in quantity and quality.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS.

43. In January I received information that Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, General Arnold, commanding the American air forces, and General Somervell, head of the American Service of Supply, would visit India after the Allied Conference at Casablanca to discuss plans for the recapture of Burma. They arrived at the end of January, and General Stilwell came also from China. Discussions were held on February 2nd and 3rd at Delhi. I had given orders some time previously for the preparation of a plan to recapture Burma during the cold weather of 1943-44, and the draft of this plan, which had been completed just before the arrival of the party, formed the basis of our discussions. As a result of these I submitted to the Chiefs of Staff an outline plan which may be summarised as follows.

The plan provided for an offensive in three phases:—

Phase 1.—To begin in November 1943, consisted in an advance by 10 Chinese divisions from Western Yunnan towards Myitkyina, Bhamo, Lashio, and eventually Mandalay; by the Chinese troops which had been trained at Ramgarh, from Ledo on Myitkyina; and by 3 British divisions from Manipur on Pakokku and Mandalay.

Phase 2.—Was to take place in December 1943, and was to consist of simultaneous seaborne assaults on the Western coast of Lower Burma, and landings were to be made on Ramree island, Taungup, Sandaway, Gwa, and Bassein, with the main object of securing airfields, also of advancing from Taungup on Prome; during this phase the British and Chinese advance in Upper Burma would be continued.

Phase 3.—Was to take place in January 1944, and was to consist of a direct seaborne and airborne assault on Rangoon, while the operations in Phases 1 and 2 continued.

Field-Marshal Dill and General Arnold then went to Chungking to discuss the plan with the Generalissimo, and I took General Somervell for a short tour of the Eastern Front. We met again in Calcutta and confirmed the outline plan.

44. The plan was admittedly a bold and hazardous one; but it was the only one which offered, to my mind, a chance of recapturing Burma in one campaigning season, between two monsoons; and this was what I had been instructed to do. The plan did not commend itself to my A.O.C.-in-C., Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, nor to Admiral Sir James Somerville, Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, who had been unable to be present at the discussions with the Americans but who visited Delhi later in February. Their objections were mainly that the cover by air forces would be insufficient; and that the direct assault on Rangoon would be impracticable if the enemy installed a heavy scale of defences in the Rangoon river. My comment was that I thought that by the winter of 1943-44 the Japanese air

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