

2. *Plans considered as the Result of the Washington Conference.*

When I took over command, planning was proceeding on the lines laid down by the Washington Conference of May, 1943.

It had been decided at this Conference that priority should be given to increasing the air transportation route to China to a monthly capacity of 10,000 tons by the early autumn of 1943. Bracketed with this as a first priority was the development of air facilities in Assam with a view:—

(a) To intensifying air operations against the Japanese in Burma.

(b) To maintaining increased American air forces in China.

(c) To keeping up the flow of airborne supplies in China.

Examination of this problem had been proceeding at India Command Headquarters, and on the 2nd July I came to the conclusion that, since priority was to be given to the air lift for China, the limitations of the Assam line of communications would not permit intensive land operations to be carried out. I considered the implications of this conclusion also in relation to the prospect of amphibious operations against Akyab, because I felt that the successful accomplishment of the latter was important for many reasons, including the need to raise the morale of the Army in India to the highest pitch. A summary of my recommendations was sent to the Chiefs of Staff on the 2nd July, 1943.

At this time it became clear that the capacity of the air transport route to China was already falling short of the target, and during July only 3,451 tons (as against a target figure of 7,000 tons) were actually delivered to China. The reason was the lack, as yet, of a comprehensive maintenance organisation and servicing facilities. The effect on our airfields of monsoon conditions was not a factor in the failure to reach the required tonnage.

On the 18th July, ill fortune beset the line of communications to the Eastern Army in the form of a serious breach on the main line of the East Indian Railway and on the Grand Trunk Road, north-west of Calcutta. This breach was caused by widespread floods resulting from the river Damodar bursting its banks and changing its course, and it came at a time when transportation on the line of communication was already in arrears owing to various unforeseen causes and also when demands on its capacity were already increasing. It now began to be seen (as already recorded) that the long term development of the line of communications so far planned (which in any case could not be fully effective till the autumn of 1944) was going to be inadequate; and various measures for short term improvement were urgently considered. The situation in regard to communications in North East India at this time and its relation to the various projected operations, was communicated to the Chiefs of Staff on the 13th August 1943.

3. *Plans reconsidered as the Result of the Quebec Conference.*

On the 25th August I received the decisions of the Quebec Conference in so far as they affected the India Command. In these the

previous decision of the Washington Conference was modified in so far as it was now resolved to give first priority in our war effort in this theatre to the land and air operations which would be necessary to establish land communication with China. It was also decided to continue to build up and increase the air routes and air supplies to China, and to develop the resources of that country in order:—

(a) To enable her to continue her struggle against Japan.

(b) To intensify operations against the Japanese.

(c) To maintain increased U.S. armed forces in China.

Furthermore, while the possibilities of developing the air route to China to enable us to deploy all the heavy bomber and transport aircraft likely to be available for the South East Asia theatre and China in 1944-45, were to be studied, a directive to the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command mentioned an eventual monthly lift of 20,000 tons as a target for the air ferry to China. No specific date, however, was fixed for this.

I now examined the operational programme for the future, so far as this had been planned, in the light of the Quebec decisions. The paragraphs which follow deal consecutively, and under their appropriate headings, with the various projects examined. In each case the narrative embraces broadly the conclusions reached up to the time I handed over to the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command.

4. *Plans for Land and Air Operations in Upper Burma.*

Plans for operations in Upper Burma had been under examination for some time, and, as soon as the decisions of the Quebec Conference were known, these plans received priority of attention over other projects.

The resolve was to conduct vigorous and aggressive land and air operations at the end of the 1943 monsoon, from Assam into Burma via Ledo and Imphal, and this was to be in step with an advance by Chinese Forces from Yunnan. The object was to contain as many Japanese Forces as possible and to cover the air ferry route. It was to be an essential step towards the reopening of land communications with China by means of a road from Ledo via Myitkyina. The new road would connect with the existing road north of Lashio.

Here again it is necessary not to lose sight of the overriding factor of the extremely limited capacity of the Assam L. of C. It was only possible to plan operations for a force within the maintenance capacity of that artery. If the forces or scope of operations were to be increased, it could only be done at the expense of other demands on the L. of C., and in particular that of the air lift to China.

By the 7th September, I was able to give the Chiefs of Staff a summary of suggested plans for land and air operations in Upper Burma in 1943-44. Chinese operations should take place as already planned from Yunnan and Ledo. It was only in respect of the plan for the British Forces that alternatives existed,