

had only reached a point ten miles south of Palel, though it was all-weather one-way for a good many miles south of that point, when the enemy launched their March offensive.

20. Concurrently with planning for operations on the Imphal Front, planning for operations in Arakan was, of course, in progress. Several plans, which included amphibious operations against Akyab in conjunction with an advance down the Mayu Peninsula, were examined, but all were eventually abandoned either for lack of resources or for other reasons, and I was thrown back on a plan for an advance with the limited objective of the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road, and the mouth of the Naf River. Once the latter was captured, supplies could be brought in by sea, not only to Maungdaw but also to Teknaf.

21. Other plans for amphibious operations, among them one for the capture of the Andamans, were also examined, but all were in the end rejected as the resources for them were needed for more important operations in other theatres of war.

I was finally compelled, therefore, to limit the operations of the Army to a short advance in Arakan and advances down the Tiddim road and Kabaw Valley with the object of capturing the Kalewa—Kalemyo area.

PART II—OPERATIONS.

Operations by 15 Indian Corps in Arakan.

22. In November, 1943, we were in contact with the Japanese in Arakan, the Imphal Front and in North Burma (N.C.A.C.).

The situation in Arakan at the end of the monsoon of 1943, was that we held positions covering Cox's Bazaar with 26 Indian Division on the general line Teknaf—Taung Bazaar, while the enemy held the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road. The advance to close contact started in the middle of October.

23. Between October and the end of December other changes were made in our dispositions :—

(a) 26 Indian Division was relieved by 7 and 5 Indian Divisions.

(b) 7 Indian Division moved across the Mayu Range, complete with all its guns and lorries. A fair-weather road was built over the Ngakyedauk Pass, which lies north-west of the village of that name, to provide the necessary communications.

(c) 5 Indian Division took over the western sector of the front.

(d) Our rear areas were re-adjusted.

(e) Finally we drove in the enemy's out-post line.

At the end of December, 5 Indian Division held from the sea to the crest of the Mayu Range, while 7 Indian Division had moved over complete into the Kalapanzin Valley. The stage was set for an attack on the main enemy position.

24. Early in January, I issued an Operational Instruction to the Commander, Fourteenth Army, Lieut.-General W. J. Slim, directing him to secure the mouth of the Naf River; Maungdaw—Buthidaung; and exploit success to the maximum. These instructions were based on an Operational Directive issued

by the Supreme Allied Commander. My objects were, first, to improve our general situation in Arakan, and, second, to contain and destroy Japanese forces.

25. A period during which certain subsidiary operations were undertaken to secure the necessary jumping-off places for our offensive then followed. The enemy defended these positions stubbornly.

On the 15th January, the dispositions of the forward elements of 15 Indian Corps (Lieut.-General A. F. P. Christison), were as follows :—

5 Indian Division: Maungdaw—Magyi Chaung—Rehkat Chaung—Point 1619, with a brigade in reserve west of the Mayu Range.

7 Indian Division: One brigade in the hills north and north-east of Htindaw. One brigade Tatmakhali to Sinohbyin, with forward troops on the Letwedet Chaung. One brigade Kyaukit *massif*—Pyinshe—Windwin, with a detachment on the Saingdin Chaung.

81 (West African) Division: Daletme—Satpaung area, in the Kaladan Valley.

Tanks: One regiment, in support of 5 Indian Division.

Medium Artillery: One battery in support of each division.

26. The enemy had turned the area about the Tunnels, through which the road runs in its passage through the highest portion of the Mayu Range between Maungdaw and Buthidaung, into a fortress with two strong buttresses—Razabil on the west and Letwedet on the east.

The general plan of attack was framed to capture these two buttresses in turn and surround the garrison of the Tunnels fortress. 5 Indian Division was to take Razabil and 7 Indian Division Buthidaung, thus cutting in behind the Letwedet buttress. 81 (West African) Division was to advance down the Kaladan River to capture Kyauktaw, with the ultimate object of cutting the Kanzauk—Htizwe road, which was the enemy's main lateral line of communication between the Kaladan and Kalapanzin Valleys.

27. The main offensive was launched on the 19th January, and, despite strong opposition, our preliminary operations against the enemy's outposts were very successful. The original plan had included a sea landing by 2 British Division further south down the Mayu Peninsula. As we did not wish to drive the Japanese into the toe of the Peninsula until 2 British Division had effected a firm lodgement, our attack on the main enemy positions was deferred to synchronize with the sea landing, the date of which could not be put forward as it was governed by the state of the tide and moon. Unfortunately, the craft required for the amphibious operation were taken away and, therefore, this "right hook" had to be cancelled. Thus our land offensive had been held up to no purpose. By the 4th February, however, the attack on Razabil had achieved a measure of success, but the main position still held out. Progress elsewhere had been steady, but slow.

28. It was at this moment that the enemy launched his counter-attack and our offensive