

Hurricane Squadrons—aircraft and personnel—began to arrive on 21st January. It was not, however, until 26th January that a Squadron built up from these elements became operational. The total reinforcement of bombers arriving in the country before the decision to evacuate Rangoon was reached comprised the aircraft and personnel of 113 Bomber Squadron and the aircraft and crews of 45 Bomber Squadron.

India, after parting with her Blenheims to Far East, had no modern aircraft of any kind and could contribute only a flight of 4 Wapiti and 2 Audax aircraft (both completely obsolete types) to form a Coast Defence Flight. This was later replaced by a flight of Blenheim I aircraft. Later India sent the 1 Indian Squadron and No. 28 Squadron R.A.F. with Lysander biplanes. These squadrons, in spite of their out-of-date equipment, did much valuable work, and 1 Indian Squadron acquitted itself gallantly in the first service in this war of an Indian air squadron. No. 31 Bomber Transport Squadron equipped with Valencia and Douglas aircraft was also placed by India at the disposal of Burma.

The air defences of Burma, especially of the vital port of Rangoon, would have been overwhelmed at once but for the presence in Burma of the American Volunteer Group (A.V.G.), an air force manned by American pilots for the defence of China. It was equipped with P-40 fighters and led by Colonel G. Chennault. One of its two squadrons was alternately made available by the Generalissimo for the defence of Rangoon, and the pilots together with the R.A.F. Buffalo Fighter Squadrons saved the situation by their dash and skill.

8 In an appreciation about the middle of December, General Macleod estimated the maximum scale of Japanese attack at one or two divisions against Southern Shan States and one division in the south against Tenasserim. He stated that two infantry brigades, one field regiment and one field battery were the additional land reinforcements necessary to deal with the situation. He considered three bomber squadrons and two fighter squadrons were required.

Both Far East Command and War Office informed me that an attack in force against Burma was unlikely until the Japanese had completed their campaigns in Malaya and the Philippines.

9. After discussing Burma's defence problems with the Governor and G.O.C. I cabled from Rangoon on 22nd December to the C.I.G.S. an appreciation in which I emphasised the weakness of Burma's defences, the lack of an Intelligence system, and the need for air forces. I said that the *immediate* requirements of Burma were two bomber and two modern fighter squadrons, a divisional headquarters and two brigade groups, apparatus for a warning system and anti-aircraft artillery.

10 In view of the extensive re-organisation of the whole defence system of Burma, which was essential, I decided that it would be necessary to replace Lieut.-General Macleod, who had done his best with the very little available to him, by a commander with more experience of the organisation and administration of troops on a large scale. The Governor of Burma was anxious, for political reasons, to have an officer of the British Service if possible,

and I decided to appoint my Chief of the General Staff in India, Lieut.-General Hutton, to the command in Burma. His powers of effective organisation had been amply proved in India. He assumed command on 27th December, 1941.

#### OFFER OF CHINESE TROOPS FOR DEFENCE OF BURMA.

11. From Rangoon I flew to Chungking with General Brett of the United States Air Force to discuss the Japanese war with Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek. I wished to ensure that at least one of the A.V.G. Squadrons, which Colonel Chennault wished to remove to China, remained in Burma for the defence of Rangoon; also to obtain the temporary use of some of the Lease-Lend material for China, which was stacked in large quantities in the Rangoon docks and could not quickly be removed, to make good the most serious deficiencies in the Burma Army. To neither of these requests did I get a definite reply, though in the end one squadron of the A.V.G. always did remain for the defence of Rangoon, and some of the Lease-Lend equipment was placed at the disposal of the Burma Army. On the other hand, the Generalissimo offered to send to Burma the Fifth and Sixth Chinese Armies. Since it has been alleged that my refusal of this offer was a main contributing factor to the loss of Burma, I will state the facts of the matter from my point of view. I accepted at once the 93 Division, part of which was already approaching the Burmese border from Puerh, and the 49 Division as a reserve on the northern frontier of Burma at Wanting. These two Divisions constituted the Sixth Army, with a third Division, the 55th, which General Denny, head of 204 Mission in China, informed me was very scattered and would take some time to collect and was of poor quality. The Fifth Army, of good quality, was collecting round Kunming. I asked that it should not at present be moved into Burma, but should be held in reserve in the Kunming area. I considered that it would be well placed here either to move into Burma if required; or for the defence of Yunnan if the Japanese made an advance north from Indo-China against the Burmese road, a contingency which the Chinese had not long before represented as the enemy's most probable move; or for offensive operations into Indo-China in co-operation with an advance from Burma if all went well.

The Generalissimo made it perfectly clear that it was a condition of the acceptance of his offer that a separate line of communications should be available for his troops and that they should not in any way be mixed up with British troops. It was impossible at the time to provide a separate line of communication for the Fifth Army though it was possible to keep the communications of the 93 Division from Puerh separate from that of the British troops in Burma. I had at the time every reason to suppose that I should have ample British, Indian or African troops available to defend Burma, which did not seem immediately threatened: obviously it was desirable that a country of the British Empire should be defended by Imperial troops rather than by foreign. The Chinese who had no administrative services of their own would have complicated the already difficult administrative