

“Defence of India: Policy & Plans” is the fifteenth volume to be published in the series “Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War.” The sub-series under which it falls is entitled “General War Administration and Organisation”, of which three volumes have already been published earlier.

The volumes in this sub-series lack the thrill associated with the campaigns, but they deal with important aspects of war-planning, organisation, expansion etc., which have a profound effect on military operations and their outcome. Their study is thus not only valuable but essential for a proper understanding of the causes of success or failure of a campaign.

Based on secret official records, this book describes in detail the policy which the Government of India followed for the defence of the country, and the various war plans formulated, discussed and adopted during the years immediately preceding the war, as also the changes and modifications made in them after the war broke out. The pre-war plans were based largely on the premise of a war on the north-west frontier of India, but in the event

(Continued on back flap)

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IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR
1939-45

DEFENCE OF INDIA : POLICY AND PLANS

General Editor
BISHESHWAR PRASAD, D.LITT.

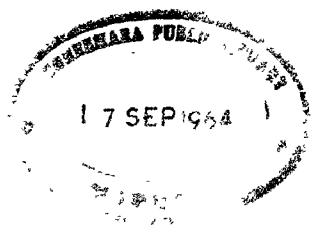
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DEFENCE OF INDIA : POLICY AND PLANS



BISHESHWAR PRASAD, D.LITT.

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INTRODUCTORY VOLUME

DEFENCE OF INDIA: POLICY AND PLANS

EXPANSION OF THE ARMED FORCES AND DEFENCE ORGANISATION

INDIAN WAR ECONOMY

TECHNICAL SERVICES: ORDNANCE AND IEME

PREFACE

The history of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War was planned to appear in 17 volumes, divided into three sub-series—the campaigns in the Western Theatre, the campaigns in the Eastern Theatre and the activities relating to organisation and administration. The present volume is the fourth in the third series. The other volumes in this series already published have dealt with Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisation, Indian War Economy and Technical Services. These volumes lack the thrill associated with the campaigns, but they deal with important aspects of war—planning, organisation, policy etc., which have a profound effect on the conduct of operations and their outcome. Their study is, therefore, not only valuable but essential for a proper understanding of the causes of the success or failure of a campaign.

The present volume describes in detail the policy which the Government of India followed for the Defence of the country, the various plans formulated, discussed and adopted during the years immediately preceding the war as also the changes and modifications made in them after the war broke out. The country had to meet danger in the east and planning had to be oriented in that direction.

The draft of this volume was examined by Major-General W. D. A. Lentaigne and his comments incorporated. I am greatly indebted to him for his suggestions. The draft was also read by an officer of the Historical Section British Cabinet Office. The volume has also been examined by Dr. Tara Chand and Shri Pulla Reddi, I.C.S., then Secretary, Ministry of Defence, as members of the Advisory Committee to whom I am grateful for their suggestions. I have also been benefited by the comments of the Historical Division of External Affairs Ministry.

I am thankful to Shri P. N. Khera, Narrator for seeing the book through the press and Shri T. D. Sharma for preparing the maps and charts.

In conclusion I must acknowledge the support and encouragement I have received from the Ministries of Defence of India and Pakistan.

New Delhi,
October 1963.

BISHESHWAR PRASAD

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.	..	Anti-aircraft.
A.C. Squadron	..	Air-Communication Squadron.
A.O.C.-in-C.	..	Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief.
A/S	..	Anti-submarine.
A.T.	..	Anti-tank.
B.T. Squadrons	..	British Troops Squadrons.
CD/AA	..	Coast Defence Anti-aircraft.
C.E.	..	Chief Engineer.
C.I.D.	..	Committee of Imperial Defence.
C.O.S.	..	Chiefs of Staff.
E.D.T. Scale	..	External Defence Table Scale.
F.A.	..	Financial Adviser.
F.D.	..	Frontier Defence.
F.D.R.	..	Frontier Defence Reserve.
F. Squadrons	..	Fighter Squadrons.
F.S.D.	..	Field Supply Depot.
G.H.Q.	..	General Headquarters.
G.O.C.-in-C.	..	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief.
G.R. Squadron	..	General Reconnaissance Squadron.
H.B. Squadron	..	Heavy Bomber Squadron.
H.D.C. Lights	..	Harbour Defence Craft Lights.
H.M.G.	..	His Majesty's Government.
H.S.M.T.	..	Higher Scale of Mechanical Transport.
I.S.F.	..	Indian States Forces.
I.T.F.	..	Indian Territorial Forces.
L.I.	..	Light Infantry.
L.M.G.	..	Light Machine Gun.
L of C	..	Line of Communication.
L.R.P. group	..	Long Range Penetration group.
L/T	..	Line Telephone.
MA/SB	..	Motor Anti-submarine Boat.

M.B. Squadrons	..	Medium Bomber Squadrons.
M.E.S.	..	Military Engineer Service.
MG/B	..	Motor Gun Boat.
M.L.	..	Motor Launch.
M.Ms.	..	Motor Minesweepers.
M/S	..	Mine-sweeper.
M.T.	..	Mechanical Transport.
M.T.B.	..	Motor Torpedo Boat.
N.C.O.	..	Non-Commissioned Officer.
N.E.	..	North-East.
N.W.	..	North-West.
O.C.	..	Officer Commanding.
P & A district	..	Presidency and Assam district.
P.R.U.	..	Photo Reconnaissance Unit.
P.S.O.	..	Principal Staff Officer.
P.W.D.	..	Public Works Department.
P.W.S.S.	..	Port War Signal Station.
Q.V.O.	..	Queen Victoria's Own.
R.A.	..	Royal Artillery.
R.A.F.	..	Royal Air Force.
R.D.F.	..	Radar Direction Finding.
R.E.	..	Royal Engineers.
R.I.A.S.C.	..	Royal Indian Army Service Corps.
S & M	..	Sappers & Miners.
S.W.	..	South-West.
T.N.T.	..	Trinitrotoluene.
U.K.	..	United Kingdom.
U.S. Army	..	United States Army.
U.S.S.R.	..	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
V/S	..	Visual Signal.
W.S.S.	..	War Signal Station.
W/T	..	Wireless Telephone.

INTRODUCTION

In the two world wars of the present century India had to play a vital role in the victory of the United Kingdom and the Powers allied with that state. The war effort of this country was a consequence of its political position; but in both the periods the Indian participation was directed against the domination of forces hostile to democracy and peace in the world. It was against German autocracy and Imperial expansionism that the Indian people volunteered to shed their blood and spend their hard-earned savings in the first Great War. There was great enthusiasm in the country for the principles of self-determination and international government, enunciated by President Wilson and other Allied leaders. Political India had hoped that the victory of the United Kingdom would help the application of the principles of liberty and autonomy of dependent peoples to their country as well. But what followed left a trail of disappointment and led to a sustained struggle for self-government and political emancipation in the next two decades. The Second World War came in the midst of it, though at the moment of its eruption experiment in provincial autonomy was on its way and endeavours were being made to establish a Federation in India, relatively free from the cramping, continuous control by the British Government. The inadequacy of political concession, callous indifference to the popular sentiment in declaring India's belligerency and the inability of the British Government to declare unequivocally their future aims and ultimate design so far as India's political progress was concerned, created a feeling of resentment among the people and made it impossible for them to offer their unstinted support to the United Kingdom and later the United Nations in their effort to defeat German Nazism and Italian Fascism. Nonetheless, the contribution of India to the war effort of the United Nations was not inconsiderable and helped in a large measure to bring defeat to Italy, Germany and Japan. The Government of India raised a force of more than two and half million men, built up a small air force and developed the navy to cooperate with the British and Commonwealth armed forces in resisting the Axis advance in Africa and West Asia and rolling back the tide of Japanese invasion in Burma, Malaya and other regions of South-East Asia. India was developed as the base for meeting the requirements of war in Asia, both in the west and the east.

The Second World War thus drained the human and material resources of the country and affected its economy which had profound repercussions on the socio-economic conditions of the people. But more effective impression was made by the danger of invasion to which the frontiers of India were exposed. In the initial stages of war, and even for some time before its commencement, it was the Soviet Union against whose apprehended aggressive designs defence preparations were contemplated on India's north-western frontier. This process had continued since 1927 when the revival of Russia and its gradual emergence as a great power had posed a threat to the Imperial interests of the United Kingdom in Asia. In all calculations of defence arrangements, the attitude of the neighbouring Afghan Kingdom was of vital consequence. However, the uncertainties inherent in the situation compelled the Army Headquarters in India to base their planning on the possibility of Afghan hostility and the opposition of the frontier tribes. The appreciation of hostile development in some of the earlier defence plans envisaged the association of Afghanistan's army with the Soviet invading force and a wide insurrection of the frontier tribal people. The Defence of India Plans, the Blue Plan and the Pink Plan were all based on these assumptions, though there might have been differences regarding the volume of threat and the direction and extent of danger. The possibility of Soviet hostilities, with or without the co-operation of the Afghans, continued to influence British-Indian foreign and defence policies up to the moment that the German-Italian Axis posed a greater menace in the direction of the north-west. It was clear that the Indian army alone could not offer an effective and successful resistance to the Russian threat; hence the arrangement determined upon was that in case of a Soviet attack, the British Expeditionary Force, specifically assigned for such a role, would be commissioned by the British Government to fight the Russians in the Kandahar-Herat area, while the Indian army would act as a holding force and maintain the security of the Indian frontier. This minor role was all that was then prescribed for the Indian armed forces which were organised on that basis alone.

The rapid and violent changes which occurred in European diplomacy in the mid-thirties, once again focussed attention on the defences of India. While there was no amelioration in the situation on the north-west, owing to the yet ambiguous attitude of the Soviet Union towards the Western Powers, and there was, in addition, growing Fascist propaganda and influence in the Middle Eastern States and Afghanistan, a new danger was apprehended in the east, particularly in South-East Asia, as a result of

the rapid drift of Japan towards the Rome-Berlin Axis. The fact could not be disputed that in any conflict between the Central European Powers and the United Kingdom and France, in which Japan was bound to align with the former, the Indian frontiers would not be safe and the Indian Ocean, which provided the main artery of communication between Great Britain and her dependencies and Dominions in the east, would witness naval raids by the hostile powers thus making unsafe the Indian coastline and its approaches as well. Indian military preparations had never so far been geared to meet such a contingency. The land forces were neither numerous nor mechanized to be effective in modern warfare. The Indian navy was yet in its infancy and the air force was almost non-existent. Complete dependence on the United Kingdom for defence in the air, on the seas or even against any major Power on land, which had been the policy of the Government in the United Kingdom despite fast developing changes in the world, had left the country in a state of comparative insecurity which appeared to be complete in the face of the combined might of the Axis Powers and the Soviet Union, whose hostility was reckoned as a factor even as late as 1941.

To meet the new situation, two Committees, the Auchinleck and Chatfield Committees, were appointed to examine the entire problem of mechanisation and industrialisation of India to meet its defence requirements. The recommendations of these bodies were halting and utterly inadequate to convert India from being wholly dependent to relatively self-sufficient in her defence potential. The earliest that this state might be attained was 1945, by which date a small measure of Indianisation in officer ranks was also to be obtained. However, along with these recommendations, the Chatfield Committee expanded the scope and zone of India's military liability to include the defence of the key points in western and eastern Asia where vital Imperial interests were sited. One division equipped on high scale was earmarked for Imperial purposes, and the Indian army was required to garrison partially or wholly, Egypt, Persian Gulf, Burma, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong regions. This was a commitment additional to the existing one of defending the north-west in case of an attack which was not unforeseen, protecting the long coastline, the eastern frontier and maintaining internal security, which was a growing problem in view of the political maladjustment between the rulers and the ruled. The Defence Plan of 1938, which outstretched the earlier calculations of danger, was comprehensive enough to include various liabilities of Indian defence and participation in Imperial requirements. This Plan continued to be the basis of

defence planning in the initial stages of the war. But the Plan, not without justification, neglected the eastern frontier which did not seem to be threatened immediately. The Soviet menace had abated to some extent, hence provision had to be made pre-eminently against Afghan opposition engineered and fortified by Axis promptings and aid. There was no likelihood of assistance from the Imperial resources, or of the British Field Army undertaking offensive operations in Afghanistan. All that was possible was to meet aggression on the frontiers of India and defend the vital areas in the north-west by denying the routes of access into the country to the invader, which was not at the moment anything more than the Afghan Government allied with frontier tribes.

The war came in the autumn of 1939 and the Government of India under directions from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom declared Indian belligerency and participation in the European war without consulting the Indian legislature or political leaders. This act came as a shock to the political parties, specially the Indian National Congress, and aggravated political tension in the country. There was considerable sympathy for the British in their new predicament, for the Indian political opinion was pre-eminently anti-Fascist and had a horror of totalitarianism and anti-democracy. Indian leaders were keen to help the overthrow of Fascism and the reconstruction of the world on the new basis of international peace, national freedom and the emergence of dependent peoples to a state of equality and self-realisation. They, therefore, asked the British Government to define its aims and in particular declare its intentions about the political future of India. The British response was unsatisfying and the communal situation, involving the disintegration of the country, was becoming grave. The Congress was not prepared to co-operate in a war which might subserve Imperial ends, and demanded a real participation in the government to evoke the willing and enthusiastic effort of the people to defeat totalitarianism. The first two years of war failed to resolve the stalemate and the political situation became gravely tense. The Government of India, nonetheless, continued to exploit the human and material resources of the country and despatched troops and supplies to Northern and Eastern Africa and Western Asia where the balance was gradually tilting in favour of the United Kingdom. The Indian army was expanding, the economic resources of the country were being yoked to war purposes, and the civil population was suffering from the shortage of food and other necessities of life. A war psychosis was developing and gripping the country.

The early months of the war did not present any new dangers to the security of India though the possibility of explosion on the north-western frontier resulting from Russian and Afghan aggressiveness was not discounted. Soon, however, the expanding Italian and German influence in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq prompted reconsideration of Plans of Defence. The Soviet threat was not appreciated high, though in view of their agreement with Germany, it could not be altogether eliminated. Greater danger was expected to emerge from the designs of the Axis Powers. Therefore, apart from preventing incursion through the traditional routes of the Khyber and Bolan passes, attention of the General Staff was directed to the northern or Pamir-Chitral border and the western or the Kelat-Baluchistan area, both of which afforded chinks for the entry of hostile forces. The Chitral area was difficult of access and the Russians or Afghans could not mobilise more than a very small, limited force in that direction. But the western fringe was of a different character. Not only could a division be moved from the Herat-Kandahar line, so as to alight in the Quetta region, by-passing the natural outlet of the Bolan, but a hostile power dominating Iran or having access to the Caspian region would be in a position to mount a full scale invasion, comprising land and air forces, in that region. The soil was suitable for armoured action and the area could yield to the easy construction of air-fields. The Italo-German successes in Northern Africa, in the early stages of the war, the Vichy French defection in Syria and the uncertain attitude of Turkey, together with the avowed hostility of Rashid faction in Iraq and the weak pro-Fascist regime in Iran, enhanced the fear of overland invasion by the Nazi forces through Iraq and Iran. This danger was aggravated when Germany invaded Russia and in the first push was able to roll back the Soviet forces eastwards into the interior. The Nazi advance in the Black Sea—Caspian region towards the Volga, exposing the Georgian defences, posed a new threat of invasion along the south-eastern Caspian shore, through eastern Iran to the western frontier of India. The Germans were in a position to launch a two-fold attack, through Syria and Turkey, on the one side, and through the Caucasus-Caspian region on the other. This major threat developing far from the immediate frontiers of India necessitated the extending and widening of the defence-border as well. Not only was it important to organise the local frontiers for defence, but also to develop defensive preparations at a distance from the country to contain the first thrust of the invading forces. It was in this context that the Indian General Staff undertook the commitment in Iraq to clear that land of Fascist influence and deploy strong military forces in Iraq and Iran. The

danger of German incursion through Turkey or Syria prompted defensive arrangements in northern Iraq where fortified centres of resistance were prepared. This was the beginning of the theory of external defence of India which was given full application in the years 1941 and 1942.

Till the close of the year 1941, eastern frontiers of India had excited little attention owing to the non-existence of any danger in their vicinity. Burma was separated politically from India, though in a limited measure the Indian Government was still responsible for its military defence. Japanese alignment with the Axis in 1936 had made the British Government conscious of danger in South-East Asia, but not till 1941 was any serious threat to Burma or India's eastern frontiers envisaged. There was the possibility of Japanese naval raiders prowling in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, but as long as Singapore, a strong bastion, remained in British hands, the intensity or imminence of threat was discounted. However, this complacency was shattered when Japan invaded Malaya, occupied it and captured Singapore and then launched an invasion on Burma. The danger to the security of India on the eastern side became grave. Not only was the eastern frontier, weakly held and completely unorganised for defence, exposed to attack, but there was an immediate threat of landings on the eastern coast-line, the Bengal Coast and Ceylon. Assam, Bengal, Madras Coast and the hinterland behind these provinces were exposed to the danger of attack. Indian armed forces were not adequate to defeat the invasion, and for more than a year after the Japanese entry into the war, planning for defence on the eastern side assumed greater significance. The danger in the west had not been eliminated and the fighting in Africa was not yet over. Russia had not emerged victorious. Japan had not yet met with stout opposition from the United States in the Pacific. In that situation the danger to the security and integrity of India was considerable, and defence planning reflected the temper of the moment. However, from the very beginning it was realised that the Indian territories could not be defended without launching counter-offensive against the Japanese in Burma or elsewhere in South-East Asia. Thus, the defence of India involved simultaneous plan of counter-offense which ultimately developed into schemes for the re-conquest of Burma and the defeat of Japan.

In this volume, the story of defence planning has been narrated in the context of the danger and the diplomatic background.

BISHESHWAR PRASAD

17 SEP 1964

INDIA

SCALE OF MILES
100 0 100 200 300 400

KILOMETRES
200 100 0 200 400 600

- INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
- RAILWAYS
- ROADS
- RIVERS
- HILLS



USSR

AFGHANISTAN

KABUL

GILGIT

LANIKOTAL

MUZAFFARABAD

SRINAGAR

OLEH

JAMMU

LAHORE

SIMLA

DENRAGUN

KANDANAR

CHAMAN

QUETTA

MULTAN

MONTGOMERY

SIBI

KALAT

SUKKUR

BIKANER

JAISALMER

JODHPUR

RAJMER

AGRA

DELHI

RAJASHTHAN

NEPAL

TIBET

OKATHANDU

SHIKHATHORI

PURNEA

RAKHAUL

SHIKHATHORI

OPUNARMA

SHILLONG

DHUBRI

SYLHET

IMPHALO

DACCA

OTRIPURA

DIBRUGARH

SADIYA

TEZPUR

KONIMA

HYIKTYWA

SHWEDD

MANDALAY

MEIKTILA

LET PAN

PHOME

OGWA

RANGDON

MOUTHS OF GANGES

RAMREE

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

TRIPURA

CHITTAGONG

PALETWA

MOUTHS OF IRRAWADDI

VERAVAL

DIU

BRACHMARI

ERINPURAO

AMMABAD

INDORE

BHOPAL

TARSIS

KATNI

DREWAS

RENCHER

BILASPUR

RAIPUR

WARDHA

NAGPUR

CUTTACK

VIZAGAPATAM

COCANADA

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CHAPTER I

Defence Policy and the Role of the Indian Army

Prior to 1947, the Government of India was a subordinate government controlled by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. This subordination extended to every sphere of administration, and was most marked in the realm of external relations and defence policy. India was a vital part of the British Empire and as such her resources were at the disposal of the Imperial authority, to be employed not only for preventing any possible threat of Russian aggression, on her north-western frontier, but also for building up British influence in the comparatively weaker and backward states of Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. In short, the constitutional position was often employed by the British Government for using India's armed forces for imperial purposes. The climax came in 1914-18 when an unprecedented contribution, both in men and money, was obtained from India to fight the Central European powers in the Great War. India not only supplied money but also sent her army, then expanded by wide recruitment, to fight in the battlefields of Europe and the Middle East.

This position was frankly stated by the Esher Committee, which sat in 1919. It laid down that "the administration of the army in India could not be considered otherwise than as part of the total armed forces of the Empire and that the military resources of India should be developed in a manner suited to Imperial necessities". From the British point of view, it was a correct enunciation of the role of the Indian army. But this view failed to take account of the growing national consciousness in this country which was extremely sensitive about imperialism. Since the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, there had been a constant demand for the reduction of expenditure on the army, which, it was feared, was being used for imperial purposes. Public opinion, therefore, would not accept the definition of the Esher Committee that the Indian army could not be considered apart from being a component unit of the Imperial armed forces. In consequence, the Legislative Assembly adopted an important resolution on 28 March, 1921, which enunciated most unequivocally the Indian conception of the army. It was accepted by the Government of India and as such was the first public pronouncement of the defence policy of the Government of India in the inter-war period. The Resolution read as follows:—

- “(a) That the purpose of the Army in India must be held to be the defence of India against external aggression and the maintenance of internal peace and tranquillity. To the extent to which it is necessary for India to maintain any army for these purposes, its organization, equipment and administration should be thoroughly up to date, and with due regard to Indian conditions, in accordance with present-day standards of efficiency in the British Army so that when the Army in India has to co-operate with the British Army on any occasion there may be no dissimilarities of organization etc., which would render such co-operation difficult. For any purpose other than those mentioned in the first sentence, the obligations resting on India should be no more onerous than those resting on the self-governing Dominions and should be undertaken subject to the same conditions as are applicable to those Dominions.
- “(b) To repudiate the assumption underlying the whole Report of the Esher Committee:—
- (i) that the administration of the Army in India cannot be considered otherwise than as part of the total armed forces of the Empire, and
 - (ii) that the military resources of India should be developed in a manner suited to Imperial necessities”.

By this resolution the Government of India was authorised:

- (a) to assume full responsibility for the defence of the borders of India against external aggression from any quarter;
- (b) to maintain internal security;
- (c) to maintain an army in India with up to date organization, equipment and administration, to fulfil the above two objects;
- (d) to assimilate the standard of equipment, organization, the efficiency of the Indian army to that of the British army so as to enable facility of co-operation between the two, when occasion so demanded; and
- (e) to co-operate with the Empire, but with the proviso that the obligations devolving on India should not be different from those on the self-governing Dominions.

This resolution was accepted by the Government of India and communicated to the Secretary of State for India with only a partial reservation that “every effort is being made to equip and organize the Indian army, as far as is practicable, in the same

manner as the British army, but complete assimilation will not take place owing to financial and other reasons.”¹

In the early twenties, the defence policy of India embraced the protection of frontiers against external aggression, the preservation of peace in the frontier regions against tribal risings and the maintenance of internal peace and tranquillity. Moreover, the Government of India also accepted unreservedly the resolution on Empire Naval Policy adopted by the Imperial Conference of 1923, which related to the primary responsibility of each part of the British Empire for its own local naval defence. India had thus assumed the responsibility for providing local naval defence of her ports without having any independent naval force in her service. The obligations of defence, therefore, were wide but their implementation was limited by finance, misconception of the non-official attitude and the exigencies of Imperial interests.

The Simon Commission rightly analysed the constitutional relationship between India and the United Kingdom in the matter of defence. Unlike the self-governing Dominions, in respect of India, His Majesty's Government was ultimately responsible for the defence of the country, having the final word both in laying down the policy and exercising control over the actual organization and the standard of training and equipment of the fighting services. Defence was a reserved subject under the Government of India Act of 1919, as also of 1935, and as such the people through their legislatures had no control over it. The final determining authority was the Governor-General in Council, or in his discretion, subject to the over-all control of the British Cabinet, which primarily prescribed the policy and the means of implementing it.

The Legislative Assembly Resolution of 1921 might have been acceptable to the authorities in India and Whitehall at a time when the international situation was placid and no immediate danger to the integrity and safety of the British Empire was apprehended. But with mounting ill-will between Soviet Russia and the British Empire, the limitations imposed by the resolution became unpalatable to the authorities who were keen to equip the Indian army for meeting Imperial commitments, and expanding the scope of the defence of India. That the Indian finances would not meet the liability was certain. That public opinion would agitate against open infringement of the accepted policy was inevitable. Hence the Government of India approached His Majesty's Government for financial aid, which would help in equipping and modernising

¹ Defence Secretary's Memorandum dated 2 Oct. 1937 dealing with Defence Policy, para.3. (File No. F 461-Paper F).

the army without the necessity of depending on the vote of the Indian Legislature.

The army in India was considered adequate for internal security and local defence of the north-west frontier; and normally this was the main sphere of its activity. But it was not adequate to meet any danger of Russian invasion or to safeguard imperial interests in Iran, the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea regions, in an emergency. At the same time, it was deemed essential to counteract the growing Soviet influence in Central Asia. Hence the Imperial Defence Committee in 1920, allocated the spheres of Imperial and Indian responsibility in the event of a Central Asian war. It distinguished between "Major Danger" and "Minor Danger". The prosecution of a war to meet the former was an Imperial responsibility while the latter was mainly the concern of the Government of India. In case of "Major Danger" also the Indian army was to undertake initial operations till the arrival of Imperial reinforcements.²

This division of responsibility was well recognised and it was on this basis that the War Office built up its case before the Garran Tribunal in 1933, when the question of financial grant for Indian defence from His Majesty's Government was considered. The Garran Tribunal finally accepted this view and reiterated that "The duties of the Army in India include the preservation of internal security in India, the covering of the lines of internal communication and the protection of India against external attack. Though the scale of the forces is not calculated to meet external attack by a Great Power, their duties might well comprise the initial resistance to such an attack pending the arrival of Imperial reinforcements."..... "The defence of India and the defence of the Empire cannot be dissociated. In a sense, everything done in the defence of India is also done in the defence of the Empire, and everything done in the defence of the Empire, whether in India or elsewhere, is also done in the defence of India".³

This principle of the integration of the defence of India and the defence of the Empire, enunciated by the Garran Tribunal, brought into prominent relief the British conception of the role of the Indian defence forces. That they might be drawn upon for Imperial purposes was a foregone conclusion; and it was on that basis alone that the British Government was prepared to make any financial contribution towards the modernization of the Indian army. The Government of India also had based their claim for

² Memorandum on the Defence Forces, dated 1 May 1936 by General Staff, Part I. (File No. F-461 Paper A).

³ Defence Secretary's Memorandum, dated 2 Oct. 1937.

assistance on these grounds. These were as follows:—

- “ (1) That the army in India serves an Imperial as well as an Indian purpose and is always available and is sometimes used for purposes other than the defence of India.
- “ (2) That other parts of the Empire do not contribute to the same extent to the defence of the Empire.
- “ (3) That the Imperial Government has predominant voice in determining the cost and organization of the army in India ”.⁴

The definition of India's defence policy as laid down by the Garran Tribunal and accepted in due course by the British Cabinet, differed fundamentally in two respects from the policy outlined by the Legislative Assembly in 1921 and subsequently accepted by the Governments of India and the United Kingdom. Firstly, it identified, or even subordinated, the defence of India to the defence of the British Empire, and thus made the Indian armed forces, in theory as well as in practice, an integral part of the Empire forces. Secondly, it definitely restricted India's responsibilities, in case of external aggression, to defence against attack by Afghanistan alone. These changes were revolutionary. Firstly, they legalised calls being made upon the Indian army by the United Kingdom Government, for India was “ the only large reservoir of trained troops in the Empire ”, and had a number of imperial commitments which were kept secret because, as Ogilvie put it, “ they are wholly inconsistent with the accepted and published defence policy ”. Secondly, “ whereas, by the terms of the Assembly Resolution, India took upon herself the responsibility for defending her borders against any enemy who might assault her land frontiers, the acceptance of the Garran Tribunal Report by His Majesty's Government, meant, in effect, that India was not concerned with the provision of her defence either by land or air against any first class power, and the natural corollary is that the whole of the defence measures which might be necessary to meet such an eventuality are the responsibility of His Majesty's Government ”.⁵

In the next few years, India received a contribution of £1,500,000 per year from the British Treasury and the mechanization of some units was taken up, particularly of those which were allotted for overseas service in the interest of the Empire. A number of commitments to despatch troops to Egypt, Anglo-Iranian oilfields in the Persian Gulf, Burma, Malaya and Hong Kong had been agreed to, and there was even a proposal to form an Imperial

⁴ Defence Secretary's Memorandum.

⁵ Defence Policy in India, 1936-37—Defence Requirements Ad Hoc Committee—Sec. II, p. 4 (File No. F-461—Paper F).

Reserve Division which would have no duties related to the immediate defence of the frontiers of India. A new theory was also, at the same time, developing that the best defence of India was away from her borders and that the Suez, the Persian Gulf, Aden and Singapore were her outposts, whose protection was an essential responsibility of India. All that involved expense to equip the Indian army "for warfare against major Powers", but financial limitations prevented it. There was also a conflict between the declared policy and the real intention which prevented the Government of India from stating their true requirements and compelling them to depend more and more on British financial support which was persistently sought. On 11 December 1936, they reinforced their demand for money by the argument that "the best contribution that India can make towards the security of the Empire as a whole is to bring her armed forces in as short a time as possible up to a state of the most complete possible readiness for war which the financial and political circumstances of the country permit".⁶

To accelerate the pace of modernisation funds were required, but the Indian Budget was unable to meet the increased charge. Hence the War Office was led to abolish the system of "holding" in 1937 by which a saving of Rs. 3 crores accrued. There was a promise of an additional grant of £ 500,000. But this led to a restatement of the defence policy. In 1938, the Committee of Imperial Defence appointed a sub-Committee (The Pownall Sub-Committee) to report on the defence problems of India and to make recommendations for the future composition and reorganisation of the army and air force in India. This Sub-Committee's report was based on the principle of joint responsibility between India and the United Kingdom for defence. The Sub-Committee stated "The changed strategical situation throughout the world and the development of modern armaments, particularly air forces, have brought into prominence the need for India, in her own interest, to play a more important part in the defence of the vital areas on our Imperial communications in the Middle and Far East".⁷ For this purpose it recommended the allocation of one Indian division to His Majesty's Government as a strategic reserve for use wherever and whenever required. This division was to be surplus to India's own requirements.

Imperial necessity and the growing cost of armaments led to the opening of negotiations between the two governments. The Chief of the General Staff, the Air Officer Commanding and the

⁶ Defence Policy in India, p. 7

⁷ Chatfield Committee Report, 1938-39, para. 70. (File No. 601/10486/H).

Financial Adviser, Military Finance, represented the Government of India. His Majesty's Government were prepared to increase the annual contribution by £500,000 and to make a capital grant of £5 million for equipment etc., on the condition that the Imperial reserve was definitely assigned and a clear and precise definition of its role in Imperial defence accepted. The Government of India agreed to the following principle, which was not meant to be made public:—

“The commitments of the Government of India regarding the use of forces from India for service overseas have hitherto taken the form of an undertaking to lend certain forces and units for particular contingencies provided circumstances in India permit at the time. Recent changes in international and strategical conditions have made it imperative that there shall be a more precise and definite standing agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Government of India that forces to the extent of one division and four air squadrons re-equipped according to modern standards, shall be maintained in India for the primary purpose of furnishing reinforcements in an emergency to areas East of the Mediterranean. These forces, if not required for their primary role, as described above, may be made available for the defence of India against aggression from an external enemy or for the maintenance of the Internal Security of India. The decision as to the actual employment of these forces in an emergency will rest with His Majesty's Government and they will therefore only be available for employment under the Government of India after consultation with His Majesty's Government”⁸

At the same time it was decided to appoint an Expert Committee, presided over by Lord Chatfield, to consider how the limited resources of India could be best employed to organise, equip and maintain the armed forces in India in accordance with modern requirements. The purpose of this Committee was to advise His Majesty's Government on any financial assistance required for equipping the army in India to enable it to assume its full share in any Imperial defence policy. The appointment of the Expert Committee and the financial offer by His Majesty's Government were announced in the Council of State on 13 September 1938. The Legislative Assembly was disappointed by the paltry aid offered. From the discussions, however, it is clear that Indian public opinion was greatly impressed by the international situation in Europe and if, apart from subordination to the needs of Imperial defence, a proper scheme for the defence of India were presented, it would

⁸Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, XX No. 1265-S dated 24 Sep. 1938, para. 4 (File No. 601/7478/H).

not have been rejected on financial grounds. Indian opinion, however, was not prepared to view the defence of this country from the angle of Imperial interests, which appeared to be the main motive of the Government of India in all these negotiations.

In 1938, on the eve of World War II, it was decided that the Imperial Reserve Division would be concentrated in a suitable locality to be available in an emergency for reinforcing the garrisons in the Middle or Far East. This force was not to be employed in case of any national emergency. The defence commitments of India were also widened so as to embrace the safeguarding of Imperial interests east of the Mediterranean in addition to the normal obligations of defence of her frontiers and the maintenance of internal security. It was in this setting that Chatfield Committee commenced its investigations.

The terms of reference of the Chatfield Committee were described thus:—

“ In the light of the recent Report of the Chiefs of Staff and of the Reports of the Cabinet Committee on the Defence of India, and having regard to the increased cost of modern armaments to the desirability of organising, equipping and maintaining the Forces of India in accordance with modern requirements, and to the limited resources available in India for defence expenditure, to examine and report, in the light of experience gained in executing the British rearmament programme, how these resources can be used to the best advantage and to make recommendations ”.⁹ This involved a clear analysis of the role of the Indian forces and an appreciation of the danger which they might be required to meet. The Committee started with an examination of Indian public opinion, the international situation as it affected India's defence policy and the part which India might be called upon to play in an Imperial emergency, and finally laid down the principles which governed the policy of the Government of India at the outbreak of World War II. The Committee made no secret of the fact that responsibility for the defence of India rested with the British Government and that the Indian armed forces might be employed to serve Imperial interests particularly at a time when the British Empire was faced with danger.

The Chatfield Committee were not content with the equivocal and limited commitments which had been prescribed for India by the Garran Tribunal or Pownall Committee, because the world situation and consequently the imperial defence problem had radically altered. The Tripartite Agreement between

⁹ Chatfield Committee Report, Introduction, p. 4.

Germany, Italy and Japan had "created a potential military combination against the Empire of a menacing character", increasing its vulnerability. The Committee did not conceal their resentment against the Indian political leaders, particularly the Congress leaders, who were opposed to the use of the Indian army for "Imperial, as distinct from Indian, interests". They feared that the Congress Party would control the Federation of India and gain "virtual control, whether by direct or indirect means over defence policy".¹⁰ The Committee realised that Indian opinion was opposed to the burden of maintaining British troops in India, as such troops constituted an army of occupation and the expenditure on them was disproportionate to the resources of the country. They admitted that Indian political leaders were not against India maintaining "efficient and up to date defence forces of her own", which "should be completely Indian", and desired India to be self-sufficient in the matter of war material. Indian opinion was not opposed to co-operation with the Commonwealth but only when India was a self-governing unit. There was support also for building up a strong defence force in the course of time. But what the Indian people resented was that Indian army should be a mere instrument of imperial policy which the British Government desired and the Committee enunciated in the following words:—

"We have been able to proceed on no other assumption than that a settled defence policy can and will be laid down, in accordance with the principle that responsibility for the defence of India rests through the Governor General and the Secretary of State for India, with the British Government and with no one else; and that this responsibility will in no respect be weakened whatever political pressure is brought to bear on the Government of India either before or after the coming of Federation. This assumption appears to us to be definitely essential, not only to the continuity of any plans which may be based on our recommendations but, indeed, to the making of defence plans of such a general and a far-reaching nature as we have been called on to make".¹¹ There should be no "whittling away of the responsibility of the British Government for the defence of India". This continuance of British responsibility together with the maintenance of a proper British element in the armed forces of India were deemed to be essential in the changed strategic international situation, which the Committee had earlier analysed in their report. Their conclusion was that "The arena of India's defence against external aggression should therefore now be regarded as covering not only primarily

¹⁰Chatfield Committee Report, para. 17.

¹¹*Ibid.* para. 20.

her North-Western land frontier but also to an increasing extent her sea communications in Eastern waters and the strategic points which are vital to their security".¹²

The Committee developed the principle of "joint responsibility" in supersession of the earlier allocation of responsibility on the basis of the "major" and "minor" dangers. "The general principle" which they put forward was "that the forces maintained in India should be adequate not merely for the narrower purposes of purely local defence, but also to assist in ensuring her security against the external threats that we have described, and further, that India should acknowledge that her responsibility cannot in her own interests be safely limited to the local defence of her land frontiers and coasts", and financially also, India was to "bear some share in a joint responsibility for her external security". The earlier suggestion to set apart an Imperial Reserve Division, financed by His Majesty's Government, was now negatived, and forces to be used for the purpose of Imperial defence, called external defence of India, were to "form an integral part of the forces in India as a whole".¹³

The Chatfield Committee widened the scope of India's obligations by advocating the doctrine of joint responsibility so far as the external security of India was concerned. It involved the maintenance of forces necessary not only for "keeping her frontiers and coasts intact and ensuring internal order" but also for Imperial purposes, now euphemistically termed "external defence", not as a matter of "contract to perform something outside the sphere of their normal duties", but as "an integral part of those duties". For this purpose collaboration in preparing plans was a *sine qua non*. In this connection the Committee said: "We assume further that both Governments would collaborate in preparing plans which, as regards India, would take account not only of India's local defence and internal security, but also of the threats external to, and perhaps not even localised near her frontiers and coasts, instead of treating them in isolation. The problem would then be to decide, as far as possible in advance, how in any given set of circumstances, the forces in India could best be employed in the defence of India in this wider and fuller sense. The more completely the defence planning of the two Governments can be co-ordinated and merged in the general War Plan, the less will the need be for defining in any general formula the degree of obligation resting on the Government of India".

This co-ordination, in the actual constitutional position of

¹²Chatfield Committee Report para 31.

¹³*Ibid.* paras. 69 and 71.

India, would have amounted to a complete subordination of India's defence policy to the interests of the United Kingdom. In any Empire emergency, and that was not distant then, India's resources would be wholly capable of being yoked to Imperial purposes. The Committee had that contingency in view when they opposed the then "conditional obligation" for placing some troops at the disposal of the British Government, and clearly emphasised that "In a major crisis the Government of India would naturally strain every nerve to help and in theory could be ordered to do so".¹⁴ In the contemporary international situation, this was natural, howsoever contrary it might be to the expressed policy of the Indian Legislature and the wishes of the Indian political parties. A grant of £2 million was made by His Majesty's Government to the Government of India on the eve of World War II to equip the Indian forces for the service of the Empire.

From this analysis it will be clear that while the declared policy contemplated "defence of India against external aggression and the maintenance of internal peace and tranquillity"¹⁵ as the only role of the "Army in India" and the full purpose of India's defence policy, the Government of India, for various reasons, had agreed to unconditional, and perhaps unlimited, Imperial commitments in the name of "external defence of India". The total obligations of defence thus comprised:

- (1) the defence of her frontiers by land and air against aggression by a second class power,
- (2) initial operations pending the arrival of Imperial reinforcements to protect her frontiers by land and air against aggression by a first class power,
- (3) the local naval defence of her ports against sea-borne aggression,
- (4) support of the civil power in the maintenance of law and order, and
- (5) provision in an emergency of assistance to Imperial forces outside India if the situation in India would permit.

The role of the armed forces, therefore, embraced internal security, defence of the frontiers both against external invasion and tribal risings, protection of the lines of internal communication, coastal defence and Imperial commitments.

Internal security, or the maintenance of internal peace and tranquillity, was an important function of the army in India. Its disposition provided for either of the contingencies, civil disturbance

¹⁴Chatfield Committee Report, para 72.

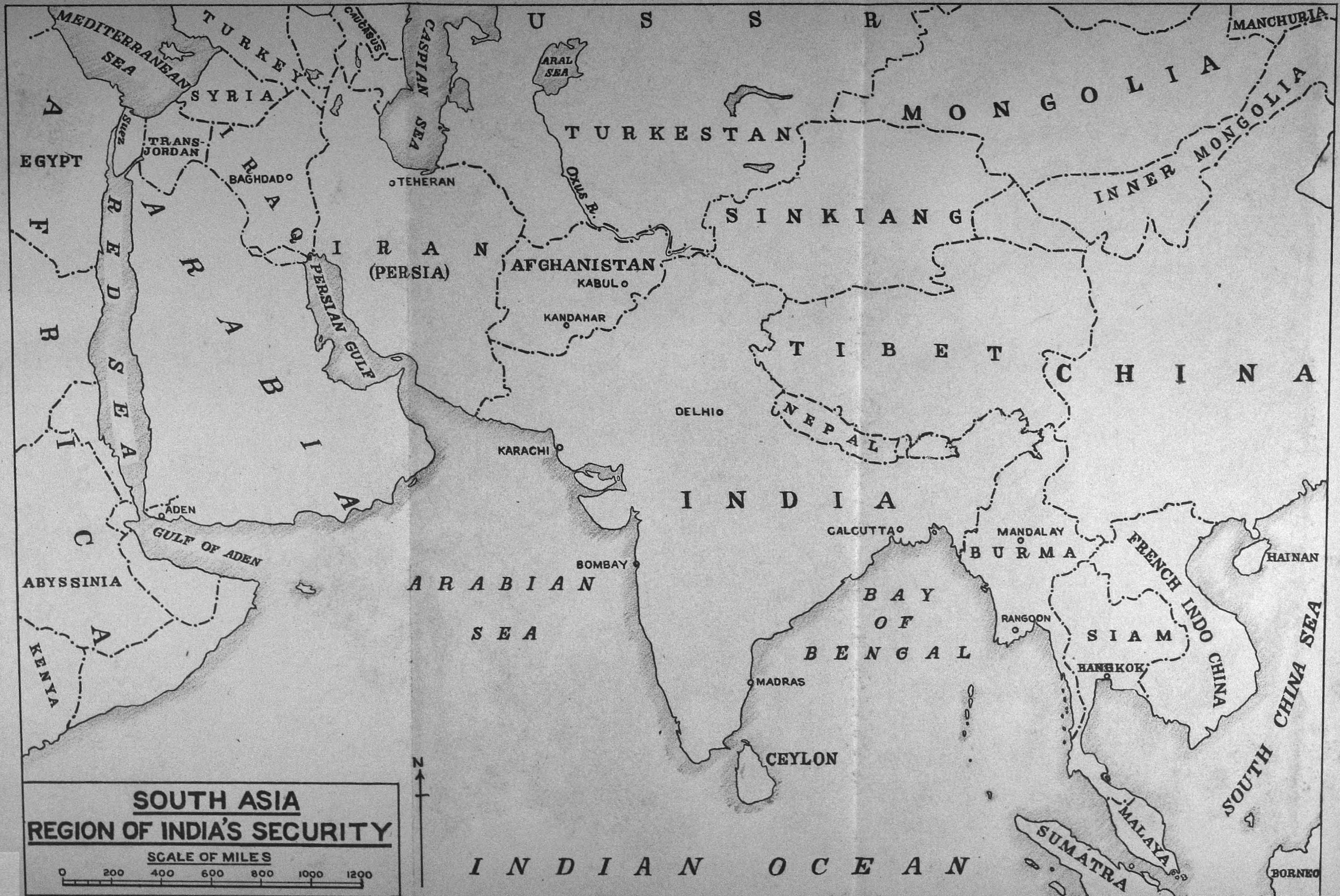
¹⁵India's Defence Requirements, Oct.-Dec. 1937 para 2(a) (File No. F. 461. Paper F).

of a major kind in time of peace, or civil unrest in the case of world war accompanied by hostilities on the frontier. It involved protection of railway lines and maintenance of uninterrupted communications. One of the main duties was to keep a watch on the tribes and preserve peace in the administered area on the frontier.

Coastal defence was being gradually recognised as an important concern but little effective provision had been made for it prior to World War II. The Government of India had, however, accepted responsibility for local naval defence and maintenance of sea communications in Indian waters, for the latter of which the British Navy could also be employed.

In addition to these, the Government of India had also agreed to despatch troops to Egypt, Anglo-Iranian oilfields in the Persian Gulf region, Burma, Malaya and Hong Kong. This limited commitment, however, was being enlarged so as to enable India to accept full responsibility for the defence of the arc extending from Suez to Singapore.

By 1939 the international situation had altered to the prejudice of British Imperial interests. Soviet Russia was not the main enemy to be provided against, rather she was inclined to be friendly. Germany, Italy and Japan were the Powers whose avowed hostility to the British Empire had conjured a new menace from which India, being an integral part of the Empire, could not remain unaffected. She was, therefore, being compelled by the new circumstances to expand the ambit of her defence and base her outposts on the Suez, the Persian Gulf and Malaya. Those were considered to be strategic points of her security, while at the same time being vital for the defence of Imperial interests. India, thus in 1939, was obliged to provide for, besides her local defence and internal security, "external defence" and to render unstinted and unlimited support to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in a war which was then looming large on the horizon. For this purpose her armed forces were being trained and equipped as they constituted, "a force ready in an emergency to take the field at once, which does not exist elsewhere in the Empire, which is specially available for immediate use in the East, and which has on occasion been so used, and that India is a training ground for active service such as does not exist elsewhere in the Empire".



CHAPTER II

The Diplomatic Background and Danger to the Security of India

“Diplomacy is the foundation of strategy”. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the diplomatic trends and analyse the background of foreign policy which affected British attitude towards the defence of India. It was the British foreign policy which controlled directly or indirectly the extent and scope of India's defence measures. For any clear understanding of the factors which endangered India's security or canalised her outlook on defence, it is essential, at this stage, to examine British relations with the major Powers and interests in the various regions, particularly in Asia.

British foreign policy was governed by two fundamental considerations, the security of Great Britain, and the safety of the Empire communications so necessary for the protection of the far flung portions of the British Empire. For the first, Great Britain has depended on her naval supremacy in the North Sea and the English Channel, the maintenance of the independence of the Low Countries, and the prevention of the hegemony in Europe of any one great Power. This has entailed on her a European policy to safeguard the balance of power and the stability of Western Europe which alone could give her an assurance of security and supremacy in the home waters. The second interest involved the maintenance of uninterrupted communications with the distant and dispersed parts of the Empire. This was essential both for her economic strength and mutual collaboration. Great Britain depended for her supplies of food and raw materials on the safety of the sea line to the east through the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. Any danger to her freedom of navigation in these waters not only prejudiced the security of her Imperial possessions but also faced her with the grim prospect of economic strangulation and starvation. Hence the need to maintain a predominant position in the Mediterranean, defend Suez Canal against alien encroachments, and retain control over the Indian Ocean, by commanding its gateways and preventing any other great Power from establishing defended ports or bases in that region. The security of routes to the east, whether by way of Africa, the Middle East or the Indian Ocean was the determining factor in her Imperial policy. The harmonious adjustment of these two vital interests, the European and the Imperial, was the

cardinal principle of her foreign policy, which, in the inter-war period, was best achieved by peace and adherence to the principles of the League of Nations.

The period between the two World Wars was dominated by the Treaty of Versailles. The basic principle of the peace settlement was that Germany should remain weak and incapable of disturbing the status quo, and Great Britain and France should have a dominating influence as the guardians of peace. But such an unequal settlement could not long be endured by the German people. Soon after 1930, Nazi Germany rose as a disturbing element. The next few years saw its maturity which threatened the vital interests of the United Kingdom and disturbed her complacency. The years between the two wars may, therefore, be divided into two main periods, in respect of the diplomatic situation, one before 1930 in which peace prevailed and the principles of the League of Nations held the field, and the other, after 1930, which saw the phenomenal rise of Germany, the formation of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis and an imminent threat to the security and stability of the British Empire and to peace in Western Europe.

The main feature of the earlier period was the general hostility between Great Britain and Soviet Russia which prompted the former to build up a strong Western Europe, to draw the states of the Middle East in her net of friendly relations and to rear up nationalist China by keeping Japan within due limits in the Far East. This Anglo-Soviet antagonism influenced her diplomacy and led to the preparation of plans for India's defence.

In the latter period the fear of the Axis was the all-absorbing interest, for not only did Nazi Germany threaten to disrupt the European balance of power, but also her alliance with Italy and Japan menaced the integrity of the British Empire. The security of Great Britain was affected by the existence of a rival in the North Sea. The integrity of her Imperial communications was menaced by the Italian adventures in East Africa, and the desire to convert the Mediterranean Sea into an Italian lake. It was aggravated by the Japanese bid for supremacy in the south-west Pacific and on the mainland of China. This overbearing danger from the Axis blunted the edge of Anglo-Soviet antagonism and led to preparations, though halting and incommensurate with the gravity of the situation, for the defence of the British Empire in which India was called upon to participate.

Anglo-Soviet Relations

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 had created a wide gulf between the eastern and western allies of the Great War. The

new regime had not been looked with favour by the Western Powers, and in the Civil War anti-Soviet forces received active support from the United Kingdom, France and the United States. And for many years the U.S.S.R. was not recognised by these Powers. Thus, for a decade after the Great War, relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union continued to be strained. The Russian policy in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Far East, also did not help to reduce tension and relieve antagonism, as the British Government had vital interests in these regions. The Soviet Government was then consolidating its hold over the Central Asian territories of Czarist Russia and establishing People's Republics in Turkmanistan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia, on the very outskirts of India. At the same time, Soviet penetration into Sinkiang and Outer Mongolia was proceeding at a rapid pace, and in China the Communist element was depending on Russian support. Treaties of friendship had been made with Persia and Afghanistan, and the Caucasus regions had been completely integrated with the U.S.S.R. All these activities in Central Asia tended to create misunderstanding in the United Kingdom, which led to the recrudescence of the old Anglo-Russian antagonism.

Anglo-Russian relations became worse between 1925 and 1927, and on the Urta Tagai issue a crisis had developed. It was then believed by the Secretary of State for India that "Russian policy in Asia is that of hemming India in the circle of Bolshevik States". Similar was the conclusion of the Chiefs of Staff who held "that the present policy of Soviet Russia towards India is identical with that adopted in the past by Imperial Russia". The view was then strengthening that Central Asia was being prepared for an attack on India. In 1927 "the diplomatic war" had practically begun. Plans were made to meet the danger. There was little change in this attitude towards the Soviet Union in the next few years, though after 1934, when Russia was involved in conflict with Japan, the fear had become less. There was never at any stage complete trust of Soviet Russia and even when the Axis danger was predominant, the British Government could not divert its attention entirely from the Russian menace in Central Asia to making full preparations against the Axis threat.

Relations with Afghanistan

Next to Russia, Afghanistan concerned the minds of British statesmen most. Its position as an intermediate state between Russia and India gave it strategic importance. Two Afghan roads connected the gateways of India with the Russian outposts on the Oxus, and thus enhanced the strategic importance of the

country in any conflict between Soviet Russia and the United Kingdom. Apart from this consideration, the Government of India was interested in the stability of the Afghan Government, with a view to keeping in check the depredations of the frontier tribes whose behaviour had always been an important factor in the defence of India. Maintenance of a strong Afghanistan and close, cordial relations with its ruler, therefore, had been the cardinal principles of British Indian policy. After the second Afghan War (1878-1880), the Government of India offered to the Amir protection against unprovoked external aggression on the condition that his foreign relations would be controlled by them. This limited alliance did not satisfy the Government of India, and many attempts were made, though without success, to secure the agreement of the successive Amirs to a definite engagement for military alliance which would enable the Government of India to render military support, by occupying and controlling the strategic bases in Afghanistan, and by modernising and developing the means of communication in the country, so as to facilitate the defence of Afghanistan in the event of a Russian invasion. For many years after 1907 the danger of Russian aggression did not however exist. And after 1919 when Amir Amanullah cut himself off from the British influence, the Government of India formally abandoned their claim to control Afghan foreign policy.

For some years till 1930, the policy of the Afghan Government was a source of concern to the Government of India. The attitude of the Amir and the likelihood of internal disturbances, as well as the treaty of friendship between Russia and Afghanistan in 1925, heightened the anxiety on this side of the Khyber Pass. In these years, both the British and the Indian Governments had been engaged on plans of defence to meet the likely danger. But after 1930, with the accession of King Nadir Shah, the situation had considerably eased and for some years there were close friendly relations with the Amir. Danger from the north-west had diminished, but in 1938 again owing to the growing Axis activity in Western Asia, British fears were revived.

DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

After World War I, the Middle East exerted great influence on British diplomacy and the developments there affected British policy and the whole problem of India's defence. Apart from the fact that in this region the interests of the Great Powers were mutually irreconcilable, the Middle East acquired a new importance by the rise of an acute and assertive national self-consciousness in the

people there. This resulted in a growing desire to throw off European control and to permit only such European influence and assistance as was not opposed to Arab sentiment. Nationalism led to the declaration of independence by Iraq and Egypt and intense endeavours were made by Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Trans-Jordan to free themselves from foreign control. The Iranian Government desired to withdraw Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's concession, and to restrict the right of the United Kingdom for air navigation over the country. Their feeble voice, however, could not prevent these lands from being exploited as Imperial preserves. The strategic and economic potentialities of the Middle Eastern countries made them of great vital interest to the British Empire and its rival Powers, Russia, Germany and Italy, from time to time.

The chief importance of the Middle East lies in its oil deposits and its strategic position on the road to the east. With the opening of air communication between Great Britain and India and other eastern parts of the British Empire, the Middle East assumed further importance. The United Kingdom drew heavily on the production of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and other oil resources of the Persian Gulf region. It could not therefore permit Iran, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Palestine to pass under the influence of Russia or any other European Power. It could not afford to see any other Power established on the shores of the Persian Gulf, or to dominate the land or air route to the east. Russia's warm water policy or Germany's or Italy's ambitions in this region, therefore, were bound to react on the British or French interests in that region. Prior to 1936, Russia was suspected of casting her net wide so as to bring Iran under her influence. Her hold over Caucasia strengthened these fears. But Soviet Russia had not succeeded in increasing her influence over this region, except for maintaining a dominant position on the north-eastern and northern frontiers of Iran. After 1936, Germany and Italy had entered the field, the latter with wide ambitions, whose emergence as an imperial power in the Middle East with anti-British propaganda among the Arabs, caused a serious threat to British interests.

The United Kingdom had acquired mandatory rights over Iraq and Palestine by the Treaty of Versailles. Iraq was however made independent in 1932, and entered into a treaty with the United Kingdom for twenty-five years, by which British troops were allowed to be maintained near Baghdad both for the protection of the Imperial air route as well as for the safety of Iraq. Palestine continued to be a mandatory area under British control.

Iran had granted oil concession to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in which the British Government had purchased a controlling interest. This concession was repudiated by the Iran Government in 1932, but after reference to the Council of the League of Nations, it was restored. The British hold over the Persian Gulf, and particularly the island of Bahrein, had been resented by the Iranian Government. Iranian nationalism was hostile to the continued British hold over their land and was susceptible to anti-British influences. But the existence of British air force near Baghdad and the stranglehold of the Royal Navy in the Persian Gulf ensured Iran's peacefulness.

The attitude of Saudi Arabia also was a matter of anxiety to the United Kingdom. But as long as Ibn Saud remained passively aloof from the game of European power politics, no serious danger was entertained from that direction. However, the Palestine problem and the French hold over Syria affected the Arab attitude towards the British whose association with Zionism was a cause of resentment in, and estrangement with, the Arab world. By 1935, there were indications that if a European war broke out the Arabs would throw their weight on the side of Germany against Great Britain and France. This attitude was clearly demonstrated in the growing friendship between Yemen and Italy which culminated, in 1937, in Mussolini's acceptance of the "Sword of Islam" and his presenting to the Imam of Yemen two tanks, two anti-aircraft guns, and arms and ammunition. Italy's success in Abyssinia, her propaganda in the Arab world, and the growing Arab nationalist opposition to the existing French and British mandates there, led to the strengthening of Axis influence in the Middle East and a threat to British Imperial security. This change in the diplomatic situation was an important factor in the schemes of Imperial defence. Egypt could not be relinquished by the British and the Treaty of 1936 provided for the continuance of British forces there. In Iraq, British forces were to be strengthened while the safety of the oilfields and the protection of the shores of the Persian Gulf called for reinforcements from India. The Middle Eastern diplomatic situation thus became an important factor in determining the defence policy of India.

THE FAR EAST

"Great Britain is interested in the Far East territorially, in respect of Hong Kong, Malaya, Borneo and the South Sea Islands and commercially and financially in respect of her trade with and investments in China, Japan and British Far Eastern dependencies.

Great Britain is further interested in the Far East in so far as developments there affect the defence of India, Australia and New Zealand, and have repercussions upon the balance of power, in the world at large and indirectly in the European continent".¹ This passage gives in brief outline the interests the United Kingdom had in the Far East, which have always been considerable. The integrity of the British Empire and the security of trade have been as important factors of policy in this region as in the Middle East or elsewhere. The United Kingdom was keen to maintain the status quo and was opposed to the rise of any power in the Far East, whose expansion would affect British predominance in the south-west Pacific or would threaten the security of India and other Imperial possessions. Further, any grave threat to Imperial communications both by sea and air were definitely to be resented, as might be the case if Hong Kong was menaced or the island of Hainan passed into hands other than those of the Chinese.

Prior to the Great War (1914-18), the British foreign policy in the Far East revolved round the Japanese alliance (1902) which was a necessary safeguard against further Russian encroachments in China. After the War, when Japan's designs on China became increasingly aggressive, the Alliance of 1902 was abrogated in 1921 owing to the pressure of the United States. For the next ten years all attempts to check Japanese drive southwards or on the Chinese mainland by means of Multi-Power Treaties had failed, and when in 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, the state of actual estrangement ensued between the United Kingdom and Japan. Further in 1935, the Japanese Government decided to sever the northern province of China, which led to the Sino-Japanese War. These developments had considerably disturbed the balance of power and were likely to lead to a definite threat to British Imperial interests.

ALTERED INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AFFECTING INDIA'S DEFENCE PLANS

The international situation on which India's defence measures had been based had radically altered by 1936, and it was becoming increasingly clear that the British Empire would be involved in a general war in the near future in which Germany, Japan and possibly Italy would be ranged against her. It was further evident that the situation both in the Middle East and the Far East might be adverse to the United Kingdom, and India would be

¹ *An outline: Political and Strategic Interests of the U.K.* by a Study group of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 209.

called upon to render maximum assistance, as her own security might be intimately affected. This new situation led to a fresh appreciation of danger and to the reorientation of the plans of defence.

The most important change had been the re-arming of Germany on land and in the air. She had repudiated that provision of the Treaty of Versailles which limited her armed forces, and was keenly looking forward to an opportunity to shake off the other shackles which denied her the right of expansion. She aimed at the re-acquisition of the territory beyond her eastern frontiers which was snatched from her in 1919. Her Central European ambitions embraced Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria. She also demanded restoration of colonies. These aims were likely to bring her into conflict with Soviet Russia, France and the United Kingdom. To the British Government the prospect of a powerful Germany dominating the North Sea and making a bid for European hegemony was distasteful and likely to bring the two into conflict. Meanwhile Germany had drawn closer to Italy and Japan. The conclusion of the Berlin-Rome Protocol of 1936 with Italy, and the Anti-Comintern Agreement with Japan cemented this alliance.

Threat to British interests from this new alignment was clearly marked. Italy's probable objective of unifying her North African empire by the acquisition of Egypt and Sudan, and reinforcement of her garrisons in Libya, Abyssinia and Eritrea in 1936, was a definite threat to British Imperial communications through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Her hold over the Red Sea would be a threat to Aden, and her liaison with the Arab States would offset the British influence over the Middle East. Similarly, the then Japanese attitude was a menace to the British Imperial interests in the Far East. Her 'Southward policy' aiming at economic expansion in the southern and western Pacific focussed Japanese interests on the area of which Singapore was the strategic centre. Her growing relations with Siam and the development of air communications there, increased British anxiety for the security of the shores of the Bay of Bengal. The growing solidarity of the Axis, therefore, naturally alarmed the British Government and created a new problem of the defence of their Empire.

To recapitulate, prior to 1935, the only power against whom plans of defence of India were prepared was Soviet Russia. The region which was then believed to be threatened was the north-west frontier; and diplomacy centred on maintaining intimate relations with Afghanistan and Iran to counteract any danger in that quarter. There was no abatement in that danger, yet new

vistas of fear had opened up in the Middle East, the Arabian Sea or the South-East Asia. Italy's control of Eritrea and her increasingly aggressive intentions in north and east Africa and the Arab littoral would pose a definite threat to the security of the coasts of India and her communications with Great Britain, which was the primary source of her military equipment and the reservoir of reinforcements. It was also felt that in case of a European war, the Royal Navy might not be able to devote its full energies to the protection of the Indian Ocean. In the interests of India's security, therefore, the British Government desired to expand the scope of India's defence plans and her commitments abroad, so as to include the Middle East. Her external defences were not only to be based on the Oxus, but also on the Suez, Aden and the Persian Gulf.

Similarly on the eastern side, danger was expected in South-East Asia, and Singapore was recognised as the eastern outpost of India's defence. Hong Kong, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies were considered to be the objects of Japanese aggressive intentions, and some were inclined to include Burma also. The Japanese drive in China, their growing influence in Siam and their naval preponderance in the Western Pacific, brought danger nearer to the coasts of India in the east. Not only her coastline was considered to be threatened but air attacks from the east were also apprehended. According to this new appreciation of danger in the south-east, India was called upon to make her contribution in the defence of Hong Kong, Singapore and Burma.

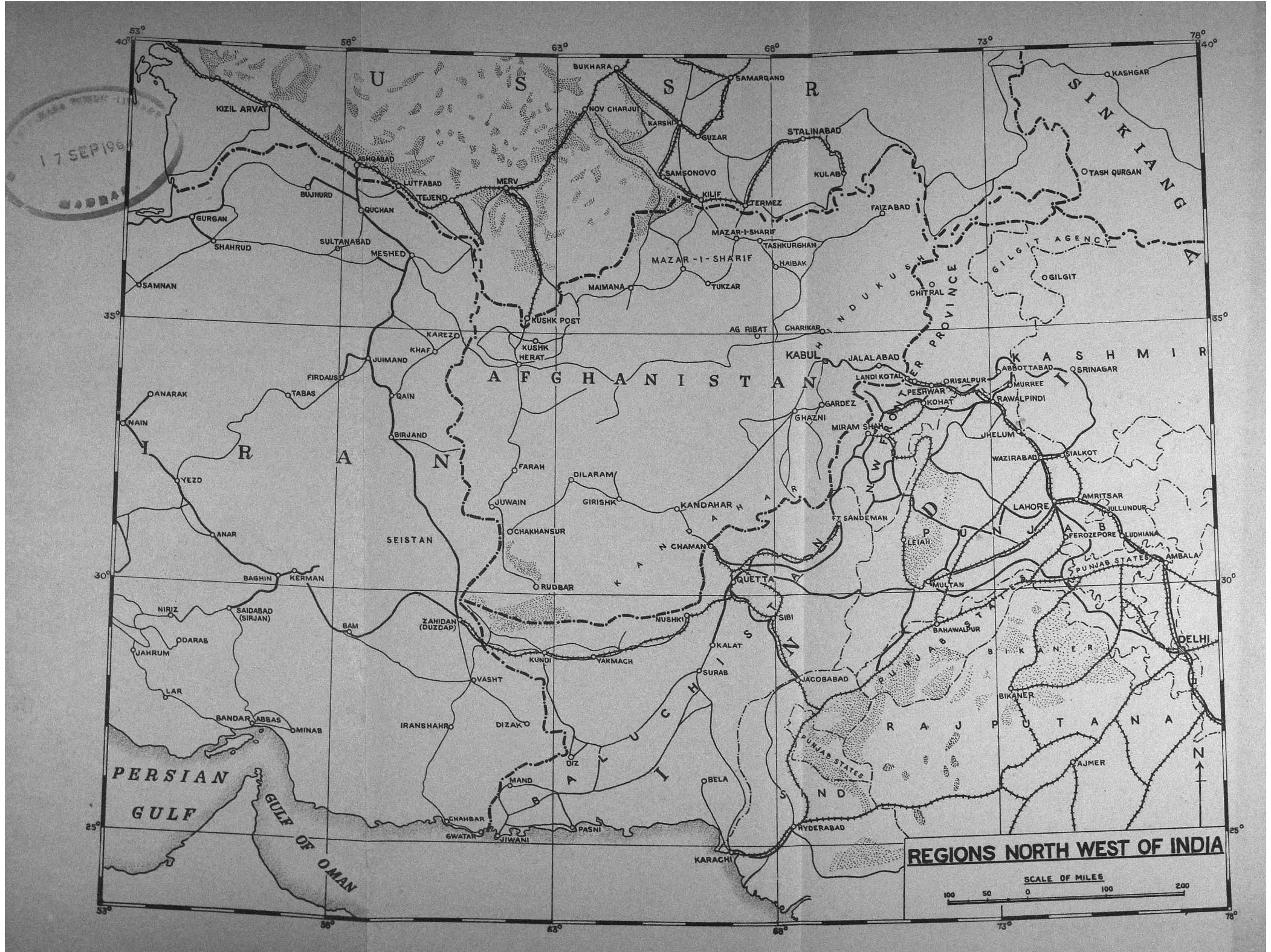
CHAPTER III

Earlier Planning for the Defence of the North-West

DEFENCE OF INDIA PLAN

Ideological differences and conflicting interests had made amicable relations between Soviet Russia and the British Empire difficult of achievement in the decade after Versailles. A diplomatic war had begun by 1926. Earlier in that year an acute Russo-Afghan crisis had developed over Russian occupation of the island of Urta Tagai in the river Oxus, which had for many years been in the de facto possession of the Afghans. This action inflamed the "amour-propre" of the Afghan Government, which might have led to the declaration of war by the Amir but for the dissuasion exercised by the British Minister there, Sir. F. Humphrys. At the same time, the Russian offer of a commission of enquiry, with the restoration of the island to the Afghans, for the moment postponed hostilities. But the British Government could not afford to sleep over the matter for fear that at any moment a deadlock might occur, and lead to actual resort to force by the two parties which might lead to British involvement in war. This occasioned a detailed analysis of the policy to be pursued towards Afghanistan and Russia and the formulating of plans to meet Russian military threat in Central Asia. Such plans were prepared both by the Imperial Government in the United Kingdom, and in a limited manner, by the Government of India. The Imperial plan was called the Defence of India Plan.

The War Office, in November 1927, believed in the definite and unveiled hostility of Soviet Russia to the British Empire, and presumed that as soon as the Russian fighting forces were fully organised and equipped on modern lines, they would strike at the British interests in Central Asia. Afghanistan was believed to be the first objective. The existence of Afghanistan as an independent state was important for the safety of India, and Balfour wanted to keep that country "un-Russianized". Hence Soviet infiltration into the northern provinces of Afghanistan was to be prevented. Having no faith in the efficacy of diplomatic means to do so, it was decided to prepare plans, however inadequate they may be. The Defence of India Plans were therefore prepared not to meet any pressing emergency as such but to counter any probable danger in the future from the direction of Soviet Russia.



17 SEP 1966

REGIONS NORTH WEST OF INDIA

SCALE OF MILES

100 50 0 100 200

The scope and object of the Defence of India Plan were defined as follows:—

“ His Majesty’s Government are of opinion that the preservation of the existing frontier of Russia and Afghanistan is of vital importance to India and the British Empire, and in certain eventualities would be prepared to develop the whole forces of the Empire to preserve the integrity of Afghanistan and resist the extension of Russian dominion southward.

“ It is considered that, under the most likely conditions, war would be preceded by a request from the King of Afghanistan to Great Britain for aid. This plan, therefore, is based on the assumption of a friendly Afghanistan, and it applies only to hostilities undertaken in such circumstances.

“ The object of the operations is to assist Afghanistan from the outset in the maintenance of her integrity against Russian aggression, to develop lines of communication and advanced bases for the prosecution of offensive operations culminating in the eviction of the Russians from Afghan territory ”.¹

The Plan was based on two important considerations, that the integrity of Afghanistan was essential to the British Empire and any encroachment on her northern frontiers by Soviet Russia would occasion a *casus belli*, and secondly, that military action would be taken in support of the Afghan Government, whose friendly attitude and dependence for support on the British Government were presupposed. The main object was to defeat the Russian forces of invasion, to delay and embarrass their advance as soon as they had threatened the integrity of Afghanistan thereby reducing their efficiency and either forcing them to abandon the campaign in its earlier stages, or so reducing their efficiency that the main battles would take place under most favourable circumstances. While the main field of action was to be Afghanistan, provision was made for operations elsewhere, both on land and sea, which would compel Soviet Russia to desist from its aggressive course. Diplomacy was also to be availed of for exerting pressure on the U.S.S.R. The Plan was developed on the basis of adopting a forward offensive policy against the aggressor, so as to speedily expel the Russian forces from Afghanistan and prevent Soviet Russia from gradually consolidating in its northern areas. This course had the advantage of obtaining “ vigorous and sustained co-operation of the Afghan Government ” and “ a full measure of tribal support enlisted on our side ”.

The General Staff appreciation of the development of Russian

¹ Defence of India Plan—“ War with Russia in Afghanistan ” Plan of Operations, dated Sep. 1928, Part I (File No. F 488).

forces and their possible lines of advance was based on the theory of a many-pronged attack over an area extending from Chitral in the east to the Persian Gulf and Iraq in the west. The main theatre, however, was expected to be the area between the longitudes 62 and 70, converging on the two main points of Kabul and Kandahar against which a force of about ten divisions, based on the railheads of Termez and Kushk Post and maintained by mechanical transport, might be employed. Air support, both for offensive raids and for maintenance purposes, might be used. That Soviet Russia would employ propaganda as a measure of offensive action was also taken into account. In this appreciation northern Afghanistan beyond the Hindu Kush was recognised as being threatened initially, the exploitation of which was to be the first consideration of Russian forces. The advance up to the Hindu Kush in the north-east and up to the Khash Rud in the south-west, was therefore easy, though further advance would encounter both physical obstacles as well as opposition from the Afghan and British forces.

It was on this appreciation of hostile development by Soviet Russia that the Defence of India Plan was based. Another assumption was that Russian action would force the Afghan Government to be friendly with the British Government, as a violation of its territories by Russia would make it seek British help. Even otherwise Russian encroachment on Afghan borders would provide an excuse for the British to send their armed forces to Afghanistan and thereby enable them to check Russian advance towards the frontiers of India. The Defence of India Plan presupposed Afghan friendliness, as well as the slow movement of Russian forces, owing to the difficulties of terrain and means of communications.

The main purpose of the Plan, as has been analysed earlier, was "complete ejection of the Russians from the Northern Provinces of Afghanistan", for which "a forward offensive policy" was to be employed and Afghan co-operation was taken for granted. The Plan though generally defensive in character aimed at strategic offensive. As the area within which Russian aggression might develop was fairly extensive and Russian manpower was "inexhaustible", British forces would have to be widely dispersed. This would be an element of weakness. Hence the principle of concentrating offensive action at one objective, "whilst standing on the defensive with minimum detachments elsewhere" was prescribed. Only in Kabul and Kandahar sectors was such offensive action to be employed and decisive results obtained. The strategy of a modern war presupposed the full utilisation of mechanical means of transport. Hence the Plan was based on a proper

development of road and rail transport while taking cognisance of air transport also. The Plan provided for operations in the two theatres, Kabul-Hindu Kush-Oxus, and Kandahar-Herat, called Northern Line and Southern (Western) Line, respectively.

On the Northern line, air offensive was to be the chief feature of operations. But this could not develop effectively unless adequate air bases were provided nearer the threatened zone. The Royal Air Force in India was located in peace time at Ambala, Quetta, Risalpur, Peshawar, Kohat, and Miranshah. An advanced base was at Arawali in the Upper Kurram. But the distance intervening between Arawali and the Oxus was very great, which made air action against the advancing Russian forces impracticable or ineffective. Hence, the Plan envisaged the use of Kabul as the advanced air base, from where Russian aerodromes, communications, supply depots etc. might be attacked. This involved developing Kabul rapidly as an advanced base for the army in India; for this purpose proper lines of communication had to be organised into that part.

While it was believed that for psychological reasons the Russians would aim their main thrust on Kabul, another view was that the nature of terrain would oblige them to deploy their greater strength on the Herat line. This would require the British to adopt offensive action on the Southern line from the beginning. "No effort will be spared", it was stated, "to pursue an offensive policy, the ultimate object of which will be to drive out the Russians from the Herat Province. Distance and lack of communications will delay contact on the line, and our policy of meeting the Russian advance as far forward as possible demands special methods in execution and the utmost advantage being taken of up to date equipment."² The course prescribed was to push the Royal Air Force early into forward positions from which it would strike against Russian forces at Herat and their lines of communication beyond. Dilaram on the Khash Rud was suggested as one such position. For the support of the Royal Air Force, in the first instance, an armoured force was to be provided. The supply was to be maintained by mechanical vehicles and transport aircraft. Early action was also to be taken to push the railhead to Kandahar and towards Dilaram to bridge the gap between the existing railhead and the advanced base. One of the priorities on this side was the construction of a railway up to Kandahar, for which material was available at Chaman. In the early stages, in this area, the Indian army was to act as a covering force, to be relieved

²Defence of India Plan—Plan of Operations—Part I. "General Considerations which have decided military policy". p. 7 (File No. F. 488).

later by the British Expeditionary Force which was to operate mainly on the Southern line.

On both the lines, the basis of strategy was to assume air offensive initially followed by the ground forces which would operate both as covering troops as well as defeat the hostile forces. Strategy was so devised as to deal with the hostile forces one by one, and concentrate for offensive action only in one sector while merely holding the opposing forces in the other. The combat zone was to be far away from the Indian frontier, and the development of railways and roads was the essential preliminary for operations at that distance from the existing railhead. The means contemplated were well devised to secure the object of driving the Russians out of Afghanistan.

The Plan also provided for the occupation of Seistan "in order to deny its resources" to the Russians. It was held that, "To a Russian force advancing on Kandahar the Seistan district would be a valuable subsidiary base of supply. Its denial to the Russians would, therefore, be strategically advantageous to us".³ Moreover, an outflanking movement based on Seistan was contemplated with the object of interrupting the Russian line of communications and their concentration in Girishk area. But the offensive value of Seistan was doubtful, as the Nushki-Duzdab railway would not be adequate for maintenance in that area, and it would involve the arduous task of constructing a railway line up to the lower Helmand Valley. Only in case of a stalemate on the main Herat-Kandahar line, an outflanking movement might be resorted to. But the difficulties inherent in transporting adequate forces and maintaining them in the Helmand Valley were so considerable that much emphasis was not laid on this operation.

At the same time it was feared that Russia might infringe the neutrality of Persia which might become a field of operations, and British policy was to "adopt a defensive attitude and on no account should we violate the neutrality of Persia until such action on Russia's part compels us to do so".⁴ But the original Plan did not contain any detailed proposals to this effect. Later, however, an estimate was made of the forces which would be required for protective and preventive action in Iraq, and the Persian Gulf regions. These forces were expected to be supplied by India, but at the moment no final decision was reached.

As regards Chitral the policy was "defensive, employing only

³ Defence of India Plan "Development of Russian Forces in Afghanistan" Serial III. Note on S. W. Afghanistan, p. 2 (File No. F. 505).

⁴ Defence of India Plan. War with Russia in Afghanistan. "Plan of Operations" Pt. I—Operations in other theatres. p. 9 (File No. F. 488).

minimum detachments of regular troops but organizing local manpower to the full extent possible. Some reinforcements of troops in Chitral may, however, be necessary. These reinforcements the army in India would provide".⁵ No major operations on this side were expected because of the high altitude of the passes leading from Faizabad. Kashgar was considered to be outside the range of military threat, hence no action was envisaged in the Plan for dealing with any Russian movement on that side.

In the Order of Battle which was framed provisionally the employment of the army in India as well as of the British Expeditionary Force was taken into account. The former was to be used entirely on the Northern Line and for initial development on the Southern Line, till relieved by the British Expeditionary Force. The role of the Indian army was generally to provide the line of communication troops, covering troops and the holding troops in the Kabul-Charikar area in a defensive role. Offensive action was reserved for the air forces and the British Expeditionary Force, whose sole theatre of operation was to be the Kandahar-Herat area, and these forces were to be developed only when the railhead had reached Kandahar.

On this basis, the Indian army was to deploy two divisions and one cavalry brigade, besides nine squadrons of the Royal Air Force stationed in India on the Northern Line. On the Southern Line, one division and one cavalry brigade were to be mobilised. This was in addition to the covering troops in the North-West Frontier region. Provision was also made for reserve forces, which were to be drawn from the 4th Indian Division.

The total deployment of the British Expeditionary Force at the end of the first year was computed at four cavalry brigades, thirteen divisions and armoured force besides ancillary troops.

These were to be disposed of as below:—

- (1) In Afghanistan—Southern Line:
 - One cavalry brigade
 - Nine divisions
 - Armoured Force
- (2) In India as reserve formation:
 - One division
- (3) In Egypt as Middle East Reserve:
 - Three cavalry brigades
 - Three divisions.

The major portion of the Expeditionary Force was to be employed after Z plus six months.

⁵*Ibid.* para 2.

The Defence of India Plan was generally prepared in 1928-29, though some of the parts were not ready up to 1932, while in many of its aspects it was not completed at all owing to the intransigence of the General Staff, India. Even Part I, which dealt with general appreciation and the outline of operational plan, was not finalised. A revised draft was sent to India in 1934, and was returned to the War Office by the General Staff with their comments but nothing was heard of it later. Drafts of other parts were also sent to India between 1932 and 1934 for comments or for action, but the India Command took no notice of them and informed the War Office that until their own Pink Plan was complete, they were not interested in any of these drafts of the Defence of India Plan. By 1937 it seems the Plan had retained only an academic significance. The Committee of Imperial Defence gave third priority to the defence of India, as European commitments and Far East had assumed comparatively graver menacing aspects. The British Foreign Office had also lost all interest in the Plan long before 1934, and made the apparent disagreement between the two General Staffs an excuse for putting it off. The reality, however, is that with the growing danger from Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia had lost its sting, and any plans merely to combat Russian expansionism in Central Asia had no value then. Moreover, Russia was busy with internal reconstruction and was in no mood to crave for a war with the British Empire. All these factors, therefore, led to the shelving, rather the end of the Defence of India Plan.

The Defence of India Plan was based on the primary assumption of Afghan friendship, to which the General Staff in India did not subscribe. They also presumed trouble from the Frontier Tribes. Hence what they desired was a plan to meet any possible Afghan and tribal hostility initially, and which, if necessary, might be expanded to include Russian opposition as well. The General Staff in India also objected to the scope of the Defence of India Plan which envisaged operations beyond the Helmand or on the Hindu Kush. They wanted to confine their attention primarily to the Kabul-Kandahar area. There were many other aspects, in detail only, on which there was difference of opinion. But substantially, in principle, there was no disagreement. General Staff, India, were concerned mainly with the limited war in Afghanistan, which had been their traditional role, and all their plans were based on the meagre resources which India alone could provide. Hence, they were content with their own Blue, Pink or Interim Plans.

The Defence of India Plan was at best an exercise, incompletely pursued, to provide for the defence of Afghanistan and

ultimately India against Russian aggression from Central Asia. Strategically it was based on the assumption that Russian invasion could proceed on the two main routes through Afghanistan on its way to India. The principle of meeting this danger farthest away from the frontiers of India was adopted, but too optimistic a view was taken of the lines of communication. The presumption that railway extension into Afghanistan would be practicable without opposition was a bold one. The estimate of Russian development forward of railhead was rather modest. As such the calculated strength of forces, only seven divisions with one cavalry brigade in the later estimate, was an underestimate and quite out of proportion to the objective, that of driving the Russians out of Afghanistan and making northern Afghanistan safe. The Plan also took little account of the possible flanking movements, in strength, towards Persia-Baluchistan or Chitral-Kashgar, the threat to which was no mean one. It was so owing to an inadequate appreciation of the strategic importance of these routes. There is little indication of the character of the operations envisaged, but it appears that a static war was conceived for the Northern Line, while a halting compromise between static and dynamic war was accepted for the Southern (Western) Line. However, it will be futile to make any comments on this aspect because the Plan stopped short of the third phase of war.

PINK PLAN

The Defence of India Plan had assumed the friendliness of Afghanistan and a generally quiescent attitude on the part of the Frontier Tribes. That Plan, therefore, presumed action only in case of Russian invasion of Afghanistan and that too on the invitation of the Afghan Government whose co-operation was anticipated. The Indian authorities did not agree with these underlying assumptions, hence the General Staff in India prepared its own plans of North-West Frontier defence, in the event of local trouble. These plans were, therefore, of limited scope and left out of account the contingency of Russian war, which would be met only by considerable reinforcements from overseas. In a way, these plans were complementary to the Defence of India Plan, in so far as they sought to amend the latter in its initial stages which had been the responsibility of the Indian army.

It was the uncertainty of Afghan situation and not any imminent danger, which had led to the consideration of plans for defence. Prior to 1930, King Amanullah's attitude had created a condition of crisis and the Blue Plan, as well as the Pink Plan by the

General Staff in India, had their origins in those circumstances. With the accession to power of King Nadir Shah, who was a declared friend of the British Empire, the immediate threat to peace had disappeared. Nevertheless the Plans continued to be discussed as an anticipatory measure. It is for these reasons that the appreciation of the occasion of war is so indeterminate.

The modest objective of protection of North-West Frontier from foreign aggression is in contrast to that of the Defence of India Plan. Without active Russian collaboration, no danger was apprehended to the security of British rule in India from Afghanistan. The farthest limit of Afghan penetration would be up to the Indus. At best Afghan aggressive action was not expected to be more than an irritant along the frontier, without taking the invasion to any depth. Hence, the first object was to protect the North-West Frontier, on which depended the peace of the country also. It was in its nature a defensive object.

The earliest Plan was the "Blue Plan" of 1927. It was based on the fundamental assumption of an offensive against Afghanistan directed towards compelling the government there to sue for peace at the earliest possible date. The lines of advance were directed against the two important centres, Kabul and Kandahar, owing to the comparative facility of communication. The Blue Plan envisaged "the main advance to take place on the Northern Line, to consist of a rapid advance on Jalalabad, accompanied by an intensive air offensive, followed by a further advance on Kabul, as soon as it is clear that the Afghans will not come to terms until their capital has been occupied. A simultaneous advance on the Western Line, with Kandahar as objective; this to be a subsidiary operation, to be carried out as transport resources permit".

The Blue Plan was, however, jettisoned in April 1931, in favour of the Pink Plan⁶, which was limited in its scope and was merely in the nature of a restraining action in case the Afghan ruler showed symptoms of hostility or was inclined to go over to the side of Russia. Political factors and adequate appreciation of

⁶The reasons for relinquishing it were: --

- (i) it was considered that a Division and a Cavalry Brigade were insufficient to dominate the Kabul area.
- (ii) it was considered extremely doubtful if five Brigade Groups could guarantee the security of an L of C of 178 miles, in view of the strength and fighting qualities of the tribes and the very difficult nature of the country.
- (iii) it was considered that road maintenance beyond Jalalabad would present insuperable difficulties
- (iv) the Plan used up practically all available forces; and left only one Brigade as a reserve to Northern and Western Lines and to the covering troops.
- (v) it involved the risk of prolonged occupation of Afghan territory, which was to be avoided at all costs.

the transport situation largely affected its character.

The Pink Plan was conceived in three stages. The first step was to bring the Covering Troops to war strength quickly, to provide them with sufficient transport to ensure the necessary degree of mobility, and to have a general reserve at a central place. The next stage was for the Field Army to come into action. If not delayed by diversions in the initial stages to beat tribal incursion into the administered area, the Field Army of four Indian divisions and four Indian cavalry brigades, together with a complement of Army and Line of Communication Troops would concentrate on the frontier in two sectors. It was held that "the paucity of good communications on and beyond the North West Frontier is a decisive factor in framing plans for the early attainment of our object. If full advantage is to be taken of our superior organization and modern equipment, the offensive must be launched in those areas with the possibility of rapid development beyond. For these reasons our offensive operation can be considered on only two lines:—

- “ (i) the Northern Line towards Kabul
- (ii) the Western Line towards Kandahar.”⁷

Landi Khana on the former and Chaman on the latter were the two railheads which would serve as bridgeheads for advance beyond. Roads to Kabul and Kandahar from these respectively were available which, with necessary development, would serve for the transport of the army and supplies for its maintenance. As the limited resources of transport and bad state of communications in Afghanistan affected the advance of the Field Army, which would be directly proportionate to the progress of road and rail construction, effective concentration of material, labour and technical units was to be organized. The Northern Line towards Kabul would not yield to rapid railway extension owing to the difficulty of terrain. It was calculated that to push the railhead up to Jalalabad, a distance of 48 miles, would take 24 weeks—therefore road development was to be taken up. On the Western Line, however, the distance of 70 miles to Kandahar from Chaman offered few natural obstacles, hence railway construction work would be pushed forth at the earliest possible time, as soon as the protection of survey parties might be guaranteed. Thus, as soon as sufficient arrangements had been made for road construction on the Northern Line, and railway, road and water supply construction on the Western Line, the two armies were to advance and occupy respectively the Dakka and Wat Thana areas.

⁷ Pink Plan, p. 2, paras 34-35 (File No. 601/745/H).

In this stage, the Royal Air Force was required to establish complete air superiority. Its whole strength, leaving the squadrons required for army co-operation, was to be employed in offensive operations.

The third stage was that of advance of the Field Army to Jalalabad and Kandahar. The two armies on the Northern and Western Lines, designated Northern and Western Armies respectively, were to advance from Dakka and Wat Thana areas, with Army Co-operation Squadrons, and to move up to Jalalabad and Kandahar. No provision was made in the Pink Plan for advance beyond Jalalabad and Kandahar.

The forces assigned for this task were to consist of the Covering Troops and the Field Army. The strength of the Covering Troops was seven regiments of cavalry, nineteen batteries of artillery, fifty-one battalions of infantry, five and a quarter field companies of Sappers and Miners and two Armoured Car Companies, spread over an area from Chitral to Baluchistan. A reserve for Peshawar and Kohat districts consisting of one infantry brigade plus attached troops was to be provided to be replaced later by 100th Indian State Forces Brigade.

The Field Army formations were to be allotted as under:—

Northern Line

1st Cavalry Brigade

1st Division

3rd Division, less one Infantry Brigade

Western Line

2nd and 3rd Cavalry Brigade

2nd Division

One Infantry Brigade, 4th Division

Divisional Engineers, 4th Division

G.H.Q. Reserve

4th Cavalry Brigade

4th Division, less one Infantry Brigade and Divisional Engineers

One Infantry Brigade and attached troops, 3rd Division.

The Air Force disposition was to be that one Army Co-operation Squadron was to be allotted to the Northern Army and one Army Co-operation Squadron and one Bomber Transport Flight to the Western Army, initially. On advance from Dakka etc., one Army Co-operation Squadron each was further to be placed at their disposal. The rest of the Royal Air Force was to be with the General Headquarters for air offensive.

The Plan made provision for road and rail construction also. For Northern Army, five Road Construction Battalions were to be made available in the first instance to put the existing road beyond the Frontier into a condition to stand continuous motor traffic. Railway survey parties and sufficient Sapper and Miner companies were also to be provided. The Pink Plan was a peace time exercise based on hypothetical diplomatic appreciations. It was largely for "Home (U.K.) purposes", and as the Commander-in-Chief put it "in India, at any rate, we do not necessarily mean to stick to it". It was for a limited purpose only and based on the resources available in India. The army had many deficiencies at the time which required examination. But financial difficulties and political policy of the British Government made any expansion of the army impracticable.

Before the Pink Plan was brought into action, the international situation had considerably altered, and in the changed situation, this Plan, like its predecessor, was declared to be obsolete and substituted by the Plan of Operations 1938, which held the field in the first two years of the Second World War.

CHAPTER IV

Pre-War Defence Policy

The international situation on which earlier defence plans were based had altered considerably by 1936. Both the Defence of India Plan and the Pink Plan were framed on the assumption of Soviet antagonism with or without the collaboration of Afghanistan. The only threat against which provision was made was that to the North-West Frontier, and no fear was entertained to the security of the coastline or the interior of the country.

Developments in 1936, however, dispelled the complacency of the British authorities. Germany was known to have rearmed both on land and in the air and to be fondling ambitions which might bring her into conflict with the United Kingdom. To implement her expansionist policy, Germany had drawn closer to Italy and Japan by the Berlin-Rome Protocol of 1936 and the Anti-Comintern Pact, respectively. The two other partners entertained aggressive designs in their respective spheres of North Africa and Asia. The growing armament of the Axis Powers and their expansionist ambitions, therefore, awakened the apprehensions of the British Government whose interests in the Middle and the Far East as well as Imperial communications were in danger.

In particular, Italy's dreams of a North African Empire menacing Egypt and the Red Sea, and her activities in Afghanistan, leading to the supply of air force to the latter, brought the danger nearer to India. This made it necessary to strengthen the British garrisons in the Middle East and stiffen Indian defences on the North-West Frontier. The Japanese "southward policy" directed towards economic expansion in the South-Western Pacific, threatened Singapore and Siam. These developments naturally made India susceptible to danger on her eastern frontier also. Japan's attitude made her face the possibility of a sea-borne attack on her extensive coastline, however limited it might be in its scope and weight.

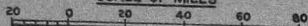
Despite this change in the international situation, threat to the North-Western Frontier was not yet discounted. General Staff were not prepared, on a long view, to regard Soviet Russia other than "as a potential enemy", against whom preparation must be maintained. The deep-rooted suspicion of Russia prevented relaxation of vigilance against her, and this view still held the ground "that the Russian menace to the territorial integrity of India, though dormant, may arise again in the future in intensified form".¹

¹Defence Policy in India 1936-37 "Changes in the International Situation affecting India's Defence Policy and Commitments" p 5 (File No. F. 461 Paper F).

OUTLINE PLAN OF OPERATIONS (INDIA)

1938

SCALE OF MILES



COVERING TROOPS ALONG N.W. FRONTIER

CHITRAL ONE INF. BN.
 PESHAWAR DISTRICT THREE INF. BDES.
 KOHAT DISTRICT TWO INF. BDES.
 WAZIRISTAN DISTRICT THREE INF. BDES.
 WESTERN INDEPENDENT DISTRICT THREE INF. BDES.

INTERNAL SECURITY TROOPS

6 INDIAN CAVALRY REGIMENTS.
 32 BRITISH INFANTRY BATTALIONS.
 20 INDIAN INFANTRY BATTALIONS

FIELD ARMY

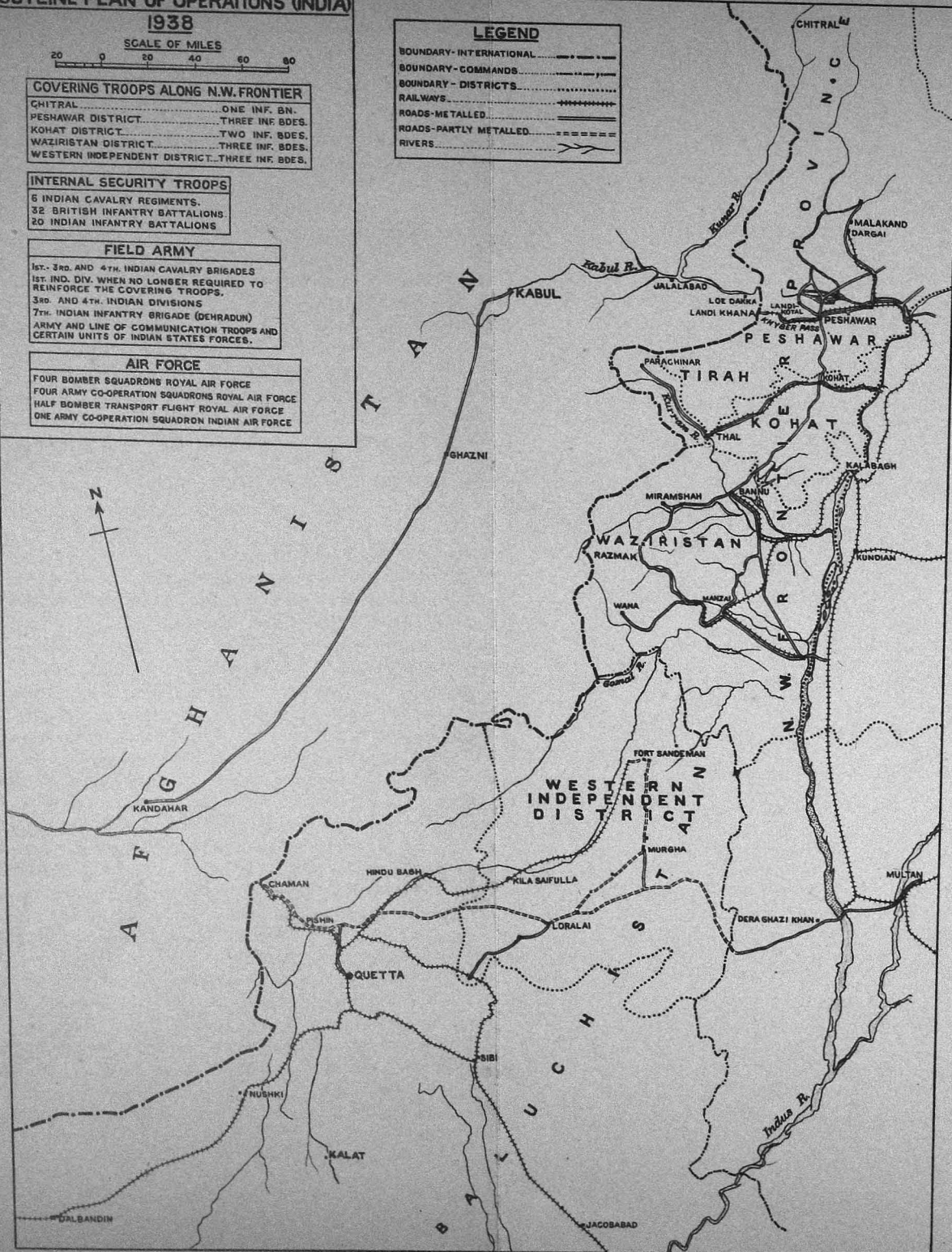
1ST, 2ND, AND 4TH INDIAN CAVALRY BRIGADES
 1ST IND. DIV. WHEN NO LONGER REQUIRED TO
 REINFORCE THE COVERING TROOPS.
 3RD AND 4TH INDIAN DIVISIONS
 7TH INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE (DEHRADUN)
 ARMY AND LINE OF COMMUNICATION TROOPS AND
 CERTAIN UNITS OF INDIAN STATES FORCES.

AIR FORCE

FOUR BOMBER SQUADRONS ROYAL AIR FORCE
 FOUR ARMY CO-OPERATION SQUADRONS ROYAL AIR FORCE
 HALF BOMBER TRANSPORT FLIGHT ROYAL AIR FORCE
 ONE ARMY CO-OPERATION SQUADRON INDIAN AIR FORCE

LEGEND

BOUNDARY - INTERNATIONAL
 BOUNDARY - COMMANDS
 BOUNDARY - DISTRICTS
 RAILWAYS
 ROADS - METALLED
 ROADS - PARTLY METALLED
 RIVERS



The situation in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq was not without anxiety. The appreciation was that "with an unstable government such as that which exists in Iraq, it is not possible to guarantee either the security of our communications between the Persian Gulf and Palestine or the safety of British oil interests in Iraq and Iran. In the cases of both Egypt and Iraq the existing Treaties can easily be obstructed or even repudiated, and neither Treaty can be considered to give wholly adequate security to Imperial interests". It was further believed that the recent "changes in the international situation have materially increased India's vulnerability and her potential commitments".² The threat to British interests in the Middle East and the Western Pacific necessitated a call upon India to reinforce British garrisons in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Malaya, and Hong Kong. At that time, the Government of India accepted the responsibility of sending detachments to these areas amounting to about one division with ancillary troops.

These new circumstances compelled reconsideration of the Pink Plan and a reorientation of the defence policy. The two earlier Plans had envisaged offensive action in Afghanistan in two sectors, Kabul or Jalalabad and Kandahar areas. But in view of the growing commitments, especially of the so-called external defence, it became evident in 1936 that the available land forces were not adequate for a simultaneous offensive in both the sectors which was the basis of the Pink Plan. Hence, initially it was decided to abandon, or at least to defer, until a later stage of the war, the advance on Kandahar, and to concentrate on a vigorous offensive on the Jalalabad line. Other factors had also intervened to necessitate the revision of the Pink Plan. During the summer of 1936 various reorganization schemes directed at mechanization of British cavalry, and the increase of the fire power of British infantry were taken up. The Western Command was also reorganized. These changes substantially affected the basis of the Pink Plan, a revision of which was contemplated as early as 1936. But at that moment the Waziristan operations and the fluidity of the situation precluded any action on it.³ In 1938, however, the matter was taken up in earnest. A Plan of Operations (Outline Plan) was drafted and considered, but before it was adopted, modernization proposals had intervened and a realistic appraisal of the war potential compelled increased emphasis on the defensive aspect of operations in the north-west. In August 1938, an "Interim Plan of Operations to meet a sudden emergency" was issued superseding the Pink Plan. At the close of the year, however, the Interim

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ Note by D.M.O. dated 31-12-32 (File No. MOI 45820)

Plan itself was substituted by the "Plan of Operations (India) 1938", which remained in force at the commencement of the war in 1939.

OUTLINE PLAN OF OPERATIONS

The Outline Plan of Operations also did not depart materially from the earlier Plans as it envisaged the possibility of war with Afghanistan, and included within its scope the control of the cis-frontier tribes, the maintenance of internal security in India, and the provision and concentration of a striking force at the frontier railheads. The appreciation of Afghan military strength was based on the active support of the cis-and trans-frontier tribes. Assistance from foreign countries was not taken into account, as in that event the war would be transformed into an Imperial war. The Plan had only a limited object, namely to ensure that the Afghan Government would seek peace so as to avoid disintegration or prolonged occupation.

Economic pressure on Afghanistan was impracticable as her routes to the north and west would not admit of blockade. Hence resort to diplomatic action was to be made to prevent the supply of war material or the furnishing of credit by the foreign powers. The appreciation also took into account India's sympathy for the Afghans which might result in widespread disaffection against the British Government, and call for adequate arrangements for internal security.

To meet the situation in case the threat materialised the Plan considered the available forces in India. These were grouped, besides the air force, into three categories:

- (a) Covering Troops
- (b) Internal Security Troops
- (c) Field Army.

The Covering Troops were disposed in peace along the North-West Frontier from Chitral to Baluchistan and comprised:

Chitral	..	One infantry battalion
Peshawar District	..	Three infantry brigades
Kohat District	..	Two infantry brigades
Waziristan District	..	Three infantry brigades
Western Independent District	..	Three infantry brigades

with the necessary attached troops and ancillary services. This force was not considered to be adequate for the role assigned to the Covering Troops in war, particularly in view of the large scale cis-frontier tribal disturbances. Hence it was suggested that a

portion of the Field Army, preferably the 1st Indian Division, should be allotted for their reinforcement.

The Internal Security Troops of the total strength of:

6 Indian cavalry regiments

23 British infantry battalions

20 Indian infantry battalions

and some units of the Auxiliary Force, India's Territorial Force and the Indian States Forces, could not be diverted from their assigned role of safeguarding the lines of communication and assisting the civil authority in maintaining law and order. In case of serious disorders it was feared they might have to be reinforced from the Field Army, though in a converse case they might be available for action on the war front.

Leaving aside these two categories of troops, the remaining force would form the Field Army, which would comprise:—

1st, 3rd and 4th Indian Cavalry Brigades

1st Indian Division when no longer required to reinforce the Covering Troops

3rd and 4th Indian Divisions

7th Indian Infantry Brigade (Dehra Dun)

Army and Line of Communication Troops and certain units of the Indian States Forces.

The air force consisted of:—

Four bomber squadrons Royal Air Force

Four Army Cooperation Squadrons Royal Air Force

Half bomber transport flight Royal Air Force

One Army Cooperation Squadron Indian Air Force.

This force was in a condition to assume offensive immediately on the outbreak of war.

The Plan of Operations was based on the hypothesis that the Afghans would have the initiative in launching an attack. Raids on Chitral, or into the Peshawar, Kohat, Waziristan and Western (Independent) Districts were in that situation also apprehended. In addition attacks on Landi Kotal, or other points in the Khyber, were not ruled out. It was further assumed that war would begin with air raids and anti-British propaganda in the frontier districts and Waziristan on a large scale, causing serious uneasiness in that area. Such a situation could only be countered by a determined and rapid advance into Afghanistan, besides engaging local tribal forces by the Covering Troops. An advance into Afghanistan, would relieve pressure on the Covering Troops and release the 1st Indian Division assigned initially for the support of the Covering Troops, to join the Field Army. The basis of strategy was to meet the hostile force as near the frontiers as practicable and to defeat

it there. The Khyber-Kabul route was the major area where the invading forces would be employed, and there they had to be fought and destroyed. Therefore, the Plan of Operations contemplated offensive action by an advance into Afghanistan and opening the campaign by air action to destroy the air force and the military objectives.

In this Plan the General Staff also discussed the alternative lines of advance into Afghanistan, with Kabul as the objective. The shortest route was the Kurram one, but it was not feasible at the time. The southern route via Kandahar and Ghazni was deemed to be very long and containing no vital objectives occupation of which would compel the Afghan Government to sue for peace. The Northern Line or the Khyber-Jalalabad-Kabul route was, therefore, the most feasible, being the shortest and most direct route to Kabul. The first suitable objective on this line was Jalalabad, whose occupation combined with air action and minor diversions on the Southern Line would compel the Afghans to desire peace. And if that did not materialise immediately, further advance towards Kabul might be effected, which would depend merely on road development and availability of motor transport. The main advance was to proceed by Khyber route, while Chaman-Kandahar route was to be utilised for holding hostile forces and executing diversions.

The army was to be organised, accordingly, into Northern and Southern Army. In the Northern Army the following troops were to be allotted:

(i) Covering Troops; Chitral, Peshawar, Kohat and Waziristan Districts.

(ii) Field Army consisting of:

1st Indian Cavalry Brigade

1st Indian Division

3rd Indian Division

Army and Line of Communication Troops

One Army Co-operation Squadron Royal Air Force.

To the Southern Army the following troops were assigned:—

(i) Covering Troops—Western (Independent) District.

(ii) Field Army consisting of:

3rd Indian Cavalry Brigade

Army and Line of Communication Troops

One Army Co-operation Squadron Royal Air Force.

The Reserves with the General Headquarters were:

4th Indian Cavalry Brigade

4th Indian Division

7th Indian Infantry Brigade

and the air forces and certain Indian States Forces units.

(The 4th Indian Division was allotted to this role on the assumption that it would not be called for Imperial role in case of such a struggle).

This Outline Plan was soon dropped, because of the change of policy. At a meeting of the Principal Staff Officers, the Commander-in-Chief held the view that as Afghanistan was a sovereign independent power, a war with her "was an Imperial concern and no longer a local Indian responsibility". That being so, the basis of the 'Pink Plan' was no longer applicable. "In future these plans and calculations were to be based on a purely defensive policy. This defence policy was to include the defence of our frontiers and our coasts and to exclude any idea of a large scale offensive into Afghanistan", though "small local counter offensives such as an operation against Dakka or Spin Baldak" would not be excluded. Hence the plan was to be based on a reduced number of units, which had become a necessity owing to the growing Imperial commitments of the Indian army. The modernization proposals also intervened. All these factors led to the recasting of the defence plans, with the consequence that the Interim Plan of Operations was issued in August 1938, and was later in the year replaced by the "Plan of Operations (India) 1938" though without any substantial change.

THE INTERIM PLAN 1938

The Interim Plan was only a provisional plan of operations for use in a sudden emergency consequent on the 'Pink Plan' being obsolete. Its underlying note was that single-handed aggressive action by Afghanistan against India was most unlikely, and that Afghanistan would join war, only if compelled by forces beyond its control. Such an eventuality, however, was at the moment regarded as improbable. Nevertheless, if aggression materialised it would be undertaken by regular land and air forces, supported by tribesmen from both sides of the Durand Line and with foreign assistance. In that contingency, a purely defensive role was to be adopted by the Indian army; and unlike all the previous plans, it was now clearly stated that there would be no immediate advance into Afghanistan. Hence the role of defence troops was to protect vital areas and to maintain the existing position vis-a-vis the tribes. This role was to be performed by the Frontier Defence Troops aided by the General Reserve in case local offensives for tactical purposes were resorted to.

The Interim Plan further outlined the vital areas in the four districts. In the Peshawar District the most vital areas were the

Khyber Pass and Peshawar. Khyber must not be abandoned as it provided the most direct route to Peshawar for an invading Afghan army. Peshawar itself was threatened by an Afridi incursion across the Khajuri Plain and by a Mohmand invasion between Abazai and Michni. The task of the force there would, therefore, be to hold the Khajuri and Malakand posts and construct a wired and lighted obstacle from Abazai to Michni. Adequate forces were to be provided for defence against invasion and maintenance of law and order in the settled districts. In Kohat District, the chief threats were likely to be an Afghan offensive against Parachinar and Thal, tribal incursions from Tirah against Kohat itself or the road Kohat-Thal, and tribal interference with the direct communications with Peshawar. To maintain position at Parachinar and in the Kurram Valley was essential. Hence troops allotted for this area were to be adequate for the defence of these vital points. In Waziristan District, the Bannu-Razmak road and Razmak and Wana had to be defended, for which garrisons were to be maintained at Bannu, Mir Ali, Razmak, Wana and Manzai. At the same time three mobile columns of a brigade group each were to be provided which might, as opportunity offered, strike against the tribes or the regular forces and make lines of communications safe. In the Western District the vital area to be protected was Quetta, the route to which from Afghanistan lay through the Khajak Pass, which was to be held at all costs. Chaman was not to be defended. But Fort Sandeman, Zhob and Bolan Pass had to be protected and maintained.

This Plan being eminently defensive in character was comprehensive enough to include the defence of the North-West Frontier, internal security, coastal defence and the overseas commitments of India. And to execute these purposes, the army in India was regrouped into five categories:

- (i) Frontier Defence Troops—to defend the North-Western Frontier against external aggression and to control the tribes.
- (ii) Coast Defence Troops.
- (iii) Air Defence Troops—to provide some measure of ground defence.
- (iv) Internal Security Troops.
- (v) General Reserve.

The sixth category was of troops earmarked for overseas commitments amounting to a division in strength.

The frontier defence was to be so organised as to unify it under one higher command with four forward sectors, each self-sufficient for purposes of daily watch and ward, and having provi-

THE LOCAL NAVAL DEFENCE

SCALE OF MILES
100 0 100 200 300 400

TROOPS ALLOTTED FOR THE DEFENCE OF PORTS [---] []
 TROOPS FOR SAFEGUARD AGAINST SEA-BORNE RAIDS [---] []
 COAST DEFENCE INSTALLATIONS [---] []



DELHI

I N D I A

N E P A L

BHUTAN

BURMA

CALCUTTA

B A Y

O F

B E N G A L

CEYLON

A R A B I A N

S E A

KARACHI

1 HEAVY ARTY. BTRY.
 2 BRIT. BN.
 1 IND. COAST ARTY. BTRY.
 1 BRIT. INF. BN.
 1 IND. INF. BN.
 2 6 INCH (45°) GUNS
 3 H.D.C. LIGHTS
 4 3 INCH A.A. GUNS

2 BRIT. BN.

(INCLUDING 2 BRIT. INF. BN. PORT BLAIR)
 2 6 INCH (15°) GUNS
 2 H.D.C. LIGHTS
 2 3 INCH A.A. GUNS

CALCUTTA

BOMBAY

1 HEAVY ARTY. BTRY.
 1 BRIT. BN.
 1 IND. BN.
 1 IND. COAST ARTY. BN.
 1 BRIT. INF. BN.
 1 IND. INF. BN.
 1 ITF. INF. BN.
 2 7.5 INCH GUNS
 2 6 INCH (45°) GUNS
 2 6 INCH (15°) GUNS
 4 H.D.C. LIGHTS
 2 3 INCH A.A. GUNS

1 COY. BRIT. INF.

VIZAGAPATAM

1 BRIT. BN.
1 IND. BN.

1 BRIT. INF. BN.
1 IND. INF. BN.

2 6 INCH (45°) GUNS
 3 H.D.C. LIGHTS
 4 3 INCH A.A. GUNS

MADRAS

COCHIN

1 COY. BRIT. INF.
 2 6 INCH (45°) GUNS
 3 H.D.C. LIGHTS
 4 3 INCH A.A. GUNS

sion for adequate immediate reinforcements, and sufficient reserve. The Frontier Command would comprise Peshawar, Kohat, Waziristan and Western Districts, as its four sectors. To these were to be assigned units which were detailed in the Plan of 1938. Similarly units were allotted for internal security, railway protection, coastal defence and reserve.

This allocation of the army units was made from the unmechanized or very partially mechanized army of India. But soon after, as a result of the proposals of the Modernization Committee, the Plan was revised on the basis of mechanization of units. The new allocation is contained in the Plan of Modernization prepared by the Committee of the Army Headquarters under the Chairmanship of Sir Claude Auchinleck. Mechanization was, however, not expected to be completed till 1942, hence the armed forces available for implementing the Plan of Operations 1938, remained in the first two years of the war very imperfectly mechanized.

LOCAL NAVAL DEFENCE

As stated earlier, the Plans of 1938 being primarily defensive in character, embraced internal security as well as the protection of the coastline and the main sea communication routes. Local naval defence was an important feature of these Plans. It had to be so, owing to the changed conditions. Formerly, no direct threat to India from the seaward had ever been presented, hence the sole objective remained the defence of the land approaches through Afghanistan. But international situation had altered by 1935 and the British Empire was confronted with the probable hostility of naval powers in the east.

In the inter-war period the centre of gravity of naval activity had shifted to the Pacific, where the United States and Japan possessed strong and modern battle fleets. Italian naval power in the Mediterranean was also developing into a force to be reckoned with. The naval strength of these two Axis Powers, one in the Pacific and the other in the Mediterranean, both in the east and the west, had increased the maritime threat to India. The General Staff, in 1936, had grown fully conscious of the danger of sea-borne aggression from Japan. It was their appreciation that in the event of a major war in Europe, "Japan was most likely to devote her main effort to action against those British possessions nearest to her shores, but sporadic action against India must be anticipated". They estimated that "Japanese action against India would probably take the form of sea-borne attack on ports and shipping,

with the object of inflicting moral and material damage to induce us to lock up troops in India which would be better employed elsewhere, and interfering with trade. The scale of attack would probably include sporadic raids by surface craft and by sea-borne aircraft from a raider, and submarine and mining activities". They could not, however, assume that such operations would "constitute a vital threat to the security of India". All that they apprehended was "a serious danger to shipping, which would certainly affect the morale of the country".⁴ The worst apprehensions at the time did not anticipate a sea-borne invasion of the country. There was reason for this optimism. As long as Singapore was considered to be the impregnable bastion of the Empire, and Suez and Aden guarded the ingress into the Arabian Sea, and the Royal Navy sailed the Indian Ocean, the Indian coast was deemed to be secured against external aggression. Against sea-borne attacks by a major Power, India had to rely mainly on the protection of the Royal Navy. Hence little had to be done by India for the protection of her trade routes or the coastline against attack by a major Power. All that was intended to be done was provision of local defences at the important ports and some aircraft for co-operation with the other services in coast defence.

While a large scale sea-borne invasion was discounted, the strategic importance of India's ports and vital need of protecting her sea communications with the other portions of the British Empire were fully appreciated. It was felt that "both for India's own internal security and defence, and as a vital link in the Imperial war effort, protection of India's great ports—Bombay, Karachi, Calcutta, Madras, Cochin and Vizagapatam—is an obvious essential", for in the event of war these ports would serve "as convoy assembly ports, emergency routeing ports, ports of refuge for merchant ships, centres for the fitting out of armed merchant cruisers and the defensive armament of merchantmen, and military embarkation and debarkation and supply ports whose efficient and unimpeded functioning would be a *sine qua non* of all military plans for land defence or offence".⁵ It was further realized that with the developments in methods of warfare and greater emphasis on material than on personnel, India would depend on the safety of her line of sea communication for the supply of equipment for her armed forces, from the United Kingdom. She depended more and more on the latter for essential imports which included scientific

⁴ General Staff paper entitled "Memorandum on the Defence Forces" dated 1 May 1936 (File No. F. 461 Paper A).

⁵ Memorandum on Defence of India 1939-43 by Naval Headquarters "Priority to Local Defence" (File No. 601/9014/H).

and optical instruments, explosives; Royal Air Force equipment and bombs; and armoured fighting and mechanical transport vehicles. From Burma she imported petroleum products and lubricating oils. The position was thus summed up by the General Staff:

“ If the steady flow of the above essentials to and from this country were checked, the defence forces of India would be unable fully to meet their commitments, either at home or overseas, and the produce of India and Burma could not be fully exploited in Empire interests ”⁶

This explains the emphasis on local naval defence which became an important feature of the defence policy of India on the eve of World War II. The Chatfield Committee, therefore, gave first priority to the provision of adequate local naval defence, and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom made it an essential condition of their willingness to forego the annual subvention of £ 100,000 by the Government of India towards the upkeep of the Royal Navy.

The Chatfield Committee analysed the danger from Japan as:

- (i) an attack on Singapore, which would directly menace India's sea communications,
- (ii) sea-borne raids on Indian coasts, and
- (iii) air attack on Burma and India.

In this connection they defined the scale and type of attack,

viz. :

- (a) Attack by cruisers or armed merchantmen
 - (i) by gunfire
 - (ii) by minelaying in the approaches to ports.
- (b) attack by submarines
 - (i) by gunfire at moderate and close ranges
 - (ii) by mine or torpedo on shipping in the harbour or immediate approaches.
- (c) blocking measures and the possibility of landing parties.
- (d) attack by air by light sea-borne forces.⁷

To such dangers was India exposed from the sea.

The local naval defence had a dual aspect. It involved defence of the ports and the coastline on the one side, and the safety of the sea routes on the other. The 1938 Plans had considered the first only, and had allotted 8 regular battalions, 3 batteries and 17 non-regular units to defend the ports and coasts of India against attack. These were to be distributed as follows:—

⁶ Memorandum on India's Defence Commitments and her ability to implement them. G. S. India Section 5, Security of Sea Communication, para. 27. (File No. F. 461).

⁷ Chatfield Committee Report, paras. 28-29.

Karachi	..	1 Heavy Artillery Battery
		2 British battalions
Bombay	..	1 Heavy Artillery Battery
		1 British battalion
		1 Indian battalion
Madras		1 British battalion
		1 Indian battalion
Calcutta		2 British battalions
Reserve	..	1 Medium Artillery Battery (60 pdrs.).

Later when the whole problem of defence was examined by the Auchinleck and Chatfield Committees, in the light of the necessity of modernizing the army in India, they prescribed the measure of provision deemed essential for coastal defence. The Modernization Committee, while not discounting the likelihood of a sea-borne invasion at some future date, did not consider it necessary at the time to set aside a special force to meet this threat, and presumed that such a task should devolve on the General Reserve. Yet, for safeguarding the principal ports from hostile sea-borne raids, they thought it desirable to provide adequate garrisons for them so as to prevent alarm and disaffection among the local civil population. For the limited purpose of providing small garrisons for the ports of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Karachi, Cochin, Vizagapatam and Port Blair, they suggested a total allotment of—

- 2 coast defence artillery units
- 1 Indian Engineer Field Company
- 5½ British infantry battalions
- 2 Indian infantry battalions
- 1 Indian Territorial Force provincial infantry battalion.

These might be supplemented by local units of the Auxiliary Force (India), and urban units of the Indian Territorial Force. This allotment did not differ substantially from the existing provision. Their distribution was to be as follows:—

Karachi	..	1 Indian coast artillery battery
		1 Indian infantry battalion
		1 British infantry battalion
Bombay	..	1 Indian coast artillery battery
		1 British infantry battalion
		1 Indian infantry battalion
		1 ITF infantry battalion
Madras	..	1 British infantry battalion
		1 Indian infantry battalion
Calcutta (including Port Blair)		2 British infantry battalions

Cochin .. 1 company of British infantry
 Vizagapatam 1 company of British infantry.

In addition to the ground forces, it was considered desirable by the General Staff to have an adequate provision of coast defence and anti-aircraft artillery.

They proposed the following installations:

Bombay	..	..	2 7.5-inch guns
			2 6-inch (45°) guns
			3 6-inch (15°) guns
			4 H.D.C. lights
			8 3-inch AA guns
Calcutta	..	..	2 6-inch (15°) guns
			2 H.D.C. lights
			6 3-inch AA guns
Karachi	..	..	2 6-inch (45°) guns
			3 H.D.C. lights
			4 3-inch AA guns
Cochin	..	..	2 6-inch (45°) guns
			3 H.D.C. lights
			4 3-inch AA guns
Madras	..	..	2 6-inch (45°) guns
			3 H.D.C. lights
			4 3-inch AA guns
Vizagapatam	..	..	Nil.

The Auchinleck Committee, however, placed greater reliance "on aircraft than on coast artillery to protect the defended ports from bombardment by enemy ships and from sea-borne air attacks".⁸ Hence, in addition to the units of artillery batteries, they calculated that a minimum of two squadrons of aircraft would be required for the task.

The Chatfield Committee went into the question very thoroughly and made their recommendations which were carried into effect at the beginning of the war. They endorsed the proposal for two bomber squadrons, which were to be equipped for the dual role of frontier and coast defence, but, in addition, they suggested the raising of five flights of aircraft on a voluntary basis to assist in the defence of the ports. They were right in their emphasis on the employment of aircraft for coast defence which were more effective against direct bombardment by ships or attack by sea-borne aircraft than the coast based artillery. Yet they considered the provision of 6-inch coast defence guns on modern mountings

⁸ Auchinleck (Modernization) Committee Report, Oct. 1938 Section 7. The Modernization of the Coast Defence Troops, p. 9 [File No. 51 (W)].

essential at some ports, and felt that with these "so long as the scale of attack is no higher than that of a cruiser or armed merchant vessel, bombardment of the ports would be unlikely"⁹ Their recommendations in regard to coast defence and anti-aircraft artillery confirmed the provision suggested by the General Staff. This minimum insurance was commended by them for acceptance. By 1939, work had proceeded considerably and in respect of port defence some sort of security had been achieved.

The next aspect was that of the safety of channels of communication, which involved the keeping open of the sea route to the United Kingdom, on the one side, and the British Empire territories in the east, on the other. It was necessary to keep the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal clear of hostile shipping and skulking raiders, a duty which devolved primarily on the Royal Navy. In 1926, however, the Imperial Conference had made the Dominions and India responsible for their local naval defence and development of their navies. By 1938, India had been able to secure five seagoing sloops, a patrol vessel and a survey ship besides providing for training and repair facilities on a modest scale. But little had been achieved in the way of affording protection to shipping in the immediate approaches to ports from submarines and mines, or against attack by submarines and minelayers. Negotiations had been started with His Majesty's Government, at the time, for the cessation of naval subvention so as to make it financially feasible to organise an adequate naval force for the protection of shipping.

The 1938 agreement with the British Government made provision for the maintenance by India of an ocean-going squadron of not less than six modern escort vessels which were to co-operate with the Royal Navy. The Flag Officer Commanding, Royal Indian Navy, prepared a Nine Year Plan which was discussed by the Chatfield Committee. Their recommendations were for the expansion of the Royal Indian Navy which should be completed in 1946-47. They recommended the construction of 4 "Bittern" class escort vessels, 4 "Mastiff" class trawlers, loaning from the Royal Navy of 4 "Halcyon" class mine-sweepers, and the rearming of the "Indus" and the "Hindustan". These recommendations were expected to provide "minimum insurance", the six sloops for the protection of the sea communications and the four mine-sweepers for keeping the ports clear and open. Further, the Nine Year Plan provided, in time of war, for the taking up of 48 merchant vessels, 25 to be fitted out as auxiliary mine-sweepers, and 23 as auxiliary

⁹ Chatfield Committee Report para. 202.

anti-submarine craft. These were to be distributed over all the major ports.

Thus provision was made for the local naval defence, both by the use of sea craft and coastal defence units, which was designed to protect the defended ports and their immediate approaches. It did not abrogate the necessity of depending on the Royal Navy, and was inadequate in its extent. Nonetheless, it made the Indian coast and her sea-routes comparatively secure against minor attacks, which alone were at the moment envisaged.

INTERNAL SECURITY

An essential role of the army in India has been the maintenance of internal security. In every plan relating to the defence of India this aspect was considered. The Defence of India Plan 1928, had made allowance for it when it described the role of the Indian army as that of maintaining order in India and on the frontier. The Pink Plan also took cognizance of the risk of internal trouble. But the General Staff were unable to estimate the extent of internal trouble in case of a foreign war, for it was, according to them, difficult to forecast the attitude of the people towards the Government and towards each other. Three factors had to be taken into account, first, the close connection between operations on the North-West Frontier and internal peace, second, the hostility of the people towards the Government and third, the communal relations between the two major groups, whose mutual animosities might cause considerable embarrassment to the Government. The Pink Plan was also based on the simultaneity of widespread unrest in India with Afghan hostilities.

In one of the inoperative Defence Plans of 1933, the General Staff had reiterated India's military liabilities for the maintenance of law and order within her territories thus:—

- “ (a) the provision of a minimum force to assist the Civil Power and to fulfil certain treaty obligations vis-a-vis the States, and
- “ (b) the protection of our bases, and of our munitions factories, and of the main railway lines leading therefrom to the war zone ”.¹⁰

The former absorbed 3 cavalry regiments and 15 battalions, which was not considered adequate by the Local Governments. The latter, involving the protection of 3,400 miles of railway, absor-

¹⁰Defence of India: Appreciation and Outline Plan, 1933. G.S. India, May 1933 p. 24 (File No. 601/ 7482/H).

bed no less than 7 cavalry regiments and 34 battalions. The protection of these bases and lines of communication, all lying within the country, was a unique problem for India then, as these installations were not deemed immune from sabotage and attack and no commander could risk a possible severance of his vital communications in time of war. These protective duties diverted a large proportion of the army in India from taking up offensive role in the field.

The 1938 Plans also took full cognizance of this function, which was that of maintaining law and order in India, and suppressing disorder which in the worst case might amount to rebellion. Prior to 1939, this subject had been fully examined and schemes with assignment of forces had been prepared.

As stated above, internal security comprised two elements, the preservation of law and order and the protection of the strategic railways forming the lines of communication on which the defence forces must depend in war. A wide range of conditions were envisaged in which danger might arise. Two conditions, however, figure pertinently in the discussions at the time. One was that of security under ordinary peace conditions and the other was that of the "worst case", a world war accompanied by hostilities on the North-West Frontier and widespread civil unrest.

In ordinary peace conditions, law and order was the responsibility of the Provincial Governments who could, in an emergency when their normal police force was unable to cope with the situation, ask for military co-operation to suppress disorder. Communal riots or sometimes large scale political demonstrations or labour strikes were occasions when army had to be called upon. Such occasions were neither frequent nor very serious, and were generally met with by the normal assignment of Internal Security Troops or the General Reserve, in its peace time locations.

The other contingency, more serious in its scope, was that of a widespread insurrection in the country when the Field Army would be absent from its peace time locations and would be engaged in a war on or beyond the frontier. To provide against such a danger, schemes known as "Extreme Emergency Schemes" were drawn up, whose object was to ensure the safety of Europeans, Anglo-Indians, loyalist Indians, Government officials and minorities. In such emergencies the main task was to protect important installations, civil and military, and the means of communication.

The position was aptly summarised by the Modernization Committee in 1938, when they classified preservation of internal security into three main categories, namely:

- “ (i) The protection of the strategic railways which it is essential to safeguard in order to provide for the maintenance of the armed forces,
- “(ii) The maintenance of law and order in the principal centres of government and the protection of military arsenals, workshops, depots and kindred establishments,
- “(iii) The maintenance of law and order and the protection, in the event of widespread disaffection, of loyal elements of the civil population in outlying areas remote from the main centres ”.¹¹

RAILWAY SECURITY

The protection of essential strategic rail communications comprising the three railways running from the ports of Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta towards the western frontier was deemed most important. The chief aim here was to ensure the security of vital points, such as important bridges and tunnels, as it was not possible to guard the whole length of railways or afford full protection against minor damage through sabotage.¹² In August 1939, the General Staff drew up an Appreciation of the Railway Security Position. Two objects were outlined in allotting troops to railway security task:

- “(1) to maintain normal railway running for as long as possible, by preventing acts of sabotage and
- “(2) to ensure the safe running, in case of situation deteriorating, of such trains as it is possible to operate and to prevent the increase of sabotage ”.¹³

The chief danger then apprehended was sabotage, for attacks by armed bands as in Palestine were most unlikely. Hence, both owing to the length of line to be guarded and the limited character of danger, the dispersed method of protection, one battalion controlling 400 miles, was adopted, as against close protection. The General Staff did not consider it desirable to disperse troops in “ penny pockets ” all along the railway sectors guarding such things as signal boxes, railway water tanks, loco sheds etc., but concentrated on “ vital points ” only. Static protection, therefore, was directed to “ vital points ” which were bridges with spans over 100 ft. in length, because damage to these would cause long dislocation of traffic.

¹¹ Auchinleck Committee Report, Modernization of the Internal Security Troops, p. 10, para. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 62, para. 2.

¹³ Railway Security General Staff August 1939, p. 1 (File No. F. 611).

Possibilities of sabotage were also analysed. It was felt that in recent years "sabotage as a weapon" had undergone considerable development in its technique, and that it demanded close attention. Even in India its possibilities had increased owing to the presence of "a considerable number of potentially hostile aliens" and "the disaffected elements of the local population capable of carrying out sabotage on their own account", who would utilise the declaration of war for their action.¹⁴ The arrest of hostile aliens on the outbreak of war did not wholly eliminate the danger for, with their prior warning of the outbreak of hostilities, they could indulge in acts of sabotage either by employing their own nationals or by the use of local elements. As regards the disaffected elements in India, the General Staff held the view that "the technicalities of sabotage form part of the syllabus of certain revolutionary institutions and the declaration by Congress that they intend to impede all war preparations gives a handle to the left wing, at any rate, to regard sabotage as a legitimate means of implementing this policy. It seems probable that sabotage by the revolutionary element of the population is likely to be opportunist owing to lack of cohesion among them and to a degree of mutual distrust. It may, therefore, not be on a large scale to start with, but the cumulative nuisance value will be considerable and failure to check it in the early stages will inevitably lead to an increase in scope and frequency".¹⁵ It was believed that railways offered an easy target for sabotage promising far reaching results. Hence followed the inference that sabotage on railways was probable, and that troops must be deployed on railway protection in the early stages and would be required for a considerable time thereafter.

A similar conclusion was reached by the Modernization Committee who were of the view that "measures for railway security may have to be put into force as soon as an emergency arises, and must belong to the regular army or to the Indian States Forces".¹⁶ They considered thirteen infantry battalions as the minimum number of troops required, and they recommended the employment of eleven Indian Territorial Force and two Indian States Forces battalions, but as the former might take up to six weeks to mobilise in the early stages, the work should be performed by regular army battalions; hence eleven regular Indian infantry battalions from the General Reserve were assigned to this task.

In peace time the problem of railway security did not involve any serious difficulty, because apart from the units particularly

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Auchinleck Committee Report, Appendix E, p. 62, para. 2.

assigned for the purpose, the General Reserve was also available. But in war, it was felt that the peace time allocation of units should be altered so as to involve least delay in implementing railway security schemes and to ensure control by the Commands. Schemes discussed related to the revision of allocations, the provision of "two 30 cwt. lorries coupled together tail board to tail board" for patrol purposes, the sentinel trains, and the improved communications by providing wireless sets so as to make units independent of telegraph lines which were liable to be damaged. By these means, it was hoped the mobility of troops would be ensured. In 1939, however, the stage of experiments only had been reached, and to a large extent old methods were still in vogue.

GENERAL SECURITY

The other two categories of internal security were concerned with static defence of important centres, political and military, and preservation of law and order in the outlying areas, both in peacetime and in times of emergency when general disorder might break out. This involved the protection of the centres of Government, Central and Provincial, and military installations such as arsenals, workshops, depots etc. The Modernization Committee had considered the vital points in all the Military Districts, other than the four of the frontier, and was of the view that the following needed special internal security measures on the basis of which the necessary strength might be calculated:—

- (1) Government institutions and property at Delhi, Simla, Lahore, Lucknow, Calcutta, Patna, Shillong, Cuttack, Ranchi, Bombay, Nagpur, Poona, Madras and Karachi, besides those at Baroda and Secunderabad under treaty obligations with the States.
- (2) Support to the civil power in Ahmedabad and Amritsar and the protection of Security Printing Press at Nasik.
- (3) Arsenals and workshops at Rawalpindi, Chaklala, Ferozepore, Allahabad and Kirkee (Poona).
- (4) Ordnance Depots and base installations at Rawalpindi, Lahore, Cawnpore and Karachi.
- (5) Factories at Cawnpore (Saddle and Boot), Shahjahanpur (Army Clothing), near Calcutta (Gun and Shell, Metal and Steel, Rifle and Light Automatic), Jubbulpore (Gun Carriage) and Aruvankadu (Cordite).
- (6) Oil storage tanks, refineries and installations etc. at Rawalpindi (Attock Oil Company), and Digboi (Assam Oil Company).

- (7) Aerodromes, aircraft park etc. at Lahore, Ambala and Karachi.¹⁷

For the security of these, both static defence and mobile reserve requirements were calculated. Prior to 1938, the total allotment, as given to the Pownall Sub-Committee was:

- 5 Indian cavalry horse regiments
- 26 British infantry battalions
- 20 Indian infantry battalions.

These included port defence troops also. But as a result of the proposed modernization, the Chatfield Committee proposed the allotment to be:

- 3 Indian cavalry motor regiments
- 15½ British infantry battalions
- 8 Indian infantry battalions
- 1 Indian Territorial Force infantry battalion.¹⁸

These were exclusive of the 13 Indian Territorial Force infantry battalions and 2 Indian States Forces battalions whose primary role was to act as railway security troops when the regular units of the reserve were mobilized.

Static defence of the political centres and military installations absorbed:

- 11 British infantry battalions
- 4 Indian infantry battalions
- 1 Indian Territorial Force infantry battalion.

These were primarily meant for static duties in the principal stations. But it was considered that the outlying areas within a military district which were liable to communal or anti-government feeling or agrarian disputes and labour strikes would be controlled only by a really mobile force which could move rapidly to places of danger. Mechanization of the first line transport made it possible for the infantry units to move with rapidity. The allotment of such units was made on the basis of the potential danger in certain areas, for example, Lucknow District was believed to be particularly liable to communal disturbances, labour strikes and agrarian disputes in its eastern parts. The total number of mobile reserve units was:

- 3 Indian cavalry motor regiments
- 4 British infantry battalions
- 6 Indian infantry battalions.

All these, static and mobile units, were allocated to different districts.

This was then considered to be an "adequate minimum

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁸Chatfield Committee Report, Appendix III, p. 80, para.(XII).

insurance against the worst contingency", that of an armed rebellion, provided the British Government could "rely on the continued loyalty of the Indian Army itself and need not contemplate any widespread disaffection among the police".¹⁹ No other assumptions were taken into account, and we are assured by the Chatfield Committee that the provision of the above strength of regular forces, in addition to the armed police of the provinces, was deemed adequate by the Provincial Governors to maintain internal security in case of a war in which the British Government might be involved.

EXTERNAL DEFENCE

The role of the armed forces in India had been defined by the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1921, as mentioned earlier, to be the defence of India from external aggression and maintenance of internal security. For any other tasks involving co-operation with the British forces for Imperial purposes, it was clearly stated that the obligation should not be more onerous than that of any self-governing Dominion. No Dominion allowed the use of its forces unconditionally for Imperial necessities. But India was called upon, not long after the above iteration of policy, to earmark portions of her armed forces for service outside her frontiers, and largely in the interest of the British Empire. A number of commitments had been imposed on her and were accepted by the Defence Department. These obligations, before 1932, related to the despatch of forces to Iraq, Persian oil-fields and Singapore.

The Iraq commitment arose out of the rebellion there in 1922, which brought the responsibility of its defence on the Air Ministry of the United Kingdom. A request for the provision of reinforcements amounting to one division and one cavalry brigade was made and accepted by the Government of India, subject to the internal situation and position vis-a-vis Afghanistan remaining peaceful. In 1925 further, His Majesty's Government asked for one division to be earmarked for despatch to Iraq, as they feared an unfavourable award regarding Mosul. This was accepted by the Government of India subject to the Indian situation remaining unaltered. In 1930, the treaty between Iraq and the United Kingdom provided for mutual aid. The Government of India was not consulted about it, but the obligation to aid the Iraq kingdom, in view of the earlier demands for the despatch of forces to that country, involved the provision of troops by India. Similarly, for

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 30, para 106.

the protection of the Persian oilfields, a request was made to the Government of India in February 1929, to provide one battalion for the security of the landing ground at Ahwaz and the maintenance of order in the oilfields. The Government of India agreed to it and, at their suggestion in 1931, the Committee of Imperial Defence raised the commitment to one brigade, provided circumstances in India permitted it. The third demand was for the despatch of one division less one brigade to Singapore. These obligations were imposed on India before 1931, and plans were being made by the General Staff for their implementation, though in certain instances, even the Governor General had no information about them.

In his letter of 27 May, 1932, to the India Office, the Secretary, Defence Department, reviewed the situation, in view of the question in the Legislative Assembly, and asked the British Government to define their policy in respect of the despatch of reinforcements to Iraq, the Anglo-Persian oilfields and Singapore, and the exact extent of the liabilities of the Government of India in this respect. The Secretary of State for India, in his reply dated 11 August, 1932, made it clear that there existed "no liability or commitment to provide reinforcements from India"²⁰, and emphasised the principle that, except in the gravest emergency, the army in India would not be employed outside the Indian frontiers without "consultation with the Governor General in Council". The whole question was then being considered by the Committee of Imperial Defence. But in the period between 1932 and 1937, the international situation necessitated a clearer definition of the extent and direction of the military assistance which India would render towards Imperial defence. From time to time, the Secretary of State for India had communicated to the Government of India requests for the preparation of schemes entailing the despatch of forces from India to meet overseas requirements. The position at the beginning of 1937 was:—

- (1) Defence of the Anglo-Iranian Oilfields:

Scheme P	One infantry brigade
	One field brigade Royal Artillery and ancillary troops
- (2) Reinforcement of Singapore:

Scheme M	One infantry brigade and ancillary troops
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- (3) Reinforcement of Hong Kong:

	Two battalions of infantry
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²⁰ Letter No - M3563/1932 dated 11-8-32 From India Office (London) to Govt. of India "Policy Regarding the despatch of reinforcements overseas" p. 10 (File No. F. 464—Pt. III).

- (4) Reinforcements for Egypt:
Two infantry brigades with ancillary troops
- (5) Reinforcements for Burma:
One infantry brigade.²¹

The total requirements were four infantry brigades and two battalions. But there was some confusion because certain schemes had been held in abeyance, and it was not clear whether the schemes were alternative ones. The total commitment had also exceeded the strength of one division which was reserved for Imperial purposes.

The Government of India desired a clarification of the situation in January 1937. They suggested that the schemes be reviewed and an indication given on (a) "the schemes which it will now be necessary to maintain", and (b) "the extent to which the schemes must be capable of being put into operation simultaneously"²². The British War Office concurred with the view that the schemes be classified according to priority and endorsed the following arrangement:

- (a) *Plans for readiness at short notice:*
Reinforcements for Singapore (Scheme M)
Defence of Anglo-Iranian oilfields.
- (b) *Plans for which reasonable warning can be anticipated:*
Reinforcement of Hong Kong
Reinforcement of Egypt
Reinforcement of Burma.

These commitments were subject to the situation prevailing in India at the time.²³

Thus at the moment that the Plans of Operations were prepared in India, this overseas commitment had been a recognized liability and was necessarily to govern all preparations and plans of defence.

The 1938 Plan (both Interim and the Substantive) also took into account the commitment to supply troops for overseas action. Such a liability was held to be essential in view of the fast deteriorating international situation which menaced British imperial possessions east of the Mediterranean. It was presumed that danger was brought nearer to the shores of India. Hong Kong, Singapore and Burma in the east, and Egypt, Palestine, Somaliland, Aden, and Anglo-Iranian Oilfields in Iraq and Iran on the Persian Gulf,

²¹ Govt. of India to India Office Letter No. 35711/GS M.O. 1 dated 2-1-37. "Liability of India to supply reinforcements outside India" (File No. F. 464 Pt. III).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²³ Letter No. M 641/37 dated 23-3-37, "Liability of India to supply reinforcements outside India" pp. 23-24, See Appendix I (File No. F. 464. Pt. III).

in the west, were the affected regions whose security was considered to be closely related to the security of India. These were vital strategic points in whose security, it was believed, India should play a part, particularly because she had, according to Chatfield Committee, "become more vulnerable to external attack".²⁴ This consideration prompted the view that India should not only be responsible for her local defence, but also have a "joint responsibility", as the Pownall Sub-Committee stated, "for the defence of the vital areas on our Imperial communications in the Middle and Far East". For this purpose, the Pownall Sub-Committee recommended "the unconditional allocation of one Indian division to His Majesty's Government as a strategic reserve for use wherever and whenever required".²⁵ While not accepting unequivocally this commitment, the Government of India virtually agreed to place at the disposal of His Majesty's Government, for service in the Middle and Far East, a force equivalent to about one division, if conditions in India permitted. The British Cabinet, however, was not satisfied with any indefinite obligations. On 29 July, 1938, the Cabinet desired that "the degree of obligation on the Government of India to place these troops at the disposal of the Home Government should be made somewhat more definite, and expressed more precisely than is at present the case with reinforcements from India, but should fall short of an unconditional obligation".²⁶ The Chatfield Committee made the position clear by emphasising the concept of joint responsibility. They stated "the fact remains that the Government of India have neither claimed nor admitted any responsibility in this connection beyond that of deciding whether forces can be spared from India in the circumstances of any particular case. In any case the hypothesis of a conditional obligation is somewhat unreal, since in a major crisis the Government of India would naturally strain every nerve to help and in theory could be ordered to do so. Nevertheless, so long as the obligation remains in form conditional, there is great practical difficulty in making effective plans in advance".²⁷

Indian public opinion was averse to the employment of Indian forces for purely Imperial purposes, outside the frontiers of India. Nonetheless, some obligations had been imposed. To adjust the seeming conflict between the expressed wishes of the Indian Legislature and the necessities of the British Empire, the Chatfield Committee put forth the new principle of external defence of India for

²⁴ Chatfield Committee Report, para. 68.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 70.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 72.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 72.

which the Indian Government must make forces available. This the Committee regarded "as a matter of common and direct concern to both Governments". In this view the "obligation" did not maintain the character of a "contract to perform something outside the sphere of their normal duties", but it became "an integral part of those duties". Hence joint planning was suggested so that plans for war might be suitably prepared. The Committee also hoped that "there may be occasions, as in the past, on which the Government of India will be able and willing to make forces available for purposes going beyond the external defence of India". They concluded by saying, "We believe it, indeed, to be both unprofitable and impracticable to attempt to delimit respective spheres or shares of this joint responsibility" so far as the external security of India is concerned.²⁸

The Defence Department had agreed to spare one division with ancillary troops for garrisoning important points of Imperial communications or posts of vital interest. The proposal to treat this division as surplus to India, as an Imperial establishment was not accepted, but the division continued to be earmarked for providing such detachments. The Chatfield Committee recommended its mechanization on a higher scale than the other units, on the ground of its assigned role for overseas service.

Thus on the eve of World War II, India had a definite liability to provide up to one division for service overseas, besides the indefinite obligation of rendering assistance to the British Government if the latter were involved in a major war. The deteriorating international situation made the discharge of that obligation almost a certainty. Garrisons for reinforcements for Malaya and Burma and troops for the Middle East were to be provided by India, but that was not the limit of her obligations.

SITUATION IN 1939

It will be clear from the foregoing account that, in the years immediately preceding the World War II, in the matter of her defence policy (particularly in respect of the danger to her security and her competence to meet it) India was passing through a period of change and transition. The authorities responsible for defence had come to realise that the basis on which defence plans were traditionally framed had been exploded by the new international situation, creating fresh enemies for the British Empire. There was a growing feeling of insecurity in Indian waters owing to the increasing naval strength of Japan and Italy, whose fleets were massing

²⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 75.

in the Pacific and the Mediterranean. Japan's unveiled hostility to the British Empire was a threat to the security of Malaya, Siam and Indo-China, and brought nearer the danger of air attacks on India and Burma. On the western side also, the fear of invasion grew. Afghanistan held the key to the situation and it was apprehended that her close liaison with Italy might draw her into the Axis net and thereby afford the Axis Powers military bases in the neighbourhood of India. Iran and Iraq, right on the Imperial air route, commanding the whole course of inter-communication between the outlying parts of the British Empire and the United Kingdom, were also not unaffected by Axis influence. Hence military control over them had become *sine qua non* of India's security. Thus, in British eyes, India's security had come to be identified with the British hold over the Middle East and the Far East. This threw enormous responsibility on India for the protection of the so-called vital points of her external defence. The principle of joint responsibility was enunciated and, by 1939, India had become responsible not only for the defence of her frontiers, but also for the protection of Indian waters and the surrounding countries of Malaya, Burma, the Persian Gulf area, Aden, Somaliland, Palestine and Egypt. Some of these commitments had been specifically accepted. Indian forces, therefore, were required for garrison purposes both to the east and to the west. In emergency they were likely to be used in other theatres as well, as had been the case in World War I. Such sentiments had been expressed at the time and, unknown to the Legislature, and against the positive wishes of the people, the Indian army was liable to be requisitioned for service overseas in the interest of the British Empire.

While obligation for external defence was being imposed on India, her normal internal commitments had shown no tendency of shrinking. The North-West Frontier was as usual the danger spot whose protection was the primary responsibility of the Indian forces. Fear of Soviet Russia, the uncertainty about the attitude of the Afghan Government and the recurring hostility of the frontier tribes, made it impossible for the British-Indian Government to relax vigilance in that quarter.

The North-East Frontier had been neglected and little had been done in that region to meet any hostile threat. It was not necessary also prior to 1939. But with the emergence of Japan as a mighty power, with expansionist ambitions in South-East Asia, the threat to Burma had increased. Constitutionally, Burma had been separated and the Government of India no longer had the responsibility for organising the defence of her frontiers. But in

her own interest, India could not leave Burma to her own resources, which were extremely meagre. Adequate assistance to Burma, therefore, both in men and equipment was essential and some of the proposals prior to 1939 did envisage it. But it must be admitted that there was a lack of proper appreciation of the strategy, resources and strength of Japan by the military authorities in India, and this prevented the formulation of any sound defence policy on the north-eastern side.

Coastal defence was a new problem with which India was faced. Heretofore the seaward security had been the sole responsibility of the Royal Navy, but in view of its possible preoccupation in European waters, the expanding obligations owing to the probable entry of Japan in a future war, and the decision of the Imperial Conference to the effect that every unit was responsible for its local naval defence, India was required to provide for the security of her coasts and sea communications. But the proposed measures of naval expansion and static coastal defence were inadequate to ensure complete security.

Little had been done also to provide for air defence, but the danger of air attacks both from the seaward as well as from the land side had been looming. At the same time, internal security too could not be neglected because British political policy had not kept pace with the rising national sentiment in India for freedom from foreign yoke. The British Government was keen to utilize India's resources for Imperial purposes, yet was not prepared to part with power or take Indian political parties into confidence in the matter of defence. Political extremism was, therefore, active in the country which made the alien government contemplate enhancement of provision for internal security. At the same time, communal relations were strained, and the needs of law and order, particularly in the case of a general war outside, demanded adequate provision of the armed forces.

Thus in 1939, on the eve of the war, the demands on the Indian armed forces were many and considerable. A global war was in sight in which Indian resources were likely to be fully taxed. Yet the British authorities failed to read the writing on the wall or to see that they were sitting on the brink of a crater. While commitments were many, the preparedness of the Indian armed forces was meagre. This fact was fully emphasised by the General Staff and the Defence Department in 1936-37.

The position was also fully reviewed by the Modernization and the Expert Committees in 1938. It was then felt that the Indian army, as then organised, was not ready for the conduct of a major war. The armies of the major Powers, including the United

Kingdom, had started the process of modernization and taken to mechanization. The armies of Egypt, Iraq and Afghanistan were acquiring modern weapons and means of transport. But research and experiment had not touched the army in India. The Modernization Committee stated that "the armament, equipment and means of mobility of the Army in India have remained virtually unchanged since the end of Great War. In consequence, since the year 1934 when the process of modernization may be said to have begun in earnest in other armies, the value of the Army in India as a fighting machine for use in modern war has decreased to an alarming extent in comparison with the armies of first class powers, and is also showing a tendency to fall behind the forces of such states as Egypt, Iraq and Afghanistan. Judged by modern standards, the Army in India is relatively immobile and under-armed, and unfit to take the field against land or air forces equipped with up to date weapons".²⁹

The list of deficiencies was large but the greatest handicap was that mechanization had not been started. The Modernization Committee found that the bulk of the cavalry was still horsed and the only progress towards mechanization was the conversion of four British horsed cavalry regiments into light tank units, two Indian horsed cavalry regiments into armoured car units and the partial mechanization of field artillery which was armed with obsolete weapons. Engineer and signal equipment fell far short of modern standards. There was a shortage of automatic weapons, and the only progress made was in the substitution of the Vickers-Berthier light machine-guns for the old Lewis guns. The infantry was still based on pack-mule or camel. There was little anti-aircraft, and no anti-tank equipment. Artillery was out of date, and largely unmechanized. High calibre guns, and 20 pdrs. had not yet come into use. There were no anti-tank units and only eight anti-aircraft guns.

This grave lack of modernization was fully realized, and it was believed that any postponement of it would have serious consequences. The Modernization Committee pointed out the "divergence in tactical and strategical thought and in methods of training" between the Indian and the British armies, and considered cooperation between the two unlikely in the existing state of the equipment of the army in India. They advocated early modernization of the British element, but also felt that any considerable delay in bringing the Indian element to that level would be destructive of efficiency.

²⁹ Auchinleck Committee Report, Section III. The need for the modernization of the land forces of India, p. 3.

The Chatfield Committee accepted the proposals of the Modernization Committee; but in view of the inadequate and backward industrial development of the country and complete dependence on the United Kingdom for the supply of equipment, it was not thought likely that the army in India could achieve even a modicum of modernization before 1945. The Committee's recommendations were based on "an adequate minimum insurance", and comprised expansion of existing ordnance factories to make India self-sufficient in munitions in time of war. In high explosives, India had to depend on Great Britain, hence in addition to the expansion of the seven existing factories, a new factory for the manufacture of T.N.T. was proposed to be constructed. All these recommendations of the Chatfield Committee were accepted by the Government of India, but before the war broke out little progress had been made in the direction of mechanization and modernization.

Indianization of the armed forces also had made little progress. On the officer side it had not much advanced, and the army in India had not only a large number of British units but also a large number of British personnel in the administrative and technical services besides the combatant arms. Political considerations had been responsible for the slow development of Indianization, and all schemes of expansion were conditioned by the availability of British personnel. The Government of India was also not prepared to increase the pace of Indianization.

CHAPTER V

Defence Plans 1940

PLAN OF ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN

The Second World War opened on 1 September 1939, with the invasion of Poland by the German forces, and on 3 September 1939, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany. The Government of India was soon led to declare its belligerency. The war in its early stages did not affect India intimately as the campaigns were limited to Europe and little danger was apprehended to the Indian frontiers from German action. The other two members of the Axis, Italy and Japan, did not enter the war for some time, which seemed to be confined to Eastern Europe. One element of fear for India, however, was the German or Italian activity in the Middle East. The Soviet neutrality pact with Nazi Germany also led to the suspicion that Russia might be hostile to the Western Powers, particularly the British Empire. This naturally revived the old fears of Russian aggression in Central Asia, directed towards Afghanistan with the ultimate object of causing discomfiture to the British controlled Government of India.

It was not until the middle of 1940 that war assumed a tempo which should have involved the world within its meshes. While Poland was being reduced to shambles, in the west, beyond the opening of the Battle of the Atlantic and the massing of Anglo-French forces behind the Maginot Line or the Royal Air Force attacks on Germany distributing leaflets, the war seemed to be peculiarly a bloodless one. The only developments were marked on the sea which ultimately led to the occupation of Denmark and Norway by the Nazi forces in April 1940. This Nazi swoop on the northern states was designed as a necessary step to a knock-out blow on England and France before Hitlerite strategy would turn eastwards against Russia. May 1940 saw, therefore, an invasion of France by way of Holland so as to avoid a frontal attack on the Maginot Line. The suddenness of the blow and German "superiority of weapons, mobility and tactics and above all superiority of morale", together with the directness of their aim, brought astounding victories to the Nazi arms. Britain was driven out of France and could with difficulty perform the Dunkirk miracle of evacuating "337,131 men in 887 ships, mostly small craft" without armour or equipment. France was soon driven out of the war when Marshal Petain signed an armistice on 25

June and established the Vichy Government. Then started the famous Battle of Britain during the summer of 1940 which failed to break the British morale, but greatly crippled her resources and had almost the effect of drying up the fountain of supply of war material for her Empire.

Italy joined the war at this stage and the centre of gravity shifted to the Mediterranean, Egypt, East Africa and the Middle East, where for nine months a war waged between Italy and the United Kingdom. During this period Hitler was opening up the Balkans prior to his attack on Russia. These developments in the Mediterranean zone in 1940 brought war nearer to India and threatened her external defences. She was then called upon to fulfil her commitments of assisting the British Empire in an emergency. Even before the war, India had despatched to Malaya, Aden and Egypt the total pre-war commitments. On the outbreak of war, the Government of India had asked if anything further was required, but the reply was in the negative. However, demands began to mount soon after. On 1 August 1939, the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade had left for Malaya, while in September (3 and 23) the 11th and 5th Indian Infantry Brigades and a Divisional Headquarters had been sent to Egypt. In 1940, further demands were made by the United Kingdom for assistance overseas. An additional infantry division formed to meet the threat on the North-West Frontier plus line of communication troops and base installations were despatched to the Middle East.

The developments in Europe and the Middle East, as well as the none too definite attitude of Soviet Russia at the moment, made the Government of India naturally anxious for the defence of the North-West Frontier. German and Italian agents were active in the countries of the Middle East trying to weaken their friendly relations with the British Government. At the same time the Government of India feared that Russia might revive her "warm water policy" against the Indian Ocean. Till Russia was invaded by the Nazi forces, the British Government was actively anticipating danger to Afghanistan or Iran from Russia, which, however, did not materialise. For some time afterwards also the danger of Axis invasion had not disappeared. This circumstance prompted plans for defence which were actually mooted in the years 1940 and 1941. The North-Western Frontier thus loomed prominently in these first two years, and, as in the pre-war period, the entire war preparations of India were turned westwards.

There were three aspects of defence which absorbed attention immediately on the outbreak of war; first was the naval defence of the coastline and the sea channels involving the protection of

defended ports and their approaches. Second was the so-called external defence which imposed the obligation on India of defending the Imperial outposts in the Far East, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The third was the defence of Indian frontiers against Soviet danger or Axis attacks on her immediate neighbours or her own territories. In the early days of the war, though Japanese naval action in Indian waters was not altogether discounted, no apprehension of land attack from the east was at all entertained. Burma was not deemed to be directly threatened from the land side till the autumn of 1940 when the Japanese forces occupied Indo-China, and then too, Burma not being under India Command, no plans for the protection of the eastern frontier appear to have been made. Thus the North-West Frontier was the only sector which demanded effective defence measures. But these were at the time conditioned by the fulfilment of obligations for external defence. India's forces were not wholly adequate for these needs, and their expansion was limited by the decreasing supply of equipment from the United Kingdom owing to the pressure of her own needs and the war activities.

On the outbreak of war naval defence measures had been put into effect swiftly. Thirty-one merchant vessels were taken up and anti-mine sweeping vessels and trawlers were commissioned to keep the Indian ports safe. The Royal Indian Navy, in conjunction with the Royal Navy, took up the protection of the sea communications. Similarly, India prepared forces for the garrisoning of the Imperial outposts. These reinforcements were sent at considerable risk to the internal defences, as they absorbed all reserves of men and equipment. Early in 1940, the obligation of despatching "Trout" and "Rainbow" for the Middle East was still there and the preparation and equipment of these forces was the first priority. But initially as the liability of India was not considered to be great, no plans for any major expansion were prepared. There was little provision even for the replacement of the units sent overseas. Nevertheless, in the first few months of the war, India was able to increase her regular army by 50,000 men, principally by embodying eleven Indian Territorial Force battalions. There was shortage of vehicles, of automatic weapons, of artillery and even of small arms. The new Territorial Force units had to be trained with dummy wooden rifles. The army had neither reserve nor the means of equipping available manpower; while its commitments had not abated; on the contrary they had increased.

SITUATION IN INDIA

When the war began, though the internal situation in India

was not one of grave emergency, British action in declaring India's belligerency without consulting the Legislature or the leaders of the political parties had caused widespread resentment. There was disappointment at the lack of response from the British Government to the political demands of the Indian National Congress. The communal relations were also deteriorating. In eight provinces, the Congress Government had resigned and the administration had been taken over by the Provincial Governors, thus suspending the operation of democratic institutions. Yet there was general sympathy for the British people in their hour of crisis, and the political parties declared their intention of not causing embarrassment to the Government. Political India at the time declared itself anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist, and there was general goodwill for the British, which would have been more pronounced if the British Government had agreed to meet the popular wish for full responsible government in India.

The situation on the North-West Frontier, however, was not peaceful. Since 1936 the activities of the Faqir of Ipi had kept the Frontier Force occupied in Waziristan. Throughout 1939 frequent raids had occurred. Hence, when the war started special measures were instituted for the protection of military traffic on roads within the district of Bannu which had been the scene of many outrages. The roads in Waziristan were also not safe and protection of convoys had to be carried out by close escorts of armoured cars and infantry in lorries, and cooperation by aircraft. Early in 1940, action was taken against Shabi Khel Mahsuds and Ahmedzai Salient on the border of Kohat and Bannu. Till May, three Royal Air Force squadrons and some sixteen infantry battalions, three cavalry armoured car regiments and artillery and ancillary services, remained in the field to quell the disturbances. These operations did not succeed in establishing peace, and by the end of 1940, the situation became worse. The effect of tension, though never very grave, was to keep the Frontier Force or Covering Troops pinned to that area. The General Staff, in July 1940, stated that the tribal situation "while not unsatisfactory does not permit any reduction in the normal allotment of forces for the security of these areas".

APPRECIATION OF SITUATION BEYOND THE FRONTIER

War brought into bold relief the problem of security on the North-Western Frontier. As mentioned above, the attitude of Soviet Russia, particularly as the result of international realignment caused by Russo-German agreement, and the presence of Italian

and German agents in the Middle East, brought the threat nearer to the Middle East and India. Consequently, "the traditional policy of His Majesty's Government and the Government of India in Central Asia," viz., "to maintain and strengthen indigenous states on Indian perimeter and to keep Great Powers off the Indian glacis" became active again. Afghanistan was a "region of most peculiar interest to India". Similarly, there was "considerable and varied interest in Iran and Persian Gulf".¹ Naturally, therefore, the Government of India and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom considered the policy which they would adopt in an emergency, particularly in case of a Russian threat.

The integrity of Afghanistan became an essential object of British policy and all plans revolved round this primary purpose. Danger to Afghanistan was considered to be dual in its nature, firstly, Soviet aggression in the form of air or land attacks, from beyond the northern borders, and secondly, internal disruption as a consequence of Axis fifth columnist activities. In either case the General Staff feared that the security of India might be involved.

POLICY OF ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN

Impelled by these considerations the Government of India expressed their views to the Secretary of State for India, in their telegram dated 12 March 1940, and emphasised the necessity of maintaining "the integrity of Afghanistan, and to do everything possible to keep Russia from nearer approach to India", and desired "that to this end some assurance should be given that His Majesty's Government would meet Soviet aggression on Afghanistan by declaration of war". This policy was the result of the fear "that failure to meet Russian aggression in Afghanistan would lead to serious deterioration of Muslim situation in India". The Government of India favoured "conclusion of open pact combined with secret assurance to Afghan Government that Soviet aggression will be met by declaration of War".² The conditions constituting aggression were defined and steps were outlined to meet its successive stages.

The position was further clarified in a telegram dated 22 March 1940, in which the British Government was requested to determine unequivocally its policy in regard to Afghanistan, Iran

¹Telegram XX No. 876 dated 22 March 1940 from the Governor-General (E.A. Department) to Secretary of State for India. "Plan for the assistance of Afghanistan" p. 11 (File No. F. 801 Pt. P).

²Telegram XX No. 769 dated 12 March 1940 from Governor-General (E.A. Department) to Secretary of State for India, "Plan for the assistance of Afghanistan" p. 6 (File No. F. 801 Pt. P).

and the Persian Gulf, regions of direct interest to India, "with special reference to the Russian menace", as "the present uncertainty as to general intentions of His Majesty's Government in particular areas referred to leads to embarrassments and guidance is essential to enable us to overhaul our plans particularly as regards the Russian threat".³

The Governor-General was impelled by two matters particularly in seeking such enunciation of policy. First was "the necessity, both as an internal and external problem, of retaining Muslim goodwill" in view particularly of the "serious and damaging repercussion in Muslim India, on the North-West Frontier and in the Indian Army", of any impression that the British would not support Afghanistan against a Soviet threat. The other was the strictly limited nature of "India's indigenous military resources". India was "largely dependent on His Majesty's Government for certain essential articles of Military Equipment and entirely dependent for assistance in the provision of reinforcements and equipment for anti-air defence measures". If India had to play her "full part in matters affecting her external defence", then her share would have to be determined by the capacity of the United Kingdom to meet her essential requirements. The Government of India, therefore, desired a clear decision of the British Government on the following points:—

- "(a) the India-Russia-Afghanistan triangle.
- "(b) provision against possible Russian aggression in Iran and particularly in East Iran with its reactions on Afghanistan and Baluchistan.
- "(c) the policy vis-a-vis the Governments concerned for protection of the Persian and Iraqi oilfields which India may be called upon to help to implement, and linked with this maintenance of our supremacy in the Persian Gulf".⁴

In the existing situation of war, the Government of India was not prepared to take any risks of setback in the Middle East or Afghanistan, in view of its reactions on the Indian opinion. Also, it was essential that prior to any plans being made, the British Government should be clear about the extent of support required by India to put her military machine in proper gear. In reply, His Majesty's Government agreed with the "necessity for maintaining traditional policy of preserving independence and integrity of Afghanistan", specially because of the effect it would have on

³Telegram XX No. 876 dated 22 March 1940 from Governor-General (E.A. Department) to Secretary of State for India p. 11 (File No. F. 801. Pt. P)

⁴*Ibid.* p. 13.

“ Moslem opinion both in India and elsewhere ”.⁵ The requirements of rehabilitating British prestige which had suffered owing to Poland and Finland and its consequences to India's security, led the British Government to enunciate their policy. Their view was “ that if Russia were allowed to overcome Afghanistan without giving the latter our active support, the resulting threats to India both material and moral and consequent strain on our resources would be such as greatly to outweigh any risks which might have to be incurred in supporting Afghan resistance with our own armed forces before it was too late ”.⁶ Afghan morale required stiffening by assistance in land forces at an early stage. Hence the British Government was prepared to go beyond the initial suggestion of the Government of India for limited assistance in the form of air operations against Soviet bases. The following decisions were therefore communicated to the Government of India:—

“ (a) That it should be accepted as an essential part of our policy that in the event of Russian aggression against Afghanistan support must be given to Afghan Government by all means in our power.

“ (b) That Afghan Government should at once be given an assurance that in the event of such action by Soviet forces directed against independence or integrity of Afghanistan, we should be prepared to give them all the assistance in our power, including (in the event of invasion by Soviet forces) the immediate provision of some measure of assistance by land forces from India in addition to air support (though we could not undertake an obligation for military defence of northern frontier of Afghanistan).

“ (c) That views of Afghan Government should be invited on question of conclusion of an overt agreement ”.⁷

In addition the Government of India was asked to consider the measures which might be adopted in India immediately, in the event of Russian aggression, or be undertaken without delay. Moreover, the question of providing forces for the defence of southern Afghanistan was referred to the Chiefs of Staff, and suggestion was made that tribal levies should be recruited to fight for Afghanistan.

Consequently the Government of India outlined the measures which they were prepared to undertake and also the strength of

⁵ Telegram XX No. 1708 dated 10 April 1940 from Secretary of State for India to Governor-General (E.A. Department) p. 18 (File No. F. 801 Pt. P).

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 18-19.

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.

the forces required and limitations on their provision. What they could undertake was:—

- “ (a) The immediate despatch to Kabul of a strong military mission together with a nucleus of technical personnel to advise and assist the Afghan Government in every way possible in their preparation and execution of war plans.
- “ (b) The immediate preparation of a force for supporting the Afghans in the general area Kandahar-Girishk in the event of Soviet invasion.
- “ (c) The immediate preparation of arrangements to support the Afghans by air on the Oxus line from bases in India, in similar circumstances ”.⁸

The main basis of these proposals was the Indian General Staff's set notion that in southern Afghanistan alone effective operations were possible. Their objective in this sector was defined as:—

- “ (a) to forestall Soviet forces on the line of the Helmand.
- “ (b) to consolidate the general area Kalat-i-Ghilzai-Kandahar-Girishk.
- “ (c) to operate subsequently west and north of above area ”.⁹

For this purpose an initial force consisting of “ (a) one mobile division of three armoured brigades plus necessary mechanised artillery including AA (anti-aircraft) and AT (anti-tank) units and (b) four infantry brigade groups all mechanised and equipped up to E.D.T. scale ” was required. But the provision of these depended on two factors, firstly, the supply of anti-aircraft units and necessary armament and equipment from the United Kingdom and secondly, the release of India from the obligation “ to provide any troops from India for Iraq or Iran ”.¹⁰

The two Governments were agreed as to the fundamentals of policy that in the event of Soviet aggression the British Government should render all practicable assistance to maintain the integrity and independence of Afghanistan, and that the existing Afghan Government alone afforded the best prospects of achieving this purpose. The difference, however, lay in the means of implementing this policy. Whereas the Government of India laid emphasis on operations on the Southern Line and were content with despatching only a military mission to Kabul, while depending on

⁸ Telegram XX No. 1120 dated 12 April 1940 from Governor-General to Secretary of State for India. Strategic Plan for the assistance of Afghanistan p. 31 (File No. F 801 Part P).

⁹ Telegram XX No. 1121 dated 12 April 1940 from Governor-General (E.A. Department) to Secretary of State for India. Plan for the Assistance of Afghanistan p. 32 (File No. F. 801 Part P).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 33.

air offensive action against Soviet bases, the British Government desired to give more effective support to Kabul Government in the shape of a token technical force which might be of assistance in buttressing the Kabul Government and stemming the tide of Russian advance on the Northern Line. The chief argument for this view was that "if support of British forces did not initially include some support at Kabul itself, we should give a handle to dangerous propaganda by elements hostile to Afghan Government to the effect that while Russians were invading North we were leaving Afghans to fight unaided at Kabul and contenting ourselves with protecting our own more particular interests".¹¹

The Government of India, on the contrary, was chiefly influenced by military considerations which were conditioned by the weak military resources of the country, dependence on the United Kingdom for equipment, and the obligation to supply forces overseas. They were also conscious of the difficulty of maintaining any effective force in Kabul area owing to the generally hostile attitude of the tribes on the line of communications. Furthermore, they had a clear appreciation of the value and strength of Afghan forces. Hence, they realised the impracticability of effecting the security of Kabul with land forces then available. As regards the Northern Line, the Government of India deemed operations there inadvisable as that would absorb forces beyond the available resources of India; and therefore desired to avoid military entanglements on the Northern Line and concentrate on forestalling the Soviet forces on the line of Helmand, while developing air operations from bases in India.

The force of circumstances compelled the British Government to decide on an active policy of land and air support to Afghanistan in the event of aggression, and the Afghan Government was so informed with the reservation that "support of land forces will be confined to the area south of the Hindu Kush".¹² This decision seemed to indicate that His Majesty's Government had viewed with indifference the conditions laid down by the Government of India for such assistance. It was rightly concluded by the Director of Military Operations in his note of 5 May, 1940, that His Majesty's Government were keen on effective support in Kabul without releasing India from her obligations in Iran and Iraq. There was also little prospect of receiving material assistance from the United Kingdom. He characterised the attitude as "We

¹¹ Telegram XX No. 1811 dated 17 April 1940 from Secretary of State to Governor-General (E.A. Department). Strategical Plan for the assistance of Afghanistan (File No. F. 801 Part P).

¹² Tel. No. 99 dated 3 May 1940. (File No. F. 801 Part S).

will take all and give nothing. But you must implement our new policy which we have already announced to the Afghan Government".¹³

PLAN A OF 1940.

The Government of India discussed the issue and took stock of the requirements in implementing the new policy and the available resources before enunciating definitely the measures to be undertaken and outlining the plan of operations. The General Staff in India was definitely opposed to the despatch of any "token force" into Afghanistan. If assistance was to be given "it must be done properly". The estimate of the Director of Military Operations was that for going to Kabul four divisions were required, while for reaching the Hindu Kush, in order to operate on the Northern Line another two divisions, bringing the total to six divisions, were required. At the same time "the back door" to Afghanistan on the Helmand line must not be neglected, and for that also three to four infantry brigade groups and an armoured force of at least two brigades were required. There was little prospect of undertaking this adventure, if emergency arose in 1940, without diverting "Trout" and "Rainbow" for the purpose. If, however, the evil day was postponed to 1941 or 1942 expansion might be undertaken. A longer term policy was therefore envisaged, which was to be based on the following assumptions:—

- (a) No "token forces" were to be sent to Afghanistan.
- (b) All land forces sent there must be adequately supplied with anti-aircraft artillery and air support including fighter aircraft.
- (c) All land forces must be equipped up to a modified External Defence Table scale.
- (d) A striking air force must be provided for which additional 14 squadrons were required.
- (e) Minimum requirements in anti-aircraft artillery must be provided.

The situation was discussed at a conference presided over by the Viceroy on 9 May, 1940. A note prepared by the General Staff outlining the requirements and the means of meeting them was adopted, which clearly defined the provisions under which alone could such assistance materialise.¹⁴ The conference had no illusions as to the ability of the United Kingdom to provide necessary

¹³ Note by Director of Military Operations dated 5 April 1940 No. 48/DMO-Submitted for Conference on 9 May 1940 (File No. F. 801 Part S).

¹⁴ See Appendix II.

equipment, but the members were impelled in their decision by the fact, as expressed by Foreign Secretary, that even if the Soviet threat might recede, the potential danger from the Germans in Afghanistan causing internal troubles, which would affect the tribes, might not be discounted, as it might draw the Government of India into active operations in Afghanistan. Hence preparations were necessary.

The Government of India, therefore, prepared an appreciation of the forces required to implement the policy determined by His Majesty's Government and communicated it on 15 May, 1940, to the Secretary of State for India for submission to the Chiefs of Staff. It was based on a number of assumptions. First, that the assurance given to Afghanistan of all-out support in the event of Soviet aggression was a definite commitment for which adequate military provision should be made. Secondly, that it would involve a replacement of the then defensive policy by an offensive one. Thirdly, that while Soviet military menace might be latent at the moment, the danger of German subversive activity in close coordination with Soviet agents did exist. Fourthly, that owing to the preoccupation of the British Government in European, Mediterranean and Near Eastern Theatres, it might not be possible for them to release India of her obligations in Iran and Iraq. And fifthly, that difficulties in the provision of essential equipment and technical personnel might increase.

The plan as then proposed was likely to be effective only in May, 1941, and it envisaged "simultaneous advance by (a) Northern Line to support Afghan Government in Kabul area, and (b) Southern Line to forestall Soviet troops on line of Helmand and stabilise Kandahar area". For this purpose alone the following minimum land forces were required:—

(a) For Northern Line:

- 9 Infantry brigades (6th, 7th and 8th Indian Infantry Divisions)
- 2 anti-aircraft regiments
- 3 Field regiments
- 1 Mountain regiment
- 1 Medium battery.

(b) For Southern Line:

- 3 Mobile brigades
- 4 Infantry brigades (9th Infantry Division plus 1 infantry brigade)
- 1 anti-aircraft regiment
- 2 Field regiments
- 1 Medium battery.

(c) For General Reserve:

3 Infantry brigades (5th Infantry Division till it left India and then 10th Indian Infantry Division)

3 Field regiments.¹⁵

The air requirements were to be 21 squadrons for the two lines, fighter defence of India and frontier watch and ward. These were distributed as:—

Fighter squadrons	..	..	..	8
Army Co-operation squadrons	..	..	..	4
Medium bomber squadrons	..	..	..	6
Heavy bomber squadrons	..	..	..	2
Bomber Transport squadron	..	..	..	1
				<hr/>
				21
				<hr/>

To equip this force and make it available, the British Government was to provide all mobile anti-aircraft and some static and anti-aircraft artillery (50 3.7 guns and 57 Bofors) and personnel, 14 squadrons of aircraft and essential armaments, technical equipment and vehicles (100 sections M.T.). It was also made clear that if the danger materialised in 1940, then India could not meet the obligation of despatching reinforcements to Iran and Iraq; but even then Southern Line operations would not be undertaken. The necessity for the provision of aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery from the United Kingdom was fully emphasised. It was also mentioned that in case the threat of Soviet aggression did not occur, the expanded forces would be available for use in other theatres.

The Commander-in-Chief issued a Directive on 21 May, 1940, for the raising of necessary forces to implement the Plan. This became the basis of expansion in 1940-41; which was incorporated in the Expansion Plan 1940. The Directive clearly stated that the political object was to support Afghanistan. The military object was to resist Soviet armed aggression, and the Plan was made comprehensive enough to include an attack on Soviet installations beyond the Hindu Kush, support of Afghan Government in Kabul and forestalling of Soviet forces on the Helmand-Kandahar line. Land forces were required for advance on both the lines, Southern and Northern, for general reserve in India, and for the control of the western frontier tribal area, internal security, coastal defence and static anti-aircraft defence of vulnerable points and communications in India. Besides, an air force, adequate to provide a striking force,

¹⁵ Besides these five excavating companies were also raised which proved invaluable later.

army co-operation units, frontier watch and ward and fighter defence of India, was required. The Directive took cognizance of the available forces and equipment in India at the moment, even including improvisation, and required plans to be prepared for the raising of the remainder. The basic policy in raising the additional formations was also laid down. It is clear from this document that, in spite of all improvisations and fullest utilisation of the resources available in the country, the dependence on the United Kingdom for essential armaments and equipment was not obviated.¹⁶

Plan for the assistance of Afghanistan or Plan A was adopted by the Army Headquarters and provisionally 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Indian Infantry Divisions, together with Force Troops, were earmarked for the task. The base was fixed at Lahore with advanced bases at (a) Peshawar-Landi Kotal and (b) Quetta-Chaman. But it was made clear that the execution of the Plan was subject to the following considerations:—

- “(a) No advance into Afghanistan will be undertaken unless the aircraft and AA Artillery required can be made available by His Majesty’s Government.
- “(b) The Plan for advance on *both* lines can only be undertaken *after* April, 1941.
- “(c) If the emergency arises in 1940 an advance can only be undertaken on the Northern Line and this can only be done subject to the proviso in (a) above and subject to our being able to employ Rainbow and Trout for the purpose”.¹⁷

Before, however, Plan A was brought into effect, the situation had so altered as to call for its abeyance and the formulation of an Interim Plan, less comprehensive in its scope.

INTERIM PLAN AND DEFENSIVE PLAN 1940

The month of May, 1940, saw rapid developments in the war situation. Norway had fallen to Germany and Nazi war machine had overrun Holland, Belgium and France, compelling the British Expeditionary Force to withdraw from Dunkirk. All prospects of continued resistance by France were over and she was forced to capitulate by the middle of June. These reverses of the Allies had their effect on the feelings and situation in Afghanistan. The British Minister at Kabul reported on 22 May, that the news of withdrawal from Norway and the German invasion of the Low Countries and France had caused considerable deterioration in the

¹⁶ See Appendix III.

¹⁷ Outline Plan for Assistance to Afghanistan. General Staff Note (M.O.1) para 1. (File No. F. 801 Pt. S).

British position of which the Germans had taken the fullest advantage and that the Afghan Government hesitated to accept British offers of military and economic assistance. A large section including the Prime Minister of Afghanistan had been greatly affected by the news of German success and was convinced of German victory. The Afghan Government, in any case, was reluctant to commit itself openly to the British side, though after some hesitation it decided to continue close association with the British Government. This factor occasioned a change in the incidence of danger also. Whereas formerly Soviet Russia was deemed to be a menace to Indian security, the Germans now constituted a "more immediate danger". The British Government viewed with extreme concern the "expansion of German influence in Afghanistan" which was obviously pregnant with "dangerous possibilities".¹⁸

At the same time, the appreciation of Soviet danger had considerably altered; and in the new developments in Europe, the British Government was prepared to resume the broken negotiations before the war for improving relations with the Soviet Government. It was also not in a position to render effective aid in equipment and armaments to the Government of India or even temporarily to release the latter of the commitments to send reinforcements to the Middle East. In these circumstances, the whole basis of Plan A had been exploded. A new Plan less ambitious and with different objects was therefore called for.

Accordingly, in his telegram No. 2723, dated 3 June, 1940, the Secretary of State informed the Government of India that the War Cabinet, after considering the appreciation and plan submitted by the Commander-in-Chief, was of the view that the necessary air force and army equipment would not be available. Hence he desired that an interim plan based on the existing resources in India should be prepared and the operations should be confined to Kabul area. It was also emphasised that the obligation to provide forces for Iran and Iraq could not be waived and that any forces required for the operations in Afghanistan would be in addition to those intended for Iran or Iraq.

The General Staff still objected to an advance on the Northern Line, particularly in view of the inadequacy of air force and land force which might be sent. Yet they were conscious of the obligations imposed by political policy and the needs of the defence of India. Maintenance of Afghanistan as a buffer state was essential in the interests of India and the United Kingdom. Plan A was framed with that object, but it fell to pieces owing to the non-

¹⁸ Telegram XX No. 101 dated 25 May, 1940, from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Minister, Kabul (File No. F. 801 Pt. Q).

fulfilment of certain basic conditions. The General Staff were fully conscious of the danger to India in the event of a revolution in Afghanistan, whether by internal upheaval or by foreign attack. Therefore, in framing the interim plan, howsoever limited in its scope, they were bound to take cognizance of the vulnerability of the western frontier to air attack and tribal disturbances.

The Interim Plan was, therefore, based on the principle of gaining depth for defence and denying to the invading forces those areas which might facilitate attack on India itself. The military objectives then suggested were to deny to the hostile forces the use of such areas in Afghanistan as might be in close proximity to the Indian frontier from which land and air attack on India might develop, and to stabilise those areas so as to form them into a base for future military and political action. These areas were Jalalabad and Kandahar-Helmand areas, whose occupation was deemed to be essential. Limited advance to these limits on both the lines was, therefore, to be included in any plan.

The Government of India, in their telegram No. 1450, dated 24 June, 1940, to the Secretary of State, outlined the basic elements of the Interim Plan which conformed to the General Staff suggestions as above. It was mentioned that in spite of the momentary recession of the Soviet danger, the Government of India could not altogether discount the possibility of trouble in Afghanistan. With it was closely connected the emergence of trouble in the tribal areas. The solution then offered was, in the first case, to revert to a defensive policy on the western frontier and, in the second, to push forward beyond the frontier with the object of facilitating control over the tribal areas and preventing any hostile occupation in proximity to the frontier. Jalalabad and Kandahar areas were to be fields for such advance which was practicable with the available resources and the goodwill of the tribes which might be secured. On this basis was the Interim Plan prepared.

The Plan was issued on 10 July 1940. Plan A was to be in abeyance though it might remain the basis of long-term planning, a subterfuge adopted to facilitate the execution of Expansion Plan of 1940 and forestall the objections of the finance. The Interim Plan was based on a defensive-offensive strategy, namely the immediate defence of the frontier which included local offensives wherever circumstances permitted and adequate forces were available. For this purpose the following forces in addition to Frontier Defence and Frontier Defence Reserve were required:—

Northern Line: One infantry division
Two infantry brigade groups

- Southern Line:* One mobile division
 One infantry division
 One infantry brigade
- Reserve:* One infantry division.

Installations were to be provided for the maintenance of these. In the interim period their disposition was fixed as follows:—

- (a) *At Jalalabad*
 One infantry division
- (b) *Between Landi Kotal and Jalalabad*
 One infantry brigade group
- (c) *In the Kandahar area*
 One mobile division
 One infantry division
- (d) *Between Chaman and Kandahar*
 One infantry brigade group.¹⁹

As an interim measure it was also arranged that for Plan A, then in abeyance, certain base and line of communication units would be required for training purposes, and the equipment for all units was to be provided. Installations required for the maintenance of the troops on the frontier were also to be pushed forth. For the Interim Plan also the same measures were to continue, but the administrative preparations for the Plan were to be confined to reconnaissance planning only.

While the policy underlying the Interim Plan was on the anvil, serious developments had occurred in the international situation demanding a fresh and thorough examination of the defence policy. The fall of France whose industrial resources could be utilised by Germany, the threatening mien of Italy, the non-committal attitude of Egypt, Iraq and Turkey, the serious situation in Syria threatening the land route, and the policy of Japan had introduced a radical change in the circumstances on which the Interim Plan was based. To the problematical danger of Soviet invasion was now added the likelihood of trouble in the Middle East, involving threat primarily to British interests in that region and secondarily to the defences of India, both land and sea. The General Staff was keen to afford maximum military support to the British Government by placing at their disposal all available forces for employment in Egypt and Iraq/Iran. At the same time, there was the necessity of securing India internally, at her ports and on her land frontier, because on her security alone depended the full mobilisation of her economic and military resources for assistance to the British Government. With the limited resources of India it was not practicable

¹⁹ Plan A (Interim Plan) No. 47870/7/M.O. 1 A.H.I.G.S. Branch 13-7-1940 (File No. F. 801 Part T).

to implement the Interim Plan as well as to strengthen the frontier and render all-out support to His Majesty's Government. Hence a proposal was made that the Interim Plan be dropped even before it had been formulated.

The new position was clearly explained by the Commander-in-Chief in his note to the Viceroy, dated 11 July, 1940. He mentioned that the Interim Plan, as demanded by His Majesty's Government, was considered by the General Staff in the interest of "extending our glacis" to areas like Jalalabad and Kandahar with the object "to improve our position for the control of our own tribes, to deny areas close to the Durand Line to a potential enemy".²⁰ But since the proposal for the Interim Plan was made, the general situation had altered. The collapse of France, the attitude of Soviet Russia and the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and in the Saadabad countries, had made it possible for the German land and air forces "to establish themselves in areas from which a direct attack on India could be launched". Then, "Soviet Russia might decide that the British Empire is crumbling and either attack India to forestall Germany or do so in collusion with Germany. This would increase the possibility and danger of an early direct threat to India from the West".²¹ As India had to play a large part "militarily and industrially to win this war", her security from western attack was essential. The Interim Plan could not afford it, hence it was obviously essential to "further reconsider our position in the light of possible further disintegration in the Middle East". The Commander-in-Chief made it clear that there was no intention of entirely overthrowing either Plan A or Interim Plan, "since the latter, in certain circumstances, might be useful to us in defensive/offensive operations for the security of our western frontier". But it was necessary to go further than that, and for this purpose he outlined the future policy as below:—

- " (a) It is intended to proceed with all preparations on the lines of our Interim Plan, since, when and if attack comes, circumstances might dictate that a preliminary advance by light forces beyond our frontier will be necessary.
- " (b) Our main battle area, however, will have to be in the Western Frontier mountain belt, since it is only here that we shall be in a position, at any rate for some considerable time, to check mechanized and armoured forces. This battle area will comprise all territory trans-Indus.
- " (c) The lines of approach to the mountain belt are to some

²⁰ File No. F. 801, Part A, p. 80. See Appendix IV.

²¹ Note from G. N. Molesworth D.M. O & I to C.G.S. dated 3-7-1940. Regarding Future Plans for defence of India itself. (File No. F. 801 Pt. A).

extent canalised and lie in the areas of the Khyber, the Kurram salient between Kandahar and Quetta, and on the East Persian Frontier in the neighbourhood of Duzdab and Mirjawa. In these areas it is necessary to strengthen our means of resistance by the preparation of anti-tank obstacles and defences and arrangements for demolitions in depth.

- “ (d) If we are attacked and we fail to hold the mountain belt referred to in (c) above, our next defensive area would have to be east of the line of the Indus ”²².

Orders were issued for comprehensive plans to be prepared for (c) and for secret reconnaissance for (d) “ with a view to preparing the major bridges for demolition ”.

Northern Command Outline Plan

In pursuance of this directive the Northern Command submitted an Outline Defence Plan which ultimately became the basis of defence preparations in that sector. This plan was designed to meet the full scale of possible Soviet or German aggression together with serious tribal disorders and internal disaffection. The object of the plan was to defeat the hostile attack as near the frontier as possible, for which defences were to be organised from the Durand Line to the river Indus, so as to cover all practicable approaches, primarily against attack by armoured fighting vehicles, supported by air forces and followed by other land forces. For this purpose the plan was divided into two sections, one covering the defence of the forward zone, and the other that of the rear or the Indus zone.

Assuming that the armoured forces would form the bulk of the invading force, the appreciation was that it would follow the main routes leading from Afghanistan into India. However, the infiltration of small invading forces at “ innumerable points into tribal territory ” and small scale raids into the administered area were not ignored. There were not many routes which were practicable for armoured fighting vehicles but their number might increase after some improvement. Besides these, there were a number of routes which would admit of troop movements equipped with pack transport. Such routes were feasible for tribal lashkars accompanied by small bodies of regular troops.²³ Hence the defence plan envisaged the preparation of an adequate number of defences against armoured fighting vehicles at or near all practicable

²² Note from Commander-in-Chief to Viceroy dated 11 July 1940. (File No. F. 801 Part A).

²³ See Appendix ARC to File 10913, May 1940, for routes.

approaches and troops were provided for them to counter "attempts by foot columns to work round them".

In the various military districts, the direction of threat and the forces necessary for defence were assessed. In the Peshawar District the threat could materialise in the (1) Chitral-Gilgit area, (2) through the Malakand-Loe Agra, (3) on the Mohamand Border, (4) on the Afridi front and (5) through the Khyber. The Chitral-Gilgit area was capable of being held by the existing garrison with air support. The approaches through Malakand and Loe Agra might be held against tribal incursions by one infantry battalion and one mountain battery, located at Malakand, and one infantry battalion in the vicinity of Kot post. The problem of protection of the Mohamand and Afridi borders was, however, more serious, as the danger there was of tribal raids supported by columns of hostile regular troops on a pack basis. For each of these areas one infantry brigade of three battalions supported by mechanized field artillery was required. The posts in these areas were to be made capable of all-round defence, and held as long as the forward zone was retained. The most vital line was that of the Khyber, and it was rightly suggested that its approaches, from the Mullagori route to the exit of the Khyber river from the foothills, must be made as far as possible impregnable to attack by modern forces. Apart from the construction of anti-tank blocks on the road, the following disposition of forces in the Khyber area was outlined:—

- (a) Shilman Shakai area—one infantry battalion and one mountain battery.
- (b) Spinatsuka-Kavakakasar-Tangi-Torkhan-Bens area—one infantry brigade, one troop field artillery, two mountain batteries.
- (c) Landi-Kotal area—one infantry brigade, one and half garrison companies.
- (d) Landi-Kotal (excl.)-Shegai (excl.) area—one infantry brigade, one mountain battery.
- (e) Localities on the Mullagori road—eastern end of the Khyber pass—one infantry brigade of four battalions and two mountain batteries.

For the Peshawar District, a reserve force was also provided which might be located at Peshawar and Nowshera, for the purpose of preventing infiltration up to the Indus. This force was to consist of one infantry brigade and one cavalry regiment, one tank battalion and field artillery etc.

In the Kohat District, the main vulnerable area was that of Thal and its neighbourhood. Upper Kurram was not to be held, but the immediate approaches to Thal from the Upper Kurram

were to be held in strength against possible attack both by armoured vehicles and foot columns. "The Manduri corridor, from one mile north of Manduri via Chahar Khal to immediately north of Tutkas" was to be selected as the defence area for which one infantry brigade of four battalions, one mountain battery, one troop field artillery and one squadron of armoured cars or tanks were required. Another position to be defended was the route from Spinwan towards Thal, for which one infantry brigade of four battalions, one troop field artillery, one mountain battery and six anti-tank guns were necessary. The third position was to be around Thal, as a rear position, and connected with the two previous ones. For this site also were required one infantry brigade of four battalions, one medium battery, one troop field artillery and six anti-tank guns. Thus was the Thal position to be strengthened to bar the entry into the Kurram Valley. It was further realised that Kohat District could well afford intermediate defence between the forward zone and the Indus river. It would comprise Raisan Valley—the Kohat Pass—the Jatta defile. For its garrison one infantry division, one field regiment, two mountain batteries, one light tank regiment and 24 anti-tank guns would be necessary. This force would provide a "strategic bridgehead trans-Indus based on Kushalgarh" and threaten the flank of any invading force which penetrated the defences of either Peshawar or Waziristan Districts.

The Waziristan District did not permit of any large-scale penetration of hostile forces, but the tribal problem there was likely to be accentuated. It was also apprehended that, under strong pressure, the forward positions in Wana, Upper Tochi and the triangle Razmak-Wana-Shapur Tangi-Jandola might have to be vacated. In that eventuality the consolidation in strength of the Shinki and Sein gorges in the north, and the Hindis Tangi in the south, was to be effected. Further, the Kaitu approach in Hasan Khel country had to be blocked to prevent incursion into the administered area, as also the route via Fort Munro to the Indus, and a mobile force with considerable hitting power located centrally.

In addition to the defence of the forward area, the defence of the Indus zone, or the rear area, was also examined. The intermediate zone did not admit of defence wholly, specially in the Peshawar area. Hence it was suggested that bridgeheads should be planned on the western bank of the Indus, which might be defended also from the eastern bank, at Attock, Kushalgarh and Kalabagh. Apart from static installations, it was intended to maintain a mobile force of one infantry brigade strength to strike at any hostile force

infiltrating across the frontier. It was also essential to protect the gaps, particularly one between Bunar Hills and Attock. Medium artillery, flooding, and outposts on the right bank, were some of the means to be adopted. The main defence was, however, to be maintained on the left bank in the form of concealed concrete machine gun emplacements, field regiments and medium battery positions and mobile force, which might be located at Pind Sultani, to counter any attempt at crossing.

This Outline Plan formed the basis of the Defence Plan 1940 which ultimately developed in the Defence Plan 1941, a comprehensive plan of defence on all fronts. Immediately, the organisation of defences and the construction of defence works in depth from the Indo-Afghan and Indo-Iranian frontiers to the River Indus were considered, and the Northern Command and the Western (Independent) District were directed to submit comprehensive schemes with costs of defensive works, anti-tank defences, blockhouses, demolitions etc. These were fully prepared and submitted. At the same time, estimates of the possible strength and rates of advance of hostile forces were worked out by the Army Headquarters. It was considered that it would take nine months before a serious threat to India via Kabul might develop, and three to four months for a similar threat through Kandahar. The possible maximum strength of hostile forces advancing on India from Kandahar was placed at one corps of three infantry divisions and two cavalry or armoured divisions. A hostile movement on Kabul would be at the expense of these forces.

In August 1940, Rs. 50,000 were allotted for preliminary work on the anti-tank defences of the Khyber; and a similar sum for the Khojak and Bogra areas. The full estimates for the Northern and Southern areas were completed some six weeks later and amounted to 282 lakhs and 98 lakhs respectively.

As reinforcements, two Indian divisions were allotted to the Northern Command and one division plus an infantry brigade to Western (Independent) District. They were for manning forward defences or local and limited counter-strokes. One armoured division and two infantry divisions remained as reserve in the Army Headquarters.

The unlikelihood of India receiving any assistance from overseas in the event of attack, and the paucity and low state of training of the troops available, left fortification of the frontier as the only alternative. In a note dated 24 October, 1940, the Commander-in-Chief pointed out that he was convinced "that some measure of fixed defences was absolutely essential", giving as one of the main reasons "the fact that with the latest commitments

overseas, the troops that we shall have available for the defence of our North-West Frontier will necessarily be of a low standard of efficiency and the only way this can be partially remedied is to fortify the ground which they will have to defend ”.

Writing a month earlier, the General Officer Commanding Northern Command stated, “Frontier defence troops now include, as far as infantry are concerned, original units which have been milked, new units recently raised, I.S.F. and Nepalese units. Other arms, too, are temporarily in a backward state of training owing to expansion. The fitness for service of the above, at this time, varies considerably and it would not be desirable to select, in so far as infantry formations are concerned, any complete brigade, as has been the custom hitherto, as a reinforcement for the North-West Frontier, should the necessity arise ”.

These were the troops with which a hostile advance to be made by armoured fighting vehicles, supported by air forces, and followed by other land forces must be met. Not even one armoured division (originally termed the Mobile Division) was ready in 1940, and was not expected to be equipped until August 1941. Thus only defensive action was planned against armoured fighting vehicles. Neither anti-tank guns, rifles, nor mines were obtained from the United Kingdom. The deficiency in anti-tank rifles was not made up, but arrangements were made to manufacture anti-tank mines in India.

To provide anti-tank guns twenty 18-pdr. guns with equipments were withdrawn from the Auxiliary Force units, Waziristan posts etc. and divided equally between the Northern Command and the Western (Independent) District.

An Observer Corps was formed to give immediate warning of hostile air attack on the North-West Frontier. The Corps was modelled, as far as possible, on the system operating in the United Kingdom, but local conditions and poor communications required considerable modifications.

The air defence situation was best summed up in the words of the General Officer Commanding, Northern Command. “ In view of the exiguous nature of our active air defence the air defence of Landi Kotal and the Khyber becomes almost entirely a question of passive air defence ”.

In November 1940, the General Officer Commanding, in his wire to the Army Headquarters, stated his main equipment and armament deficiencies to be:—

- Anti-aircraft artillery
- Anti-tank artillery
- Medium artillery

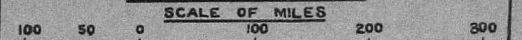
Field artillery
Mountain artillery
Cruiser tanks
3" Mortars
Light automatic guns
Anti-tank rifles.

This was a most comprehensive list covering practically all important armament items. The reply from the Army Headquarters indicated that the majority of these deficiencies could not be rectified before late in 1941 or some time in 1942. Of light automatic guns it was said "as far as is known, every obsolete and serviceable automatic weapon is in use", a statement which might have been applied with almost equal truth to all other weapons. There was even a shortage of rifles which affected an expansion of the Zhob Militia proposed by the General Officer Commanding, Western (Independent) District. At that time wooden dummy rifles were being manufactured and issued to training centres for the instruction of recruits.

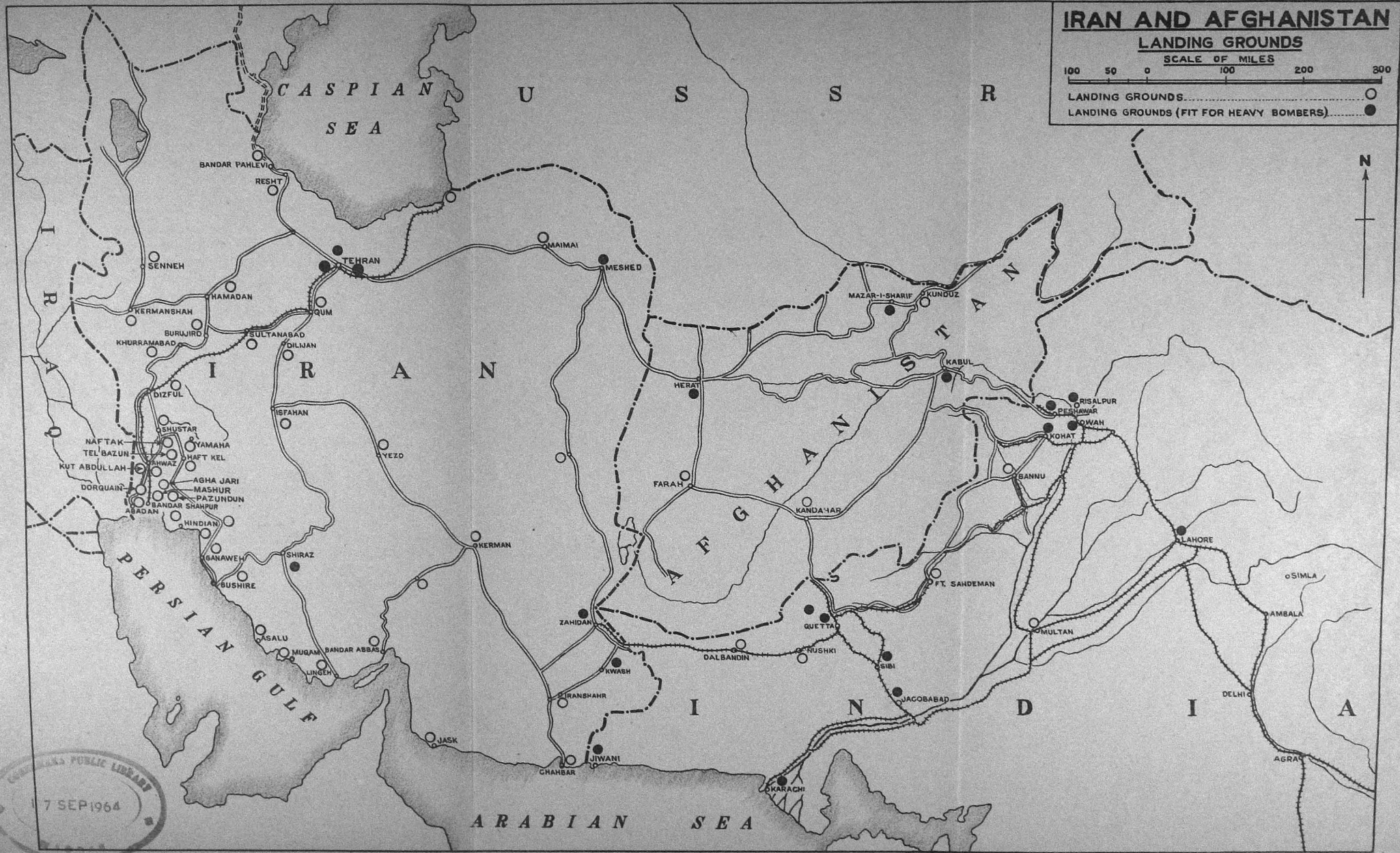
Thus, in spite of the desirability of early offensive action being adopted against possible aggression in the north-west, such a course was entirely beyond the capacity of India in 1940, more particularly in view of her great efforts to supply overseas theatres with properly trained and equipped troops. These reinforcements were regarded as of greater urgency, and it is not overstating the case to say that it was only by the use of emergency expedients that the defence of India's own frontier against an enhanced danger was organised at the time.

IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN

LANDING GROUNDS



LANDING GROUNDS.....○
LANDING GROUNDS (FIT FOR HEAVY BOMBERS).....●



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CHAPTER VI

North-West Defence 1941-42

In the early stages of World War II, planning for the defence of the North-Western Frontier of India continued to be based on the appreciation that the Soviet Union might launch an invasion either in collaboration with the Afghans or in hostility to them. The plans made in 1940 envisaged a situation in which the British Government might be called upon to render assistance to maintain the integrity of Afghanistan. It was, however, realized that active assistance was not feasible, owing to the paucity of adequate armed forces in India. The General Staff appreciation during this period was that Soviet action in the north-west would have the countenance of the Germans. Some thought that Nazi Germany would not favour any expansion eastward of the USSR.

By the end of 1940, it was clear that the danger of Soviet aggression in the north-west was remote and that the advancing tide of German successes in Europe ruled out the possibility of a Soviet attack on Afghanistan or against the Indian borders. After the speedy collapse of French resistance and the subordination of the Vichy Government to Nazi Germany and the continuous 'blitzkrieg' over the British Isles, it was clear that Germany would either attempt the subjugation of the Balkans or seek an understanding with the British Government with a view to directing her energies against Soviet Russia. At the same time, it was evident that the Middle East would come for greater attention and more serious activity by the Axis Powers. With the entry of Italy into the war in the middle of 1940, Africa had become the battlefield of the contending forces. The Middle East was thus coming prominently into the picture.

The year 1941 saw a situation developing which ultimately led to the declaration of war by Nazi Germany against Soviet Russia. For a time, the problem which had faced the General Staff in India seemed to be at an end. Soviet Russia was now an ally of the British, and was not therefore expected to harbour aggressive designs against Afghanistan or the North-Western Frontier of India.

But a new danger seemed to be looming in the north-western horizon, because of the presence of German and Italian nationals in Afghanistan and the growing Axis propaganda in Kabul. The Secretary of State for India, in a telegram dated 25 June, 1941, reviewed the danger arising from the presence of German nationals

in Afghanistan and Iran and sought the opinion of the Government of India regarding measures which might be taken to remove the hostile aliens from there.¹ The Chiefs of Staff, India, in their examination of the problem, struck the right strategical note. They emphasised the unity of the front from Syria to Sinkiang and assessed the danger which might accrue from the "possible penetration" of Iran and Afghanistan by German forces. Their conclusion was that any penetration of this protective armour of India at any point would be dangerous to her security, though "certain portions are potentially more dangerous than others owing to the ease with which they can be approached and the possibility which they offer for the development of communications towards India". Iran and Afghanistan were two such areas and the problem at the moment was how to prevent German penetration there.

The Chiefs of Staff feared that German progress in the Caucasus would be rapid and that within two months they would "gain possession of the oil bearing area in that region". In that event there was a probability of Afghanistan and Iran turning hostile to the British, and then in these lands the "German forces could move far and fast". Hence the Chiefs of Staff desired that all measures should be adopted which would prevent easy German passage through these countries and which would "reduce to the effective minimum" their hostility. Germans, therefore, had to be expelled from the two countries.²

The growing fear of speedy collapse of Soviet Russia and the direction of German thrust against the Caucasus, raised fears of a threat to Iraq, Iran and the cis-Caspian regions. The two alternative routes likely to be taken by Germany for attack on Iraq and the Persian Gulf region were:

- (1) Caucasus and Iran.
- (2) Through Anatolia and Syria.

In one of their telegrams dated 17 July, 1941,³ the War Office in London gave an appreciation of the possible German action through these two alternative routes and estimated the weight of attack both by land as well as by air. The defence of Iraq, particularly the oilfields of the Persian Gulf, became an essential object of protective arrangements. This defence of Iraq, though not directly connected with the defence of the North-West Frontier of India, was yet deemed to be important from the point of the

¹ Telegram No 7305 dated 25 Jun 1941, C.O.S. Papers—C.O.S. 41-XII (Item 5) (File No. F. 138 Pt. 1, p. 115).

² *Ibid.*

³ Telegram No. 78559 dated 17 July 1941. Appreciation of the threat to Iraq and General Policy, Vol. 1, p. 11 (File No. F 945).

ultimate defence of India. It was rightly assumed that if that distant bastion of Indian defence fell to the Axis, the danger to the Indian frontiers would be considerably enhanced.

The situation in Iran, too, was causing anxiety. If the Caucasus fell, the possibility of Northern Iran falling to the German arms even without resistance was great. Tabriz, Teheran and Mashed, in that eventuality, would be easily occupied by the German forces and the air facilities of Northern Iran, it was believed, would be utilised for attacks on the Persian Gulf, on the one side, or on the frontiers of India, on the other.

With the Axis influence growing in Iran and Iraq, with an Axis element in Afghanistan, with the fast crumbling initial resistance of the Russian forces, and with the increasing tempo of Axis advance in North Africa, a threat had developed to the security of India. Plans which had been prepared earlier on the basis of a Soviet threat to the North-Western Frontier were now considered to be inadequate and ineffective in view of the new threat. The General Staff was, therefore, called upon to review the situation and frame plans of defence in keeping with the new developments.

Prior to 1941 the entire attention of the General Staff was concentrated on the security of the North-Western Frontier. India's defence preparations were directed, firstly, to the security of the North-Western Frontier, whether against tribal raids or against external attack, and secondly, to giving assistance to the British Empire in defending what was termed the external defence of India in the Middle East and in South-East Asia. In 1941, however, danger from the east also seemed to be increasing. In 1940, Japan had installed her forces in French Indo-China. If Japan became an active partner in the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, Japanese air attacks in eastern parts of India could not be ruled out. However, no threat of land invasion was apprehended from that quarter, and, as Burma was not a part of India Command, no plans for the defence of the eastern frontier were immediately prepared. In 1941, the danger to the eastern frontier seemed to be drawing near but it was not till the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942 that the danger had become acute. Nevertheless, in 1941 the General Staff could not maintain the old attitude of complacency, and was compelled by the force of circumstances to consider the defence of the eastern frontier also. This led to the formulation of comprehensive plans for the defence of India covering her eastern and western frontiers.

The political situation in India was also not free from anxiety for the Government of India. The inability of the British Government to concede even the moderate demands of the political parties,

and the growing economic crisis as a result of the war, added to the unrest. India had become by 1941 a great producer of war supplies and was considered to be the chief source of manpower which was in great demand at that stage. The Government of India, therefore, could scarcely afford to take any risks with internal security. The protection of India both against external attack and internal rising became an essential element of British policy. The plans, therefore, of 1941 and 1942, had to be comprehensive in their character so as to include all aspects of the country's defence.

1941 DEFENCE PLAN

The Government of India, in their telegram of 29 March, 1941 to the Secretary of State, outlined the Defence Plan which they considered desirable in the new situation.⁴ The new plan was entitled "1941 Defence of India Plan" and comprised coastal defence, internal security, the defence of the north-west India, the defence of the north-east India and anti-air defence of the country against air attacks by the hostile forces. In this chapter only the defence of the north-west India has been discussed.

The appreciation on which this Plan was based included a possible danger from Soviet Russia, but there seems to have been a growing impression that, if such a contingency did arise, Soviet Russia would not be alone but might be assisted actively by Germany. This Plan laid conventional emphasis on the northern portion of the frontier for which larger forces were assigned. It is, however, clear from the Plan that nothing more than a defensive attitude prompted the General Staff. In 1940, the policy of constructing static defences in the frontier had been accepted. The defence works in the Khyber, Kurram and Khwaja Amran areas were considered essential for frontier defence, and this Plan desired that the construction of such defences should be expedited. These static defences were to be used as "pivots of manoeuvre on which to fight the defensive battle". The Plan was divided into two stages, one purely defensive and the other that of despatching assistance to Afghanistan in order to implement the policy laid down by His Majesty's Government, in their telegram of 10 April, 1940, which involved the despatch of troops to the Kabul area for active assistance to the Afghan Government either against internal disruption or external aggression.⁵ It is clear from the Plan, however, that this second stage was not seriously intended and was to be implemented only on the availability of equipment from

⁴ Telegram No 1872 dated 29 March 1941, p 96 (File No F 23).

⁵ See p. 68 above.

the United Kingdom which would enable mobile forces to undertake active operations in that area.

The troops considered necessary for these operations were estimated at four higher scale divisions, one lower scale division, two armoured divisions and a heavy armoured brigade. The initial allotment of these forces was:

Northern Command:

- One division higher scale
- One division lower scale
- One heavy armoured brigade

Western District:

- One division higher scale
- One armoured division

General Reserve:

- Two divisions higher scale
- One armoured division.

All these formations were additional to the existing Frontier Defence and Frontier Defence Reserve troops. In addition an air force of about 17 squadrons was required for the implementation of this Plan.

This was, in brief, the original 1941 Plan, the main object of which was to provide India with suitable defences to withstand an attack by armoured forces supported by air forces and followed by land forces against her North-West Frontier. The intention was that the defences should be so designed as to enable a hostile attack to be defeated beyond, or as near, the frontier as possible and localise any breakthrough that might occur. The scale of attack was calculated at two armoured divisions, two infantry divisions and up to a brigade of airborne troops. The place of assembly was considered to be north of the Oxus or in Northern Iran, and it was calculated that the minimum time before an attack might develop would be two months.

In June 1941, the two Commands, the Northern and the Western (Independent) District, were called upon to prepare detailed plans for blocking the main approaches of the hostile force in their respective sectors. As far as the Northern Command was concerned, defences were to be constructed so as to block all possible approaches by armoured forces in two large pivots of manoeuvre in the Khyber and the Kurram, with complementary defences in Waziristan. The areas in the Khyber in which construction of defence works was then proceeding were as follows:—

- (a) An area round Landi Kotal.
- (b) A smaller area round Ali Masjid.
- (c) The line of communications between Landi Kotal and

the Baghiari peak, east of Ali Masjid, consisting of defences close to the road and railway.

(d) A smaller defended position in the vicinity of the Manzan Okandao, north-east of Landi Kotal.

(e) A small position at Warsah.

In addition to these it was proposed to construct defences near the junction of the Chora and the Khyber rivers. These constructions which were to be executed later were sited at Chora-Khyber-Shinki-Himis and Sein, for which a total amount of Rs. 1,87,02,000 was sanctioned. Moreover, defensive works were to be constructed in the Kurram Valley between Thal and Manduri. The General Staff believed that with these concrete blocks of construction the approaches up the two routes of Khyber and Kurram would be blocked against any armoured troops of the invader. These defences were to be operative against any incursions, arising from whatever hostile source. It was essential that the Khyber and the Kurram routes must be controlled in every contingency by the Indian forces, because apart from blocking the approach of the hostile forces, these positions were essential for controlling the tribes.

But soon after the entry of Russia into the war, the danger from the northern side was greatly minimised. The new appreciation was that the brunt of the Axis attack would be borne by the Western (Independent) District; and it is with the plan of that Command that we are most concerned in analysing the defence policy in the two years 1941 and 1942.

The danger of a German incursion was canalised between two routes:

- (1) Syria and Anatolia.
- (2) Caucasus and Northern Iran.

The first route would be availed of by the Germans in case they obtained complete control over the Balkans and secured the submission of Turkey either by force or by consent. The developments in early 1941 did greatly accentuate this fear. In case the German thrust along the eastern Mediterranean coast succeeded and the Germans occupied the Suez area, Iraq and Iran, with a pro-Nazi element in the Governments there, would have been easily overrun by the Nazi forces, and the Persian Gulf as well as the Eastern Iran regions would have passed under German control thereby paving the way for an attack on India. The timely action taken by the Government of India in sending forces to Basra in April 1941 and the eventual surrender of the Iraq Government to the British control eliminated to a large extent the danger from that side. India had sent to Iraq the nucleus of the 10th Indian Division with

the 3rd Field Regiment and the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade with ancillary troops. Soon after, the 6th and 8th Indian Divisions were also despatched there even without full equipment or training. The arrival of these Indian forces led soon to the consolidation of British position in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul which were strategically important. This action was taken against the judgment of the British Agent in Iraq or even the War Office. Nevertheless, the importance of this adventure cannot be underrated. The timely occupation of Iraq may be regarded as an important contributory factor to the security of India from that side; and when later Syria was occupied by a force of the 5th Indian Division, whose assistance was of great benefit to the Allied forces operating against the Vichy Government in Syria, it might be said that the route from the east Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf had been to a large extent secured.

There still remained the Iranian Government to deal with where there was a considerable German influence hostile to the Allies. After diplomatic representations had been unsuccessful, concentrations were carried out by the 8th Indian Division with the 13th Lancers, the 3rd and 11th Field Regiments and the 18th, 24th and 25th Indian Infantry Brigades in the Basra-Shaiba area. Similarly in the Khanaqin area, the 2nd Indian Armoured Brigade, the 15th Field Regiment and the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade along with the 19th Medium Battery were concentrated. These were later joined by a Brigade Group of the 5th Indian Division. This demonstration of superior force advancing into the interior of Iran compelled her Government to yield, and, in the middle of September 1941, British and Russian troops had reached the Iranian capital and were in occupation of the city and the major portion of the country.

By this manoeuvre of force the danger of invasion of India from the western side had been greatly reduced, but the advance of the German forces in the Caucasus region and the swaying fortunes of the war in the African desert, could not eliminate the fear altogether. The second route from the Caucasus and Northern Iran towards the frontiers of India was still unguarded, and opened the possibility of German invasion from that quarter. The Western District Plan of Defence as a part of the 1941 Defence Plan, or the plans for defence prepared in 1942, did essentially concentrate on the possible threats by this route.

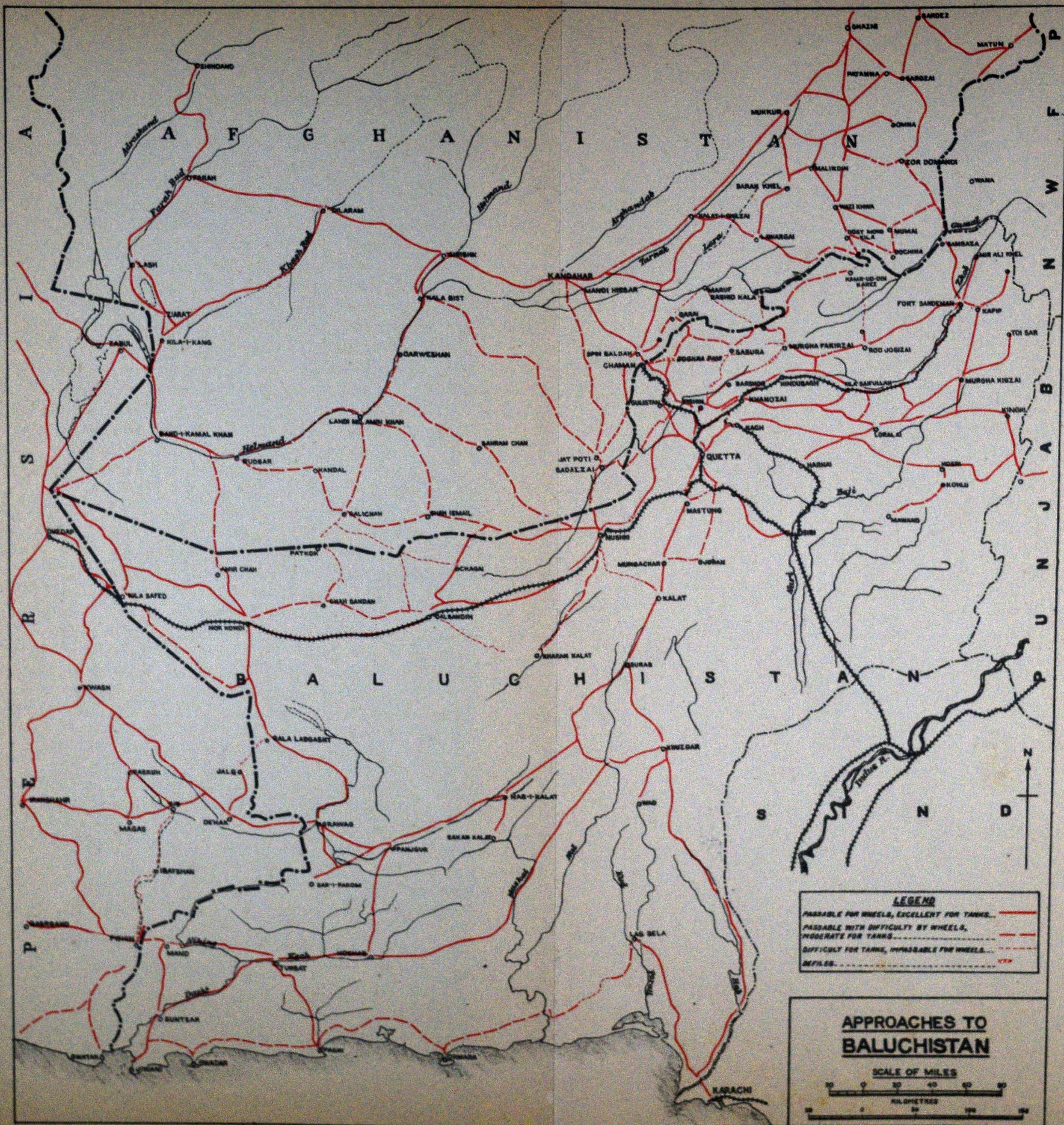
In the appreciations made at this time, Meshed was taken as the starting point of all possible German invasions towards the North-Western Frontier of India. Two routes lay from Meshed, one towards Herat and Farah and the other towards Zahidan, Mirjawa

and Nushki. It was even believed that Kurram would be reached by the German forces and utilized for offensive operations. From Farah many routes lay to the Indian frontier. One would be from Farah to Girishk, and from Girishk to Kandahar from where the invasion might possibly take three alternative routes:

- (1) from Kandahar to Loeband,
- (2) from Kandahar to Chaman, and
- (3) from Kandahar to Jatpoti.

The other would be from Farah to Chaharburjah along the Helmund which might also be suitable for mechanized forces. But it was assumed by the Western District that the German forces would cross the Helmand near Girishk and traverse the Reghistan Desert to Jatpoti and Nushki from where a number of routes might be utilised because the desert was passable by tanks and vehicles with desert tyres. The region from Farah to Baluchistan thus presented a suitable area for the armoured forces to attack the frontier at many places. In the appreciation, the Western District considered three main thrusts directed on the Quetta-Bolan area, which was considered to be an important base for defensive operations. The most important of these to be developed by the German forces would be from Kandahar to Chaman and through Khwaja Amran towards Quetta and Bolan. The second route, which also offered good going and against which defences had to be organised, was from Meshed to Zahidan or from Khwash to Zahidan, thence along Mirjawa-Nokkundi-Yakmach-Dalbandin to Nushki from where Quetta might be assailed. It was also feared that from Nushki via Kalat and Las Bela a diversion would mount against Karachi. Another diversion was believed to lie through Jatpoti to Panjpai from where seven routes, not unsuitable for armoured forces, lay through the highlands into Quetta. While the Western District Plan did consider the danger from the western and north-western side as of considerable immensity, it was not impervious to the danger from the northern side also. Though the road was not very suitable for armoured forces, yet, as a diversion and to keep Indian forces in the Zhob pinned or possibly for rousing the tribes in the northern regions, it was believed, a thrust might be made from Kandahar by way of Maruf or Dobandi to Loeband, from where the attack would be directed by way of Durgah Faqir Zai against Hindu-bagh, on the one hand, and Fort Sandeman, on the other.

Any German threat to the Indian frontier, on the lines described above, would arise only as a result of grave deterioration in the situation on the Russian and Middle-East fronts. It was the view of the Joint Planning Staff of the India Command that such



a threat postulated the elimination of Russia and the collapse of British position in Persia and Iraq. When the Japanese entered the war, it was their appreciation, however, that the Germans might attempt some action combined with their eastern allies to embarrass the British position in India. The course of action which, therefore, they envisaged was:

- “(a) That the Germans would establish air forces to threaten British sea communications in the Persian Gulf.
- “(b) That they would establish their air forces further east and thereby threaten bases in north-west India, the port of Karachi and the shipping in the Arabian Sea.
- “(c) That in conjunction with (b) above, they would endeavour to occupy Baluchistan as a defence base for further operations.
- “(d) That in combination with the air attacks and the occupation of Baluchistan the Germans would attempt to involve the British with the Afghans and foment tribal discontent.”⁶

This implied that the German attack would include the utilisation both of air forces as well as land forces, both armoured and otherwise. For the air offensive, the number of aerodromes in eastern Persia, Baluchistan or in the Kandahar-Farah region offered facilities to the Germans for heavy air attacks against Karachi and Quetta as well as against important bases in the frontier regions. While there were good aerodromes at Kandahar, Farah and Zahidan, there could be developed landing grounds almost anywhere in this region. On the Makran coast also there was possibility of air landings and utilisation of the strips for air attacks on north-western India.

DEFENCE OF THE WESTERN SECTOR

Judging from the available routes to the frontier from Northern Iran, the danger to the defences was apprehended largely in the Baluchistan-Sind area. The General Staff, in their letter of 27 June 1941, to the Headquarters Western (Independent) District, mentioned that defences had been constructed by the Northern Command so as to cover the approaches up to Fort Sandeman, and directed that in Baluchistan, south of Fort Sandeman, modern defences should be built.⁷ They demanded that the main approaches by armoured forces to Baluchistan should be blocked, and that other defences designed to protect the flanks should be

⁶ J.P.S. Paper No. 16 dated 16 May 1942 (File No. 601/12013/H).

⁷ Letter No. 48408/V/M.O.I. G.H.Q. dated 27 June, 1941 (File No. 509).

prepared in depth so as to localise a breakthrough and to enable the situation to be stabilised for a counter-attack. The infantry to man these obstacles was to "be provided with all-round field defences" which were to be constructed simultaneously. Defence of the Indus bridges was also to be arranged for. In view of this directive the Western District prepared its plan in October 1941, which was generally accepted by the General Staff.⁸

The plan envisaged that the hostile forces which might assemble on the North-Western Frontier of India would not exceed a maximum of five divisions plus an airborne brigade owing to the limitations imposed by the administrative conditions on the line of communication. The appreciation was that with such limited forces no attempt would be made to invade India, but the initial action would be limited to efforts to establish in Baluchistan, almost as a bridge-head in preparation for further advance when the line of communication had been properly developed. Such operations were believed to take the form of:—

- (a) a direct advance to Sind via the Bolan,
- (b) an attack eastwards into the Punjab, or
- (c) an attack on the port of Karachi.

But as none of these objectives could be attempted without a prior control over Quetta plateau, it was considered that the primary object of the hostile forces would be Quetta and Kolpur area. Such an operation would be possible only by two routes, Kandahar line and the Nushki line. The appreciation was that the scale of attack would be limited to four divisions on the Kandahar line and one division on the Nushki line. In addition, there was danger of airborne attack by three to four thousand troops.

The plan was based on the appreciation that the main advance of the hostile forces would be along the two metalled roads:

- (1) Kandahar—Chaman
- (2) Via Nushki

because it was believed that the armoured divisions would be the main spearhead. There was also a possibility of the hostile forces exploiting the other tracks to enable the armoured forces to execute outflanking movements, both with the object of striking deep into the objectives and to facilitate the action of the infantry against prepared defences. Apart from these two routes, and the subsidiary tracks to them, the penetration in the north into the Zhob and in the south through Kalat was also taken into account. It was appreciated that hostile armoured forces might be detached into the

⁸ Plan for the Defence of the Western Sector of N.W. Frontier of India, No. 1277/GS Letter No. 1502/MOI dated 19 December 1941 (File No. 739).

Zhob for rousing the tribes and for creating a diversion to threaten the line of communication in that area. The breakthrough towards Kalat in the south, mostly as an outflanking movement, was also considered, but it was not believed that any large scale threat would develop on that side. Furthermore, air bombardment in the early stages against the Indus bridges and the Bolan Pass, as well as the base installations in Quetta, Kolpur and Sibi areas, were also apprehended. The possibility of airborne attack directed at vital points in the rear, though only to a depth within supporting distance by a day or two of the ground troops, was also taken into account. The fear was that small parties of saboteur parachutists might be dropped to interfere with the line of communication.

Thus the Western District appreciation was that the main lines of advance of hostile forces would lie in three directions:

- (1) northern area consisting of the Zhob and Loralai;
- (2) southern area consisting of Kalat, Makran and Las Bela, stretching right forward from the Iranian frontier towards Karachi;
- (3) central area comprising the Quetta-Bolan region.

The defence of the northern area primarily involved the protection of the lines of communication against a German attack or tribal raids. Largely it was considered to be the tribal factor; hence the plan did not give major attention to the problems of this area. As regards the southern area, it was believed that the physical conditions there offered few advantages to an invader. The "country consists of alternate mountainous and desert tracks lacking in communications and largely devoid of water". There were no major objectives in that region, the only possible one being the port of Karachi for which the shortest route lay through this region. The responsibility of the Government of India for the protection of Kalat state arising out of treaty stipulations was also there. But this commitment was made light of. The importance of this route for an attack on Karachi was also discounted as it was believed that with Quetta controlled by the Indian forces, no hostile force could, without clearing off the Quetta positions, dare move against Karachi on that side. Hence, the only need for military provision was against any tribal incursions against Sukkur or the Indus region and the land line of communication.⁹

The plan also discussed the main lines of communication, both for maintenance and reinforcement, and suggested the necessary arrangements directed towards their protection against

⁹ "Interim Appreciation and Plan for the Defence of the Western Sector of the N.W. Frontier of India" (File No. F739 Pt. A).

tribal raids. As long as Quetta was controlled by the Indian forces, it was held that the lines of communication would not be substantially threatened. However, it was then felt that the main line of communication passing through the Bolan Pass would not be adequate for both maintenance and reinforcement purposes. Hence alternative routes should be developed for which proposals were made.

For the defence of the central region, which was considered to be vital for the security of India, the general policy laid down was that hostile forces should be met and opposed by the mobile armoured forces beyond the frontier. But because of the insufficiency of such forces and their inability to compete with the hostile armoured forces in the open, it was necessary to adopt a policy of static defence. Such defence positions, however, were merely to be auxiliary to the armoured force whose primary role would be to defeat the invader. It was, therefore, necessary to organise these static defences; and the plan was devoted largely to this purpose. The whole defence was conceived in three concentric lines which were styled Outer Defences, Inner Defences and the Defence of the Bases. The Outer Defences were intended to cover the two main lines of approach as near the frontier as possible with the object of:

- “ (1) Delaying the enemy's armoured forces by imposing on them difficult routes other than main roads thus giving time for our own mobile reserves to adopt advantageous positions.
- “ (2) Offering, as far as possible, a determined resistance to attempts by infantry divisions to open such main roads for his armoured forces and his permanent lines of communication ”.¹⁰

The Inner Defences were to be organised for the purpose of resisting and localising any breakthrough of the hostile armoured forces so as to “ enable the situation to be stabilised for a counter-attack to be launched ”. The other defences were created for the purpose of countering hostile attempts by airborne troops and any other breaks-through to the main area.¹¹

The Outer Defences were planned on both the Kandahar-Chaman-Quetta and Nokundi-Nushki-Quetta lines. On the former, fortresses organised for all-round defence and capable of withstanding thirty days' siege, were to be constructed along the Khwaja Amran range at Boghra, Khojak and Spinatizha, because the route to the interior lay through these three passes. The

¹⁰ *Ibid.* para 37(a).

¹¹ *Ibid.* para 37(b).

GALANGUR AREA

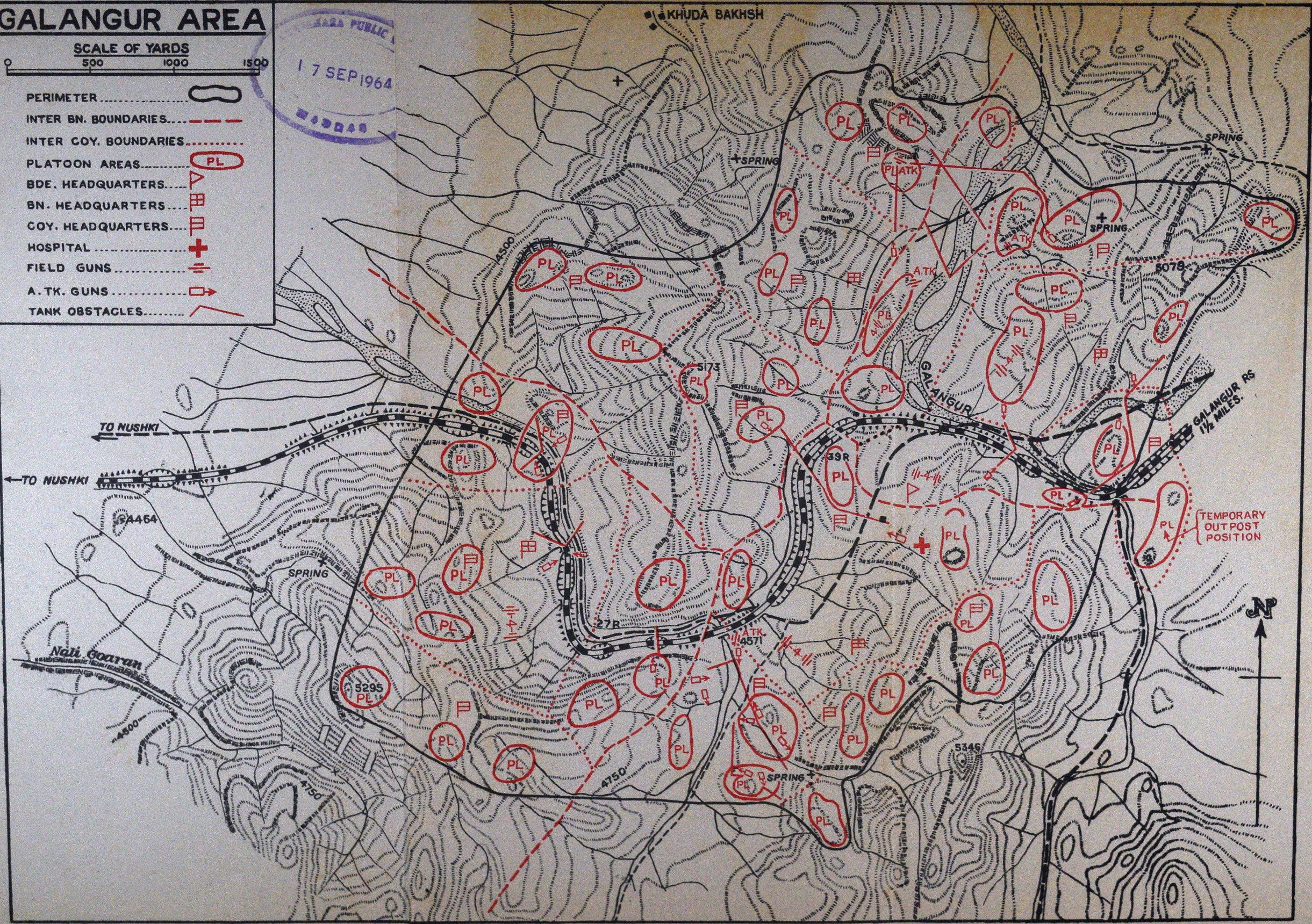
SCALE OF YARDS



- PERIMETER
- INTER BN. BOUNDARIES
- INTER COY. BOUNDARIES
- PLATOON AREAS
- BDE. HEADQUARTERS
- BN. HEADQUARTERS
- COY. HEADQUARTERS
- HOSPITAL
- FIELD GUNS
- A. TK. GUNS
- TANK OBSTACLES

17 SEP 1964

KHUDA BAKHSH



TEMPORARY OUTPOST POSITION

Khwaja Amran range could be pierced through only on these three lines where blocks were now to be imposed to prevent any further ingress of the hostile forces. Similarly, on the Nushki line, fortresses were to be constructed in the Galangur area, which would deny access to armoured forces to the south-east in the direction of Kalat, and prevent any direct thrust against Quetta on the main route. With the construction of these two lines of outer defences the only area which might admit of entry was the Panjpai Plain which could be pierced through by the various routes converging from the Jatpoti direction, or by breakthrough via the Pishin Lora. There was also the possibility of armoured troops by-passing the Khwaja Amran range. Hence, as Inner Defences only those were to be planned which might block the further advance towards Quetta. On the northern side, the routes by which the hostile armoured forces could by-pass the main outer defences were three:—

- (a) via Dobandi giving access to the Tabina plateau, five miles east of Boghra Pass, and thence east to the Barshor Valley and south to the Pishin plain;
- (b) between Khojak and Spinatizha giving direct access to the Pishin-Gulistan plain;
- (c) south of Spinatizha via Pishin Lora leading eastwards towards the Ghazaband Pass.

It was not felt necessary block all these with static defences, because with the available troops it was an impossible task. It was believed that on a breakthrough the hostile forces would be engaged by the Indian mobile forces, and further held up at the static defences in the rear. Thus reliance was to be placed on the inner line of static defence for the protection of the base from the north and north-west by covering the Kuchlag-Ghazaband pass line. This route would afford proper defence for Quetta and the Bolan head. Such defences were to be placed on a line from Point 6365-Kuchlag-Ghundak-Ghazaband. This was the only position in that area which would admit readily of static defence. Hence it was to be the main Inner Defence on that side.

On the Nushki line also, defence of Quetta and Bolan, in the last resort from any attack from the south, had to be planned. There it was considered necessary to hold the Lak Pass including the Nishpa Tunnel, but as this pass alone did not afford sufficient depth or had a satisfactory position for blocking the advance of the hostile forces, forcing or by-passing the Galangur defences, it was found necessary to establish strong static defences at Sheikhwasil position, which was held to be adequate for denying access to the hostile forces both from the north (from Khanak to the Karanga and Karak Loras) and south (from Mustang plain on the Kalat-

Karachi road). This position was calculated to prevent any advance from Jatpoti-Panjpai side as well. Thus the Inner Defences were to extend from Kuchlag-Ghazaband on the one hand to Sheikhwasil-Lak Pass on the other. Then came the defences of the key positions which were the Quetta, Kolpur and Sibi base areas. In the initial stages a threat of airborne attack and armoured raids was the only danger envisaged, for the protection against which defences were to be in position from the very beginning. The protection of the Sibi base area and the Indus bridges was not deemed to be essential in the early stages and beyond sabotage no other threat was apprehended.

The defence of the Zhob was also taken into account. The only entry feasible was via Loeband from where there were two possible tracks into this area:

- (1) south via Durgah Fakirzai into the Zhob Valley and
- (2) south-west into the Borshar Valley.

Here it was considered necessary to block the first with static defences and the second by establishing a force in the area Khanozai-Khanai.

Apart from these static defences, it was held that, for the ultimate defeat of the hostile forces, emphasis must be laid on the one armoured division which was allotted to the Western District. The role of this division was to be mainly the destruction of the hostile armoured forces, and for this purpose it was to be concentrated well forward in a position from which it could operate rapidly in any threatened direction. The initial concentration of this division, therefore, was to be in Baleli and Panjpai. For the assistance of the armoured division and for co-operation with it, in the attack on hostile motorised divisions, one complete infantry division in the role of mobile reserve was to be allotted. This division was also to be made available as occasion demanded for the reinforcement of the existing static defences or for attack on the airborne formations which might occupy the key positions. On this very division the safety of Kolpur and Quetta against airborne attacks did also devolve. In view of this policy the plan provided for the following allotment of troops:—

(a) *Outer Defences*

(i) *Kandahar-Chaman-Quetta Line*

Khwaja Amran Defences:

Garrison

One infantry division, one brigade

(ii) *Nushki Line*

Galangur area:

Garrison

One infantry brigade

- (b) *Inner Defences*
- (i) *Kandahar-Chaman-Quetta Line*
Kuchlag-Ghazaband-Pishin:
Garrison One infantry division
- (ii) *Nushki Line*
Sheikhwasil Position:
Garrison One infantry battalion
Lak Pass: Garrison One infantry battalion
- (c) *Close Defence of Quetta*
Garrison One infantry brigade
- (d) *Close Defence of Kolpur*
Garrison One infantry brigade
- (e) *Defence of Zhob*
Khanozai-Khanai:
Garrison One infantry brigade
(three battalions)
Hindubagh for Durgah-
Fakirzai area:
Garrison One infantry battalion
- (f) *L of C Protection:* Four infantry battalions
Two anti-parachute battalions
- (g) *Mobile Reserve*
- (i) *Armoured Division*
Baleli (Yaru Karez) One armoured division
(less 1 brigade)
Panjpai One armoured brigade
- (ii) *Infantry Division*
Quetta (close defence) One infantry brigade
Kolpur-Lak Pass One infantry battalion
Galangur Divisional recce regiment.

The defence plan of 1941 as prepared by the Western District was generally approved by the General Headquarters, but certain pertinent comments were made by them which clearly indicate the weaknesses and defects of the plan.¹² It was noted by the General Staff that the appreciation was limited to an examination of the areas in which static defences should be constructed. While agreeing to the necessity of such a step, they objected to the stress

¹² Letter No. 1502 M.O. 1 dated 19 January 1942 (File 739).

laid on this aspect of defence. Very rightly they held that the troops had a double role, that of holding a position prepared for all-round defence and a mobile role of counter-attack. The General Staff, therefore, desired that certain proportion of the infantry in defended areas should be assigned to a mobile role. The second point to which they rightly objected was that, as seems evident, the defence plan had for its primary objective the defence of Quetta and the head of the Bolan Pass, which of course was not in consonance with the object laid down by the General Headquarters viz., "To defeat the enemy beyond or as near the Frontier as possible and localise any breakthrough that might occur". Confining their vision to the mere passive defence of Quetta and the Bolan, the Western District gave insufficient consideration to stopping the hostile forces before they could reach the central area. This was a real weakness and was perhaps occasioned by the inadequate strength of the armoured forces which were assigned to this Command. But it seems the Western District did not have proper appreciation of the role of the infantry which in their view was merely the occupation of static defences, while it should have naturally been that of combined action with the armoured forces in a mobile role. Another point which was raised by the General Staff related to the supposed superiority of the hostile forces in armoured troops and the facility with which they would shift them from one sector to another. It was held that the invader should be operating on exterior lines and therefore it should be difficult for him to transfer troops from Chaman to the Nushki line. If the defenders had proper intelligence and defences were prepared in advance, it would be possible to forestall the hostile movements. This point seems to have been overlooked by the Western District. There was also criticism of the proposal for abandoning Fort Sandeman and the northern portion of the Zhob. But no sound alternative proposal seems to have been made by the General Staff either. There was criticism in regard to the allotment of troops for the protection of the base area, for which it was considered the Frontier Defence Reserve should be adequate. The essence of the comment was that instead of laying stress on static defence, a dynamic mobile defence should have been organised and the field forces released for operations beyond the line of defence to meet the hostile thrust and roll it back.

In the course of the year 1941, the details of the plan were worked out by the Western District. Khwaja Amran defences were under construction also. The detailed planning of the static defence at Galangur, Sheikhwasil and Kuchlag-Ghazaband-Lak Pass area was also undertaken. Estimates of the installations and

the expense involved thereon were also prepared and approved. But before any effective action was taken, the General Staff considered that the situation governing the 1941 Plan had altered and that new planning was essential. In their letter of 8 April 1942, to the Headquarters Northern Command, the General Staff stated, "The changed situation due to the substitution of a German threat for Russian threat to the North-West Frontier and the probability of a Japanese attack on southern and eastern India has necessitated a complete revision of the plan for the defence of the North-West Frontier. This revision is now being taken in hand by the Joint Planning Staff and will be completed as rapidly as possible".¹³ They also felt that the projected defences as under the 1941 Plan might not meet the new situation, hence the whole plan for the defence of Baluchistan would require re-examination. This led to the issue of fresh appreciations and new directives for planning the defences of north-west India in 1942.

The Joint Planning Staff, in their paper of 16 May 1942, gave their general appreciation and outlined the principles on which defence planning should proceed. The general considerations which governed their appreciation were that only on the elimination of Russia and the collapse of the British position in Persia and Iraq could a German attack materialise against the North-West Frontier. But they were also conscious of the fact that the Germans might attempt some combined action with the Japanese to embarrass the British position in India. The regions where such a danger might develop were the Persian Gulf, Baluchistan and Afghanistan. The problem, therefore, was that of preventing the following threats:

- "(a) The enemy gaining use of aerodromes within effective bombing range of our bases in North-West India and the Port of Karachi.
- "(b) The enemy establishing himself in the Quetta plain.
- "(c) The tribal problem getting out of hand".¹⁴

It was their appreciation that the German forces operating against Baluchistan would be two armoured divisions, three motorised divisions and one airborne division, and for other areas of North-West Frontier one additional division. The air force which might be used was 400 to 500 aircraft. The earliest date on which such an invasion would materialise was believed to be the beginning of 1943 or an air threat a month or two earlier.

¹³No. 6035/1/M.O.I.G.H.Qs. India (G.S.Br.) 8-4-42 Strategic Defence of the North-West Frontier (File No. F 510).

¹⁴J. P. S. Paper No. 16 dated 16 May 1942. "Defence of North-West India" para 5 (File No. 601/12013/H).

The Joint Planning Staff appreciation was based on three different phases of danger to the frontier:

- “ (1) The attempt by the Germans to recapture aerodromes in the vicinity of India from where air action could be possible.
- “ (2) Advance into Baluchistan, and
- “ (3) Action on the Afghanistan side ”.¹⁵

As regards the first, it was believed that the Germans would attempt to capture aerodromes within the range of the bases in north-west India and the port of Karachi, both in Afghanistan and east Persia and Baluchistan. Mostly, such action was to be restricted to the use of aerodromes of Kandahar and Farah in Afghanistan, as also those of east Persia and Baluchistan. In east Persia the aerodromes of Meshed, Birjan, Yezd, Kerman, Zahidan and Khwash were the most important. If the Germans were in occupation of the aerodromes in the Zahidan-Khwash area, the danger of heavy air attack both against Karachi and Quetta would be great. From this base there was also a possibility of their getting access to an area in Baluchistan where aerodromes might be easily developed and from where air attacks in the interior would also be possible.

The primary aim of defence, therefore, was put down as “ to deny him the use of this area if we can ”. For this purpose, it was suggested that these aerodromes should be utilised by the Indian air forces. The aerodrome at Kerman might be protected and used if transport aircraft were available because maintenance by mechanical land transport would be impracticable. Hence the suggestion was to maintain a small force there which was to be removed before being overwhelmed by superior numbers. This aerodrome was to be used as long as possible. In respect of the Zahidan-Khwash area aerodromes, it was believed that they should be maintained by armoured forces for whose operations the country was quite suitable. The forces there would be maintained by the Nushki-Zahidan railway and, if strong hostile forces were developed, they could at least delay the progress of German mobile forces. It was laid down, therefore, that “ Our infantry dispositions must be designed to protect the aerodromes and provide pivots of manoeuvre for our mobile forces. If the enemy is in superior numbers, our policy should be no more than to delay the enemy’s advance ”.¹⁶

As regards the aerodromes and landing grounds on the Makran coast, the occupation of which would increase the threat

¹⁵ *ibid.* paras 14 and 15.

¹⁶ *ibid.* para 17.

to Karachi and the shipping communications, it was believed that the Germans would not attempt to reach them. But if they were to be left undefended, air landings would be possible there. Hence, it was suggested that planning should be carried out for the defence of these aerodromes and landing grounds by a force based on Karachi.

In respect of the aerodromes in Afghanistan, owing to the limited resources of the Indian troops, no action was possible by the land forces to prevent their occupation by the Germans. All that was practicable was to rely entirely on the air force to neutralise German air action.

The next stage was that of the German advance into Baluchistan, which might be possible only when the Germans had been able to establish themselves in Zahidan or Kandahar areas. The advance into Baluchistan involved primarily the capture of the Quetta-Pishin plateau, for control of this area would enable increased air offensive operations against India and would furnish a good base for further advance into the country. The defence against such a move would, in the first instance, be by raids with armoured forces in order to harass hostile occupation. The best defence of the Quetta-Pishin plateau would be possible by holding positions about Khanozai, Khwaja Amran and Nushki as these areas covered all the main roads into the plateau and were capable of easy defence. The main conclusion, therefore, was that the primary resistance should be in the Khwaja Amran-Nushki areas and that the hostile advance should be held by air superiority. But in case it was not possible to hold the Khanozai-Khwaja Amran-Nushki perimeter, the holding of the Quetta plain would be problematical, though for some time Kuchlag-Ghazaband-Lak Pass area might be held. In such an eventuality, the course which was proposed was to withdraw down the Bolan Pass, making maximum use of demolitions. Similarly, if the Khwaja Auran position could not be held, the Zhob would be turned and the forces would have to withdraw to Fort Munro. Moreover, the appreciation was that it was not necessary to hold Fort Sandeman in the event of a serious German threat.

In regard to the northern sector, Khyber-Kurram-Waziristan, the appreciation was based on the elimination of Afghanistan as an ally of the British. It was feared that opposed by a German division in their country, the Afghan Government might not be able even to maintain a semblance of neutrality towards India. In that contingency the possibility was that their regular forces would be employed as a focus for tribal risings and a spear-head of attack against India. The attitude of the tribes, too, was likely to

be unfriendly, for under German direction, it was believed, they would rise against the British, almost in a concerted manner. In Waziristan the problem was more serious, because, by their very situation, the Indian forces in a hostile region could not long hope to maintain their positions of Razmak and Wana. In this northern region, danger was apprehended from tribal risings supported by Afghan regular troops and Germans, and attack was likely to be in the neighbourhood of the Khyber and Thal. Accompanying air action was also to be taken into account. The means by which such attack might be stayed were ruthless air action and hard hitting mobile columns. But it was feared that with simultaneous threat to Baluchistan the Indian resources were inadequate to meet the danger. In the alternative, therefore, it was suggested that fixed defences in the Khyber and Thal-Manduri areas, which had been previously constructed, should be garrisoned sufficiently to prevent their being seized by a *coup de main*. Essentially, the Khyber Pass was to be defended. In the worst case, however, when it was necessary to evacuate these forward areas, suggestion was made that the control of Peshawar including Khyber, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan districts must be maintained. The holding of Khyber and the rear line in the administrative area was thus to be the last stand.

The Joint Planning Staff, therefore, desired detailed plans to be prepared for the following:

- “(a) The operation of air forces from Kerman. This plan to be adopted only if air transport is available for the movement and maintenance of aerodrome protection troops. All forces to be withdrawn as soon as Kerman is seriously threatened.
- “(b) The operation of air and armoured forces based on the Zahidan-Khwash area. The role of the land forces in this area to be restricted to harassing and delaying action only.
- “(c) Defeating the enemy on the general line Khanozai-Khwaja Amran-Nushki.
- “(d) Holding the general line Kuchlag-Ghazaband-Lak Pass.
- “(e) Withdrawal down the Bolan Pass making maximum use of demolitions (worst case).
- “(f) Defence of the Khyber.
- “(g) The operation of mobile columns in the Khyber, Kurram and Waziristan areas (best case).
- “(h) The close defence of Peshawar (including Khyber), Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan Districts (worst case).

- “ (i) Demolitions in the Fort Munro defile.
 “ (j) The formation and operation, as soon as a German threat becomes imminent, of an L of C area exclusive Lahore and inclusive Karachi ”.¹⁷

The forces for which administration was to be planned, besides 27 squadrons of air force, were the following:—

- (1) *For Baluchistan:*
 One armoured division
 One anti-tank brigade
 Three infantry divisions plus Frontier Defence and Frontier Defence Reserve troops.
- (2) *The rest of the Frontier:*
 One armoured division
 One anti-tank brigade
 Two infantry divisions plus Frontier Defence and Frontier Defence Reserve troops.

The Chiefs of Staff considered the appreciation and plan outlined above and were in general agreement with the conclusions reached, except in respect of the employment of an aerodrome “ as far west as Kerman in view of the operational and administrative difficulties involved ” in the course. The operation of air forces from aerodromes in central or western Persia largely depended on the progress of operations in the Middle East. The Chiefs of Staff, however, fully concurred in the plan to delay the hostile advance in the vicinity of Zahidan and Khwash, as long as possible, and later “ falling back if forced to do so, to a main defensive position on the perimeter of the Quetta plateau ”.¹⁸

Following this decision, the General Headquarters and Air Headquarters issued an operational instruction for the preparation of the detailed plans. The general policy, which followed the lines of the appreciation, was to be:

- “ (a) To harass and delay the enemy’s advance towards North West India through Persia and Afghanistan. To do this he must be attacked as far from the frontier of India as possible. This will be primarily the task of the air force.
- “ (b) To prevent the enemy seizing air bases in Eastern Persia, Western Baluchistan or South Eastern Afghanistan from which to attack Karachi or North West India.

¹⁷J.P.S. Paper No. 16. para 43.

¹⁸Note to the Commander-in-Chief, by the Joint Planning Staff dated 29-5-1942 (C.O.S. 42-57) (File No. F 453 Pt. A).

- “ (c) To secure air bases in Eastern Persia and Western Baluchistan to enable our own air forces to operate against a German advance.
- “ (d) To hold the Quetta plain within the perimeter of the Khwaja Amran range and its extension south to Nushki.
- “ (e) In the event of there being insufficient forces to carry out (d) above, to impose the maximum delay on the enemy and deny to him the Bolan Pass as long as possible in order to gain time for the arrival of reinforcements.
- “ (f) In the North-West Frontier Province to hold the defended areas already prepared.
- “ (g) To exercise effective control in the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier ”.¹⁹

The plans which were to be prepared under this Directive were to be the following:

- “ (a) Plans for the operation of a force in the Zahidan-Khwash area with the object of attacking any enemy forces attempting to establish air bases in that area whilst at the same time ensuring the safety of bases for our own aircraft.
- “ (b) If sufficient forces for (a) above are not available, plans to protect aerodromes in the area Zahidan-Khwash and Western Baluchistan for use by our own air forces in the initial stages of a German advance, in order to impose the maximum delay ”.

In both (a) and (b) above, consideration was to be given to the employment of both parachute and air borne troops to attack the enemy line of communication, reconnaissance being carried out of possible withdrawal routes to the south with a view to the troops being taken off by sea.

- “ (c) Plans to deny the Quetta-Pishin plain to the Germans by the occupation of defended areas on the general line Khanozai-Khwaja Amran-Nushki as pivots of manoeuvre for our mobile forces.
- “ (d) If the forces available at the time are insufficient for (c), plans for the occupation of defended areas covering Quetta and the head of the Bolan Pass on the general line Kuchlag-Ghazaband-Lak Pass.
- “ (e) Plans for a withdrawal down the Bolan Pass making the maximum use of demolitions.
- “ (f) Plans to prevent any enemy penetration into the North-West Frontier Province by the occupation of defences

¹⁹ G.H.Q. Ops. Instr. No. 3 of 3-6-1942 to G.O.C.-in-C., North-Western Army.

now prepared in the Khyber, Kurram and Waziristan".²⁰

Similarly, the Air Headquarters defined their policy which was similar to that of the General Headquarters and desired plans to be prepared for the following:

- " (a) On the assumption that the air forces will be available, plans for their forward operation from the Zahidan-Khwash area with the object of harassing and delaying any enemy advance towards North-West India through Persia and Afghanistan.
- " (b) For the establishment and maintenance of a condition of air superiority in the area of operations including the employment of Wireless Observer Units, Indian Observer Corps and R.D.F.
- " (c) For the close support of special operations of the land forces.
- " (d) For the local fighter defence of Quetta and Rawalpindi.
- " (e) For a possible withdrawal down the Bolan Pass with the object of continuing the maximum possible measure of support to our land forces.
- " (f) Administrative and maintenance plans for the above, including the preparation, stocking and defence of base and operational landing grounds".²¹

In pursuance of this directive, the General Headquarters and the North-West Army Headquarters prepared detailed plans for the defence of that frontier. These plans envisaged the problem of defence of three succeeding ranges:

- (1) beyond the frontier,
- (2) in the Quetta-Pishin region, and
- (3) in the rear along the Indus.

The only serious difference between the two plans and those of 1941 related to the proper appreciation of the role of the mobile troops and of the necessity of meeting the German attack, both by air and armoured force action, in the region of eastern Persia and western Baluchistan, where the first line of defence was to be established. The 1941 Plan had concentrated essentially on the defence of the immediate frontiers both in the Khyber area as well as in the Quetta-Bolan area. In that plan static defence was considerably emphasised. Hence it did not suit the exigencies of the situation. The limitations of the 1941 Plan, which restricted its scope, were the non-availability of essential equipment from the United Kingdom and the inadequacy of the air force. In 1942 plans, both these limitations were ignored possibly because of the

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 15, para 4.

²¹ Air H.Q.'s. Ops. Instr. dated 30-6-1942 to G.O.C. in C., N.W. Army, para 8.

expectation of getting adequate air forces and also increasing supplies of artillery and engineer equipment. Without effective air support it would not have been possible for the General Headquarters to plan for operations in distant posts such as Kerman, Zahidan or the stray airfields in western Baluchistan.

As far as the interior defences were concerned, no important alteration appears to have been made. In the new plans also figured the preparation of static defences in the Khwaja Amran and Nushki area, which included the close defence of Boghra, Khojak, Spinatizha, Kuchlag, Ghazaband, Sheikhwasil and Galangur areas. By the end of 1942, the preparation of such defences in the Ghazaband and Khwaja Amran-Nushki regions had been largely executed. Except for some gun emplacements which required the blowing of the rocks, the rest of the static defence plans had been completed. But the most important activity related to the construction of defences in the outer region. In one of their telegrams to the War Office in November 1942, the Government of India informed that the aerodrome construction, as a long-term defence policy, would continue and for that purpose nine aerodromes had been ordered in east Persia and eleven in Baluchistan. By the end of 1942, the aerodromes in Baluchistan had been completed while work had commenced on those in east Persia also. Similarly, road construction had been taken in hand which included the roads Zahidan-Kerman and Zahidan-Bashid, as well as feeder routes to the various aerodromes.

In addition to these, a list of vulnerable points had already been prepared and detailed layouts had been planned for them. These related to the whole of the north-western area and were intended for strengthening the defences on that side.

The rear line defences were also planned but the chief item therein was that of demolitions, particularly of the Indus bridges. This planning had been continuing since 1940, and, by the end of 1942, detailed arrangements for the destruction of the Indus bridges right from Attock down to Sukkur and Rohri had been fully prepared. Schemes for demolition of the lines of communication leading to the Indus from the frontier were also under preparation. In case of the German forces breaking through the Khyber or the Quetta defences, these demolition schemes were to be brought into effect to delay the advance of the hostile forces so as to permit of preparations for defence being made on the Indus line.

1941 and 1942 Defence Plans were made at a time when the danger of German advance to the east seemed to be quite imminent. By the end of 1942, however, it appeared as if the corner had been

turned and a definite setback had been imposed on further German advance. Russian resistance in Caucasia and at Stalingrad remained unbroken. As long as, therefore, the Russians could hold the German forces beyond the Caucasus it was well-nigh impossible for the Nazis to attempt to occupy Persia or to advance on India. The Intelligence appreciation of November 1942 took full account of the war situation and, discussing the situation arising out of the developments in Africa and Caucasia, concluded that further adventures in Persia and the possibility of attack on India by the Germans were quite unlikely. Even if such a contingency were possible, the earliest date on which, in case of success in Russia or Africa, the Germans could reach the Indian frontier was 15 April 1944. The conclusion of the Intelligence therefore was:

- “(a) It is impossible in present circumstances to envisage Germany being in a position to attack India even by long range air raids.
- “(b) If, however, she could do so and decided to do so, the earliest date the attack could develop would be 15 April 1944.
- “(c) We would always have nine months warning of attack on India”.²²

Thus, while deprecating any immediate likelihood of a direct German attack on India, the Intelligence appreciation could not leave out of account German efforts to cause trouble in Afghanistan and in the tribal areas, and the possibility of an indirect attack. The appreciation stated: “It is possible that Germany resigning herself to the curtailment of any plan she may have had for military exploitation towards India, may intensify her expenditure in fifth column activities. Admitting that without military support these are less likely to be successful, we do not think the danger should be entirely dismissed”.²³

As a result of these appreciations and the rapidly changing war situation in Africa and Russia, which was favourable to the Allies, the General Staff decided on reviewing the whole situation and re-examining the priorities of projects in the North-Western Army, with a view to diverting any resources to the more affected areas. Their examination led to the following conclusions:

- “(1) That although the threat to North-West India had receded considerably, there could be no question of abandoning any other projects in hand in Baluchistan and South Persia. While admitting the necessity of

²²Note No. D.M.I./836 dated 11/12 Nov. 1942. Prepared by D.M.I. on German Threat to India, para 7 (File No. F 561(A)).

²³*Ibid.* para. 8.

slight decrease in tempo of constructions it was felt that so far as possible facilities should not suffer, and they should be ready for use at short notice.

- “(2) The existing combined plan for the defence of North-West India should become a long-term plan, but it must be fully implemented, for without it the defence of India would remain incomplete. The Zahidan area was definitely to be developed as communications and reinforcement route from Middle East alternately to Karachi”.²⁴

Air Headquarters also decided that the programme of aerodrome construction should be completed. They fixed the target date for aerodromes in Makran and south-east Persia as June 1943, while there was to be no slowing down of the tempo of construction of landing grounds at Notkzai, Dalbandin, Nokkundi, Kerman, Zahidan and Ardakan.

Thus in January 1943, the General Headquarters had countered the earlier instructions for effective planning of defences in the north-west. In their Instruction No. 1 of 1943, they mentioned that it was impossible in the then circumstances to envisage Germany being in a position to attack India even by long-range air raids, and even if such a contingency did arise it would not develop prior to April 1944. But as “Germany may intensify still further and accelerate her political and subversive efforts to embarrass us by causing trouble in Afghanistan and in our own tribal areas with a view to locking up our resources”, it was necessary for the Indian land and air forces “to exercise tribal control and to plan to meet a German attack”.²⁵ With the elimination of the danger of German attack all effective planning for the defence of the North-West Frontier of India came to an end. During the rest of the war, Russia remained an ally of the British and the German forces were rolled back. The traditional requirement of the defence of the frontier against tribal attack remained, and in the succeeding years of the war continued to engage the attention of the Indian Government.

²⁴ *Ibid.* paras 1 and 2. “Re-examination of Priorities for Projects in N.W. Army”.

²⁵ G.H.Q. Operation Instruction No. 1 Jan. 1943 paras 1 (b) and 2 (File No. 453 Pt. B).



GILGIT & CHITRAL
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CHAPTER VII

The Defence of Gilgit and Chitral

Another sector in which danger could arise was the northern frontier of India formed by Gilgit Agency and Chitral. This region bordered on Sinkiang, the Pamir tract of USSR and Wakhan in Afghanistan. Since the days of Lord Curzon, Russian threat to this area had been taken into account. In the inter-war years also, the danger of Russian diversion in this sector was visualised and plans were made from 1923 to 1938 to counter it.

In May 1939, the Government of India was once again concerned at the prospect of Sinkiang passing wholly under the control of Russia. In the spring of 1939, a serious anti-Indian campaign was in progress in Sinkiang. The local authorities there showed indications of hostility to the Mir of Hunza and petty raids were reported in those regions. These developments, therefore, led the Governor-General to ask for the General Staff appreciation of the extent of danger in that area. In particular he desired that the possibility of any threat to India from Russian or Chinese air forces operating from a base in Sinkiang should be considered.¹ The possibility of a Soviet war, in the next two years, and then the fear of a German or Japanese invasion occasioned a further examination of the possibilities of danger and the measures for defence in that region. A few plans were made and appreciations prepared. It is evident from these appreciations that the physical factor was greatly emphasised while the practicability of invasion from beyond the frontiers was under-estimated. No occasion however arose for testing the plans.

The appreciation prepared by the Air Officer Commanding, and probably endorsed by the General Staff, expressed the view that the extension of Russian control over Sinkiang would not make any appreciable difference in the extent of air threat from the Russian aerodromes which already existed in the USSR at Stalinabad, Tashkurghan or in their neighbourhood. The only area which might be affected was the Gilgit Agency, where there were no vital military objectives to be menaced from hostile landing grounds in Sinkiang.

The threat of land incursions was also considered. An appreciation was prepared with the object of providing for the defence of Hunza state territory in the event of any actual or threatened invasion from Sinkiang. After fully examining the

¹Note from the Viceroy to Chief of the General Staff dated 19-5-1939 (File No. F 464 Pt. I).

situation in Sinkiang and the routes which lay into Hunza or Gilgit, the conclusion was that "it would be impossible under present circumstances for any large force to be concentrated at or near Tashkurghan as the country is unsuitable for the concentration of a large force. Raids, if carried out, would probably be by means of small bands of a strength of not more than 50. It is estimated that the difficulties of supply and of transport would limit the size of an enemy force with the object of absorbing Hunza to a strength of from 500 to 1,000".² This appreciation was based on the premise that only local administration at Kashgar would be hostile and that the Central Government at Urumchi would not be interested in the incident. Hence the inference that the Sinkiang garrison, about 10,000 strong, would not be able to launch a major attack. Action from the air was also discounted. The only defensive counter-measure which might be adopted was to deal with the raiding gangs. For this purpose, the plan suggested establishment of posts at Murkushi and Darwaza with a supporting post at Pasu, manned by the Gilgit Scouts or regular troops of Kashmir State Forces. There was a proposal for constructing an emergency landing ground at Pasu and for providing the various posts with wireless sets and Popham panels for communication. If subsequently these small forces found the situation to be beyond their control, additional troops up to a battalion of infantry and a mountain battery might be sent to Gilgit to support the advanced scout posts. This plan was of a limited character and was intended merely to counter local raids coming from the direction of Sinkiang and unsupported by any Russian forces.

Not long after, the possibility of Russian or Afghan threat to the Gilgit Agency was envisaged. The Gilgit defence scheme, prepared by the General Staff in 1940, was comprehensive in its nature and took into account every possible variety of threat to the Gilgit Agency arising either from internal revolt or hostile aggression from the north, Afghanistan, Sinkiang or Russia. The scheme examined the various routes which connected Gilgit with Afghanistan, Russia or Sinkiang and canalised the direction of any possible attacks.

Reviewing the threat from the cis-frontier tribes, the General Staff inference was that these tribes would not be a serious danger to the peace of the Gilgit Agency, except in the event of war with Afghanistan or Russia. In that contingency it would be extremely unwise to reduce to any appreciable extent the existing garrisons of Gupis, Gilgit or Chilas. Next, the General Staff considered

²Appreciation of the situation on the Indo-Sinkiang Border, para IV (File No. F 591 Pt. A).

Afghan aggression and were of the view that, owing to the distance from the possible bases at Jalalabad or Faizabad, it was unlikely that any attempt would be made by the Afghans to invade Gilgit or even to despatch raiding parties across the passes. The air threat also was discounted, firstly, owing to the preoccupation of the Afghan air force elsewhere and, secondly, owing to the mountainous nature of the country and lack of important objectives in Gilgit. It was, however, felt that the Afghans might attempt aggression against Chitral which might cause disturbed conditions in the Gilgit Agency also. Precautions would therefore be necessary against trouble from adjoining tribal territories.

Concerning aggression from Sinkiang, it was the view of the General Staff that in the existing circumstances raids by small bands of not more than 50 men were alone possible. Making an assessment of the danger of Russian aggression, the General Staff view was that Russian infiltration and subversive propaganda had already made steady progress in the Tagdumbash Pamir through which area lay the route from Kashgar to Hunza via the Mintaka Pass. They also reviewed the distance to the nearest Russian railheads and the condition of the roads leading from there into the Gilgit Agency. Their conclusion was that "though some of the passes into the Agency are comparatively easy, the present remoteness of Russian railheads and lack of good roads leading from the Russian side added to the extreme difficulty of the ground on our side would make aggression by land forces to any serious extent unlikely. Efforts in this respect would probably be limited to raiding or at the most to the operation of a force, the equivalent in strength of an infantry brigade with attached troops".³

The General Staff view was that the most probable route for Russian attack would be from Wakhan via the Dorah Pass into Chitral. An alternative route lay through the Baroghil Pass into Chitral and from thence into Ghizar through the Darhot Tui and Shandur passes. But it was unlikely that any attempt would be made to invade the Gilgit Agency from the Khotan side, apart from the raids by small bands into Hunza territory. The air danger was not rated high though the aerodromes were not more than 300 miles from Gilgit, as flying over mountainous country would not be very practicable. Nevertheless such attacks might occur and be undertaken with the following objects:

- " (1) To force us to divert a part of our slender resources in aircraft from the main operations.
- " (2) To impede means by which we can provide air assistance

³ *Ibid.* para 14(i).

to our land forces operating in the defence of the Agency by attacking our landing grounds with the object of destroying or at least neutralising our air power in India.

“ (3) For moral effect, to cause embarrassment.

“ (4) To facilitate when feasible advance of their land forces ”.⁴

It will be clear from the foregoing appreciation that any possible Russian attack by land forces was limited to only a few routes, largely through Chitral, while the air threat from bases in Sinkiang or Russian Turkistan could be severe, though climatic conditions and high altitude were bound to impose limitations on the scale of attack. Aggression by neighbouring tribes or from Afghanistan was not estimated to be of much effect, and could be encountered by maintaining a close watch on the routes leading into the Gilgit Agency and by strengthening the Gilgit Scouts, with reinforcements from the Kashmir State Forces.” Also scout posts might be located near the areas likely to be affected by raids and active patrolling might be pursued. Similarly, any aggression from Sinkiang could be contained by establishing posts of Gilgit Scouts in the forward areas so as to cover the approaches by the Shingshal, Khunjerab, Mintaka and Kilik passes, and a supporting post at Pasu. To counteract air threat, it was proposed to have an emergency landing ground at Pasu and to provide for wireless communications and for proper meteorological observation. In addition, a scheme of demolitions was to be executed on the likely approaches to Gilgit so as to delay hostile advance.

The 1940 Plan had provided merely for an Afghan or Russian invasion, but in 1942, the situation had greatly changed and instead of a Russian attack, German intrusion from the northern side had to be taken into account. Two appreciations in quick succession were, therefore, made, one in 1942 and the other early in 1943, both of which were based on the possibility of German or Japanese threat from the northern side. In these appreciations, as in that of 1940, one postulate which governed defence measures was the lack of railway facilities and good roads, leading from the Russian side, and extreme difficulty of the ground on the Indian side, which would preclude any effective employment of land troops in sufficient numbers. The extent of land attack was extremely limited, but not so the possibility of hostile air action. It was also felt that some of the passes were easy and practicable and that there were no physical factors which might absolutely prevent the incursion of a small force, either across the Mintaka and Kilik passes into

⁴*Ibid.* para 21.

Hunza or over the Baroghil Pass into Chitral. But as there were no important military objectives in the Gilgit Agency except possible landing grounds, of which there were two, the natural assumption was that little would be gained by the Germans in attacking the Gilgit Agency, and there was nothing to induce them to attempt the long and difficult land approach to the country from the north. Even attacks by airborne troops were unlikely owing to the other commitments of the Germans, but if these were to occur the scale of attack was not estimated to exceed 150 men per aerodrome. A further appreciation was that if Russia and China collapsed there might be infiltration by marauding bands from Sinkiang and Wakhan, but this danger was not estimated to exceed an attack by 1,000 men. Even if regular troops were to be employed their maximum strength would not exceed 1,000 men. The 1942 appreciation, therefore, was based on this limited scope of aggression.

The forces available for the defence of the Gilgit Agency then consisted of ten platoons of Gilgit Scouts, which were located at Gupis, Gilgit, Chilas and Babusar, armed only with .303 rifles and Vickers Guns as post armament. This force was considered by the General Staff to be adequate for initial defence, the plan of which was to hold the landing ground at Gilgit and to control the main routes through the Agency. Demolitions were to be resorted to in effective measure to delay the advance of the hostile forces. The main defence line was on the front Baltit, Gilgit, Gupis posts. All these places were to be strengthened and provided with concrete emplacements for medium machine guns. The landing grounds at Gilgit and Chilas were to be protected by pill boxes and light machine guns. For reinforcements, regular troops from India might have to be brought in but these were not to be employed north of Gilgit. Their conveyance was to be by air if possible; the policy of reinforcing forward posts with scouts with a minimum number of regular troops at Gilgit as second-line support was to be employed.

The 1942 appreciation was thus based on the fullest employment of the Gilgit Scouts with demolitions and static defences in the most affected parts, particularly in the defiles leading from the passes into the interior. In February 1943, a further appreciation and plan for the defence of Gilgit were prepared by the General Staff. There was no appreciable difference in the scale of threat envisaged from the earlier plans. It was not considered likely that Germany or Japan would endeavour to secure the Gilgit Agency or any part of it with a view to using it as a forward post for the invasion of India. The only object which might govern their move into that

region would be to cause alarm and unrest in Kashmir and northern India and damage British prestige. Such a purpose might be achieved by “ (1) inciting marauding bands from beyond the border to infiltrate into the Agency through the various passes in search of loot, (2) employing picked regular troops to carry out minor incursions, and (3) airborne attack ”.⁵ A combination of all the three was also considered a probability. But except for the infiltration of marauding bands, the other courses were not likely unless Russia and China had practically collapsed. Examining the threat in detail the appreciation recognised five passes as the most likely ones to be negotiated. These were Mintaka Pass, Kilik Pass, Baroghil Daryun Pass, and Karumbar Pass. The routes leading through them were narrow tracks with numerous suspension bridges which might easily be demolished and which were used only during summer months. Apart from the marauding bands whose strength would not exceed a maximum of 1,000, the General Staff felt that the regular troops of the Japanese would not be employed because of long distances and absence of road or rail communications. The German regular troops might be employed in case they gained control over the railway Krasnovodsk-Bokhara-Katirnagan or the railway Merv-Samarkand-Osh. The control of these railways would afford them the use of a railway about 300 miles from the Gilgit Agency border with a motor road for another 300 miles of that distance. Kizil Robot, 60 miles from the Gilgit border, would be the nearest place connected by motorable road with the railhead. Nevertheless, maintenance difficulties were presumed to be high and it was not believed that a German force of more than 1,000 in strength would be employed. From their base beyond the frontier, the Germans would have to march 10 or 14 days to reach any important objectives at Gilgit or Chilas within the Agency.

As before, the possibility of air threat was considered but as the Gilgit landing ground could not take modern aircraft and was incapable of enlargement, and the Chilas landing ground, too, could not take the latest type of aircraft, the only possibility was that of crash landings or parachute landings. There were many other places where such crash landings or parachute landings might be made. Thus, the General Staff estimate was that by using old types of machines upto 150 men might land at the two landing grounds, and a larger number if crash landing troop carriers were employed. The use of paratroops preceding such landings was also taken into account. But the General Staff realised that main-

⁵Appreciation and Plan for Defence of Gilgit. p. 3 (File No. 591-Pt. B).

tenance difficulties would be great because maintenance by air, owing to the uncertainty of the weather and the height of the mountains to be crossed, would be a hazardous undertaking. Nevertheless, the danger of such air landings was really great as, firstly little warning of such landings would be available and secondly, little effective resistance might be offered by the Gilgit Scouts, who would not be prepared to face a hostile force suddenly landed in their midst and equipped with every form of modern weapons. The moral effect of such landings would be to prevent any resistance by the local population. Owing to the non-availability of previous information, reinforcements sent from India by land routes would not arrive in time to save Gilgit and Chilas. And once these were occupied by the German forces, their ejection would be a difficult and extremely lengthy operation. Reinforcements by air also would not be possible, because the landing grounds would be in German hands and parachute troops were not available. The possibility of permanently locating regular troops in the Agency to forestall hostile air landings was considered, but such a course was deemed to be uneconomic as it would lock up limited resources. Hence, the only course suggested was to raise locally additional scouts units and equip and train them specially for the task of defence against hostile air landings. These scouts would also be able to deal with incursions by land on the part of marauders and delay considerably the advance of any regular troops invading the country.

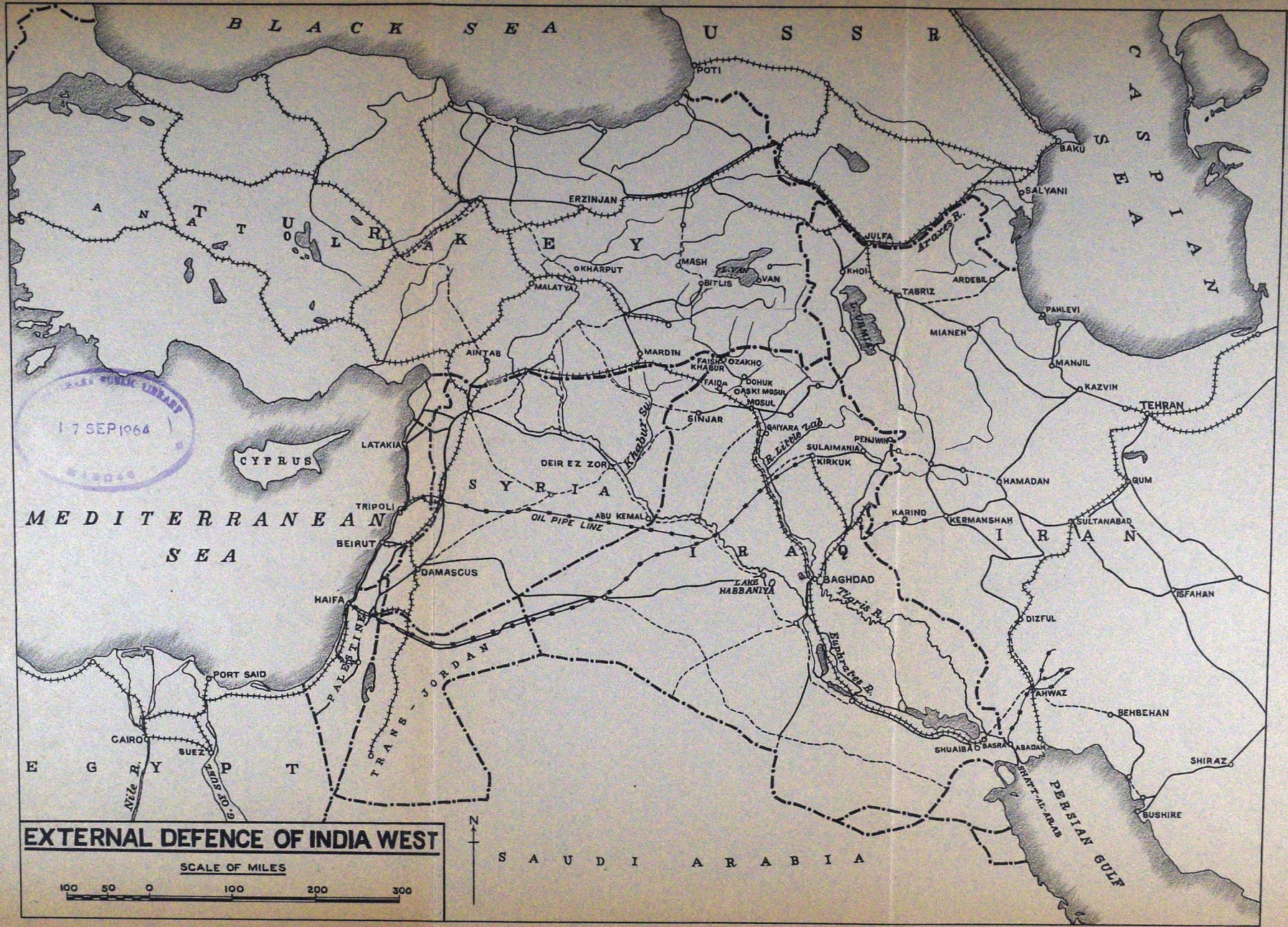
CHAPTER VIII

External Defence—West

Long before the war broke out, the value of India as a source of reinforcements in any Imperial crisis had been fully recognised. In the early thirties, when there was danger of Japanese aggression in South-East Asia, consequent on the Manchurian crisis, India was asked to render assistance in the defence of Hong Kong and other British possessions in the Pacific. Later, when the Italian attack on Abyssinia was imminent, India was required to despatch a company of Indian troops to Addis Ababa for the protection of the British Legation there, and when the Italo-Abyssinian war progressed, more effective reinforcements from India were planned, and actually one battalion was despatched. Subsequently, when the danger of Axis hostilities developed, the defence of the British interests in the Middle East or the Far East was considered to be equally the responsibility of India for which Indian forces were to be utilised. The plans which were then drawn up envisaged, as far as the Middle East was concerned, the sending of reinforcements to Egypt, East Africa and the Iran-Iraq area. Certain commitments were accepted by the Government of India also. In 1937, the liability of India to supply reinforcements overseas was assessed to be the defence of the Anglo-Iranian oilfields, reinforcements to Egypt and reinforcements for Singapore, Hong Kong and Burma.

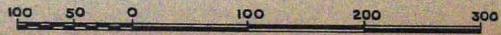
Scheme "P", which was the code word for the despatch of a force to Iran for the protection of the personnel and property of the Anglo-Iranian oilfields in the event of internal disturbances in Iran, was the most important scheme which was actively considered in the years 1937-38. However, as the situation became tense by the beginning of 1939, more effective schemes for reinforcements to the Middle East had been prepared, and actual orders for the despatch of forces had been issued.

Apart from the despatch of troops to Abyssinia, which were withdrawn in 1936 when the threat of Italian aggression against the British possessions in Africa had increased, a scheme was drawn up for the despatch of Indian forces to Egypt and Aden. For Egypt under Scheme "E", which later came to be known as Scheme Heron, two infantry brigades (11th and 12th), one field company Sappers and Miners and one field ambulance were earmarked; while for Aden, under Scheme "A", later known as Scheme Hawk, one infantry battalion was assigned. About the same time,



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the Chief of the Imperial General Staff persuaded the Army Headquarters in India to reinforce Port Sudan garrison for which a detachment was promised. This force included one 2-gun (6") battery, one anti-aircraft battery, one Fortress Company Royal Engineers and one company infantry. In 1936, there was the possibility of a force being sent to British Somaliland, but it was countermanded subsequently as not being necessary. The 1937-38 planning included the despatch of troops to the Middle East primarily for the purpose of defending Suez Canal and Western Desert in Egypt, and maintaining internal security in Palestine. The forces under schemes Heron and Hawk were kept ready to sail for their destinations, but by the end of 1938, the improved situation in Europe led to the postponement of the despatch of these forces. During 1939, however, the necessity of sending troops to Egypt, Aden and Iraq was fully recognised, and by 12 September 1939, India had sent overseas the following formations and units:—

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| (a) Egypt | Force Heron and 11 Army Troops Company Queen Victoria's Own Madras Sappers and Miners, and 13 SIS Royal Indian Army Service Corps. |
| (b) Aden | Force Hawk, a detachment 8 Anti-Aircraft Battery Royal Artillery (Force Falcon). |
| (c) East Africa | 22 Mountain Battery Royal Artillery (Force Warbler). |
| (d) Iraq | Detachment Royal Indian Army Service Corps 100 Drivers (Force Pippet). |
| (e) Singapore | Force Emu. |

The detailed order of battle is given in Appendix V.

It will be clear from the foregoing that at the beginning of the war, India had been committed to the defence of areas in the Middle East and the Far East which were recognised as regions intimately connected with what was then known as external defence of India. It was held that the security of the Indian frontiers depended on the maintenance of British control over Egypt, East Africa and the countries from Syria to Iran, which flanked the western defences of India. Similarly, it was held that the retention of Singapore in the south-east as an important naval base and the outer bastion of India's defence, was essential for her protection. The danger against which such a defence had to be prepared was that of the German or Italian threat in the west and the Japanese in the east. All indications pointed out that the war, in which the United Kingdom was involved against the Axis Powers, would extend to the Middle East and South-East Asia, and that India could not remain unaffected very long. At the same time, being

a part of the British Empire and wholly controlled by the British Government, it was unlikely that India's resources should not be employed at a time when the British Empire was involved in a struggle for its very existence. India was an important source of supply of manpower and had, as long as her own immediate defences were not menaced, a large Imperial reserve of troops which might be thrown into the balance in case of a serious danger to the integrity of the British Empire. Hence, even in opposition to the Indian public opinion, and without taking the Indian Legislature or the Indian political leaders into confidence, an adequate force comprising at least one division with ancillary troops had been prepared for the implementation of these Imperial commitments. As has been mentioned earlier, this force was in a better state of preparation and had been modernised on a higher scale than other Indian divisions, on the recommendation of the Chatfield Committee. Thus, when the war broke out, the Indian army was called upon to man the outposts both to the west and the east against any likely hostile thrust from either side. The liability could not be limited to one division and might extend to more than one if the situation grew critical: and the Army Headquarters in India was required to keep plans in readiness for such emergencies.

The basis on which this commitment was planned, was that Germany and Italy would make the Middle East a main theatre of war, and if they could not be contained on the borders of Egypt or resisted to the north-west of Syria, their further advance through Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Iran would effectively endanger the security of Indian frontiers. The other consideration which had prompted such measures in the Middle East was the necessity of keeping the main routes through the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean open. This was considered to be the lifeline, the maintenance of which was essential for successful operations against the Axis Powers.

If the war was to be successfully prosecuted, centres of production which alone could maintain the forces in the operational areas and raise equipment to train new air and land forces required for operations, had to be properly defended. India was one such centre, and it was essential that the routes connecting India with the operational area should be kept open and that her outer defences should be fully maintained. Then also had to be considered the oil supplies in the Persian Gulf regions, exploitation of which was essential for war purposes. Impelled by these motives, therefore, and in view of the expanding phase of the war in 1939-40, the fullest defence of the Middle East became the first priority for which India had to bear her full burden.

In the early months of the war, India had prepared the force Niblick and Rufus for operation in Iraq-Iran, primarily for the protection of oilfields against likely local risings and the opposition of Iran. By the end of December 1939, however, the situation demanded far larger plans involving the defence of Iraq in addition to Persian oilfields. A scheme for the employment of three divisions and mobile troops was prepared (Trout scheme). The purpose of this force was to protect the oilfields from either hostile Iranian forces or Russian aggression, or both combined. It was to operate either from Basra where a base was to be planned, or from Shatt-el-Arab from where it might operate for the security of Abadan and afterwards towards Ahwaz and beyond. There was also likelihood of a force upto three divisions based on Basra, in case Iraq continued to be friendly, to operate to the north of Baghdad. All these plans had been prepared prior to the collapse of France and entry of Italy into the war and were directed against any hostile thrust from Soviet Russia.

With the growing threat to Egypt, in September 1939, Niblick sailed to Egypt, where, with the addition of another brigade, it was formed into the famous 4th Indian Division which played an important part in the North African campaigns. Later in 1940, when Italy entered the war and there was the danger of hostilities spreading to East Africa, the force which was being prepared for Iraq was moved to Port Sudan, where it was formed into the 5th Indian Division which was employed in defeating Italian opposition in East Africa. So far as Egypt and East Africa were concerned, to the end of 1940, the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions and the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade were the only Indian forces which were employed in that theatre of war.

With the collapse of France in June 1940, the situation in the Middle East grew critical. Developments in the Balkans and Syria and the entry of Italy into the war made the opening and maintenance of main communications in the Middle East important. The Red Sea and the alternative land routes from Basra to Egypt via Palestine and Syria, gained added importance and schemes were formulated for their safe maintenance. Early in June 1940, the situation was reviewed by the Chiefs of Staff in England. Their appreciation was that the—"retention of our position in Middle East remains of the utmost importance to a successful prosecution of the war particularly in view of our policy of an economic blockade of Europe. It is also important to secure the Anglo-Iranian oilfields".¹ This primary object of retaining supreme control over

¹ Telegram XX No. 75367 dated 3-7-1940, from Troopers London, to Arminia, (File No. F 23, Vol. 1).

the Middle East depended, according to the Chiefs of Staff, on the defence of the following:—

- (a) Egypt and Sudan
- (b) Iraq
- (c) Palestine
- (d) Aden
- (e) Kenya.

With the defence of these areas was intimately connected the protection of the communications centring on the Suez Canal, the security and control of oilfields in Iraq and Iran, the safeguarding of the Baghdad-Haifa route and the Red Sea communications. In view, however, of the limited resources they felt that the policy in the Middle East could, at this stage, be only defensive, although every chance of taking local offensive action was to be utilised. Their first appreciation was that though the German air forces would be occupied in the near future in attacks on the United Kingdom, air attacks in Egypt should not be ruled out, which would have made the maintenance of Alexandria as the fleet base impossible. In such an eventuality the maintenance of the Mediterranean as a safe route for supplies to the Middle East and as the chief artery of communication between the centre and the outlying parts of the Empire, could not be depended upon. Moreover, they felt that the German or Italian attacks through the Balkans on the Middle East were likely. Turkey's attitude was equivocal, and she could not be expected to offer any prolonged resistance to German attacks. Hence the threat to the Middle East from that direction, though considered to be a long-term one, was not altogether ruled out. In that situation, it would be necessary to see that Syria did not come under German occupation. If the *status quo* in Syria was disturbed, it was feared, the defence of Iraq would be seriously compromised, and the situation in Iran adversely affected. In view of these considerations, the strengthening of the defence forces in the Middle East, at the earliest possible moment, was essential.

The African campaign was controlled by the Middle East Command and as such India was not directly concerned with the operations there. Apart from the reinforcements necessary to keep the forces in strength there, India's commitments in that region were not considerable. But in the Iran-Iraq-Syria theatre the responsibility of India for defence was recognised as primary, and in the next two years, according to the vicissitudes of war, plans for the defence of this region were prepared; and as this particular region was considered as the first line of defence of India against hostile thrusts, the liability of India for active participation in such

schemes of defence was heavy. Iraq and Iran thus became the chief concern of India.

The situation in the Middle East was fast changing. General Sir Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, gave an appreciation of the situation on 21 October 1940, and pointed out that the strategy in the Middle East during the forthcoming months should be directed towards the following aims:—

- “ (a) Inflicting so heavy a defeat on the Italian forces on the western frontier of Egypt that the danger to Egypt will be removed;
- “ (b) to take such action in Sudan and Kenya as will gradually weaken the Italian position in Italian East Africa, remove any threat to Sudan and Kenya, lessen danger to our communications in the Red Sea and increase the revolt within Abyssinia to an extent that will occupy the whole of the Italian effort;
- “ (c) to prepare a force to assist the Turks if attacked in the spring;
- “ (d) to have similar forces for the assistance of Greece, if possible, and to assist in the defence of Crete; and
- “ (e) to have a force ready in India for the defence of our interests in Iraq and Iran, if necessary ”.²

On the acceptance of this general strategy only could the forces required for the Middle East be estimated.

The position in the winter of 1940-41 did not show any sign of improvement. In one of the policy telegrams dated 17 November, the Secretary of State for India informed the Viceroy of the general appreciation of the situation by the British Government. In this document possible German objectives in the Balkans and the Middle East were indicated. Fear was expressed that after she had overrun Rumania and Turkish Thrace, Germany might next advance into Anatolia, Syria and possibly Iraq. Subsequently she might turn either southward into Palestine or eastward into Iraq. If the Germans succeeded in drawing large supplies of oil from Iraq it would prejudicially affect the economic blockade of Germany on which alone hopes of British success were then based. In this appreciation it was felt that the penetration of Syria by the Germans would “ threaten our alternative lines of communication to Egypt via Iraq and Palestine and our oil supplies from Iraq and Iran might be attacked from air. An increased scale of enemy air attack from Anatolia or Palestine might affect the security of our Fleet Base at Alexandria and might eventually oblige our forces

² Notes on the Strategy in the Middle East by General Wavell dated 21-10-1940 (File No. F 23, Vol V).

in Egypt to fight on two fronts. Effective Turkish resistance is therefore of highest importance to us".³

In order to meet this danger, British policy at this time was to strengthen Turkish will and ability to resist Axis pressure. Secondly, every endeavour was to be made to prevent Russia from aligning herself with the Axis in the Near or Middle East. Thirdly, French territories in Syria were to be pressed not to take any hostile action against British interests; and, finally, all available diplomatic, financial and economic measures were to be taken to ensure that the situation in Iraq did not further deteriorate. It was, moreover, felt that the existing strength of forces in the Middle East was not adequate for the various commitments. Hence, the British Government was of the view that the shipping resources should be utilised to the fullest extent to reinforce air and land forces in the Middle East, so that direct assistance to Turkey and control of communications through Syria, and finally the occupation of Iraq might be practicable.

In the succeeding months, British resistance to the German-Italian advance in Africa did not weaken and the Germans were unable to break through the Balkans into Turkey or Syria. The situation in the spring of 1941, therefore, did not indicate any serious deterioration, though danger had not abated. A new element had arisen, however, in the internal situation in Iran and Iraq. In Iran, the Government of the Shah was growing pro-Axis, and on the issue of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company tension had developed between Iran and the British Government. The situation in that country was not quite satisfactory from the point of view of defence against Axis encroachments. In Iraq, an internal revolution had occurred by which the pro-British Regent had been driven out to take shelter with the British, and Abdur Rashid, pro-Axis in his sentiments, had by a *coup d'etat* become the Prime Minister of the country. This situation in Iraq, at a time when the British forces had not landed on the Iraqi soil, was considered to be imminently dangerous for the entire war effort. In April 1941, therefore, the Government of India, on its own initiative, diverted a force intended for Singapore to the Persian Gulf and, by military action taken in time, was able to expel Abdur Rashid and thus maintain a political hold on the Iraqi Government, however inconsiderable it might have been.

Soon after this incident General Auchinleck, as Commander-in-Chief of India, reviewed the entire situation in the Middle East and assessed the part which India was likely to play. The German

³ Telegram XX No. 1522 dated 17-11-1940 from Secretary of State to Viceroy (File No. F 23, Vol VI).

success in Cyrenaica and the conquest of Greece and the Dodecanese had established German influence in the eastern Mediterranean, and the threat to Turkey, Syria and Palestine had thereby considerably increased. The French in Syria could not offer effective resistance to German attack, and it was feared that Syria would easily fall into the hands of the Germans. In that eventuality, General Auchinleck's appreciation was that the Germans would make full use of their superiority in the air to obtain a footing in that country with the object of:—

- “ (a) encircling Turkey and forcing her to submit to his dictates;
- “ (b) striking at Egypt and the Suez Canal from the north as well as from the west;
- “ (c) moving against Iraq so as to deny to us the use of Basra and the lines of communication thence to Turkey and Egypt and also to secure the Iraq oilfields;
- “ (d) setting of the Middle Eastern Muslim countries against us and of causing serious disaffection in India;
- “ (e) cutting off our supplies of oil from south-western Iran ”.⁴

Apart from this threat, he felt that the Germans, by holding Lower Egypt, would use Suez Canal to pass warships into the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. This in its turn might lead to the British flank in the Persian Gulf being turned and danger increasing in that region. Moreover, with Egypt in their hands, the fear was that the Germans would use the land line of advance into Palestine, Syria and Iraq. For the object of preventing this serious threat, General Auchinleck was of the opinion that Egypt should in every case be held as long as practicable. Apart from that, he was of the opinion that “ to prevent Turkey joining the Axis actively or passively and to deny our enemies access to Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Iran and eventually India, it is essential for us to retain our hold on Palestine and to prevent the enemy establishing himself firmly in Syria ”.⁵ From his point of view, therefore, the primary object of British policy in the Middle East was the retention of their hold on Palestine, Syria and Iraq.

General Auchinleck further thought that in case Alexandria, Suez and Port Sudan were lost, Basra and Port Said would be the only possible bases available. Of these two, he held Basra to be by far the most useful, as it might be employed to maintain not only forces in Egypt but also in Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Iran. That port might well become the principal port of disembarkation for personnel and munitions for the Middle East, not only

⁴ Note by General Auchinleck dated 2-5-1941 (File No F 23, Vol. VII).

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 5.

from India but also from Australia and the United States of America. On this view he concluded that Basra with the various lines of communication leading thence had assumed a major strategic importance.

It was not only Basra but the whole of Iraq which had acquired a new strategic importance. Basra, according to General Auchinleck, had use only as a port of entry at which troops would be landed in the Middle East, should Iraq, Palestine and Syria fall into German hands. But in order to prevent that contingency, it was essential to consolidate British hold on Iraq and develop the communications leading through it, north and north-west from Basra, to their utmost capacity so that the hostile forces might easily be forestalled in Syria, and effective help rendered to Turkey to resist pressure on Anatolia. Thus, Iraq, with its port Basra, had by the middle of 1941, assumed a definite strategic importance. The security of Iraq was imperative both in the interest of the protection of India as well as the maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire. Hence General Auchinleck was led to assume that "it is imperative now that we should as soon as possible make it clear to Iraq and the world that we are compelled to occupy Iraq and that we intend to do so by force, if necessary".⁶ To achieve this object India alone could provide the requisite troops, but at the moment she was not in a position to supply the required force owing to the many calls on her and the non-availability of equipment.

It is clear from the previous account that the Middle East was a vital area for the defence of India and of the Imperial interests which were defined by the General Staff as:—

- (1) maintenance of air base at Habbaniya,
- (2) maintenance of air route across Iraq as means of Imperial reinforcement,
- (3) security of the port of Basra,
- (4) security of the Iraq oilfields and the pipeline to Haifa,
- (5) facilities for air bases in Iraq from which to strike at the Soviet centres of oil production in the Caucasus,
- (6) maintenance of a line of supply for material to Turkey through Iraq,
- (7) Basra-Baghdad-Haifa line of communication, and
- (8) Iran oilfields.

For the purpose of securing these objects India had been asked to prepare a force of three divisions (Trout and later Sabine). This force was under training but owing to the inadequacy of the

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 6.

supply of equipment from the United Kingdom, it was unlikely that the force would be ready before July 1941. But, as has been mentioned earlier, before such a force was ready, the crisis in Iraq demanded action and India was compelled to send a force of one brigade (the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade) with ancillary troops and one field regiment of artillery by sea, while a British battalion was despatched by air to Shaiba to arrive simultaneously with the convoy. There was danger of an opposed landing, but the new Iraq Government was almost taken by surprise, and without any serious action the *coup de main* succeeded. The expulsion of Abdur Rashid prevented the Axis from acquiring a foothold in Iraq. There was of course Axis air action, but owing to the sudden collapse of the pro-Axis resistance in Iraq, no further action at that stage was taken by the Axis Powers. As a result of this quick action by the Government of India, Iraq and Iran came under British control. Henceforth the problem in the Middle East continued to be that of defending this area against any German infiltration.

Prior to June 1941, all appreciations for the defence of Iraq-Iran were based on a possible Soviet advance through the Caucasus-Caspian region. The entry of Russia into the war against Germany in June 1941 removed that threat, but the danger of German invasion from the north became more imminent. By the autumn of 1941, German forces had entered the Balkans which was made subject to their will. British resistance in Greece and Crete had failed and the eastern Mediterranean was dominated by Germany. In Northern Africa also, the position of the British forces was not quite strong. The German invasion there had been hammering almost at the gates of Egypt. Further progress of German arms towards Russia, and the rapid rolling back of the Russian forces right up to the river Don and into Caucasus, in the succeeding months, created a serious danger for the security of Iran, Iraq and Syria. The General Staff appreciation in this period was that Russian resistance could not long continue, and with the crumbling of the Russian front the possibility of a German move into the Middle East, from the direction of Caucasia or Turkey, would become serious. They felt that if Russia succumbed or Egyptian resistance collapsed, the German army might easily infiltrate in strength into northern Iran and Iraq. The possibility of Turkey either consenting to such a move or, in case of resistance, succumbing early to *force majeure* could not be eliminated. In these eventualities it was presumed that the German move eastwards would take three directions—

- (1) through Egypt, Palestine and Syria into Iraq,
- (2) through the Black Sea coast and Turkey into Iraq,

- (3) through Caucasia or Trans-Caspia into northern Iran and Iraq or south Iran.

This danger continued in all its intensity till about the end of 1942, when it was realised definitely that the Russian resistance was unlikely to crumble soon, and in Northern Africa the German forces had been driven back. During this period of about one year the question of preparing defences in Syria, Iraq and Iran became acute, and plans were prepared in which India had an effective share. Iraq and Iran were at that time rightly considered as the advanced defence of north-west India, for in case Iraq and Iran fell under German influence or the Germans could control the airfields in that region, or even could hold the ports on the Persian Gulf, the security of India would be considerably menaced. The defence of Syria-Iraq-Iran, therefore, may be regarded as a phase of external defence of India in which the Government and the General Headquarters of India were intimately concerned.

General Wavell, in his note of 29 September 1941, discussing the defence of Iraq estimated that the German attack would come either from Anatolia or by Azerbaijan and Persia or from both these directions at the same time. His view was that if it came from the first direction the line of hostile advance would be down the Euphrates and Tigris valleys and in the Jezira between them. If, on the other hand, the attack came from the north-east, the possible routes were (a) Tabriz-Rowanduz; (b) Kazvin-Hamadan-Khaniqin; (c) Hamadan-Khurramabad and Ahwaz.

The other appreciations which were made at the same time also based the plan of defence on possible German infiltration from these two directions. Turkey and northern Persia, from Caucasia to the south-east of Caspian Sea, were supposed to provide lines of advance for the German forces towards the oil regions of south Iraq and Iran and the head of the Persian Gulf, which was a vital area so far as British Imperial security was concerned. Any infiltration through Turkey towards Syria and Palestine could also have the effect of a pincer movement to throttle British forces in Northern Africa by action from two sides. In the event, therefore, it became essential for all plans to provide for the defence of a very large sector right from Alexandretta on the Mediterranean to Teheran and Ahwaz in Iran. The central fortress of this wide defence was Iraq which contained the Abadan area where oil was the chief concern. The defence of this region was conceived in concentric lines with the centre defended in depth on the method of a chain of fortresses.

The first possible route considered was that of Turkey where it was presumed the German forces would advance either through

western or eastern Anatolia. This advance would be directed, on the one hand, towards Iraq and, on the other, towards Syria and Palestine. In the Operation Instruction No. 101 dated 9 September 1941, the General Headquarters Middle East laid down the policy governing the defence of Syria and Palestine. Herein it was held that for the security of the main base in Egypt and of the Anglo-Iranian oilfields, it was most essential to deny to the Germans the aerodrome areas in northern Syria. For that purpose it was essential to afford full encouragement and support to the Turks against any German invasion of their country. In case such diplomatic move to secure Turkish co-operation failed, it would be necessary to check the German advance as far ahead of the borders of Syria in the Turkish territories as practicable. For this purpose, the plan laid down that the defiles in the southern Anatolian mountains should be occupied so as to stop the German forces in a country unsuited for armoured action. Such forward defence was to be based on the two following lines —

- (a) Watershed south-east of the railway Erzingansivas-Kayseri-Ulukisla. This was to be the forward line in western Anatolia.
- (b) Watershed south of the river Murad Su and of the railway Malatya-Alexandretta.

As an alternative the advanced line Diarbekr-Aintab-Antakia was suggested at the foothills as it was the only line which might be defended. Plans for the Allied advance to the two lines were to be prepared. It was, however, felt that in case of superior German strength the British forces might have to withdraw from northern Syria. In that eventuality, the hostile advance would have to be stopped in the mountainous area in south Syria and northern Palestine, "which could be effected by formations occupying previously prepared defended localities sited to protect the main aerodromes and base installations in the areas Baalbek-Rayk, Beirut and Palestine", and thus deny to the Germans the main arteries of communication. By this manoeuvre the German forces might be compelled to attack the Allied army in its prepared positions, where difficulties of maintenance would compel the Germans to slow their advance, and thus provide favourable opportunities for counter-strokes.

But such an attack on Syria would not materialise before the spring of 1942. Defences, therefore, were to be constructed on the basis of the available garrison which was estimated (a) at one Army, and two Corps Headquarters, (b) two armoured divisions and six infantry divisions exclusive of Free French Formations. Arrangements for demolitions had also to be made.

Measures for the defence of northern Iraq and northern Persia were also contemplated at the time. The German advance could, as has been mentioned earlier, come either from Caucasus or Turkey or both simultaneously. Estimating the danger from the Turkish side, the General Staff, in their appreciation of 10 September 1941, examined the main routes leading from Turkey towards northern Iraq and estimated that a force of at least nine divisions might be maintained by the Germans in that theatre. Further analysing the courses open to the Germans, the General Staff view was that they would attack Turkey by landings along the Black Sea coast as well as from western Anatolia. In that situation, the Turkish resistance would not last long and the German move towards Iraq might be rapid. To counteract it a move forward was necessary to a line in the mountains so as to block and cover main communications southwards. For this purpose the general line Bitlis-Mush-Kharput-Malatya offered suitable possibilities of resistance, particularly because its right flank rested on Lek Van. This line was regarded merely as a forward zone behind which it would be necessary to secure positions in northern Iraq. Mosul was to be the centre of such defence. Such defences were to be organised in three divisional areas, (1) north-east of Mosul covering the Rowanduz approach and linking with the Russian defences in Caucasus: (2) north-west of Mosul and (3) round Mosul itself. Each of these defensive areas was to include operational aerodromes, and was to be constructed for all-round defence and to be stocked with supplies at least for 60 days. For the support of these defensive areas, one armoured division and a heavy armoured brigade might be located in the vicinity of Mosul.

This central defence in northern Iraq was to be connected with the Syrian defence towards the west and the Russian defence system towards the north-east. Towards the west, a desert base for an armoured division would be required in the area Deir-Ez-Zor or Abu Kemal which would maintain touch with the forces in Syria and prevent the left flank being turned in the early stages. On the eastern side, the Russian forces, then in north Persia, might be sufficient to meet the threat, but their reinforcement with necessary aircraft and construction of adequate defences were necessary. In the event of a complete Russian collapse, the General Staff held the view that the British should be prepared to hold Tabriz for which an additional force of one infantry and one armoured division would be required. By this force it would be possible to prevent the Germans from establishing aerodromes in north Persia.

Apart from this outer line of defence, a defensive system in

the Baghdad area was also considered to be necessary, which was linked up with the Russian system in the general area Kerman-shah-Hamadan. Two infantry divisions with an armoured force would be necessary for maintaining this defence.

The general principles on which such defence was to be organised were outlined by the General Staff as follows:—

“ (1) As our object must be to delay and break up the enemy attack as far away as possible from our defences and as the enemy has difficult country to traverse with limited communications our operational aerodromes must be organised in depth and must be placed as far forward as possible”. This forward area would be north of Mosul where hostile aerodromes could not be permitted to be located.

“ (2) The frontages to be defended in Iraq preclude the adoption of any linear system of defence. The whole defensive system must therefore be based on areas organised for all-round defence which, even if by-passed by enemy, can still exert effective pressure owing to the armoured forces and air forces which they contain. Having regard to the necessity for depth it appears that defensive areas should be organised approximately about Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. This system of defence entails defended areas being entirely self-supporting.

“ (3) Any other system of defence can only be less effective and would inevitably lead to withdrawal. In these circumstances we should no longer be able to protect adequately our bases at Basra or the Anglo-Iranian oilfields, or to guarantee the security of the Persian railways. Under such conditions it would be necessary to consider whether our object still remained the defence of Northern Iraq and Northern Persia or had been reduced to that of the defence of India itself.

“ (4) The whole defensive system will be based on the static defence of certain vital areas as self-contained fortresses and comprising all arms, the attack of any enemy forces infiltrating between those areas by air forces located within the areas themselves and by armoured and motorised forces from the defended areas or from areas further in rear ”.

In this scheme of defence, the chief object of protection was Basra and the oilfields area. To prevent any infiltration to that central object, a depth in defence was required. The system of fortresses or defended areas honeycombed within the main region of defence was to be adopted so that a hostile force might be met outside the perimeter, and even if it infiltrated within, it would be easily liquidated by thinning its line of communication and by dealing with it by concentrated attack by air and armoured forces.

In addition to the preparation of these fortress areas, the lines on which operations were to be conducted were laid down. The main routes of invasion or advance were to be denied to the Germans by demolitions and inundations. Light mobile forces supported by artillery were also to be employed in forward regions to harass the invading forces. The idea was that the primary object of defence should be to attract the Germans to attack the principal defensive areas with the preponderance of their strength so that their force intended for push elsewhere would be weakened.

On this basis, to provide a depth in front of the bases at Basra and to prevent the Baghdad and Iran plain being overrun by the hostile forces, the defensive area was to be so organised as to prevent the German infiltration through the mountains of Kurdistan in the north east or of Turkey on the north-west. On the side of Turkey, the idea was to make a rapid advance by the armoured force and the 10th Indian Division to the Kharput area where forward defences were to be organised. In the rear, positions were to be prepared at (1) Zakho covered by the rivers Khabur Sa and Tigris, (2) river Dohuk and across the Tigris to Ainzala, (3) line Aski-Mosul-Assufa-Ishkaft-Sinjar and river Khabur Su, (4) river Little Zab-Tigris-Jabal Mak Hul.

On the north-eastern side in Persia, the positions to be prepared were to be located:—

- (1) on the frontier east of Rowanduz;
- (2) on the frontier east of Sulaimania in area Penjwin;
- (3) area Kermanshah-Kerind;
- (4) area Elam; and
- (5) Gorge north east of Dizful.

It was the outer line of defence behind which positions were to be prepared south-west of Baghdad as a last line of defence for Basra. This position could be defended by making extensive use of inundations in the west and utilising the river Tigris as the protection for the east flank. As a last resort, even if this Baghdad position failed to hold out, Basra-Abadan area was to be defended. Demolitions of course were to form part of the defence to delay the advance of the hostile forces.

This scheme seems to have been finally accepted. General Wavell, in his telegram No. 15872 dated 23 October 1941, indicated his decision to construct defensive positions which were to be as follows:—

- (1) Between river Tigris and hills at Faيدا south of Dohuk and bridgehead on west bank of river at Mosul and another bridgehead 50 miles south in Qaiyara area.

Outpost positions at Faish Khabur-Zakho and at Aski Mosul were also to be constructed.

- (2) All approaches to Baghdad were further to be blocked between the two rivers mainly by inundations, and a turning movement west of Euphrates was to be prevented by inundations between Lake Habbaniya and Kerbela.

Positions for defending main routes from Persia and Iraq were also to be prepared.

In this scheme of defence of northern Iraq, the base of manoeuvre was to be an area extending from Dohuk south to Baghdad resting, on the western side, on the river Tigris and, on the eastern side, on the Persian hills. Inside this area maximum possible force was to be kept fully mobile so as to be moved rapidly to reinforce any threatened point and to offer counter-attacks. General Wavell's estimate was that one armoured division, one heavy armoured brigade and six infantry divisions would be required for the purpose, and he presumed that the requisite force would be made available from India by April 1942, provided tanks and other equipment were supplied from the United Kingdom. Such a commitment was bound to "leave India itself dangerously weak" and General Wavell suggested it only if there was reasonable certainty of holding Iraq and north Persia.

On the basis of this plan defensive positions were prepared in the last part of 1941 and early in 1942.

The defensive plan for Iraq, Syria and northern Persia was based on the fullest cooperation between the Russian forces in northern Persia and Caucasia and the British-Indian forces in Iraq and Syria. It was agreed by all concerned that the best method of defending the Middle East against aggression from the north was to oppose the Germans in western Anatolia or alternatively in southern Anatolia, where positions might be seized along the watershed south of Erzinjan to the Taurus mountains or along the high ground on the Mardin-Malatya-Aintab line. If even this line was untenable, the invading forces were to be met on the frontiers of Iraq or Syria where defended positions in considerable depth would be prepared. It is clear from the whole plan that the linear defence which had been in vogue at the beginning of the war, but which had been found to be utterly useless, had been abandoned and in the Middle East as well as in the north-western defences of India the fortress system of defence in depth was adopted. Against armoured troops supported by air force no other effective system of defence was practicable, hence the Middle East and India Commands were justified in adhering to this mode of defence which alone could provide effective protection to the

Basra-Abadan-Persian Gulf region and which could have prevented infiltration of the German forces nearer to the frontiers of India.

The situation was further reviewed in the summer of 1942 when the Chiefs of Staff appreciated the threat to north Persia in case the Russian southern front collapsed that year. The odds at that time were calculated to be against Russia. In such an event, he felt that nothing would prevent the German forces from advancing through Persia and reaching the oilfields. Therefore, they must be opposed in north Persia for they could not be allowed to enter Iraq plains owing to the comparative weakness of the British-Indian forces in the armoured arm. The schemes of reinforcement by providing additional armoured divisions from the United States of America and the despatch of British and Indian divisions to Iraq, were suggested in order to attain the security of Persia in 1942-43. Anti-aircraft defences of Basra and Abadan-Bahrein area were also considered for the defence of the Persian Gulf ports. The Chiefs of Staff invested Basra-Abadan area with greater importance than the security of Egypt, for he felt that if Persia and Iraq were lost the position in Egypt would be untenable. The defence of the sources of oil and sea transport of the Middle East was more important not only for the defence of Egypt but also for the security of India and the stability of the British Empire.

The threat to the Middle East was considered to be very acute in the winter of 1942, though even in the spring of 1943 it had not minimised. If Russia failed or if Field Marshal Rommel succeeded in North Africa, the threat to Iraq and Iran would be considerable. There was therefore fullest appreciation of the situation by the Chiefs of Staff who were prepared to assign increasing forces for the protection of this area.

At this time, the German advance in Trans-Caspia through Baku was not overlooked. It was felt that a simultaneous advance might be made from Baku along with a thrust westwards through Julfa and Tabriz. But owing to the continuing Russian resistance in the Caucasus and the consequent slowing down of German advance there, it was not held likely that the Germans would reach Tabriz railhead before December 1942, when the winter would have been far advanced to permit any further German advance into Persia and Iraq. The advance from Baku-Rasht-Kazvin and Teheran or Kazvin-Hamadan or Hamadan-Ahwaz was also considered as likely to develop, but it was felt that no serious danger should be apprehended on that line before the spring of 1943, for which plans had to be considered.

Operation Instruction No. 3 of 20 November 1942, outlined the preparations for the campaign in 1943. The appreciation in respect of hostile forces was that by the end of December 1942 light forces might be concentrated on the Araxes and two divisions could advance to north Persia by the end of January 1943, while five divisions might be concentrated in the area Ardebil-Tabriz by May 1943. For the purpose of halting German advance in northern Persia, and for conducting a campaign on the northern frontiers of Persia and Iraq, the 10th Army together with the Polish Army were to be located in the Persian regions.

The outline plan, the code name of which was Gherkin provided for two objects:—

- “ (1) to retain for our own use and to deny to enemy as long as possible airfields in areas Teheran-Pahlevi-Ardebil-Tabriz,
- “ (2) to defeat enemy in area south and south-west of Mianeh should he succeed in reaching that area ”.

The forces were to be disposed in three lines in order to contain the hostile advance in some depth. The first line was to be on the axis Teheran-Kazvin-Pahlevi-Ardebil-Salyani. The second line was that on the axis Kazvin-Mianeh-Tabriz-Julfa, while the third was to be based on either side of Lake Urmia. It was held that the German advance south of the Araxes would be met by demolitions and troops on the three roads running south from Salyani, Julfa and Khoi. The intermediate positions at Ardebil and Tabriz were to be held which would also cover the landing grounds. The main positions were to be held on the right in the area Teheran-Manjil-Pahlevi, centre at Mianeh and left at Maragher and Rezaieh. Reserves were to be maintained in Kazvin-Mianeh and Kermanshah areas. This plan was intended to prevent any German infiltration towards the southern Persian oilfields or even towards the east in case of any likely breakthrough towards the frontiers of India.

By the beginning of 1943, however, it was clear that the Russian resistance would not collapse; rather on the contrary the German forces were being thrown back, while in North Africa Rommel had been driven far behind to the west. The danger to the Middle East had therefore considerably abated. Their heavy commitments in Europe and Russia could not afford the Germans any chance of invading Middle East in strength. The plans for Persia and Iraq, therefore, were less comprehensive and were directed mainly towards the local defence of the Persian Gulf regions and for building a base there for any future offensive action.

CHAPTER IX

Eastern Frontier: Preliminary Defence Plans

Unlike the North-Western Frontier the eastern frontier of India was comparatively secure. No danger of land attack was apprehended from the east because, unlike the west, no powerful states were there which might menace the security of the Indian frontiers. As long as England and Japan were on friendly terms, no danger was visualised. Even after the growing coolness between these two states, particularly after 1931, the danger of invasion by land was not considered to be great because of the inhospitability of terrain and the unlikelihood of Japan acquiring any bases on land in the neighbourhood of Burma. As long as Burma remained part of India, the protection of its eastern frontier was a charge on her, but with the separation of Burma, the Army Headquarters in India had little concern with it. The immediate eastern frontier of India was also not believed to be threatened. For, if Burma was a British possession, and was able to maintain its own defences, the north-eastern land frontier of India would not be a severe headache to the Army Headquarters.

The position of the coastal defences, however, was different. Only in case of Japan coming into conflict with the British Empire, danger of naval incursions, though on a minor scale, might be entertained. But to the extent that Singapore remained a strong base of the British Empire in South-East Asia, dominating the straits of Malacca and Sunda, there was little fear of Japanese fleet entering the Indian Ocean. Stray raids might not be altogether eliminated, but even in this case the danger was not likely to be considerable. Similarly, in respect of air attacks the position was that unless Japan could dominate the territories of Indo-China or Siam, or be in full control of South China, such air attacks on Indian bases were not practicable. Because of these reasons, prior to the Second World War no definite plans for defence of the eastern frontier had been prepared.

Subsequent to the year 1931, owing to the Manchurian crisis, the diplomatic situation in the east had deteriorated. The increasing hostility of Japan and the feeling that left to herself she would start on a career of expansion towards the south, led the British Government to consider measures of defence to safeguard her empire in South-East Asia. Between the years 1932 and 1938, therefore, the War Office and the Government of India were studying measures for strengthening the defences in those regions. But even during this period, when schemes for fortifying the

defences of Malaya, Hong Kong and Burma were devised, no fear was entertained for the actual borders of India. The Indian army was merely called upon to send troops to Hong Kong, Singapore or Rangoon for their protection, as it was believed that on the defence of these outer bastions depended the protection of India also.

On the eve of World War II, the diplomatic situation was none too re-assuring, but owing to the inadequacy of the forces which might be provided and equipped in India, and further owing to the more pressing menace on the north-western side, no schemes for the defence of the eastern frontier were prepared. The 1938 Plan included the defence of the coastal region against any possible raids, but owing to the impracticability of any invasion in strength either by land or by sea from the eastern side, no comprehensive plans were made for the eastern defences.

Earlier in 1927, however, the Commander of the Burma Independent District had prepared a plan of operations for the defence of the north-east frontier against the possible threat of a Chinese invasion from the side of Yunnan. Between the Chinese Government and the Government of India there had been a dispute in regard to some territory on the frontier; and this fact led to contemplation of a plan of operations in the likely event of an invasion from the other side. The plan, which was submitted by the Burma Independent District, provided for active defence of the frontier in case it was evident that the Chinese intended to create unrest on the borders of Burma or to cross the north-east frontier in force at any one or more points. This plan had no reference to the direct frontiers of India but was related only to the protection of the Burmese frontier. The object of the 1927 plan was to maintain the frontier line intact by troops suitably situated within the frontier and by active reconnaissance beyond it. In the appreciation, the probable strength of the hostile Chinese forces was calculated at not more than 145,000 men, if all the provinces of China in the neighbourhood of Burma would combine to concentrate their armed strength for invasion. The equipment of this force was not considered to be adequate either. Little air activity was estimated.

In order to meet the danger of any hostile thrusts towards Bhamo, the plan of operations provided for concentration of a striking force in the Mandalay-Maymyo area. In addition to this, the Frontier Police Battalions were to hold to their existing posts. Their main function would be to reconnoitre across the frontier by all known routes. The plan also included the despatch of the Upper Burma Movable Column, reinforced by two sections of

Field Company of Sappers and Miners to work on the improvement of communications to enable light motor transport to be used. In addition to these measures on the frontier, adequate internal security measures were also to be taken for which detailed dispositions were included in the plan.

This plan of operations, as prepared by the Burma Independent District, met with the approval of the General Staff, but the latter were not prepared to countenance any measures for the development of communications either between India and Burma or within Burma itself, because they did not at the moment apprehend any danger to Burma from the side of China. In their note of 13 August 1927, the General Staff stated, "At the present time our policy is to adopt a strict defensive attitude on the north-east frontier since we have no aggressive intentions ourselves, and because we are of opinion that the Chinese will not for a considerable time be in a position to undertake any important offensive against us, even if they wished to do so. No plan of operation exists for carrying a war beyond our frontier and need not be contemplated for the time being or in the near future". The General Staff had no faith in a policy of passive defence as had been the basis of the operational plan described above. It was their view that if developments in China resulted in a serious menace to the north-east frontier, the Indian army would have to veer round towards the offensive-defensive, a policy which had been prescribed for the North-Western Frontier.

The whole trend of the General Staff policy at the time was to discount danger to the north-east frontier. They felt that there was no urgent danger on that side and there were no objectives of any importance beyond the frontier for which offensive action should be adopted by the Indian army. The result was that the General Staff did not feel the necessity, at that stage, of developing communications in Burma, and whatever proposals were made for connecting Assam by road or by rail remained abortive.

The 1927 scheme had no reference to the general threat in subsequent years for no danger appeared from China, and the plan was merely limited to an examination of the threat from the side of Yunnan. As has been mentioned earlier, after 1931, the danger mainly came from the hostile attitude of Japan and affected the so-called external defences of India, viz. Hong Kong and Singapore. The attitude of Japan towards the United Kingdom continued to be unfriendly and hostile. Her sympathies were more with Germany and Italy. Hence on the eve of World War II an examination of the situation became necessary. A Conference was held at Singapore in June 1939 which was attended by the

representatives of the Governments of England and France. The scope of this Conference was to examine the defences of South-East Asia, particularly of Indo-China, Netherlands East Indies and the British possessions in Malaya. The appreciation made by the Conference was that Japan could attack Hong Kong or Tonking or Indo-China by air and sea. The main object of attack on Indo-China would be to cut off all communications with China from that coast. A subsidiary object might also be to seize good naval defences based in the vicinity of Cam-ranh Bay. The likelihood of a Japanese attack on British possessions in Borneo, Singapore or even the Dutch East Indies was not barred out. In order to combat any such threat the Conference recommended an increase of military, air and naval forces in Indo-China, and for that purpose, desired co-ordination of naval and air plans between England, France and Holland. Prior to the Second World War, therefore, the only measures which had been taken or were in contemplation related to the despatch of reinforcements to Singapore, and Hong Kong, and conversations for joint action by France, England and Holland to prevent Japanese intrusion into the south-west Pacific and through the Straits into the Indian Ocean. The danger was not rated high, hence the preparations to counteract it were neither adequate nor effective.

In the early months of the war, Japan did not show her hand. She did not enter the war till December 1941. During this period, the British authorities were neither prepared for war nor desired it. It was their appreciation that Japan would not fight the British Empire unless she was forced by the nationalist group in the country or by the ultimate weakness of the British. It was further believed by them that American economic strangle-hold over Japan would prevent her from taking any aggressive action. The British Government was, on its part, prepared to prevent the entry of Japan into the war, either by economic pressure or even by conceding to Japan certain concessions in China. In July 1940, the Secretary of State for India telegraphed to the Viceroy the developments in Japan and pointed out the measures which were then in contemplation to prevent Japan from becoming a threat to the British and French possessions in East Asia. The United States Government was asked to increase pressure on Japan even to the extent of full embargo on trade. A concrete offer was to be made to Japan with a view to securing a settlement between Japan and the Chinese Government. In lieu of Japanese neutrality in a European war and her preserving the status quo of the British, American, French and Dutch possessions in the Pacific, the United States and the British Commonwealth were prepared to render to

Japan financial and economic assistance. This course, however, did not materialise as the Japanese Government was reported to be in no mood to safeguard the interests of the other powers in East Asia.

Meanwhile, economic pressure by the United States was proving a serious burden to the Japanese Government, and the American intransigence led duly to the rise of the nationalist party which was aggressive in its intentions. The American assistance to China and her fleet manoeuvres, which were to extend even to the south-west Pacific, as well as the non-recognition of the puppet government which was established in China, made Japan resent American action. The situation, therefore, by the end of 1940 was growing tense and was productive of war.

Till the middle of 1940, it may be said, the Japanese policy appeared to lean towards maintaining better relations with the United Kingdom and the United States, but subsequent to the collapse of France and the entry of Italy into the war, Japanese ambitions appear to have been roused and the dreams of southern expansion were sought to be realised. It was reported that after the French capitulation, Japan adopted a more aggressive attitude towards the Allies. Pressure was then brought on French Indo-China to prevent supplies from being sent to Chiang Kai-Shek. Soon after, the British Government was also asked to prevent the supply of arms by the Burma-Yunnan road to the Chinese. This situation prompted a fresh appraisal of the developments in the Far East. In one of their reviews the General Staff in India, in June 1940, were of opinion that the Japanese would possibly enforce demands "which will enable the Chinese incident to be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion".¹ They felt that, even if Japan did not embark on direct aggression, she might make unacceptable demands which would ultimately force her into a war with the British Empire. In that eventuality, the General Staff made an appreciation of the course of action likely to be adopted by Japan. Attacks on Hong Kong, on Tonking, on Indo-China or later on British possessions in Borneo, which would give her access to the Dutch East Indies and afford her advanced naval bases close to the Meri oilfields, were considered likely. In addition, attacks on Singapore and trade routes in the Indian Ocean from her advanced naval or air bases in the South China Sea were also taken into account. The occupation of Thailand with "fifth column" assistance and thereby isolating Burma from Malaya and Indo-China, as well as an attack by air on the oil

¹ "Probability of Japanese Aggression" Appreciation by G S. June 1940 para. 22 (File No. F 454 Part I).

refineries in Burma, were also to be expected. It was felt that Japanese resources were adequate to enable them to adopt two or three of these courses concurrently. But even in this long category of the possible objects of Japanese aggression, a land attack on Burma was not considered likely. The Burma-Yunnan road was not deemed to be a feasible proposition and no other possible line of approach by land to Burma was then apparent.

Realising the most probable course of action, the General Staff appreciation was that the Japanese long term policy of Asia for the Asiatics would in the first place make Japan enforce her will on China. Then in pursuit of the achievement of her ultimate aim of eliminating European influence from the Far East, she would be brought into conflict with the British Empire which was the main obstacle in her path to the domination of Asia. For this purpose, Japan would covet Hong Kong; but the appreciation did not consider the capture of Hong Kong at the moment as likely. In the case of Indo-China, however, the appreciation was that the collapse of France would perhaps lead to an early occupation of that country. That was to be Japan's most probable immediate step. If Indo-China fell to the Japanese, the danger to the British position in Asia would become serious. Indo-China was recognised as a first line of defence for Malaya and Burma. It was a convenient stepping stone for further Japanese advance into Thailand, British Borneo, the Netherlands East Indies, Singapore and Malaya. From that vital area air and land operations might conveniently be mounted against all those regions. Thus, from her base in Indo-China, Japan was expected to develop aggression in several directions. But even as late as the middle of 1940, it was presumed that Japan in her then economic position would be anxious to avoid rupture with the United States, and thus would not be brought into direct clash with the British Empire. Though it was assumed that Japan would be content with the gain of some economic or political concessions, the ultimate likelihood of danger to the British interests was not barred out. It was therefore feared that subsequent to the occupation of Indo-China, Japan would enforce her will on Thailand, and on a favourable opportunity deal with Malaya and Singapore by land, sea and air, attack Burma, Assam and eastern Bengal by air, and overrun the Dutch East Indies and subsequently send naval forces into Indian waters for a direct attack on India. The general conclusion of this appreciation was that while Japan would avoid conflict with the United States and the British Empire, she might under certain circumstances be compelled to occupy French Indo-China which would involve serious strategic implications for British position in Malaya,

Burma and India itself. The General Staff were fully conscious of the impracticability of launching military, naval or air action in support of the French in Indo-China. They were also not quite sanguine of any drastic action being taken by the United States. Hence they wrote: "Should Japan take this step our strategic position not only in Malaya and Singapore but also in Burma and India will have to be entirely reconsidered. The future possibilities cannot under present circumstances be foreseen, but it is perfectly obvious that Japanese control of Indo-China may be a first and very large step towards extending her influence to India in furtherance of the aims of her ultimate Asiatic policy".²

Similar conclusions were arrived at by the British Government as is evident from their telegram to the Viceroy dated 14 August 1940.³ While holding that the ultimate aim of Japan would be the exclusion of western influence from the Far East and the control of raw materials in that area, which would not be available without the capture of Singapore which was a potential threat to her western Pacific expansion, hope was entertained that she would, on the termination of the European war, confine her attempts to eliminate British influence from China and Hong Kong without incurring rupture with the United States and the British Empire. The policy of avoiding open clash with Japan was reiterated. In consequence the British Government was then prepared to enter into a wide settlement in the Far East, including economic concessions to Japan if that would help maintain peace. The position was so desperate that on the failure of a general settlement on satisfactory terms, the British Government was even prepared "to play for time, concede nothing until we must and build up our defences as soon as we can".⁴ In this connection, they analysed their interests in the Far East, the security of which was essential. Among others, Malaya and Netherlands East Indies, Burma, trade routes in the Indian Ocean and western Pacific as well as China trade, were recognised as the vital interests which must be safeguarded. Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies contained essential raw materials control of which was extremely important. Apart from that, they feared that the Japanese occupation of either would greatly threaten the security of Singapore with whose defence were directly connected the interests of security in the Indian Ocean region.

² Appreciation by G. S., June 1940 para 34.

³ Telegram XX No 2461/S. From Secretary of State (File E 23, Vol. III).

⁴ "The Situation in the Far East in the event of Japanese Intervention Against us" Appreciation by Chiefs of Staff Committee, War Cabinet, dated 15-8-1940. Appendix No. 6 to War Diary G.H.Q. Far East (File No. 601/7228/H).

Discussing the strategy in the Far East, the British Government held the view that the foundation of it should be to base a strong fleet on Singapore to provide cover for communications in the Indian Ocean and south-western Pacific and thereby frustrate any large expedition which the Japanese might attempt against Australia, New Zealand or British Far Eastern possessions. But they realised that as long as Germany and Italy had not been defeated, concentration of a fleet adequate for the purpose was not possible. In the absence of this fleet, some damage to the British interests had necessarily to be borne. An analysis of the possible courses of action open to Japan was made. The danger was assessed for Singapore, Indo-China and Thailand as bases for attack on Malaya and finally on the Netherlands East Indies. While discounting any immediate threat to Singapore, the British Government considered it important to be prepared for an assault against that base and to increase the defences there to deter Japanese aggression. In regard to Thailand or Indo-China, it was felt that the Japanese thrust could not be prevented, and that their penetration into Thailand would necessarily have serious consequences for the security of Singapore, Penang, Malacca Straits and Rangoon oil refineries. With Thailand in Japanese hands, land advance against Malaya would be greatly facilitated. The defence of Burma and Malaya would, in that case, become very difficult. But even with this occupation of Thailand and Indo-China, the sea routes would be out of danger. The same complacency, however, did not prevail in the case of the last course, that of an attack on the Netherlands East Indies, as it was apprehended that if Japan established herself in the Netherlands East Indies the whole system of British defences would be gravely compromised. The vital sea communications and base at Singapore would be endangered and the air route from Singapore to Commonwealth countries threatened. It was emphasised that "security of Netherlands East Indies is therefore an essential British interest second only to the integrity of Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, and their defence is an important part of our Far East Defence Plans".⁵

This appraisal led to an examination of the defences of these zones and the primary bases. Firstly, the necessity of holding the whole of Malaya, rather than concentrating on the defence of Singapore alone, was emphasised, and that was likely to involve the employment of large land and air forces. Next came the defence of Burma, but in this case beyond the possibility of danger

⁵ *Ibid.* para 34.

from air to the keypoints, such as oil refineries and aerodromes, the invasion of Burma territory except in the extreme south was a remote contingency. The main problem, therefore, was to prevent Japan from having bases in South-East Asia, and for this purpose, at that stage, the strengthening of the defences in Malaya and the cooperation with the Dutch were the indispensable measures. In the absence of a strong naval fleet, air and land forces alone would be employed. Hence proposals were made to strengthen the air force in the Far East and to reinforce the army in Malaya.

Though the General Staff recognised the ultimate possibility of danger to India, yet in 1940, the possibility of land invasion seems to have been ruled out. Even in case war did occur with Japan, the mainstay of defence would be Singapore, and to prevent Japanese access into the Indian Ocean, it would be necessary to deny them a hold on Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies by concentrating all forces there. As long as these bases were in British hands the likelihood of any serious threat even to the coastline of India would not be great. Hence no plans of a comprehensive defence for the eastern frontier of India were prepared. The whole emphasis of the British Government during this period was on preparing forces for despatch overseas to the Middle East or to Malaya for the protection of these outer bastions of India's defence. Yet, in view of the situation then developing in the Far East, in the plans for defence, the necessity of joint planning with Burma and Malaya was realised. The Defence Plan of 1941, though primarily concerned with the defences of the North-West Frontier, could not altogether leave out of consideration the eastern threat and had therefore to be comprehensive in its scope. Besides including coast defence and internal security, it took into account the defences of north-east India also. While holding that land attack was unlikely, potential danger to main industrial areas in Eastern India by air attack was rated as large. Therefore, air defence based on the close defence of certain areas producing vital necessities for the war effort, such as Digboi, Calcutta, Tananagar and Asansol, was provided for by the proposal to establish at least one fighter squadron at each of these places. A proposal for having necessary observer layout and for establishing static anti-aircraft guns in these places, was also included in the Plan. The Eastern Command seems to have also taken up the question of providing ground defences for the aerodromes. In addition, adequate protection of the possible landing places on the sea coast was also thought of.

Japan entered war in December 1941. In one of the Intelligence appreciations on the situation in the Far East of

22 October 1941, the chances of Japan entering the war were speculated upon. The conclusion was that "If Japan makes up her mind to fight she will come in soon and the fact that she should come in soon must tend to force her to make up her mind quickly".⁶ In this appreciation the possibility of Japan adopting a southern objective was discussed, but even up to that date, the likelihood of Japan moving northwards against Russia was not altogether ruled out as an alternative. In case of a southern advance, Burma was deemed to be Japan's most suitable objective. But till the end of 1941 no effective measures for the defence of Burma or India on the eastern side had been adopted.

Though prior to the close of 1941, no comprehensive plans of defence had been prepared, the Eastern Command and the Army Headquarters, India, were not quite oblivious of the danger. In their letter of 23 October 1940, the Headquarters Eastern Command apprised the General Staff of the measures which they then contemplated to counteract any possible Japanese large-scale naval raid or a small combined operation. Feeling that Calcutta must form a tempting objective of such attacks, and that Budge Budge with its oil storage, the neighbourhood of Calcutta with all the ordnance and other important factories and Tatanagar with its steel producing plant, were not impregnable, the Eastern Command considered it necessary to improve the defensive arrangements along the coastline of Bengal and Orissa, specially because the naval position of the British in eastern waters was weak and dependence on American intervention was inadvisable. The Eastern Command had ground and air reconnaissances made of the whole area and formulated an appreciation and a plan for defence, demolitions and inundations. Their appreciation was based on the vulnerability of India and the delay which might be involved in installing the defences. The Eastern Command did not altogether eliminate the possibility of a Japanese attack on India, as they rightly felt that as a member of the Axis, Japan might be induced by Germany to threaten India with a view to containing the forces within the country and fomenting internal unrest, so that all war help which India was then rendering to the British Empire would be prevented.

The General Staff did not approve of the appreciation of the Eastern Command, but informed it that a plan of operations of 1941 was then being drafted which would deal fully with the threat to which India might be exposed from external aggression. In their own appreciation the General Staff were of the view that as long

⁶ An Intelligence Appreciation on the situation in the Far East dated 22-10-1941 para. 24(e) (File No. 12151/H).

as Singapore and the Dutch East Indies were held by the Allies, and the Japanese had not been able to establish any points on the coasts of Malaya, Dutch East Indies or Sumatra, the scale of attack on the eastern shores of India would not exceed "that which could be carried out by a cruiser, armed marine cruiser or submarine. Such attacks would be limited to bombardment or attack on shipping by torpedo or mine-laying in the approaches of a port. Attack by sea carrier borne aircraft would be limited to such aircraft as could be carried in the above vessels and would in consequence be on a light scale".⁷ They also held the view that attack by raiding parties landed by war/marine vessels would also be on a very small scale and would not involve any considerable danger to the security of the Indian coastline. They also considered that lack of communications, and the very limited capacity of those which existed, excluded the possibility of land attack on any effective scale. In regard to air attacks also their view was that from bases in Yunnan, French Indo-China or Thailand, Japan could not operate more than 50 aircraft for attacking India. "The effectiveness of an attack carried out over these distances must depend on the resistance offered by us".⁸

In their letter of 13 February 1941, to the various Commands in India, the General Staff further elucidated their viewpoint in regard to possible Japanese threat. They were conscious of the fact that the situation in the Far East might deteriorate and become acute at short notice. In the event of hostilities with Japan, therefore, they did not rule out the liability of Indian shores to raids, the strength of which would depend on the situation. But they still held the view, enunciated earlier, that until the Japanese had acquired possession of the Singapore region, a landing operation against India or Ceylon was improbable and attacks were unlikely to exceed the scale described earlier. Even after the fall of Singapore, they did not believe that any large-scale attack would develop for some time. Discussing the objectives of such a raid on India, which naturally would be a minor one and of a "hit and run" nature, they thought that its sole purpose would be that of creating a psychological effect on the population of India and a diversion to curtail the despatch of reinforcements either to the east or to the west. If a mere psychological effect was to be the object of such a raid, then the Japanese would execute it against any point on the vast coastline, provision against which would not always be possible.

⁷ "Consideration of the possibility of Japanese attack in the Bay of Bengal" Appreciation by G G S. dated 6-12-1940 para 6 (File No. F 44)

⁸ Letter No 49849/2/M O.I. A.H.Qs. India G S Br 28-12-1940 "Appreciation of the Situation for the Defence of Eastern India" para. 3 (File No. F 44).

The General Staff held that there were no important installations near the coastline which might be Japan's main objectives. The purport of this letter seems to be to convince the various Commands that for some time to come there was no appreciable danger to the Indian coastline or to the Indian territories, and, therefore, no measures which would in any manner affect the primary task of sending reinforcements to the Middle East should be entertained.

The Eastern Command prepared another plan just on the eve of the declaration of war by Japan and before Malaya or Burma had succumbed to the Japanese attack. That plan was based on giving minimum protection to the provinces of Assam, Bengal and Orissa. By that plan the Eastern Command desired to break the existing Presidency and Assam District into two parts, one the Assam District and the other to be called the Bengal District. The Assam District was to make all arrangements for the eventual location of three brigade groups one each at Chittagong, Imphal and Digboi. The divisional troops were to be located in Manipur State, possibly at the railhead Manipur Road. For Bengal District their proposal was that the 93rd Indian Infantry Brigade should be moved from Delhi to Calcutta area and should be in addition to the troops located in the Bengal District. The task for this brigade would be to undertake the preparation of beach defences at Balasor, Diamond Harbour and Port Canning, and on completion of these to concentrate in Ranchi. In addition to these arrangements, the Eastern Command also decided to organise, from the resources existing within the Command itself, three brigade groups each to be located at Kharagpur, Barrackpore and Dhanbad. These three brigades were to act almost as reserve troops which would be available for immediate despatch to deal with any attempted landings in any area. Internal security was also to be properly organised and a tentative order of battle was prepared.

The General Staff did not fully accept these proposals. They considered the defence of Chittagong to be intimately connected with that of Calcutta and also held that defences beyond those existing at Diamond Harbour or Port Canning were not necessary. They did not, therefore, accept the proposal of reinforcing the Eastern Command forces by the move of the 93rd Indian Infantry Brigade. They were not prepared at that stage to strengthen the defences of the eastern regions to any considerable extent.

In respect of air action, however, the General Staff were prepared to adopt measures which might minimise the risk of such raids, besides issuing orders for the passive air defence including observer and warning system and obscuration of lights. They

suggested the construction of fighter strength in the eastern areas. The stationing of a fighter squadron at Dinjan and the other two at Dum Dum and Jamshedpur, besides installing anti-aircraft guns in Calcutta and other affected areas such as Digboi, or Tatanagar, were also ordered at the time.

Soon after the entry of Japan into the war, the Joint Planning Staff prepared an appreciation of air threat to India and Burma.⁹ The vulnerable points in north-east India were considered to be "the docks and industrial installations of Calcutta, the industrial centres at Jamshedpur and Asansol and oil installations at Digboi". "The ports of Vizagapatam, Madras, Cochin, Bombay and possibly Karachi" were believed to be "liable to attack by submarine or surface raider or by ship-borne aircraft". Danger of mining from the air of certain ports was also there. But as late as 15 December 1941, the assumption was that the objectives in India were "at considerable range" and were "liable to sporadic raids" only. To meet this danger, the Joint Planning Staff recommended that two fighter squadrons should be based at Dum Dum for the defence of Calcutta, and one each at Jamshedpur, Asansol, and Dinjan for the protection of Tatanagar, Asansol and Digboi, respectively. These recommendations found favour with the General Staff. In addition to this, coast defence was also considered and the Joint Planning Staff examined the measures for the defence of Port Blair, Akyab and Chittagong, as these were liable to Japanese attack.¹⁰ While Port Blair and Akyab might expect early attack, Chittagong was not assumed to be menaced until the Japanese had been established in Akyab and the Andamans. Hence the only course adopted on 27 December 1941, was to ask the Eastern Command to prepare a plan for its defence.

It is clear from the action taken up to the end of 1941 that the General Staff in India were suffering from a peculiar complacency, which prevented them from adopting effective measures to counteract any possible Japanese threat against Eastern India or her coastline. The commitments in the Middle East might have been responsible for this attitude, for they were considered to be necessary in the interest of Imperial defence or even the external defence of India and against the possibility of Soviet attack and, after the middle of 1941, of the probable German aggression from the north-western side. Forces in India were not considerable. Though manpower was available, equipment could not be spared by the United Kingdom. Hence, adequate forces to meet the threat both from the east and west could not be prepared in time.

⁹ J.P.S. Paper No. 1, 15 December 1941 (File No. 12002/H).

¹⁰ J.P.S. Paper No. 2, 23 December 1941 (File No. 12003/H).



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The immediate danger in the Middle East had priority, and in their weakness the British and Indian Governments hoped that Japan would not enter the war. They also placed a disproportionate reliance on the naval base at Singapore. The absence of effective plans to meet any possible danger to the Indian frontiers was largely due to these considerations.

The Japanese war commenced in December 1941, her advance in South-East Asia was rapid, and within three months the danger had become acute to the shores and eastern frontiers of India. Early in January 1942, the Japanese thrust into Malaya materialised, and it was so rapid that soon they appeared before Singapore which was also doomed. On 15 February, the British Commander surrendered to the Japanese and the whole of Malaya thus came to be part of their southern possessions. Prior to the occupation of Malaya, Thailand and Indo-China had been subjected to Japanese control. Their next move was, therefore, naturally against Burma in the north and Java and Sumatra in the south. By the end of February, the Dutch East Indies had practically fallen to the Japanese and the straits of Malacca and Sundas were completely controlled by them. Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Sumba and Timor had all been covered by a great defensive net and had become strong forts from which offensive action might be launched into the Indian Ocean. First-class bases and adequate supplies had also been acquired which gave the Japanese considerable advantage in their further moves. The route both to India and Australia lay open to them which they could strike either simultaneously or separately, depending on the strength of their resources.

The Japanese advance into Burma soon materialised, leading to the rapid retreat of the resisting Indo-Burmese forces. By the middle of February 1942, the threat to Rangoon had considerably increased, and by early March that important port had also fallen to the Japanese. Then commenced their move towards Upper Burma possibly with the dual object of controlling the road leading into China and threatening the north-eastern frontiers of India. Before the commencement of monsoon in May, the Japanese had definitely acquired a preponderant military position in the regions of South-East Asia, immediately bordering on India, and the danger to the security of the Indian frontiers had become considerable.

These developments in South-East Asia made the authorities in India fully conscious of the serious menace to her security. The appreciations in the first three months of 1942 were based on the realisation of this danger and have a more realistic touch about

them. While early in January the possibility of land attack was not assessed very high, by the end of March, owing to the rapid advance of Japanese forces in Burma, such a contingency conditioned the plans and policy of defence.

Early in January, the Joint Planning Staff drew up an appreciation of Japanese threat to India,¹¹ which formed the "basis for further detailed planning". Prior to the Japanese occupation of Malaya and Netherlands East Indies only "sea and seaborne air attack and minor raids" were believed to be possible, though "later, when the Malaya-Netherlands East Indies barrier has been pierced major landings will be possible". The Japanese had the initiative, hence it was difficult to determine precisely the areas they might attack first. Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Vizagapatam, Madras and Ceylon were considered to be the areas threatened by land, air or seaborne attack. Except Assam all other areas were only susceptible to seaborne and air attack. Hence, as the Deputy Chief of General Staff put it, "the major partners in the defence of our vital threatened areas must be sea and air forces. If these are inadequate the land forces can do very little. It is only adequate sea and air forces that can keep him at arms length". Hence the best plan that could be then adopted, judging from the Japanese strategy, was (a) to deny aerodromes to the Japanese which they might use for land based aircraft, and (b) to protect and develop such aerodromes as might be required "to cover and support the combined operations entailed in our defence".¹²

The Deputy Chief of General Staff, in his note on the appreciation, very clearly defined the then object of defence. He wrote "our object for the time being is to prevent any Japanese incursion into India and Ceylon, until such time as we can turn to the offensive. In considering our policy to attain our object we must not lose sight of the ultimate aim which is the defeat of Germany, since this ultimate aim affects the disposition of such forces as we now have available in India and of future reinforcements".¹³ With this limited object, governed essentially by the primary aim of defeating Germany, defence planning had to be pursued. This implied the determination of priority of the threatened areas. Major General Molesworth was of the view that "the Japanese combined advance will be *first* via Burma against India", entailing "the defence of the Assam frontier and provision to deal with landings on the coast Akyab-Chittagong-Calcutta-

¹¹ J.P.S. Paper No. 4, dated 23 Jan. 1942 (File No. F 139 I).

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*.

Balasure". The *second* area was Ceylon for the purpose of "rendering Trincomalee and Colombo unusable as fleet bases". The *third* area was Vizagapatam-Madras, an attack on which would be for diversionary purpose and to lower the morale in India. But he considered attack on the north-eastern area as most serious as it endangered "our major production area".¹⁴

The basic need at the time was to prevent the collapse of Burma and the Netherlands East Indies, the two bastions of India, and to determine the strategy which should be employed. This appreciation and the note by Deputy Chief of General Staff formed the basis of subsequent planning of the defence of India.

Soon after, in a joint naval, army and air appreciation of the Japanese threat to India, prepared on 31 January 1942, a definite possibility of attack on India was emphasised. It was then appreciated that the Japanese strategy would be directed towards securing Sumatra, Nicobars, Andamans, Lower Burma, and Tenasserim from which area effective control of the Bay of Bengal might be gained and a major landing operation in Bengal and Orissa staged, possibly in conjunction with a land and air campaign to secure the whole of Burma. At this stage, owing to the war having not progressed appreciably in Burma, a direct threat of land attack was not considered to be imminent, but it was mostly the danger of seaborne attack and air attack which was taken account of. The view then held was that the Japanese could carry out naval bombardment, submarine and seaborne, and air attack against the coasts of India. It was also felt that as soon as the Malacca Straits had been controlled by the Japanese, raids by land forces might be expected which would be of the strength of one infantry brigade. Further, when they had scored a major success at sea in addition to having secured control of the Straits, it was feared that a major landing operation of the strength of two divisions would be possible. The objective of these attacks whether by sea or air was considered to be Bengal and Orissa area, which owing to its industries was an attractive objective. The situation of the north-eastern area made it susceptible of being a target both for Japanese land-based aircraft as well as for landing operations conducted by way of the sea. Madras-Vizagapatam coast was also believed to be a probable objective, though a secondary one. Hence the first aim of defence was defined to be "to ensure that Chittagong, and the area containing Calcutta and Jamshedpur do not fall into the enemy's hands".

This danger was further emphasised in the plan for the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

defence of north-east India which was drawn up by the General Staff on 12 February 1942. As in the previous appreciations, the Japanese strategy was believed to be directed towards securing the perimeter Sumatra-Nicobars-Andamans-Rangoon for the purpose of gaining effective control of the Bay of Bengal. Major landing operation in Bengal or Orissa in conjunction with a campaign to secure the whole of Burma were estimated as likely. Seaborne raids and air attacks against the coasts of India and inland as far as Digboi and Jamshedpur were also considered probable. But a land attack against Assam and eastern Bengal was not then believed to be possible unless the whole of Burma had been overrun. In that eventuality, however, an attack on a wide front was deemed practicable, the minimum strength of which would be two divisions. It was also feared that the scale of air attack would increase very considerably.

General Wavell, in his telegram to the War Office, dated 7 March 1942, very clearly emphasised the danger flowing from the course of war in the east.¹⁵ He pointed out that the immediate Japanese objectives after the occupation of Java would be:

- (a) Rangoon and Andamans to secure naval/air bases in the areas facing the Bay of Bengal, and
- (b) Upper Burma with a view to cut communications between India and China and with the object of establishing air bases for attack on India.

General Wavell did not agree with the appreciation of the War Office that Ceylon would be the more probable object of Japanese attack. He considered Burma, on the contrary, as the most vital area in war against Japan, and was emphatically of the view that the Japanese advance would be rather against Burma and north-east India than Ceylon. He was keen to divert British war effort towards Burma in order to maintain connection with China, to protect north-eastern India, and to secure essential air bases from which the Japanese air bases might be attacked. He did not concur in the importance of Ceylon, and was dissatisfied that troops and aircraft which were required in north-east India were being diverted to that region. Anticipating an early attack on Upper Burma, which could not be resisted for long, and appreciating that Mandalay and Lashio would be the immediate objectives of the Japanese thrust, and also fearing raids on Akyab and Chittagong, he considered the threat of attack on north-east India by land, by seaborne forces and by air an immediate possibility. This view, however, was not shared by the War Office who, on

¹⁵ Telegram No. 5084/G dated 7-3-1942 from Army India to Troopers (File No. F 806).

13 March, reiterated their view of the importance of Ceylon. They wrote "We agree with your conception of forming bastions in north-east India but the problem is to decide what portion of our slender resources it is right to allot to this area vis-a-vis Ceylon. In our view the security of our Indian Empire depends in the last resort on our ability to control sea communications in the Indian Ocean. For this we must have secure naval bases, and the only ones in sight for some time to come are in Ceylon. For these reasons we consider that defence requirements of Ceylon must be given priority although we agree that north-east India is very important, and also appreciate potential internal security problems with which you may be faced in Bengal and eastern India".¹⁶

The India Command, however, did not seem to place the same emphasis on the defence of Ceylon as on that of north-east India. In one of their most important papers, the Joint Planning Staff, on 14 March 1942, analysed the strategic situation which had taken a radically adverse turn; for with Japan effectively controlling large portions of China, the whole of Indo-China and Thailand, Philippines, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies and Southern Burma, the immediate possibility of threat to north-east India and the whole of the east coast of India and Ceylon had become considerable. They thought, therefore, that the situation demanded that the whole of India must be effectively organised for defence. They did not discount the potential threat to the north-west of India, for they were conscious of the probability of a combined Japanese and German aggression, but the Japanese offensive plan, which was prominently emerging, made them devote greater attention to it, for the immediate problem was to defeat the threat in the east. They were fully conscious of the adverse and serious effects of Japanese invasion of India. The most serious consequences which might then be envisaged were:

- " (a) a big refugee problem,
- (b) a serious internal security problem,
- (c) the probability of fifth column activities in Bengal,
- (d) large scale desertion of labour from the threatened areas paralysing all industrial and transport activities,
- (e) breakdown in civil administration,
- (f) large scale looting, and
- (g) general loss of morale throughout the population of India which could not escape having an effect on the Indian forces".¹⁷

¹⁶ Telegram No 76116 M.O. 12 A dated 13-3-1942 from Troopers to Army India (File No. F 150 Pt I).

¹⁷ J.P.S. Paper No. 7 dated 14-3-1942 "Defence of India and Ceylon" (File No. 12152/H).

To prevent this general dislocation, which would seriously reduce the military effort in India, they emphasised the necessity of preventing invasion from the east and adopting all measures, at this stage, towards that end.

This view found support in the Commander-in-Chief's Conference held at Calcutta on 17 March 1942. This Conference examined the defences of India and the possibility of Japanese invasion, and came to the conclusion that the Japanese would attempt a seaborne attack either in the Sundarbans area or directly on Calcutta or in its neighbourhood. A land attack on Assam coupled with infiltration up the east coast was also not improbable. This view was based on Intelligence Reports which pointed out that Japan had sufficient ships and troops available to transport a total of six divisions. Hence an attack of the strength of about nine divisions by way of the sea and two divisions or more through Burma was apprehended.

Thus before the end of March 1942, and prior to the occupation of the whole of Burma by the Japanese, the India Command had become fully conscious of the imminence and intensity of threat from the east. While recognising the value of Ceylon as an important naval base in the Indian Ocean, they laid greater emphasis on the security of north-east India, for it was here that the major war effort of India was concentrated. Any threat to this area was bound to affect adversely the whole war situation of the Allies, and, therefore, realising the magnitude of the threat from the east, the India Command was keen to prepare plans for the effective defence of that region.

In north-east India, certain regions were considered to be of considerable importance whose defence was a prime necessity. By virtue of their importance, these areas were considered to be threatened in a larger measure. In the plan of 12 February 1942, these areas were enumerated as (1) Chittagong, (2) Calcutta, (3) Jamshedpur, (4) Cuttack, (5) operational aerodromes and (6) the Assam-Burma frontier, especially at points where communications crossed the frontier.¹⁸ The Joint Planning Staff, in their paper of 14 March, examined the threatened areas throughout the country and were of the view that the following areas should be susceptible to attack:—

- (a) Assam; (b) Bengal; (c) East Coast about Vizagapatam;
- (d) East Coast about Madras; (e) the southern extremity of India including Travancore and Cochin; (f) Ceylon and

¹⁸ Plan for the Defence of North East India dated 12-2-1942 No. 34/D.M.O. G HQ., India, G.S.Br New Delhi (File No. F. 806, Part 1).

(g) Bombay.¹⁹

They analysed the importance of each one of these areas and came to the conclusion that Bengal and Ceylon were both of the first importance: Bengal because it contained heavy industries and main rice supplies, and Ceylon as the most important naval position in the Indian Ocean. They did not attribute the same importance to the areas Vizagapatam and Madras, though they were of the view that in Japanese hands these would seriously prejudice the defence of the main areas. As regards Assam, immediately its importance was as the main supply route to Burma and China. It was not at the moment considered seriously to be threatened owing to the poor land communications, but in case Burma was to be overrun wholly, Assam would become equally important as an integral part of the defence of Bengal. The Joint Planning Staff view was that these areas must be held as bases for organising the defence of the country, and the most important purpose of the plans was to provide for the defence and security of these areas.

The underlying policy of the plans then prepared was, in the words of General Wavell, "of mobility and immediate attack on enemy landing forces. Mobility will be secured by improvement of communications and fortifications of important road junctions and river crossings as pivots of manoeuvre".²⁰ The problem was of both preventing an invasion of the country as well as of defeating it, in case the invasion was not wholly prevented. For this purpose it was necessary to fight for Bengal and Assam as far forward as possible, for which fullest co-operation of the naval, land and air forces was necessary. The policy of offensive action against invading forces was also contemplated. Unlike the defence of the north-west region, little reliance was placed on static defences, though the necessity of preparing defended localities to cover river crossings and centres of communication was not excluded. These were intended as pivots of manoeuvre for offensive action, and had to be prepared for all-round defence and fully supplied to enable their being held for several weeks. The whole basis of the plans was mobile action on a wide front with columns of the size of a brigade group or less, converging on the locations of the hostile forces. In the early stages the plan was based on the policy of defending certain localities, but, in later phases, it was believed that the best policy would be that of meeting the Japanese forces as far ahead as possible.

¹⁹ J.P.S. Paper No. 7 dated 14-3-1942 "Defence of India and Ceylon" (File No. 601/12152/H).

²⁰ Telegram No. 6353/G dated 19-3-1942. From Arminia to Troopers G.O.S. from General Wavell (File No. F 806 Pt. II).

But there was no illusion about the unpreparedness of the forces for the task. The strength of the available forces was wholly inadequate and it was felt that, in case invasion came before reinforcements had arrived, the choice would have to be between the two main lines of policy:

- “(a) the dispersal of our forces to protect ports and air base areas,
- (b) a decision to withdraw our forces from certain areas before they are inextricably committed, in order to hold one or more strategic positions strongly. These positions must be such that they can be reinforced and from which a counter-offensive to drive the enemy out of India can be taken. However desirable it might be to hold areas such as Bengal the fact that this might be impossible must be recognised”²¹

It was feared that in case of a full scale offensive action by the Japanese, Bengal might not be held with the existing forces. Hence, withdrawal to previously prepared positions with a view to subsequent counter-offensive had to be envisaged. In addition to this, it was felt necessary to organise the country against invasion, and lines on which demolitions and denial on a large scale would be executed were also considered. The policy, therefore, on which the plans were to be based was of defending the important areas and naval bases, centres of communication, and the main centres of industrial production, of meeting the hostile forces as far ahead as possible, and in case of failure to prevent infiltration or a large-scale invasion to prepare for demolitions and ultimate withdrawal to the west of Bengal.

The first plan was that of 12 February 1942. The object of this plan was to hold and defeat the Japanese attack on India either by land from Burma or in the form of a seaborne attack on the coast of Bengal and Orissa or a combination of both. The scale of attack was considered in three phases; the first envisaged a naval bombardment, submarine and air attack against the coast of India extending as far inland as Digboi and Jamshedpur. Phase two was based on the possibility of the Japanese securing the Malacca Straits with a view to launching raids of the strength of one infantry brigade. Phase three envisaged the control of the sea by the Japanese and of Burma, in which case major landing operations of the strength of two divisions with heavy air action might be possible. The whole plan was based on the defence of certain selected areas such as Chittagong, Calcutta, Jamshedpur,

²¹ J.P.S. Paper No. 7 dated 14-3-1942 (Joint Planning Staff India Command) Defence of India and Ceylon, para. 63 (File No. 601/12152/H).

and the Assam-Burma frontier, as well as operational aerodromes. Requirement of forces was to vary with the phase of the operations reached, and comprised the naval, land and air forces.

As at that stage the most likely threat was of seaborne invasion, greater stress was laid on the protection of the sea coast. Adequate coastal patrols to cover the area between Chittagong and the mouth of the Hooghly were deemed to be essential, for which a minimum of 30 Basset trawlers or 20 corvettes with an additional 50 motor launches was necessary. Coast watching system was also to be intensified. No major naval force was contemplated, presumably because it was felt that the Eastern Fleet would be available. As for land forces, the following disposition was accepted during Phases I and II:—

- (a) Chittagong: The role of the force was to hold the local aerodrome. The forces required for this purpose were:
- 1 infantry brigade
 - 4 18 lb. guns for beach defences
 - 1 battery anti-tank guns
 - anti-aircraft defence—8 heavy, 8 light, 80 mines.

The brigade was to be based on part mechanical and part animal transport. It was also held that one battalion should be rendered as mobile as possible with launches and country boats to enable it to deal with infiltration on the coastline by Japanese detachments.

- (b) Calcutta: Apart from two British infantry battalions for internal security duty, the force to be established there was to include one Indian infantry brigade group (50 per cent mechanical and 50 per cent animal transport) for the defence of approaches in the area Hassanabad-Port Canning and Diamond Harbour, and another infantry brigade group, with 50 per cent mechanical and 50 per cent animal transport, east of Calcutta to deal with any attempts at infiltration from the area west and south-west of Dacca. This brigade was also to be equipped with launches and country boats to increase its mobility. A third Indian infantry brigade group on high scale transport plus one General Purposes Company and one division Recce Regiment were to be stationed at Kharagpur.
- (c) Jamshepur: One Indian infantry battalion, one heavy anti-aircraft regiment.
- (d) Cuttack. One garrison company.
- (e) Bangriposi: One garrison battalion.
- (f) Assam-Burma Border: Two Indian infantry brigade groups.

(g) Operational Aerodromes: One company for the local defence of each operational aerodrome. In addition to this, the Eastern Command at Ranchi was to have a reserve consisting of the 14th Indian Infantry Division less one brigade group, which on replacement was to be substituted by a lorry borne division with divisional troops including a battalion of tanks. In Phase III reinforcements were to be provided for:—

- (1) Calcutta: One additional Indian infantry brigade group.
- (2) Bangriposi: One Indian infantry brigade group.
- (3) Jamshedpur: One Indian infantry brigade group.
- (4) Assam: One Indian infantry brigade group.

It was also felt that as and when an invasion through Burma might be practicable and preceded operations in the Bay of Bengal, a force of two divisions should be maintained in Assam. As for the air force in Phase I, to provide against sporadic air attacks on the industrial centres, fighter squadrons were to be located at Dum Dum—one squadron; Alipore—one squadron; Dinjan—one squadron and Chakulia—one squadron. Besides these, for coastal protection and security of shipping in the Bay of Bengal, one general reconnaissance squadron each was to be established at Cuttack, Madras and Akyab. One Torpedo Bomber Squadron each, in addition, was also to be established at Cuttack and Akyab. In Phase II, an additional air force consisting of light bomber and Army Co-operation Squadrons was to be located at Tejpur, Comilla and Ranchi. Phase III, however, was most important as with the Japanese occupation of Lower Burma a consistent air offensive against north-east India might be carried out. In that eventuality, it would be necessary to attack the Japanese in Burma from air bases in north-east India. Hence, an additional force was to be provided which was to consist of five Fighter Squadrons, one each located at Ondal, Salbani, Jessore, Nabharan and Chauba (Digboi). Three Medium Bomber Squadrons located in Asansol-Gaya area were also to be provided. The plan made provision for anti-aircraft defence also and laid down the requirements. Further, it provided for aerodromes to be located in the neighbourhood of land forces to ensure their protection. An observer system was also suggested. Moreover, it was impossible to ignore the problem of internal security as it was believed that the advent of a Japanese attack in any form against Eastern India would produce a serious internal situation. Internal Security Troops, therefore, could not be removed for effective field service.

In addition to these measures, the plan envisaged demolitions

which were to be confined to:—

- “ (1) Denying essentials to the enemy should he penetrate the threatened area.
- (2) Strategic demolitions, and
- (3) Tactical demolitions ”²²

While these demolitions were to be effected, there was no intention of having a general scorched earth policy as such. Wholesale destruction was not contemplated. The only object was to prevent the possibility of essential commodities falling into hostile hands which would facilitate their further penetration into the country. The demolitions were to include all power stations, oil installations, wireless cabin telegraph stations and the ports of Calcutta and Chittagong, besides the destruction of all repair installations and technical fittings in the aerodromes which had to be abandoned. A plan for collecting all river craft and sinking or destroying them was also contemplated. These plans were also to provide for the removal of railway and rolling stock. Such demolitions were to be carried out only in Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa areas. Removal of vital installations was also to be employed in preference to destruction, if that was practicable.

This plan of February 1942 did not go far enough because the full weight of Japanese attack was not, at that stage, fully assessed. As air attacks or naval raids were all that were then apprehended, emphasis was laid on the defence of certain localities and no major effort was to be made to fight the Japanese force on the Assam-Burma border. The threat from that side was not considerable owing to Burma not having been wholly overrun till that date. Hence, provision for the defence of that frontier was both problematical and inadequate.

The General Staff plan for the defence of north-east India was based on the proposals submitted by the Eastern Command in December 1941, which the former incorporated with necessary modifications. The basis of the plan had been that of defending the chief industrial area by providing for local defences. Till the situation improved this plan continued to be the basis of defence in the north-east.

In March 1942, however, a fresh examination was made of the whole problem, and, owing to the gravity of the situation which was fast deteriorating, some final decisions were taken to meet the emergency. In their paper No. 7 of 14 March 1942, the Joint Planning Staff, as has been previously stated, examined the

²² No. 34/DMO General Headquarters, India, General Staff Branch, New Delhi, 12 Feb 1942 “Operational Plan for the Defence of North-East India” para. 13 (File No. F 806).

possible lines of defence and made an appreciation of the forces which would be necessary for meeting the Japanese threat. The whole basis of their proposals was to prevent invasion. They appreciated the danger as being of considerable magnitude. They estimated that the maximum threat would be an attack by thirteen divisions and 768 aircraft. They thought that two divisions and one tank regiment would come overland from Burma, while eleven divisions might form a seaborne expedition. They felt that the threat was both for north-east India and Ceylon, but while Ceylon might face an invasion by two divisions plus one battalion of tanks and 200 aircraft, north-east India would be invaded by a force comprising ten divisions, including two tank regiments and 470 aircraft. It was also their view that a seaborne expedition against the eastern coast of India would materialise by early April. Though they held that a land threat would be a long-term affair, an air attack of course might be expected at any moment.

While discussing the method of meeting the threat the Joint Planning Staff thought of two definite courses:—

- “ (1) of establishing a strong force in India to meet the invasion, and
- “ (2) of creating a threat to Japan itself in order to divert her resources and thus reduce the weight of any attack on India ”.²³

As regards the latter, they were of the view that the best chance of defeating an invasion would lie in establishing a strong well-balanced air force in India, with adequately defended air bases, in cooperation with which strong naval forces could operate in the Bay of Bengal. Such an air force would be a deterrent to any further Japanese advance by land or sea. They also directed that all methods to reduce the Japanese threat should be exploited, and themselves suggested three courses:—

- “ (1) to attack Japanese lines of communication wherever possible,
- “ (2) to co-ordinate Allied propaganda, designed to make the Japanese anticipate either a direct attack on Japan or an early counter-offensive in some other part, and
- “ (3) to encourage and maintain the maximum amount of subversive activities in the occupied countries.”²⁴

It was their view that the United States and Russia should be able to organise attacks on Japan. If these courses were adopted, it was natural that Japanese forces would be locked up elsewhere and

²³ J P S. Paper No 7 dated 14-3-1942 (Joint Planning Staff) “ Defence of India and Ceylon ”. Methods of reducing the Threat (File No 601/12152/H)

²⁴ *Ibid.*

would not be in a position to mount a strong invasion against India.

There was, however, no doubt in their mind that the Japanese resources at that stage were adequate for launching an invasion against India. To meet this, they laid considerable stress on the availability of adequate naval and air forces, for on such support alone would there be a possibility of preventing a seaborne expedition in strength. They estimated that a minimum force of 64 squadrons would be necessary for this purpose. As regards a naval force, they recommended that in addition to the main naval forces which might be in the Indian Ocean, immediate and essential requirements were of large numbers of fast coastal craft, a strong submarine force and mine-sweeping flotillas. The requirement of fast coastal craft was as follows:—

10 flotillas of MA/SBs

1 flotilla of MG/Bs

15 flotillas of MT/Bs.

They also suggested laying of defensive mine-fields off the ports and preparation of blocked ships for the east coast ports for use in the event of evacuation.

If such naval and air reinforcements were available, the pressure on land forces would not be considerable. The main role of the land forces in that case would be to secure the areas from which air and sea forces must operate. The estimate of requirement of land forces was based on the defence of the important areas. Their disposition was to be governed by the prime consideration of imposing the maximum delay on any Japanese incursion. Hence, the security of ports and air bases was the main consideration. The Joint Planning Staff, therefore, recommended that a minimum force of four divisions would be necessary for the protection of Bengal, but that only when adequate sea and air support was available. In a contrary situation they were afraid that resistance would fizzle out, and they were prepared for the eventuality of even leaving Bengal and withdrawing elsewhere. For Assam, which was not then believed to be immediately threatened, they considered that only such troops should be sent there as might be required for development, maintenance and protection of the line of communication to Burma. For Vizagapatam and Madras coast two mobile brigade groups were believed to be sufficient for the protection of ports and air bases. These were to be in addition to the existing port defence troops. Similarly for Ceylon and Southern India, the Joint Planning Staff thought that a force of three brigades plus anti-aircraft units would be adequate, but that was contingent on the availability of adequate

air support. Thus, in all a force of about five brigades was required for the protection of air base area and ports in the south.

In that paper the Joint Planning Staff reviewed the strength of the forces which were then available, or which might be available in the subsequent four or five months. While the land forces were not found to be quite inadequate, the naval and air forces were believed to be quite weak. Hence, without sufficient and rapid reinforcement, it was presumed that the defence of the country against an immediate Japanese attack would not be practicable.

The entire situation was reviewed by the *Commander-in-Chief* in his Conference in Calcutta on 17 March, which decided on concentrating all efforts on the defence of the north-east India and Calcutta, because it was held that the chief war industries area in eastern Bengal must not be given up. The policy then outlined was to defend India to the utmost capacity. The defence of the region east of the Brahmaputra was also decided upon for which the 14th Indian Infantry Division was to be despatched forthwith. It was also decided to take up the improvement of communications in that region. To a large extent this decision was governed by the necessity of assuming a counter-offensive in Burma, for which the region east of the Brahmaputra had to be prepared as a base. The other reason which prompted such a decision was to meet the danger of further Japanese aggression as far away from the main industrial area as practicable, and such a line would naturally be on the Assam-Burma frontier.

Other decisions of the Conference were:—

- (1) One infantry brigade was to be sent to Assam and a second brigade to be stationed at either Kalewa or Ledo.
- (2) The 14th Indian Infantry Division was to be moved to Comilla.
- (3) The Eastern Command Plan in general was agreed to and the principle then adopted was to organise on a basis of small columns, never bigger than brigade groups and possibly down to battalions or even less, all to be based on a series of defended areas whose object would be to defend principal river crossings and tactical points.
- (4) Intelligence was to be developed to the highest possible degree.
- (5) Guerilla bands were to be organised.
- (6) Denial policy was to be executed in case of emergency.

On the basis of all these recommendations the *Commander-in-Chief* issued his *Operational Instruction No. 1* on 23 March 1942, and thus gave a definite trend to the policy which had to be adopted and executed immediately, to meet the danger in the north-east,

This directive laid down the role of the Eastern Army as that of defending north-east India against invasion. The main intention was to fight for Bengal and Assam as far forward as possible. The vital areas to be defended were:

- (a) road, rail and river communications in Assam,
- (b) Digboi oilfields,
- (c) air bases in Bengal,
- (d) port and city of Calcutta,
- (e) the industrial area in Bengal.

The Commander-in-Chief also definitely mentioned the importance of Assam as a base for counter-offensive into Burma. He further laid stress on the closest possible co-operation and liaison between the army and the naval and air forces. Moreover, he emphasised that offensive action against any invading force was the best line of action, and for that purpose he directed that operations should be conducted on a wide front with columns of the size of a brigade group or less.

Mobility and a well-organised system of Intelligence were essential for this purpose, which required the development of communications and establishment of an observer belt to give warning of attack. A guerilla force was also to be organised in Assam immediately and in other areas where they might be usefully employed.

The Commander-in-Chief further mentioned that defended localities should be prepared to cover important river crossings and centres of communication, but there was no idea of locking up troops in such forms of passive defence. In addition to these measures, General Wavell desired demolitions, both tactical and strategical, to be prepared, which were to be carried into effect only as a last resort.

By the end of March 1942, thus, a definite policy had been adopted and the urgency of defending north-east India had been fully appreciated. There was, however, difference in regard to the local defence of Calcutta. While the Eastern Command placed greater stress on the defence of Calcutta, the loss of which following on that of Singapore and Rangoon they considered to be a serious disaster, the General Staff did not attach the same importance to this matter for, as has already been mentioned, they desired the defence of the industrial area to be organised as far away from it as possible.

CHAPTER X

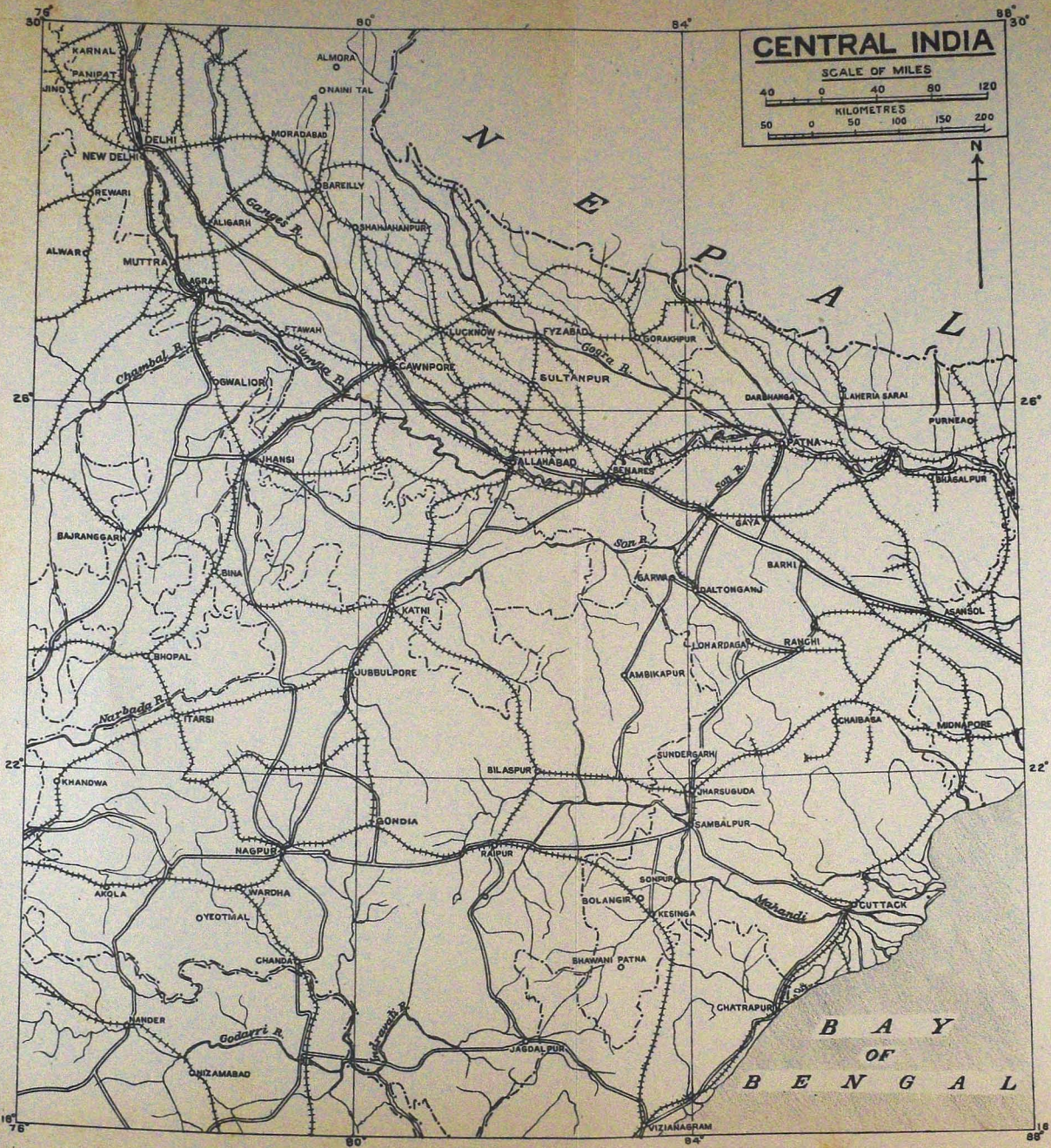
The Defence of Eastern and Southern India

By the end of March 1942 signs were evident that with the stabilisation of Japanese hold on Burma and dominant position in the Bay of Bengal, threats to the security of India must be expected, both in its eastern and southern parts. Though there was difference in emphasis about the comparative vulnerability of Ceylon or Eastern India, yet it could not be denied that both the regions were subject to possible threat of invasion, and the India Command had to adopt adequate measures to meet the danger. It is true that as the year advanced and better intelligence of the Japanese resources was available, the imminence of threat to Ceylon and Southern India was discounted and larger concentration of forces was effected in Eastern India.

The situation in Burma further deteriorated in April 1942 and prominently revealed the menace to the Indian territories. Planning for the defence of India thus took a concrete shape. The Joint Planning Staff, therefore, desired precise instructions "as to the lines on which future planning should proceed".¹ The Chiefs of Staff, thereupon, issued a directive which laid down the policy that "we will fight for North East India and Southern India with Ceylon". The plans were to be prepared on a dual basis, for the actual defence of India and for "an eventual offensive into Burma". In the subsequent months planning was directed towards both these ends. In this chapter we are concerned with the former, the defence of the soil of India.

The War Office, in their telegram No. 8175 dated 11 April 1942, desired to have the general views of the India Command in regard to the implications of Japanese action against India or Ceylon. In particular attention was drawn to the "effect of stoppage of communications in Bay of Bengal" on the defence of north-east India and Indian economy and war effort. The other point made was that of the effect of Japanese "lodgment in Eastern Bengal and/or South East India" on the political and internal situation, and the possibility of reinforcements from abroad. The worst case of internal unrest and widespread frontier trouble in the north-west was also to be considered in case the British were

¹ J P S Memorandum No. 3 Defence of India—Future Planning dated 15-4-1942 Introduction, page 1 (File No 601/12004/H)



CENTRAL INDIA
SCALE OF MILES
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KILOMETRES
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"forced to concentrate on securing areas essential to cover communications with the Persian Gulf, e.g., Karachi and Baluchistan" and the use of Bombay.²

These matters were then being examined by the Joint Planning Staff. The India Command, however, sent an interim reply in which they analysed the existing situation. The Japanese were in complete control of the Bay of Bengal which not merely led to the stoppage of all communications but made it impossible to "defend Akyab-Chittagong approaches,"³ and thereby made it easy for the Japanese to land their forces at any point on the coast. Economy in Bengal was dislocated and serious congestion of traffic arose at the western ports. There was also danger of the breakdown of communications in Bengal and Madras, where widespread fifth column activity was feared.

The Joint Planning Staff appreciation was that Japanese attack, if at all, would be "on a large scale" in which case reinforcements might be possible by air, but air position was weak. If the invasion materialised and wide unrest prevailed in the country, it would not be practicable to concentrate in the north-west, for "premature withdrawal would be to invite Japanese to enter country and might well lead to general rising against British rule and collapse of Indian morale even to point demanding separate peace".⁴ The then disposition was for holding north-east India and Southern India and Ceylon. Any redistribution of forces in the absence of a general reserve was bound to lead to dislocation of defence. The main problem, in view of India's role, was to maintain sea communications, for which, as well as for preventing invasion, strengthening of air forces and navy was essential. It was imperative therefore that the defences of Eastern and Southern India should be strengthened.

Subsequent to this reply, the Joint Planning Staff produced a paper on 25 April 1942, which though general and not quite on the lines of the directive issued by the Chiefs of Staff, analysed the danger and emphasised the consequences of the loss of control over sea communications.

The basic object of this paper was vague and indicated merely the Imperial aspect of India's defence. India's role was defined:

- "(a) as a base for the fleet, on whose ability to operate depends the safety of the sea communications to India and the Middle East via the Cape and the Persian Gulf,

² Telegram No 8175 (M.O 12A) dated 11-4-1942 from Troopers to Armindia (File No. 601/12004/H)

³ Telegram from C.G S. to D.M O. (File No 601/12004/H).

⁴ *Ibid* para 9

- “ (b) as a supply base for the Middle East,
 “ (c) as a supply base and transit area for China,
 “ (d) as a base for offensive action against Japan ”.⁵

This postulated the importance of Indian Ocean sea communications, the control of which alone would enable India to fulfil the above roles. The Japanese had acquired control of the Bay of Bengal owing to their superiority in naval and air forces, and thereby were in a position to threaten British “ control in the remainder of the Indian Ocean ” and make landings “ at several points on a wide front and achieve numerical superiority at the points selected ”.⁶ By their position the Japanese were able to destroy the Eastern Fleet and/or British merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean, to attack north-east India, capture Ceylon, land on the eastern coast or threaten the western coast of India with the aim of capturing Bombay. Except the last, all these were immediate threats. To achieve these ends, the Japanese might employ up to ten divisions initially, “ subsequently expanding to twenty divisions ”, besides an air force of 300 shore-based bombers and 300 shore-based fighters and four to six carriers.

The implementation of any of these threats was bound to have very serious repercussions on the British position. The destruction of the Eastern Fleet or hold over the west coast would completely deprive the British of any control over the sea communications in any part of the Indian Ocean, which would be highly dangerous for their campaign in the Middle East and Africa. The loss of Ceylon and Southern India would also adversely affect control of sea communications, while the loss of north-east India would completely dislocate armament industry which would not be available for use by the Imperial forces. The defence of these areas, therefore, had the following priority:

- (1) the west coast and the Fleet
- (2) Ceylon
- (3) north-east India
- (4) the east coast.

The Joint Planning Staff paper did not produce any comprehensive plan to meet the danger to the vital areas. Its main recommendation was to build a strong reserve of land forces in the area Nagpur-Secunderabad, from where reinforcements might be rushed to any threatened region. Air defence for the protection of ports and shipping was also suggested. This was only a make-

⁵ India Command Joint Planning Staff. J P S Paper No 14 dated 25-4-1942: Defence of India No. 1 “ India’s position in the General Strategy of the war ” (File No 601/12011/H)

⁶ *Ibid.* para. 8(a).

shift proposal pending the arrival of reinforcements from elsewhere, as it was clearly emphasised that the existing resources were wholly inadequate for the defence of India. The main object was "to secure the bases from which our Naval forces can continue to dispute the sea communications in the Indian Ocean, and from which they will eventually re-establish control. Our second is to impose the maximum delay on the enemy approach to those bases so as to gain time to allow for reinforcements to arrive. If we have to give ground, it must still be our aim to cover Bombay and Karachi as long as possible".⁷ It is no wonder that with this restricted aim to protect sea communications and to maintain the two reinforcing ports, alternatives of despair, planning at this stage was neither bold nor determined. The situation was one of emergency, and naturally defence planning had to comprehend the worst possible case and to devise means to confront it.

While the Eastern Command, under the direction of the Army Headquarters, was taking necessary measures for the defence of Eastern India, and preliminary planning for counter-offensive in Burma was being pursued, the Joint Planning Staff was also examining the ultimate defence of India in the worst possible case of Japanese intrusion in north-east India. In Paper No. 17 dated 23 May 1942, the consequences and eventual development of a Japanese breakthrough in north-east India were analysed and measures outlined to meet the danger. Essentially this paper was concerned with the main line of resistance in case of defeat and expulsion from Bengal, Orissa and Assam, where defence might be stabilised. A defeat in Bengal-Assam area would lead to complete dislocation of air defence organisation and would cause the interruption of railway communication and public services. Communal troubles, sabotage and depreciation of public morale were its other concomitants. If these catastrophic developments occurred what subsequent action should be adopted by the defence to stem the advance of invasion and where and how should the situation be stabilised; this was the problem tackled in the paper.

Discussing the courses open to the Japanese after their victory in Bengal, the paper appreciated the following alternative lines of action:

- " (a) Hold Bengal and do nothing—not unlikely.
- " (b) Drive up the Ganges Valley—highly probable owing to its advantages.
- " (c) Drive westward with Bombay as ultimate objective—communications made it feasible.

⁷ *Ibid.* para 31.

“(d) Thrust down the coast towards Vizagapatam—not very useful yet might appeal as a subsidiary movement”.⁸

Courses (b) and (c) were most likely, hence there was need of ensuring “against an advance up the Ganges Valley and a westward drive towards Bombay via Raipur”. The essential problem of defence in the second stage, therefore, was to deny access to the Japanese into the area west or north-west of Bihar.

It was felt that the Japanese would not be in a position to stage a major seaborne attack against any part of India before late June, and that the liquidation of resistance in Bengal would take at least a month. Hence, further operations might not be effected before late July. Next, an appreciation was made of the available forces and the time involved in concentrating them. It was estimated that on 15 July approximately three infantry divisions and two infantry brigades, one armoured division and one brigade, but only in infantry role, one parachute brigade but in infantry role and one armoured and one tank brigade, would be available for operations. The air force would be weak numbering not more than five or six crippled squadrons. With this depleted force, in the absence of effective reinforcements, it would be difficult to oppose a numerically superior hostile army and “deny any area to the enemy, or to hold more than temporarily focal points from which to make sorties”. Hence, pending the arrival of adequate reinforcements the only course was “to impose the maximum delay on the enemy while keeping our force in being”. To achieve this object, it was necessary to “find successive zones suitable for fighting delaying actions” and to “fight the enemy as far forward as possible”. The tactical method recommended was that of “aggressive action with small hard hitting mobile columns” which should operate in zones “well in advance of the area in which we are seeking to fight, whether it be a supply area, a centre of communications or tactical feature”, and unhampered “by undue preoccupation about covering objectives”. These operational zones should be located in “open country where infantry and armour can combine to the best effect”.⁹ Six such succeeding zones were defined in the paper:

Zone A—to cover the Ganges valley east of Patna stretching from Laheria-Serai on the north to south of Gaya. It had the advantage of road and railway

⁸ India Command: Joint Planning Staff JPS Paper No 17 dated 23 May 1942 “Enemy Attack on N.E India” “*Courses open to the Enemy*”, para 3 (File No 601/12014/H)

⁹ *Ibid* para 31.

communications; supply centre at Banaras and aero-dromes of Allahabad.

Zone B—extending from Sundergarh to Bhawani-Patna designed to check penetration from Midnapur and Cuttack. It had the advantage of a few defiles in which alone action would proceed.

Zone C—west of Zone B and covering the defile through which ran the Raipur-Vizagapatam railway. This would check advance northward from Vizagapatam and might be used by the forces falling back from zone B.

Zone D—between Banaras and Allahabad designed to cover the railway at Fyzabad, Allahabad, Jubbulpore.

Zone E—east of Katni and Jubbulpore, covering both these junctions, the route to Bombay and the main arsenal at Jubbulpore.

Zone F—east and south of Nagpur, to cover that important supply centre and railway junction.

In addition to these operational zones for delaying hostile advance, denial measures were suggested which involved comprehensive demolitions of the means of communication.

The Joint Planning Staff did not recommend the withdrawal of forces from the North-West Frontier or South India, but desired that the required troops and air forces should be found from elsewhere. Delay was to be imposed on the Japanese so that reinforcements might arrive via Bombay and Karachi. Fighting in previously prepared and suitable zones was the only possible strategy. These conclusions were endorsed by the Chiefs of Staff for the purpose of planning. But the Commander-in-Chief desired to "let this lie fallow for the moment", for he was keen to plan for counter-offensive in Burma which did not integrate with this line of despair.

These papers give an appreciation of the danger and the trend of strategy for defence. In the summer of 1942, danger of invasion of India from the east, more by sea than by land, was assessed to be high. The strength of the armed forces in India was low and their equipment inadequate. The situation in the Middle East was not yet convincing enough to permit of any relaxation in the resistance to Axis Powers there. The threat to the North-West Frontier was also not absent. Sea communications were controlled by the adversary and prospects of effective reinforcements from the United Kingdom were remote. Public morale, after the loss of Burma, was very low and 'Fifth Column' was active in the country. British political policy failed to marshal

Indian patriotism for the security of the country. Therefore, with the limited resources, the India Command had to provide for the best possible defence, both of the north-eastern and southern India.

EASTERN INDIA

Against Eastern India, Japanese invasion was assumed to adopt the form of either a seaborne invasion or land attack or both. In the spring of 1942 there was greater emphasis on the sea-borne attack, either in conjunction with a land advance up the Arakan coast or without it, which, it was believed, would be directed against any part of the long Bengal and Orissa coastline with the object of capturing the vital industrial areas behind it. The danger to Assam was also realised. Hence the Commander-in-Chief, in his first directive on 23 March 1942, had given instructions for laying the defence of north-eastern India, which comprised the protection of Digboi oilfields, the port of Calcutta and the industrial area.

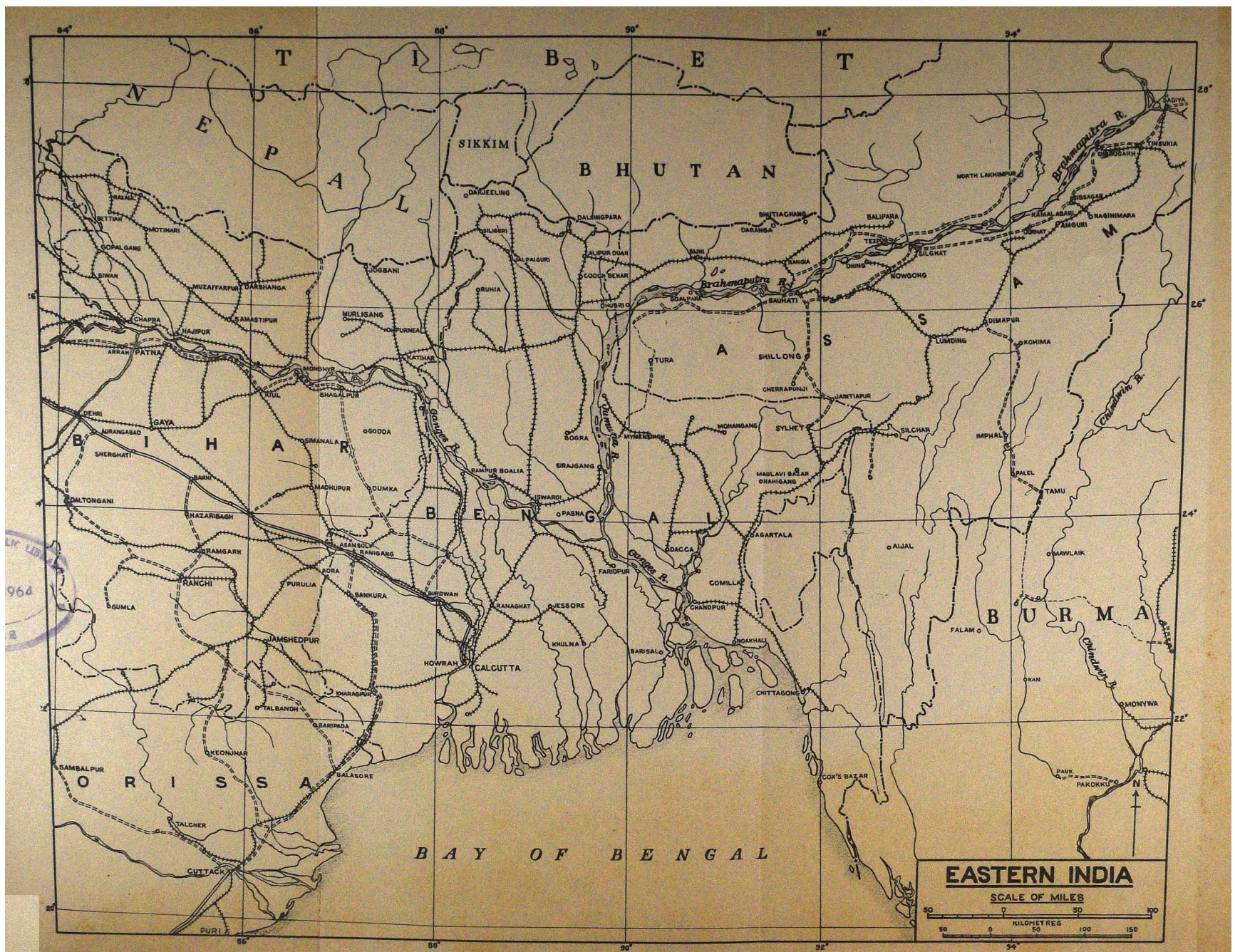
Very soon the picture of operations in South-East Asia became clearer. The Japanese had secured Malacca and Sunda Straits and had acquired bases in the Andaman Islands. They had also hold of the Arakan coast and were fast moving inland into Burma. On this basis the Eastern Army appreciation was that the possible Japanese objectives in India, in order of priority, would be:

- “ (a) to cut communications to Burma and China
- “ (b) to create an adverse moral effect in India
- “ (c) to interfere with India's industrial war efforts, and
- “ (d) to contain troops in India and thus prevent their use elsewhere ”.¹⁰

To achieve these aims, the Japanese might adopt one or more of the following courses:

- (a) a landing up the Brahmaputra river using ships and local craft in order to threaten communications with Burma and China and to endanger the security of Calcutta,
- (b) a landing south of Calcutta in the area of the Sunderbans with the immediate object of attacking the Calcutta area,
- (c) a landing on the coast, south-west of Calcutta, as far as including Puri, with the object of seizing the main industrial centres about Asansol and Tatanagar and

¹⁰ Eastern Army Operation Instruction No 3 Plan for the Defence of N E India. “ Possible Enemy Action ” Appx. I to War Diary Eastern Army for April 1942 (File No. 601/156/WD Pt. I).



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EASTERN INDIA
SCALE OF MILES
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KILOMETRES
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threatening the main line of communication to Central India¹¹.

There was fear of a major landing being attempted against the Cuttack coast, for there the rivers and creeks lent themselves to infiltration tactics and were within easy reach and, if captured, would facilitate the development of operations inland. In addition to these, landings at Akyab and Chittagong were also feasible and might precede other operations. This appreciation was based on the fact of Japanese superiority in the Bay of Bengal and their policy of moving forward systematically from one air base to another, and of landing when within range of their own fighter aircraft. With the control of air fields in Arakan, landings on the coast south-west of Calcutta might easily be given air-fighter cover, while a major landing on the Cuttack coast would obtain air support by means of aircraft carriers.

In view of this threat, the Eastern Army determined the following as vital areas of defence:—

- “ (i) Road, rail and river communications in and to Assam.
- “ (ii) Digboi oilfields.
- “ (iii) Operational aerodromes in Bengal, Orissa and Assam.
- “ (iv) The port and city of Calcutta.
- “ (v) Industrial areas in Bengal and in particular Jamshedpur and Asansol.
- “ (vi) Road and rail communications running west from Calcutta ”.¹²

To meet this threat and to provide for effective defence of the eastern regions, the Eastern Army was reorganised and the basic principles of operations, as well as the assignment of tasks to the component forces, were clearly defined. These arrangements for defence were very comprehensive and were directed towards preparing a thorough organisation, both for combating hostile forces as well as for providing an effective system of observation and intelligence, besides plans for demolitions and guerilla activities. The structure outlined in the Eastern Army Instruction No. 3 of 13 April 1942, remained, with some later modifications, in operation as long as the threat of invasion continued.

The principles on which operations were based were generally the same as laid down by the Commander-in-Chief in March 1942. Even at the risk of repetition these may be mentioned here. Besides emphasising the importance of collecting “ by every means possible ”, intelligence of the Japanese “ strengths, intention and actions ”, and the necessity of “ good communications ”, great

¹¹ *Ibid* para 3

¹² *Ibid*. para. 5.

stress was laid on "extreme mobility and rapid offensive action once the target is presented". This rapid offensive action was to be based on a series of self-supporting defended areas which were intended "to form stops on important communications, bases from which mobile troops can dominate the surrounding country and gateways through which reserves can pass". The reserves were to be situated in central areas where they might be required. "The ability to operate on wide fronts using independent columns of a brigade group or less" was also emphasised.¹³ This plan of defence envisaged the preparation of fortress areas, as in Iraq, which would act as pivots of manoeuvre, and apart from holding up the hostile advance inland would afford bases for mobile counter-offensive action against the Japanese landing forces. It was fully realised at the moment that owing to numerical inferiority in troops and weakness in naval and air resources it would not be possible altogether to prevent landings on the sea coast. All that was practicable was to check the infiltration of hostile forces, or advance in strength, into the interior and thus protect vital industrial areas. For this purpose and for maintaining the vital lines of communication, which were essential both for defensive action at that time and offensive action in the future, well-defended fortified areas were to be prepared at strategic points. While defence was the immediate necessity, offensive action against the Japanese to retrieve Burma had never been lost sight of. Preparations for defence, therefore, were based on this dual principle. Defence itself was conceived in two aspects simultaneously acted upon. One was by means of defended areas to prevent the hostile forces availing themselves of the lines of communication inside. The other was by mobile forces operating offensively and by rapid action and depending on the fortified areas to give battle to the Japanese forces in their own prepared battle areas. The object of all these manoeuvres was to pinch the invasion at its inception and not allow it to develop.

At that stage it was also essential that communications should be effectively developed, and there should be an efficient observer system so that timely and adequate intelligence of hostile movements would be available. Bengal, Orissa and Assam were backward in the matter of roads, and those in existence were generally unusable in the wet weather. Between Assam and the rest of India the line of communication was limited and precarious, as the Brahmaputra had not been bridged. In Orissa and down the east coast, the road and railway line passed too close to the sea

¹³ *Ibid* paras. 13(d) and 13(f).

and thus were vulnerable to attack. This made the task of rapid movement and mobile offensive action difficult, while maintenance particularly at the extremities presented serious problems. It was natural, therefore, that in the plans in the initial stages there should be insistence on the development of communications, both as the responsibility of the local command and the General Headquarters. The establishment of an observer system was another primary necessity. In the Instructions of 13 April 1942, as well as in all subsequent plans great stress was laid on this aspect of defence. The observer system then established as a skeleton continued to function until the need was over. At that time there was also need for effective schemes of demolitions and denials. But beyond emphasising the necessity for these in certain emergencies, no further action was immediately taken because a plan was then being prepared at the General Headquarters.

For the defence of the eastern area, the Eastern Command was made responsible, and for this purpose it was transformed into the Eastern Army, the organisation of which was forthwith brought into force. The Eastern Army was composed of Assam Division, the XV Indian Corps and the IV Indian Corps, besides army formations and air component allotted to it. Its organisation, as on 13 April 1942, is given in Appendix VI(a). The Air Officer Commanding the Royal Air Force in the Eastern Army was to be located at Barrackpore along with the Headquarters of the XV Indian Corps. In Calcutta was located the Headquarters of a Fighter and a Bomber Group while there was an Army Co-operation Squadron at Ranchi under the command of the IV Indian Corps. The task of air watch over the Bay of Bengal was the responsibility of the Royal Air Force which was to transmit the information procured to the army formations.

The area of responsibility and the tasks of the three component formations of the Eastern Army were also defined. The Assam Division (Headquarters Jorhat) was made responsible for the province of Assam. The tasks allotted to it were the detailed reconnaissance of roads and tracks in the hills, and readiness for operations in that sector which included the preparation of defended areas "to cover vital points on the communications". A force of two divisions was to be placed under the command of the Assam Division and the commander was instructed to prepare plans for the defence of vital areas and to commence works required, but not so as to hinder the progress of the roads to China.

The XV Indian Corps (Headquarters Barrackpore) was the main force for the defence of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa provinces. It comprised Calcutta Division, the 14th Indian Division and the

36th, 47th and 49th Indian Infantry Brigades, a force of three divisions besides No. 3 Inland Water Transport Group (Sundarbans Flotilla). The tasks allotted to this Corps were, besides securing information of the Japanese advance against the coasts of Bengal and Orissa by means of an Observer Corps, firstly to "contain and delay any Japanese landing and advance inland, to the maximum extent possible, within the limitations of the defence layout"; secondly "to locate the area of the main Japanese attack" and lastly "to improve communications in Bengal and Orissa to facilitate active operations by the IV Corps". The responsibility for manning and maintaining the defended areas devolved on it.

The IV Indian Corps, with its Headquarters at Ranchi, was the mobile reserve which was located in the area Lohardaga-Ranchi and was to be "prepared for rapid offensive action anywhere within the area of the Eastern Army except Assam".¹⁴ Detailed instructions (Instruction No. 2, 6 April 1942) had been issued to the IV Indian Corps to carry out its role of mobile reserve acting offensively against hostile forces. The chief vulnerable areas were defined as Calcutta, Parbatipur Junction, Jamshedpur, Asansol and operational aerodromes.¹⁵ The force under command comprised two divisions; the 23rd Indian Infantry Division, to be deployed in the area Karanjia-Bisai, and the 70th Division in area Tatanagar-Purulia. In an emergency, the 23rd Indian Infantry Division might move to Calcutta. When this concentration had been completed the IV Indian Corps was required to be in readiness to carry out any of the following moves with the whole or part of the force:

- " (i) IV Corps to billets in and around Calcutta.
- " (ii) An advance from the river Hooghly into the area Chaudanga-Khulna-Diamond Harbour in an attacking role in support of the Calcutta Division.
- " (iii) An advance into the Patnan Khali-Barisal-Faridpur delta country from the line Khulna-Jhenida in order to deliver a counter-attack against the enemy advancing northwards in the delta.
- " (iv) Forward move to engage the enemy in the area Midnapore-Balasore-Contai.

¹⁴ *Ibid* para 12

¹⁵ The operational aerodromes enlisted were Armada Road (Dia Sol), Hinoo (Ranchi), Tezpur and Borjuli (S), Comilla and Chandina (S), Fenny Kanchrapara (Bengal), Imphal*, Salban (Bengal), Jessore, Dujan and Chabua (S), Agartala (Tripura), Asansol, Cuttack, Ondal, Gaya and Nawadih (S), Alipore, Dum Dum, Chakula (Bihar), Manipur Road*, Bangaon (Bengal), Jamshedpur, Cooch-Behar (Bengal), Chittagong, Calcutta Maidan, Bagachhi.

S denotes Satellite

* Not yet sited.

“(v) Forward move to engage the enemy in the area Bhadrak-Cuttack-Puri-Chandbali”.¹⁶

To carry out this offensive action, it was necessary for the IV Indian Corps to have a thorough reconnaissance of the area of possible operations. Hence instructions were issued for the reconnaissance of the following areas in order of priority:—

- “(i) the delta country between the Ganges-Padma-Meghna rivers and the Madhumati-Baleswar-Haringhata rivers,
- “(ii) the five battle areas around Calcutta and the delta to the south of them,¹⁷
- “(iii) the country between the Tatanagar-Kharagpur-Calcutta railway and the Subarnarekha river,
- “(iv) the country lying east of the Simlipal hills between the Subarnarekha and Baitarani rivers,
- “(v) the delta country east of Cuttack,
- “(vi) the country lying north of Midnapore towards Bankura”.¹⁸

Detailed instructions were also issued for the location of the Headquarters IV Indian Corps, which were to be sited with reference to the movement of operations from east to west.

It will be clear from these instructions that the role of the IV Indian Corps was to counter-attack the Japanese forces, in case of their landing in an area extending from the junction of the Ganges and Meghna rivers in the east to the Cuttack area in the west, with the object of preventing their further advance inland and protecting the main industrial area. Calcutta was the main object of defence towards the east, while Asansol-Tatanagar area was the vital industrial area to be fully safeguarded in the west. All deployment of forces in early April 1942 was with this main purpose of holding the Japanese advance so that it might not affect the industrial effort of India.

Similarly detailed tasks for the XV Indian Corps were determined. It had to develop the battle areas around Calcutta, and had to prepare defended areas at Bangriposi, Subarnarekha and Kasai river crossings on Orissa Trunk Road, Jhingergacha, Deula railway station, Fenny, Noakhali, Chandpur, Anandpur,

¹⁶ Appendix III to War Diary of Eastern Army, April 1942. Eastern Command Operation Instruction No 2, para 8 (File No 601/156/W.D.Pt 1)

¹⁷ These were:—

- No. 1. The triangle of land lying between the rivers Rupnarayan and Hooghly
- No. 2. The country lying between Calcutta-Port Canning Railway-Kulpi.
- No. 3. The country between Basirhat and Port Canning
- No. 4. Area Jessore-Khulna-Basirhat-Bangaon
- No. 5. Area Chaudanga-Jhenida-Jessore-Bangaon-Ranaghat

¹⁸ Appendix III to War Diary of Eastern Army, April 1942 Eastern Command Operation Instruction No 2 para 9. (File No 601/156/W.D.Pt 1).

Keonjhar, Daulatpur, and Bansi Kusum Ghat. Their garrison was normally to be one battalion of a brigade group, the other two of which were to be available for offensive operations around the defended area. These areas were to be made as strong as resources would permit against all forms of attack, including air and tank, and were to be so equipped and stocked as to stand investment for several weeks. The garrison was not to abandon the defended area and, even if by-passed, was to act offensively against hostile communications or other suitable objects. In effect, every defended area was to contain a brigade group which had both static and mobile role. These defended areas were to be prepared in every battle area, for they were regarded as the mainstay of defence, as stops on communications and pivots of manoeuvre.

The main danger at the time was of a seaborne attack. Hence an Inland Water Transport Group (No. 3) known as Sundarbans Flotilla, was allotted to the XV Indian Corps for the purpose of patrolling the rivers and creeks leading inland with the object of gaining information, and taking offensive action against any Japanese attempts at landing and thereby gain time for the forces further back. These patrols were required to move up and down the creeks and rivers at right angles to the coastline. The formation was to consist of four companies, each consisting of five sections of five launches. Their disposition was laid down and was not to be altered without the prior consent of the Eastern Army.¹⁹

Very great emphasis was laid on information and communications in the early instructions. For the purpose of securing early information of any possible hostile moves, the Eastern Army instructed the Commander of the XV Indian Corps to establish a system of information lines on which patrols would move by mechanical transport or boats, and be equipped with wireless sets, or use telephone or telegraph system and communicate information of advance up the creeks or of actual landings. In addition to these regular patrols the other means then established for watching the coasts and reporting the movements of aircraft or other forms of hostile activity, were Civil Watching System, Naval War Watching

¹⁹ Flotilla was to operate as follows :—

- (a) One section based on Dandaparulia on River Rasulpur-Baghoba on River Malda under operational command of 35 Inf Bde
- (b) One coy (less one sec) in the Sundarbans area based on Nankhan-Raigh-Port Canning under operational command of 71 Inf Bde
- (c) Two coys based on Hasnabab Khulna-Madaripur under operational command of 4 Inf Bde
- (d) One coy based on Narayanganj-Chandpur-Noakhali under operational command of 14 Indian Division. For reasons that led to the formation of the Flotilla see Appendix VII.

Organisation, the Indian Observer System and the Railway Warning System, the details of which are given in Appendix VIII. All these resources were to be worked in strength and utilised for rapid and full flow of intelligence of any offensive hostile action on the coastline of Bengal and Orissa. The Eastern Army also gave instructions regarding the improvement of communications. The general policy was to maintain some roads towards the coast, south-west of Calcutta at an all-weather standard, to improve some which led into Orissa and develop others to the east of Calcutta. The list of the roads which were thus selected for improvement is given in Appendix IX.

The plan of defence also involved effective protection against air attacks. The security of aerodromes was essential for this purpose. Land forces for their defence were allotted and these were equipped with anti-air-craft guns. At the same time, orders were issued for observing full passive air defence measures.

In the Instructions of 13 April 1942, due emphasis was laid on the measures of denial and demolitions and the formation of guerilla forces. Denials and demolitions were of a limited nature, affecting stocks of certain material and the use of public services like railways, roads, and telephones. There was no intention to go in for a complete scorched earth policy. Appendix X gives the instructions relating to denial policy.

Thus was outlined the general structure of defence in the Eastern Army area. It was comprehensive enough and was based on the principle of fortress defence with mobile forces for counter-attack. Mobility and intelligence were its two pillars. But while this structure continued in operation, from time to time, according to the need of the situation or availability of troops, modifications were made in the organisation of the Army and the allotment of tasks to its component formations. In early April, owing to the inadequacy of forces no separate arrangement was made for a line of communication force, which was, however, provided by the close of the monsoon. In early days the threat to Assam had not become quite evident, hence beyond assigning the Assam Division there was no adequate provision of troops for that region. But as months passed and the danger to Assam loomed larger, we find greater concentration on the eastern side. Thus, while changes were occurring from time to time in the deployment and tasks of the formations, little change had occurred in the essential principles of defence.

The first reorganisation came on 9 May 1942, when, in view of numerous operational moves, it became necessary to rearrange

the formation boundaries and the tasks allotted to the units.²⁰ The main change was in the role of the IV Indian Corps, which from being a mobile reserve was allotted the defence of the Eastern Area and Assam Division under its command. The whole region was divided into three areas, western, central and eastern. Western was assigned to the 70th Division, which included the line of communication area pending the formation of line of communication units. The central remained as before the charge of the XV Indian Corps while the eastern was given over to the IV Indian Corps. There was no change made in the general aspect of their tasks. The move of the IV Indian Corps, the mobile striking force, to Assam and placing the Burma Army and Chinese Army under its command, was intended to contain the impending thrust of the Japanese Army on that side. The primary task of the IV Indian Corps was to prevent the Japanese from entering Assam; hence instructions were issued to checkmate their attempts to establish themselves in the Imphal Valley, cut the Assam-Bengal Railway or capture the Digboi oilfields.²¹

On 11 July 1942, the role of the 70th Division was further defined.²² In conjunction with the 50th Army Tank Brigade it was to constitute the mobile reserve, a role originally allotted to the IV Indian Corps. With its location in the Ranchi area, it was charged with the duty of operating offensively against any hostile aggression in the area south-west of the river Damodar and around Calcutta, and gaining earliest possible information thereof. To relieve it of the line of communication duties, orders were then being issued for the establishment of separate line of communication formations. But before action was taken, Bihar was in the grip of internal unrest in August 1942, and the 70th Division was assigned the task of keeping the communications open and preventing acts of sabotage.²³ By the end of August, however, two line of communication areas had been defined, to which was assigned the responsibility, formerly devolving on the 70th Division, for the defence of some portions of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The role of the 70th Division, henceforth, was again primarily that of a mobile reserve.

Though there was little change in the appreciation of Japanese threat, yet owing to the necessity of developing the communications fully and relieving the striking forces of the responsibilities incidental to the administration and internal security, two line of

²⁰ Instruction No. 5 Eastern Army dated 9 May 1942 (File 8544)

²¹ Instruction No 6 Eastern Army dated 17 May 1942 (File 8544)

²² Instruction No 7, 11 July 1942 (File 8544)

²³ Instruction No 8, 14 August 1942 (File 8544).

communications areas, 101 and 201, were established. Their task included the prosecution of works in the occupied defended areas, the development to an all-weather standard of some of the roads required by the mobile reserve for its operations,²⁴ and the provision and distribution of supplies, ammunition and petrol along the selected lines of communication, so as to enable reserve formations to operate from as short a supply line as possible. One of their functions was also to maintain the security of Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur. But the most important task was to ensure the mobility of the striking force, viz., the XV Indian Corps with under command the 70th Division, 50th Army Tank Brigade and 1 Hyderabad Lancer, which, it was presumed, would "remain concentrated to take offensive action where required".²⁵

During the monsoon of 1942, the organisation of the Eastern Army had been gradually proceeding and the force was being built both for the role of affording defence against possible offensive landings and for taking counter-offensive measures in Burma. The preparations were governed by the appreciation in June 1942, that the likely menace was that of a seaborne landing invasion against the coast of Bengal which would not materialise before 1 October, owing to the intensity of monsoon. The disposition of troops, described earlier, had been based on the consideration that the most affected area would be from the river Brahmaputra to the Cuttack coast, though danger to Digboi oilfields must not be ignored. At the close of the monsoon, further appreciations were made. Judging from the war situation in the Middle East and the pressure which Germany was then exercising on Japan to invade India, an invasion was not unlikely. The German successes in Russia and Egypt, and the likely German approach to the Persian Gulf, were strong factors impelling Japan to direct her gaze towards India. She had also sufficient land forces and transport for attack on India or Ceylon, or both. At the same time the internal situation in India might have been regarded favourable for an attack. But there were important counter-vailing factors also, which might have deterred her from taking the plunge. Russia had not been beaten, and the internal situation in India,

²⁴ Routes to be developed

- (i) Ranchi-Chaibasa-Keonjhar-gargh-Jhagpur Road.
- (ii) Chaibasa-Bangriposi-Balasore
- (iii) Ranchi-Purulia-Bankura-Midnapore
- (iv) Chaibasa-Ghatsila-Midnapore
- (v) Purulia-Jamshedpur
- (vi) Karanjia-Bangshikusumghat
- (vii) Chandil-Mahulia
- (viii) Purulia-Raghunathpur-over Damodar Rly. bridge-Asansol

²⁵ Instruction No 11, dated 27 August 1942 (File 8544)

particularly the attitude of the Indian National Congress which was positively hostile to Japanese aggression, did not warrant the conclusion that invasion must end in the disintegration of India. What Japan wanted was a swift, decisive action depending on the cooperation and active support of the people. In the existing war situation, she was not prepared for a long war in India, but the internal situation did not give her the assurance of a decisive action. At the same time, her commitments in the South-west Pacific were increasing, as the American offensive there was sapping her naval strength. All these considerations pointed to the possibility of Japan waiting on events, which she could easily afford. However, limited offensive action against Bengal might not be overlooked with the object of anticipating and stifling in their infancy the preparations which were then being made in Bengal for mounting an offensive against Burma. Situation in Bengal was far from stable and could give to the Japanese an impression of the province being a fit target of invasion. But Axis propaganda had failed to evoke any favourable response from the Indian political parties or the army, who expressed inveterate hostility to any idea of Axis invasion. On this ground, responsible opinion in Japan was against the venture. Nevertheless, "large scale raids into Assam and Eastern Bengal to encourage disruptive elements in India and to dislocate preparations for the offensive" were not ruled out.²⁶ Hence seaborne raids on the Bengal and Orissa coast, within the range of fighter cover from Burma airfields, and infiltration or direct attack on Assam were taken into account in the Indian appreciations of danger and all defence preparations had to be made accordingly.

In September-October 1942, the India Command's appreciation was that the Japanese might adopt one or more of the following courses:

- " (a) A landing south-west of Calcutta with the object of seizing the main industrial area Giridih-Asansol-Midnapore-Jamshedpur-Dumri.
- " (b) A landing in the Delta area with, as an immediate objective, the capture of Calcutta.
- " (c) An advance by sea and land up the East Bengal coast, with a view to the capture of Chittagong and Tippera as a base for further operations either towards Assam or Bengal and Calcutta.
- " (d) A direct attack on Assam with the object of capturing the

²⁶ Telegram No 25943/1 dated 20-10-42, from Armindia to Troopers (File No. F36)

Digboi oilfields and eliminating Assam as a base of operations for us".²⁷

Apart from Assam, the main threat was to Calcutta and Jamshedpur. The forces available were the IV Indian Corps, and the 14th Indian Division towards the east, the XV Indian Corps with the 70th Division and 50th Indian Tank Brigade under command, and the 39th Light Division in Shillong besides the line of communications areas. The 2nd Division was also being concentrated in the region, to be available for operations either with the XV Corps or IV Corps, according to the need of the moment. It may be noted here that the IV Corps with the 14th Indian Division had been definitely allotted the task of carrying out operations in the winter of 1942/43 in Burma, and their immediate objectives were Chin Hills, Chindwin-Kalewa area and upper Arakan up to Akyab, a move directed towards the ultimate recapture of Burma. Hence, apart from holding the Japanese attack against Digboi oilfields, the IV Indian Corps would not be available for defensive role in the Bengal-Orissa area, which developed on the XV Indian Corps and the line of communications areas.

The XV Indian Corps with the 70th Division, 50th Indian Tank Brigade and 1 Hyderabad Lancer, then constituted the Army Mobile Reserve and was given the following directive:

- " (a) Be prepared to take counter-offensive action to destroy any enemy directing his attack on Jamshedpur or Calcutta within the areas:
- (i) Midnapore-Balasure-Anandpur-Chaibasa-Jamshedpur.
 - (ii) Chaudanga - Jhenida-Jessore-Khulna-Basirhat-Barasat.
- " (b) In the event of the enemy developing his offensive northwards up River Brahmaputra you will be prepared to move into the area Parvatipur-Sirajganj-junction Rivers Brahmaputra and Ganges-Harding Bridge with a view to opposing his advance and destroying his communications. This will probably be in cooperation with counter-measures taken by IV Corps".

There were thus two battle areas where decisive action might be fought. But as the force was limited the Army Reserve (XV Indian Corps) could not be committed to action until the main direction of attack had become evident. The risk of " penetration inland had therefore to be taken". In case of invasion in the

²⁷ In September this was worded as: "An infiltrating attack on Assam with the object of capturing the Digboi oilfields and the rice granaries of Assam". See Eastern Army Operation Instruction No. 13, dated 9 September 1942 (File 8544).

western sector, to the west of the river Hooghly, the XV Indian Corps was to be "launched to drive it back into the sea". But if the main invasion lay through the Sundarbans, the Reserve would not be employed in the Delta proper but would have to wait till the invading force emerged in the area Diamond Harbour-Port Canning-Basirhat-Jessore-Jhenida and Khushtia and then to destroy it there. The 2nd Division, when it arrived, would operate in conjunction with the XV Indian Corps in any sector of these battle areas, which were defined.

Essentially the structure for defence, as built up during the monsoon and winter of 1942-43, was based on the possibility of hostile attack developing in three main sectors, Assam to the east of Brahmaputra by land, advance across the Assam-Burma border, the delta area between river Hooghly and the Brahmaputra, and lastly the south-west coast of Bengal extending west of river Hooghly to the Cuttack coast. The disposition of the defence forces was so organised as to enable rapid action being taken in case of an actual threat developing. As on the North-West Frontier, in the eastern zone also, the defence was divided into three sections, the line of communications troops, the garrisons for the defended areas, and the striking force. The three geographical sectors covered the entire exposed region. The defence establishments there were well directed to meet a land advance or seaborne invasion. There was greater apprehension of seaborne landings, hence in the two sectors, central and western, defence comprised, first, effective patrolling of the coastline and the inland creeks and rivers, second, the defended areas which were intended both as stops on communications and pivots of manoeuvre for the mobile reserve, third, counter-attack by the mobile striking force which would fight the invader and prevent him from reaching the vital industrial area, and last, the line of communications areas designed to facilitate the maintenance of the striking force and the garrisons in the defended areas, and safeguard the communications and provide local defence for the vital industrial centres. In Assam, the eastern sector, the IV Indian Corps with the 14th Indian Division had been established both for protecting the vulnerable points and preparing for the invasion of Burma. 202 Line of Communications Area with its Headquarters at Gauhati and its three sub-areas located at Shillong, Dibrugarh and Manipur Road had been assigned for the maintenance of the Assam forces. For the other two sectors, the XV Indian Corps and the 26th Indian Division were allotted the role of the striking force, while 101 and 303 Line of Communications Areas with Headquarters respectively at Patna and Calcutta and the sub-areas (151, 152, 154 and 351, 352, 353 and 354), located at

Ranchi, Dinapore, Cuttack, Kharagpur, Calcutta, Jalpaiguri and Chittagong respectively, were allotted for Bihar, Orissa and Bengal.

The role of the XV Indian Corps has already been mentioned. The 26th Indian Division was made operationally responsible for the mobile anti-invasion defence of Bengal, south and west of the rivers Ganges, Padma and Meghna including the whole of the Sundarbans. Prior to March 1943, the entire region west of the Brahmaputra had been the responsibility of the XV Indian Corps, which would not be effectively covered by it. Hence the then strategy was to meet the invading forces outside the Sundarbans. With the addition of the 26th Indian Division, it became possible to oppose the hostile forces in the Sundarbans, while the XV Indian Corps might operate in the interior line.

The operational role of the line of communication troops, which may be regarded as the third line of defence was:

- (1) to provide for internal security, railway security, static defence including defence of aerodromes and of selected vulnerable points, coast watching and mine watching,
- (2) to develop, maintain and protect selected signal road and railway communications, and
- (3) to arrange for early information of hostile action.

They were not normally to operate in a mobile role, but they had the responsibility of assisting the field formation in the above manners. The responsibility for the garrisoning and maintenance of the defended areas also devolved on the line of communication areas or the 26th Indian Division in its zone.

These defensive forces built up during the winter and spring of 1943 were well poised to meet any Japanese threat, and continued to be in position till the danger had receded. The appreciation in October 1942 was that in certain contingencies the invasion might crystallise. It was, however, clear in the summer of 1943 that the intensity of danger had abated, and the prospects of invasion of the Indian soil had become remote. Henceforth, greater concentration of effort was on preparing for offensive action in Burma. Gradually, therefore, the organisation for defence in Bengal was transformed into one for offensive action.

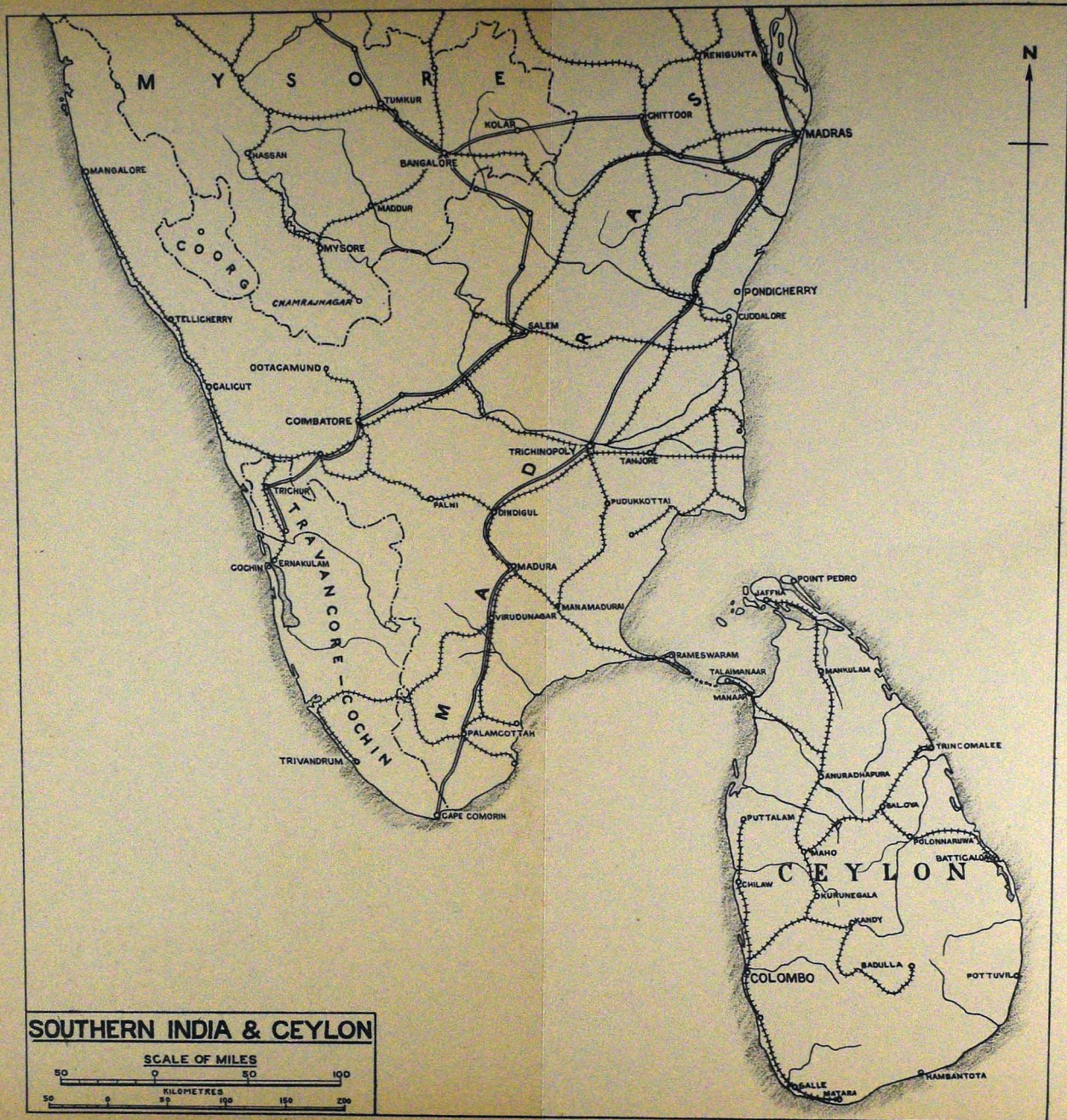
The only occasion when again a serious threat developed was in the spring of 1944 when Kohima and Imphal were the objects of Japanese invasion. But subsequent to the summer of 1943 the danger of seaborne landings had generally passed away, and apart from the anti-air precautions or the strengthening of the line of communication areas for the maintenance of the invading force in Assam, the defence organisation was relaxed.

In addition to the arrangements for defence on land, steps were also taken to provide for effective coastal watching system, anti-aircraft defence and demolitions and denials in emergency. The Eastern Fleet together with the infant Indian Navy were based on Ceylon, but the naval superiority in the Bay of Bengal had passed to the Japanese. Hence the navy was not then in a position to render the coastline safe. In later stages, however, the navy came into its own, but then the danger of invasion had receded. The Royal Air Force was gradually building up, which enabled air defence to be strengthened. Its role in defence was primarily to maintain reconnaissance and constant air watch for hostile air or sea craft, and in case of invasion to render effective cooperation to the land forces. In all plans of defence, at the time, sufficient emphasis was given to the employment of air and sea forces for countering the hostile forces. For anti-air defence, however, other measures like an observer system and passive air-defence were necessary.

SOUTHERN INDIA AND CEYLON

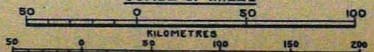
From the time that threat to India developed, Ceylon and Southern India were regarded as objectives of Japanese invasion. It was particularly so when the land threat to Assam had not become serious and a naval invasion or a seaborne landing was the most probable form of aggression. In the Joint Planning Staff Appreciation of 14 March 1942, the east coast about Vizagapatam and Madras, the southern extremity of India including Cochin and Travancore, Ceylon and Bombay were considered to be the vulnerable areas. Air attack on Ceylon and the eastern coast was believed to be imminent. The relative importance of each of them was then examined. While the eastern coast was an important element in the security of the Indian system of communications, Madras and the southern extremity were integral parts of the defence of Ceylon. That island was, from the naval aspect, the "main strategic position left in the Indian Ocean", whose "loss would prejudice naval support to the defence of India and would seriously weaken the whole Allied naval situation in the Indian Ocean".²⁸ Hence the Joint Planning Staff considered it essential to hold Ceylon, Vizagapatam and Madras and provide for their effective defence. Bombay was not deemed vulnerable yet.

²⁸ J.P.S. Paper No. 7 dated 14-3-42 (Joint Planning Staff India Command) Defence of India and Ceylon (File No. 601/12152/H).



SOUTHERN INDIA & CEYLON

SCALE OF MILES



About the same time the General Staff Planning Committee prepared a plan for the defence of Southern India and Ceylon. On the assumption that the Japanese objectives in that region, in the order of priority, might be Ceylon, Vizagapatam and Madras, they assessed the area, form and scale of attack. Naval attack including ship-borne aircraft might be directed against Southern India, and the main targets, in order of priority, would be Trincomalee, Bombay, Madras and Cochin. The following was their appreciation of the form and scale of attack:—

- “ (a) Naval bombardment by warships up to 12-inch guns.
- “ (b) Ship-borne aircraft, two aircraft carriers.
- “ (c) Attacks by submarine, ship-borne M.T.Bs. and human torpedoes.
- “ (d) Raids, by forces up to possibly one brigade.
- “ (e) Major landings by a force of two divisions ”.²⁹

The initiative lay with the Japanese in the matter of selecting the point or points of attack which might be anywhere. Hence the essential policy for the conduct of defence would be “ to employ the minimum forces necessary in a static role for the defence of vital areas whilst providing for mobile reserves, suitably located as regards communication ”.³⁰

The principle of defence was the same as in Bengal, with the difference that in the south, local naval defence and effective garrisoning of the fortified posts were the pivot of defensive arrangements. Navy and air were the two chief components of defence organisation, while land forces were there to prevent the hostile forces from consolidating their position on the coast or penetrating inland. In the south there were no vital industries or lines of communication to protect except on the Vizagapatam coast. The only importance of the extremity of Southern India was as a link in the defence of Ceylon, while Ceylon or Cochin had their value as naval bases for the maintenance of Allied position in the Indian Ocean and as convoy-assembly points. Hence the object of defence was to provide for the protection of the main ports and to maintain the integrity of the lines of communication connecting them with the rest of India. This involved a close cooperation of naval, air and land forces, and the plan of operations was based on this principle.

The most important area from the point of defence was Ceylon. In Ceylon also, Trincomalee and Colombo, besides the landing grounds, were considered vital areas to be protected. In addition

²⁹ G. S. P. No. 7-(G. S. Plans) ‘Defence of Ceylon and Southern Command’. para 59 (File No. 12155/H).

³⁰ *Ibid* para 60

to these Talaimanaar in the north and Galle/Kogalle in the south were important points, one as link with India and the other as the most southerly taking-off point for seaplanes operating for the protection of shipping. The occupation of any of these points by the Japanese would involve serious danger to the security of Southern India and Allied position in the Indian Ocean. Hostile operations might take the form of a naval or ship-borne aircraft bombardment and landings on the coast. The local naval defence of Colombo and Trincomalee was a responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies. It was presumed that such defences were adequate and that necessary reinforcements would be secured from the United Kingdom. On this assumption, the plan assessed the air force requirements as four Fighter Bomber squadrons, three G.R. squadrons, two Fighter squadrons and two Torpedo Bomber squadrons. For this expanded air force, a number of aerodromes and alighting areas, in addition to those existing in the neighbourhood of Colombo and Trincomalee were required, which, it was suggested, should be located in the vicinity of the two vital areas and in the northern part of the island, to maintain a link with landing grounds in South India so as to provide an inter-connected air defence. It was further suggested that radar direction finding (R.D.F.) facilities should be urgently provided, besides a network of 64 heavy and 82 light anti-aircraft guns, searchlights and one balloon squadron for the two ports, Trincomalee and Colombo.

This local defence was not considered a sufficient insurance against invasion, for it was rightly held that the Japanese could land anywhere except the two defended areas, without any difficulty. With the limited resources and weak navy as against the length of the coastline, suitable for landings, it was not possible to provide complete immunity against all landings, major or minor. Hence the General Staff appreciation was that an invasion might be possible with any one or more of the following objectives:—

- “ (i) To destroy, or with a view to further operations, to secure a landing ground or the seaplane base at Kogalle.
- “ (ii) To interrupt communications with India in the area of Talaimanaar.
- “ (iii) To damage the bases at Trincomalee and Colombo.
- “ (iv) To occupy Galle as a base from which to conduct further operations ”.³¹

The policy outlined for defence, therefore, was to hold Colombo, Trincomalee and Galle and provide sufficient mobile reserves to counter-attack any hostile landings before the Japanese

³¹ *Ibid* para 20

had time to organise, a principle similar to that adopted in Bengal. For this purpose, in addition to a force of about two brigades in Ceylon, the following additional forces were required:—

- (a) Kogalle/Galle— One battalion with sufficient mechanical transport and three 60-pounder guns.
- (b) Talaimanaar— One battalion with sufficient mechanical transport.
- (c) Mobile Reserve— One brigade group with sufficient mechanical transport and Field troops and anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery.

This outline plan provided for naval defence of the coastline, sufficient protection of the fortified ports and a mobile land force which would be employed to fight Japanese attack, developing in any part of the country. A substantial air support was to be an effective insurance.

For South India and the western coast also defence was to be organised on similar lines. Local naval defence, coastal defence, air defence and lastly the land defence, with the aid of garrisons in fortified ports and mobile reserve, were the main items of the plan of defence. Four areas were marked out for such treatment, the southern tip of India; the eastern coast, Madras-Vizagapatam; Cochin; and Bombay. The defence of each one of these had to be provided for separately. For the southern tip, it was felt that defence arrangements in Ceylon should be adequate with some additional provision for Dhanushkodi. The defence of this area was interlinked with that of Ceylon, hence in the proposal for the construction of new airfields, their situation had to be determined from the point of view of protecting either of the two areas, northern Ceylon and southern extremity of India. It was considered that the object of an invasion on Southern India would be to interrupt communications with Ceylon and to capture landing grounds in that area. Hence the protection of Dhanushkodi and the Palk Straits became essential. For this purpose one battalion was to be located in the Dhanushkodi area, and the Palk Straits had to be mined to bar Japanese approach in that area. Moreover, some local naval defence vessels of Fairmile type and 105 medium machine guns were also necessary. It was also considered proper to have an alternative ferry station to Dhanushkodi, for the Pamban bridge connecting Dhanushkodi with the mainland was quite vulnerable. Hence the proposal was made for the improvement of jetty facilities at Mandapam. But apart from Dhanushkodi, landings might be possible elsewhere also. To meet that danger

it was proposed that a brigade as mobile reserve should be stationed at Salem.

The next important area was the eastern coast. In this area the Japanese raids or invasions would have two purposes:—

- “ (a) as nuisance value, to interrupt communications and create panic,
 “ (b) to secure a sure base for aircraft, in conjunction with or previous to a major invasion ”.³²

The Japanese aircraft based on Tavoy or Rangoon had Vizagapatam and Coconada within their range. But if the Japanese could secure some bases on the east coast then there would be no need for them to bring fighter aircraft by ship for subsequent operations. Raids or invasion on this coast might therefore be expected.

It was difficult to protect the whole eastern coastline against raids, hence the only practicable policy was to defend some important areas, which were determined as Madras, Vizagapatam, Pondicherry and Coconada. Japanese landings might come at many other points, but these alone were to be regarded as vital. The Outline Plan was based on the offensive protection of these points.³³ The defence of the east coast, therefore, had to be organised on the same basis as that of Ceylon. For local naval defence the following craft were required:—

	Madras	Vizagapatam
Division (3 ships) or M/S cum A/S Flotilla	1	1
<i>Mine Sweepers</i>		
Basset Trawlers	3	3
105 ft. MMs	2	2
Skid Towing craft	1	1
<i>Anti-submarines</i>		
Basset Trawlers	5	3
110 ft Fairmiles	3	..
72 ft. Motor Launches	2	2

For coast defence the following artillery layout was suggested:—

Madras—	6"-45°	3
	4.5"-CD/AA	2
	60 pdr.	2
Vizagapatam—	6"-45°	3
	60 pdr.	2

³² *Ibid* p 7, para 31.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 8

In addition to these, for protection against special craft, including motor boats, provision was made for 6 light machine gun posts for Madras and 7 for Vizagapatam, with lights, in addition to a patrolled anti-tank net at Madras and a patrolled indicator net supported by guard loops at Vizagapatam.

For these two ports anti-aircraft defence of the strength of 12 heavy and 12 light anti-aircraft guns for Madras and 12 heavy and 5 light for Vizagapatam, was also provided.

Land forces for local protection, in addition to internal security troops, were to be provided on the following scale:—

Madras—	one battalion with mechanical transport to make it mobile.
Vizagapatam—	one battalion with mechanical transport to make it fully mobile, and a modified brigade headquarters and signal section.
Pondicherry—	arms and equipment for the Free French forces which would be adequate.
Coconada—	one company for the protection of radar direction finding station.

For effective backing of these garrisons, in case of an invasion, mobile reserves conveniently located were necessary so as to be able to adopt a counter-attack role immediately the Japanese endeavoured to obtain a footing, particularly for operating land-based aircraft. These mobile reserves were to be located as follows:—

- (a) Salem Area— one brigade group including one field regiment of 25 pounders, one anti-tank and one light anti-aircraft battery; one field company with sufficient mechanical transport to carry marching personnel.
- (b) Secunderabad Area— one division with sufficient mechanical transport to carry marching personnel.

For further support the General Reserve of at least one division with the Army Headquarters might also be utilised.

Air force necessary for the protection of the east coast was also laid down as:—

- One general reserve squadron (Hudson) at Madras.
- One general reserve squadron (Hudson) at Vizagapatam.
- One Fighter squadron each at Madras and Vizagapatam.
- One AC squadron.
- Adequate radar direction finding facilities at both ports.

For operating these aircraft, it was essential to increase landing grounds at both the places to three each.

The third vulnerable area was that of Cochin. It was an important base for the naval forces as well as an alternative convoy assembling point to Bombay. Hence arrangements had to be made for its defence, both against the possibility of a raid by land forces as well as by naval forces and shipborne aircraft. The coastal area with its backwaters was considered suitable for Japanese tactics. Here also the defence was to be organised on the same lines as on the east coast.

Local naval defence forces included:—

One Division (3 ships) of M/S cum A/S Flotilla.

Five Auxiliary M.S. vessels.

Three auxiliary A.S. vessels.

Three 110' Fairmiles.

Two 105' Motor minesweepers.

Two 72' M.Ls.

Coast Defence provision was as follows:—

6"-45° 3

4.5" CD/AA 2

60 pdr. 2

In addition to these, four light machine gun posts and two lights with an indicator net, for the harbour entrance, with three patrol craft were to be provided.

For anti-aircraft defence 10 heavy and 6 light anti-aircraft guns were to be sited.

Cochin had one company of Auxiliary Force troops in garrison. This was to be augmented by one garrison battalion, so that a mobile water-borne reserve would be available for patrolling the back-waters, utilising local craft. In case, however, of a large-scale threat, the reserve at Salem might be drawn upon. There was also proposal for having a General Reserve Squadron in Cochin.

Last came the defence of Bombay. It was regarded as a remunerative target for Japanese sea or air attack, but the chances of any major landings or invasion were discounted. Hence defence of Bombay was to be provided on local scale only. The following forces were deemed adequate for the purpose:

Local Naval Defence Forces

One Division of M/S cum A/S Flotilla

Five Basset Trawlers

Five 110' Fairmiles

Five Auxiliary M.S.

Three Auxiliary A.S.

Twelve 72' M.Ls.

As a protection against human torpedoes, M.T.Bs. including motor boats, etc., the following measures were to be undertaken:

- (a) an indicator net
- (b) patrols by motor boats
- (c) light machine gun posts with lights

Coast Defence

7.5"	4
6"-45°	6
6"-15°	3
4.5" CD/AA	2

Anti-aircraft Defences

14 heavy and 18 light anti-aircraft guns

Land Forces

One British infantry battalion

Two garrison battalions

Air Force

One General Reserve Squadron

No provision was made for mobile reserve because the threat of invasion was not there.

Thus was the Plan prepared by the General Staff for the protection of Ceylon and Southern India. Besides the forces which were to be employed, emphasis was laid on demolitions also.

On the basis of this Outline Plan, the Southern Command, transformed into the Southern Army, was made responsible for the defence of Southern India against invasion. It was mentioned in the Directive of 11 April 1942, that the defence of India, south of the line Madras-Bangalore-Cannanore, was vital to the defence of Ceylon, which in turn was of very high importance strategically. Bombay also was to be protected against air and sea bombardment.

The directive also catalogued the vital areas to be defended according to their primary or secondary importance. These were as follows:—

Areas of primary importance

- (a) Air bases and landing grounds south of the general line Madras-Bangalore-Cannanore.
- (b) Madras Port.
- (c) Bombay.
- (d) Cochin.
- (e) Rail and road communications to Bombay and to the Central Provinces.

Areas of secondary importance

- (a) Vizagapatam.
- (b) Coconada.

(c) Pondicherry.

(d) Rail and road communications to Bengal.

The Southern Army was directed not to fight for Vizagapatam and Coconada, but in the event of attack by superior forces, the garrison was to hold up the invasion until demolitions had been carried out and then to withdraw. But further advance inland from Vizagapatam was to be checked by the mobile reserve, for which maintenance of communications with Secunderabad was essential. Great emphasis was also laid on closest cooperation and liaison with naval and air forces as well as on mobility by improving communications. As in Bengal, the Southern Army was directed to fortify important centres of communications, river crossings etc. which would act as pivots of manoeuvre for mobile columns. The policy was that of offensive action against any invading force. Hence mobile striking forces were to be located south of Bangalore.

This directive gave the general setting of defence and, in essentials, endorsed the Outline Plan discussed earlier. Very little change had been made in the general structure of defence, which continued to function without major modifications until the disappearance of all threat to South India. On 30 December 1942, the Southern Army was directed not to proceed with denial schemes in the ports of Cochin, Madras and Vizagapatam, owing to their being required for use in the conduct of future offensive operations against Burma. By May 1943, the danger had practically passed away. The General Headquarters therefore modified the basis of defence in Southern India. The risk of invasion was very small, but as the ports were to be used as bases for offensive operations, raids with the object of destroying port facilities and base installations might still be possible. Therefore, the only role of the Southern Army was to defend against raids the following ports and their connected airfields:—

Madras, Vizagapatam, Cochin and Bombay.

The structure of defence, however, was to continue as previously.

In 1943 the situation had changed so radically that offensive operations against Burma were being planned. The danger of invasion of India had disappeared, and it was considered possible to relax the preparations for defence,

CHAPTER XI

The Threat of Invasion from the East

PLANS OF OPERATIONS IN BURMA

The war in Burma in 1942 rapidly assumed an adverse aspect for the British, Indian and Chinese forces, which were compelled to retreat towards the borders of India. With the fall of Rangoon in early March, the Allies lost their foothold in southern Burma. The Japanese advance into the interior of Burma followed a three-pronged attack against the Chinese forces in the east, and the British-Indian forces in the central and northern Burma. Then began a series of withdrawals which were closely followed by the Japanese forces. The British and Indian troops distinguished themselves in rearguard actions and, fighting against heavy odds, were able to extricate a large part of the force to safety behind the Indian frontier. The 17th Indian Division had reached Kalewa before 15 May and, despite frequent bombing and machine-gunning from the air by the Japanese, was able to cross the flooded river and make for the border of Assam and Manipur. By May 28, practically all the troops of General Alexander's Burma Army had crossed the Indian border, and were out of Japanese reach. The Chinese forces had also retired into Yunnan, which was subjected to Japanese attack. Some of the Chinese forces had moved into India, where General Stilwell also arrived after an adventurous journey through central Burma to Assam. The Allied forces had, in his words, taken "a hell of a beating" and had retired to India leaving the whole of Burma to the Japanese, thus forsaking the initiative to the latter to strike at their will, either against China or India. General Wavell, in his despatch, explained the reasons for the disaster, which was due more to the impossibility of maintaining supplies in the absence of practicable and satisfactory routes between India and Burma. The superior training of the Japanese forces in jungle warfare, and their strategy of infiltration and envelopment had also accounted for the defeat of the Allied forces.

The situation was grave which General Wavell aptly characterised as "India itself and Ceylon lay under imminent threat of invasion", while "the forces available for defence were dangerously weak". The Japanese had adequate forces to follow up their successes in Burma by launching a simultaneous invasion of India by land, through Assam or Eastern Bengal, and by seaborne landing operations on the eastern coast of India. Their

air force was also well poised, with their well spread out aerodromes in Burma, to inflict continuous and heavy raids on Calcutta and the industrial area in the eastern regions. But fortunately for Indian defence initially the Japanese attention was directed against Yunnan, through which passed the lifeline of China, the so-called Burma Road. This diversion in addition to the stiff resistance offered by the Indian forces in their retreat towards India delayed the follow-up till the monsoon set in, when any offensive action by the Japanese in the unexplored, jungly regions on the eastern frontier of India was well-nigh impossible. This gave a respite to the Indian forces and enabled the India Command to organise the defences, secure reinforcements, strengthen supplies, and be prepared not only for effective defence of the frontiers but also to contemplate counter-offensive moves for the recapture of Burma. The danger passed off, never to return in its original intensity.

The situation had greatly deteriorated in March 1942. It is evident from the Joint Planning Staff Paper No. 7, dated 14 March 1942, that serious danger to the security of India was then apprehended. The impracticability of resisting a full-scale offensive was appreciated. At the end of the month the situation had grown still worse. In an appreciation by the Director of Military Operations on 28 March 1942, the situation as it might develop in the next six months was analysed, and the measures necessary to restore the position were considered. Rangoon had fallen, and the Japanese were in occupation of the general line Lashio-Shwebo-Paletwa. Part of the Allied force had withdrawn towards China and was in the area Bhamo-Paoshan where it was being maintained by air. The Allies had little mechanical transport and for their maintenance depended upon a paltry force of 125 transport aircraft. On the other hand, the Japanese had control of oilfields and had the use of the railway and inland water transport on the Irrawaddy. In addition, the layout of the aerodromes in Thailand and Burma gave them considerable depth and enabled them to bring heavy aircraft against their objectives. With Akyab and other aerodromes on the west side of Burma in their occupation, they were in a position to employ heavy naval forces in the Bay of Bengal. Their sea communications with Rangoon were secure which enabled them to bring reinforcements wherever desired.

As against this superiority of the Japanese, the situation of the Allies was woeful. There were two depleted and disorganised divisions in Burma, and the condition of Chinese forces was deplorable. In Assam there was a Corps of two divisions, while two more divisions were available in Bengal. The land forces in India might not have been numerically very much weaker than the

Japanese but in the air they had no superiority, both owing to the inadequacy of air force and the dispersal of the aerodromes and their distance from the potential objectives in Burma. On the sea also, India was not in a position to land forces on the Arakan coast, or even to neutralise Japanese offensive action. Air superiority was essential both for defence as well as for adopting measures to stage a counter-offensive in Burma. For maintenance, the position was equally desperate, as the three new roads, Manipur-Imphal-Tamu-Kalewa road (likely to be completed by September 1942), Ledo-Hukawng Valley road to Mogaung, and the Ledo-Fort Hertz-Myitkyina road, both nearing completion, could not maintain more than a division.

Taking into consideration all the factors, strength of forces, weather, topography and the temper of the people, the Director of Military Operations appreciated that the Japanese might adopt the following courses of action:—

“ Course I—To leave a sufficient force to cover their western flank against any operations by us from the direction of Assam and Eastern Bengal, and to press north-eastwards along the China Road with the object of finishing off Chinese resistance.

“ Course II—The reverse of Course I, namely to leave forces to cover their eastern flank and to move against Assam and Eastern Bengal with the object of cutting off our oil supplies from Digboi and raising the population of India against us.

“ Course III—To concentrate on movements along the west coast of Burma and to continue this movement into Bengal and along the Meghna and Padma rivers supplementing this with a diversion by sea against the east coast of the Bay of Bengal ”.

The Director of Military Operations did not consider the first course as likely, as the Chinese capitulation was a matter of time only, hence the Japanese would not waste their energies on a fruitless chase. The second course was also not very likely owing to their inability to deploy large forces and consequent slow progress, in view of the undeveloped communications. The last course might offer “ better prospects and faster results than any movement through Assam ”. This course had the advantage that it would permit of gradual extension in northern Burma while providing quicker results. By this means Assam would be cut off by a move up the Meghna and Padma rivers and northwards along the Brahmaputra. Owing to the weakness of India on the sea and in the air, a landing operation on the east coast was not unexpected

and the East Bengal coast was vulnerable. To supplement the seaborne action, a Japanese land attack through Arakan might also be likely. The General Staff, as has been mentioned earlier, attached high priority to the north-east and did not associate the same intensity of danger to Ceylon.

To counteract the impending danger, the Director of Military Operations outlined three courses of action for India. These envisaged offensive action with the object of destroying the Japanese forces in Burma. A counter-offensive is an essential element of defence, and it was on that principle that, at the moment, the Plans of Operation in India were based. "To leave the initiative to the enemy and wait passively for his thrusts to crystallise would have frittered defence by causing a dispersal of inadequate defence forces". Hence the strategy which might promise appreciable results would be that of adopting an offensive to destroy the hostile forces as far away as possible, but at the same time to be ready to meet any local threat. The initiative in such a move would not pass to the invader, and would enable even a comparatively weak defence to earn higher dividends. On this assumption, therefore, certain courses were suggested in this appreciation, with the object of launching an attack against Burma either by way of Assam or down the Arakan coast.

The alternative courses were:—

- (i) to attack from Assam with a Corps of two divisions, one moving via Tamu and the other on the Hukawng Valley, with their objective the recapture of Mandalay and Lashio and opening the supply route to China,
- (ii) to combine with (i) above, a movement down the west coast of Burma from Chittagong,
- (iii) to start an attack by two divisions against Northern Burma as in (i), and when the Japanese start sending reinforcements northwards, to put in attacks against their main lines of communications simultaneously from the west and the east. The attack from the west would be in the form, firstly of a division landed on a broad front from Akyab to Owa on the west coast to cause dispersion of Japanese air forces, and secondly, of main landings opposite Au and Taungup, and directed ultimately against Magwe and Prome to cut the Irrawaddy line of communication. This would involve capture of Akyab by parachutists and surprise landings near Ramree Islands etc, a combined operation. From the east, the attack would be organised by means of an irregular force operating against the railway at Pyaswe

and joining up with the main force. This operation, if successful, would have involved the destruction of Japanese forces in the north and opened the way for operations in the south.

The last course was considered to be fruitful of effective results. But air superiority was essential for its execution. The most feasible course was to strike in the north combined with an attack on the line of communications in the rear. The Japanese were supposed to entertain the plan of moving northwards, up the west coast of Burma, and combining it with a seaborne operation against the north or west coast of Bengal. To prevent this, and to recapture Burma, the course as above was suggested for which plans of operation had to be prepared.

This paper met with the approbation of General Wavell who considered it a valuable basis for planning a counter-offensive in Burma, if all went well there till the autumn. He was conscious of the difficulty in holding Burma, yet he wanted "someone with a mind not wedded to orthodoxy to plan a reconquest of Burma or operations against Japanese line of communication as they advance towards India". This appreciation served as the basis for future planning of counter-offensive, though immediately the turn of events made any action on those lines impossible. Burma was wholly lost by the end of May 1942, and no operations of a counter-offensive nature could be adopted just at the moment. The coming of the monsoon and the adoption of active counter-offensive by the United States forces in the Pacific, as well as Japanese diversion against Chinese forces in Yunnan, delayed the invasion of India. It may be that Japan was then watching the trend of political movement in India and not being certain of the reaction of the people and the Indian National Congress, might have put off the attack which she was then in a position to launch. With the end of the monsoon, however, some reinforcements had arrived in India, the Pacific situation had improved, and the Indian internal situation, too, had lost its sharpness; hence the defence was in a position to turn its gaze to plan a counter-offensive.

At the time of the withdrawal from Burma, the situation of the Eastern Army, which was responsible for the defence of north-east India, was as follows:—

"IV Corps (Lieut.-General N. M. S. Irwin) was responsible for the defence of Assam. The Burma Army (17th Indian Division and 1st Burma Division) passed under his command; apart from them he had only one brigade (1st Indian Infantry Brigade) which had been moved from the N. W. Frontier

into Manipur State and was astride the Palel-Tamu road; and one battalion of the 49th Infantry Brigade.

"XV Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Noel Beresford-Peirse) was responsible for the defence of Bengal against seaborne invasion or an advance up the Arakan coast. It comprised 14th and 26th Indian Divisions, both incomplete.

"70th British Division (less one Brigade Group) was at Ranchi with the role of meeting any seaborne expedition on the Orissa Coast".

There were certain auxiliary forces, and a force of local levies was raised from amongst the hillmen of the Lushai, Chin and Naga hills, known as "V" force. Its role was to collect information and harry the Japanese line of communications. Another force was also organised to man river boats to patrol the waterways intersecting Bengal. It was known as the Sundarbans Flotilla. However, the army in the north-east was neither fully equipped nor trained for the job and no division was complete. But by the end of June, two British divisions (5th and 2nd) were arriving, anti-aircraft and other units had reached India, and the remnants of the Burma Army were reforming. Two Indian armoured divisions were also being completed as some equipment had been received. Moreover, the Chinese forces had arrived in India and additional troops were being flown to Ramgarh where the Chinese Army was re-forming, re-equipping and receiving training for the counter-offensive. The air force was also being strengthened. In March 1942 its strength was negligible. But by the end of the year, 29 squadrons were on operational role and another 20 were forming in addition to the two squadrons of transport aircraft and one PRU squadron. From about 30 to 40 airfields in March, by the end of the monsoon season, 150 airfields were suitable for operation and others were under construction.

The transport problem was another handicap to effective defence or adopting counter-offensive action. There was a remarkable lack of communications from the rest of India into Eastern Bengal, and Assam was practically cut off by the unbridged Brahmaputra. There was only one single track railway in Assam which was connected with a ferry across the Brahmaputra. Roads were also practically non-existent. There was no good road west of the Brahmaputra, and Assam had only one east to west second class road. River transport too had been depleted to meet the demands from Iraq. In Bengal also the situation was no better. To the east, Chittagong was connected by a single track metre-gauge railway. Early measures were, however, taken to improve matters. A road from Assam to Burma, Imphal-Kalewa, was under

construction. The Ledo Road to connect with the China-Burma Road was also being pushed ahead. Manipur Road station was developed as an adequate railhead. Moreover, communications in Assam were also being developed. A new railhead and advanced base was made at Ledo, an additional river port was made at Dolnagon on the Brahmaputra, north of Jorhat, and many additional crossing places were prepared on the railway, and the control system was improved. Nevertheless, the position was extremely disappointing, and it deteriorated further owing to a high incidence of malaria in Assam, floods in Bihar and disturbed internal conditions in northern India. The last involved employment of 31 battalions of the Field Army besides internal security troops, and led to the dislocation of transportation system for a considerable period. These factors complicated the system of maintenance and necessarily delayed preparations for counter-offensive and weakened the defence organisation, if the Japanese were to undertake an invasion. Till the end of the monsoon, these conditions prevailed, but with the advent of winter, the situation grew propitious for launching on schemes of counter-offensive.

Planning had been taken up by the Chiefs of Staff in England and by the India Command, long before the fall of Burma. It is clear from Arminia Telegram, No. 7639/G dated 31 March 1942, that offensive operations against Burma were being planned in India, while long-term appreciation of war against Japan was being considered in England. General Wavell issued definite instructions to the Joint Planning Staff on 16 April 1942, to begin "consideration of an offensive to reoccupy Burma". It was not intended for any immediate execution, but was meant to be "a long term project" to give an idea of the possible "commitments involved in the way of transportation, aerodromes, equipment etc" for planning ahead to proceed. This estimate was absolutely necessary for provisioning and training purposes. He also desired the Joint Planning Staff to consider other prospects for counter-offensive and in particular to advise whether recapture of Andamans should precede or accompany an offensive into Burma, whether northern coast of Sumatra provided a good objective for expedition, and whether by these means sea communications could be cut between Rangoon and Japan, and whether an expedition against Moulmein might be mounted to cut their land communications and isolate the Japanese forces in Burma. An estimate was to be made of the troops required, of the measures for their maintenance and of the special training and equipment necessary; airfields and the maintenance arrangements for a large air force were to be planned, since air superiority was the first requisite for operations against

Burma by land or sea. Such planning continued for more than a year before actual offensive operations started and revealed the difficulties of the problem. The increasing delay in the Japanese invasion of India and the improving position of the Allies, particularly in the matter of war supplies, provided a growing stimulus to the schemes of counter-offensive, as it was fully realised that with the expulsion of the Japanese from Burma was closely identified the security of India and the safety of the Indian Ocean. General Wavell had originally intended to undertake a limited offensive into Upper Burma directed towards Kalewa-Katha-Myitkyina line in October to be followed by a push from Chittagong into the Arakan, and a seaborne expedition against Lower Burma. But conditions in India and the non-availability of essential supplies in time led him to postpone the offensive to March 1943, which did not materialise even then. Nevertheless, operations were commenced for the capture of Akyab by land and some movement of troops had been effected towards Tamu, Kabaw and Chin Hills. In the succeeding pages a brief survey will be made of the consecutive appreciations and plans which had the capture of Burma as their objective.

The first important study of the problem of recapture of Burma was made by the Joint Planning Staff in their Paper No. 15, dated 11 May 1942. It was a comprehensive analysis of the factors involved and the principles on which operations might proceed. In this study were included three main types of operations or a combination of them; overland from north-east India, seaborne expedition and operations along the Arakan coast. The difficulties involved in each one of them and the forces and maintenance arrangements required were also examined. Taking all these aspects into consideration, the Planning Staff came to the conclusion that "a large scale offensive against Burma cannot be staged for some-time" for it "is dependent on many factors beyond the control of the India Command". It was rightly argued that "it depends on strategic developments in the other war theatres, and their effect on the combined plans of the Allied Powers. The reconquest of Burma may require a considerable effort and make heavy demands on our naval, army and air resources. But this is only one of the ways by which we can strike back at the Japanese, and it may not be the most economical method of doing so". Before any effective planning proceeded, it was essential to know the object of the operation, whether it was "to be the reoccupation of Upper Burma to re-establish the supply routes to China, or whether India is to be a base for a major sea expedition by Allied forces, or whether India's role is merely to be ancillary to other major

operations conducted from bases further east". These questions could be answered only by the Chiefs of Staff in London and Washington, who alone had the full picture and could determine priorities and fix the dates. Nevertheless in this paper broad aspects of the problem were studied in order to outline the possible scope of the operations and the forces and types of equipment required.

The following basic principles governed any offensive operations from India:—

- “ (a) Restoration of control over sea communications in the Indian Ocean, both for the feasibility of seaborne operations and the facility in obtaining supplies and reinforcements.
- “ (b) Sufficient strength in shore-based and carrier-borne aircraft for the protection of fleet and for air predominance.
- “ (c) The recapture of Rangoon was the preliminary to the reoccupation of the whole of Burma, but could not be possible without a sea-borne expedition for which air and sea predominance must be achieved.
- “ (d) Capture of the Andamans, and the aerodromes on the Arakan Coast was an essential preliminary ”.

The paper then examined the possibilities of the three types of operations, specified earlier. Taking overland operations from Assam first, it was held that owing to the limited capacity of the lines of communication into Upper Burma, the inconvenient situation of the aerodromes for providing air support, and the strength of the Japanese forces well provided with a chain of good aerodromes, only a small force could advance into Upper Burma, with scanty chances of success, unless the Japanese defence had been sufficiently weakened by events elsewhere. The only object of such an operation would be to capture aerodromes.

Next were discussed the operations involving a seaborne expedition. The Burma coastline had three portions, the Arakan coast, the Irrawaddy Delta and the Tenasserim coast. Rangoon and Moulmein, apart from Bangkok, were important bases about which the Japanese would be most sensitive. Hence strategic advantages would result by the recapture of Rangoon. The Arakan coast was important for without it air superiority over the Irrawaddy Delta would not be established. Landings on this coast would be easiest but further consolidation was difficult owing to the impassable nature of the Arakan Yoma. Tenasserim coast would not admit of the deployment of large forces, though for diversional purposes its value was undoubted, as it was possible by a raid on

the Victoria Point to interrupt railway communications, or threaten Bangkok by a landing near Tavoy. But air superiority was essential for any type of seaborne expedition, and for that early capture of aerodromes was a prerequisite. Use of carrier borne aircraft, or long-range fighters operating from Assam and north-east India, and simultaneous landings on various points along the coastline, were necessary for that purpose. At the same time, the capture of Andamans and Nicobars, as preliminaries to the offensive operations seawards, and the re-establishment of bases in Sumatra were also considered. Operations against Sumatra were ruled out, but the seizure of aerodromes on the Arakan coast and the capture of the Andaman Islands were deemed to be necessary preludes to seaborne expedition. The primary objective was to be confined initially to the capture of aerodromes on the coastline, but a sea-borne expedition was not considered feasible unless naval and air superiority had been attained. The third type of operations, those along the coast, was designed for "thrust southward, capturing existing aerodromes and building additional ones where possible. This could be either a preliminary operation to assist in gaining initial air superiority, or part of the main offensive plan".

Estimating the strength of the forces required the presumption was that the Japanese would hold Burma in strength, even if they had no intention of pushing further west, and would maintain a garrison of five to seven divisions with 500 aircraft. In the circumstances, the Allies could not employ a smaller force. Two to three divisions only could be maintained for an overland advance, and two divisions might be usefully employed on the Arakan coast. But without the capture of Rangoon, for which a seaborne expedition was essential, the other two operations would not make any serious impression. Hence a force of eight divisions and 500 aircraft was required "unless the Japanese garrison of Burma can be reduced by diversions elsewhere".

The Paper outlined two possible plans which provided reasonable chances of success, but their adoption would depend on the situation at the time. The first related to the recapture of Burma, as a whole. This would involve "preliminary operations to capture and develop aerodromes on the Arakan coast, and to seize the Andamans, followed by the despatch of a seaborne expedition to capture Rangoon. A diversion from north-east India would be valuable". A total force of eight divisions was required which would operate as below:—

- " (i) For the Arakan occupation—initially two divisions, which might subsequently be reduced to one.
- " (ii) For the Andaman Operation—maximum of two

divisions, at least one of which would be available for the Rangoon operation.

“ (iii) For the Rangoon Operation—three divisions plus an armoured component.

“ (iv) Reserve and Diversions—three divisions ”.

The second was based on the recapture of Upper Burma only, assisted by a diversion on the Arakan coast. For this a total force of six divisions was required, two for initial advance, two for consolidation, one for diversion and one as reserve

This Paper was of a general nature, but it focussed the attention on the object which should determine the character of the plan of operations. If the object was to restore the supply line to China, then the operations would be of a limited nature and sea supremacy in Burmese waters would not be essential and, as the Director of Military Operations then put it, “ we would not need so many divisions, but would probably still want the 500 aircraft ”.¹ If, on the other hand, a more comprehensive object, that of the re-occupation of Burma and the strategic defeat of Japan were envisaged, then the course would necessarily be “ to establish air bases in the Andamans and at Akyab and perhaps Ramree Islands. After that it might be more promising to go for Moulmein and the landing grounds down the Tenasserim coast to Tavoy. From there our air forces could operate against Bangkok and the air bases north of it, and against enemy shipping in the Gulf of Siam. Land forces operating east from Moulmein would threaten the railway line running north from Bangkok. When we launch these operations we shall go in for deception on a large scale. Therefore there should be some advantage in threatening immediately their most important base, Bangkok ”. The Director of Military Operations considered this bold adventure “ more promising than a systematic recapture of Burma, where we may expect the population to be hostile and where probably at least two divisions will be necessary to keep order in a country which is really only a Japanese outpost ”. A plan as that required immense resources but these were not available at the moment. This plan, however, denoted the lines on which subsequent edifice could proceed.

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff in England had also been considering possibilities of operations for the recapture of Burma. In their telegram of 9 May 1942, they gave the trends of their thought and desired views of the Commander-in-Chief, India. The Chiefs of Staff were then thinking in terms of reopening communications with China for which capture of Rangoon was

¹ Note dated 12 May 1942

essential. To achieve that object two simultaneous operations were contemplated, one, advance across the India-Burma frontier, and the other down the coast from Chittagong, from aerodrome to aerodrome, with a view to establishing fighter aircraft in the Gwa or Bassein area. The recapture of Andamans as a desirable preliminary was also thought of. But they realised the limitations in executing these operations which were not practicable unless it were possible to secure control over the Bay of Bengal, air superiority over southern Burma and adequate number of landing craft. To commence these operations in autumn would be feasible only if there was some deterioration in Japanese strength and mobility. The India Command was in general agreement with the lines adumbrated by the Chiefs of Staff, and held that if sea and air situation allowed, the first steps should be the occupation of Andamans and advance and consolidation down the Arakan coast. Their estimate of the forces required to carry out the respective operations, outlined in the above telegram, was eight divisions plus armoured component. But before any effective planning might proceed, it was essential, from their point of view, to know exactly "India's probable part in plan for defeating Japanese". They asked, "Is our role likely to be main seat of Allied offensive from elsewhere"? A definite guidance from the British Government was essential before planning or action might be adopted in India.

The Commander-in-Chief also outlined the nature of planning pursued in India, in his telegram of 15 May 1942. Its main lines coincided with the Joint Planning Staff Paper 15 of 11 May 1942. He mentioned that planning had under consideration two operations:—

- (a) for the recapture of the whole of Burma,
- (b) limited operations to secure Upper Burma, north of Mandalay,

and outlined the essential features of his plan, which agreed generally with those laid down by the Chiefs of Staff above. He wrote. "In view of small resources likely to be available this year we are now giving priority to planning of limited operation in Upper Burma. Limited operation would have as main objectives raising of morale in India by offensive action and possibly re-establishing combined front with Chinese. We think operation north of Mandalay up to Irrawaddy might be possible with limited resources that would not permit attempt to recapture whole of Burma. If, of course, sufficient naval, land and air forces can be made available after monsoon to make operations against Rangoon possible, this is best means to re-establish ourselves in Burma and plans will be

made to this end. If not, limited offensive in Upper Burma will be undertaken if possible".

The India Command decided initially for "a limited offensive into Upper Burma with the object of re-establishing our forces in the Chindwin and Irrawaddy valleys, north of Mandalay, on the line Kalewa-Katha-Myitkyina with the possibility of extending it towards Bhamo, Shwebo and the Chinese frontier". An offensive of this nature was to be planned to start on 1 October. On this basis, the Chiefs of Staff (India) desired a plan to be prepared by the Joint Planning Staff.² The Paper produced by the latter, on 1 June 1942, was based on extreme caution and failed to meet with the approval of General Wavell, who found it "disappointing" and magnifying "our own difficulties almost exclusively and not those of the enemy". He desired a dash like the Japanese and was keen to launch on an offensive on the expiry of the rains. The Joint Planning Staff Paper had, however, the merit of appreciating the weaknesses in maintenance and air resources and precisely assessing the requirements of training and information and the difficulties arising from terrain and weather. Their cautious conclusion, therefore, was that "unless the enemy forces against us are very weak, the chances of a rapid advance to any of our objectives are small, and we shall have to reach them by a more gradual operation. To achieve this, our troops will have to be lightly equipped and maintained on a much lower scale than previously. Our success will depend very largely on the extent to which our air forces can destroy the enemy air forces, and harass his land forces".

Based on the limitation imposed by the slow construction of the Imphal-Kalewa and Ledo roads, which would not be usable fully before March 1943, an outline plan in three phases, to be in full operation in March 1943, was prepared. In the first phase (until mid-September), active patrolling was to be carried out in the area bounded on the west by the line of the road Tamu-Kalewa and on the east by the river Chindwin. The second phase from mid-September to end of February, related to the complete capture and consolidation of the area comprising the rectangle Homalin-Kalewa-Kalemyo-Tamu. In this period, road construction and seizing of the bridgeheads, east of the Chindwin, with their consolidation with anti-aircraft protection and possible schemes of deception, were to be carried out. The last phase, beginning in March, would involve advance on Shwebo and Katha. Along with this move was to synchronise an advance southwards

² Chiefs of Staff Committee, C.O S-42-55 dated 16-5-1942

from Ledo of a brigade group strength. The force required for the main operation was to be a maximum of three divisions and two armoured brigades. Air action was also contemplated. In the first phase it might be at best spasmodic, while in the second phase it would be directed towards the assisting of road construction and achieving a positive degree of air superiority by day and night attacks on the Japanese aerodromes. In the last phase, its role would be that of close support of the land forces and attack on the Japanese lines of communication and areas of concentration. For this purpose a force of 29 squadrons would be available on 1 October 1942, and would suffice for the object.

While denouncing the Joint Planning Staff Plan, on 1 June 1942, General Wavell did not materially differ from those suggestions in his proposals for offensive action. He assessed his advantages as local air superiority, better lines of communication and manoeuvrability, with concealment behind the mountain barrier, while the Japanese lines of communication running parallel to the front would be vulnerable. He desired the plans to take full advantage of these factors. The object of the offensive plans would be to get into touch with the Chinese and raise the morale in India. His idea was to carry operations rapidly "using a number of small columns acting offensively against the enemy's flanks and rear".

These operations he wanted to be prepared for October, if possible, and directive to be issued to the Eastern Army accordingly.

The War Cabinet in England was not happy with these halting half-measures, "minor operations, very nice and useful nibbling". What they desired was the capture of Rangoon and Moulmein and thereafter striking at Bangkok. For this "we should first have to fight our way along the coast amphibiously from Chittagong via Akyab, and at the right time launch an overseas expedition of forty or fifty thousand of our best British troops with suitable armour across the northern part of the Bay of Bengal. The object of this would be to carry the war back into Southern China. This would be seizing the initiative and making the enemy conform, instead of being, through no fault of your own, like clay in the hands of the potter. It would be war on a large scale, and the movement of reserves from Britain would be regulated accordingly". But it was, at the same time, realized that no such operations would be practicable unless situation in the Caucasus and Middle East regions improved and there was no setback there. Japanese losses in the Pacific and their diversion towards Manchuria and Siberia affected their strength in the south-eastern theatre. The cabinet assured the Commander-in-Chief of the "support with resolution"

of the fleet and air force, and desired him to state his "stand in relation to these ideas".

This communication seems to have whipped up the optimism of General Wavell. In his reply he sketched the improvement in the situation of India's defence and mentioned the receipt of reinforcements as well as some improvement in the strength of the Eastern Fleet.³ He considered he had "enough troops to initiate operations against both Upper and Lower Burma but further reserves would be required to exploit success". But his limiting factors were inadequate training of the troops and the strength of the air force, which was "deficient in numbers, in reserves, in range, in hitting power and in training". For offensive operations of that magnitude, therefore, he demanded more aircraft and an "understanding with Americans" about command "so as to place Stilwell and his air forces under my command". Nevertheless, during the rainy season planning continued for operations both in Upper Burma and on the Arakan coast, which was greatly encouraged by the decreasing danger of invasion of India by Japan. The plans were either for limited objectives or were directed towards the major objective of recapturing Burma. In general, however, at this early stage offensive planning appears to have been directed against Akyab, on the one hand, and Fort Hertz, Myitkyina and Chindwin line, on the other.

Two offensive operations against Burma to take place during the winter of 1942-43 were planned, one against Upper Burma was known by the code word of "Ambulance", while the other, an amphibious operation against Lower Burma was called "Probation" or later "Cannibal" against Akyab. "Ambulance" was to be executed by the IV Indian Corps, consisting of the 17th, 23rd and 39th Indian Divisions, with the 70th British Division in reserve and the 14th Indian Division, located in the Comilla-Chittagong area as link up between the two operations. For "Probation" were assigned the 2nd Division (British), the 29th Infantry Brigade Group (British) as assault troops as they had training in combined operations, and three follow-up divisions: the 19th and 7th Indian Divisions and 20th Indian Division or 5th British Division, with necessary armoured formations and force troops. The date of the operations depended on the availability of shipping, landing-craft etc. Moreover, owing to the uncertainty of executing "Ambulance", and as an alternative to it, a limited plan, "Damocles" or "Ravenous" was considered for the capture of Akyab, northern Arakan, Chin Hills and Somra Tracts.

³ No 14299c dated 14 June 1942.

For the capture of Akyab, two other plans were also prepared which were known as "Canny" and "Nibble". The former related to scaborn assault on Akyab and to hold it, while "Nibble" was to be operated by the 14th Indian Division whose role was to capture Akyab by overland advance. "Probation" combined both these aspects and was more elaborate than these. Its object was the capture of Rangoon which was planned to be executed in three stages; a step by step advance down the Arakan coast seizing aerodromes at Akyab, Kyakpau, Sandoway, Gwa and Bassein; air offensive to destroy Japanese air forces along with mine-sweeping operations in the approaches to Rangoon, and finally landing in the Rangoon area combined with an advance from Bassein northwards. Operation instructions were issued from time to time to undertake offensive operations. The one on 14 June 1942 directed to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Army, desired a more forward policy to be adopted in the Chittagong area. This would involve controlling the country south of Chittagong up to the Burma frontier by active patrolling, and ensure a base in that area for offensive operations across the frontier at a later date. Instruction 11, dated 17 September 1942, further amplified the necessary measures for reoccupying Upper Arakan, capturing Akyab and strengthening position in the Chin Hills. The intention was also to occupy Kalewa and Sittaung and thence to raid the Japanese line of communications. The purpose was to facilitate move of forces towards Upper or Lower Burma. As a preliminary to that, the construction of a road south from Chittagong and the completion of the landing ground at Cox's Bazar were essential so as to enable effective maintenance of the penetrating forces. The capture of Akyab by land advance and its retention were to be a combined operation in which navy, army and air forces were to participate. A Parachute Brigade was also to be made available. The object was to capture Akyab by an amphibious operation and then to hold it to enable aircraft to operate from there as soon as possible. For that purpose were necessary:—

- (a) the rapid repair and stocking of landing ground,
- (b) the installation of an adequate warning system,
- (c) the provision of anti-aircraft defence.

For advance in, and recapture of Upper Burma, the preliminary occupation of Fort Hertz and building up a force and a system of intelligence there were essential. An officer was therefore deputed to proceed by air to Fort Hertz and organise Burma Levies and collect information. It was then intended to send troops to Fort Hertz by air, the code word for which operation was "Pillar". A parachute force from the 50th Parachute Brigade

was also to be dropped in Fort Hertz area, the code word for which operation was "Firepump". Similarly a detachment of the 50th Parachute Brigade was to be dropped in the Myitkyina area (code name "Puddle") whose role was to collect information relating to the Japanese build-up and means of transportation and relations between the Japanese and the local inhabitants. "Puddle" was dropped on 4 July 1942 and moved toward Konglu with a view to reconnoitre towards Fort Hertz. The main operation, however, was contemplated with the object of developing communications and establishing a favourable position for reconquering Burma and reopening the Burma Road at the first opportunity, and to bring the "Japanese to battle with the purpose of using up their strength, particularly in the air".⁴ The immediate steps to attain this object were, besides the capture of Akyab and Upper Arakan, to strengthen position in the Chin Hills, occupy Kalewa and Sittaung as a preliminary to the raid on the Japanese lines of communications and to make all administrative preparations which would allow rapid advance of a force towards Upper or Lower Burma. The Eastern Army was therefore directed firstly to establish regular forces at Tiddim and Tamu and then to capture Kalewa and Sittaung, and thereby deny the use of the river Chindwin to the Japanese. The purpose of this operation was to intercept the Japanese line of communication, and for that object the employment of the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade as deep penetration group was envisaged.

While planning was proceeding in these directions in India, the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek in China had been keen to undertake offensive operations from Yunnan against the Japanese, in order to expedite the opening of communications between China and India. "The economic situation in China had become acute and serious inflation had already occurred. Still more serious was the shortage of munitions, artillery and ammunition". Hence according to General Stilwell, as "an improvement in the situation could only be achieved by opening a road to India, they were determined to launch" an offensive operation.⁵ For this purpose, cooperation of India was essential. The Generalissimo desired coordinated offensive in which the Indian forces would move from the Hukawng Valley to Magaung and Myitkyina, while the Chinese would advance from Yunnan to Bhamo and Lashio and thus open up a road. At the moment the Allied nations were keen to aid China and thereby launch a bombing offensive against Japan.

⁴ Instruction No 11

⁵ Chiefs of Staff Committee, sixty-first meeting minutes, 17 December 1942.

Political policy and strategy both demanded the improvement of communications to China, which might be effected by opening a land route from India. "Joint plans for offensive operations by American, British and Chinese forces against the Japanese in Burma at the earliest possible date", therefore, became essential. Between October and December 1942, many conferences were held between General Wavell and General Stilwell and their staff to determine the future strategy. The plans prepared by the India Command came up for review at these meetings and the weaknesses and deficiencies of the forces were examined.

In the first meeting on 18 October 1942, General Wavell explained the trend of his planning for offensive operations in Burma, and pointed out that owing to the "low capacity of the railway and river communications to Assam", "a very high rate of sickness amongst the troops", and the diversion of "aircraft, troops and equipment intended for India" to the Middle East, he had been reluctantly compelled to put off "any advance in force against Northern Burma" till 1 March 1943. But "he hoped to advance at an earlier date in the south down the Arakan Coast" and in addition "he was planning a small combined operation for the capture of Akyab". In northern Burma, he said, if the operations would commence in March, little time would be left "to get two divisions to the Mandalay area" and, owing to the lack of communications, even if this force were established there, it would be impossible to maintain it during the monsoon. He had no intention to stage another withdrawal. Hence his immediate objective for the winter of 1942-43 was to be northern Arakan, the Chin Hills and the upper Chindwin.

The Chinese memorandum was also discussed, but it was realised that naval control over the Bay of Bengal and the feasibility of major combined operations against Lower Burma depended on air superiority which would not be attained before March 1943. It was, therefore, decided to leave the date of major offensive operations indefinite, but planning should continue on the basis of the Chinese memorandum and the earlier plans of the India Command. Meanwhile in another conference on 27 October 1942, the role of the Chinese forces in India was defined. "It was agreed that the force should be based on Ledo and should move via the Hukawng Valley to establish itself in the area of Myitkyina-Bhamo, with the object of obtaining the use of the aerodrome at Myitkyina and denying it to the Japanese; by making contact with Chinese troops advancing west from Yunnan". But any such move was conditional on administrative improvement which was the main problem in any advance into Burma.

In November 1942, the Joint Planning Staff examined the problem of advance into Burma again. At the 52nd meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 16 November 1942, the Commander-in-Chief explained the position in regard to such plans. He pointed out that "there were really three plans on which work was in progress". The first was for the re-occupation of Upper Burma by (i) an advance by British troops to the Chindwin and beyond, (ii) an advance by the Chinese troops training at Ramgarh under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, India, down the Ledo-Hukawng Valley route, (iii) operations by Chinese forces operating from Yunnan under the Command of General Chiang Kai-Shek. The advance of the Chinese forces from Yunnan had been made "conditional on the joint British and American forces obtaining naval control over the Bay of Bengal and air superiority over Burma", which was not practicable in the immediate future. The capture of Upper Burma was, however, considered to be "only one step on the way", for "a direct assault on Rangoon" alone would establish the supply line to China.

The second plan related to a seaborne expedition against Rangoon, which depended on an adequate supply of ships, aircraft and landing craft which were not likely to be available for some time. Hence this plan was merely a long-term plan for the future. The third plan was that for the capture of Akyab "which would be of value as an advanced air base for attacking Japanese aerodromes and therefore for the defence of India". Initially it had been planned as a small seaborne expedition, but it was being substituted owing to air situation and difficulty of providing sea escort by "an operation which would combine a land advance down the Arakan coast with a final assault by landing craft and boats". It was found that the existing resources were insufficient to launch immediately on any active major operations.

The Joint Planning Staff also re-examined the problem, and in their Paper No. 40 dated 27 November 1942, made a forecast of the timing of operations. They fixed the D day as 15 February 1943, with assault on Akyab, and suggested the launching of operations by the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade on 1 February, while Chinese offensive from Yunnan would commence on 1 March, from Ledo in the first week of March, and the IV Indian Corps operations across Chindwin would begin on 15 March 1943. This time table was recommended by them for "the proposed Anglo-American-Chinese Operations". The Chiefs of Staff were in general agreement with it and emphasised the necessity of an earlier assault on Akyab by the Eastern Army.

The Joint Planning Staff further examined the plans of operation and in their Papers No. 41 and 37 dated 1 December and 19 December 1942, respectively, came to the conclusion that "large scale Sino-Anglo-American operations in Upper Burma" were not possible in the winter of 1942-43 owing to administrative reasons and other factors. Their appreciation of the Japanese strength and intentions was that their weakness in the air and the drain on their resources would preclude them "from undertaking anything more than limited operations against India". The Joint Intelligence Committee, both in London and in India, had agreed "that Japan is unlikely to carry out a major seaborne invasion of India. Thus, operations against India, should the Japanese decide to undertake them, are likely to be confined to limited land offensives from Burma, with a defensive object in view". Such offensives could be in Arakan beyond Maungdaw-Buthidaung "to gain depth and dislocate our preparations for an advance" or in the Chin Hills "with a defensive object". To meet the threat in Upper Burma they could, therefore, concentrate their forces there. On the other hand, the administrative difficulties, owing to the limitations of road construction, would prevent either the Chinese forces or the IV Indian Corps from making any considerable advance beyond the Chindwin, except for local raids. Hence the recommendation of the Joint Planning Staff was that "planning for an Anglo-American-Chinese occupation of Upper Burma in the dry weather" should be discontinued; the IV Indian Corps should advance only to enable "mobile raiding parties to operate in Burma" and road construction should continue during the summer; while Chinese forces should not move to Ledo. Similarly in Paper No. 37, the Joint Planning Staff reiterated their opposition to major offensive operations in the dry weather of 1942-43. Their appreciation was that the "Japanese occupy a very strong geographical defensive position where they enjoy the advantage of being on interior lines in relation to operations against Upper and Lower Burma. So long as they remain in their present strength, the complete reconquest of the country can only be effected by a combination of—

"(a) a land advance into Upper Burma",

"(b) operations down the Arakan coast to obtain aerodromes",

"(c) some form of seaborne expedition against Lower Burma".

They examined these courses and found that in the existing strong position of the Japanese and the likelihood of their strengthening the garrison, the reconquest of Burma would be "a most formidable task". This task would have absorbed "India's total resources for offensive operations and involve a disproportionate adminis-

trative effort" without the campaign being concluded within the time available. Hence they thought of alternative courses as "the recapture of Burma is not necessarily an essential first step in an offensive by the United Nations armies at bringing about the rapid downfall of Japan". The alternative proposed was that of an assault on northern Sumatra and consolidating the position in that theatre of the long extended perimeter of the Japanese possessions, as that was not strongly held.

At the end of December 1942, the position was least optimistic for offensive operations to commence in that winter. At the sixty-fourth meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 20 December, at which General Stilwell and Admiral Somerville were present, the Commander-in-Chief of India, General Wavell, made it quite clear that the administrative difficulties made it impossible for him either to concentrate the Chinese force at Ledo or to substantially help Chinese offensive from Yunnan by staging an advance beyond the Chindwin, and thus draw large Japanese forces from concentrating against the Chinese. All that General Wavell would say was that "we must plan for a step by step advance depending upon the development of lines of communication and upon the degree of resistance met". All that he would promise in aid of the Chinese was raids east of the Chindwin, which might stop during the rains. He said, "It was the responsibility of the Generalissimo to say whether he would advance in these circumstances. The best line of advance for the British forces would probably be south from Kalembo by Gangaw towards Pakokku. This would be divergent from the Chinese but would be bound to attract Japanese forces".

At the end of 1942, the only offensive operation which was well advanced in planning was that for the capture of Akyab, to make the aerodromes on the Arakan coast available so as to facilitate combined operations against Lower Burma subsequently when the resources were freed from other theatres, on the defeat of Germany and Italy. The India Command seems to have had little interest in the plans for the capture of Upper Burma which had the primary object of opening communications with China only, on which General Chiang Kai-Shek and President Roosevelt were keen. Therefore, while, for political reasons, they entertained the plans for the capture of Upper Burma, they were generally keen about Lower Burma and amphibious operations against northern Sumatra or Malaya. But as no major seaborne expedition was practicable unless the war in Europe had been concluded, all that could be done from India was to have operations overland during the winter of 1943-44. For this plans had to envisage three distinct campaigns:—

- “ (a) Operations against Burma limited to landward and coastal advances with the forces available.
- “ (b) The reconquest of Burma by a combination of land, coastal and major seaborne operations.
- “ (c) A seaborne expedition against Northern Sumatra combined with air, land and coastal operations based on North East India ”.

It is in these directions that subsequent planning was continued in 1943.

CHAPTER XII

Counter-Offensive Plans

OCTOBER 1942-NOVEMBER 1943

During the respite afforded by the monsoon, the India Command had laid down the essentials of a policy of offensive action for the recapture of Burma and determined the main lines of advance. Minor operations more for the purpose of raising the morale had also been planned. It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that besides air action, invasion was planned to take the form of a seaborne expedition against Rangoon, amphibious operations against the Arakan Coast or a down-the-coast land invasion against Akyab in Lower Burma, and operations from Imphal to hold the line of the Chindwin, and by the Chinese from Yunnan with Myitkyina as the main objective in Upper Burma. Moreover, it was contemplated to employ Long Range Penetration Groups for harassing the Japanese lines of communication and softening the area for eventual operations. These operations could be mounted separately or simultaneously, according to the availability of resources. The three lines of advance followed the possible lines of communication which, when developed, would enable maintenance of the field armies. In the post-monsoon period action was planned and steps were taken to begin operations. But it was clear then that beyond minor operations against Akyab or patrolling activity in the Chun Hills, no comprehensive offensive operations would be undertaken in the dry season of 1942-43. Hence planning, which followed and which was not finalised before the monsoon of 1943, was directed towards the invasion of Burma in the winter of 1943-44.

For the winter of 1942-43 the main objectives prescribed by General Wavell were the capture of Akyab, the strengthening of the position in the Chun Hills, establishment of forces on the Chindwin river between Kalewa and Sittaung with a view to further penetration eastwards and advance into Upper Burma. On that basis increased patrol activity was witnessed in the Chun Hills, and, on 19 December 1942, a force advanced from Chittagong into Arakan on its way to Akyab. This soon "developed into an inconclusive but sanguinary campaign". Field Marshal Wavell in his third despatch (January to June 1943) has mentioned that the objective of these operations was only the capture of Akyab Island, and that he had been compelled to have resort to a land

attack through most unhealthy country only because of the non-availability of landing craft and transport for a seaborne assault on the island. He writes, "I took the risk, sooner than keep my troops standing idle, of trying to reach Akyab by an overland advance. I was well aware of the difficulties and dangers, and that the troops I was employing were not fully trained or equipped; they had been organised and trained up to the autumn for the defence of Bengal". He further writes that he had been led to take this course in the expectation that the Chinese forces would advance into Upper Burma from Yunnan and that the IV Indian Corps from Assam would cooperate with them and thus create a diversion for the Japanese. But he was disappointed in that in so far as the Chinese could not move and the IV Indian Corps, owing to administrative difficulties, could not initiate operations. The Japanese forces had therefore freedom to concentrate against the detachment on the Arakan coast and defeat the Arakan adventure. Field Marshal Wavell also realised the superiority of the Japanese forces in jungle warfare. In the circumstances, he ordered the withdrawal of the Indian force to its base. The whole expedition had been "in the nature of a gamble". It involved "serious loss in prestige and morale" but brought "experience of the enemy's methods and of our own defects in training and organisation".

The Arakan expedition was the only operation which was mounted in any strength in the winter of 1942-43. The advance of the IV Indian Corps into Upper Burma, to establish itself on the Chindwin river for the strategic objective of assisting the Chinese advance, did not materialise except for strong offensive patrols in the Kabaw valley. But the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade (Wingate Force) was used as a Long Range Penetration Group and spent four months inside the territory occupied by the Japanese. It suffered heavy losses though ample experience was gained in this method of warfare. This enterprise had no strategic value either. Hence, till the end of the monsoon of 1943, no appreciable progress had been made in taking the initiative in offensive action for the recapture of Burma. Owing to the administrative difficulties, largely because of the lack of effective lines of communication, early 1943 passed without any serious measures being taken to implement the desire to reoccupy Burma immediately. The difficulties of the task had not been anticipated in the earlier stages. Preparations for offensive action did not proceed adequately. Hence, whatever action Field Marshal Wavell took had little impression beyond strengthening the eastern defences of India. Earlier planning for operations in the dry weather of 1942-43 had no results. Hence planning had to be undertaken

for operations to commence in the dry weather after the monsoon of 1943.

The appreciations during this period revealed that while Japan might assemble "up to 12 divisions, naval landing parties equivalent to one division and four to six tank regiments for operations against India", the inadequate air cover and shipping limitations made it improbable that operations should proceed against any part of India, except the north-east. Furthermore, it was believed that priority would be given to the invasion of Yunnan and that "Japan will not in the next six months launch a major offensive against India". This was more true of any landing assaults on the Indian coast. No serious threat for the time being was apprehended against the land defences also owing to the various and increasing Japanese commitments elsewhere. But not even an optimist could say at the moment that the Japanese would weaken their hold on Burma, or allow the Allies to recapture it without stiff resistance. All evidence showed that they had adequate force to hold it and that geography had considerably made their task easy. There were also indications that the Japanese would remain on the defensive in Burma for which purpose they had adequate strength. The general conclusions of the Joint Intelligence Committee (India) in its appreciations of 10 December 1942 were:

- " (a) The Japanese in Burma are likely to remain on the defensive as far as India is concerned during the first five months of 1943.
- " (b) They may be tempted to attack Yunnan but if they do the operation will not be staged at the expense of the defence of Burma.
- " (c) The Japanese defence of South Burma will of necessity be passive except in so far as they will hold on to Akyab for as long as possible.
- " (d) Their defence of North Burma will be as active as possible and will aim at limiting our advance during the campaigning season of 1942-43 to the line of Chindwin.
- " (e) They will continue to occupy Myitkyina but are unlikely to advance to Fort Hertz or to make anything but a limited advance up the Hukawng Valley.
- " (f) They will reoccupy Homalin to threaten our line of communication and thus reduce the force which we can maintain forward while at the same time protecting their own line of communication to Myitkyina
- " (g) They will advance into the Chin Hills to disperse our effort against the Chindwin line and to protect their

line of communication up the Gangaw Valley.

“(h) They will, by forces based on the Chin Hills and at Kalewa, dispute our advance to Kalewa and hope thus to reduce the force which we can advance east of the Chindwin further north.

“(j) Their ground vital to the defence will be the line of forward aerodromes Shwebo-Monywa-Pakokku-Magwe”.

Their disposition of forces was believed to be of about three divisions in Shwebo-Homalin-Myitkyina; Monywa-Pakokku; Chin Hills, and Kalewa area in Upper Burma.

The Japanese strength in Burma was appreciated to be eight divisions of the land forces and 300 aircraft, while they had two cruisers, twelve destroyers and fifteen submarines at Singapore for service in the Burmese waters. As for reinforcements, while holding the view that without difficulty the land forces in Burma might be increased up to the limit of maintenance capacity, it was not believed that the existing land forces would be increased by more than one division or that such reinforcements would be located elsewhere than in Lower Burma. At the time, Japanese strength was estimated at two to three divisions in Lower Burma and three to four in Upper Burma. But this force was not considered to be adequate for the defence of a large area with the two most important positions Rangoon and Mandalay, being 300 miles apart and the communications between them vulnerable. As regards the air force, the Japanese strength in Burma was believed to be 150-200 fighters and 150 bombers. But this numerical inferiority was counter-balanced by “an excellent system of well developed airfields extending continuously from Upper Burma through Lower Burma and Siam to French Indo-China”.

On this data, the Joint Planning Staff made a forecast of Japanese strength in the autumn of 1943.¹ Their appreciation was that unless the Japanese were engaged in a war with Russia they would experience no shortage of land forces and that they would be able to accumulate sufficient reserves of warlike stores for eight divisions for one year. It was also felt that unless Japanese morale was undermined, they would be expected to “fight any defensive operations with extreme stubbornness”. Both Mandalay and Rangoon areas would be strongly defended. As against these factors, the appreciation took note of the effect of war in Europe on the Japanese morale and resources. There were indications that during 1943 war situation in Europe would incline in favour of the Allies as both Italy and Germany were expected

¹ Paper dated 26 January 1943

to be defeated. This development was likely "to have an adverse effect on Japanese morale principally among the higher ranks of the Civil Services and armed forces and those 'in the know'". Moreover, the events in the Pacific led to the presumption that the Japanese would feel "the effects of an increasing shortage of both Naval and Merchant ships and of air force". These factors would, it was believed, considerably embarrass the Japanese in Burma.

In this paper the Joint Planning Staff prepared an appreciation for the reconquest of Burma, on the assumption that a major offensive would be undertaken in the winter of 1943-44 with the "minimum object of recapturing Rangoon and reopening communications connecting Lower and Upper Burma". They examined the possibility of capturing Rangoon in one dry season as well as by a direct seaborne attack. Their appreciation, however, was that, while for the former prospects were small, the latter was impracticable. The earliest date by which operations might commence was mid-November 1943, but physical difficulties and lack of proper lines of communications made rapid reconquest of Burma impossible. That end would be greatly simplified if ample air transport were available, but the prospect of its availability was extremely remote. The main bottleneck was the difficulty of maintenance which depended on road construction. The British Indian troops required twice the scale of maintenance of the Japanese forces. The construction of roads would not proceed very fast either. This made the task of the re-occupation of Burma in one dry season impossible unless factors elsewhere greatly depleted the Japanese strength in Burma.

This appreciation was, nevertheless, based on the possibility of the reconquest in one campaign season, and included preliminary naval and air operations and simultaneous advance into Upper Burma, Lower Burma and against Rangoon. The strategy underlying the plan was to "bring superior land forces against the enemy by operating on a very wide front and by making use of as many routes as possible leading into Burma". By this means, if natural difficulties were overcome, it was possible to exploit any Japanese weakness in Burma by creating a situation in which they would have to meet all threats at once. But the Joint Planning Staff realised the limitations of such operations and held the view that "either we must capture Rangoon and gain the use of all-weather communications through Burma before the monsoon begins, or else our advance must be confined to the areas to which we can extend such communications".

They first discussed the possibilities of capturing Rangoon as soon as practicable. For that operation a force up to three

divisions was required with an adequate measure of fighter cover. If such air support was available, the best and most direct method of attacking Rangoon would be by means of a seaborne expedition. For that purpose they examined the Bassein, Moulmein and Rangoon areas as disembarkation points. Their conclusion, based on the appreciation of the Director of Combined Operations India, was:

“(a) To capture Rangoon we need to disembark strong forces at some point, or points, other than at Rangoon itself, as its river approaches would be well defended and landing in the harbour would be much too hazardous.

“(b) There are no points east of Cape Negrais where seaborne forces could be landed and concentrated rapidly against Rangoon in the strength required.

“It follows, therefore, that if we are to bring a sufficient weight of attack against Rangoon, at least part of our attack must be made overland. For overland operations we shall need to capture and develop forward bases in Central or Lower Burma, and to improve ‘communications’”.

They examined next the factors underlying the operations in Upper and Lower Burma. As a preliminary to these, it was considered essential to interrupt sea lines of communication of the Japanese and thus prevent them from building up their reserves. But having no forward bases from which naval surface forces might operate, the only means was to employ submarines and aircraft. Submarines were not sufficient in number and aircraft, too, which might attack shipping or the port of Rangoon and mine the approaches to Rangoon harbour, were also not available in sufficient numbers. However, these modes of preliminary attack were to be employed. At the same time emphasis was laid on air superiority which was practicable as there would be 40 squadrons available in autumn and might be increased if the European situation improved. The policy to be pursued, therefore, was to inflict greatest damage on the Japanese air strength by attacks on their aerodromes and installations and forcing them to waste their air force. To achieve such air superiority as would attack Japanese lines of communications, protect Allied shipping and assault convoys and undertake strategic bombing of Central Burma, it was essential to have landing grounds on the Arakan coast.

Operations in Upper Burma would be directed against Japanese communications which converged in the area Mandalay-Thazi-Pakokku. Hence all forces had to be concentrated towards this objective, and for that purpose the use of Kalewa-Yeu-Tiddim-Kan-Pakokku and river Chindwin line of communications was

advocated. But the British and Indian forces alone would not be able to undertake this task with their maximum strength of three divisions. Hence Chinese cooperation was to be sought who might operate from Yunnan and/or Ledo. Owing to the maintenance difficulties even this force would not be in a position to assemble more than three to five divisions from Yunnan. Ledo force would however be more useful, but there was not much reliance on their effective cooperation. These operations could not commence before mid-November owing to health reasons, and the administrative difficulties made rapid progress impossible before the monsoon, when the problem of their maintenance in Mandalay area would become difficult.

The operations in Lower Burma were to be directed ultimately towards the capture of Rangoon, and had to be amphibious in their nature. To make any headway, Akyab, Ramree Island and Kyaukpyu must have been captured before the beginning of the cold weather 1943-44, otherwise the operations would be proportionately delayed. The next objective was Taungup for the capture of which seaborne assault, land forces operating from Lotpan and parachutist troops had to be employed. Next to Taungup, the capture of Sandoway and Mazin was essential to obtain landing grounds for the support of operations further south. The most important point on this line, however, was Bassein, the difficulties of which operation were fully realised. Use of parachutists, assault forces and seaborne expedition up the Bassein river, all might be necessary. When forces had been established in Taungup and Bassein, attack on Rangoon might proceed, for which it was necessary to force the passage of the Irrawaddy river near Prome. Advance both from Taungup and Bassein was considered. The conclusion was "that to develop a strong land offensive against Rangoon we should from the start have to build up our advanced bases and lines of communication on an all-weather standard, and to continue operations either during or after, the next monsoon".

The Outline Plan, therefore, provided for attacks on Japanese air installations and lines of communication and naval operations primarily directed against sea communications with Rangoon, in addition to operations in Upper and Lower Burma. Upper Burma operations could begin in mid-November 1943 so that the British and Indian forces might advance with the object of bringing the maximum threat to bear against the area Mandalay-Thazi Pakokku. Chinese forces from Yunnan could advance against Lashio and Taunggyi, and Chinese forces from Ledo could advance on the general line Myitkyina-Bhamo.

In Lower Burma after the occupation of Akyab and Ramree Island, before mid-November 1943, assault on Taungup and Sandoway was to be followed by an advance of one division to capture bridgehead across Irrawaddy at Prome by mid-December. Next was to be taken up the assault on Bassein followed by an advance of one division to capture bridgehead across Irrawaddy in Letpadan-Tharrawaddy area. A second division was to be moved up to this area as soon as maintenance would permit. This was to be completed by mid-January 1944. As soon as sufficient forces had been concentrated east of the Irrawaddy, attack on Rangoon would be launched. One brigade group was also to be earmarked for assault landing in Rangoon river in the final stages of the attack. For operations in Lower Burma it was deemed essential to develop on an all-weather basis the communications on the Taungup Pass and Bassein-Henzada line of communications. Forces to be employed for these operations were estimated at:

- “ (a) Arakan coast up to Kyaukpyu—
one division and one assault brigade.
- “ (b) Taungup—
one division and one assault brigade.
- “ (c) Bassein—
two divisions and up to three assault brigades including that employed in (a) above ”.

Besides these, Long Range Penetration Brigades were also to be used in support of operations against Lower Burma.

This plan was intended to be a mere basis for calculating the required resources and for detailed planning, if the objective was clearly defined.

On the basis of the above appreciation the Joint Planning Staff, on 1 February 1943, further examined the “ requirements necessary to implement a plan to reconquer Burma in one dry-weather season ”. The general conception of the operations, following the outline plan discussed earlier, was that of an advance of British, Indian and Chinese forces from their respective bases in Assam and Yunnan and Ledo in Upper Burma, and of landing at Taungup with an offensive overland, capture of Bassein and direct assault on Rangoon by an advance up the river in Lower Burma. The measure of opposition was confirmed at eight divisions, of which four would be deployed in Lower Burma, two to oppose Indian forces in the Prome-Henzada-Bassein-Taungup area, one in Rangoon-Pegu-Moulmein area and one as reserve in southern Central Burma to be moved south on the indication of danger. They estimated that attack on Rangoon must be prepared to

overcome two to three Japanese divisions. The Joint Planning Staff further expressed the view that to eliminate Japanese opposition quickly "we must be prepared to accept very heavy casualties and thus must start the operation with a large superiority of force". Hence they estimated a force of at least six divisions for Lower Burma only. The timings were slightly modified in this appreciation. The operations could commence about the middle of December and the capture of Rangoon in January which would follow the capture of airfields at Akyab, Kyaukpyu, Sandoway, Gwa and Bassein, which might be achieved in December. The operations in Upper Burma would be so timed as to "contain as many Japanese forces as possible in Upper Burma in order to reduce their strength in Lower Burma", and would begin in December 1943. It was their view further that capture of Rangoon by direct assault from sea could not be planned with reasonable chance of success.

With the preliminary reports of the Joint Planning Staff, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, on 3 February 1943, further examined the question of reconquest of Burma in the dry season of 1943-44. They started with the assumption that at the opening of the season in November 1943,

- (1) the Indian forces would be in occupation of Akyab, Tiddim and of Sittaung and Kalewa on the Chindwin;
- (2) the Chinese Corps would be concentrated in Ledo area; and
- (3) the Chinese force, about 100,000 men, well-equipped and trained would be in a position to take the offensive from the Paoshan area or Yunnan. The main outline of the operations envisaged by the Chiefs of Staff Committee was as follows:—

Upper Burma

- "(a) Advance by Indian forces from Imphal and the Chinese forces from Yunnan on the Mandalay area.
- "(b) Advance by the Chinese troops from Ledo and a Chinese force from Paoshan on Myitkyina and Bhamo".

The main Chinese forces were to advance from Western Yunnan in the general direction of Myitkyina, Bhamo, Lashio and eventually Mandalay. Their offensive was to take the form of following thrusts:

- (a) from Tengchung towards Myitkyina,
- (b) from Paoshan towards Bhamo,
- (c) from the Lungling area towards Lashio,
- (d) from Puarth towards Kentung.

The forces involved were to amount to 10-11 divisions each 10,000 strong. In addition to these a Chinese Corps of 30,000 was to advance from Ledo down the Hukawng valley towards Myitkyina. Further to guard against a Japanese offensive from Indo-China a Chinese force of about three Armies each of two divisions was to be maintained in Kunming area.

Lower Burma

- “ (a) Simultaneous landings at Kyaukpyu, Sandoway, Gwa and West of Bassein with the object of capturing the air-fields there.
- “ (b) A landing at Taungup, followed by the advance of a force of about one division towards Prome and the Rangoon road, with the object of containing enemy forces and cutting communications from Rangoon to the North.
- “ (c) The capture and development of the Port of Bassein, followed by the advance of a force of about one division towards Henzada and Rangoon.
- “ (d) A direct assault on Rangoon by airborne troops and from the Sea ”.

To implement this plan it was considered necessary that the Japanese naval threat to the convoys and assault shipping should be eliminated, and for that purpose it was essential to strengthen the Eastern Fleet. In respect of land operations, large superiority of forces was a pre-requisite, hence the Committee recommended employment of six divisions against Upper Burma and six divisions against Lower Burma. They considered capture of Rangoon by direct assault as the only means for the reoccupation of Burma in one dry season. It had to be “ a bold and hazardous operation ”.

This Outline Plan was accepted in its essentials by the Conference of American, British, Chinese and Indian Officials, held in Delhi and Calcutta between 1 and 9 February 1943. It was agreed further that a major offensive would not begin “ until November 1943 and that the intervening period should be utilised by the Indian and Chinese forces in engaging in minor offensive actions with the object of gaining positions for main offensive and in road-making and administrative preparations ”. The Conference considered the “ possibility of overland advance from Bassein as main operation against Rangoon ”, but felt that it “ could not afford reasonable chance of taking Rangoon in one dry season ”. Hence in spite of the hazards involved, they accepted the plan of direct assault. Further, if Rangoon assault was unsuccessful Bassein

bridgehead could still be developed as main line of advance on Rangoon". The Conference also considered the requirements and was of the view that India could not carry out the plan with her own resources. Field Marshal Wavell, in his telegram to the Chiefs of Staff, No. 37949/COS dated 10 February 1943, indicated the deficiencies and pressed for an early provision. He desired the Eastern Fleet to be reinforced with capital ships and aircraft carriers and necessary smaller ships besides auxiliary carriers and anti-submarines, anti-aircraft and mine sweeper escorts. He further asked for six to nine assault brigades of which India had only four at the moment. The rest had to come complete in every respect from outside India. He also asked for a second parachute brigade and two additional divisions as reserve in India. Additional air force of the order of 240 fighters, 90 light and medium bombers, 125 heavy bombers and 200 transport aircraft were also required. To implement the plan early training had to commence.

While this Outline Plan was being finally considered by the higher authorities, Field Marshal Wavell was conceiving bolder adventures elsewhere. He did not seem to have placed much confidence in the effectiveness of this plan and desired "to look elsewhere for a speedy and effective blow against the Japanese line". He did not place much reliance on Chinese aid, but banked more on the effective cooperation from the United States of America and Australian forces in the south-west Pacific. Hence he desired plans to be prepared for the control of the Sunda Straits between Sumatra and Java and for the capture of a base in North Sumatra to control the Malacca Straits. This operation, he thought, would go "far towards the defeat of Japan". This measure could give surprise which the Burma operations would not. It is clear from his note to the Secretary, Joint Planning Staff, of 16 February 1943, that he was not prepared to execute the plan of advance in Burma, except as an instrument of surprise for the execution of the Sumatra-Java operations. He wrote: "For political reasons it will be necessary to conceal our intentions from the Chinese who are naturally anxious to see the reconquest of Burma. This very fact can be made to help our plans, we can continue preparations and discussions with the Chinese on an offensive into Burma, and this will quite likely come to the knowledge of the Japanese. We shall in fact make a limited offensive into Upper Burma, with the object of confirming the Japanese of our intentions to attack in Burma". Field Marshal Wavell therefore desired a plan to be prepared for attacking southern Sumatra and western Java by a combined operation both from India and from western Australia.

However, on the basis of the appreciations and Outline Plan

prepared in February, operation instructions were issued to General Sir George Giffard KCB, DSO, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Army, and Major General R. A. Wheeler, U.S. Army, defining their tasks for the winter of 1943-44 and allotting their spheres of action. General Giffard was to command the seaborne operations against the Arakan coast. It is clear from these instructions that by the end of March limited offensive operations in Burma had held the ground. The American Commander was to be responsible for all land operations which were planned to develop in his area, which included the base at Ledo and the road forward towards Shingbwiyang,² and his immediate tasks included (a) preventing Japanese advance into India by the approaches to Ledo from the east and southeast and (b) covering the construction of the road forward from Ledo. The main object of the Allied operations, during the winter, was defined to be to re-establish by May 1944 through communications between Rangoon and Lashio, as the primary purpose at that date was to maintain the Chinese in the war as long as possible, for which the opening of the Burma Road was a prerequisite. The general conception of the operations was, as defined in Joint Planning Staff and Chiefs of Staff papers, advance from Assam, Ledo and Paoshan areas into Upper Burma with the object of occupying the Mandalay area in phase one, simultaneous seaborne assaults on the Arakan coast, particularly seizure of Bassein, in phase two, and direct assault on Rangoon in phase three. For this purpose an order of battle was also outlined.

The plans heretofore prepared were unrelated to the general strategy of the United Nations for the ultimate defeat of Japan. They were based on the conception of driving the Japanese out of Burma and thus making safe the frontier of India. Another purpose which was greatly emphasised by the Anglo-American Chiefs of Staff was to maintain the supplies to China, for which the security of the air route and construction of Ledo road to connect with the Burma-Yunnan road were essential. An overall effort by land and seaborne operations for the capture of Rangoon and making safe the communications with the north was required; hence the Outline Plan, described above, was adopted to achieve the object. But doubts were then entertained about the efficacy or economy of that effort. It is clear from Field Marshal Wavell's note, mentioned earlier, that he considered the plan to be both costly and tardy, and desired, therefore, to launch an operation

² Boundaries : Right—Watching, Kaiyan Naukkon, Changwa, Bhamo.
Left—Nao Ditung River, Chaukan Pass, Matsuka, Bum E, Sumprabum E.
Rear—Makochung, Marghesta Bridge E

against Sumatra which promised better dividends and which would have integrated the Indian effort with that of Australia and America in the south-west Pacific. This tendency to view the Japanese repulse in wider perspective and to concentrate on the strategy of defeat of the Japanese, initiated by Field Marshal Wavell, found its echo in the plans and decisions arrived at during the summer of 1943.

The Joint Planning Staff of the War Cabinet in the United Kingdom considered the Indian plan of the reconquest of Burma (Anakim) and examined it in the light of general strategy for the ultimate defeat of Japan. It was clear that the United Nations had placed first priority on the defeat of Germany, without the achievement of which resources adequate for the defeat of Japan would not be available. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had, however, defined their policy towards Japan as follows.—

“ To maintain pressure on Japan with the forces allocated, retain the initiative and attain a position of readiness for the full-scale offensive against Japan by the United Nations as soon as Germany is defeated.

“ These operations must be kept within such limits as will not jeopardise the capacity of the United Nations to take advantage of any favourable opportunity that may present itself for the decisive defeat of Germany in 1943 ”.

To carry out this policy the strategy towards Japan was further analysed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff as below:—

- “ (i) offensive action to prevent the Japanese consolidating their present positions,
- “ (ii) offensive action to reduce Japanese naval and air power,
- “ (iii) attacks on Japanese shipping, particularly by submarine,
- “ (iv) the attainment of positions from which to menace enemy communications with the Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines and the South China Sea,
- “ (v) the opening of a line of communication with China via Burma in order to keep China in the war, to use China as a base from which to attack sea communications on the China coast and in the Formosa Straits, and to keep up pressure on the Japanese in this area ”.

At the Casablanca Conference definite measures to implement the above strategy were adopted, which, except the “ Anakim ”, subject to later confirmation, all related to American action in the south-west Pacific. “ Anakim ” was a British responsibility for which American assistance in shipping and landing craft was to be available, for this operation was more favourable to the Americans. At Casablanca the United States Chiefs of

Staff had attached great importance to it, for it would assist their operations in the Pacific by drawing off Japanese forces from that theatre and reopening the Burma Road, and thus help to keep China in the war which was so keenly desired by the American public opinion. The only advantage to the British was that of prestige, which was counter-balanced by the cost involved. It seems the War Cabinet did not favour this course for they were sceptic of the Chinese earnestness "to play a more active part at present in the war against Japan and also about the final utility of the measure as a means of accelerating the flow of supplies to China". They doubted the whole basis of this operation and held the view that the failure to reopen the Burma Road would neither bring about the collapse of the Chinese nor "induce the Chinese to take a much more active part in fighting the Japanese". They did not also consider the utility of this measure as a means to accelerate air attacks on Japanese shipping from air bases in China, which could easily be effected by the "use of air transport from India ultimately to a capacity which will surpass that of the Burma Road and without the great cost of land operations to reopen the Road". Hence their conclusion was that "the reconquest of the whole of Burma is not militarily an essential step in the plan for the long-term defeat of Japan". They were nevertheless in favour of limited land operations to secure Myitkyina airfield which would ensure the maximum use of the route of air lift. The sole object appears to have been to help air lift to China without in any manner launching expeditions which would divert resources from the undeviated effort in the western theatre.

In consequence of this reasoning and in view of the limited resources available, the Joint Planning Staff outlined the objects of operations in Burma as follows:—

- "(a) to cover as far as possible the development of the air supply route from Dunjan to Kunming with a view to:
 - (i) maintaining a larger American air force in China
 - (ii) increasing the flow of supplies to China,
- "(b) to contain and wear down the Japanese land and particularly air forces in Burma,
- "(c) to encourage the Chinese and prevent large-scale operations against them in Yunnan,
- "(d) to give battle experience to land forces".

To achieve these objects, they suggested the following course of action:—

- "(a) In view of the superiority of the Japanese in the jungle country and the impossibility of staging more than limited land operations into Northern Burma except at the expense of airfield

construction, we should give priority in the allocation of available resources to improving the air transport route into China with a view to maintaining a larger American air force in China and increasing supplies to China.

“(b) Land and seaborne operations based on India should be designed to provide some protection for the air transport route into China, to contain and wear down the Japanese and to give battle training to our troops. These operations should be:

- “(i) An advance from Imphal in December 1943 by up to three divisions plus one Long Range Penetration Group, the forces to be withdrawn on approach of the monsoon.
- “(ii) A concurrent advance from Ledo by Chinese troops (or British if the Chinese refuse) but only if there is no resultant interference with the development of airfields and transportation facilities.
- “(iii) The capture of Akyab in December 1943.
- “(iv) The subsequent capture of Ramree Island if sufficient assault craft survive and the necessary shipping can be made available”.

Thus the Joint Planning Staff of the War Cabinet definitely ruled out the attack on Rangoon both by seaborne and land operations. As a corollary to that, operations against Taungup and Bassem which were subsidiary to the advance on Rangoon were also eliminated. Land operations down the Arakan coast also were not to be pursued, and the measure of land operations in Upper Burma was also reduced, because the only purpose in view was to facilitate air transport to China. The operations against Andamans or assault on North Sumatra followed by a landing on Malaya, as advocated by Field Marshal Wavell, were also considered either of little value or quite beyond the resources in 1943-44. The operations assented to by them were more for morale purposes and soothing the Chinese than for the object of defeating Japan, which was deemed to be impracticable by action in Burma alone. The utmost effect of the operations in Upper Burma and Arakan coast would be to contain the Japanese forces and thus prevent them from consolidating their positions or reinforcing their effort in the Pacific. There was a growing realisation that defeat of Japan would come only by action taken from the Russian mainland or by a hopping operation in the Pacific. This strategy, therefore, minimised the importance of Burma and lessened the importance of British offensive action there in the ultimate liquidation of Japan.

Operation instructions issued in June reflected this mood. In modification of the instruction of 31 March 1943, General

Giffard was assigned a limited task and that too only for the period during the monsoon. He was instructed to maintain control over the areas occupied by him and prevent the Japanese from establishing themselves there, to maintain internal security and to prepare for offensive action during the dry season of 1943-44. This involved the security of Chittagong or Cox Bazar, in Arakan holding of the Tamu area, retention of Fort Hertz and continuance of road construction in the Ledo-Hukawng area. After the monsoon the forces should be in a position to occupy Maungdaw airfields in Arakan, reoccupy positions on the Chindwin north of Mawlaik and the Chin Hills. For future offensive operations, he was instructed to provide for intensive training of formations and to study the possibility of offensive operations by land in the general direction of Akyab, Chindwin river valley, as far south as Kalewa and the Chin Hills. Instructions for action after the monsoon were to be given later.

Thus ended fruitlessly the earlier attempts under Field Marshal Wavell to plan offensive action for the recapture of the whole of Burma. The plan was strategically feasible but it involved utilisation of resources which could be ill-spared at the moment. Moreover, it did not well integrate with the general strategy for the ultimate defeat of Japan, which, it was then assumed, would be effected by action in the Pacific. In pursuit of short cuts to victory, the ambitious plan of the reconquest of Burma in one season was set aside as impracticable. As long as the sole objective of the United Nations in Burma theatre was to assist the Chinese war effort, there was least possibility of such comprehensive plans of freeing the Indian frontier from Japanese incubus being entertained. Meanwhile Japanese occupation of Burma continued and danger to the Indian frontiers, though reduced, was not eliminated.

General Sir Claude J. E. Auchinleck was appointed the Commander-in-Chief in India, on 20 June 1943, in succession to Field Marshal Wavell. Simultaneously with this change in the India Command, a decision was taken to set up a new South East Asia Command with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten as the Supreme Allied Commander. But it was not till November 1943 that the new Command started functioning. Hence the responsibility for continuing the planning of future operations and executing them during the monsoon devolved on the India Command. The earlier attempts to capture Akyab and establish forces on the line of the Chindwin river between Kalewa and Sittaung had failed, and the forces had retreated to their original positions. This setback had greatly affected the morale of the army. Lack of training and undeveloped line of communications had been responsible for

the failure. It was, therefore, essential, before fresh offensive might be taken up that these deficiencies should be remedied. But the physical factors and the necessary time lag involved in engineering operations made rapid progress impracticable, and it was found that the necessities of maintenance still limited the scope of offensive operations in the winter of 1943-44. This factor accounts for the very limited character of the operations which had been planned by the India Command, prior to the institution of the South East Asia Command.

The Washington Conference of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, in May 1943, had determined certain priorities and outlined the scope of operations for the India Command. The basic objective of the Allies, in so far as the Eastern Theatre was concerned, was to render utmost assistance to China in order to keep her into the war. For this purpose first priority was given to increasing the air transportation route to China to a monthly capacity of 10,000 (later 20,000) tons. This involved the development of air facilities in Assam for the purpose of intensifying air operations against the Japanese in Burma, maintaining increased American air forces in China and keeping up the flow of airborne supplies to that country. All operations in Burma were conditioned by this fact of devoting energies and resources to the building up of air route to China. The line of communications in Assam being limited and being subject to the effects of floods and internal disruptions, it was not possible to strain it by the expansion of air lift to China as well as by increasing the tempo of offensive operations on the eastern front.

General Auchinleck reviewed the position in the light of examination by the Joint Planning Staff and communicated his views to the Chiefs of Staff, in his telegram No 58356/CCS dated 2 July 1943. The Joint Planning Staff had rightly held the view that "depth of advance must be governed by maintenance position and thus by construction of all-weather roads". All operations except those in Arakan depended on the Assam line of communications, which, apart from meeting military requirements, had also to bear the load of jute and tea traffic in which His Majesty's Government were keenly interested. Air operations against Burma and the increasing load of air ferry to China further added to the weight of burden on that line of communications. Hence it was not practicable to adopt the full scale offensive operation for pushing the Japanese out of Burma which had been planned earlier. The India Command desired air operations to continue, particularly those pertaining to a sustained bombing offensive against strategic objectives. For land operations it was laid down that "only those areas served by all-weather roads, can be permanently occupied".

Hence for the winter of 1943-44, the defined aim was "to reduce gap between our all-weather line of communications and permanent road system in Burma, distance which could be covered in dry season of 1944/45. This can be done if all-weather road can be extended to Sittaung and Kalemyo in Burma". On this basis the operations recommended for Upper Burma during 1943-44 were:

- " (a) Chinese from Yunnan: offensive operations with object containing and destroying maximum Japanese forces and improving position with a view to continuation operations 1944/45.
- " (b) Chinese from Ledo: to advance as far towards Myitkyina as subsequent maintenance will permit.
- " (c) British forces on Chindwin: offensive operations with up to three divisions and one L.R.P. brigade with object pushing forward all-weather road construction to Sittaung and Kalemyo and maintaining forces covering road-head throughout the subsequent monsoon".

Emphasis was at the same time laid on operations in Arakan. The capture of Akyab was deemed to be of "utmost importance" which would be effected by two assault brigades in the first flight and a third as a follow-up. This was to be supported by "maximum scale air bombardment and fire cover from naval forces". Use of fighter squadrons and carrier borne aircraft was also essential for the success of this effort. To ensure success it was necessary to employ land forces up to two divisions simultaneously on the Arakan coast and one Long Range Penetration Group in the Kaladan river area.

Capture of Ramree Island was also considered but it was felt that owing to the shortage of shipping, and if the shipping used against Akyab was to be employed for assault on Ramree, a period of three or four months must intervene between the two amphibious operations. The Joint Planning Staff attached great importance to the operations on the Arakan coast because owing to the limitations of Assam line of communications, operations in Upper Burma in any depth could not proceed and because capture of Akyab was so closely associated with prestige and morale. Hence they desired that sufficient resources should be allotted for this operation to ensure success. The earliest when the assault could proceed was January 1944. But prior to that and subsequent to the monsoon, operations from Imphal and from Ledo might commence, for which necessary forces were available. On these lines General Auchinleck had issued instructions to the Eastern Army to complete their plans and do the provisioning.

Before preparations were effective, on 18 July 1943, serious

floods in Bengal affected the line of communications and it was apprehended that excessive deficiencies would occur in the maintenance programme. It became, therefore, necessary to reconsider the plan of operations. General Auchinleck, in his telegram No. 65566/COS dated 13 April 1943, to the Chiefs of Staff, discussed the effects of the deficiencies on various operations. It is clear from his communication that there was no early prospect of operations in Upper Burma and that he was inclined to give preference to the operations on the Arakan coast, particularly the land operations for the capture of Akyab, as it did not appear practicable to execute the amphibious operation against that island. But even such a limited programme of offensive action was likely to militate against effective prosecution of the development of air-fields in Bengal to heavy bomber standard. Priority had been assigned to air operations by the Washington Conference. Hence the Commander-in-Chief, on the advice of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, was prepared to put off operations, both land and amphibious (Cudgel and Bullfrog), on the Arakan coast and devote all energies to air development. In conclusion he wrote, "Fully appreciate pressure which is being brought to bear on you in favour of starting large scale offensive operations against Burma this coming winter and believe you are fully aware of the disadvantages of this course. But the course of planning for even the limited operations included in "Champion" (exploitation of land advance in Burma) has brought me to the conclusion that the best military course would be to avoid wasting effort on this unprofitable objective and to concentrate on supply to China by air at the same time increasing and conserving strength of India and preparing resources for CULVERIN (operations for the capture of North Sumatra) next winter. Preparations for CULVERIN would enable us to bring training of troops to high standard. If CULVERIN were definitely decided on for 1944/45, it would be desirable to divert resources from BULLFROG (amphibious operations for the capture of Akyab) to BUCCANEER (operations against Andaman Islands) in the late spring of 1944".

General Auchinleck had to suggest this course in view of the priority which was given by the United Nations to the support of China and air development. But on a fuller examination of the situation arising out of the floods, the Eastern Army prepared an Outline Plan for limited offensive in Arakan and holding up action on the Assam front. It was based on the principle that "the adoption of a purely defensive military and air policy on either Corps front is highly undesirable. In both areas (Arakan and Assam) such an attitude would considerably encourage the

Japanese and invite him to attack us, with all the attendant advantages of the loss of initiative to us. It would be bad for the morale of all our forces, military and air, and for the irregular forces at present helping us. It would be bad for public opinion". Hence, keeping fully in view the relative limitations of maintenance on the two fronts, the Eastern Army decided on giving preference to operations in Arakan. Their basic policy was to provide, first for all essential resources for the XV Indian Corps operations in Arakan and then to allot available resources for any operations, offensive and defensive, on the IV Indian Corps front. They also realised the dearth of airfields in the IV Indian Corps area and accepted as a priority requirement the development of temporary strips in the Imphal and Tamu areas. Taking these factors into consideration their conclusion was that "while we may be forced upon the defensive on IV Corps front by adverse administrative conditions there will still remain a minimum target for operations in this area which we should accept and make possible". For the other front, they decided on the "earliest offensive necessary to gain and maintain the initiative". Air force action was to be directed towards "the destruction of enemy line of communications to the Arakan front".

This Outline Plan (Bigot) of 25 August 1943 took full account of the possibilities of Japanese offensive. The appreciation was based on the Japanese strength of four divisions, which might not be adequate for any major offensive without reinforcement. But such reinforcement was practicable, hence offensive operations might be undertaken, which were arranged according to their priority as "northwards in the Arakan, in the Chin Hills, or towards the Digboi-Ledo-Margherita area. The first two might be undertaken simultaneously". It was also likely that even without offensive reinforcements, the Japanese would launch limited offensives in these areas. Hence the appreciation was that "directly the weather conditions permit, the Japanese will resume offensive operations. In particular he is likely to carry out air attacks on our extremely vulnerable line of communications, and Chittagong is certain to be high in his priority targets. If our concentration plans, or our resources, will not permit us to undertake an early offensive, we must in any case dispose our forces to hold such attack and regain the initiative when we are ready". From this appreciation naturally followed the necessity of undertaking offensive operations, particularly in the Arakan area, for by that means the defence of the frontiers would be ensured.

Very comprehensive calculations were made of the available resources in men and material and their disposition between the

two fronts. On the XV Indian Corps front, for offensive operations, a force was to be employed "to overcome the prepared Japanese defences on the Mayu peninsula and able to operate in sufficient depth" while another "strong striking force was to be used on the Kaladan river in order to widen the front of operations and to protect our left flank". Operations on this front might commence before 15 January. On the other front the minimum targets were defined as follows:

- " (a) To forestall the Japanese on the west bank of the Chindwin River as early as the weather will permit.
- " (b) To capture the stockades areas and drive the Japanese from the Chin Hills.
- " (c) To carry out raids with limited objectives not involving an extension of maintenance organisation.
- " (d) To bluff the Japanese into believing that we intend a large scale operation in this area".

For these objectives a force of three divisions was required. The Long Range Penetration Groups were to be used, one on the IV Indian Corps front and the other in the country between the Chindwin and Kaladan rivers³.

The Quebec Conference of the Chiefs of Staff, in August 1943, modified the basis of operational planning in India. Whereas the Washington Conference had laid emphasis mainly on the air ferry to China, Quebec decisions gave "first priority to the land and air operations which would be necessary to establish land communications with China". It was of course not the intention

³ The outline plan, based on these factors was as follows :

Operations on XV Corps Front (Arakan)

Phase I—up to end of January 1944.

Offensive defensive to maintain initiative and gain information by patrolling and raiding

Phase II—at end of January 1944

(a) 77 Long Range Penetration Brigade to move on line Langleh-Heka—thence south with the object of disrupting communications between the Chindwin and Kaladan Rivers

(b) 5 Indian Division and 7 Indian Division to capture Japanese positions Maungdaw-Razabil-Buthidaung

Phase III

Advance on three division front on Mayu Peninsula-Line of Mayu River and Kaladan River

Objectives: Foul Point-Rathedaund—North of Kaladan River

Phase IV

Exploration to line of Lemro R-Yamaung Mun Chaung

Operations on IV—Corps Front (Assam)

Phase I—soon after weather clears

(a) Chindwin front Possession to be regained of areas west of the Chindwin. This not to include Sittaung, but to include the occupation of the E. W. Roadhead.

(b) Chin Hills 17 Light Indian Division to re-establish itself on the Tiddim from as far forward as the condition of the road might permit

to adopt the new course in supersession of the earlier objective, for even the Quebec Conference "decided to continue to build up and increase the air routes and air supplies to China and develop the resources of that country", primarily to intensify operations against Japan. The Quebec decisions also directed preparations to be continued "for an amphibious operation in the spring of 1944". In addition to these, operations against the Andaman Islands and against North Sumatra, as well as for the direct capture of Singapore through the Malacca Straits besides those through the Moulmein area of Kra Isthmus in the direction of Bangkok, were to be planned. Even a bomber offensive on Japan from China was considered, and the general idea of bombing Japan with a bomber force built up at Changsha and maintained by a fleet of transport aircraft based on Calcutta was accepted. Instructions were issued to study future plans for all these operations. The Quebec decisions brought to view the possibility of a major enterprise against Japan, the form of which would be land and air operations for the capture of Upper Burma, offensive operations in Arakan, capture of Akyab and Sumatra and attack on Rangoon. This comprehensive object for which planning had proceeded earlier was to be revived, and in the new aspect of increasing resources of the United Nations, a major offensive against Japan in Burma and South East Asia was envisaged.

The Quebec decisions were communicated to the India

Continued—

Phase II—when supply depots established and troops ready to operate

- (a) The expulsion of the Japanese from their positions about Fort White and the stockades.
- (b) Offensive patrolling followed by raids.
- (c) Operations by one Long Range Penetration Brigade in the area Homalin-Katha-Shwebo-Gangew with the object of disrupting Japanese communications in Shwebo area

Concurrently with the above operations the construction of the following roads could be made

Palet-Tamu—All weather.
Tamu-Sittaung—Fair weather
Imphal-Tonzang—All weather
Tonzang-Kennedy Peak—All weather
The order of Battle for this plan was

Army Troops	111 Long Range Brigade	XV Corps	IV Corps
Army Reserve	26 Indian Division One Brigade Group PI (WA) Division 254 Indian Tank Brigade One Medical Regiment Royal Artillery	5 Indian Division 7 Indian Division 81 (WA) Division (less one Brigade Group) 25 Division Indian Army Corps 6 Medical Regiment Royal Artillery	17 Indian Division 20 Indian Division 23 Indian Division 77 Long Range Penetration Brigade

Command on 26 August 1943. General Auchinleck immediately desired these schemes to be examined by the Planning Staff. The result of this fresh examination was that the aspect of operations in Upper Burma underwent a radical change. From being a mere local offensive-defensive action to contain some Japanese forces, it developed into a resolve 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 the Chinese forces from Yunnan. The object was to contain as many Japanese forces as possible and to cover the air ferry route with the definite object of reopening land communications with China by means of a road from Ledo via Myitkyina to be connected with the existing road north to Lashio.

The first plan was communicated to the Chiefs of Staff on 7 September 1943, and it included, besides Chinese operations based on Yunnan and Ledo, two alternative operations for the Indian forces based on Imphal-Tiddim area. The first included an advance to the area Kalewa-Kalemyo and thence to Ye U. The second related to "an operation for the capture of the Indaw area (with its airfields) by airborne assault, followed by an advance overland to consolidate the capture. This force would depend on air supply until the Chinese advance from the north opened a route for maintenance by land". Long Range Penetration Groups were to be used in either of the two schemes. General Auchinleck favoured the first, but the Chiefs of Staff preferred the second, as it would enable contact with the Chinese advance from Ledo and Yunnan and because it had a greater element of surprise. The second plan was, therefore, prepared. The Outline Plan provided for Indaw airfields being seized by parachute troops and thereafter a division (less one brigade) being flown in. "A third brigade with mules and jeeps was to advance overland from Imphal to Indaw. This was to be coupled with a limited offensive/defensive operation southwards from Tamu, as well as with the Chinese advance from Ledo and Yunnan on Myitkyina-Bhamo and Lashio. Offensive operations in Arakan were also to be timed to take place so as to have the maximum distracting effect on the enemy. Finally the advance of the main force towards their objectives was to be preceded and assisted by long range penetration forces". This plan was, in essentials, the same as had been considered earlier when the reconquest of the whole of Burma was the objective. The Arakan plan also embraced amphibious operations. Thus, the consideration of these plans along with the ambitious and enterprising ventures for the capture of North Sumatra, Singapore, Andaman Islands and the Isthmus of Kra, which were then being

planned, indicate the desire of the United Nations to take to offensive action against Japan and undertake an all-out effort to oust her from South East Asia. The establishment of a new operational Command for South-East Asia showed the earnestness of the Allies. The planning which had been pursued by the India Command was transferred along with the staff to the new Command. It is clear from the operations during 1944-45 that essentially the strategic lines considered earlier had been followed, and the reconquest of Burma and the liquidation of the Japanese hold came by the methods planned by Field Marshal Wavell and General Auchinleck in India.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Liability of India to supply Reinforcements outside India

INDIA OFFICE, WHITEHALL, S. W. 1. 23 MARCH, 1937

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for India to invite attention to the fact that the Government of India have from time to time been asked by H. M. Government to prepare schemes for the reinforcement of certain places outside India and the potential commitments which they may be asked to discharge may be summarised as follows:—

Iranian oil-fields	..	..	1 Infantry Brigade
Singapore	.	..	1 Infantry Brigade
Hong Kong	..	.	2 Infantry Battalions
Egypt	..	..	2 Infantry Brigades
Burma	.		1 Infantry Brigade.

2. The Government of India have now suggested that the situation in regard to these schemes should be reviewed and that an indication should be given on the following points:—

- (a) the schemes which it will now be necessary to maintain,
- (b) the extent to which the schemes must be capable of being put into operation simultaneously.

3. It is suggested for the concurrence of the Army Council that the schemes should be classified into two main divisions as given below, and that the classification should be subject to periodical review by the Army Council.

- (a) *Plans to be maintained at such a degree of readiness that they could be put into effect at short notice.*

It is suggested that under this heading the following might be included subject to confirmation and periodical review by the Army Council.—

Reinforcement of Singapore (Scheme M).
Defence of Anglo-Iranian Oilfields.
Scheme M (Emergency) for reinforcement of Singapore (Burma only).

- (b) *Plans for which reasonable warning can be anticipated.*
Reinforcement of Hong Kong.
Reinforcement of Egypt.
Reinforcement of Burma.

A situation in any theatre in this category may deteriorate necessitating the desirability of the plan for reinforcement being transferred temporarily to category (a). Should such an eventuality appear imminent it is requested that early information should be afforded.

4. Finally, I am to invite attention to C.I.D. Paper No. 130-D, paragraph 44, governing the Government of India's commitments regarding the supply of reinforcements from India and the conclusion reached by H. M. Government (namely that the principle should be generally accepted that, except in the gravest emergency, the Army in India should be employed outside the Indian Empire only after consultation with the Governor-General in Council), and to the understanding attached to India's acceptance of any commitments that troops can only be supplied by India provided the situation in India at the time permits.

R. C. WILSON

APPENDIX II

The Military Situation in regard to Land and Air Support to Afghanistan in the event of Soviet Aggression

(Note: In this paper where "military" considerations are referred to this term includes both Army and Air Force considerations).

1. On the 12th March 1940 (telegram 769) the Government of India submitted their views to H.M.G. on the subject of support to Afghanistan in the political, military and economic fields.

On the 10th April (telegram 1708) H.M.G. replied laying down as "an essential part of our policy that in the event of Russian aggression against Afghanistan support must be given to the Afghan Government by all means in our power". This implies a reversal of the existing military defensive policy on the Western Frontier and the adoption of an offensive military policy. The Government of India at the same time were asked to give their views on the military measures necessary to implement the new policy in the event of immediate aggression, the possible necessity for raising additional troops in India being referred to.

On the 12th April (telegram 1120 and 1121) the Government of India gave their views regarding the military aspect which were briefly as follows:

- (a) A mission and technical personnel to be sent to Kabul.
- (b) A.A. units to be provided for defence of India itself by H.M.G.
- (c) Extra air force units to bring India's total up to 14 squadrons to be provided by H.M.G. to enable us to support Afghans by air on line of the *Oxus*. In addition 2 more fighter squadrons and 1 heavy bomber squadron would be required to support a land advance.
- (d) Land support to be confined to the *Southern line*.
- (e) For this land support initial force required would be
 - 3 Armoured Brigades
 - 4 Infantry Brigade Groups (Mech.)

These would operate via Kandahar up to the Helmand.

- (f) To enable us to provide (e) above we should be released from our obligations to provide troops for Iraq and Iran.

On the 18th April (telegram 1849) H.M.G. asked the Government of India for their further views on the possibility of assisting the Afghan Government by sending forces to Kabul, i.e. for the minimum requirements in forces on the *Northern line*. On the 23rd April (telegram 1202) the Government of India gave their reasons why it would be inadvisable initially to develop land forces on the *Northern line*, and pointed out the dangers of hostile air attack on this line. They also reaffirmed that the move of troops to the Helmand would be feasible, in the event of immediate Soviet aggression, provided our request to be released from obligations in Iraq and Iran was agreed to. They further pointed out India's defenceless state against hostile air attack.

2. On the 27th April (Forminka 77) H.M.G. authorised H.M.'s Minister Kabul to inform the Afghan Government of our new policy. This was done on the 3rd May (99-Katodon). Thus the Afghan Government are now aware of our new policy and we are committed to the carrying out of the military implications.

On the 4th April (telegram 2128) H.M.G. in replying to certain other questions affecting discussions with the Afghan Government at Kabul, gave certain indications in regard to land and air support which have raised immediate questions of the greatest military importance. These are:—

- (a) It seems most unlikely that H.M.G. will agree to release us from our obligations in Iraq and Iran.
- (b) By implications it seems most unlikely that we would expect any assistance in the form of land forces from overseas.
- (c) The Chiefs of Staff have other urgent preoccupations and it is unlikely that we shall receive guidance from them in the near future.

3. The conclusions arrived at from the foregoing paragraphs are:—

- (a) It is evident that H.M.G. are desirous that we should endeavour to assist the Afghan Government by land support on the *Northern line*.
- (b) Whatever we are able to do, either in the event of immediate aggression in 1940, or at some later date after preparation, will have to be done from our own resources.
- (c) H.M.G. require an answer and we should in reply, put our case and proposals clearly before them.

4. The question is what we can do. Before answering this question there are certain provisos which are a *sine qua non* as regards any proposals we make. These are:—

- (a) We can send NO "token forces" to Afghanistan. To do so would be to court disaster and to risk a reverse which would have far reaching repercussions throughout the Middle and Far East and in India itself.
- (b) Any land forces we send into Afghanistan must be adequately supplied with A. A. artillery and air support including fighter aircraft.
- (c) Our land forces should be equipped up to a modified E.D.T. scale, i.e. to a better scale than that to which the Army in India is now equipped.
- (d) A striking air force must be provided, i.e. the additional squadrons to bring out existing air force in India up to:—

2	H.B. Squadrons
4	M.B. "
4	Fighter "
4	A.C. "

Total 14 Squadrons

- (e) Our minimum requirements in A.A. artillery (totals for which have been prepared) for the defence of air bases and lines of communication in India itself must be provided.

Based on the assumption that these essential requirements will be supplied (and we cannot agree to provide the necessary support to Afghanistan unless they are) our proposals are as follows:

5. *Immediate support if necessary in 1940.*

We can undertake NO land support to Afghanistan in 1940 unless we are able to make use of those forces now earmarked for Iraq and Iran. This is a *sine qua non*. Subject to agreement on this point and to the provisos in paragraph 4 above our preliminary view (subject to more detailed examination) is that we could, at considerable risk but not before September 1940, provide the following forces:—

- (a) *For Kabul and Northern line L of C*
For Kabul 3 Inf Bde Groups (Rainbow)
For L of C 6 Inf Bde Groups
 (i.e. Lucknow Bde
 Bareilly Bde
 1 F.D.R. Bde
 1 Bde milked from Frontier)
 2 Bdes from I.S. (replaced by new
 battalions now raising).

(b) *For Southern line*

This is doubtful and would depend on when the immediate aggression came. If it came after October 1940, which is unlikely owing to climatic conditions, we might be able to provide:

1 Light Tank Bde

1 Motor Cavalry Bde

2 Inf. Bde Groups (i.e. 1 Quetta Bde

1 Bde from I.S. replaced by bns now raising).

6 Before considering what might be possible in 1941 or subsequent years it is necessary to consider the A.A. artillery and air requirements which will be necessary, as pointed out in paragraph 4 above, for any plan

These are:—

(a) *For Northern line*

2 A.A. Regts

2 F. Squadrons

2 A.C. Squadrons

1 M.B. Squadron

(b) *For Southern line*

1 A.A. Regt.

2 F. Squadrons

1 A.C. Squadron

1 M.B. Squadron

Total (not including static A.A. artillery for defence of bases, etc. in India or the air components of the striking force, Fighter defence of India or Watch and Ward):—

3 A.A. Regts.

4 F. Squadrons

3 A.C. Squadrons

2 M.B. Squadrons.

7. *Minimum Army requirements subsequent to Spring of 1941 to implement H.M.G.'s policy.*

These are based on the assumption that forces for Iraq and Iran will be required for these theatres. They are thus excluded from calculations. The A.A. and Air requirements are given in paragraph 6 above and remain the same.

(a) *For Northern line, To hold Kabul area only and protect L of C*
9 Infantry Brigade Groups

(b) *For Southern line, To secure line of Helmand and Kandahar-Kelat-i-Ghilzai-Girishk area*
3 Motorized Cav. Bdes.

4 Inf. Bde Groups

(c) *General Reserve*

3 Infantry Bde Groups

(a), (b) and (c) above give us a total requirement of 16 Infantry Brigade Groups or 48 Infantry battalions

8. By the Spring of 1941 our 3 Motorized Cav. Bdes should be ready. Infantry battalions which could be made available will only be as follows, since we cannot touch I.S. units or the bulk of the Frontier Defence units and Frontier Defence Reserve.—

9 battalions now being raised to replace Rainbow.

3 battalions Lucknow Bde

3 battalions Bareilly Bde

3 battalions Quetta Bde (F.D.)

3 battalions from Frontier Defence Reserve

3 battalions milked from Frontier stations and replaced by I.S.F.

6 battalions milked from Frontier Defence stations and replaced by Nepalese.

Total 30 battalions.

Conclusions as regards infantry:—

48 battalions required

30 battalions available

Balance 18 battalions which will have to be raised

9. It is unnecessary to consider details of ancillary units which would be required but the situation regarding M.T. and artillery must be stated.

(a) *M.T.*

Disregarding 17 sections which will leave India with Rainbow and Trout we should by the Spring of 1941 have

36 Regular Sections

6 Subsidized Sections

36 Regular Sections if the Plan of Operations 2nd contingent is raised now.

Total 78 Sections

Subject to detailed examination we should probably require some:—

<i>For Northern Line</i>	..	. 100 Sections
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<i>For Southern Line</i>	..	. 40 Sections
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Total	..	. 140 Sections
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This gives a shortage of some 62 sections.

There are at present 12 Regular and 5 Subsidized Sections working with the Frontier defence troops. If these were replaced by animal transport and stocks in frontier stations increased from 60 to 120 days reserve we could reduce the additional sections to be raised to some 45 sections.

(b) *Artillery*

After Rainbow and Trout leave 6 Field Artillery regiments would be available in the Spring of 1941 (2 mechanized and 4 horsed).

Our minimum requirements would be approximately:—

For Northern line	..	4 Fd Regts.
For Southern line	..	2 Fd Regts.
For Central Reserve	..	3 Fd Regts.
For Frontier Defence Reserve	.	2 Fd Regts.

11 Fd Regts.

Thus, taking "B" Field Regiment (ready by 1941-42) into our calculations we should require another 4 Field Regiments.

Summary of requirements

(a) *From India*

18 Infantry Battalions
4 Field Regiments
98 Sections M.T.

(b) *From Home*

3 A.A. Regiments
A.A. artillery for static defence of bases, etc.

10. *Summarized Air requirements.*

(a) *Main striking force*

2 H.B. Squadrons
3 M.B. Squadrons

(b) *Fighter defence of India*

4 F. Squadrons

(c) *Watch and Ward (frontier)*

1 A.C. Squadron
1 M.B. Squadron

(d) *Northern Line Component*

2 F. Squadrons
2 A.C. Squadrons
1 M.B. Squadron

(e) *Southern Line Component*

2 F. Squadrons

- 1 A.C. Squadron
- 1 M.B. Squadron
- (f) *Reserve*
- 1 B.T. Squadron

Summary

- 2 H.B. Squadrons
- 6 M.B. Squadrons
- 8 F. Squadrons
- 4 A.C. Squadrons
- 1 B.T. Squadrons

Total 21 Squadrons

OR, 7 squadrons additional to the 14 squadrons proposed by C.O.S. before new policy of H.M.G. as regards Afghanistan was decided on.

APPENDIX III

Directive by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief

Dated Simla, 21 May, 1940

1. H.M.G. has now decided that our policy towards Afghanistan for the future will be that in the event of Soviet aggression by armed forces against the independence or integrity of Afghanistan support must be given to the Afghan Government by all means in our power.

2. In pursuance of this political policy the object of air and land support to the Afghan Government will be:—

(a) to resist Soviet armed aggression by air attack from bases in India on Soviet aerodromes, installations, communications and armed forces north and west of the Hindu Kush Range.

(b) To support the Afghan Government in the Kabul area with land and air forces *via* the Northern line.

(c) To forestall Soviet forces on the Helmand River and stabilise the Kandahar Area with land and air forces *via* the Southern Line.

3. The minimum land forces which will be required to attain the object are:—

(a) *For the Northern Line*

(i) *At Kabul.*

Three Infantry Bdes.

One A.A. Regiment.

Two Field Artillery Regiments
(one horsed, one mechanized).

One Medium Battery.

(ii) *On Northern L. of C.*

Six Infantry Brigades.

One A.A. Regiment.

One Field Artillery Regiment
(horsed).

One Mountain Artillery Regiment.

(b) *For the Southern Line*

Three Mobile Brigades.

One A.A. Regiment.

Two Field Artillery Regiments (one horsed, one mechanized).

One Medium Battery.

Four Infantry Brigades.

(c) *For General Reserve in India*

Three Infantry Brigades.

Three Field Artillery Regiments (horsed initially).

(d) In addition forces will be required for:—

(i) Control of Western frontier tribal area.

(ii) Internal and railway security.

(iii) Port defence.

(iv) Static A.A. defence of vulnerable points and communications in India.

4. The minimum air forces required to attain the object are:—

(a) *Main striking force (Five squadrons)*

Two H.B. Squadrons

Three M.B. Squadrons

(b) *Northern Line component (Five squadrons)*

Two Fighter Squadrons

One M.B. Squadron

Two A.C. Squadrons

(c) *Southern Line component (Four squadrons)*

Two Fighter Squadrons

One M.B. Squadron

One A.C. Squadron

(d) *Frontier Watch and Ward (Two squadrons)*

One M.B. Squadron

One A.C. Squadron

(e) *Fighter defence of India (Four squadrons)*

Four Fighter Squadrons

(f) *Reserve*

One B.T. Squadron

5. The total of land forces to be provided by India to comply with requirements shown in para 3(a), (b) and (c) is as follows:—

(a) One Mobile Division of three Brigades

Four Infantry Divisions of three Brigades each

One Infantry Division of four Brigades

Two Mechanized Field Artillery Regiments

Six Horsed Field Artillery Regiments

One Mountain Artillery Regiment

Two Medium Batteries.

All with the necessary HQ. Signals, Engineers, Medical, Transport and other ancillary units, and L. of C. and advance base organizations.

(b) The provision of the three A.A. Regiments complete will be a responsibility of H.M.G.

6. The provision of the land forces required will be undertaken as follows:—

(a) *Static A.A. defence.* Requirements are:—

Fifty-three 3·7" guns without tractors

Twenty-five Bofors guns with tractors

Thirty-two Bofors guns without tractors.

These are in addition to those to be provided under the modernization plan.

Orders for these with the necessary ammunition will be placed on U.K. The bulk of the personnel will be raised in India. Plans for the provision of this personnel and personnel for the connected Observer Corps and for training will be taken in hand at once.

(b) *Mobile Division.* The following will be available from foreseeable resources during 1940:—

One Light Tank Brigade.

One Mobile Brigade (trucked).

One Field Regiment (mech.)

Eventually the Mobile division will contain one more Mobile brigade (armoured carriers). Until the armoured carriers are available the Mobile brigades will be trucked. Plans will be put in hand now to prepare the remaining units, i.e.,

One Mobile Division H.Q.

One Mobile Division Signals (Full scale)

One Mobile Brigade H.Q. and Signals (Full scale)

One Mobile Brigade (trucked).

Two Mobile Field Ambulances.

Ancillary services for Mobile Division complete.

(c) *Artillery.* Plans will be undertaken to raise (including 'B' Field Regiment) two additional Field Artillery Regiments, initially on a horsed basis if tractors cannot be made available. In so doing full use will be made of existing pieces in India, pieces and personnel to be obtained by reducing frontier post groups and possibly by taking complete units from I.S.F. artillery.

(d) *Artillery Signals.* Two Field Artillery Signal Sections to be raised.

(e) *Infantry.* 16 Infantry Brigades might be provided as follows:—

(i) The following complete infantry brigades:—

The Lucknow Brigade.

The Bareilly Brigade.

One brigade removed from F.D.R. (N)

One brigade removed from Western (I) District.

Total four infantry brigades leaving twelve infantry brigades (thirty-six battalions) to be found.

(ii) These thirty-six infantry battalions might be provided as follows.—

Nine battalions now being raised in replacement of Rainbow.

Nine battalions to be replaced in regular garrisons by I.S.F., Nepalese or I.T.F. Eighteen battalions to be raised.

New battalions will now be raised as follows:—

	Indian Gurkha
Vice Rainbow to be raised at once (orders already issued)	7 ..
Vice Rainbow to be raised in cold weather 1940/41	2
Vice 1/2nd Punjab, gone to Aden, to be raised in cold weather 1940/41	.. 1
1940 expansion to be raised at once	.. 6 ..
1940 expansion to be raised at once in anticipation of departure of Rainbow	6 ..
1940 expansion to be raised in cold weather 1940/41	.. 3
1940 expansion to be raised when Rainbow goes overseas	3 ..
Total	<hr/> 22 6 <hr/>
i.e. vice 1/2nd Punjab	1
vice Rainbow	9
expansion 1940	.. .. 18
Total	<hr/> 28 <hr/>

Newly raised battalions will not however be employed under the plan and the principle to be observed in raising and locating them will be that they will be raised with a low standard of armament (rifles and grenades) and will as far as possible be employed on Internal Security thereby releasing fully trained and equipped units to form the new brigades.

(iii) To complete the new infantry brigades plans will be prepared at once to provide:

Twelve Infantry Brigade H.Q.

Twelve Infantry Brigade Signal Sections (lower scale).

Twelve Field Ambulances.

Eleven Field Companies S. and M. (lower scale).

(f) Plans will be prepared to provide the necessary ancillary units, including repair organization and additional medical units or forces on the Northern and Southern lines and the General Reserve.

(g) *Headquarters of formations.* The following will be required:

Five Div. H.Q. complete with Div. Sigs.

One Force H.Q. for Northern line complete with signals.

Two L. of C. H.Q. complete with signals.

(h) *Additional Engineer units required for field forces:*

Two Field Park Coys.

One Army troops coy, S. and M.

(i) For L. of C. and advanced base installations the following will be required:

Two adv. base organizations (Peshawar, Chaman).

Two L. of C. telegraph coys.

Expansion of existing hospital accommodation in India.

(j) *Mechanical transport.* The total requirements for the Northern and Southern lines have been estimated at approximately 140 sections while total assets have been estimated at 36 regular and 6 subsidized sections. By placing Western Frontier Districts on an A.T. basis (except for 1 subsidized section) and increasing stocks at frontier stations when a Precautionary Period becomes necessary it may be possible to reduce the number of additional sections of M.T. to be raised to 100 sections. Plans to raise this amount of M.T. will be taken in hand at once.

7. In preparing plans for the raising of the additional formations the following policy will be observed:

(a) All available resources must be utilised to the utmost and advantage taken, with due regard to reasonable safety of improvisation when possible. I am not prepared to accept any proposals which, in my opinion, go beyond the minimum requirements of this plan, which may be referred to as the 1940 Expansion Scheme. No risks must, however, be taken as regards the medical arrangements which will be fully adequate.

(b) Ancillary units, other than medical, will be cut down to the minimum essential.

(c) Engineer and Signal units will be provided on the following basis:

(1) Signal units for the Mobile Division, and one infantry brigade on the Southern Line will be equipped to as high a scale as possible. Other

units will only be provided with wireless equipment as and when available.

- (ii) Field units S. and M. will be provided on a full scale for the Kabul Division, the Mobile Division and one infantry brigade on the Southern line. Units on the L. of C. and with General Reserve will be on a lower organization. Full use will be made of I.S.F. Engineer units.

(d) A.T. guns and cruiser tanks are unlikely to be immediately available but plans must be made for raising the units as soon as equipment is in sight.

A.T. guns may in the first instance be replaced by 18 pdrs

Cruiser tanks when available may be absorbed in British units of Light Tank or Mobile Brigades.

8. In estimating requirements for the additional land forces to be raised provision has been made for.

- (a) War wastage of personnel which may extend finally to an all-round figure of 66%. This number will be worked to as experience shows that the men are likely to be required. In the first instance the usual 33% will be held in readiness.
- (b) The expansion of Schools and training establishments.
- (c) Increase of War Reserves. This should be effected without going back on any existing commitment to H.M.G.
- (d) The calling up for training of $6\frac{1}{2}$ I.S.F. battalions.
- (e) Hutted accommodation for additional personnel.

9. (a) His Majesty's Government has been informed that the following must be made available from the U.K.:

Three A.A. Regiments complete.

The Air squadrons required over and above our estimated total of 7 squadrons available in India.

(b) His Majesty's Government has been asked to give a certain amount of assistance as regards armament and equipment but this cannot be relied on and demands on them must be reduced to a minimum. They have also been asked to authorize us to obtain M.T. etc. from America up to a minimum of 7 million and a maximum of 10 million dollars (which includes the pending demand of 2.2 million dollars for Trout and its replacement).

(c) H.M.G. have also been informed that, if the Soviet menace should not materialize, some at any rate of the forces referred to above will become available for war purposes elsewhere if required

10. A total of three additional squadrons of the Indian

Air Force will be raised in India, including the one recently sanctioned.

11. The modernization plan remains the basis of reorganization except where it is necessary to modify it for the purposes of the above plan. It will remain the basis of long term policy.

12. The cost of raising and maintaining the additional forces described above excluding the additional fourteen R.A.F. squadrons, the 3 A.A. regiments and the equipment for the static A.A. has been reported to H.M.G. as 13 crores capital and $12\frac{1}{2}$ crores recurring in a full year. These figures are highly secret and must on no account be divulged. The basis of this costing is attached and it will show the framework within which the scheme was originally devised. The Governor General in Council has accepted a charge of this order of magnitude against Indian revenues for this purpose. It represents the maximum financial effort which India can produce as far as can at present be foreseen, without resorting to extensive borrowing (which may have serious political reactions). It is obvious therefore that the cost of the measures now to be undertaken must not by and large exceed the above amounts. It is evident also that the above financial limits can only be adhered to with the maximum of improvisation. The financial control over the implementing of this programme will throw as much increased strain on the Military Finance Branch as on other Branches, and it is essential that energies should not be wasted in lengthy argument. If the P.S.O., after consulting F.A. is convinced that he cannot accept the advice given the case will be immediately referred to me for early decision.

Estimates for proposals dealing with the Soviet menace

Item	Capital	Recurring Lakhs
1. Force H.Q. complete with R.A., R.E., R.I.A.S.C. .. .	4.0	14.0
2. Five Div. H.Q. .. .	15.0	36.0
3. Four Div. Signals:—		
(a) 2 complete } . . .	35.0	28.0
(b) 2 modified } . . .		
4. Ten Field Coys (modified) (10) . . .	18.0	18.0
5. Field Park Coys (2) . . .	5.3	4.0
6. Infantry Brigade H.Q. (9) .. .	7.5	12.0
7. Infantry Bns. (18) (H.S.M.T.) . . .	90.0	108.0
8. H.Q. L of C Area . . .	2.0	2.7
9. H.Q. Engineers L. of C. (2) . . .	0.75	3.5
10. L of C Telegraph Coys (2) . . .	14.0	16.5
11. G.H.Q. Type Signal Section .. .	2.0	2.0
12. Mobile Force H.Q. .. . Say	4.0	7.2
13. Mobile Force Signal (less three Bde. Sqns).	10.0	9.0
14. One Armoured Bde. Sig. Squadron	1.2	1.8
15. Trucks for one mobile Bde. and Bde. H.Q. (See item 28 for substitution of Marmon Harringtons) . . .	10.0	2.5
16. One A Tps. Coy (Special estimate)	4.25	3.9
17. H.Q. L. of C. Sub Area	1.5	2.0
18. Two Field regiments horsed . . .	30.0	33.0
19. Two base organisations (2) (roughly estimated)	30.0	50.0
20. Ancillary units—		
(a) Medical .. .	22.0	38.0
(b) R.I.A.S.C. (including 26 coys— 104 Secs)	226.0	165.0
(c) Ordnance	27.0	54.0
(d) Miscellaneous	8.5	18.5
(e) Lump sum estimate for ancillary services (not yet worked out) . . .	15.0	20.0
21. Expansion in existing hospitals in India	7.0	15.0
Carried forward .. .	590 0	664.6

Estimates for proposals dealing with the Soviet menace—(Contd.)

Item	Capital	Recurring Lakhs
Brought forward .	590·0	664·6
22. Four camel companies .	20·0	25·0
23. Expansion of Schools (estimate) ..	10·0	12·0
24. Training 6½ I.S.F. Bns (estimate) ..	13·0	12·0
25. Temporary accommodation .	125·0	1·5
26. Increased war reserves .	200·0	.
27. War Wastage (66%) ..	200·0	400·0
28. Cost of Marmon Harringtons for two bdes. (vice two wheel drive trucks)	50·0	6·0
	1208·0	1121·1
Add 10% for contingencies	121·0	112·0
Total .	1329·0	1233·1
Say Rs	13 crores	12½ crores.

Policy regarding Defence of the Western Frontier

This note deals with the policy we are working on at present in regard to the defence of our Western Frontier.

2. To start with I should like to summarise the present position regarding assistance to the Afghan Government in certain circumstances.

- (a) The plans prepared in April and May last to assist the Afghan Government in the event of Soviet armed aggression are now held in abeyance as they cannot be implemented until H.M.G. are in a position to let us have the essential aircraft and A.A. and A.T. artillery.
- (b) The above position as regards (a) was realised by H.M.G. and they then suggested that we should prepare an interim plan. We agreed to this and informed H.M.G. that we should consider the possibility, in the event of internal disintegration in Afghanistan and in our own interests, of extending our "glacis", if circumstances permitted, to such areas as Jalalabad and Kandahar.

Our object in this, depending on circumstances, would be to improve our position for the control of our own tribes, to deny areas close to the Durand Line to a potential enemy and to form rallying points for any remnants of the Afghan Government and their loyal supporters.

3. The proposal for an interim plan referred to in para 2(a) above was, however, made before the collapse of France and the developments which have since followed. Thus, in view of the present general situation, we must obviously further reconsider our position, in the light of possible further disintegration in the Middle East and the uncertain attitude of the Soviet.

4. I do not suggest or propose entirely to throw overboard either our original plan to support the Afghan Government in the Kabul area, or the interim plan, since the latter, in certain circumstances, might be useful to us in defensive/offensive operations for the security of our Western Frontier. But it is obviously necessary to go further than this if security is to be maintained against possible attack.

5. The future policy which I am adopting, therefore as regards the Western Frontier, is as follows:—

- (a) It is intended to proceed with all preparations on the lines of our interim plan, since, when and if attack comes, circumstances might dictate that a preliminary advance by light forces beyond our frontier will be necessary.
- (b) Our main battle area, however, will have to be in the Western Frontier mountain belt, since it is only here that we shall be in a position, at any rate for some considerable time, to check mechanised and armoured forces. This battle area will comprise all territory trans-Indus.
- (c) The lines of approach to the mountain belt are to some extent canalised and lie in the areas of the Khyber, the Kurram salient between Kandahar and Quetta, and on the East Persian Frontier in the neighbourhood of Duzdap and Mirjawa.

In these areas it is necessary to strengthen our means of resistance by the preparation of anti-tank obstacles and defences and arrangements for demolitions in depth.

- (d) If we are attacked and we fail to hold the mountain belt referred to in (c) above, our next defensive area would have to be east of the line of the Indus.

6. As regards para 5(c) above, orders have already been issued for comprehensive plans to be prepared at once and subsequently implemented.

As regards para 5(d) above, orders have also been issued for secret reconnaissances on the line of the Indus with a view to preparing the major bridges for demolition.

7. I will give Your Excellency further details of the plans referred to in para 6 above as soon as they are on train.

Commander-in-Chief in India.

11th July, 1940.

APPENDIX V

Order of Battle—Forces Heron, Hawk & Emu

FORCE HERON (EGYPT)

<i>Staffs</i>	Indian Army Liaison Staff. H.Q. 11th Infantry Brigade.
<i>Artillery</i>	4th Field Regiment, R.A.
<i>Engineers</i>	No. 18 Field Company, Royal Bombay S & M
<i>Signals</i>	4th Field Regt. R.A. Signal Section. 11th Inf. Bde. Signal Section, 4th Divisional Signals.
<i>Infantry</i>	2nd Bn. Cameron Highlanders. 1/6th Rajputana Rifles. 4/7th Rajput Regiment.

Services

<i>Supply & Transport</i>	No. 15 Suply Issue Section. No. 62 Depot Section, Supply Personnel Company. No. 16 Cattle Supply Section, Class 11. Nos. 9 and 10 Cattle Supply Sections, Class 111. Composite M.T. Company.
<i>Medical</i>	No. 19 Field Ambulance. No. 15 Field Hygiene Section (less two sub- sections). No. 11 Indian General Hospital (H.Q. and 400 beds.)
<i>Ordnance</i>	Ordnance Field Company Ordnance Workshop Company—Headquar- ters. Nos. 18, 19 and 29 Workshop Sections.
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	Mixed Reinforcement Camp. 2nd Echelon. Field Accounts Office. No. 19 Field Post Office.

FORCE HAWK (ADEN)

2/5th Mahratta Light Infantry,
Detachment R.I.A.S.C.
17 Indian Staging Section.

Note: One Company 2/5th Mahratta L.I. and the detachment R.I.A.S.C. (M.T.) have been in Aden since 30 April 1939.

FORCE EMU (MALAYA)

<i>Staffs</i>	H.Q. 12th Infantry Brigade.
<i>Artillery</i>	22nd Mountain Regiment, R.A.
<i>Engineers</i>	No. 15 Field Company, Q.V.O. Madras S. & M
<i>Signals</i>	Mountain Regiment Signals Section, 3rd Divisional Signals. 12th Infantry Brigade Signal Section, 4th Divisional Signals.
<i>Infantry</i>	2nd Bn. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. 5/2nd Punjab Regiment. 5/14th Punjab Regiment. 4/19th Hyderabad Regiment.

Services

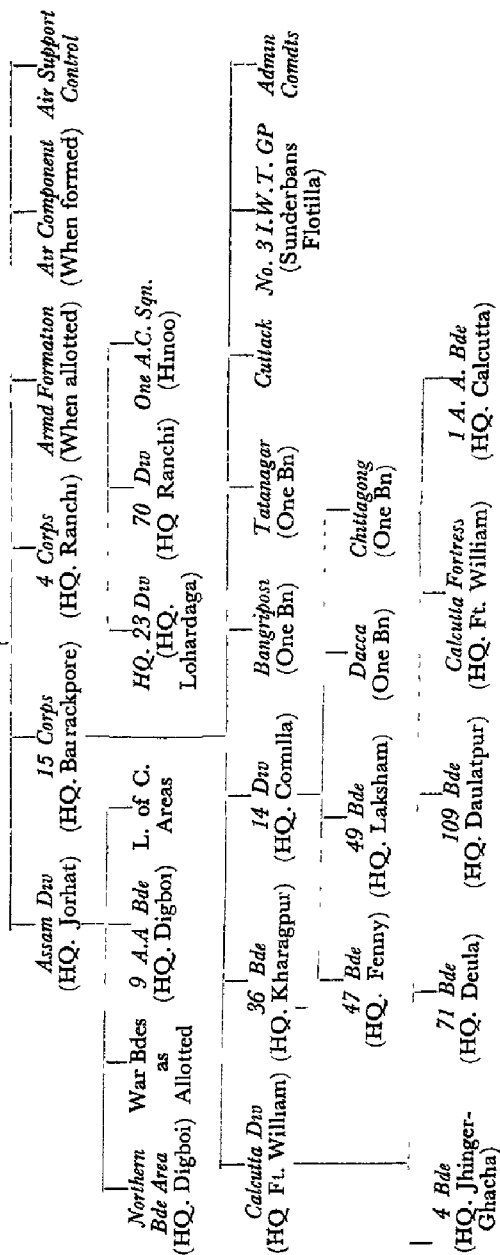
<i>Supply & Transport</i>	No. 16 Supply Issue Section. No. 39 Depot Section, Supply Personnel Company. No. 40 Depot Section, Supply Personnel Company. No. 9 Cattle Supply Section, Class II. No. 2 Motor Ambulance Section. Detachment R.I.A.S.C., M.T.
<i>Medical</i>	No. 18 Field Ambulance. No. 5 Field Hygiene Section. No. 12 Indian General Hospital (H.Q. and 400 beds).
<i>Ordnance</i>	Ordnance Detachment.
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	Mixed Reinforcement Camp. 2 Echelon. Field Accounts Office. Field Cashier.

Royal Air Force Contingent

- No. 12 (Indian) Wing.
- No. 11 (Bomber) Squadron.
- No. 39 (Bomber) Squadron.

Organization of Eastern Army

EASTERN ARMY (HQ. RANCHI)



APPENDIX VI (b)

General Headquarters Operation Instruction No. 1

To:—

The G. O. C.-in-C.,
Eastern Command

1. The role of the Eastern Army is to defend N.E. India against invasion.

My intention is to fight for *Bengal* and *Assam* as far forward as possible.

2. Vital areas to be defended are (in order from EAST to WEST):

- (a) Road, rail and river communications in *Assam*.
- (b) *Digboi* oilfields.
- (c) Air bases in *Bengal*.
- (d) Port and city of *Calcutta*.
- (e) The industrial area in *Bengal*.

3. Your plans should take no account of the existing *Assam-Burma* frontier which should be treated as non-existent from the military point of view. It is not intended at present to lay down a dividing line between your command and that of G.O.C.-in-C. Burma; it will be done later if necessary.

You must bear in mind the importance of *Assam* as a base for counter-offensive action into *Burma*.

4. In all your plans you must arrange for the closest possible co-operation and liaison with naval and air forces in your command. The assistance of the Navy in the defence of the water lines entering *Bengal* will be of vital importance.

Air forces will be allotted to you from time to time for the direct support of your operations. All other air forces in your area will operate under the command of the A.O.C.-in-C. India.

5. Your policy should be one of offensive action against any invading force.

The best means in this theatre of dealing with enemy aggression will be by operating on a wide front with columns of the size of a Brigade Group or less. These columns should converge on the enemy when located.

Mobility and a well organized system of intelligence are essential. Every effort must therefore be made to improve communication and arrangements for inter-communication. The

establishment by the earliest possible date of an Observer Belt to give warning of an attack, is essential.

6. A guerilla force will be organized at once in Assam and any other portion of your area where you consider they can be usefully employed.

7. Defended localities will be prepared to cover important river crossings and centres of communication. These will act as pivots of manoeuvre for offensive action. They will be prepared for all round defence and supplied to enable them to be held for several weeks

The troops employed in passive defence should be kept at a minimum. They must hold their defences even if surrounded.

Demolitions, both tactical and strategical, will be prepared but carried out only as a last resort.

8. You will be provided as soon as possible with two Corps Headquarters, one to command the formations in Army Reserve, and one to command the formations in Bengal other than those in Army Reserve. A third Corps Headquarters will be provided for Assam should it become necessary to do so.

New Delhi
23/3/1942.

SD. A. P. WAVELL
General
Commander-in-Chief in India.

APPENDIX VII

Chiefs of Staffs Committee Statement of Case

FORMATION OF A SUNDARBANS LAUNCH FLOTILLA

As a result of discussions on the defence of North East and India the necessity of launch patrols as anti-infiltration measures and for reconnaissance has become evident.

Hundreds of miles of waterways form the only means of communication over large distances and it would be possible to land forces in this area without information reaching the defence authority for days.

2. While air reconnaissance should be able to keep P. & A. District advised of the approach of a large convoy, it would almost certainly lose contact with the landing craft once they had commenced the journey up the creeks and consequently the position of the enemy's main thrust would remain unknown until an attack was actually made

3 The problem, therefore, becomes largely one of intelligence and the answer is the patrolling of as much of the water area possible with armed motor craft, fitted with W/T in the case of the larger craft and with visual signal links to shore stations in the case of smaller craft.

These would be able to engage and destroy the enemy if he employs his normal infiltration tactics using small parties of troops and to report his movements and delay him should he appear in force, so enabling air forces to locate and engage him and to enable the correct dispositions of defending troops to be made.

5. A brief outline of the Naval proposals is given here together with the links considered necessary with the other two services.

- (a) The mouths of all the main creeks between the Hooghly and the Meghna to be patrolled on a 24-hours basis.

For the main creeks and rivers such as the Matla, Hariabanga, Pusur, Haringhata and Meghna rivers a group of large seaworthy launches fitted with machine guns, W/T, V/S and pyrotechnics is required. The possibility of obtaining some of these from Netherlands East Indies is being examined as information has been received that a certain number of motor fishing vessels are surplus to requirements. W/T link to be direct, if possible, to Headquarters, P. & A. District and local Air Headquarters,

or through the proposed Floating Observer Corps launches at the mouths of the rivers between the Haringhata and the Hooghly and with Chittagong Naval W/T for launches operating on the Meghna.

- (b) The lesser creeks to be patrolled by smaller launches who will probably not be fitted with W/T. These will report to shore stations by V/S or word of mouth. As the primary function of these smaller craft is reporting only, their armament may be less than the larger launches.
- (c) The shore stations, which will have to be tactically sited so as to form reporting centres for groups of patrol launches, should be in direct telephonic L/T or W/T touch with Headquarters, P. & A. District, or any area Headquarters which may possibly be formed to deal with the Sundarbans as a whole. The posts should be manned by the Army.

6. It is realised that to seaward of the creek patrols should be an outer patrol carried out by ships. The number of vessels to maintain such a patrol have been worked out by Naval Headquarters. The numbers are so large however that there is no possibility of this requirement being fulfilled within at least a year and so they have been omitted from this paper, but will be included when detailed proposals for a long term scheme are put up.

7. The present scheme is an interim one designed to produce some sort of a patrol organisation in the quickest time possible

8. Sanction of the Chiefs of Staffs is requested for:—

- (a) The immediate requisition of a minimum number of 50 launches for Naval patrol duties.
- (b) Recruitment of officers and personnel to man these launches.
- (c) Release of the necessary L.M.Gs to arm the above.
- (d) Provision of existing Army personnel to man this armament.
- (e) An immediate reconnaissance by Naval and Army Officers of the area in question to enable a detailed combined plan to be made which will dovetail into both the main Army defence scheme and the Observer Corps scheme.

APPENDIX VIII

Watching Systems

Civil Watching System

A Civil Watching System is being established in the coastal districts of Bengal and Orissa.

The object of this system is to obtain reports of any hostile action occurring in the more outlying districts.

It is the intention that reports shall be made by whatever system is possible locally, to the nearest Telegraph Office or Police Station from where the information will be passed to a formation HQ when feasible, or to the nearest military unit.

Naval War Watching Organization

This organization provides for the watching of the coast so that warning may be given of the approach of enemy forces.

Watching Stations on the coasts of Bengal and Orissa are under the control of the Naval Officer in Charge, Calcutta who will pass any reports received to the Fortress Comd.

In addition reports of suspicious vessels or aircraft approaching the coast and which may lead to the possibility of a surprise landing are to be made to the nearest military authorities at the same time as normal reports are made to the Naval authorities.

Present Naval Watching posts are established at:—

Orissa

Gopalpur

Puri

False Point

Shortts Island

Chandipur

Bengal

W.S.S. Saugor

P.W.S.S. Calcutta (Diamond Harbour)

Jaldia

Kutubdia Island

Cox's Bazar

Teknaf

The Indian Observer System

The Indian Observer System is primarily for reporting movements of aircraft but also reports other forms of hostile activity.

The branch of the System which is established in the area of the Eastern Army is known as the Calcutta Observer Corps with main centre at Calcutta.

This Corps operates the following:—

Belts

- No. I. Mymensingh—Chittagong—Ramu. (East Bengal).
Observer Centre—Lalmai.
In the event of the Southern frontier being withdrawn, this belt will function from Lalmai Northwards.
- No. II. Morrelgunj—Jessore—Arapur. (East Bengal).
Observer Centre—Calcutta.
- No. III. Syamnagar—Gopalnagar—Amtala. (East of Calcutta).
Observer Centre—Calcutta.
- No. IV. Port Canning—Amta. (South and West of Calcutta).
Observer Centre—Calcutta.

Groups

- (a) Cuttack—Kharagpur.
Observer Centre—Kharagpur.
- (b) Jamshedpur. (Not yet functioning).
Observer Centre—Jamshedpur.
- (c) Asansol. (Not yet functioning).
Observer Centre—Asansol.

Sundarbans Belt

Sagar Island to Haringhata River. (South East Calcutta).

This system is under construction and until it is functioning an interim system has been established from Namkhana to Bogi.

Information received from Belts and Groups is sifted at the Observer Corps Centre in Calcutta and passed on to the Fighter H.Q. and Operations Room from where Air Raid Warnings are issued.

The Railway Warning System

Under this system reports are sent in by railway officials to railway controls who pass it on to Air Defence Centres which have been established at Fort William, Chittagong, Kharagpur and Asansol.

The main Air Defence Centre is at Fort William and communicates by W/T with subsidiary centres.

Air Defence Centres issue Air Raid Warnings to the zones in which they are situated.

APPENDIX IX

Communications

The general policy is:

- (a) To maintain the following roads towards the coast S.W. of Calcutta at an all-weather standard:
 - (i) Ranchi—Chaibasa—Keonjhargarh—Jaipur.
 - (ii) Ranchi—Jamshedpur—Baripada—Balasore.
 - (iii) Ranchi—Purulia—Bankura—Kharagpur—Balasore.
 - (iv) Grand Trunk Road.
- (b) To improve lateral roads S.W. of Calcutta as follows:
 - (i) To fair weather standard.
Road Keonjhargarh—Karanjia—Bangriposi—Kharagpur.
- (c) To make via Midnapore an alternative route to the Grand Trunk Road into Calcutta.
- (d) To raise the road Jessore—Khulna to all-weather standard and the road Calcutta—Khulna via Basirhat to fair-weather standard.
- (e) To raise the road Golaghat—Dimapur and the road Silghat—Nowgung—Dimapur to all-weather standard, i.e., 10 ton two way.

APPENDIX X

Denial and Demolition Policy

1. *Commands of Military Areas*

The provinces under the Eastern Army will for purposes of this scheme be divided up into two areas for each of which a General Officer will be responsible:

- (a) Assam Province under Comd. Assam Div.
- (b) Area under 15 Corps, i.e., provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

2. *Preparation*

After planning has been done, all possible preparation will be made on the site of the demolitions. Charges cannot be laid now, unless guards are available to guard the site. The following are examples of the preparatory work which can now be undertaken:

- (a) Preparation of chambers and boreholes to receive charges.
- (b) Erection of scaffolding to enable working parties to get at the actual places where charges are to be fixed.
- (c) Marking girders etc. with paint to show the position and size of charges to be affixed.
- (d) Cutting to size and making of necessary clamps struts, etc., for the fixing of charges. These small stores are to be stores at site under the protection of special chaukidars.

As soon as preparations are complete a report in duplicate will be rendered to the Denial Board concerned. The report will mention any special points which might be useful to any person who might have subsequently to prepare and execute the demolition in a hurry.

The Denial Board will pass a copy of the report to the Comd of the Military Area concerned.

The Board will be responsible for ensuring that reports are received for all demolitions.

3. Three copies of all demolition plans with calculations and sketches will be sent as soon as completed to C.E. Eastern Army.

4. *Authorities responsible for preparation*

These are laid down in Eastern Command letter No.

42611/X/GS(O) dated 13 March 42. The prescribed authorities are shown in tabular form attached hereto.

5. *Explosives*

- (a) As explosives become available, they will be allotted to the various demolitions by the R.E. Denial Boards, under the orders of the Comds of Military Areas.
- (b) Explosives will be placed in position at all works on which guards either police, Military, or privately appointed are employed. These guards will be made responsible that the charges are in no way interfered with. Primers and detonators for these demolitions will be held by an R.E. or S.M. unit appointed by the Military Area Comd.
- (c) Should the Denial Boards consider that any other charges should be placed into position now, they will ask the Military Area Comd if a guard can be detailed.
- (d) Explosives for demolitions, for which guards are not appointed, will be stored in a convenient area as directed by the Military Area Comd. These areas will often be the nearest F.S.D.

6. *Transport*

Military Area Commanders are responsible for earmarking transport for conveying explosives from places of storage to all demolition sites.

7. *Placing charges in position*

HQ Eastern Army will notify the areas which become threatened by enemy action. This information will be given to Military Area Commanders by the quickest form of communication available.

On receipt of this information Military Area Comds will put their scheme into force for placing all charges into position within the threatened area as notified by Eastern Army.

This work will be done, with certain exceptions noted below, by military engineer or pioneer units detailed by the Military Area Comds. These commanders may find it advisable to divide their area up into a certain number of sub-areas for each of which a Field Coy or Pioneer Bn is detailed. Engineer Comds must be given a copy of the sketches and Calculations for each demolition well in advance.

The exceptions mentioned above, where engineer units are not responsible for placing charges are as follows:—

- (a) Main Oil Installations.

- (b) Ports and Harbours.
- (c) Power Stations.
- (d) Government Factories.
- (e) River and sea craft.

In these cases the Senior Officer in charge of the installation will be responsible for the work of placing charges in position.

8. *Firing charges*

- (a) Military Area Comds are responsible for classifying all demolition as Preliminary, Deferred or Final and passing clear orders as to the military authority responsible for ordering the firing of all Preliminary and Deferred demolitions.
- (b) The Fortress Comd at Calcutta and Chittagong will be the authorities for ordering the execution of demolitions of those Ports.
- (c) In the case of occupied aerodromes, the authority will be the O.C. Aerodrome Defences.
- (d) The firing of final demolitions will be delegated to the formation commander operating in that particular area. Final demolitions will be kept to a minimum. A Liaison Officer not below the rank of Captain should be stationed at all important final demolitions. A covering party may be necessary.
- (e) Officers and N.C.Os. in charge of final demolitions must be warned of the tricks and ruses likely to be adopted by the enemy to prevent the firing (parachutists and 5th Columnists in British uniforms, etc., etc.).

Installations etc.	Authority responsible for Planning	Authority responsible for Preparation
Main Oil Installations	Oil companies advised by Denial Board	Oil companies advised by Denial Board.
Minor Oil Installations		See Eastern Command Letter No. 426 of 13 Mar 42 Para 3(f).
Ports and Harbours	Port authorities advised by Denial Boards.	Port authorities advised by Denial Boards.
Occupied aerodromes Power Stations	M.E.S. Electric Power Coys advised by Denial Boards	M.E.S. Electric Power Coys advised by Denial Boards.
Other Factories	Owner or Military advised by Denial Boards.	Military authorities
Removal of stocks of foodstuffs and materials	Civil Governments	Civil Governments
Railways	Railway Agencies advised by Denial Boards	Railway Agencies with assistance of R.E. officers
Roads	Denial Boards	P.W.D. with assistance of R.E. officers
River, Sea Craft, M.T. & Bicycles	Civil Governments	Civil Governments
Wireless, Cable, Telegraph and Telephone Installations	Senior officer of each installation advised by O.C. Eastern Command Signal Coy	Senior officer of each installation advised by O.C. Eastern Command Signal Coy

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the danger appeared from the east and planning had to be oriented to the new threat. This involved not only working out plans for the defence of the country but also, simultaneously, planning for a counteroffensive which ultimately developed into schemes for the reconquest of Burma and the final defeat of Japan. The book narrates, with the help of many maps and useful appendices, the story of these war plans, both defensive and offensive, in the context of the military situation then prevailing and the diplomatic background.

It is an absorbing study of a little known subject of special importance to all interested in the defence problems of the sub-continent of India.