

heavy air attack. Its A.A. protection was quite inadequate and it had no fighter cover. Our own aircraft were therefore employed in the early stages of the campaign against enemy aerodromes, in an effort to give immediate relief to our troops. This was not successful. The enemy's reserves were sufficient to replace at once the small casualties which our attenuated squadrons could inflict. Moreover, he had the means to repair rapidly the damage our squadrons inflicted on his aerodromes.

675. The lesson was again learnt that little relief can be obtained by attacking the aerodromes of an enemy who has the means for replacing or repairing damage, particularly if such attacks are of little weight.

#### *Reinforcements.*

676. The reinforcements which the R.A.F. received arrived too late to save the situation. By the middle of January, when the first few came on the scene, the aerodromes which they had to use in Singapore were already under constant and heavy bombing. Reinforcements which came later had to use aerodromes in Sumatra which were little more than clearances in the jungle, for by this time, namely late January and early February, the enemy was in possession of the whole of the mainland of Malaya, and three out of the four aerodromes on the Island of Singapore were under observed artillery fire.

677. Hurricane reinforcements arrived in batches at intervals, and had to be thrown into the battle against greatly superior numbers and at tactical disadvantage caused by the lack of effective warning or efficient R/T control. The great majority of their pilots had never been in action before, and some had been at sea for as long as three months.

678. About half the bomber reinforcements that were despatched reached Malaya. They arrived in dribbles of two and three aircraft at a time—the result of circumstances along a lengthy and insufficiently developed air reinforcement route. They had to be used piecemeal, without their own ground crews, and not as complete units. No time could be allowed for acclimatising and training them in local conditions. Extremes of weather caused navigational difficulties to which crews were strange. Adequate ground and radio aids, to which many were accustomed, were lacking.

679. The very important lessons were demonstrated that reinforcements must, in order to be effective, arrive as complete units, with aircraft, aircrews, specialised equipment, servicing crews and sufficient stocks and reserves. They are merely frittered rapidly away if they arrive piecemeal. They must have adequate bases from which to work, and they gain much if they are given time to obtain experience of local conditions before being engaged in battle. In short, the more orderly and methodical their arrival and their preparation for battle, the greater their chances of success—and, vice versa.

#### POSTSCRIPT.

#### *The Army in Malaya.*

680. I wish to pay a tribute to the help which the R.A.F. received from the army in Malaya. Despite its own acute needs and shortages it

gave ungrudging help—in defence of aerodromes at cost to its vulnerable points; in working parties and native labour to repair aerodromes at cost to the construction of military defences; in maintaining signals communications and in many other ways. In particular, thanks are due to Lieutenant-General A. E. Percival for all that he did, in conjunction with the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, during the months immediately before war broke out, to re-establish good relations between the two services. Had the latter officer survived I know how strongly he would have expressed these views.

#### *The Royal Navy in Malaya.*

681. The R.A.F. owes much to the Royal Navy also. Nothing that was requested was refused if it was available; frequently it was given at cost to itself—working parties for aerodrome repair, for replacing stevedores and labour which had deserted the docks under bombing: facilities in the dockyard workshops, and in many other ways. Thanks are particularly due to the late Rear Admiral Spooner, R.N., who lost his life in attempting to escape with the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, and whom the latter would wish to commend to your notice for all that he and his subordinates did for the R.A.F. in Malaya.

#### *The Merchant Navy.*

682. Much credit is due to the Merchant Navy. It rendered the R.A.F. devoted service in bringing into Singapore reinforcements and supplies at a critical time, in transferring units to the N.E.I., and in evacuating several thousands of personnel from Singapore and later from the N.E.I. This work was done at great hazard in waters exposed to surface, submarine and air attack. A number of ships and seamen were lost in the doing of it. I wish to record our deep appreciation to the masters and crews who did so much for us at such cost to themselves.

#### *Civilians in Malaya.*

683. A tribute is also due to the civilians, men and women, who put themselves and their means at the disposal of the R.A.F. Of them there were many—nurses, business men, clerical staffs, tradesmen, welfare workers, contributors of material and money, and others. Their assistance and good-will were invaluable at a most difficult time. To them the R.A.F. owes a real debt of gratitude.

#### *The Dutch in the Far East.*

684. It must be remembered that the Dutch pinned their faith to collective Allied resistance in the Far East, and that they lost part of their Air Force and of their Navy to the common cause before the Japanese reached Java at all. When their hopes of successful resistance disappeared, and only a small British force remained to replace the forces the Dutch themselves had sacrificed, their isolated position came home forcibly to them.

685. Moreover, everything that the Dutch community possessed was in the N.E.I. Towards the end it was obvious to them that the whole of it, including their families, must inevitably fall into the hands of the Japanese. They had already experienced incidents of