

venture in South-East Asia. The resultant action initiated by G.H.Q. is dealt with in Section II.

SECTION II.

NARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS BASED ON MALAYA.

EVENTS FROM 22ND NOVEMBER TO MIDNIGHT 7-8TH DECEMBER, 1941.

G.H.Q. Appreciation of the Situation—22nd November, 1941.

140. On 22nd November, 1941, G.H.Q. issued their appreciation of the situation. Briefly, this appreciation considered that any further major action by Japan in the near future would take place from South Indo-China against Siam, rather than from North Indo-China against the Burma road. G.H.Q. did not, however, disregard the possibility of Japan making a "gambler's throw" against Malaya or even against Singapore itself. G.H.Q. concluded that the most likely operation which would be called for on our part in the immediate future would be to the set plan "Matador," namely an advance by our land forces into South-East Siam. A.H.Q. was accordingly instructed to make all preliminary moves and to be ready to support "Matador" at 72 hours' notice, and was informed that this support for "Matador" was to take precedence over the preparations then being made for an International Air Force to operate in South China. A.H.Q. was also warned that the full reconnaissance plan for detecting the approach of a sea expedition against Malaya might be ordered later.

141. The Order of Battle of the Far East Command in Malaya at this stage is shown in Appendix "C".

Action taken by A.H.Q. to implement Operation "Matador".

142. A.H.Q. immediately adopted the following measures for reinforcing N. Malaya.

- (a) Formed Headquarters Norgroup which assembled on 24th November at Kuala Lumpur alongside Headquarters IIIrd Indian Corps. The Commander appointed was Wing Commander R. G. Forbes, Station Commander, Alor Star, in the absence of the Commander designate, Group Captain A. G. Bishop, who was away in South China. (See para. 106.)
- (b) Ordered No. 21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F., to move to Sungei Patani: move to be completed by 25th November.
- (c) Put No. 34 (B) Squadron (Blenheim IV) at short notice to move to Alor Star.
- (d) Made provisional arrangements for the move of No. 60 (B) Squadron aircraft (7 Blenheims) out of Kuantan to Butterworth. This move would be necessary if the reconnaissance plan were to be brought into force because No. 8 (GR) Squadron, R.A.A.F. would require the accommodation at Kuantan for carrying out that plan.
- (e) Instituted certain other precautionary measures, including the warning of our

fighters at Kota Bahru, Sungei Patani and Singapore of the action they were to take if unidentified aircraft were sighted. Training was allowed to proceed with certain restrictions.

143. Commander, Norgroup, was informed that the following squadrons would support Operation "Matador":—

- (a) No. 62 (B) Squadron (Blenheim I) from Alor Star.
- (b) No. 34 (B) Squadron (Blenheim IV) from Alor Star.
- (c) No. 21 (F) Squadron, R.A.A.F. (Buffaloes) from Sungei Patani.
- (d) No. 27 (NF) Squadron (Blenheim I) from Sungei Patani.

Further G.H.Q. Appreciation—28th November, 1941.

144. On 28th November, 1941, G.H.Q. informed A.H.Q. of a report received from Saigon that the Japanese intended landing troops in South Siam on 1st December, 1941. G.H.Q. stated that the Japanese had adequate forces to carry out such a move but placed no great credence in the report. They assumed that if such a convoy did leave Saigon it would travel at 15 knots or less and anchor off Nakwan or between Singora and Patani on the S.E. coast of Siam on the morning of either the 30th November or 1st December. G.H.Q. ordered A.H.Q. to despatch air reconnaissances daily with a view to locating this Force, but in view of the danger that the Japanese might, by holding out a bait, induce us to strike the first blow and thus appear to be the aggressors, with consequent loss of American sympathy, stated that "a striking force will not be ordered to attack the convoy if found". From this day until 3rd December, reconnaissances proceeded without event except that on the 3rd December two large cargo boats were sighted.

145. On 29th November, 1941, the notice for Operation "Matador" was shortened by G.H.Q. from 72 hours to 12 hours.

Assumption of No. 2 Degree of Readiness.

146. On 1st December, 1941, G.H.Q. ordered the Command to be brought to "No. 2 degree of readiness". The promulgation of this degree informed the Command that "the international situation was deteriorating" and brought it into a position to operate at short notice. Inter alia it meant that the full air raid warning system was to be brought into being.

Arrival of Naval Reinforcements.

147. On the 2nd December, H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and H.M.S. "Repulse" arrived in Singapore as a counter-measure to continued Japanese encroachment in the South-West Pacific. The former wore the flag of Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, the new C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

Initiation of full Air Reconnaissance Plan.

148. On 3rd December, 1941, orders were issued by G.H.Q. for the full reconnaissance plan to be put into force on the following day. As a result, in the afternoon of the 3rd, a Dutch group of three flying boats arrived at Seletar in accordance with prearranged plans (see para. 37). The reconnaissance areas