

in Malaya. In December, 1940, the Australian War Minister visited Singapore. Largely as a result of his representations, the Australian Government despatched the 22nd Brigade, Australian Imperial Forces, to Singapore in February. The 27th Brigade followed later, and arrived on the 20th August. Besides these valuable reinforcements, Australia supplied officers for the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve for administrative work on aerodromes, men for two reserve mechanical transport units in the spring of 1941 and for the forty tanks which we had hoped to get from the Middle East. The situation regarding Beaufort aircraft has been mentioned in para. 79 above, and small arms ammunition in para. 92. In addition to this, Australia also supplied many items of signalling equipment and special radio sets for coast defence guns. After the war started four Hudsons from Australia reached Singapore on the 23rd December and Army reinforcements were promised. (See para. 118 above.)

The Dutch.

149. The Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies faithfully executed their share of the agreements and, indeed, went beyond them, and co-operated wholeheartedly with us in every way. They sent three bomber squadrons and one fighter squadron in the early days of the war in Malaya, although, owing to technical troubles they were having at the time with their engines, the bomber squadrons consisted of only six aircraft, the whole three, therefore, being equivalent to little more than one British bomber squadron. Their submarines operated with great gallantry in the Gulf of Siam. They also gave me three of their reserve flying boats to make good our losses, and sent over a guerilla band to Northern Malaya to operate in the Japanese rear.

At a later stage in the operations I believe they were somewhat critical of the amount of assistance we were able to send to the Netherlands East Indies, and of the length of time before it arrived; should this give rise to any acrimony in the future, I hope that the prompt and whole-hearted assistance they rendered to us will not be forgotten.

Work of General Headquarters.

150. In Malaya the operations of my own Headquarters were limited to the issue of certain directives to the General Officer Commanding and Air Officer Commanding. These laid down such matters as the withdrawal from Kelantan and Kuantan, and priority of tasks for the Royal Air Force. Apart from that, the main work was to secure the proper co-ordination of air operations with the Dutch and Australians.

A great deal of the time of my small staff was taken up at the beginning by the drafting of Sitreps telegrams and communiqués, as well as preparing appreciations demanded from England. One of the problems regarding the two former was the fact that they had to be sent to Australia as well as to England; their timing was, therefore, a matter of fine adjustment, since it was necessary to ensure, for instance, that a communiqué should not be printed in Australian newspapers before the Sitreps telegrams arrived in England. Eventually, it was found simpler to hand over most of this work to the combined Army and Air Force operations room, in so far as Malaya itself was

concerned, and General Headquarters Sitreps communiqués were confined to the situation as a whole.

Although my General Headquarters operated at the Naval Base at the beginning of the war, it was found that, after the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* and the formation of the War Council, it was more convenient for my Headquarters to be located near the Combined Operations Room. Preparations had been made for this some months before, and the necessary accommodation was available. The move was carried out about the 15th December.

151. After the transfer of the defence of Burma to Commander-in-Chief, India, and the fall of Hong Kong, it was felt that the location of General Headquarters should no longer be in Malaya, since to keep it there would not only hamper its own work but cramp the initiative of the General Officer Commanding and Air Officer Commanding and make the organisation in Singapore too top-heavy. It was decided before I left that the correct location of General Headquarters would be in Java, preferably near Bandoeng, and steps were already in hand to effect this move. The possibility of a move away from Singapore becoming necessary had been foreseen many months before.

152. The results of the campaign in the Far East naturally gave rise to some speculation as to the advisability of forming what may be called Strategic Headquarters, devoid of all responsibility for direct operational control or administration. Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, at the time I passed through Cairo in November, 1940, stated that, in his opinion, such a General Headquarters was impracticable. My view is that, under special conditions such as existed in the Far East, a strategic General Headquarters was a workable proposition, provided its limitations are fully recognized.

In para. 5 above were indicated the measures which it was expected to achieve by the creation of a General Headquarters, Far East. We failed to convince the Japanese that our strength was too great to be challenged with success; the limitation of the forces, especially aircraft, that could be sent to the Far East was imposed by prior requirements elsewhere.

Co-operation in Malaya and co-ordination of effort with neighbouring countries, including plans for mutual reinforcement, were achieved.

Farewell Order.

153. I handed over Command of the Far East to Lt.-General Sir Henry Pownall on the 27th December, 1941, and left Singapore, in accordance with instructions, on the 31st December.

I end with my farewell order which was published on the 28th December, 1941.

TO ALL RANKS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE,
MALAYA.

On relinquishing the Far East Command I send to you all in the Army and Air Force in Malaya a message of farewell, of admiration for the way you have faced danger, fatigue and hardship, and of all good wishes for 1942.

I know my successor well, and I turn over the command to good hands.