

were represented on these committees and problems affecting the defence, both military and civil, could have been discussed frankly and more expeditiously than by ordinary routine methods. Similarly, reports on the work of the various sub-committees and controllers could have been made and the information could thus have been disseminated to all concerned.

#### SECTION XII.—INFORMATION, PRESS AND CENSORSHIP.

97. *Information.*—At Singapore were established the Ministry of Information Far East and the Malayan Information Bureau. It was through these channels, among other duties, that official propaganda was disseminated.

98. *Press and Censorship.*—The Local Press in Malaya was divided into two categories, i.e. the English Press and the vernacular Press in which each Asiatic community had its own paper or papers. In addition there were the war correspondents whose numbers increased rapidly as the situation worsened. For liaison between the Press and the Services a Public Relations Officer was appointed. The holder of this appointment was a retired naval officer who came directly under the Commander-in-Chief China until the beginning of December, 1941, and then under the Commander-in-Chief Far East. Under him were officers representative of the three Services, who acted as conducting officers, advisers to the censors, etc.

In the same building as the Public Relations Officer was the Chief Censor with his staff of subordinates, i.e. press censors, cable censors, mail censors, etc.

With permission of the C.-in-C. Far East I agreed to receive all Press correspondents for interviews at stated intervals. Similar interviews were given by other commanders. We considered that it would be better to give the Press some official data to work on rather than that they should publish statements and views, often harmful, based on false information or misunderstandings. Towards the end of 1941 I had regretfully to discontinue these interviews on instructions of the C.-in-C. Far East who had, I understand, received instructions from Home to this effect.

Visits to troops in all parts of Malaya were arranged, when desired, for the war correspondents.

In the summer of 1941 there was a tendency in certain sections of the Press to give the Overseas troops very much more publicity than was given to the British Troops. This was damaging to good "esprit de Corps" and I had occasion to include the matter in the agenda for one of my Press conferences. I made it clear that my policy was to treat all troops alike and asked that the Press should do the same. This they agreed to do.

#### SECTION XIII.—THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

99. During 1941 the tension with Japan increased and there were various signs that she was preparing for hostilities in the Western Pacific. Towards the end of July she occupied the Southern part of Indo-China, where she increased her concentrations. She also increased her political activities in Thailand. The attitude of the Thais was uncertain. On two occasions Thai military officers paid official visits to Singapore, where they protested their friendship for Britain. One of them was actually there when war broke out. On the other

hand, there is no doubt that the Japanese were permitted to make preparations in advance for their occupation of South Thailand, for our officers, carrying out reconnaissances in that area, frequently met Japanese there and one of them, though too late, found large petrol dumps on the Patani aerodrome which had been made ready for the occupation. In the autumn many Japanese nationals received orders from their Government to leave Malaya, and Japanese reconnaissance aircraft flew over Malaya and Sarawak. As a result of these activities varying degrees of readiness were from time to time ordered by the C.-in-C. Far East. On the 1st Dec., 1941, the 2nd Degree of Readiness was ordered and a State of Emergency was declared. On the same date the Volunteer Forces were mobilized.

#### SECTION XIV —THE NAVAL SITUATION.

100 On the outbreak of World War II the greater part of the China Fleet had of necessity to be withdrawn for operations elsewhere. The Flag of the Commander-in-Chief, China Station, was transferred from Hong Kong to Singapore at the end of June, 1940. He brought with him, however, only a few light cruisers and destroyers as additions to the very inadequate fleet of local naval craft which existed there. We no longer had control over sea communications in the Far East.

On the evacuation of Shanghai in August, 1940, three river gunboats from the Yangtze were transferred to Singapore, while a few days before the outbreak of war with Japan the "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" with some attendant destroyers arrived. There were, however, still no aircraft carriers, heavy cruisers or submarines, so that there was nothing in the nature of a balanced fleet.

With the arrival of the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse" on 2nd December, Admiral Sir Tom Phillips as Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, took over command of all Fleet operations, leaving local Naval defence in the hands of Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, then Commander in Chief, China. The Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, immediately left Singapore by flying-boat for Manila to confer with the American Naval Commander-in-Chief, Asiatic Fleet, with whom contact had been previously established by Commander-in-Chief, China, and did not return to Singapore till 7th December. On the outbreak of hostilities with Japan, the appointment of Commander-in-Chief, China Station, lapsed.

Naval Headquarters remained at the Naval Base.

By December, 1941, the seaward approaches to the Naval Base and to Keppel Harbour were strongly defended by mine-fields, booms, submarine nets, detector loops, etc.

The following ships were at Singapore on the 8th December, 1941:—

Battleship	..	1
Battle Cruiser	..	1
"D" Class		
Cruisers	...	3
Destroyers (including	2	
"S" Class)		7
Gunboats	...	3