

for the fighters to take off and get up. An R.D.F. set at Moulmein was just starting to operate in December 1941.

With regard to A.R.P., the original policy in Rangoon had been evacuation. Sir Reginald Dorman Smith decided to change this, and to construct air raid shelters. There had been no time to complete these shelters before war broke out.

Political Factors.

28. The internal situation in Burma gave rise to much anxiety, and it was realised that in time of war it might become necessary to reinforce the police with military units. There were doubtless many reasons for this potential unrest, but two were particularly evident. The first was the influence of the Buddhist priesthood, especially from Mandalay. In Burma itself, the priesthood was numerous and powerful; it had been brought largely under the influence of the anti-British political party, and consequently preached the doctrine of Burma for the Burmese and complete independence. Many efforts were being made to counteract this, and were partially successful. Apparently, in the Shan States, the native rulers had kept a tighter control over the Buddhist priests than we did in Burma proper, and had limited their numbers.

The second reason was the anti-Indian feeling. The Indians in Burma were much more clever than the Burmese in business transactions, and, amongst other things, lent money out on mortgage, with the result that they owned a large proportion—about one-half—of the best agricultural land in Burma. We were looked upon to some extent as protectors of the Indians, and consequently attracted to ourselves part of the hatred that was felt by the Burmese for the Indians over this land problem.

Transfer of Command to Commander-in-Chief, India.

29. On the 12th December a telegram was received from the Chiefs of Staff stating that the defence of Burma was to be transferred from Commander-in-Chief, Far East, to Commander-in-Chief, India, including all relations with China. The transfer was effected as from 0630 hours on the 15th December, 1941.

IV.—FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEFENCE OF HONG KONG.

Authorities.

30. In November 1940, General Norton was Acting Governor of Hong Kong. Sir Geoffrey Northcote resumed his post as Governor on the 13th March, 1941, and handed over to his successor, Sir Mark Young, on the 10th September, 1941. Major General Maltby took over the duties of General Officer Commanding from Major-General Grasett on the 19th July, 1941.

General Policy.

31. Hong Kong was regarded officially as an undesirable military commitment, or else as an outpost to be held as long as possible. It must, however, be considered in relation to the whole defence of the Far East, especially China and the Philippines. The withdrawal of our troops from Peking, Tientsin and Shanghai in the summer of 1941 after the collapse of France was recognised by General Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese as being an inevitable and wise move, but the Chinese interest in the defence of

Hong Kong grew as their war developed and their difficulties increased. Hong Kong was very valuable to China as a port of access and had they not been convinced of our determination to stand and fight for its defence, and been taken into our confidence and given opportunities to inspect the defences and discuss plans for defence, the effect on their war effort would in all probability have been serious. A withdrawal of the troops in Hong Kong coinciding with the closing of the Burma Road might have had a marked effect on Chinese determination to fight on. Our policy for the defence of Hong Kong, therefore, in all probability played an important part at a critical period in China's war effort.

As regards the Philippines, according to information available in Singapore, it was doubtful, at any rate up to the middle of 1941, whether the Americans intended to defend the islands, or whether they did not. It is therefore possible, that had we demilitarised Hong Kong, or announced our intention of not defending it, the Americans might have adopted a similar policy with regard to the Philippines. In this case, they might have ceased to take direct interest in the Far East, and confined themselves to the Eastern half of the Pacific. Should this supposition be correct, then the attempted defence of Hong Kong was justified for this reason alone, even though it did ultimately lead to the loss of six battalions and other troops.

Strength of Defences.

32. The strength of the Hong Kong garrison is given in Appendix H. The official period for which Hong Kong was to be provisioned, both in military stores and food reserves, was 130 days.

The main defence of Hong Kong was on the Island. Whilst the enemy were to be delayed as long as possible in any advance over the leased territory on the mainland, the troops had orders to retire if attacked in force, as they were required for the defence of the Island itself. The Gin Drinkers line was naturally a strong one, and much work had been done on it, but it would have required two divisions or more to hold properly.

Two Canadian battalions arrived in Hong Kong on the 16th November, 1941. This extra force was of greater value than the figures would indicate. Whilst there were only four battalions in Hong Kong, only one could be spared for the Gin Drinkers line, which practically meant merely a thin outpost line. As this battalion was also essential for the defence of Hong Kong Island, it would not have been able to put up any resistance, but would have had to retire before the advance of even a weak force, since heavy casualties would prejudice the defence of the Island, and could not be faced. With the arrival of these two Canadian battalions, three could be put into the Gin Drinkers line, and a far stronger resistance could be put up, not merely because of the increased strength, but because casualties would not cripple the subsequent defence of Hong Kong Island. Even a few days' delay in the occupation of the mainland by the enemy was of great value, enabling steps to be completed which it was impracticable to take before the outbreak of war, for instance, the movement of the fishing fleet and waterborne population out of Hong Kong waters.