

33. A great deal of work had been done in preparing the island for defence, and the construction and concealment of pill-boxes and obstacles showed much originality and initiative. Preparations were also made for offensive operations against islands near Hong Kong, should the Japanese seize them, and for "left-behind" parties on the mainland. Every advantage was taken of any local resources available for defence.

34. There were two Walrus amphibians and four Vildebeeste aeroplanes at Hong Kong, located at Kai Tak aerodrome on the mainland. The former might have been of some value for reconnaissance; in war it had been intended to operate them from Aberdeen Harbour, on the South side of Hong Kong Island, but this was apparently found impracticable. The latter would have had to remain at Kai Tak since no possible site for an aerodrome could be found on the Island itself. It was realised that these aeroplanes could not last for long in time of war, and that the Kai Tak aerodrome would, in fact, be quite unusable unless the Gin Drinkers line could be held.

Civil Population Factors.

35. One of the main problems in the defence of Hong Kong was the large Chinese population. This had nearly doubled during the three years previous to December 1941, owing to the influx from China. The population in April 1941 was—

Hong Kong	709,000
Kowloon	581,000
Water population	154,000

Total	1,444,000
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This is exclusive of the population of what is known as the New Territories on the mainland.

The great increase above the normal population led to many problems, e.g., civil hospital accommodation and medical staff, police control, supply of water, food and firewood. In addition, this increase, combined with the constant movement taking place between the Island and the mainland, rendered it very difficult to keep complete control of the Chinese, and made it easy for the Japanese to acquire information.

36. The reservoirs on Hong Kong Island were partly filled by rain water and partly by a supply from the mainland. It was, of course, realised that this latter supply might be cut, calculations showed that the rain, added to the capacity of the reservoirs, was normally sufficient to meet the essential requirements of Hong Kong Island, so long as the whole Island remained in our hands. If there was a dry spell during the winter, the supply might have been short in February and March, and there might not have been sufficient to supply water to deal with outbreaks of fire. Although fire engines could draw on sea water, the higher levels of the town of Victoria could not be reached in one lift. This difficulty was largely overcome, however, by the installation of service tanks at medium levels, which it was intended to keep filled with sea water by separate pumps.

37. As regards food, rice was a constant anxiety, since most of it had to be imported from Siam or Burma. In addition, what was known as the rice supplement was a problem, since fish would not be available in case of war, and storage of alternatives over a period

of months was difficult. In December 1941 the stocks of food were not much short of that required for the period laid down, i.e., 130 days. The local supply of firewood was insufficient, and some was being imported from North Borneo.

38. The A.R.P. organisation in Hong Kong was good, and some 12,000 A.R.P. workers of one sort or another had been enrolled before war broke out. In addition, tunnels were made into the granite hills behind the town of Victoria; these provided admirable shelters which should have been proof against any type of bomb. The limitation here was the number of pneumatic drills that could be obtained to enable the necessary blasting to be carried out. It was a slow process but by the time war broke out there was shelter accommodation in the tunnels, concrete splinter-proof shelters and strengthened houses for about 300,000. Provision was made for the movement of the balance to hutments outside the town.

39. Most of the European women and children had been moved away from Hong Kong by July 1941, the total leaving being approximately 1,680 women and children belonging to the Navy, Army or Air Force, and 1,824 civilian. This left about 918 European women and girls in Hong Kong. Of these, 595 were nurses and medical staff, 60 held key duties in A.R.P. and the majority of the remaining 263 were employed in clerical and other duties. The Governor's order for the movement of women and children away from Hong Kong had been disputed, but was upheld in a test case in the courts.

V.—PROBLEMS AND WORK OF GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, FAR EAST.

Site of General Headquarters.

40. General Headquarters started to function at 0800 hours on Monday, the 18th November. The order issued to the three General Officers Commanding and the Air Officer Commanding outlining their relations to General Headquarters is given in Appendix B.

One of the first problems I had to decide was the site of my Headquarters. The Army Headquarters was at Fort Canning and the Air Force Headquarters was in newly-built hutments about five miles away. The Governor and other civil authorities were in Singapore town. The Naval Commander-in-Chief had his Headquarters at the Naval Base, which was some 35 minutes by road from Singapore. It was important for my Headquarters to keep in touch with all these. I hoped at one time that the Commander-in-Chief, China, would move to Singapore, but he felt very strongly that he had to remain in the Naval Base, where the F.E.C.B. was also located. A compromise might have been possible but would have entailed dividing F.E.C.B. After much consideration, I decided that the dominant factors were to ensure close touch with the Commander-in-Chief, China, and to keep the F.E.C.B. intact. Accordingly, my Headquarters moved to the Naval Base in January, 1941, but I continued to reside in Singapore, which enabled me to have interviews with the General Officer Commanding, Air Officer Commanding and the Governor, either before I went to the office or on my return. This was not a perfect solution, but it was the best one in all the circumstances.