

On the 5th December, 1941, I was informed by the C.-in-C. Far East that, in accordance with the terms of a telegram just received from London, MATADOR could thenceforward be put into effect without reference to London (a) if the C.-in-C. Far East had information that a Japanese expedition was advancing with the apparent intention of landing on the Kra Isthmus, or (b) if the Japanese violated any other part of Thailand.

30. *The Northern Frontier.*—One of the first problems to which I turned my attention was the defence of the Northern frontier. Excluding the Kelantan frontier, which will be referred to later, the Malaya-Thailand frontier was crossed by only two roads and one railway, but there were in addition a number of bush tracks. The main road from Alor Star in Kedah to Haad'yai in South Thailand and thence to Singora crossed the frontier a few miles north of Changlun. A secondary road, running eastward through Province Wellesley and South Kedah, crossed the frontier at Kroh and then continued via Yala to Patani in South Thailand, an unbridged river being crossed by a ferry. The west coast railway, passing through Alor Star, crossed the frontier in the small State of Perlis and then forked at Haad'yai Junction, the main line continuing to Bangkok with a branch to Singora.

31. The C.-in-C. Far East having issued an order that the main road approaches from Thailand were to be put into a state of defence, the problem was studied by senior officers of 3 Indian Corps. The primary role of the troops in this area was to cover the aerodrome at Alor Star and those further south in Kedah and Province Wellesley. The position selected therefore had to be sufficiently north of the Alor Star aerodrome for this purpose. The frontier area itself was found to be unsuitable both for tactical reasons and because it was known to be very malarial. Ultimately a position was selected in front of the small village of Jitra, which lies at the junction of the main road with the branch road to Perlis, some 18 miles south of the frontier. This position had, however, obvious disadvantages, chief of which was the weakness of the left flank in dry weather, for between it and the sea was a stretch of some 12 miles of open or semi-open country, intersected by small canals and ditches. The main defences were, therefore, concentrated astride the two roads, reliance being placed on a skeleton pill-box defence combined with a maximum use of natural obstacles for the protection of the left flank. Plans were made to flood an area astride the railway, which seemed to be a probable line of enemy advance. On the main front anti-tank ditches were dug where there were no natural obstacles and defended localities were constructed, though later preparations and training for MATADOR interfered to some extent with the development of these defences.

32. On the Kroh-Patani road, intelligence reports pointed to the fact that the most suitable place for a defensive position was a locality known as "The Ledge", some 35-40 miles on the Thailand side of the frontier. Here the road had been cut out of a steep hillside and it seemed probable that it would be comparatively easy to block it by demolitions, though it was of course impossible to make any preparations in peace-time. Another defensive position

was prepared west of the frontier upon which to fall back in case of need.

Although no large bodies could cross the frontier by bush tracks in North Perak, it was nevertheless possible for small parties to do so. Such small parties, by guerilla activities against our communications, could at least develop a nuisance value. In order to watch these tracks a special platoon of local men was formed and incorporated in the Perak Volunteer Battalion.

33. *The East Coast.*—Throughout the whole length of the east coast of Malaya there are numerous beaches very suitable for landing operations. For the greater part of the year the sea is comparatively calm off this coast. The exception is the period of the north-east monsoon. It had, however, been determined, as a result of a staff ride held in 1937, that even during this monsoon landings were possible though it was thought they might be interfered with for two or three days at a time when the storms were at their height. In consequence, it was thought that the enemy would be unlikely to choose the period December-February if he could avoid it.

It has already been explained (see Sections I and VI) that there are large undeveloped areas in the eastern part of Malaya and that communications are scarce; also that the original policy had been to avoid, as far as possible, further development of these communications with a view to reducing military commitments in this part of Malaya. By 1941, however, the Army had been obliged to undertake the defence of three areas on the east coast i.e. the Kelantan area, the Kuantan area and the East Johore area. The primary role of the Army in the first two of these, both of which were situated at the end of very long and vulnerable communications, was the defence of the aerodromes which had been constructed there. In both cases the forces which could be made available were inadequate for their task.

34. The State of Kelantan is divided into two parts by the Kelantan River which flows roughly South to North and reaches the sea near Kota Bharu. The river is wide and unbridged for road traffic which makes communication from one bank to the other difficult and slow. The railway crosses the river west of Machang and then running west of it crosses the frontier into Thailand a few miles from the coast. There are no road communications across the frontier though, as in Perak, the frontier is crossed by tracks and, in the more mountainous sections, by rivers navigable by small craft.

There were three modern aerodromes in Kelantan—one at Kota Bharu completed and in use, one at Gong Kedah some 30 miles down the coast, serviceable and nearly completed, and one at Machang on the Krai-Kota Bharu road under construction. All these were east of the Kelantan River.

The Commander of the Kelantan Force of one brigade group, which had only begun to move into position at the end of 1940, was instructed that his primary task was to secure the aerodromes for the use of our Air Force and to deny them to the enemy. He was also instructed that in order to carry out his task, he was to endeavour to prevent an enemy landing and that, for this purpose, pill-boxes were to be built and beach defences, both anti-personnel and anti-tank, were to be constructed