

Shortly before the outbreak of war with Japan a new headquarters for the Royal Air Force was completed at Sime Road, near the Singapore Golf Club in the centre of the island. When war broke out a temporary Army headquarters was under construction on an adjoining site with a Combined Operations Room between the two. Here the Operations and Intelligence Staffs of Headquarters Malaya Command worked during the campaign except for the last few days. The Administrative Staff, partly because the temporary accommodation was not finished, and partly to be in closer touch with the Civil Government, remained at Fort Canning.

The Commander-in-Chief China, after moving to Singapore, established his headquarters at the Naval Base.

12. When the Commander-in-Chief Far East was appointed, the problem of the location of headquarters again came to the front. If his headquarters had been located in the Singapore City area they would have been close to those of the Army and Air Force and of the Civil Government, but would have been separated from those of the Commander-in-Chief China with whom much preliminary planning had to be done. Also the Far East Combined Bureau (Intelligence) which came under the Commander-in-Chief China was located at the Naval Base. The Commander-in-Chief Far East was largely dependent on this bureau for his intelligence. He therefore decided to establish his headquarters at the Naval Base with the intention of moving to the Sime Road area should operations develop in Malaya. This is what actually happened.

13. It will be seen that when hostilities started the headquarters of the Army, the Royal Air Force and the Civil Government were grouped in one area, while those of the two Commanders-in-Chief and of the Rear-Admiral Malaya were grouped in another, some 10 miles or more apart. This was far from an ideal solution, but possibly the best under the circumstances.

This problem of the location of headquarters has been discussed at some length as showing the difficulties of reconciling the requirements of independent Services. Had there been at that time a Supreme Commander with an integrated staff probably many of these difficulties would have disappeared.

SECTION V.—HEADQUARTERS MALAYA COMMAND.

14. With the increase in the garrison as the defences developed and relations with Japan became more strained, so there was an increase in the strength of Headquarters Malaya Command. The senior General Staff Officer, who had been a 2nd Grade Staff Officer in 1935, became a Brigadier in 1940. The senior Administrative Staff Officer was a Brigadier i/c. Administration who, as is customary, was responsible to the War Office for control of expenditure on the administrative side. With the expansion of the Command in 1941, the "A" and "Q" Branches were separated, a Deputy Adjutant General being appointed as Head of the "A" Branch, while the Brigadier i/c Administration remained responsible for the "Q" Branch.

15. After the outbreak of war with Germany the filling of vacancies on the staff became more

and more difficult as the supply of trained staff officers in the Far East became exhausted. Regular units serving in Malaya were called upon to supply officers with qualifications for staff work until it became dangerous to weaken them any further, and selected officers were sent for a short course of training at Quetta. The supply of trained staff officers from Home was naturally limited by non-availability and by the difficulties of transportation. At the same time, even before war broke out with Japan, the work at Headquarters Malaya Command was particularly heavy, including as it did war plans and the preparation of a country for war in addition to the training and administration of a rapidly increasing garrison. In addition, the Command was responsible for placing orders to bring up to the approved scale the reserves of all supplies and stores, except as regards weapons and ammunition. In fact, Headquarters Malaya Command combined the functions of a local War Office and those of a Headquarters of a Field Force.

The Staff of Headquarters Malaya Command was a loyal and conscientious body of men who worked long hours under trying conditions.

16. Authority for the raising of new units and for all increases in establishments had to be obtained from the War Office. With the pressure of war-time business it will be appreciated that delays occurred, some of which had serious consequences. An instance of this was the delay in connection with the raising of two additional Labour Companies which, owing to the shortage of labour in Malaya, became desirable in the autumn of 1941. All arrangements had been made for the raising of these companies at Hong Kong, but, as a result of delay in obtaining sanction, the outbreak of hostilities with Japan intervened and the project was rendered void. Their presence in Malaya during the campaign would have been of very great value.

In 1941 sea voyages from the United Kingdom were taking 2-3 months so that there was a long delay in filling staff vacancies from Home even after approval had been given. In consequence, the strength of Headquarters Malaya Command was usually much below establishment. When war with Japan broke out there were less than 70 officers at Headquarters Malay Command, including the Headquarters of the Services. This is about the war-time establishment of the Headquarters of a Corps. Our resources were thus strained to the limit.

17. It should be realized that the G.O.C. Malaya did not have a free hand in developing the defences of Malaya. In principle, the defences were developed in accordance with a War Office plan which was modified from time to time in accordance with recommendations made by the G.O.C.

By the beginning of 1941 the overall estimated cost of the War Office scheme had amounted to slightly over £5 million, and actual expenditure to 31st March, 1941, was over £4 million. Although originally the defence items were mainly in respect of coast artillery and fixed defences the scheme was later expanded to include services on landward defences. Such expansions of the main scheme had to receive War Office and Treasury approval and though they were submitted as major services, this entailed delay. On the 11th December, 1941, when Malaya became an active theatre of