

675. In the sphere of labour there is no doubt that the present long-range hitting power of the air arm, which can attack back areas equally with those near the front line, has created new and difficult problems. Especially is this the case where, as in Malaya, comparatively few of the people are natives of the country and where in consequence "defence of home" is not a strong compelling force. In such a case a much stronger control of labour is required than was actually in existence.

676. The problem is an intricate one. In Malaya it was complicated by the variety of languages spoken by the labourers and the impossibility of finding a sufficient number of supervisors who spoke those languages. There were also difficulties connected with remuneration, transportation, accommodation and food.

There is no doubt that during the pre-war period the problem was not tackled with sufficient vigour. When the danger of the situation became apparent and efforts were made to improve it, there was insufficient time to solve the many and intricate problems which arose.

677. Experience showed that by far the best results were obtained from properly organized labour companies under military control. The labourers were then subject to military discipline and were handled by their own officers and non-commissioned officers, some at least of whom could speak their language. These companies should have their own transport and should be housed as near as possible to the work in hand. They should be issued with regular rations. In this way only will it be possible in a country like Malaya to keep labour at work under modern war conditions and to get the best value from it.

Each of the Fighting Services should have its own labour force and the nucleus at least of these forces should exist in peace-time so that a rapid expansion can take place when war threatens. In Malaya the finding of additional officers and non-commissioned officers to supplement the permanent staff on mobilization should be another call on the Local Forces.

SECTION LXXII.—CIVIL DEFENCE.

678. It is now generally accepted that success in modern war depends upon the whole-hearted co-operation of all concerned, both in the Fighting Services and among the civil population, striving with a singleness of purpose to attain the common goal. In the Malayan campaign, fought within our own territory, that was of paramount importance. To organize the civil community and to prepare itself for prompt and vigorous action was clearly one of the Government's responsibilities.

679. A great deal of criticism has been levelled at the Civil Administration. Much of it is unjust. His Majesty's Government had laid down that the primary duty of the people of Malaya was to produce as much rubber and tin as possible for war purposes. The Civil Administration had to keep this object in mind while making at the same time preparations against eventual attack. It had also to watch over the interests of a mixed population of Malays, Chinese, Indians and Europeans. In the circumstances, it was inevitable that clashes of interests should occur.

680. When the war came many men and women of all races, both official and unofficial, played a creditable and often an heroic part in the defence of the country. Many of them lost their lives and many of them suffered a long period of imprisonment or internment at the hands of the Japanese. Most of those who survived suffered heavy losses of property. I wish to express my deep appreciation of the loyal assistance and self-sacrifice of these people.

681. Nevertheless, both during the period before the war and during the campaign itself an artificial and unwarlike atmosphere prevailed throughout Malaya. There seemed to be a lack of a united effort by people determined to repel the common foe at all costs. There were many causes for this—a lack of knowledge of war owing to Malaya's long immunity from it, an inability in some quarters to realise the real danger which threatened, the lack of common citizenship, and the high standard of living resulting from the wealth of the country's resources.

682. Difficulties arose from the complicated machinery of Government comprising as it did a large number of separate administrations. As this is a matter which is now receiving the consideration of His Majesty's Government, it is sufficient to say here that from a defence point of view it is essential that a simpler and more straightforward organization should be evolved.

683. I feel bound to record as a result of my experiences in Malaya that the Fighting Services throughout suffered from this lack of a strong and centralized administration able and ready to take prompt decisions and vigorous action.

* SECTION LXXIII.—THE HIGHER COMMAND.

684. The advantage held by the seasoned Japanese troops as a result of the experience of active operations which many of them had had in China applied also in some degree in the case of the senior commanders. Whereas most of the Japanese commanders had had previous experience in handling large forces in the field in Far East conditions of warfare, few of our commanders had had the benefit of a similar experience. Many of them had had no experience whatever of tank warfare.

The importance of commanders in all parts of the Empire being given opportunities in peace-time of training with forces which they will be called upon to handle in war needs no stressing.

685. The Army of Malaya was composed of troops from many parts of the Empire—from the United Kingdom, India, Australia and Malaya—and comprised many different races. The various contingents varied widely in their characteristics. It was my duty and constant effort to weld these contingents into a homogeneous whole.

Between the two wars great progress had been made, by exchange of officers and by other means, in spreading a common doctrine throughout the armed forces of the Empire. There can be no question of the value of this, especially in theatres of war where, as in Malaya, forces are mixed. I recommend, from my experience in Malaya, that this policy should now be developed and greatly expanded because I believe it to be essential that all senior commanders and staff officers should not only have common ideas on the strategy, tactics