and staff work applicable to a major war but that they should also look upon all problems of defence from an Imperial rather than from a local point of view. With increased facilities for air travel it seems possible that this ideal may in the future be capable of attainment.

686. Throughout the campaign, Headquarters Malaya Command had the dual function of controlling forces in the field in quickly moving operations ranging over an area nearly as large as that of England and Wales and of dealing with the many matters, such as business with the Home Authorities and the Civil Government, which are necessarily the responsibility of the Headquarters of a Command overseas. Its strength, when war with Japan broke out, was approximately equivalent to that of the headquarters of a Corps and its establishment was not suited to its dual role. Although the staff was strengthened as more officers became available, it remained throughout the campaign too weak to fulfil adequately the dual task imposed upon it.

It would in my opinion have been of great assistance if there had been a single commander over all the Fighting Services and the Civil Administration. I and my staff would then have been much freer to concentrate on operations.

687. Reference has already been made in this Despatch to the disturbing effect of the numerous changes which took place in the Higher Command. During the short campaign there were in all five Commanders-in-Chief. Such rapid changes, though largely forced upon us by circumstances, are naturally not calculated to create an atmosphere of confidence.

688. It is not within the province of this Despatch to make concrete recommendations for the future organization of Command in the Far East. The defence of British Borneo and possibly also of Hong Kong must enter into the problem. It is obviously necessary to avoid overweighting the structure with too many headquarters, but I feel that a Supreme Commander in the Far East would be a great advantage both in peace and in war. Wide powers of decision, with considerable financial control, should be delegated to him. It is for consideration also whether in time of war the civil administrations as well as the Fighting Services should not come under his control.

689. As war has become an affair of nations and not only of the Fighting Services, I consider it of the utmost importance for the future that all senior commanders, civil officials and staff officers should be fully trained in the art of making war on a national basis. It must be a study in which all brains are pooled. There must be a corps of civilians and officers of each Service fit to staff and command the forces of the future and to understand the complete integration of civil and military efforts. In addition to what they learn in their own Services and Colleges, I am of the opinion that a course at a Combined Imperial Defence College will be essential. For this purpose I would advocate a considerable expansion of the Imperial Defence College as it existed before the war and that graduation at that College should be an essential qualification for the higher military and civil appointments in the strategically important overseas parts of the British Empire.

SECTION LXXIV.—CONCLUSION.

690. The Retreat from Mons and the Retreat to Dunkirk have been hailed as epics. In the former our Army was able with the help of a powerful ally to turn the tables on the enemy; in the latter our Army was evacuated by the Navy with the loss of all heavy equipment. Each of these retreats lasted approximately three weeks. The Retreat in Malaya lasted ten weeks in far more trying conditions. There was no strong ally to help us and no Navy to evacuate the force, even had it been desirable to do so. It has been hailed as a disaster but perhaps the judgment of history will be that all the effort and money expended on the defence of Malaya and the sacrifice and subsequent suffering of many of those who fought in the Malaya campaign were not in vain. The gain of ten weeks and the losses inflicted on the enemy may well have had a bigger influence than was realised at the time on the failure of the Japanese to reach even more important parts of our Empire.

691. An analysis of what has been said in this Despatch shows that a great many of the causes which contributed to our defeat in Malaya had a common origin, namely the lack of readiness of our Empire for war. Our shortage in light naval coastal craft and in modern aircraft, our lack of tanks, the lack of training of most of our troops—especially the reinforcements—the lack of experience of modern war of some of the senior commanders and the weakness of our intelligence service can all be attributed to a failure to prepare for war at the proper time. This unpreparedness is no new experience. It is traditional in the British Empire. But it is becoming more and more expensive and, as the tempo of war increases, more and more dangerous. I submit that the security of the Empire can only be assured by making proper provision for its defence in time of peace. Even if this involves increased financial expenditure, the money will be well spent if it acts as an insurance against war or at least against a repetition of the disasters which befell us in the early stages of this war. If the Malayan campaign, in conjunction with other campaigns, has done anything to bring this fact home to the peoples of our Empire, it will not have been without merit.

A. E. PERCIVAL,
Lieut.-General,
Formerly General Officer Commanding Malaya.