

R.A.A.F., and from other individual officers and airmen, with almost complete lack of success, in spite of protracted brutal treatment in many cases. They then gave up all attempts to obtain it. More than once, their Intelligence Officers afterwards stated that the British had proved obstinate and stupid about the matter and had suffered accordingly. Credit is due to the above named individuals, who were the first to set an example of compliance with orders to observe complete reticence in spite of brutal treatment, as it is due to those who subsequently followed their lead.

609. The later treatment of P.O.W.'s, with little regard to the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1929 which had been accorded to them on surrendering, is too well known to need further elaboration in this report.

Breakdown of Signals Communication with Air Ministry.

610. The original site chosen on 7th March (p.m.) for the Signals Station near Tjukadjang proved unsuitable for communication with outside countries, screened as it was by the surrounding mountains. It was, therefore, moved about noon 8th March towards the coast, in an attempt to find a suitable position.

611. A technical breakdown, caused by contamination of the Diesel fuel of the T. 1087 high power transmitter, followed by a road accident which damaged the transmitter itself, prevented this set being used again.

612. Attempts were made that evening to come into action with another, a low power, set were at first forbidden by the Commander of the Dutch troops into whose area the station had by now moved, and who by this time, was strictly obeying the terms of surrender. These orders forbade further communication with the outside world. Despite them a T. 1082/R. 1083 Vanette set was brought into action but it failed to establish communication with Melbourne, Ambala or Air Ministry. Several signals were broadcast by this means for three hours on the morning of 9th March in the hope that they would be picked up. Amongst them was the signal which informed the Air Ministry that the orders to surrender were being complied with (para. 596).

It subsequently transpired that these signals were not picked up although at the time the operator believed that they had been.

613. Subsequent attempts by the Signal Station to contact H.Q. and reciprocal attempts by H.Q. to find the new position of the station, failed to establish touch before the staff of this station had to destroy their equipment because:—

(a) It was believed that the last signals for despatch had been sent:

(b) Current reports of the imminent arrival of Japanese troops (subsequently proved to be false) made it necessary to destroy compromising documents and the set itself, to avoid capture in accordance with strict instructions which the A.O.C. had issued a few days previously on the subject of preventing the capture of cyphers and secret equipment.

These were the circumstances in which the report of the final surrender of the British troops in Java was not received by their respective Governments.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAR EAST CAMPAIGN, DECEMBER, 1941, TO MARCH, 1942.

SCOPE OF REPORT.

614. This paper reports on only one aspect of the campaign of 1941/42 in the Far East—the air aspect. Weaknesses are admitted where they are believed to have existed.

The air aspect was, however, only one of several. An account which discloses its weaknesses, but not those of the other aspects, is liable to leave an impression that the air was primarily responsible for the downfall of Malaya. This was not the case.

615. In order to counteract this tendency it is necessary, therefore, to refer to weaknesses elsewhere which played their part. This is done hereunder in no carping spirit, but in recognition of their causes and of the efforts made by those who endeavoured to overcome them. It is done for one reason only—to counterbalance a one-sided examination and to throw the whole into perspective. Weaknesses lay in many places. Failure in Malaya was a combined failure brought about firstly by the unpreparedness of the Empire as a whole for war, and then, when war came, by the needs of far more vital theatres of war on the other side of the world and in the seas which served them.

WEAKNESSES IN THE FIGHTING SERVICES.

616. In Malaya, the old policy of restricting the defence of Singapore to the immediate vicinity of the Island had been replaced by one of defending the whole of Malaya. In conformity with this policy the Chiefs of Staff had authorised large army and air force increases. In the absence of the Fleet, defence of the Far East was to depend primarily on a mobile air defence. Pending provision of the increased air strength, the army needed additional interim strength, over and above its ultimate total, to ensure security in the meantime.

617. The Japanese attacked whilst this policy was being implemented. The air force and the army had by then received only a part of the modern equipment and reinforcements which had been estimated to be necessary. The vital and pressing needs of the war in Europe and the Middle East, which had passed through a long and very critical period, had proved of overriding importance. The result was that the forces in the Far East were attacked in positions which could only have been defended if the full strength planned by the Chiefs of Staff had been available.

Mutual Naval and R.A.F. Support.

618. The Air Force in Malaya was not yet in a position to deny the waters off Malaya to a seaborne invasion. It possessed neither the necessary aircraft nor secure aerodromes, and the enemy proved altogether too strong in the air once he had obtained a footing in South Siam and North Malaya.

619. The "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" were lost in a gallant attempt to help the army and air force in their predicament in North Malaya. The attempt was made in the face of a strong shore-based Japanese Air Force but without the corresponding air support, either carrier-borne or shore-based. Thereafter it was progressively impracticable for the