

The Far East War Council, after full consideration of the factors involved, issued instructions that evacuation should start forthwith and that all available accommodation in ships returning to suitable destinations should be used. A Joint Service and Civil Committee was set up to allot accommodation. In providing passage accommodation for those civilians who wished to leave Singapore the civil Government ordered that all nationalities should receive absolutely equal and impartial treatment. A Committee was set up with a Judge of the Supreme Court as Chairman to decide on priority of claims. The implementation of the policy will be dealt with later in this despatch.

240. This was one of the most difficult problems we had to solve. It is a problem upon which there will be many and varied opinions. It was complicated by the known characteristics of our adversary, and by considerations for the care of children. I do feel, however, that women who stick to their posts in these conditions so long as the commander allows them to do so are making a very valuable contribution to the general war effort and especially to the maintenance of morale.

#### SECTION XXIX.—CIVIL DEFENCE.

241. It had become apparent very soon after the outbreak of hostilities that the pre-war civil defence arrangements were in many respects inadequate for the situation which was developing. This did not apply so much to the Passive Air Defence Services which were for the most part operating efficiently in the area which had been bombed, though they required strengthening especially as regards the Fire Fighting Services whose work was invaluable. It applied chiefly to the material protection of important buildings and to the control of labour and transport.

242. *Martial Law*—Towards the end of December 1941 Martial Law was, at the instigation of the Cabinet Representative in the Far East, declared in the Colony of Singapore. The Commander Singapore Fortress was appointed Administrator. The Commander 3 Indian Corps and the Commander A.I.F. were authorised to declare Martial Law in the Federated Malay States and in Johore and Malacca respectively at their discretion. They did not find it necessary to do so.

243. *The Civil Defence Committee*.—In an endeavour to develop and bring up-to-date the Civil Defence arrangements for Singapore the Cabinet Representative in the Far East set up on the 16th December a Civil Defence Committee to review and deal with all measures affecting the defence of Singapore other than those of a purely military character. Its composition was as under:—

##### *Chairman.*—

The Cabinet Representative in the Far East. (The Rt. Hon. A. Duff Cooper).

##### *Members.*—

The Commander Singapore Fortress (Maj.-Gen. Keith Simmons).

The Inspector General S.S. Police (Mr. A. H. Dickinson).

Mr. Denham.

The Defence Security Officer (Col. Johnson).

The Committee was dissolved early in January.

244. *The Directorate of Civil Defence*—Towards the end of December the Cabinet Representative in the Far East proposed the formation of a Directorate of Civil Defence under a Director General. I was asked if I would be willing to make my Chief Engineer, Brigadier I. Simson, available for the appointment of Director-General. Although I was loath to lose the services of so important an officer at this juncture, I agreed to make Brigadier Simson available provided he retained concurrently the appointment of Chief Engineer. This provision was made in his own interests and for financial reasons. In sending my reply I expressed the opinion that the organization which would result from the proposed new Directorate was faulty because it cut across the existing organization and would lead to a clash of responsibility between the Director General of Civil Defence and the Secretary for Defence. Nevertheless, the Directorate was created on the 31st December, Brigadier Simson being appointed Director-General and Mr. F. D. Bisseker, the General Manager of the Penang Smelting Works and the Senior Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council, Deputy Director-General. Mr. Bisseker, was also appointed Director of Labour and Transport.

The Minister gave the D.G.C.D. plenary powers on all matters pertaining to Civil Defence in Singapore Island and Johore, subject only to reference to the War Council through the Minister where considered necessary. A letter to this effect, signed by the Minister, was addressed to certain Heads of Government Departments, Public Bodies and Civil Firms, with copies to the Governor and the Service Chiefs.

On the 1st January 1942, under amended terms of reference issued by the Governor, Johore was excluded, so that the Directorate of Civil Defence actually operated in Singapore Island only.

On or about the 23rd January, the D.G.C.D. became a member of the Far East War Council.

245. As the campaign progressed the activities of the Directorate of Civil Defence increased rapidly, but it was an impromptu organization and suffered from lack of staff and normal office facilities. Also the extent of its functions were never clearly defined or understood. The Director-General and his Staff worked untiringly, but I remain convinced that the organization was fundamentally unsound. There was already a Secretary for Defence and there was a Permanent Labour Committee. Plans had also been made for transport in wartime to be handled by the Registrar of Vehicles and his staff. It is true that at this time strong action was required for the rapid development of some of the Civil Defence arrangements but, by making the Director-General of Civil Defence responsible through the Minister to the Far East War Council, the Governor and his subordinates were presumably deprived of some at least of what should have been their responsibility. It would, in my opinion, have been better to build on the