

of war and automatic reaction without reference to London.

45. In the A.D.B. report it was stressed that the Atlantic and Europe were the decisive theatres of war, so that the forces employed in other theatres must be reduced to a minimum. Our main strategy in the Far East for the time must, therefore, be defensive, but it was recommended that preparations should be made for air operations against Japanese-occupied territory and against Japan herself, both from China and from Luzon.

The necessity for collective action was reaffirmed as well as the particular actions by Japan which would necessitate the Commanders concerned advising their respective Governments to take active military counter-action. The importance of Luzon, especially from the offensive point of view, was emphasised, and a recommendation made that its defence should be strengthened. It was suggested in this connection that Hong Kong might be of value as a subsidiary base. It was also recommended that the British and U.S.A. should support the Chinese Army, especially with finance and equipment, should assist the guerilla operations in China, and organise subversive activity in Japan and Japanese-occupied territories.

It was recommended that the Commander-in-Chief, China Station, should exercise strategical direction over all Naval forces, excluding those employed solely on local defence or operating under Commander-in-Chief, United States Asiatic Fleet. Similarly, it was recommended that the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, should exercise strategical direction of the air forces in the Far East. The areas of responsibility were defined. The basis of a plan for Naval and air co-operation, both as regards reinforcements and reconnaissance, was laid down. This included the movement of surface vessels of the United States Asiatic Fleet from Manila to Singapore if the former were attacked, and the despatch of two or more Dutch submarines to the South China Sea, all operating under the Commander-in-Chief, China.

For purposes of planning, the air forces available for mutual reinforcement were assumed to be:—

From Malaya: 4 bomber squadrons;

From Netherlands East Indies: 3 bomber and 1 fighter squadrons;

From Philippines: all available, but in case of evacuation only; and

From Australia: 2 bomber squadrons for the Ambon-Timor Area.

In telegraphic comments by the Commanders-in-Chief, Far East and China, two points were specially stressed: first, the great importance to the defence of the Far East of offensive operations by the United States Pacific Fleet, a point that was deliberately omitted from the report; and, secondly, the importance of strengthening the defences of Luzon.

The A.D.B. report was, with one or two exceptions, approved by the Chiefs of Staff in London. The exceptions were that, whilst they would welcome any strengthening of the Philippines which could be effected otherwise than at the expense of the United States effort in the Atlantic, they were not prepared to press the point in the United States: and that Hong Kong was unlikely to be of much value as an advanced base for operations by United States submarines and naval aircraft against the Japanese sea communications.

But, although signed by the representatives of the United States, the report was objected to in Washington, mainly on the ground that certain political matters had been introduced. An amended A.D.B. agreement, known as A.D.B. 2, was therefore drawn up in London in August 1941, leaving all the main features of A.D.B. practically unchanged, but putting the political matters into an appendix. This, however, did not entirely satisfy the United States authorities in Washington, and eventually it was decided that a further conference should be held in the Far East to draw up a modified A.D.B. This information was conveyed to me on the 25th November, 1941, but was received too late for any action to be taken before war started.

In spite of this, A.D.B. and Plenaps remained the basis on which we were able to work before, and immediately after, the outbreak of war with Japan, both with the Netherlands East Indies and, to a lesser degree, with the Philippines. (*But see para. III below.*)

Information from London.

46. I found on arrival in the Far East that there was considerable ignorance of modern war conditions, both in the Army and the Air Force. This could not, of course, be made good entirely by documents; personal experience was essential.

For some months after the formation of my General Headquarters there seemed to be considerable delay in getting information from England with regard to the lessons of recent operations and developments in tactical ideas, both as regards the Army and the Air Force, though A.R.P. pamphlets seemed to arrive regularly soon after issue. The situation improved about July, 1941, but we were always uncertain whether we were being kept up to date. This feeling of being neglected was naturally intensified by the distance of London from Singapore, and the whole position in this respect would have been greatly improved if visits by liaison officers from the War Office and Air Ministry had been made from time to time. This was actually started in the case of the War Office, and the first liaison officer arrived in Singapore in November, 1941. I believe it was intended to do the same in the case of the Air Ministry. It would have been a great help had this been done twelve months earlier.

Training.

47. As regards training, steps were taken to ensure that troops were thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the country in which they would have to operate. This was simple in the case of Hong Kong, where units knew exactly the ground over which they were going to fight. It was more difficult in the case of Malaya, as the nature of the country varied considerably, but here special attention was paid to movements through jungle and the acquisition of jungle lore, and many units reached a high stage of proficiency in this. The Volunteers in Malaya were called up for training during February and March 1941.

Apart from minor Staff Exercises, two were carried out under General Headquarters: the first in December, 1940, to test out communications and co-operation between the Army and the Royal Air Force; and the second, a more ambitious one, in March, 1941, to test out all the stages of a change-over from peace to war for the civil authorities as well as for the three Services. This brought out many useful lessons.