

Japan. So long as Japanese merchant shipping was being employed on its normal work, F.E.C.B. could keep track of every vessel, and should it be found that an unusual number was being kept in home ports for no good reason, it would indicate the possibility, or even probability, that the Japanese were refitting these ships as transports prior to an overseas expedition. The effect of the embargo, however, was to drive all Japanese shipping off the seas for purely economic reasons, and once in Japanese ports they could be altered as required without our being any the wiser. This applied especially to the fast vessels, *i.e.*, round about 18 knots.

In spite of the preparations going on in Southern Indo-China there were some indications—at any rate up to the end of November—that the Japanese did not intend immediate hostilities. The first was a general one, namely, that if the Japanese intended to attack Malaya, they would have been more likely to have done so in 1940, when our forces were far weaker than they were at the end of 1941. Then the winter months, December to February, were less favourable for an expedition against the East coast of Malaya and the Kra Isthmus than other periods of the year owing to the North-East monsoon. (*See also para. 134 below.*) Finally, there was the visit of Kurusu to Washington. It seems now probable that Kurusu, though possibly innocent himself, was sent to Washington with the deliberate object of misleading the United States and ourselves as to the Japanese intentions, and keeping us quiet until their own preparations had been finally completed. But at the time it seemed to us in Singapore that this was a genuine attempt on the part of the Japanese to get relaxation of the restrictions that had been imposed, and possibly to drive a wedge between Britain and the United States. I believe the same view was held in England.

95. In the latter part of November information accumulated to show that the Japanese were probably intending an offensive at an early date. Four Mogami class cruisers with a few destroyers had been despatched from the Japanese Combined Fleet to the South China Sea. Two squadrons of long-range Zero fighters arrived in South Indo-China. The number of aircraft in Indo-China rose from a total of 74 at the end of October to 245 at the end of November. The 5th Japanese Division, which was highly trained in landing operations, was reported by the Chinese to have moved to South Indo-China. There were large movements of motor landing craft from Central China, though there was no definite information as to where they had gone. In addition, a telegram was received from the War Office to the effect that the United States Army commanders in the Far East had been informed from Washington that the Kurusu negotiations might break down at any time and offensive operations be started by Japan against Siam, the Netherlands East Indies or the Philippines; up to the receipt of this telegram we had remained completely in the dark on this matter except for Press reports.

Aeroplanes, almost certainly Japanese, occasionally flew over parts of Malaya in the latter part of November and early December, in all probability carrying out photographic reconnaissance, but owing to the speed and height at

which they operated we were never able to make contact and obtain definite identification.

In view of the continued Japanese developments in Southern Indo-China, which gave them the facilities needed to attack Malaya, precautionary steps were taken on the 22nd November, and orders were issued for vulnerable points to be guarded, and on the 1st December the Volunteers were mobilised. Certain movements of air forces were carried out, and reconnaissances over the China Sea were instituted.

During this time we felt great need of aircraft capable of doing high-altitude photographic reconnaissance. This applied not only to the aerodromes in Southern Indo-China, but particularly to Camranh Harbour, on which we got no information whatever. We had no aircraft suitable for the purpose since, though a Catalina could have flown the distance, it had neither the speed nor the necessary ceiling. It seemed highly undesirable to aggravate a strained situation by sending over an aeroplane which would in all probability have been intercepted and definitely identified as British. I asked General MacArthur to carry out a photographic reconnaissance from Manila with one of his Boeing Fortresses, which had the necessary speed and ceiling, but he replied that orders from Washington prevented him from carrying out my request.

96. Near the opposite end of the prospective theatre of operations, the island of Timor was important as being a definite link in the air communications between Australia and the Netherlands East Indies. Its occupation by the Japanese would also be a serious threat to Australia. The importance of Timor was noted in the A.D.A. agreement, and it was referred to in A.D.B. Roughly half the island was Dutch territory and half Portuguese; it was the latter half which gave no small anxiety. The Japanese had a consulate in Dilli, the capital of Portuguese Timor, and by November, 1941, had received permission to run a regular flying-boat service to Dilli, and were gradually getting an economic hold on Portuguese Timor. In November, 1941, a small nucleus of Australian troops was sent to Koepang in Dutch Timor, where there was an aerodrome and a flying-boat base. On the 12th December one infantry battalion, one independent company and a few coast defence troops reached Koepang from Australia. A combined Australian and Dutch force occupied Dilli in the middle of December, 1941. About the 7th December, in accordance with the A.D.A. and A.D.B. agreements, two flights of Hudsons of the Royal Australian Air Force moved to Ambon in the Netherlands East Indies. These were followed later by an infantry battalion.

Order of the Day.

97. The Commander-in-Chief, China, and I had agreed as far back as May, 1941, that it was desirable to prepare an Order of the Day before the war broke out, so that it could reach Burma and Hong Kong in time to be translated into the different languages spoken by the troops in the Far East and be ready for issue on the first day of war. Drafting this Order presented difficulty because it had to appeal to men of varying races and religions, *e.g.*, British sailors and Burmese troops. The main object that I had in view when preparing it was to make an effective appeal to the Indian