

who had always been taught to believe in British might and had difficulty in accustoming themselves to these unexpected conditions. During the later stages also the loss of the Naval Base and the withdrawal of the Air Force to the Netherlands East Indies, necessary as it may have been, affected some, but by no means all, of the troops, especially those whose homes were then directly threatened. Finally there was the effect of extreme physical and mental exhaustion which resulted from continual day and night operations over a long period.

The military commanders did their utmost to improve matters by endeavouring to arrange short periods of rest for all front line troops in rotation. Unfortunately, owing to lack of reserves, this did not always prove practicable. The 11 Indian Division for example, which bore the brunt of the fighting in the north, was engaged almost continuously for the whole period of the campaign.

646. Those who have had the task of re-organising units which have suffered heavy losses in battle will know that time is required before full fighting efficiency can be regained. In Malaya it was never possible to make time available and units had to be sent into action again and again before they had recovered from their previous efforts. Their efficiency suffered accordingly.

647. In these circumstances, it was hardly to be expected that the inexperienced troops would withstand the trials of the campaign as steadfastly as would regular seasoned troops. Nevertheless, although they became more and more exhausted and were bewildered and often disheartened, their morale was never broken. Throughout the campaign there was a great deal of heavy fighting at short range and often hand-to-hand, in which our troops fought courageously and well. Such was the case, in particular, in Kelantan, on the Kroh and Grik roads, at Kampar, at Kuantan, at Gemas, at Muar, in the Mersing area and in many places on Singapore Island. Nor should the less spectacular operations of administration, of communication and of command, which were going on steadily day and night, be forgotten. It stands to the credit of all ranks that, in the many critical situations which developed in the course of the long withdrawal down the Peninsula, the enemy, in spite of the great advantages which he enjoyed, was never able to effect a complete break-through—an occurrence which, in view of our lack of reserves with which to meet such a situation, would have spelt immediate and irreparable disaster.

648. In the final analysis, it is necessary that the influence of all the conditions under which this campaign was fought, which have been fully set out in this Despatch, should be carefully weighed.

649. I believe that few of the men who came to Malaya had any wide knowledge of the importance of that country, both strategical and economical, as an integral part of the British Empire. To most of them Singapore was known only as the site of the great Naval Base. They knew little of the geography or problems of the Far East generally. In consequence, they had but a very elementary knowledge of what they were fighting for, and in the case of the majority there was no time to bring this home to them after arrival in Malaya.

I believe that the problems and needs of our Empire should be much more widely taught in our schools and colleges and in the Army itself than was, at any rate, the case before the war.

SECTION LXVII.—THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.

650. It must be admitted that both during the period prior to the outbreak of hostilities and also during the operations themselves our information of the Japanese activities and intentions left much to be desired. This can be attributed partly to the extreme secrecy which the Japanese always maintain on military matters and also partly to our shortage of reconnaissance aircraft. But there were other shortcomings which cannot be attributed entirely to either of these two causes.

651. Before the Malayan campaign our knowledge of the potentialities of the Japanese Army and more especially of their Air Force was very lacking. The ease with which their aircraft sank our two capital ships on the 10th December, 1941, following on their successful attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbour, surprised not only us but the whole world. The ability of the Japanese to apply modern "blitz" tactics to jungle warfare was also greater than had been anticipated.

652. The attitude of Thailand remained uncertain until the last minute, although we knew from our reconnaissances that the Japanese had for some time been very active in that country and it was clear that these activities were being carried on with the connivance, if not with the assistance, of the Thai authorities. When war broke out Thailand immediately sided with the Japanese and opposed our advance into Thai territory.

653. The pro-Japanese propaganda, which had for some years previously been spread throughout the East; had undoubtedly had some effect. The Japanese came to Malaya well equipped with the means of continuing these activities and their stream of propaganda, much of it very crude, had its effect on some at least of the people of Malaya, and at times even on a few of the troops. It must be said, however, that those who served in the fighting forces, whatever their nationality, with very few exceptions disregarded this propaganda and conducted themselves with never failing loyalty.

654. Within Malaya itself the Police intelligence organization was handicapped by the complicated political structure of the country. Although certain Japanese subversive activities were brought to light almost simultaneously with the outbreak of hostilities and although the Japanese undoubtedly received some assistance from the population during the campaign, there is no reason to suppose that there was any widespread pro-Japanese organization in the country.

655. The future organization of intelligence in the Far East requires a separate study. It is sufficient to say in this Despatch that a much stronger organization is required than has existed in the past. It should be built up round a nucleus of men trained professionally in Far Eastern affairs with a knowledge of the peoples and their languages. Unless the problem is tackled thoroughly it will be difficult, as it proved in the past, to keep abreast of the great changes which are constantly taking place in that part of the world.