

Navy, other than the lightest units, to remain in Malayan waters, particularly in the absence of such support.

620. The freedom of the seas which the enemy gained by his use of air power both at Pearl Harbour and off the coast of Malaya, was such that he was virtually free thereafter to hit when and where he liked. The consequences to the army and air force dispositions and operations in Malaya were profound. No criticism is levelled, the war against Germany and Italy had stretched our resources as never before. The small forces which were available in the Far East were faced with overwhelming circumstances and were too weak to overcome the advantages which the enemy gained in the first and most vital days of the campaign. In short, neither the Air Force nor the Navy was in a position to support the other.

#### *Mutual Army/Air Support.*

621. The enemy army proved to be more effective than had been expected: our army had a number of shortcomings. It is not for this paper to say what they were or to expand upon them: it is appropriate only to say that they existed and that the army, in consequence, was unable to play its part adequately in the provision of secure air bases for our air forces. The root cause was the same, namely the overriding calls of the war in Europe and the Middle East.

622. When war came, the construction of aerodromes in Malaya had outstripped the provision of air forces to occupy them. But the aerodromes had had to be defended—a factor, amongst others considerably more important, which led to the army adopting a forward policy. The army had insufficient troops for the purpose, particularly in the absence of the additional interim strength it required pending full Air Force expansion. It became widely scattered in trying to meet all its commitments, and was defeated in detail.

623. The R.A.F., although inadequate for the task, had to occupy these forward and ineffectively defended aerodromes. There it suffered severe losses which could not be replaced, and it was driven out.

624. Thereafter the army had to fight in northern and central Malaya without any air support, and to face an enemy whose air support was constant and strong. It was not until the Japanese advance brought the land battle within effective range of aerodromes on Singapore island, that our army could be supported from the air. Even then this support fell far short of the scale demanded by the situation, although it was the maximum available. The enemy's air support remained undiminished. Neither service was in a position to support the other or to fulfil its commitments: both suffered severely in attempting to do both.

#### *Mutual Support between Japanese Forces.*

625. The Japanese, on the other hand, had sufficient forces to support one another. Their naval and air forces were adequate to cover the initial landings of their army, and to give its subsequent expeditions virtual freedom of action to strike where and when they liked. Their army was strong enough to hold the countryside as it was overrun, and in particular to defend the aerodromes it captured. Their air

forces were able to fill those aerodromes with aircraft, maintain them there at full strength, and from them gain and fully exploit the advantages of air superiority in the land, sea and air battles.

They possessed what we had not—balanced harmony by land, sea and air, their forces in which elements were strong enough to play their respective parts and to support one another fully.

#### *Joint Navy/Army/Air Co-operation.*

626. Two lessons emerge from the foregoing factors:—

Firstly, that only by full co-ordination of the fighting services—in strength, organisation and methods of operating—can success be achieved.

Secondly, that the issue of a modern war largely depends on the struggle for secure air bases, which all three fighting services have a joint responsibility for obtaining, defending and maintaining.

That side which is successful, and which denies its opponent the advantage of secure air bases, dominates the whole theatre of war within air striking range. It has then every prospect of success, while its opponent has but little.

#### THE CIVIL COMMUNITY.

##### *Shortages of Labour and Material.*

627. Civil interests and the fighting services competed keenly for labour, M.T., constructional material and equipment, all of which were in short supply (see paras 21 and 24). Before war came it was difficult to obtain access to land for the construction of aerodromes and other installations (see para. 19), particularly if its acquisition affected the production of rubber or tin, which were Malaya's most important contribution to the war in Europe and which her administrators had been enjoined to raise to a maximum.

628. The complicated administrative machinery in Malaya, which comprised numerous states with varying constitutions, was slow to produce results. Speed was further handicapped by the multiplicity of nationalities—Chinese, Malay, Indian and European—who populated Malaya and whose interests and outlook varied widely.

##### *Native Labour.*

629. Experience confirmed the unreliability of unenlisted natives employed as domestics, as M.T. drivers and for construction and repairing damage to aerodromes. They disappeared en bloc, as did many native employees of the railways, whenever bombing started or the siren sounded. At critical moments dislocation occurred to the domestic life of R.A.F. stations, and to road and rail movements.

630. It is imperative in these days of air warfare to enlist all native personnel on whom dependence is to be placed in war. If enlisted, and officered by trained leaders, the natives in the Far East proved to be most reliable. This was demonstrated by the R.A.F. Special Technical Corps of enlisted Chinese, Malays and Indians, whose service in Malaya and Java during the war was exemplary.