

were still fighting with them at the end of January, 1942.

XV.—SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE OPERATIONS.

Changes in Commands.

130. A large number of changes took place shortly before or shortly after the war with Japan started. These were as follows:—

(a) Admiral Sir Tom Phillips replaced Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton on the 6th December.

(b) On the 10th December, after Sir Tom Phillips had gone down with the *Prince of Wales*, Sir Geoffrey Layton—who was then actually on board his ship about to start for Australia on his way home—resumed command.

(c) On the 6th November I was informed that "owing to recent developments in the Far East, it had been decided that the duties of Commander-in-Chief should be entrusted to an Army officer with up-to-date experience." My successor was to be Lieutenant-General Paget. This prospective change became generally known in the Army and Air Force in Malaya by the end of November.

(d) On the 29th November a signal was received from Whitehall to the effect that General Pownall had been substituted for General Paget.

(e) On the 15th December the responsibility of the defence of Burma was transferred from the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, to Commander-in-Chief, India.

(f) On the 29th December General McLeod was replaced by General Hutton as General Officer Commanding, Burma.

(g) On the 10th December Mr. Duff Cooper was appointed as Cabinet representative in the Far East, and instructions were received by him that a War Council was to be formed under his leadership.

These changes may have been inevitable, and it could not, of course, have been foreseen that they would coincide so closely with the start of the war, but they did add to the difficulties of the situation.

War Council.

131. The composition of the War Council, the formation of which was started on the 10th December, was as follows:—

Mr. Duff Cooper, *Chairman*;

H.E. the Governor of Malaya;

C.-in-C., Far East;

C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet;

G.O.C. Malaya;

A.O.C., Far East;

and later, Sir George Sansom, as being responsible for Propaganda and Press control.

The War Council did useful work in several directions, but as it was not formed until after the war began there had been no time to work out its correct functions. Actually, the composition led to its dealing rather too much with the details of what was happening in Malaya, whilst it would have been more useful if it had concentrated on the wider problems.

On the 16th December a Civil Defence Committee was set up to review and deal with all measures affecting the defence of Singapore other than those of a purely military character. Its composition was:—

Mr. Duff Cooper, *Chairman*;

Fortress Commander;

Inspector-General of Police; and

One civilian.

Intelligence.

132. Turning to intelligence, perhaps the most serious error was one involving the broadest aspect, namely, the intention of the Japanese Government. From the tactical point of view in Malaya there was no surprise, but from the wider point of view there was. Whilst in General Headquarters we always realised the possibility of the extreme military party in Japan forcing their country into war, we did not believe, till the end of November, that Japan might be actually on the verge of starting war. (See paras. 61 and 94 above.)

As indicated in paragraph 75 above, there was also some error regarding the intentions of the Siamese Government.

133. As regards the more local intelligence, the forces that the Japanese would have at the beginning for an attack on Malaya were estimated with a fair degree of accuracy, but there was an under-estimate of the power of the Japanese to attack several places simultaneously. Before the war it was considered that the Japanese might attack in force either the Philippines (with or without Hong Kong), or Malaya or the Netherlands East Indies. It was not anticipated that they would attack in force both the Philippines and Malaya simultaneously; still less that they would also attack Pearl Harbour. So far as I could gather from telegrams, this opinion was also held in England, at any rate up to the last few days before war started, though I believe the Embassy in Tokio held a more correct view of the Japanese power to attack several places simultaneously.

134. There was also an under-estimate of the efficiency of the Japanese Army and Air Force, particularly in the following points:—

(a) Their disregard of weather conditions, especially their ability to land on beaches in bad weather. Also they appear to have been but little hampered by the flooded state of the country in the Southern end of the Kra Isthmus;

(b) Their mobility. This was due to several causes. The Japanese Army seemed generally to depend less on mechanism than ours and to be content with a smaller proportion of artillery. The men needed only simple food and were able to live largely on the country and apparently required nothing in the way of comforts. In some cases they used lighter weapons including a mortar that was lighter than our 2-inch mortar. As a result the Japanese Army was able to operate with less mechanical transport than ours and so was less dependent upon roads. The whole organisation could be kept less complicated than ours and more flexible;

(c) The individual initiative of the Japanese soldier;

(d) The performance of the naval single-seater fighter known as the Zero type. This had a detachable petrol tank under the fuselage and the Japanese got much value from the long range thus given to it. In spite of this complication, its speed and manoeuvrability at heights of 10,000 feet and over were remarkably good; and

(e) The rapidity with which repairs were carried out, in particular of bridges and aerodromes. This last affected the strength of the Japanese air force in the Singora area at the South end of the Kra Isthmus in the early days of the war.