

Malay States. This was a factor which had to be borne in mind in the conduct of the operations. In a country where there was so little national unity, it was natural that the Sultans should be inclined to consider the security of their own territory as of primary importance.

SECTION III.—THE HIGHER ORGANISATION FOR WAR.

6. Prior to the outbreak of World War II there was a Defence Committee Malaya, modelled on the Committee of Imperial Defence at Home. The Governor was chairman of the Central Committee, while the members were the Heads of the Fighting Services and the leading Civil Officials. The Secretary was at first an officer of the Malaya Command Headquarters. Later joint secretaries were appointed, one military and one civil.

There were a number of sub-committees. The members of these sub-committees were as a rule partly military and partly civil. In some cases, the secretary of the Central Committee acted also as secretary to these sub-committees; in other cases independent secretaries were appointed. A great deal of useful planning work, which was invaluable when war came, was done by these sub-committees.

7. On the outbreak of World War II the Defence Committee Malaya and its sub-committees were dissolved by order of the Governor and High Commissioner. In place of the Defence Committee was set up a War Committee, the chairman and members of which were practically the same as those of the Defence Committee. At a later date, however, some of the leading Unofficials also became members of this War Committee. In 1941 meetings of this Committee were summoned by the Governor and High Commissioner as and when required.

The Sub-Committees of the Defence Committee Malaya were replaced by controllers appointed by the Governor and High Commissioner.

A Secretary for Defence was appointed, responsible direct to the Governor and High Commissioner. Mr. Dawson, who held this appointment at the outbreak of war with Japan, had the confidence and respect of all.

8. Up to November 1940 the three Fighting Services worked independently, the commanders of the Army and Air Force being responsible direct to their own Ministries. The Senior Naval Officer at Singapore was originally responsible only for the sea defences of Singapore Island and for the local defence of the adjoining waters. Later he became, as Rear-Admiral, Malaya, responsible for all the coasts of Malaya. From July 1940 onwards, however, the Naval Commander-in-Chief, China Station, flew his flag on shore at Singapore and assumed responsibility for all the waters off the coasts of Malaya, except that the responsibility for those off Singapore Island was still delegated to the Rear-Admiral.

9. In October 1940 a Commander-in-Chief Far East was appointed, the position being filled by Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham. G.H.Q. Far East opened on the 18th November, 1940.

The C.-in-C. Far East was responsible to the Chiefs of Staff for operational control in Malaya, Burma and Hong Kong, and for the co-ordination of plans for the defence of these territories.

He was informed that the two main principles to guide his actions were (a) It was the Government's policy to avoid war with Japan, (b) Reliance for the defence of the Far East was to be placed on Air Power until the fleet was available. He was further instructed that the G.O.C. Malaya was to continue to correspond with the War Office, on all matters on which he had hitherto dealt with it, to the fullest extent possible consistent with the exercise of his command.

The C.-in-C. Far East had no control over any naval forces nor did he have any administrative responsibility, the various Commands continuing to deal with their respective Ministries in this respect. The C.-in-C. Far East, therefore, had only a small operational staff and no administrative staff.

In conformity with the above instructions, the C.-in-C. Far East on assuming command issued the following instructions to his subordinate commanders:—

"You will correspond direct with Headquarters Far East on questions of policy affecting strategy or operations. On other questions you will repeat to the C.-in-C. Far East such of your communications to the War Office etc. as you judge of sufficient importance."

10. On the 16th May 1941 I assumed the duties of G.O.C. Malaya Command. I had previously served as Chief of Staff Malaya Command (General Staff Officer 1st Grade) in 1936 and 1937. On taking over command I was informed of the general policy and of the instructions of the C.-in-C. Far East as recorded above.

At that time the Air Officer Commanding Far East was Air Vice-Marshal C. W. B. Pulford. He had taken over command only a short time previously.

The Commander-in-Chief China was Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton. Rear-Admiral Drew was Rear-Admiral Malaya but was shortly afterwards succeeded by Rear-Admiral Spooner.

SECTION IV.—THE LOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS.

11. The location of headquarters of the two Commanders-in-Chief and of the Fighting Services was a problem which received a great amount of attention but which was never satisfactorily settled. Probably there was no satisfactory solution.

In 1936 the headquarters of the Naval Commander were in Singapore City. The Army headquarters were at Fort Canning, also in Singapore City, but those of the Royal Air Force were at Seletar on the north side of the Island. In order to improve co-operation, the then A.O.C. moved his headquarters into Singapore City, but about the same time the Naval headquarters were moved to the Naval Base on the north side of the island, to enable the commander to supervise better the rapid developments which were taking place there.

In order to ensure co-operation in war a bomb-proof battle headquarters was constructed at Fort Canning, where it was intended that the Combined Operations Staff of the three Services should work. This headquarters, however, was already too small by the time it was completed and, although it was occupied during the operations, it was never actually used for the purpose intended.