

of the older men were employed in Government Departments or in the Passive Air Defence Organization which needed strengthening. A number of the younger men were commissioned in the Services. Some specially selected officers were posted direct to Indian Army Units in spite of their lack of knowledge of the language as it was considered essential to strengthen the European element in those units. Others were attached to combatant units as interpreters and advisers on local conditions.

329. *Supplies in Forward Areas.*—The tactics adopted by the enemy of striking at our communications, coupled with the complete lack of transport aircraft, forced us to modify the general principle of keeping supplies in forward areas mobile. I therefore directed that 7 days' reserve of food, ammunition and other essential stores were to be maintained at all times by forces whose communications might be in danger of attack.

SECTION XXXVI.—REINFORCEMENTS.

330. As has already been stated (Section XXXIII), the 45 Indian Infantry Brigade with attached troops and an Indian Pioneer Battalion had arrived at Singapore on the 3rd January. On the 13th January an important convoy reached Singapore safely bringing the following formations and units:—

53 British Infantry Brigade Group of the 18 British Division.

One Heavy British Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

One Light British Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

One British Anti-Tank Regiment.

50 Hurricane Fighters with their crews.

The transports included several large American liners which were discharged with the utmost despatch and left again without delay.

331. The reception and protection of this and subsequent convoys were combined operations of considerable magnitude. The Navy was responsible for routeing and docking them and for the provision of naval escort vessels, the Air Force for providing aerial protection from the Banka Straits northwards, and the Army for the provision of ground anti-aircraft protection from the time they reached Singapore till the time they left and for the rapid disembarkation of personnel and discharge of cargoes. Each convoy presented separate problems which had to be carefully studied before plans could be formulated. In all three Services the preservation of the utmost secrecy was insisted upon. It was due to this that commanders in the forward areas were sometimes unable to appreciate the broader aspects of strategical plans. It stands to the credit of all three Services that only one ship in convoy was sunk before reaching Singapore.

332. The 53 Infantry Brigade Group had left the United Kingdom in October bound for the Middle East and had been diverted off the east coast of Africa. The voyage had lasted exactly eleven weeks. On arrival the troops were healthy but soft. In addition, a great deal of new equipment had been issued shortly before embarkation with which there had been no time to train. The Brigade had had no experience of bush warfare conditions. It arrived without its guns and transport, but it was found possible to replace these temporarily from local reserves. It was accommodated in the first instance on

Singapore Island, where I had hoped to be able to give it a short time to become acclimatized, but the swift march of events made this impossible. On the 14th January orders were issued for:—

(a) One battalion of the Brigade to move to Jemaluang as soon as ready to relieve a battalion of the 22 Australian Infantry Brigade which would then be at the disposal of Westforce,

(b) The remainder of the Brigade to be prepared to move as soon as ready to either (i) Mersing in relief of the 22 Australian Infantry Brigade, or (ii) Labis, to come under orders of Westforce. Reconnaissances of the Mersing area were to be carried out at once.

333. On the 14th and 15th January the detachment of Dutch Marechaussees (See Section XXXI) reached Singapore by air from the Netherlands East Indies. This detachment, the strength of which was about 80 all told, consisted of native troops from the N.E.I. with European officers. They were specially trained in jungle guerilla warfare. Their despatch to Malaya provided another proof of the ready co-operation of our Dutch Allies in this Far Eastern war.

After arrival the Marechaussees concentrated in the Labis area of North Johore and, after the Japanese advance, operated against their communications in that district. During the latter half of January they had considerable success killing a number of Japanese and doing material damage. Later, however, they experienced difficulties from lack of food and from the unreliability of some elements of the local population. Rather more than half the detachment eventually made its way to Sumatra.

334. The Hurricane Fighters arrived crated, but were unpacked and assembled with the utmost despatch by the R.A.F. They were in the air within a few days of their arrival. These machines were not the most modern type of Hurricane. Most of the twenty-four pilots had previously seen active service, but had been drawn from several different units.

335. As regards the future, another Indian Infantry Brigade, an Australian Machine Gun Battalion and some Indian and Australian reinforcements were expected within the next ten days and the remainder of the 18 British Division towards the end of the month.

SECTION XXXVII.—THE STRATEGICAL SITUATION, 15TH JANUARY, 1942.

336 Our object remained as before, i.e., the Defence of the Naval Base.

337. *Army.*—We knew that on the west coast the enemy had two divisions in front line. From the manner in which they were able to maintain the momentum of the attack we thought that they had the equivalent of two divisions in reserve with which they were able to effect regular reliefs of their front line troops.

There was little evidence of what troops the enemy might have on the East Coast, but we knew it was a minimum of one division.

In addition the enemy was known to have in Indo-China a formation trained in air-borne landings and he was believed to have there at least two divisions in reserve which might be employed in Malaya or elsewhere.

We estimated therefore that the enemy had at his disposal a minimum of seven divisions with