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REPORT ON THE AIR OPERATIONS DURING THE CAMPAIGNS IN MALAYA AND NETHERLAND EAST INDIES FROM 8TH DECEMBER, 1941 TO 12TH MARCH, 1942.

The following report was submitted to the Secretary of State for Air on July 26th, 1947, by Air Vice-Marshal Sir PAUL MALTBY, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., A.F.C., Assistant Air Officer Commanding Far East Command, Royal Air Force, from January 12th to February 10th, 1942, and Air Officer Commanding Royal Air Force in Java from February 11th to March 12th, 1942.

FOREWORD.

A report on the operations in Malaya and the N.E.I. would be incomplete without a survey of the situation in the Far East before war broke out there. A convenient date for beginning such a survey is 1st June, 1941, soon after the date, 24th April, 1941, on which the late Air Vice-Marshal C. W. Pulford became Air Officer Commanding R.A.F. Far East Command.

A number of other newly posted Senior Officers also took up their new duties about the same time, the more important amongst them being Lieut.-Gen. A. E. Percival (G.O.C. Malaya—16th May, 1941), Air Commodore C. O. F. Modin (A.O.A. at A.H.Q. 10.6.41), Group Captain A. G. Bishop (Group Captain Ops. at A.H.Q. 1.6.41) and the late Group Captain E. B. Rice (Fighter Defence Commander of Singapore and Co-ordinator of Air Defences of Malaya, both newly established appointments, 10.7.41).

Although 1st June, 1941, has been chosen as the datum line from which to start the survey, full recognition is given to the large amount of preparatory work which was done by the predecessors of the officers whose names are mentioned above. Some reference is necessarily made to matters which occurred during the time

they were in office, but in general the survey deals with the period between 1st June, 1941, and the outbreak of war. It indicates the energetic measures which were taken immediately beforehand to prepare the Command for war, and points a picture of the situation as it existed at the outbreak of hostilities.

The narrative contains only brief reference to developments in Hong Kong, Burma and the Indian Ocean, operational control of which passed out of the hands of the A.O.C. Far East Command soon after the Japanese had landed in Malaya. Their presence in the Command during the pre-war period did, however, appreciably divert attention and work from pressing matters of local application, and to this degree affected preparation for war in Malaya.

Some reference is necessary to sources of information on which the report is based.

Official records from the Far East are few and incomplete. Most of those which were maintained there had to be destroyed to prevent their capture by the Japanese. The few which survive consist of brief situation reports and a few files of important signals and correspondence, now with the Air Ministry. To make good the loss of the destroyed documents, reports have since been obtained from a number of officers who held important appointments in the Far East Command. But these are far from authoritative. Most of them were written in December, 1945, and January, 1946, nearly four years after the events which they describe had taken place, during which years their authors had been prisoners-of-war in Japanese hands, or alternatively had been actively employed in other theatres of war. A number of important individuals who could have given