

591. As on the mainland, morale was affected very adversely by the implementation of the Scorched Earth Policy. Fighting and destruction do not go hand-in-hand together. In particular, the effect of burning oil should be recorded. The smoke rises in great black clouds and numberless particles are deposited far and wide over the countryside. These blacken everything with which they come in contact including human beings, who are also blackened from contact with the oil-soaked foliage. A soldier's self-respect and in some cases his morale are adversely affected.

592. To sum up, the Japanese undoubtedly obtained on Singapore Island some war material which was of value to them in their war effort. In view of the large quantities of weapons, military equipment and war stores of all natures concentrated there this was inevitable. Nevertheless, taking into account the difficulties which had to be faced and the strain, both mental and physical, under which all concerned were working, the implementation of the Scorched Earth Policy was, in my opinion, as effective as could reasonably have been expected.

593. In conclusion, it may not be out of place to stress once again the difference between the application of a Scorched Earth Policy in defence of a nation's homeland and its application in a distant land inhabited by Asiatic peoples where the property to be destroyed has been built up laboriously over the years by Government or by private enterprise and where in many cases those responsible for the implementation of the Policy have themselves in the past been the leaders of progress in their respective spheres. In this latter case some account must be taken of human nature.

PART IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

SECTION LVIII.—THE DEFENCE PLAN.

594. The object of the defence, in accordance with instructions received, was the protection of the Singapore Naval Base.

595. The tense political atmosphere which prevailed in Europe following the advent of the Hitler regime and the rapidly increasing range and power of air forces were two factors which had profound influences on the problem of defence.

So long as it was certain that a strong and balanced British fleet could, when required, be despatched to the Far East and that it would be able on arrival there to control the sea communications leading to Malaya, the task of the local defence was to ensure the security of the Naval Base for a limited period only. Conversely a Japanese attacking force, if it was to be successful, would have had to capture the base within that limited period. The nearest Japanese base was then 1,800 miles from Singapore and the Japanese would not have had time to establish an advanced base from which they could develop deliberate operations. They would therefore have had to rely on some form of "coup-de-main" attack with forces of limited size.

The effect, however, of the uncertainty as to whether a strong British fleet would in fact be able to sail for the Far East was that the Japanese could, without incurring undue risk, undertake a more deliberate form of operation with very much stronger forces. In other words, they could establish bases in North

Malaya and in South Thailand from which they could develop operations by land, sea and air. The Naval Base at Singapore, which is only 400 miles from the Malaya-Thailand frontier, would thus become exposed to a heavy scale of air attack. To avoid this, and also to enable our own air forces to reach out and strike at the approaching enemy convoys as far from the shores of Malaya as possible, it became necessary to hold the whole of Malaya and not only Singapore and the adjoining islands with part of Johore.

596. This change in the problem of defence was fully appreciated by the General Officer Commanding Malaya in 1937 and was set forth in a document which, as General Staff Officer 1st Grade Malaya, I personally prepared in accordance with his instructions. This document was sent to the War Office. It asked, among other things, for substantial increases in the air forces and in the local naval craft and for more infantry. It seems, however, that the change in the situation was not as fully appreciated at Home as it was in Malaya, or it may have been that lack of resources of man-power, material and money, made it impossible to comply with the recommendations made. In any case, it was not until 1940 that official approval was given to the policy of holding the whole of Malaya.

597. The fall of France in 1940 and the subsequent occupation of French Indo-China by the Japanese again altered radically our problem of defence. Our potential enemy was now within easy striking range (400 miles) of North Malaya and within what was at that time comparatively long-distance air striking range (700 miles) of Singapore itself. Moreover, he now had an advanced base at which he could assemble a strong invasion force without interference. Thereafter such reinforcements as could be made available were sent to Malaya but, in view of our commitments elsewhere, these were not as large as were required.

598. In the autumn of 1940, when it had become apparent that we were not in a position to send a fleet to the Far East, the Home authorities laid down that the defence of Malaya must depend primarily on air power but that, until adequate air forces could be provided, the land forces must be strengthened. The policy of relying primarily on air power was in fact never implemented.

599. In consequence of the above policy the Army dispositions were designed primarily to afford protection to the bases from which the air forces when available would operate. In the event, the Army had to bear practically the whole weight of the Japanese attack with little air or naval support. This was the main cause of defeat.

SECTION LIX —COMPARISON OF FORCES.

600. *Navy.*—The Japanese were able to operate with a balanced Fleet based on Camranh Bay in French Indo-China. In the battleship "Prince of Wales" we had a more powerful unit than anything the Japanese possessed but we never had a balanced Fleet. The loss of the "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" left the Japanese in undisputed possession of the eastern approaches to Malaya.

Malaya had a coast line of 1,000 miles with innumerable creeks. To conduct the attack or