

been primarily trained—to hit the enemy convoys at sea, as far away and as often as possible. The consequence was that the enemy was able to establish himself firmly ashore in a neutral country before action could be taken against his convoys.

Operation Matador.

640. The political factor was also partly responsible for preventing the initiation of the planned British advance into Siam. The consequences were far-reaching: those affecting the Air Force were immediate. The enemy was able to establish his squadrons in strength in Siam within easy striking distance of our virtually defenceless aerodromes in northern Malaya. Many of our aircraft were thus destroyed with little accomplished, and our squadrons were driven out. Thereafter they were unable to give air support to the army in its battles in northern and central Malaya.

641. In passing, it is legitimate to reflect that had the reconnaissance into the Gulf of Siam been greater on 6th December after the Japanese convoys had been sighted, and on 7th December (paras. 150-169 and 671), and had the object of the Japanese expedition been disclosed thereby, it might well have had an influence on the decision to initiate operation "Matador", or brought about its cancellation earlier than was the case.

Japanese Action.

642. The Japanese, on the other hand, chose the moment for attack that was most opportune for themselves. In doing so they brushed aside political hindrances—as indeed they had done whenever it suited them during their successive encroachments into the South-Western Pacific.

Lesson.

643. The lesson which emerges is that when the initiative lies in the hands of a prospective enemy, as it did in the Far East, it is highly dangerous to depend upon a plan of defence which may be frustrated by political considerations.

WEAKNESS OF ALLIED INTELLIGENCE.

Under-estimation of Japanese Strength.

644. Put bluntly, the enemy's true value was much under-estimated. Although he was known to possess some good military (the word is used in its widest sense) qualities, conspicuous amongst which was a fanatical valour, it was believed that he would display weaknesses, hitherto undisclosed, when he came face to face with the modern forces of the British Empire and the U.S.A.

645. There is reason to believe, from the experience of those who underwent military interrogation as prisoners-of-war in Japanese hands, that the enemy took deliberate steps in peace-time to mislead her potential enemies into under-estimating her fighting forces. They themselves on the other hand were not deluded about our true value: they were too well informed by a long-established organisation of agents.

Japanese Air Forces.

646. The qualities of the Japanese Air Force came as a complete surprise—in numbers, performance and quality of equipment, training and experience of its personnel, and in its

mobility. Its fighters displayed unexpected all-round qualities. They and the Japanese medium bombers had ranges of 1,500 to 1,600 miles which enabled them to operate from bases out of our reach. Their normal operational height was 20,000-24,000 feet where they were immune from any of our A.A. gun defences. Japanese torpedo-bombers proved to be unexpectedly effective.

647. It is difficult to assess the precise air strength the enemy deployed against Malaya. At the time, it was thought that he had 700 first line aircraft based in South-Indo-China, with adequate immediate reserves, as against our 158 obsolete and obsolescent types with practically no reserves.

Japanese Army and Naval Forces.

648. It is not for this paper to explain the extent to which these were under-estimated, except to say that his army proved to be more effective than it was believed to be, and that the Japanese ability to strike so strongly and simultaneously in several directions in the Pacific had not been anticipated.

Need for an Intelligence Corps.

649. It is therefore appropriate to suggest here that our mistakes can only be attributed to lack of an adequate Intelligence organisation. True, a combined services intelligence organisation was in existence for obtaining naval, military and air information throughout the Far East (F.E.C.B.—see para 67) but it was inadequate for the purpose. In the East an Intelligence system of any real value takes years to build up and requires considerable funds at its disposal. That it should be a combined organisation to serve the needs of all the defence Services goes without saying. It is suggested that a specialised Intelligence Corps will be essential in the future: that only by this means can continuity of knowledge, experience and contact be maintained: and that the appointment of individuals, as an incident of their service careers, can no longer be relied upon to fulfil requirements.

WEAKNESS OF JOINT ARMY/AIR FORCE INTEREST.

Army/Air Force relations.

650. There has been much exaggerated talk about the poor relations which existed between the Army and R.A.F. in Malaya. That there was foundation for it in limited quarters is unfortunately true during the time immediately before the arrival of the late Air Vice-Marshal Pulford and Lieut.-General A. E. Percival, who quickly took steps to put matters right. Unfortunately, honestly held differences of opinion about defence matters between their predecessors had led to weaknesses which had not been fully rectified by the time war came. The two chief matters are hereunder (paras. 651 and 652).

Army/Air Support.

651. Organisation of, and training in, air support for the army was in a primitive state of development in both services. There was a marked lack of specialised equipment for the purpose, and there were but few persons in both services who had had appreciable experience in co-operation between air and ground forces, particularly modern experience. The result was