

Another factor which influenced me in coming to this decision was the danger of my Headquarters becoming intimately involved in the defence of Malaya if I remained at Singapore, to the neglect of the wider problems of the defence of the Far East.

*Relations with Commander-in-Chief, China Station.*

41. From about June 1941 onwards an intelligence conference was held at ten o'clock every morning, and was attended by the Commander-in-Chief, China, and myself, and our senior staff officers. Generally speaking, the division of responsibilities was clear, and in other cases they were divided up without any difficulty. The Commander-in-Chief, China, had been dealing with Free French problems, and continued to do so after my Headquarters was formed. As our relations with French Indo-China were largely concerned with economics and shipping, he dealt with most of the problems of that country, whilst my Headquarters dealt mainly with Siam. He also agreed to take over responsibility for control of the Press and continued to do so up to the beginning of December, when Sir Tom Phillips arrived and I took over this responsibility.

Other questions, such as food supplies, we dealt with together. In this case also shipping was largely involved, and as the Commander-in-Chief, China, had a representative on the Food Committee, he generally represented our combined views at meetings of the War Committee.

The Commander-in-Chief, China, took over from me the control of the Miri oil denial scheme. This was found more convenient since the problems of oil supply were more closely connected with the Navy than with the Army or Air Force, and the evacuation of both material and personnel from Miri was essentially a Naval matter.

Agreement was reached in regard to surface sea patrols near the coast, and it was decided that the Naval authorities would be responsible for patrolling in the open sea and the Army would be responsible for similar work on the rivers. One or two estuaries were dealt with as special cases, but generally came under the Naval authorities.

*Conferences at Singapore.*

42. Many conferences were held in Singapore both before and after the formation of General Headquarters, Far East. These were as follows:—

(a) The Franco-British Conference held in June 1939. The report of this conference contained some useful observations on the general problems, but the basic assumption of active French collaboration from Indo-China vanished with the collapse of France.

(b) The Singapore Conference of October, 1940, with which should be included the Tactical Appreciation dated the 16th October, 1940, prepared by the Commander-in-Chief, China Station, the General Officer Commanding, Malaya, and the Air Officer Commanding, Far East. (See paras. 79 and 90 below.)

(c) The conversations with the Dutch in December 1940, the principal object being to obtain information and agreement on certain matters raised in Appendix A of the Report of the Singapore Conference.

(d) The Conference between British, Dutch and Australian representatives, with United

States observers in attendance, held in Singapore in February 1941, resulting in what is known as the A.D.A. agreement. This agreement included plans for mutual reinforcements, principally of air forces and submarines. (See para. 44 below.)

(e) The Conference between the Americans, Dutch and British, including Australia and New Zealand, together with representatives of India and the East Indies Station. This was held at Singapore in April 1941, and resulted in what is known as the A.D.B. agreement. (See para. 45 below.) It was followed by a shorter agreement between the British and the Dutch, which dealt almost entirely with Naval matters, and was really a modification of the agreement reached in A.D.A., bringing the latter into line with A.D.B. It was known as B.D.

(f) Arising out of A.D.B., a detailed plan for naval and air operations, known as Plenaps was drawn up.

No political commitment was involved by these agreements, and A.D.A. and A.D.B. remained subject to ratification by the respective Governments.

43. In the case of the conference leading to the A.D.A. and A.D.B. agreements, I felt that the representation was somewhat unbalanced. In the former, the Naval representation of the Dominions was weak since the Chief of the Naval Staff in Australia, Admiral Colvin, was unable to come, and New Zealand was represented by Australia. In the A.D.B. Conference, the Naval representation was strong but that of the Dominion Army and Air Force was comparatively weak. Further, in A.D.B. the United States representatives were somewhat junior, and there was no representative of the Pacific Fleet, but only of the Asiatic.

44. In A.D.A. the necessity for collective action was emphasised, it being pointed out that Japanese aggression against any one country would be of vital importance to the others. Agreement was reached on the particular actions by Japan which would necessitate the Naval and Military authorities concerned advising their respective Governments to take active military counter-action. A suggestion was made that Commanders-in-Chief on the spot might be allowed to take measures in such circumstances without prior reference to London.

The principle of mutual reinforcement was agreed, the Dutch undertaking to provide submarines for operation in the South China Sea, as well as one Fighter and three bomber squadrons to reinforce Malaya; whilst it was estimated that four Bomber squadrons would be available from Malaya to reinforce the Netherlands East Indies. Australia was prepared to assist by the provision of Army units, and of an air striking force at Darwin to reinforce Ambon and Koepang. The necessary administrative arrangements to prepare for these land and air reinforcements were to be undertaken at once, and progress reports were to be rendered monthly to G.H.Q., Far East. The principles on which sea communications would be defended were outlined, and emphasis was laid on the importance of making the passage of the Northern line of the Dutch possessions as difficult as possible for the Japanese.

The A.D.A. report was approved generally by the Chiefs of Staff, the main exception being that there could be no prior definition of an act