

contracting parties undertook to assist one another by political, economic and military means if one were attacked by a power not then involved in the European war or in the Sino-Japanese conflict, the United States being obviously indicated.

Germany no doubt hoped that the Pact would make it easier to bring Japan into the war on the side of the Axis. Japan's motives were different. Since quitting the League of Nations after the Manchurian incident Japan had been in a political isolation which was now ended by alliance with the strongest military power in Europe. The signature of the Pact probably did little actually to remove the distrust of Germany which was felt by Tokyo. The absence in the German plan for Japan's part in the Axis war, of any provision for operations to be undertaken in the Netherlands East Indies perhaps gives a clue to Germany's attitude towards domination by an Asiatic nation such as Japan of a quasi-Teutonic European area in the Far East, the mother country of which was now under Germany's protection. Hitler's frequent offers to respect and protect the integrity of the British and Dutch Empires were incompatible with Japan's expansionist ambitions, and the Japanese were acutely aware of the possibility that Germany might attempt to obtain a settlement with Great Britain and the United States at their expense. Her hope now was that the pact would weaken opposition to her policy of expansion in South-east Asia; and finally, she thought it might enable her to improve her relations with Soviet Russia which at that time was on friendly terms with Germany and was expressly excluded from the *casus fœderis* of the Tripartite Pact.¹ There had recently been some large border clashes in which the Japanese Army had taken severe beatings from the Russians; and the Japanese wanted to concentrate with an easy mind on the forthcoming adventure in the south.

As regards Japan, the Pact was clearly intended as a warning to Great Britain against interfering with her plans in the Far East and to the United States against making common cause with Great Britain. The effect on Great Britain and the United States turned out to be the opposite of what Japan expected; and Japanese spokesmen soon found it advisable to explain away the Pact as purely pacific in intention and not aimed at any third party.

Hitler had no intention, however, of allowing Japan to enjoy the benefits of German support without working her passage; and plans were drawn up, detailing the part she must play in the Axis war. By December 1940 the German Naval Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Raeder, was advising the Fuehrer to urge Japan to attack Singapore arguing that it was unlikely this would bring the United States into the war.² In the following February the German Naval Staff investigated the question whether a neutral or a belligerent United States would exert on the war an influence more favourable to Germany. Benevolent neutrality was already swelling Great Britain's military potential and would do so in an increasing degree as the United States built up their output, if not compelled to divert it to their own war purposes. The American Neutrality Zone set up by the 21 American republics at Panama in October 1939 was hampering the operations of German submarines. Although by Presidential proclamation of 4th November 1939 and 11th June 1940 United States merchant ships were barred from Combat Areas surrounding the British Isles, north-west Europe, and the Strait of Gibraltar their cargoes were to some

¹ Article V declared that the pact did in no way touch the political status existing at the time between each of the contracting parties and the U.S.S.R.

² *Fuehrer Conferences on Matters dealing with the German Navy*, Office of Naval Intelligence, Navy Dept., Washington D.C.

extent reaching Great Britain, directly or indirectly. On the other hand, a belligerent United States would need the larger part of her armament production herself and less would be available to nourish the British military effort. The American flag would no longer afford protection. The U.S. sea communications in the Pacific were long and vulnerable and Japan was in an advantageous position for attacking these and the British communications in the Indian Ocean. For these reasons it was considered that entry of the United States into the war might be advantageous to Germany, provided Japan had previously created the essential basic conditions for carrying out a war in the Pacific and Malayan waters, and furthermore, entered the war immediately after the U.S.A. commenced hostilities. It was essential, however, that Japan should not pursue purely selfish aims unrelated to the total war effort but should regard herself as part of the Axis front against the Anglo-American Powers; and it was to be the task of the Japanese navy to sever the supply lines of these Powers in the Pacific and Netherlands East Indies areas, this taking priority even over the attack on Singapore, which Admiral Raeder had advocated, and which even under the most favourable conditions would tie down strong Japanese forces for a long period.

30. SINGAPORE DEFENCE CONFERENCE

As the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Hull, observed the actual signing of the Pact did not in the view of the United States Government substantially alter the situation which had existed for several years. Nevertheless, in the minds of the American public there was an increased awareness of the expansionist ambitions of Japan in Asia, that United States interests were involved, and that should Germany succeed in occupying Great Britain as many foreign observers at the time thought more than possible, then the security of the United States itself would be directly threatened from both the West and the East. At the same time, the signing of the Pact occurred a little over a month prior to the presidential election. Public interest was concentrated on that event and it was more than ever necessary for the United States Government to exercise caution in relation to their own public particularly as to how far they could go in giving assistance to the British Commonwealth and in planning for war with the Axis Powers. Talks of an explanatory nature had indeed started in London in the previous month but these were chiefly confined to an exchange of information on a wide scale; they did not include any actual planning for the possibility of the United States entering the war. It was assumed, however, in London that after the presidential election Anglo-American conversations of a more detailed nature than exchange of information would take place not only in London and Washington but also in the Far East between the various Commanders-in-Chief in the South West Pacific area. In order to prepare for this, on 22nd October 1940 a conference of representatives of the Chiefs of Staff of the Commonwealth¹ was opened at Singapore under the Commander-in-Chief, China, in order to consider points for discussion in these conversations and in staff conversations with the Netherlands East Indies authorities in the event of such being authorized²; also to consider the tactical appreciation which the Far East commanders had prepared, and to review the defence requirements of India and Burma in the light of a possible Japanese threat from Siam. At the urgent request of the Australian and New

¹ Two officials of the Malaya civil administration also attended.

² Telegram Admiralty 1331/9 10.40 to Commander-in-Chief China (535), Commander-in-Chief E. I. (289).

Zealand delegations, who, with representatives from Burma, India, and the East Indies Station attended the Conference, its proceedings were extended to include a general review of our defence position in the Far East. The U.S. Naval Attaché, Bangkok, attended the later stages of the Conference as an observer, in all secrecy.

The Conference considered that the first and immediate consideration must be to ensure the security of Malaya against direct attack, in order to safeguard Singapore. Attack on the Netherlands East Indies or Timor to secure supplies and bases was a probable enemy course of action, the success of which would facilitate naval and air attack on Malaya and Singapore (where there was not a single fighter aircraft) and also on Darwin, which was likely to be raided and possibly seized as a base, though the difficulties of communication and supply rendered the latter fate unlikely.

An estimate was made of the dispositions and naval forces required for protection of vital points and vital trade and convoys. The position in the Indian Ocean where the scale of attack to be expected was a force of enemy cruisers supported by one or more capital ships, was dependent on the arrival of reinforcements from elsewhere, though the Conference, which had been informed that the only reinforcement possible would be the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, the battle cruiser *Renown* and some destroyers from Gibraltar for trade protection in the Indian Ocean¹ felt no purpose would be served in assessing the forces necessary in that area beyond the fact that capital ships' escort for troop convoys would be essential and the provision of aircraft was an urgent requirement. Many of the Australian and New Zealand naval ships were serving on other stations; the cruiser *Australia* was in the North Atlantic (Force H); the *Sydney* and the five Australian destroyers were in the Mediterranean; the *Perth*, *Leander* and the armed merchant cruiser *Westralia* in the East Indies; and the New Zealand sloops in British Home waters. The return of these cruisers and destroyers to Australian and New Zealand waters where the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board considered their small available forces must be used would give a force of two 8-inch cruisers, five 6-inch cruisers and five destroyers leaving one old 6-inch cruiser and three armed merchant cruisers available from Australian and New Zealand forces for convoy and trade protection further afield. Apart from the requirements of capital ship escort for troop convoys this might suffice for meeting essential commitments in waters which except for the Tasman Sea lent themselves to evasive routing and the security afforded thereby. The assumption was, however, that adequate air forces would be available in the focal areas, and this at the time of the conference was far from being so.

Having regard to the possible use by the United States and British naval forces of bases in the Pacific Ocean and Timor Sea, it was recommended that the provision of facilities at Suva (Fiji Island), Port Moresby (southern Papua), and Darwin should be expedited, and Thursday Island be defended in order to control the passage through Torres Strait.

The Commanders at Singapore considered that the scale of forces for the defence of Singapore decided upon by the Chiefs of Staff when reviewing the situation in August was insufficient. They recommended a large increase of first line aircraft, from 336, which was the long term project, to 566; pointed out serious deficiencies in the equipment of the land forces; and recommended the provision, for the purpose of preventing enemy coastwise movements, of

¹ Telegram Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief China 625, 1225/27/10/40.

three flotillas of M.T.Bs. and three submarines. These recommendations were endorsed by the Singapore Defence Conference, which increased the figure of aircraft required to 582. The Chiefs of Staff concurred generally in the recommendations of the Conference. At the time, however, home defence, the war in the Atlantic, and the Middle East operations all took precedence of the Far East in the allotment of resources which were stretched to the utmost. The Chiefs of Staff agreed that 582 aircraft was an ideal, though 336 should give a very fair degree of security. They added however that 'The target of 336 cannot be increased before the end of 1941 and remains subject to general situation and supply of aircraft.'¹

As advised by the Conference the Admiralty approved the boundaries of the China Station being extended in a westerly direction to include the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The change was made on 26th November 1940.²

31. RAIDERS IN THE PACIFIC AND INDIAN OCEANS

The desire of Australia and New Zealand to employ their naval forces in defence of trade in their own waters had received ample justification at the time of the Singapore Conference.

On 18th June 1940 the s.s. *Niagara* was mined off Auckland, N.Z. and on the same day, 1,200 miles to the eastward, the Norwegian s.s. *Tropic Sea* was captured by a German raider, the *Orion* or *Schiff 36*, the vessel which laid the mines that sank the *Niagara*. Further evidence of raider activity followed. On 16th August the Vichy French s.s. *Notou* was sunk 90 miles east of Moreton Island, Queensland, and four days later a distress message was received from the s.s. *Turakina* 900 miles to the south.

From October 1940 to the end of the year there was constant activity by German raiders in Anzac waters, at least one other raider besides *Schiff 36* being implicated. After a fruitless incursion into the Indian Ocean the latter returned east and joined up with *Schiff 45* (the *Komet*) and the supply ship *Kulmerland*. The former had entered the Pacific in August via Bering Strait. After sinking the s.s. *Ringwood* near Nauru on 15th October the three went south and sank two ships in New Zealand waters, the *Holmwood* off Chatham Island on 25th November and the *Rangitane* two days later, before returning north and sinking five ships³ near Nauru on the 7th and 8th December. The phosphate loading jetties and plant at the British mandated island Nauru were shelled on the 27th. The bombardment destroyed large stocks of phosphate belonging to Japan with adverse effect on relations with Germany.⁴ Both raiders then sailed for the Indian Ocean and passed into the Atlantic without doing any further damage.

Meanwhile, there had been raider activity west and south of Australia. *Schiff 33* (the *Pinguin* or *Kandelfels*) entered the Indian Ocean in August 1940 and sank four ships⁵ in the Madagascar area. After taking in prize the m.s. *Nordvard* in 30° 31' S., 69° 09' E. about 15th September and the s.s. *Storstad*

¹ Tel. C.O.S. No. 39 (COS (41) 13th Mtg.).

² From the India-Burma border to position 20° N., 92° E., thence along the meridian of 92° to 13° S., thence due east as before.

³ *Triona*, *Vinni*, *Triadic*, *Triaster*, *Komata*, all British except the Norwegian *Vinni*.

⁴ NID 24/T.47/45.

⁵ *Filefjell*, British Commander, *Morviken*, *Benavon*.

off Exmouth Gulf on 7th October she laid mines in south Australian coastal waters, where four ships¹ were mined between the 5th and 8th November. *Schiff 33* sank four further ships² in the Indian Ocean west of Australia before the end of the month, after which she crossed into the South Atlantic, reappearing in the Indian Ocean in March of the following year. In this second cruise in the Indian Ocean her activities were confined to the Arabian Sea, where she sank three ships³ before being herself sunk by H.M.S. *Cornwall* on 8th May, about 600 miles north-east of the Seychelles.

A second German raider, the *Goldenfels*, known as *Schiff 16*, had entered the Indian Ocean via the Cape of Good Hope in May 1940. During the ensuing ten months she worked the area as far east as the approaches to Sunda Strait and between the parallels of approximately 10° N. and 50° S. During this time she sank thirteen and captured two ships,⁴ before making rendezvous with the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* on 16th February 1941 east of Madagascar, after which *Schiff 16* set course once more for the Atlantic, where she was sunk by H.M.S. *Devonshire* on 22nd November. The *Admiral Scheer* made a short incursion into the Seychelles area, where she fuelled from *Schiff 16's* prize, *Ketty Brovig*, about 16th February 1941. On the 20th she captured the tanker *British Advocate*, and she sank three ships⁵ before leaving for the Atlantic two days later. The raider *Schiff 41* (*Kormoran*) entered the Indian Ocean, passing well south of the Cape of Good Hope, at the end of May 1941, and proceeded to the Bay of Bengal without sinking a ship. On 26th June she sank two ships in the Bay⁶ and a third⁷ in the Arabian Sea about 26th September. After fuelling from the supply ship *Kulmerland*, she proceeded to the neighbourhood of Exmouth Gulf, where she was in action on 19th November with H.M.A.S. *Sydney*, and both ships were sunk.

32. ANGLO-DUTCH STAFF CONVERSATIONS

The proceedings of the Singapore Defence Conference emphasized the necessity for close collaboration with the Dutch, and the Chiefs of Staff had recommended in August that as soon as we had been able to improve our position in Malaya sufficiently to be able to offer effective military aid to the Dutch we should open conversations with them. A list of points for discussion with them at some future date had been drawn up at Singapore, and the exchange of liaison officers was arranged. Naval observers were also exchanged with the United States. The result of the Presidential Election in the States, where President F. D. Roosevelt was elected for a third term on 6th November,

¹ *Nimbin, Hertford, Cambridge, City of Rayville.*

² *Nowshera, Maimoa, Port Brisbane, Port Wellington.*

³ *Empire Light, Clan Buchanan, British Emperor.*

⁴ *Tirranna*, 10th June, in 12° S. 68° E. approx.; *City of Bagdad*, 11th July, in 0° 14' N., 86° 43' E.; *Kemmendine*, 13th July, in 04° 12' S., 81° 47' E.; *Talleyrand*, 2nd August, in 30° S., 67° E. approx.; *King City*, 24th August, in 16° 53' S., 65° 17' E.; *Athelking*, 9th September, in 21° 52' S., 67° 20' E.; *Benarty*, 10th September, in 18° 32' S., 70° 07' E.; *Commissaire Ramel*, 17th September, in 28° 30' S., 74° 13' E.; *Durmitov*, 21st October, in 08° 30' S., 101° 30' E. approx.; *Teddy*, 8th November, in 05° 35' N., 88° 22' E. approx.; *Ole Jacob*, 10th November, in 06° 29' N., 90° 16' E.; *Automedon*, 11th November, in 04° 19' N., 89° 24' E.; *Mandasor*, 24th January 1941, in 6° 23' S., 61° 40' E.; *Speybank*, 31st January, in 03° 0' S., 51° 45' E.; *Ketty Brovig*, 2nd February, in 04° 50' S., 50° 0' E. The two latter were taken in prize.

⁵ *Grigorios C. II, Canadian Cruiser, Rantau Pandang.*

⁶ *Marceba, Velebit.*

⁷ *Stamatios G. Embiricos.*

provided considerable encouragement to the Dutch and it was possible to hold at Singapore between the 25th and 29th November a series of Staff Conversations with the Naval and Military representatives of the Netherlands East Indies, the object being to arrive at an agreement on mutual co-operation and also to obtain agreement on a plan prepared by the Singapore Conference for the employment of British and Dutch Naval and Air Forces.

The Naval Forces in the Netherlands East Indies available for general use were—

- 3 light cruisers,
- 6 destroyers,
- 11 submarines,
- 8 flights of aircraft (reconnaissance auxiliary bombers).

The main naval base and principal base for the Netherlands fleet air arm was at Surabaya (Java) with an auxiliary naval base and main seaplane base at Tandjong Priok (Batavia). Other seaplane bases were situated at Balik Papan and Tarakan in Borneo and Ambon in Ceram. The A/A defence of ports and bases was seriously deficient, and the general shortage of munitions would be the limiting factor in Dutch endurance. Orders for munitions had been placed in both the United States and the British Commonwealth, on whom the Netherlands East Indies were entirely dependent for supplies, and it was recommended that they be expedited.

Assuming that the Dutch and the U.S.A. were also at war with Japan it was agreed that the primary role of the Dutch naval forces would be local defence in the Netherlands East Indies and collaboration with other Allied forces in holding the gateways into the Indian Ocean.¹ Two Dutch light cruisers or one cruiser and two destroyers would be used for trade protection generally.

The Chiefs of Staff considered and approved these conversations at the same time as they considered and approved the military proposals of the Anglo-Dutch-Australian Conference which was held three months later.²

33. UNITED STATES PREPARES FOR WAR

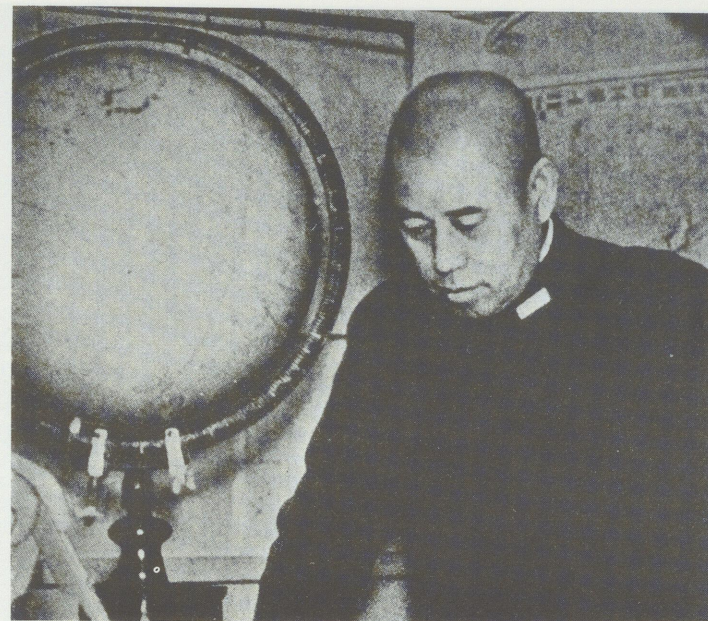
The position of the United States differed essentially from that of the British Commonwealth and the Dutch, their paramount territorial interests in the Eastern Hemisphere being chiefly sentimental and concerned with the Philippine Islands. Whilst doing everything possible, short of serious risk of actual military hostilities, to keep the Japanese situation stabilized, the United States Government was preparing for a conflict in the West which many of its members feared was inevitable though the public at the time did not understand the imminence of the danger. The end of arms limitation had been foreshadowed ten years earlier with the rapid deterioration of international relations which began when Germany's defiant rearmament was gathering headway and Japan carried out her coup in Manchuria. With the advent of the Roosevelt administration in 1933, the United States undertook increased naval construction and in the following year the Trammel-Vinson Act authorized a long-range building programme to provide a Navy of full treaty strength by 1942. The war in Europe was but a few days old when the President made a declaration of limited emergency, the immediate effect of which was to increase the enlisted

¹ Telegram Admty. 1856 15 10 1940 to Commander-in-Chief China (562) (R) Commander-in-Chief E.I. (345).

² See Section 36.



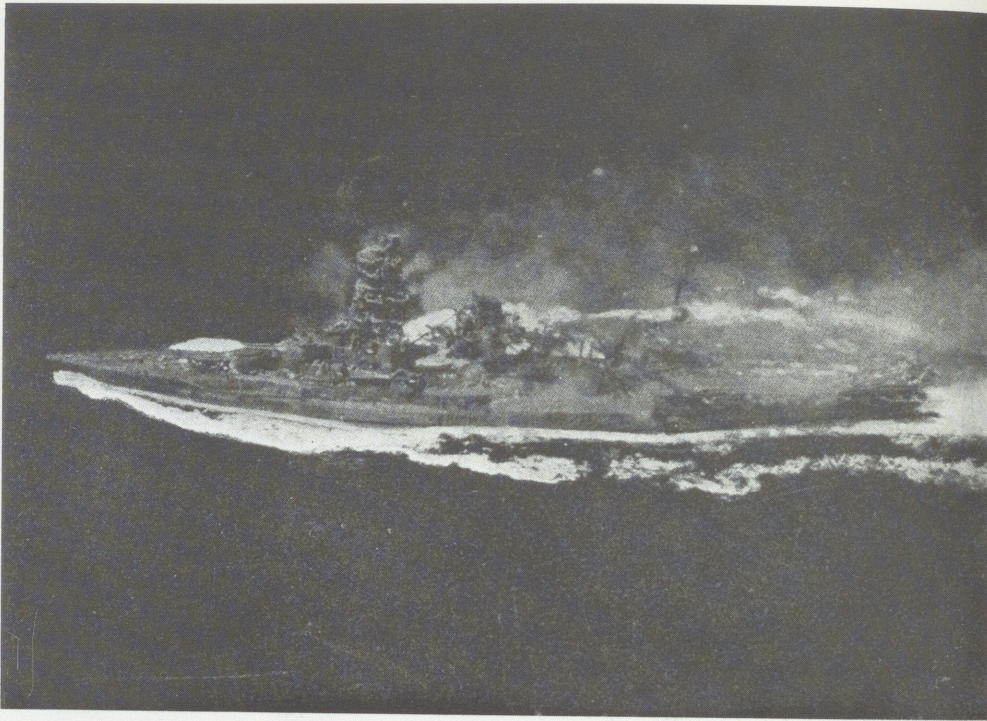
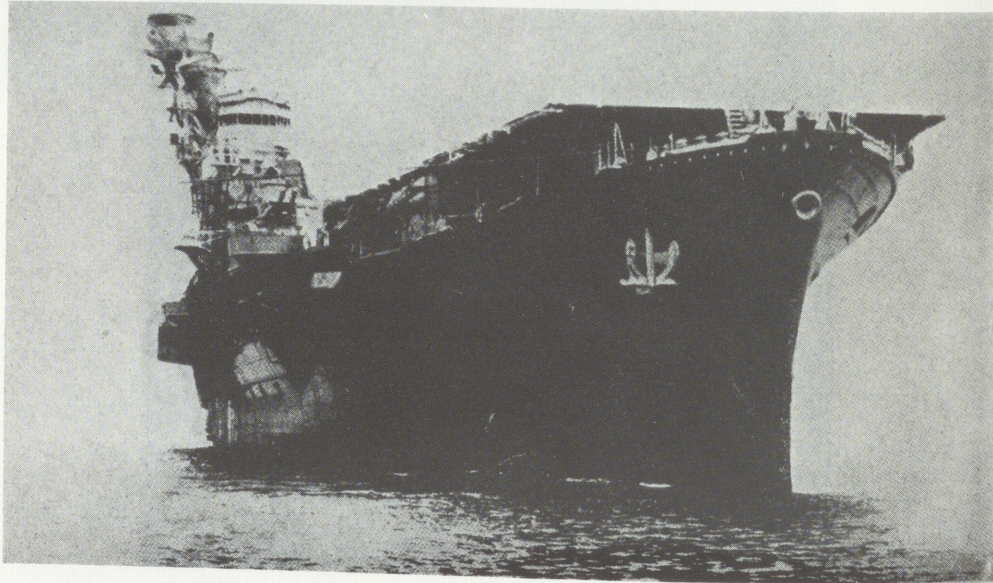
ADMIRALS LAYTON, HELFRICH AND HART, ALLIED COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF IN THE FAR EAST ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR



ADMIRAL I. YAMAMOTO, C.-IN-C. JAPANESE COMBINED FLEET



VICE-ADMIRAL C. NAGUMO, C.-IN-C. JAPANESE FIRST AIR FLEET

JAPANESE BATTLESHIP *Ise* AFTER FITTING OF FLIGHT DECKJAPANESE CONVERTED CARRIER *Jango*

El Alamein that the Americans were able to deploy their resources to the full extent. With few exceptions, all requisite war materials were available to the U.S.A. She was the world's greatest producer of coal, petroleum, steel, electric energy, copper, timber, and many other industrial and agricultural materials. Her transport and communications systems were highly organized. Her manufacturing capacity, already great, had been stimulated since the outbreak of war in Europe by British and foreign orders and by lend-lease. Her basic industries were situated in close proximity to her natural resources. Her people were characterized by activity of mind and mechanical and scientific ingenuity. Her governing and managerial hierarchy were fully capable of dealing with the problems of a nation at war. 'During wartime the United States was capable of feats of constructive energy almost beyond compass; history scarcely knows a more impressive record of co-ordinated elevation and intensity of national enterprise.' It was 'a country capable of spawning one hundred thousand airplanes overnight.'¹ Imagination falters before some of the figures of production. One commercial shipbuilding company alone completed 45 auxiliary aircraft carriers in the twelve months ending 6th July 1944, in addition to building merchant vessels. 'At peak, a ship could be built in four and a half days, that is the various prefabricated parts and sections were put together in that time, and launchings once reached a rate of thirty-two per month, or one million-dollar ship a day.'² One plant had a daily production of seven million rounds of small arms (.30) ammunition. It was due to this great military potential that the United States was able to overwhelm Japan without the necessity of landing a single soldier on her shores. But this vast production required time to get into its stride, and for many months operations in the Pacific had to be carried out with less than minimum requirements, whilst even in the latest stages of the war there was never any surplus material. To quote a single instance of shortage; at the date of the Battle of the Coral Sea, May 1942, binoculars were in such a short supply that in the American aircraft scouting squadrons only the commanders could be equipped.

The United States industrial complex remained out of reach of Japanese attack throughout the war. Brazil, the nearest point of approach to the continent from the Pacific, since climatic conditions ruled out the northern route, co-operated closely with the U.S.A. in defence plans and matters relating to the war effort.

35. ANGLO-DUTCH-AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE

THE 'A.D.A.' AGREEMENT

Though the United States was actively engaged in preparations for war the Government was not yet in a position politically to take part in discussions with the British Commonwealth and the Netherlands East Indies on a representative basis. It was possible, however, for the British Far Eastern Commanders to draw up firm agreements with the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, and also with the Netherlands East Indies. The incorporation of the latter in their 'New Order in Asia' the Japanese were demanding in January 1941.

A Conference was held at Singapore on 22nd-25th February 1941, largely at the suggestion of the Government of Australia, to formulate definite plans for naval co-operation of the Powers in a war with Japan. A fully representative

¹ John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.*, p. xiii.

² The same, p. 71, and C.B. 01815 (U), October 1945.

Dutch delegation attended but the United States officers were present only in the capacity of observers.¹ The views of New Zealand were represented by the Australian delegation.

These conversations resulted in what was known as the A.D.A. (Anglo-Dutch-Australian) Agreement. This was subject to ratification by the respective governments and involved no political commitment. There was complete agreement that action by the Japanese against anyone of the participants was of vital importance to the others and that all should co-operate fully in such an event, but it was noted that the active intervention of the U.S.A. in the early stages of a conflict could not be relied on. Agreement was reached on the particular actions by Japan which would necessitate the Naval and Military authorities in the Far East advising their respective governments to authorize active military counter-measures. The danger of delay in taking measures, which prior reference to London would entail, was referred to.

Vice-Admiral Helfrich had in the previous month stressed the danger and the need for a reciprocal agreement between his government and the British in the event of air attack by Japan on the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, for without such an agreement he would be unable to assist with his fleet for a considerable time after the event occurred.

The principle of mutual reinforcement was agreed. The Dutch undertook to operate in the South China Sea and to provide six or eight submarines and three bomber and one fighter squadrons whilst it was estimated that Malaya could provide four bomber squadrons for operation in the Netherlands East Indies territory.² Whether or not these squadrons would actually move in mutual support would depend on a political decision as to whether the British should fight if the Dutch were attacked, and the Dutch if the British were attacked. Australia was prepared to assist with two brigade groups, and an air striking force at Darwin of two or possibly three bomber squadrons to operate in the Ambon-Kupang area. It was agreed that the necessary administrative arrangements to prepare for these reinforcements should be undertaken at once. In May an interchange of British and Dutch staff officers began between Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. British bombers were allocated to Dutch airfields, war stores were sent from Australia to Dutch bases, and Australian liaison officers arrived in Java. The importance of Singapore to the security of the Netherlands East Indies was emphasized. It was agreed that the enemy should be met as far north as possible in the line of the Dutch possessions. The threat to the trade routes and the best method of countering it were considered.

The naval forces expected to be available were

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

British.—For the protection of shipping one aircraft carrier, one 8-inch cruiser, seven 6-inch cruisers, five armed merchant cruisers.

One battle cruiser, one aircraft carrier, one cruiser to be sent from Gibraltar.

¹ On 26th February 1941, at the 11th meeting of the U.S.-British Staff conversations in Washington the U.S. Staff Committee stated that the representative (Chief of Staff) of the Commander-in-Chief United States Asiatic Fleet was then at Singapore *with full powers to arrange mutual co-operation with the British and Dutch*, subject to later approval. Nothing is known of this, and it is not mentioned in the A.D.A. Agreement.

² The Dutch allotted Sinkawang and Samarinda airfields in Borneo as bases for two R.A.F. squadrons each. Sinkawang was ready for the reception and operation of two squadrons on the outbreak of war, but Samarinda was not ready.

Depending on the raider situation an additional force of two 8-inch cruisers, one 7.5-inch cruiser, one aircraft carrier.

Three D-class cruisers based on Penang.

Dutch.—Three light cruisers, six destroyers, eleven submarines, eight flights of aircraft, as agreed at the Anglo-Dutch Staff Conversations in November 1940.

IN THE S.W. PACIFIC, AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND WATERS

The Australian and New Zealand squadrons reinforced by the return of their units serving at the time on other stations.

IN THE WATERS OF THE N.E.I. AND THE PACIFIC TO THE EASTWARD THEREOF

The Dutch fleet, less any detachment which might be employed in the Indian Ocean.

The Chiefs of Staff approved the military clauses of the A.D.A. Report as a basis for planning, but not the prior definition of an act of war and automatic reaction without reference to London, whilst the assurance of military co-operation with the Dutch in the event of Japanese aggression was left in abeyance.¹ Arrangements had been made for re-assembling the Conference, but the Chiefs of Staff only agreed on the condition that the agenda was confined to military questions within the scope of accepted policy.

The result of the Conference, however, did not altogether satisfy the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, who were concerned at the fact that there was no co-ordinated naval plan for the Far East. The view taken by the Conference, however, was that the amount of detailed planning which would be useful at this stage was limited in view of the doubt as to what course of action the Japanese would pursue. In particular, the contingency of the main Japanese offensive being concentrated on an attack on sea communications, which bulked largely in the speculations of the Australian and New Zealand authorities, was deemed to be too remote to justify detailed planning. In any case such planning would be better done in London, since the problem must be a world wide one. The Conference itself recognized the difficulty in such a large gathering of itself formulating plans in detail and that a Joint Planning Staff was clearly needed. It was further realized that an effective general Conference could not be held until the United States were in a position to send a representative delegation. The attitude of the U.S.A. indeed was recognized as a governing factor, and it was thought that if America intervened actively on our side, Japan would have to adopt a defensive strategy and abandon major expeditions to the south.

One result of the Conference was the initiation of active co-operation between the China Squadron and the Netherlands East Indies Navy. From March-April onwards regular anti-submarine exercises were carried out by ships of the two fleets together.

36. PROTECTION OF AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND SHIPPING

In preparation for the Conference the Australian Chiefs of Staff had made an appreciation of the situation which clearly showed their apprehension of the danger of Japanese attack on Australian and New Zealand trade.² The war

¹ C.O.S.(41) 208 and Admty. Tel. 1206/13/3/41 to Commander-in-Chief China, Commander-in-Chief E.I.

² B.U. S. (41) 17.

effort of these Dominions had its principal focus in the Tasman Sea, and if command of this area was lost the transport of troops and trade by both Dominions would cease or be reduced to a trickle. They considered the area to be very open to attack and thought the Japanese could maintain there constantly a cruiser force stronger than any which the British could bring against it. The Australian Chiefs of Staff were also concerned at the naval weakness in the Indian Ocean, where some 20,000 to 25,000 Anzac troops each quarter were estimated to require convoy to the Middle East. There was also a serious threat to the Colombo-Singapore trade. The general view at the Conference was that such dangers should not be exaggerated. Distances made serious Japanese attack on sea communications in the Indian Ocean unlikely, and the remoteness of the South Pacific trade routes, including the Tasman Sea, would probably limit Japan to sporadic raids unless she first captured the Netherlands East Indies or established bases to the north-east of Australia. In another connection, however, it was pointed out that at the time Japan would need but a small force to enable her to establish a base in the New Guinea—New Hebrides—New Caledonia—Fiji area and thus make the passage of American reinforcements to the Far East hazardous; and some increase in the defences in this area was consequently recommended. It later transpired that as regards the security of trade from Australia and New Zealand to the Panama Canal—about 14 ships per month—the United States War Plan made provision for this.

Despite the high importance of the Empire Air Training Scheme, which required the passage every month of some 400 air personnel to Canada and 700 to the United Kingdom from Australia and New Zealand via the Pacific, the U.S. Chiefs of Staff did not apparently regard the material support to the war effort which was being provided by Australia and New Zealand as vital: they considered it might if necessary be replaced by further supplies from the Western Hemisphere.

The Conference advised that the return of all Australian and New Zealand cruisers to their own stations for protection of trade in their own waters should take place when war with Japan became imminent, or earlier if the ships could be spared.

37. UNITED STATES-BRITISH STAFF CONVERSATIONS IN WASHINGTON—ABC-1

The information just noticed regarding the United States war plan came to light in the course of staff conversations which opened in Washington on 29th January 1941 between the United States Staff Committee representing the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral H. R. Stark and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General G. C. Marshall and the United Kingdom delegation headed by Rear-Admiral R. M. Bellairs representing the Chiefs of Staff. The representatives of the Chiefs of Staff of the Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were associated with the United Kingdom delegation throughout the course of these conversations but were not present at joint meetings.

These conversations which were of a particularly secret nature, the United States being at the time theoretically neutral, were the outcome of discussions between London and Washington during the previous three months. Prior to the Presidential Election in November 1940, the United States view was that conversations should be confined to exchange of information in London. The result of the election cleared the way for extending the scope of the conversations. At the beginning of November Lord Lothian, our ambassador

in Washington, visited London. During his stay the First Sea Lord impressed upon him the importance attached to conversations in Washington with the United States Naval and Military staffs. It was explained that the British representatives being only a small party would pass unnoticed in the numbers of official missions in Washington and that the preservation of secrecy should be no difficult matter.

At the end of November the President agreed that conversations should take place. There was some delay owing to the sudden death of Lord Lothian and the British representatives did not leave until the beginning of January when they sailed in H.M.S. *King George V* which was carrying our new ambassador, Lord Halifax, to the United States. Their instructions were that 'conversations should be based on the hypothesis of a war between Germany, Italy and Japan on the one hand and the British Empire with our present allies and the United States on the other.' This hypothesis was without prejudice to any development in the political situation and implied no political commitment. The object of the conversations was 'to co-ordinate on broad lines plans for the employment of allied forces in the above hypothesis.' The Prime Minister himself gave particular directions that 'the attitude to be adopted by our delegation in the discussions on the naval strategy should be one of deference to the views of the United States in all matters concerning the Pacific theatre of war.'¹

The report on these United States-British Conversations (short title ABC-1) was signed at Washington on 27th March 1941, shortly after the passing of the lend-lease act which was to strengthen our hands immeasurably. It embodied the basic strategic decision that the Atlantic and European theatre was the vital one where a decision must first be sought. Germany and Italy must be defeated before Japan.

During the preliminary conversations the question of security in the Far East gave rise to some discussion.² The British view was that the position including the territorial integrity of Australia and New Zealand was essential not only to British strategy but also to the maintenance of the war efforts of the associated powers. For this purpose the maintenance of the Fleet base at Singapore must be ensured, the loss of which might have a decisive effect on the issue of the war. Reinforcement of naval forces in the south-west Pacific by one carrier, a division of heavy cruisers and the necessary auxiliary craft in proportion was felt to be, in the British view, a minimum requirement in the event of Japanese aggression. This force would have to be provided from the United States Pacific Fleet. The U.S. view on the other hand was that whilst the general moral effect of the loss of Singapore would be great, the strategic consequences would not be so severe as envisaged by the British representatives in a paper placed before the conference and which stated that 'if we were to abandon our position in Malaya, not only should we be unable subsequently to restore the position but the Japanese would be able to use the facilities we had abandoned and thus penetrate to the Indian Ocean. In these circumstances our sea communications to the Middle East would be gravely threatened and we might be unable to maintain our position in the Middle East. With Malaya in Japanese hands India would be exposed to attack. . . . We should lose sources of supply of certain raw materials which are vital to our war effort (Malayan rubber and tin and oil from the Netherlands East Indies and Borneo).'³

¹ C.O.S. (40) 1052.

² B.U.S. (J) (41) 13 and 16.

³ B.U.S. (J) (41) 6 Annex. 1.

The United States representatives considered that the British and Dutch defence of the Malay barrier should not assume assistance from the United States and no additional naval forces would be sent to the Philippines during peace. 'Their strategic location there would be fatally unsound.' In view of the possibility that the Japanese might establish naval and air bases in the Netherlands East Indies, Siam and Indo-China, they doubted whether it would be possible to operate naval forces from Singapore in view of the weakness of the defence of Malaya. Whilst the retention of Singapore might be very desirable the diversion to the Asiatic theatre of sufficient forces to ensure its retention might in the view of the U.S.A. representatives jeopardize the success of the main effort in the Western Hemisphere where the paramount territorial interest of the United States lay. A further factor was that Japan did not yet know the intentions of the United States whether the latter would enter the war nor having done so, what the American navy would do. Committal to the Far East of a fleet large enough to be significant might enable Japan to analyse the intentions of the United States and proceed accordingly. The position in the Far East could not be held in its entirety. There was little hope of holding Hong Kong, the Philippines or Borneo indefinitely.

As noted above the instructions to the British delegation were that the United States view on Pacific strategy should prevail and the final report stated that 'The United States does not intend to add to its present military strength in the Far East but will employ the United States fleet offensively in the manner best calculated to weaken Japanese economic-power, and to support the defence of the Malay barrier by diverting Japanese strength away from Malaya. The United States intends so to augment its forces in the Atlantic and Mediterranean areas that the British Commonwealth will be in a position to release the necessary forces for the Far East.' The United States did, however, shortly afterwards reinforce their air forces in the Philippines, the fighter aircraft for this purpose, as well as for reinforcement of the Hawaiian Islands in February 1941, being secured largely by stripping the limited number of squadrons then in training in the U.S.A. In November additional submarines were sent to Manila.

The ABC-1 conference agreed that even if Japan did not enter the war on the side of the Axis Powers it would still be necessary to maintain dispositions to provide against the possibility of subsequent Japanese intervention. Should war break out Manila, with other outposts such as Hong Kong were to be held as long as possible in order to impose the greatest possible commitment upon the enemy. The military resources, bases, repair facilities and supplies of either nation were to be at the disposal of the military forces of the other to whatever extent might be required for the successful prosecution of the war; whilst the required military measures were to be taken to ensure the safe passage of the forces, food and raw materials of the Associated and Allied Powers. An essential feature of associated strategy was stated to be the application of economic pressure, in which respect Pan-American collaboration in the control of commodities at source was of the utmost importance. It was added that a cardinal feature of British strategic policy was 'the retention of a position in the Far East such as will ensure the cohesion and security of the British Commonwealth and the maintenance of its war effort.'

General principles governing the command of the fighting forces of the Associated Powers were agreed at the conference. Each Power would undertake the strategic direction of all forces of the Associated Powers normally

operating in certain areas.¹ As a general rule these forces would operate in their own areas of responsibility under their own commanders. The forces of one Power operating under the strategic direction of a commander of the other would be employed under their own commanders as task (organized) forces charged with the execution of specific strategic tasks: only in exceptional circumstances would they be distributed into small bodies and attached to the forces of the other Power. United States naval air forces would, however, remain under U.S. naval control.²

The areas to be secured in the Pacific and Far East were so widely separated that the American naval forces were organized in two separate fleets, the Pacific Fleet based on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, and the Asiatic Fleet based on Manila. Though it was not practicable to combine these two fleets under a single command, their activities were to be co-ordinated towards a common purpose.

Subject to agreement with the Dutch it was agreed that the general strategical control of Associated naval forces operating in the Far Eastern area, other than those engaged in the defence of the Philippines, would be exercised by the British Naval Commander-in-Chief, China, under whose command the Australian and New Zealand Navy Boards had placed their forces. The Commander-in-Chief, United States Asiatic Fleet, would, however, be responsible for the direction of the naval forces operating in the Far Eastern area in defence of the Philippines which thus formed an enclave within the Far East Area.

The report laid down that the tasks of the naval forces in the Far East and those of Australia and New Zealand were the security of sea communications of the Associated Powers; the raiding of Japanese sea communications (probably limited, in the neighbourhood of Japan, to occasional long-distance submarine raids); the destruction of Axis forces; and co-operation with land and air forces in defence of territories of the Associated Powers. The British East Indies Station through which passed the sea communications between the United Kingdom and the Middle East to and from Australia and New Zealand would be closely associated strategically with both the Far East and Mediterranean theatres.

It was pointed out that even after reinforcement, that is, the arrival of a main fleet, the Far Eastern forces would still have to act on the defensive. As stated above such reinforcement by a British Fleet was to be rendered possible by the transfer of certain United States forces from the Pacific to the Atlantic and Mediterranean, thus setting British ships free. The only immediate reinforcements envisaged were a battle cruiser and an aircraft carrier together with a few cruisers and destroyers from Force H based on Gibraltar. This was approximately as mentioned in the Chiefs of Staff's cable to Singapore on 16th September.³ Ultimately, however, the intention was to despatch five battleships and a further considerable number of cruisers and destroyers.

The ABC report quickly received the approval of the British and United States Chiefs of Staff and immediate steps were taken to implement it.

¹ For areas of responsibility and strategic direction *see* Plans I, 5.

² A note on U.S. air forces is given in Appendix A.

³ The cable said 'one cruiser,' but ABC-1 allowed for one 8-inch and three 6-inch cruisers.

38. EMPLOYMENT OF THE UNITED STATES FLEETS

Prior to the outbreak of war in Europe the United States Fleet had been based on the west coast of the United States. In the spring of 1940, however, the fleet had proceeded to the Hawaiian area for fleet exercises and its scheduled return to its regular bases on the west coast was delayed from time to time. From these delays there gradually emerged evidence of the President's decision to retain the Fleet in the Hawaiian area, as an instrument of diplomacy, for it was thought the presence of the Fleet at Pearl Harbour might deter Japan from attacking the Netherlands East Indies. Pearl Harbour was the only anchorage in the Hawaiian area offering any security, though the deficiencies of the base rendered the position of the Fleet there inherently untenable and dangerous, whilst an additional sea voyage of 2,000 miles was required for the inadequate fleet train to bring out crews, equipment, and supplies.

On 1st February 1941 the United States Fleet, now based at Hawaii, was renamed the Pacific Fleet and Admiral H. E. Kimmel succeeded to the command. Its strength was appreciably reduced in April and May 1941, when one aircraft carrier, three battleships, four cruisers and eighteen destroyers were detached and transferred to the Atlantic. Before ordering the transfer the President directed the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral H. R. Stark, to consult the British Chiefs of Staff on the proposal to effect it. These gave it as their opinion 'that the consequential reduction in the strength of the United States Pacific Fleet would not unduly encourage Japan.'¹

After the transfer to the Atlantic, the main strength of the Pacific Fleet consisted of:—

- 9 battleships,
- 3 aircraft carriers,
- 9 heavy cruisers,
- 10 6-inch cruisers (5 old),
- 45 destroyers (plus 6 old destroyers),
- 33 submarines,
- 76 flying boats,
- besides destroyers, (fleet) minesweepers and minelayers.

The Fleet was outnumbered two to one by the Japanese Combined Fleet in all categories except battleships. One American post-war analysis has called it 'An inferior Fleet, under enemy surveillance in an exposed naval base without resources to protect it.'² Military Commanders in the Far East had however always relied on the deterrent effect on Japan of the existence of the Pacific Fleet, even if the United States were not in the war from the start. It was expected that this deterrent would prevent the Japanese from allotting more than a limited number of warships for escort duties, thus imposing a limitation on the number of convoys sent into the south China Sea, and would also prevent them from sending an expedition round the east side of the Philippines towards the Netherlands East Indies, especially Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands.³ In the ABC-1 agreement the intention was that the

¹ Letter from Rear-Admiral Danckwerts, a member of the United Kingdom delegation at Washington, to Rear-Admiral R. K. Turner, one of the U.S. representatives at the British United States Staff Conversations, 28th April 1941, quoted in Report of *Investigations of the Pearl Harbour Attack*, p. 266-C.

² Conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Committee on the *Investigation of the Pearl Harbour Attack*.

³ *Commander-in-Chief, Far East, Despatch*, para. 113.

U.S. Pacific Fleet would support British naval forces south of the Equator between 155° E. and 180° E. as opportunity offered, or as might prove profitable, but the U.S.A. could not undertake to give continuous support, nor would such support be extended in the event of mere sporadic raiding by single Axis ships.¹ The necessary arrangements were made later for direct liaison between the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, for local naval co-operation on the Australian and New Zealand stations, and between the New Zealand Naval Board and the Admiral Commanding the 12th Naval District San Francisco, for the purpose of control of trans-Pacific shipping.

The role of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet was to operate against Japanese expeditions threatening the Philippine Islands and Hong Kong. The Fleet consisted, apart from base and local defence forces, of one 8-inch cruiser, one 6-inch cruiser, 13 old destroyers, 17 submarines,² and 24 patrol seaplanes. The war plan (Rainbow 5 or WPL 46), based on ABC-1 and officially adopted in May 1941 stated that the Asiatic Fleet must support the Army in the defence of the Philippines 'so long as that defence continues,' but could shift its base of operations to a British or Dutch port at the commander's discretion: whatever forces he might shift south would fall under British command, and their task would then be to support the British and Dutch Navies in the defence of the Malay Barrier.³ It was understood by the Military Commanders in the Far East that the base force (submarine, destroyer and large patrol aircraft tenders and tankers), would be despatched from Manila to Singapore before the commencement of hostilities if the movements of the Japanese naval and air forces became threatening; the submarines and naval air forces would support the army in the defence of Luzon, conducting reconnaissance and such offensive operations against Japanese sea communications and naval forces as were consistent with that duty; the cruisers with attached aviation units and destroyers would, when ordered by the Commander-in-Chief, Asiatic Fleet, proceed towards Singapore reporting to the Commander-in-Chief, China, to operate under his strategic direction; and on the 'Ultimate Defence Area' (which included Corregidor at the entrance to Manila Bay), becoming untenable, all remaining naval and naval air forces capable of fighting would, when released by the Commander-in-Chief, Asiatic Fleet, retire southward for employment under the strategic direction of the Commander-in-Chief, China.

39. JAPANESE-RUSSIAN NEUTRALITY PACT

The tension between Japan and ourselves engendered by her interference in the affairs of Indo-China and Siam reached a climax about the middle of February 1941. During January the Japanese Government withdrew the most controversial legislation before the House of Representatives and introduced a Bill to strengthen the National Mobilization Law. This sudden clearing of the decks was looked upon as ominous, suggesting preparations for Japanese action during the early spring. After the middle of February, however, the Commander-in-Chief, China, saw evidence of some slight relaxation of the tension, the main factors contributing to which he believed may well have been the firmer attitude adopted by the United States as indicated by speeches on the Pacific question, the progress of the Lend-Lease Bills, and the despatch of reinforcements to

¹ Telegram from U.K. Delegation, Washington, Gleam Series, No. 71, 19th June 1941.

² There were 29 submarines on the outbreak of war in December 1941.

³ Morison, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific*, p. 152.

Malaya. In London, too, an improvement in the situation was discerned.¹ The apparent relaxation of tension did not, however, imply any diminution in Japanese preparations for southward expansion. Japan was making great efforts to settle the Chinese question, and for this purpose effect some compromise with the U.S.S.R. and Communism. On 13th April she signed a neutrality pact with Russia, supplementing the pact of non-aggression between the two Powers dating from August 1939. The new pact was doubtless designed to remove a menace to Japan's northward flank but was scarcely secure enough as a basis for further moves. Under it, the parties agreed to maintain peaceful and friendly relations and observe strict neutrality if the other should be attacked. Possibly Japan had hoped for something more robust; but with Hitler's assurance that any breach of the pact by Russia would result in his taking 'suitable action,' Japan pressed on with her preparations. Though it is scarcely likely that she could have been diverted from her plan, so urgent was her need for the primary products of Malaya, Borneo and the Netherlands East Indies, it is probable that Japan would have welcomed avoidance of war with the United States, had the attainment of her aims been possible without first rendering the American fleet incapable of interfering: and, indeed, on 7th May the Japanese Government made through their Ambassador in Washington, Admiral K. Nomura, a proposal that the two countries should sign a pact of non-aggression. As the date of the war approached, said Mr. Cordell Hull, United States Secretary of State, the Japanese made 'almost frantic effort to push us into an agreement that would give Tokyo all it wanted . . .'.² What Japan wanted was a species of joint overlordship of the Pacific area by herself and the United States, with Japan in control of the part that embraced nine-tenths of the population and the wealth, and with little consideration for the rights and interests of other nations.

40. REINFORCEMENT OF SINGAPORE

At that time (April 1941) our ability to send a fleet to the Far East depended on so many factors that the Government decided it could only be considered in the light of the situation at the time. It was not possible to say more than that we intended to despatch a battle cruiser and an aircraft carrier to the Indian Ocean at the start of war.

On 28th April Mr Winston Churchill, in his dual capacity of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, impressed with the overwhelming necessity of concentrating our efforts and resources on the existing theatre of war indited the following directive to the Chiefs of Staff which had an important bearing on the reinforcement of Malaya:—

Japan is unlikely to enter the war unless the Germans make a successful invasion of Great Britain, and even a major disaster like the loss of the Middle East would not necessarily make her come in, because the liberation of the British Mediterranean Fleet which might be expected, and also any troops evacuated from the Middle East to Singapore would not weaken the British war-making strength in Malaya.³ It is very unlikely, moreover, that Japan will enter the war either if the United States have come in, or if Japan thinks that they would come in consequent

¹ C.O.S. (41) 230 Final.

² *Memoirs*.

³ The Mediterranean Fleet at this date comprised three battleships, three aircraft carriers, 5 6-inch gun cruisers, 3 A.A. ships.

upon a Japanese declaration of war. Finally, it may be taken as almost certain that the entry of Japan into the war would be followed by the immediate entry of the United States on our side. These conditions are to be accepted by the Service Departments as a guide for all plans and actions. Should they cease to hold good, it will be the responsibility of Ministers to notify the Service Staffs in good time . . .

There is no need at the present time to make any further dispositions for the defence of Malaya and Singapore, beyond those modest arrangements which are in progress, until or unless the conditions set out in paragraph 1 are modified.

Although as a result of the recommendations of the Commanders in the Far East, endorsed by the Conference which followed at Singapore in the same month, army reinforcements were sent to Malaya, mainly from India and Australia, yet the difficulties of providing the increased air forces required were such that on the outbreak of war with Japan the total operational first line strength of the Royal Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force was less than half of even the lower figure of 336 recommended by the Chiefs of Staff, whilst a number of the machines were obsolete and others in poor condition. The difficulty in providing the requisite forces was, of course, to strike a balance between the essential needs of the theatres in which we were fighting, without neglecting those where war might develop at any moment.

41. AMERICAN-DUTCH-BRITISH (A.D.B.) CONVERSATIONS

By the time the United States-British Staff Conversations came to an end, in March, however, the progress of United States policy at least made it possible to implement the recommendation made in the Report of the Washington Conversations, that a conference of American, Dutch and British Military Commanders should assemble at Singapore without delay to prepare a plan for the conduct of military operations in the Far East on the basis of the Report. This was convened from 21st-27th April 1941, and was attended by representatives of the U.S.A., Netherlands East Indies, Australia, New Zealand, India and the East Indies Station, as well as the local commanders.

The Chiefs of Staff considered that our essential commitments in the Indian Ocean and Far East comprised the security of communications both in those areas and between the United Kingdom and our Dominions and possessions and those of the Americans and Dutch, including the Philippines. Vital supplies passed along the sea routes in those areas, whilst in the Pacific, reinforcements of troops were being sent to our island possessions, and there were important movements in connection with the Empire Training Air Scheme. The security of coastal trade had also to be ensured.

The Conference worked on the assumptions that—

- (a) A British Eastern Fleet would be available about 80 days after the outbreak of war;
- (b) The U.S. Asiatic Fleet, if the U.S.A. entered the war, would retire on Singapore when the Philippines were invested, and would therefore be available to assist in the defence of the former;
- (c) The co-operation of the Dutch forces in the Netherlands East Indies was fully assured.¹

¹ T.S.D. 4409/42, p. 29.

Former conferences had considered various courses of action open to Japan, but now at length Japan's basic object in going to war was appreciated and assumed (correctly) to be the gaining of complete political and economic domination over South-East Asia and the islands in the Far East area in order to secure control for herself of the sources of vital war supplies. The importance of Japan's knowing that such action might immediately lead to united resistance by all was pointed out.

The conviction that action against one of the Powers was of vital importance to the others was reaffirmed. In order that the Allies should not allow themselves to be deflected from their principal object of the defeat of Germany and Italy it was emphasized that their main strategy in the Far East at that time must be defensive. This policy was consonant with air operations and the report of the Conference emphasized the importance of organizing such measures against Japanese occupied territory and against Japan herself. 'It is probable,' stated the report 'that her collapse will occur as a result of economic blockade, naval pressure and air bombardment.' As events were to prove, this was an exact appreciation. The maintenance of a bombing force in Luzon and building up of a similar force in China were recommended. In addition to the value of Luzon as a base for submarines operating against Japanese expeditions routed west of the Philippines against Malaya or the Netherlands East Indies, or east of them against the Netherlands East Indies, Australia, or New Zealand its importance as a base for offensive air action was pointed out, and the strengthening of its defences was recommended. Other offensive action recommended was support of the Chinese Army by Britain and the U.S.A., especially with finance and equipment and assistance to guerilla operations, and the organizing of subversive activity in Japan and Japanese-occupied territories.

It was recommended that the British Naval Commander-in-Chief, China Station, should exercise strategical direction of all Naval forces in the Eastern Theatre, other than those employed solely on local defence or operating under the Commander-in-Chief, United States Asiatic Fleet; and that the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, should exercise strategical direction of the air forces in the Far East. The Eastern Theatre was defined as comprising the East Indies, China, Australia and New Zealand British naval stations excluding those parts in the Pacific area (*see* Plan 5).

The British naval forces were to be employed, apart from the local defence of bases, in attack on Japanese sea communications and defence of our sea communications. The forces available were quite inadequate for the introduction of a general convoy system, and consequently, evasive routeing or sailings under cover would have to form the main defence for trade. The employment of the Dutch naval forces was as agreed at the Anglo-Dutch conference in the previous November.

The A.D.B. Report included a plan for the employment of the land and air forces of the Associated Powers, each of whom undertook responsibility for air operations in their own spheres. To facilitate concentrations for dealing with major operations in specially important localities, certain air base areas were prepared to receive and operate reinforcements from other areas. Such were Burma, southern Malaya, west and east Borneo, south Celebes, Ambon, Timor, Luzon in the Philippines, and the Australian and New Zealand areas. The United States intended to support the British air forces in the Australian and New Zealand areas, though at the time of the A.D.B. Conference information

as to the extent of such assistance was still awaited from the Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet. During the late summer of 1941 the Australian Government made arrangements to afford the U.S.A. air bases in its sphere. The landing strips at Port Darwin, Rabaul in the Australian mandated territory of New Britain, and Port Moresby in southern New Guinea, a dependency of the Australian Commonwealth, were improved; aviation fuel and bombs were despatched to these points, and a beginning was made with similar deliveries to Singapore and Balikpapan in Borneo.

The conference made recommendations on the subject of what should be considered *casus belli*, the principal being a 'direct act of war' by Japanese armed forces against the territory or mandated territory of any of the Associated Powers; a movement of Japanese forces into Siam west of the meridian of Bangkok (100° E.) or south of the Kra Isthmus (10° N.); the occupation of Portuguese Timor, New Caledonia or the Loyalty Islands; the movement of a Japanese expedition directed on the Philippines, Malaya or across the parallel 6° N. between Malaya and the Philippines, across a line from Gulf of Davao to Waigeo Island (off north-west New Guinea) or across the Equator east of Waigeo Island.

42. REINFORCEMENT OF HONG KONG

The A.D.B. Report envisaged Hong Kong as an advanced base for operations by the submarines and naval aircraft of the United States Asiatic Fleet, a view with which the Chiefs of Staff did not concur. The pressure to reinforce Hong Kong, which the Chiefs of Staff had foreseen in August 1940, soon arrived. In December 1940 Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Commander-in-Chief Far East, visited the colony, and on 6th January following he sent a message to the Chiefs of Staff. At the time, the war was going better for Great Britain. The threat of invasion had diminished; in the Western Desert our offensive against the Italians was proceeding with brilliant success; and at sea our shipping losses from German submarines showed a downward trend. Sir Robert hoped that in our improving situation the relief of Hong Kong might yet be possible. He proposed to reinforce the garrison by two infantry battalions from Malaya as soon as they could be spared, and he aimed at the provision of air assistance to the Chinese armies so that they might be in a condition to relieve pressure on Hong Kong by action in the Canton area. In a further telegram next day he stated that although no airfield could be constructed on Hong Kong island a suitable base for amphibians could be found on the south coast.

'This is all wrong,' wrote the Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill. 'If Japan goes to war with us there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of increasing the garrison it ought to be reduced to a symbolical scale. Any trouble arising there must be dealt with at the Peace Conference after the war. We must avoid frittering away our resources on untenable positions. Japan will think long before declaring war on the British Empire, and whether there are two or six battalions at Hong Kong will make no difference to her choice. I wish we had fewer troops there, but to move any away would be noticeable and dangerous.'

Nevertheless, Sir Robert returned to the attack, until in May the Chiefs of Staff closed the subject for the time being by reminding him that Hong Kong was still regarded as a strategic liability, not an asset.

The Commander-in-Chief Far East based his representations for reinforcement of Hong Kong on the view that it might be of value as a base of operations 'at a later stage of the war.' Sir Robert was also mindful, however, of the effect of our attitude at Hong Kong on Chinese determination to fight. The port of access was very valuable to China. Had the Chinese not been convinced of our determination to stand and fight for the defence of Hong Kong, and been taken into our confidence and given opportunities to inspect the defences and discuss plans for defence, Sir Robert thought the effect on their war effort would in all probability have been serious.¹ Eventually, and principally in order to reassure the Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Canada provided a small reinforcement, though with no expectation other than that resistance might thereby be prolonged and that Chiang Kai-shek would be reassured. At the same time, the Chiefs of Staff repeated once more that Hong Kong was to be regarded merely as an outpost to be held as long as possible in the event of war.

43. DRAFT AGREEMENT (A.D.B. 2) DRAWN UP

The A.D.B. Report was, generally, approved by the Chiefs of Staff in London, but leaving the political issues to be resolved independently. Objections were raised in Washington, however, the first being that political commitments had been introduced. The strategic scope was too broad—the East Indies Station, for instance, was outside the Far Eastern area (that in A B C—1) to which the Navy Department felt the report should be limited; they were not prepared to contemplate the possibility of the Asiatic Fleet when placed under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief Far East (whose command extended from Africa to New Zealand) being ordered to operate outside the Far East Area in waters of no strategic significance to the United States nor to allow American Naval Aviation² to be employed, as they maintained might occur under the report, on other than naval tasks. Another specific point of objection was that the task of holding the Malay Barrier was left to the Asiatic Fleet, whilst all other, numerically superior, naval forces were employed in protecting the sea communications of the British Empire. Finally, the deep-seated mistrust of Singapore felt by the Navy Department found expression in the refusal to place American naval forces 'at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief Far Eastern Fleet who was to supersede and be over the Commander-in-Chief China,' in war. This referred to a decision of the Admiralty in April 1941, that as soon as the main fleet arrived at Singapore its commander would take the title of Commander-in-Chief Eastern Fleet: he would fly his flag afloat while the Commander-in-Chief China would continue to fly his flag at Singapore. Admiral Layton strongly disliked the scheme, and later the Admiralty decided that on the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief Eastern Fleet at Singapore, the title of Commander-in-Chief China should lapse and that Admiral Layton should return to the United Kingdom. The United States Chiefs of Staff definitely rejected the A.D.B. Report on 3rd July and notified the British Chiefs of Staff that permission given to Admiral Hart to operate the Asiatic Fleet under British strategic direction, was revoked.

The report was discussed and points of disagreement cleared up with the U.S. Chiefs of Staff at the inter-Allied conference held on board the *Prince of Wales* in Placentia Bay in August 1941 known as the 'Riviera' Conference. It was redrafted in London in the same month and converted into an agreement

¹ *Despatch*, Sect. 31.

² Naval Air Force (see Appendix A).

between the Chiefs of Staff of the Associated Powers, known as A.D.B. 2. This agreement left all the main features of A.D.B. practically unchanged, but removed the political matters to an appendix. This, however, did not entirely satisfy the United States authorities in Washington when they studied the matter leisurely,¹ and eventually, since neither of the agreements, A.D.B. nor A.D.B. 2, met the conditions then prevailing in the Far East it was decided in November that a further conference should be held at Singapore to draw up fresh plans. The information reached the Commander-in-Chief Far East on 25th November, too late for any action to be taken before war broke out.²

44. BRITISH-DUTCH (B.D.) CONVERSATIONS, SINGAPORE

The American-Dutch-British Conference was immediately followed by conversations with the Dutch to clear up outstanding points arising out of the Anglo-Dutch Australian Conversations of the previous February and to draw up plans for the disposition and employment of British and Dutch forces in the Far East.

For the purpose of personal contacts the Dutch Naval and Military Commanders-in-Chief visited Singapore in June, when a planning section of Vice-Admiral Layton's staff was set up. 'Such a conference was all the better for producing no written report to be argued over later,' wrote Sir Geoffrey Layton.³

45. THE OPERATIONAL PLANS (PLENAPS)

The A.D.B. Report included an outline plan for the employment of naval and naval air forces. As soon as the planning section of the Commander-in-Chief China's staff was formed, a start was made to prepare plans to implement the naval portion of the report. These plans for the employment of the naval forces of the Associated Powers (short title Plenaps), were later expanded to include the appropriations which were actually put into operation by the Commander-in-Chief Far East and the Commander-in-Chief Eastern Fleet (*vide postea*) in consultation.

When information was received of disagreement in Washington with the A.D.B. Report, Vice-Admiral Layton decided, by an arrangement with the Commander-in-Chief Asiatic Fleet, Admiral Thomas C. Hart, U.S.N., to continue to draft plans covering the participation of the United States in the Far East area. The drafts of these plans were adjusted from time to time in consultation with Admiral Hart, to meet changes in United States policy. The Netherlands East Indies authorities also agreed to this procedure as the plans could be applied equally well to co-ordinate British and Dutch activities if the United States were not a belligerent.

The strategic function of the naval forces of the Associated Powers in the Far East had been agreed in the conversations at Washington as the neutralization of the operations of such Japanese forces as might not be contained by the operations of the United States Pacific Fleet. Our basic policy was defined by the Chiefs of Staff on 28th July, namely, to hold in co-operation with the Dutch a perimeter from Lashio in Burma to Tonga (the Friendly Islands) on

¹ Telegram from B.A.D. 1241R/2/10/41.

² War Office Telegram No. 53937.

³ *Report on China Station 1940-1941*, p. 6 (M.09462.42).

the Date Line 2,000 miles east of Australia, Singapore being the focus. In the absence of a battle fleet air forces would be used for mobile, and land forces for static defence.

The plans were formulated locally on the assumption that Japan would attack our sea communications from the outset of the war, and that the Japanese would allocate naval and air forces to neutralize Hong Kong and destroy or contain the Asiatic Fleet in the Philippines. It was held that attacks on Australia and New Zealand could be ruled out as initial operations. It was appreciated that Japan was now in a position to attack both Malaya and Burma from Siam: either of these, or the Philippines, British Borneo, and the Netherlands East Indies might be the object of attack, and plans were drawn up for action in each of these various contingencies. (The general opinion seems to have been that the Japanese were not capable of mounting more than one major expedition at a time.) The Commander-in-Chief China would take the decision to put any particular plan or portion of a plan into effect. It was thought that the arrangements made for reconnaissance and intelligence were adequate to give warning of a prepared but not of a sudden attack on territory. For this reason, the initial plan allowed for a state of war developing before it was known what territory, if any, Japan intended to attack. It was considered impracticable to make a strategical appreciation of the Far Eastern situation without making reference to a wider area. The Eastern Theatre covered the whole sea area included in the three British Naval Stations: East Indies, China, and Australia and New Zealand, except parts included in the Pacific area in which the U.S. Pacific Fleet operated. This theatre was divided into three areas: India and East Indies, Far East, and Australia and New Zealand. The Far East area, which included within it all the probable Japanese territorial objectives, was subdivided into three spheres of Naval operational control: United States, British, and Netherlands East Indies. The policy in regard to naval tactical command in the eastern theatre was based on that in force in the North Atlantic¹ where United States ships in the course of ensuring that the war material they were supplying to Britain reached its destination had already entered the 'shooting war' against Germany.

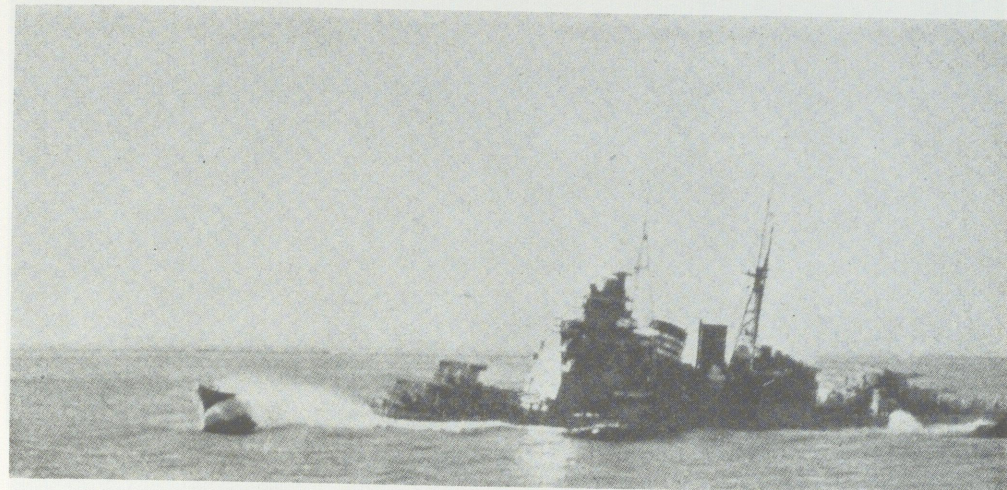
In the Far East Area aircraft provided the primary means for distant reconnaissance and for offensive action. The air forces available initially for operations to seaward were:—

- (i) United States Naval Aviation and a part of the Army Air Corps.²
- (ii) Netherlands East Indies Naval Air Force and a part of the Army Air Force.
- (iii) A part of the British Royal Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force.

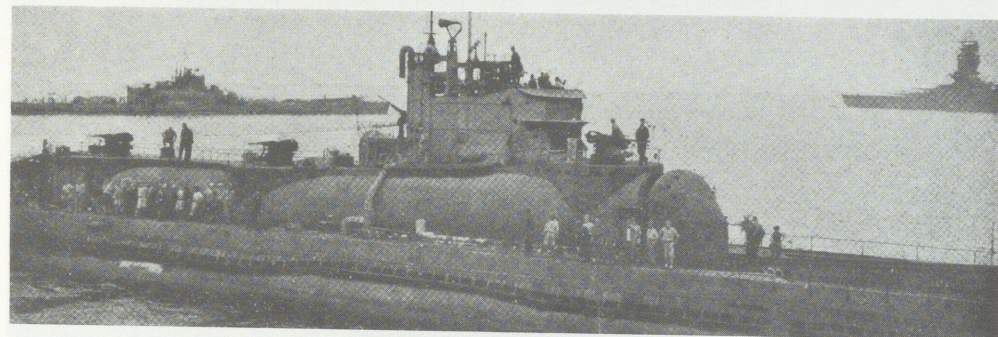
The aircraft of the Associated Powers were to be under the general control of their respective commanders in each sphere, though in order to ensure co-ordination, operations over the sea would be controlled from four centres ashore; at Singapore (for the British sphere), Batavia (for the Java Sea and Macassar Strait area), Ambon (for the Banda Sea and Molucca Strait area), and Manila (for the U.S. sphere). These would jointly operate all aircraft in the area assigned to the centre. In the Australian Area of the Eastern Theatre air reconnaissance would be established in the focal areas of trade; over the area Darwin-Timor-New Guinea; between New Guinea and the New Hebrides;

¹ The Senior Naval Officer by rank or time in grade co-ordinates tactical action provided his identity is clear to the Commanding Officers of the other units concerned. If the identity of the Senior Naval Officer is not clear the Commanding Officer of the forces first engaged in tactical action will co-ordinate the action of all forces which are present or may later join.

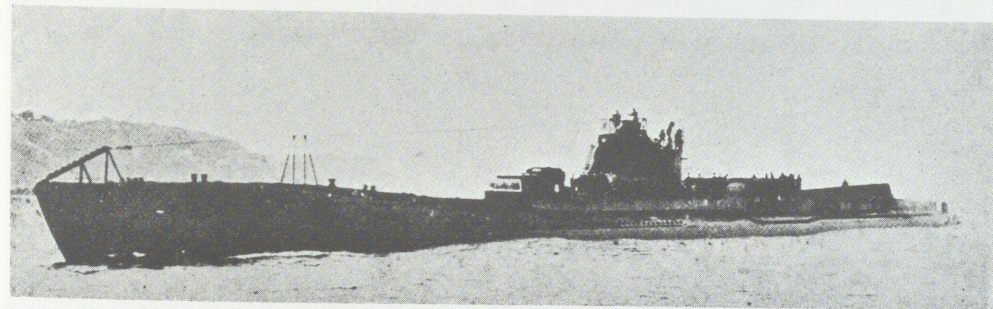
² Army air force.



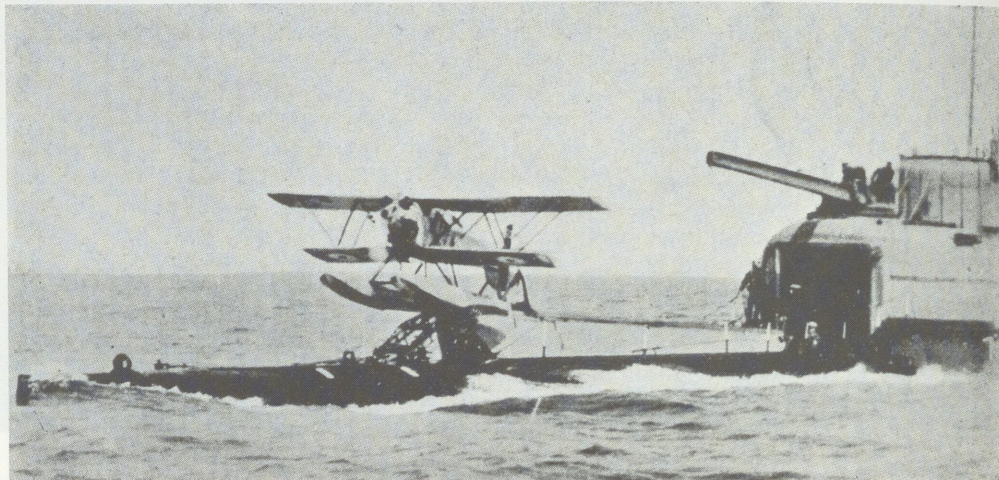
JAPANESE CRUISER *Atago*



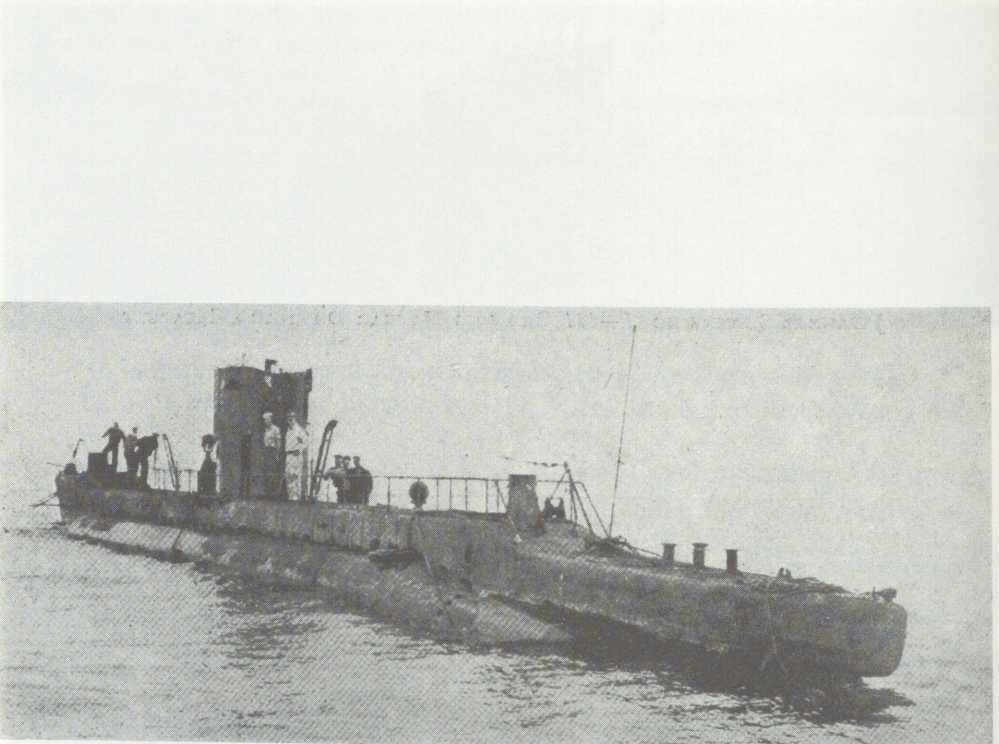
JAPANESE SUBMARINE *I-401* SHOWING HANGAR DOOR AND CATAPULT



JAPANESE CRUISER SUBMARINE OF THE *I-5* CLASS



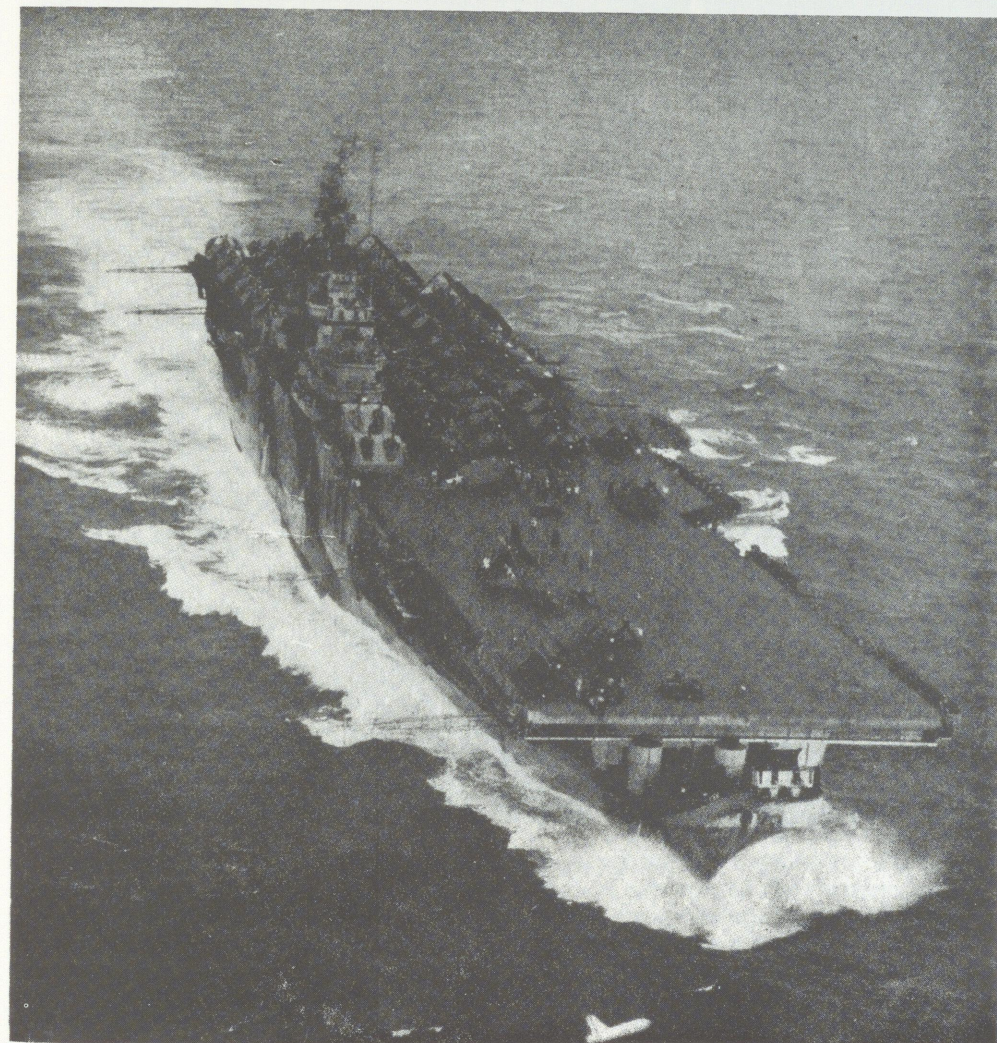
FLOATPLANE TAKING OFF FROM JAPANESE SUBMARINE



JAPANESE SMALL ARMY SUPPLY SUBMARINE, DRY CARGO CAPACITY 30 TONS



H.M.S. *Dorsetshire*



U.S. *Essex* CLASS AIRCRAFT CARRIER

and continuing in the New Zealand Area through Fiji and Tonga. In all these areas air striking forces were available. On the East Indies Station flying-boat reconnaissance squadrons were based on Malaya, with advanced bases at Port Blair (Andamans), Nancowry (Nicobars) and Sabang (N.W. Sumatra); and on Ceylon, Durban or Mombasa, with advanced bases at Mauritius, Seychelles, Addu Atoll (Maldives), and Diego Garcia (Chagos). Air striking forces were available only at Rangoon and certain bases in India and on the east-coast of Africa.

Pending the arrival of naval reinforcements in the Far East it was not considered practicable to undertake offensive operations on a large scale in the China Sea with the meagre surface forces available, and naval dispositions were consequently directed towards the defence of trade and troop convoys in the southern part of the area and as far as possible towards safeguarding important territories against unexpected attack. The initial dispositions and functions of the various forces were agreed by the Commanders-in-Chief.

There was now hope of reinforcement of the East Indies Station within six months, for consequent on the assumption by the United States of responsibility for British trans-Atlantic trade convoys in the western part of the North Atlantic it had become possible to withdraw the four old battleships of the 3rd Battle Squadron at Halifax N.S., from the North Atlantic Convoy Escort Force, with the intention of re-forming them as a new 3rd Battle Squadron in the Eastern Fleet. The *Revenge* arrived at Trincomalee on 13th December and was employed on escort duty pending the formation of the fleet. The *Royal Sovereign*, *Ramillies* and *Resolution* were expected to arrive on the East Indies Station by late December, and the battle cruiser *Repulse* was to remain until relieved by the *Renown* about January 1942. Furthermore, a reinforcement of one or two modern capital ships was to arrive on the station early in the New Year.

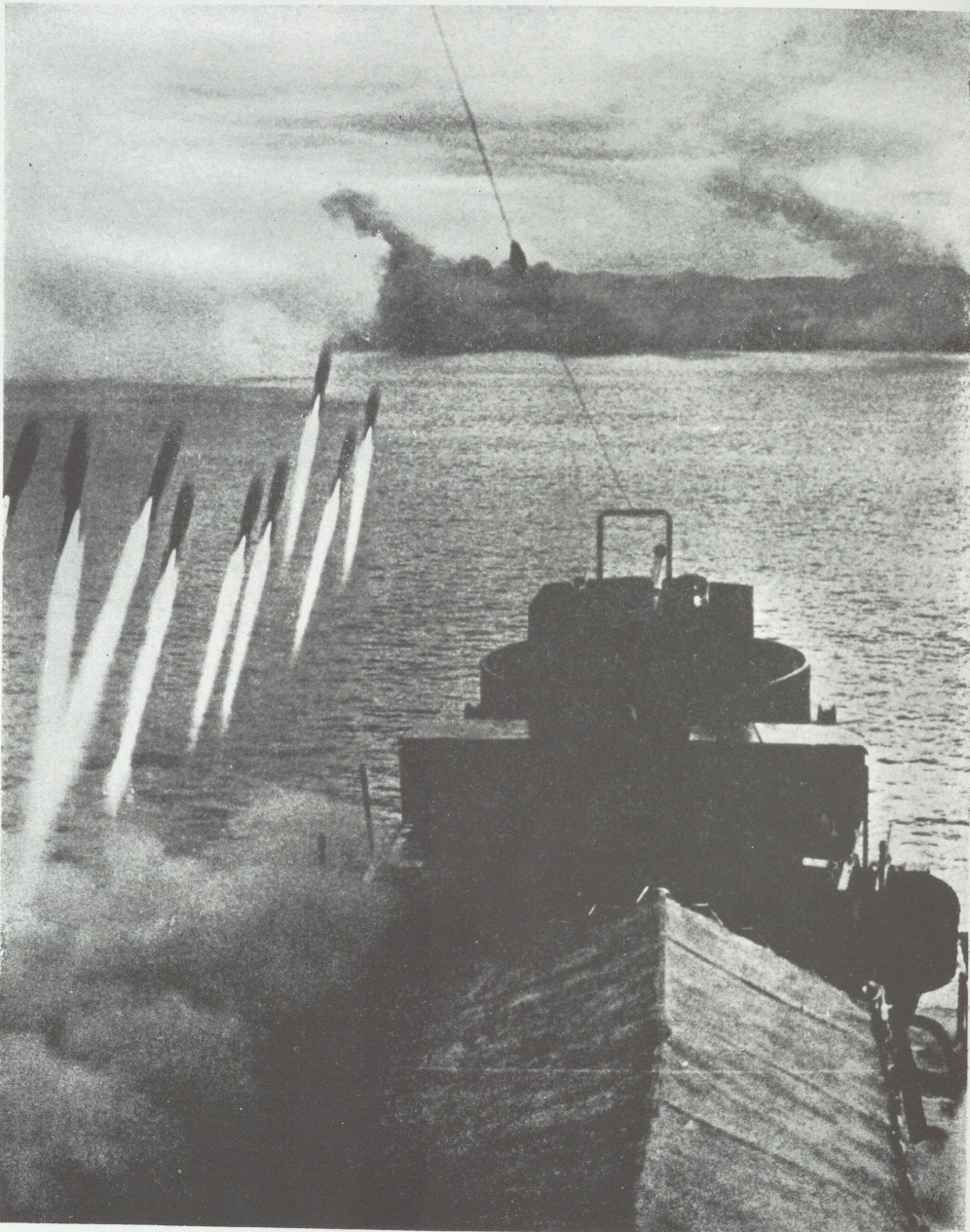
In the British-United States Staff Conversations it had been agreed that a reinforcement of 32 destroyers would be sent, but this had now to depend largely on availability.¹ Convoy escort claimed the whole of the British forces and all the Dutch except two cruisers and four destroyers, though the U.S. tactical forces of the Asiatic Fleet, termed the Raiding Force, and comprising two cruisers and two divisions of destroyers (total strength 13) were available for attack on Japanese sea communications and general action against enemy forces. It was intended that all submarines operating in the Far East Area should be used in active operations on the high seas.

Minefields had already been laid off Singapore, in the approaches to certain Netherlands East Indies ports, and the entrances to Subig Bay and Manila Bay. On the outbreak of war, or before if considered necessary, minefields would be laid to close all passages through the Rhio Archipelago (off the south entrance to Malacca Strait) except Rhio Strait.

46. GERMANY ATTACKS RUSSIA

Throughout these months the policy of the United States became more and more openly hostile to the Axis and to Japan's further expansion. On 27th May with 'war coming very close' the President proclaimed the existence of an unlimited national emergency requiring the strengthening of the nation's defences to the extreme limit of the national power and authority.

¹ Admiralty Telegram 0337A/22/9/41 to B.A.D. Washington.



U.S. L.C.I. (G) FIRING ROCKETS