

SECRET.

Nº 74

E. 58.

(Also C.I.D. Paper No. 195-C.)

This Memorandum was approved by the Standing Defence Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence at their 33rd Meeting, held on June 19, 1923. [S.S./33rd Minutes (1).]

NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, 1923.

EMPIRE NAVAL POLICY AND CO-OPERATION.

AUSTRALIA.

1. *Object.*

TO summarise the Naval Situation (1923) and to give in outline Admiralty recommendations to Australia in pursuance of C.I.D. Paper No. 194-C.

2. *The Naval Situation.*

As a result of the Washington Conference and the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the strategic situation has changed.

Except for a base in Hawaii, America does not possess, and by the terms of the *Status Quo* Agreement, cannot construct Naval Bases in the Pacific which would enable the American Fleet to be moved across that ocean.

America is therefore precluded from taking effective action in the Western Pacific.

Consequently the British Empire is left as the sole Power, apart from Japan, capable of operating in these waters. The Four-Power Pact between the United States of America, France, the British Empire and Japan cannot eliminate all possibility of war in that area.

The capital ship superiority of the British over the Japanese Fleet (Ratio 5 to 3) is off-set to a considerable extent by the great distance at which the fleet would have to operate from its main bases of supply and repair.

The Main Fleet, therefore, cannot be divided into detachments, but must be ready to move as a whole to any threatened area.

The need for mobility makes it necessary to press on with the preparations for a rapid concentration of our Main Fleet in the Far East, and the keystone of these preparations is the development of Singapore as a fuelling and repair base.

Even after the completion of the Singapore Fleet Base and the intermediate fuelling bases, and assuming the Suez Canal Route is available, the Main Fleet will take from one month to six weeks to reach the Far East.

The enemy's obvious and most natural objective during the interval would be Singapore, the seizure of which would deny to our Fleet the control of the Western Pacific and secure the enemy's lines of communication in the direction of Australia and New Zealand.

The main task of the Naval Forces of the Empire in the Western Pacific, operating in the face of superior enemy forces, would consequently be to delay and harass the despatch of an expedition against Singapore, or any operation, such as an attack upon Hong Kong, intended to lead up to such an expedition.

For this purpose two classes of vessel are suitable:—

- (a.) Fast light cruisers of great endurance.
- (b.) Large overseas submarines.

It is, therefore, recommended that Australia should include both these classes of vessel in any future building programme.

[10154] [10185] [10353] [10431]

B