

aerodromes, and were very valuable for reconnaissance; reconnaissances were regularly being made—

- (a) 350 miles N.N.E. of Singapore;
- (b) along the East coast of Malaya;
- (c) over the Rhio Archipelago; and
- (d) to the Miri and Kuching areas—from Sinkawang;

in addition to those over the fighting area.

By the 21st-22nd December Kuala Lumpur was coming in for heavy air attack, though little damage was at first inflicted. Against an attack by Ju. 87's on the 21st December the Buffaloes were more successful, causing the Japanese bombers to break formation in disorder, but to deal with the Zero fighters it was apparent that only the speedy arrival of Hurricane reinforcements, while we still held sufficient air bases, could turn the tide.

The land situation in the next few days (21st-23rd December) witnessed further advances by the enemy in all areas. Pressure along the Grik road was heavy, in spite of severe losses inflicted during a successful clash on the night of the 19th-20th December.

The Japanese floated troops down the Perak River by night, and on the 22nd December the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade was forced back South of Kuala Kangsar. The 28th Indian Infantry Brigade was also pressed in the same direction, small detachments only being left North of Kuala Kangsar and West of the Perak River. Bridges were destroyed as the troops retired. While this was taking place on the Perak front, the Kelantan withdrawal was also continuing, the 8th Indian Infantry Brigade retiring South of Kuala Krai along the railroad. A problem similar to that of Krohcol and the 11th Division referred to above (*see para. 115*) now arose in regard to 8th Indian Infantry Brigade and the main body of III Corps in Perak, and, to a lesser degree, in regard to the force at Kuantan and the 8th Indian Infantry Brigade. It was therefore decided to withdraw this 8th Brigade much further South into Central Malaya, and it took up completely new positions in the Kuala Lipis-Raub area. A small party known as "Macforce" was left with an armoured train at Dabong to withdraw down the railway, demolishing it as they went. The Kuantan force was ordered to prepare to withdraw Westwards at short notice. On the 23rd December all our fighters on the mainland were withdrawn to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Port Swettenham being kept as advanced landing grounds. The enemy was also occupying various points down the East coast of Malaya, and had proceeded from Kuala Trengganu to Dungun. By the 25th December it would be true to say that something like one-half of Malaya had passed from our control.

121. With the object of maintaining the morale of the civil population of Malaya I held a meeting on the 22nd December, attended by members of the Legislative Council, leading men of the different communities and the Press, the total number being about 120. The main points I stressed were that the available strength had proved inadequate; we had to remember that the aircraft, A.A. guns and tanks that might have come to Malaya were not being wasted, but were being used with great effect in Libya and Russia; that there was every reason for confidence that, now the requirements of the Far East had become press-

ing, those responsible were taking steps to ensure the despatch of adequate reinforcements of men and material; and that it was up to everyone to ensure that no effort was spared to hold up the enemy until the necessary forces arrived.

On the 22nd December, a telegram was sent to Mr. Duff Cooper to the effect that useless mouths were to be evacuated from Singapore without racial discrimination and on a voluntary basis so far as the general population were concerned.

The total number of British women and children evacuated from Malaya from the beginning of the war with Japan to the 31st January, 1942, was as follows:—

7,174 European;
2,305 Indian; and
1,250 Chinese.

According to a Japanese report, the number of British women and children left in Singapore at the time of capitulation was about 200.

XIII.—THE ATTACK ON, AND FALL OF, HONG KONG.

122. On the 8th December, at 0800 hours, hostilities began with the launching of a Japanese air attack on Kowloon. Frontier demolitions were accordingly blown and our troops withdrew according to plan as the Japanese crossed the frontier on a broad front during the course of the morning. It was estimated that the enemy were employing a force of one division, with the possibility of increasing this to two divisions with the troops then in the area.

There was no enemy action from the air or sea during the night of the 8th-9th December, but heavy pressure was exerted against our forward troops along the Taipo Road. During the day of the 9th December these troops were compelled to withdraw within the Gin Drinkers' line in consequence of their left flank being turned. Enemy air attacks during the day, directed mainly against the south coast of the island, did little damage. Leaflets, too, were dropped. The day closed unfortunately, since the Shing Mun Redoubt, held by The Royal Scots, was suddenly captured at 2300 hours—an unexpected blow in view of the difficulty of approach over such country at night. It was considered that local fifth columnists must have guided the Japanese in this attack. One company of Winnipeg Grenadiers was now despatched to reinforce the Kowloon Brigade.

It was soon found necessary, in view of enemy pressure, to readjust the line south-west of the Jubilee Reservoir, where the enemy was making progress, and to vacate Kai Tak aerodrome, after the two remaining aircraft had been demolished. During the morning of the 11th December, however, after the two left Companies (Royal Scots) at Kowloon had been driven in, and reserves (including Winnipeg Grenadiers) had failed to effect more than a temporary halt, it was decided to withdraw from the mainland, with the exception of Devil's Peak. This withdrawal was successfully carried out, beginning at dusk on the 11th, and included howitzers, mechanical transport and armoured cars. Some interference by Kowloon Chinese fifth columnists was experienced. Stonecutter's Island, which had been heavily bombarded and had suffered damage to the military barracks, was also evacuated during the night of the 11th-12th. Hong Kong Island itself was now also the