

and the Kallang aerodrome, but attacks were also made on the Changi area on certain of the Fixed Defences and on the Singapore Town area. Attacks on the Johore 15 in. Battery did little damage. Our ground defences succeeded in preventing the enemy aircraft from flying low, while the fighters attacked them as opportunity offered.

The Japanese artillery adopted harassing tactics, batteries becoming active in the plantations north of Pulau Ubin and on the high ground east and west of Johore Bahru. One battery, with a specially long range of about 24,000 yards, shelled the Government House area from near Johore Bahru. A balloon section was brought forward to the high ground above Johore Bahru to assist in the observation of this artillery fire. Our artillery replied with counter-bombardment and harassing fire within the limits laid down. The observation posts on Pulau Ubin proved of great service but had to be withdrawn when enemy troops occupied the island early on the 8th February.

On all fronts our night patrols crossed the Straits and reconnoitred the enemy dispositions. Two of the A.I.F. patrols which returned on the night 7th-8th February, after being in enemy territory over 24 hours, reported that on the 7th February large enemy reinforcements had arrived in the rubber plantations opposite the western shores of Singapore Island between the Rivers Malayu and Perepat.

488. At 0930 hrs. on the 6th February our air reconnaissance sent out from Palembang in Sumatra reported one cruiser, four destroyers and four merchant ships at anchor in the Anambas Islands some 250 miles north-east of Singapore. We concluded that this was a sea-borne force assembling for an attack either on Singapore or on some objective in the N.E.I.

SECTION L.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON SINGAPORE ISLAND. 8TH-9TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

489. At about 1330 hrs. on the 8th February heavy artillery fire opened on the fronts of the 22 Australian and 44 Indian Brigade Groups following lighter shelling during the morning. Forward defences, headquarters and communications received special attention. After a lull at sunset the bombardment continued with increased intensity. It was apparent that the enemy had greatly strengthened his artillery during the previous week, the bombardment being reminiscent of that during the World War I. Casualties to personnel were, however, not heavy owing to the protection afforded by slit trenches, but cable communications were cut and damage was done to searchlight and other equipment.

490. The 22 Australian Infantry Brigade was disposed on a three battalion front, each battalion finding its own reserves. The Brigade front, which stretched from the River Kranji on the right to the River Berih on the left measured 16,000 yards. In rear of the position there is a comparatively narrow neck of about 3,000 yards where the headwaters of the Rivers Kranji and Berih nearly join. The problem was whether to allow the enemy to land unopposed and to endeavour to stop him on this neck or to hold forward positions near the coast with a view to attacking the enemy when he was most vulnerable, i.e., when he was crossing the Straits and landing on the shores

of the Island. In accordance with the general policy laid down by Headquarters Malaya Command the forward positions were occupied.

The 2/20 Battalion A.I.F. with a company of Dalforce attached was on the right on a front of 8,000 yards between the River Kranji and Sarimbun Island. The 2/18 Battalion A.I.F. was in the centre on a front of 4,000 yards between Sarimbun Island and Murai Point. The 2/19 Battalion which had absorbed a large number of reinforcements since its heavy losses at Muar, was on the left on a front of 4,000 yards between Murai Point and the River Berih. There was a machine gun company distributed along the front. The Brigade was covered by Australian Field Artillery, the total number of guns which could bear on this front being about 30.

I have no record of the orders issued by the Commander 22 Australian Infantry Brigade, but it appears they were to the effect that the forward troops if overrun were to fall back successively to company and battalion perimeter positions.

491. The first landings took place at about 2045 hrs. 8th February and very soon the whole of the front between the River Buloh on the right of the 2/20 Battalion and the right company of the 2/19 Battalion was being attacked. Some craft also attempted to enter the mouth of the River Berih but were driven off. The troops which formed the first flight of the attacking force were conveyed across the Straits in special armoured landing craft. Successive flights came in more vulnerable types of craft. These landing craft were available in very large numbers, as many as 40-50 appearing on the front of one of the forward companies in the first flight. Each landing craft carried 40 men. It is now known that two divisions, the 18th right and 5th left, took part in this attack. It has been ascertained from Japanese sources that 13,000 troops landed during the night and a further 10,000 soon after dawn, so that our defending troops were heavily outnumbered. The landing craft emerged from the rivers opposite the north-western and western shores of Singapore Island. It is now known that the Japanese carried them overland by road from Pontian Kechil on the west coast of Johore. There can be no doubt that preparations for this attack on Singapore Island had been made a long time before the war started.

492. The enemy landing craft in the first flight were in many cases sunk or beaten off by the Forward Defended Localities and the machine guns, but they were quickly followed by others and the enemy succeeded in landing at many points. Very heavy, and, in many areas, fierce hand-to-hand fighting developed. Some of the machine guns continued fighting until their ammunition was practically exhausted. Unfortunately, it appears that the S.O.S. calls for artillery support were not answered until some time after the attack started. This was due partly to the inadequacy of Verey Light signals in that close country, partly to the severing of cable communications by the enemy's bombardment and partly to a failure to make full use of W/T. When the artillery fire did come down, however, it was maintained, within the limits of the resources available, at a high level throughout the night and must have done considerable damage.