

necessary in almost all formations. This was especially the case in the 3 Indian Corps which had borne the brunt of the fighting. The absorption of the 9 by the 11 Indian Division has already been recorded. In addition, the weaker formations and units were now strengthened by the appointment of new Commanders, by the transfer of personnel, by the appointment of newly commissioned officers and by returning junior staff officers to duty. In spite of these measures, the fighting efficiency of many units, as a result of their initial dilution and of the heavy losses which they had suffered, was far from what could have been desired. This was an unpleasant but unavoidable fact which had to be faced.

Lt.-Col. Coates, G.S.O.I. 9 Indian Division, was appointed Commander of the 6/15 Indian Infantry Brigade in place of Brigadier Challen who was missing after the west coast operations. Col. Trott was appointed to command the 8 Indian Infantry Brigade.

As Headquarters Malaya Command was, in the peculiar circumstances prevailing, now dealing direct with divisions in matters concerning Artillery, Supply and Transport, Ordnance and Medical Services, I authorized a reduction of the administrative staff of Headquarters 3 Indian Corps to conform with the new conditions. Unfortunately there was no opportunity for evacuating the surplus personnel before the Japanese attack started.

The Australian units which had suffered such heavy casualties in the Muar area had now been re-organized and brought up to strength with new drafts many of which were, as has been stated, lacking in training and experience.

483. *Preparation of Defences.*—The preparation of the defences could now be continued by the troops who were to occupy them. Most of the work on the forward defences had to be done by night as they were directly under enemy observation by day. In most areas it was found desirable to withdraw the garrisons from the Foremost Defended Localities by day, leaving only observation posts, and to re-occupy them at night.

All civilians, except those employed on work for the Fighting Services, were evacuated from the northern and western coastal belts. In view of the congestion which already existed in other parts of the Island this was no easy problem.

484. *Arrival of Reinforcements.*—Early on the morning of the 5th February a convoy of four ships bringing the Reconnaissance, Machine Gun, Anti-tank and certain administrative units of the 18 Division and some Indian troops approached the Singapore area. At about 1100 hrs., when the leading ships were close to Singapore and the slowest ship, the "Empress of Asia", was south-west of the Sembilan Islands, the convoy was attacked by enemy dive-bombers. The "Empress of Asia" received several direct hits and soon began to sink. All the troops had to take to the water owing to fire on the ship. Some acts of great gallantry were performed, especially by members of the hospital staff. Rescues were quickly effected by the Royal Navy. The loss of life fortunately was small, but nearly all weapons and equipment on board were lost and the ship became a total wreck. Owing to heavy air attacks on the Docks area, some of the vehicles and heavy stores were not discharged

from the other ships which left again the following night.

It thus happened that some of these units landed without their equipment. They were re-equipped as far as possible with small arms and fought thereafter as infantry. They joined the 18 Division reserve.

485. *The Scorched Earth Policy.*—Very careful plans were made for the implementation of the Scorched Earth Policy. As far as the fighting Services were concerned, the policy briefly was that the authority responsible for the dump, depot or establishment concerned would be responsible for the preparation and execution of denial schemes. As regards the orders to put the schemes into effect, I reserved to myself the responsibility for giving the order if time permitted, but, to provide against the contingency of this not being possible, I laid down that there must always be on the spot day and night sufficient personnel with a reliable Commander who would in the last resort and failing any orders act on his own initiative to ensure that the policy of His Majesty's Government was carried out.

A copy of the Instructions issued in this connection is attached as Appendix "J" to this Despatch.

As regards the Naval Base area, it was arranged that the Rear-Admiral, Malaya, should confer direct with the Commander 11 Indian Division as regards any assistance he might require for the implementation of the Scorched Earth Policy.

The Director General of Civil Defence became responsible for the implementation of the policy as far as civil installations were concerned.

486. *Civil Defence.*—The withdrawal of the Air Force, except for one fighter squadron, and the evacuation of the Naval Base had a bad moral effect on certain sections of the civil population. Rumours were circulated that Singapore was not to be defended. In an endeavour to restore confidence, I published a statement in the Singapore newspapers making our intention clear. (See Appendix "H".) I also gave an interview to representatives of the Press on the 5th February and on the evening of the same day received a deputation of the leading members of the Unofficial European community. At both these interviews I explained the reasons for the withdrawal of the Air Force, stressed the strategical importance of Singapore and made it clear that our intention was to defend it to the best of our ability.

On the 2nd February a Chinese District Watch Force was formed whose duties, among others, were (a) to assist in arresting looters, hooligans, etc., (b) to assist in calming the populace, (c) to advise the populace to resume business after alerts, (d) to assist in food distribution. By this time the Communist element was taking a major part in the Chinese war effort.

Civil labour continued to be a great difficulty. The Docks at this time were being worked chiefly by military labour assisted by some civilians. In other areas also labour was disappearing.

487. *Operations.*—The operations during this period consisted chiefly of air attacks and of artillery and patrol activities.

The attacks of the Japanese Air Force were directed mainly against the Singapore Docks