

100 casualties between them. Several guns had been lost. The majority had either been caught on the wrong side of demolitions, or become inextricably bogged in their gun positions or been cut off by enemy penetration, it being impossible in most places to move them across country. A large number of vehicles were lost for similar reasons. The loss of carriers, small arms weapons, signalling equipment etc. had also been very heavy. These were serious losses as in many cases there were not sufficient reserves in Malaya to replace them.

The 11 Indian Division needed to be relieved, rested and reorganised before being again called upon to fight, but there were no troops available to relieve it.

172. It is unlikely that the Japanese employed more than one division during the battle of Jitra. Their success was won primarily by bold and skilful infantry tactics and by the use of tanks. They employed no artillery heavier than the infantry gun and in this action they made little use of aircraft in support of ground forces. They exploited the moral value of noise behind the defences. They also appear to have had an organized "fifth column" plan which had at least a partial success by spreading false rumours.

173. It is probably true to say that the battle of Jitra was half lost before it began. The change from an anticipated offensive to a strategical defensive had, as has been stated, an adverse moral effect on the troops. The temporary loss of two battalions on the previous day had left serious gaps in the reserves on the right flank. In consequence, when the enemy broke into the defences, the reserves were not strong enough to prevent the enemy getting control of the one vital artery of communications. Veteran troops would have found these conditions trying enough. They were in some cases too trying for the young and inexperienced troops of which the 11 Indian Division was composed. Finally, the eventual withdrawal, carried out in very difficult circumstances, was too complicated and too long for troops who were already exhausted and considerably disorganised.

174. *The Command Reserve.*—On the 12th December I placed the Command Reserve (12 Indian Brigade Group), with the exception of headquarters and one battery of the 122 Field Regiment, at the disposal of the Commander 3 Indian Corps for employment on the west coast. With the exception of the 4/19 Hyderabad Regiment, which had to be withdrawn from Kelantan, the Brigade Group began to move forward immediately by road and rail.

175. *The Kroh Front.*—Early on the morning of the 12th December (the day of the Jitra battle) the enemy again attacked the 3/16 Punjab Regiment but was driven back. An outflanking movement, however, forced the Punjabs to withdraw with heavy casualties to one of their forward companies. Eventually the 3/16 Punjab Regiment withdrew through the 5/14 Punjab Regiment to Kroh. Their strength, including 50 reinforcements, was now about 400. They destroyed three bridges on the road to Klian Intan and Grik and moved into a prepared position 2 or 3 miles west of Kroh. The orders given to the Commanding

Officer of the 5/14 Punjab Regt. were that he was to delay the enemy but not become inextricably involved.

Two Japanese companies attacking at dawn on the 13th December were practically annihilated by the fire of our light automatics. Enemy enveloping movements round both flanks, however, forced a withdrawal and the 5/14 Punjab Regt. with attached troops fell back to Betong, where the battalion embussed, and by dusk the whole force was in occupation of the position west of Kroh.

At midnight 12/13th December the Commander 3 Indian Corps took over direct command of Krohcol from the Commander 11 Indian Division.

At midday on the 14th December the Commander 12 Indian Infantry Brigade took over command of Krohcol and moved it to the Baling area some 9 miles west of Kroh. Krohcol, as an independent force, was then dissolved.

The withdrawal of Krohcol to the position west of Kroh left uncovered the jungle road through Klian Intan to Grik and thence the metalled road to Kuala Kangsar and Ipoh. Reports on this road had indicated that as far as Grik it was passable only for light M.T. in dry weather. We were soon to learn that these reports were optimistic. To meet the threat a company of the 2 Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders with a detachment of the F.M.S.V.F. Armoured Cars was ordered to Grik.

176. *Headquarters 3 Indian Corps.*—On the night 13/14th December the Commander 3 Indian Corps moved up to Bukit Mertajam in Province Wellesley where he established an advanced headquarters.

177. *The Battle of Gurun.*—At dawn on the 13th December there were only three companies in position on the south bank of the Kedah River with one company at Langgar. The large road bridge south of Alor Star was destroyed, but an attempt to destroy the railway bridge was less successful. The enemy made only one attempt to cross during the day and, after getting a footing on the south bank, was driven back. During the night 13/14th December and the morning of the 14th all troops of 11 Indian Division were withdrawn to the Gurun position. Here, where the plain merges into the rolling thickly wooded rubber country of South Kedah, was perhaps the best natural defensive position in Malaya. It had previously been reconnoitred and was again reconnoitred as soon as the Japanese advance began. A large labour force had been ordered to assemble but failed to appear and no work had been done on the position when the division arrived.

178. The Gurun position was occupied with the 28 Indian Infantry Brigade on the right and the 6 Indian Infantry Brigade on the left with the weak 15 Indian Infantry Brigade in reserve. On the afternoon of the 14th December the enemy attacked down the main road with tanks followed by infantry in lorries and supported by aircraft. Some penetration took place but the enemy were stopped by local counter-attacks. During the night, however, the enemy effected a deep penetration down the road and at 0700 hrs. attacked the Headquarters of the 6 Brigade. All the officers except the Brigadier himself were killed. There