

one, making for Sampit in the centre of the south coast and the other for Pankalang Boen 120 miles to the West. It was hoped to find sea transport which would take the columns to Java. The columns left early in February and arrived at their destinations simultaneously. On arrival at Sampit the eastern column found a Japanese force there which it engaged. It then joined the western column by marching on a compass bearing through dense jungle for six days. The distance covered by the eastern column from Kuching to Sampit was over 800 miles, the major portion on foot through jungle. On the 3rd April the whole force, which was in an exhausted state after its long march, became prisoners of war. A high standard of discipline had been maintained by the troops who had covered hundreds of miles carrying their light automatics and ammunition with no transport through some of the worst country in the world.

226. *Labuan*.—On the 3rd January, 1942, a small Japanese force took possession of the Island of Labuan, which was not defended.

227. *British North Borneo*.—The State of British North Borneo was organized into two Administrative Divisions, the east and west coast Residencies. The seat of Government was at Sandakan.

On the 3rd January a small detachment from the Japanese force which had landed at Labuan proceeded in a captured motor vessel to Mempakul on the coast of British North Borneo and from there to Weston, a small port at the mouth of the River Padar. At Weston the detachment commandeered a train and proceeded to Beaufort 20 miles distant. The detachment at Beaufort was reinforced on the evening 3rd January. On the 6th January Japanese forces entered Jesselton by rail from Beaufort (56 miles). All the west coast area was now under Japanese control and the Governor (Mr. C. R. Smith) severed all connection between the east and west coast Residencies.

On the 19th January a Japanese force, estimated at 600 strong, arrived at Sandakan, British North Borneo, having assembled at Banggi Island off the north coast of North Borneo two days earlier. It came in two coastal vessels captured in Brunei waters and twelve Japanese motor fishing vessels. The troops from the latter landed in two creeks to the north of the Sandakan area and reached Sandakan by land at about 0900 hrs. The two coastal vessels entered Sandakan harbour at about 0930 hrs. The Governor surrendered the whole State at 0900 hrs. 19th January and refused to carry on the administration under Japanese control. He and his staff were interned.

Tawau, situated on the east coast near the N.E.I. border, was occupied by the Japanese on the 24th January and Lahad Datu, between Tawau and Sandakan, on the 26th or 27th January. Kudat on the north coast was occupied about the 1st February and the whole State then came under Japanese control.

A great deal of denial damage was done under the Governor's orders in accordance with plans carefully prepared beforehand. In particular, coastal vessels and local craft, including a number of Japanese craft, were sunk. The Japanese occupying forces were much incensed

at the damage done, especially at Sandakan and Tawau.

228. *Christmas Island*.—On the 20th January our Coast Defence Artillery at Christmas Island engaged an enemy submarine which had torpedoed a Norwegian vessel.

#### SECTION XXVI.—THE HIGHER COMMAND.

229. On 5th January, Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, moved his headquarters from Singapore to Batavia.

This move was decided on primarily because of the now vital necessity of taking every possible step to ensure the safe and timely arrival of troop convoys at Singapore. This necessitated close co-operation with the American and Dutch Commanders, which could only be achieved at Batavia.

Moreover, by this date it had become apparent that Singapore would shortly be exposed to heavy air attack by bombers escorted by fighters and therefore would be of little value in the immediate future as a base for heavy surface ships. The Rear-Admiral Malaya (Rear-Admiral Spooner) became Senior Naval Officer at Singapore, and resumed responsibility for the whole of the local naval defence of Malaya.

230. On the 23rd December, 1941, Lt.-Gen. Sir Henry Pownall arrived to succeed Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke Popham as Commander-in-Chief Far East in accordance with a decision which had been made before the outbreak of hostilities. He immediately went North to the 3 Indian Corps area, visiting the 11 Indian Division on the 25th Dec. and the 9 Indian Division on the 26th Dec. On the 7th Jan., 1942, General Sir Archibald Wavell (now Field-Marshal Earl Wavell) arrived at Singapore to assume the appointment of Supreme Commander South West Pacific Command. After visiting Headquarters 3 Indian Corps and troops of the 11 Indian Division on the 8th Jan. General Wavell left Singapore for Java. The Far East Combined Bureau accompanied him except for a few officers who were left to strengthen the Intelligence Branches of the Service Staffs at Singapore. On the establishment of Headquarters South West Pacific Command, the appointment of Commander-in-Chief Far East lapsed.

231. Mr. Duff Cooper, the Cabinet representative in the Far East, also left Singapore early in January.

232. It was generally agreed that these rapid changes in the Higher Command, necessary though they may have been, had an unsettling effect and did not make for continuity.

#### SECTION XXVII.—THE SCORCHED EARTH POLICY.

233. Early in 1941 a denial scheme for the event of the invasion of Malaya had been prepared and necessary instructions issued. This scheme was directed principally to the destruction or removal of everything that might facilitate the movement of invading forces, i.e., the destruction of any form of repair workshop, the demolition of bridges and the removal or destruction of all forms of vehicle or boat. The plan did not envisage a complete Scorched Earth Policy.

About the middle of December, 1941, the Cabinet Representative in the Far East informed the War Council that he had received