

211. *Summary.*—After sixteen days of continuous and exhausting operations our troops on the west coast were back behind the River Perak. What would have happened had Operation MATADOR been put into effect in good time is a matter for speculation. It is almost certain that it would have eased the air situation by denying to the enemy some of its fighter bases. On the other hand, had we been unable to hold the strong enemy thrust on the Kroh front our communications to North Malaya and subsequently to East Malaya would have been severed and our whole structure of defence undermined. For the frustration of the enemy's plan to destroy our forces in this way we are indebted particularly to the fine fighting of the troops on the Kroh and Grik roads and to the quick reaction of all commanders to the very real threat which the enemy's thrust on this front constituted.

212. *Operations in the Ipoh area*—On the 22nd December the Commander 3 Indian Corps decided to hold the areas south of Ipoh as under:—

One Brigade Group between Kg. Sahum and Tapah.

One Brigade Group covering road and railway north of Kampar.

One Brigade Group covering road and railway north of Bidor with a battalion at Ct. Jong and the Independent Company at Telok Anson.

On the 23rd December the Commander 3 Indian Corps issued instructions to the Commander 11 Indian Division, the gist of which were as under:—

(a) The Commander 11 Indian Division would assume control of all combatant troops north of the Rivers Slim and Bernam.

(b) The enemy was to be delayed for as long as possible west of the River Kinta.

(c) The positions at Kg. Sahum—Kampar—Tapah and Bidor must be held until the strategic situation demanded that the Division be withdrawn. A rear position was being prepared in the neighbourhood of the River Slim.

(d) Local offensive operations were advocated.

(e) In case communications should be cut, each battalion was to hold 10 days' supplies and ammunition.

(f) Fighting patrols were to be employed to watch the flanks which could never be secure.

(g) Civil labour was being engaged and handled by the Europeans of the Perak Volunteer Force.

The 6/15 Indian Infantry Brigade had now been rested and reorganised. Three days in the Ipoh area had worked wonders. All units had been partly, but far from completely, re-equipped. The outlook was very much brighter. The Kampar position was rapidly put into a state of defence.

213 On the 26th and 27th December the 12 Brigade Group fought a delaying action north of Chemor (10 miles north of Ipoh) inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, whose units moved forward in close formation. The 5/2 Punjab Regiment, upon which the brunt of the fighting fell, distinguished itself though it suffered fairly heavy losses.

During these two days the 28 Brigade Group continued to watch the line of the River Perak in the Blanja area.

By the 26th all troops remaining in Ipoh had moved south. Among the last to leave their posts were the Chinese and Eurasian girl operators of the telephone exchange who were handling military traffic and who continued to do so in the face of bombing and the approach of the enemy until ordered to leave. They deserve the highest praise.

The withdrawal of the 12 and 28 Brigade Groups began at 1900 hrs. on the 27th December and continued throughout the night. The 12 Brigade Group, to which had been allotted the task of delaying the enemy's approach to the Kampar position north of Dipang, occupied a position south of Gopeng, while the 28 Brigade Group took up positions astride the defile road which protected the right flank of the Kampar position, with one battalion in the Tapah area.

The newly formed Kedah Armoured Car Company, manned by European Volunteers, acquitted itself well during and following the withdrawal. It now became apparent, however, that the enemy were using an armour-piercing bullet against which the armour of the Marmon-Harrington armoured cars was not proof. Many casualties were suffered by the crews of these cars during the subsequent operations.

214. On the 29th December the 12 Brigade Group was early in contact with the enemy who attacked at 1000 hrs. The attack was repulsed but, realising that the enemy was now in strength, the divisional commander ordered the brigade to withdraw that evening through the Kampar position and come into reserve at Bidor. The enemy followed up the withdrawal closely and again tanks produced a demoralizing effect on the tired troops. The situation was saved by some excellent work on the part of the 137 Field Regt. and the 80 A/Tk. Regt. The large bridge over the River Kampar at Dipang was destroyed after several abortive attempts.

The 12 Brigade Group had had a gruelling time. Since the battle of Gurun it had borne the brunt of the fighting, and in its doggedly-fought rearguard actions between Batu Pekaka and Selama, on the Grik road and in the Ipoh area it had gained time for the re-organization of the remainder of the 11 Indian Division and the occupation of the Kampar position and had inflicted delay and heavy casualties on the enemy. It had, however, suffered severely itself.

215. In order to protect the long and vulnerable communications the 1 Independent Company had been sent to the Telok Anson area on the lower reaches of the River Perak. From here distant boat and cycle patrols were sent out. It was supported by one infantry battalion at Ct. Jong.

216. *Operations of Rose Force.*—Towards the end of December a successful raid was carried out by Rose Force, strength about 40 men, against the enemy's communications west of the River Perak. The party was landed from the sea on the Perak coast but was unfortunately weakened by the breakdown of one of the troop-carrying launches. A M.T. column was ambushed and some lorries and two staff cars containing high-ranking officers destroyed.