

511. By 0730 hours a strong attack had developed against the 12 Brigade holding the right of the position and later the attack spread southwards. Our troops were forced back to positions covering Bukit Panjang Village and Bukit Panjang to the south of it and further south to a position astride the Jurong road covering Bukit Timah Village. A wide gap developed between the left of the 12 Brigade and the right of the 6/15 Brigade.

512. On the left of the Northern Area the Commander 11 Indian Division, finding his left flank exposed, ordered the 8 Brigade from divisional reserve to move westwards and re-occupy the high ground south of the Causeway. This it succeeded in doing by about 1000 hours. A little later a battalion of the 8 Brigade attacked and re-captured Hill 95 overlooking the Causeway.

513. During the morning I ordered the Commander Northern Area to despatch a force of three infantry battalions as soon as possible from his Area to a rendezvous east of the Race-course to come under the orders of the Commander Western Area. This force was drawn from the 18 British Division. It was commanded by Lt.-Col. Thomas, Commander of the Machine-Gun Battalion, and became known as "Tom Force." As the 18 Division was still holding a front line sector and at this time had only two brigades under command, it was not possible, regrettable as it was, to send a composite formation.

514. After visiting Headquarters 3 Indian Corps and 11 Indian Division I returned again to Headquarters Western Area at 1430 hours and instructed the Area Commander to re-capture the Kranji-Jurong Switch Line which I looked upon as vital for the defence of the important Bukit Timah area where so many of our main depots were located.

515. The orders issued by the Commander Western Area for the counter-attack provided for an advance in three phases as under:

(a) To secure by 1800 hours 10th February the Bukit Panjang and Bukit Gombok features.

(b) To secure by 0900 hours 11th February a line from a point east of Keat Hong Village to Ulu Pandan.

(c) To re-establish by 1800 hours 11th February the Kranji-Jurong Switch Line.

The first advance involved only a slight re-adjustment of the line and was effected without difficulty. An enemy attack and penetration during the night, however, prevented the fulfilment of the remainder of the plan, which subsequently had to be cancelled.

516. At the same conference I decided, after consultation with the Commander Western Area, who had no ground communication with the 27 Australian Infantry Brigade, to place that brigade temporarily under command 11 Indian Division, through whose area its communications now ran.

517. On the front of the 1 Malaya Brigade, the forward troops of the 2 Malay Battalion were attacked and driven back east of the River Jurong.

518. Early in the afternoon the Commanding Officer of a battalion of the 44 Indian Infantry Brigade, which had been attacked,

asked for and obtained permission to make adjustments in his dispositions. Troops of the other battalions, seeing this movement, started moving themselves and, before the Brigade Commander could regain control, the whole brigade had reached the village of Pasir Panjang 4 miles away. Here the brigade was re-assembled and marched back in good order, tired but not demoralized, to a position one mile south of Bukit Timah Village. This incident is recorded to illustrate the unreliability of semi-trained and inexperienced troops in critical situations such as that which then existed. It was not a question of fear or cowardice. It resulted rather from bewilderment in conditions which were entirely strange to these raw and untried troops. Such incidents, however, make the conduct of a battle difficult if not impossible.

519. On receipt of information that the enemy were approaching Bukit Timah Village I gave orders for the Reserve Petrol Depot, situated just east of the village, to be destroyed at 1800 hours. These orders were duly carried out.

520. By dusk the 12 Brigade was in position astride the main road south of Bukit Panjang Village where at about 2015 hours it was attacked by enemy tanks closely supported by infantry. The tanks broke through and proceeded south towards Bukit Timah Village but were held up for a time by the 2/29 Battalion A.I.F. and other troops. About 40 tanks were used in this attack.

521. One more infantry battalion (5 Bedfs and Herts) was withdrawn from the Northern Area, and at 2200 hours 10th February was placed under orders of the Commander Southern Area with instructions to proceed to a rendezvous designated by him.

522. The Supreme Commander South-West Pacific arrived at Singapore early on 10th February and left late at night. During the day he visited all formation commanders. Before leaving he issued orders to the effect that Singapore must be held to the last. These orders I passed on to all ranks.

523. During this and subsequent days enemy aircraft were very active over the forward areas and over Singapore Town. They were now unopposed except for anti-aircraft and small arms fire.

SECTION LII.—EVENTS OF THE 11TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

524. At 0630 hrs. 11th February Tom Force moved forward astride the Bukit Timah Road with orders to re-capture Bukit Timah Village which was then in possession of the enemy. On reaching the line of the railway, however, the leading troops came under small arms fire and were held up. On the right contact was made in the thick country astride the pipe line east of the Bukit Timah Rifle Range where close-range fighting developed. The front stabilized on this general line for the rest of the morning.

525. During the night there was a great deal of mortar and patrol activity on the Jurong Road front and by 0830 hrs. the enemy was attacking this position in rear from the direction of Bukit Timah Village. The 6/15 Brigade and other troops on this front fell back south-eastwards towards Reformatory Road south of Bukit Timah Village. The