

buildings had a considerable psychological effect on the troops of the 11 Indian Division who had been told that their task was to secure this aerodrome for the use of our Air Force. Further attacks were carried out on Sungei Patani and Butterworth aerodromes and, again owing to the lack of light anti-aircraft and fighter defence, casualties were inflicted on the aircraft grounded there. On the 10th Dec. our aerodromes on the Kedah front were again heavily attacked. Sungei Patani aerodrome was evacuated during the day. On this day also the first of a series of heavy Japanese air attacks on Penang Island took place. It was carried out by 70 enemy bombers and Georgetown was the target. There were no anti-aircraft defences, except small arms fire, and few shelters. The inhabitants thronged the streets to watch the attack. The casualties from this raid ran into thousands. A large part of the population left Georgetown and moved to the hills in the centre of the Island, but the A.R.P. and the Medical and the Nursing Services stood firm. The small garrison, in addition to manning the defences, was called upon to assist the Civil Administration by taking the place of labourers and of the personnel of essential municipal services. It also had to assist in burying the dead. On the following day Georgetown was again raided by 25 aircraft and the experiences of the previous day were repeated on a smaller scale.

On the east coast front the enemy during this period concentrated his air attacks on our aerodromes, all of which in the States of Kelantan and Pahang became unserviceable.

Valuable photographic reconnaissances were carried out during this period, as they were throughout the campaign, by two pilots flying Buffalo aircraft.

153 *Borneo*.—In accordance with pre-war plans the denials of the Miri and Seria Oilfields and Installations in Sarawak and Brunei were completed, as far as could be done, as soon as hostilities broke out. The refinery at Lutong was also demolished on the 9th Dec

154. *Command Reserve*.—On the 10th Dec., in view of the threat to Kuantan, the weak strength of the garrison there and the danger to the communications of the Kelantan Force, I moved one battalion of the Command Reserve (2 Bn. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) from the Port Dickson area to the Jerantut area on the east coast railway and placed it under orders of the Commander 3 Indian Corps for duty in that area only.

155. *Summary*—Since the outbreak of hostilities the general situation had changed greatly to our disadvantage. The Japanese had established complete air superiority over North Malaya and had gained full control of the sea communications east of Malaya. As a result of this the whole of the east coast of Malaya and Singapore Island itself lay open to attack and, to meet attack, reliance would have to be placed almost entirely on the land forces. As regards the land situation the Japanese had established strong forces both in South Thailand and in Kelantan, and nothing could now prevent them from bringing in reinforcements as far as their resources would admit. To make matters worse they had, as far as could be ascertained, landed these forces with the loss of only 7 ships, of which 6 had been sunk by Dutch

submarines, in place of the considerable losses which it had been hoped that our Air Force would inflict and which had formed the basis of my estimate of the Army strength required (See Part I, Section VI). Our own forces were weak everywhere and we could not expect any reinforcements until at least the following month, though it was certain that every endeavour would be made to send us such reinforcements as could be made available as early as possible. Further, it had been established that the Japanese force included tanks while we had none.

It was apparent that the safe arrival of reinforcements was of paramount importance and, if we were to attain our object of securing the Naval Base, it was essential that they should arrive in time to take part in operations on the mainland. To enable them to do this, it was necessary that we should impose the maximum delay on the enemy but that at the same time we should avoid having our forces destroyed in detail. If the latter should happen in any area, it might open the way for a rapid advance by the enemy which with our lack of reserves we might find it impossible to stop.

156. *Special Order of the Day*—On the 10th December I issued the following Special Order of the Day:—

“ In this hour of trial the General Officer Commanding calls upon all ranks Malaya Command for a determined and sustained effort to safeguard Malaya and the adjoining British territories. The eyes of the Empire are upon us. Our whole position in the Far East is at stake. The struggle may be long and grim but let all resolve to stand fast come what may and to prove ourselves worthy of the great trust which has been placed in us.”

SECTION XX—THE AIR SITUATION 11TH DECEMBER, 1941.

157. Photographs taken of the aerodromes in South Thailand showed that the Japanese were already operating large numbers of aircraft from them. On Singora aerodrome alone there were upwards of 100 aircraft with comparatively little anti-aircraft gun protection—a wonderful target had we had an adequate and balanced Air Striking Force. The enemy were of course also operating their longer range types of aircraft from their bases in Indo-China and possibly also from aircraft carriers. It is probable that they were operating some 300 modern aircraft at this time. Their bombers were of the Navy 96, the Army 97 and the Junkers 88 types, all twin-engined machines. Their dive-bomber was the Junkers 87B. Their torpedo-bombers were Navy 97's and their fighters were Navy “O.” (or Zero) machines. A wide use of auxiliary petrol tanks for the fighters gave them increased range.

In face of this attack the losses suffered by our small Air Force in North Malaya had been comparatively heavy. They had been heavier than they otherwise would have been owing to the inability, due to lack of resources, to provide adequate fighters in North Malaya for the defence of aerodromes and the protection of the bombers, and also owing to the lack of ground defence against low-flying aircraft.