

parts of Singapore Island. There seemed to be two alternatives, either (a) to fall back to the east part of the Island and hold the Changi area or (b) to concentrate for the defence of Singapore Town. We were not strong enough to hold both areas. The most important considerations were the location of the water reservoirs; the location of our main dumps and depots and of our hospitals and the fact that the Civil Government and the bulk of the civil population were still in Singapore Town. I decided that, in the eventuality under consideration, we would concentrate on holding a perimeter round the Singapore Town area and the outlying islands, even though that meant the loss of the Changi defences. As regards the Fixed Defences, the experience at Pasir Laba that morning had suggested that these would not long remain in action if the enemy concentrated his dive-bombers on them.

The plan in outline was to hold a perimeter which would include the Kallang aerodrome, the MacRitchie and Peirce Reservoirs and the Bukit Timah depots area. It was given out verbally to the Commanders Northern and Southern Areas on the evening 9th February and issued as a Secret and Personal Instruction to Senior Commanders and Staff Officers at 0050 hrs. 10th February. It was issued in order that responsible senior officers might know my intentions in case the situation developed too rapidly for further orders to be issued. A copy of the Instruction is attached as Appendix K to this Despatch.

503. During the evening 9th February the enemy's artillery concentrated on the area held by 27 Australian Brigade. This brigade, on orders from the Commander Western area, had modified its dispositions to guard against the threat to its left rear. At about 1930 hrs. the enemy attacked on a front between the Causeway and the River Kranji. Again a large number of his landing craft were knocked out by artillery and machine gun fire but again he succeeded in getting a footing. Fighting went on in this area until midnight.

504. At midnight 9th/10th February after a day of very heavy fighting the position was approximately as under:—

Causeway Sector.—The enemy had effected a landing west of the Causeway and confused fighting was going on.

Kranji-Jurong Sector.—The 12 Brigade were still astride the road west of Keat Hong Village with troops of the 22 Australian Brigade in front of them near Bulim Village. The 44 Brigade Group was occupying a position astride the Jurong road near the headwaters of the River Jurong, having driven off some Japanese troops who had cut the road east of Jurong Village.

River Jurong Sector.—The 2 Malay Battalion of the 1 Malaya Infantry Brigade (Southern Area) was on the line of the River Jurong with forward troops west of the river.

Other Fronts.—Except for some artillery harassing fire there had been no activity on the other fronts.

Reserve—The 6/15 Brigade was assembling in the Racecourse area.

505. Throughout the day the Hurricane fighters had been in the air almost continuously, as had indeed been the case during the whole

of the previous week. They had inflicted casualties on the enemy aircraft and sustained some themselves. This one weak squadron fought gallantly against the Japanese Air Force. With the loss of Tengah, the aerodrome at Kallang was the only one now serviceable. The A.O.C. with my consent decided to withdraw what remained of the fighter squadron to a base in the Netherlands East Indies intending to use Kallang as an advanced landing ground only. In the event no British aircraft were seen again over Singapore.

506. Under cover of darkness on the night 9th/10th February a naval force of three fast armed patrol vessels (Fairmiles) entered the western channel of the Johore Straits with the object of disrupting the enemy's communications and sinking some of his landing craft. A few small craft were sunk but no other vessels were seen and the force had to withdraw without further success.

The Far East War Council met on the 9th February but no meetings were held on subsequent days.

SECTION LI.—EVENTS OF THE 10TH FEBRUARY, 1942.

507. Shortly after midnight 9th/10th February, his left battalion having been forced back from the beaches, the Commander 27 Australian Infantry Brigade issued orders for his brigade to withdraw to positions north and south of Bukit Mandai. This movement was successfully carried out before dawn. It had the effect, however, of leaving open the vital position overlooking the Causeway and exposing the left flank of 11 Indian Division. The enemy was not slow to occupy the hill south of the Causeway.

508. The 6/15 Brigade, the leading battalion of which arrived at its rendezvous on the Bukit Timah Road at about midnight 9th/10th February, was immediately ordered forward by the Commander Western Area to a position north of the Jurong road near the headwaters of the River Jurong and some 4 miles west of Bukit Timah Village. This position it reached and occupied, after a tedious march owing to the congested road, at about 0430 hours.

By dawn the 44 Brigade was in position on the left of the 6/15 Brigade and south of the Jurong road.

509. The 22 Brigade was still in the Bulim area where it had been since mid-day on the 9th and was ordered by the Commander Western Area to fall back at 0600 hours to fill in the gap in the Kranji-Jurong Line between the 12 and 6/15 Brigades. This movement commenced according to plan but, partly owing to the Brigade Commander losing touch with his units, and partly owing to a misunderstanding of an order received by him from the Commander Western Area, the brigade became scattered and only a part of it took up its allotted position. The remainder occupied a position south of Bukit Timah Village.

510. As previously stated the Kranji-Jurong Line had been selected and partially prepared in peace-time as a Switch Line to protect the centre of the Island against an attack from the west. A wide belt had been cleared of trees and undergrowth between the two rivers. It was a naturally strong position but the defences had not been completed.