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HISTORY OF THE MALAY REGIMENT 1933-1942^{*}

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I. Introduction

March 1st 1933 marks the official birth of the Malay Regiment. The formation of the regiment fulfilled the frequently expressed desire of the Sultans and their subjects in the Federated Malay States to establish a body of Malay troops who would share the responsibility of military defence and protection of their homeland.¹ This desire existed even before the Federal Council officially heard of the Malay Regiment proposal on July 4, 1913, and again in November of the same year.²

But until September 25, 1931, when Major-General L. C. L. Oldfield, General Officer Commanding the Troops in Malaya, was instructed "to proceed with the necessary preparations with a view to forming (experimentally) a Malay Regiment",³ the scheme was not considered practicable. It had been deferred so long that the public was "astonished by the announcement that the scheme has at last been adopted."⁴

The hesitancy to arm and train local Malays was understandable. To begin with, the widespread trouble and disorder in the warring feudal states of Perak, Negri Sembilan, Selangor and Pahang in the 1870's and even as late as the 1880's and 1890's was too recent an event to be entirely ignored in 1913. War and piracy were said to be the only professions recognised by the Malays of old as "worthy of a gentleman".⁵ Hence Swettenham's description of how the correct Malay "gentleman" of 1874 appeared in public with "say two daggers in his belt, two spears in his hand, a gun over his shoulder, and a long sword

^{*} Essentially as written in 1955 when the author was a History student at the University of Malaya (Singapore).

1. *Proceedings, Legislative Council, Federated Malay States*, (hereafter cited as *P.L.C.F.M.S.*), 1914, p. B35, address in Malay by Tuanku Muhammad ibni Yau Tuan Antah, the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan; and 1920, p. B60.

2. *Ibid.*, 1913, p. B41 and p. B77. Actually, the first proposal was for a "Malay Militia" by Mr. Walter Frederick Nutt (an active European unofficial member of the Council who left the country in 1921 on transfer). He was supported by both officials and unofficials. The second time the name "Malay Regiment" was introduced by Mr. Nutt.

3. *Malay Regiment Regimental Orders 1936*, Kuala Lumpur, 1936, p. xxi (hereafter cited as *M.R.R.O.*).

4. *Straits Times* (S.T.), 21.11.1932 commenting on Government announcement of September 13, 1932.

5. L. A. Mills, "Malaya" chapter in *The New World of South-East Asia* (Wisconsin, 1950), p. 69.

under his arm."⁶ Then came British intervention in the western Malay states dating from the Pangkor Engagement of January 1874. The country was gradually pacified but not without bloodshed. The carrying of arms in public was soon prohibited.⁷ The British interpreted their duty in Malaya to be "not to get the Malays to fight (at which they had shown themselves only too ready) but to prevent them from fighting."⁸ In spite of this pacifist policy, the Malay Regiment idea lingered and the Sultans and Malay leaders inside and outside the Federal Council took turns to nurture its growth.

There were other reasons. Even when the Malay Regiment proposal was finally approved and the first 25-man squad of The Experimental Company was ready to begin serious military training in 1933, it was regarded as no more than an experiment⁹ "to find out . . . how the Malays would react to military discipline, and in fact if they would be made into really efficient regular soldiers."¹⁰ There had been fears expressed by "some people that the Malay, with his leisurely temperament and lack of military traditions other than those of guerilla warfare, would rebel against the discipline of the parade ground and the barrack-room."¹¹ Even before the impact of the West on Malaya, the Malay spirit of "independent individualism" was from time to time commented upon by stray visitors to these shores.¹² It has been argued that this characteristic of the Malay in the past, for all his warlike nature, could be traced in part to the lack of a regular Malay army. Indeed from the days of the Malacca Empire down to 1885¹³ no native ruler or chief in Malaya appeared to have maintained a force of trained Malay regulars although there were a collection of swash-bucklers and Indian mercenaries attached to the court or to the households of

6. Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya*, London, 1948, p. 135.

7. In fact, immediately after the signing of the Pangkor Engagement in January 1874, Captain Speedy and his trained Sepoys went to the Krian district of Larut, disarmed the Malays there under the warlike Panglima Mat Ali and destroyed their stockades (*Perak Enquiry Papers*, Vol. 2, 1876. Statement of Panglima Mat Ali).

8. Victor Purcell, *Malaya - Outline of a Colony*, London, 1946, p. 129. In another book, *The Chinese in South East Asia*, London, 1952, p. 367, Purcell remarks, "It had never been the policy (of the British) to arm the peoples of Malaya or to train them in military services." See also Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral*, London, 1945, p. 429.

9. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1932, p. B77.

10. Major-General G. McL. S. Bruce, O.B.E., M.C. (retired) writing about his interview with the War Office in December 1932. Article "Trying it out with No. 2 Squad" in *Pahlawan*, Vol. 1, Kuala Lumpur, 1952.

11. *S.T.*, 4.8.1933.

12. Lewis Wertheimann, for instance, has this to say of the Malay inhabitants of 1500 Malacca which he visited. "The people are fierce, of evil condition and unruly, for they will obey to no Governor, being altogether given to rob and murder, and therefore say to their Governors that they will forsake (the) country if they strive to bind them to order . . ." Quoted from Swettenham, *op. cit.*, p. 16. For the phrase, "independent individualism," see Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

13. The Timbalan Setia Negri (forerunner of the Johore Military Forces) - a regular body of Malay troops trained and armed on western lines - was founded by Sultan Abu Bakar of Johore in 1885; Ombi Jaafar, *Selamat Johore*, Singapore, 1935, pp. 30.

the greater chiefs.¹⁴ Armed attendants, varying in number, accompanied the Malay Sultan or major chief wherever he went. What training there was in the military arts was purely an individual concern.¹⁵

In times of hostility, the Sultan gave orders through the Bendahara (Chief Minister) to the various Malay rajahs and chiefs to rally and lead their men – feudal retainers – who assembled with their own arms and equipment. It was common for the Bendahara – and not unusual for the Sultan himself – to take the field.¹⁶ The display of colours and pennons, the use of elephants and horses in battle, and the historic war-cry of the Malays – the “sorak” – figure in most accounts of Malay fighting.¹⁷ While on active service, the Malay armed men were provided with food but appeared to receive nothing else – a feudal arrangement which suited them until well into the nineteenth century. Usually, they shared the plunder thrown into the common stock.¹⁸ Those who distinguished themselves in battle were rewarded with titles, fiefs or *persalin* (clothings) by the Sultan.¹⁹

In pre-European days, the Malay could hold his own against anyone, man to man. Against the better-equipped, better-armed European soldier, however, from the Portuguese down to the Dutch and the English, the Malay, like other Asians of the day, found himself at a disadvantage. Later, Malay fighting men actually went into the service of European powers. From the beginning, the

14. R. O. Winstedt, *The Malays – a Cultural History*, London, 1950, p. 77.

15. *Sejarah Melayu*, Singapore, 1950, p. 60 foll. A man would, on his own initiative, study the manly arts under a noted *guru* (master) or *pendekar* (veteran or celebrated warrior) as did the semi-legendary 15th century Malay hero, Laksamana Hang Tuah, and his equally famous companions-at-arms Hang Jebat, Hang Kesturi, Hang Lekir and Lekiu (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*, Vol. I, Singapore 1917, p. 29; Vol. II, p. 161). The *Sejarah Melayu* tells of Sultan Mansur Shah (1458-1477), the celebrated Sultan of Malacca, who requested all the *anak tuan-tuan* (i.e. young gentlemen) of his court to study the manly arts of handling weapons, elephants and horses under recognised *pendekars* and masters in the country. What was more, the cost of training was borne by the Sultan himself (*Sejarah Melayu*, p. 86).

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 135. W. Lincham, “A History of Pahang”, *JMBRAS*, Vol. XIV, pt. 11, Singapore, 1936, p. 27; Sultan Mansur Shah II was killed about 1560 in a war against the “Jawa Kafir” (i.e. pagan Javanese). In more recent times, Sultan Ahmad of Pahang in 1892 took the field with about 1,000 fighting men against the rebel ex-Orang Kaya of Semantan (p. 142).

17. *Sejarah Melayu*, pp. 135, 136; Hugh Clifford in *Bushwhacking*, London, 1901, p. 53, described the “sorak” as “a savage sound, high-pitched, full-throated”.

18. G. B. Gardner, *Keris and Other Malay Weapons*, Singapore, 1936, p. 118. In a royal warrant of confirmation dated August 25, 1870, Sultan Abdul Samad of Selangor, inter alia, wrote, “No Towkay shall assist the Mandiling people and if by Allah’s grace the disturbances are settled, the possessions of the Mandilings shall be divided among such of the aforesaid as assist Tengku Kudin.” (*JMBRAS*, Vol. XII, pt. 3, 1934, p. 23).

19. *Sejarah Melayu*, pp. 97, 147, 168, 190.

Portuguese made use of the Malays.²⁰ And the Dutch were assisted by their Johore allies when they seized Malacca in 1641. Although in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch distrusted the Malays, "some of whom are bad and malignant and are actually desirous of depriving Christians of their lives and property",²¹ nevertheless, they did not altogether scorn the use of Malays in their intermittent fighting and skirmishes with neighbouring states around Malacca.²² It was as military scouts and advance guards that the Malays were highly thought of by the Dutch, for "the ways are best known to them and they had a better knowledge than our people of how to penetrate the thick jungle".²³ But Dutch distrust of the Malays prevailed until Malacca surrendered to the English East India Company in 1795.²⁴

With British intervention in the western Malay States in 1874, Malays served as policemen and irregulars to assist the work of pacification.²⁵ The Perak Armed Police (1877-1884) — a para-military force of Malays, Sikhs and Pathans — performed police duties as well as those normally entrusted to troops; and so did the First Battalion Perak Sikhs (1884-1896), a mixed military corps which

consisted of the military efficient Walker.²⁷ Malay force of lines.²⁸ Their cited by sponsor training and g

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20. Thus, in an attack on Pate Kater (Tun Pateh Akhir?) at Upe in 1512, the Portuguese were assisted by the local auxiliaries, i.e. "homens da terra" (lit. "men of the country"); letter of Fernao Peres d'Andrade to Afonso d'Albuquerque, 22.2.1513, in *Cartas de Afonso d'Albuquerque*, Lisbon, 1884-1935, Vol. 3, p. 52. Accounts of other Portuguese writers of the time like Barros, Castanheda, Goes, Gaspar Correa and Couto, even more specifically mentioned the use of Malays in both defensive and offensive action. Thus, in *Historia de descobrimento e conquista da India pelos Portugueses coimbra 1924-1933*, Vol. 3, Bk. 4, p. 459, Castanheda reported the successful attack on Muar in 1519 by a mixed force of 120 Portuguese and 1,000 Malay archers. And also on Bintan Island (1526), the last stronghold of the exiled Sultan Mahmud; this was the attack which broke the back of the old Malacca Empire. Led by Mascarenhas, the attacking force consisted of 300 Portuguese and 600 Malays "under two Honourable Captains, Sanaya Raja (Sang Naya Raya?) and Tun Mufamede (Tun Muhammad?)". (Castanheda, *op. cit.*, Book 7, p. 36).
21. JMBRAS, Vol. V, pt. 1, 1927, p. 154, Report of Governor Bathasar Bort on Malacca translated by M. J. Bremner. A series of Malay attacks on 22nd, 23rd and 24th April, 1658, on the Dutch Factory at Ujong Salang and on the company's ship the *Beroun* (17 Dutch and 4 Blacks killed) caused a loss of f. 23244.7.3 to the Company (p. 162).
22. *Ibid.*, p. 61. In two punitive expeditions against Rembau and Nanning in 1645 and 1646, respectively, 80 "inhabitants of Malacca" in the first expedition and 190 in the second were used — "armed as soldiers".
23. *Ibid.*, p. 76. This opinion was shared by the British who came after them. Thus in an 1892 Report to the Governor at Singapore, the Resident of Pahang praised "the excellence of his (the Sultan's) men as guerilla soldiers when fighting in dense jungle" through which "Malays move with ease and rapidity." Lineham, "Pahang", JMBRAS, pp. 143 and 144.
24. "We cannot use Native, i.e. Malay, soldiers in this Fortress because, if we did so, their number would quickly surpass that of the Europeans, which could be dangerous." Extract of "Ordinary Letter of 18th February, 1795" quoted in a letter of justification dated June 12, 1805, addressed to Governor-General Johannes Siberg at Batavia by the Dutch Governor of Malacca, A. Couperus (Translation from a Dutch MS by Dr. G. W. Irwin, formerly of the University of Malaya).
25. The short Perak War which followed the killing of Resident J. W. W. Birch on November 3, 1875, provided several instances of the use of Malay irregulars on the British side.

26. *Straits Settlements The Origin* not published
27. *Perak Annals* found that Malay branch were "more
28. Onn bin Jaar Military Force Abu Bakar's seconded to
29. Major Dato' 1951, p. 17- equal to the
30. *Treaties and and Gibson,*
31. T. M. Wins 1939, p. 49.
32. *P.L.C.F.M.S.* the suggestion Ibni Yam T derable. Be \$20,000,000, service in A.

consisted of three arms — Infantry, Artillery and Troops.²⁶ A high standard of military efficiency had to be maintained by the commandant, Major R. S. F. Walker.²⁷ Meanwhile, in 1885, Johore took the initiative of raising the first all-Malay force of native regulars to be trained, equipped and organised on Western lines.²⁸ Their acknowledged efficiency at arms-drill and marksmanship was cited by sponsors of the Malay Regiment proposal as proof that, under proper training and guidance, the Malay could make a good soldier.²⁹

Under the Treaty of 1895 a body of Indian troops was maintained at Taiping to form part of the Straits Settlements garrison in times of emergency. Thus, a new and purely military body, The Malay States Guides (1896-1919), emerged to supplant the Perak Sikhs.³⁰ The exclusion of the Malays from the defence of their homeland — at least in the Federated Malay States — must have been apparent to many. Except to voice their feelings intermittently, the Malays had to be content with joining volunteer forces. Volunteering began in the Federation with the formation of the first unit of the Malay States Volunteer Rifles in 1902.³¹

Then came the first official mention of the Malay Regiment in the Federal Council in 1913. But World War I intervened and the voice of the Malay Regiment proposal was silenced — not before the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan had suggested enlisting “some 20,000 young men for the army” to serve only in Malaya.³²

26. *Straits Settlements Despatches* 369, dated October 18, 1876; Abdul Karim bin Bagoo, *The Origin and Growth of the Malay States Guides 1874 - 1919*, Academic exercise, not published, University of Malaya, Singapore, 1954, p. 22.
27. *Perak Annual Report for 1886*. Major (later Lt.-Col.) R. S. F. Walker, incidentally, found that the Malacca and Province Wellesley Malays made better recruits for the Malay branch of his para-Military force than those of Perak. For one thing, they were “more amenable to regular work and discipline”.
28. Onn bin Jaafar, *op. cit.* The Timbalan Setia Negri (lit. Loyal State Levy), the Johore Military Forces, from the beginning, were commanded by Malay officers. Since Sultan Abu Bakar's time, it had become the practice for at least one British officer to be seconded to the unit as military adviser and instructor.
29. Major Dato' Haji Muhammad Said b. Haji Sulaiman, *Hikayat Johor*, Vol. 2, Johore, 1951, p. 174. The *Straits Times* (13.11.1948) comments, “their arms-drill was fully equal to that of the British regulars”; see also *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1932, p. B126.
30. *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, compiled by Maxwell and Gibson, London, 1924, p. 70. Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
31. T. M. Winsley, *A History of the Singapore Volunteer Corps 1854 - 1937*, Singapore, 1939, p. 49.
32. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1914, p. B35. The Sultan of Perak (Sir Alang Iskandar Shah) endorsed the suggestion of the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan (Tuanku Muhammad Ibni Yam Tuan Antah). Malaya's contribution to the war efforts was not inconsiderable. Besides presenting Britain with a battleship, H.M.S. “Malaya”, costing \$20,000,000, the country paid for the entire cost of the Malay States Guides which saw service in Aden. See also fn. 2 above.

The end of the War signalled the revival of the Malay Regiment idea with the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar and the Sultan of Perak³³ leading the campaign in the Federal Council. Earlier, the mutiny of one wing of the Fifth Light Infantry in Singapore in February 1915 had implicated some elements of the Malay States Guides.³⁴ This compromised the Guides' loyalty and reliability, and indirectly, strengthened the Malay claims for a Regiment of their own. At any rate, the Guides were disbanded in 1919 and the Federation secured from India the loan of one battalion of the Burma Rifles to comply with its Treaty commitments.³⁵ The Burma Rifles soon proved costly to the Federation. Despite various requests, the Indian authorities declined to make large reductions or to maintain an acceptable system of military accounting.³⁶ The Federal Council, naturally, looked around for a cheaper and more convenient substitute for its defence requirement including the possible use of Dayak troops from Sarawak.³⁷

Meanwhile, pressure on the Government continued both inside and outside the Federal Council.³⁸ The Depression of 1928-1932 made a defence force recruited locally all the more desirable for reasons of economy and employment.³⁹ In Europe, the political climate darkened with the rise of Hitlerism; the British Government now began to view with favour the Malay Regiment proposal. And so, for various reasons — political, economic, financial and administrative — it was announced on September 13, 1932, that the Colonial and War Offices had approved in principle the formation of the Malay Regiment.⁴⁰ The announcement was received with great satisfaction by the Malay public and by supporters of the scheme.

33. *Ibid.*, 1919, p. B30, B73.

34. *S.T.*, March 8 and 23, 1915.

35. Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1931, p. B133.

36. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1928, p. B41 and 1931, p. B133. Mr. Arnold Baily was the most vocal among the critics. In 1931, he doubted whether "this Burma Rifles battalion (is) really of assistance in securing the safety of this country", and pointed out that "the Treaties really speak of a regiment and not merely of a battalion or other unit." The average cost to the Federated Malay States of the Burma Rifles from and including 1927 to 1931 was \$860,478.95 (1931, p. B126). In 1923 the military estimate was \$802,000; for 1927, it came to \$1,200,000 (1926, p. B140).

As the Acting Financial Adviser explained feelingly to the Council: "There had been occasions in the past when we thought we had paid everything and we received further bills. The Indian authorities have declined to give us any assurance that no further items in respect of the period to which their accounts relate will ever be presented at a future date" (1928, p. B41).

37. *Ibid.*, 1926, p. B140.

38. *Ibid.*, 1931, p. B125. Address by Raja Sir Chulan; p. B126 by Arnold Bailey. By the end of 1931, the matter had been discussed at no less than three Durbars, at Klang, at Singapore and at Sri Menanti (p. B137).

39. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1932, p. B126; p. B135.

40. *Ibid.*, 1932, p. B77. "The word in principle (the Acting Chief Secretary, Mr. Andrew Caldecott says) is important, because before concrete approval can be given to the substitution of a Malay Regiment for the Indian troops which these States have contracted to maintain under the Treaty of Federation, it will have to be proved that a

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On January 23, 1933, the "Malay Regiment Bill" was tabled on a Certificate of Urgency and passed by the Federal Council as Enactment No. 11.⁴¹ The necessary training staff had been engaged earlier and by March 1, 1933 the first 25 recruits of "The Experimental Company, the Malay Regiment" were ready at Port Dickson to begin serious military training on British Army lines.⁴²

II. "The Experimental Company", 1933-1934.

The first twenty-five recruits of "The Experimental Company, the Malay Regiment" were men carefully selected from a crowd of over a thousand applicants who answered the initial call through the district offices and advertise-

Malay Regiment is of equal military value. Those of us who know the Malay as a policeman and a volunteer have no misgivings as to the outcome of that test. But in order that it may begin to be applied as early as possible, it has been decided to inaugurate an experimental company of the regiment as from the first of January next year. Special expenditure this year has already been provisionally approved by the Finance Committee of this Council and will amount approximately to \$75,000. The annual cost of the company is estimated in round figures at \$100,000 a year, and it may, at first sight appear anomalous that, at a time when the finances of this Federation demand all-round retrenchment, we should be embarking on this additional expenditure. The reason for this is three-fold. In the first place, we have no guarantee of the permanence of the arrangement whereby India lends us the means to comply without Treaty obligations. In the second place, the arrangement is a very costly one. It costs us roughly £100,000 a year, whereas a Malay Regiment would cost us 35 to 40% less than that amount and the money of course would not, as it does now, leave Malaya. Lastly, there is the political consideration that the opportunity of fitting and training themselves for the defence of the country could not, without causing great disappointment to Their Highnesses, the Rulers and their subjects, be any longer withheld from the Malay race. I feel sure that all Hon. Members of this Council will welcome the Secretary of State's approval, in principle, to the formation of this Regiment and will wish the experimental company about to be inaugurated all success." There was no dissenting voice.

41. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1933, p. B30. The Acting Legal Adviser of the F.M.S. in reading the Bill admitted that the Bill — a lengthy document — was "necessarily drafted without the help of experts in military law since no member of the Department of the Judge Advocate-General was available in Malaya." It was modelled and based largely on the Imperial Army Act then ruling. It had been considered necessary to give an "enormous" number of powers to the High Commissioner which were normally invested in the Army Council. But he could delegate powers except in such important matters as those relating to the death-sentence, the making of regulations, declaring an emergency and declaring the Regiment on active service. Only local Malays "who are subjects of the Malay States under His Majesty's protection" could join the Regiment. See *F.M.S. Enactment* 1933, p. 49 ff.

42. *F.M.S. Annual Report*, 1933, p. 97. Recruiting was started on February 1, 1933. The staff were: Commanding Officer: Capt. G. Mc. I. S. Bruce, M.C. w.e.f. 3.2.1933.

Adjutant: (Local) Capt. K. G. Exham w.e.f. 1.12.1932.

R.S.M.: A. E. MacCarthy w.e.f. 15.12.1932.

C.S.M.: E. Oldfield w.e.f. 25.11.1932.

(based on *Malayan Establishment Staff List* as on January 1, 1934.)

ments in the Malay press.⁴³ From the outset the response to recruiting was gratifying.⁴⁴ Leading Malay families sent applicants with the result that "a high standard" for recruits could be maintained from the beginning without difficulty.⁴⁵ Subsequent recruiting for the Regiment was made through the district officers with the assistance of the penghulus (headmen) under their charges. Their main problem was to reduce to reasonable proportions the crowds of applicants who answered the call. The final choice and attestation up to the quota allowed for each state or district was then made by the visiting Regimental Selection Board comprising usually of the Commanding Officer, one other officer, a prominent Malay of the State concerned and the Regimental doctor.⁴⁶

Enlistment was at first confined to the four Federated Malay States which bore the cost of the experiment.⁴⁷ But as the Regiment was intended to be Malayan in composition, subsequent recruiting was extended to cover the rest of the country (except Johore).⁴⁸ Recruits from the non-Federated Malay States, however, were not to exceed twenty per cent of the establishment.⁴⁹

43. Nearly 50% of the 25 men were English-speaking (S.T. 4.8.1933; confirmed by author's interviews with Malay Regiment personnel). M. C. ff Sheppard, *The Malay Regiment 1933-1947*, Kuala Lumpur, 1947, p. 5. Also letter of Major-General K. G. Exham, C.B., D.S.O., dated 28.2.1955; confirmed by the writer's interviews with men of the inaugural squad.

44. Sheppard, article "The Malay Soldier - from a District Officer's point-of-view", in *Straits Times Annual of 1939*, Singapore, 1939. He recalled interviewing 300 candidates for the 10 vacancies allotted to his district. The Commanding Officer, Major G. McI. S. Bruce, sometimes had "some 500 applicants for 10 vacancies and that after the D.O. himself had sorted out the obvious weaklings." (See his article in the Malay Regiment magazine *Pahlawan*, Kuala Lumpur, 1952). The outbreak of hostilities in Europe did not affect recruiting for the Regiment. Even after the Japanese had landed in Malaya "several recruits from Trengganu and Kelantan, finding the main route no longer available, made their way right across the country to join up at Port Dickson" (Letter of Lt.-Colonel J. T. Bretherton Hawkshead-Talbot, M.C., ex-Regimental Commander, Malay Regiment, dated 18.3.1955).

45. *Federation Government Press Release*, P.R. 1/50/270, Kuala Lumpur. Major Raja Lope Nor Rashid (still serving with the Regiment) is the son of the late Sultan of Perak, Sir Alang Iskandar. He joined the original 25-man squad as a private and, according to Major-General G. McI. S. Bruce (letter dated 5.3.1955), received "NO preferential treatment." The Malay Regiment after the War continues to attract members of leading Malay families. (P.R. 1/50/270, *op. cit.*)

The qualification of admission to Malays of between 18 and 23 years old was minimum height 5' 3", a 2" chest expansion from 31" to 32" deflated measurement, good eyesight, good teeth, good physical condition, free from disease, good character, and an educational standard equal to standard 4 Malay school (*A Guide to Careers in Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur, 1939, p. 191).

46. Sheppard, article in *Straits Times Annual*; See also M.R.R.O., 1936.

47. *Handbook to British Malaya 1937*, Kuala Lumpur, 1937, p. 80. M.R.R.O. p. 3. The annual estimates were to be prepared by the Commanding Officer, Malay Regiment, and to be submitted to the Government after consultation with Command Headquarters. (There were, in fact, two recruits from Malacca in the first 25-man squad, Ismail Manap and Ismail Mahmud.)

48. Johore had its own Johore Military Forces recruited from Malays of the State. Presumably it was feared that recruiting for the J.M.F. might be adversely affected.

49. M.R.R.O. p. 81.

As far as possible men with Larut training.⁵⁰ It was the Malay race⁵¹ states in particular", Major G. England at Port (Captain K. G. the Company Se Paul) had been in ruary 1 had already training and route near the sea, some ing huts known ground and a good

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Five months object was to train officers and instruments were delivered

50. S.T., 13.9.1937 first civilian of quality of Perak and won their
51. By "Malay" w Muslim religion Government an. *Enactment*, 19.
52. From a booklet reported in S.T.
53. Letter of Major he went to Port tour of duty e.
54. Letter of Major.
55. Bruce, *Pahlawan* hands, feet and were going to be heard or dream leave. If any of own Sultan and

As far as possible equal proportions for each state were attempted but Perak men with Larut as the best recruiting ground predominated from the beginning.⁵⁰ It was strongly emphasised in the Regiment that all ranks belonged to the Malay race⁵¹ and represented their country as a whole and not the various states in particular.⁵² The first Commanding Officer of "The Experimental Company", Major G. McL. S. Bruce, M.C., of the Lincolnshire Regiment, arrived from England at Port Dickson in early February, about two months after the Adjutant (Captain K. G. Exham), the Regimental Sergeant Major (A. E. McCarthy), the Company Sergeant Major (E. Oldfield) and the first civilian clerk (Lim Paul) had been installed.⁵³ By then, the inaugural squad which joined on February 1 had already started foot-drill and had begun to feel the grip of military training and routine. The embryo Regiment occupied the old Volunteer camp near the sea, some five miles from Port Dickson town. The camp had four sleeping huts known as the Haig Lines, an office building, "an excellent parade-ground and a good area for local training."⁵⁴

The day after his arrival, Bruce held his first Commanding Officer's inspection and met the twenty-five Malays "on whose reaction to hard work, hard discipline and hard training, and on whose behaviour on parade and on leave, depended the whole success or failure of the experiment." He decided to tell them frankly what to expect in their new way of life and the high stake involved.⁵⁵

Five months had been allotted to the training of the squad. The main object was to train as many of them as possible to become non-commissioned officers and instructors of those who were to follow. Although military commands were delivered in English, all instruction was as far as possible to be in

50. S.T., 13.9.1937. In an interview at Port Dickson on 16.12.1954, Mr. Lim Paul (the first civilian clerk employed by the Regiment) acknowledged to the writer the high quality of Perak recruits generally. The first four Malay officers were all Perak men and won their commissions by merit.

51. By "Malay" was meant one who habitually spoke the Malay language, professed the Muslim religion, was born in the Malay States under the protection of His Majesty's Government and was a subject of one of the Rulers of these States. (*Malay Regiment Enactment*, 1933, Section 73, part 11).

52. From a booklet on the Malay Regiment issued by the Ministry of Information as reported in S.T. 15.2.1941.

53. Letter of Major-Gen. K. G. Exham, 28.2.1955. As the first Malay Regiment Adjutant, he went to Port Dickson in December 1932 "to start the initial preparations". His tour of duty ended in 1934.

54. Letter of Major-Gen. Exham.

55. Bruce, *Pahlawan*, 1952. "... they were going to be drilled and trained until their hands, feet and hearts burned. They were not going to be just smart soldiers. They were going to be the smartest d... soldiers anybody in the Peninsula had ever seen, heard or dreamt of. The same would go for their turnout, kits and behaviour on leave. If any body let the side down ... it was letting their own Malay people, their own Sultan and family down."

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Malay. On or before secondment⁵⁶ – normally on a three year tour – the British personnel of the Regiment from the Commanding officer downwards were expected to learn Malay and subsequently to know something about Malay custom and the Muslim religion.⁵⁷ As might be expected, the squad was trained and brought up on the lines of a British infantry unit down to the traditional Army way of instruction – much profanity on the parade ground and no ill-feeling afterwards.⁵⁸

From the start Bruce was optimistic. The recruits were “good material and keen . . .”; the training staff were “smart, know their job, have a sense of humour and have got things running.”⁵⁹ The staff concentrated on “a high standard of discipline, skill at arms, good drill and ceremonial and games” – the last in order “to develop character, comradeship and physical fitness.”⁶⁰ Competitions were held for the smartest man on parade and for the best kit. The staff aimed among other things at developing in the Malay soldiers a sense of patriotism – “love for their country and loyalty to their Rulers” – and a determination to make the military experiment a success. That the squad responded well was due no less to good training and organisation as to good handling. Indeed the good conduct of the men was considered exceptional. Serious breaches of discipline were “exceedingly rare”.⁶¹

Special attention was paid to the diet and recreation in the barracks. The high quality of the food proved to be one of the best recruiting draws as also did “the smartness and increased size and weight of the men on visiting their kampongs on leave”.⁶²

56. No commissions were given to British officers into the Malay Regiment direct. All officers were seconded for service. Officers were paid by appointment not by rank, i.e. as a Company Commander, Company Officer, etc. (Compilation of Lt. Col. J. R. G. Andre dated November 11, 1943, re-written and brought up-to-date in October 1944. Not published).

57. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1936, p. C67. At first, officers (Major Bruce for instance) took a short Malay language course at the London School of Oriental Studies but after 1935 (according to Brigadier G. T. Benaro, former Director of Federation Military Forces, Malaya Command) the course was taken at the Malay Regiment establishment under the Education Officer, Che' Abu Samah. From interviews with Malay Regiment personnel, the writer learns that Captain Exham spoke tolerable Malay, while R.S.M. McCarthy and C.S.M. Oldfield were well-versed in the language. Major Bruce picked up the language fast and was soon able to converse fluently with the soldiers in Malay.

In a letter dated 10.3.1955, Tuan Haji Ibrahim Yusof, the Regimental Religious Teacher, mentions the marked interest taken by Bruce in the religious life of the men. Haji Ibrahim joined the establishment on 1.9.1933. See *Pahlawan*, 1953, p. 200.

58. Interviews with ex-members of the inaugural squad Major Taib b. Jais, Major Raja Lope Nor Rashid, Che Ahmad b. Abdullah at Port Dickson.

59. Bruce, *Pahlawan*.

60. Letter of Major-General Exham.

61. Sheppard, *Straits Times Annual*. From 1933 to 1938 there was only one case of desertion.

62. *Ibid.* Records of weight, height and chest measurement kept of every man showed a pronounced all-round physical improvement after six months' training.

In the light of initial scepticism expressed about the experiment, Bruce made every effort to encourage the public to form their own impressions by visiting the camp and witnessing the regular Sunday morning parades. The Sultans from the start took a keen interest in the Regiment and the various district officers and Government officials gave full cooperation.

The allotted five-month intensive training went on steadily and by mid-July 1933 six men had been promoted to lance-corporals and the inaugural squad was ready to put up a show for officialdom. The High Commissioner, Sir Shenton Thomas, accompanied by two staff officers from Singapore paid his first visit to the Regiment at Port Dickson on July 18, 1933.⁶³ He must have been favourably impressed for the Federal Council heard of "the excellent start" made by the inaugural squad⁶⁴ and of the decision to expand the force to 150 men – the full complement of the Experimental Company. Hence batches of thirty recruits – now including the Straits Settlements and the Un-Federated Malay States (except Johore) – were enlisted at intervals of two months. By the end of 1933, the strength stood at 115 men.⁶⁵ The final batch of thirty-five men joined on February 1, 1934, after which recruiting was suspended pending the final decision whether to have a Malay Regiment or not.⁶⁶

It was during a recruiting reconnaissance in Kelantan that Bruce conceived the idea of a Regimental mufti embodying the Malay national dress. This he introduced for "*esprit de corps* reasons and to aid recruiting in the kampongs." Similarly in the interest of *esprit de corps*, all British personnel had to identify themselves from the outset with the Malay Regiment – to wear Malay Regiment uniform and carry nothing of their own British unit.⁶⁷ Within six months of the formation of the Regiment, Bruce and Exham between them had also designed the Regimental badge containing the motto: *Ta'at Setia* (Loyal and True).⁶⁸ Similarly, three colours were chosen for the Regiment – green (the Muslim colour), yellow (for Malay royalty) and red (for the British Army influence).⁶⁹ These were embodied, for instance, in the Regimental tie and "sarong" for the Malay mufti.

In keeping with the experimental nature of the Regiment recruits of the Experimental Company were enlisted on a three year engagement instead of seven years with the colours and five years in reserve after the Regiment was

63. S.T. 4.8.1933. They performed the fixing and unfixing of the bayonets on the march "with admirable precision. This most complicated exercise . . . is seldom done in the British Army and is one of the features of the Royal Tournament at Olympia."

64. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1933, p. C377.

65. *Federated Malay States Annual Report 1933*, Kuala Lumpur, 1934, p. 97.

66. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1935, p. C310.

67. Letter of Major-General Bruce.

68. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

69. Bruce, *Pahlawan*.

confirmed.⁷⁰ Similarly, the initial supply of arms and equipment necessary to start training was received on long-term loan from the Imperial Government. It was not until the end of 1934, when the expansion to battalion strength was decided upon, that the Federal Government began to buy its arms and equipment for the Malay Regiment.⁷¹

Bruce's optimism about the final judgment on the force he had helped to raise and train was fully justified. Before mid-1934 the experiment was officially pronounced "a success . . . justifying further expansion towards a complete battalion."⁷² The Standing Advisory Committee for the Malay Regiment, therefore, met at Port Dickson on April 24, 1934 and discussed details of the expansion. Sub-committees were formed to deal with specific issues arising out of the decision to expand. It was decided to recruit four additional British officers, one quarter-master (where there was none before), five additional British warrant-officers and instructors as well as 229 Malay other ranks. Estimates were passed by the Federal Council on July 2, 1934, for the construction of permanent barracks for the men, officers' quarters, battalion parade-ground, medical reception station, sub-assistant surgeon's quarters, a new rifle-range, a guard-room, etc., at Port Dickson. The site chosen for the new construction was 500 acres of land (adjoining the camp area), bought from the Kong Sang Rubber Company for \$75,000.⁷³

It was no coincidence that the Malay Regiment for the first time provided a fifty-man Guard of Honour for the ceremonial opening of the Federal Council's budget meeting on October 22, 1934.⁷⁴ The Council was informed, *inter alia*, that "the Malay Regiment has progressed far beyond the original expectations."⁷⁵ Meanwhile under the agreed policy of expansion a recruiting drive was launched in November which resulted in 232 new men joining the Regiment on Feb-

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70. Article by Major G. McL. S. Bruce in 1936 *Annual Report of the Negri Sembilan Planters' Association* reported in S.T., 14.3.1937.

71. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1935, p. C192; 1936, p. C6.

72. *Memorandum by Acting Chief Secretary to Government on Estimates for 1935*, F.S. 3611/34.

73. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1933, p. B9; 1934, pp. B50, C279, C310

74. S.T. 23.10.1934. Of the Regimental Guard of Honour provided on that day, the paper says, they displayed "both in their appearance and the precision of their movements the very acme of military smartness." According to Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 7, the standard of superlative drill for which the Regiment rapidly became famous was to a large extent due to such British instructors as R.S.M. MacCarthy (awarded the M.B.E. in 1937), Sgt.-Major Rich and Sgt.-Major Staniforth. In 1935, R.S.M. MacCarthy attended a higher drill-course at the Guards Depot, Caterham, (P.L.C.F.M.S. 1936, p. C35). Bruce Lockhart the author and diplomat who witnessed a Sunday parade of the Regiment at Port Dickson wrote in his book *Return to Malaya*, London, 1936, p. 184 "I am no soldier, but during my life abroad I have seen the ceremonial parades of most of the crack regiments of Europe. These Malay boys were marvellously efficient. They had the 'swagger' of guardsmen." Local newspapers from time to time paid tribute to the performance of the Regiment on parade.

75. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1934, p. B85.

76. *Ibid.*, 19

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78. F.M.S. A Report o the end battalion for the a transport the main

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ruary 1, 1935.⁷⁶ The success of the military experiment also meant among other things a change of name. And so, on January 1, 1935, "The Experimental Company, the Malay Regiment" officially assumed the title "The Malay Regiment".

III. The Malay Regiment, 1935 – 1941

Irritation meanwhile continued to be expressed in the Federal Council at the "unsatisfactory system" of Indian military accounting and the high cost of maintaining the Burma Rifles at Taiping. The Government was urged to "press as rapidly as possible with our own Malay Regiment".⁷⁷ But expansion to battalions strength entailed a number of difficulties which were not wholly solved even by the time Bruce left Malaya in August 1938.

One of the early problems of the Regiment was that of the building programme keeping pace with the rapidity of expansion now that recruiting had been speeded up. The Public Works Department did its best to cope with the situation by erecting temporary accommodation on every available space and, generally, concentrating on the more important construction.⁷⁸ By the end of 1938 the building programme was more or less completed and 261 families of married soldiers moved into married quarters. Officers and warrant officers occupied quarters on a hill feature over-looking the Straits of Malacca.⁷⁹

Meanwhile, new recruits arrived in a steady stream and the training and administrative personnel were gradually increased to cope with the expansion. With the addition of 232 recruits in February 1935, the Regiment – now 380 strong – began to adopt battalion organisation comprising two rifle companies "A" and "B", and a Headquarters Wing which included a Vickers Machine-gun Platoon, a Signalling Section and a Corps of Drums.⁸⁰ More recruits were enlisted and by October 1938 the Regiment, with the exception of its Malay officers' strength (intended to be 19), had nearly reached its full peace-time complement of 17 British officers, 6 Malay officers, 11 British warrant-officers

76. *Ibid.*, 1935, p. C310.

77. Council address by an unofficial member, Colonel Rae. (*P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1935, p. B31).

78. *F.M.S. Annual Report*, 1935, p. 12. Also Bruce's notes in Appendix to *1935 Annual Report of Negri Sembilan Planters' Association*. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1935, p. C303. By the end of 1935, two barrack blocks (each holding 160 men and 16 N.C.O.'s), the battalion parade-ground, the central reception station, the guard-house, certain quarters for the assistant medical officer, officers, warrant officers, and garage for mechanical transport were completed and so were the secondary roads to the new construction and the main approach roads.

79. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1938, p. B76. According to *S.T.* November 4, 1936, regulations had been approved which enabled the wives of Malay Regiment soldiers to occupy married quarters on December 16, 1936; Sheppard, in *Straits Times Annual*.

80. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1935, p. C310.

and 759 other ranks.⁸¹ It was organised into three rifle companies "A", "B" and "C" and one Support (Machine-gun) Company and a Headquarters Wing. There are also a Depot Platoon staff for the training of new recruits. Band, drums, signallers, pioneers and armourers were also up to strength. Four more Malay cadet officers were sent to Singapore for three months training with the Loyal Regiment and received their High Commissioner's Commissions as Second-Lieutenants in January 1939.⁸²

The shortage of officers and platoon commanders was a major problem to Bruce during the initial stages of the Regiment's rapid expansion in 1935. Further recruitment of British officers and instructors in January 1936 helped to lessen the pressure on the old staff. It was less easy, however, to obtain trained Malays quickly and in sufficient number to officer the Regiment. The first four Malay regular officers — Second-Lieutenants Ismail Tahar, Raja Lope Nor Rashid, Ariffin Haji Sulaiman and Ibrahim Sidek — all from Perak, had risen from the ranks since joining the Regiment in March 1933. Trained as platoon commanders at Port Dickson they underwent a further three month training with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in Singapore before receiving their Commissions on November 4, 1936.⁸³ A yearly quota of about four Malay officers was planned but their training was "necessarily slow",⁸⁴ with the result that the authorised Malay officer establishment of nineteen remained unfilled until the outbreak of hostilities in Malaya. The production of Malay non-commissioned officers in sufficient numbers to deal with the large influx of recruits was less of a problem. It was intended to replace gradually the British warrant-officers by Malay Company sergeant major and Company quarter master sergeants as these became fully trained. Special facilities and inducements were held out to Malay non-commissioned officers and men to learn to speak, read and write English.⁸⁵ Within three years, Malay Regiment non-commissioned officers were taking the place of British instructors in charge of Volunteer Force Cadre Course in different parts of the country.

The good relations between the Regiment and the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force were maintained from the outset. The Regiment cooperated fully with volunteer units which periodically camped and trained at Port

Dickson and provided officers for training matters.⁸⁶

The rapid change in the customs and habits of their people. The Standing Advisory Committee maintain liaison with the children of the camp area. From a religious teaching large Regimental 1939 to cater to

In keeping with the desire to retain the best personnel or other Regimental members. Besides serving as barbers. All Malay and so mental hospital, soldiers detailed where there was missioned officers period they return

The training of the Malay states. 1937 that it came one of the biggest the first made by local press paid to

81. *Ibid.*, 1938, p. B76.

82. 1938 *F.M.S. Annual Report*. Since September 1950, the Commission is known as "The High Commissioner's Commission granted on behalf of H.M. The Queen and Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States." (*Pahlawan*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 200). See also *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1938, pp. B76, C354.

83. S.T. 3.11.1936. The ceremony of presenting the sword to the first four Malay officers was held before the Federal Building in Kuala Lumpur. The grant of (High Commissioner's) Commission to Malays was approved by the Secretary of State with the concurrence of the War Office (*P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1935, p. B47).

84. Bruce, *op. cit.*

85. *M.R.R.O.*, p. 177.

86. Sheppard, *op. cit.* (pp. 3, 8, 17).

87. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*,

88. Interview with 16.12.1954, at

89. Letter of Haji March 10, 19 official, Lebai

90. According to h Sheppard, in S

Dickson and provided them with Malay-speaking officers and non-commissioned officers for training and generally helped them in administrative and other matters.⁸⁶

The rapid expansion of the Regiment also gave rise to problems involving the customs and religion of the soldiers and the welfare and education of members of their families. These were accordingly entrusted to a reconstituted Standing Advisory Committee for the Malay Regiment which also served to maintain liaison with the civil population.⁸⁷ A Malay co-educational school for the children of Malay Regiment soldiers and employees⁸⁸ was built in the new camp area. Friday prayer had been made compulsory since the early days and a religious teacher, Haji Ibrahim Yusof, was appointed in September 1933. A large Regimental mosque was constructed and officially opened in December 1939 to cater to the religious need of the men.⁸⁹

In keeping with the name "Malay Regiment", everything possible was done to retain the distinctive Malay character of the establishment in terms of personnel or otherwise. It was seen, for instance, in the adoption of the Malay Regimental mufti, the Regimental tri-colour, and the medium of instruction. Besides serving as regular soldiers, Malay were also employed as cooks and barbers. All members of the Pioneer Section (carpenters and painters) were Malays and so were the band, the armoury and transport staff. In the Regimental hospital, the Malay doctor and Malay dressers were assisted by regular soldiers detailed for duty as ward orderlies. At the School of Instruction, where there was a Malay Education Officer, a number of suitable non-commissioned officers were detailed to assist him on six month rotation after which period they return to their companies.⁹⁰

The training of the Regiment was based at Port Dickson and elsewhere in the Malay states. But this was necessarily limited in scope. It was not until 1937 that it came down to Singapore for advanced training, and taking part in one of the biggest inter-service combined operations in the east. This visit was the first made by the Regiment to Singapore and created quite a stir. The local press paid tribute to the smartness and drill performance of the Regiment

86. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 7; *F.M.S. Annual Report* for 1935 (pp. 7, 11, 12); for 1937 (pp. 3, 8, 17, 21); for 1938 (pp. 11, 17).

87. *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1936, as reported in *S.T.* 4.11.1936.

88. Interview with Che' Janor, Headmaster of the Malay Regiment Children's School, on 16.12.1954, at Port Dickson.

89. Letter of Haji Ibrahim Yusof (Regimental Religious Teacher), to the writer dated March 10, 1955. He was appointed Imam on 1.9.1933. Later another religious official, Lebai Muhammad Ali b. Abdul Manan, was appointed in 1936 to assist him. According to him, Bruce was fully cooperative in religious matters.

90. Sheppard, in *Straits Times Annual*.

and reported fully on its activities.⁹¹ The local Malay Union was in fact moved to approach the Colony Government to establish a Malay Regiment in Singapore.⁹² 1937 also saw about 250 non-commissioned officers and men of the Regiment on strike duty during the serious labour troubles which developed in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan during March and April. About 6,000 workers on the Malayan Colliery's coalfields at Batu Arang went on strike and two companies of the Regiment under Captain J.R.G. Andre and Captain F.W. Young were deployed in the strike area to assist the police in keeping order. The troops earned the commendation of the Governor and General Officer Commanding, Malaya, for showing "considerable discipline and restraint."⁹³ Other notable activities during 1937 were the sending of a small military contingent to England on the occasion of King George VI's Coronation and the Regiment's participation in a Military Searchlight Tattoo in August at Farrer Park, Singapore.⁹⁴

The Regiment again came down to Singapore in January and February 1938 to carry out battalion and advanced training. A party of fifty men attended the opening of King George VI's Graving Dock at the Singapore Naval Base.⁹⁵ But the most memorable occasion of the year for the Regiment was the loss of its first Commanding Officer, Lt.-Colonel Bruce, who left Malaya in August to rejoin his old Regiment. The Malay community and the Federal Council paid handsome tribute to him for his past services and the "pronounced success" of the military experiment⁹⁶ for which he was awarded the O.B.E. Major Bretherton Hawkshead-Talbot, M.C., now assumed command of the Regiment. R.S.M. McCarthy too was conferred the M.B.E. for his service to the Regiment. The standard of "superlative drill" for which the Regiment rapidly distinguished itself was largely due to his efforts and those of his other colleagues like Sergeant-Majors Rich and Staniforth.⁹⁷

91. Official Announcement issued by Fort Canning, January 13, 1937. See S.T. 13.1.1937. During its two week visit to Singapore, the Regiment mounted guards at the Government House, beat the Retreat at the Esplanade, conducted a mosque parade at which the Governor and Sultans of Perak and Trengganu took the salute and invited the public to a Malay Regiment "At Home" in its Selarang Camp. (see S.T. and *Malaya Tribune* of January and February, 1937). The march past the Governor on 12.1.1937 was the first occasion the Regiment was left entirely in the charge of Malay officers (S.T. 13.1.1937).
92. S.T. 12.2.1937. A letter by a Eurasian appeared in the S.T. 23.1.1937 paying tribute to the Regiment and suggesting the creation of a Eurasian regiment.
93. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1937, p. B55; S.T. 28.3.1937.
94. J. M. Winsley, *A History of the Singapore Volunteer Corps 1894-1937*, Singapore, 1937, p. 123.
95. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1938, pp. B77, C354.
96. P.L.C.F.M.S., 1938, pp. B66, B71. He left behind him "a battalion of highly trained and disciplined men" (said the Governor in the Legislative Council) but, (as Bruce put it himself in the *Pahlawan*, 1953) "still lacking the vital and searching test of war to bring it to its army manhood."
97. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 7; S.F.P., 12.1.1938. Their "drill is equal to the highest British standard" (see note 74 above).

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98. Sheppard, *op. cit.*
99. Editorial of 21.8.1939.
100. *Malay Regi* and Septeml obtained fro
101. *M.R.W.D.*, p
102. *M.R.W.D.*, p 100 hours, v ment, plus Inf/2/54/100

The emphasis on marksmanship in the army applied to the Regiment as well. One of the best achievements of the Regiment was in October 1938 when four Malay cadet officers attending a regimental Bren-gun course in Singapore along with other British personnel won the first four places out of a class of fifteen.⁹⁸

Meanwhile the worsening international situation in Europe resulted in military reinforcements — the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade Group — reaching Malaya in August 1939. The Malay press welcomed the new arrivals but urged the British Government to expand the Malay Regiment to “many times its present strength.”⁹⁹ No expansion, however, took place until shortly after the outbreak of the European war (September 3, 1939). On the declaration of war, the Regiment was immediately mobilised and its training programme intensified.¹⁰⁰ One additional company (known as “W” Company) was recruited in February 1940 as a war measure, and by April an attap hutment camp was built near the Normanton Oil Depot, Singapore, for the use of one company permanently at war station. The Regiment which, with the 2nd Loyal Regiment, had been formed into the First Malaya Infantry Brigade came down again to Singapore in July 1940 and subsequently took over “W” Sector at Pasir Panjang (including the Labrador Sub-Sector and the Jurong Boom) from the 2nd Dogra Regiment.¹⁰¹

Japan became a signatory to the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy and with the Japanese military occupation of north Indo-China in September 1940 after the French collapse, the threat of war came nearer to Malaya. The immediate result was a rapid strengthening of Malaya’s garrison for it seemed improbable that the main fleet of the Royal Navy could reach Singapore in time because of British commitments in other theatres of war.

Meanwhile, the Malay Regiment’s training programme was further intensified — long route marches, specialised training, and battalion, brigade and combined exercises with other Imperial units became more frequent as the war clouds gathered.¹⁰² The Regiment increased its efficiency with two and three

98. Sheppard, in *Straits Times Annual*.

99. Editorial of *Majlis*, an influential Kuala Lumpur Malay newspaper, as reported in S.T. 21.8.1939.

100. *Malay Regiment War Diary* (September 1939 – December 31, 1941). Less August and September 1940 missing. Photostat copy in the Malay Regiment Record Office obtained from the War Office, London (not published).

101. *M.R.W.D.*, pp. 9, 30; *P.L.C.F.M.S.*, 1939, p. B69.

102. *M.R.W.D.*, p. 15 ff. No. 3 platoon of 1st Battalion covered 104 miles in just over 100 hours, with no man falling out although each was carrying 80 pounds of equipment, plus rifle and food. Vide; *Army Public Relations, Press Statement D. Inf/2/54/100 (Army)*.

inch mortars, anti-tank rifles and other modern weapons. Its members attended various courses organised by Headquarters Malaya Command. A Carrier Platoon comprising ten Bren-gun Carriers was formed in early August 1941 with Captain R.R.C. Carter in command and began training under the 2nd Loyal Regiment.¹⁰³

From time to time one company or two were detailed for training and detachment duties in the Malay States. It was thus that the newly-formed "W" Company (later known as "A" Company 2nd Battalion) under Captain W. Richardson was despatched to Kampong Pergau, Kelantan, in August 1941. From this base, the Company established an advance camp well up the Pergau River. The tributaries of the river were reconnoitred as far as the Siamese border with a view to preventing Japanese infiltration into Malaya from Siam.¹⁰⁴ The Company was in Kelantan when hostilities broke out.

In the meanwhile to the satisfaction of the Malay public the Governor announced in March 1941 the decision to increase the Regiment's strength to two battalions.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, the necessary promotions were made — recruiting having begun earlier — and on July 12 Lt.-Colonel Bretherton Hawkshead-Talbot, M.C., left for Port Dickson as Regimental Commander leaving Lt.-Colonel J.R.G. Andre in Singapore to assume command of the 1st Battalion.¹⁰⁶ A "fair nucleus" of trained officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men were drafted from the 1st Battalion to the 2nd Battalion which was officially formed on December 1, 1941,¹⁰⁷ with a total strength of 453 men,¹⁰⁸ under the command of Lt.-Colonel F. W. Young.

One week later, the Japanese struck.

IV. The Campaign on the East Coast: "A" Company, 2nd Battalion

Long before December 1941 the Japanese, with German assistance, had made minute preparations to ensure the success of their "blitz" in Malaya.

103. *M.R.W.D.*, pp. 27-29.

104. Letter to the writer from Major (then Captain) W. Richardson, Commander of "A" Company 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment, dated 21.2.1955. In its reconnoitring work, the Company was greatly assisted by a Mr. Bangs a planter who lived at Pergau and knew that part of the country intimately. Also statement of Captain (then C.S.M.) Md. Sidek b. Ismail made to the writer in an interview at Port Dickson.

105. Editorial of *Warta Malaya* and *Utusan Melayu* as reported in *S.T.* 4.4.1941, in response to Sir Shenton Thomas' radio broadcast on March 30, 1941.

106. *M.R.W.D.*, p. 27.

107. Letter to writer from Lt. Colonel J.T. Bretherton Hawkshead-Talbot, M.C., ex-Malay Regiment Commander, dated 29.3.1955; *M.R.W.D.*, p. 36.

108. Letter to writer from Lt. Colonel F.W. Young, M.B.E., 2nd Battalion Commander, *M.R.*, dated 3.4.1955.

Lieutenant-General Japanese Army military commanders and The units entered and the 5th Division in the China

Japanese to capture Singapore tated combine drive by infantry complete absence of the British the two capital campaign¹¹² Japanese superiority of Japanese pi generally obso of action and

On land, Japanese were on call to and momentum had to fight all were generally necessary skill "the most formidable

109. A. E. Percival *Second World War Postscript*, I and technique

110. *Operations of the Japanese* London, 1944 book *The Sea* (of the British of the Japanese

111. *O.M.C.*, pp.

112. Both ships were

113. Percival, *op. Navy "O" for mastery of the fact* (Church

114. Compton Mackenzie

115. Field-Marshal in Burma, Lord

Lieutenant-General Tomoyuki Yamashita, Commander-in-Chief of the 25th Japanese Army detailed for the Malayan operations, had conferred with Hitler's military experts in Germany on plans for the campaign.¹⁰⁰ His formation commanders and senior staff officers were the flower of the Japanese General Staff. The units entrusted with the task, especially the crack Imperial Guards Division and the 5th Division, were elite troops — highly trained and battle-hardened in the China War.¹¹⁰

Japanese strategy called for a lightning offensive down the Malay Peninsula to capture Singapore before British reinforcements could arrive. This necessitated combined operations along the coasts and a simultaneous three-pronged drive by infantry and tanks pressed with great vigour and speed. The complete absence of British tanks on the Malayan front,¹¹¹ the weakness of the Royal Air Force stationed in the Peninsula and the sinking of the two capital ships the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* very early in the campaign¹¹² played into Japanese hands. The numerical and technical superiority of the Japanese planes — bombers and fighters alike — and the skill of Japanese pilots came as an unpleasant surprise. A large proportion of the generally obsolescent British aircraft operating in Malaya was soon put out of action and the defence was denied an effective air striking force.¹¹³

On land, large Japanese army reserves in South Thailand and Indo-China were on call to supply fresh troops in the forward areas to maintain the pressure and momentum of attack. The defenders, on the other hand, lacking reserves, had to fight almost continuously day and night with little respite.¹¹⁴ They were generally inexperienced and partially-trained troops and lacked the necessary skill in jungle warfare to match the cunning and superior tactics of "the most formidable fighting insects on earth."¹¹⁵

109. A. E. Percival, *The War in Malaya*, London, 1949, p. 47; Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. IV, London 1951, p. 37; according to Ian Morrison, *Malayan Postscript*, London, 1942, p. 130, Yamashita was "absolutely up-to-date in the science and technique of war".

110. *Operations of Malaya Command, (D.M.C.) 8th December, 1941 — 15th February, 1942*, London, 1948, by Lt. - General A. E. Percival (pp. 1280, 1329). Cyrill Falls, in his book *The Second World War*, London, 1948, comments acidly, "The tactical leadership (of the British commanders) was pedestrian by comparison with the dash and daring of the Japanese." (p. 145).

111. *O.M.C.*, pp. 1280, 1305.

112. Both ships were sunk 60 miles off Kuantan on December 10, 1941.

113. Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 47. The Brewster Buffaloes were outclassed by the Japanese Navy "O" fighters, (p. 104); *O.M.C.*, pp. 1237, 1273, 1274, 1305. "The Japanese mastery of the air arising from our bitter needs elsewhere ... was another deadly fact" (Churchill, *op. cit.*, p. 38.)

114. Compton MacKenzie, *Eastern Epic*, vol. 1, London, 1951, pp. 262, 275.

115. Field-Marshal Sir William Slim's hard tribute to the enemy, quoted in *The Campaign in Burma*, London, p. 136, by Lt. - Colonel Frank Owen.

In the light of their all-round superiority, the Japanese could afford to take risks as regards the security of their long and continually extending lines of communication and the maintenance of their supplies. They were soon able to execute a series of amphibious outflanking operations under a strong air cover and thereby to influence the situation at the front. Thus, although on the main-land the Japanese possessed no great numerical superiority, their progress was never held up for long and, generally speaking, they moved south at the rate of some ten miles a day. The initial success of their "blitz" tactics and combined land-sea-and-air operations may be gauged by the fact that within sixty-two hours of the outbreak of hostilities, they had established air superiority over North Malaya, naval superiority along the entire east coast of the Peninsula down to Singapore, and had landed formidable land forces in South Thailand and Kelantan.¹¹⁶ Before the year was out the whole of North Malaya had been occupied and by the end of January 1942 Japanese forces were already poised for a frontal attack on Singapore island itself. Two weeks later Singapore fell.

In the campaign on the mainland, the Malay Regiment had only two companies, "A" and "D", each of about 120 men, of the newly-formed and partially-trained 2nd Battalion in action. "D" Company, 2nd Battalion, received its baptism of fire at Sungai Bakap, Province Wellesley. It took part in the general withdrawal down the Peninsula with other British forces, culminating in a miniature Dunkirk at Ponggor beach, West Johore. The experiences of "A" Company under Major W. Richardson were less eventful. It fought rearguard actions in Kelantan for the most part while withdrawing into Pahang and Johore.

Immediately after landing on the shores of Singgora, Petani and Kota Bahru shortly after midnight December 7/8, 1941, the Japanese strengthened their beachhead and began their three-pronged drive down the Peninsula. "A" Company of the 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment (less one platoon at Pergau), was then stationed at the railhead of Kuala Krai, Kelantan. It was under the operational command of the 8th Indian Infantry Brigade and, together with other Indian units, had been detailed for defence of local installations.¹¹⁷ It was bombed on the 9th but suffered no casualties.¹¹⁸

The task of the 8th Brigade deployed in Kelantan under Brigadier B. W. Key was to safeguard for the Royal Air Force the three aerodromes at Kota Bahru, Gong Kedah and Machang and to deny them to the enemy. This it

failed to do after withdraw the British resources from the coast".¹¹⁹ The 1st the vulnerable Pahang. On December occupied defensive attacks.¹²⁰ Threatened to retire further absorbed with other duties "most effective

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116. Briefly summarised from O.M.C., pp. 1273, 1290-91, 1324, 1329.

117. M.R.W.D., p. 20; Letter of Major W. Richardson, dated 21.2.1955. Confirmed by Captain Mohd. Sidek, interview at Port Dickson on 24.2.1955.

118. Interview with Captain (then C.S.M.) Mohd. Sidek b. Ismail.

119. O.M.C., pp. 1273, 1290-91, 1324, 1329.

120. Letter of Major

121. Percival, *op. cit.* each of the following 3/17th Dogras, Heavy Machine.

122. Letter of Major

123. Text of radio by Captain Mohd.

124. O.M.C., pp. 128

failed to do after five days fighting and orders were received to disengage and withdraw the Brigade systematically from Kelantan with a view to "conserving our resources and concentrating them for the main battle... on the west coast".¹¹⁹ The line of retreat, with complete enemy air supremacy, was down the vulnerable single-track railway joining Kota Bahru and Kuala Lipis in Pahang. On December 14, "A" Company, following the Brigade's withdrawal, occupied defensive positions at Pergau where it experienced occasional air attacks.¹²⁰ Three days later, with the enemy closing in, the Brigade was ordered to retire further south. "A" Company, consisting of three platoons, was then absorbed with other units into a rearguard — Macforce, which carried out its duties "most efficiently."¹²¹

Commanded by Lt.Colonel G. McKellar, Macforce's role was initially to retain positions then held as long as possible so as to enable the main body of the Brigade to withdraw unhindered. Five days later its role was changed. It carried out an offensive withdrawal and demolished in succession the bridges of the East Coast Railways as the Brigade proceeded south. Various sorties were also made through the jungle to hit the enemy but without results.¹²² The enemy continued to hang on the heels of the retreating columns and occasionally bombed and machine-gunned them but did not press hard.¹²³ The withdrawal route from the Kuala Krai down the railway line took "A" Company (which was still intact) to Kemubu, Bertam, Limau Kesturi, Gua Musang, Merapoh, Bukit Beiong and on to Kuala Lipis which it reached on New Year's Day 1942.

By that date the Brigade was deployed in the triangle formed by Kuala Lipis-Raub-Jerantut, covered on the north by Macforce and on the south by detachments watching the approaches through Pahang. The lateral road, Jerantut-Kuala Lipis-Raub-Kuala Kubu, being the only line of East-West road communication in Malaya, was strategically vital and was to be kept open.¹²⁴

By now, the governing policy was to delay the enemy as long as possible from occupying too early the airfields at Kuala Lumpur and Kuantan. The fall of these vital airfields might jeopardise the safe arrival of land and air reinforcements expected in January. But Kuantan — a very isolated area — had

119. O.M.C., pp. 1235, 1274.

120. Letter of Major W. Richardson, cited above.

121. Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 139; O.M.C., p. 1273. Macforce comprised of one company from each of the following Regiments; 1st Frontier Force Rifles, 2nd Frontier Force Regiment, 3/17th Dogras, Malay Regiment, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (Pahang) Heavy Machine-Guns, and one detachment of the Royal Engineers.

122. Letter of Major Richardson.

123. Text of radio broadcast by Lt. Col. J.R.G. Andre (S.T. 30.12.1947); statement of Captain Mohd. Sidek.

124. O.M.C., pp. 1281, 1288.

to be abandoned on the night of December 31/January 1, 1942.¹²⁵ The aerodromes in Kelantan and Kuantan although damaged by demolition work, were soon repaired and used by the enemy to mount air strikes against the defence.

Some time on January 9 withdrawal orders were received at Kuala Lipis and "A" Company, along with other units, entrained for Buloh Kasap in Johore where they occupied defensive positions facing the enemy across a river obstacle. By then Macforce as an independent unit had been dissolved. For about a week the defenders — part of Westforce¹²⁶ held their ground though harassed by constant bombing, shelling, mortar fire and by ground-strafting, Japanese aircraft working in close support of their forward troops. Here Corporal Napi was killed and three others injured.¹²⁷

The fall of Muar on the 16th and the dangerous situation developing in that area, threatened Westforce's communication. Hence "A" Company and other troops were withdrawn two days later to the central Johore front centring at Segamat. They marched back under heavy artillery and mortar fire for the greater part of the way but ambushed near Segamat.¹²⁸ "A" Company along with other units dug in behind the Segamat River and again saw action¹²⁹ as part of Westforce in the desultory fighting which developed. The Japanese thrust from Muar in the direction of Yong Peng threatened to isolate the whole Segamat force. This resulted in a further withdrawal. The Company had been constantly on the move under fire for over a month and the ordeal made itself felt. Ten men including the Commanding Officer were taken ill and evacuated to Singapore for hospital treatment. Lt. D. D. Rennie now assumed command.¹³⁰ At midnight, January 23/24, the rearguards from both the Segamat and Muar fronts passed through Yong Peng. From here the Company — or what remained of it — battered, ill-clothed and exhausted — took part in the general withdrawal via Ayer Hitam to Singapore where it rejoined the 2nd Battalion at Normanton Camp.¹³¹

By now the Regimental Depot at Port Dickson had been withdrawn to

125. *O.M.C.*, p. 1290.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 1293. Westforce the equivalent of 1 strong division (p. 1297) comprised of: 9th Indian Division, Australian Brigade Group, 2 Battalions Loyal Regiment less one Company (from Singapore Fortress), Artillery, Engineer and Administrative Battalion. Westforce's formation, the Indian Pioneer Battalion. Westforce's task was to hold the N.W. portion of Johore, the main line of resistance to be on the general line Batu Anam — Muar.

127. Statement of C.O.M.S. Kassim; statement of Captain Mohd. Sidek.

128. *O.M.C.*, p. 1299; statement of Captain Mohd. Sidek.

129. Letter of Major Richardson.

130. Letter of Major Richardson and statement of Captain Mohd. Sidek.

131. Statement of Captain Mohd. Sidek; also written statement of C.O.M.S. Kassim.

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134. MacKenzie, o,
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Singapore and disbanded (except for a small cadre). Its personnel were posted to the two battalions of the Regiment. Recruits with a few weeks training were distributed among the rifle companies in the proportion of one recruit to three trained soldiers. The strength of the 2nd Battalion now stood at 580.¹³²

V. The Campaign on the West Coast: "D" Company, 2nd Battalion

Of the two 2nd Battalion units which saw action on the mainland, "D" Company appeared to have had a more varied and arduous experience. This young and partially-trained unit under Captain A. S. Taylor came down to Singapore on December 11, 1941. It barely completed its basic training at the Regimental Depot, Port Dickson. On being brought up to strength the Company entrained for Sungai Bakap, Province Wellesley, arriving there at midnight of the 13/14th.¹³³ By then the enemy, in a powerful drive down the Peninsula from Singgora, enjoying air superiority over North Malaya and making use of tanks to spearhead their offensive, had occupied Perlis and half of Kedah. The defeat at Gurun resulted in a further British withdrawal southward and by the morning of the 16th, the 11th Indian Division charged with the task of containing the Japanese drive from Singgora had fallen back south of the River Muda into Province Wellesley.¹³⁴ The previous day, the Royal Air Force had evacuated Butterworth aerodrome which was no longer tenable.

The day after the Company's arrival at Sungai Bakap, it experienced a low-level air attack but suffered no casualties.¹³⁵ During the period December 14-16, the Company performed guard duties at the Ordnance Depot in the Val d'Or Estate and provided local protection for motor transport vehicles and personnel.¹³⁶ Later verbal orders were received to have mobile platoons in readiness to deal with possible enemy paratroop landings.

The front moved rapidly nearer. On the 16th, "D" Company was ordered to take up defensive positions at Nibong Tebal some three miles to the south of Sungai Bakap. For 48 hours a sector on the right bank of the Krian River was held by the Company together with 90 other ranks of the Bahawalpur State

132. Letter of Lt. - Col. F. W. Young. The recruits formed the pioneer and mortar platoons. They were "a very good batch of men who work cheerfully and willingly". Lt. - Col. Andre confirms this statement in his War Diary.

133. War diary of Captain A. S. Taylor which records events from 6.12.1941 to 21.1.1942 (not published). Captain Taylor was a planter and officer of the F.M.S.V.F. He joined the Malay Regiment on 17.8.1941 and survived Japanese captivity in Singapore.

134. MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-260; *O.M.C.*, p. 1277.

135. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 12; statement of C.S.M. Abdul Manan, "... the next day the enemy spotted us and machine-gunned us from 300 to 400 feet altitude".

136. War Diary of Captain A.S. Taylor.

Infantry – part of a composite battalion under the orders of Lt.-Colonel Pine Coffin of the 14th Punjab Regiment.¹³⁷ During this time the forward troops (elements of the retreating 11th Division) withdrew. By the 18th all troops were south of the Krian River and the Company came under fire for the first time. As was usual before a Japanese Infantry assault across a defended river obstacle, enemy planes flew in to bomb and machine-gun the defending troops.¹³⁸ “D” Company assisted in repulsing the initial enemy attempt to cross the river in sampans.¹³⁹ The Company was relieved on the 19th by the Gurkhas and withdrew along with other troops to Parit Bantar where “utter confusion” reigned.¹⁴⁰ Penang was so hurriedly evacuated on the same day that some motor vessels and many junks and barges were left intact in the harbour. These were used later by the enemy for amphibious outflanking operations on the west coast.¹⁴¹

“D” Company reached Ipoh and entrained the following morning for Kuala Lumpur where one platoon under Lt. Muhammad Ali was detailed for defence and guard duties at Kuala Kubu.¹⁴² The rest of the Company journeyed through Seremban to its Depot at Port Dickson where it came under the command of the Regimental Commander, Lt. Colonel J. T. Bretherton. The Company’s journey to Port Dickson was not uneventful. The men, along with other Imperial troops, were bombed and machine-gunned at Parit Bantar, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. The air raid at Ipoh, in particular was a vicious low-level attack but fortunately the Company suffered no casualties.¹⁴³ No British planes were evident during the withdrawal for by now Japanese air supremacy was practically undisputed and their planes ranged the sky freely looking for suitable targets to attack.¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile Lt. Mohd. Ali’s platoon was ordered north from Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Kubu to do internal defence and guard duties at the Explosive and Ammunition Depot. Its first task was to escort thirty truck-loads of high explosive and ammunition from Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Kubu.¹⁴⁵ Fortunately the ammunition convoy – a vulnerable target from the air – met with no marauding planes on the way. A week later the platoon was relieved by an

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137. *Ibid.*

138. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali b. Sharafat Ali, Platoon Commander of “D” Company (unpublished); also written statement of C.S.M. Abdul Manan.

139. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

140. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali b. Sharafat Ali.

141. Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

142. War Diary of Captain Taylor; and of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

143. Statements of Sergeant Abu bin Mat; C.S.M. Abdul Manan, war diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

144. O.M.C., p. 1283.

145. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

146. O.M.C., pp. 129

147. War Diary of C

148. Percival, *op. cit.*

149. O.M.C., p. 1294

150. War Diary of L

151. War Diary of C
and 28 ranks of

Indian unit and returned to rejoin "D" Company at Port Dickson on about December 28.

Much had happened in the meanwhile. After some stiff resistance, the defence on the West coast front fell back behind the Perak River on December 23/24 in view of unfavourable developments on the Grik front. Ipoh was evacuated on the 27th. Preparations were made to hold the Japanese at Kampar — a good defence position — but after a series of fierce and prolonged encounters in which the enemy suffered severe losses, this position too was abandoned and the defence retreated further south. An enemy sea-borne landing in strength near the Bernam River estuary had threatened the defence communications and largely influenced the withdrawal from Kampar.¹⁴⁶

While "D" Company was at Port Dickson it served as a mobile column, patrolling the area against enemy sea or air-borne landings. Captain Taylor did reconnaissance work in the area between Morib and Malacca and acquainted senior officers of the 45th Indian Brigade and several gunner officers with the lie of the land.¹⁴⁷

By January 4, 1942, the 11th Indian Division had withdrawn from Kampar to the Slim River positions. It was constantly harassed by enemy planes which flew up and down the road all day, bombing and strafing. Desultory fighting developed but early in the morning of the 7th, in bright moonlight, the Japanese launched a powerful infantry attack spearheaded by fifteen tanks with close and continuous air support. Heavy fighting ensued and the 11th Indian Division was badly mauled, losing many men, guns and vehicles.¹⁴⁸

The disaster at Slim River necessitated a long withdrawal to a new defence line in north Johore. The necessary demolition work was carried out; Kuala Lumpur was evacuated on the 10th, and so was Port Swettenham. By the 14th the Japanese had occupied all areas north of Johore.¹⁴⁹ The Japanese air force was active on the 11th and 12th reconnoitring and bombing, and "D" Company in retreating along the Negeri Sembilan coast to Pasir Panjang (some ten miles south of Port Dickson) was attacked by enemy planes.¹⁵⁰ It then withdrew to Singapore by way of Gemas, Segamat and Johore Bahru. Twenty four hours later on January 15, after being reformed and refitted, it moved to Batu Pahat for the defence of the Senggarang landing ground.¹⁵¹

146. O.M.C., pp. 1290, 1291.

147. War Diary of Captain Taylor.

148. Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

149. O.M.C., p. 1294.

150. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

151. War Diary of Captain Taylor. He had in addition 1 platoon Independent Company, and 28 ranks of the Johore Military Forces under his command.

The situation by then had further deteriorated. Muar, 33 miles to the north of Batu Pahat, had been occupied on the 16th by elements of the formidable Imperial Guards Division. Another crack unit — Matsui's 5th Division — was deployed in strength along the main road. Within the week, by means of a series of complex operations employing heavy tanks, air and artillery support, they had succeeded between them in destroying the young 45th Indian Infantry Brigade and in forcing the withdrawal through Yong Peng of both the Segamat and the Muar forces. The latter had to abandon all its guns, vehicles and heavy weapons and even its wounded whom the Japanese promptly massacred.¹⁵²

The defence was rapidly reorganised to hold the general line: Jemaluang-Kluang-Ayer Hitam-Batu Pahat. The 6/15th Infantry Brigade under Brigadier Challen was responsible for the defence of Batu Pahat with the following troops under his command: the British Battalion, the 2nd Cambridgeshire, "D" Company 2nd Battalion (Malay Regiment), 1 battery 155th Field Regiment (four guns), the 11th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, and administrative units.¹⁵³ The task of the Batu Pahat Force was to hold the town and keep open the Ayer Hitam Road.

On the 18th, "D" Company with other units of the Batu Pahat Force was deployed on the south bank of the Batu Pahat River. They soon closely engaged the enemy poised for an assault across the river. During the day, Japanese planes in close support of their ground forces bombed and strafed the defence troops while shell and mortar fire were exchanged.¹⁵⁴ That night the Japanese attempted several times to cross the river but were repulsed. The platoon commanders, Lt. Mohd. Ali, Lt. Ibrahim Alla Ditta and Lt. Yazid Ahmad "each fought with determination throughout the first night."¹⁵⁵

Earlier on the 16th, an enemy force of undisclosed strength had landed at the lighthouse west of Batu Pahat town and disappeared into the jungle-clad Bukit Banang height dominating the town. It soon became active. Before the war the Japanese owned iron mines and large estates in Batu Pahat and their considerable knowledge of the country plus some pro-Japanese activities in the town assisted them on this front.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore they enjoyed air and numerical superiority.

Units of the Batu Pahat Force holding the river defence line, therefore, were withdrawn on the following night (19th). "D" Company retreated under

152. O.M.C., p. 1300. Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 222; Russel Braddon, *The Naked Island*, London, 1954, p. 67.

153. Percival, *op. cit.*, pp. 239, 240.

154. War Diary of Captain Taylor; and of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

155. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

156. O.M.C., pp. 1300-1302.

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161. O.M.C., p.

162. War Diary

163. O.M.C., p.

heavy mortar fire and occupied positions in the Banang Estate about four miles to the rear.¹⁵⁷ The enemy crossed the river the same night and for the next few days desultory fighting developed in the town and in the surrounding rubber and jungle area. The Company here suffered casualties and a number of its men were surrounded and captured by the enemy.¹⁵⁸ By the 23rd, the Batu Pahat-Ayer Hitam Road was closed. The arrival of fresh enemy reinforcements in lorries worsened the situation and a further withdrawal was ordered. "D" Company and the British Battalion under Lt.-Colonel Morrison fell back on the small airfield at Senggarang about seven miles to the south of Batu Pahat.¹⁵⁹ The coastal area between the Batu Pahat-Senggarang-Benut road and the sea consists mainly of mangrove jungle and coconut plantations. The Japanese infiltrated and attacked from close range but the defence line held. However, the growing strength of the enemy and the threat of his outflanking movement forced the main body of defending troops to withdraw a further three miles. The following morning penetration on the right flank at Sungai Ayam was reported. Elements of the British Battalion and Lt. Mohd. Ali's platoon staged a successful counter-attack and captured a number of enemy rifles, bayonets and hand-grenades.¹⁶⁰ The main defence line stood firm for another 24 hours. However, enemy outflanking movements in strength down the east of the Batu Pahat-Senggarang-Benut road threatened the defenders' communications and resulted in the withdrawal of the entire Batu Pahat Force during the night of January 25/26.¹⁶¹

It was soon discovered that the enemy "had cut the road between Senggarang and Rengit and had established 7 road-blocks between these places. Repeated attacks by the (2nd) Cambridgeshire failed to clear these."¹⁶² As Percival remarks "here again as elsewhere the exhaustion of the troops after several days and nights continuous operations...told its tale."¹⁶³ Earlier, a mechanised column consisting of armoured cars and Bren-gun carriers had been despatched from Benut by the 11th Indian Division to relieve the trapped Batu Pahat Force but it was ambushed and cut up en route. That evening (the 25th), Brigadier Challen Commander of the Force gave orders for the destruc-

157. War Diary of Captain Taylor; of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

158. Statement of Sergeant Idris b. Achin. In one of these skirmishes Sgt. Idris and some of his men were attacked by the enemy in superior numbers at about 0400 hours (25th or 26th January). "My post was surrounded and I was overwhelmed and taken prisoner." The Japanese kicked and slapped him and later forced him, along with other British prisoners, to do various fatigue work, e.g. pushing their guns towards the south Johore coast preparatory to the assault on Singapore.

159. War Diary of Captain Taylor.

160. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali.

161. O.M.C., p. 1302.

162. War Diary of Captain Taylor; Percival, *op. cit.*, pp. 242, 243.

163. O.M.C., p. 1302.

tion of all guns and transports and for units to escape to Benut through the coastal belt of the road. Accordingly, one contingent moved east of the road and reached Benut on the 27/28th.¹⁶⁴ The other under Lt.-Colonel Morrison consisting of remnants of the 15th Brigade (the British Battalion, the 2nd Cambridgeshire, "D" Company 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment, and remnants of the Royal Norfolk) struck south-west through the mangrove and jungle and lay up on the coast near Ponggor¹⁶⁵ some three miles from Rengit. Although the troops were almost surrounded and were exhausted from lack of sleep and food—except coconuts and bananas—they succeeded in evading enemy air detection by forced night marches.¹⁶⁶

Prior to this Lt. Ibrahim Alla Ditta of "D" Company had done "excellent work" for which he was subsequently awarded the Military Cross.

The rapid movement and infiltration of the Japanese made accurate information as to their whereabouts unobtainable. Lt. Ibrahim went out in disguise on several occasions and penetrated enemy positions in order to obtain information; and on another occasion he led his platoon forward to recover and haul back two British guns which had been hit but not severely damaged.¹⁶⁷

Meanwhile, a grim fate awaited the force of about 2,000 officers and men at Ponggor unless a miniature Dunkirk could be staged. Ltd. Mohd. Ali was selected to accompany the Brigade Major (G. Laman) of the 6/15th Indian Brigade and a sergeant to seek help at the Divisional Headquarters in Pontian Kechil, some thirty-two miles down the coast. Disguised as fishermen the trio set off in a sampan on the 27th reached

... Pontian Kechil about 2100 hours. When we were about 800 yards away from the beach we heard our own coast battery giving fire orders on our sampan because they thought we were the enemy.¹⁶⁸

Fortunately the trio managed to convince the gunners in time by frantic shouts and signals that they were British personnel. The following night, Lt.-Commander Clarke, R.N. of H.M.S. *Dragonfly* arrived with H.M.S. *Scorpion* and

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164. O.M.C., p. 1304.

165. War Diary of Captain Taylor. Statement of other "D" Company personnel substantially confirmed the Batu Pahat operations.

166. MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 372. "The discipline preserved at Ponggor throughout that long day of waiting was magnificent. The road along which enemy transport was moving all day and night was only 1,100 yards away; Japanese planes were constantly overhead."

167. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Confirmed by Major (then Lt.) Ibrahim b. Alla Ditta, M.C., when interviewed by the writer at Kluang on 27.3.1955. See also War Office citation published in *London Gazette Supplement* of August 1, 1946; War Diary of Captain Taylor. The award was made on the recommendation of Lt.-Col. Morrison.

168. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali. See MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 356. 372.

169. O.M.C., p.

170. War Diary

171. O.M.C., p.

172. O.M.C., p.

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175. O.M.C., pp

other small craft and the whole force of about 2,000 at Ponggor was successively evacuated by sea to Singapore.¹⁶⁹ "D" Company arrived at Clifford's Pier at 1400 hours on January 29 and rejoined the 2nd Battalion at Normanton Camp. "All ranks were completely flogged and all weapons so caked with mud as to be temporarily quite useless."¹⁷⁰

Meanwhile, following a Japanese amphibious landing in force at Endau on the 26th, enemy troops pressed southward, captured Mersing and swept on towards Johore Bahru. The untenable situation in Johore forced Lt-General Percival to withdraw systematically all British forces on the mainland into Singapore island. This being done the Causeway at Johore Bahru was breached on January 31 and stage was set for the Battle of Singapore.¹⁷¹

VI. The Battle of Singapore, February 8 to 12, 1942

The first eight days of February 1942 saw feverish preparations going on in both camps on opposite sides of the narrow Straits of Johore. The Japanese realised the advantage of giving the defence little time to recover its breath. Troops from the three veteran victory-flushed units — Nishimura's Imperial Guards Division, Matsui's 5th Division and Mutaguchi's 18th Chrysanthemum Division¹⁷² — were soon deployed on the south Johore coast for a mass amphibious assault across the Straits. Landing craft for the task were carried overland from Pontian Kechil; about 175 light and medium tanks were assembled.¹⁷³ An artillery barrage on Singapore began as early as the 5th and was concentrated on the forward areas and likely points of landing.¹⁷⁴ Japanese planes, still supreme, carried out frequent sorties against the defence — reconnoitring, bombing and machine-gunning.

On the Singapore side, the troops busied themselves with strengthening and constructing shore defences, support lines, gun positions, wiring and underwater obstacles. Lt-General Percival, on his part, deployed the island garrison of about 70,000 combatant troops on the general defence plan of fighting the Japanese on the coastal perimeter wherever they might land.¹⁷⁵

169. O.M.C., p. 1304.

170. War Diary of Captain Taylor, *op. cit.*

171. O.M.C., pp. 1303, 1604.

172. O.M.C., p. 1303. This was the force which landed at Endau on January 26, 1942, captured Mersing and drove on to Johore Bahru.

173. Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 271; O.M.C., p. 1328.

174. MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 383, 384. This day coincided with the arrival in Singapore of a four ship convoy bringing reinforcements — British and Indian troops — the former being the balance of the 18th British Division which had arrived earlier. The last ship in the convoy the *Empress of Asia* was sunk by enemy air action within sight of Malay Regiment personnel stationed at "W" Sector.

175. O.M.C., pp. 1311, 1315.

The Malay Regiment, about 1,400 strong (including raw recruits and a high proportion of young soldiers),¹⁷⁶ together with the 2nd Loyal Regiment and attached troops formed the 1st Malaya Infantry Brigade.¹⁷⁷ Its task was to defend the western part of the Southern Area under Brigadier Williams. The 1st Battalion, Malay Regiment, on the lookout for surprise sea-borne attacks, concentrated on beach defence in "W" Sector. The 2nd Battalion,¹⁷⁸ still under-strength and acting as mobile reserves, occupied positions on the line of the Jurong River with forward troops west of the river. The Loyals were deployed further inland nearer to the 2nd Battalion position.¹⁷⁹

Invasion day was February 8. The first enemy landings on the fronts of the 44th Indian Infantry Brigade and 22nd Australian Brigade occurred at about 2045 hours, preceded by heavy artillery bombardment. Despite heavy losses 13,000 Japanese shock troops managed to land on the first night at many points, followed by 10,000 more soon after dawn. Thus they outnumbered the forward defence troops from the start. Repeating their tactics on the mainland, the Japanese rapidly strengthened their beach-heads and, with the aid of their supporting arms, immediately began their powerful multi-pronged drive down the island. The strongest enemy attack was launched by Matsui's 5th Division with Ama Keng Village en route to the Tengah Aerodrome as its immediate objective.¹⁸⁰ A quick second southward thrust further to the west was made by Mutaguchi's 18th Division. It threatened Jurong Road—the communication line of the 44th Indian Brigade which was deployed on the left western area. The third

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As a result of troops suffered a pany of the 7/8th along the West followed the new few Australians".

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176. According to the ex-Regimental Commander, Lt. - Colonel J. T. Bretherton Hawkshead-Talbot, M. C. in a letter to the writer dated 18.3.1955 and "speaking from memory" (all records being lost) the entire strength of the Regiment then was about 1,400 men all told with about 180 recruits in the Depot, i.e. 1st Battalion between 750 and 800 men; 2nd Battalion about 600. In another letter dated 29.3.1955, Colonel Bretherton puts it as a guess that the proportion of young soldiers (not recruits who did 6 months Depot training) was about 25% in the 1st Battalion and 33% in the 2nd Battalion. Lt. - Col. F. W. Young (2nd Battalion Commander), in a letter to the writer dated 3.4.1955, gave the figure 580 as the full strength of the 2nd Battalion in January after the Depot had arrived in Singapore from Port Dickson and its personnel distributed among the 2 battalions. There was, consequently, "a considerable dilution of recruits . . . in the proportion of about 1 recruit to 3 trained men." As might be expected, like other units of the Imperial forces serving in the Malayan Campaign, many of the Malay Regiment men were semi-trained and a number of the officers were civilians who joined the Regiment a few months, or weeks (even days) before the Japanese landed in Singapore.

177. *M.R.W.D.*, p. 25. It became a Duty Brigade on June 1, 1941. The Official War Diary of the 2nd Loyal Regiment and of the 1st Malaya Infantry Brigade were not accessible. The 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment, kept no diary of its own. (Letter from Cabinet Office dated February 28, 1955).

178. Letter of Lt. - Col. Young. "C" Company under Captain Riley consisted of only Company HQ and 1 platoon and provided guard duties at the Combined Command Headquarters at Sime Road, moving with that HQ to Fort Canning on February 11.

179. Statement of Captain (then C.S.M.) Mohd. Sidek b. Ismail of "A" Company, 2nd Battalion; *O.M.C.*, p. 1318.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 1317.

181. *Ibid.*, pp. 131

182. War Diary of letter dated 3

183. Based on state published); of Andre; Letter Gordon Benne

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184. War Diary of personnel also

and fourth thrusts developing from the west Causeway area were made during the night of the 9th by the Imperial Guard.¹⁸¹

The activities of the Japanese 5th Division forced Percival to withdraw the 44th Indian Brigade from its coast defence positions and to deploy it on the left of the Kranji-Jurong line astride the Jurong Road. Its left flank touched the 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment ("A" Company).¹⁸²

Earlier in the day (February 9), the Pasir Laba 6" Coast Defence Battery and the mixed Indian, Australian and Malay garrison troops in the area had been successively shelled and attacked by low-flying enemy aircraft. The guns were put out of action; and a number of the crew were killed or wounded. "B" Company, 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment, under Captain R. A. Monks, shared the ordeal at Pasir Laba but suffered no casualties. In view of the dangerous situation developing in that area, the Pasir Laba garrison were pulled out of their exposed position and ordered to withdraw along Jurong Road with "B" Company bringing up the rear and "A" Company (also 2nd Battalion) moving up to give covering fire. After a night of hard marching, harassed by heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire, "B" Company reached Normanton Camp at 0200 hours on February 10 and was not re-employed until the 11th.¹⁸³

As a result of heavy bombing and shelling, the Malay Regiment and attached troops suffered a number of casualties in this sector. During the night a company of the 7/8th Punjab Regiment a number of Australian stragglers withdrew along the West Coast Road through the Malay Regiment lines. They were followed the next day by "large numbers of Indian troops... and not a few Australians".¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile the enemy in a rapid advance down the island had penetrated the Jurong area and sporadic fighting developed on the front of "C" Company,

181. *Ibid.*, pp. 1316-1318.

182. War Diary of Lt.-Col. J.R.G. Andre. D.S.O., (not published). Also Lt.-Col. Young's letter dated 3.4.1955.

183. Based on statement of C.S.M. Arshad b. Ibrahim of "B" Company, 2nd Battalion (not published); of C.Q.M.S. Kassim of "A" Company, 2nd Battalion; War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre; Letter of Lt.-Col. F.W. Young. See also *O.M.C.*, p. 1317; Maj.-General Gordon Bennett, *Why Singapore Fell*, Bombay, 1945, p. 128.

According to C.S.M. Arshad, "B" Company of about 130 men had been stationed at Pasir Laba since the outbreak of hostilities. In his letter dated 3.4.1955, Lt.-Colonel Young says that the Company formed the infantry garrison for the R.A.-manned fort at Pasir Laba and rendered "very effective service".

184. War Diary of Lt.-Col. J.R.G. Andre. Written statements of other Malay Regiment personnel also speak of these stragglers. See *O.M.C.*, pp. 1317: 1319.

"A" Company (2nd Battalion) and the 44th Indian Brigade.¹⁸⁵ The forward troops of the 2nd Battalion were attacked at dawn on the 10th and driven back east of the Jurong River.¹⁸⁶ Enemy pressure on the 44th Indian Brigade front compelled their withdrawal, creating a gap on the right flank of the 2nd Battalion. There being insufficient reserves to a counter-attack and regain the lost ground, Brigadier Williams ordered a general withdrawal of the Malay troops in this area to fresh positions behind the Pandan River on the West Coast Road. The Pandan bridge was then demolished. During this and subsequent days, enemy planes were very active over the forward areas and were unopposed except for anti-aircraft and small arms fire.¹⁸⁷

The 2nd Battalion's line now stretched thinly from the West Coast Road up the Pandan River with "A" Company occupying a position near the Mortar Range about 200 yards to the left of the 15" gun battery.¹⁸⁸ There was some intermittent enemy activity on the 44th Indian Brigade front and, to a lesser extent, on the 2nd Battalion positions. The attacks stiffened before daybreak (11th), culminating in close and hand-to-hand fighting between the enemy and "the mixed British troops which had (been) concentrated in this area" — both sides suffering heavy casualties. The 15" guns were destroyed and the crew subsequently fought as infantry.¹⁸⁹ With the withdrawal of the 2nd Battalion and other forward troops from this front, the enemy began the advance with tanks down Jurong Road, Ulu Pandan Road and Reformatory Road. The whole Malay Regiment line had now to be rapidly reorganised to face the threat of strong enemy attacks coming from the rear and fanning out towards the sea. The long and elaborate preparations made with mines, wire obstacles, concrete

pill-boxes,¹⁹⁰ etc. It was at this stage that the enemy began to move — patrolling and making contact between

A letter from the Malay Regiment was dropped that morning, scattered by enemy fire.

Under sustained enemy fire, an enemy tank had resulted in the destruction of the Bukit Timah area. The enemy followed the hill line of the railway and then the roads and then

The general communication lines were a feature of the swampy country, in close country, to their own initiative, detached and late in effect of a counter-attack towards Singapore.

185. War Diary of 2/Lt. Abbas; written statements of Sgt. Noordin b. Kohat, Sgt. Awang and Private Tahir, all of "C" Company, 1st Battalion (not published); War Diary of Lt. - Col. Andre.
186. O.M.C., p. 1319. Also War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali, and of C.Q.M.S. Kassim, both of 2nd Battalion. According to the latter: "The enemy penetrated our area at 0400 hours (10.2.1942) and after being in action for nearly 3 hours my Company was ordered to withdraw to our Battalion Headquarters at Sungai Pandan." Also war diary of Lt. - Col. Andre, who was informed by 2nd Battalion HQ of "an attack . . . developing on their right and on the Indians" (i.e. 44th Indian Brigade).
187. Letter of Lt. - Col. Young; War Diary of Lt. Abbas, and written statement of L/Cpl. Abdul Ghani of Transport Section, 1st Battalion (unpublished). Also war diary of Lt. A.G. MacKenzie, M.C. (unpublished); O.M.C., p. 1318.
188. Written statement of C.Q.M.S. Kassim; statement of Captain Mohd. Sidek. Lt. - Col. Young, in his letter, mentions "the (Battalion) occupation of positions across the Mortar Range area to Reformatory Road."
189. O.M.C., pp. 1319, 1320. Written statements of C.Q.M.S. Kassim, and Lt. Mohd. Ali *op. cit.* According to Lt. Mohd. Ali, "that night we were attacked at close range by the Japs and engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. Here again my platoon suffered casualties."

190. O.M.C., p. 13. The pill-boxes were constructed at night and comprised anti-aircraft foldings, timber and concrete, which were removed by the enemy hands. (Vide O.M.C., p. 13.)
191. Sheppard, *op. cit.* written account.
192. O.M.C., p. 13. by the writer. Officer if 1st. 1955.)
193. O.M.C., p. 13.
194. O.M.C., p. 13. Battalion; state 2nd Battalion.
195. Article entitled "The highest test, the

pill-boxes,¹⁹⁰ etc., for beach defence in "W" Sector failed to serve their purpose. It was at this stage that the Carrier Platoon of the 1st Battalion came into its own — patrolling, gaining information of enemy movements and maintaining contact between sub-units of the Regiment.¹⁹¹

A letter from Yamashita urging the surrender of Singapore had been air-dropped that morning but was ignored by Percival. Propaganda leaflets were scattered by enemy planes among the troops, a number of these dropping behind the Malay Regiment lines.¹⁹²

Under sustained enemy pressure, the defence was falling back on all fronts. An enemy tank break-through down the Bukit Timah Road the previous day had resulted in the destruction of food and petrol depots and dumps in the Bukit Timah area. By mid-day on the 11th, the general line approximately followed the hills east of the Bukit Timah Rifle Range on the right, along the line of the railway, then forward to the junction of Ulu Pandan and Reformatory Roads and then south to a point on the coast north of Pasir Panjang Village.¹⁹³

The general air of uncertainty and confusion and the dislocation of communication lines by heavy enemy shelling and bombing and sabotage were a feature of the swiftly-moving Battle of Singapore. In fighting by day and night in close country, platoons and even sections found themselves isolated and left to their own initiative. Strength underwent rapid changes as sub-units became detached and later rejoined.¹⁹⁴ To all this might be added the psychological effect of a continual stream of "demoralised stragglers from the front" moving towards Singapore town in full view of other defending troops.¹⁹⁵ A number

190. O.M.C., p. 1308. Concrete boxes for machine guns and light automatics had been constructed at intervals of about 600 yards along the beaches. The material defences comprised anti-tank, anti-boat, anti-personnel defences which included timber scaffoldings, timber tank obstacles, mines and barbed wire. The defences were well-equipped with beach lights. Before the Regiment withdrew, arms and ammunition were removed from the pill-boxes or destroyed to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. (Vide War Diaries of Lt.-Col. Andre and Lt. A.G. MacKenzie).

191. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 16. Also war diaries of Lt.-Col. Andre, Lt. A.G. Mackenzie and written accounts of other Malay Regiment personnel.

192. O.M.C., p. 1320. Affirmed by a number of Malay Regiment personnel interviewed by the writer both in Singapore and in Port Dickson, including the Intelligence Officer of 1st Battalion, Captain (then Lt.) E. Lenthall (at Port Dickson on 23. 2. 1955.)

193. O.M.C., p. 1320.

194. O.M.C., p. 1317. War Diary of 2/Lt. Abbas b. Abdul Manan of "C" Company, 1st Battalion; statement of Captain (then R.S.M.) Mohd. Sidek b. Ismail of "A" Company, 2nd Battalion. Also War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre.

195. Article entitled "Taat dan Setia" in the *British Military Administration News* and reprinted by the *Straits Times* (18.3.1946). "Once the Japanese landed on Singapore Island on February 8 an atmosphere of uncertainty and despondency spread and the highest test, that of morale when fighting on a losing side, was applied to the men
(Continued next page)

of these stragglers, however, joined Malay Regiment units and, thereby, strengthened the Regimental resistance.¹⁹⁶

By the 12th, the danger of a tank break-through into Singapore town had caused Percival to decide on a close perimeter defence of the town to include the Pierce MacRitchie Reservoirs. All beach-defence troops stationed in the north and east part of the island were, therefore, withdrawn and deployed accordingly.¹⁹⁷

Earlier, at about 2000 hours on the 11th patrol clashes occurred on the Malay Regiment front close to the left flank of "C" Company, 1st Battalion, holding the Pasir Panjang Village cross-roads.¹⁹⁸ This was ominous. That night a heavy and sustained artillery barrage was laid down by the defence on the area west of Reformatory Road.¹⁹⁹ The following day (February 12), the enemy, having now been greatly reinforced, renewed his attacks on all fronts. In the Southern theatre, the 44th Indian Brigade and the right forward troops of the 1st Malay Infantry Brigade (2nd Loyals and 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment) were engaged but succeeded in repulsing "several enemy attacks".²⁰⁰ But, on orders from Brigade, the Loyals and the 2nd Battalion withdrew under cover of darkness to fresh positions to conform with the situation on the right where the 22nd Australian Brigade Group had to be withdrawn to the Holland Village area.²⁰¹ The 2nd Battalion was now deployed in some depth between Ayer Rajah Road and the Gap Ridge. The 2nd Loyals covered its right flank while "A" and "C" Companies 1st Battalion, protected its left.²⁰² Here, the general line at dawn of the 13th ran from the Tanglin Halt area to a little west

of the (Malay) Regiment. Demoralised stragglers from the front line became steadily more numerous and could be seen by men from both battalions. Thanks to the sound training and discipline which Lt. Colonel Andre and his predecessors had given them, the men of the Regiment stood up well to this test." Also *O.M.S.*, p. 1317, and war diary of Lt. Col. Andre.

196. According to Lt.-Col. Andre, 11 stragglers from the British Battalion joined the Regiment on 11.2.1942 and were posted to Point 270. The following day, 60 survivors from an Anti-Aircraft Regiment under Capt. Pool now fighting as infantry assisted in the defence of Pasir Panjang Ridge from the Gap to Point 270. More came in later bringing with them a number of 4.5" howitzers and 25-pounders. An Australian unit of 3 Bren-gun carriers too teamed up with the Regiment having lost touch with their own unit, and were assigned to assist "B" Company later at Buona Vista Village.
197. *O.M.C.*, p. 1321.
198. War Diary of 2/Lt. Abbas of "C" Company, whose 7-men patrol surprised an enemy detachment. Lt. Abbas then enlisted the help of the Company's heavy machine-guns which dispersed another enemy patrol located in the direct line of their fire. Also war Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre.
199. War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre.
200. *O.M.C.*, p. 1321.
201. *O.M.C.*, p. 1321; letter of Captain A.S. Taylor, "D" Company Commander 2nd. Battalion, (dated 27.3.1955) to writer.
202. Letter of Lt.-Col. Young.

of the Pasir Panjang Road, Adam Road Pumping Station they were all rest the previous Japanese".²⁰⁴

All was now

VII. The Battle

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203. *O.M.C.*, p.
204. Letter to 2nd Battalion
205. At least 5 offensive, although s
206. War Diary
207. Statement Dickson or
208. War Diary ("A" Company Also states Signal Office dugout safe shambles."

of the Pasir Panjang Village. From the Tanglin Halt area the line ran to Farrer Road, Adam Road, the east end of the MacRitchie Reservoir, the Woodleigh Pumping Station and so to the Kallang Aerodrome inclusive.²⁰³ As for the men they were all "pretty well exhausted and very short of sleep as we had little rest the previous 3 to 4 nights due to the continuous night activity of the Japanese".²⁰⁴

All was now set for the major clash – the enemy offensive of February 13.

VII. The Battle of Singapore, February 13 to 15, 1942

Friday the 13th began ominously. Aerial bombing and a mounting crescendo of accurate artillery and mortar barrage straddled the Loyals and Malay Regiment positions, causing heavy casualties among the officers and other ranks²⁰⁵ as well as serious material damage. An enemy observation balloon to direct the fire had been installed at the western end of Singapore the previous day. The 1st and 2nd Battalion headquarters received direct hits. The Gap House (1st Battalion HQ) became a total wreck. The adjutant, Major Wort, and subsequently three other officers and a number of other ranks were injured.²⁰⁶ The Durian Camp (2nd Battalion HQ) was burnt down and casualties mounted.²⁰⁷ As for "A" Company, 1st Battalion, – already a depleted force – its fighting efficiency was further reduced with the death of three officers including Captain Horsburgh, the Company Commander, and of several other ranks. Matters were not improved when a direct hit wrecked the Signal dugout of the 1st Battalion, resulting in "the whole of our telephone communications (being) broken".²⁰⁸ To maintain contact, battalion and senior commanders, notably Lt-Colonel Andre and his second-in-command, Major Denaro, frequently made personal visits to the forward troops and "undoubtedly sustained the morale of the Regiment by their coolness under fire and their complete

203. O.M.C., p. 1321.

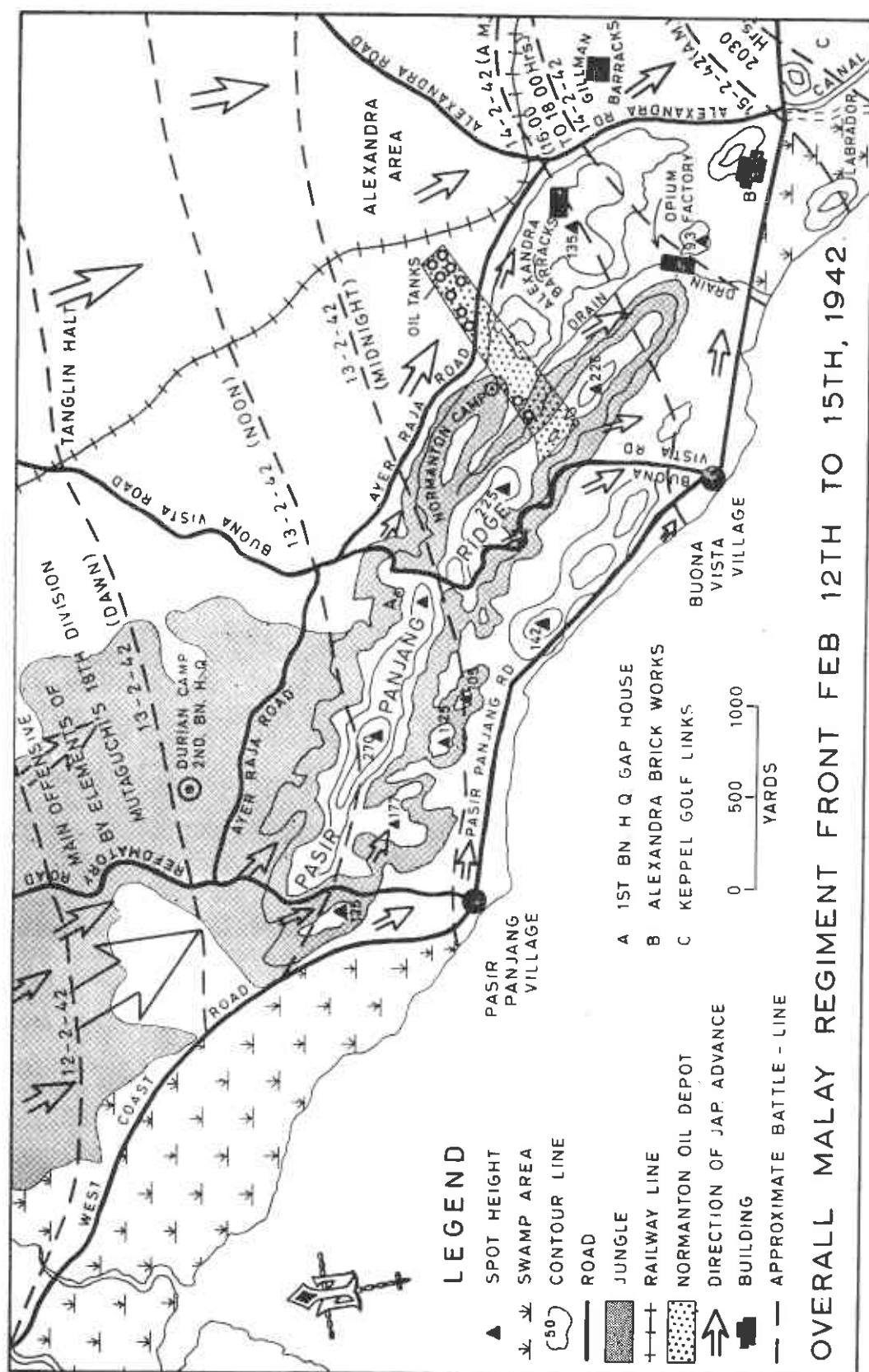
204. Letter to the writer dated 22.3.1955 from ex-Lt. J.B. Masfield of "D" Company, 2nd Battalion, (then Chief Police Officer, Selangor).

205. At least 5 officers were killed and 7 more wounded before the actual Japanese offensive. The number of casualties among the other ranks was not precisely known although suspected to be heavy.

206. War Diaries of Lt-Col. Andre and Lt. MacKenzie.

207. Statement of Major (then Lt.) Taib b. Jais when interviewed by the writer at Port Dickson on 16th and 18th December, 1954; also letter of Lt-Col. Young.

208. War Diary of Lt-Col. Andre and others. The casualties were Captain Horsburgh ("A" Company Commander), Lt. Haggitt and Lt. Russell (Platoon commanders). Also statement of the Intelligence Officer 1st Battalion, Captain E. Lenthall. The Signal Officer, Lt. Tj. van de Gaast, a naturalised Dutchman, was blown out of his dugout safe but "considerably shocked". The telephone lines were "a complete shambles."



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disregard for personal safety".²⁰⁹ The mortar barrage was "so thick and fast" that (at least on one occasion) it was "more like heavy machine-gun fire than mortar shelling".²¹⁰

This unprecedented concentration of enemy fire prefaced the Japanese plan to launch their main offensive that day on the Malay Regiment front along the length of the Pasir Panjang Ridge. The main attack came at about 1400 hours at a time when the 2nd Battalion under Brigade orders was engaged in readjusting its Company positions, with "A" Company moving forward and "D" and "B" companies falling back.²¹¹

Elements of Mutaguchi's 18th Division, assisted by continuous mortar fire, launched a frontal attack in strength with tank and air support. The whole sky at this time was overcast with smoke from burning oil fire. The undergrowth of the hill feature was ablaze and at times the smoke obscured enemy positions. The brunt of the initial offensive fell on the 2nd Battalion and later on "A" and "C" Company, 1st Battalion. The Loyals on the right flank also came in for heavy punishment. Under strong Japanese pressure the front yielded. The forward troops of 2nd Battalion units fell back to prepared positions on the hill feature behind Reformatory Road and continued the unequal battle for more than two hours.²¹² The well-entrenched but exhausted 2nd Battalion — mixed Malay and attached British troops — especially those defending Point 270 "fought and struggled hard to push them back" and took heavy toll of the enemy with grenades, rifle and automatic fire.²¹³ Supporting mortar and artillery fire too claimed their share of Japanese dead and wounded but shortage of ammunition, sheer weight of numbers and physical exhaustion finally forced the defenders back, through the Gap Ridge and the wrecked 1st Battalion HQ.²¹⁴

209. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

210. War Diary of Lt. A.G. Mackenzie. Accounts of other Malay Regiment personnel confirmed his statement.

211. Letter of Lt.-Col. Young, O.M.C., p. 1321, according to Major-General Gordon Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 159, Japanese maps captured by the 2/18th Australian Brigade showed that "the main enemy forces were moving from Bukit Timah village towards Pasir Panjang village and Buona Vista village.

212. Accounts of Lt. J.B. Masefield, Lt. Mohd. Ali, C.S.M. Abdul Manan.

213. Based on written statements of C.S.M. Abdul Manan, Lt. Masefield and Lt. Mohd. Ali. According to Abdul Manan, "D" Company Commander Captain A.S. Taylor, Lt. J.M. McDonald (later shot through the chest), Lt. Masefield, Lt. Yazid Ahmad (later shot by the Japanese), Captain Monks (Commanding officer of "B" Company), Lt. Ibrahim Sidek ("B" Company, later killed by the Japanese), and other men of the 2nd Battalion from the front line joined them on the Gap Ridge (Point 270) position and fought the enemy who "at that time was advancing in mass formation with their tanks to support them".

214. Letter of Lt. Masefield. According to him, the defenders on Point 270 were "in a little hollow in the ground in an excellent position and could have held out for a long time, but with the continuous firing we were running short of ammunition. The rifles became so hot that they were difficult to hold with the bare hands". Lt. Mohd. Ali's account confirms Lt. Masefield's account substantially.

Remnants of the battered 2nd Battalion including at least four wounded officers withdrew soon after dark through the blazing Normanton Oil Depot to the Alexandra Brickworks area.²¹⁵ Further on the left, "A" Company — greatly weakened in personnel and leadership — fell back. The survivors were subsequently distributed among the remaining companies. The enemy cut through "A" Company position, crossed Reformatory Road and seized Point 177 after overcoming the resistance of "B" Company remnants, 2nd Battalion.²¹⁶

The Japanese next turned their attention to "C" Company, holding the Pasir Panjang Village end of the Reformatory Road area. It was now somewhat isolated and its communications along Pasir Panjang Road were threatened. "C" Company was soon closely engaged. Its resistance, however, had been strengthened by remnants of "A" Company and two Bren-gun carriers of the Loyal Regiment as well as by some attached gunner and Australian troops. The Company suffered casualties but though out-numbered and virtually outflanked it fought on stubbornly maintaining its ground until midnight.²¹⁷ It was in this engagement that Private Yaacob bin Bidin won the Military Medal for stalking an enemy mortar position through the burning undergrowth and silencing it with Bren-gun fire.²¹⁸

At midnight, "C" Company, battered but still holding out, was extricated from its dangerous position by ten Bren-gun carriers. The evacuation route ran through a strong road-block on the Pasir Panjang Road set up by "B" Company defending Buona Vista Village. The concrete road-block was being steadily shelled by enemy artillery and a gap was created. The enemy's firing, fortunately, was very irregular and in between the distinct pauses, one carrier after another loaded with "C" Company personnel dashed through the gap to safety. Much depleted in strength as a result of the day's fighting, the Company now took up positions on a low hill west of the Government Opium Factory some 500 yards inland off the 4¼ milestone, Pasir Panjang Road. Garrisons from

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215. War Diary of Lt. Mohd. Ali, and written statement of C.S.M. Ismail Babu, M.B.E.
216. Written statement of C.S.M. Arshad of "B" Company, 2nd Batalion, *op. cit.* He was surrounded and captured by the enemy, together with his men, in the Point 177 area. They were violently knocked about but their lives were spared. They were then forced to do all kinds of fatigue work for the enemy.
217. Based on War Diary of Lt. Abbas, written statement of No. 1054 Private Osman of "C" Company, and War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre, and of Lt. A.G. MacKenzie, M.C.
218. Based on Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 16, and War Office citation published in *London Gazette Supplement* dated August 1, 1946. The enemy attacked and outflanked "C" Company's position. But on finding themselves unable to advance the Japanese set fire to the undergrowth or dry "lallang" grass and ferns and under cover of the smoke they established a mortar position which soon caused a number of casualties. Private Yaacob, with another Malay soldier whose identity is unknown, advanced through the burning undergrowth with his Bren-gun, stalked the mortar position and completely neutralised it.

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two beach-posts K5 and K6 as well as remnants of "A" Company were added on to "C" Company's strength.²¹⁹

The enemy scored local success elsewhere on the other fronts and the general line by the evening of the 13th ran roughly from a point a little to the north of Kallang aerodrome, to the Serangoon Road area south of Paya Lebar, to the Thomson Road line, on to the Tyersall-Tanglin area under the Australian Imperial Force, to the north of Braddell Road, then down to a line covering the important Alexandra area which contained the main Ordnance Depot, the Alexandra Ammunition Magazine, the Military Hospital and other installations. On the night of the 13/14th remnants of the Royal Navy and all sea-going craft left Singapore Island with about 3,000 evacuees for Java but they were intercepted by the enemy on the way and were either captured or sunk.²²⁰ The Royal Air Force had vacated the island even earlier.

The morning of the 14th again saw enemy shells falling steadily on the Malay Regiment area and casualties mounted. The 2nd Battalion, now a Brigade reserve, occupied rear positions in the Mt. Faber area and there it stayed until the surrender. It was in touch forward with the 1st Battalion at the Alexander Brickworks.²²¹

The rest of the campaign saw only the 1st Battalion at grips with the enemy. The first encounter on the 14th was experienced by "B" Company which had three Australian carriers to assist it in holding the Buona Vista Village road junction. But when the attack, spearheaded by tanks, finally developed at about 1400 hours one carrier was soon damaged and the other two withdrew. The defence position was rushed and overrun that afternoon following a brief but sharp encounter in which some hand-to-hand fighting occurred.²²² The Japanese attacked simultaneously by way of the Pasir Panjang Road and Buona

219. War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre.

220. O.M.C., pp. 1322, 1323.

221. Letter of Lt.-Col. Young; Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p.21. Strictly speaking, the Battalion at first occupied the lower part of Morse Road. There was a report that enemy tanks might attempt a break-through along Keppel Harbour road. A road-block was built and manned. The battalion here was reinforced by a party of about 50 Royal Artillery personnel. At 2000 hours, the Battalion was moved to the Mount Faber area, handing over their position in Morse Road to a Royal Army Ordnance Corps battalion. Until the surrender, the 2nd Battalion was occupied with patrolling the area of the Weir Wharf and Mount Faber against a possible Japanese landing from Belakang Mati (wrongly believed to have been occupied by the enemy). The last task of the Battalion was a reconnaissance with a view to a protective role in the event of a possible further withdrawal of the Brigade behind the Singapore River. News of the capitulation arrived just as this had been completed.

222. Statement of No. 993 Sgt. Hussein Mat Som, a Vickers Machine-Gun Section-Commander of "D" Company sent to assist "B" Company. He was wounded in this encounter. (Interviewed on 4.12.1954). Also written statement of Lt. Khalid b. Hashim, platoon commander of "B" Company (not published).

Vista Road, preceded by patrol infiltration into Buona Vista Village.²²³ It was in this engagement that Lt. A. G. MacKenzie of the Carrier Platoon won the Military Cross for gallantry and initiative by silencing an enemy gun crew with a Tommy-gun single-handed.²²⁴ In so doing he greatly assisted the escape of Major Richards, "B" Company commander whose Bren-gun carrier had been disabled by an enemy tank.

A good number of "B" Company men managed to withdraw along the beach and rejoin the Battalion at Labrador. Some were made prisoners but isolated parties took to the surrounding area dotted with brick houses and substantial cover and fought on²²⁵ long enough to enable a second line of defence to be prepared against the enemy.

Almost at the same time, an enemy attack was developing further down the Pasir Panjang Road on the "C" Company front. "C" Company position was on a low hill separated from "D" Company area at the Labrador by a deep drain containing escaping oil from the Normanton Oil Depot which had been damaged by enemy action on the 10th. At times this drain became "a complete wall of fire."²²⁶ This and the break-through on "B" Company front tended to isolate "C" Company. After steady shelling in the morning, the enemy in the early afternoon sent a detachment of his men in close order into "C" Company posi-

tion "dressed as long bursts of the ground dead the hill".²²⁷

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223. Written statement of 2/Lt. Khalid, "B" Company platoon commander; also statement of Sgt. Hussein Mat Som.

224. War Diary of Lt. A.G. MacKenzie. He had been sent up from Battalion H.Q. at Labrador to contact "B" Company as there was no telephone communications between the Battalion H.Q. and the Company. While at "B" Company H.Q. some distance down the Pasir Panjang Road he saw the Bren carrier which was taking Major G.P. Richards, the Company commander, forward to "B" Company position a little up the road stopped abruptly after being hit twice by a Japanese tank at 50 yards range. Major Richards and the Malay driver dived out of the disabled carrier apparently wounded. (This was confirmed by 2/Lt. Khalid b. Hashim). Lt. MacKenzie armed with a Tommy-gun wriggled his way forward to the scene of action making full use of available cover — walls and hedges — until amidst the din of fighting he came very close to "a Jap. infantry gun with her crew of about a dozen or fifteen busy getting her into action." He emptied his gun at them and saw "the whole crew went down". He had to make his getaway back to the Malay Regiment line now that his Tommy-gun was empty. He narrowly escaped being shot down by Malay Regiment troops who mistook him for the enemy.

225. Statement of Sgt. Hussein Mat Som, and 2/Lt. Khalid b. Hashim, of "B" Company. 2/Lt. Khalid related how he managed to gather enough survivors to form a weak platoon of 15 men which then formed a perimeter defence somewhere near the beach that night and waited vainly for a counter-attack by the Regiment. During the period of waiting when they were shelled by their own Regiment (Andre mentioned shelling that day on ex-"B" Company area by 25 pounder guns attached to the Malay Regiment) they engaged Japanese stragglers, killing six in all with the loss of 3 Malays, viz. Private Hamid b. Man, Private Pilus b. Aris and Private Yassin b. Haji Latif.

226. War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre Other accounts too (e.g. by R.S.M. Ismail Babu, Lt. Abbas, etc.) speak of the "wall of fire".

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229. Written state Din and 5 c for dead by t injured, he c who assisted of Lt. Stephe escape from all survivors

tion "dressed as Punjabi troops". But their disguise was easily penetrated and long bursts of Lewis-gun fire at close range left "about 22 (Japanese) lying on the ground dead or wounded". The rest fled "crawling and stumbling down the hill".²²⁷

The ruse having failed, the Japanese staged a determined attack about two hours later in overwhelming strength. Although the defenders fought bitterly with grenades and automatic weapons they were unable to hold the hill. Many of the men and all the officers (except Second-Lieutenant Abbas) died in the close and at times hand-to-hand fighting which developed.²²⁸ A number of the captured survivors were massacred by the Japanese. Lt. Adnan who, along with his brother officers, fought gallantly in this action was shot down and bayoneted by the enemy. His body was then hung upside down from a nearby tree; no one was allowed to cut it down for burial.²²⁹

All the other Company posts having been overrun, Lieutenant Abbas — the only surviving officer — tried to save the remnants of his platoon from virtual extinction. The Japanese were outflanking and closing in from the front and the

227. Written statement of 2/Lt. Abbas b. Abdul Manan of "C" Company. For one reason, the Japanese marched in fours, not in threes, as adopted in the British Army. For another, the Japanese came from a direction which was most unlikely to be occupied by Punjabi troops. Lt. Adnan b. Saidi assisted by 2/Lt. Abbas took prominent part in this engagement. Percival in his books *The War in Malaya* and *Operations of Malaya Command*, mentioned the Japanese resorting to occasional disguise. Also War Diary of Lt.-Col. Andre.

228. Written statements by a number of survivors, e.g. 2/Lt. Abbas, Private Osman; Cpl. Din; Private Wan Ngah; Private Mohd. Yunus Jamil - all "C" Company; L/Cpl. Tan ("A" Company); L/Cpl. Harun b. Musa. In this engagement called "The Battle of Opium Hill" the Company Officer, Captain Rix, maintained close personal touch with his men and showed a disregard of danger which inspired his men to equal efforts. He gave orders that the position should be defended to the last man and the last round and the majority of "C" Company followed his example and died fighting.

Lt.-Colonel Andre in his notes mentions that "Captain Rix's body and those of about 12 Malays were found by a working party in the area where his Company had made their last stand". Lt. Stephen's body was not discovered and the working party was not allowed by the Japanese to search the area for more bodies. Lt. Stephen inspired his platoon with equal gallantry and when many of his men had been killed or wounded and the enemy were within 50 yards of his position, he led a bayonet charge but was shot down before he could reach the enemy. Lt. Adnan, commander of Platoon No. 7, handled a Lewis gun during the encounter and encouraged his men. Mortally wounded he ordered his men to fight on to the last man.

229. Written statement of Corporal Din, Private Wan Ngah and other survivors. Corporal Din and 5 others were captured and tied up. They were then bayoneted and left for dead by the enemy. Corporal Din was the only survivor of this group, and, badly injured, he crawled away under cover of darkness and later met Private Wan Ngah who assisted him to rejoin the Malay Regiment line. Private Wan Ngah, the batman of Lt. Stephen, was nearby when his officer was shot down. He had a miraculous escape from death and described the final engagement and the massacre of almost all survivors captured by the enemy after the battle.

wide drain of burning oil at the rear blocked his retreat. He and four of his surviving men, fought their way to the drain and leapt through the wall of flame. Two fell into the blazing oil and were pulled out badly burnt.²³⁰ The remainder including Lieutenant Abbas eventually reached Battalion Headquarters where the grim fate of "C" Company was made known.

The Regiment had its revenge in the final clash with the enemy near the Alexander Brickworks area — a stronghold of "D" Company which was intact and heavily armed with automatic weapons, anti-tank rifles and mortars.²³¹ In addition, the Battalion H.Q. and about a company of men were strongly entrenched on a low hill overlooking the Brickworks. The clash — a machine-gunner's dream come true — occurred on the same day at dusk.

What happened is best related in Lieutenant MacKenzie's own words.

Imagine our surprise and delight when the Nips appeared marching straight down the Pasir Panjang Road — in fours! We let them get to within 100-150 yards of "D" H.Q. and let them have it with MG's (machine-guns) first and then mortars. Almost every man of their first Company was slaughtered and a lot further back too. A Loyals officer up on the right counted 94 bodies on that part of the road that he could see alone.²³²

The survivors cleared the road instantly flinging themselves into ditches or getting behind cover from where they returned fire. They then withdrew under cover of darkness.²³³

230. War Diary of 2/Lt. Abbas. The two badly injured men crawled away to a safe hiding place leaving the other three to continue on their way unhindered amidst the "rain of Japanese bullets". Lt. MacKenzie, the next morning (the 15th), came across "two Malays wounded and covered in oil, remnants from "C" Company which had been pretty well wiped out earlier in the evening on the right of the brickworks". Also statement of Private Osman.

231. Letter to the writer dated 4.4.1955 from Brigadier (then Major) G. T. Denaro, D.S.O., O.B.E., Director of Federation Military Forces, H.Q. Malaya Command. Also written statement of Private (now Captain) Sulong Ahmad b. Dato' Hamzah who was nearer to the scene of action.

232. War Diary of Lt. A.G. MacKenzie, and other eye-witness accounts of this incident e.g. Brigadier (then Major) G.T. Denaro; Lt.-Col. Andre; Captain (then Lt.) Lenthall (interviewed by the writer at Port Dickson); Private (now Captain) Sulong Ahmad b. Dato' Hamzah; and Captain (then R.S.M.) Ismail Babu, M.B.E. substantially support one another. Lt.-Colonel Andre who was with Lt. MacKenzie at the Battalion H.Q. estimates the Japanese at "about two companies", - which accords with Brigadier G.T. Denaro's estimate. Private Sulong Ahmad mentions "a column of troops". According to him, every available weapon was used against the enemy, rifles, Lewis-guns, rifle grenades, revolvers, anti-tank rifles and mortars. Private Sulong was shot on the left side of the neck and sent to hospital critically wounded. R.S.M. Ismail Babu M.B.E., also substantiates enemy casualties in this encounter, remarking that "enemy corpses were piled one on top of the other." According to Brigadier Denaro, "The Japanese were caught in the open and I would say lost half their force in the first opening of fire."

233. Letter of Brigadier G.T. Denaro. Also statements of Capt. Lentall; Private Sulong.

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The final 8.30 that night Docks to Bukiton, the Alexander Tanglin Area, Broadcasting Station the Kallang area as well as the

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236. O.M.C., p.

The reason for this suicidal act on the part of the enemy and for his failure to use tanks for a break-through at the Malay Regiment line remains one of the mysteries of the war. At any rate, as a result of this check on the enemy's attempted to reach Keppel Harbour by Pasir Panjang Road, the Regiment—except for occasional shelling — spent a quiet twenty-four hours until the surrender. The Japanese switched their activities on to the Loyals front on the right. They penetrated into the Gillman Barracks and Alexandra area and attacked some of the staff and patients in the Alexandra Military Hospital.²³⁴ Clashes occurred on the following morning (the 15th) and the Loyals fell back a few hundred yards to fresh positions in the afternoon with Malay Regiment and attached troops on their left following suit. The end was inevitable. The enemy was gaining ground everywhere. The collapse of civil labour, the total stoppage of public services, the imminent failure of the town's water-supply which was then under Japanese control, the exhaustion of the defending troops, these and other factors combined to leave Percival with no alternative but surrender.

The final line on the Malay Regiment front when the surrender came at 8.30 that night ran along the back of the Keppel Golf Links in front of the Docks to Bukit Chermin Road and Morse Road;²³⁵ and so to Mount Washington, the Alexandra Ammunition Magazine, the biscuit factory, Mount Echo, Tanglin Area, Tyersall area, Raffles College area, Adam Road, Bukit Brown, the Broadcasting Station, the Braddell Road junction, the Tarlat Airstrip and finally the Kallang aerodrome. The islands of Belakang Mati, Pulau Brani and Tekong, as well as the Pengerang area were still in British hands.²³⁶

With the surrender, survivors of the Regiment gradually re-assembled during the night of the 15th and 16th in the Keppel Golf Links area and on the following morning the Malay personnel numbering eight officers and about 600 other ranks were separated from the British officers and marched off to join Indian prisoners-of-war at the Farrer Park concentration area. The British personnel of the Regiment were eventually taken to the Changi Military Camp and interned. But Captain Bretherton and Major Richards escaped within the

234. Percival, *op. cit.*, pp. 288, 289. According to Sheppard (*op. cit.*, p. 21) the enemy entered the Alexandra Military Hospital and bayoneted some of the staff and patients. They then marched away about 160 hospital personnel and massacred them in cold blood. The remnants of the staff were then refused entry into the building for 24 hours. During this period Lt. W. B. Young, the Medical Officer of the 2nd Battalion, Malay Regiment, who was himself a patient along with the other wounded personnel of the Regiment was the only medical officer in the building and although severely wounded in the hand he attended to the patients without rest until the 24 hours ban was lifted and the staff allowed to return.

235. War Diary of Lt. A. G. MacKenzie. He represented the Regiment in arranging a new line of defence with the Loyals.

236. O.M.C., p. 1326.

week and after a hazardous journey they reached Sumatra and freedom. Both won the Military Cross for their initiative.²³⁷

The surrender did not mean the end of casualties to the Regiment. Within a fortnight five Malay officer-internees of the Regiment were summarily executed for refusing to serve under the Japanese or, alternatively, to put on civilian clothes and accept release.²³⁸ Most officers and men who escaped internment at Singapore were arrested on their return home during the year and imprisoned for a while.²³⁹ A number of the other ranks were pressed into forced labour gangs and sent to work as far afield as Siam and Indonesia.²⁴⁰ The majority were released from prison camps in Singapore at different dates in March when all up-country evacuees in Singapore were ordered to return home.²⁴¹ Several of them in a party of 98 Malay personnel serving with the Imperial forces were removed by the Japanese military police and machine-gunned near the Gap.²⁴² During the Malayan Campaign, mainly on February 12, 13, and 14, the Regiment suffered a total of 159 killed (six British officers, seven Malay officers, 146 other ranks) and a large but unspecified number of wounded.²⁴³

One month after the re-occupation of Malaya, the Malay Regiment was revived on September 5, 1945, its members being veterans of the 1941/42

237. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

238. *Army Public Relations Press Statement*; D/Inf./2/54/100 Army (Kuala Lumpur). They were Lt. Mohd. Ariffin b. Haji Sulaiman, Lt. Abdul Wahid b. Judin, Lt. Ibrahim b. Sidek, Lt. Abdullah b. Saat and Lt. Abbas b. Mohd. Said of the S.S.V.F. attached to Malay Regiment, all of the 2nd Battalion. (The Malay officers of the 1st Battalion had been told to disperse by Lt.-Col. Andre when the surrender was announced, thereby escaping possible death). Captain Raja Aman Shah of the F.M.S.V.F., 2/Lt. Abu Bakar and Lt. Osman b. Kring (Dato' Naning) of the S.S.V.F. were also executed. "For an entire week they refused to be persuaded by the enemy even to removing their badges of rank. They were then taken out to an isolated area and shot."

239. Statement of Major (then Lt.) Mohd. Taib b. Jais interviewed by the writer at Port Dickson on 16.2.1954. Soon after returning to his home in Port Dickson in March 1942, he was caught and imprisoned at Temeng Gaol, Seremban, for a week together with at least three ex-Malay Regiment personnel who were soon released afterwards. Major Taib, however, was beaten up and questioned about his activities as a Malay officer of the Regiment. One day, he and three Chinese prisoners were taken out to the prison courtyard and made to kneel down on the ground with their hands tied behind their back. The first two Chinese were then beheaded with a Samurai sword. The prison-officer-cum-executioner was persuaded by the interpreter standing near him to stay the execution of the other two men. The Japanese prison authorities for some reason changed their mind and a few days later released Lt. Taib with the stern warning to behave himself. Also written statements of Sgt. Mohd. Desa, L/Cpl. Abdul Gani, Captain (then Sgt.) Manlud b. Haji Abdul Samad. For the most part they were denied regular employment after being released from prison and so they took to farming, fishing, etc.

240. Written statements of L/Cpl. Tan, Private Mohd. Yunus, Private Tahir.

241. Notification dated March 6, 2606 in *The Good Citizen's Guide*, Syonan-to, 2603, p. 19, published during the Japanese regime. "Any refugee who is found in Syonan after March 14 shall have his property seized and shall be severely punished."

242. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, p. 24. No definite number could be given.

243. Letter of Brigadier Denaro.

Campaign. The Regiment again saw action with the outbreak of the Emergency in 1948 and by 1955 had grown to seven battalions.²⁴⁴

We might now conclude our study of the subject with the words of Lt.-General A. E. Percival who remarks, *inter alia*,

When war broke out in the Far East, the Regiment was in process of expansion ... In consequence ... like many other units of our Imperial Forces, (it) was not fully prepared for the ordeal which it was to face. Nevertheless, these young and untried soldiers acquitted themselves in a way which bore comparison with the very best troops in Malaya. In particular, by their stubborn defence of the Pasir Panjang Ridge at the height of the Battle of Singapore, they set an example of steadfastness and endurance which will become a great tradition in the Regiment and an inspiration for future generations.²⁴⁵

244. Letter of Brigadier Denaro, *op. cit.*, On March 1, 1955, the Regiment's strength was 7 battalions (5136 men), with Depot H.Q., Malay Infantry Brigade, etc. (583 men).
245. Sheppard, *op. cit.*, preface. Tributes were also paid by General Sir Gerald Templer, vide *Federation Government Press Statement*, D. in Inf. 2/54/168 (H. C.) dated 23.2.1954; and by Lt.-General Sir Frank Messervy, General Officer Commanding, Malaya, vide *Army Public Relations Statement*, 2/54/100 (Army).