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*Operations in Java -
24th. February to 20th. March 1942 -
Despatch by Maj Gen. H.D.W. Sitwell, M.C.*

ORIGINAL

SECRET

Operations
in
Java.

24 th. FEBRUARY 1942 — 20 th. MARCH 1942

Despatch by _____

Major General H.D.W Sitwell M.C.

~~Diagrams and Recommendations for Awards~~
~~included in Copy No 1 only.~~

SECRET

DESPATCH ON OPERATIONS IN JAVA - FEBRUARY TO MARCH 1942
BY MAJOR GENERAL H.D.W. SITWELL, M.C.

NOTE FOR MINISTER

Advice has been received from the Dominions Office through the Department of External Affairs that it has been decided to publish a despatch by Major-General H.D.W. Sitwell, M.C., on the operations which took place in Java from 24th February to 20th March 1942. The United Kingdom authorities have asked whether the Commonwealth Government desires to make any comments on the despatch, copy of which is attached.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF:

2. The Chief of the General Staff has advised that it was considered desirable to have the views of Brigadier A.S. Blackburn before forwarding any observations, as Brigadier Blackburn was the officer in command of the AIF in Java throughout the operations in question. Following upon receipt of the comments of Brigadier Blackburn, the Chief of the General Staff has now stated that from an historical point of view the despatch is concurred in. He has suggested, however, the following minor amendments on matters of detail contained in Major-General Sitwell's despatch:-

<u>Maj-Gen Sitwell's Despatch</u>	<u>Observations of Chief of the General Staff</u>
<u>Page 5, part I para II(1),</u> <u>Sub-para (b) - Order of</u> <u>Battle (Army).</u>	Amend to read as shown (additions underlined) -
(b) <u>AUSTRALIAN</u>	(b) <u>AUSTRALIAN</u>
Infantry Brigade Headquarters	Infantry Brigade Headquarters
An Australian Machine Gun Battalion	An Australian Machine Gun Battalion (<u>less 8 officers and 192 other ranks and less all vehicles and machine guns</u>).
An Australian Pioneer Battalion	An Australian Pioneer Battalion.
Field Company R.E.	Field Company R.E.
Reserve M.T. Company	Reserve M.T. Company
Miscellaneous small units consisting of Guard Platoons etc. including some deserters from Singapore, whose value was very doubtful.	<u>One M.T. Coy. less vehicles</u> /Miscellaneous...

Maj-Gen Sitwell's Despatch	Observations of Chief of the General Staff
	Miscellaneous small units consisting of Guard Platoons etc. including some deserters from Singapore whose value was very doubtful
<u>Page 6, sub-para (b) -</u> <u>Disposition of Troops</u> (b) <u>Australian</u> One battalion KALIDJATI on aerodrome defence duties. Remainder in the BATAVIA area. Reserve M.T. Company in area BATAVIA, BANDOENG, TJILATJAP (south central Java)	<u>Comment</u> At no time were there any Australian troops (except a few RAAF Officers) at KALIDJATI. All Australian troops (except Reserve M.T. Company who were in the area specified in the despatch) were at the time referred to, in the BATAVIA area.
<u>Page 17, para. 5 -</u> <u>Blackforce Plan for with-</u> <u>drawal.</u> (a) <u>First sentence</u> <p>Brig. Blackburn ordered one Company of the Australian Pioneer Battalion for task at 4(b) above.</p> (b) <u>Fourth Sentence</u> <p>(Actually they did not reach BANDOENG until midday 6th March owing to various delays)</p>	Should read - <p>Brig. Blackburn ordered one Company of the Australian <u>Machine Gun Battalion who were</u> <u>fighting as Infantry</u> for task at 4(b) above</p> Should read - <p>(Actually they reached BANDOENG soon after daylight and were in position on the Eastern flank of perimeter defence by 1000 hours).</p>

3. In connection with the above amendments, it is noted that in the introduction to his despatch, Major-General Sitwell states -

"At the time of writing this despatch I have no papers to assist me, and it is possible that there may be some small inaccuracies as to dates, Units, moves, etc.

I am satisfied, however, that it does represent a reasonably accurate account of events as seen by myself as G.O.C. at the time."

SUBMISSION:

4. The despatch deals objectively with purely military events and there are no comments in it on matters impinging on policy decisions of the Australian Government. In this connection it is mentioned that the Government had made representations in February 1942 to General Wavell and through

Sir Earle Page London and the Australian Minister Washington, that Australian troops in Java should be evacuated should the situation deteriorate before the receipt of orders for evacuation. War Cabinet, on 2nd March 1942 (Minute 1932) observed from the information furnished to it by the Chief of the General Staff that the General Officer Commanding, A.I.F. Java, had been overruled by General Wavell in the observance of the Commonwealth Government's request. It was directed by War Cabinet that representations should be made that, in the event of surrender, the Australian Government hoped that the A.I.F. in Java would be afforded an opportunity to escape and it was decided that the Chief of the General Staff should communicate these representations to the Army Commander at Java. These representations were made and General Sitwell replied on 6th March 1942 that any ordered evacuation was impossible owing to the shortage of shipping. He stated that should Dutch resistance cease, the troops would endeavour to escape from Java in small parties.

5. It is suggested that the observations and amendments proposed by the Chief of the General Staff and Brigadier Blackburn be communicated to the Dominions Office with the following comments:-

"The Commonwealth Government is in agreement with these observations. It notes that in the introductory portion of his despatch, Major-General Sitwell states -

'At the time of writing this despatch I have no papers to assist me, and it is possible that there may be some small inaccuracies as to dates, Units, moves, etc.

I am satisfied, however, that it does represent a reasonably accurate account of events as seen by myself as G.O.C. at the time.'

The amendments suggested relate to small inaccuracies in factual aspects affecting the Australian Forces and the Government would be glad if they could be embodied in the despatch."

W

S e c r e t a r y

TOP SECRETNARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS OF BRITISH FORCESIN JAVAFor period 24th February 1942 to SurrenderOn 12th March 1942 and Subsequent Action to20th March 1942C O N T E N T S

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TOP SECRET

NARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS OF BRITISH FORCES IN

J A V A

FOR PERIOD 24TH FEBRUARY 1942 TO SURRENDER ON
12TH MARCH 1942 AND SUBSEQUENT ACTION TO 20 TH

MARCH 1942

INTRODUCTION

Sir,

At the time of writing this despatch I have no papers to assist me, and it is possible that there may be some small inaccuracies as to dates, Units, moves, etc.

I am satisfied, however, that it does represent a reasonably accurate account of events as seen by myself as C.O.C. at the time.

At the outset I must remind you that the Dutch suffered from many terrible disadvantages, not the least of which was the fact that much of their Air Force and part of their Navy had been dissipated by the Allies in the earlier engagements further North before the Japanese reached J.A.V.A. at all.

On the break up of South West Pacific Command, the resources available for the Commander-in-Chief for the defence of J.A.V.A. were briefly as follows.

1. DUTCH

(a) Army

The army in J.A.V.A. had not yet been in action, but had been heavily depleted in white personnel, for various reasons, from a proportion of one white to five natives to one white to about forty natives. They had attempted to re-arm and modernize their forces from about 1936 onwards, but being unable to obtain the new armaments they were not yet prepared for modern war.

(b) Navy

One or two old fashioned cruisers and destroyers.

(c) Air

Though pilots were individually gallant, they had little training in formation fighting and manoeuvre, and the machines with which they were equipped were known to be inferior to those used by the Japanese.

2. BRITISH

(a) Army

A token force, consisting of a squadron of Light Tanks, two battalions of infantry (Australian) and a number of A.A. units, with a conglomeration of small non-fighting administrative units for use at the base.

(b) Navy

The cruisers EXETER and PERTH, with a few destroyers and small craft.

(c) Air

About 5,500 British R.A.F. of all ranks with a number of machines ex SINGAPORE and SUMATRA, which had to be entirely reorganized and reformed before operations commenced.

3. AMERICAN

(a) Army

* One battalion of Field Artillery less a battery.

(b) Navy

The cruiser HOUSTON and two or three destroyers. The former had one turret out of action from a bombing attack.

(c) Air

Approximately one squadron Glen Martins, a few Curtis P.38's and Buffaloes and about four seaplanes. All these aircraft were either destroyed, or left Java, early in the operations, and, to the best of my knowledge, there were no American air personnel in Java at the time of the surrender.

The Dutch had been told that they could expect no further help from the Allies for a considerable time and rather naturally, in the circumstances, many of them felt that they had been abandoned to their fate by the Allies.

PART I

EVENTS PRECEDING THE OPENING OF HOSTILITIES

I. Original Instructions

On the 23rd February, 1942 I had been acting for the previous three weeks as A.A. Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief, South West Pacific Command. On this date the Headquarters were broken up with a view to leaving J.A.V.A. and I was ordered to take over Command of all troops in J.A.V.A. which were to remain behind. I received instructions to the following effect:-

- (1) I was to be in Command of all English, Australian and Indian troops.
- (2) I was to be under the Command of Lieutenant-General TER POORTEN, the Dutch Commander-in-Chief for all purposes, and Major-General VAN OYEN, for Air Defence matters.
- (3) I was to continue to resist whilst the Dutch did so. After this had ceased I was to evacuate my troops if such action were possible.
- (4) The British Air Forces remaining in J.A.V.A. were to be commanded by Air Vice Marshal MILTBY, operating under Major-General VAN OYEN as a separate force.
- (5) Whilst I was not to be under the orders of Air Vice Marshal MILTBY as he was the senior I was instructed to communicate through him with the Home Government, as codes and wireless were in his possession, and it was not desirable to issue duplicates.
- (6) I could expect no help from outside whatsoever for a very long time.

II. Disposition and Plans of the Allied Troops

- (1) Disposition of British Troops was as follows.

Approximate Order of Battle (JUNE)

(a) ENGLISH

'B' Squadron 3rd Hussars (Light Tanks)

77 H.A.A. Regiment of H.Q. and three batteries

21 L.A.A. Regiment of H.Q. and two batteries - one of four troops and one of three.

48 L.A.A. Regiment of H.Q. and two batteries less two guns.

All A.A. regiments above with Signal, R.A.S.C. and R.A.O.C. sections attached.

6 H.A.A. Regiment of H.Q. and two batteries (personnel only).

35 L.A.A. Regiment of two batteries (personnel only) under

command of O.C. 6 H.A.A. Regiment.

Allied Military Hospital at BANJONG

Miscellaneous base administrative units (personnel only) such as

Base Ordnance Depot, Detail Issue Store, Security Sections,

MAFI etc.

TOTAL: 3500

(b) AUSTRALIAN

Infantry Brigade Headquarters

An Australian Machine Gun Battalion

(less 34th 1920RS and small units etc.)

An Australian Pioneer Battalion

Field Company R.E.

Reserve M.T. Company *

→ One MT Coy *less*

Miscellaneous small units consisting of Guard Platoons etc.

including some deserters from SINGAPORE, whose value was

very doubtful.

(c) INDIAN

Miscellaneous M.T. drivers, clerks etc.

TOTAL: 2,500

GRAND TOTAL (about): 6,000

Dispositions at Time of Taking over Command and shortly after

(a) Force Headquarters

This consisted of:-

G.O.C.

G.S.O.I

A.A.Q.M.G.

Services att.

G.S.O.II(Intelligence)

D.A.A.G.

G.R.A.S.C.

G.S.O.II(Australian

D.A.Q.M.G.

S.O.M.B.

for liaison purposes,

Staff Cpts.

A.D.M.S. etc. with

A.D.C.

Staffs.

There was no Signals element at Force Headquarters and other than Signal Units with A.A. Regiments, no Signals in the Force whatsoever.

The lack of signal organization proved a great handicap to me throughout the operations. Dutch communications did not work well, and, though operators

* All personnel of a low medical category

usually did speak English of a sort, the language difficulty was considerable. The Dutch H.Q. in Bandoeng were usually very ill informed as to what was happening, and I found it difficult to get any information from them except by personal visits.

For my own orders I had to rely chiefly on liaison officers and D.R.'s; the former I found most valuable, but the latter frequently lost their way or could not find the units, with consequent delay in the transmission of orders.

At Major-General VAN OYEN's Headquarters:-

Brigade Major) to deal with orders affecting
) units issued by myself or
Staff Captain) Major General VAN OYEN.

The Headquarters was located at the old Intendant-General's Headquarters of South West Pacific Command. This was forced upon me, although in many ways unsuitable, since owing to lack of any Signal facilities I had to make use of what was already in existence. I was unable to take any operational command in the field having no Signals, and consequently organized it mainly with a view to liaison and administrative work.

At A.H.K. (Dutch) at BANDOENG . . . I had a permanent Liaison Officer.

(b) Australian

sent One battalion KALIDJATI on aerodrome defence duties.
Remainder in the BATAVIA area.

Reserve M.T. Company in area BATAVIA, BANDOENG, TJILATJAP
(south central JAVA).

(c) English

'D' Squadron 3rd Hussars - BATAVIA area
Administrative Units - BATAVIA, BANDOENG and
TJILATJAP areas

A.A. units deployed in action as under:-

77 H.A.A. Regiment H.Q. - SOERABAJA (East JAVA)
and two batteries.
One battery - BATAVIA
21 L.A.A. Regiment H.Q. - Aerodromes in East
and one battery Java
One battery
48 L.A.A. Regiment H.Q. - BATAVIA
and one battery

One battery

- KALIDJATI

One battery

- TJILILITAN aerodrome (not marked
on map - south of BATAVIA

6 H.A.A. Regiment

- BATAVIA area moving to

TJIDARI

All the above units were indifferently equipped and mostly under establishment in personnel. The Light Tanks, with which B Squadron 3H were equipped, were of obsolescent pattern and practically worn out. Transport and guns for such of the remaining units as had them, had been hurriedly got together from what was available at the base post TANJOENG PRIOK on disembarkation; transport was mostly of types to which the units were unaccustomed and in many cases unsuitable for the work that had to be done. A large part of the transport at the base could not be used, as vital parts, such as carburettors etc., had been removed during the voyage for safety reasons and could not be found; it was by no means certain that these parts were in Java at all, as many of the ships had come from Singapore, being sent on to Java before they had fully discharged. From reports since received, it appears also that the loading of the transports for 'K' force in England had been done in a most haphazard fashion, for which there was very much less excuse.

(2) Disposition of Dutch troops.

The Dutch N.E.I. Army in JAVA consisted of approximately 25,000 men made up of four Regiments of infantry (native) of three Battalions each, with Artillery and ancillary troops, and garrison units. They had very few A.P.Vs, having been unable to obtain them from the Allies. In addition there was a Home Guard of about 40,000. The regular troops were situated:-

- (a) BATAVIA Area - two Regiments with artillery etc. - Commander: Major-General SCHILLING
- (b) North Central JAVA - one Regiment and ancillary troops - Commander: Major-General PESSMAN
- (c) East JAVA - one Regiment and ancillary troops - Commander: Major-General ILGEN
- (d) South and Central JAVA - garrison Units and Coast Artillery - Commander: Major-General COX.

The troops were for the most part widely dispersed and no reserve except one company of tanks and a motorized Cavalry Regt. was held in the hands of

the Commander-in-Chief.

The training of the Home Guard, numbering about 40,000, had necessarily been very limited, but those in Western JAVA were reported to be the best. The best Home Guard unit was at SOERABAJA, where there were about 1,000 men with twelve armoured cars (home made). * Most of the Home Guard were well armed with rifles and Tommy-guns but they had very little tactical knowledge as to how these should be used and had no artillery at all.

The Dutch High Command (A.H.K.) anticipated that the enemy would land in both East and West JAVA, north of SOERABAJA and opposite SUMATRA. They considered a landing in central JAVA was possible but unlikely. They did not anticipate a landing in south JAVA. It was considered the enemy could not land before 26th February at the earliest and it would probably be later than this.

(3) The Dutch Plan

The Dutch plan was to resist the enemy on landing, falling back as necessary on to previously prepared positions covered by demolitions. Owing to the shortage of troops it was proposed to allow the enemy to cut JAVA in two in the middle. They proposed falling back from SOERABAJA to the MALANG PLATEAU in East JAVA; in the West, they proposed to defend the BATAVIA area in strength, and later to fall back upon the capital, BANDJONG, where they proposed to make a final stand. Defences to cover BANDJONG had been prepared, but the Dutch anticipated they would not have enough troops to man them completely.

The Home Guard were mostly to be used in a static role, as it was not considered they were sufficiently well trained to be capable of manoeuvre.

Bridges everywhere had been prepared for demolition and the Home Guard detachments stationed on them had instructions to blow the bridges when the enemy approached. There appeared to be no concerted plan other than this for the use of demolitions.

(4) The British Plan

In deciding how the British troops could best be employed I was governed by three considerations:

- (a) Though we were bound to be over-run in the end it was obviously

* This information was given to me whilst a prisoner of war by Major-General SCHILLING, who was responsible for their training and organization until about three weeks before operations commenced.

desirable to contain the maximum strength of Japanese forces for as long as possible. The Dutch and ourselves were bound to be hopelessly outnumbered both in numbers and material. It therefore seemed to me advisable that we should attack wherever possible both from the air and from the ground, making full use of surprise with a view to gaining a success which, though necessarily local only, would nevertheless have the effect of delaying the enemy, and might cause him to land more troops in Java than were necessary, under the impression that he was up against considerable opposition.

- (b) There was no time for training. The Japanese were likely to attack in three or four days' time. It was only possible to use units in roles for which they had been previously trained. It would be very difficult even to equip them in time.
- (c) I had no Signal organization whatsoever available for my Headquarters. It was therefore essential that my force should be operated by Dutch Commanders in the earlier stages of the operations.

My plan was as follows:-

- (a) A.A. units to remain deployed in an anti-aircraft role.
- (b) Our main weapon of attack was the R.A.F. and therefore I proposed to concentrate all A.A. units, including H.A.A., for defence of aerodromes used by the R.A.F. This was, however, partly negatived by Major-General VAN OVEN who insisted on retaining the Heavy A.A. for the defence of SOERABAJA and BATAVIA.
- (c) The Australian units and "B" Squadron 3rd Hussars I decided to form into a mobile striking force under the command of Brigadier BLACKBURN, to be known as BLACKFORCE. This was to be augmented by an improvised cavalry field ambulance produced from the Allied General Hospital in RANDOENG, and later by the American Artillery and some R.A.F. who had been equipped by the A.O.C. as infantry. To make the force fully mobile I allotted to them two sections of the reserve M.T. Company as a permanent arrangement.

I suggested that this force might be held under my own hand in the RANDOENG area. The Commander-in-Chief, however, preferred the area BUITENZORG in West JAVA as more suitable. Here he stated the

country was suitable for mechanised operations, and the whole force could be well concealed in rubber plantations. He proposed to put the force from the outset under the orders of Major-General SCHILLING. To this I agreed.

- (d) The 6 H.A.A. Regiment I arranged to equip as infantry units for aerodrome defence on a mobile basis on an allotment of one battery per aerodrome. They had had a little training in the use of small arms, but none as infantry in the proper sense of the word. I anticipated parachute attacks as being probable and to deal with these I considered a high degree of mobility for the aerodrome guards as essential, particularly in view of the very large size of the aerodromes they had to cover. I arranged for them to move to TJLMAHI for reorganization and equipment.
- (e) The port of BATAVIA, TANJONG PRIOK, was in a state of great confusion. There were plenty of stores and transport for everybody, the Dutch as well as ourselves, but it was impossible to tell where the stores were or whether the essential parts were in JAVA or had been sunk at sea or left behind at SINGAPORE. It seemed to me essential to clear the port as quickly as possible and issue all stores to whoever could best make use of them. I accordingly appointed an Embarkation Commandant and Staff with a small Ordnance nucleus who had instructions to let all units draw anything they wanted without any signature or paper, giving priority to BLACKFORCE and the 6 H.A.A. Regiment in the matter of transport. After all stores had been issued I instructed him to transfer anything they wanted, and particularly transport, over to the Dutch. He was then to move the balance of the stores to TJLMAHI by 28th February so far as he was able, subject to difficulties of transport etc., as a convoy was due to leave by sea about then.

There were still many personnel left in the Island that it would have been desirable to evacuate. These were mostly R.A.A.F. specialists who had to take priority on any convoy that could leave.

(5) Guerilla Warfare

I further considered the possibility of fighting guerilla warfare in

the latter stages. The country seemed to me to offer many opportunities of doing this to considerable advantage, but it obviously had to be part of a general plan which the Dutch were in a better position to produce than I was. In fact, I considered that Dutch help in the matter was essential. I therefore wrote a draft instruction which I submitted to the Dutch Higher Command for approval asking them to allot me an area in which to operate so that I could arrange for previous reconnaissance, forming of dumps, etc. I was told that preparations for guerilla operations were in hand and that they would issue orders to me on that subject in due course. Pending receipt of these orders they would prefer that I did not issue any instructions on the matter.

(6) Development of British Deployment in accordance with the above-mentioned Plan.

BLACKFORCE were equipped ready to operate in the RANDOENG area by 28th February. A Signal Section was allotted to them from the 48 Light A.A. Regiment for the use of their Brigade Headquarters.

Difficulty was experienced in equipping the 6 A.A. Regiment which I intended to have completely deployed by the 26th February. Hitches occurred in drawing transport and organizing and equipping with drivers in the required time. The first battery equipped as infantry I sent to TJILILITAN aerodrome on Major-General VAN OYEN's orders about 26th February. The second, intended for KALIMATI aerodrome, was moved there on 28th February. Air reports received at this time indicated that the Japanese attack could not take place before 1st March.

(7) American Field Artillery Battalion

On the 27th February I asked the Commander-in-Chief to allot the American Field Artillery Battalion, which was in East Java to BLACKFORCE, which had no artillery. To this he agreed, and the unit finally joined them on the evening of 2nd March.

(8) Battle of the JAVA Sea

On the night of 27th/28th February the whole of the available allied ships of war left SOERABAYA in an attempt to disperse the Japanese invasion convoys assembling in the JAVA sea. After a most gallant action, in which it is believed considerable losses were inflicted upon the Japanese escorting vessels, all Allied ships which were hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned were either sunk or disabled.

PART II

OPERATIONS 28TH FEBRUARY 1942 TO 8TH MARCH 1942

I. Events on Night 28th February to Evening 1st March

Soon after midnight on the night of 28th February/1st March an enemy landing occurred north of SOERABAJA in East JAVA, at ERETANG WETANG (West Central JAVA) and near MERAK (West JAVA). The landing at the latter place was much disrupted and delayed by the very gallant fight of the American cruiser HOUSTON (and the Australian cruiser PERTH) which, in trying to pass through the SOEMBA STRAITS, engaged the enemy landing craft and caused many casualties but was finally sunk herself by their escort.

(1) Events following the landing North of SOERABAJA

The Dutch resisted the landing near SOERABAJA, later withdrawing, according to plan, to prepared positions on the MALANG Plateau. They were still holding out there on receipt of the order to surrender.

(2) Events following the landing at ERETANG WETANG

The landing apparently took place unopposed and was reported by the Dutch as being made with the assistance of lights put up by Fifth Columnists. It was later attacked near the beaches by a Company of Dutch regular troops which were hastily brought up, but these were held by the Japanese who pressed forward rapidly in strength and occupied SOERABAJA reaching KALIDJATI aerodrome about 1000 hours. The defences were surprised and overwhelmed, but due to the action of the light A.A. guns and the ground defence troops, both Army and R.A.F., the Hudson Squadron (Australian) were able to fly off their aircraft, which were on the aerodrome to AMHIR aerodrome near BANDOENG. The Blenheims, which were off the aerodrome, could not be got going in time and were overrun. It is impossible owing to the lack of survivors and conflicting evidence, to get any details of this action, but the Japanese afterwards told me that the British there fought very gallantly indeed. This was borne out by the numbers of bodies, both British and Japanese, which were reported near the aerodrome and in the woods round it after the surrender, by the salvage parties (British) which were employed by the Japanese.

During the day considerable execution was done by R.A.F. fighter aircraft operating from TJILILITAN against enemy transport on the road

running west from PABUNOEKAN.

An officers' patrol sent out by me later in the day confirmed that the Japanese were in full occupation of the KALIDJATI aerodrome, and all fighting had ceased by about 1600 hours. A Dutch reconnaissance in force sent out from BATAVIA later confirmed this.

(3) Events following landing near SERANG

This took place roughly two hours later than the first landing on a wide front. It was opposed by the allotted Dutch regiment who fell back to the East. By nightfall the enemy had reached SERANG with the Dutch occupying a prepared position to the East of it. The retirement here appears to have gone according to plan, but further south the Dutch appeared to have retired somewhat precipitately and the enemy had seized a river crossing (a ford not marked on the map). It became evident to Major-General SCHILLING on the evening of the 1st March that the enemy proposed to press on to attack BUITENZORG thus cutting off BATAVIA, so he issued orders to put in force his pre-arranged counter-attack which was as follows.

The only through North and South communication known to exist between the BATAVIA-SERANG road in the north and the BUITENZORG-PANDEGLANG road in the south, west of the road RANCKASBITOENG - KRACILING was the BUITENZORG-BATAVIA road. Between these, however, a secret road had been built under Major-General SCHILLING's orders before the war specifically for the purpose of this counter-attack, which ran south-west from BATAVIA and had been kept concealed. The plan for the counter-attack was for BLACKFORCE to press forward at first light on the 2nd March and gain a head-on contact with the enemy on the southern road endeavouring to outflank it from the south in accordance with the tactical employment of BLACKFORCE which I had previously arranged with Major-General SCHILLING. He proposed to use his reserve regiment to attack the Japanese column in the flank and rear at the same time, moving from the BATAVIA area along the concealed road.

During the day "E" Squadron 3rd Hussars had been sent forward as far as BAKARAJAN by BLACKFORCE, but it failed to gain contact with the enemy.

(4) Landing north of SOERABAJA

As soon as I heard this had taken place I asked Major-General VAN OIEN to withdraw the remaining British A.A. from the SOERABAJA area to West JAVA so that they could fight under my command in the later stages. He agreed to this and ordered the 77 H.A.A. Regiment to TJILATJAP. This move subsequently went according to plan, but one troop of 77 H.A.A. Regiment was cut off and left behind under the command of the Dutch.

(5) Withdrawal of British Shipping

Rear-Admiral PALMER informed me on 1st March that orders had been received from the Admiralty that all British ships were to be withdrawn from JAVA at once and that this was the last chance to withdraw any of my forces from JAVA. I had previously hoped that it might be possible to evacuate from the beaches on the South coast in small boats to shipping lying out at sea without using the ports, but this order meant, if it was implemented, that our last hope of any evacuation had gone. I accordingly wired to the Home Government to this effect, but recommended that we should remain in JAVA in accordance with my original orders, on account of the bad effect it would undoubtedly have if the British left JAVA the moment the enemy invasion commenced. To this the Home Government agreed.

(6) View of Dutch High Command on the day's Operations

On the evening of 1st March the Dutch High Command, though dispirited appeared reasonably satisfied with the day's operations which they considered had gone as well as could be expected. They did not appear to rate KALIDJATI as important at this time, but were worried about SOERANG which they considered was a tactical centre of great importance to them and stated they proposed to attack this with their reserve tanks (Dutch) the following morning. They proposed to launch a large-scale counter-attack in this sector on the morning of 3rd March hoping to drive the Japanese back to the coast.

(7) Formation of 16 A.A. Brigade

I was not satisfied with the way the command of the A.A. units was functioning under the existing arrangements and accordingly re-formed the nucleus A.A. Headquarters as the 16 A.A. Brigade to take command of all

the A.A. troops in JAVLA.

II. Events of the Evening 1st March to Evening 4th March

(1) 'Centre Sector - 2nd March

The Dutch tank attack on SOEBANG was delivered at 1000 hours on 2nd March and reached the centre of the town. The infantry, however, were unable to support and they were forced to withdraw with heavy casualties.

(2) West Sector - 2nd, 3rd and 4th March *

In accordance with orders from Major-General SCHILLING, BLACKFORCE advanced at first light 2nd March to the west from the BUITENZORG area. On reaching LEUWILLANG the bridge was blown up by the Home Guard detachment there just before they arrived, although according to Intelligence reports at the time (which were accurate) there were no Japanese within 30 miles. The reason for the premature blowing up of this bridge was never discovered. The effect of this was to reduce BLACKFORCE to a force of infantry whose mobility was useless to them since there were no communications with the northern road (except through BATAVIA) and no roads to the South.

Brigadier BLACKBURN, however, pushed his infantry across the stream in small parties. These penetrated as far as DJASINGA but no signs of the enemy were met.

Orders were issued by the Dutch High Command about 1430 hours on 2nd March for BLACKFORCE to withdraw with a view to attacking the enemy near KALIDJATI in the centre sector at first light on the morning of the 3rd March in conjunction with the main Dutch counter-attack in this sector. I was notified by my Liaison Officer, and received a message from Brigadier BLACKBURN shortly afterwards asking if he was to comply with this order. I told him to wait until I had seen the Commander-in-Chief. It did not appear to me that this operation could possibly be a success, since it involved a move of about 150 miles over mountain roads by night to be followed by an attack at dawn against an enemy whose position was only vaguely known and which could not be reconnoitred previously by any of the troops who would have to carry out the attack. Even this was assuming that BLACKFORCE, whom I believed to be engaged with the enemy, could be safely disengaged by nightfall, which I thought might well be very

* Brigadier BLACKBURN has written up an account in detail of the operations of his force, which he proposes to submit to the Australian Government on his return.

difficult. The enemy had by this time complete command of the air over Western J.A.V.

I accordingly went to see the Commander-in-Chief and said that I thought this operation was impracticable, though if as Commander-in-Chief, he insisted upon it we would of course comply. He replied that he did not like it himself, but that the situation in the centre sector was very serious. After some discussion he agreed that my objections were sound and countermanded his order. I thanked him and suggested that BLACKFORCE might be withdrawn in view of the bridge being destroyed, and operate on the other road, leaving a detachment only at LEUWILLANG bridge, but upon this he expressed no opinion.

As I learned subsequently, he then ordered Major-General SCHILLING, in spite of the latter's protestations, to carry out the operation to which I had objected with his reserve Regiment, thus making it impossible for the counter-attack to be delivered in the Western sector. The Regiment endeavoured to comply with the order, but was caught on the road the following morning at about 0800 hours about 20 miles short of their objective and heavily attacked from the air. As a result they were completely dispersed, though their casualties in killed and wounded appear to have been low, and were unable to take part in further operations for some time.

The Japanese reached LEUWILLANG bridge on the 3rd March and tried to outflank the defences to the North, to the South and then to the North again. The Australians apparently gained complete surprise over the Japanese by carrying out outflanking movements in the North and South just before the Japanese were able to attack. The Japanese attack near the bridge was met by heavy small arms and artillery fire and heavy casualties were inflicted; a staff car, several tanks and other vehicles being destroyed and set on fire. Enemy casualties in general during these operations appear to have been heavy.*

Operations continued during the night 3rd/4th and during the 4th March. The enemy was driven back over the river to the South, the only place they had succeeded in crossing. The Australian morale was high, and the Japanese attacks appear to have failed everywhere.

* Whilst prisoner of war Major-General SCHILLING informed me that the Japanese told him they had over 500 killed including several high ranking officers in this fight.

On the 3rd March withdrawal of A.N. units from BATAVIA to the RANDOENG area was commenced.

(3) Centre Sector - 3rd to 4th March

The Dutch counter-attack on the 3rd March was a failure. The attack on the left flank was never delivered as has been told above. The attack on the right flank succeeded in entering SOERANG but was driven out again. After the failure of this attack the Dutch became rather dispirited and it was reported to me on the 4th March that a determined attack by the Japanese in the centre sector could probably penetrate through to RANDOENG.

The Commander-in-Chief therefore decided on the 4th March to withdraw from the BATAVIA area to RANDOENG, the troops from the BATAVIA area to reinforce the troops in the centre if necessary. It was also decided to withdraw troops from Central JAWA employed at TJILATJAR to the RANDOENG perimeter at the same time. The situation reports in this area were obscure. There were many reports of enemy parachutists having landed - all of which proved false.

(4) Plan for the Withdrawal from the BATAVIA area

- (a) Withdrawal by road and rail to RANDOENG during the night 4th/5th and during the 5th to the RANDOENG perimeter, some of the units to stay the night at SOEKABOEMI.
- (b) BLACKFORCE to withdraw by road during the night 4th/5th March to SOEKABOEMI, moving to RANDOENG on the night 5th/6th March; to be responsible for keeping the road and rail junction through BUTTENZORE clear of the enemy until 1200 hours on 5th March.

(5) BLACKFORCE Plan for Withdrawal

Brigadier BLACKBURN ordered one Company of the Australian Pioneer Battalion for task at 4(b) above. The right flank was to be covered by "B" Squadron, 3rd Hussars the whole being under the orders of O.C. B Squadron 3 Hussars; they were ordered to join up with BLACKFORCE later on. The remainder of BLACKFORCE was ordered to withdraw during the night 4th/5th March, stopping at SOEKABOEMI during 5th March, and moving during the night 5th/6th March to RANDOENG, where they would take their place in the perimeter defence. (Actually they ^{never} did not reach RANDOENG

soon after daylight and were in position on the eastern flank of the perimeter defence by 10 a.m.

until midday 6th March owing to various delays).

The Dutch Staff were advised of this plan and considered it probable that BLACKFORCE and the forces in the BATAVIA area would be cut off as they expected a repetition of the Japanese attack in greater strength in the early morning of 5th March. I said that I saw no difficulty in the operation whatsoever as I was quite convinced that the Japanese would be in no position to attack before midday on account of the losses they had received.

(6) Guerilla Warfare

I again raised the question of guerilla warfare with the Dutch High Command as I had previously done on several occasions. I was told that the matter was being carefully considered and final instructions would be given at a Conference which was to be held the following evening, the 5th March.

(7) R.A.F. Personnel

Owing to casualties of planes the A.O.C. had at this time many technical R.A.F. personnel who had been trained in the use of small arms but could not be used in their proper role. They were accordingly formed into an Infantry unit and sent to join BLACKFORCE.

III. Events of the 5th March

(1) Centre Sector

No change. Morale still remained low, but the country was very difficult for the attacker and it seemed most unlikely that any rapid Japanese advance would occur here, though the enemy were pressing forward to POEWARKARTA and LEBANG.

(2) West Sector

The retirement to SOERABOEMI was mainly unmolested but one company, which had advanced to the South from the LEUWILLANG bridge, had lost touch and was left behind. O.C. B Squadron 3 Hussars endeavoured to communicate with this company the following day, but by this time they were cut off by the Japanese. They subsequently took to the mountains and rounded up by the Japanese about two weeks later.

The Japanese attacked across the river at LEUWILLANG both north and south of the bridge at 1130 hours, and were successfully repulsed. Due to a train accident and other delays the British rear guard were asked to hold on and cover BUTTENBORG until first 1330 hours and later 1430 hours.

This they agreed to do, and finally withdrew about 1500 hours without being seriously harassed.

(3) A.A. Units

These were either on the road or in action at TJIMAH, TJILATJAP or TASIK MALAJA (South JAVA). At the latter place was a secret aerodrome where all the remaining British aircraft had been ordered to assemble. Major-General VAN OYEN ordered a concentration of British A.A. units in the area TASIK MALAJA during the 5th March and the night 5th/6th March to ensure good air cover for the remaining aircraft still able to operate.

Brigadier PEARSON and Headquarters 16 A.A. Brigade left Major-General VAN OYEN's Headquarters for TASIK MALAJA on 5th March.

IV. Conference 1800 Hours on 5th March

At this Conference there were in attendance all senior Dutch officers of the Dutch High Command, the A.O.C., myself and two Staff Officers, my G.S.O. I and the A.O.C.'s Chief of Staff. At this Conference the Commander-in-Chief stated as follows:-

- (a) No guerilla warfare was possible or would be attempted. There was great hostility amongst the native population towards the whites, and without the help of the natives guerilla warfare could not possibly be successful. All his Staff were emphatically agreed that such warfare was not possible.
- (b) The Dutch morale was at a low ebb and it was possible that RANDOENG might fall very quickly. When the enemy penetrated the outer defences he did not propose to defend RANDOENG, which would be declared an open city. It was full of refugees and could not in any case hold out for long.
- (c) Owing to difficulties of communication the Dutch High Command could operate only from RANDOENG. They would not attempt to exercise control from elsewhere and would not move from RANDOENG.
- (d) Resistance was to be carried on elsewhere by Commanders if possible in accordance with an order issued by Queen WILHELMINA of HOLLAND that there should be no surrender to the Japanese. If a surrender order was issued by the Dutch High Command it was to be disobeyed.

The Commander-in-Chief then asked me if I proposed to fight on in these circumstances, as the situation appeared to be hopeless. I replied that I certainly did if any of the Dutch did so. If not, it would depend on circumstances but I must reserve the right for us to decide for ourselves. The A.O.C. then asked if we could defend our Headquarters in RANDOENG in the event of the Japanese entering the town. On receiving the reply "No" we asked to be allotted an area in the mountains where we could fall back and continue the fight. The Commander-in-Chief suggested that an area to the south would be most suitable as from there we could easily get to the coast and might be able to leave JAVA. To this the A.O.C. replied that if we went to the hills it would be to fight and not to get out of the Island. There could be no question of us leaving JAVA now in any case.

We were eventually allotted an area north of SANTOSA and south of RANDOENG, which was chosen from the map. The Commander-in-Chief stated that we should get good accommodation there, that there was a good Home Guard in this district with whom we could co-operate and who would have a defence scheme ready drawn up. He stated also that the country was highly suitable for protracted defence with exits to the coast in the rear should evacuation prove possible. A situation report was promised to be sent to us at SANTOSA the following morning. The Commander-in-Chief further said that as he was not a tactical General he proposed to hand over the command of RANDOENG to Major-General SCHILLING as soon as he arrived.

I arranged with the A.O.C. that we should establish a combined British headquarters in the SANTOSA area moving there at first light on 6th March. I notified Brigadier BLACKBURN by motor liaison officer of the proceedings of the Conference and ordered him to report to me, unless operations prevented him from doing so, as soon as the relief on the RANDOENG perimeter was complete. I also arranged all available transport with Headquarters to load supplies from the dump south of RANDOENG at TJIPARU, and to accompany my Headquarters.

In view of difficulties of supply, all A.A. and administrative units had been ordered to hold if possible a reserve of three days rations, the most they could carry with them, at the commencement of operations. BLACKFORCE were ordered to hold seven days.

V. Events on 6th March

Combined Headquarters reached the SANTOSA area about 0830 hours. I considered the area generally to be unsuitable for protracted defence. It consisted mainly of

rolling downs and tea plantations intersected with roads. Any position I might take up would apparently have both flanks in the air.

I chose a tea plantation as a temporary Headquarters and arranged for the Commanders of the local Home Guard to meet me there at 1130 hours to discuss defence measures. During the interval I made further reconnaissance of the area which bore out my initial impression that it would be difficult to put up a protracted defence there.

The Commanders of the Home Guard I found very anxious to give us all the help they possibly could to reach the coast for purposes of evacuation; though they did not openly say so, they did not seem at all willing to help us to make a stand in the district, and it was quite obvious that they were very anxious that we should go elsewhere.

I asked about a defence scheme, but found none of them had any idea of the existence of such a thing. There was no pre-arranged plan whatsoever for opposing the Japanese in this area.

I thought it probable that these Home Guards would be of very doubtful value in any fighting I might decide to put up and might, in fact, constitute a grave weakness to my forces. I decided therefore that a stand in this area was hopeless and it would be necessary to move elsewhere.

The difficulty was to decide where to go. I endeavoured to get in touch with the Dutch High Command by telephone to get further advice but failed to do so. The most obvious area seemed to be TASIK MALAJA where the A.A. units and the R.A.F. were then concentrating. This area was, I knew, low-lying and unhealthy, and though I did not know the ground in any detail it seemed from the map that it would be most improbable that I could put up any sort of a stand in that area. As Brigadier BLACKBURN had been ordered to report to me as early as possible I decided to wait his arrival before issuing orders to move to TASIK MALAJA.

Brigadier BLACKBURN arrived about 1700 hours. He informed me that Major-General SCHILLING had stated that he could now do without BLACKFORCE. He had been told of the proceedings at the Conference held on the night 5th/6th March and he had informed Brigadier BLACKBURN that if we were not allotted an area elsewhere he strongly recommended that we should go to the mountainous country to the south of TJIKADJUNG which he considered was well suited for the action we had in mind. I had considerable respect for Major-General SCHILLING's military ability, and his

recommendations carried weight with me accordingly.

I therefore decided that I would act on his advice, subject to the approval of the Dutch High Command, and made a plan from the map for moves to this area. In any case I did not think I had much choice in the matter. It would certainly not be worse either than TASIK MALAWA or the area I was in at the time. It further had the advantage that it could be easily reached by the A.A. and R.A.F. at TASIK MALAWA without any probability of enemy interference, except from the north; provided BLACKFORCE fell back along the RANDONG-GAROET road they should be able to cover the road junctions at GAROET until such time as the moves were completed. I therefore made a tentative plan from the map, which was as follows:-

- (a) The final raid by the A.O.C's last remaining aircraft from TASIK MALAWA was to be carried out that night - 6th/7th March. In view of the enemy's command of the air I wished to move only by night as far as possible. The moves should not, therefore, commence until the following night.
- (b) Commencing the night 7th/8th March, the A.A. and the R.A.F. were to move to the area TJIKADJANG-PANGUNKEPUK covered by their own rearguards from any enemy pressure from the south and east, should this materialise. Units to take accommodation as available inside this area and cover the approaches from the sea. Allowing for time for reconnaissance etc., I estimated that this would take until first light on 9th March assuming I moved by night only.
- (c) BLACKFORCE to withdraw from the RANDONG defences on a timed programme commencing last light on 7th March. Bounds were allotted from the map, and BLACKFORCE's general task was to cover the approaches to GAROET from the north and north-west until first light on 9th March and subsequently to fall back to a position covering TJIKADJANG itself with their vehicles withdrawn down the road to the south-west. BLACKFORCE to come under my orders when clear of the RANDONG area. One A.A. battery from the 48 Light A.A. Regiment was to be allotted to BLACKFORCE for the period of the withdrawal.
- (d) Headquarters of the Force I proposed should be roughly in the centre of the area. Troops to fall back, when forced to do so, upon previously prepared positions towards my Headquarters as the enemy advanced.

- (e) Dumps of food and ammunition to be formed in the area along the TJIKADJANG-PASEUNKEUR roads during the 7th march.
- (f) The Dutch High Command to be asked to warn the civil power at GAROET, where the Government centre was, to give us all the help they could in organizing any local defence and arranging for food supplies and accommodation. In view of the torrential rains I thought the latter very important.
- (g) In view of the difficulty of heavy vehicles ascending the hills to TJIKADJANG over the narrow roads I proposed that the heavy A.A. should destroy their guns and get them off the roads before they reached this area.

In anticipation of Dutch approval I sent a warning order to Brigadier, 16 A.A. Brigade and warned him and Brigadier BLACKBURN to meet me at TJIKADJANG for reconnaissance at 0900 hours the following morning, 7th March.

This plan I submitted in writing to the Dutch High Command who approved the plan in general and returned it to me the same evening; I was, however, asked not to withdraw BLACKFORCE from the BANDONG defences as this meant leaving a gap, and therefore they could not yet agree to their withdrawal on 7th March.

VI. Events on 7th March

(1) First Light to 1800 Hours

The reconnaissance was carried out according to plan and areas roughly allotted to formations and units. Verbal orders were issued to Brigadiers and Headquarters staff giving a plan as above. Further details as to siting of dumps etc. along the road and traffic control for the move were arranged by my Headquarters, and Staff Officers got in touch with the civil power at GAROET. My G.S.O. I was despatched to reconnoitre for the Force Headquarters and to look over the whole area with a view to choosing defence positions in more detail. My Headquarters I established temporarily at a tea plantation at TJIKADJANG where there was telephone communication with the outside world.

I returned to BANDONG with Brigadier BLACKBURN to meet Major-General SCHILLING at 1800 hours, by previous arrangement, in order to discuss the co-ordination of the withdrawal of BLACKFORCE. I did not

consider I need make any alteration to the plan that I had submitted to the Dutch High Command since, if RANDOENG fell, there could be no objection to me withdrawing BLACKFORCE; if, on the other hand, RANDOENG held out then there was no enemy threat to GAROET from the north-west. When I reached Major-General SCHILLING's Headquarters he was speaking on the telephone. He was obviously very tired and worn out. He put the telephone down on my arrival and informed me he had just received news that the enemy had reached the outskirts of RANDOENG and might be expected to enter the city at any moment.* He stated that he was withdrawing at once and advised me to do the same. In view of what I had heard at the Conference on the previous night I thought it highly probable that this information was correct, but in order to co-ordinate the withdrawal I asked if he would agree to BLACKFORCE blowing any bridges behind them as they withdrew towards TJIKADJANG. To this he agreed provided no bridges were blown within 20 kilometres of RANDOENG.

I accordingly told Brigadier BLACKBURN to proceed with the plan as previously arranged and sent him back to his Headquarters at once. I considered it advisable not to visit the Dutch High Command myself as I had originally intended to do. If Major-General SCHILLING's news were true, and I saw no reason why it should not be, obviously the first place Japanese troops would make for would be the Dutch H.Q., whose position was bound to be known to them, and if I attempted to visit there I should probably be captured. I therefore decided to return to my own Headquarters as quickly as possible.

(2) 1800 Hours to 2359 Hours

On reaching my Headquarters I got reports as follows.

- (a) The Assistant Resident (European) at GAROET had been unable to help us in any way. He appeared to be obsessed with the idea that a revolution was imminent by the native population and a massacre of all whites would inevitably follow if we attempted to fight in this area. He thought it highly probable in any case.
- (b) The dump at TJIKARU had been set on fire and destroyed and there was no chance of getting any more rations from there.† The only

* I subsequently heard this report was false. The enemy did not enter RANDOENG till after the surrender. Major-General SCHILLING, however, acted upon it and withdrew his forces that evening.

† This report turned out to be an exaggeration. The dump was not completely destroyed, and we did get more supplies from there later on.

reserve rations that I had for the force therefore were those carried by units and a small dump which had previously been formed in GAROET. Apart from this there appeared no possibility of raising any more supplies.

- (c) The Medical authorities had been unable to obtain any medical supplies whatsoever.

Later in the evening RANDONG was declared an open town by proclamation on the wireless. This I had expected. I was also told that both GAROET and TASIK MALAJA had been declared open towns at the same time - which I had not expected. I had, however, in giving my verbal orders impressed upon Formation and Unit Commanders the importance of moves going through according to plan in spite of any difficulties they might meet.

VII. Events of 8th March

The moves during the night 7th/8th March went through reasonably well. By dawn the R.A.F. and 77 H.A.A. Regiment (less guns) and most of the administrative details had reached the allotted areas. The remaining A.A. units were on the road between GAROET and TIKADJUNG under cover for the day. BLACKFORCE were in position on their first bound to the south-east of RANDONG, the first bridge having been blown by them to cover their withdrawal at about 0830 hours. I left my Headquarters at first light to reconnoitre for defensive positions between my new Headquarters near TUISOMPET and TIKADJUNG. About 0900 hours a D.R. reached me sent by the A.O.C. who stated that a proclamation had been given out on the wireless to the following effect: "all organized resistance having now ceased", troops were to cease offering further resistance to the Japanese.

The A.O.C. stated that he was leaving Headquarters himself to see the Assistant Resident at GAROET to try and get in touch with the Dutch High Command for further details and proposed to meet me at Headquarters on his return. I returned to Headquarters myself and after investigation found the administrative situation to be approximately as follows.

(1) Rations

The R.A.F. had been unable to bring any supplies with them, and the army had supplies varying from 48 hours to seven days' rations. A total of three and a half days' supplies for the whole force was available in the area, or possibly seven days on reduced rations.

(2) Ammunition

Units were moving with echelons full, and there were further supplies in the GAROET area. This I estimated would be adequate.

(3) Fuel (Petrol etc.)

This was limited to what was carried in vehicles which had filled up before leaving T.SIK MILWA and carried such reserves as was possible with them. There was a possibility that I might be able to obtain a little more in GAROET.

(4) Drinking Water

This was unsatisfactory. Though there was plenty of water in the area, the doctors reported it as unsuitable for drinking. There was a shortage of water carts - the R.A.M. having none at all.

(5) Medical Supplies

None whatsoever available except those which were carried by units.

I endeavoured to find out on the telephone as to whether any Dutch troops were showing any signs of preparing for further resistance to the Japanese in the neighbourhood, but could get no results whatsoever.

The question had now to be decided as to whether the Commander-in-Chief's order was to be obeyed or not. The pros and cons seemed to me to be as follows:-

(a) To continue Fighting

- (i) This would heighten British prestige if successful, and I was fairly certain that we could hold out without difficulty for seven days and probably longer if we could obtain more food locally.
- (ii) Morale of the troops appeared to be good although they were tired. I did not think there was any doubt that they would all fight well if ordered to do so by me.
- (iii) I had been unable to hear of any Dutch going on fighting, but obviously my enquiries to date could only be local ones. If there were any Dutch continuing to fight elsewhere in Western JAVA I felt it was my duty to continue to fight also.

(b) To obey the Proclamation

- (i) In accordance with the Dutch system of government, the Governor General had abdicated at the commencement of the operations in favour of the Commander-in-Chief, and therefore any order from him

became ipso facto one from the government of the country. His proclamation was prefaced "all organized resistance having now ceased etc." and so far as I could remember this was the exact wording in International Law which defined the difference between a soldier, entitled if taken prisoner to treatment under the laws of war, and a bandit, who could be shot unconditionally if taken in arms by his captors. If this was so, it did not seem to me that I could, in fairness, order soldiers to continue to fight without telling them of it, and if I did continue to fight it would have to be with volunteers.

- (ii) The situation as regards medical supplies and water meant that all wounded men would die in a drawn-out fight.
- (iii) My main object in continuing to fight would be to contain Japanese troops. I had already put up a bluff as to the British troops on the Island to the best of my ability and I doubted if by going on fighting I could in fact achieve any more. It was unlikely I could contain more than two battalions at the outside after the enemy had attacked. If he did not attack he could probably starve me out in about seven days.
- (iv) According to the Assistant Resident, a massacre of whites was inevitable if I continued to fight. I had no means of telling whether this was true or not, but if so we should undoubtedly suffer heavily ourselves at the hands of the natives in the later stages of the fight when troops were exhausted and food was running short. There were large numbers of native coolies living in the area working on the tea plantations and no means, so far as I could see, of getting rid of them.
- (v) The A.O.C. had told me that 3,000 R.A.F. personnel - unarmed - had had to be left behind at TASIK BALAH as they would only constitute useless mouths if moved to our defence area. These had been ordered to surrender to the Japanese on their arrival. The Japanese would undoubtedly use these as hostages and threaten to shoot them should we not surrender, and I thought it highly probable they would carry out their threat. I had heard stories

of this being done before in similar cases on a smaller scale in

REMARKS: *

- (vi) There was no indication that any Dutch resistance was continuing anywhere, and some Dutch opposition to the moves the previous evening had been met on the grounds that the war was over.
- (vii) The Japanese command of the air, against which we had only Light guns, would have made protracted defence very difficult.

The deciding factor in my mind was whether the Dutch were continuing to fight or not. If they were we must go on irrespective of any other considerations. I accordingly decided to await the A.O.C's return before issuing any orders to my troops. The latter reached Headquarters at about 1330 hours and stated as follows.

- (a) The Assistant Resident had re-affirmed his views about the massacre of the whites in a most emphatic manner. He was entirely unhelpful and was very annoyed because bridges had been blown by BLACKFORCE which he stated were hindering the surrender negotiations.
- (b) Whilst at the Resident's house the A.O.C. had been rung up by a high Staff Officer from the Dutch High Command. The latter had been very insistent on immediate surrender and had stated that on no account were any more bridges to be destroyed.
- (c) All enquiries he had made by telephone tended to show that the Dutch were surrendering everywhere.

We accordingly regretfully decided that we must comply with the proclamation as received from the Dutch High Command and units were therefore ordered to cease further resistance to the Japanese in a message timed 1430 hours. I also ordered the destruction of all warlike stores and stores likely to be of value to the enemy except transport, at the same time. I kept a proportion of the latter to be used as accommodation for the troops as protection against the torrential rains which fell every day in the afternoon. A report giving the circumstances forcing us to comply was sent to the British Government, but the D.R. taking it to the wireless station never arrived. We did not discover this till later.

* These stories were subsequently authenticated.

PART III

OPERATIONS OF A.A. UNITS 28 FEBRUARY 1942 TO 20 MARCH 1942.

When I took over command on 24 February 1942, A.A. units were deployed as follows.

BATAVIA Area	239/77 H.A.A. Bty.
	242/48 Lt. A.A. Bty (TJILILITAN Aerodrome).
	H.Q. 48 Lt. A.A. Regt. O.C. 48 Lt. A.A. Regt. was in command of A.A. defences in Batavia area.
KALIDJATI Aerodrome	49/48 Lt. A.A. Bty. (ten guns only).
BANDJENG Area	95/48 Lt. A.A. Bty in defence of ANHIR aerodrome
TJILAHJI (Bandjeng)	H.Q. two Btys 6 H.A.A. Regt. Two btys 35 LAA Regt under comd OC 6 HAA Regt at TJILAHJI: these units had lost their equipment in SUMATRA, and had only what they stood up in. They were being reequipped and trained to fight as infantry.
EAST JAVA	H.Q. and two btys. 77 H.A.A. Regt., in defence of SOERABAJA.
	H.Q. and seven troops, with two Bty. H.Q.'s 21 Lt. A.A. Regt. in defence of aerodromes at SINGOSARI, MOASPATI and MILANG.

I was anxious to concentrate the British forces in West Java as early as possible, with a view to taking command myself in the later stages, and had previously issued a directive to regimental commanders to the effect that, if they were left without orders, to withdraw to the West of Java when the Dutch withdrew from the SOERABAJA area. I therefore pressed Major-General VAN OYEN, on taking over command, to withdraw all the British A.A. to Western Java at an early date.

After some discussion he agreed to withdraw the Light A.A., who were ordered to move to the BANDJENG area, but refused to withdraw the Heavy, whom he insisted must remain for the defence of SOERABAJA.

The H.Q. 21 Lt. A.A. Regt., and two troops after a difficult march, reached the BANDJENG area on 28 February/1 March and were deployed for the defence of the ANHIR aerodrome. Three troops were diverted for the defence of TJILATJAP and two to JOGJAKARTA thence to TASIK MALAJA, which they reached on 1 March.

Major-General VAN OYEN agreed to withdraw the H.Q. and two bty. 77 H.A.A. Regt. from SOERABAJA to the TJILATJAP area on 28 February. The march commenced on

1 March, the date of the Japanese invasion. One troop was detained under Dutch instructions, and was unable to reach TJILATJAP owing to the Japanese threat to the roads in central Java. They were accordingly turned back to Eastern Java, where they rejoined the Dutch and were eventually captured there in the general Dutch surrender on 8 March.

On the 4 March 239/77 H.A.A. Bty^{was} ordered to withdraw from the defence of Batavia to the BANDOENG area, where they were joined on 5 March by 242/48 Lt. A.A. Bty from TJILITAN aerodrome and deployed for the defence of BANDOENG and the ANHIR aerodrome, near BANDOENG.

On 2 March two troops 21 Lt. A.A. Regt. were moved from JOGJAKARTA to a new aerodrome at TASIK MALAJA.

On 5 March Major-General VAN OYEN ordered a concentration of all the available British A.A. units in the TASIK MALAJA aerodrome. Moves to this area took place on 6 and 7 March, the units in TJILATJAP moving as a tactical rearguard to the Dutch, who were withdrawn at the same time. The enemy were successfully engaged, and held off, by flanking detachments pushed out to the East, during this march. The concentration of all the A.A. units in the TASIK MALAJA area, under the command of Brigadier commanding 16 A.A. Bde, was completed by evening 7 March. Flank guards were put out, and road blocks covered by Bofors guns set up to North East and South.

The move to the TJAKIJANG area commenced on the evening 7 March. I had ordered the 77 H.A.A. Regt. to blow up their guns, as I was anxious lest the GAROET - TJAKIJANG road might be blocked, and this was satisfactorily carried out on evening of 7 March. One battery 48 Lt. A.A. Regt. joined up with Blackforce East of BANDOENG in accordance with instructions.

There were heavy raids on ANHIR, TJILATJAP and TASIK MALAJA during periods 3-5 March. Claims for aircraft as shot down were carefully investigated by regimental and battery commanders, and the bag of certainties was -

ANHIR 14 TJILATJAP 9 TASIK MALAJA 3

In addition, there were 13 'probables' claimed at TJILATJAP.

I have since been informed that the above figures tallied closely with admissions by the Japanese wireless at the time for losses in raids on Java.

PART IV

POST CAPITULATION PERIOD - 9TH MARCH 1942 to

20TH MARCH 1942

I. Events of 8th - 10th March

The A.O.C. and I visited the Resident in GAROET the same afternoon. When we told him we had issued orders to surrender he immediately became helpful, and promised to come up to see us at TJIKADJANG that afternoon with a view to arranging some permanent accommodation for the troops.

Several accusations were brought in whilst we were there of atrocities in GAROET alleged to have been committed by British troops. The native Resident who was present at the time denied these stories and appeared to treat the matter as a joke. However, I ordered Brigadier BLACKBURN to investigate each case personally which he did the same afternoon. These stories were proved to be entirely without foundation, and I can only assume that these reports were a deliberate attempt to cause mischief between the native population and the British troops.

I summoned a meeting of all Brigadiers and Commanding Officers at my Headquarters at 1700 hours the same evening. I explained to them the full circumstances under which I had issued orders to cease resistance and asked if there were any present who disagreed with the action I had taken. All were, however, agreed that under the circumstances no other course was possible.

On the 9th March a final order to surrender was received from the Dutch High Command. This order gave, in addition, the instruction that all arms were to be piled on a conspicuous open place and marked with a white flag. Senior officers were to get in touch with senior Japanese formation commanders to arrange details of the surrender. The destruction of all stores was to cease at once and all stragglers were to be collected.

By the 9th March moves had been completed and all units had reached their allotted areas near TJIKADJANG except the 21 Light A.A. Regiment to whom I gave permission to remain south-west of GAROET. The A.O.C. went to RAJDOENG in the evening to get in touch with Japanese Headquarters and arrange details of surrender in accordance with orders received from the Commander-in-Chief.

On the 10th March the A.O.C. returned having interviewed Lieutenant General MARUYAMA, the Commander of the 2nd Japanese Guards Division. He had been cordially received and had been told to arrange for accommodation locally for the British troops

who would stop where they were for the time being. He also said that if there was any difficulty locally in arranging for this accommodation the Japanese would give him all the help they were able; they would also help us to get supplies.

II. Events of the 11th/12th March

On the afternoon of the 11th March four senior officers (British--the A.O.C. and myself; Australian x Brigadier BLACKBURN; American - Colonel SEARLE) were summoned by telephone to GAROET to meet a Japanese officer, who proved to be an officer on the Staff of Lieutenant-General MARUYAMA. The latter was rude and inclined to be insulting and after a certain amount of cross-questioning and discussion ordered us to accompany him to BANDOENG that night. We spent the night at BANDOENG in chairs in a waiting room, and in the morning we assembled for the formal signing of the surrender terms. In these terms Lieutenant-General MARUYAMA promised, in front of numerous British and Japanese witnesses, that prisoners would be treated in all respects in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Convention, 1929. We were also ordered in future to obey all orders that might be given to us by any of the Japanese military officers. An attempt by the A.O.C. to get the word "lawful" inserted before "orders" was refused point blank by Lieutenant-General MARUYAMA who stated that this was unnecessary since we had the protection of the Geneva Convention, under which no unlawful orders could be given to us. An original signed copy of the surrender terms is now in A.V.M. WATBY's possession, and a copy, with the names of all witnesses is at present in the hands of the M.I. at the War Office.

On the strength of the above terms on our return we warned all ranks verbally against giving away any military information if questioned, telling them that under the protection of the Geneva Convention no pressure could be put upon them to give such information.

III. Events of 13th to 20th March

We subsequently returned to GAROET for the formal handing over of arms and equipment. All guns and instruments had by this time been completely destroyed, at which the Japanese were very annoyed and told me we were bad soldiers to have destroyed our equipment in this fashion which others had not done. I replied that it was a point of honour with British soldiers not to let any guns fall undamaged into enemy hands -- a reply which curiously enough appeared to satisfy them. Before predictors and Gun Radar sets were not produced. These had been completely destroyed, and I hoped the Japanese would not realise they had ever existed at all.

The Japanese insisted at the time, and did so throughout our captivity, that the Australians were a separate nationality.

I was subsequently cross-questioned about the before predictors, about which I denied all knowledge. They apparently were not aware of the existence of Gun Radar sets at all.

A few days later all senior officers were summoned to GARATT for their first cross-examination by Japanese Intelligence staff. So far as the A.O.C. and myself were concerned this cross-examination was carried out entirely correctly and when a question was asked to which I refused to give an answer my refusal was accepted without further ado. At this interview I was told that the British had fought very gallantly at KALIDJATI and elsewhere, but that the Americans and Dutch had let us down. (I subsequently heard that the Americans were told the same about the British). An interesting point which came out in the cross-examination was that the Japanese evidently thought there was a complete Australian Division in JAVA as they continually pressed me to give them the name of the Divisional Commander and refused to believe that the Australian troops who had surrendered were the total numbers present. They also stated that they knew it was quite impossible for an English officer, as I alleged myself to be, to be put in command of Australian troops as the Australians would never agree to such a course of action.

Brigadier PEARSON was, however, stood up against a wall and threatened that he would be shot if he did not give information. On refusing to do so he was at once released and congratulated by the Japanese Intelligence officer on his bravery. When this was reported to me I forwarded a letter to Lieutenant-General MARIYAMA complaining about this action as contrary to the Geneva Convention.

About this time we were warned that all troops would have to march to BATAVIA. The Generals were to go in cars and were being accommodated in bungalows en route. The troops, however, were to go on foot and no arrangements whatsoever were to be made for staging for the night. The march, which was 150 miles, was to be completed in eight days. As the troops, notably the R.A.F., were very ill equipped with boots etc. and many were of low medical category, it was obvious to us that a march under these conditions would result in many deaths. We accordingly refused to give the orders. We were subsequently summoned to BANDUNG to Headquarters where we repeated our refusal, and the A.O.C. quoted the terms of the Geneva Convention as forbidding such a march, which was quite unnecessary for any military reason. Though nothing was said to us at the time, a few days later we received an order to the effect that the march had now been cancelled and the troops would move by

train to BATAVIA in due course. We despatched a letter of thanks to Lieutenant-General MARUYAMA for this decision.

About 14th March the English troops from the RUKUMANG area were moved to the area TJIPATO and the Australians to LELES.

On 19th March the A.O.C. was injured in a motor accident receiving severe concussion and a slight fracture of the skull and was sent to hospital. On the 20th March all senior officers were summoned to Headquarters at BANDOENG for a Conference. On this date also there was a noticeable change in the attitude of the Japanese officers towards us. Hitherto they had been on the whole fairly helpful, but they now adopted a more uncompromising and hostile attitude. The A.O.C. being sick, Air Commodore STATEN and Group Captain BISHOP went in his place to represent him. I was away at the time so Brigadier PEARSON went in my place. On return to my Headquarters and hearing that Brigadier PEARSON had gone to BANDOENG, I immediately went there myself being closely preceded by the senior American officer who had also received the order to attend. Brigadier BLACKBURN could not be found. (When told of the order the following morning he was also told that now it did not matter, and he need not go to BANDOENG). On arrival at Headquarters, after a short wait, I was summoned to an inner room where I was faced by Major Saito, Chief of the Japanese Intelligence of the 2nd Guards Division and one of the officers who had been present at the formal signing of the surrender when we were promised the rights of the Geneva Convention. As I entered the room the senior American officer came out, and I was motioned to a seat in front of which was a map of the SOUTH PACIFIC and AMERICA on which various places were marked in chalk which, so far as I knew, coincided with the movements of the American Field Regiment, now prisoners in JAVA. I assumed therefore that he had been prepared to give this information, which was of comparatively little importance, the American regulations on this point being less stringent than the British. (I was later informed that Dutch officers were told by the Commander-in-Chief that they might answer any questions they were asked by the Japanese provided they said nothing about future operations).

I was asked for shipping information regarding my own movements on coming to JAVA and the movement of other shipping. From the questions it appeared to me that the Japanese were trying to find out the whereabouts of the remainder of the 1st Australian Corps which I knew to be en route for AUSTRALIA. I refused to answer the questions and was told that if I did not it would probably cost me my life.

On pointing out that this was contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Convention, Major SAITU replied that JAPAN only obeyed these when it suited her to do so, the same as ENGLAND. I denied this very vehemently and was then handed over to the Secret Police, from whom I had a very unpleasant time for the next month being, amongst other things, kept with my hands handcuffed behind my back for the next ten days without a break. The other three officers were treated in the same way as myself.

We were subsequently sent on 18th April to a prison camp in BATAVIA where we joined up with Dutch senior officers, and were not questioned again. A full account of this incident has now been submitted to the War Office in order that Major SAITU may be tried as a war criminal.

I heard later that other British personnel, chiefly R.A.F., received terrible ill-treatment and torture at Japanese hands to make them talk, but they appear to have refused, and the information extracted from them was, according to Japanese accounts, very little. I was told later by the Japanese that the British had proved both obstinate and stupid, and had suffered accordingly.

February 1946

H.D.W. SITWILL.
General.