



O. D. GALLAGHER



RETREAT IN THE
EAST



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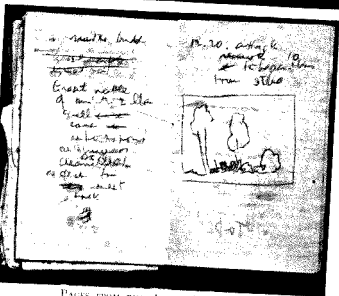
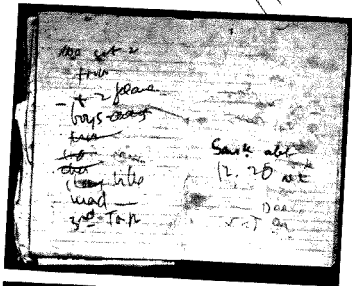
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PAGES FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

These pages, still showing signs of their immersion, contain notes of the sinking of *Repulse*. The note "Sank abt 12.25" on the right-hand page, above, was written a second before the author jumped into the sea off *Repulse*. The sketch was the last glimpse he had of *Prince of Wales* before she began sinking.

TO
MR CHURCHILL
IN ADMIRATION AND IN WONDER
THAT HE EVER SLEEPS



Preface

MISGUIDED, over-optimistic propaganda in the early days of this war (those days characterized by that unattractive period piece, "We're going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line—if the Siegfried Line's still there . . .") was given the official cachet by Ironside and Chamberlain, who said Hitler had missed the bus.

It was ourselves and our friends who were bluffed, not the enemy. . . . Hitler outflanked the Maginot Line.

Then in 1941 the Japanese strutted into the picture, and most of us remembered all we had heard about Britain's mighty naval base at Singapore. So far as the ill-advised, uninspired British propagandists of those earlier days were concerned, there had never before been such an island fortress. The official British propagandists of that time left their successors, those men in office in London immediately prior to and during the Japanese attack, a legacy in the minds of the whole world (except Japan) that Singapore was that non-existent quantity, an uncrackable nut. I remember the official Services' publicity office in Singapore turning out bulletins, almost one a week, announcing the arrival of yet more reinforcements. We reporters had to cable these bulletins to various parts of the world. Reinforcements were arriving almost weekly, but their arrival did little more than build up an army of reasonable size. Obviously we were unable to explain this in our cables, and the result was that the world in general was given the impression that Malaya, and particularly Singapore, was receiving all the attention it rightly deserved. The shock of its collapse was greater than it need have been.

And who was responsible for pricking this mighty bubble of impregnability? . . . "A horde of Japanese whose battleships overturned when they launched them; men who ate polished rice which made them liable to beriberi, and who, therefore,

were the world's worst pilots; men who were already fighting a hopeless war against China, a war of many years' standing which had drained their country of its resources of men and material; a nation of fanatics, who were not capable of producing anything original — they had learned everything they knew from the British and the Americans" . . . and so on. Balderdash.

Then Japan saw her German ally repulsed from the gates of Moscow. Her German ally demanded assistance. Japan (not because she is the tool of Germany) gave it. Japan saw the United States industries rolling out a thunderous war machine. She saw even the possibility of her ally being defeated. She saw that the departure of Nazi Germany from the world-stage would also mean the departure of the Japanese Empire, with its ambitions of world-domination. She plunged into the war to take advantage of her last chance to carry out her vast ambitions. If the United States was allowed time to prepare to enter the war Japan saw herself crushed by the final joint action of the Chinese, the British, the Russians, and the Americans.

The effects of Japan's attack on the United Nations were shattering. This nation of little yellow men who make battleships but still practise phallicism exposed the feeble bluff of the British propagandists of the ghastly Siegfried Line period in the first week of the war by sinking *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in the South China Sea with a loss to themselves of only seven aircraft. They rushed on from victory to victory.

Singapore was outflanked like the Maginot Line.

The remains of one country after another crashed about the ears of the dazed, misinformed man-in-the-street. It took him a long time and many costly lessons, but at last he began to read the guff of the propagandists with scepticism, and, as a shrewd English newspaperman in India wrote, "There exists to-day a profound, widespread, and justified dislike of dope."

I am at this moment still what is called an "officially accredited war correspondent." I wear the uniform of an officer, but I am not allowed to carry a gun. I am "entitled to be treated as an officer," but I am (it should be "we are") frequently treated

PREFACE

with suspicion by the Services themselves. In spite of this we frequently have information that comes under the heading "Official Secrets," which rightly we cannot disclose. But in this book I have told as much of the truth of the causes of our first disasters in the Orient as the censor would allow. He expunged only a few sentences, and those mainly for security reasons.

In Malaya and Burma I saw men show high courage. I saw men fight. Saw them die. . . . I saw other men show apathy. Saw them sit back. Saw them escape.

I saw men grapple with the most hopeless situations, and achieve local victories. . . . I saw other men bungle with consummate efficiency, and achieve inglorious disorder.

I saw determination. I saw vacillation.

My incessant note-taking earned me good-natured gibes from some colleagues: "The compleat reporter—always got his notebook and pen out." In spite of this diligence I have, undoubtedly, been guilty of a number of errors of fact. Eight of my notebooks have long been pulp at the bottom of the South China Sea. My errors are inevitable. The fog of war was thick enough to confound the generals. But my errors are not serious errors.

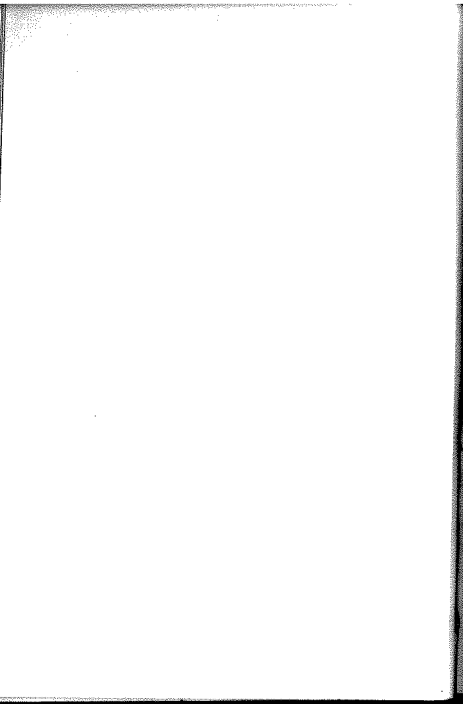
I have glossed over none of the blunders, accidents, malinering, complacency, defeats, that I came across. I have been critical of some civilians because their support of the Army was not what it should have been.

I have told the truth, as far as I was able, in fairness to the soldiers who died and in fairness to their families and friends who still live. And so that the British and Indian soldiers and airmen who lived through those green jungle hells of Malaya and Burma, particularly Burma, may—at last—be given public credit for fighting one of the most courageous actions in the history of British arms.

I have eschewed dope.

O. D. G.

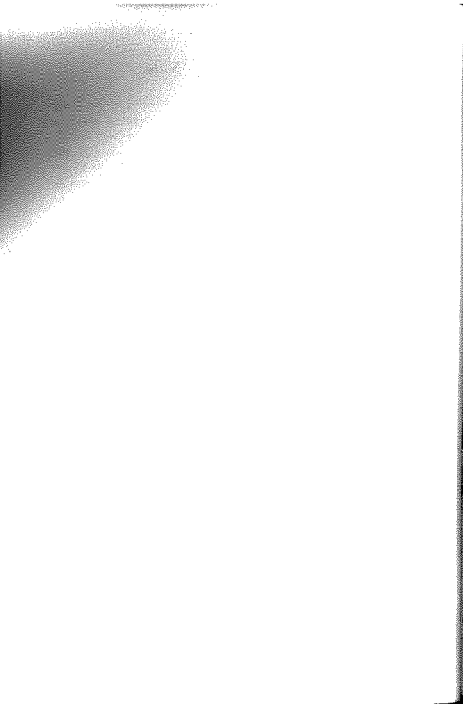
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Publisher's Note

THE author was the War Correspondent of the *Daily Express* in Malaya and Burma. He reported previous wars and revolts for his newspaper in Abyssinia, Spain, Palestine, and China. He was also in France with the Advanced Air Striking Force and the B.E.F., in Dover for the Battle of Britain, and with the Eighth Army in the Western Desert. He was called to the Colours on his return to England from the Far East, and is in the Royal Armoured Corps.

All the photographs in this book, except those of a documentary nature or in which the author appears, were taken by him.



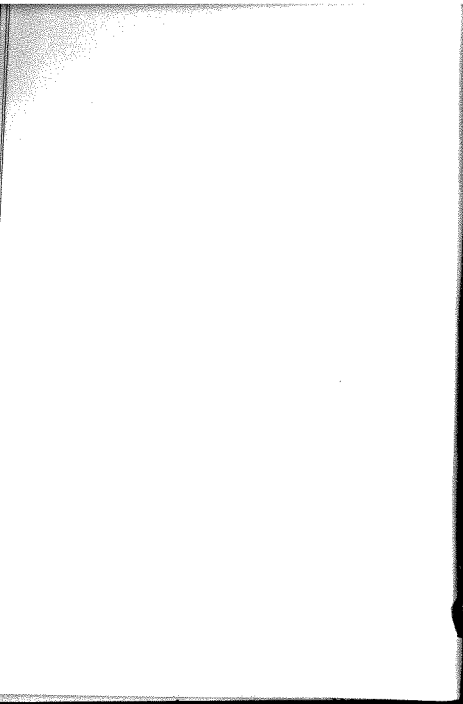
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City of the Lion-with-Cat's-Claws

THEY said of Singapore, fabulous commercial citadel built on jungle swamp, that one-time ocean Clapham Junction of the Orient, they said of it that when the war began in 1939 it fell asleep—after setting the alarm clock for Armistice Day. . . .

That was true.

With a few exceptions the white civilian population evinced no interest in the war whatsoever, except at the breakfast-table when their papers, reporting news from the battle-fronts of Russia and North Africa, gave them something exciting to chatter about. They were dead keen to read all about it—in the same way as boxing fans in some remote part of the world might follow daily reports of an interminable world championship somewhere in the United States.

When I came down on the water there, in September, 1941, in an Empire flying-boat from Cairo, I remembered all that I had read and heard of Singapore over a period of years—"the greatest floating dry-dock in the world; it can take the biggest battleship and still have room to spare." . . . "Singapore's naval base cost £30,000,000." . . . "Its guns are bigger and better than Gibraltar's." . . . "It is an impregnable fortress" . . . and similar claptrap.

Now that the Japanese were beating the big drum again, once again taking advantage of a situation which tied Britain down in Europe, Singapore had become the British Empire's third war capital. London was the first, Cairo the second, Singapore the third. . . .

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In A.D. 1250 a Malayan prince from Palembang settled on that island at the end of the Malayan peninsula. He gave the settlement the honorific Sanskrit title of Singhapura, meaning "City of the Lion."

In A.D. 1940 Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham arrived as Commander-in-Chief Far East. His task was to give the City of the Lion claws, webbed feet, and wings. He did, though they would have been a tight fit on a house cat. Their inadequacy was not his fault. After all, he was no more than a cog in the British war machine.

It was apparent to almost every one there that Singapore was a city standing on a swampy foundation, both literally and figuratively. To all, that is, except the *Tuans Besar*, which is Malay for "big-business men," or just "big shots." I was taken to the Singapore Club by a friend one day. It was the second most important club in the Orient. First was the Bengal Club, senior club of the Orient and Middle East. The Singapore Club was Number Two. It was a club founded by *Tuans Besar* for *Tuans Besar*. "A place where we big-business men can meet our equals, and where we can talk freely without the possibility of being overheard by our employees," as one of them explained to me.

I had lunch there. There were some twenty items on the menu, and the *Tuans Besar* did them justice. We finished our meal at 2.30 P.M. and walked to the lift. We passed through the lounge, and I saw one of the ugliest sights of my life.

There lay the *Tuans Besar*, in two long rows of low chairs. Attached to the arms of each chair were two leg-rests, which were swung out so that the sitter could lie flat out with his legs held up at a comfortable angle for him. The *Tuans Besar* were nearly all dressed in light-weight, light-coloured suits (not white, mark you, as only Eurasians wore white in Singapore; certainly not the exclusive, well-dressed *Tuans Besar*). Dark-red mouths

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and closed as they blew out great gusts of curry-spice-breath. The bloated bellies heaved . . . the Tuans Besar recovering from their midday gluttony.

Meanwhile up in the North, at Khota Baru, where the Japanese a few months later made their heaviest landings, pushing the thousands of wicked little fighting men who were to mop down the peninsula to Singapore — up there was an R.A.F. mess. It was under the command of an Englishman, Wing-Commander "Beery" Noble, but most of the personnel were Australian. Khota Baru air-field was Malaya's most advanced air striking-base. It was the base for a squadron of Australian-manned Lockheed Hudsons, some Brewster Buffalo fighters, and Vildebeest torpedo-bombers. The men there would be the first to go into action in any war with Japan. Their job would be to attack the Japanese Navy and troop transports.

It was an air-field that lacked every amenity. The R.A.F. and A.A.F. men exiled to this outpost of Singapore led the bleak life imaginable. I visited them once. I found a sodden, cold campment. The ground squelched under-foot. Water dripped from the palm-trees. It was so wet that I saw ground crews talking about their duties in bathing-trunks, rubber boots, and so on. I took a photograph of some of them.

In the midst of all that liquid waste there was no good drinking water. I had some lemon squash in the officers' mess, and they said if it tasted queer I wasn't to mind as they had to chlorinate the water. Lunch consisted of two boiled potatoes with a thin layer of watery stew, a mug of tea, and bread and butter. It cost me 50 Straits Settlements cents, or 1s. 2d. Food was the chief complaint. They swore that lunch was a typical meal. They said every one on the station had had stomach trouble of some sort. And the cooks (Asiatics) were always leaving them. Any self-respecting cook would.

Back in remote Singapore again the Tuan Besar was yawning and stretching before going back to the office for three hours in

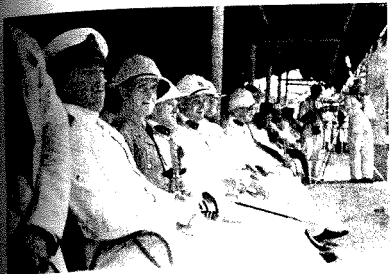
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the afternoon. After that, home in his chauffeur-driven car, the Tuan Besar sitting in lonely dignity in the back seat, to have a gin pahit or two and a shower before changing into his dinner-jacket for a sumptuous dinner on the lawn at Raffles Hotel, and a show, and off somewhere afterwards for some more drinks and dancing.

They, the Tuans Besar, did precisely nothing to make life more tolerable for the airmen up in Khota Baru, the men who were the first to lay down their lives in defence of Singapore. . . . The only cheery things I saw at Khota Baru were reproductions of the American artist Petty's luscious girls pinned on the Mess walls. "They make me think of Bondi Beach," said an Australian, with a great, nostalgic sigh. You are not likely to see more beautiful girls anywhere else in the world than on this wonderful beach.

The voracious Tuans Besar could easily have sent regular supplies of small luxuries up to Khota Baru. There was a train service. I mentioned this to a friend who was close to the Tuans Besar, and he replied, "I know their food isn't so good at Khota Baru, but you must remember they are on rations." All the more reason for the Tuans Besar to dip deep into their ample jeans. . . .

The women of Singapore tried hard to help the war effort along. They held dances and whist-drives, arranged concerts and plays, and threw pahit parties. They organized sewing-circles. They rolled bandages. It was over piddling activities of this sort that the C.-in-C., Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, once took a strong line. He and Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, China Station, were invited to patronize in their official capacities a gymkhana planned by the Singapore Polo Club in aid of the Malaya War Fund. Both officers replied by letter bluntly refusing to have anything to do with it. They told the club that they looked upon this type of war effort as little better than a



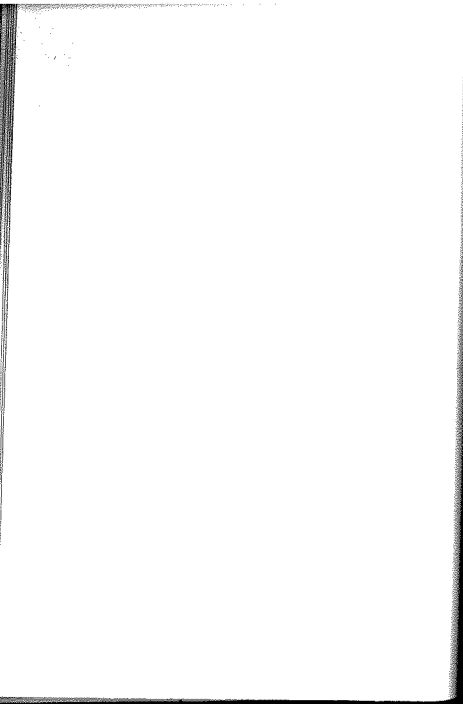
CAPTAIN J. A. S. ECCLES, R.N.

Captain Eccles was the personal representative of the Royal Navy at the Sarawak centenary celebrations described in Chapter II.



A GURKHA IN MALAYA

These magnificent fighting men played a gallant part in the Malayan campaign.



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of time, as the money given to the war fund (after costs been deducted) was negligible. They added that the war would be better served if Malaya fell into line with the of the British Empire in the matter of taxation. In 1941 Straits Settlements, one of the richest spots in the world, expected to produce only £940,000 through income tax, according to an estimate printed in the Straits Times, of Singapore. Among the population were men like Sir John Bagnall, of the Straits Trading Company, Ltd., whose salary exceeded that of Mr. Churchill. This brickbat from the two in-C. caused something of a domestic crisis. It did not last. Singapore's socialites soon recovered.

In September, 1941, Singapore was almost deserted for two and a half days. Only Sikh guards were to be seen at the entrances to the city's public buildings and offices of administration. Skeleton staffs ran all except essential public services. The banks were closed. The Tuans Besar and their staffs had fled to the countryside, to their homes. This was during a period when relations with Japan were as brittle as they had ever been. Was this exodus by limousine and 'bus the result of the crisis as Tojo formed his War Cabinet? Was it fear of bombs? No, sir. The headlong flight ended on the golf-courses, tennis-courts, and verandahs, where pahits could be comfortably smoked.

Singapore closed down at 1 P.M. that Saturday (as usual), had Sunday off (of course), and also Monday, which was a public bank holiday in honour of the Indian festival of Deepavali. Singapore—Gibraltar of the Orient—closed down for two and a half days while Tojo picked his men for the attack on the British Empire, the Netherlands East Indies, and the United States.

The spokesman of the Colonial Secretariat of the Straits Settlements told anxious reporters that the Government saw no reason to cancel the holiday. "We do not want to spread alarm

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and despondency among the people. Any cancellation would only encourage the Japanese," he said, with magnificent illogicality. An American said this fatuous observation gave him a bigger belly-laugh than any of the inanities of Disney's Goofy.

This utter inability on the part of the civilians and their Government officials to adopt a realistic attitude towards the Japanese threat must have been one of the major encumbrances in the way of the military.

Even from Siam came sound sense by radio. On Armistice Day, November 11, 1941, Radio Bangkok said, "The entry of Thailand into the war is only a matter of time. . . . The Thai Government has in the past tried to lull your anxiety by saying the world situation is improving, but now we realize that it is better to be frank. So to all Thais we say: Get ready for war. Learn how to fight under competent authorities." . . . And the Siamese later attacked Burma.

In Singapore that night the Tuan Besar sat back complacently and listened to the babble of voices—to the chatter of the tongues of sixty-four different tribes of human beings, twenty-four of which were white. All around him was light and gaiety. The City of the Lion held a shock or two, though, for the troops (particularly Australians, whose positions were nearer the city) who came in from the fantastically luxuriant jungle fronts, their eyes brightly anticipatory. . . . According to statistics compiled by a United States Government Bureau, Singapore was the second most expensive city in the world to live in; Buenos Aires was the most expensive. The Straits Settlements dollar was worth 2s. 4d., but it bought only a shilling's worth of food or entertainment. The prices rocked the troops.

Apart from these jungle troops and their camouflaged transport which was parked in the streets, and the countless "V for Victory" signs, it was difficult to find any sign of crisis. The after-dark high spots were the cabarets-cum-fairgrounds called the "Great World," the "Happy World," and the "New

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"In them you found hundreds of that peculiar Oriental, the Chinese taxi-dancer. Sloe-eyed, slant-eyed girls, slim and snub-nosed, who wore dresses as simple as nightgowns and slit each side to above the knee. This fashion, it was said, originally followed the wearing of silk stockings by Chinese girls. They are practical people, and some years ago they asked what the use of wearing expensive silk stockings if you did not wear them. They thereupon slit their ankle-length, one-piece stockings, fitting as tight as gloves, up the sides to above the knee. They walked, shoulders and hips slightly swaying, as gracefully as a gazelle. . . . They danced jerkily, galumphing as awkwardly as a giraffe. They cost 7d. per dance, and as the bands played short numbers with only a few seconds' interval between those girls danced as many as sixty times a night, some making £1 15s. a night. Many exceeded this, as they were given two, three, four, or a bookful of tickets by appreciative customers. Their gracious dignity had devastating effects sometimes, as was witnessed by a court case between a Chinese taxi-dancer and an Indian merchant. It came out in evidence (the dancer was the complainant) that the defendant had bought her as much as six pounds' worth of tickets a night.

At the moment the bands played *God Save the King* the girls were hurried to their amahs (mother-like servants-cum-chaprons), and hurried home, sitting side by side in rickshaws pulled by spindleshanked Chinese coolies. The rickshaw coolie's life, it was said, ended five years from the day he first stepped between the shafts. He usually died of consumption, worn out. Did you know that a rickshaw coolie preferred heavy loads? The bigger they came, the better he liked them. The heavier his load, the more "face" he gained.)

There were other diversions in Singapore during those days of celebrating and preparing, preparing with inadequate supplies of

men and materials. One of the oddest diversions was the mid-night matinee. Every cinema organized one and it was customary for them to screen the newest films received from the United States. The supply was maintained right up to the day the Japanese attacked.

Was there a crisis in Singapore as Tojo assembled the Japanese militarists who were to attack us and drive us out of Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies, and Burma? Was the City of the Lion ready?

No.

Why, we had a Japanese-owned, Japanese-controlled newspaper operating right up to the day Singapore was bombed! It was the *Singapore Herald*, facetiously referred to by some of us as the "Voice of Japan." The editor was a Welshman named Jones. His pro-Japanese leading articles were a weird mixture of Shintoism and his own brand of Socialism.

Japanese spies (I knew one or two) were allowed to go about their business without undue interference right up to the last day.

Those vertebræ of the Japanese Secret Service, the bespectacled Japanese photographers, who had their studios in almost every city, town, and village throughout Malaya, Borneo, Siam, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies, were largely unmolested until the first Japanese bombs fell on Singapore.

I know one Japanese "photographer" (he had his shop in Singapore) who got away with a minor coup a few weeks before Japan attacked. A newly-arrived military photographer from the Middle East quite thoughtlessly handed him a roll of film to be developed. It contained certain air pictures taken in the Western Desert. When he went back at the appointed time to collect the developed roll the Japanese "photographer" could not find it.

"You've bloody well got to find it!" declared the white photographer, who now sensed trouble. They searched the shop

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and found nothing. They examined roll after roll, but the roll from the Western Desert was not to be found. Courageously, promptly, the white photographer went to the police and confessed his thoughtlessness.

The Japanese "photographer" had his shop ransacked by detectives, but, of course, nothing was found. The result of a strong talk by the senior detective to the Japanese was an advertisement that ran in Singapore newspapers for several days: "Will the customer who mistakenly took away from the under-mentioned shop a roll of film which did not belong to him please return it immediately? IMPORTANT." . . . It never came back.

A shop-sign "Photographer" was wonderful cover for spies. The Japanese realized this about ten years ago, when Japanese "photographers" began popping up all over the territories they now occupy or are attacking. I believe they did a better job of sending out "tourists" than the Nazis did. Yet, in Singapore, the authorities waited until Japan entered the war before intern- ing them. . . .

The City of the Lion was also infested with Japanese barbers and masseurs. Shrewd men, the barbers — they automatically gave all white customers an anti-hangover massage whether they wanted merely a shave or a hair-cut. . . .

Although "The second doorway of the wide world's trade is mine to loose or bar," as Kipling wrote of Singapore, although it had now become the British Empire's third war capital, it was a remarkably suburban place. Probably because the white population was comparatively small. On Sundays, for instance, the thing to do was to go to the Seaview Hotel in the mornings. You found all the young socialites there. The smart young women, numbers of them in nothing more than brassière-and-shorts play-suits; the young, adoring officers; mothers and fathers; all were there. And the reporters. . . . We all drank

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pahits, from whiskies-and-sodas to beers and rums and Cocolas, and listened to the band. We all sat at tables in the ballroom. It was an open affair, with a dome to shelter us from sun and rain. The sea was at the doorstep. It was most pleasant. It was a regular date, Sunday morning at the Seaview.

Each session came to an end with the band playing *There'll Always be an England*, and everybody picked up the cards, laid on each table, bearing the words of the song. Chinese, Malays, Americans, Australians, Eurasians, South Africans — everybody joined in the chorus. There was no limit to our patriotism, if the strength of our voices was the criterion. Then we all went and ate lunch. The main dish was a hot, soporific curry. . . .

The *Tuan Besar* did not show up very well in the matter of the screening of the film *Target for To-night*, that fine piece of cinematic understatement directed by a Scotsman, Harry Watt. It came to Singapore, and the Air Officer Commanding thought it would be a good chance for Singapore to be entertained and at the same time help the war fund. The R.A.F. Press Officer at that time, Flight-Lieutenant Sidney Downer—an Australian with a magnificent English accent who was also a fine cricketer and a good guy, who escaped from Singapore to Batavia, but is now listed as missing—went to fix it up with the owners of the Pavilion Cinema, who agreed to screen the film for expenses only on the first night. They also agreed to charge about £10 14s. a seat, all of which, when expenses had been deducted, would go to the war fund, as well as the cost of souvenir programmes to be sold by the beautiful young socialites of Singapore.

Only ten seats were sold during the first week of booking. Obviously the apathy of the *Tuans Besar* was going to do the R.A.F. more harm than it would do the war fund good, so the A.O.C. had the price reduced to about £1 4s. a seat. Even then the cinema was not filled, and the climax came when one of the Ministry of Information officials went to see the programme.

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found that the cinema-owners had put *Target for To-night* as a curtain-raiser for an appalling film of Edgar Wallace's *The Case of the Frightened Lady*. The Ministry of Information had the order of screening reversed, but even so they did not collect much money for the war fund. The Tuan Besar was not interested.

At this time, however, Tokyo Radio broadcast the following in Japan in Japanese: "The Japanese are not at all awake to the serious straits their country is in. If they are why is there so much grumbling of late? Before grumbling think of plans for betterment, or look on the bright side only. There is a shortage of everything. It takes half a day to buy a few vegetables or a loaf of cakes. There are no taxis or buses. But, compared with Germany, Japan is far, far better off. . . ."

Singapore? It was short of nothing. But it grumbled — at Mr. Duff Cooper, of whom they were most suspicious until he made a statement to say that he had come to the city solely to compile a report on the administration of the war effort of the whole of British territory in the Far East. They grumbled at his presence until he said he had no authority whatsoever to interfere in local administration; that he had nothing to do with any discussions which might mean raising taxation in the Straits Settlements. That got big play in Singapore's headlines . . . and the Tuans Besar, who paid only 8 per cent. on any annual income of £2,400 and over, and up to any amount, went comfortably back to their *pahits* and curries. . . .

Then came the night of November 29, 1941. Notices were flashed on the screens of the cinemas:

**ALL BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES TROOPS ARE
REQUESTED TO REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THEIR UNITS**

It just about emptied the white section of the city.

We reporters became involved in a maddening fracas with the official publicity office. The then chief of it, Commander

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William Burrows, R.N., a retired Fijian magistrate, told us we could say nothing about the recall of troops.

"I have just spoken to the all-highest, and he says nothing is to be sent. It's nothing serious. It's what's called 'normal precautions,'" said the commander.

After hours of wrangling some of us gave it up and went to Raffles Hotel for a drink. We sat in the "ballroom," which was nothing more than an outsize verandah. The most stupendous party was in progress. The Scots were celebrating St. Andrew's Night. They had the pipes and pipe-majors out doing the Strathspey, the Highland Fling, and others. The Navy was there in force, dressed in their natty bum-freezers. The women were in evening-gowns. And a notice-board at the entrance said, "No Dancing except in Formal Dress." . . .

That same night United States Service chiefs in Manila told reporters, "It may happen to-night."

It did not. It happened ten days later—and how fared the *Tuan Besar*?

Meanwhile, I went to Sarawak to see the White Rajah. . . .

CHAPTER TWO

An Old Etonian's Farewell

WAS early aboard His Majesty's auxiliary cruiser *Kedah* on the evening of the night she was to steam to Kuching, capital of Sarawak, land of the White Rajah, Sir Charles Vyner Brooke. Although the Orient was in a state of ebullition, and Japan had poured the main force of her propaganda from the British Empire to the United States (an ominous sign), it had been decided to go ahead with the programme to celebrate the centenary of the rule of the Brooke family over Sarawak.

H.M.S. *Kedah* and H.M. destroyer *Tenedos* were to represent the British Navy at Kuching, and H.M.S. *Kedah* was to carry Captain J. A. S. Eccles, R.N., thither as the personal representative of the Admiralty.

We were waiting for Captain Eccles. He had been a former captain of H.M. aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal*, which had been sunk here and again by Goebbels and his Italian opposite number. These gentlemen, however, were eventually forestalled by the British Admiralty, who were first to tell the world when she really did go to the bottom of the Mediterranean.

Captain Eccles arrived. After meeting the officers of the ship, he said to the captain, "By the by, do you mind if I take my boy along? He isn't a 'boy' really—he's my valet."

"Certainly."

"And—er—would it be all right if my boy's boy came, too? You see, my boy is a bit superior to the ordinary fellow, and he usually takes his boy along to look after the luggage and things like that."

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So we sailed away to Sarawak—Captain Eccles, R.N., his boy, his boy's boy, an Australian reporter named Maley who was always being confused with the Australian cricketer, a plump Scottish newsreelman who blushed at the slightest provocation, two gibbon apes, and me—bound for the world's biggest island: Borneo, the land of the White Rajah. The present ruler, the third of the line, was an Old Etonian; he was wearing the Old School Tie when I later drank gin with him and the Rancee.

H.M.S. *Kedah* was a coastal steamer which had done passenger- and freight-carrying from Singapore up to Penang and Rangoon. Her armament now that she had been made an auxiliary cruiser consisted of a couple of 6-inch guns and some Lewis guns for aircraft. As her officers said, "We're the 'thin red line' at sea to stop the Jap Navy. God knows how we'll fare."

At Kuching we were distributed among those white officials who had been ordered to stay behind to run the State. There were some 200 of them, I believe. All the women and children who would go had been evacuated to Malaya and Australia. My host was the "Hon'ble Secretary for Defence" (as he was officially called), Mr. J. L. Noakes, a New Zealander, who had been landed with this onerous duty after spending many years in Sarawak as chief of the Survey Department of the Government of His Excellency the Rajah. Noakes was one of the most generous men I have met, but he also had one of the smallest appetites. His cook judged my appetite by his master's, which he had served for years. I thought I would die of starvation, and I was too bashful to ask for more.

All the white men had been overworked as a result of the preparations then being made for the defence of the State against possible Japanese invasion. This was one place I visited where most people were convinced the Japanese would attack. They worked hard at the defensive preparations, but it was obvious they could achieve little that would stop the Japanese.

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Because of inadequate resources at their command, Sarawak got the serious attention from the Commander-in-Chief Far East, the Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, G.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., A.F.C. (who was related to the White Rajah), or the General Officer Commanding, Lieutenant-General A. E. Percival, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., who stayed in Singapore to negotiate the capitulation.

The fixed defences would not have deterred a troop of determined Boy Scouts. It was not the fault of the Rajah's unfortunate white Government officers. After months of hard work most of these officials had decided to have a holiday during the customary celebrations. The main relaxation was to be found in their fine club, subsidized by the Rajah. It was drinking and playing indoor bowls and liar dice. They were experts.

The Rance had recently arrived from England, via the United States. I had seen her in Singapore when she arrived. She was the Wrong-way Rance, going to Sarawak against the small tide of evacuating women and children; but as she told me, "I must join the Rajah. I haven't seen the poor dear for two years." Owing to restrictions on the export of currency from the British Empire she had been stranded in the United States for several months, as she had not got her trans-Pacific Clipper fare of £280. She collected it by writing a magazine article called "I Want a Job," also by receiving from the magazine Time £140 (she told me) in settlement of a libel action, and by making gramophone records advertising a wine.

She had a talent for publicity and she attracted considerable attention in Singapore (and, I imagine, in the United States) by the Malayan costume she affected, complete with heavy bangles and ear-rings. She later caused a stir in Australia by informing the reporters there that Australian men were magnificent, but that Australian girls were far from the most attractive she had met. Some newspaper replied by publishing numerous

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pictures of the bathing-belles on Bondi Beach alongside a picture of the Ranee. . . .

However, to get back to Sarawak, she was constantly at the Rajah's side through the arduous days of the celebrations when he, a modest, retiring man (all his Government officers assured me), had to appear daily before his subjects and guests to make speeches, smile, and generally take an interest in the happy goings-on in his capital.

From the reporter's point of view the centenary celebrations began on September 24, 1941. That day ended a hundred years of unbroken rule by the Brooke family. The present Rajah was the third Brooke to hold absolute power over his large domain populated by whites, Malays, Chinese, Dyak head-hunters, and various other tribes.

That morning he floated across the fast-flowing river from his Astana, or palace, accompanied by his consort, in the royal barge—a peculiar, sharp-pointed craft carrying what at a distance appeared to be a small, low, red-tiled house. It was, in fact, the cabin. Within sat the Rajah and Ranee. They were bound for the town-side of the river where two tall, straight-backed chairs had been placed side by side at the top of a flight of stone steps leading to the main Government offices, where the central court of justice was situated. Flags of Sarawak, Britain, and China had been hung out with bunting, and many chairs had been set out on either side of the roadway leading to the steps.

An extraordinary assortment of people sat on those chairs when the Rajah and Ranee took their places at the top of the steps. There was Mrs. E. J. Spooner, wife of the Rear-Admiral, Malaya, and a talented singer; and the pretty blonde wife of one of her husband's assistants in a big straw hat. And there were several Dyaks (Sea Dyaks, I think they were) wearing nothing but the briefest, tightest trunks. There were Chinese in European clothes and Chinese in Chinese clothes, and Chinese



GUESTS AT THE SARAWAK CENTENARY RECEPTION

The second from the right is Mrs E. J. Spenser, wife of the Rear-Admiral, Malaya.



TWO MORE GUESTS AT THE SARAWAK CELEBRATIONS



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photographers in shirt-sleeves. And representatives—some with long hair, carrying spears, blow-pipes, and shields—of every tribe in the country. Some had walked jungle-paths and swum rivers for fourteen days to be present.

The ceremony began with the Rajah listening to addresses of loyalty from many of his subjects, who read them into a microphone. He was obviously most uncomfortable. The heat was terrific and he sat in the direct rays of the sun, from which an umbrella-bearer tried to shield him without much success. The Rajah constantly wriggled in his seat and put his fingers inside his ceremonial collar, stretching his neck as he did so. The Ranee sat contentedly throughout, her hands on her lap, smiling regally and graciously.

Then the Rajah rose to the microphone and began a long reading. It was Sarawak's new Constitution, whereby a Supreme Council was given statutory powers of advising the Rajah. In effect it meant that from that moment the Rajah, whose idlest word could have meant death for any of his subjects, shared his power. It was the virtual end of the absolute rule of the White Rajahs. Soon after that the Rajah evacuated to Australia. Soon after that the Japanese occupied Sarawak. The Rajah was sixty-seven years old when he relinquished his and his successors' right to unconstitutional monarchy over Sarawak. . . .

That done, the gathering broke up to drink champagne in the court-house. As the Rajah turned to leave through an opening in the curtains behind the two royal chairs, we were startled to see Sarawak's coat of arms emblazoned in bright red on the back of his white uniform. In a moment we realized how hot he must have been during the ceremony, for the back of the chair on which he had sat was of red leather and bore his coat of arms, too. . . .

That afternoon the bazaar and fair opened in Kuching's museum and its beautiful grounds. There we saw blow-pipes, spears, stuffed cobras, pythons, deadly hamadryads (the only

snake that attacks human beings without provocation, they say), and gigantic, ginger-haired orang-outangs—shot or snared in the jungle that lay so close to the capital—and carrots, turnips, and durians grown by Kuching's home gardeners in competition, and tea-cloths made by Mission pupils. There was native singing, dancing, and play-acting, and a girl selling lottery tickets for a house and a motor-car.

On the first floor of the museum were two wooden statues, crudely carved years ago by an up-country tribe. They were a source of embarrassment to the curator of the museum, who, no doubt, received complaints from worried Kuching parents or possibly from missionaries. He compromised by hanging two red-paper skirts upon the hideously grinning monstrosities. I regret to report that they were surrounded by a giggling crowd of Chinese and Malayan school-children throughout most of the first day of the bazaar. They giggled not so much at the statues as at the red-paper skirts, for they were not encumbered by mock modesty.

It was great fun—so thought the Indian troops stationed in Sarawak for its defence. It was very crowded, too, thought a number of attractive Chinese girls who were trying to sell needlework and other things for the war fund. In fact, there were one or two noisy scenes when the Chinese girls spoke rapid, indignant Chinese to the grinning Indian troops, who could not understand a word.

The climax came in the office of the Hon'ble Secretary for Defence. A small deputation of Chinese girls complained that the Indian troops had pinched their bottoms at the bazaar. If it did not stop, they said, they would not attend the fair. And, they added, if they did not attend the fair no one else would, as most people came to see the pretty Chinese girls. How it ended I do not know, as the Indians' commanding officer could find no proof of the offences complained of, and the Chinese

girls found themselves unable to produce any visible evidence to support their allegations.

The *Sarawak Times*, a minute paper of four pages, produced a special number which bore across the top of the front page the following headlines:

THE WHOLE STATE CELEBRATED THE CENTENARY
OF GREAT BROOKE RULE IN SARAWAK

LONG LIVE THEIR HIGHNESSES THE RAJAH AND RANEE

GREAT BROOKE RULE IN SARAWAK

A CENTURY OF PEACE, PROSPERITY, AND PROGRESS

The last paragraph showed the determination of the happy population to go through with the celebrations in spite of everything. It said:

Lantern Procession. A heavy shower fell at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and though it gradually turned to drizzle it did not stop till well past eight, and in consequence some lanterns were disfigured. The procession was a very long one. They were all in the shape of aeroplanes, every one of them of the same size. Other striking features in the procession were a paper Centenary railway engine, two big tanks, and a dragon.

When the Japanese came to Sarawak in the shape of the dragon the only aeroplanes and tanks they might have seen were relics of the procession. . . .

Then came the ceremonial dinner. A constant procession of barges ferried the guests across the river to the flood-lit Astana. Almost everybody who mattered was there. In accordance with Malayan custom there were no women—except the Ranee. She sat at the head of one of the two long tables, the Rajah at the other. They sat at opposite ends of the room; where the Rajah sat was the head of the room. Captain Eccles sat on the Ranee's left, and I sat beside Captain Eccles. A brass band played in another room.

The Ranee chattered brightly for some time about the place of women in Sarawak and Malaya. "A wife must always walk well behind her husband. I think it is quite right. I would do it if the Rajah would let me."

Captain Eccles protested that women had become emancipated and were no longer mere chattels.

"Oh, but they are," insisted the Ranee, and, turning to the guest sitting on her right, said, "By the way, have you met?"—indicating me. The gentleman, who had short-cut, reddish hair, smiled and said no.

"Then let me introduce you—Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Sheean!" Other guests and the Ranee thought this reference to that dreadful song of about fifteen years ago extremely funny, and the Ranee declared that she had not noticed the joke when she looked at the seating plan. I am prepared to swear that she had. I could see no other reason for my being so well placed at her table. It was so that I would be near enough to Mr. Sheean for her to introduce us. Mr. Sheean was the British Government Agent in Malaya. The party went on . . . from tinned tomato soup to tinned salmon. . . .

A frank, but rude, Chinese guest sitting near the Ranee seized the hand of a waiter as he was pouring white wine for him. He took the bottle firmly by the neck, placed his nose to the opening, smelled it loudly, grimaced, and waved it away with a rapid flutter of his right hand. I found the wine good. The Chinese was a favourite of the Ranee's. She told us all, loudly enough for him to hear, that he was one of the cleverest young Chinese in the State—a genius with figures, but so wicked, such a liar! Perhaps that was why he treated the wine so shamefully. If the Ranee saw him refuse it she said nothing.

After dinner some of us were asked to stay and have a last drink. We had several. Some of us got tight. As we left, walking through the hallway of the Astana, we saw our host's

umbrella-stand. In it was one umbrella such as the commonest people carry in Sarawak, made of varnished leaves of the plantain-tree. It had the Rajah's name painted on it in big, white letters: "C. V. BROOKE."

"Gosh, I'd like that," I remarked, and I was easily persuaded by two of the Rajah's Ministers to take it. When we had recovered next day I did my utmost to return the umbrella. I had heard that the Rajah was most jealous of his umbrellas and was always losing them. But I could devise no way of getting it back except by taking it in person. I did not feel up to that. I tried to persuade one of the Ministers to replace it. He said, "Nothing doing." So I took it back to Singapore with me. When the Japanese occupied Singapore it lay in a big suitcase in the offices of the American Express Company.

I am sorry, Rajah. . . .

There was another party: in H.M.S. Kedah, anchored down the river. Apart from the number of bottles of whisky which the ward-room had to pay for (it was their party), and, apart from the two gibbon apes, the most likeable, mischievous animals in the world, and, apart from a recrudescence of bottom-pinching (for which I do not think the Navy were to blame), this party went off without hitch.

And there was another party in the Sarawak Club. I was not there. A beautiful brunette who came from Singapore with her father (he took colour pictures of the celebrations with a 16-mm. ciné camera) slapped a Naval officer's face. It was the wrong man, but she could not be blamed, as, on feeling the sharp pain of a sly nip, she swung round and hit the first face she saw.

A reporter got drunk this time and insisted on showing how to carry out a flying Rugby tackle, Australian style. He charged down one of the indoor, wooden bowling-alleys into volunteers who stood where the big wooden skittles were usually placed. Missing some of the volunteers because they moved out of his

way, he became a reckless mass of cuts and bruises. Apart from those two incidents, this party went off with a bang.

There was also one other party, also in H.M.S. *Kedah*. There had never been one like it before. The hospitable Navy thought it a good idea to invite all the head-hunters, and others, to see H.M. destroyer *Tenedos*. They bought two huge jars of arak—or ouzo, as I think we called it in Abyssinia that time when Mussolini was the victor—a powerful drink made from rice, which turns milky white when mixed with water. The State provided transport in the shape of two Chinese buses, and the Land and Sea Dyaks, and others with their blow-pipes (carried ceremoniously now) and short, curved knives and scanty clothing, arrived.

They were shown over the *Tenedos* first and made loud, excited comments on the torpedo-tubes and 6-inch guns. A heavy machine-gun was set up in the stern and the boys were told to gather round. I have seldom known such heat. It was too hot on the steel deck for the leathery feet of the head-hunters. They hopped from one foot to another. I saw one foot with prehensile toes carry out a raid on another pair of feet which were standing on a piece of cotton-waste. Neither owner looked down; their eyes were watching the sailor who was adjusting the machine-gun. The single raiding foot won, and between big toe and second toe it carried off the cotton-waste to place it beneath its owner.

All was set.

"Stand back!" ordered a gallant sailor.

They did, and the gun was aimed at the jungle. . . .

Click!

"Dammit!"

More readjustments. More clicks. They were about to give up the display when a last attempt set the gun firing. Bullets threw up jets of water immediately in front of a boat which a startled native was rowing down-river. The display was there-

upon abandoned and we all went to H.M.S. Kedah for refreshments. As we left H.M. destroyer *Tenedos* the head-hunters gave their war-cry. It was not impressive—just an echo from the past. Some of the white sailors in the boat which carried us looked embarrassed.

After the arak was handed over the guests began to dance, partly for their own amusement, partly for ours. The more the one arak jar was emptied the more interesting the dancing became. Their method of distributing the arak was simplicity itself. They asked for two buckets. They filled them up—three-quarters arak, one-quarter water—and whenever anybody's glass ran dry it was filled by dipping it into a bucket. Before a man danced another man gave him arak; he held the glass to the dancer's mouth and poured the entire contents in.

Some of the dances were gruesome. They portrayed the spearing of an enemy, the *coup de grâce*, and the cutting-off of his head. . . .

A sailor who had been watching volunteered to give a dance while the head-hunters had a rest. He was covered with tattooing—girls in bathing costumes, red roses, speared hearts, sailing ships, and "I Love Dora." The head-hunters were tattooed, too. One old man showed me his hands; they were black with intricate designs. An interpreter explained that they were a sign that this man had been a collector of human heads. A Government official present confirmed his claim, saying he had been a powerful man in his youth and had had about five heads before head-hunting was made illegal by the Rajah.

Music was made by the simplest possible means. An empty paraffin tin was beaten with a metal spoon by one man, an upturned bucket by another, and a crowbar by another. A handsome boy of about fourteen was with the Sea Dyak party. He was the son of the present chief. Behind him always was his slave, or bodyguard. Wherever the boy went his human shadow was with him. This party, too, came to an end. There

was a great deal of hand-shaking and war-cries, and the boy was slung over a shoulder of the bodyguard, who carried him away. He was the only drunk.

H.M. destroyer *Tenedos* carried Captain Eccles, his boy, and his boy's boy, and one or two others of us back to Singapore. The lieutenant-commander engineer was as proud as you like because he got $31\frac{1}{2}$ knots out of her.

"It was only thirty," declared the captain.

"It was not, sir; it was thirty-one-and-a-half," said the "Chief."

We pulled his leg all the way back to Singapore. I next saw that little destroyer when *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were sunk off the east coast of Malaya. . . .

Meanwhile serious work had been going on elsewhere in the White Rajah's country. . . . Some weeks later in Singapore I met some of the men from the oil-fields at Miri, in Sarawak. They told me how they had carried out "scorched earth" there. They had filled the bore-holes (some of them 2,000 feet deep) with concrete. I asked whether the Japanese could not rebore the holes. They told me they could, but it would take at least two months even if they were allowed to work without interference by Allied bombers. That two months has long since elapsed. The Allied air forces had not bombed Miri during that time. . . . Japan must be getting oil from Miri to-day.

CHAPTER THREE

"So, Shoot to Sink!"

WE were sitting at lunch in that barn of a place, Raffles Hotel, Singapore. It was a hotel that lived on the romantic reputation given it by fiction-writers who may have spent an expensive night there and afterwards used the name because they thought it gave a well-travelled, authentic air to their stories about Malaya. Raffles Hotel also lived on the over-night passengers dumped there by British Overseas Airways Corporation and Pan-American Airlines.

One of the Malayan waiters came to our table and called Cecil Brown to the 'phone. Brown worked for the Columbia Broadcasting System, and his continual complaints about the inadequacies of the military public relations office, which was supposed to help us reporters get news, won him nothing but the ill-will of all the officers even remotely connected with official publicity. They threw him out of Singapore at the finish. As his departure was not many days before the Japanese took over this "Gibraltar of the Orient," I do not think he was unduly sour about it.

He came back to the table.

"It was 'Aspro,'" he said.

That's what we called the Services' Public Relations Office, or S.P.R.O., to give it the official abbreviation. "It's also good for headaches," was the reason. We also devised a motto for "Aspro," one partly borrowed from the R.A.F.—*Per Aspro ad Ardua*: "Through 'Aspro' to Difficulties."

"What did they want?" I asked Brown.

"They've got some trip on, and wanted to know if I'd go. They wouldn't say what it was, but it'll take four or five days. I turned it down. You can't leave Singapore for as long as that at this stage."

"I wonder what it was?" I said—and also wondered why I had been left out. You never knew with "Aspro." They always gave preference to American reporters, not considering the fact that British reporters were trying to cover the war for the families and friends of the men who were fighting it alone in those days.

The Malayan waiter came back; called me to the 'phone. It was Major Charles Fisher, Deputy Assistant-Director of Public Relations, Singapore, whom I always found most helpful. He spoke urgently. "Look, there's no time to waste. Do you want to go on a jaunt? I can't tell you what it is. You must say yes or no—at once. You'll be away four or five days. Do you want to go?"

"Wait a minute, Major. Can't you give me the vaguest clue? The war's only been on a few days. My office will go hopping mad if I disappear for five days and come back with something that doesn't interest them."

"I can't say a thing. If you don't say yes I'll have to offer it to someone else. . . . Well?"

I had a brain-wave. We had all been to look over *Prince of Wales* a day or two before. She had just arrived.

"Er—has it anything to do with those 'new boys' we saw?" I asked.

"Yes. Two can go—one American and one British reporter."

"Hang on a minute, Major. I'll get you the American."

"I can't wait at all. You must say yes or no. A car will pick you up in a few minutes."

I wanted to tell Brown what he had turned down and try to persuade him to change his mind. Captain Henry Steele, one of the officers of "Aspro," arrived at the 'phone-box. (All the

reporters who were in Singapore said they would not have got out had it not been for Steele.)

"Henry, old horse," I pleaded with him, "the major's on the 'phone and won't wait while I run and see Brown. For God's sake keep him talking. . . ." He took the 'phone and was still there when I came back. I told Major Fisher: "Brown has changed his mind. He and I will take the job."

So a car picked us up a few minutes later. Steele said he would find my typewriter and see that it got to the naval base before we left.

Brown and I discussed the job in the car as we went to pick up short, fat Lieutenant "Tubby" Abrahams, an official Naval photographer.

"It's a ready-made world-scoop. Laid on a plate for you and me," I said. It seems Major Fisher had first offered the job to Tilman Durdin (*New York Times*), Lawrence Impey (*London Daily Mail*), and Yates McDaniel (*Associated Press of America*).

"Yeah, I guess you're right, kid. But, by God, I don't like leaving Singapore at this stage. I got to broadcast at two in the morning."

"What the hell! This'll make up for it. I shouldn't be surprised if we aren't going to keep a date with the American Fleet."

We picked up Abrahams and got aboard *Prince of Wales*. I found my typewriter, as Steele had promised. But once aboard *Prince of Wales* we nearly turned the job down. We had been given the impression that we were to go in *Prince of Wales*. The duty officer who met us on the quarter-deck said, "How d'you do? Where is your baggage?" Brown pointed to his suitcase, Abrahams to his cameras and suitcase, and I to my gear.

"Good," said the duty officer. "Then we'll push you over to *Repulse* at once. We'll soon be off."

"No, we're going in *Prince of Wales*—so we were told," I said.

"Afraid there's no room whatsoever. Not even in the ward-room. We're all doubling-up."

We argued for ten minutes, pointing out that *Prince of Wales* was the only ship the censors would allow us to name in our stories, and that was why we had accepted the job. So that we could get a date line: "Aboard *Prince of Wales* in the Gulf of Siam, Tuesday." If we went in *Repulse* all we should be allowed to say would be "With the Eastern Fleet. . . ."

If there had been time for another couple of reporters to get down to the Naval Base we might have thrown the job up. But there was no time, and if we didn't go there would be no reporters with the Eastern Fleet at all. We went by launch to *Repulse*.

Brown and I got a cabin somewhere down below, just over the boilers. An engineer-officer popped in to see us and said, "This isn't much of a place. It gets as hot as hell. I know—I had it once."

Lieutenant Hulton, Royal Marines, was detailed to help us settle down. He was officer of the after 4-inch gun-control turret. He showed us over *Repulse* and then we collected on the deck as we began moving out. *Prince of Wales* cut past us, throwing up a long, low, rippling bow wave. Her decks were lined with her men, and so were ours. As we were abeam of each other we saluted, and we saw Captain Leach, of *Prince of Wales*, wave from his bridge to Captain Tennant, of *Repulse*. *Prince of Wales* cut down the Johore Straits into the evening, a picture of great majesty. In my notes made at that moment I find one line that caught our feelings as we watched. "*Prince* slipped on past us to death or glory. . . ."

"Gosh, what a sight!" exclaimed normally undemonstrative Brown.

We went forward and sat on a bench with a couple of

sailors. Ashore, girls waved to us. We were now in line-ahead formation: *Prince of Wales* leading, then *Repulse*, and four destroyers. "Force Z," as we were officially called for the purposes of the operation, moved out to the open sea watched by several hundreds of people ashore. I have wondered since if there were any Japanese agents among them with access to small portable radio-transmitters.

Prince of Wales looked so fine that she even impressed the sailors in *Repulse*.

"Just look at her, boy! Churchill's Yacht . . . the Glamour Ship. Look at her!"

"Think there'll be any fun this trip?" I asked.

"Dunno. It'll be the first time for us *Repulse* boys if there is. I got me lifebelt blown up—an' me fingers crossed."

We went through the anti-submarine boom into the wide, open sea. *Prince of Wales's* guns were elevated as though ready for long-range action. She ran up a signal to us, the rest of Force Z. It said: "Stand by for P.V.s," meaning paravanes.

A rumour, or buzz as the Navy calls them, had gone around. A stoker told me, "We've got to knock hell out of them while we've got a chance."

A bugle sounded "cooks," or supper, over the ship's loud-speaker system. "Sausage and mash," said the stoker as he went below to get it. The air cooled with the dropping of the sun. And a few minutes later the tropic day ended. . . .

In the ward-room we drank pink gins after washing for supper. A messenger came in and pinned a notice to the board.

TO THE SHIP'S COMPANY FROM THE CAPTAIN

We are off to look for trouble. I expect we shall find it. We may run up against submarines or destroyers, aircraft or surface ships.

1. We are going to carry out a sweep to the northward to see what we can pick up and what we can roar up. We must all be on our toes.

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2. For two months past the ship has felt that she has been deprived of her fair share of hitting the enemy. Although we have been constantly at sea and steamed 53,000 miles in nine months, we have seen practically nothing.

3. There is every possibility that things are going to change completely.

4. There is every likelihood that we shall get a good deal of bombing in harbour.

5. I know the old ship will give a good account of herself. We have trained hard enough for this day. May each one of us, without exception, keep calm if and when action comes—that is very important.

6. Lastly, to all of you, whatsoever happens do not be deflected from your job. When, say, high-angle guns are engaging a high-flying aircraft and all eyes are in the sky, none of the short-range guns on the disengaged side should be looking at the engagement but should be standing-by for a low dive-bombing or torpedo-bombing attack coming from the other side. Similarly in a surface action at night, provided the disengaged guns look out on the disengaged side they may be able to repel a destroyer attack that might otherwise seriously damage the ship.

7. For all of us—concentrate on the job. Keep calm.

8. Life-saving gear is to be worn or carried, or is to be immediately to hand, *not* because I think anything is going to happen to the ship—she is much too lucky—but if anything happens you have your life-saving gear handy; that is all you have to think about with regard to yourself; you are then absolutely free to think of your duty to the ship.

(Signed) WM. TENNANT
Captain

H.M.S. *Repulse*
December 9, 1941

Distribution: All notice boards

Chatter in the ward-room: "So we're looking for trouble, eh? About time, too."

This had all been a supposed secret between the captain and the chief engineer until the ship was out to sea and there was no chance of an idle word being dropped ashore.

We went in to supper, which was *consommé*, steak, mashed potatoes, boiled carrots, French beans, savoury, and coffee. Most of us had port afterwards and went to bed. I had a

terrible night. I slept naked, but even under the wind-chute could not get cool enough to sleep. Brown snored once or twice.

Next day, after breakfast, we went to the quarter-deck and discovered that the four destroyers with us were *Tenedos* (she brought me back from the centenary celebrations in Sarawak), *Jupiter*, *Express* (she was nearly sunk earlier in the war by a mine which blew half her bows away), and *Vampire*, of the Royal Australian Navy. Little, antiquated *Tenedos* would not stand much of a chance in a battle, I thought. Still, it was all that was available in Malaya.

It was while I was taking a note about a statement of Brown's that I ran out of ink. Brown had been a constant source of anger to Aspro because of his bitter complaints about them, though I must say I think I was just as critical without drawing Aspro's open resentment. After one row with them Brown told me, "Well, kid, from to-day I cease to be a propagandist for Britain. I've had enough. From now on, I am just an Objective American Reporter. I will tell all I see, bad as well as good."

Then the Japanese dealt the United States that treacherous major blow at Pearl Harbour. Standing on the quarter-deck, probably thinking aloud about Pearl Harbour and the fine sight presented by *Prince of Wales*, Brown said: "I'm no longer an objective reporter, Gal. Only so far as the Japs are concerned. But I still reserve the democratic right of criticism."

I had just noted this when my pen ran dry. I had affected green ink soon after I heard that Wavell used it so that his notes could be quickly picked out. I thought it was a swell idea, too, and bought myself some; but as I had not much kit with me I couldn't fill up. I went to one of the ship's writers and he said that he had some ink, but it was made in the ship and he didn't think it was up to much. He let me fill my pen. Thank God I ran out of green ink. When I looked at my

note-book, which I had in a pocket of my shorts, after being rescued by an Australian destroyer, all the notes taken on shore in green ink had disappeared. Every word in ship's-made ink was just as I had written it. . . .

I had another piece of miraculous luck. When I got aboard *Repulse* I decided I would take as complete a note as possible of everything that happened. I was out to collect ship's talk, customs, and general background for future use. The result of this decision was that my note-book was filled with statements like this one: "9 Dec. '41: 9.45 A.M. Lt. Hulton took me to see Capt. Tennant in his sea-cabin. Orchids in glass water-jug in front of photo of Captain's wife . . ." and so on. Except perhaps for Brown, who is an inveterate note-taker, I do not think there exists a more comprehensive note of what happened in *Repulse* than in my oil-stained, sea-stained, backless note-book.

The weather was marvellous. The clouds were low, it was drizzling, visibility was almost nil. We stood a good chance of slipping to our objective, wherever it was (we still did not know), without being spotted by the Japanese. That would give us the important advantage of surprise.

Lieutenant Hulton took us to the flag-deck. When we were with Captain Tennant we asked if he would name our action station. I favoured the forward 4-inch gun control-turret, somewhere at the top of the forward mast. In charge there was Lieutenant Page, R.N.V.R. In peace-time he had worked for Messrs. Debenham and Freebody, London, as an organizer of mannequin parades. As he only went into action if the after control-turret was destroyed we should not be likely to get in his way. But Captain Tennant said we must use the flag-deck as our action station.

"There isn't much cover there, captain," observed Brown; but Captain Tennant was adamant. He did not want to take any chance of us interfering with the smooth working of the gun-control turrets.

"SO, SHOOT TO SINK!"

of the yeomen of signals said, "We always have casualties on the flag-deck in action. It's very exposed."

"So," said Brown.

They were there when the signal came over the loud-speakers: "Action—action—action! Second-degree readiness! Second-degree readiness! High-angle guns—third-degree readiness!"

They went back to the ward-room and found a commander, whose duty was control of the magazine, saying, "If we're spotted we'll get a destroyer, submarine, and dive-bombing attack at dusk. If not we'll meet the Jap convoy early to-morrow. Whatever happens, whether we're spotted or not, you can be sure we'll get something to roar up to-morrow afternoon."

Thinking this over, we were taken to the Queen's boudoir on the upper deck. *Repulse* was the ship that was to have taken the King and Queen to Canada. Captain Tennant took over the King's quarters, but seldom used them as he preferred to sleep in his sea-cabin. The Queen's boudoir had become an upper-deck ward-room. We were sitting here when we got word that another notice from the captain had been posted. It read:

TO THE SHIP'S COMPANY FROM THE CAPTAIN

We are making for the north-east coast of Malaya and shall be off the north-east corner at sunset to-night. At dawn we shall be to the seaward of Singora and Patani, where the Japanese landing is taking place. Though we may, of course, run into Japanese forces anywhere during the day I think it is most probable that only submarines and enemy aircraft are likely to be sighted.

1. Any time during the night and at dawn the fun may begin. We must be on the look-out for destroyer attack to-night. If we are lucky enough to bump into a Japanese convoy to-morrow at dawn it will be a most valuable service and seriously upset their plans.

2. Having stirred up a hornet's nest, we must expect plenty of bombing on our return to-morrow.

3. That is what the high-angle gun crews have been longing for. It will be much better than sleeve-target practice, and I hope the marking will be done for us by the Japanese aircraft falling into the sea.

(Signed) WM. TENNANT
Captain

December 9, 1941

We all settled back again after crowding in front of the notice-board. Abrahams went back to his book, *Chin Ping Mei*, to chuckle and read aloud the scene in the summer-house when Hsi Men ties Lotus Blossom's ankles to the two door-posts and flicks small, yellow plums at her till she cries with laughter, "Stop, you're shooting me to death!"

Then we began discussing the Japanese Navy. I remembered being in the ward-room of *Prince of Wales* in the Naval Base the day after she arrived in the Orient. A senior officer said, "This will not be normal sea-warfare out here. These little Japs are fanatics. What we'll have to be careful of is the blighters flying into the ship, bombs, aircraft, themselves, and all."

A junior officer in *Repulse's* ward-room said, "We'd better wait and see what they're like before we run them down."

Another said, "Oh, of course. They're an island—damn it all, they should be a maritime nation."

The heat was dreadful. I drank ten glasses of orange squash, but sweated it out almost immediately. One of the Fleet Air Arm pilots called across the ward-room to another, "Say, Crozier, make sure some one collects our bottle of rum. We've got our food—but don't forget the rum." They were loading up their Walrus aircraft in case they had to be catapulted off-ship during the anticipated action. They told us a good tale about the arrival of a Walrus in Iceland after the Americans had taken over part of the defences there.

The American colonel saw this small, peculiar-looking aircraft coming in and asked what the devil it was, and then remarked, "We'd better give them a welcome."

When the Walrus taxied to a stop and the pilot and gunner climbed out they found themselves faced by a semi-circle of American officers and soldiers. The colonel strode forward, his right hand outstretched, and, doffing his cap, said in ringing tones, "The Brothers Wright, I presume?" . . .

"SO, SHOOT TO SINK!"

Lieutenant Hulton and I went on deck. It was raining. "Like the North Sea," said a voice nostalgically. Loud-speakers sounded. "Surgeon-Commander wanted on the bridge at once!"

Search for a certain officer who had been climbing the steel structure up to his action station and had slipped. He fell twenty feet from the roof of the bridge and was badly hurt. Ribs were broken, and one of his arms. They carried him down to the deck flat, and there he remained throughout the hours to

the Queen's boudoir again Lieutenant Hulton said, "I'll write my sweetie a letter. . . ." He had no sooner finished through the preliminaries than the loud-speakers announced, "Gun crews below must be prepared to close up at any time."

We were all carrying life-belts or life-jackets. A young sailor, or midshipman, said, "They wouldn't be much good anyway. The sharks would get you."

Although there was not much talk about it, I suppose the thoughts of most of us were concerned with the coming dawn. Sailors were making arrangements to have packets of sandbags made up for them. Most of them had changed into their fighting clothes—old clothes that covered as much of the body as possible; no shorts or short-sleeved shirts. But they all changed on clean clothes before action. This was to minimize chances of dirt getting into wounds received and consequent infection. Some one did mention, earlier in the day, the possibility of the ship being hit, and out came an answer from Lieutenant Page, with the old comforting fatalism. "If it's got to tally on it, well, there's nothing you can do about it," he said. He went down in *Repulse*. Poor chap, he had been seen on action.

I saw one of the sailors throw a banana-skin overboard. So did an officer, who choked him off. If it had been seen by a

Japanese submarine or some other vessel they would have known there were other ships in the vicinity, he said.

At 12.45 P.M. I heard a shout from the air-defence platform at the top of the mainmast. I was on the flag-deck. The shout was, "Aircraft on the port beam!" I saw it. A single plane—a dot on the skyline. "Action stations!" was sounded. The port multiple pom-pom, or Chicago-piano, as some of the boys called these guns, swung easily on its base as the muzzles moved restlessly in the direction of the distant plane.

The yeoman of signals read a message run up by *Prince of Wales* and smiled as he shouted, "It's O.K. That's a Catalina. The R.A.F." The plane came up close and flashed a message to *Prince of Wales* as she circled around her.

It read, "Japanese making major landing north of Singora."

Back once again to the ward-room, where the dental surgeon, who was in one of the ship's fire-parties clamped in down below the armoured deck during action, told us of the only action *Repulse* had seen during the war. It was off Norway. German aircraft dropped eighteen bombs without hitting her.

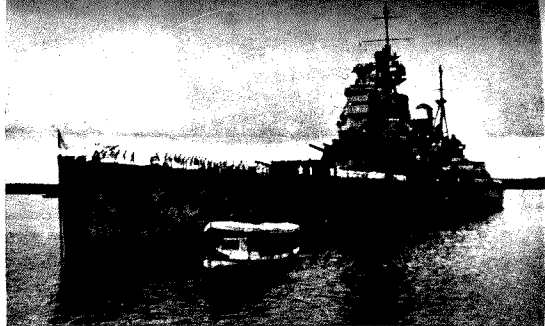
In all her 53,000 miles' cruising during this war, in all the danger-zones (she was in the *Bismarck* chase), this single bombing was her only meeting with the enemy.

We heard the B.B.C. Michael Standing was interviewing people in Leicester Square. He asked a stranger, "Have you any friends in the Far East?"

"Yes," replied the stranger. "A *Daily Express* war correspondent, who says he's going to Japan soon."

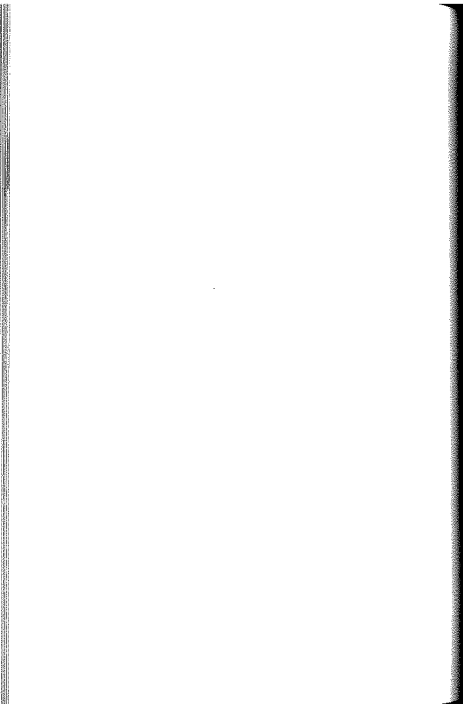
He meant me. I never said anything of the sort about Japan. I wished my unknown friend and I could have changed places.

Another notice was pinned to the board. It was from Admiral Sir Tom Phillips. It said:



"PRINCE OF WALES" ARRIVING AT SINGAPORE

This photograph just before the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor was the last ever taken of *Pr. of Wales*.
From copyright covered



"SO, SHOOT TO SINK!"

"REPULSE" FROM C.-IN-C "PRINCE OF WALES"

Inform ship's company as follows. Begins:

"The enemy has made several landings on the north-east coast of Malaya and has made local progress. Our army is not large and is over-pressed in places. Our air force has had to destroy or abandon one or more aerodromes. Meanwhile fast transports lie off the coast. This is your opportunity before the enemy can establish himself. We have made a wide circuit to avoid air reconnaissance and hope to surprise the enemy shortly after sunrise to-morrow, Wednesday. We may have the luck to try our mettle against the old Japanese cruiser, *Kongo*, and some Japanese cruisers and destroyers in the Gulf of Siam.

"We are sure to get some useful practice with high-angle armament, but whatever we meet I want to finish quickly and so get well clear to the eastward before the Japanese can mass too formidable a scale of air attack against us. So, shoot to sink."

Another signal said:

From dawn Action Stations and throughout daylight to-morrow, Wednesday, all ranks and ratings are to wear clothing such as overalls or suits which keep arms and legs covered against risk of burns from flash.

Ward-room chatter was resumed. It struck me how civil all the men were to one another and how apparently interested they were in one another's opinions. I swear they must have been so long together that they would have known exactly what each would be likely to say under almost all circumstances. They have more tolerance in the Navy than one knows. I suppose that is the only way to make life bearable when you are cooped up with a limited number of other men for months at a time.

"What about the other half?" asked some one.

But bugle-notes burst from the loud-speaker. A voice called, "Enemy aircraft!"

We ran to the flag-deck. Everybody was running somewhere. Every one seemed to carry tin hats. Passing us on the flag-deck he made his way to the bridge, a lieutenant-commander said,

"Afraid they've spotted us. Only one of them, but . . ." and he was gone.

It was a Nakajima Naka 93—much too far off for our guns to engage it. The Chicago-pianos were roving again.

Loud-speaker: "Hello there, every one. We are being shadowed by enemy aircraft, but return to third-degree readiness. Every one must be ready to repel aircraft immediately. Air-raid message—"White!"

There were now two Nakajimas on the horizon. They shadowed us till nightfall. All had gone well until this last hour of daylight. The weather had been perfect for hidden movements until there was only one hour of daylight between us and the dawn action of the morrow. Then the weather had cleared, and it is well known how good visibility usually is immediately after rain.

The B.B.C. News that night said the Japanese had entered Bangkok and that heavy fighting was proceeding for the air-field at Khota Baru. We thought that if our troops at Khota Baru could hold the Japanese until we sank their big troop convoy they would stand a chance of beating them. If Japanese reinforcements got in, though, it would be a different ending.

Then the B.B.C. added that twenty-five additional Japanese transports had been seen making for this part of Malaya. These were the ships we were after. How the B.B.C. came to broadcast that piece of information I cannot guess. I believe it would have made for additional security had they kept silent, and thereby possibly misled the Japanese into believing that we knew nothing about them.

At 8 P.M. we had dinner: what they called a scratch meal of hot soup, cold beef, ham or meat-pie, oranges, bananas, pine-apples, coffee. There were no mess stewards, so we all helped ourselves.

One of the Fleet Air Arm pilots came in, exclaiming, "My God, some one's blackened the eye of my gunner. His right

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the one he shoots with. What happens if I have to take tomorrow with a one-eyed gunner?" He and the other looked up to see who would go if they got the order next. The one whose gunner was now one-eyed lost. He was a red-bearded New Zealander. He had to stay behind for the toss.

Every one had been getting quietly ready for the coming. They wore an odd assortment of clothes in the ward-room—white flannel bags, grey ones, corduroy, blue serge, all showing arms and legs against flashes from guns, shells, or bombs. I had no such clothes, but was given an asbestos head-covering that made me look like one of Snow-White's dwarfs. Everybody agreed that the Japanese aircraft must have missed us all right. They hung around long enough for their crews to have compared our outlines with those in the latest version of *Jane's Fighting Ships*.

At 9.5 P.M. the loud-speaker called for attention. A voice from the bridge said, "Stand by for the captain to speak to

us." Then came Captain Tennant's voice: "I have just received a message from the C-in-C. He very much regrets to say that he has had to abandon the operation. We were shadowed by three enemy aircraft in the evening—after dodging them all day. The enemy aircraft will have largely disappeared when we arrive and we will not find enemy aircraft waiting for us. We are now returning to Singapore."

That groaning in the ward-room!

"This ship will never get into action. . . . It's too lucky."

There were discussions about the decision. I confess I may have spoken out of turn in the ward-room by declaring that we should have gone on. I reasoned that they had found us, and therefore it was only a matter of time before they air-bombed us. If we were to be bombed, let us achieve something at the same time by attacking the convoy or its escort. I was depressed

RETREAT IN THE EAST

at the thought of the ill-equipped, small army we had in Northern Malaya meeting the more numerous, more experienced, better-armed Japanese. If this big new Japanese convoy landed its thousands of troops it would be the end of our small forces in the North.

So we all went to bed as the ship made out to sea to try to get beyond the range of medium bombers, which might be expected in the morning. I could not go down to that cabin over the boilers so I slept on a ward-room couch. It was much more comfortable.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The Lukewarm Whirlpools Close!"

... a thin, Oriental dawn that I saw when bugles awoke
... "Action stations!" at 5.5 A.M. A cool breeze swept
... the fuggy ship that had been battened down all night.
... was luminous as a pearl. I went to the cabin Brown
... had been assigned expecting to find him there. But it was
... All the lights were on and the fans were whirring. . . .
... hurried up to our action station on the flag-deck. There
... smoking a first cigarette with some of the young
... ers. There was that silence among us that usually goes
... an early, unwelcome awakening. The Navy's silence at
... last, leaving a man to his thoughts and an out-of-date
... paper, is something I appreciate. It was chilly in the
... and I was glad I had managed to rake up a pair of
... s, though they were stained with oil.
... yeoman of signals was staring through his telescope on
... starboard side.
... look," he said.
... saw a string of boats.
... they're barges." Landing-barges—"like railway trucks," as
... ang signaller accurately observed.
... expected *Repulse* to open fire and sink them, but we did
... fire a shot. We did not want to "roar up" anything at this
... Heaven knows what attention we might have attracted
... we had raised the echoes with those sharp-barking 6-inch
... We were in an area where the enemy might be con-
... trated.

RETREAT IN THE EAST

At 6.30 A.M. the loudspeakers said, "A signal has just been received to say the enemy is making a landing a hundred and forty miles north of Singapore. We are going in."

All of us rushed breakfast, which consisted of coffee, cold ham, bread, marmalade. Back at action stations the whole ship's company kept look-out. We cruised in formation, *Prince of Wales* leading, *Repulse* second, with the destroyers screened out.

We went down the Malayan coast, examining, with the help of the terrier-like *Express*, *Jupiter*, and *Vampire*, all the coves for hidden enemy landing-parties.

At 7.35 *Prince of Wales* catapulted one of her planes away on reconnaissance, with instructions to land ashore after reporting anything she may have found. We watched her become midget-size and drop out of sight behind two hummock-backed islands, where lay a beach invisible to us. Meanwhile all the ship's company on the decks had donned anti-flash helmets and elbow-length asbestos gloves, goggles, and tin hats.

Prince of Wales was an inspiring sight. White waves crashed over her plunging bows. They shrouded them with watery lace—the bows rose high again—and plunged again. . . . She rose and fell so regularly, so evenly, the effect of staring at her was hypnotic. Her white ensign stood out stiff as a board in the breeze.

I felt a surge of excited anticipation rise within me at the prospect of *Prince of Wales* and the rest of us in Force Z smashing into Japanese landing-parties and their escorting warships.

Lieutenant Hulton told me, "We have not had much action—only one against German aircraft—but we are a perfect team. The whole twelve hundred and sixty of us. We have been working together so long. We claim to have the Navy's best gunners."

My anticipatory reverie was broken by a voice from the loud-

"THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

... again: "Hello there! Well, we have sighted nothing but we will go down the coast having a look for them."

... exclamations of disappointment. One of the two yeomen of signals now on the flag-deck said: "Don't say this one's too." As we sped down Malaya's changing coast-line the yeoman of the flag-deck said in a parody of a Fitzpatrick travelogue, "In the port beam, dear listeners, you see some of the beauty of Malaya. . . ."

Once again the loud-speakers announced that nothing had been sighted, and we were ordered to return to third-degree readiness. Repulse sent off one of her planes. The pilot was the ginger-bearded New Zealander. He lost the toss and had to stay behind.

We drifted back to the ward-room until 10.20 A.M., when we were spotted again by a twin-engined Japanese snoopier of the same type that attacked Singapore on the day the new war began. We could do nothing about it as she kept well out of range of even our 6-inch guns. No doubt the occupants were checking up on the reports made by the aircraft the previous night.

At 11 A.M. a twin-masted, single-funnelled ship appeared on the starboard bow. Force Z moved over to investigate. She carried no flag. *Prince of Wales's* guns were sky-raking at all angles and a signaller said, "They look like a lot of chop-sticks." Looking through the yeoman's telescope, I saw she was well down in the water. At that moment I nearly lost an eye. The shock of an explosion made me jump so that I nearly pushed my head out with the eye-piece of the telescope. It was 11.15 A.M. The explosion came from *Prince of Wales*. She had opened up with her portside secondary armament at a single plane. We opened fire, too. There were now about six aircraft. At the shock of the guns a three-quarter-inch screw fell on my tin hat from the bridge-deck above me.

"The old tub is falling to bits," remarked the yeoman. That

was the beginning of a superb air attack by the Japanese—by an air force that had been until then an unknown quantity, never before having met an equal power.

I remembered the officers in *Prince of Wales's* ward-room the previous week saying they expected the most reckless flying from the Japanese. It did not come to pass. Up to the fall of Rangoon the Japanese had not shown themselves on one occasion to be suicide squads, except in that they thought they could fight the American Volunteer Group and win.

The attacks on *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* that morning displayed the most orthodox flying in the world. They even came at the two ships, all of whose guns were blazing, in perfect formation, flying low and close. They broke up only when forced to do so by shell-fire.

Aboard *Repulse* were observers, whom I spoke to later, as qualified as anyone to pass an opinion on the Japanese flying capabilities. They knew from first-hand experience what the R.A.F. and Luftwaffe were capable of, and their verdict was, "The Luftwaffe never did anything like this in the North Sea, Atlantic, or Mediterranean."

The Japanese concentrated on the two capital ships, taking *Prince of Wales* first and *Repulse* second. The destroyer screen they left alone. All except damaged aircraft, that is, which had no alternative but to fly low over them—and they dropped their bombs defensively.

At 11.18 *Prince of Wales* opened a shattering barrage with all her Chicago-pianos. Red-blue flames poured from the eight gun-muzzles of each battery, and I saw glowing tracers describe shallow curves, soaring skywards and surrounding the Japanese planes.

Our Chicago-pianos opened fire, as well as our triple-gun, 4-inch, high-angle turrets. The uproar was so great you could quite definitely feel it.

THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

the starboard side of the flag-deck I saw two torpedo-bombers. No, they were orthodox bombers. They flew straight at us. All our guns, except the long, still 15-inchers, poured shells at them. Among the shells were some so delicately fused they exploded merely on grazing cloth fabric. But the bombers swung away, carrying out evasive action, without doing anything.

Ordered afterwards what their object was. It was a diversion to draw the attention of as many guns as possible, and the attention of the spotters high up on the air-defence platform.

There was a heavy explosion, and *Repulse* rocked. Great quantities of paint fell from the funnel to the flag-deck. We all turned to see the planes which had sneaked up on us while our attention was focussed on the low-flying aircraft which we had thought were going to attack.

They were high-level bombers—17,000 feet up. The first was the one that rocked us, was a direct hit on the catapult. It went through the port hangar. Parts of the ship were hurled into the air. I stood behind a multiple Vickers gun of the type that fires two thousand half-inch bullets a minute. At the after-end of the flag-deck I saw a cloud of smoke. It came from the hangar hit by the first bomb. Another came down—this time from 17,000 feet. It exploded in the sea close to the starboard side and churned up a creamy blue and green patch about 100 feet across. *Repulse* rocked again.

It was a miss, though, so no one bothered. A cooling fluid leaked from one of the muzzles of a Chicago-piano on the starboard side. I saw the black paint on the funnel-shaped muzzles actually rise in blisters as big as your fist.

There were ten men to each Chicago-piano. They were busy eating, saturating their asbestos anti-flash helmets. The whole gun swung this way and that as the spotter picked out a plane he considered within range.

Two planes seemed to be coming directly at us. A spotter

saw another at a different angle, but much closer. He leaned forward, his face tight with excitement. He urgently pounded the back of the man who swivelled the gun. He hit that back with his right fist and pointed with his left, his forefinger stabbing at the new plane. Still blazing, the whole gun platform turned quickly in that direction and poured its hail of death on the Japanese. It was about a thousand yards away.

I saw the tracers rip into its fuselage, dead-centre. The fabric opened up like a rapidly spreading sore with red edges and yellow centre. The fire swept to the tail. In a moment the stabilizer and rudder became a framework skeleton. The nose dipped down and the plane crashed into the sea.

We cheered like madmen. I felt my larynx tearing at the effort to make myself heard above the roar of the guns. The plane smacked the sea on its belly and was immediately transformed into a gigantic shapeless mass of fire which shot over the sea as fast as snakes' tongues.

Repulse had got her first raider.

For the first time since the action began we could hear the sound from the loud-speakers which were on every deck, at every action station. It was the sound of a bugle. The first notes were somewhat tortured. The young bugler's lips and throat must have been dry.

He gave that most sinister of all alarms at sea—"Fire!"

Smoke from the port hangar was thick. Men in overalls, whose faces were hidden by masks of soot, man-handled hoses along the deck. Water fountained delicately from a rough patch made on one section of hose with a piece of white shirt. It sprayed on the Vickers gunners, who, in a momentary lull, lifted their faces, opened their mouths and put out their tongues to catch the cool-looking jets. They quickly averted their faces and spat—the water was warm and salt. It was sea-water.

The Chicago-pianos opened fire again with a suddenness which made me flinch, though once their erratic fire was going

THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

almost comforting. All aboard said that the safest place on any big ship is behind the Chicago-pianos; it is the most sheltering. Empty cordite cases tumbled out of the guns' muzzles so fast, so excitedly that they reminded me of a fortune-telling fruit machine I once played in Gibraltar. It went amok and paid out eight pounds in a frantic rush of shillings. The cases bounced off the steel deck and danced round the big gun-base into a channel ready for easy picking up later.

At 11.25 A.M. we saw an enormous splash on the horizon. The splash vanished and a white cloud took its place. A large plane jettisoning its bombs—or another enemy down? A rapid Gallup poll of the flag-deck decided it was “another enemy down.” “Duck” was a word they had picked up from the Italian destroyer, *Vampire*, with us, and it meant an enemy

lopping about from one side of the flag-deck to the other. The portly Abrahams. He was using a bulky Press camera: what pity, for all his plates were lost. Naval photographers should use miniature cameras. No matter what happened they should always put their films in the small metal containers and seal them with a piece of adhesive tape.

The spotter said that by now forty Japanese torpedo-bombers had been in the attack. Bomb-splinters had torn three holes in the dummy funnel immediately aft of our flag-deck. The attack continued.

I sat there, gazing impotently at the attackers with nothing more than a fountain pen and note-book in my hands, while the gunners, messengers, surgeons, range-finders, and unseen engine-room and gun-room men worked, I found emotional relief in shouting, loudly perhaps, at the Japanese. I discovered depths of serenity previously unknown to me. One young signaller was passing me bits of information in between running-up the

He told me, "A couple of blokes are caught in the lift from the galley to the servery. They're trying to get them out."

The yeoman of signals interjected, "How the bloody hell did they get there?"

"Dunno."

There was a short lull, and the boys dug inside their overalls for cigarettes.

The loud-speaker again: "Enemy aircraft ahead!"

Lighted ends were nipped off and the ship's company went back into action. There were twelve planes. The boys on the flag-deck whistled.

"One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—ten—eleven—twelve. . . Any advance on twelve, gentlemen? No? Well, here they come!" It was the wag of the flag-deck, and he levelled his signalling-lamp at *Prince of Wales*.

It was 12.10 by my watch. All the aircraft concentrated on *Prince of Wales*. They were after big ships without a doubt. A mass of water and smoke rose from *Prince of Wales's* stern. They had hit her with a torpedo. A ragged mass of flame belched without a break from her Chicago-pianos, as well as heavier, instant flashes from her high-angle, secondary armament. She listed to port. It was a bad list. We were about six cables from her.

A snottie ran past and called as he went, "*Prince of Wales's* steering-gear is gone." It did not seem possible that those slight-looking aircraft could have done that to her.

The planes then left, obviously having used all their torpedoes. I could not believe it was over.

"Look, look!" shouted some one. "There's a line right under our bows!" It was the wake of a torpedo that had missed us, and we could see it churning on eastward.

Prince of Wales signalled us and asked if we had been hit. Captain Tennant replied, "No, not yet. We have dodged nineteen."

Six stokers arrived on the flag-deck. They were black with

"THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

... and oil; the skin hung from their hands like dirty muslin. They had been caught down below when the bomb exploded. They were being taken to the armoured citadel, at the base of the mast, for treatment. The list on *Prince of Wales* had increased. There was a great rattle of two-pounder cordite cases as the boys of the Chicago-pianos gathered the empties.

A new wave of planes appeared at 12.20 P.M. The end was near, though we did not know it. *Prince of Wales* lay about 100 cables astern of our port side. She was helpless. Not only was her steering-gear destroyed, but also her screws by that first torpedo. Unlike the German *Bismarck* caught by the Navy in the Atlantic, which lost only her steering-gear and was able to keep moving in a circle, *Prince of Wales* was a hulk.

All the aircraft made for her. I do not know how many there were in this last attack, but it was afterwards estimated that there were between fifty and eighty Japanese torpedo-bombers in operation during the entire action. *Prince of Wales* fought desperately to beat off the determined killers who attacked her like a pack of dogs on a wounded buck. *Repulse* and the destroyers formed a rough circle around her, to add our own power. All ships fired with the intention of protecting *Prince of Wales*, and in doing so each neglected her own defences.

It was difficult to make out her outline through the smoke and flame from all her guns except the 14-inchers. I saw one plane drop a torpedo. It fell nose-heavy into the sea and churned up a thin wake as it drove straight at the immobile *Prince of Wales*. It exploded against her bows. A couple of seconds later another hit her—and another.

I gazed at her turning slowly over on her port side, her stern rising under, and dots of men jumping into the sea, and was struck against the bulkhead by a tremendous shock as *Repulse* was hit by a torpedo on her port side.

I saw Brown kneeling on the deck in a corner, holding his

head. I wondered if he had been hit, but he stood up and I knew it was noise that had upset him. We all tied on our life-belts and life-jackets. Mine was like a motor-cycle inner tube; it had a valve to put in the mouth to inflate it.

With all others on the flag-deck I was wondering where the torpedo came from, when we were staggered by another explosion, also on the port side.

Then every one cheered with more abandon than any football crowd. Although *Repulse* was rapidly listing to starboard that great roar from her company hailed the destruction of another Japanese plane. It also hit the sea in flames. The shout was the last defiant gesture of the ship's company—they knew by the rapidly sloping deck that there was nothing left for them but the sea.

Repulse was hit by a third torpedo. Then happened things that Kipling knew:

Hit, and hard hit! The blow went home,
The muffled, knocking stroke—
The steam that overruns the foam—
The foam that thins to smoke—
The smoke that clokes the deep aboil—
The deep that chokes her throes
Till, streaked with ash and sleeked with oil,
The lukewarm whirlpools close!

My note-book, which I have before me, says, "Seven Japs down so far. *Repulse* got third torp. Listing badly."

The loud-speakers spoke for the last time: "All hands on deck! Prepare to abandon ship. God be with you."

I noted the time. It was 12.25 P.M.

We all trooped down the ladders, most orderly, except one lad who climbed the rail and was about to jump to the lower deck when an officer called, "Now then—come back—we're all going the same way." He rejoined the line.

THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

seemed slow going. Like all others, I suppose, I was
led to leap to the lower deck, but the calmness was catch-
We were able to walk down the side of the ship to the
the lay so much over to port that it was a steep but easy
even upright. I found my shoes did not grip the steel
so I kicked them off.

to the torpedo-blister, which protruded about three
from the side of the ship. It barred progress to the sea.
you got on top of the blister there was no turning back—
had to jump some twelve feet into the sea. I paused in
of the blister. I cannot swim. Indulging in a little mock
I suppose, or more probably playing for time, I opened
cigarette-case. There were two cigarettes in it. I put one in
mouth and offered the other to a sailor standing beside me.
said, "Ta. Want a match?" We both lit up and puffed
or twice. But the sea would not wait for *Repulse*. Her
had developed so fast you could see it.

he said, "Well, I'll be seeing you, mate."

plied, "I certainly hope so. Cheerio."

the sea was black. I jammed my cap on my head and
ped. I remember drawing breath first. As I sank I thought
going straight to the bottom. My descent into the warm
ers off the eastern coast of Malaya seemed endless. The
er was a greenish colour below the surface. Then I began
g and kicked like mad to get away from *Repulse* before
sank to be followed by the "lukewarm whirlpools." . . . I
a glimpse of the bows of *Prince of Wales* disappearing.
kicking took me in the wrong direction, straight into the
spreading fuel oil. It felt thick as velvet. A wave hit me,
ng me around, and I had a last glimpse of *Repulse*. . . .
she was about one hundred yards away. Her underwater
es were a bright, light red. Her bows rose high as the air
pped in the underwater forward compartments tried to
ape. I thought of the officer who had fallen from a ladder

previously and was now with his broken ribs and arm in the sick bay. Repulse hung, bows high in the air, for a second or two, then slipped easily out of sight. I had a tremendous feeling of loneliness. I could see nothing capable of carrying me.

I kicked, lying on my back. My eyes were burning as oil crept over me: in my mouth, nostrils, ears, hair. I remember seeing water that I spurted out of my mouth was black. I came across two men hanging on to a round life-belt. They were black. I told them they looked like a couple of Al Jolsons. They said, "We must be an Al Jolson trio, because you're the same." I have wondered since if I knew either of those men. Another man joined us, so we had an Al Jolson quartet on one life-belt. It was too much. In the struggle to keep it lying flat on the sea we lost our grips and broke up, possibly meeting again later somewhere in the sea, though not being able to recognize each other because of our masks of oil.

I was in a panic, left on my own, to escape from the oil. All I achieved by my wild kicking was to bump into a floating paravane. Once again there were four black faces with red eyes gathered together in the sea. Then we saw a small motor-boat with two men in it. The engine was broken. I tried to organize our individual strengths into a concerted drive to reach it. We tried to push or pull ourselves while hanging on to the paravane. The paravane was too awkward to handle. It overturned and we all lost it. My underwater struggles happily took me nearer the idly floating boat. After about two hours in the water—two hours of swallowing and spitting out black oil—I reached a thin wire rope which hung from the boat's bows. My fingers were numb and I was generally weak with oil-poisoning, but I held on to that rope by clamping my arms around it. I called to the men aboard to help me climb the four feet to the deck.

They tried with a boat-hook, but finally said, "You know,



SURVIVORS FROM "PRINCE OF WALES" AND "REPULSE"

In the centre, holding the oar, is the Royal Navy's youngest petty officer, Eric Monaghan, who pulled the author out of the sea. (See p. 70.) The photograph was taken by the author aboard the rescuing Australian destroyer *Yamagiri*.

Photo "Daily Express"



"THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

we're pretty done in, too. You've got to try to help yourself. We can't do it alone."

I said, "I can't hold anything."

They put a boat-hook, through my shirt-collar, but it tore. They said, "Sorry, pal, we can't lift you. Have you got that wire?"

I said, "Yes."

They let me go, and there I hung again. Another man arrived and caught the wire. He was smaller than I am. I weigh 182 pounds. The men aboard said they would try to get him. "He's lighter than you."

They pulled him aboard, during which operation I went under again when he put a foot on my shoulder.

The mouth of one black face aboard opened, showed black-slipped teeth, red gums and tongue, and said, "To hell with this!"

He dived overboard through the film of oil and into the sea and popped up beside me with a round lifebelt which he put over my head, saying, "Okay, now let go of that wire." I could not. I dared not. It had kept me above water for fifteen minutes. They separated us, however, and then I was hanging like a dummy through the life-belt, being hauled aboard at the end of a thick rope which they could grip with their oily hands.

They stretched me out on the deck. The one who had dived in massaged me and softly sang Scottish songs.

"What are you?" he asked. "Are you a stoker?"

"No," I replied. "I'm a reporter."

"A what?"

"I work on a newspaper."

He called to the others, "Hey, hear that? This bloke here's a newspaper reporter!"

The others said, "Go on! Is he really?"

"What one do you work for?"

I told them.

One said, "My ol' man takes that. 'Ere, give us a good write-up, won't yer? What d'yer know, eh? Blinkin' newspaper reporter! Won't my ol' man be tickled!"

As he rubbed my arms and legs the singer asked my name. I told him: Gallagher. He insisted thereafter on calling me "Hughie," after Gallacher, the Scottish footballer, whom he admired considerably.

We were picked up by the Australian destroyer *Vampire* (she was sunk four months later), and I and some others were stripped and left lying naked on long tables in the fo'c'sle to sweat and recover.

On the way back to Singapore I found my rescuer. He was the Navy's youngest petty officer, Eric Monaghan, twenty years old, and he had worked with Lieutenant Hulton in *Repulse's* after 4-inch gun-control turret.

Captain Tennant was aboard *Vampire*, too. He had a bruised cut on his forehead, where he had struck some wreckage diving into the sea.

Admiral Sir Tom Phillips obeyed the out-dated tradition which says the senior officer must go down with his ship. It was a grave loss. We needed gallant little Admiral Sir Tom Phillips. . . .

I remembered seeing some aircraft flying about when I was in the sea, but I could not say whose they were or how many there were. In *Vampire* they told me that the Japanese torpedo-bombers which had delivered the last attack had flown over the scene when *Repulse* disappeared and that they had signalled the destroyers which were picking up survivors that they could continue unmolested. "We have completed our task. You may carry on."

Well, I never had any real confirmation of that. I never heard it from any officer who may have seen any such message personally. I think it is possible, however, that these torpedo-bomber pilots may have done this. The Japanese Navy and

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Naval Air Arm are said to have a higher code of honour than their Army and its Air Arm. They are said to be more apt to practise as well as preach bushido. And also, having achieved such a great victory (I cannot help but think the pilots themselves must have been astonished at the apparent ease of it and that Japanese G.H.Q. must have had grave momentary doubts as to the truthfulness of their pilots' claims when they returned)—after such a success they could afford to be merciful. It put the seal on their victory.

As for our own planes, I was told in Vampire that two Buffaloes arrived on the scene about an hour after the two ships had sunk. In Singapore I was told that three Buffaloes had been sent out to the ships when Singapore picked up a radio signal from *Prince of Wales* stating that a heavy torpedo-bombing attack was in progress against them. I was told that these aircraft had been sent out from Kwantan air-field, half-way up the east coast of Malaya. I was not able to find confirmation or denial of these statements in Singapore.

My breath smelled of heavy engine oil for more than a week afterwards. I suffered from acute vertigo and had pains in the back of my head. I was under the impression I was suffering from oil-poisoning, although I did not know exactly what that might be. I went to a Singapore doctor and simply told him the symptoms; I gave him no clues, as I wanted him to have a clear mind when he examined me. I wanted him to tell me what was the matter, so I did not say where I had been.

He made me strip and lie on a table. He tapped me, used his stethoscope, looked at my tongue, inquired after my bowels, and all the rest of it.

Then he tapped my diaphragm.

"Listen," he said. He laid a knuckle on it and tapped it sharply with another knuckle. There was a hollow sound.

"You've got a dyspepsia," he announced. "Take some castor-

RETREAT IN THE EAST

oil." The diagnosis cost me £1 3s. 4d. The mortifying aspect of it is that I think he was right.

Most of the men who were lost were in *Repulse*. When Admiral Sir Tom Phillips knew that his ship was crippled—that the torpedo which destroyed her steering-gear and screws had turned her into a hulk, a stationary target for the torpedo-bombers which were bound to follow the first wave—he ordered all men who were not necessary for the maintenance of the ship's electrical power and other vital services up on deck. When, therefore, the order to abandon ship was given, many more men were able to leap into the sea and save themselves than would have been the case otherwise.

Repulse was in action until the last. Although the first bomb that hit the port hangar started a fire that lasted throughout the action, not a man was released from his duties below, wherever he may have been. All her guns fired ceaselessly throughout each attack, and they were still firing when she was hit by the third torpedo, which immediately caused her list to increase sharply. Even as she went over to starboard one of the port multiple-Lewis guns was firing. On my way to the main-deck and the sea I passed a gunner lying among empty shell-cases beneath the breeches of the triple 4-inch gun-turret on the starboard side. He had not been dead long. Blood had just begun to trickle to the deck from his head, which was deeply gashed. He wore asbestos gloves and headphones. The gun at last was silent.

It was only after the third torpedo shook the ship that the loud-speakers sounded throughout the ship (except in areas where the lines may have been broken): "All hands on deck. Prepare to abandon ship. God be with you."

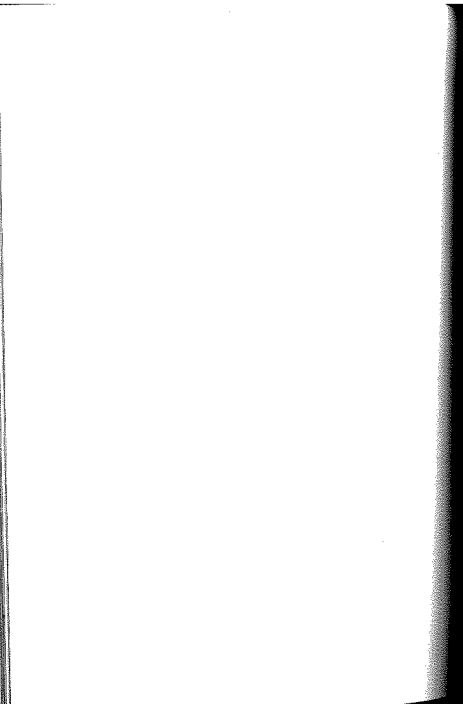
It must have been too late for many men down below to get out before the sea rushed powerfully into the ship, to sweep them off their feet or to jam hatches closed by weight of water.



ON BOARD THE DESTROYER "VAMPIRE"

The author is seen third from left. The ship is the Royal Australian Navy destroyer which picked up survivors from *Palao* and *Ripter*.

Photo "Daily Express"



"THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

and trap them below. The three torpedoes must also have cut parts of the ship from escape-hatches.

Repulse went down fighting. None can say how the brave men down below fared during those last minutes. . . .

These waters were said to be the home of many sharks. Many of us thought about them when we took to the sea. Yet no one was attacked by a shark. There was not a report of one being seen. The reason is obvious: they had been frightened away by the uproar of the exploding torpedoes and the first few bombs.

After Rangoon had fallen and I was in Calcutta, I heard the answer to a question that had worried me for some time. What was that twin-masted, single-funnelled merchantman I, and probably the whole of Force Z, were looking at when the Japanese attack opened? It had carried no flag.

In Calcutta I met her captain. He was British; so was his ship. He was beating it out of Hong Kong. When the Japanese air attack began on Force Z he was in the middle of it, but managed to slip away without being molested.

In Singapore later I also met the pilot of the plane catapulted from *Repulse*. He ran out of petrol fifty miles from Singapore and had to land in a minefield. He was found by a Catalina, which dropped food tied to a Mae West life-jacket for him and his gunner which fell so far off they had to inflate their rubber dinghy and row to it. After picking it up and on their way back to their plane the dinghy sprang a leak and sank. They swam to their plane and were later picked up by a minesweeper, which towed them out of the minefield and all the way to Singapore at eight knots. After a few days the plane was serviced and they were back on the job again.

I met Brown the day after we were sunk—and Abrahams

"What did you do with your camera? Did you throw it into the sea with a defiant gesture, or what?" I asked Abrahams.

He replied, "D'you know what—that's a funny thing. As I was walking off the flag-deck I passed a life-belt locker. I put my camera and plates in it and locked them up."

Brown asked, "When are you going back for them?"

Brown remembered he had done something equally absurd. He wore a pair of hand-made shoes, all in one piece in what the Americans call "reversed calf." I pulled his leg about his fancy shoes, but he liked them. So much so that when he stood on the torpedo-blisters, about to jump into the sea, he remembered he had them on. He bent down, undid the buckles, took them off, and laid them neatly side by side as he would outside his hotel bedroom door, before taking his chance in the sea.

I heard afterwards also a grim story about the unsung heroes of every naval action: the stokers and engine-room men battened down below decks.

After *Repulse* was hit in the boiler-room by the first torpedo some of the men tried to get out by climbing up the dummy funnel.

Those who did escape did so by climbing up the ladder inside the live funnel, gripping the burning steel rungs with their gloved hands till they burned through, and trying to hold their breath until they reached the top and were able to fall out a few feet into the sea, such was the angle of the ship at that time. . . .

Brown met Captain Tennant, of *Repulse*, later in Singapore. We had found Tennant (now Rear-Admiral) most helpful (like most of the Navy), and he had a keen sense of the value of good propaganda.

"Hullo, captain," said Brown, when he spotted him. "I'm glad to see you're safe."

"Thanks, and the same to you. Well, did you fellows get what you wanted?" as though it had been laid on specially for our benefit.

"THE LUKEWARM WHIRLPOOLS CLOSE!"

That is the spirit of the British Navy, that overworked force that has been in action every day since the war began in 1939 (and for a short while before that).

"Not the sort of a story we were hoping for, captain."

"Ah, well—make the best of it."

In the offices of "Aspro" later I met Brown. He said, "Gee, kid, we were worried about you. When we couldn't find you on our destroyer I remembered you couldn't swim. Say, what happened to you?"

I told him, and then said, "It certainly seems that 'Aspro' is after you all right. They'll get you yet, Cecil."

"By God—they will. They will."

Brown and I had been on three jobs together. I applied by with the R.A.F. to Khota Barn. I found Brown had also applied. We took off with a squadron of Vildebeeste, obsolescent torpedo-bombers which were ferrying torpedoes to Khota Barn, the most advanced airfield in Malaya, in preparation for attacks against the Japanese Navy. He had the gunner's seat in one, I had the same seat in another. The journey north was without incident but we did not get back to Singapore until it was dark. There was low mist over the airfield. My pilot dove into it in search of the ground. We went all-out, a roaring, rocking 110 miles an hour. I thought we would crash into other unseen aircraft.

Woosh! We swept past the mast-head of a ship. We were about thirty feet off water, so it seemed. A gap in the mist—we saw another Vildebeeste. We caught a glimpse of the flare-path and were enveloped in mist again. Down went my pilot, preparing to land. I do not know how he knew where he was. We hit the ground, bounced once or twice, and rolled to a stop. Down came all the others . . . nine, ten, eleven. . . . It was a fine piece of flying. . . . Wait, where's the twelfth?

I went to the duty pilot's hut. "Have you seen a tall American named Brown? He's a reporter."

"No, I haven't, but I'll tell you where he is," said the duty officer. "Go down to the end of the field. You will find a crate up-ended in a ditch. Brown was in it. I don't know what happened."

I found him at the doctor's. He was suffering from shock.

"It's 'Aspro,'" he declared. "Those guys don't like me."

Another time about ten of us went to an island off Singapore to see the big guns doing night-firing. Afterwards we went into a mess to drink a beer. We came out to find that the open truck which had carried us up the steep hill from the jetty had got its rear wheels stuck in a ditch. We all climbed in, thinking the Malayan driver would pull it out easily once he got the engine going.

But the driver had other ideas. He got behind the truck, which was facing downhill, and pushed. He pushed it free and then ran to jump into the cab and grab the steering-wheel. He could not catch up with the truck, which careered down the hill.

I was first into the truck and I was first out. I shouted "Jump!" as I was in the air. Everybody did, except Brown. We saw the truck leave the road and head towards a drop of about 150 feet to the sea. As it went over bumps Brown was thrown into the air and generally tossed about among the benches which had been put there for us to sit on. The front wheels hit another bump, which turned them to the right, and the truck came to a stop. We dashed up to find Brown prone on the floor amid a heap of benches.

"Are you hurt?"

"What happened?" asked the dazed Brown.

When he recovered he said, "It's 'Aspro.' They're after me, kid."

Then he went into the sea off *Repulse*. . . .

CHAPTER FIVE

Impregnable Fortress

I WAS in bed in the Adelphi Hotel, Singapore. It was about three o'clock in the morning. The date was December 8, 1941. The telephone rang.

Almost whispering, a voice said, "This is Fisher here. Can you come to the office at once? We've just received an important statement. Will you tell the others staying in your hotel?"

I phoned the others, including Tilman Durdin (*New York Times*) and his wife (*Time*), and lay for a moment or two thinking about Madrid.

"The Japanese have started something. I was in bed the last time something like this happened. Madrid; about ten o'clock in the morning. Heard people shouting 'Blanco, blanco, blanco! (White, white, white!)' Couldn't make it out. 'Phone ringing that time, too. Guy I shared a flat with—'Say, you still in bed? You'd better hop down to the censorship—and don't bother dressing. Franco is here. Madrid has fallen!'"

Not quite the same this time. I climbed out of bed and—
Crump! Crump! Crump!

Bombs, by God! On Singapore. . . . My immediate thoughts were thoughts of praise for Major Fisher, of the Queen's Royal Regiment, and presently one of the senior officers of "Aspro." For the first time "Aspro" had worked with the utmost efficiency. "Aspro's" function was to tip us reporters off on social news and see we got facilities to do our reporting.

"You want news," Fisher might have said. "O.K.! Here it is—Crump! Crump!"

When I got to the hotel lobby all the lights were on, including those in the open court-yard. I shouted to the night-clerk to put them out, which he did so promptly that I bumped into an unknown woman, who asked, bewildered, "What on earth are we to do?"

Durdin and his wife were now in the lobby, and the three of us began walking to Union Buildings, on Collyer Quay, where "Aspro" had its offices. There were no taxis.

We heard a couple more crumps—fairly distant. But it did not seem like an air raid at all. Something was out of place. Then I understood.

"I'll be damned!" I exclaimed. "Look at all the lights."

"We know," said petite Mrs. Durdin, her voice gravid with foreboding. "We've seen them, too."

Every single street-light was on. The Japanese were bombing a fully lit-up city. It made me feel sort of naked, walking under the street-lamps. I longed for the obfuscation of London. Durdin said he had better take Mrs. Durdin into the municipal offices as we passed them. I walked hurriedly on as some more crumps came faintly from some distance away. I got to a bridge and was about to walk over when a voice shouted, "Halt! Who are you?"

I told the voice, and it said, "Stand still."

I did, and a Malay in what looked like police uniform came up to me, crouching behind a fixed bayonet. He wanted to know where I was going and why. When he was satisfied he lowered his bayonet and said, "What they doing? Why don't they put lights out, heh?"

"Ask me, brother," was all I could reply, and went hurrying on to "Aspro." Nobody could say what was happening, except that hostile aircraft were operating. The "Raiders passed" signal sounded at 5.10 A.M., and it was found that the damage had

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been slight and the casualties few, except where one bomb fell in a crowded part of the Chinese quarter, which was one of the most thickly populated areas in the world.

This extraordinary episode (which has not been reported before) did not improve the morale of those thoughtful whites, Chinese, Eurasians, and Malays who had noted the "drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die," atmosphere that had permeated the city for months past.

The first news that one section of civil officialdom had that there was an enemy air raid came from a woman. A bomb fell into, and destroyed, a house on the opposite side of the street from hers. She and her household took what cover was available, but noticed that there was still a glare in the sky from the lights of central Singapore—and that the lights in her street were still on. She telephoned the police.

"What on earth is happening?" she asked. "Why doesn't someone put out the lights? There's an air raid on."

The policeman replied, "That's quite all right. It's only a practice."

She was a woman of some will-power, as I had it on the best authority she did not emit a single swear-word but said pertly, "Well, they're using real bombs then. One has just blown up a house opposite."

She did not know that police, A.R.P. officials, power-station employees, and others were at that time searching for one individual who had the key to the central switch which would black-out the city. They found him after the Japanese raiders had left. Theoretically it was an excellent idea to leave the control to one trusted man; it might have been a fine precaution against sabotage.

And so the war began. . . . The City of the Lion had been caught unawares. Pearl Harbour had been attacked that same

Way up in the north lay the small British army, the weakest

link in the British defence-line that ran half-way round the world, from John o' Groats to New Zealand. Their positions lay mostly in the jungle: the jungle that had once been described as impenetrable and which ill-advised politicians continued to refer to as impenetrable—even after both the British and the Japanese had proved it to be nothing of the kind. The first British troops to pioneer the Malayan jungle—primordial jungle that was popularly supposed to be a living defence-wall—were men of the Indian Army. They made their way through it, in full battle order and carrying mortars, as long as two years before the Japanese attacked. There could not have been, therefore, any illusions at G.H.Q. about the impenetrability of the jungle.

Months before the new war began British and Indian troops settled down in the rubber-plantations and jungle-zones of the Malaya-Siam border with typical stoicism, to live a dreary, morale-withering life of waiting, waiting, waiting. . . . Apart from military exercises and games, there was little for them to do in this land where elephants lived, and walking fish, and flying lizards, and almost-human gibbon apes. They did not even get supplies of papers and magazines from the Tuan Besar in Singapore. Plenty were available down there; ships still brought American art-paper magazines that individually weighed as much as two dozen bullets.

They found the most depressing places to live in were the rubber-plantations: long, sombre corridors of rubber-trees, all evenly spaced, with leaves so thick they kept out the sunshine. In wet weather, they told me when I visited them, the "drip, drip, drip" from the trees nearly drove them mad. They lived in quickly built attap houses, attap being the name of the tree that furnished the leaves for roof and wall. Because of dampness all the houses stood on piles four or five feet from the ground.

When I first saw the British troops in their jungle positions

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They were surrounded by vegetation so thick that although a thunderstorm had been pelting down for about fifteen minutes only a few heavy drops splashed on their tin hats. The main volume of water had not yet penetrated the vast, green canopy. Leeches fastened themselves on my bare knees. The jungle boys always wore slacks.

"Light a cigarette," an officer said. "When they fasten on don't pull them off—you'll leave half of them behind—just tick them up with the lighted end. They'll fall off."

They gathered all sorts of strange pieces of knowledge about the jungle and its inhabitants. They told me, for instance, that they had been no cases among them of a leech's incision becoming septic. That, they said, was because the leech, before stepping off replete with blood, injected a minute dose of something which prevented blood-coagulation for some minutes, and before the consequent bleeding (not great) washed out the viable germs. I was sceptical; they insisted it was true.

They became almost attached to their strange, teeming new world as they then considered the jungle to be.

Another officer told how he had made a reconnaissance of a part of the jungle in his area and had found big, evenly spaced, round holes in the ground. He could not imagine what they were for, but he came across a mound of elephant-dung. He used the elephant's footprints, he said, as steps up the peak. He also seemed to have seen in the mangrove swamps a periopthalmus, a walking fish. It was on the branch of a mangrove-tree, and when he startled it, it fell off and hopped into a hole in the ground. It went down tail first, and kept its head out, looking at him. If they did not see these things I cannot imagine what they picked up the details. . . . (Some months later I saw hundreds of small walking fish in a swamp in West

.)
The waiting British troops also became something of a novelty to the botanists, as their jungle and paddy-field defence-lines

were fringed with exotic flowers. Heavy, sweet-smelling jasmine perfumed their camps; flaunting, scarlet hibiscus drooped over their pill-boxes. Their nights were sometimes miracles of theatrical drama. Electrical storms raged at one period of the year. Lightning momentarily cut the velvet darkness of the jungle to reveal ghostly panoramas of writhing vegetation. Olympian thunder drowned the din of myriads of insects and birds, and set the monkeys chattering witlessly. . . .

In general, however, their days were hours of boredom.

Commanding officers did what they could to provide them with diversions to fight the melancholia that flourished in the oppressive semi-darkness of the rubber. Looking down the avenues between the trees, you could see hundreds of "Vs for Victory" cut in the bark. These Vs were tended daily by Tamil labourers whose duty it was to milk these milch cows of the vegetable world. From the point of every ironical V dripped the fluid called latex, into small clay cups. Tamil labourers poured the latex from the cups into milk-urns.

As elsewhere, the British troops adopted stray dogs as pets. They were smarter dogs than most that survived their first two or three days in the rubber. Latex looked like milk. It was nicely laid out in a multitude of little cups at a convenient height. So was it to be wondered at that a number of dogs drank it and later died? It set rapidly in their stomachs.

It was through these rubber plantations that the Japanese carried out their first infiltration movements, better armed against our outnumbered defenders. During the first week or two of the battle for Malaya they tricked the British and Indian troops by posing as Tamil latex-collectors, but under their white toga-like wrappings they carried sub-machine-guns.

The original British front against Japanese-occupied Siam was divided into three sections of approximately equal length. The central sector consisted of virgin jungle. There were no troops

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stationed there. The two other sections consisted of flat quagmires—quagmires to the military but rich, food-yielding land to the rice-eating Asiatics who tended them.

Through these two sections ran roads, though the road on the eastern section did not penetrate deeply into Malaya. It was supposed that Japanese armoured vehicles would have to use the roads; that only a few would get through the jungle and paddy-lands. Unfortunately it did not work out that way. They had overwhelming numbers—reinforcements that *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were courageously sacrificed to prevent arriving—and they cleared the roads before them of our defenders. Their tanks used the roads. . . .

When the Japanese war began there was not a single tank in Malaya. The backbone of Britain's 'panzer' units was a small number of Rolls-Royce armoured cars, manned by Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. I saw one still carrying bullet-holes from engagements in Palestine when Arabs under the direction of the renegade Mufti rose in revolt. These vehicles were museum pieces; they were used in the Middle East during the war of 1914-18. The Argylls were proud of the fact that they were able, by dint of hard training, to dismount the guns from the cars in two and a half minutes if it became necessary to abandon the cars themselves. I noticed that only one car out of six carried the heavy machine-gun. They had been removed from the others for distribution elsewhere and the slots were covered by small steel plates.

Singapore continued very much the same as it had done before the war. There were still dances and *pahit* parties, right up to the time when the Japanese had pushed down to Ipoh, centre of the tin-mining industry, half-way down Malaya, half-way to Singapore.

The newspapers in the city—and more dangerously the Singapore radio, because it was continuously monitored by the Japanese—committed the most extraordinary breaches of

security. It was not their fault, I suppose, as each breach I noticed was contained in some official statement handed to them to publish. One, I remember, made reference to Singapore Island's stocks of flour. It said that on and from a certain date all stocks of flour would be stored at No. so-and-so, in such-and-such a road, so as to facilitate Government control. Knowing that Singapore was as likely to be besieged as not and that food would therefore become a military objective, I thought at the time that this was not a piece of information to broadcast to the enemy. My fears were correct, for when the Japanese reached the Straits of Johore some months later they used their artillery with such effect that they picked off individual buildings at will. Witness the intermittent shell-fire maintained upon Government House until it had to be abandoned by the Governor, Sir Shenton Thomas, who moved into the Singapore Club.

I recall at this stage an interview a number of us had with the C.-in-C., Far East, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham. Among the reporters present were Raymond Maley (Associated Press of Australia), Tilman Durdin (*New York Times*), J. Selby-Walker (Reuter), Harold Gard (United Press of America), Harry Standish (*Sydney Morning Herald*), Yates McDaniel (Associated Press of Australia), Cecil Brown (Columbia Broadcasting System).

I took a complete note of the interview—I still have the notebook. We were told by the C.-in-C. that we could use it as background. A detailed report of the interview has not been published before.

It took place on December 3, 1941. The Japanese attacked Malaya, Manila, Pearl Harbour, on December 8, 1941 . . . five days after the interview. . . . Mark that—only five days later.

Sir Robert said, "There are clear indications that Japan does not know which way to turn. Tojo is scratching his head."

As Japan did not have a definite policy to follow, irrevocably,



CAPTAIN TENNANT, OF "REPULSE"

In this photograph, taken by the author thirty minutes after his rescue, the captain is talking to *Repulse's* chaplain Canon J. S. Bozzant, Chancellor of Liverpool Cathedral, just after they themselves had been rescued. The chaplain was seen in the lowest parts of *Repulse* during the action, administering last rites and using a hypodermic needle for bad cases.

Photo "Daily Express"



step by step, said Sir Robert, "there is a reassuring state of uncertainty in Japan."

There were no signs that Japan was going to attack any one, said Sir Robert. In fact, he declared, she was withdrawing troops from French Indo-China. Indeed, he added, in some parts Japan was assuming defensive position, making preparations to fight defensively, "which is a good sign."

As an example Sir Robert cited information he had that two Japanese aircraft-carriers had been sent exercising off the Japanese mandated islands. Planes were sent ashore from the carriers. "You do not send fighter aircraft into the middle of the Pacific if you intend launching an attack," was Sir Robert's interpretation.

As we left the conference Durdin (*New York Times*) and I, discussing this remark, decided that it was probably exactly what one did do if one contemplated an attack against United States territory. Neither Durdin nor I was a qualified militarist.

Sir Robert also confessed that his greatest worry as C.-in-C., Far East, was shortage of aircraft, but, he mentioned, he was satisfied with the United States Brewster Buffalo, adding, "We can get on all right with Buffaloes out here, but they haven't got the speed for England. Let England have the super-Spitfires and hyper-Tornadoes. Buffaloes are quite good enough for Malaya."

Many fine, courageous pilots were lost in the inferior Brewster Buffaloes. Two Australian pilots who took part in the Battle of Britain fought their Buffaloes throughout the Battle of Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. They were the only two left out of their squadron. When they were last heard of they had got into the habit of congratulating each other when they met in the mess each evening, saying, "What, we're both still here? This is too good to be true. It can't last!"

Sir Robert also told us that Japan had a "powerful force of long-range bombers stationed in South French Indo-China."

RETREAT IN THE EAST

... Seven days later *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were sunk off the central east coast of Malaya by Japanese torpedo-bombers. These two great ships were out there at sea without any fighter protection. . . .

There was another question that perturbed a number of us, including official foreign observers. Many troops were being withdrawn from the Western Desert and being sent to Malaya. Why should this have been necessary?

Chinese troops did not, unfortunately, take part in the Battle of Malaya. Chinese civilians in Singapore showed considerable courage, discipline, and willingness to accept responsibility during the days it was besieged.

The attack down the mainland of Malaya began. The Japanese had begun to force a breach in the flimsy back-door to Singapore. Beyond doubt Singapore was an "impregnable fortress"—if attacked from the sea. British propaganda on this point had been so good in the years of peace that the Japanese apparently took our propagandists' word for it; but, unfortunately, they also took a leaf out of the Nazi diary of the Battle of France. They outflanked Singapore as the Nazis outflanked the Maginot Line.

I went north to see our allies, the Gurkhas, in their positions. They came from Nepal. The country of the Gurkhas is an independent state. The East India Company did not win the Gurkha War of long ago; the Gurkhas capitulated and the British never entered their country. The peace terms were honourable ones, acceptable to both sides. The result is that the Gurkha country remained an independent state and whites may enter it only if they are given permits by the Gurkha authorities.

They are firm believers in a saying common in Nepal: "First the missionary and the Bible; then the trader and the flag; then the soldier and the musket."

So the peace terms said: No white men.

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The British have an envoy at the court of the Maharajah, and the Gurkhas have an envoy at the Court of St. James's.

British agents are allowed, in peace-time, to recruit 20,000 Gurkhas for service in the Indian Army. The war of 1939 was ten months old when the Gurkha Durbar, or Government, asked the British Government if their relations with each other had become strained.

Hastily the British Government said no; on the contrary, they hoped they had never been so good.

Well, said the Gurkhas in effect, why are there so few Gurkhas serving overseas in this war?

Because, replied the British, we may not recruit more than 20,000 Gurkhas unless general mobilization has been declared in India, at which time your Durbar would reconsider the number. And, added the British, general mobilization has not yet been declared in India.

This was merely a technical difficulty so far as the Gurkhas were concerned, and readily removed. There began, at the request of our allies, a steady flow of these small, tough, magnificent fighting men to the British fronts in the Western Desert, to Malaya, and to Burma.

Many of them had never seen white men before. Nor had they seen aeroplanes. The first pair of boots many of them had worn was the pair issued with their khaki uniform.

You might almost say that fighting is the main occupation of the Gurkhas. If there are five brothers in a family two will stay at home while three join up.

The British major with me said, "See that subadar-major—there. Well, I remember when he joined up. He was fifteen. His father retired ten years ago with three rows of medals from the Boer War and France. On the North-West Frontier the old man's father once killed twelve rebels and brought their heads back in sacks for the colonel to see, and also to

explain what he had been doing during his six days' absence without leave."

In the last war the Gurkhas came down from their craggy country to help the British. They came down again in this war. I asked the subadar-major how he came to be in Malaya with the British army.

He said, "We are allies. The British are at war. The Gurkhas come to help them."

They are among the best friends the British have. The British, in turn, have the greatest respect for them.

As soon as they had settled down in Malaya the subadar-major said to the colonel: "Colonel sahib, there ought to be a lot of game here. There must be lots of pigs to kill." He said it wistfully; the colonel said he was probably right and he would see if anything could be done about it. He knew what the subadar-major had in mind; the Gurkhas are great hunters.

"Give them ten years in a place and they'll kill everything that walks or flies," said a major. "Then they'll start on the porcupines, and things that live underground."

One of the first things they did on arriving in Malaya was to celebrate *dasehra*. They sought out a prime water-buffalo and took it to a piece of open ground. Around it were gathered as many of the men as possible and all the regiment's available weapons, mortars, machine-guns, rifles, kukris (short swords, the Gurkha's national weapon).

The most adept wielder of the kukri then severed the animal's head. If it came off in one blow then the regiment would experience the best of luck for one year. On this occasion the head was severed with one stroke, then carried round in front of all the assembled weapons. All guns present would be sure of accurate shooting for one year.

At once the subadar-major sent a telegram to the colonel, who happened to be in Singapore: "Buffalo sacrificed beautifully."

To which the colonel replied, "Congratulations."

Among the men in Malaya were a number who had proven their loyalty and strict regard for discipline in remarkable ways. In peace-time one of them had eight months' leave, and returned—one year late. When he showed up he was not the same man. It seems he had been mauled by a tiger when returning and had had to go home again to recover.

Another was saying his farewells before returning to his unit. He went to a new bull he had bought, to bid it good-bye. It gored him. They carried him inside and he asked them to call the local *mochi*, or boot-maker. The *mochi* sewed him up with a leather thong, and after a rest the Gurkha set off to his unit. His officer hurried him to the military hospital when he saw him, and asked him what on earth had made him undertake such a journey. He replied that he had never reported back late from leave in twenty-three years and he did not intend to start now that he had had his first leave since being promoted subadar.

For stamina the Gurkhas are hard to beat. They had a race—a sixteen-mile round trip up a 4,000-foot mountain. It was done between breakfast and lunch. . . .

I doubt if any troops are as popular among the British as the Gurkhas. It is a pity that the majority of them do not know each other's language.

They fought with the cunning and courage which is their birth-right alongside the British and Indians in Malaya, but remorselessly the Japanese drove them back. They were unable to cope with the over-numerous Japanese and their superior weapons, including aircraft.

The Japanese had control of the air. I remembered an interview I had had with the Air Officer Commanding, Far East, Air Vice-Marshal Conway W. H. Pulford, C.B., O.B.E., A.F.C., a few weeks earlier.

He said, "Japan's best fighter is the Navy 'O.' It is on a par with our Buffalo, certainly not much faster. . . . The major assignment of the R.A.F. is the Far East in general, of which Singapore is only the key. The defence of Singapore and Malaya will be attack."

What else could he say? The battle had not been joined at that time. The outcome was that the Japanese proved their aircraft better than those—Brewster Buffalo—used by the British, and they were most certainly more numerous.

The R.A.F. and the R.A.A.F. might have achieved more had the Army been able to hold their ground. The nearer the Army was driven to Singapore, the greater the difficulties of the airmen became. It meant that they were given shorter and shorter warnings of approaching enemy planes as the Corps of Observers were forced to retreat with the Army; less and less time to gain height over the Japanese.

This was not the fault of the Army. They were outnumbered against a better-equipped attacker. Mr. Eden said at about this time, "Singapore has not been neglected." I am bound to suggest that Mr. Eden was misinformed.

Or perhaps he had been reading the splurges written by a colleague of mine, Leonard O. Mosley, war reporter for the *Daily Sketch* and Allied Newspapers Ltd., London. Here are some of his lines: "Singapore, nerve-centre of Britain's defensive system in the East, is sharpening her teeth." What sort of teeth has a nerve-centre? He referred to "giant guns guarding the jungle-fringed shore . . ." and said (this rightly belonged to the "Hang-out-our-washing-on-the-Siegfried-Line" period when Ironside said, "We wish the Hun would attack; we want to have a crack at him"), "Australian, British, and Indian troops in the hot, fly-infested forest are ready for anything, while clouds [my italics] of planes daily patrol over neighbouring islands." Rot.

"Clouds" of planes? . . . At Khota Baru airfield—which Mosley visited—was one squadron of Lockheed Hudson bombers. One squadron at our most advanced, important base to meet and repel the Japanese Navy. . . . It was ill-advised, over-optimistic guff like this which also increased the difficulties of the fighting forces later. Too much was expected of them. They were made out to be stronger than they were. When Malaya and Singapore eventually fell, as was inevitable without the assistance of powerful reinforcements then beyond the power of the British or United States Governments to supply, the public was more deeply shocked than it need have been.

And so the Japanese came to Johore. This was territory to be defended by the Australians under Major-General Gordon Bennett. The Japanese pushed on and forced the British to retire into Singapore Island itself.

Once again unbelievable short-sightedness was revealed on the part of the planners of Singapore as an "impregnable fortress." Singapore Island's main source of water-supply came from Johore, on the other side of the deep Johore Straits. It was carried over the Straits in a big pipe-line that rested on Johore Causeway, a heavy stone-and-concrete affair. As the withdrawal into the island was decided upon it meant that the causeway had to be destroyed also. But to cut the causeway would be to cut the island's main water-supply. . . . There was no alternative (Mr. Eden: Singapore has not been neglected. . .)

Was a thorough job of demolition done on the causeway? Was it so destroyed that it could not be of the slightest use to the enemy? No. The only section destroyed was at the Japanese end of the causeway, and that was a small wooden section that could be elevated to allow the passage of small ships. The rupture in the causeway was bridged by Japanese sappers within three hours of its destruction.

During the withdrawal into the island there occurred one of those typically British actions in which all their dignity,

courage, and determination is revealed. There was no secret scurrying across the causeway in the dead of night. None of that. The remnants of the heroic, fighting-mad Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders battalion crossed the causeway into the island—on their way to their last fight, in which they died almost to the last man—with a magnificent flourish behind their pipers, who played "I Dream of Jeannie with the Light-brown Hair."

The end came quickly. The behaviour of a large number of Australian troops was peculiar. Suffice it to say that Major-General Gordon Bennett often told war reporters in interviews that his men would never retreat because they did not know how to retreat—they had not been trained to retreat. The spirit was admirable, but the wisdom of the decision doubtful. How could the Australians be expected to make an orderly, fighting withdrawal if such a manœuvre had not been included in their training?

The Japanese were soon upon the city of Singapore itself. They were soon among the now disordered haunts of the *Tuans Besar*. At this moment a whole division of new British troops arrived and disembarked to go straight into the battle. They, too, were lost among the 70,000 troops killed or captured by the Japanese, who had complete air superiority.

I can report for the first time that, though ordered to cease firing and withdraw, some considerable number of troops from Great Britain refused to do so. They said they would not be able to get away and rather than be captured they would sooner fight, die, and take as many Japanese with them as they could. They continued to fight until they had no ammunition left, and then resorted to their bayonets. The prisoners were tortured and killed by the blood-lusting Japanese in reprisal.

General Wavell used his utmost endeavours to have that last division of new British troops to arrive in Singapore diverted to Burma while they were still at sea. He was unsuccessful. . . .

Had they gone to Burma they would have landed there soon after a brigade of the Royal Tank Corps, operating American-made tanks, arrived. A new division and tanks in operation against the Japanese, with the 5th and 6th Chinese Armies, just moved up to the front, would have made a considerable difference to the Battle for Burma.

Mr. Eden: "Singapore has not been neglected. . . ." No, but it was too late then. . . .

I left for Burma.

The windows of the flying-boat were blacked-out with curtains so we should not see the defences of Singapore from the air, and so that we should not see any naval shipping that might then be approaching or leaving Singapore. We pioneered the new route through Sumatra. Japanese air activity from Penang, which they had occupied, made the normal, shorter route through that town impossible.

Once away from Singapore, they let us take down the curtains and we saw a long string of jewelled islands floating in the greenest sea. Jungle islands, looking soft and lush from the air, the vegetation coming right down to their coral edges, where it was reflected in the flattest sea that ever was. They had all the neatness of Holland as seen from the air, these minute emeralds in the Dutch colonial crown. Then we flew over the Nicobar Islands and on to the Andamans, the convict settlement for India.

We went ashore for about half an hour, and ran into the British garrison's manœuvres. The garrison consisted of one company of the North Staffordshire Regiment. Their young captain chatted to us, and said there were 5,000 convicts in the settlement and they were guarded by 150 Sikh police. "We'd have a sticky five minutes if the Japs came. We'd give them a fight, and then I suppose we'd have to take to the jungle."

Some of his men trotted past, carrying full battle order. They were sweating in the humid heat.

"Come along, come along! And don't walk—you're being b—— well bombed!" shouted a lieutenant as they went on with their exercises.

The Andamans were occupied by the Japanese three months later. After the fall of the Dutch East Indies and Malaya, and Southern Burma, it was not possible for the British to hold them with the forces then at their disposal. They were abandoned—the convicts were removed.

We flew on again, the last lap to Rangoon. Aboard was Captain Hallet, R.N. He had been in a ship which caught fire in the Atlantic, six hundred miles west of Ireland, in 1941. Oil-pipes over the boilers cracked and sprayed oil over them. The seas were tremendous, he told us. One minute the sea would be seventy feet below the ship's side, the next it would be level with the main-deck. There was no stopping the fire, so a destroyer drew alongside to take off those on board. This was done with few losses.

With us, also, was a man who had come from Shanghai. He had been on the executive food council there. He said the city had rice for only three months. Japan had drained occupied China of rice. A *pickul* (133½ lb.) of rice had cost six Shanghai dollars. When he left it cost six hundred Shanghai dollars—the result, he declared, of Japanese 'squeeze,' or bribery.

This man whom I mention had also been in Japan during the great earthquake. He saw the street rising up in waves four feet high, coming towards him. He was tossed about as though in the sea. He lost his bulldog. It turned up six days later, quite well, but without a single hair on its body.

"Another earthquake like that would do a lot of good," he said, and we all agreed, and came down in the Irrawaddy river to land at Rangoon. . . .

"Non-Belligerent Dopes . . ."

THE story of Rangoon makes a dismal chapter. It is a story that must be told in fairness to the fighting men, especially those who died to try to save it. . . . Rangoon's part in the Battle for Burma was marked by the collapse of the civil government. The civil service as it was constituted there could not stand the strain. This in turn did not strengthen the position of the small British army at the front. An army without a sound base cannot achieve maximum efficiency. How could the R.A.F. have won the Battle of Britain without the support of a powerful civil government?

I doubt if there was a city in the British Empire as drab as Rangoon. It was not loved by the Burmese. To the whites of all nationalities it was a busy commercial port, the main outlet for Burma's rice, her oil, her teak, on the swift, muddy waters of the Irrawaddy.

Her population of about five hundred thousand was an astonishing conglomeration of different peoples. Few really understood the others; few bothered even to try. There was little mutual trust. Nothing was done before the war to clear up the mess.

Small wonder, then, that Japanese propaganda was so successful among the Burmese. The strength of British counter-propaganda can be judged by the fact that Rangoon radio devoted most of its time to popular gramophone records, and news bulletins, and talks in *English*. British propagandists in Burma fought a losing battle, largely because of a shortage of trained directors. The results were not edifying.

As the Japanese army drew nearer to Rangoon the radio adopted as a preface to its news broadcasts a sentence: "Here is the news—do not listen to the rumours." This was soon changed by a cynical, unconvinced public to "Here are the rumours—we haven't got any news."

Rangoon radio closed down for three public holidays. . . . Tokyo usurped the wave-length with three days of Burmese programmes, music, and propaganda to undermine the whites.

This was the unhappy atmosphere in Rangoon, city of the great golden Shwe Dagon Pagoda, where lay two of the Lord Buddha's hairs, when the war came.

The first Japanese bombing of Rangoon took place on December 23, 1941. Shelters were practically non-existent. The few that stood on the pavements, the cement not yet dry, were wisely avoided by all the cautious population: they were made of clay bricks. Well over a thousand people were killed in the first raid. And the great trek began. . . .

Bewildered labourers abandoned the docks where lay scores of ships loaded with thousands of tons of war materials. Sanitary services broke down. Hotels, boarding-houses, flats, private houses, were emptied of their servants. Bus- and tram-drivers vanished. All took the road to Prome and the north and safety. The poorer people carried all their possessions with them, on their heads, on push-carts, or in rickshaws . . . the better-off rode away in their cars, carrying mattresses, food, their money and their jewels (if they had any). The city came to an abrupt, disordered standstill. . . .

A week or two later a message came from Mr. Churchill praising the Asiatic population for standing by their duties, and he lauded the dock-labourers and the lowly sweepers (on whom the vital, rudimentary sanitary arrangements depended) for defying the Japanese bombers. No doubt this was the report he received, but it was untrue. Residents of Rangoon ridiculed his statements. Garbage lay for more than a week in the big

municipal receptacles on the pavements in the centre of Rangoon, their lids carelessly left open. They were the gathering-places for countless crows, which lifted morsels out, pecked at them on trees, and dropped them where they willed.

Bodies of people killed in the first raid lay on the pavements for three days. Passers-by had pulled pieces of sacking or loose clothing over them. Rangoon presented scenes of disorder more ghastly than I had seen in war cities in Abyssinia, both sides in the Spanish War, Shanghai in 1937, France in 1940, or the Middle East. Rangoon was permeated by a foul smell.

The Japanese bombers came back on Christmas Day. They had warned the Asiatic population by pamphlet and radio to move fifteen miles outside the city. It was not necessary. They had already gone. The Governor himself told me he estimated that about 200,000 had gone. I said the figure was nearer 300,000.

Of those bewildered Asiatics who remained many were redoubtable Indian shopkeepers and merchants and night-watchmen, though few shops were open.

There was a shortage of bread. I was in the Savoy Restaurant, Rangoon, owned by a powerful, friendly Greek whom every one called Jack. He was the city's biggest baker, and his bread-wrappers bore the line: "By appointment to His Excellency the Governor." There was an endless stream of people of all nationalities into his shop asking for bread. He had none to sell. Most of his bakery staff had fled.

A Burmese woman said, "What are we to do? We must have bread. It is our food."

Jack said, "Perhaps I bake to-morrow. Go on."

The civil population were given no vigorous lead by the Government. They—the whites, the Anglo-Indians, the Indians, the Burmese, the Chinese—were left to sort out their own salvation.

The Christmas Day bombing drove out those other thousands of poorer people who had been reluctant to abandon their homes for they knew not what uncertainties on the road to the north.

More ships arrived, carrying cargoes of United States Lease-lend materials for China. There was no labour to unload them. The American Military Mission officers, stationed in Rangoon to supervise that end of the Burma Road, were bitterly critical of the lethargy of the civil government. On all sides was asked the same question: "Why doesn't the Governor declare martial law?"

Perhaps it was pressure of work, or perhaps he did not think of it. If the Governor had shown himself more in public, touring the bombed areas, he might have done considerable good, for the psychological effect of seeing the leader on the job was realized by more than one obscure citizen. Noticeably by a white employee of the Rangoon Docks Commission.

He was Mr. "Bobby" M'Lean-Brown, a middle-aged, plump Yorkshireman. He wanted to clear up the mess at Brooking Street Wharves, which had been heavily bombed. So he rounded up his Indian labourers and told them what he wanted. They would go by launch to the wharves, and he would stay with them until the job was done.

Because both Japanese raids had been carried out at about 1 P.M. the belief spread that that was the danger-hour. The atmosphere became most tense at that time. His labourers asked if they could cease work at 1 P.M., take shelter away from the docks, and come back in the 'safe' period. M'Lean-Brown agreed immediately. He would go with them. They got to the wharves, where a dump of detonators and small-arms ammunition had been hit and blown up, and also found thousands of packets of cigarettes abandoned.

"Get on with your work, and when you've done you can all help yourselves to those smokes. Do you understand? They're

all yours, as many as you can carry away. Now let's see you do a good quick job. Come on, now."

He was one of the few men who kept his labourers with him throughout his stay in Rangoon.

Of his wife, Mara, a twenty-five-year-old London girl with two babies, I heard nothing but praise. Their bungalow lay beside Rangoon river. Behind it was the General Motors Corporation assembly plant, which turned out many thousands of cars, trucks, Jeeps, and scout-cars during its period of operation, and whose yards were piled high with hundreds of crated vehicles. On either side of their bungalow lay many thousands of gallons of oil in drums. She would not leave the bungalow to live in a safe area some miles away, because if she did it would mean that her husband (who began work early and finished late) would not be able to get home as he had no transport of his own.

They stuck together, each doing his or her job, and they were an inspiration to many others. An American, Major John Russell, attached to British Headquarters, told me, "People like those built the British Empire. They've got guts."

There were others like them. Nor did they get recognition. I saw an Anglo-Indian in the ballroom of the Strand Hotel on Christmas Day, when bombs fell outside the hotel, take charge of quite a number of excited white women. The "Raiders passed" signal had not yet sounded and people were lying on the floor of the ballroom. Two men carried in an Indian. His left hand was gone, and blood ran from the stump. He was semi-conscious. Women got jumpy. Then a strong, confident voice rang out: "Do any ladies here know anything about first-aid? If so, please step this way. This man needs attention."

That was an order, and two white women fixed a tourniquet on the injured man's arm. The Anglo-Indian went about talking to people, encouraging them, and fixing up tables to give extra cover in case a bomb did hit the hotel. . . . I saw him

in later days. He was a servant in the hotel. He neither asked for, nor got, any particular attention from any of the guests who still happened to be there.

There were the Anglo-Indians and Indians who stayed put in the telegraph office; most of the staff had fled. A bomb burst immediately outside the building in the first raid. It was considered to be a military objective. The skeleton staff stayed on for about seven weeks, grossly overworked, but they kept the lines open. They were not rewarded. Some of them stayed on even after the general evacuation. I was glad to see one of them, a friend of mine—a betel-nut-chewing Indian—turn up in Mandalay with several days' growth of beard on his face. He was tired and dirty. He had stayed on and seen the demolition of Rangoon.

The Strand Hotel, Rangoon's best, tried to keep open for some weeks. After the second bombing only the manager, the assistant manager, and the chef (all three Swiss), and two Anglo-Indian housekeepers, and two Indian scullery-hands, were left. The chef continued to cook, and everybody did the serving, until there was nothing left in the store-room; and then the hotel closed down for good.

The Silver Grill restaurant, and the Savoy, kept open and served soup and one meat dish to customers.

I knew of one shop that kept open until the end. It was a grocer's, owned and run by an elderly Armenian named Morton; his son helped him. He had a packing-case of cigarettes delivered to his shop one day when cigarettes had become scarce. It was seen by passers-by, and the police had to be called to keep the crowd away. The crowd consisted mostly of Chinese who could not understand a word the police said.

The banks added to the general confusion. Rangoon's first raid was on December 23. The banks closed down on December 24, 25, 26, and 27 for bank holidays. December 28 was a Saturday, so they were open in the morning. I tried to cash a

"NON-BELLIGERENT DOPES"

cheque at once, and was told, "Sorry, we're only open to receive payments—we're not paying out to-day." December 29 was a Sunday; they were closed, of course. December 30 was another bank holiday, and so was January 1.

They were open, just when people wanted to draw money, for one and a half days out of nine days.

The scandal of the shipping lying fully loaded with war materials in the river became so grave that one of the local newspaper editors, Mr. E. W. R. Stone, of the Rangoon Gazette, took the bold step of attacking, in a front-page article, those responsible. His main headline was:

OUR FINEST FIGHTING EFFICIENCY WILL BE WHEN THE
BUREAUCRATS HAVE GONE

Another was:

FAITH IN OUR FIGHTING MEN: BUT SAVE US FROM
NON-BELLIGERENT DOPES

He said in his article, which shocked Rangoon officialdom:

There is little doubt that there are ships in Rangoon, and coming to Rangoon, loaded with goods, both for civil and military uses. The difficulty, apparently, is to get them unloaded, and as the Government fights shy of the excellent suggestion for labour battalions (although we cannot think why) we support the suggestion. Let us cut yards and yards of red tape, wound around the customs and port officials, and get down to essentials. The goods are here, and they have got to be unloaded, so let us get down to it and hang the cost. After all, there is a war on.

Stone also recalled a meeting that had taken place a few days before between the then General Officer Commanding Burma, Lieutenant-General Hutton, and Major-General Liu Kwan-Loong, commander of the Chinese then said to be in Burma. Stone said:

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Before we have finished with the job in hand [the war in Burma] Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's assurance, that he will send many more troops to Burma if they are required, may have to be accepted. It is up to us to see that adequate stores and supplies are available for the equipment of these troops.

I doubt if many people recalled these words when the first two Chinese armies to be sent to Burma met the Japanese at Youngoo and had to withdraw in the face of the Japanese attack because, as an officially released message from British Headquarters in Burma said, of a "shortage of ammunition and supplies." . . .

Leland Stowe (*Chicago Daily News*), the most glamorized war reporter in the United States, and I had been greatly exercised over this very question, but had refrained from writing anything about it for fear of being accused of drawing the attention of the Japanese bombers to the port (of revealing "military secrets"). We now decided that as the local paper had dragged it into the open we had better add our criticisms in the hope of bringing about some action before the bombers came.

I had discovered that criticism was greatly resented in Rangoon; it was regarded with that hyper-sensitivity commonly shown by the second-rate, unconfident bureaucrat.

Stowe and I took our stories to the military censor. He said it was outside his province. We took them to the Chief Civil Censor of Burma, Colonel Raymond, a cheery, elderly man who had asked for a job of some sort to do when the war began and had been given the one he now held.

He said to me (it was our first meeting), "Oh, you're Gallagher, are you? God! how I hate the name. What part of Ireland do you come from?"

"I don't, colonel. I'm South African. I haven't been to Ireland yet."

"Oh, I thought you were another of these irresponsible Irishmen."

He read our stories and said, "I simply can't look at these articles. You had better take 'em up to Government House. And tell Binns [the Governor's private secretary] that I wouldn't look at them."

We took them to Mr. Bernard Otwell Binns and asked if he would show them to the Governor. As with the military censor, our quest was unsuccessful.

Binns replied, "Are they about this stuff Stone wrote about this morning—because if they are I simply refuse to show them to H. E. He's absolutely furious with Stone. If he doesn't stop it we will pre-censor his paper."

These statements proved how sensitive to criticism the Government was, and also how difficult it was for newspapermen to expose what was considered to be governmental mismanagement.

And that was that. We picked up our stories—that no one would even look at—and went away.

A few days later poor Stone, of the *Rangoon Gazette*, went on holiday. He was ill. . . . He went to Maymyo, near Mandalay. He never saw his newspaper again, because he was still up there when the Japanese occupied Rangoon . . . and when the Japanese seized a sizeable quantity of war material they found there. It must be said, however, that the greater part of United States Lease-lend war material sent for China and still lying in Rangoon when evacuation of the city became imperative, was destroyed by British and American demolition squads. . . . It would have been better, however, if it had been sent to the Chinese armies earlier on. They could have used it, and so, for that matter, could the small British army in Burma. . . .

I declare that the vacillations of the civil authorities in Rangoon on the question of martial law did irreparable damage to Burma's war effort.

Yanks over the Paddy-fields

NEVER was a country less prepared for war than Burma. Why, when the war began in 1939 Lieutenant-General D. K. M'Leod, then officer in command of the British army in Burma, had only one thousand nine hundred trained white troops at his disposal. The number of Burmese and Indian troops was proportionately small. Everybody said (almost proudly, it seemed to me), "Burma is a military backwater." Imagine, then, the state of her anti-aircraft defences when about fifty Japanese bombers, with thirty-four fighters as escort, crossed the Siamese border on December 23, 1941, bound for Rangoon, whose docks and wharves were jammed full of shipping and United States Lease-lend material for China.

I was on the front steps of the strand Hotel, immediately opposite the new Brooking Street Wharves. Down came a stick of bombs to straddle these wharves, and I lay flat, hugging the top step. The hotel shook, and I was covered by thousands of dry husks, which I thought were seeds of some sort. They turned out to be dead cockroaches, shaken out of the Neon light over the doorway.

Tremendous uproar as the Japanese plastered the city. . . . Considerably more than a thousand people were killed that day. This was the direct result of inadequate instruction in what to do during raids, as the majority were Indians and Burmese standing in the streets gazing up into the sky.

Stowe—the white-haired man they said was too old to report a war, but who went to Norway, Finland, Greece, and China—



AFTER THE CATASTROPHE

Heads bob in the water around a destroyer which has gone to the rescue. The author is among the dots in the sea. Most of these men were among the 2330 saved.

Photo "Daily Express"



and I decided to go to Mingalodon airfield, about fifteen miles north of Rangoon, to see what had happened out there.

It was an appalling sight. They had been caught unawares by this, their first raid, and almost every building on the field had been hit, including the control hut. A bomb had gone through the centre of the roof and carried away even the air-raid siren. The British medical officer and a number of others had been killed. One bomb fell plumb into an A.A. gun-pit, wiping it out.

Then the fighter boys themselves began coming in. This was the first time since 1914-18 that the United States and Britain had flown wing-tip to wing-tip into action against a common enemy. With few exceptions this was their baptism of fire, though some of the A.V.G. (American Volunteer Group) had seen action in China, and two of the R.A.F. pilots had fought in the Battle of Britain.

The first A.V.G. pilot (or "Flying Tiger") I spoke to said, "Boy, those little yellow bastards certainly can fly. That bombing—it was beautiful." And the results of that first united American-British air action over Burma were two United States pilots and three planes lost to about thirty Japanese air personnel and thirteen of their bombers and fighters.

An A.V.G. flight-leader, Paul J. Greene, who always carried a monster revolver, had baled out, and as he came down was shot at by Japanese fighters.

"You want to see my 'chute—it's got more holes in it than the nose of a watering-can."

The way they chattered, hot from the fight; their enthusiasm, their curses, their praise, their avowed anxiety to get back to another fight—it reminded me of the young men of the R.A.F. I knew in Kent during the Battle of Britain. I must have bored boyishly enthusiastic Stowe by my everlasting comparisons between the A.V.G. activities in Burma and the R.A.F. in that bigger battle of Britain.

The boys were still talking when we left:

"... I closed on him. I could see my bullets pouring into him, but the bastard went straight on."

"Yeah, it's disgusting when you pour it in and they don't come down."

In their P.40s, or Tomahawks, as we call them, the A.V.G. destroyed all but one or two of the bag of Japanese that day. They continued to do most of the destruction even until long after we lost Southern Burma. I do not know if any Japanese air crews ever had time to see a Tomahawk at close range, but if they did it must have shaken them. The noses had been painted to resemble a shark's head with wicked eyes and open red jaws. They may have been surprised also at the Petty girl (in bathing-suit; every one a different pose) painted on each Tomahawk.

Thus began the first miracle of the war against Japan. Remorselessly the Japanese sacrificed their air crews in attack after attack, in bitter attempts to break this small United States force which barred their way to Rangoon. They were forced, like the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain, to change their tactics with great rapidity.

First they sent over waves of unescorted bombers. The A.V.G. destroyed them. They sent over bombers with light fighter escort. The A.V.G. destroyed them. They sent over bombers with medium fighter escort. The A.V.G. destroyed them. They sent over bombers with heavy fighter escort. The A.V.G. destroyed them. They sent over, at last, only fighters to destroy these infuriating Americans. The A.V.G. destroyed them.

Lieutenant-General George Brett, chief of the Allied air forces in the Anzac area, told me when the Battle of Burma had just begun, "I give Burma three weeks."

That it took six weeks for the Japanese to get to Rangoon was in part due to the magnificent fighting of the A.V.G.

YANKS OVER THE PADDY-FIELDS

Actually Burma lasted nearly six months—six vital months of preparation in India and Australia.

Preparations for this United States surprise, the A.V.G. (it must have caused a hæmorrhage or two at Japanese G.H.Q.), began months before, when one astute American named William Pawley was given the job of secretly recruiting pilots and ground crews from the United States' three air forces for service in China under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. Pawley was the chief of the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company ("Camco"), Miami. He was authorized to see that adventurous Americans were offered high pay and quick temporary release from the service of their Government if they cared to go and fight for China. Pilots were offered six hundred dollars (gold) monthly. Pay for ground crews was equally high.

Thus came into existence the American Volunteer Group, consisting of the First, Second, and Third Pursuit Squadrons. Wearing civilian clothes, they were shipped across the Pacific with orders not to divulge their real identity or destination. They were the first "tourists" (on Nazi lines) of the United Nations. They addressed each other as "Mister"; no Service ranks were used.

I saw several groups of them in Singapore. I was struck by their fine physique; I do not think I had ever before seen so many tall, broad-shouldered, intelligent, self-confident young men. Many of them wore the loose, brightly coloured silk shirts usually bought by tourists in the Philippines. I checked them up in the hotel register and found entries like "R. T. Smith: American; from U.S., destination unknown; retired acrobat," and "W. D. McGarry: American; from U.S., destination unknown; artist."

I asked one of them, "Do you know Mr. McGarry?"

He said, "Yes, sir, I do. Why?"

"Well, I'm a newspaper reporter and I'm writing a colour-piece about Singapore—you know, about the taxi-dancers and

all that. I wondered if he would accept a commission to do some sketches for my paper—to go with my story.”

The stranger screwed up his mouth, put his head to one side, and said doubtfully, “I dunno—don’t think he would, somehow. . . .” shaking his head.

“Why not?”

The stranger leaned close, with exaggerated caution looked to see if anyone was listening, then whispered, “Because he can’t draw a line—see?”

Others described themselves as “Presidents-in-training,” or just plain “tourists.”

They continued to arrive and cause a stir in the haunts of the staid Tauns Besar by their easy, friendly familiarity with everybody. I think they might have been more discreet, though. We soon all knew who they were.

Away they went to China to meet the man who made the A.V.G. one of the world’s finest fighting units: Colonel (as he then was) Claire Chennault. I never met him; but every A.V.G. pilot frankly said they owed all to the colonel. It seems the colonel had made good use of his years in Japan. He studied the Japanese air forces with such assiduity that later, as chief of the A.V.G., he was able to tell his pilots exactly how the Japanese would fly, where to find their weak spots, how to avoid their strong ones, and, in fact, how to beat them.

The Burmese population of Rangoon and neighbourhood were also surprised at the obvious inability of the Japanese Air Force to fight through to Rangoon and its docks, after those first two raids in December. They were so impressed that they attributed it to nats (pronounced “narts”) or fairies, in whom every Burman believes.

One told me, “The nats are protecting Rangoon. They are too powerful for the Japanese acroplanes.”

I tried to explain to him that in this instance the nats were

none other than a small number of solidly built young Americans. I did admit, however, the spiritual presence in Burma of one extremely wise nat, who was in fact living in Chungking. He was a nat they called Chennault, and he had been made a brigadier-general in appreciation of his good services in training all the young nats to shoot down the Japanese.

The shrewd, appreciative Chinese Government, to whom the entire A.V.G., from the colonel to the auto-mechanics, were under contract, gave a verbal promise to pay the pilots five hundred dollars (gold) for every Japanese plane they shot down. Up to March, 1942, the time of his death in action, the highest scorer was Squadron-Leader Jack Newkirk, who had shot down seven Japanese, an average of one a week. After Newkirk's death, easy-going, shrewd Squadron-Leader Bob Neale became highest scorer with fourteen up to March, 1942.

They were the world's strangest, highest-paid mercenaries. They were the first men in nine years to inflict a fighting defeat on the Japanese. In those dark days they held command of the air—command which none of the wiles or men-sacrificing bludgeonings of the Japanese could wrest from them. But their command of the air was, unfortunately, only local. They were the kings wherever they happened to be based. There were but three squadrons. All could not be on operations together; one or two of them had to be held in reserve. After a long period of fighting a squadron had to be withdrawn to be rested, and a reserve squadron went forward to replace it.

The A.V.G. gave all of us who were there to see them the surest clue as to how this war will be won. The Japanese air forces will one day be grounded wherever they lie, by superior air crews flying superior aircraft. How onlookers like Stowe and me longed for thirty squadrons of men and machines like these, thirty instead of three. . . .

"We'd ground the Japs here and now if only we had another six squadrons and the fields to operate from," said an A.V.G.

boy to me in February, 1942. "We'd knock them hellwise and crooked."

Up to the Japanese occupation of Rangoon the score-card read, "For every A.V.G. pilot lost the Japanese have lost fifty air personnel (pilots, gunners, observers)."

Up to April, 1942, the score-card was: eighty Japanese aircraft lost to one A.V.G. aircraft—and by June, 1942, the score was: 284 Japanese aircraft destroyed with a loss of only fifteen A.V.G. boys killed or missing.

Shades of their ancestors of the Lafayette Escadrille. . . .

What were the secrets of this small, formidable fighting force? How were they able to guarantee to beat the Japanese—so vastly superior in numbers—every time they went up to engage them? What was their inspiration?

One of them told me, "Money." He was a sardonic young man.

I tried to analyse them and came to these conclusions.

All were volunteers. All were enlisted regular fighters. They had agreed of their own free will to leave the air forces of the United States Army, Navy, or Marine Corps, which were then marking time. They went to China with chips on their shoulders, not merely willing, but anxious, to fly pursuit in actual war. That, I think, was secret No. 1. Their morale was the highest.

Secret No. 2: Every man was hand-picked. From the physical standpoint, "You were out," one of them told me, "if you had a half-rotten tooth." From the mental and moral standpoint one of the clauses in the contracts they had to sign with representatives of the Chinese Government in the United States said the volunteer had to be easy to live with. If, when he reached China, any volunteer was found to possess bad habits or bad temper, or turned out to be a dark, grumbling pessimist, he was, at the request of his comrades, given a free passage home. (I heard of none going back this way.)

YANKS OVER THE PADDY-FIELDS

Secret No. 3: If a volunteer joined up in the United States because he was carried away by glamour pictures in the art-paper magazines of heroic pilots hugging beautiful Oriental girls in sarongs, and less; if he expected hero-worship in foreign war-zones and instead found the war offering nothing more than high pay and nothing to spend it on, mud, cold, bad food, boredom, fear, and sometimes futility, and consequently felt he had been cheated—then he would be offered an honourable and free passage home again. The fundamental rule of the A.V.G. was, "We only want the men who want us."

Secret No. 4: Whatever the A.V.G. made of itself would be the fault, or the honour, of the men themselves. The original idea belonged to some one else, it was true, but once the Group was formed it became the men's own responsibility. Unlike a national army, navy, or air force, where a volunteer found his individuality lost in the vast anonymity of thousands, the A.V.G. gave its members the chance to retain their individuality. This gave each a pride in the Group. If it went bad it was the personal responsibility of the members.

Secret No. 5 was the Group's honestly democratic way of running itself. A tough little Communications Chief, "Mickey" Mihalko, of the Second Pursuit Squadron, put it this way: "Any man in this outfit can do as he damn well pleases." His squadron-leader, Jack Newkirk, a long-limbed, serious New Yorker, and a fine leader, would have put it differently. I imagine he might have said, "Any man in this outfit is damn well pleased to do anything there is to do if it'll help beat the Japs." That was the spirit of the A.V.G. as I saw it during countless meetings with the boys.

Secret No. 6 brings me back to the sardonic young pilot who said, "Money." Good reward for good service is apt to bring out the best in a man. And an A.V.G. man knew his family back home did not have to worry about cash.

The unique A.V.G. did have something no other air force

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had. Americans, regular Service men flying P.40s (Tomahawks) in the Philippines, in the Netherlands East Indies, in Australia, did not achieve the same dazzling victories against the more numerous Japanese as the A.V.G. in Burma. Brigadier-General Chennault had a lot to do with it, and democracy. Democracy is an unusual thing in any organized fighting unit. Except, perhaps, among guerillas—and guerillas frequently give the enemy more worry than fully militarized units ten times their size.

Even orderly-minded Newkirk said if the A.V.G. was incorporated into the regular army it would add minutes to the time it took them to take off. To be really orderly entails a certain amount of formality. Formality takes time. Japanese don't wait.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Descendants of the Gods Descend

ON October 15, 1941, fifty-five days before Japan completed the ring of fire round the world by bringing war to the Pacific, the British Air Officer Commanding Far East, Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, summing up for me in Singapore the Japanese Air Force, said, "Their best fighter is the Navy 'O.'"

On December 25, 1941, while the Japanese were still celebrating the day by their second air raid on Rangoon and Mingalodon air-field, an A.V.G. pilot said to me, "We've just seen our first Navy 'O'. Boy, it's just like shooting fish in a barrel."

I thought to myself, "Hold your horses, feller. You're going to land in trouble."

Then down out of the fight came a boy from South Dakota, Flight-Leader Duke Hedman. He had been a farm-boy before he became a pilot. Ground crew and pilots (momentarily idle), Stowe, and I gathered around.

"What did you see, Dook?"

"Plenty. The sky's full of them."

"What did you get, Dook?"

"Five."

"Wha-a-t! Hey, who are you razzing?"

"No. It's right. Four bombers and a Navy 'O.'"

He was not fooling. He had set up a world's record. Five enemy planes in one fight—just like that. He had been up with two other Tomahawks for an hour and a half without seeing any Japanese. Then the flight ran into a formation of twenty-seven bombers and fighters. The running fight that

ensued lasted for half an hour, during which Hedman got his five.

Another A.V.G. pilot, Wingman W. E. Bartling, put up a world's record that day, too. He attacked and shot down two Japanese, and was himself attacked and shot up so badly he had to make a forced landing. He did so beside a railway-line. No sooner had he climbed out of his Tomahawk than an Englishman came up to him and said, "You must need a drink," and took him a few yards to a parked railway-coach. The Englishman was a railway overseer, and this was his travelling home. They sat down and drank beer. . . .

As Bartling said, "I claim a world's record. I shot down two Japs, got shot down myself, and in five minutes I had a bottle of beer in my hand. How's that?"

The total for that Christmas Day was twenty-four Japanese (six of them fighters), against two A.V.G. planes and one R.A.F. plane, with all three pilots saved. The Japanese had a total of one hundred planes up. They lost a quarter of them. This percentage is notable, as all that a fighter command hopes to bring down, its highest ambition, is 10 per cent. of each raiding formation.

Americans living in Rangoon, mostly General Motors Corporation men who supervised the assembly plant for Lease-lend vehicles—everything from Jeeps to scout-cars—organized a ferry-service from the city to the airfield, carrying sandwiches, iced beer, candy, cakes, and cigarettes to the A.V.G. boys. A new mess had not yet been established to replace the one gutted in the first Japanese raid two days earlier. They certainly were proud of their boys, these American civilians, and they showed it. So much so that it embarrassed some of the A.V.G., who said, "I feel darn' sorry for those R.A.F. boys over the runway there. They've had nothing for two and a half days. Say, why don't some of the Britishers round here take them something too?"

They got back to discussing the engagement, and one said, "I'd sooner fight those bastards than eat," and stuffed half a sandwich into his mouth.

Another added, "And you can quote me on that, also."

"How many did you get, MacMillan?" they asked the vice-squadron-leader.

"First I got one for Gilbert. Then I got one for Martin. Then one for myself—but they knocked me out and I lost my ship, so I'm going right back up there to get another."

It was supposed to have been MacMillan's day off, but he had said, "Hell, no—there's no bank holidays in war-time." That was how he came to avenge two of the A.V.G. boys who were killed in the first raid on Burma.

He crash-landed his Tomahawk deep in the barren plains, near the Siam frontier. Burmans gave him a bullock-cart and a horse and a guide, to put him on his way back to Mingalodon. "They wouldn't take a cent from me, and said they were mighty glad to see me alive." He brought back a fine souvenir with him—a Japanese officer's sword.

It was after these two actions, December 23 and 25, that the A.V.G. really got into their stride. They were under the command of the R.A.F., to whom they had been lent by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek to help protect Rangoon, which to him was of the utmost importance, being the sea end of the Burma Road. The Air Officer Commanding Burma, Air Vice-Marshal Stevenson, who was an operational commander of day bombings from Britain before he came out, said of the A.V.G., "They're admirable. Full of fighting spirit. All I've got to do is hold 'em back, and that, believe me, is a pleasure for any commander."

Of all their adventures perhaps the most amusing one took place at a Japanese-held air-field in Siam, called Raheng. In an effort to impress the Siamese the Japanese invited a big number

of their officials from the surrounding countryside to the air-field to see the heroic Japanese pilots take off, to eat lunch themselves, and then be ready to watch the return of the magnificent Japanese pilots from a raid against the despised Americans and British in Burma.

The take-off was all right, supposedly; but what happened immediately after that is not known, as there is no record of a Japanese fighter strafe having been carried out anywhere that morning. Japanese planes were over Burma, though, for the alarm was given and the A.V.G. and a number of R.A.F. took off.

Acting on information radioed to them from observers on the ground, the A.V.G. formation of six Tomahawks got a line on Raheng air-field. They went there and arrived at the precise moment when the heroic Japanese pilots were landing—"without any losses, after beating up Burma," I suppose the tale was. The Japanese-loving Siamese officials no doubt applauded.

In sailed the A.V.G. . . . Two Japanese circling the field, preparatory to landing, were shot up and sent crashing in flames among the Siamese officials. They then attacked the five Japanese planes neatly lined up on the ground for the inspection of the sycophantic visitors. They shot them up—flying only twenty feet from the ground—set them on fire, and, just for the hell of it, gave the Siamese a couple of bursts. In a moment the field was cleared of civilians, who had hurried into the surrounding jungle. The A.V.G. flew so low that a number of Japanese soldiers dropped on one knee and fired at them with their rifles. They were leaving, homeward bound, when one A.V.G. pilot saw a truck dashing across the field. He went for it, but when he got back to Mingalodon he was most disappointed.

"I'm not much of a billiards-player. When I hit the truck it cannoned into a burning plane instead of into the only plane left standing at the end of the line."

He had no need to worry, for another A.V.G. pilot who left later saw that last plane, too, and went down and machine-gunned it.

Net result: the Japanese wanted to show their Siamese friends some real flying. They did. The flying was done by the A.V.G., and the Japanese Air Force paid for it—with seven planes destroyed for certain and one probably badly damaged.

The A.V.G. carried out another strafe of a Japanese air-field that same day with good results. In two short actions each A.V.G. pilot in action that day destroyed two Japanese planes.

In the days of peace the dream of every junior reporter was to be the only survivor of a gigantic train accident. The dream of every fighter squadron is to annihilate an enemy formation. We often talked about this dream at Mingalodon. We decided the best thing to do was to shoot down every raiding unit of a Japanese formation and then say nothing about it—leave all the Japanese headquarters from Siam to Tokyo wondering what on earth had happened.

It soon became a reality in Burma. Not once, but twice, the A.V.G. wiped out complete formations of Japanese. One formation numbered eleven, the other seven. We did not keep it quiet.

At this stage the Japanese High Command became so enraged at this flying wall that barred their way that they had Tokyo Radio broadcast in English that Mingalodon air-field was going to be subjected to mustard-gas attacks. Their reason? As stated by Tokyo Radio, "The A.V.G. is using Tomahawks, and it is not fair to the heroic Japanese pilots whose aeroplanes are not in the same class."

A target much favoured and sought after by the A.V.G. was a beam view of a Japanese bomber without any defending fighters about. As a London ground-crew man attached to the A.V.G. remarked, "These blinkin' Japs carry everything except the kitchen stove!" Swords for every one of the rank of

sergeant-major and above, fishing-tackle, torches, rations of cooked rice and fish, and uncooked fish, and up to eight men as crew. Eight crew in a bomber normally carrying five in other forces. To rake a Japanese bomber, side on, from air-screw to rudder was the fighter's delight.

"I couldn't guess what happens inside, but you're bound to hit some one. Can you see them! Stumbling over their swords, falling over their fish, getting snarled up in the fishing-tackle. Boy, it's more fun than you could shake a stick at!"

And so thought another doughty A.V.G. boy from Georgia, whose drawl fascinated all the British from the boys of the R.A.F. to the *Burra Sahibs*, when he got shot up by the Japanese.

He was posted missing after a Tomahawk strafe against the Japanese air-field at Mehsod. They took it badly in the A.V.G. They were all depressed except a New Zealander, who was a Brewster Buffalo pilot. He said, "What are you worrying about? He'll come back all right. Nothing'll keep him down. Tell you what, I'll bet you anything you like he comes back riding a wog cart, or a water-buffalo—or something." ("Wog" is a word commonly used by Australasians. It is said to have originated in the last war, when a British Minister asked Australasians to show more regard for the people of the country where they were fighting. He asked them to show more respect as they were, after all, "Worthy Oriental Gentlemen." . . . So . . . W.O.G.s.)

The missing pilot came back after three days. Although he left Mingalodon in a Tomahawk, he came back in a Blenheim bomber. He told his story briefly: "I shot up one of those little yellow-bellies, and then got shot up myself and had to bale out." He did so on the right side of the frontier, but did not know that the Japanese had advanced and that he was in their lines. He hired himself a water-buffalo cart and a guide, and sat beside the driver while the buffalo plodded slowly through the night and the Japanese lines. He got to Moulmein

air-field, which was still held by the British, and they gave him a lift by Blenheim bomber to Mingalodon. When they told him what a hazardous trip he had made he said, "Well, I sure am surprised to hear that. I sure am."

The A.V.G. shot the Japanese down with such regularity day after day that the Burmese country police could not get round all the wrecks quick enough. One of the many new duties allocated to the Burmese police out in the bush was to visit all crashed aircraft and place guards over them. This was to prevent souvenir-hunters tearing what was left of the planes to pieces and carrying the bits away. Even *hpoongyis*, or Burmese monks who wore saffron-coloured robes and were supposed never to show emotion of any sort, joined in the looting of crashed Japanese aircraft.

The situation got so confused that the Burmese police were unable to point out to Intelligence Officers, whose duty it was to examine all crashes to see if there was anything new to be learned about Japanese aircraft, which plane had been shot down on what day. Single wrecks were being visited twice in the belief that they were two different ones. The police were told to carry chalk with them in future, and mark on a part of each wreck the date they found it. This worked out well, although there was no chalk to be found at many of the country police-stations. Intelligence Officers found the dates without any trouble, however, as the simple Burmese policeman used his finger as his pen and mud as his ink.

This confusion resulted in a conservative total figure being issued officially by the R.A.F., which was in keeping with the R.A.F.'s general, and wise, policy of under-estimating rather than over-estimating the enemy's losses.

On February 2, 1941, the Air Officer Commanding, Air Vice-Marshal Stevenson, sent a message to Brigadier-General Chennault in Chungking, congratulating the A.V.G. on shooting down that day its hundredth Japanese plane over Burma. One

hundred Japanese aircraft destroyed in forty-nine days . . . and, I repeat, it was a most conservative figure. Against this the A.V.G. had lost five pilots killed in action and one presumably a prisoner of war.

This figure was based on actual wrecks found on the ground, or those seen by more than one witness falling into the sea. Most of the battles the A.V.G. fought with the Japanese took place over remote jungle country. Who can say how many wrecked Japanese planes lie there still?

One hundred Japanese aircraft destroyed meant £12,500 to the A.V.G. pilots. Some of them shared their bonuses, from the Chinese Government, of £125 for each Japanese aircraft destroyed with their groundsmen.

But the Japanese still kept flying. They spread their wings over the Dutch East Indies, Pearl Harbour for the second time, many South-west Pacific islands, over Australia, and India. By bombing Colombo in April, 1942, the Japanese did, in fact, complete the circle of war round the earth. Up to that month India had not been attacked.

The total Japanese air losses must have been quite high by then, but—they kept on flying. Their activities did not tally with another statement made to me by the Air Officer Commanding Far East, Air Vice-Marshal Pulford, in December, 1941. He said he believed the Japanese pre-war front-line air strength was two thousand five hundred aircraft of all types.

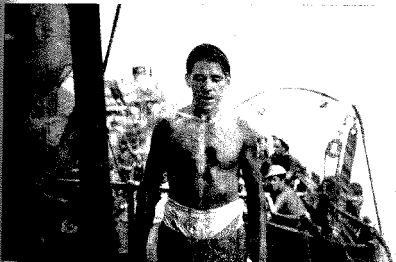
The A.V.G.'s share in the destruction of Japanese aircraft earned for them extraordinary public adulation in Burma. I do not think any white people have been so popular in Burma in all its history. The girls tumbled over themselves to try to get a date with an A.V.G. boy. They were accosted by strangers who insisted on buying them drinks. The American news agencies drove their reporters in Burma frantic with demands for more A.V.G. stories. Men off visiting United States



MALAYAN RUBBER-TREE BEING TAPPED

From the "V for Victory" cut in the bark drips the fluid called latex into the small clay cup attached to the tree.

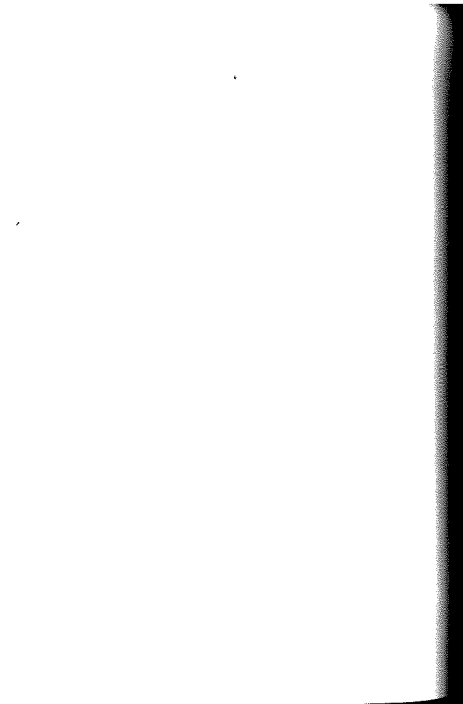
(See p. 82.)



ERNEST SHACKLETON, ANOTHER "REPULSE" SURVIVOR

He had just been picked up when this picture was taken by the author on board H.M.A.S. Vampire. When first seen he appeared to be walking on the sea; actually he was on a piece of board.

Photo "Daily Express"



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merchantmen, carrying Lease-lend cargoes, visited the air-field to see "our boys" and collect bits of Japanese aircraft as souvenirs. One wanted a dud bomb. He said he wanted to take it back to New York and stick it in Johnnie's Bar with a notice underneath saying: "See this bomb?—It's made of American scrap-metal—Bombs like this are killing our boys in Burma—It's a Japanese bomb—see?"

He got some bomb-splinters instead, and wrapped them in tissue paper.

How did it affect the boys themselves? Not much. One or two got a little blasé—when they were out of school. The majority enjoyed it, but did not take advantage of it.

I said to one, "I must say I don't know how you blokes do it. The Japs are no slouches at flying, you know."

He said, "In the air, or on the ground, one American is good for ten Japs."

"That's a bit high."

"I said ten to one."

He was not fooling.

I was keenly reminded of the Battle of Britain once again when I took two R.A.F. men out in the Jeep. It was their day off, and they wanted to go inland to look at a Japanese fighter that was supposed to have landed intact. I worked in Kent throughout the Battle of Britain, and spent much of my time riding round the hop-fields and Romney Marshes in chase of crashing Luftwaffe machines. The similarities between the actions of the R.A.F. in that bigger battle and the A.V.G. in this one were remarkable. In both cases you had a widely boosted and numerically superior force attacking what they had supposed to be an inferior force. In both battles the arrogant attacker paid heavily to find out that he had erred somewhat.

We could not find the undamaged Japanese plane anywhere and were on our way back to Rangoon when we saw those

familiar wheeling dots in the sky which told of a fight. I nearly said "dog-fight." 'Dog-fight' is the most inadequate, ill-chosen word to apply to an air fight in this war. 'Dog-fight' at more than 300 miles an hour?

We pulled up the Jeep under a leafless tree and found that we were immediately below what was the geometrical centre of the fight. We recognized Tomahawks and Brewster Buffaloes, and the usual numerous Japanese.

Out of the fight fell one Tomahawk, close behind it two Japanese. Although he appeared to be crashing, it was evasive action on the part of the Tomahawk pilot, but the Japanese followed him down, regardless. About two hundred feet from the ground, the Tomahawk straightened out and went like the wind. We saw the Japanese still on his tail for a minute or two, when they had to abandon their kill or take the risk of running out of petrol.

Other planes cut out of the turmoil to fly away, out of ammunition, or in search of a place to attempt a forced landing. Out of the whirling centre of the battle came one in a spin.

"That's no evasive action," observed one of the New Zealanders in foreboding tones; and he was more qualified than most to judge after his many hours' flying the inferior Brewster Buffalo (inferior in speed and armament) against the Japanese. A wing came off as it sped to the ground. The rest of the plane left it far behind. It raised a great cloud of dust as it hit the ground. I saw it bounce. Many seconds afterwards the severed wing came swishing down like a piece of paper, and also raised dust as it landed in a paddy-field.

They fell quite close to us, so we hurried over to collect our souvenirs. I wanted the radio-set to fix on the Jeep. I do not know what the others wanted. We were joined by a Burmese who said he knew the exact spot where the wreck had landed. Just before we came to a high railway embankment I found a

piece of shiny, grey fabric bearing a bright orange-coloured ellipse—part of the plane, with the Japanese identification mark, and a good souvenir to hang up at an A.V.G. dispersal point. We crossed the railway—and saw a Tomahawk . . . minus the starboard wing.

It lay upside down and the pilot was half in, half out of the cockpit. He was dead. From the pocket of his leather flying-jacket had fallen a letter. It lay on the dried paddy-field. It was addressed to "Mr. Hoffman" (I have forgotten the address) ". . . United States of America." The pilot's last letter to his father. . . .

It took us most of the day to get police and ambulance-men on the job. We arrived home late, tired, and deeply depressed. The Battle of Britain had also been punctuated by such shocks. . . . The pilot, Flight-Leader L. Hoffman, was the oldest pilot in the A.V.G. He had more flying hours than any of the others. Before he took off that morning he told his friend he did not feel much like flying. His friend had said, "Well, don't fly; if you're not well, why then, tell them so." Hoffman replied, "No, I'd better go. . . ."

They kept on fighting, the A.V.G., as the Japanese got nearer and nearer to Rangoon and the main A.V.G. base, Mingalodon air-field. It got more and more difficult for them, as the shorter the distance became between the Japanese front line and their air-field the shorter the warning they got from the observers stationed in the most forward positions. And, of course, the less warning they were given of approaching Japanese raiders, the less time they had to climb up and get height in preparation for the attack on the intruders.

The Squadron-Leader R. J. Sandell, of the First Pursuit Squadron, was killed. A Japanese fighter, shot through the head by a steel, armour-piercing bullet (bullets which sometimes pass clean through the body without killing), crashed on

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Mingalodon air-field, landing plumb on the tail of a parked Tomahawk. Some said he had been shot up so badly he knew he was going to die and so had decided to take a Tomahawk with him. Others, including a military doctor, thought he had no control over his actions at all and was lucky to hit the Tomahawk in his last dive.

Anyway, he smashed up the tail of "Sandy's" Tomahawk. It was fitted with a new tail, and "Sandy" acted test pilot and took it up for a try-out. Something went wrong. The other A.V.G. boys were watching him; some said he tried to roll too near the ground. He crashed and was killed. They lost one of their best men. Stowe knew "Sandy" fairly well. He could not believe the news; he did not want to believe it. I did not know "Sandy" as well as he, but it seemed like a personal loss. He was a soft-spoken man . . . a level-headed, small-built man . . . a man born with the ability to inspire confidence. He would have done the Japanese no good.

On February 15, 1941, Squadron-Leader Robert A. Neale (who took "Sandy's" place) gathered his First Pursuit Squadron round him on the verandah of one of the huts and gave them a straight talk. The Japs, he said, were coming too close for comfort—or efficiency, so far as flying pursuit was concerned. We had better start making plans for evacuation. He went into detail about road transport for those who did not fly or those who had no planes to fly. The petrol tanks of certain trucks and Jeeps were to be kept full. If anyone used them it was their duty to return them with the tanks full. And so on. . . .

Then he said they had not to think, just because they were flying, that they were doing their duty. That was not enough. They had got to take their full responsibility on the ground as well. (Japanese parachutists were considered a possibility, and Tommy-guns were distributed some days before.) Neale

told the boys that their plan for evacuation at Mingalodon, the base for all their triumphs, was built on a warning of twelve hours. When they got the word they would all have to be out and everything destroyed within twelve hours.

"Hell," said a democratic A.V.G. voice. "We can destroy all there is to be destroyed and *still* be outa here in less time than that. "What'll the hurry be?"

That was the plan. Every one got the details fixed in his mind and went back to his job, the pilots to their cockpits and the mechanics to their tools with which they had done such remarkable work during all those weeks. As the ground crews praised the pilots, so the pilots praised the ground crews—and with reason. They were short of everything, even spare air-screws. In some cases they used empty fruit-cans to repair cannon-shell holes in their Tomahawks.

Their last two fights from Mingalodon air-field deserve mention. They took off to intercept Japanese bombers and a heavy fighter escort reported to be approaching Rangoon.

"Hello, Red One; hello, Red One," called the voice from the ground that directed them in all their battles. "About twenty-two 'O' bandits over Mandalay—going east! Is it understood? Over." (Bandits was the code-word, since changed, for Japanese.)

"Hello, Red One; hello, Red One. We do not know, but angels are very high. Over."

And so it went on "angels" in this case being the not very difficult code-word for altitude, here referring to the altitude of the oncoming Japanese.

They could not find the enemy, so with a flight of R.A.F. Hurricanes they flew down to Moulmein, where the Japanese had installed themselves at the air-field.

When they arrived they found no less than twelve Japanese aircraft in process of landing . . . and in they went. They

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destroyed all twelve of them—three were destroyed by R.A.F. Wing-Commander George Carey, a Londoner, who won his D.F.M. in France during this war, his D.F.C. and bar in the Battle of Britain, and a second bar to his D.F.C. in Burma.

"He's some fier," said the A.V.G.

That day they got twenty-three Japanese, and the day afterwards another twenty.

On that last day Newkirk and Wingman "Snuffy" Smith both distinguished themselves.

Newkirk was chased by three Japanese fighters after running out of ammunition. They chased him forty miles out to sea, taking turns to give him running bursts of fire. He outflaw them and got back to Mingalodon with his instrument-panel shot away, his tyres burst, and his tail shot to pieces. But he got back, and was unhurt.

Newkirk, a grand leader as well as pursuit pilot, was killed in action over Magwe air-field in March, 1942. At the time of his death he was the A.V.G.'s highest individual scorer. He had destroyed seven Japanese aircraft.

"Snuffy" Smith, on that last day, chased three Japanese for miles, and finally shot two of them down. He told me afterwards, "It was duck soup."

An A.V.G. mechanic said of "Snuffy" Smith, "He's a hum-dinger!"

Another added, "I'll say. He's real people!"

Listening to the radio contact between the pilots up in the air and the observers on the ground, we sometimes had interruptions of the strangest sort. There was no apparent reason for them. The radio would be saying, "Hello, all aircraft! Hello, all aircraft. Come home now. It is understood? Come home now, all aircraft." Then a crooner: "Love is a dancing thing. . . ." "This is Nirom Radio calling," interrupted a Dutch girl announcer chirpily. "All clear for Batavia—all clear for

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Batavia" . . . and the crooner went on, "It's dancing my light heart away. . . ." It was odd how the Japanese raids on Batavia and Burma coincided almost to the moment on several occasions.

The boys woke up next morning to find the evacuation of Rangoon in full progress. They—and the R.A.F. Hurricanes—had been left at Mingalodon without any air-raid warning system. The observers normally stationed as near to the Japanese lines as possible had had to be withdrawn or be left in grave danger of being cut off. All the fighter boys on Mingalodon air-field could rely on now was visual spotting from the field itself, which would be quite useless. As you cannot operate any fighter units successfully without some hope of being in the air before the enemy aircraft arrive, the A.V.G. blew up, or burned, anything that may have been useful to the incoming Japanese air forces, and followed the R.A.F. Hurricane boys north to their next base at Magwe air-field. No sooner did they arrive there than they were bombed. The Japanese did considerable damage to the field and to the aircraft dispersed upon it. The A.V.G. were not able to achieve much against them. They had only one minute's warning of the first attack on their new base.

The A.V.G.'s chief *nat*, Brigadier-General Chennault, was responsible for a fine manoeuvre in April, 1942, when fourteen Japanese fighters, fitted with special long-range petrol tanks, attacked them in China. The Japanese were a long way from their base. The A.V.G. shot seven down in a drawn-out action, but still kept flying. They went up in relays. The result was that the Japanese were forced to stay up flying so long that Brigadier-General Chennault was prepared to swear on a stack of Bibles that the remaining seven did not have enough petrol to get back to their bases. Safe forced landings could not be made in the jungle over which they had to fly.

When they occupied Mingalodon air-field the Japanese,

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particularly the pilots, must have had many a thoughtful moment as they gazed at what was left of the base of the A.V.G., the so numerically inferior air force that for six hectic weeks had had the temerity, the ability, the aircraft, and the courage to call "Halt!" to the air forces of His Imperial Japanese Majesty—to call "Halt!" to the flying Descendants of the Gods, who carried swords, and fishing-tackle, and rubber goods, and dirty pictures, in their aircraft. . . .

CHAPTER NINE

Army in Burma

BURMA was lost because the small British army (white trained troops alone numbered only 1,900 when the war began in 1939) was outnumbered, out-armed, outflanked, and, in fact, outfought. But they had courage. Magnificent, unforgettable courage.

The everlasting withdrawals, which continued for so long, did not hearten the troops themselves. They certainly lowered the morale of the civil population, both white and Asiatic, and even encouraged the Burmese to many constant minor attempts to sabotage the British war effort. Too many of these attempts were successful. These Burmese even took up arms against the British Army as a result of the Japanese propaganda, which told them that the British were debilitated and that now was the time to avenge themselves for defeats the Burmese themselves had suffered dating back to the annexation.

The fact of the matter was that Burma had been neglected. It was a military back-water. Priority treatment was given to Malaya in the disposition of forces. None anticipated that avalanching advance of the Japanese through Malaya and down to Singapore. Obviously the British Government knew the weaknesses of Malaya's defences, but they almost as certainly did not expect the Japanese to show such well-organized power in their wide-flung attacks.

The other war that had been in progress for five years between Japan and China may have contributed to the under-estimation of Japan's fighting capabilities. Japan had not been able to

defeat pathetically under-armed China in all those years; how then could she hope to fight a successful war against the ABCD line? How could she launch an attack against Australian, British, Chinese, and Dutch interests when she still had that vast fighting flank in China? And, supposing the United States came into the war, how much more remote became Japan's chances of success!

There is no doubt, in my opinion, that Japan's war with China petered out into gigantic, realistic manœuvres after 1939, when the Japanese had occupied Nanking and Canton, gained control over Shanghai, forced the Chinese into the remote hinterland, and became masters of China's coast-line.

The China war became for the Japanese the militarist's dream. Here he had a vast army sufficiently armed to make the fighting real, but not sufficiently armed to make it a menace to his own army. Instead of sandbags he had live human bodies with which to train his soldiers in the use of the bayonet—this is an indisputable fact. He had real, live soldiers, skilled in manœuvring, as his enemy, to juggle with in training his officers. He had thickly populated cities with which to train his bomber crews. And here was a country in which to keep a vast number of his own nationals who might have caused political difficulties back in Japan. The food, wine, and women of the occupied areas was his for the taking. These are not wild suggestions: they are quite in keeping with average Japanese arrogance, which is without parallel anywhere in the world.

That probably was the true position, but to the outside world the Japanese were being held back by the vast Chinese army. I believe the part played by the ruling Japanese militarists was not sufficiently considered. They played with a real, live war, giving their army and air forces training over a period of years not possible to any other nation in the world. They had pushed as deep into China as they dared at that time, and then they

shrewdly dug in. It must be emphasized, however, that the Japanese did not by any means have it all their own way.

Such operations as the Japanese did carry out were widely publicized by both the Japanese themselves and by the Chinese.

The Japanese militarists publicized them as a sort of account of their stewardship to the Japanese nation as a whole: as a long series of interim reports of what they were doing with the labour, the money, and the sons of the Japanese at home. The longer the war lasted the longer the militarists held power, and the more complete became their plans to militarize the whole nation. . . . and the more the Chinese suffered.

Also, they were playing a bigger game. By continuing this war in China—a war over which I insist they had control, their sleeves being stuffed with peace offers for all occasions—by continuing this war they lulled their real enemies, the white nations, into the comforting belief that they were too deeply embroiled to consider seriously any further aggressions. The reluctance of the white Governments to doubt this was displayed on several occasions. Whenever Britain was involved with affairs nearer home, in Europe or in the Empire, Japan encroached a little further on British interests in the Orient.

The Japanese continued (with a propaganda flourish) their China war until such time as they considered their preparations for their most ambitious plan to be as complete as they ever could be. They used the Nazis as much as the Nazis used them—nay, more so. There is no real affinity between the Nazis and the Japanese. Each works with the other, each has the same mad ambition of world-domination. Were the plans of each to work out successfully, they, the Nazis and the Japanese, would have to fight the last battle.

The critical moment came. It was impossible to bluff the United States much longer. United States war production had become a valuable aid to the British and the Russians. The Nazis, Japan's criminal partners, demanded support after their

repulse from Moscow in 1941. Their demands could not be refused in the interest of Japan's own master-plan. And Britain was not ready in the Orient; she was heavily committed in the West. The time had come to use the men who had been so long in training in China. . . .

History's most infamous act of international treachery was planned. . . . Kuruu was sent to Washington to talk peace—and the Japanese struck in an attack so wide-flung, so powerful, that the truth was at once self-evident. Japan stood revealed—not as the power which could not beat under-armed China in five years, but as the new, cunning, powerful aspirant for world-domination.

Is this exaggeration? The late Professor Taid O'Conroy, than whom no foreigner knew Japan and her ruling classes better, said, "The idea is vast: first Manchukuo, next China, India, Australia, including New Zealand, and Russia. That is the campaign of the Staffs."

So, as part of the gigantic deception, Japan widely publicized her war with China. In her propaganda she frequently and shrewdly gave the Chinese great credit for courage and fighting power.

The relatively unimportant operations of the Japanese army in China during the years immediately preceding 1939 were publicized by the Chinese merely to maintain the high morale of her population. The Japanese invasion had given China national cohesion, willing support by the people of a central Government, on a scale such as China had never known before.

This Japanese war was also a training-ground for China. She was preparing—in an infinitely more difficult way and on an even vaster scale, so far as population was concerned, than Japan—to take her place eventually as a modern world power.

Japan's realistic and, at the same time, profitable war of exercise in China was publicized by the Chinese to attract and

hold the sympathy and support of Japan's potential enemies: the United States and the British Empire.

The result of both Chinese and Japanese propaganda (extremely cleverly done by the former) was that the outside world conjured up a distorted picture of the inability of Japan's militaristic powers to beat under-armed, under-industrialized China. Japan was grossly under-estimated, as we all know. I must hasten to add that this was not the intention of the able Chinese propagandists.

Because of all the possible consequences in India the British Government did not want war with Japan. It used every endeavour to placate Japan without betraying China. The United States Government realized the weakness of the British in the Orient, and a few months before the Japanese attacked they assumed the leading role in attempting to curb, peacefully, Japan's mad ambitions. This became obvious when all Japanese propaganda against the whites in the Orient was switched in November, 1941, from the British to the Americans.

The Japanese could not be stopped; they would not be placated. Malaya was overrun and the war came to Burma, weakest link in the British Empire defence-line that ran from Iceland to New Zealand.

Burma's unpreparedness at the time Japanese troops moved across the narrow Kra isthmus and occupied Victoria Point as it was simultaneously abandoned by the British, is indicated by the fact that even if she had had bombers she could not have used them as she had no bombs. Also indicative is the fact that the rank of the Air Officer Commanding the whole of Burma was that of a group-captain. A more experienced officer, an air vice-marshal, assumed command one month after the Japanese began the war.

General Sir Archibald Wavell, both as Commander-in-Chief of all Allied forces in the South-west Pacific and later, once again, as Commander-in-Chief, India, visited Burma with a

frequency remarkable for a man holding his responsibilities. He actually inspected troops fighting on the Moulmein front. He flew over Siam in a bomber. Another time he landed at Mingalodon air-field when a Japanese raid was in progress. He ran to a slit-trench. The bomb that missed him was thirteen of my paces from his trench.

Wavell in his lectures, *Generals and Generalship*, which were published in 1939, said:

What troops and subordinate commanders appreciate is that a general should be constantly in personal contact with them, and should not see everything through the eyes of his staff. The less time a general spends in his office and the more with his troops the better. . . . He should show himself as frequently as possible to his troops, and as impressively as possible.

Wavell was no idle preacher. His dive into the slit-trench was not "impressive." It was better. It was talked about by the troops for weeks.

As the Japanese swept down Malaya the British made rapid, last-minute preparations for the defence of Burma. Wavell made yet another flight, this time with that distinguished United States soldier, Lieutenant-General George Brett. They flew to Chungking and conferred with the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. Sole responsibility for the Sino-Siam and the Sino-French Indo-China frontiers was accepted by the Generalissimo. That left the British with a smaller front still quite beyond their means to protect with any hope of victory. Brett played a major part in the discussions that resulted in the dispatch to Burma of units of the American Volunteer Group: three squadrons of the finest pilots of the Army, Naval, and Marine Corps air forces of the United States, the first men to inflict fighting defeats on the then crest-riding Japanese forces.

Both these moves, so readily agreed to by the Generalissimo, prevented the Japanese overrunning Burma within a few weeks.

Without the support of the A.V.G. and the Chinese the small British army in Burma, which fought with such fearlessness and which sustained so many bitter defeats and which was so seldom praised, would undoubtedly have been annihilated early in the war.

As it was, they fought that most uninspiring, unspectacular, uncertain form of warfare, a major delaying action, with the highest courage and, despite their high losses, with considerable success. Though continually retiring, they inflicted the gravest losses upon the Japanese army; they seriously disorganized it.

But the British army was hampered by many things.

First, it had inadequate, insufficient weapons. Tommy-guns, an invaluable weapon in jungle-fighting, were actually a curiosity among the forces who made the first stand against the Japanese.

"I couldn't believe it," said an American. "I was with some of your British troops and showed them my Tommy-gun. They said, 'Oh, so that's a Tommy-gun, is it?' They hadn't seen one before, and there they were fighting the Japs. Boy, they've got something!"

Second, the British army in Burma was strangled by the most incomplete communications. They were actually short of telegraph wire. The result was that unit commanders in the jungle were unable to ask advice from headquarters so as to play their part in concerted actions, and headquarters was unable to contact unit commanders in the jungle to arrange co-ordination. Headquarters went for days without news from high officers in the field.

Third, among the British army in Burma there was a surprisingly widespread ignorance of the topography of the country, its people, and its customs.

An officer who had done great work at Dunkirk, the general now in command on the Tenasserim front, was more fortunate than others in having the resident civil District Commissioner as his Intelligence Officer, a Mr. Pilly. Forced out of Moul-

mein, the D.C. offered to join the general so that he could use his knowledge of that part of Burma.

Fourth, the individual commanders in the field, the commanders of small units, were not allowed sufficient licence. They were not able to use their own initiative as the Japanese officers were—even Japanese sergeants had power to make operational decisions. This would have been one way of minimizing the British difficulties and dangers which beset every plan consequent upon the inadequate communications.

Fifth, the British troops were not so well trained in jungle-fighting as the Japanese. Nor had they the realistic training in war that the Japanese had had in China.

Sixth, they were fighting an enemy much more fitted to this type of warfare. The Japanese soldiers were closer to the earth than normal white troops. They were able to live and fight on food that would have been considered impossible by the British or United States armies.

Seventh, they were fighting an enemy whose staff work was superlative. Shortage of all supplies made it impossible for the British commanders to use their talents to the full. They did not have at their disposal either enough men or equipment to allow them to plan and undertake any but the simplest stratagems.

Eighth, they were continually at the mercy of the Japanese air forces. The R.A.F. and A.V.G. fighter squadrons were (once again because of inadequate numbers) tied down to maintaining a defensive vigil at Mingalodon air-field. Occasionally they were able to make sorties to Japanese-occupied air-fields to bomb aircraft on the ground. They were not numerically strong enough to be able to afford to wear out engines by continuous patrols over the British army in the field. They were only able to reach any specified spot where the Japanese might be attacking the troops on the ground in time to engage them; once again lack of communications.

ARMY IN BURMA

Ninth, the British army in Burma, as I have already shown, did not have the support from the civil authorities that they were entitled to. United States war materials—destined for China, it is true—lay in ships in Rangoon river for weeks. Dock labour had fled after two Japanese bombings of Rangoon, and no strong measures were taken by the civil government to provide labour. At the outset the Chinese authorities were reluctant to cede any of their United States Lease-lend materials to the British, but this was later altered on the Generalissimo's instructions.

Tenth, the rapid expansion of the army in Burma (expansion that would make it an army only just big enough to justify its being called an army) discovered the usual shortage of trained officers. There were numerous commissions from the ranks, and even more commissions were granted to intelligent young men who had never seen service before. Inadequately equipped in the ways of war, these officers had the unenviable duty of trying to outwit the hardened, crafty, blood-soaked Japanese officers from China.

Eleventh, out-dated tactics prevented the small British army inflicting even greater losses on the Japanese. Had the inspiration been the teachings of the British Staff College during the Boer War it would have been a distinct improvement. But they were largely 1914-18 tactics that were employed, tactics that were hopeless against the unseen, darting human leopards in the jungle.

But despite all, the small British army in Burma, short of everything from men to munitions, put up a stronger resistance than that which preceded the fall of Malaya. . . .

Outnumbered and poorly equipped, the British and Indian troops had to be on the alert for every deception by the ruthless Japanese.

The thoroughness of the preparations made by the Japanese staffs was shown in the many devious tricks employed during

battle. Making superlative use of the jungle, the Japanese frequently discovered British positions by shouting a few words in strange English, words picked out of a small hand-book compiled for the purpose. In the earlier stages the British soldiers replied—and were attacked immediately.

Nothing was left to chance in the long-laid plans of the Japanese Staffs. The world heard nothing of the minutely detailed plans being concocted in Japan for years before. There were no reports of the busy comings and goings of these apes in uniform who had studied the art of modern war, nor of the activities of those other mockeries of man dressed in trousers, shirts, jackets, collars, and ties, who had found in the West the formulæ of natural science and were applying them to The Plan—the, to us, chimerical plan for world-domination. . . .

The results of this diligence, which we had ignored, were apparent in Burma in the use that the military minions of the elevated apes made of such simple things as fire-crackers. They threw them to one side of British positions, or behind them, where they exploded and naturally distracted the attention of the defenders, who were promptly attacked from the unwatched side. They used their fire-crackers to draw answering fire and to give the impression of greater force than in fact existed.

It says something for the thoroughness of the Japanese Staff that things such as these were not forgotten when all the equipment of war was carried many miles on human backs and on elephants through jungles and across rivers and mountains merely to cause a momentary distraction in the course of a major war. . . .

In the earlier days the British headquarters had insufficient bullets. Fire-crackers were the last thing they could afford to worry about.

The Japanese machine-gunners also used tracer-bullets; their fire converging at a certain point gave the Japanese mortar-bombers their range and direction.

Machine-gun posts were established among the branches of trees, thus enabling their users to direct their fire over the tops of defence-works at the British or Indian troops manning them.

They had not the slightest compunction in using British markings on their aircraft. They also wore the wide-brimmed hats of the Gurkhas.

Up to, and for some time after, the fall of Toungoo the only white troops in action in Burma (indeed, the only white troops in Burma) were men from the British Isles. As in the past, they had the hardest fight, they had the least praise, they were the least noticed—and they suffered the greatest casualties.

I was born in South Africa, my father was an Anglicized Irishman. Without fear, I hope, of being accused of partisanship, I can say that wherever I have seen fighting soldiers, heard their tales, known their losses, seen the results of their victories, I have found few that can stand up to the small-built fighting men from the British Isles. They are seldom commended, frequently disparaged, but they fight and suffer and die as few other men do. . . .

Of the troops who fought and died in Burma, holding the Japanese where they could, making fighting withdrawals where they could not, the men who fought apparently a hopeless battle, delaying the Japanese while the United States began rolling out the most thunderous war machine in history, the Indians and the Gurkhas must be placed high on the roll of honour.

A London-born soldier (in hospital, wounded) said to me in Burma, "Give me an Indian on my left and a Gurkha on my right and the three of us will fight our way to hell and back. If we've got enough ammunition," he was careful enough to add.

In the Western Desert, in Malaya, and in Burma I could ask one question of any British troops and know what the answer would be: "What do you think of the Indians and the Gurkhas?"

RETREAT IN THE EAST

I never heard the slightest word of criticism. I also know from their officers that they are among the world's most co-operative soldiers. If they grumble, then something serious is amiss.

The Japanese main land attack against Burma began with the small British army at another disadvantage. They had their outposts out against the Siamese frontier, but beyond that frontier they could not go. Although the Japanese had assumed control of Siam and were conducting their campaign against Malaya from Siam, and although they had occupied part of the Kra isthmus by advancing out of Siam and were using Siamese air-fields from which to bomb Rangoon and other parts of Burma, the British were not officially at war with Siam.

Kid-glove diplomacy resulted in British troops having to wait in Burma for the attack, which it was known was being prepared from Siam. They could have added many days to the master delaying plan of the Allied Nations had they been allowed to establish themselves beforehand in Siam.

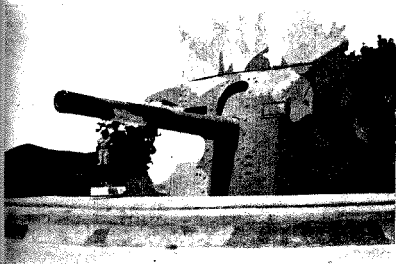
However. . . . On January 21, 1942, the attack began. It was initiated by Siamese puppet-soldiers of Japan. One month after Japanese bombers, operating from Bangkok aerodrome, had killed more than a thousand people in Rangoon, Britain was officially at war with Siam. One hundred Siamese troops crossed the frontier at Palu, due east of Moulmein. They attacked a Gurkha outpost there, and then began digging-in. . . . They had done their bit for Siam.

The Japanese attacked at several spots on a front of about ten miles. In two days Moulmein was threatened. In eight days it fell. There followed a spate of uninspired propaganda that aggravated—instead of mitigating by giving explanations—the shock of each successful withdrawal carried out according to the master-plan.

"The Japanese now face the Salween river," said Burma's amateur military propagandists. "In places it is two miles wide.

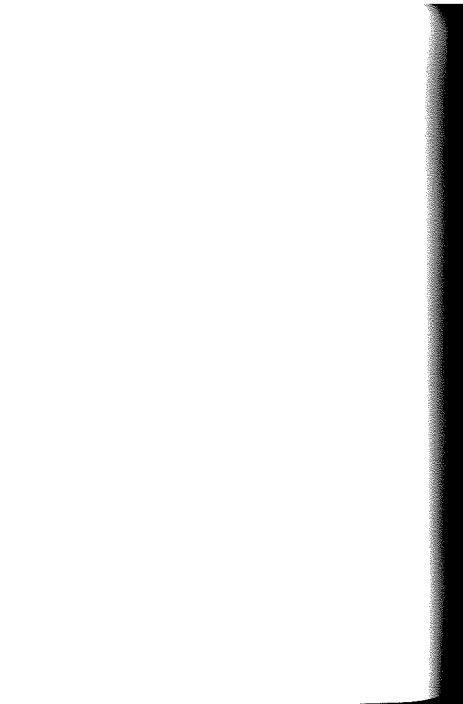


THE AUTHOR IN HIS JEEP IN BURMA



A "JUNGLE CAMOUFLAGE" GUN

These were used for beach protection at Penang, Malaya, but, owing to the course of events, never fired a shot.



It is a deep, swift river. The Japanese will have to come out into the open there. There are a limited number of ferrying-places. They will not be allowed to cross the Salween." . . . And so on.

The Battle for the Salween began. The Japanese began the action by launching an attack from Pa-an early on February 11, 1942.

It is worth while detailing as it was typical of the fighting that continued throughout this period, when the Japanese were forcing their way out of the jungle areas towards Rangoon. It is also typical of the fighting we will have to do in crushing Japan when Germany has been disinfected.

At 6.15 that same evening another strong attack was developed at Kuzeik, and the fighting continued throughout the night.

Next morning at three o'clock a second heavy attack developed at Kuzeik, and the fighting lasted fifteen hours. Both the Indian troops (Baluchis) and the Japanese were worn out, and the Indians were running short of ammunition. Japanese aircraft flew over their positions, apparently making a reconnaissance, and soon afterwards the Japanese troops withdrew from close proximity to the Indians and established themselves on an outer ring around them.

Extremely heavy artillery and mortar action began, and while the evening light lasted it was supported by dive-bombing. There was no possibility of R.A.F. or A.V.G. fighters engaging them, as they were at Mingalodon air-field, near Rangoon. Even if a message could have been sent to them immediately they could not have arrived at Kuzeik while it was still light. In any event, the Japanese dive-bombers would have completed their action and have been on their way home before they arrived.

Artillery and mortar fire ceased, and the Japanese infantry closed in again to make a second hard attack. In prolonged

hand-to-hand fighting the casualties were considerable on both sides. The Indians were overrun. They had killed and wounded many Japanese. The odds had been at least three to one.

The Japanese troops in this action were highly trained regulars from China, and it was admitted officially by British headquarters that they had "an excellent system of communicating with their aircraft!"

One of the Indian officers had been defending the south face of a position with a small force. It was attacked by two companies of Japanese, of whom at least one hundred were killed. When he had only one N.C.O. and three men left the officer withdrew, but they ran into two other Japanese companies. He and the N.C.O. were placed under the guard of one Japanese sentry. The officer shot the sentry dead, and he and the N.C.O. parted to try to escape individually.

While making his way cautiously out of the area, which was now thick with Japanese, the officer heard the sound of many men approaching and climbed a tree. They passed below him, on a jungle-path. He counted a complete Japanese battalion with mules and infantry guns advancing in column. Thinking less about his personal safety now, he soon afterwards climbed down the tree and hurried through the jungle towards the British positions. He was able to warn them of the approach of the Japanese column.

Later that same night fighting began near Duyinzeik. Here the Japanese used tracer-bullets in an attempt to make the British disclose their positions. Officers and men withdrawing from advanced outposts reported many Japanese concentrations of from two hundred to one thousand men each, converging on the area. They were described as wearing khaki and peaked caps. They were accompanied by cyclist-scouts dressed in Burmese clothes. They had Burmese guides.

Casualties in the action that ensued were extremely heavy on both sides; most of those suffered by the British and Indian

troops were caused by hand-grenades, with which all Japanese troops were equipped.

Not only were the British hampered by the use the Japanese made of the jungle as cover, but the Japanese also made their movements to new positions by night.

Thus the Japanese crossed the Salween and pushed on. They had paid dearly for it. The British fighting men, misrepresented by bad local propaganda, had done as they were ordered and done it well. They had inflicted the heaviest casualties upon the Japanese and then withdrawn.

But the misinformed, querulous public piped, "Good heavens, what's the matter with the Army? If they can't stop them at the Salween where can they stop them?"

Then it was the Bilin river. Official, ill-advised direction caused the newspapers and radio to assert that this was an even greater obstacle than the Salween, as it was a shorter front line and therefore would be more closely defended by the British troops, whose forces could now be massed.

The Japanese crossed the Bilin—and the public became more dispirited.

It was during this withdrawal, carried out by the front-line troops according to orders, with the usual heavy losses to the Japanese, that there occurred one of numerous errors which were the result of inadequate communications. It is sufficient to give this one example.

Thaton, a village about twenty-five miles west of Pa-an, was evacuated prematurely, due entirely to faulty communications which could not be improved without the necessary equipment, which in turn was not available.

The British and Indian troops withdrew during the night and took up new positions. Next morning a force of Blenheims bombed Thaton. What the Japanese some miles away from the village thought I am unable to say. Probably they thought it was a force of their own bombers attacking. They did not

advance. Thaton had become a village in No Man's Land; nobody occupied it for some days.

The railway ran through Thaton down to Martaban. A passenger train was seen to puff down the track and before it could be stopped it had gone on to Thaton. The general in command of the Tenasserim front was immediately informed. He was not far away, and he went to that section of the track that ran near a British position.

The opinion of most was, "That train will come back up this same track. It will be full of Japanese soldiers—it has got to be stopped."

As many troops as could be spared from near-by positions were deployed on either side of the track to ensure the most deadly enfilading fire. Mines were laid under the track. The general himself took command of the preparations. Scouts were posted lower down the track to give signals of the approach of the train.

A distant *chut-at-ter, chut-at-ter, chut-at-ter*, was heard. . . . All the waiting troops sank into cover. One of the officers with the general scanned the track through his field-glasses as far as the bend. *CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER*, as the Moulmein Express swung round that bend. . . . The sappers crouched tensely, hands on the plungers which would detonate the mines under the track. . . . The troops raised their rifles and Tommy-guns. . . .

"Sir!" exclaimed the officer with the field-glasses. His voice was urgent.

"Yes?" said the general.

"There's something peculiar about that train. There are people hanging out of the windows. . . . I—er—I think some of them are women. Anyway, they're dressed like women."

The general raised his own field-glasses, so did the rest of his staff—those who had them.

"Stop those sappers!" ordered the general. *CHUT-AT-TER*,

CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, the Moulmein Express came swinging up the track.

"Send a couple of men out to stop the train. Let every man be ready to fire at the slightest hostile movement." A couple of heroes stood openly on the track, waving the oncoming driver to stop. **CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, CHUT-AT-TER, chut-at-ter, chut-at-ter, chut-at-ter, chut.** . . .

Women and children hung out of all the windows. The engine-driver and his mate leaned out of their cab. These two looked anxious for a moment. Then the children saw the British uniforms.

"Hooray!" they shrieked. "Hooray for the Governor! Hooray for the rescue train!"

There was some short questioning by the Army, and the engine-driver, realizing that he had done a dangerous job well, spake up boldly and said, "I would have driven the train anyway, but they should have told me what the position was. It wasn't fair to send me down there without any warning at all."

The Army wisely left the matter where it was. The smiling driver climbed back into his cab. . . .

Toot! Toot!

"Hooray!" screamed the children. "Hooray for the Army! Hooray for the Governor, who sent the rescue train!"

Hooray for everybody. . . . The troops waved good-bye, and the rescue train moved off . . . busily chattering *chut-at-ter, chut-at-ter, chut-at-ter*, the children still waving until it vanished round another bend. . . .

I suppose the engine-driver must have found out the truth in the end. He had driven on through the British positions and on into Thaton station, the small town that lay open to the Japanese. He had found the platform crowded with the townsfolk. The station officials told the driver that the

Japanese were too close now for comfort and that every one was getting out. They had been waiting for the train; the stationmaster had signalled for one to come down for them.

The surprised driver reversed his engine, but held his tongue, not wishing to reveal his ignorance. No doubt he had some harsh thoughts about the railway administration, who had sent him down there without warning. . . . But they all got back all right, and—well, he must be the only engine-driver to have driven a whole train into enemy territory and brought it back full of grateful refugees. . . .

Another incident in the Tenasserim area did not have such a happy ending. It was one of those things which occur in every war. I report this one not to suggest that nothing went right on the British side, but merely to show how a commanding officer is suddenly faced with new problems which could not have been foreseen in his original plans, and how his plans can be gravely disturbed by thoughtless actions of his officers. I do not know what mistakes were made on the Japanese side, but whatever they were (and however numerous) they could no doubt be glossed over in the general elated feeling which accompanies a long series of victories. When one side has no alternative but to carry out continued withdrawals these mistakes appear to assume a greater significance—the result, I suppose, of the tendency of all of us to seek a scapegoat.

When it became necessary for demolitions to be carried out in a certain area in Tenasserim to avoid being outflanked by the Japanese, an officer asked his commander for the order to detonate the explosives laid under a number of big tanks which would destroy 300,000 gallons of petrol.

This commander had the delicate task of handling a big unit of Burmese troops. They were already somewhat nervous and he did not want to increase their fears. He hoped to carry out the withdrawal in the most orderly fashion possible. He fancied

that his Burmese troops would be in better heart in the new positions, which were not so open to Japanese outflanking.

He told his officer that he was not prepared to give the order to destroy the petrol. He said he believed that the thunderous uproar and the consequent gigantic fires might cause just the final shock which might make his Burmese troops unmanageable, and he was not prepared to take that responsibility.

The withdrawal took place. The Japanese found that magnificent plum of 300,000 gallons of petrol waiting for them at an advanced base. It would save them untold labour in bringing up such supplies; indeed, it would be enough to keep them supplied for many a day. At the subsequent inquiry the commander agreed that his judgment had been at fault, and offered to fly as observer in a bomber and point out each and every tank now in possession of the enemy. He volunteered to take any risk. His offer was not accepted owing to the shortage of bombers at that period. . . .

Then came the Battle of the Sittang River, which was also the Battle of the Burma Road. The result of this gave the Japanese a straight run through Pegu (where they were forced to heavy casualties once again) and on to Rangoon.

If any proof of the ruthlessness, the hard-fighting determination, of the Japanese soldiers is needed at this date, it can be found in the story of the Battle of the Sittang. Although Rangoon had still to be taken by the Japanese, Burma in its entirety was nearly lost in this one battle that lasted many days.

Briefly, Lieutenant-General Hutton, the General Officer Commanding, had little more than three and a half brigades at his command. . . . Little more than three and a half brigades to meet the Japanese invasion of Burma. His life must have been a nightmare.

He had two and a half brigades on the east of the Sittang. Japanese pressure made it imperative, once again, to withdraw,

at the same time inflicting as many losses as possible. The chief line of retreat lay over a bridge. This was blown up. Most of the two and a half brigades still lay on the wrong side of the river.

Those British and Indian troops who were able swam the Sittang, carrying as much of their kit as possible. Those who could not swim made small rafts. Remorselessly the Japanese pressed upon them, forcing them to assemble in tight bodies to prevent outlying units being massacred. They used the undergrowth for cover. Many of these groups were surrounded, the Japanese, apparently wishing to avoid hand-to-hand fighting, remaining at a short distance. There was a series of sieges.

Shortage of water and food forced some of the beleaguered units to attempt to break out. Many did so, with heavy losses to themselves and the Japanese. Others were surrounded by Japanese forces of such numbers as to make any such attempts suicidal. Their commanders decided to remain in a state of siege, hoping for counter-attacks from the British side which would give them less formidable numbers to face. These units were systematically pounded all hours of the day and night by the enemy.

The Japanese used with great accuracy the weapon with which they may be said to have won both the Malayan and Netherlands East Indies wars—the mortar. It was the largest weapon that could be carried with rapidity through the jungle—as British Indian troops discovered two years earlier. Extremely heavy casualties were suffered by the British and Indian units subjected to this form of attack on the wrong side of the Sittang.

Meanwhile, other units were still retreating across the Sittang in small numbers. Japanese snipers, using a form of Tommy-gun with telescopic sights, maintained a relentless fire against them. Those who could swim managed to cross in fair numbers by swimming below water. Those who could not swim, and sat

or hung on to small rafts, did not reach the other side in big numbers. Wounded lying on rafts being pushed by swimmers were killed by the Japanese snipers.

Lieutenant-General Hutton received at this time his first tanks. They had trained crews who had fought their tanks (all were American-built) in the Western Desert. Hutton said, "The situation is desperate. I am in danger of losing almost my entire army. If the tanks are unable to do anything I do not know what may happen."

I was in Toungoo. At headquarters there I found a local counter-attack was being planned: an attempt to relieve pressure on the beleaguered brigades. The operation was planned with such rapidity that dispatch-riders (and there were few of them) were unable to cope with the flow of urgent errands. The commander of the operation assigned a captain of the Burma Rifles and me to carry operational orders to the commander in the field, in the frontal zone.

The orders and plans were written in pencil on blue, scented note-paper, which happened to be handy in the room where the scheme was formulated. Our search for the field-commander involved a round trip during the night of one hundred miles along empty roads which field-headquarters considered might have been subjected to fire from advanced Japanese patrols. We saw no Japanese, we heard no shots, and we tore through the night (headlights full on) in the Jeep. I have never driven faster.

We returned to Toungoo at dawn, and the counter-attack had begun. The main idea was to send forward units of sappers to lay an emergency bridge. Half a dozen Bren-carriers were to cross the Sittang and generally go on the rampage to disrupt the Japanese positions, thus giving the beleaguered units an opportunity to make a fighting exit.

On the way back to Toungoo that night I met the Bren-

carriers going down. I gave some cigarettes to a sergeant, and said, "I suppose you've seen a lot of action in your carrier?"

He said, "No. This is my first fight in a carrier." As an afterthought he added, "We haven't been trained yet."

I was shocked. I was also amazed at the matter-of-fact way he made this revelation. He was quite calm. I saw his face when he lit a cigarette; I will always remember it. He looked up at me. Our eyes met. He must have read my thoughts: "This man won't come back—he can't come back. What does he know about fighting these jungle-men? How can he push his carrier through all that vegetation? Japs will be in the trees. They'll shoot him from behind."

I did not know what to say. He said, "Cheer up. 'Tisn't as bad as that."

Was he a hero?

I joined the young Bren captain. He was talking to the Burma Rifles captain whom I had driven down with the orders for the small counter-attack.

"We don't move off until dawn," said the Bren-carrier captain.

"My God, you're lucky blighters," said the Burma Rifles captain with me. "We've got to drive all the way back to Toungoo to-night." People can be fools. I nearly hit him for that stupid remark.

"Smoke, captain?" I asked the Bren captain.

"Thanks, I don't," he said, and spoke his thoughts aloud. "It's a great relief when you've got no family worries, isn't it? I've got my girl safely over to Calcutta. Haven't got to worry about her being safe, now. It's a great relief."

We finally left them, and when we got back to Mandalay we heard that they had all got across the sappers' bridge. . . . I wonder who came back? They created a diversion, and as Hutton's newly arrived tanks went into operation as well against Japanese who had already crossed the Sittang quite a number

ARMY IN BURMA

of the two and a half brigades got back. One survivor told me he saw men who could not swim standing on the wrong side of the Sittang at the last. They were waiting for the Japanese to arrive—to kill, and be killed.

All troops should be taught to swim. All Japanese can.

The courage of the small British army in Burma is something that must be remembered. Though there were blunders, though their tale during those months is one of continual retreats, they were the men of a scratch army who stood up to an infinitely more dangerous enemy, an enemy superior in everything except courage, and made him pay in blood for every advance he made.

They tried to hold the fort. . . . They died for it.

*Night Fighters, Fried Eggs, and the
Wife-beater*

WE were lucky to find quarters in the Mingalodon Golf Club, that stronghold of the *Burra Sahib*. There were three of us: Stowe, Darrel Berrigan, and myself. We never thought they would take us as residents.

The first night we had dinner there one of the *tauk-tehs* (a big lizard that lives among the beams of ceilings and such-like, eating flies, moths, mosquitoes) startled us by its call. Unlike the *chik-chak*, a much smaller lizard about four or five inches long, the *tauk-teh* speaks infrequently. When it does you are supposed to listen carefully and count the number of times it says "Tauk-teh!"

"What on earth is that?" we exclaimed.

"Shush!" said the English-speaking butler.

Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! Tauk-teh! . . . Silence. We looked at the butler, who said, "Very good. When he say 'Tauk-teh!' eight times it means house is very lucky."

Berrigan was the youngest. He was a bespectacled Californian, who had managed to get out of Bangkok and Siam after the Japanese had taken over the affairs of that political funambulist, Field-Marshal Luang Bipul Songgram, Premier of Siam. Berrigan, like many young Americans, had done a number of odd jobs in his young life, among them that of hotel night-porter. He had also been a hobo. He was the soul of good nature, and, he said, had lost his temper only once. It

was in Shanghai when he was pestered by a drunken Australian sailor. He followed the patient Berrigan round the streets for a while pressing his unwelcome, peculiar attentions on him, until Berrigan finally got mad and told him to get to hell out of it or he would call the police. The Australian's hurt reply, he told me, was, "Say, what's up with you—you're an American, aren't you?"

Berrigan, like many reporters, could not spell. He said it was hereditary, because his mother could not even spell his name correctly. She had been reading a book called *Darrell's Quest*—I think that was the title—and the hero had impressed her greatly, it seemed. When Berrigan was born the doctor asked her what name she had chosen for him. She replied that she had written it on a piece of paper, which now lay in a drawer of the sewing machine. If it was a boy, the left drawer; a girl, the right drawer. The doctor took it out—and there!—she had forgotten one of the *l*'s. He was christened Darrel.

We had a lot of good times, the three of us, but I cannot imagine what Stowe and I would have done without Berrigan. First I would get the sulks and ignore Stowe and snap at sympathetic Berrigan. When I recovered Stowe would become unresponsive, ill-humoured. Good-natured Berrigan was always in the middle. He once said, "When the two of you get the willies on the same day I'm going to beat it."

Just when air activity got going from Mingalodon he was laid low by malaria. He had contracted it passing through a malarial belt when leaving Siam. It was cerebral malaria, the most malignant form. The three of us were sharing one small room, and the Indian doctor who examined Berrigan advised Stowe and me, for Berrigan's sake and our own, to try to get him moved to a separate room. Sidney Bush, the club's managing member, let us have another room in the same narrow, low building. We moved Berrigan into it and bought a mosquito-net: more, as we cruelly told him, to prevent careless mosquitoes

infesting themselves by feeding on him and later infecting us, than to protect him from their annoying attentions.

United Press (New York office) began worrying him with telegrams like "AP says AVG downed twelve Japanese yesterday stop how"—"how" being newspaper talk for "How about it? How did they get away with it? How are you going to explain this beat?" and so on. Under his mosquito-net Berrigan rolled and twisted and panted as the fulminant fever grappled with him. His face was sallow, and he had a frowzy stubble. On the bedside-table lay numerous bottles, big and small, with corks in some and out of others, some on their sides, others standing upright. Newspapers littered the floor, and half-smoked cigarettes . . . like a scene out of Somerset Maugham. Gazing at it all, I wrote a cable to his office saying, "Your Darrel Berrigan rapidly becoming white cargo wreck cerebral malariawise stop doctor order him bed." United Press (London office) was most considerate, and left him alone until he recovered.

New York office then took up the matter. He had recovered for more than a week and had told them so, and he had been filing messages to them; but New York apparently were not satisfied, for they maintained a series of fatuous cabled inquiries after his health: "Flash Berrigan c/o USConsul Rangoon—AP forecasts imminent Japattack Tenasserim front stop AP also smashing exclusive Lone Star State pilots down shot three Japs stop how stop are you well yet."

But still he never lost his temper. The irony amused but did not annoy him.

The Japanese at this time began to bomb Mingalodon airfield at night. They could achieve little against it by day. So the Japanese, perforce, resorted to night bombing.

"How's the moon to-night?" became one of the routine questions at Mingalodon Golf Club. It did not worry us much until it had passed into the second half. The Japanese in

earlier, and possibly experimental, night raids must have suffered heavy losses of aircraft in night landings, for they adopted a definite routine of coming only when the second half of the moon was up. This enabled them to take off from Bangkok and other Siamese air-fields by moonlight, to fly over their objectives in moonlight, and get back to their bases in the light of dawn. In all their raids against Mingalodon air-field they proved themselves to be inaccurate night bombers.

A club member who had lived in the district for many years, used his influence to have slit-trenches dug under trees in front of each of the quarters, as they called the rooms of the club-house. I regret to say that most of us spent quite a lot of our time in these trenches during the night raids. Mingalodon air-field was about three and a half miles away as the crow flies, and we were not so convinced of the accuracy of the Japanese bomb-aimers as Tokyo apparently was. Tokyo Radio claimed immense damage to Mingalodon air-field during these night raids. On several occasions they destroyed on the field—by radio—three and four times the total number of A.V.G. and R.A.F. aircraft existing in the whole of Burma. We knew, as eye-witnesses, that their night bombs fell as much as two and three miles wide of their targets.

We inhabitants of Mingalodon Golf Club needed no siren to awaken us. The noise of the engines of the Japanese aircraft was sufficient. One member, however, must have been a heavy sleeper, for he requested the managing director to have one of the club servants strike loudly upon the piece of suspended steel railway-track that was normally used to summon (at 4.30 A.M.) the Indian water-carriers from their humble beds to begin a long day's watering of the greens. I found this clamour more terrifying than the noise of the Japanese planes overhead. The pilots, observers, and gunners of the R.A.F.'s Blenheims, who were now sleeping all over the club's big lounge, found it distinctly annoying. Prior to the institution

of the clarion call they had said, "When the Japanese come to-night, for the love of Mike don't wake us. Leave us alone. We want to sleep."

During the last-half-moon periods our good-night formula was always the same. We would walk the hundred yards or so from the blacked-out club to our quarters. Behind us we left the sound of the same old record that one R.A.F. boy played over and over again on a portable gramophone. I have, thank God, forgotten the name of it. I do not know how the other R.A.F. boys stood it—they even seemed to like it. We would arrive at the doorway to Berrigan's quarter and say, "Well, good night, Darrel. See you in the trench at about three o'clock," and go to bed.

Sometimes Stowe, more often I, would awake at that hour to hear the Japanese droning overhead. I would get out of bed, slip my feet into slippers, and pull the coarse blanket off the bed, wrapping it round my shoulders, and say, "Lee." Silence.

"Lee!"

"Huh? What is it?" mumbled Stowe.

"Here they are." There would be a hurried, scuffling sound as he left his bed and grabbed his blanket—and his pipe. We would dash down the couple of steps across the pathway and into the trench. We nearly always found Berrigan already there. It became quite a joke; we twitted him relentlessly about it. In later days he would give us a call as he passed our quarters on the way to the trench. And, even later, he would still be lying in his bed when we got to the trench. When I popped into his quarter once or twice to call him I found him asleep. Asleep? I wonder if he was, or whether he was not showing us that he did not give a damn, and could be first or last into the trench, whichever he chose.

He was a hair-raising sight when he was late, though. On one occasion, I remember, he did not come out of his quarter until Japanese bombs were crumping on the ground. Then he



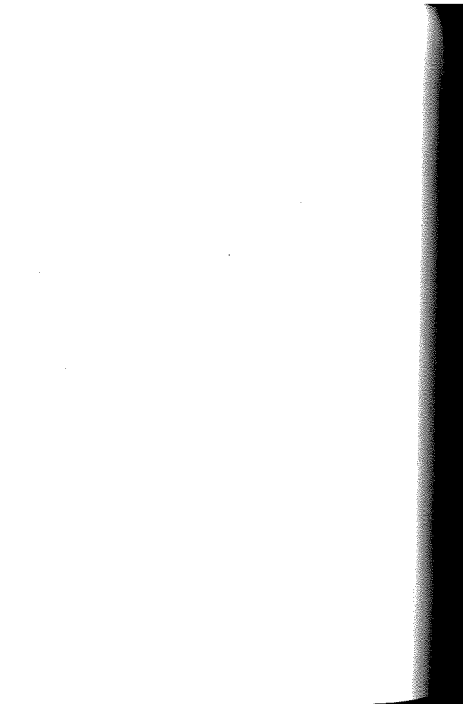
BREAKING UP A JAPANESE FIGHTER PLANE

The pilot was shot in the head with an armoured bullet and crashed on Mingaladon airfield.



ON THE SIAM BORDER

The author is in the centre. The two "natives" in the background are Japanese spies.



NIGHT FIGHTERS

appeared quite naked except for white trunks, slippers, and spectacles, his arms flaying the air, his feet beating the ground in kangaroo-like bounds, and his blanket flapping behind him. Stowe and I ducked our heads as he leaped into the trench, loudly asking (a reporter to the last), "What's happened?"

In adjoining trenches were the members of the R.A.F. cook-house. They had set up shop at the club after their establishment on the air-field had been blown up. They did not seem to have recovered completely from the shock of that experience, for a jumpier lot of lads I have seldom met. When shells from one of the Bofors guns were soaring into the sky from the air-field (about three and a half miles away) they got close to the bottom of their trenches, wrapped in their blankets, clutching their rifles, which they always took with them. They all wore tin hats.

Stowe never looked like himself unless he had a pipe in his mouth, one of the fifteen he carried about with him. As I have said, he grabbed it before making for the trench. He was most careless about lighting it. He would light up anywhere, any time. He did so in the trench one night when the bandits, as they called the Japanese, were above us, and there came a stentorian bellow from a cook-house trench: "Put out that bloody light, unless you want a bullet!" Stowe was a sensitive man; I think he resented being spoken to in that way. In later raids he seemed to make a point of lighting his pipe at critical moments.

The Bofors gun used tracer-shells that night for the first time. An alert reporter of the *Rangoon Gazette* saw them in the sky and wrote a story about them which got the following headlines next day:

FIFTH COLUMNISTS IN RANGOON?

FLARES SEEN IN SKY DURING JAPANESE RAID LAST NIGHT

The alert reporter was smartly rapped over the knuckles by an equally alert Director of News Services, who issued a pompous explanatory denial.

We saw many wonderful sights from the club at night-time. We had a grandstand seat for every night bombing carried out against the air-field by the Japanese. Many times we saw Japanese formations pass over our heads as they manœuvred to get a line on the target. Then the ground shook, and the surrounding country was instantly revealed in the flashes of the exploding bombs.

I have often heard British citizens criticize the Germans for stolid regularity. If they plan to take a position by a frontal attack they will hammer away sedulously, suffering great casualties, but keeping to the original plan. They will not change the plan and outflank the position because they have not got the imagination or the resilience. You always know that Jerry will stick to his plan, day in, day out. So they said. Well, we showed singular lack of imagination in our night anti-aircraft defence of Mingalodon. To-night is an ack-ack night—to-morrow is a night-fighter night—the night after is an ack-ack night . . . and so on. The plan was never varied.

The most interesting nights were the night-fighter nights. One night a Brewster Buffalo fighter went up, piloted by a boy who had done no night-flying before. He could not get down again. Pilots, doctors, ground crews, reporters gathered in groups to watch the unfortunate boy up aloft and all alone. He circled round and round and round that air-field until it nearly made us dizzy. They signalled to him with lamps and flares to come down on the softly red-glowing flare-path. But, poor lad, he could not. . . . He was up there in the starry sky for about three-quarters of an hour. Petrol must have run low, because at last he came in on the flare-path. We watched him, navigation lights looking like a floating ruby and an emerald. He flew gently in. . . . He's too high. . . . He'll go clean off

NIGHT FIGHTERS

the end of the runway. . . . Ah, that's better, he's come down a bit. . . . He's clean off the flare-path. I tell you! . . . No, he's not—and then he vanished behind a building and there followed one of the most intense silences I have experienced. We all waited for the explosion as he crashed. There was no explosion. He landed without hurting himself, but he took the engine clean out of a motor-car which was parked near the runway.

The A.V.G. tried night fighting, but were not successful. Their squadron-leader refused to send up any more planes unless the flare-path was improved. He declared it was inadequate, and also that a pilot could not function with reasonable safety and efficiency so long as the radio arrangements were what they were.

Despite this, an A.V.G. pilot took off one night to try to catch the Japanese night bombers. It was against all orders. Unfortunately, he did not shoot down (or even see) any Japanese, or the squadron-leader may have let him off more lightly when, in landing, he wrecked his plane and at the same time took another engine out of another parked motor-car.

After one night bombing there was a big fire on the air-field, so I told Stowe I was going over to see what it was. We went along together, in the Jeep.

A Japanese bomb-aimer had scored a magnificent hit. Aeroplane tails, fuselages, airscrews, engines, wheels, bomb-racks, turret-guns, lay twisted and broken all over the place. Six or seven forty-gallon drums of oil were on fire. A bomb had fallen plumb in the middle of a shed where bits of Japanese aircraft destroyed in day fighting by the A.V.G. and R.A.F. were assembled.

We came across two lonely figures shrouded in blankets: two R.A.F. boys, Flight-Lieutenants Pinkney and Bingham-Wallace. Both had fought in the Battle of Britain. They were doing some night fighting between them. No one else was there, just the

two of them. Bingham-Wallace was going to do the flying, and Pinkney was going to give him directions from the ground with the help of a portable radio-transmitter. He was going to spot for Bingham-Wallace. I had a small ivory hippo in my pocket, which I had bought in Khartoum for luck; I had had it with me in Repulse. I gave it to Bingham-Wallace to take flying with him.

They went into action as a team that night, but did not shoot down anything. I called at their dispersal hut on the air-field next day. It had a big sign up saying, "Pinker's Kiwis—Tokyo or Bust!—The Dinkum Oil."

Pinkney was the senior officer of that unit, and all his fellow-pilots except Bingham-Wallace were New Zealanders; hence the Kiwis (the flightless bird peculiar to New Zealand) painted on each of their aircraft.

Pinkney said, "Come and look at this. I should have had that hippo last night, not Bingham-Wallace. . . ." We looked at a trench. "I was in there with the radio—and there"—three feet away—"was the bomb!"

Pinkney was a hero. He was a twenty-three-year-old Wiltshireman. He was last seen on the afternoon of January 23, 1942, being chased by twenty-seven Japanese fighters. . . . He had been in continual operation since August, 1940, and had destroyed five Germans and two Japanese.

Some new boys arrived at the club—pilots and gunners of Lysanders, a slow plane with fixed undercarriage designed for Army reconnaissance. One day one of them asked me to take him in the Jeep to the airfield; he said he had an important job to do.

I found out that he had to fly the G.O.C., Lieutenant-General Hutton, to Chungking to see the Generalissimo. They went in two machines. In one travelled the general as passenger, in the other his A.D.C. They flew at night-time. Neither

pilot knew the country. . . . Nor did they know that one of their passengers was to prove himself to be The Perfect A.D.C. . . .

Something went wrong. The general's pilot lost his way, the engine broke down, or something, and the pilot told the general he would have to make a forced landing. They crashed into an unseen obstruction and the engine caught fire. Out jumped the general, whipped off his greatcoat (it had been an open seat), and beat at the flames while he tried to help the pilot out. The pilot was unconscious and was jammed in his seat. There was nothing for the general to do but to try to put out the fire. He flayed it until he was nearly exhausted. Though he could not extinguish it he did keep it from reaching the pilot. The fire had been seen by local inhabitants, who must also have heard the sound of the aircraft. It took them time to reach it, and they found the general nearly worn out. All took a hand and kept the flames back while others broke away parts of the cockpit and released the pilot. . . .

Up above, the pilot of the second plane saw his leader go down, and saw the subsequent fire. He guessed that there had been a crash in the uneven, boulder-strewn land below, which was also dotted with stumpy trees. He decided it better to try to carry on and reach his destination and report the accident rather than risk crashing the second plane and thereby losing all contact with possible sources of help.

He told the A.D.C. what he thought had happened down below, and asked him what he thought he (the A.D.C.) had better do.

The A.D.C. replied, "Well, what do you think—I'd better bale out, hadn't I?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said the pilot. "But hang on a minute. I'll climb, so you can have plenty of height for the 'chute to open."

Up they went. . . .

"Okay?" asked the pilot.

"Yes," replied the A.D.C. "I pull this handle out when I think I'm clear of the plane, don't I?"

"Yes, that's right," replied the pilot. "And, I say . . . don't lose it, whatever you do. It'll come away in your hand when you pull it. Hang on to it, because if you can't produce it afterwards it costs you a round of drinks for the whole mess. Cheerio! Good luck!"

Away went The Perfect A.D.C. who would follow his general anywhere. He broke no bones in landing, and arrived in time to lend the general his greatcoat. They got to Chungking two days late. . . .

The night bombing of Mingalodon continued, and so did the amateur experiments in night fighting. It was a hazardous business, not to be compared with night fighting in Britain, where the pilots got every assistance from the ground—in taking off, spotting the enemy, and landing—that science and any number of experts on the ground could devise. In Burma, once the pilot got safely off the ground he had the devil's own job getting down again. There was not a single searchlight in Rangoon at any time.

At last two night-fighter pilots arrived from Britain. One of them had asked to be posted to a night-fighter squadron because he preferred it to day fighting. We were in front of the club, on the big lawn, with some twenty Blenheim pilots, observers, and gunners. We heard the distant sirens of Rangoon.

"Is it a fighter night?"

"Yes."

"Good—let's watch the fun."

We heard the night fighter take off (the pilot was Squadron-Leader Stone, D.F.C.), and begin its sinister, unseen prowling of the sky. The moonlight was brilliant, although there were some high, patchy, still clouds. Indeed, they seemed to add to the brilliance of the moonlight by reflecting it.

The Japanese night formation arrived with a trembling drone that filled the air. They were at a great height but we spotted them. They circled the air-field once or twice with their customary arrogance, their usual contempt for the feeble defences. To-night it was a pleasure to see them keep tight formation, supremely ignorant of the single, higher-pitched sound that manœuvred around them. They could not, of course, hear the Hurricane with its old night-fighter pilot in the cockpit. They certainly could not see it, any more than we could. It was perfectly blacked-out—not a twinkle of light from its shielded exhausts.

It seemed to us on the club lawn, however, that the pilot, Stone, was having difficulty in getting into position or making sure of the direction in which they were flying.

We shouted advice and instructions to him, and thereby relieved our feeling of impotence.

A line of red tracer-bullets pierced the sky and shot up vertically. Another—the tracers chased each other upwards until they burned out. Seconds later we heard the rat-tat-tat of Stone's guns. He had got a bead on them from below. We shrieked applause.

"He's got them!"

Not yet. . . . Tracers shot from another point, obviously fired by the gunner of a Japanese bomber. But at that same moment a new line of red tracers poured downward from an invisible source above them. It was Stone, who had drawn their attention to a spot below the formation, then climbed all out above them and caught them unawares.

"Hooray!"

One of the bombers burst into fire and crashed to the ground. An immense flash as it hit, and later a heavy *crump*. . . . In the light of the following day they found the bodies and remains of five Japanese around the wreck. That was the first night-fighter success from Mingalodon air-field. The night-fighter pilots did

good, steady work. One night they destroyed five Japanese bombers.

Among the bravest pilots operating from Mingalodon were the R.A.F. Brewster Buffalo boys. Most of them were New Zealanders, but there were a couple of English officers.

I visited them most days at their dispersal point on Mingalodon air-field.

"What have the Yanks done to-day?" they always asked. They were full of admiration for the A.V.G., and envied them their Tomahawks. They were always praying that they would be given Hurricanes when reinforcements came in.

Among them was a sergeant-pilot named Barge, whom they called "Ketchil," which is Malay for "small." He had been posted to Rangoon from Singapore. He was the idol of the ground crews, and, said the A.V.G., a "born flier." He did the most extraordinary things in his Buffalo, and was more completely at home in an aeroplane than any other pilot I had met. He did things instinctively when he was flying.

One day he was in a fight, and got on the tail of a Japanese fighter. He closed to about fifty yards and gave him a long burst. The Japanese pilot's engine fell to pieces, and Barge was so close behind him that oil from the wrecked engine covered his windscreen. He could not see through it as clearly as he would have liked. There was no time to land and have it cleaned, so he took off one of his boots, pulled a sock off, undid his harness holding him to the seat, and stood up. Pressing against the great air-pressure, he wiped off the windscreen, holding the stick with his free hand. That done, he settled back and found another Japanese bomber and shot it down. . . .

Another story about Barge that went the rounds was that he had got mixed up with a Japanese formation one day and flew along with it until it ran into clouds, and then wisely slipped away. That, I am afraid, was untrue. What did happen was

that he was sitting on the tail of a Japanese bomber, playing cat-and-mouse, when thirty Japanese fighters swooped on him. He got away, though nobody knows how.

The losses of the Buffalo boys were heavy, but they flew every day and sacrificed their lives without complaint. . . . Those who were left got Hurricanes eventually.

Besides the Blenheim boys and us reporters, half a dozen sisters and nurses from the British military hospital stayed in Mingalodon Golf Club. We scarcely saw anything of them, as they left early in the morning for the hospital and returned late—and also because their quarters were in the women's lavatory. That was not as bad as it sounds, because a fairly big dressing-room was part of the establishment. They were courageous people, the nursing staff of that hospital. It was about half a mile from Mingalodon air-field and therefore in constant danger of being hit by Japanese bombs. Some fell near it. The man who laid out the barracks, of which the hospital and church were the centre, quite obviously knew nothing of the writings of that Italian general called Douhet (he died in bed), who is supposed to have been the originator of modern warfare, or *blitzkrieg*, as the most savage exponents of it would say. No, for he placed his barracks, canteens, church, and hospital neatly and tightly in close proximity to the air-field.

The hospital had few empty beds through the weeks of fighting that led to the fall of Rangoon. The air-raid sirens sounded constantly. Many of the patients were too ill to be moved two and three times a day to the trenches outside. The result was that the nursing staff became extremely muscular. They lifted all the bed-patients out of their beds, laid them on mattresses under their beds, and put a second mattress over them. We wondered why they did not move the patients, staff, and all the rest to a safer area, but the colonel in command left the nurses putting the patients under the beds and lifting them

back again for many weeks. They did move the whole establishment eventually, and, believe me, after the move, a bomb fell on the evacuated building. . . . A good example of how to muddle through.

The food they served the Blenheim crews in the club was appalling. It was supplied not by the club but by the R.A.F. cook-house. In all the weeks I was there I never saw their breakfast varied. It was tea, two pieces of sodden sausage on a minute piece of wooden, fried bread, two pieces of butterless bread, and a spoonful of watery jam.

Stowe, Berrigan, and I, being paying temporary members of the club, got the club's food, which was good. We could have almost anything we liked for breakfast: always two good fried eggs and bacon. I enjoyed my breakfasts immensely until I saw a sergeant-pilot, who up to that time had gone on at least ten raids against the Japanese, glance at my appetizing plate and then push his eternal sausage and fried bread petulantly away and say, "Oh, to hell. I'm not going to eat any more of this muck!"

"Pipe down, feller, pipe down," urged an Australian. "We've had worse than this."

"Yes, I know," said the other. He sighed. He was hungry. He put his right elbow on the table, held his head in his hand, and pecked at the sausage with his fork.

There was no excuse for the bad food they gave them. The market in town was filled with fruits of all kinds. There was no shortage of meat. It was lack of interest on the part of the cook-house C.O. I wrote a short paragraph about their food in the local newspaper. It won more approval from the boys than any eulogies about their heroism.

"We want bacon, not bouquets," they said.

Berrigan saw the cook-house at work on the carcass of a bullock one day. He came to our quarter, and his face was

grey. He said, "I've never before seen a butcher make his work look so much like murder."

I bought three dozen eggs one evening and took them to the club. I gave them to one of the Burmese waiters and said, "Will you fry these eggs to-morrow morning and give two each to the R.A.F. at breakfast-time?" The waiter understood more English than I did Burmese, and said he would see to it. We had drinks and went in to dinner with the R.A.F. We came out and sat down again. The waiter came up to me and said, "Eggs ready, sir."

"I'm?"

"Eggs are fried, sir."

"What? They're fried? Already? We've just had dinner. . . . What's going on?"

Fried they were—thirty-six, in one huge yellow-and-white mess. The cook had put them all into a giant pan together. They came out in layers.

We asked in loud tones if any one wanted some fried eggs. We were not hopeful—not five minutes after dinner. But the answer was a chorused "Yes!" The R.A.F. were so ravenous there were not enough for all.

A frequent visitor to the club in the evenings was a magnificent, powerful, Rabelaisian Yorkshireman, Captain Harry Stott, of the Royal Army Service Corps. He had been in France with the B.E.F., and was in *Lancastria* when she was sunk by Nazi bombers as she carried troops to England during the evacuation from Brest.

We all agreed we had never met such a teller of tales. His experiences in France with the B.E.F. were a constant source of wonder to us. He had a well-developed Yorkshire accent. The R.A.F. boys would pull up their chairs when Captain Harry Stott began, "Here, I say, did I ever tell you about that time in France when . . ."

His best, most oft-repeated tale concerned a snivelling skinflint of a Frenchman who lived with his pretty young wife in a village near Lille, where Stott and his men were stationed. That ill-favoured, pusillanimous lout, it seemed, was in the habit of beating his innocent-eyed pipit of a spouse. When he was home invariably she was in tears.

"We'll fix him," chivalrous Stott told his men. "You two—you'll hang around her house, unobtrusive-like, and study his habits, see? Make a note of everything he does. Come back, and report to me."

Diligent observation revealed that the miserable creature had the eccentric habit of retiring to the old fashioned out-house at the bottom of his garden at exactly six o'clock each evening. He was so lacking in delicacy that he scarcely waited until he had closed the door upon himself before making his preparations.

Stott immediately evolved a plan. He detailed five men to scour the village that night with empty sacks and to return only when each had his sack filled with cats.

"You should have seen them," Stott told us, his eyes lighting up at the memory. "There were black cats, white cats, brown cats, ginger cats, brindle cats, piebald cats, tom-cats, and Blue Persians." Whenever Stott told this story the list of cats was always the same, ending with Blue Persians.)

Just before that contemptible bully came home for his tea next day it was arranged that the nervous young wife should be engaged in conversation at their front door—meanwhile the lid was removed from the seat in the out-house and the multitude of cats nimbly thrust therein.

Every bush, empty barrel, and other hideout held a grinning soldier shortly before six o'clock. All eyes were on the back door of the house. It opened. Out stepped the knavish husband.

He walked, scowling, down the pathway, undoing buttons as was his habit. He performed his customary last-minute scurry, leaving the door well ajar as he swept aside the wooden lid and planted himself upon the seat. . . .

"Those cats had been having a pretty rough time. They say they can see in the dark—well, I don't rightly know about those cats of ours. They'd been there a good fifteen minutes, and you know what it's like when you get in a panic in a shipwreck—you don't care who you stand on. If he'd only waited he'd have heard them. There never was such a row. Suddenly they saw daylight—not much of it, it's true—but you can imagine how they fought to get out. They came out like greased lightning—*phut! phut! phut! phut!*—tails swishing behind them. And there he sat, struck dumb, not knowing what was happening under his seat. Then he saw them cats—I don't know what he thought they were as they tore out of the out-house. I couldn't recognize them, honest I couldn't—but he beat it up that path, nearly falling over hisself, 'cause his pants were round his ankles; and he disappeared into the house. We had a right good laugh over that lot when we got back to our billets. We did an' all. Didn't we, Mike?" he said to a brother officer who had also been there.

When the laughter subsided some one asked, "Did it stop the old swine beating her?"

Stott just shook his head, mournful-like. "No. He beat her worse than ever. He thought *she'd* done it."

Stott did not really belong to these times. He was too big physically, too bluff, too Rabelaisian, too much a man of action. He would have been at his best inside a one-ton suit of armour, astride a gigantic horse.

He was a racing-driver in peacc-time. When he left the club the spinning wheels of his camouflaged Pontiac threw shingle on the roof.

RETREAT IN THE EAST

The little chik-chaks, or house-lizards, that walked upside down on the ceiling chasing flies, moths, and mosquitoes, chided him loudly: "Tchik, tchak! Tchik, tchak!"

They were the last things the R.A.F. boys saw at nights as they lay on their backs in their beds before "Lights Out."

Burra Sahibs and Bomber Boys

THE smugly ignorant complacency of the *Burra Sahibs*, or big-business men, of Burma cannot be better gauged than by this story of how the war first came to one of them. He also lived adjacent to that bastion of the *Burra Sahibs* of Burma, Mingalodon Golf Club, where Stowe, Berrigan, and I lived. The course, incidentally, was said to be the finest in the Orient.

That Jeep which Stowe and I had—that grown-up toy once described by General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, as his country's chief contribution to modern warfare—was the cause of our meeting a certain old resident of Burma.

Our Jeep was the first to be put on the road in daily service outside United States territory. By the time Rangoon fell Stowe and I had done 10,000 miles in Burma in it. We tuned it up regularly, and could do seventy miles an hour when necessary. Stowe, who did not drive, confessed just before we parted (he to Russia, I to India) that being passenger in a car frightened him more than bombing did. I believed him; I often saw him clench his fists and strain his feet against the floor-panel when we approached an oncoming truck with a Chinese driver.

To get back to the *Burra Sahib*. . . The first night we drove our Jeep home to our quarters, as they called the glorified dog-box we lived in at the club, we had to pass within fifteen yards of a wooden bungalow inhabited by an Englishman who had spent practically all his life in Burma. Here he lived a solitary existence, moving day in, day out, between three points—the

wooden bungalow, his office, and the golf-course. That was his set routine. I do not think he went anywhere else.

We drove past his bungalow to our quarters to park the Jeep close enough to a verandah-post so that we could chain the steering-wheel to it. People coveted Jeeps, and one Jeep key fits all Jeeps. . . . We went to bed.

Next morning the *Burra Sahib* entered our quarters with the first light of dawn.

"I say—excuse me, but you woke me up in the middle of the night. You came crashing past my bungalow, making a terrible noise. I thought it was enemy action. I jumped out of bed into my trench. Would you please not do it again, or I shall have to inform the Committee. This is a quiet country club. We know there is a war on, but we try to avoid as much of the unpleasantness of war as possible. Good morning." That is a verbatim report of what he said; I took it down.

Stowe was a misty figure sitting upright in bed under his mosquito-net, but not so misty that I could not see his bristling white eyebrows.

"What do you know about that!" he exclaimed. Thoughtful silence, then, "I'll be damned!"

That was his first meeting with the Great White Raj of India, the *Tuan Besar* of Malaya, the *Burra Sahib* of Burma. . . . "Take up the White Man's burden—" said Kipling. "Send forth the best ye breed. . . ."

We saw a lot of the *Burra Sahib* later. He was a constant source of irritation to both Stowe and me.

I asked him one day if there were any Burmese members of the club. He said yes, a few, but they seldom visited it. We gathered that this did not worry him.

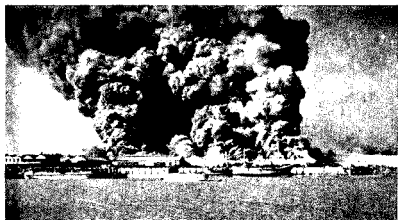
"For many years we had a rule against them being members," he told us. "Then we decided to change it. We held a ballot, every member was asked to vote for or against having Burmese members. It went through. I voted in favour of it, but"—he



THE BURNING OF RANGOON

The "scorched earth" policy was applied to Rangoon a few hours before the Japanese entered the city. The photographs in this plate and the next were taken from the Irrawaddy river by the author, who was on the last boat to leave.

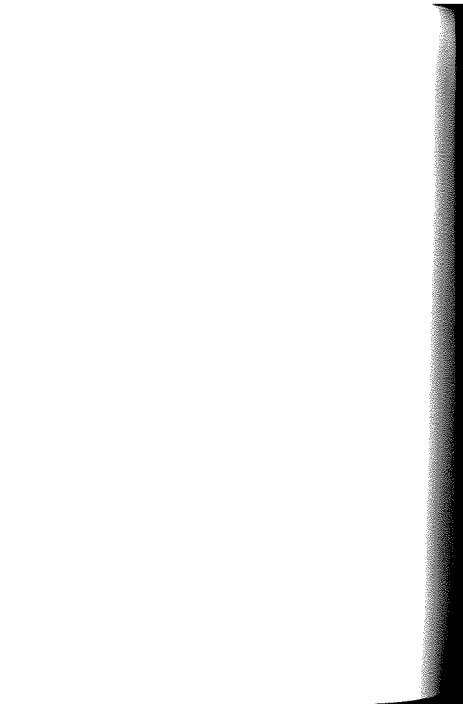
Photo Keystone



RANGOON'S WATER-FRONT

In the foreground is the storage part of the Burma Oil Company.

Photo Keystone



shook his head, made a mouth—"I've often doubted the wisdom of my decision since. It wasn't a good thing, you know."

"How many Burmese became members?"

"Oh, only a few." He smiled knowingly, and added, "Of course we chose them very carefully, the ones we put up for membership."

Stowe and I asked each other "Why?" Japanese began using the club soon afterwards. They did not wait on the invitation of the *Burra Sahib*.

We were present at the fall of the *Burra Sahib's* last bastion in Rangoon, this club. While our members were engaged in "avoiding as much of the unpleasantness of war as possible" (which apparently entailed living exactly as he had done before the Japanese came to Burma) the club was invaded by a group of some twenty boisterous young roughnecks who shouted with laughter, drank up all the club's refreshing iced beer, and smoked as many of the club's cigarettes as they could afford to buy. They slept on beds and benches all over the cool, big lounge where the *Burra Sahib* and his ladies used to drink their chota-pegs on Saturday afternoons after golf and on Sundays before eating throat-blistering curry which sent them to sleep.

They showed no respect whatsoever for the strait-laced conventions ruling the club. They stripped off their shirts and lay on the sacred lawn in front of the club-house sunning themselves. They actually had long talks with the Burmese waiters, learning about Burma and the customs of its people. An unheard-of thing, this fraternizing with the 'boys' whose job it was to wait on the *Burra Sahib*.

Then the club hit back. The managing member, Sidney Bush, a dear old man somewhat flustered by the war, was told not to serve the club's iced beer to the young roughnecks; nor the club's cigarettes. "After all, the members' needs must be considered first. If we sell our stocks to all these young fellows there'll be nothing left for the members."

Who were the members? Stowe and Bernigan and I (temporary members), and one or two others. In the three months or so I lived in the club I did not see more than twenty other members visit it.

And who were the young roughnecks? Pilots, observers, and gunners of half a dozen Blenheim bombers which had just arrived from the Western Desert. . . . That was the reception they got from the *Burra Sahib*. In return they, in their Benheims, carried out more raids in three months than any other air force in the world.

The first Blenheim pilot I spoke to (the first to arrive in Burma as reinforcements from the Western Desert) was Lieutenant "Hookey" Russell, of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. I saw him come into the club one evening. Saw the red flash of courage that all South African fighting men wear on their shoulders—and could not believe it.

South Africans are not supposed to serve outside Africa. In the early days they were not supposed to serve even outside the Union. That was changed, however, and those volunteering to serve anywhere in Africa were privileged to wear the red shoulder flash. How on earth Hookey got as far afield as Burma to fight for the Union, I could not guess. I sent a story about him. Other South Africans followed him. There were no repercussions. . . . They were all volunteers for the Orient.

Hookey and the other Blenheim boys (Australians, Rhodesians, Englishmen, Canadians) arrived at Mingalodon at six o'clock in the evening and dumped their gear in the club. They had a taste of the *Burra Sahib's* chilly hospitality when they were told they could not buy the Club's iced English beer. They had some in the finish because the soft-hearted managing member got indignant. There were no members present: it was better in those days to stay home at nights. Our defences against Japanese night bombers were negligible.

The managing member exclaimed, "Damn the rules! Nobody's going to stop me selling beer to these lads who've just flown half-way round the bloody world."

As I said, they arrived at six in the evening. After flying from the Western Desert over a route none of them had ever flown before, they took off from Mingalodon the same night to bomb Bangkok. That was the first bombing of Bangkok in history.

Our military Press Officers shepherded us out to Mingalodon aerodrome a few evenings later.

"We've got a story for you," they said.

"What is it?" we all asked with unintentional brusqueness; but we were suspicious as they had not had any ideas for stories before that date.

They would not tell us.

"It's something good, but we can't give you any details. . . . Security."

We arrived at the duty pilot's hut at the air-field to find that we were to watch a number of Blenheims take off to give Bangkok a second bombing. I heard disappointed moans from a couple of other reporters and news-reel men who had long since given up covering such colourless stories. And then the news-reel men were forbidden to take out their cameras. . . .

"Can I go in one of them?" I asked the Press Officer.

"I don't know. I'll find out. You wait here." He went into the duty pilot's hut, came out again and said the wing commander wouldn't play.

"Can I ask him myself?"

"No, I shouldn't do that. He's said no."

But I did. The "Wingco," as they called him, was enthusiastic Wing Commander Reggie Stidolph. He was a Southern Rhodesian, and I told him I was South African.

"Can I go?"

He said, "Drive me over to the planes. I'll have a look."

We buzzed from one Blenheim to another and the wing commander asked each pilot, "Care for a passenger to-night?"

All had some reason or another for saying no. Passengers made some nervous; others had extra weight of incendiaries. I swung the Jeep under the wing of another Blenheim. The pilot was Hookey, and he said, "Sure, sir" to the wing commander, and "Jump in, man," to me.

He wasn't the same Hookey I had met before. He was tense, and showed it in his terse speech.

"Look, you sit here, man."

That was beside him on a folding flat shelf of a seat. In front was the glass-panelled nose where the observer-cum-bomb-aimer worked. As the engines were warming up (we had trouble with both of them because, the mechanic said, Hookey was giving them too much juice when the self-starter was turning the props over) Hookey said, "Look, man, there's my torch in that pocket beside you. When I put my right hand out I want you to put the torch in it. I may want it to look at the dials. And there's my water-bottle. Feed me water every now and then, will you, man? . . . I must have my water," he added to himself more than to me, as he made the sign to pull the chocks from under the wheels.

Then to me, smiling: "All set? O.K., man, here we go!"

He jabbed out a clenched fist from which rose a triumphant thumb at the observer-bomb-aimer, a dandy young Australian calm beyond his years. They exchanged grins. Hookey wiped the palms of his hands on his khaki shorts, limbered up his muscles by flapping his bent arms and, at last, settled down into his seat, wriggling like a fussy, broody hen. . . .

We climbed into the early night sky, and I could see all around us circling dots which were the rest of the formation assembling in the order in which they were to attack. We were No. 2. No. 1 was a blond-haired Canadian. His orders were to destroy Bangkok's power-station.

As we crossed Burma behind the droning, surging engines we saw down below fires in the paddy-fields caused by wrecks of Japanese planes shot down by the A.V.G. that afternoon. They had wiped out a complete formation of seven bombers and three fighters.

There were other fires, too—laid by Burmese agents of Japan, and probably by Japanese nationals in person. They appeared night after night around vital areas in the neighbourhood of Rangoon and Mingalodon. A night-fighter pilot, who learned that dangerous work in Britain, was sent out one night to strafe them with his Hurricane's eight guns. It did not stop them.

As we flew on thin moonlight filtered through the wide-spread clouds, and we occasionally saw the moon itself riding, so it seemed, across breaks in the clouds. Whenever it appeared it got a sharp, quizzical look from Hookey. He was trying to guess what help he could expect from it when we reached Bangkok and he had to begin the search for his target for the night.

I fell asleep during the monotonous, droning flight towards the border. Hookey woke me by gripping my knee. His mouth opened, but I could not hear what he was saying and shook my head. He leaned forward and shouted into my ear so that I heard his high-pitched words: "We've crossed the border. Siam!" and he jerked his thumb at the black shadow below that was the earth. He looked forward again as he nursed the plane along. Turning back to me, he grinned. I could not guess what he was thinking about. His white teeth shone out of the blue mask which the moonlight made of his face. He wriggled in his seat again, once more wiped the palms of his hands and wagged his arms.

His eyes were screwed up as he tried to pierce the darkness. Looking at the blue-limned crow's-feet at their corners, I imagined him squinting the same way in the brilliant light of

the Western Desert on a day bombing. Somewhere in front lay Bangkok.

In the glass nose the young Aussie observer-bomb-aimer looked alternately at the earth through an open hatch at his feet, picking up landmarks like curves of some river or other, which momentarily reflected fleeting moonlight, and then back at his collapsible table where lay his maps, protractor, and other gear. When he found something on the ground he thought he recognized he switched on a tiny red lamp over his table and checked the position on his map.

That level-headed young Aussie, given an early sense of responsibility by war, kept us dead on our course throughout the night.

"One of the best," was Hookey's comment later.

I dozed again, my mind idly noting how unsensational night bombing seemed to be. I also wondered at my false feeling of tiredness. Like thousands of others, I find it one of the easiest things in the world to sleep through air raids. It is not a thing to boast about. It is a fear-reaction. A sense of foreboding, anxious anticipation, and not nonchalance, made me sleep as I sat beside Hookey.

He woke me again and pointed into the night ahead.

"Bangkok."

I lost my tiredness, and my hands grew clammy. I saw the Blenheim piloted by the Canadian ahead—No. 1 of this formation. He was much lower than us. I saw him pinned against the clouds for a few seconds by a Japanese searchlight. He threw his plane into a full-power dive, nose right down, and cut out of the beam. He went on down to one thousand feet (according to his orders) in a dazzling storm of ack-ack shells and softly-glowing tracers. At one thousand feet his bomb-aimer's right hand pulled a small lever and released his two 500-pounders.

Most of Bangkok was instantly revealed in two white flashes.

It was like the melodramatic lighting up of clouds by lightning in a night storm. Reports later proved that those two 500-pounders were well placed in Bangkok's only power-station, leaving for the rest of us in the formation a Bangkok as perfectly blacked-out as any Japanese could have wished. The Canadian pilot aimed his Blenheim's nose at the high-riding clouds, and was swallowed up in them with a Brock's benefit bursting on his tail. I was told later that the observer in this plane threw an empty beer-bottle down the searchlight beam . . . it howls like a banshee. . . . He went home, having written off his target for the night.

The results, down below in the city, of those first two bombs would be difficult to guess. I was in Rangoon on December 23 and December 25, 1941, when it was bombed heavily by the Japanese; those raids emptied Rangoon of all essential labour for days. Our bombs used on this night over Bangkok were heavier than the bombs used against Rangoon. The uproar must have been terrifying.

It was Hookey's turn to go in. We dropped sharply as we got nearer our target, which was anywhere around the power-station.

Searchlights groped the clouds in search of us and the others, all of which by this time were circling somewhere over Bangkok, waiting their turn in an aerial queue. I had no thoughts of sleep, but was seized by an uncomfortable nervousness which was sharpest in my stomach. This increased as I saw Hookey speak into the "intercom" 'phone to the Aussie in the nose. I learned later they had both spoken to the Aussie gunner in the turret behind us whom we could not see.

Hookey lifted his sharp-featured face with screwed-up eyes towards the sky where the moon was riding. He looked at me, frowned, and jerked his head up. I looked where he indicated, and saw two pin-points of blue light. They were the exhausts

of a Japanese night fighter. It had height on us, and our dark bulk must have been exposed in the moonlight.

As for our exhausts—they spat sizzling blue flames two feet long. At this moment we were enveloped in light and saw down below us a round blob of shining silver. It was a searchlight, and we were pinned on the end of the beam. We looked right into the heart of the lamp and wondered what was going to happen. My lips were dry, my throat was dry, my hands were damp. I couldn't see the night fighter any more. I wondered if it was on our tail—when its bullets would come ripping into us. . . .

Hookey carried out some violent evasive action and we saw the beam of the light again. It had lost us, and we, we hoped, had lost the night fighter. We flew around a few minutes while the young Aussie sorted out his bearings. He gave Hookey a line on the burning power-station. We dived, but climbed again without the Blenheim giving that jump which I thought told you that the bomb-load had been released. We circled again and climbed and dived again. We went down so sharply that I leaned back on my folding seat instinctively, stupidly trying to straighten the Blenheim. The young Aussie grinned back at Hookey, and we climbed once again. Still we circled Bangkok and ack-ack was bursting again. It seemed the night fighter had gone down.

I wished Hookey would not be so conscientious about making sure he was on the target, and finally wrote a note to the young Aussie. I asked, "Are we going to drop any bombs?" He switched on his small red lamp and grinned as he read the note. He wrote a reply, and I read it by moonlight. It said, "I dropped the stick ten minutes ago. You can't see them burst from your position. We're on our way home." I grinned as much as the Aussie did at my ignorance, but mine was tinged with relief. . . . I felt sleepy again. Looking round, I saw Bangkok dotted with fires. The others were on the job. . . .

I fed Hookey more water from his bottle, and got an appreciative 'thumbs up' sign from him. I went to sleep thinking about the unseen procession of Blenheims that would be following us home. They must have stretched for miles. . . .

I woke as Hookey lost height in preparation for landing. Down we went, nose aimed correctly to the right of the dim red flare-path. We touched down, bounced, and swung wildly to starboard. The Aussie bomb-aimer was back with Hookey and me. He sat on my lap and stretched his legs out to brace his feet against part of the wall of the cockpit. He held my two hands in his, my arms he crossed over his chest.

Hookey had a veritable battle with his Blenheim. He pulled it back to port by main force, so it seemed. His lips were tightly closed, and the muscles of his bare forearm stood out as he wrestled with the stick to regain control. We left the runway altogether and hurtled at about ninety miles an hour down the embankment. The Blenheim's starboard wheel hit something and swung it round so that we were now facing in the direction from which we had come. There was a crash as the landing-gear crumpled up, and we came to a stop.

There we sat, the four of us. Hookey, the Aussie, and I looked at each other and grinned.

"Now you see why I came and sat on top of you," said the Aussie. "I saw that lot coming and didn't want to be crushed in the nose."

The gunner had climbed out of his turret first, and now shouted "Fire!"

He had seen smoke coming from the port engine.

"Get out!" shouted Hookey. I did, with him and the Aussie following. As we ran from the machine, which we expected to blow up, we saw the wisp of smoke thin out and vanish. We stood still. There was silence, broken by the roar of another Blenheim coming down to land. Then the doctor and some stretcher-bearers ran up.

"All right. Nobody hurt, man," said Hookey. "Let's go and have a beer."

As we walked to the mess we were all silent until Hookey exclaimed, "Damn it, man! That's bad luck. . . . smashing the old crate up like that. We've got none to spare. It's those tyres; they're too worn."

Stowe and Berrigan were standing by the duty pilot's hut.

Berrigan said, "Lee here has been worrying like mad about you."

Stowe said, "I have. Man, I'm glad to see you back."

Stowe, Berrigan, and I were to have had a party in the Silver Grill in town that Saturday night. Berrigan had been out on the air-field with the rest of us, and had seen me get a lift in one of the Blenheims. He went into town and met Stowe. When Stowe asked where I was Berrigan said, "Oh, you know what he thinks about the Silver Grill. He's changed his mind. He's staying at the club."

Berrigan explained to me later he did not want to tell Stowe until they left the Silver Grill, as Stowe would have "worried his guts out" all night until I got back. Stowe had lost a great friend in Greece, a man he greatly admired: Ralph Barnes, an American newspaperman, who had been killed in a Blenheim bomber.

It was pleasant to know they had been thinking about me, but I felt rather a mock-hero. One flight over Bangkok and a fairly good story. The Blenheim boys had to make as many as five flights a day. Their risks, their real courage, were taken very much for granted by all of us.

And that was Hookey's second night flight—both of them over Bangkok; within a week of flying from the Western Desert to a part of the world he had never seen before, to fly over country the maps of which he had never studied before.

If any South African deserves to wear that red flash of courage on his shoulders it is Lieutenant Hookey Russell. . . .

The next time I came across him they would not let me see him. It was in Toungoo.

"He seems to be dying," they told me at the British military hospital there. Making a landing at Toungoo, one of his tires had burst. . . . He was burned from his waist to the top of his head. They had to keep him behind screens, he was so disfigured.

If only (how often you hear those words these days), if only his parachute harness had stuck when his Blenheim crashed on this occasion; if only the sliding glass roof of the 'green-house,' or cockpit, had jammed; if only something had happened to delay him when he scrambled from the burning plane, he would probably have escaped without a scar of any sort. But nothing stuck, nothing went wrong. He was half-way out in a second and was enveloped in the searing flash of pure fire when the petrol tanks exploded. The flash was instant—it but touched him and closed his eyes.

He dragged himself out and fell to the ground. Another Blenheim pilot and bomb-aimer landing saw what had happened and the pilot taxied directly to the wreck. The Canadian observer, Sergeant Bill Clearihue, leaped from the plane as it passed Hookey, but he found there was nothing he could do except say, "Hookey—it's Clearihue—are you bad?"

Poor Hookey said, "Clery—Clery. . . ." He never wanted a friend more urgently.

I was in Toungoo on my way back from seeing the 5th and 6th Chinese Armies, who had just arrived. As I passed through Toungoo in the morning, going south, it had been as quiet as could be. Coming back that evening, I found it burning like the Crystal Palace. The whole bazaar quarter was alight. Standing on the edge of the huge fire and gazing down the burning streets was like looking into a brightly lit but empty fun-fair. White, blue, and red flames outlined every building, throwing off pretty showers of sparks. The trees in the pavements were

like Christmas trees, some glowing skeletons, others ever changing their shape and colour as the flames ate them up. Every house was a wooden one. The dry heat of central Burma had turned them to tinder.

All the result of an ill-timed visit by twenty-nine Japanese bombers. Their target had been the railway station, where they believed were trains filled with thousands of Chinese reinforcements. They had been misinformed. Instead of bombing the Chinese (whom they fear), they bombed (and killed) a number of their own supporters, renegade Burmese.

It was impossible to stop the fire. Six hundred British troops were called out to blow up buildings around it and thus create a dead zone which the fire could not cross. This had no effect; the fire ate its way farther afield. It came close to the British military hospital, so close that doctors and nurses moved all patients out on the roadway in front of it and next to a railway-line. A hospital train was sent for to move them up-country to another hospital. All patients were moved, except one—Hookey. They dared not move him unless the fire actually caught the hospital; his condition was so grave.

The one man who had the greatest reason to fear fire had to stay until it drove him from his bed. Fortunately he did not know what was happening. The windows of the ward in which he lay had been thoughtfully blacked-out by the nurses so that he should not see the red light of the fire playing on the walls and ceiling.

He lay there all night, and the other patients lay all night beside the railway-track. There had been some blunder. The engine-driver of the hospital train had been given wrong orders, and instead of going to the hospital he had driven his train right out of Toungoo. Railway officials chased him through the night and managed to stop him by flashing a torch at him at a place where road and railway track ran parallel. The line—

single-track—had then to be cleared so that he could take the train all the way back in reverse.

Every patient except Hookey was taken away in the train. They flew him to Calcutta in a Blenheim. He is out of the war for good. The doctors say he will recover, and, by a miracle, be unscarred. . . .

The *Burra Sahib* back in his stronghold, the Mingalodon Golf Club, did not want to sell him his iced beer. Well, the R.A.F. boys (poor Hookey wasn't there) got all of it in the end. And the champagne, and the wine, and the liquicurs. The managing member had almost to be forced to evacuate (he never really believed the Japanese would get to Rangoon). His head butler, Maung Myang—a perky little Karen who was a Christian, and who got on famously with all the R.A.F. boys, though they tried to pull his leg and found themselves outwitted—called them all in and said, "Help yourselves. There are no keys, but take what you want." The Japanese found precious little at Mingalodon Golf Club.

One other Blenheim boy was not there when Maung Myang threw the club open to them. He was Sidney Lee, a twenty-three-year-old Australian flight-lieutenant. There were few young men like him. He was always cheerful, always ready with a sympathetic word. He was intelligent, quiet-spoken, courageous, good-looking, tolerant. And he had an intense, seldom-voiced desire inside him to do what he could to beat the Germans and the Japanese.

Like all other young men serving away from their own homes, their own countries, he was often assailed by nostalgia. "But I'm not going till this is over," he said. It seemed to be a vow he had sworn to himself. He will not go back. . . .

One of the first jobs he did when he arrived in Burma from the Western Desert was to fly his Blenheim and a high-ranking R.A.F. officer over thousands of miles of Free China. It was largely a pioneer flight. Despite the attentions of the Japanese

air forces during the last five years Lee and his passengers met Chinese who had never seen a plane before. They landed where there were no air-fields. They ran into electrical storms and lost their way. They ran out of petrol. But Lee took his passengers where they had to go, and brought them back safely. He showed me the map he used throughout . . . it was all Chinese, with not a single word of English on it.

There were no decorations under his pair of wings, however. Nothing spectacular had come his way during his many months of bombing the Nazis in the Western Desert, or the Japanese in Burma. He always did a clean job, a complete job. He left nothing out; he dodged nothing. He took the risks as they came, and did not boast. He seldom went further than saying, "They nearly got us to-day, boy. Nearly." You had to get the hair-raising details from his loyal observer and his Yorkshire gunner, a grand lad they called "Yorkie."

Eventually they did get him. His Blenheim was crippled by Japanese fighters and he could not continue flying it. He came down and tried to make a forced landing. The observer, a New Zealander called "Schnoz," was killed as he was thrown out of the glass-enclosed nose of the Blenheim. Lee was shot through the cheeks; a bullet went clean through both of them. Yorkie helped him out on to a wing, and was trying to give him first-aid when the Japanese fighters resumed the attack.

Even the Nazis respect the understanding which says a plane that is shot down is out of the fight. That is something beyond the comprehension of the slant-eyed flying apes called Japanese. They flew so low they skimmed the ground (there were no defences within miles) and spattered the crashed plane with machine-gun bullets. They set it on fire. Lee staggered upright to try to take cover and fell into the fire. Yorkie fell off the wing. He could not get near Lee, the fire was too big. The Japanese came back. Yorkie rolled under the tail and the bullets crashed into the burning wreck. They came back and Yorkie

rolled from side to side of the tail to dodge each attack. Satisfied at last, the savages who talk of *bushido* flew away. Yorkie looked at the dead observer, thrown several yards away. He looked at the blazing bomber. He could do nothing. It was the pyre of Sidney Lee, the "gentil knight" of the "R-double A-F"—the Royal Australian Air Force. . . .

I often wonder if the company of Indian labourers who watered the lawns and greens of Mingalodon Golf Club all day and every day, for the *Burra Sahib* who seldom played, who carried water from 5 A.M. when they were summoned from their beds by a man who beat the signal on a piece of suspended railway-line, until 7 P.M.—I wonder if they carried on watering after Rangoon fell. They carried water until a day or two before the general evacuation. . . . That's a question the *Burra Sahib* could not answer—except by hearsay. . . . He had long since left.

As the Japanese advance into Burma and towards Rangoon developed speed, more and more R.A.F. reinforcements arrived. The numbers of machines, both fighters and bombers, sent to Burma were inadequate to deal any smashing attacks at the Japanese, and therefore incapable of assisting the small army in Burma in sufficient power to relieve the pressure of the Japanese army.

The planes were sent, but few ground crews to service them. Pilots, observers, gunners, did what they could to help the overworked ground crews, but they could not keep the machines from wearing out. There were so few Blenheims, for instance, that they were overworked as no other force was, even more than the Advanced Air Striking Force that was sent to France in 1939. I saw pilots take off from Mingalodon aerodrome five times in one day to bomb the Japanese at Moulmein and thereabouts. The wing-commander himself made three raids in one day.

RETREAT IN THE EAST

The inevitable happened. At a critical moment, when the Japanese were about to cross the Sittang river at definite points like ferries, where they could be observed and would be in the open, we had only two Blenheims fit to fly. So the Japanese crossed what should have been their most hazardous obstacle on the road to Rangoon while two shaky Blenheims, relayed by different pilots, carried between them two thousand pounds of high explosive each trip to drop on some seven different points, miles apart.

These were soon afterwards reinforced by Lysanders, planes generally considered obsolete even as reconnaissance aircraft, for which they were designed. The Lysanders we got in Burma were bombers. They were flown mostly by men of the Indian Air Force. Magnificent men, who knew full well the risks they ran carrying out daylight bombings without any escort.

It is an astonishing fact that their losses were small. This may have been because they usually hedge-hopped when bombing.

One of the white pilots was Pilot-Officer "Dickey" Dickson. He was a dare-devil kid with fresh cheeks and fair hair. While drinking beer in Mingalodon Golf Club one night (when it had been turned into a "beer garden," uninhabitable by the genuine *Burra Sahib*) they were talking about the law of averages. One said he had seen a man put one bullet in a revolver, flick it round, and then point it at his hand and press the trigger. It was five to one against him shooting a hole in his hand.

"That's nothing," said "Dickey," and pulled out his revolver. He ejected all the bullets except one, flicked it round, put the muzzle to his head and pressed the trigger. There was a click—and a roar of protest from the others at the table.

"Don't you ever do that again, or I'll kick you in the pants," said one.

"Why not?" asked "Dickey."

"You might have killed yourself, you fool!"

"Rubbish," said "Dickey," and before any one could stop him he did it again. His C.O. gave him a lecture next day, and every one was telling about the newest crazy thing young "Dickey" had done.

Well, he was killed. There was a shortage of bombs. There were gaps when the bombers were grounded because the supplies of bombs had not arrived. They loaded up the Lysanders with American bombs which were available. Anything, to try to stem the Japanese. They did not fit the Lysanders' racks. A Lysander should carry only 250 pounds. The bomb-load on this occasion weighed 480 pounds.

Something went wrong as "Dickey" was taking off . . . the whole plane blew up. . . .

Three Fanatics (made in Japan)

THE first move of the war-time propagandist is to use the newspapers, their cartoonists, the cinema, the radio, the hoardings, the pulpits, the town and village halls, to build up in the mind of the not-so-enlightened public a picture of the enemy as a man, an individual. By subtle means and crude the propagandist tries to make him out to be a brutal, lying, cunning, grasping, noisome, lecherous, niddering, gluttonous, cowardly, flagitious, obscene, sub-human oaf . . . an ape who, by some astounding mischance, has found a gun.

It is all part of the necessary plan to give people the will to fight; to give the people the slightly elevated feeling of crusaders. All this has been done over a period of years in the Orient with the Japanese in the role of the human monkey with a puzzled frown and beady, shifty eyes. The Japanese, that upstart nation which has learned in the last eighty years to make and operate that most complicated single piece of machinery, a modern battleship, yet which still sells its girl-children to the brothel-keeper.

I believe that few of the barbarisms attributed to the Japanese have been exaggerated. I possess contact prints of photographs taken by Japanese officers and soldiers in China of the most monstrous, inhuman acts perpetrated by the very photographers themselves on Chinese—Chinese whose only defence was their courage and the inborn, supreme dignity of a people with five thousand years of civilization behind them.

THREE FANATICS (MADE IN JAPAN)

What other so-called civilized nation could produce soldiers who pose for their pictures, proudly smiling, with bayonets dug deep into the backs of stripped, bound Chinese peasants? Where else could you find an Army officer grinning into the eye of the camera, his right hand holding a bloody sword, his left the hair of a severed, sightless but staring head? What they did in Hong Kong, Malaya, New Britain, is also known.

Among the pictures (taken, I must repeat, by the criminals themselves) are some of a great pit in which lie a nightmare confusion of heads, arms, legs, bodies of men and women . . . others of a Japanese officer whose sword is blurred as it flashes down the bare neck of a bound, stripped prisoner . . . and yet others of a woman before, during, and after rape.

It is necessary, I believe, that those who must fight the Japanese should know these things. It is necessary that the men of our armies, navies, and air forces should know that the Japanese systematically mutilate the wounded and dead, when they have time, on the battle-field.

China tried to tell the world the truth about the fussy Japanese during her long war with them. Few of us were interested enough to listen carefully. When all of us became involved in the war, when the Japanese by a piece of typical Japanese treachery forced the United States to take up arms without delay, many of us tried to remember what we had heard about them.

The Japanese characteristic most widely believed in by men of the fighting services in Malaya, Borneo, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, and India, was their fanaticism—their complete indifference to death, or rather their anxiety to die for the aggrandizement of Japan. Experienced fighting men like the officers of *Prince of Wales* told me in their ward-room a few days after she arrived at Singapore that what they feared most was Japanese pilots flying their aircraft, with bombs still in the

racks, into the ship—dying in a blaze of suicidal glory for Dai Nippon.

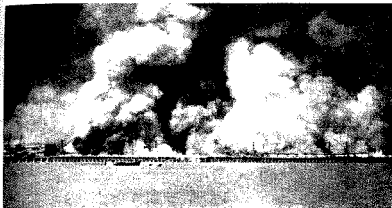
Such was British propaganda in the Orient in the past, such was our propaganda during the war up to and even after the loss of Rangoon and all that went with it, that our fighting men in all services were left uncorrected, left with this demoralizing idea of the fanaticism of the Japanese fighting man still in their minds.

Nothing was done to explain truthfully to them that the Japanese was mentally inferior to them; that this was proved by the belief of every Japanese that he personally is related to a descendant of the Gods. Nothing was done to tell our fighting men how Japanese prisoners did in fact behave. They were not told that Japanese propaganda (readily believed by the insanely superstitious Japanese) was largely responsible, by instilling fear, for some Japanese fighting men killing themselves rather than allow themselves to be captured by the "sadistic" Allies.

Our propaganda in Malaya and Burma was a farrago of nebulous communiqués announcing, often days late, more "victorious withdrawals" (one actually stated with considerable pride that we had "successfully disengaged the enemy") or peevishly denying Japanese claims. The fighting men, whose inalienable right it was to demand personal propaganda, were ignored, or should I say forgotten?

I first discovered that the death-seeking Japanese fighting man was really quite human, afflicted by very human fears that made him tremble, that swamped the mad desire to die at any cost in carrying out the glorious mission of Japanese world-domination—I first found out his shortcomings in the British military hospital at Mingalodon.

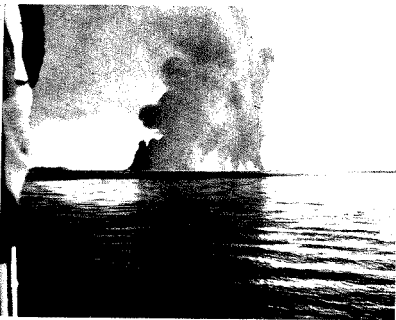
On New Year's morning, early, about one o'clock, Stowe got 'browned-off' with the noisy crowd of British Army, Navy, and Air Force officers and men, and the A.V.G., and oil-men, and



RANGOON'S WATER FRONT AFTER THE DEMOLITION

So dense was the smoke, even three days after, that a Hurricane, trying to take photographs, could not get below 18,000 feet.

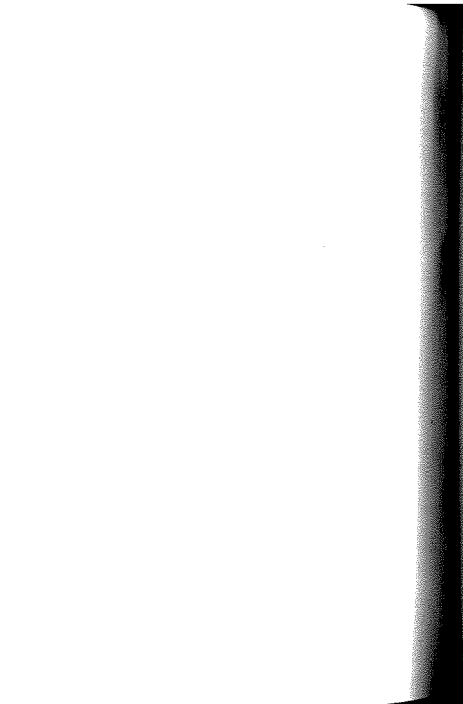
Photo Keystone



THE SYRIAM OIL REFINERIES

The fumes from the giant oil containers at these refineries lasted over a month.

Photo Keystone



Burra Sahibs, and American motor-engineers, celebrating in the Silver Grill, Rangoon's most popular restaurant and dancing-place. It was a frightful dump, with grimy walls and ceilings, dirty glasses, attic furniture, and a fifth-rate band. When bombs fell near it on Christmas Day a girl was scared almost witless by a dozen rats bouncing down the main stairway and out into the street. In peace-time the *Burra Sahib* ate and danced here in his stiff shirt and dinner-jacket. Indeed, in 1937, when I passed through on my way to China and the Japanese sacking of Nanking and isolation of Shanghai, they would not serve me until I changed to a suit resembling in some degree the eating-outfit of the *Burra Sahib*. I was not resentful; an Italian major, also on his way to China, and I had too much fun out of the dilapidated place for that.

Anyway, Stowe left the party and went home, fed up. These war-time jollifications, this decrepit meeting-place, made him think of New Year at home with his wife and two fine boys. He reached the Strand Hotel, Rangoon's best, where he and I were living. In a spasm of petulance he kicked the plate-glass panel out of one of the front doors, pushed the door open, and went to bed.

I drowned my own feeling of frustration in indifferent alcohol. I had spent only one of the previous five Christmas Days at home, the others in war-time Addis Ababa, Shanghai, Madrid, Arras. I reached the front door of the Strand in time to see John Gardiner, an executive of General Motors Corporation assembly plant in Rangoon, on all fours climbing through the shattered glass panel. He cut his hand getting through. I followed him. I cut my knee. Once inside, we found the door was not locked.

I had to go to the British military hospital next day to have a stitch sewn in my knee. When the nurse asked me if it was a bomb-splinter wound Stowe laughed and confessed to kicking the glass out.

An Indian Army Medical Corps doctor put in the stitch. It was as neat a job of horse-hair stitching as I have ever had done to me. The European male hospital orderly, a youth with a Cockney accent, spoke to the pleasant Indian doctor with what I thought was insufferable insolence. Looking at the two of them, I wondered what it was that gave the white orderly that feeling of superiority over the Indian doctor. . . .

"We have some Japanese prisoners here," said the doctor.

"Really. How many?" I asked.

"Three. Would you like to have a look at them?"

Stowe and I said yes. When the stitching and bandaging was done the doctor said, "They're in there." He pointed to a small private ward directly in front of the chair where I was sitting—about three yards away. The window and door were open, but over both were steel grilles.

We went up close and peered into the dim interior. Three men sat on three beds. They looked at us. We looked at them. Stowe and I looked at each other.

"Do they speak English?" we asked the nurse, who had joined us. She shook her head, and leaned forward to have another look. There was nothing more we could do, and the Gurkha guards, two of them with fixed bayonets, looked resentful, so we left the hospital to try to find some one who could speak Japanese.

We found Major F. D. Merrill, one of the United States Military Mission to China, a mission which represented the United States Government in the Orient in any matters dealing with United States Lease-and-lend material for China. Merrill was a keen cavalry officer who wore rimless spectacles and had a deep knowledge of Japan. He had spent many years there as military attaché. Sure, he would come along and interpret for us. Which prisoners were they? Oh, those. He had seen them already. Very interesting, they were. He told

THREE FANATICS (MADE IN JAPAN)

us how he had been asked by some British Intelligence Officers to interpret for them.

"When we got there I asked them what questions they had. Do you know what they said? They said, 'Oh, we don't know. Ask them anything. We'd be glad of any scraps you can get out of them.'"

We returned to the hospital next day and found the three Japanese had been moved to another ward, also with barred door and windows. The Gurkha guard saluted Merrill, who then stood in front of one of the windows through which he knew the Japanese could see him, and took off his revolver and holster and laid them on a table.

There is no doubt the Japanese are the most ceremonial people on earth. It is all linked up with their superstitions. Everything must be done just so, or something awful might happen. They sat, legs crossed, on their unmade beds, folded their hands gently in front of their chests, and bowed low, murmuring something in Japanese. They did it first to Merrill, then individually to Stowe and me. Through Merrill they invited us to sit on their beds, as there were no chairs.

The first thing that struck me was the incongruity of the three spittoons and their nauseating contents. The Japanese displayed the quintessence of politeness to us hated foreigners, their enemies, their captors—that being the behaviour dictated by their code for the occasion—then, quite as a matter of habit, they hawked and expectorated expertly into their respective spittoons.

These three men were some of the few survivors of a hundred and forty-nine Japanese flying personnel shot down by the A.V.G. in two actions. One was a junior officer, pilot of a Navy "O" fighter. The other two were the front- and rear-gunners, respectively, of a bomber which had carried a crew of eight. The other six were killed in the crash.

The pilot was, according to Merrill, a well-educated young Japanese. He was born in Korea and was twenty-five years old. On the point of his smooth chin and across his upper lip were thin patches of short black hair. The growth was so sparse you could see the individual hairs.

One of the gunners, the rear-gunner, was a hulking young man who had been a farm-labourer. He was also an amateur exponent of judo. His blank face framing expressionless, black eyes, and a loose mouth, topped by a wrinkled, narrow forehead, fascinated Stowe. As he stared at this dolt ("dope," Merrill called him), I fancy Stowe may have been trying to visualize one of the bright-devil-may-care A.V.G. boys being shot down by him.

The front-gunner was a different type. He took great interest in everything said, laughed easily, and had a pleasant, clean face. He was the youngest.

Interpreters have an infuriating habit of carrying on long conversations with people whose language they know, and forgetting about the other, ignorant, party present. So it was with Merrill. We would put a question for translation into Japanese. He would ask it, and there ensued long discussions between him and the Japanese. By pressing for answers in English we learned quite a lot in the finish.

The pilot, who had fractured his pelvis, was so overcome at finding a sympathetic Japanese-speaking soldier that he confessed his and the two gunners' great personal worry. He asked Merrill, "Are you ashamed of us?"

"Good God, no! Why?"

"Well, we are prisoners."

"So what? There's nothing wrong with that. You were shot down. You couldn't help it."

Then the Japanese pilot went on to explain what Merrill already knew, but of which he had deemed it wise to pretend ignorance.

"We should not have allowed ourselves to be captured. We should have committed seppuku [stomach-cutting]. Japan does not exchange prisoners of war because there are not supposed to be any Japanese prisoners of war. When we know that there is no escape we must try to kill as many of the enemy as possible, and then kill ourselves. It is a most shameful thing to be captured—nothing more shameful could happen to us. Now we cannot go home after the war because we should bring dishonour upon our families."

Sympathizing with him, Merrill drew out of him his reactions when he knew his flying days had been ended for the duration by the A.V.G.

When his plane was so badly damaged as to be about to crash he thought about seppuku. Now was the time. . . . But he delayed—and found himself dangling at the end of his parachute. He thought about it again as he drifted down. He did nothing about it. When he landed he made such a clumsy job of it that he broke his pelvis.

"I suffered so much pain, I had no thought of suicide. I fainted."

He recovered consciousness as a prisoner of war—oh, dishonour!

He was taken to an Army headquarters and subjected to routine questioning. His behaviour was queer enough to cause one of the questioners to ask him what was the matter. He said he had broken his leg and couldn't stand up. They examined his leg and found nothing wrong with it, and, naturally enough, declared he was malingering. He continued to groan, and a doctor was called, who at once said he had fractured his pelvis.

Normal treatment in the British military hospital soon allayed the pain, and he ceased to groan and began again to think of seppuku. But again he did nothing about it. He had no weapon, you say? He had. Each of them had a round tin to carry fifty cigarettes. Also, the Gurkha guard stood with his

back to their grilled doorway, his rifle and bayonet held loosely in his right hand.

"Are you ashamed of me?" he asked Merrill.

"Of course not."

He bowed low again, sucked air nosily through his teeth—another sign of polite Japanese appreciation—and said, "Thank you. I feel much better now." He and the two gunners smiled happily.

Because some people had been hit by machine-gun bullets in one of Rangoon's main streets during the Christmas Day raid, a rumour had spread that the Japanese pilots and air crews carried Tommy-guns with them when they had to bale out and that they used them to machine-gun any one they happened to see. It was obvious balderdash, but I asked Merrill to question the three prisoners about it.

Their mouths were open as he spoke to them, then they shook their heads and the pilot said, "There are too many other things to worry about when you're on a parachute."

Some fanatics. . . . So spoke a Descendant of the Gods to an abhorred white man whom he had met but twice. The Japanese are careless of death—the death of others.

The pilot told us some interesting facts about beliefs in the Japanese Army. I asked him what he expected to meet when he came flying to Burma. Did he expect a walk-over, a fair fight, or did he expect a beating?

He answered in general terms, avoiding Burma, scene of his "dishonour."

"We all believed the United States was not prepared for war, and so was weaker than Japan. We knew, though, that United States equipment was better than Japan's. We also know British equipment is better than ours."

He added, "We do not think the Philippines will be able to withstand us for long. Singapore will be our most difficult task."

It should have been. . . .

THREE FANATICS (MADE IN JAPAN)

Speaking as a pilot, he said he did not like Japan's best fighter of that period, the Navy "O." He preferred the older, slower Army 97 fighter. The 97's wings were less likely to come off in high-powered action, he said.

An odd thing about the bombers brought down by the A.V.G. in those days, and by the R.A.F. in a lesser degree, was that so many of them carried fishing-tackle. It shook most of us who knew about it. I asked the more intelligent gunner why they carried it. He said they had come down from the Russian border and had used their fishing-tackle *en route*. It was in their planes when they raided Burma simply because no one had taken it out. It did not say much for the thoroughness of their ground crews, I thought.

Among the most prized souvenirs collected by the A.V.G. and R.A.F. fighter boys were Japanese swords. All Japanese soldiers of the rank of sergeant and upwards carry swords, the pilot told us. As many of them are family heirlooms, handed down from father to son, they are the subject of some superstition, something to be always carried for good luck. That was why so many Japanese air crews captured or found dead were wearing swords. Many of their bombers carried a crew of eight, instead of the normal five. Suppose all were officers and sergeants—what fumbling there must have been in the confined space of a bomber during a raid as they moved about the machine on their various duties.

The sword is also used for suicide.

As we were leaving three prisoners in the hospital, the pilot said to Merrill, "You must visit us in Japan when the war is over. You must stay with us."

I said to Merrill, "I thought they said they could not return to Japan because of the disgrace of having been prisoners?"

Jokingly, Merrill asked them what about it.

They smiled archly, and the pilot, bowing deeply, said, "Perhaps we change our names, ha ha."

I prayed that the features of these particular Descendants of the Gods would never be stamped on the myriad faces of the Orient. . . . Preserve us from an Orient where strut Japanese *Herrenvolk*. . . .

And talking about fanatics, one thing that has worried me for some time is the inadequate propaganda concerning British troops, particularly troops from Great Britain. They were (indeed still are) the real fanatics. They went into battle against what they knew to be the most hopeless odds on many occasions without a moment's hesitation. Theirs was a sort of cold-blooded fanaticism as compared with the wild, heated fanaticism of the Japanese. In all the wars within this world war troops from Great Britain have had a considerable amount of the dirty work to do. They were seldom mentioned in the official and semi-official reports. Dominion troops were: Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, South Africans—and then passing references to "Imperial" troops.

I know from many contacts with the men from Great Britain that they resented this apparent slight. They read old papers, heard broadcasts, and wondered why they were so seldom mentioned. "What the hell is it about?" they asked. It lasted two and a half years. I do believe it was calculated to improve the morale of the men themselves. They may have thought, "We do not get mentioned much—perhaps we are not so good as the others." And that is quite untrue.

After two and a half years of enemy lies that the British were fighting to the last Frenchman, the last Indian, the last Chinese, the last Dominion man, and hoping to fight to the last American, British propaganda policy was changed. We war reporters were not only told we could now mention units from the United Kingdom by name, but were asked to give them full credit whenever it was their due. Those of us who had been to the majority of fronts in this war where these men had fought were only too anxious to do so.

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I would like to say now, talking as a South African, that in the eleven theatres of war where I have worked as a reporter in the past seven years I have seen no troops show such courage of various types as the troops from Great Britain.

Whether it was fighting a hopeless offensive against impossible odds of men or material; whether it was fighting a disheartening, long delaying action without prospect of a single victory; whether it was in the mad heroism of a smashing attack to force a victory; whether it was courage in private matters, not allowing themselves to be worn down by nagging anxiety about wives or sweethearts left to their own devices at home thousands of miles away, wives and sweethearts who were often silent because of inadequate postal services—whatever courage the war called for, these men found it within themselves. Courage is their birthright.

The rather uninspiring man in drab clothes who filled the cities of Great Britain, who breathed air contaminated by industry, who nervously said, "Oh, I beg your pardon!" if he accidentally brushed against you in a crowd, he is not the man he was. He is a tough guy now.

It needed the rough awakening of war to make him realize he still had the qualities of his forefathers, the men who built this giant Empire.

See the square-jawed men of the Commandos, the sun-burned men of the desert, the confident men of the air forces, and the heroes of the sea.

They are the men of Britain Re-born. They have seen fear from Iceland to New Zealand. They have suffered wounds. They have died.

Their day comes. . . .

"On the Road to Mandalay"

OUR position as officially accredited war reporters was anomalous. We were supposed to maintain the appearance of officers by our dress and behaviour, but we were civilians. Some of us carried what the British War Office is pleased to call "licences," and we were subject to military discipline. In Rangoon, during the last week or two, we were honoured by the appointment of Colonel C. Foucar as chief of the Services' Public Relations Office, to which we were attached. Shortly before his appointment the colonel had been a Rangoon lawyer, and also a fiction-writer.

We were of the army, but not a part of it. I cannot recall being given any help of importance by the Press unit in Burma. I do not wish to suggest in any way that it was obstructive. I do not think it was. It merely could not help. It was the poor relation of the army in Burma.

When the Japanese advance towards Rangoon gathered momentum, when it was obvious that the defending forces had small hope of beating them off, and when an outflanking movement seemed to me to be probable, I asked the colonel if any arrangements had been made to include the Press unit in any scheme of withdrawal the Army might have in mind. He said he did not know. I asked him if he would find out. He said he would. I heard no more about the matter. Some days later I asked another officer of the Press unit the same question.

He replied, "Now look, Gal., I can't tell you anything, but you leave it to me. Just trust me."

Unfortunately I was one of a number of officially accredited reporters who had been in Rheims with the Advanced Air Striking Force sent to France in those early days. We had a 'phone-call one morning from the R.A.F. Service Press Office telling us to be out of Rheims in two hours. The Germans were coming, we were told.

"What about transport?" we asked.

"There's difficulty about that. H.Q. has commandeered the cars you chaps have been using. You'll have to make your own way out, I'm afraid."

That—after several of us had asked permission to buy and use our own cars, but had been refused on security grounds. . . .

So when the Rangoon R.A.F. Press Officer told me to trust him I could not help but recall that other occasion when we had to abandon much of our gear; a news-reel man had to leave behind a three hundred pound camera (most of the stuff was recovered later through no fault of the Press Officers).

I discussed the matter with Stowe, and he agreed it would be a good idea if we loaded all our belongings into the Jeep and moved them north to Prome. We could dump them there and be free to return to Rangoon with a Jeep that we could load with spare petrol. Our Jeep did only fifteen miles to the British gallon.

The R.A.F. Press Officer asked us a few days later if we had transport in which to evacuate ourselves. We said we still had our Jeep. He said, "Fine—then I'll cross you off the list. God knows where I'm going to find transport for all the others," he added alarmingly.

Two new reporters arrived, an Australian working for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and another for the *London Daily Mirror*. I happened to know that in Rangoon the chief of the Chinese transport service on the Burma Road, Mr. Sen, was prepared to hand over his Government's Lease-lend Jeeps to any reliable person who would promise to deliver them, even-

tually, to the Chinese authorities in Lashio. I gave these two reporters a letter to him saying they would be pleased to help him and themselves by taking over one Jeep each. It was an excellent Chinese plan to remove as many Jeeps and trucks out of threatened Rangoon as soon as possible; to make sure few, if any, fell into Japanese hands. He signed over two Jeeps to them. By now all of us had Jeeps, and were able to relieve the Press Officers of the trouble of finding transport for us.

Stowe and I left Rangoon on February 19, 1942. The Second Echelon of the British army had already gone north. We were advised not to deposit our belongings in Prome but to carry on to Mandalay, which would be the new headquarters if and when Rangoon was abandoned.

The Jeep took us along at a fine speed, but we were surprised at the emptiness of the road. Evacuation was the word on every one's lips in Rangoon. The banks, and other similar institutions, were informed secretly through the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce that they would be given seventy-two hours' notice of evacuation. We, reporters attached to the army, had been given no such information or assurance. The lack of north-bound traffic therefore surprised us, since if, even officially, the situation was grave enough to allow for discussions of plans for evacuation, then surely the removal of machinery, transport, food, medical supplies, and countless other stores not wanted for immediate use should be in progress. It was not. Much was lost in the demolition of Rangoon that should, and could, have been saved.

We arrived at Mandalay, an arid, tin-shanty city with nothing to commend it save Kipling's ballad.

"Let's go to the Fort and find out what the position is," said Stowe. "Stop at the Mandalay Club first and we'll have lunch."

We drove into the Fort through one of the gateways in the high, thick walls built by a Burmese king, and had difficulty in finding the club. I pulled up the Jeep beside a Burmese

who was walking on one of the many roadways inside and asked him, "Can you tell us where the Mandalay Club is?"

Glancing around, I saw we were parked beside a flat mass of smoking rubble and a charred, wooden porchway. Jokingly I said, "This isn't it, is it?"

"Yes," he said, "Mandalay Club."

It had received a direct hit in the city's first raid the day before. A young officer in one of the Army buildings had no news of what was happening down in the south, and advised us to go up to Maymyo, the Governor's hill-station town.

To reach it we had to drive along a road, forty-one miles long with more than two hundred turns in it, to the top of one of the plateaux of the Shan mountain-range. At the Maymyo Club we met Mr. V. P. Wainwright, the secretary, who was a retired civil servant. His club was full, but he offered us the use of one of the rooms in his own bungalow on the club premises. He also gave us the use of his bathroom, which contained "the only long English bath in Maymyo." Gentle Mrs. Wainwright was like a mother to us.

After the dusty heat of the Irrawaddy Valley, and the smells of dilapidated Rangoon, Maymyo was paradise. Although the bitterly cold nights made us shiver we enjoyed it, and wrapped ourselves in blankets. In the lounge of the club there were open fires, the first I had seen for more than a year. It was a pleasure to freeze and think about the sweat of the valley and lower Burma.

We stayed a day longer than we intended, and when we were making arrangements to deposit our gear in the club's store-room the other reporters arrived with the colonel and his assistant. . . . The general evacuation from Rangoon had begun.

On February 20, 1942, the day after Stowe and I went north to deposit our gear, Colonel Foucar said to our colleagues in Rangoon, "You will all be leaving for Maymyo at two o'clock

this afternoon." Some protested that their job was to stay on and report what happened. Colonel Foucar said, "You are all subject to military discipline. That is an order. If you chose to disobey it . . ." They left.

This was not in accordance with a statement issued to all commanders on War Office policy in regard to officially accredited war reporters. It was issued on January 31, 1942, by the Chief of the General Staff. Paragraph 2 (a) of the document said, "Officially accredited war correspondents, in uniform, will come round during the battle. It is their job."

And paragraph 2 (d) adds (ironically?), "The Press correspondents must be allowed to go where they want so long as they do not interfere with the battle."

However, it was an order. They left.

Our colleagues were quartered in huts in the Burma Rifles mess compound, and there they stayed without beds or baths for some weeks until they were requested to leave. It seems one of them had spilled a bottle of sauce on the dinner-table. This, and some other minor happenings, caused the mess president to ask the colonel to remove them as, it was said, "They are lowering the tone of the mess." A woman, an impartial onlooker, remarked that this was impossible.

Meanwhile cars, trucks, Jeeps by the hundred, sped up the Mandalay road. The accidents were countless. This was due partly to the fact that only a small percentage of the drivers now on the road, and arriving under stress, had ever driven before, and partly to the fact that most of the vehicles, being American, had left-hand drive. The Chinese drivers of convoys were notorious. They kept their trucks in size anything from two and a half to ten tons, in close formation on the narrow roads and maintained steady speeds of fifty and sixty miles an hour. They were not experienced drivers, and if the leading truck ran into trouble few of the others following so closely

and speedily behind could pull up and avoid being involved in the accident. It was generally a case of "one crash—all crash."

To pass a Chinese convoy, which always raised clouds of choking dust, was a major adventure. In the first place the drivers were too preoccupied merely keeping their heavy vehicles, overloaded with goods and their families and friends, on the road as they went blinding along on one another's tails to keep an eye on their rear-view mirrors. Secondly, they almost invariably kept all windows of the driver's cabin closed to keep the dust out, so they could not hear hooters from behind.

Three courses were open to those who wished to dodge the dust raised by a Chinese convoy:

(1) Stop your own vehicle for an hour or so and let them get miles ahead.

(2) Force your way past by tearing along the edge of the roadway on their right. This involved the risk of falling down an embankment, called a *bund*, as all roads in the valley were built on embankments so that they would be usable in flood-times. Note: Chinese convoys did not keep to the left of the road, their correct side. They usually drove in the middle, or on the wrong side.

(3) This method was eventually adopted by Stowe and me. We would pull up at a place where the road was under repair and gather a considerable number of lumps of dry clay, weighing about two pounds each. We would then pull up close behind the last truck in the convoy and both of us would throw a hunk of clay clean over the top of it, to land on the bonnet. It needed only one good lump to fall on the truck's bonnet—where it appeared to explode like a small bomb—to persuade the driver either to stop, leave the road, or pull over to his correct side. This would be done to each truck in turn, as we worked our way at considerable danger to ourselves through the dust-raising convoy with madmen at the wheels.

On another road to the north and Mandalay Stowe and I saw at least fifty American trucks burned out. They littered the roadside for some fifty miles. Our first thoughts were, "Why the hell doesn't some one teach the Chinese to drive? Look at this appalling waste." We blamed the poor Chinese drivers quite wrongly. The useless destruction was the work of Americans.

There was at the small village of Nyaungleben, 350 miles due south of Mandalay, a unit of the A.T.G., or American Technical Group. They belonged to the body of American motor-engineers who had come to Burma and China as part of the American Lease-lend agreement to make sure that breakdown and lack of competent mechanics did not result in United States vehicles being abandoned on the Burma Road. They formed a Burma Road repairs patrol, and fixed up any stranded China-bound vehicles. No repair job was too big for them. The unit at Nyaungleben heard of Japanese patrol activity not far from the village, and misconstrued it, apparently, as a general Japanese advance. Acting on instructions, one of them told me, this group began a rapid journey north to Mandalay carrying out en route their own "scorched earth" plans. Wherever they found new American trucks, originally bound for China, parked by the roadside awaiting repairs, they burned them up. I saw twenty-two burned skeletons in one dump. They were six- and ten-wheeled trucks.

A British brigadier named Burke sent one of his officers to the unit to ask would they please let him have some of the abandoned trucks and he would have them repaired. He explained that he was extremely short of transport. The brigadier told me that the answer was that the unit had instructions to destroy the trucks, and destroy them they would. They were very sorry, but orders were orders. So the roadside from Nyaungleben almost to Mandalay was marked by the charred wrecks of new vehicles that had not done more than a few

SERGEANT-PILOT
"KECHIL" BARGE

"Kechil" is Malayan for
"small." This pilot is
mentioned at p. 161.



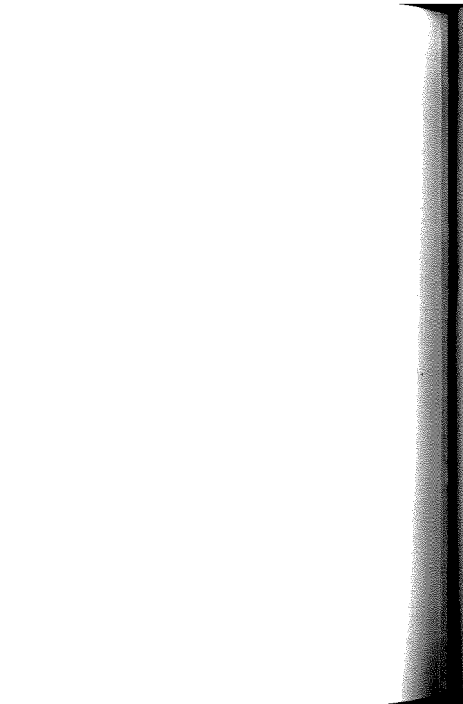
SECOND LIEUTENANT
"HOOKAY" RUSSELL

This South African pilot flew
the author in the bombing
raid on Bangkok, described
at p. 177.

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT
BINGHAM-WALLACE

One of the pilots who tried
night fighting from Rangoon
at p. 179.





hundred miles. The Japanese did not come to Nyaungleben, where the "scorched earth"-ing of the vehicles began, until one month later. It did not seem possible that Americans would have blundered in this way . . . the whole thing seemed so British, Americans might, I suppose, blame it on the British environment.

As the Japanese approached Pegu, north-east of Rangoon, the tempo of the evacuation from Rangoon increased. Trains were sent north filled with women and children and old men. One of these was bombed and machine-gunned by the Japanese. All sorts of people arrived in Mandalay and Maymyo, driving Chinese Lease-lend trucks and cars and Jeeps. The United States Consul-General, Mr. Schnarre, and his staff were escorted north by a U.S. Army officer, Captain Roscoe Hambilton, who brought up the rear of the speeding convoy in his Jeep. Laid within easy reach across the front passenger's seat (which was empty) was a Bren gun fully loaded.

Mr. Bernard Otwell Binns, the Governor's private secretary, was in another convoy. Beside Binns sat an armed soldier of the Gloucestershire Regiment. I met Binns in Maymyo Club some time later. He sat down beside me and chatted affably and familiarly with me. I thought he had mistaken me for some one else as I did not recognize him. Finally he said something which made me remember him. I wonder if it was a reference to demolition that made me recall that message criticizing the civil government for its lethargic handling of the unloading of war materials from ships in Rangoon docks—the message Stowe and I wrote and which he refused even to show to the Governor for censorship?

I was shocked by his appearance. He was thin, cut, bruised, and bandaged. He had been driving a Jeep, and had left the road to tumble down an embankment when he encountered a Chinese road convoy. The soldier was gravely injured.

Then Lieutenant-Colonel Miller, the Governor's A.D.C., arrived. He also had a drink with us in the Maymyo Club lounge, more commonly referred to by old inhabitants of Burma as the "Snake Pit." It was that part of the club most favoured by women.

The colonel told us that the Governor had with him a younger A.D.C. in Rangoon: "He needs some one a bit sprightlier than me. I've got a wooden leg."

We were joined by the wife of an officer who was on the staff at headquarters still in Rangoon. She was most worried about his safety. She herself was not well and told us the doctor had told her to take care of herself because of her weak heart.

She did not know the colonel personally, only that he was the Governor's A.D.C. She said to him, "When do you suppose my husband will be coming up here, colonel?"

With heavy jocularly the colonel replied, "When he is forced to, madam. He's a soldier, isn't he? He'll stop down there until the end."

"What does Dorman-Smith mean by saying over the wireless that Rangoon will be a second Tobruk or Moscow? What does he mean by staying down there? So long as he stays all the others have to."

The poor woman, like many others, was hysterical, and, it must be remembered, unwell.

The colonel: "Madam, I will not have you talking like that about His Excellency the Governor, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith. I am his personal aide, and I simply will not have it."

"Well, he ought to know better."

"Look here, madam, I don't care who you are or what you are, but I will not allow you to say such a thing. How dare you!"

"Well, why doesn't he leave and let all the others leave, too?" she demanded thoughtlessly.

"I am not going to have this defeatist—er, defeatism. I will not have it. . . ."

"Well, I am a defeatist!" she exclaimed.

The colonel, who had long since risen to his feet, now turned sharply away and left the "Snake Pit," nearly shattering the glass panels of the door as he closed it.

This elevating passage had been heard by all the people present in the "Snake Pit." They had all ceased their private talks the better to hear the raised voices of the colonel and the woman. There was some tittering as the colonel left.

I report this unpleasant episode as proof of the attitude of so many of the civilians. Their morale was as flat as a punctured tyre. Cynical banter about "Where do we go from here? . . . When do you think the Japs will arrive? . . . I give this place a week. . . . We certainly are seeing the world, anyway . . ." was used to gloss over the true feelings of most of the people. They seemed to be little interested in anything except in getting out of the country, buying cigarettes, having parties, and scoffing.

An officer I met down in Lower Burma asked me, "What on earth do the folks up there think is going on? They don't seem to have any appreciation of the danger of the situation."

They did, but they lacked leadership. They rolled bandages as they had their drinks in the "Snake Pit." . . .

There did not seem to be the slightest regard for security, if the talk one heard in the "Snake Pit" was any criterion. And it was a criterion, I am afraid. Wives of officers told me of matters which I knew were secret. I even heard references to the contents of messages sent by the Army and the Government to India and London. I was told in the "Snake Pit" that fifteen ships carrying reinforcements would soon be leaving an Indian port bound for Burma. . . . Units of the regiments mentioned did arrive in Burma some days later.

People were shameless in their voiced lack of faith in the outcome of the war so far as Burma was concerned.

This did not help the troops, particularly young officers, who heard it all.

There was no newspaper. The *Rangoon Gazette*, the only real English-language paper to serve all Burma, had closed down. Rumours were numerous.

Rangoon radio news was scanty. This vital service had been largely left to two Anglo-Indians named Lazario and da Costa. They sought scraps of official news from Army Headquarters. They listened to the B.B.C. and made a summary of what they heard. Altogether they showed a loyalty that was lacking among the white population. They were left without the personal guidance of the Director of News Services of Burma, a young man named Thomas Cook, who had been the Governor's A.D.C. and had married one of the Governor's daughters. He had been in a Guards Regiment and had been promoted from lieutenant to major. Cook's duties had taken him north.

On, I think, two occasions, the Governor, who had decided to remain in Rangoon until advised by the army that the military evacuation was to take place, went to the microphone to state that he was in Rangoon, and not, as the Japanese radio declared, Maymyo. But the propaganda was uninspired, and some of the more flowery statements were greeted with sneers by cynical white listeners in the north. The Governor's broadcast declaration that Rangoon would be another Tobruk or Moscow was such an empty flight of fancy that it gave a completely wrong impression to the outside world of the true nature of things. After such bombast too much was expected of Rangoon's defenders. Rangoon was infinitely less prepared for defence than Singapore, but to the outside world the shock of its fall was greater than it need have been. The grandiloquent boast by the civil leader who presumably knew the facts, and then the dark revelation of the emptiness, was not calculated to inspire confidence even among the friends of Britain.

The newest development was the organization of groups of Commandos, or bush-whackers, as they were locally called, to go to Rangoon for late salvage work. That was the next piece of advance information to be bandied about the "Snake Pit." It was true—of course. The bush-whackers went down several in each truck. The idea was for them to take over as many vehicles as they could find in Rangoon, load them up with anything they considered might be useful, and bring it north. I do not know why only a small number of bush-whackers were sent. There were many men in Maymyo and Mandalay who would have gone willingly, or could have been ordered to go, and much valuable material might have been saved instead of destroyed. It struck me as being a half-hearted affair.

Even after the great rush to the north had begun, when the time that Rangoon was to remain part of the British Empire could be counted in hours, some of the civilians up in Maymyo still did not seem to realize what was happening. One woman who had lived in Rangoon with her husband (a *Burra Sahib*) for about ten years was so unable to orientate herself that she said to me, seeking advice, "I did so hate to leave our house. After all these years . . . just think. I packed all the silver in wooden boxes with the best linen. Do you think it will be all right? I barred the windows and locked the doors." Locked the doors and barred the windows. . . .

Another refugee, more as a joke than anything else, nailed a notice to his front door: "Don't bother—this house has already been looted."

Yet another—a woman—drinking a *chota-peg* in the "Snake Pit" in Maymyo Club, said she was so worried about her dogs. She had come up with her mother to Maymyo, and once she had got her settled in a bungalow she had meant to go back to Rangoon for her dogs. She couldn't go back now, could she? Oh, she was so worried about them, poor dears. She had left

them locked up in the house with about a week's supply of dog-biscuits and water laid out for them on the scullery floor.

At this stage the first Government-sponsored evacuation of women and children began to move. They left Mandalay on February 26, 1942. They reached Calcutta twenty-two days later. They travelled by car, foot, launch, elephant, dhoolie (a platform on which to squat, carried by four bearers), and train.

They were led, Moses-like, by Mr. G. Farmer, an Englishman who had lived in Shanghai. He became known as "Oh-Mister-Farmer" as that was how he was addressed a thousand times a day by his hundred and eighteen charges seeking advice. He appointed as pace-maker a middle-aged but fit Englishwoman who was afflicted by a limp. She walked ahead of the procession on the seventy-two-mile stretch where transport of any kind was impossible. She set the pace for all—pregnant women, cripples using crutches, bearers (or coolies) carrying babies in baskets. As "Rear-Admiral" Farmer appointed the coolie-khan, an elderly man whom they named "Happy" because of his resemblance to the notable dwarf. He looked like "Happy" and had "Happy's" disposition despite his blue eyes, tuft of white beard, and black skin. "Happy's" duty was to see that the bearers did not lag. Each refugee was allowed sixty pounds of baggage. Two of the women, Mrs. Jane Ogden and Mrs. Gertrude Murphy, produced evening gowns, necklaces, and pearl earrings the night they arrived in Calcutta.

It was an adventurous trip. At one place the camp caught fire. There was pandemonium as the children ran through the burning grass calling for their mothers. Bearers dashed into the grass-huts and rescued baggage. At another place they were joined by a Dutchman. No one seemed to know where he had come from. During a night walk up a mountain-path he fell down a crevice, some twenty feet. Fortunately he could not see where he was and kept still. Below his ledge was another drop, of two hundred feet. They rescued him.

"During the marches we heard parrots and whistling monkeys, and our elephants trumpeted," said Mrs. Murphy.

At another stop they could get nothing to drink after a ten-mile walk. Some one had used the big water-container as a bath, and had used soap.

Then their guide and many of the bearers left them when they came to a village stricken with cholera. The last lap was by train to Calcutta. When they got out they found a red carpet laid across the platform. They did not know what to make of this display of official welcome, but they walked sedately over it. . . . They learned afterwards that it had been laid down for the Governor of Assam, who had also been in the train.

At Rangoon the Governor, perhaps mindful of his many critics, stayed on in Government House. With few exceptions the normal civilian population had gone, including the fire-brigade and all municipal employees. The empty streets were patrolled by troops carrying Tommy-guns and rifles. The only other inhabitants were criminals, criminal lunatics, lunatics, and lepers.

They had been released from the gaols and institutions on the order of an officer of the Indian Civil Service. He had misread an order sent to him regarding their disposal. The convicts numbered some five thousand. At night they made Rangoon a city of the damned. They prowled the deserted streets in search of loot. When they were seen looting they were shot by the soldiers. Numerous fires burned. Some were houses (many in neglected slum areas) set alight by their owners before they too evacuated. Other fires were laid by the looters, gone amok, unbalanced by their sudden, unexpected freedom. Yet others were laid by fifth-columnists.

The senior civil servant who had given the criminals, lunatics, and lepers their freedom committed suicide. Another did the same soon afterwards.

Lepers and lunatics wandered aimlessly about in search of food, some sharing pickings of the refuse-heaps with the many mongrel dogs. An occasional Buddhist monk walked the street going about his business, protected from assault by the long saffron robes of his faith.

Down at the docks all was chaos. Burmese looters were rummaging about and had found some medical supplies in cases. On examining these they judged them to be of no use except for the bottles. They tossed them away on the concrete wharves and watched them explode.

An A.V.G. ground-crew man, who went to the docks to see what there was that might be useful for the unit, saw them at it.

"They were having a great time," he said. "They were tickled pink by the explosions."

The army began withdrawing in the face of the powerful Japanese attacks at Pegu. Advanced Japanese patrols pushed some miles west of Pegu, threatening the Prome road to the north. Hope of holding Rangoon vanished. The order was given to begin the demolition that had been prepared during the last two or three weeks. The demolition squads worked fast, but two hours after they had begun mechanized Japanese units arrived at Mingalodon air-field. Petrol-dumps, dock areas, the power-station, food-depots, warehouses, all were destroyed. The city was filled with the thunderous roar, and immense fires began. At Syriam, where lay the oil refineries and storage tanks, experts laid fires. Millions of gallons of oil and petrol were fired, and the refineries were utterly demolished. It was impossible to see in parts of the city because of the vast volume of smoke that rose to the sky. It was like an eclipse. In other parts the only light came from burning buildings.

Ships began carrying refugees out. Among the last to be taken out by sea were numbers of men who actually took part in the demolition of Rangoon. The last ship was so crowded

from her bridge to the holds that the captain could not take another individual. So she moved slowly away from the dock-side. Those still ashore were immediately set upon and cut to pieces by criminal Burmese. This was witnessed by people in the ship as she drew away. They were powerless to stop the slaughter.

Still at work in the harbour was Mr. "Bobbie" McLean-Brown, of whom an American officer said, "Men like him built the British Empire." He and some of his men were hurrying from wharf to wharf destroying all they thought might be useful to the Japanese. He helped to alter the dispositions of many of the buoys marking safe channels in the river, in the hope that Japanese ships would, some weeks later, follow them and run on sand-banks and mud-flats. He was destroying launches moored in the river when he heard the explosions that destroyed most of Rangoon. Glancing ashore, he saw the troops still hurrying along the water-front. A bomber flew low over his tug and an object fell from it. He thought it was Japanese. The object floated on the water as he manœuvred alongside to investigate. It was a flare which now burned bright red. Attached to it by a piece of string was a piece of cardboard. He hauled it aboard. The bomber was a Lockheed Hudson. The message on the cardboard read, "Go to Akyab immediately—Japs are here—get out!"

The troops he had seen ashore were Japanese. But a short way up the river was another moored launch. McLean-Brown navigated his tug up to it and scuttled it before turning round and steaming full-speed down-river to join a bobtail convoy of other craft like his own which was assembling.

He came across a boat carrying a number of armed Burmese and a Japanese. He aimed the bows of his tug at it and cut it into two pieces. Another unit of this bobtail convoy attacked another boat carrying renegade Burmese and a Japanese officer. There were eighty Burmese, and they could not be picked up

except at the risk of their over-running the British tug. They had to be left. The Japanese officer, however, was hauled aboard and made prisoner.

Three days later an R.A.F. Hurricane pilot, who won his D.F.C. in the Battle of Britain, was sent on a photographic reconnaissance of Rangoon. They had waited three days for the smoke to die down so that he could get close pictures of the results of this first British application of the "scorched earth" policy. He came back with pictures all right, but they were pictures of gigantic volumes of smoke. He reported that he could not get below 18,000 feet. . . .

That, for the time being, was the end of Rangoon and Lower Burma. I wonder if the Japanese rulers used the former Governor's air-raid shelter? It was one of the few properly constructed shelters in Rangoon. (Most people used slit-trenches.) I was told by a United States Army officer that it had cost thirty thousand rupees, or nearly £2,250.

It was not the end, though, of the tragedy of the refugees. I was ticked off by a woman who had been flown out of Burma to Calcutta for referring to her as a "refugee." "I am not a refugee. I am an evacuee," she said.

Call her what you like, the thousands of people without money or influence trekked the long road north, suffering great privations—the small wage-earning Indian particularly, for not only was he short of almost every necessity, but he was also set upon by, in a cowardly, brutal fashion, by the Burmese. These same Burmese wisely avoided the fighting Indians, the men of the Indian Army. They sought out and robbed and butchered the leaderless caravans moving so slowly to zones of safety. All had the same blind hope of reaching their homeland, India. Many got there despite all.

I saw one such caravan numbering about 4,000 men, women, and children. They could move only a few miles a day, as their pace was regulated by that of the oxen who pulled their

cumbersome carts. I have seen refugees in Spain, China, and France, but none to compare with these people. They were at the mercy of almost any one who cared to accost them. Although the noses of each pair of oxen all but touched the back of the preceding cart (they were close-packed for safety), their waggons blocked the road for about half a mile. They moved only by night. They explained that they feared attacks from the Burmese at night. They said the Burmese were too cowardly to attack them by day, but sneaked round the edges of the caravan under cover of the night and silently slew with knives those unlucky enough to be remote from the main body. They then plundered the carts of the slain.

They searched among their crowded numbers for some one who could speak English, and produced a man who had been a tailor. Through him they inquired about the best road to take to India. They had about 1,200 miles to walk. They asked if all was well in India, and—simple, gentle, folk (I cannot imagine who they thought I was)—they asked me if "His Majesty" was well. I assured them he was.

I said, "You must appoint a council among yourselves. Let them rule the caravan. Let them settle disputes and keep order."

The tailor interpreted, and I was given nods and encouraging smiles by the big audience. Their intense interest, tinged with inborn subservience, was pathetic. They were so anxious to find some one to take an interest in them and their plight. I continued, "You must organize the young men among you as guards. Let them take up positions around the caravan. Arrange signals so that you may meet attacks quickly. You must, in self-protection, kill those who would kill you. Have you weapons?"

They showed some spears and knives.

"Pick out the best and wisest among you and appoint them your leaders."

Their reply was the measure of their distress. They said, "Sahib, what can we do? We have no leaders."

Their cattle lay, unyoked, on either side of the shafts of the carts on the road. Sleeping beside them, their heads resting against the oxen's sides, were their small children. Small boys and girls were naked; the girls had small gold ornaments and rings fastened in holes pierced through their noses. They sought the shady side of the oxen, or they slept beneath the carts. The only food and water they had was carried on the carts. Poor people, I wonder where they are. . . . ("I am not a refugee. I am an evacuee, said the white woman." . . .)

A United States Army officer who travelled from Burma to India by road told me he had seen thousands of people trudging the same road, carrying their small packs of belongings. Many were starving. Many were dying of cholera, which was prevalent in a number of villages along the road.

"Let me tell you, brother, I saw vultures picking at the dead." He was not a man given to exaggeration.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Penny-a-day Soldiers

I KNEW a Chinese seller of embroidery up in Maymyo, the summer hill-station of the Governor of Burma and site of the new British headquarters after the loss of Rangoon. He asked me one day when the British were going to stop retreating in Burma. I replied, When they could assemble, with the help of the United States, enough bombers and fighters and well-equipped troops.

He said, "When will that be? This cannot go on. The Japanese will soon be right up north of here, on the Chinese border. We shall have to send Chinese soldiers into Burma to protect our own frontier, the same as Russia did in Poland."

That Chinese knew what he was talking about so far as Burma was concerned. As the British retreated up the Kra isthmus, getting nearer and nearer to Rangoon, vital Lease-lend port for China, everybody was asking the same question: "What has happened to Anglo-Chinese co-operation?"

Doubts about this matter, in the absence of news of the Chinese forces which had been twice falsely reported already in Burma, caused the then General Officer Commanding, Lieutenant-General T. J. Hutton, to call us reporters together, look at us over his rimless half-lenses, and say, "I have been asked many questions about our relations and co-operation with the Chinese. For reasons of security it has been impossible to give any details, but now, gentlemen, I can assure you that units of the Chinese Army are in Burma. They will take over, and

assume entire responsibility for, certain sectors of the British front."

I asked if the British had accepted the full number of Chinese soldiers offered to us by Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-Shek. There was silence for about half a minute, and that is a long time when some fifteen impatient people are sitting round a table looking at the man who has to answer. The general asked if any figures had been published as to the numbers offered, and we had to say truthfully no. He then said he was afraid he could not go into detail again, but he could say that both he and other British authorities were quite satisfied with the numbers of Chinese troops who had entered Burma. It was not a satisfying answer. That was on February 7, 1942.

A month later Stowe and I left Maymyo by Jeep for Toungoo to see the 3rd and 6th Chinese Armies moving in.

To the west of the road to the front towered Mount Popa, rising gigantically, alone, out of the plain between the road and the Irrawaddy river. Outside the pagodas, it is one of the most sacred places in Burma. It is the home of the country's most powerful nats, or spirits. None are feared so much as the nats of Popa. Legend says a blacksmith, the strongest Burman that ever was, lived on the mountain with his sister, the most beautiful maiden seen by man. They never stirred from the mountain, but lived beside the big stream that flowed from the crater at the summit—for Mount Popa is an extinct volcano.

When the old king died and the new, younger king sat on the throne, he sent word throughout the country, as was the custom, that all the most beautiful girls had to be sent to the Golden Palace in Mandalay to be the king's wives. At last they persuaded the girl from Popa to go, and she became one of the principal queens and held most power over the king. Jealousy caused the other queens to tell the king that her powerful brother had many followers and was planning a rebellion. If

his sister was good enough to be queen he was good enough to be king—that was supposed to be his reasoning.

By a trick they made her send for him to come to the Golden Palace. He was tried and sentenced to be burned at the stake as a traitor. His sister, broken by remorse, pretended to the king that she had not realized what manner of man her brother was, and she asked to be allowed to sit in the forefront of the spectators when he was burned. Then she threw herself into the fire and perished with her brother.

A giant fig-tree grew where they had died, and children who played beneath it vanished. Travellers resting below it were beaten by invisible hands. The king ordered it to be cut down and thrown in the river. It came to rest by another big town, and similar strange things happened.

Finally a most holy monk was sent to talk to it. He asked if there were nats in the tree, and if there were to say what they wanted and it would be given them.

The brother and sister replied. They wanted to be left in peace, alone, back in their home on Mount Popa. And away they went, and, say Burmans, have lived there ever since. Proof of the sincerity of their belief is in the fact that to this day they lay out food on the mountain for the strongest Burman and his most beautiful sister, who became the most powerful nats in the land. . . .

We left blue, hazy Popa behind and arrived.

At Meiktila we had our first contact with a recalcitrant Burmese official. We had heard a lot about them. This one was the District Commissioner, and we had to go to him to get a permit for petrol. He asked, "Where are you going?"

"To the front."

"Which front?"

"One of the fronts."

"How many fronts are there?"

And so on, until Stowe pointed out that we were subject to military discipline, that we were moving on an Army order, and that we could not answer such questions, no matter who asked them.

"All right," said the Burmese District Commissioner, with finality, "if you won't trust me, I won't help you. I will give you no petrol." And we had to leave.

It was so late and dark by now that we decided to stay the night in Meiktila, at the Circuit House. We met there a young Yorkshireman who was in a Commando unit. He was proud of his "fanny," as they call the knuckle-duster-cum-dagger used by Commandos. He wore it instead of a revolver.

"I killed an Italian sentry with it in Libya on a raid one night. The German wireless says any British troops caught carrying fannies will be shot. They've got to catch us first."

This Yorkshireman had the most peculiar salute. First he bowed slightly, then saluted.

"I had to do it when I was with the Chinese up in the Shan States, and I can't get out of the habit."

After getting petrol from the Army we pushed on next day to Pyinmana, where we found the streets lined with thousands of the most untidy troops I had ever seen, not excluding the Spanish Republicans. There was something about them that distinguished them from other non-white troops I had seen, and Stowe supplied the answer: "You don't see a single dumb-looking Chinese, do you?" That was it. As we moved slowly past them they all looked at us with keen curiosity. There were no blank, stupid stares. They looked us and the Jeep over from end to end, and then turned away, apparently satisfied.

Cigarettes were very scarce, but I had about twelve tins of fifty, which had been brought from Rangoon. We pulled up and offered a tin to a company of Chinese. They were all bows and grins, but refused to take them. We moved on, and opened a tin and offered it to some others. Bows, grins, and Chinese



鄭庭質

MAJOR-GENERAL CHENG TING CHI

This pass-port photograph, with the General's signature, was given by him to the author as a pass through the Chinese lines. (See p. 231.)

大中華民國遠征軍第20師
少將鄭庭質
上尉沙真

REVERSE OF PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPH

The translation of the message written by the General on the back of his photograph is: "Major-General Cheng Ting Chi: Major Sargent: 20th Division of the Chinese Expeditionary Force."



no-thank-you's. We tried several more times, but no one would take them.

We discovered later that this was the result of the strict orders they had been given on how to behave in Burma. They had been told, among other things, not to take anything that did not belong to them, so they would not take our cigarettes. Stowe and I were impressed by this first sign of their discipline, because there is no one who likes a cigarette better than a Chinese.

From an eye-witness we later heard a more pointed example of the discipline which has done so much to enable the Chinese armies to hold off the Japanese so long.

A junior Chinese officer and four men walked into the Pyinmana Club the second night they were there. There was no one about as most of the population had fled since a light Japanese bombing a week or two before. Naturally enough, the Chinese helped themselves to a drink. Whisky, brandy, gin, and all the rest were on the shelves, but the abstemious Chinese took two bottles of ginger-ale and four of soda-water. The Indian butler left in charge of the club walked in, saw the party in progress, and ran for help.

He returned with a senior Chinese officer who immediately made the revellers pay for their ginger-ale and soda. The careful Indian butler examined the till and declared that it lacked one rupee. In the search the senior officer found a silver rupee in the pocket of one of the soldiers. He gave this to the butler and drew his Mauser pistol. . . .

"Oh, please don't shoot him," begged the Indian, on his knees. "Perhaps it is not my rupee."

And the senior officer returned his pistol to its holster; instead he drew his sword. Before you could say 'antidisestablishmentarianism' he had lopped a piece off the top of the soldier's ear.

Every one spoke of the Chinese troops in Burma up to this date as the best-behaved troops they had seen.

Even the nervous country Burmese apparently took a liking to them. The first reaction from the local population, the villagers, when they saw the Chinese, was to abandon all and hide in the jungle. Small deputations were sent out looking for them, asking them to please come back to their homes. They were told they would not be harmed and that they were needed by the Chinese army.

"While you are away we have to help ourselves to your vegetable gardens. If you come back then we can buy these vegetables from you."

Their arrival in Burma gave the country a unique distinction, for alongside the British there were now the world's highest- and lowest-paid fighters. . . . The Chinese soldiers got 2s. 8d. a month—the A.V.G. pilots got six hundred dollars a month as regular pay, plus a bonus of five hundred dollars for each Japanese plane they destroyed.

These men of China's first expeditionary force for centuries could have fought for one month, and then have been able to buy one single bottle of beer with their pay.

As in the highest-paid A.V.G., so among these penny-a-day Chinese, I found real Democracy. All wore the same denim uniforms. There were no displays of badges of rank. I did not recognize a lieutenant-general when I saw him. All he wore in the way of badges was the simple enamelled white star on a blue ground, the badge of the Chinese Army, like all his men.

He was about to pass through a narrow gateway in a fence made of bamboo when two of the coolies attached to his army confronted him, going the opposite way. They were carrying a long bamboo from which was slung a big jar of water. It was the general who stepped aside. The coolies brushed past him without a word and went on their way. No doubt the general, unshackled by any false notions of dignity, realized it was

easier for him to stand aside than for the heavily laden coolies. It was all quite matter-of-fact.

Mechanization was something those two Chinese armies knew nothing about. Between them they had two motor-cars. They were for the General Officer Commanding, who had to have them for himself and his staff for visiting their white allies. And in this fact lay their strength. The small British army who, alone, had met and fought the Japanese from Victoria Point, at the southern end of Kra isthmus, to Rangoon and up to Nyaungleben, when the help of the Chinese was sought—this small army had relied overmuch on inadequate mechanical transport. This, in turn, had tied them down to the roads (such as they were). Therefore, one of the routine activities of advanced Japanese patrols was to block the roadways and thereby upset a number of British plans. Like the Chinese, the Japanese did not rely exclusively on mechanized transport and thus enjoyed freer movement.

Even mules were not to be seen among the Chinese armies. All was carried by the troops and their coolies. It was the usual thing to see a Chinese soldier jogging along a roadway with a bamboo across his shoulder; from one end of it hung the base of a Stokes mortar, from the other the barrel. Add to this his rifle and pack, and his load was about a hundred and twenty pounds. He would march thirty miles a day carrying it.

Among all these Chinese troops marching into Pyinmana we saw some Chinese girls. They wore the denim uniform, and carried packs. With the help of an English-speaking Chinese we were taken to see them when they had settled down in their billets. We were kept waiting for about twenty minutes, but when we were shown into one of the rooms they occupied we saw why. They had all washed and changed and put on smart khaki uniforms.

Most of them, we learned, were students in Chinese universities only two years before. I spoke to one who had a

bright smile and rosy cheeks. She was eighteen. She had just come from university, where she had been studying political history.

They lived easily with the troops, eating the same food, and many of them did heavy work similar to that of the coolies. But their main work was to keep up the morale of the Chinese troops. All were specialists at their work, whether it was teaching the men politics, or performing plays.

I asked one, "What made you leave university so young? Why did you join the army?"

She replied, "How could I stay at university when China was in danger? I had learned enough to be useful to our brave soldiers."

"Are you afraid of bombs and shells?"

"We learned all about them in China. The Japanese taught us when we had no defences. We cannot be bombed more heavily here than we were in China."

They used no lipstick or powder, things given up long since by all self-respecting Chinese women. If there were any to buy in China I doubt if any of the ordinary people could have bought them.

Then we met the lieutenant-general, Cheng Ting Che, or to give him his full title and name in English: "Leader of Soldiers" (equivalent of our lieutenant-general) "Best of the Family" (a rough literal translation of his name). We found him sitting at the top of a flight of stone steps leading to a big agricultural school, built and run by some American missionaries. He made us sit down, and called for tea. It came out of an Army water-bottle. It was pale, sugarless, milkless Chinese tea, and was carried by the troops instead of water. As interpreter, we had a young Chinese captain named Sar-Jin, a man who never ceased to smile.

Like all the other Chinese I met, from shop-keepers to diplomats, the general was fully aware of China's strange new

role in Burma. It was a strange role when one remembered the China of only a few years before. Here they were in Burma as allies of Britain and the United States, helping the effort to save this fantastically rich land from the rapacious imperialism of Japan. He called one of the forty soldiers standing behind him, and took a Mauser from him. He passed it to us, and Sar-Jin interpreted, "The general he say we have very good guns."

The general nodded, and took out his own revolver—a .38 which lay in his holster swathed in a piece of oil-soaked cloth. We made admiring noises, and the general told us to drive him to his billet-cum-headquarters. It was the first time he had seen, or ridden in, a Jeep, although several thousands were sent to China as part of the Lease-lend plan.

He lived for the time being in a one-room, wooden Burmese house raised on piles some eight feet from the ground. The two windows were paneless, and had wooden shutters. The furniture consisted of one bed with a mattress made of interlaced bamboo laths, one chair, one wash-stand with an enamel bowl. The general's towel hung on a piece of wire. He pulled a large map, roughly drawn on rice paper, from his small tin trunk and laid it on the floor. We all knelt round it and, through Sar-Jin, the general explained.

"Japan and Germany have a rendezvous here." His finger stabbed India. "If they meet they will cut the world in half." He lifted the round lid off a cigarette-tin and swept one hand between the lid and the tin itself. "Like this!"

We were all sweating in the heat, and as a drop fell from my forehead into the middle of the Indian Ocean the general called for towels. A soldier came forward with three small hand-towels soaked in cold, scented water. We swabbed off, and the general continued, "We must all attack Japan here." He laid a slim, tapering finger over Japan itself. He had, like other Chinese generals I have met, hands as small and delicate as a girl's. "And we must attack from here." His finger traversed

the North Pacific and stopped on Alaska. "Attack Japan itself, and all Japanese soldiers will want to run home," said the general, who has not seen his family for ten years. "England," he said, "must attack Germany from the west, Russia must attack Germany from the north and east; China and her friends out here must attack Japan. It would all be over. The British, Americans, Russians, Dutch, Chinese, and all our friends could then arrange for the East and the West to live peacefully at home for ever. The Chinese are a peaceful people," he added—wistfully, I thought.

That was the general's master-plan to end the war. He said it would end in 1942.

He had Stowe and me to supper that evening. We had a couple of tins of pineapples, a bottle of stuffed Spanish olives, and a salted ham in a bag. We gave these to Sar-Jin and asked him to offer them to the general. The general bowed and smiled and ordered the tins and bottle to be opened, and sent the ham upstairs to his billet.

We sat round a small table about five inches high laid on the clean-swept ground in front of his billet. The general sat in a toy basket chair, and Stowe and Sar-Jin and I on two small boxes and a low bookshelf, respectively. The general picked up his black chopsticks and nipped a fatty piece of chicken from a big bowl of soup in the centre of the table. "China will stop Japan keeping a rendezvous with Germany in India," he said, and popped the chicken into his mouth. He looked at us and showed several gold-filled teeth as he smiled and chewed the chicken. He then picked up a porcelain spoon and fed himself some soup.

Sar-Jin: "The general he say eat some soup." So we downed chopsticks and took turns with the general at dipping our spoons into the bowl. He supped his soup with such frank, loud pleasure that I felt constrained to follow suit. He cocked a surprised eye at me, smiled again, and nodded encouragingly.

PENNY-A-DAY SOLDIERS

The Chinese rightly say you do not get the full flavour from your food unless you aerate it. I then switched to chopsticks again, and ate some chips of fried beef.

"Sar-Jin, ask the general what he thinks about Japanese soldiers."

The general said, "They are not brave, like Chinese soldiers. When they have plenty of guns, aeroplanes, and comrades they are very brave. Then they are not frightened of anybody—no matter how small they are."

Sar-Jin forgot his manners and emitted three staccato laughs—ha, ha, ha! The general gave him an admonitory glance, but he could not resist Sar-Jin's bright, rosy-cheeked face with two scarcely visible, beady, black eyes and fully exposed set of superlative teeth. The general laughed, too—ha, ha, ha!

"What about Japanese generals?"

"The general he say Japanese generals are in very dangerous position. They are like small boy, whose parents have disgraced themselves by bringing him up badly. Small boy he raid kitchen and eat too much. All same like Japanese generals. By and by small boy and Japanese generals have stomach trouble."

They told us that the Japanese soldiers were extremely afraid of the Chinese soldiers, as they (the Chinese) cut their heads off whenever there is time to kill them in that fashion during an action. And Japanese do not like to die if their body is not all in one piece.

Before we left the general gave me a pass, the only safe sort to have in areas occupied by the keen, suspicious Chinese soldiers. They have learned in their long war with the sly Japanese to trust no one. The pass was a small photograph of himself, and on the back he had written his name and that of the English liaison officer with the 20th Division of the Chinese Expeditionary Force.

He apologized for his creased, faded uniform and for the

untidiness of his troops. Sar-Jin: "General he say you find best-dressed soldiers behind the lines—ha, ha!"

These were the men of China's first expeditionary force for hundreds of years. . . . They wore grass sandals (made by themselves) and wide straw hats when not in action. As iron rations they carried fried rice in cylindrical canvas bags, several feet long and slung over one shoulder like a Sam Browne. Luxuries? They had none—unless you consider a luxury to be the black seeds of water-melons. These the Chinese washed and dried in the sun. They carried them in their pockets and chewed them from time to time.

Their personal needs were of the simplest. But they were inadequately armed. More anxiety on the part of Britain and the United States, before the Japanese war began, to take advantage of the vast man-power of China would have made a considerable difference to the course taken by the war in Burma. These two Chinese armies proved themselves in Burma, particularly in the fighting at Toungoo in March, 1942, to be courageous, hard, ruthless fighters. They were beaten on that occasion not so much by the overwhelming numbers of Japanese as by a shortage of ammunitions and supplies generally.

What might have happened if their co-operation had been sought months earlier? They would have fitted themselves out with almost everything from scout-cars to revolver ammunition from the stocks that had to be destroyed in Rangoon when it was abandoned.

What might have happened if we had regarded the Chinese as fighting allies months before? When they met the Japanese in Burma they might not have been so hampered by inadequate artillery support.

What might have happened if we, the British, had, through the Governor of Burma, taken decisive action in handling the dock-labour shortage in Rangoon after the two Japanese bomb-

ings? Both the Chinese and British armies in Burma needed all the American Lease-lend material dumped in Rangoon. Too much of it was destroyed when Rangoon was given over to the demolition squads. . . .

Before ending this report in book form I should like to make a few remarks about the Japanese.

I should like to take a stand on their behalf. They are frequently referred to by spokesmen and propagandists of the United Nations as copyists of the Nazis. They resent this. They say it is untrue. I agree with them.

On September 3, 1941, second anniversary of the war, Mr. Churchill said in his radio review that the Japanese were imitating the Nazis in their terrorization of the 400,000,000 people of China and in their attempted coercions of other countries.

In the course of a discursive radio reply from Tokyo a Japanese spokesman vilified Mr. Churchill, calling him an ignoramus.

"Why, he does not even know that the Sino-Japanese conflict began two years before Hitler attacked the British Empire. And yet he says Japan imitates Germany!"

That extraordinary boast makes a crazy foot-note for historians. Hitler, the Japanese say in effect, may have been a leading practitioner of modern barbarism, but we, the Japanese, were the originators. We began it.

And it is true. They did. They were the first to fight total warfare. Nothing was barred in their operations against the Chinese. Brutality on the part of the soldiers was encouraged. Systematic annihilation of intelligent anti-Japanese Chinese was carried out. Puppet Governments and quislings were established in Japanese-controlled territory. These territories were transformed into vegetable gardens for Japan. The people were seized in the streets, in their houses, and transported like slaughter-house cattle to remote mines and other Japanese projects needing labour. No woman or girl (her age was not

of the slightest consequence) had the right to deny even the foulest Japanese soldier who, in his unimaginable arrogance, decided he wanted her. To say the people were enslaved is to indulge in understatement.

The Japanese did all these things first. They began in Korea in 1910; Hitler and his Nazis came into power in 1933.

To the Japanese the lowest of their race is superior to the best of any other nation. It is their conviction. All other people are animals to be worked, played with, broken, killed, as they, the Children of Heaven, will. They declare they are superior beings.

And what of that other piece of gross self-deception—the mythical tribal superiority of the German, the god-like Aryan? Hitler, the Great Savage, Civilizer of the Already Civilized, the Liberator of the Free, the Founder of the New World Order that Dates Back a Thousand Years—he seems to have gone for his inspiration to a primitive tribe which has learned to wear trousers. He must have known that the Japanese—the first modern barbarians who, in their dark ignorance, claimed to be a superior people with a divine mission to rule the world—were the first mock *Herrenvolk* of our times.

For many years every Japanese who has not risen above the norm of the tribe has believed himself to be a god—each one, from both the designer and manufacturer of male rubber goods in the shape of a man wearing a top hat to the man who drives nails through a paper image of his enemy in the fond conviction that he thereby injures him. . . .

But do not underestimate them. On the contrary, fear them *more* as an enemy. Mercy is a quality unknown to them. We too must be merciless. Many British soldiers in Burma learned this hard lesson from the fate of comrades. The Japanese has no regard for any human being, so why should he not bayonet or decapitate prisoners?

We must be ruthless. You do not use a pop-gun to stop a mad gorilla.

Most Japanese have an inherent fear of fire. They remember the great earthquake which caused such loss of life and property in Japan. American and British bombers must fire their cities anew.

And they will.

If I may venture a forecast, I say that Japan will be beaten by the roaring air-borne might of the Empire and the United States. Bombers, unequalled in the world, will one day (not so distant) pound the Japanese apes in uniform with unrelenting harshness.

Fighter aircraft will be air-borne in the Far East in such numbers as to tax the mathematical ingenuity of the Japanese astronomers. I believe that the Japanese air forces will be grounded wherever they are found by overwhelming Allied air superiority, both in numbers and in quality, and, I know, in the courage of the men who will fly them.

The bloody triumph of Japanese arms will be brief. She has beaten us so far because we were unready.

When Germany is beaten, that day when Mr. Churchill sits at his desk in No. 10 Downing Street, lights a big cigar, and says, "Right—bring him in" . . . on that day the Rising Sun will begin to set as the trained soldiers of the Allies, with the finest modern equipment, turn their attention to these little yellow traitors.

I do not think it should be necessary for us to send our fighting men back into the jungles and swamps where they have fought, and where so many have died, with such courage. The sombre jungle and the swamp with their myriads of beasts, reptiles, and insects are a more fitting habitation for the Japanese than for us.

RETREAT IN THE EAST

Our fighting forces should begin the decontamination of the East in Japan itself. Japan should be the battleground. Thousand-bomber raids to devastate her cities would soon make the Japanese doubt their beliefs of divine origin.

We will avenge the butchered men, the outraged women.

