

MALAYA AND SINGAPORE

1940

22 June The French sign an armistice with Germany. Metropolitan France is divided between the area occupied by Germany and the area controlled by the Vichy French government (The Free Zone) under Marshall Petain. Most French colonies stayed loyal to the Vichy Government.

26 September The Japanese “invade” northern French Indochina (North Vietnam) and extend their influence into the rest of French Indochina (Laos and Cambodia). The Japanese allow the French colonial authorities to administer the colony.

27 September Japan signs the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy (The Axis).

9 December The Vichy French government permits the French colonial authorities in Indochina to allow the Japanese to use the colony to attack British possessions in south east Asia.

1941

26 July US and Britain impose oil embargo and other sanctions on Japan.

28 July Japan takes over the southern part of Vietnam but allows the French authorities to continue to administer the territory.

2 December The Battleship HMS Prince of Wales and the Battlecruiser HMS Repulse (Force Z) depart the UK for Singapore

4 December A Japanese invasion convoy leaves Hainan Island (Southern Vietnam)

6 December The British on Malaya receive the first reports of the Japanese convoy. British troops are put on alert but Operation Matador (a pre-emptive move into Thailand to prevent large scale landings on the Thai coast) is not activated.

7 December The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) attacks the US Naval base at Pearl Harbour and shells the US base on Midway Island.

8 December Japanese troops land at Singora and Patani in Thailand. Thai forces offer a token resistance. Another landing is made at Kota Bharu where it meets with strong resistance from Indian troops stationed in the area. When news of the Japanese invasion reaches Admiral Tom Phillips he leaves Singapore with Force Z to intercept the Japanese invasion force. He refuses air support and orders a communication blackout. Japanese air raid on Singapore.

9 December Kota Bharu and its airfield are taken by the Japanese. The Japanese forces that landed in Thailand cross the border into Malaya. Force Z is spotted by a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft and having failed to locate the invasion force, turns back for Singapore.

10 December Long range Japanese bomber aircraft locate Force Z just after dawn and start a series of attacks. Repulse breaks radio silence to request urgent air support. By 1.30 pm both the Prince of Wales and Repulse are sunk with the loss of 840 men including Admiral Phillips. The air support requested by Repulse arrived just as the Prince of Wales sunk.

11 December All remaining RAF fighters in the north of Malaya were withdrawn to defend Singapore and the convoys arriving there with men and material. Northern Malaya is effectively fallen after a major defeat at Battle of Jitra .

14 December Japanese forces capture the airfield at Alor Star intact.

16 December The British evacuate Penang Island on Malaya's west coast and is occupied by the Japanese on the following day.

21 December British forces withdraw to prepared defences behind the Perak River.

29 December In an attempt to hold central Malaya the British fight a defensive battle at Kampar just south of the Perak.

1942

January

2 January To avoid encirclement the British withdraw from Kampar.

3 January British retreat from Kuantan on the east coast.

4 January British retreat to defences on the Slim River.

7 January Japanese attacks destroy two Indian Brigades, take over 3,200 prisoners and enormous amounts of equipment and stores. This defeat means that central Malaya has fallen.

8 January Wavell (Commander in chief of British India the Far East) orders the withdrawal to Johore.

11 January Japanese occupy Kuala Lumpur on the west coast.

13 January The leading elements of 18 Division arrive at Singapore.

15 January Japanese Imperial Guard Division defeats the Indian 45th Brigade at the Battle of Muar.

17 January 6th Royal Norfolk Regiment (53rd Brigade, 18 Division) moved up to cover the withdrawal of the survivors of the 45th Indian Brigade but are forced to withdraw.

18 January British forces withdraw behind the Segamar River to avoid encirclement.

24 January More Australian reinforcements arrive in Singapore.

25 January British withdraw onto Singapore Island.

26 January Japanese land at Endau on the south eastern coast.

28 January 22nd Indian Brigade cut off and destroyed in Johore.

31 January The last British troops cross the causeway over the Johore Straits and into Singapore. The causeway was then destroyed.

February

4 February The Japanese commander, Yamashita, orders his artillery to bombard Singapore.

5 February The last reinforcements reach Singapore.

6 February Yamashita concentrates his artillery bombardment on the north eastern section of the straits, it was a feint to draw the British into believing

the assault would come from this direction and concentrate on achieving a bridgehead near Changhi.

8 February Yamashita begins another artillery barrage to cover the Japanese 5th and 8th Divisions attack across the Straits on a wide front in front of the Australian 22nd and 27th Brigades.

9 February The Japanese create a bridgehead and British counter attacks fail.

10 February The Imperial Guard Division crosses the Straits near the causeway and seizes another foothold on the island. The British commanders are in meltdown and the confusion prompts another withdrawal from prepared defensive positions to the City boundary.

11 February The Japanese consolidate their positions and take the key village of Bukit Timah.

12 February Advancing down the Bukit Timah road the Japanese reach the outskirts of Singapore. The British retreat yet again to a new defensive position.

14 February With air support and an intense artillery barrage the Japanese enter Singapore.

15 February After discussions with his senior officers Lieutenant General Percival decides that Singapore can no longer be defended and surrenders his forces to Yamashita in the afternoon.

Some 80,000 (accounts do vary) British, Australian Indian and local troops became prisoners of war (POW). Japanese atrocities began almost immediately with the execution of thousands of civilian and most of the local troops that fought with the British to defend Singapore.

Yamashita dubbed the “Tiger of Malaya” was tried for war crimes and executed in 1946.

The following Hoxne men were among the 80,000 POW's.

James Feavearyear 1st Battalion, 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment.

Harry Thomas Knights. 5th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment.

William John Schofield. 4th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment.

R.J. Schofield. Royal Norfolk Regiment (Battalion unknown).

Harold Monague "Jimmy" Rush. 135 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (?).

Gerald Goddard 1st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment.