

INDIES

L.I. Sanoco Feb. 16, 1942, Monday.

Good Evening Everybody. -

Mishap follows mishap in the Far East today.

On top of the fall of Singapore comes the Japanese occupation of Palembang in Sumatra, one of the greatest oil fields in the world. If it's any consolation, the Dutch succeeded in leaving the conquerors nothing but scorched earth. They destroyed a hundred million ~~xxxx~~ dollars' worth of wells and equipment. So the report from Batavia says, ~~and~~ ^{thus} frustrated ^{ing} ~~the~~ Japanese hopes of seizing huge quantities of oil. ^{TP} Fully half of the petroleum in the East Indies came from the Palembang area. ^{TP} To try and head off the destruction, the Japanese ~~landed~~ ^{floated down} great flocks of parachute soldiers, but the Dutch managed to wipe ^{out} most of them. ~~out~~ ^{But} ~~However~~ while they were ^{so} doing ~~that~~, the Japanese landed on the Sumatra coast, from Banka Strait, and also on the Musi River, ~~and~~ all day long ~~they were~~ disembarking fresh streams of soldiers, ^{who took} ~~Now that~~

~~are~~ ^{The Japanese are now}
~~they're~~ at Palembang, ^{they're} only two hundred and
seventy miles from Batavia, the capital of Java,
~~that~~ ^(high command of the)
~~where the~~ general headquarters of the united nations
under General Sir Archibald Wavell, ~~are now located.~~

~~that~~ We hear ~~that~~ the Allies have landed considerable
reinforcements in Java, troops from Australia, as
well as American airplanes and ground crews. But the
Japanese in Sumatra are separated from Java only by
the Sundra Strait, which at one point, is only twenty-
seven miles wide.

The Allies made the Japanese occupation of
Palembang as costly as possible. ^{Dutch,} American, ~~Dutch~~ and
^{planes dropped} British ~~air fighters~~ ^{made} direct hits on seven enemy
warships and transports, and left one Japanese
cruiser burning furiously. The official communique
states that "Hurricanes and Blenheims caused severe

devastation in low flying attacks against barges packed with enemy troops while they were moving up the Musi River." ^{All of which} ~~It seems that~~ didn't prevent the barges from landing the soldiers. ^R The Allies also admitted ~~ed~~ that the Japanese have seized the Anambas Islands, ^a hundred and fifty miles northeast of Singapore, and slightly northwest of Borneo.

It now becomes apparent that the enemy ~~which~~ are carrying out a pincers movement on Java, with one force massed on the south coast of Borneo, and the other driving through Sumatra. ^{TP} The only strong naval base left to the Allies in the East Indies ~~now~~ is the heavily fortified ^{Javanese} port of Soerabaja. All American reinforcements ^{now} have to go by way of New Zealand, around the continent of Australia, ^{to get} to Java.

Military experts in London haven't much hope that Java can hold out. Even Dutch officials in the

British capital say the same. Borneo, they acknowledge, is as good as gone, and Sumatra nearly so.

In Celebes, the Dutch defenders are still holding out valiantly, near Macassar, but that also is only likely to be a matter of days.

AUSTRALIA

~~As for~~ ^{they} the Australians are now alarmed for ^{the safety of} their northern base at Port Darwin, where the entire male population is ^{ing} working feverishly, ~~to~~ strengthen the defenses. All women and children have long since been evacuated. Bank cashiers and office managers are digging with picks and shovels alongside militiamen and laborers. Once upon a time Port Darwin was nothing but a jumping off place, a sleepy port on the edge of the ^{wild north} ~~great~~ Australian ^{coast.} ~~desert.~~ Now it's a crucial point in the defense of the southwest Pacific, ~~a last hope.~~

^{Today is}
Australia ~~is now~~ on a work or fight basis.

A special meeting of the Cabinet has been called for tomorrow and of the War Council for Wednesday. On Friday there ^{will} ~~be~~ be a closed session of the Australian Parliament to hear a confidential statement from Prime Minister ~~John~~ Curtin.

SINGAPORE

And still we haven't the whole story of Singapore. There is much we don't know. But everything we do know leads only to one grim conclusion, that the tragedy is well nigh complete - sixty thousand of the British Imperial forces capitulated in the city. And, of course, their equipment. Singapore, once the boast of the British Empire as its Far Eastern Gibraltar! The Imperial command surrendered under what was described as "a solid wall of fire from Japanese mortars."

That figure of sixty thousand prisoners comes from different sources. The first official Japanese report estimated the number captured at fifty-five thousand. Later on, Tokyo declared that there were fifteen thousand British soldiers, fifteen thousand Australians, and thirty thousand Indians. The figure was corroborated by London, where the same estimate was made.

When an American reporter left Singapore

aboard a little coastwise training ship last week, there were still about sixty thousand Imperial soldiers in the city when he pulled out, and there were no naval units in the harbor.

Which probably disposes of the Japanese claim that British warships were captured as well as the city and island.

It was all the culmination of a tragedy that had been building up for two months. Only sixty days ago it was that we heard with grave misgivings the news that invaders from Nippon had effected a landing on the Isthmus and had seized the British airdrome at Kota Bahru. The British High Command described that operations in laconic fashion, merely reporting that their forces had withdrawn to defense lines further south. The British did not then reveal what later came to light in a letter received by a British member of Parliament. that that important airdrome had been defended by only fourteen Indian troopers and one British officer.

From that day on the story became one sickening repetition after another. Imperial forces, untrained and unequipped, for jungle warfare, forced back at the rate of ten miles a day by veteran soldiers equipped to the teeth and trained in the tactics of jungle-fighting. Neither jungle nor ravine nor river stopped the oncoming Japanese. One airdrome fell after another. On one occasion, when that calamitous campaign was in its earlier stages, an American reporter saw the map of a high staff officer of the British Imperial Command. On it was marked a date, January Thirty-First, and that date was marked at the Johore Causeway which led from the mainland to Singapore Island. The British Imperial Command evidently had guessed pretty accurately what was in store. Without mobile guns, with a bare handful of planes, their defeat was written in the books long since.

The world at large had been told that Singapore was impregnable, but the Japanese knew it wasn't so if they came by the back door.

It can now be told why the British were able to blast the Johore Causeway without let or hindrance from the Japanese. They had withdrawn so quickly that the Japanese had lost contact with them. In fact, the retreating Imperials lost contact not only with the enemy but with entire brigades of their own troops, brigades that were left behind on the mainland of Malaya after the causeway had been destroyed. Australian troops holding one sector on the mainland had to run for their lives, leaving all their equipment behind.

Also, there were a thousand Chinese volunteers making ~~xxxx~~ a last ditch stand nearby. Nobody knows what happened to them. It could have been only one of two things, they either died to the last man or were taken prisoner. An American correspondent's report reads:- "No living thing could have stood up long to the dive bombing and that solid wall of fire from Japanese mortars."

And what of the people left behind in Singapore?

Singapore - 5
LEAD - 8

A telegram to the British Colonial Office from Governor Sir Shenton Thomas reports that "the civil population is quiet but bewildered.

Passive defense and fire services are carrying on." and it adds the words:- "Telephone girls are still at their posts."

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The Japanese official news agency gives an account of the formal surrender of Lieutenant-General Percival, the British Commander, which it makes as humiliating as possible. It quotes Lieutenant-General Yamashita, the Japanese Commander, as using the words:- "I wish replies to be brief and to the point. I will listen only to ~~an~~ unconditional surrender." And later Yamashita is quoted by his own side as having ~~said~~ said: "I want to hear a civil answer and ~~insist~~ insist upon an unconditional surrender." Yamashita is also supposed to have asked whether any soldiers of the

Mikado had been captured by the British, to which Percival replied: "No, not a single one."

Percival, according to that Japanese report, asked for time to reply, which Yamashita refused, insisting upon an immediate answer "yes" or "no."

Percival's final reply was "yes." Thereupon Yamashita announced he would send a thousand Japanese troops into the city immediately to preserve peace and order.

The principal occupation in London tonight was that of speculating what the Japanese would do next. The Premier at Tokyo had told his Parliament that their submarines were already operating in the Indian Ocean. The British guess is that the Japanese will try to move through Burma toward India, by land. Also against Ceylon and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, by sea.

General Tojo called upon the people of India and Burma to rebel against the British. And he urged the Australians and the people in the Dutch East Indies to withdraw from the war.

BURMA

Not much change in Burma. The official communique from Rangoon tells us that the British have retreated to more concentrated positions on the Salween River line. Bringing the Imperial forces to a point where the Salween enters the Gulf of Martaban, forty-five miles from Moulmein. The communique seems to be deliverately vague. Evidently the Japanese are pushing ahead, and are now within seventy-five miles of Rangoon.

There's a story from Kunming in China, that Japanese bombers came near catching up with the Allied high command, at Rangoon. The story is told by an American pilot, one of the Flying Tigers. He was at the Rangoon air field when a warning sounded, and almost immediately a plane of the China National Aviation Corporation landed from Chungking, carrying General Sir Archibald Wavell, the Allied Commander-in-Chief and his deputy, the American General George Brett. The American pilot tore across the field in a car and shouted to Wavell to jump in. They all rushed for shelter.

The American goes on to say:- "When the Japs didn't show up right away, Brett said I should drive them to headquarters. We started across the field," says the American pilot, "when a soldier waved frantically, and we jumped out, throwing ourselves in a muddy ditch. Then," ~~he~~ says the Flying Tiger, "all hell broke loose. A huge squadron of Jap bombers flew right over us and released their cargoes all around." But both generals escaped injury.

HART

For some curious reasons of their own, the Japanese put out a report that they had killed Admiral Hart, who resigned the other day as Commander of the Allied Naval Forces in the southwest Pacific. The story, put out by ~~the~~ Tokyo propaganda, was that Hart had perished aboard his flagship, the heavy cruiser HOUSTON.

On the contrary, an American correspondent had dinner with Admiral Hart last night. He had just finished awarding decorations to a number of commanding officers of American destroyers who had distinguished themselves in that Far Eastern war. The ~~story~~ Japanese ^{Yam} ~~story~~ was that he had been killed aboard the HOUSTON on February Fourth. The correspondent who had dinner with him last night said that ~~he~~ he appeared to be in excellent health. The Admiral himself said he was feeling fine.

ARUBA

The Nazis have made their first direct attack on the Western Hemisphere. This news comes from the Caribbean, where a German U-boat has been operating. She got through the patrolling cordon of our fleet and sank not only four Dutch oil tankers, but -- and this is what I mean by attacking the Western Hemisphere -- she shelled the Dutch Island of Aruba, where there is a huge American refinery to treat the oil that comes from Venezuela.

On the map, Aruba seems to be ~~only~~ only a tiny dot off the Venezuelan coast. Actually, it includes some sixty-nine square miles. Aruba is one of three islands belonging to the Netherlands; population of ten thousand; the chief industry being that refinery, the largest in the Western Hemisphere. Apparently the damage was not serious.

NEWSREEL

I can tell you in advance about something you'll all be seeing during the next few days -- the motion picture record of our navy's attack on the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. For I spent a little while today looking at them, at my Movietone office. And every American will want to see them:- the arrival of the warships at dawn, in sight of the Japanese controlled islands. Aboard^a U.S. airplane carrier you see the aviators leap to their planes, then the take-off; then the bombing of the Japs; the salvos of our big guns -- and the explosions ashore.

Formations of enemy planes fly over to the attack -- their bombs drop. And you see the Japanese bomber apparently trying to plunge at our aircraft carrier, missing it -- and crashing into the sea.

It's all a revelation of Uncle Sam's first brilliant blow in the sea war.

ALABAMA

8 1/2
Thirty-five thousand tons of steel slid smoothly into the Chesapeake River at Norfolk, Virginia, today while more than fifty thousand people cheered. It was the hull of Uncle Sam's new^{est} battleship ALABAMA, the last word in floating fortresses.

Mrs. Lister Hill, wife of the ~~senior~~ Senator from Alabama, smashed the bottle across her bows, *(to the bows of the S.S. Alabama, I mean)* to send her down the ways, and Secretary of the Navy Knox announced that *she is* ~~the new battle-wagon was~~ a symbol of the terrific burden our Navy now has to bear, the greatest in its history.

"We have not only to protect our own shores and our coastal commerce, but such strategic areas as Hawaii, the Panama Canal, the Caribbean." And he ^{added:} ~~said:~~

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"We must defend our good neighbors to the southward.

Also we must protect the flow of supplies to Great

Britain and check as best we can the surging flood of Japanese aggression."

So The ALABAMA, eighty~~en~~ million dollars' worth of man-o-war, ^{is}~~was~~ launched nine months ahead of schedule. ~~That means she is the sixth new battlegoon under the recent program.~~

And that's the kind of news we want to hear a¹/₂ more of, don't we Hugh?