

# JAVA AIRDROMES PROVED USELESS

Allies Were Forced to Surrender Excellent and Well Hidden Fields Because of Lack of Planes And Anti-Aircraft Guns.

(This is the fourth of George Weller's series on the Java campaign.)

By GEORGE WELLER

Copyright, 1942, by The Indianapolis Times and The Chicago Daily News, Inc. SOMEWHERE IN AUSTRALIA, April 7.—When approximately a dozen various groups of Jap convoys, consisting of from six to 10 freighters, were gathered by their cruiser-based seaplanes into three large convoys escorted by warships, their attack was directed at three points along the northern Java coast. These points were Rembang, in the east-central part of the island; at Indramayu, in the west-central, and at Bantum, at the extreme west, near Sunda straits.

Although the Dutch officially admitted only 26 transports having landed at Rembang, 12 at Indramayu, and 14 at Bantum, this was a description of only the earliest phase of the invasion.

A naval officer who participated in a subchaser attack close in shore upon the Rembang group, told me that he saw 34 transports in line there. Furthermore, after the allied fleet left, the transports landed at Samarang, almost exactly in Java's center.

Japan's secret fleet of freighters, which had been laying up quietly in closely guarded inlets of the Japanese and Chinese coasts, made possible this heavy armada of which perhaps one-tenth were sunk by American and British bombers when landing. Allied ship losses in evacuating civilians from Singapore were certainly appreciably heavier due to Jap domination of the air than Jap losses in invading Java.

Old Story: No Planes

Such was the chance lost by the United Nations through having meager, out-dated bomber and fighter groups upon Java. Excellent airfields were there in abundance—tiny fighter fields so well hidden that even American pilots often could not find their way home after battles, and oil and bomb depots.

All was lost through lack of planes able to compete with Japan's highly maneuverable and speedy navy Zero-fighters and through lack of anti-aircraft guns able to hit Jap bombers above 20,000 feet.

Jap troops, landing by moonlight upon Java, found themselves with a far easier problem than when they landed upon the eastern coast of Malaya.

In Java the Japs landed upon the flats, with the nearest mountains 20 miles away and virtually no jungle to hide the defenders. The invaders' exposure in the moonlight was fully compensated by the fact that the defenders were equally pitilessly revealed, but in much smaller numbers. Only meadows of sea hay and rice fields were visible, but no bomb depots.

Will to Fight. That's All

Traveling by day and night, I made an 800-mile automobile journey over the entire length of the island from Bajewangi, opposite Bali, to Batavia on the two days and nights preceding the invasion. Everywhere the stern Dutch resolution to fight the Japs was paired with means which were woefully inadequate.

When they landed upon the shore, which somewhat resembles the coastline of Long Island or the southern shores of Lake Michigan, the Japs would almost immediately be in possession of the main east-west highway which runs the length of the island, as well as of the railroad connecting with Batavia.

After landing and disposing their coastal forces, they severed Soerabaja from these arteries by cutting

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Fears Seizure



Natalie Edmonds, 22, employee of the war department, faces the possibility of internment in a concentration camp despite the fact that her maternal ancestry goes back to colonial days. She has not seen her Japanese father, Rilichiro Kawashima, since he deserted her mother in New York in 1920, two years after their marriage. She is fearful of internment because of the senate bill, which authorizes seizure of any person considered by laws of a foreign nation to be a citizen of that government.

## BRITISH SCORCH EARTH IN BURMA

Forced to Take Up New Positions in Defense Of Oil Fields.

NEW DELHI, India, April 7 (U.P.)—British troops defending the western Burma flank have been forced to take up new positions in the Irrawaddy valley less than 60 miles below the rich central Burma oil fields, an India-Burma command communiqué revealed today.

It said the imperialists now have withdrawn north of Thayetmyo, 37 miles north of Prome, while three Japanese columns are pressing northward.

The communiqué emphasized the plight of the British defenders in disclosing that the retreating forces had applied a "scorched earth" policy, destroying oil and cement installations at Thayetmyo and nearby Allianmo before they withdrew.

The latest information regarding enemy movements, the communiqué said, placed one Japanese column on the west bank of the Irrawaddy river north of Kama, 17 miles north of Prome and another on the east bank in vicinity of Nyaungbinzeik, about 15 miles north of Prome.

Other Japanese elements, the communiqué added, were moving northeastward along the Sinojok valley, apparently in an attempt to cut off the British.

A Chinese military spokesman at Chongming revealed, meanwhile, that China's fifth and sixth armies were engaged in an artillery duel with strong Japanese forces a few miles north of Toungoo on the eastern allied flank.

## ADMIRAL IS LOST AT SEA DURING CRUISE

WASHINGTON, April 7 (U.P.)—

In a brief and undetailed communiqué, the navy announced last night that Rear Admiral J. W. Wilcox Jr., 60, was lost overboard in heavy weather during normal cruising operations. The date and location of the tragedy were not revealed.

Wilcox, a native of Atlanta, Ga., became the second American admiral to lose his life in the war. Rear Admiral Isaac Kidd was killed during the Pearl Harbor attack.

Surviving Wilcox are his widow, the former Miss Caroline Manigault of Charleston, S. C., and two children, Arthur M. Wilcox, 21, and Mary Manigault Wilcox, 11.

## RAILWAYS EMPLOYEE WOUNDED BY BANDIT

A bandit who shot Fred H. Beckom, 1736 Union st., in a holdup attempt last night was hunted today by police.

The shooting occurred near Iowa and Meridian sts., where Mr. Beckom, an employee of the Indianapolis Railways, had left a trackless trolley. He was carrying a black bag containing his money changer and trolley receipts when the bandit stepped out of an alley and pointed a pistol at him.

Mr. Beckom swung the bag at him, and the bandit fired. Mr. Beckom received a slight flesh wound on the right shoulder.

## RAFTERY APPOINTED DEPUTY PROSECUTOR

John F. Raftery, Indianapolis attorney and Republican precinct committee man, was appointed a deputy prosecutor to serve in municipal court today by Prosecutor Sherwood Blue.

Mr. Raftery will succeed John Tindler who has enlisted in the army air corps for flying cadet training. Mr. Raftery has been active in Republican politics since 1914. He lives at 131 S. Gladstone ave., is married, and has three children.

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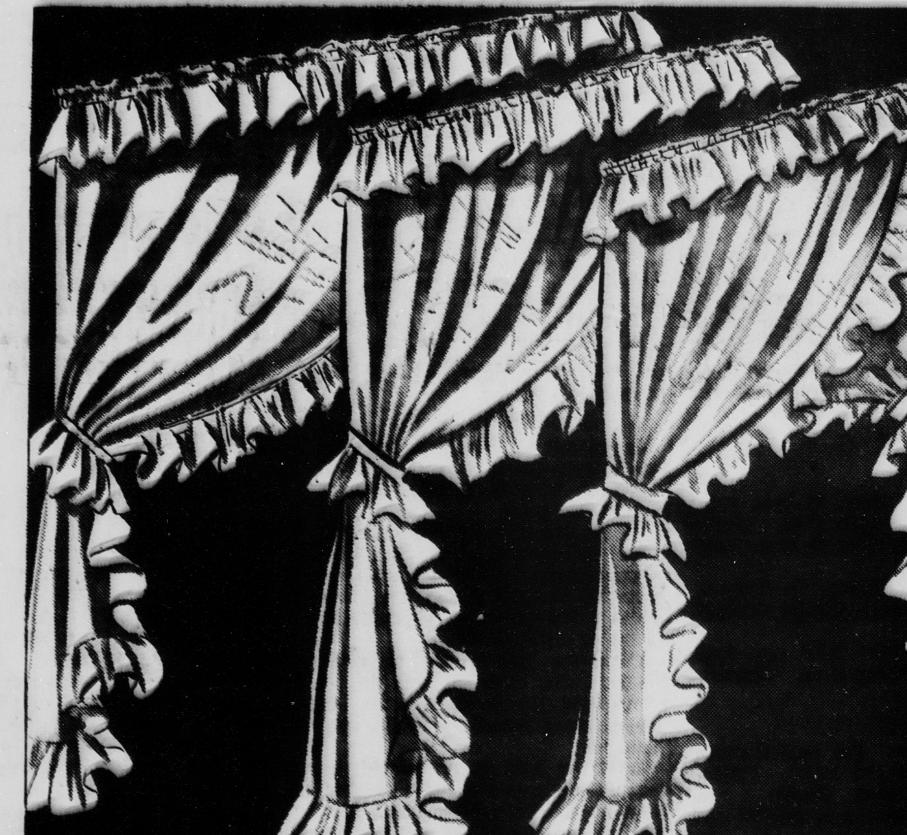
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