

## CHAPTER XIV

Meanwhile the organization of Panay, along the general lines laid down by General Chynoweth prior to his departure for Cebu, had steadily progressed under the intelligent and capable leadership of Brigadier General Albert F. Christie\*. Baus Au operations had provided adequate food and other necessities in the mountains. Security areas had been established and implemented. Defensive positions against possible landings had been set up at likely points with well defined lines of withdrawal into the security areas. Communications with all troop echelons had been constantly improved, with a prescribed and rehearsed plan of coordination between all commanders.

In addition to these activities, the last of four airfields, the construction of which had been included in the mission of the Panay force, was completed 15 April. In charge of this project as Division Engineer, after Tom Powell, Jr., joined Chynoweth in Cebu, was Major Claude Fertig, and a faithful and loyal civilian, Mr. Fred C. Fredericks. Working night and day it required fifteen hundred laborers on each field to complete the job on schedule.

In retrospect, considering the pressure under which everyone worked, the man hours of labor, the vast quantities of materials

\*Appointed brigadier general by General Chynoweth. This promotion was never officially recognized in spite of the fact that Christie commanded a division and an island of considerable importance.

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MAP #15 PANAY INVASION

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required to prepare for the reinforcements which we believed up to the last minute would arrive to swing the decision in our favor, the tragic futility of these herculean efforts is vividly delineated in our memories.

The warning to the Visayas implied by the fall of Bataan, with its consequent release of enemy troops, was confirmed when, during the early morning of 10 April the Panay garrison received its first curt word of the imminent invasion of Cebu through Cebu radio sources. The ominous radio silence which fell the next day told its own story. The plight of Cebu was embroidered in the telling by native evacuees arriving in Panay by banca during succeeding days.

Transports and warships, present in the surrounding waters constantly during this period presaged a similar landing on Panay within a matter of hours. Troops slept with their arms -- Headquarters not at all, as constant reports came in from the offshore patrol and coastal observation posts.

Late in the afternoon of 15 April four transports were reported moving slowly southeastward off Naso Point\*, others being sighted near Capiz. That these vessels were accompanied by the usual naval escort was made abundantly clear at daybreak next morning when at points near Iloilo, Capiz and San Jose enemy troops poured ashore under cover of a heavy naval barrage and supported by reconnaissance planes and bombers in large numbers. (Map #13, 15)

At Oton, a small barrio some ten kilometers west of Iloilo at

\* Naso Point - extreme southern tip of southwestern Panay.

at the hub of the roadnet, Jap scouting parties coming ashore under cover of darkness surprised and captured the outpost, cut telephone wires and generally paved the way for the pre-dawn landing of the assault troops. Strong flanking parties reaching north and east seriously threatened the line of retreat of the one Philippine Army battalion under Major Bickerton\*, defending Iloilo. After dark that night however, having held their delaying positions according to plan sufficiently long for all demolitions to be executed, most of the battalion withdrew toward the mountains, and reached the regimental security area near Alimodian in safety. A few small groups, cut off, succeeded in making their way across country to rejoin their units, leaving Iloilo a holocaust even as Cebu City had been. This was no part of the demolitions plan, nor was there any intention on the part of the American command that this should occur, since it was believed that the destruction of the city would work far greater hardship on the Ilongos than on the enemy. It was simply another example of the pyromaniac urge inherent in certain types of natives under emotional stress.

Grino's outfit\*\* meanwhile, northeast of San Jose, was acquitting itself well, as were Chavez' troops farther to the

\* First Battalion, 61st Infantry. Recruited after the departure of 61st Division troops from Panay and Negros in January, this was a second regiment to bear this number - the first, under Gen. Mitchell's command, being at this time in Lanao, Mind.

\*\* Like the 61st, this regiment duplicated the number of Thayer's outfit - the 62nd Inf., also transferred to Mindanao in January. These regiments had originally been 64 and 65, but the designations were changed.

north in the Capiz sector. All were giving ground as slowly as possible, and withdrawing, according to plan, toward the mountains.

By the following morning enemy reconnaissance had penetrated from Iloilo as far north as Janiuay, where they made contact with troops of the Second Battalion, 61st Infantry, under Major Harry J. Harding, Jr., who were covering the road blocks south of the barrio. Losing no time in seizing high ground overlooking our positions, the Jap promptly and effectively brought them under mortar fire. There was little cover and less camouflage and the restlessness of our troops made their location a simple matter for the invader, whose accurate fire soon compelled withdrawal; however a small and determined rear guard held the road block until dark.

Apparently finding that the well-prepared organization of Panay presented a greater obstacle than had Cebu, on 20 April at San Jose, and again on the 24th at all three previous landing points, additional Nip infantry, cavalry and armor were landed.

Also on the 20th a Jap force attempting to penetrate the mountain area near Alibunan tangled with a battalion of the 63rd Infantry under the redoubtable Lt. Colonel Chavez, and was severely mauled. Drawing off to lick their wounds, the enemy was still further disorganized when Chavez' troops followed up their advantage with a determined second attack. Contact was close and bitter throughout the day, but when on the 22nd the enemy was reinforced in overwhelming numbers, the intrepid defenders were reluctantly forced to withdraw.

Meanwhile, on the west coast Grino's battalions were becoming hard-pressed. This regiment, recruited in the early Spring of '42 after the transfer of units from Panay to Mindanao, was of necessity armed almost exclusively with bows and arrows. Although the scope of their activities was limited by their medieval arms, these same arms lent themselves admirably to jungle ambush - as Nipponese patrols and reconnaissance parties learned at fearful cost. In other types of terrain, and pitted against the artillery and armor of the aggressor, this archaic weapon was tragically deficient. It was "like using bare fists against a vicious gangster armed with a tommy gun"\*. By the night of the 21st repeated furious attacks by the now greatly reinforced enemy had forced the retirement of these troops from two of their positions.

Division Headquarters was by this time established on Mount Baloy, selected because of its relatively central location, its few avenues of approach and consequent excellent adaptation to guerrilla tactics. Radio contact with all three regiments was constant. The supply situation was excellent - there were ample sources of good water, wild game was abundant and the intensive "Baus Au" program had resulted in ducks, chickens, pigs, 500 head of cattle, 15000 bags of rice, hundreds of cases of canned goods, rice mills, complete machine shops, drums of gasoline and kerosene and other items being stored throughout the mountains.

The intelligence service was functioning splendidly. Filipino

\*Admiral Hart's famous remark concerning the weakness of American power in the Orient when war began.

agents had been planted in many strategic spots, including the Japanese Headquarters mess, where they served as table waiters; and even as orderly to the Japanese commanding general.

About this time intelligence reported that the enemy was sending a foraging company, in trucks, daily into the Alimodian area to procure rice, fruits and vegetables. Securing permission from Colonel Flinau, Peralta\* with a group of about a dozen soldiers set out to raid this detachment.

Lying in wait in well-concealed positions the raiders watched the approach of three covered Japanese trucks. At a given signal, at point blank range, the guerrillas opened fire with machine guns, automatic rifles and rifles. In the resultant massacre the 26 enemy soldiers and 2 officers were all either killed or wounded -- in which latter case Peralta personally administered the coup de grace with his bolo.

Only after the brief encounter was over was it discovered that casualties in the leading truck had included some dozen young Filipina girls whom the Japs had abducted to augment the personnel of one of their brothels, which are SOP\*\* for the Japanese Army, being established by their high command for the comfort, convenience and pleasure of their troops in the field.

The resourceful commander of the 61st Infantry, Lt. Colonel Lyle J. Fitzpatrick, was also busily engaged in adding to Japanese headaches during this period. The enemy had taken over the Sugar

\* Lt. Colonel (later Brigadier General) Marcario Peralta, Jr., Div. 5-3.

\*\* Standard Operating Procedure

Central at Janiway and were using the machine shops for the repair of their ordnance equipment, in addition to the production of sugar. On two occasions, personally leading his men, Fitzpatrick raided the Central accomplishing its total destruction and killing 18 Japanese, with no losses to his detachment. For his actions on these occasions Fitzpatrick was awarded the Silver Star.

Later, in three separate forays, this officer and his group sabotaged the Jap water supply to Iloilo, blowing up the installations and killing all the Jap guards.

Unfortunately, instead of intensifying their campaign against the guerrillas following these actions, by way of retaliation the Japs chose the simpler expedient of rounding up the civilians in the nearest barrio -- with utter impartiality as to age or sex -- and summarily executing ten for every Jap soldier killed.

Thereafter, although the ambuscades were continued, care was taken to warn nearby civilians, or to ensure their evacuation before reprisals could be made.

The three Filipino cavalry platoons which had been organized in the Spring were of inestimable value at this time. The wiry, sturdy little Philippine ponies tripled the range of the guerrillas, vastly increasing their sphere of activity. Most of these troopers were armed with rifles as well as bolos, their fire power further increased by one or two pack ponies bearing a machine gun and a few precious boxes of ammunition.

Early in May information was received at Division Headquarters



from one of the agents in the San Jose area that the Nips had hatched a plan for a punitive expedition against Division Headquarters itself.

Only one trail led toward Mount Baloy from the west, and this at one point threaded its way through an exceedingly narrow defile between steep hills. The Division Chief of Staff, Lt. Colonel Fliniau, assigned to Lt. Colonel Grino the mission of defending this pass. Three platoons of bow-and-arrow men were hidden along the wooded, boulder-strewn hillsides flanking the trail; the fourth, armed with spears and bolos, was concealed slightly farther back.

Apparently oblivious to any threat of ambush and with no reconnaissance to the flanks the Jap column moved into the canyon in single file. At a prearranged signal from Grino bowstrings drew taut and arrows flew, silent and deadly. Not a single Jap escaped. Spear- and bolo-men moved swiftly in to add such finishing touches as were necessary.

A day or so after this occurrence Colonel Fliniau, at Division Headquarters, received a message -- under a white flag -- from the Japanese commanding officer. The message stated, somewhat plaintively, that the Fil-Americans were "not fighting fairly, according to rules of land warfare".

Colonel Fliniau's reply is unprintable.

Prior to this time Jap cavalry patrols combed the foothills and penetrated the lower mountain areas in many sections. One

battalion command post was surprised and captured, some patrols failed to return, and part of one infantry company, believing itself "surrounded" -- which was the classic Filipino reason given for retreating -- dispersed. As a whole, however, the enemy's mountain expeditions were not notably successful. The irregular, cragged terrain, covered for the most part with forests virtually impenetrable to the uninitiated without a competent guide, provided perfect concealment for the native forces. Small enemy detachments searching the forest were wiped out by silent snipers. Larger forces, operating over wide areas, found only deserted hideouts and cold campfires. Unable to maintain themselves in these inaccessible regions as could the guerrillas, with their multitude of scattered food caches, the frustrated Nip soon abandoned his mountain activities and returned to the lowland barrios and cities.

The overall situation on the Island by this time appeared to be quite satisfactory. The guerrilla organization was functioning smoothly and according to plan. The troops were over their initial buck fever and those who now remained were steady and dependable -- the best of the lot. Though he was no longer there to participate, General Chynoweth's cherished dream and carefully worked out plans for a well-founded, hard-hitting, elusive guerrilla force had come true, through General Christie's tireless and sagacious administration. Chynoweth did at least have the satisfaction of hearing about it however when Lt. Colonel Capili, the 61st Division G-2, had occasion to make a trip to Negros and relayed from there a

message from General Christie.

On 7 May Division Headquarters received by radio the stunning news of the surrender of the troops on Corregidor. The long-awaited aid had not arrived in time. Now it was too late -- forever too late for many. And the aid, when it did come, would meet vastly greater opposition. In the meantime the Visayas and Mindanao were on their own.

After the first shock passed the commanders and men on Panay pursued their guerrilla activities with even greater zeal than before. During the succeeding weeks several carefully planned ambushes, at widely scattered points, were executed at considerable cost to the Nip. One of Colonel Peralta's picked detachments way-laid a Jap troop train, and were not gentle with those soldiers of the Emperor who fell into their hands. Not long after this another daring sortie was made by Peralta deep into enemy held territory near Janiuay. Falling upon an unsuspecting Nip column with bolos flashing, they accounted for many casualties before the demoralized remnants fled the terrible blades, leaving behind valuable impedimenta in the shape of rifles, ammunition and supplies of various sorts.

There was no question in Christie's mind, or in the minds of his staff, then or later, of the ability of the Panay garrison to continue operation indefinitely. They were well organized, well supplied, well situated, well trained, courage and morale were high.

And yet all of this, it developed, was of no avail.

In Mindanao, Jap forces opposing Chastaine's troops in the lower Davao-Agusan sector had been increased during the last week in April. G-2 estimates placed the enemy strength in the Hijo-Pagsabangan area at about one rifle company, with two- and three-inch artillery; at Mugugpo, near Kilometer 58, about 200 marines with 6-inch artillery; and at Madaam between 500 and 1000 armed civilians. Plans were laid, accordingly, for a coordinated attack at three points on 1 May. (Map #10)

Major Soliman, with "F" Company and a platoon of machine guns took up position near Pagsabangan with instructions to attack the town from the north. Major Utke, with "G" Company and a machine gun platoon were ordered to Hijo, while the main body of troops along the Agusan Highway were to deliver a frontal assault on the Japanese position at Kilometer 62. The attacks were to be synchronized at dawn on 1 May. Two of the P-40s rescued from the grounded An Hui off Leyte and lightered down to Agusan had been assigned to support this attack, which it was hoped would be sufficient threat to induce the Jap to reinforce this front with troops drawn from the Digos area, where our forces were being hard-pressed.

At dusk on 30 April a reconnaissance in force made by "E" Company against the Japanese outpost position at Kilometer 62 drew fire from machine guns, mortars and artillery, and revealed that their forward positions had apparently already been reinforced. One man in the scouting party was killed and ten wounded, against an estimated twenty Japanese killed.

Early on the morning of 1 May a Japanese force estimated at one company staged an incursion against the 81st's forward positions along the Highway near Kilometer 63, driving in the outpost. About an hour later the two F-40s flew over the area, at about 2000 feet, but failed to make any attack against the hostile positions. It was learned later that they returned to their base reporting that no targets could be found.

The two flanking forces, under Majors Soliman and Utke, had attacked at dawn, in accordance with orders. Soliman's company succeeded in cutting the Highway between Pagabangan<sup>S</sup> and Mugugpo and demolished a bridge, but a counter attack by the Japanese at 8:00 AM forced the Filipinos to retire. In addition to their machine gun and artillery fire in this encounter the Japs resorted to setting off numerous fire-crackers. Although this was later found to be a favorite Oriental subterfuge to create the illusion of many guns, this was the first time it had been observed.

Major Utke's force, in its advance on Hijo, had accepted the services of the ex-mayor of Hijo as guide. Shortly before reaching the town the guide disappeared. Subsequent developments indicated strongly that he was an enemy collaborator.

"G" Company's attack was met with heavy fire, supporting a Japanese counter-attack by the reinforced garrison, compelling Utke's small force to fall back. So rapidly did the troops retire that the Major and his command group narrowly escaped encirclement.

They had, in this brief engagement, accounted for an estimated 80 or 90 enemy casualties, including an enemy command car filled

with officers, caught by machine gun fire. Losses in the attacking force were 4 killed, 6 wounded, ten missing. In their counter-attack the Japs were seen to be assisted by two white men, believed to be German officers.

As was prevalent elsewhere during this campaign, there would appear to have been some lack of coordination between commands. Apparently the main body of troops on the highway made no attempt to attack on this day, leading to speculation as to when, and by whom, the dawn attack had been planned, and what orders were issued.

Assuming that Lt. Col. Van Nostrand was still in command of the regiment (and there is nothing in the record to indicate any change) the only possible conclusion is that orders to attack were never received by him. Admitting that the pre-dawn sortie by the enemy undoubtedly caused a certain amount of confusion among the troops; and the mid-morning attentions of the Jap bombers constituted a further hindrance; neither hell nor high water - nor Japs - ever prevented Bill Van Nostrand from carrying out his orders.

With the attack on Panay on 16 April, rapidly following the invasion and occupation of Cebu on 10 April, it was almost certain that Mindanao was next on the Japanese list of calls. Intelligence reports indicated increasing concentrations of enemy warcraft throughout the surrounding waters, but requests for bombers from Australia to combat these concentrations were denied.

April twenty-seventh brought reports from Negros that six

enemy transports were steaming in a southeasterly direction. On the 28th, information from Colonel A. T. Wilson, in Zamboanga, indicated that six transports and two destroyers were maneuvering in Basilan Strait. Subsequent reports strengthened the probability that this convoy would strike at either Cotabato, Parang or Malabang.

(Map #3)

Both the Cotabato-Davao and Lanao sectors were alerted, demolitions checked and all final preparations perfected for the military reception of the "sons of heaven".

Throughout the campaign, the Jap made it a point to stage his major attacks, where possible, on the 29th of the month in celebration of the Emperor's birthday. It was a foregone conclusion that any contact with the enemy on that day was sure to be particularly vicious. The malaria-decimated troops awaiting this attack were without illusions as to the "party" which was in store for them, but were determined to have a few "presents" ready for the Emperor's emissaries.

Although the immediate mission of General Vachon's Cotabato-Davao force was to frustrate any enemy advance from the Digos front and to prevent landings elsewhere, the chief mission was to thwart hostile attempts at penetration into the interior of the Island northward from Carmen Ferry.

Division had been advised of the invasion of Cebu and Pansy and landings were considered to be imminent at Cotabato or Parang. It was a foregone conclusion that the Nip would take full advantage

of his already well established facilities at Davao.

With these eventualities in mind, General Vachon attempted to tighten the defense of his sector with a reorganization in depth, transferring the 101st Infantry into the area north of Carmen Ferry near Kilometer 116. There the terrain provides a naturally strong defensive position in a heavily wooded section through which the highway winds along the rim of precipitous canyons. The first delaying position was established at Carmen Ferry, where Frandsen with his Third Battalion was stationed. The second, seven kilometers to the rear, near Aroman, was garrisoned by Higgin's 2nd Battalion. The main position lay in the canyon area near Kilometer 117, and it was to this position that Richardson's First Battalion came when relieved on the Digos position on 27 April, having been there continuously since February. (Map #10)

Demolitions were prepared from Digos and from Cotabato City to Carmen Ferry by Captain Ross Miller, the Division Engineer officer. From Carmen north the emplacements would be under Frandsen's direction. Fields of fire were cleared with great difficulty through the tangled undergrowth. For about two days there were a few civilian workers available, but the general unrest and agitation which was beginning to be manifest in desertions throughout the ranks quickly communicated itself to them.

Many rumors, all demoralizing, were prevalent. One of the most pernicious -- and hardest to combat -- was that the Americans were to be flown out to Australia, leaving the Filipinos to surrender



during the intense shelling. This attack drove in the left flank outpost to the main line but was halted at this point, and the tanks driven back by machine gun fire. Action was broken off at five PM when the enemy retired with visible heavy losses. Our front lines were still intact.

That night, the Division Commander ordered a withdrawal to the Sayre Highway, directing that the 2nd Battalion, 102nd Infantry under Major William Baldwin form the rear guard. Previously prepared plans for evacuations of rear installations, and transport of supplies and equipment were at once set in motion and the first of the troops -- the 1st Battalion 101st Field Artillery -- was entrucked immediately. Units at the front were skillfully and quietly withdrawn, the 2nd Battalion 101st Field Artillery leading, to a rear assembly area at Kilometer 78; and all installations destroyed. By dawn of 3 May a delaying position had been established by the rear guard on the high ground near Kilometer 86, which it held until 2:30 PM permitting personnel from various detached posts to clear the assembly area. The Engineer demolition officer supervised the execution of all demolitions, after which the trucks and the rear guard withdrew toward the North.

At Carmen Ferry, by order of the Division Commander, the 1st Battalion 101st Field Artillery was diverted to Pikit to assist in repulsing Jap forces reportedly being guided upriver by Sinsuat Moros.\* At Kilometer 115 on the Sayre Highway the 2nd Battalion 101st Field Artillery was attached to the 1st Battalion, 101st

\*Moros under the aegis of Duma Sinsuat, who were said to be actively pro-Jap. Sinsuat himself was allegedly present in one of the barges.

Infantry, while the remainder of the force\* organized a defensive position at Kilometer 124.

Meanwhile, in the Cotabato-Parang salient the thin line of defenders was also being rolled back. During the night of 28-29 April after confirmation had been received from the offshore patrol of the imminent arrival of the enemy convoy, the sector commander had ordered all demolitions executed. Whether the ensuing conflagration occurred in the course of normal demolitions, which got out of hand, or as a result of the pyromanic urge of the emotional Filipino is not clear in the record; but as a consequence Cotabato City was razed to the ground.

Just as day was breaking 5 Japanese armored-steel barges disgorged their troops on the Cotabato City side of the river. Twice during the early hours enemy attempts to cross the river at Salimbao were repulsed by Companies "E" and "F" of the 104th Infantry, who held their position until noon when an enemy machine gun attack drove them back in some confusion. Not, however, before Lt. Matson had seen to the burning of Salimbao Market and the destruction of the ferry. Hip crossings were also achieved about this time north of Salimbao, where a machine gun platoon had "evacuated" without orders under fire of dive bombers. This defection compelled the remainder of our troops along the river to fall back to their second position.

By 1:30 Captain Schultz, having lost two platoons through premature withdrawal along the Pinaring trail to Kilometer 23 on the

\* Hq Bn and 2nd Bn, 102nd Infantry.

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MAP # 16 COTABATO SECTOR

National Highway, had reorganized his one remaining platoon of "E" Company on the high ground near Pinaring, which position he held throughout the afternoon, retiring on order, about dusk, to Kilometer 23.

About 3:30, while the charred wreckage of the demolished span still smoked, the Simuay Bridge position, occupied by one infantry company plus a machine gun section\*, was attacked by Jap units arriving from the direction of Parang. Opposed by mortars, automatic rifles and machine guns, with dive bombers dumping their lethal calling cards into the general fracas, the Filipinos, vastly outnumbered, held their ground exacting heavy toll until dark when flanking action forced their retreat to Kilometer 14 where they joined the remainder of the 3rd Battalion, 102nd Infantry.

Demolitions and obstacles on all roads prevented Jap employment of tanks, however during the succeeding 24 hours the steady and relentless pressure of Jap infantry, now reinforced by heavy artillery in addition to the mortars and the omnipresent dive bombers, continued to drive the Fil-American forces back.

Inability to gain contact with Duque's troops in the Parang area, or to determine their actual whereabouts, imposed additional strain on the already overtaxed Cotabato force, since it necessitated deployment of troops sorely needed elsewhere to protect the right rear. Several patrols sent out on succeeding days during this period from different points in the Cotabato area reported no

\* "K" Company, 102nd Infantry, with a platoon of "I" Company attached and supported by one section of machine guns from "M" Company.

contact with the Parang force.\*

With the first grey of daybreak on the 30th enemy troops stemming from the Parang area stormed the position at Kilometer 14. Our machine guns held the position until, with brighter daylight, the ubiquitous dive bombers put in their appearance. Since the terrain at this point offered virtually no protection from the air, the pilots had a Roman holiday until the troops succeeded in reaching the relative security of the position at Kilometer 17. Nips advancing rapidly North from the Pinaring trail to effect a flanking movement thus found their quarry gone upon their arrival at the highway.

By noon Jap barges covered by predatory dive bombers had pushed up the Cotabato River as far as Paidu Pulangi. When this news was received at Pikit the Philippine Constabulary there fired the town, without orders, and "evacuated" -- also without orders. The commander of the Constabulary detachment charged with guarding the enemy internees, in direct contradiction to his orders, began marching the prisoners northward toward Maridagao during the afternoon. Upon learning of this irregularity the Division Commander ordered the internees returned at once to Pikit and released, the Constabulary force then to maintain contact with the enemy and cover the Pikit-Maridagao road. The first part of the order was

\* Contact was also lost between General Fort's headquarters and Colonel Duque's 2nd Infantry Battalion on 3 May, and the subsequent fate of these troops is not known to this day. General Fort stated that reports were received on 30 April of the seemingly ceaseless stream of Japanese pouring from the 7 transports in Polloc Harbor, and on the following day, the information that the defending troops, although constantly forced back, were retreating in good order and continuing to harass the enemy to the extent of their limited abilities. Since that time ----- silence.

complied with, but the detachment then fled precipitately to Bau, leaving the road wide open, which necessitated a company of the 105th Infantry (Division Special Unit) being dispatched to cover the road south of Maridagao.

An attack on the Japanese at Pulangi by Moros under Captain Piang, scheduled for that night, failed to materialize. During the afternoon of the first, however, a Nip battalion advancing on Pikit was engaged by a Filipino contact patrol and 37 Moros under a Datu. Of the 20,000 Moro warriors reputedly at Piang's command, this small skirmish is the only action, other than the ambushes with the 101st Infantry, in which they are known to have participated.

Just before dusk on the 30th the telephone operator at Dulawan reported the disembarking of enemy troops at that point, which brought reinforcements on the double to maintain the security of the Dulawan-Lumopog junction, while demolitions crews touched off their installations in Midsayap. By 11 PM of the 30th, demolitions completed, all troops in this area were ordered back to the Libungan River, the last units clearing Midsayap about midnight. Meanwhile the units at Kilometers 17 and 23, also ordered to the Libungan River rendezvous, were covered in their retreat by the 2nd Battalion 104th Infantry. Detachments from Company "B" 101st Engineers continued throughout the night to destroy bridges and improvise road blocks.

The first delaying position now, astride the Libungan trail

some 500 yards north of the Cotabato-Davao road, was occupied about dusk by two companies of the 3rd Battalion, 101st Field Artillery, whose outposts consisting of a third company, commanded the highway in both directions. During the night the 3rd Battalion 102nd Infantry took up its position some 1500 yards in rear (North) of the first delaying position. Sector Headquarters, followed closely by the rear guard\* arrived shortly afterward.

Scouting patrols from the front line battalion reported no enemy contacts until midmorning of 2 May when a party estimated at about 200 was seen advancing along the Libungan trail and reported infiltrating by side trails to our left (east). "I" Company which had been left at Kilometer 32 on the Highway to outpost the MLR\*\* had not reported and could not be located by runner. On learning of the enemy approach, "L" Company abandoned its front line position without authority and fled to the north leaving "M" company to hold alone. No hostile action developed however, the Nips having apparently passed up the position for objectives farther to the east. Several additional detachments also passed the trail junction during the day, headed east.

During the afternoon Sector Headquarters with additional troops\*\*\* moved on Division's orders to the east to secure the trails in the vicinities of Nicaan, Gokotan and Bau to protect the supply bodegas at these places. A detachment from the 104th was to press onward to make contact with the 101st Infantry on the Sayre Highway in the vicinity of Kilometer 127. The orders also specified that the

\* 2nd Battalion, 104th Infantry

\*\* Main line of resistance.

\*\*\* Hq. Battalion, 101st Field Artillery and 2nd Battalion, 104th

Libungan position would continue to be held by the 3rd Battalion, 102nd Infantry while the commander of the 3rd Battalion 101st Field Artillery attempted to reorganize his disintegrating force, but by ten AM of the third less than 100 men remained on the Libungan line - all others sick or in desertion.

The Constabulary force at Gokotan, mistaking their approaching reinforcements for enemy, fired the supply bodegas there, destroying desperately needed food and ammunition. Reports received by radio at Headquarters - and colored by "bamboo telegraph" - of our losing fight in the Lake Lanao area and of a new invasion at Bugo, further undermined the shaky morale of these forces which hit a new low a few days later when civilians, in terror, fled a Moro uprising with its attendant pillaging and burning in the vicinity of Midsayap. Moro runners were dispatched to bring in Lt. Mantel Dilangelan, a Moro leader, "to explain the Moro activities".

No enemy action had taken place nor had patrols encountered any evidence of hostile forces in the vicinity for several days when, about midnight of the 8th, a radiogram received at Sector Headquarters stated that General Wainwright had directed the surrender of all troops in the Islands. Pending verification of this calamitous denouement all action was suspended.

At 4:40 AM on the morning of 29 April reports from Colonel



Duque advised that a Japanese force of two aircraft carriers and seven transports, under air cover, were landing an estimated 3000 men, with tanks and artillery, in Polloc Harbor, sixty kilometers southeast of Malabang.

According to General Fort's report, Duque's force of less than 600 inexperienced school-boys, operating from well-prepared positions overlooking the harbor, held its ground for seven hours with a loss of only one man killed and 17 wounded, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy with cross-fire from concealed machine gun positions on landing parties.

By eleven AM the Nips had succeeded in establishing a beach-head at the southwest end of Polloc Harbor and in order to prevent his troops from being outflanked Colonel Duque withdrew to his second position at barrio Cuba, about five kilometers north of Parang.

Colonel Mitchell, informed of this turn of events, strengthened his outposts and requested authority to demolish the bridge at Kilometer 84, ten miles east of Malabang. This was refused - possibly because Fort wished to leave this line of withdrawal open to Duque, in case his prescribed route via trail to the east on Buldun Mountain was cut off.

(Map #17)

(Map #16)

Rifle pits and machine gun positions had long since been organized on the Malabang beach with final protective lines enfiling all angles of the airfield. Defensive positions had been established on the elevation just north of the airfield at

MAP #17 MALABANG SECTOR

Kilometer 69. Road blocks, demolitions and emplacements had been constructed covering the route for a distance of 30 kilometers, to a point north of Lake Dapao, and further delaying positions organized at Kilometer 63 and 54.

The main line of resistance lay to the north of the Malabang Airfield and generally astride the Malabang-Ganassi road, paralleling the Zamboanga road to the west. The 3rd Battalion, under Major Ernest E. McLish, held the left (east) of the line astride the Ganassi road, extending three kilometers west from the Mataling River. Company K from position east of Malabang covered the "Old Malabang Trail" - the old military road to Balaygay. On the right, Captain Clyde Childress' 2nd Battalion occupied positions astride the Maladig River. (See Map page 17).

Captain Albert H. Price with his two 2.95 howitzers had been relieved from attachment to Nelson's Cotabato command at Parang and attached to the 61st Infantry about 12 March. His weapons had been emplaced in the rear of the main line of resistance (see map) prepared to fire prearranged concentrations, especially covering the airfield.

Major Mora's 1st Battalion, in reserve near Lake Dapao, was held in readiness to move forward by truck, either to support the front lines or to block the northern exit of any of the trails leading to the coast. The Regimental Commander moved from Ganassi to the command post of the left front line battalion.

During the night, patrols reported enemy landings at Banago,

eight kilometers southeast of Malabang, and at barrio Budas, where they were reported to have used the docks of Senor Francisco Altea to unload their tanks.

At 3:30 on the morning of the 30th a telephone message from Company "K" at Malabang reported that enemy tanks had passed the outpost. While the message was being received firing was heard in the direction of the Mataling River Bridge. It developed that this fire, which was soon augmented by small arms, was being directed against our front line by the tanks, against which our .50 caliber machine guns were ineffective. No assault was launched however, before daybreak. The dispatch with which the Nips discovered the fords across the Mataling River lent credence to subsequent allegations that a German mestizo, Lazaro, had acted as guide.

On the evening of the 29th Duque had sent a message to General Sharp stating that twenty or thirty trucks, with tanks and scout cars, were leaving Parang in the direction of Malabang. Colonel Mitchell received this information through channels at about five PM on the 30th after he had been in contact with the same force for over twelve hours.

About dusk on 28 April, in response to urgent requests from General Wainwright, two Navy PBVs took off from Darwin for Corregidor. Greatly concerned about the fate of the nurses on the Rock in the event of capture, Wainwright was anxious to evacuate as

many of them as possible from the ghastly hospital laterals. Also slated for evacuation were Mrs. Seals, wife of Brig. Gen. Carl Seals, who had been too ill to be moved the previous May during the final exodus of Army wives; Mrs. Bewley, wife of the head of the Department of Education, and her daughter Virginia; and others, including several officers whom General Wainwright considered in no fit physical condition to stand captivity.

General MacArthur had specifically asked for Colonel Stuart Wood and Commander Francis J. Bridget, former Legation attaches in Tokyo and expert Japanese linguists, and several cryptographers. President Quezon had requested that Colonel Edwin Ronan, former Chief of Chaplains and now advisor to the President, be sent out to him.

Staging at Lake Lanao, where they refueled, the two PBVs arrived at the fortress island shortly before midnight of the 29th - a day which had been marked by outstandingly vicious aerial and artillery bombardments in celebration of the Emperor's birthday - landing in the questionable shelter of the narrow channel between Corregidor and Caballo Island's Fort Hughes, which had been hastily cleared of mines.

The fifty designated passengers were taken aboard as rapidly as possible and less than an hour after their arrival the two packed planes had taken off on their southward trip, plane number one reaching Lake Lanao shortly before daybreak. Plane number two, losing its bearings in the darkness, waited out the remainder

of the night on Iligan Bay, joining the first P-boat at Bacoled Chico, near Dansalan, about an hour after daylight. The barrio's appearance of somnolent peace was belied by the intermittent rumble of guns borne on the south wind, and by the villagers' excited warnings that the Japs were closing in from the southwest and were now only thirty kilometers away. (Map #6)

According to the flight plan the planes were to refuel, wait out the daylight hours and take off on the second leg of the hazardous journey at dusk that evening, rendezvousing in the air. Number Two got up on schedule, but the boat which was to tow Number One from her anchorage out into the lake proved too light for the task, and before the heavily-loaded plane could turn into take-off position she had drifted downwind into shallow water, striking a submerged obstruction in the lake which gashed a large, jagged hole in her hull. Water poured in. The danger of sinking became imminent. Before the plane could be beached on the nearby shore, water was waist-deep within the cabin.

Number Two plane meanwhile, sighting the difficulty, had landed and approached, but since they were already loaded to capacity and must make their destination before dawn they were signalled to take off for Australia alone.

The drenched and disappointed passengers of the damaged P-boat were again set ashore and taken to nearby Camp Kiethley to spend the night, while the crew set about, without optimism, to mend the damage. Neither the necessary tools nor materials being available,

only the crudest of makeshift repairs were possible, not sufficient to enable the craft to take off loaded. A major portion of its passenger list, including all women and several officers, among them Colonel Wood and Commander Bridget, were therefore left on Mindanao.

During the afternoon of 1 May the group was transported by bus to Del Monte airfield, in the hope that evacuation by bomber to Australia might be arranged from that point. But there were no more bombers - and the Macajalar invasion the following night sealed their fate\*.

Enemy strength at Malabang at this time was estimated at one infantry battalion supported by five light tanks, bombers and reconnaissance planes. Numerous assaults were made during the morning of the thirtieth, all against the Third Battalion on the left of the line. Enemy fire was building up steadily. Especially noticeable was the increased volume of small arms and mortar fire.

By eleven AM the enemy pressure on the left center had penetrated a short distance, resulting in the capture of both of the trench mortars. This small salient was later pinched out in spite of the intense Jap fire which continued to fall into the thick woods covering the 61's positions.

The Third Battalion, receiving the brunt of the attack, was suffering heavy casualties and further threatened by envelopment

\*Many versions of this incident have been circulated. The facts presented here are believed, after considerable research, to be accurate.

of its left flank. Childress' troops, on the right, were receiving considerable mortar fire but were not under pressure. Company "E", not engaged, was therefore withdrawn to the rear and attached to the Third Battalion, committed to reinforce this hard-pressed unit's left.

Enemy strength and fire continued to increase hourly, especially against the left, while the Second Battalion, occupying a position in dense woods and extending beyond the Nipponese left flank, remained almost unengaged. A counter-attack by this battalion was accordingly made against the enemy left to relieve pressure on the Third Battalion. However this action developed the presence of large enemy reinforcements in rifles, automatic weapons and mortars and failed in its purpose. Enemy artillery soon joined this action and fire on all positions was intense throughout the remainder of the day.

Late in the afternoon, a runner was dispatched to Captain Childress with orders from the Regimental Commander. He failed to return. Lt. Dominado, the Regimental Operations officer, then volunteered to try to get through to Childress and disappeared into the gathering dusk just as Major Mora arrived from Lake Dapao with his First Battalion which had been held in reserve. As the first of these troops moved forward through the jungle to reinforce the shaken Third Battalion the swift equatorial darkness descended, bringing with it another enemy assault.

Dick Hill, Regimental Executive officer, with his character-



istic presence of mind, snatching these fresh troops like the drowning man's straw, immediately launched a counter-attack but was met by the full force of the now greatly-reinforced enemy. Even the full tropical moon soaring over the hills to the east seemed to be in league with the Japs, pinpointing the battered, bruised defenders even while it shadowed the attacking forces as they advanced in a savage bayonet attack which crumpled the left flank.

The counter-attack had been late by minutes. The stricken left, driven back precipitately, almost smothered "A" Company's advance, creating further pandemonium from which the commanders counted themselves lucky to withdraw their troops without staggering losses.

During the night, with "A" Company in contact as rear guard, McLish's men moved back to the second delaying position at Kilometer 63. The 2nd Battalion, cut off by heavy enemy infiltrations, had straggled back to Kilometer 64, where it was reported that Capt. Childress had been killed, apparently enroute to Colonel Mitchell's command post, and that Lt. Dominado had lost his life attempting to reach the Captain.

What actually happened to Captain Childress is not known. Presumably he was badly wounded and, also presumably, cared for by natives -- since he recovered sufficiently to be of great service later to the guerrillas. He was not seen again by any of the 61st.

Neither sleep nor rest were possible this night, during which

troops were reorganized and positions strengthened.

At dawn on May 1, the outposts were again driven in as the Nips, in a long, thin line approached the main position with automatic weapons and mortars. Contact was brief and few casualties were suffered. During the morning, however, augmented infiltration around the right flank was evidenced by increasing sniper activity, while on the east the Japanese main force made contact and passed the flank, threatening to cut off the entire position. Lack of reserves forced the defenders to a further withdrawal to their third delaying position at Kilometer 54.

While the 61st was engaged at Kilometer 63, Colonel Mitchell had received orders from General Fort placing at his disposal the 84th Infantry. This organization, formed only a month or so previously, was one of the informal units designed to provide labor at one of the ports, and consisted of only one battalion, about 250 strong, under Captain Jay J. Navin. Before Mitchell was able to contact Navin, circumstances forced the retirement to Kilometer 54, whereupon the Captain was ordered to occupy this position to cover the reorganization of the 61st. Due to lack of coordination at Division Headquarters, however, conflicting orders had been issued to Captain Navin and most of his command was already enroute to another point before Colonel Mitchell's message was received. Only one company was available to comply with Mitchell's order. This company reached Kilometer 54 after the 61st was already in position.

The withdrawal to this point had been accomplished in some disorder but with few casualties, the enemy failing to maintain contact even by tanks on the road. Except for this failure the fight would have been over then and there. Enemy aircraft continued constant observation however, and bombers pelted positions, troops and suspected localities at regular intervals throughout the day.

The previously-prepared trenches of the third position were hastily occupied as the troops arrived, the almost exhausted store of ammunition being painstakingly apportioned. Company "A", 84th Infantry, was placed on the extreme right, McLish's 3rd Battalion of the 61st,\* held the left, with the 1st Battalion, less two companies, in the center. One of these two companies constituted a reserve. The other, Company A, cut off in its position east of Kilometer 63, had withdrawn to the northeast, toward Lumbatan.

About mid-afternoon a second company of the 84th arrived and was also assigned to the right. Meanwhile, information had been received that about 150 men of the 2nd Battalion were evacuating along the Baras trail, to the north. Intercepted at Lake Dapao by Captain Katz of the Headquarters Battalion, they were ordered to return south immediately over the Malabang trail to rejoin Mitchell. Only about 60 of the number ever arrived -- the remainder evidently having urgent personal business elsewhere.

About noon, while the position was being occupied, the Division Commander, General Fort arrived. The General ordered that "This position will be held at all costs", and promised to send as

\* Less Company K, with Co. E. attached.

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reinforcements during the afternoon, the Engineer Battalion, two battalions of Moro bolo men and possibly a battalion of the 73rd Infantry, from the north coast, not in contact with the enemy. The orders were issued but none of the promised troops ever arrived.

Actually, the Moro battalions did not exist, as such. General Fort had spent months of time and great effort attempting to organize the Moros into some sort of resistance groups. Meetings were held in central localities to which important Moros were invited, and came. Eventually thousands of Moros took their oaths on the Koran to defend their province, and were organized into platoons of 40 under local leaders, and battalions of 400 under more prominent datus. Since no arms were available they were to use their blade weapons, capturing Jap rifles during their encounters with the enemy.

On the day of the landing at Parang there was not a Moro visible at Ganassi. Enroute to the front line at Malabang on 29 May, Mitchell picked up two Moros going forward to join the fight. There were reports of several who fought at Ganassi on 2 May, with a detachment of the 73rd Infantry. General Fort had great confidence in the fighting quality of the Moros, and it is said they did much damage to the Japanese by ambush after the surrender -- but there were no Moro units available to the 61st Infantry on 1 May 1942.

Shortly after noon on 1 May, the Nipponese advance guard made contact with the position, their artillery, mortars and machine

guns maintained a persistent though intermittent fire throughout the remainder of the day. Confirmed as fact later, the estimated enemy strength at this time was a reinforced regiment of 3000 men, supported by tanks, heavy artillery, mortars, automatic weapons and aircraft, opposing a scant 630 Filipinos, little-trained, armed with obsolete rifles, hungry, tired, frightened, and supported by one 2.95 mountain howitzer and a handful of exhausted American officers.

The artillery detachment, depleted by casualties and unable to man both pieces in this position, sent one of them to the rear to Colonel Vesey's 73rd Infantry. Captain Price, acting as observer for the remaining gun, engaged enemy targets, especially mortars, throughout the afternoon and remained in action after dark until, about 9 PM, enemy infiltrations threatened capture of both gun and crew. With ammunition exhausted and with no transportation to move the gun to the rear, the piece was destroyed to prevent its use by the enemy and Price and his few remaining crew members were pulled out of action and sent north to furnish artillery support to Vesey's regiment with the gun which had preceded them.

At dusk on May 1st, all enemy weapons were coordinated in an attack which rapidly enveloped the left flank and infiltrated through the right sector. Enemy snipers added the finishing touch to the already crumbling morale of the troops, whose ammunition was totally expended by dark, and many were reported leaving the lines as early as 7 PM. By midnight the demoralization was

practically complete and few of our own troops could be found.

Almost all fire, except enemy artillery, had ceased.

Considerable anxiety was felt concerning the fate of Major McLish and Captain Navin, neither of whom had been seen since dusk.

With about 30 men, mainly from Combat Company, 81st Infantry and Company A, 84th Infantry, now reduced to bayonets and bolos, Colonel Mitchell with Dick Hill, his executive officer, and Captain Legaspi, adjutant, retired toward Pualas on the main road. Again the enemy failed to exploit his advantage and did not follow promptly.

About 2:30 AM, May 2nd, a short distance south of Pualas the retiring party met the Division Chief of Staff, Lt. Colonel Floyd F. (Sammy) Forte with a detachment of about 60 men, rounded up from the hospital at Keithley, enroute to reinforce the troops at Kilometer 54. Almost simultaneously an enemy column, headed by tanks, appeared from the south and the detachments scattered into the hills on both sides of the road and took cover as the column passed, escaping detection in the shielding darkness.

(Map #6)

Being now behind the enemy, Major Hill, Captain Legaspi and a small party made their way around the east side of Lake Lanao, reaching Bubong, the final rendezvous of the Division, after many days of hardship. Colonel Mitchell remained in the area in a futile effort to round up the last scattered remnants of his command and was captured soon after dawn by scouts of a second enemy column.\* Lt. Col. Forte and a few of his men succeeded in circling the enemy

\* See Appendix #8

and joining troops of the 73rd Infantry near Ganassi later in the day.

In the meantime, the First Battalion, 73rd Infantry, ordered down from the Iligan coast into positions at the Moro village of Bacolod Grande at Kilometer 28 was, at 3 AM on May 2nd, moved forward to Ganassi.

An hour or so before daybreak Colonel Vesey arrived at the Ganassi message center where Commander Strong\*, the 61st's communications officer, was still attempting to reestablish contact which had suddenly ceased some hours previously with Mitchell.

"Where's Colonel Mitchell?" Vesey demanded. "I've got to tie in with him before taking up a position."

Strong pointed down the road toward Pualas. "Can't be far, Colonel".

"How far?" Vesey wanted to know.

"I don't know - but it can't be very far because the Japs aren't very far!" Strong replied.

Vesey, with his executive Commander Tisdale and Private Childress drove off down the road in their jeep. Shortly after daylight Vesey returned to the message center alone and on foot. Volunteering no details he said abruptly to Strong, "What's your job here?"

The commander replied wryly that he had been communications officer, but that there didn't seem to be any more communications.

"Well, I'll give you a job as my executive officer, then, to replace Tisdale!"

\* Robert C. Strong, Jr., Commander (now Captain) United States Navy, attached.

The new assignment approved by Division Headquarters, Strong and Vesey left to establish the 73rd's defense line. Vesey had been unable to reach Colonel Mitchell and was without authentic information as to enemy strength or arms. He did, however, know their location.

As he had driven southward that morning a headlight had suddenly appeared in the distance. Before the three in the jeep had time to estimate what it might indicate it had proven to be a Jap tank. Vesey had hit the dirt on one side of the road - Tisdale and Childress on the other - while the tank speedily reduced the jeep to rubbish with its .37 mm gun. What had happened to the other two men Vesey could only guess.

Much later - after the capitulation - Pvt. Childress was brought into prison camp, seriously wounded, by Moros. From his hospital cot he told Strong the events of that morning.

After the tank had destroyed the jeep and passed on without discovering them, he and Tisdale had employed a group of Moros to guide them back to Ganassi. On the way, during a brief rest in the jungle, one of the Moros had called Tisdale's attention to a loosened shoe-lace. As he bent to retie it the Moros had attacked with bolos, decapitating Tisdale and inflicting two deep slashes on Childress before he contrived to elude them. For two days he had lain hidden in the brush. On the third day a party of Moros had passed nearby and Childress called to them. Hoping to impress

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them and perhaps insure his safety, he represented himself as a colonel, whereupon the Moros emphatically proclaimed their allegiance and loyalty to the United States and their hatred of the Japs. The value of these pledges was weakened considerably by the fact that Childress recognized in the party two of the men who had attacked him and Tisdale. This time, however, the Moros carried Childress to one of their homes and cared for him in their own crude fashion during the ensuing month.

Shortly after daybreak on May second the Japs continued their mechanized advance. The terrain around Ganassi was totally unsuited to defensive action in the face of superior forces and the greatly outnumbered and outarmed troops of the 73rd, constantly harried by aerial bombing and machine gunning, could offer no more than a brief delaying action.

Japanese tanks arriving during the early morning precipitated a general evacuation of the position. To quote Captain Strong, "The thing that happened then was amazing: To have withdrawn our men from the hills and loaded them into trucks would have taken at least an hour; but the men seemed to be falling like leaves from the hills beside the road into the trucks, and in a marvelously short time were off in the direction of Dansalan."

Attempts to stop the flight here were futile but by dint of breakneck driving the regimental commander's jeep contrived to outdistance the troop-laden trucks sufficiently to halt a certain

number of them at the Bacolod bridge, where a second delaying position was established. Others, still spurred by panic, raced on toward Dansalan. Captain Katz, former commander Headquarters Battalion 61st Infantry was sent to Dansalan with orders to round up the stragglers and return them to Bacolod.

(Map #6)

Here at Bacolod the remainder of the 2nd Battalion held the left of the line, extending from the highway to the lake; the First took up position astride the road north of the now demolished bridge and along the crest of a spur rising to the west, with Price's one mountain howitzer commanding the highway. As additional strays were returned from Dansalan the lines were strengthened and morale improved.

Throughout the day enemy planes bombed and strafed rear areas as far north as Dansalan, Camp Keithley and Momungan, causing considerable damage and widespread panic among the civilians, and in certain instances, the Constabulary. At Keithly the Constabulary dispersed with such vigor and abandon that the momentum carried some elements as far as Kapai. Arsonists again added to the conflagration in some places.

All day stragglers from the front continued to arrive at the rear echelon (CPS)\* in Bubong forest where they were fed, organized and dispatched to Dansalan to be returned to action.

During the morning Commissioner Guigona, Senor F. Alagaban, Provincial Auditor, and Captain Sam Wilson, USN, arrived at Division Headquarters to remove a fund of Commonwealth currency totaling several million pesos, which had been deposited there some time

\* The rear echelon of Division headquarters was located in Bubong by the Siguan River, 21 Kilometers Northeast of Dansalan.

previously for safe keeping. The Commissioner departed with two of the trunks, entrusting to Captain Wilson the task of destroying the contents of the remaining two chests. Later in the day several American officers and the Adjutant General of the 81st Division, witnessing this expensive bonfire -- which consumed, in addition to the 3,500,000 pesos in Wilson's chests, \$13,900 in official U. S. funds, which Chief Pay Clerk O. C. Brunn, USN, was destroying -- had the thrill of lighting cigarettes with hundred-peso bills.

Meanwhile, near Bindayan, one of Fort's Moro "Bolo Battalions" was justifying the General's faith in them. A Japanese force estimated at 600, enroute by truck from Ganassi to Lumbatan, fell victim to an ambush carefully prepared by Captain Mamarinta Lao, with results which doubtless provided the background for many a night's campfire bull-session for the successful bolomen. Only two Moros were lost.

The two companies of Japanese surviving resumed their movement around the lake. It was hoped that their progress through this swampy region would be sufficiently impeded by the thoroughly demolished bridges to allow Lt. Col. Naidas of the Constabulary to carry out his orders. He had been dispatched by General Fort with instructions to establish a line from Tamparan to Talcan Hill "with whatever troops he could find" to deny the east coast of the lake to the enemy.

(Map #6)

On May 3rd, a renewed Jap advance began near Bacolod. About 8 AM a motorized formation, spearheaded by four tanks, approached

the 73rd's positions. Two of the tanks essayed the crossing of the stream around the blown bridge. A well-directed shell from Price's one truck-mounted 2.95 howitzer caught the leading tank, putting it out of commission and throwing the column into considerable confusion. Nips poured out of the stalled trucks into a withering cross-fire from the defending troops, which made up in its concentration at point-blank range what it lacked in accuracy.

Apparently resolved upon a break-through regardless of cost -- which was later admitted by these to have been seven truckloads of dead in this initial assault -- the enemy brought up their artillery. Directing the fire of their light and medium artillery by aerial observation, they harassed our positions during the entire day.

Although General Fort's grave prediction that the whole Lanao sector would be lost if Bacolod were lost still rang in Vesey's ears, shortly after noon, after his small force had held the Japs for four and a half hours against overwhelming odds in men and equipment, heavy infiltrations and strong flanking parties compelled him to order a withdrawal to avoid the annihilation of his entire command. A small rear guard under Lt. Jack Laro protected the withdrawal first to positions near Tugaya, at KM 22, then as the enemy drive gained momentum, to Dansalan. \* Midnight found the shattered remnants of the two battalions in the rim of hills about 4 Kilometers east of Dansalan, near the trail to the final rear position. Monkeys chattered sleepily in the jungle, disturbed by these stumbling humans, as weary officers strove by the pale light of the dying moon to

(Map #6)

\* General Fort later recommended for the "highest citation" Vesey, Price, Laro, Frere Pipe and others whose names are unfortunately missing.

restore some semblance of cohesion to the badly disorganized remnants.

Losses had been heavy this day, in both men and officers, among them the Division Chief of Staff, the dynamic and impetuous Floyd (Sammy) Forte. A firm disciple of the doctrine that attack is the best defense, he had been increasingly irked and impatient at the continued withdrawals. Failing to halt the retreat from Tugaya - so the story goes - "Sammy" started down the road toward the enemy alone but for his Filipino sergeant, declaring, "I'll get some of the bastards before they get me!"

(Map #6)

Perhaps one of the most colorful figures to come to light during the entire campaign, this vigorous and intrepid officer will long be remembered by all of those with whom he served.

Requiescat in pace.

Organization of the units was completed the following day and headquarters of the Division reestablished in a shallow depression at Karakotan first; later when this proved impractical, on Mount Palao. Plans were laid to rebuild the Division strength with Moro units. Three Moro companies, commanded by American officers, were organized and more were projected.

Numerous stragglers wandered in during the next few days, including fragments of the Third Battalion, 73rd Infantry. This unit, left at Overton, had been ordered to the rendezvous point via Kapai over hill trails, but the majority of the command, which

had seen no action, failed to arrive.

On 20 May the Division Commander decided to transfer his base of operations east of Tamparan for reasons of security, availability of food supplies and better suitability of the locale to guerrilla operations. Major Richard Hill was sent ahead on that day with an advance detachment to set up the new Headquarters.

Contact had been lost with General Sharp's Headquarters on 2 May, and it was hoped that in this new position it would be possible to reestablish communications with less difficulty.