

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I ON BRITISH MALAYA: THE BATTLE OF PENANG, 1914

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Abstract

The geographical location of World War I has also been strictly confined to Europe. Many have overlooked the facts that the war has spread geographically to other regions too, and battles have been fought outside of Europe. This paper is written to discuss, the impact of World War I on British Malaya: the Battle of Penang. The German Ship SMS Emden attacked and ambushed the port of Penang and sunk two Allies ships, a Russian protected cruiser the Zhemchug and French destroyer Mousquet. This paper aims to confer on the details of the battle to illustrate that the war itself is not confined to the border of Europe merely. It is important and of great values that shed new lights on the geographical location of the war itself. The Battle of Penang was hardly mentioned in any European nor have Malaysian textbooks, the battles and the heroes remained unsung. This paper aims at shedding new light on the geographical location of the battle, the battle itself and the effects of the battle directly and in directly to British Malaya and to the Great War generally. Among the immediate impacts of the battle was the citizens residing in the colonies started to questions British incompetence, this incompetency includes negligence of safety, and no proper system of safety maintenance, the overconfident harbor masters that ignored all his commanding officers instructions. A ship like SMS Emden could easily reduce the island of Penang into rubbles, and the attack occurred when civilian had feared that it was coming. Due to this incompetence the people of Penang were heavily traumatized, they for once have witnessed a battle on their own backyard. The British Colony Officers were heavily criticized surprisingly by one of their fellow Englishmen Reverend Cross. These criticisms were proven to have weight when SMS Emden continued its raids up to the Bay of Bengal in India. There was also prolonged impact of the war, after SMS Emden was destroyed in the Cocos Island by HMAS Sydney an Australian Cruiser. All German survivors were taken as prisoners of war. In early 1915 one of them Julius Lauterbach was taken as prisoner of war in Singapore, which is also a part of the British Malayan Colony, where he instigated Indian Sepoys Guard mutiny and successfully escaped during the course of the anarchy. In this paper I would be employing qualitative methods by consulting several firsthand sources in order to successfully elucidate and illuminates the details of this forgotten battle and its repercussions.

Keywords: *Battle of Penang, World War I, British Malaya*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the impact of World War I on British Malaya: the Battle of Penang. In this battle German Ship SMS Emden attacked and ambushed the ports of Penang and sunk two Allied Ships, a Russian protected cruiser named the Zhemtchug and the French destroyer Mousquet. The battle of Penang was hardly mentioned in any European or Malaysian textbooks, This article fills this gap and discussed on the historical details of the battle and sheds lights on a more remote geographical location of the war itself of the battle directly, illustrating thereby that the war itself is not confined to the borders of

Europe.¹ I address the direct and indirect effects of the battle to British Malaya and to the Great War in general. Among the immediate impacts of the battle was the citizen residing in the colonies started to question British capacity to protect them. A German ship like SMS Emden could easily reduce the island of Penang into rubble, and the attack occurred when civilians had feared that it was coming. The British Colony Officers were heavily criticized surprisingly by one of their fellow Englishmen Reverend Cross.

BRITISH MALAYA

British have occupied Malaya and its neighbouring island, Singapore. In 1786, the British controlled Penang, later in 1814 Malacca and finally in 1819 managed to control Singapore. This colonization brought about several changes in terms of socio-politics and the economy.

Among the political impacts apparent during the British colonization was the Residential System. It was a concept of indirect rule. It was important for the British to cooperate with the most hostile faction that despised British ascension to power, that was the Malay nobility or the ruling class. In order for this cooperation to be successful the nobility needed to be rewarded. Hence a considerable amount of these nobilities was incorporated into the bureaucracy to avoid over dependence on the royal bounty. A state council was created as an institution to create an illusion of British 'advice' to the Rulers. In fact, it was the sole legislative body (Andaya, 2001).

Before British occupation, the demography consisted of the Malays and the aborigines both in the Malay Peninsula and Borneo. Upon entering the 18th century the structure changed, this development was accompanied with development in politics and economy. The 18th and 19th century was marked with migrations of labour from China and India that changed the landscape of Malaysian society (Abdul Manaf, 2005).

GERMAN AND BRITISH RIVALRY IN ASIA

Many foreign powers wanted to gain a foothold in Asia. China in particular was rich with resources. The major colonial power having occupied vast territories was Britain, controlling both China and India. Germany hence, began discussing the possibility of a coastal entry point by which they could expand into China, in 1860 (Van Dijk, 2007). They were granted a station for the German East Asia Squadron by the Chinese authorities. Territorial acquisitions plans were not in action - the Germans were merely looking at exploiting China commercially. An opportunity presented itself when in 1897 after, two German missionaries were murdered. Germany managed to secure some territory due to this incident. One of these territories was *Tsing Tao*. A free port was set in Tsing Tao modelling as Hong Kong but aimed to rival Hong Kong. Some investments were spent on coal mines, a harbour and a shipyard. These were activities that were understood as profit making entities to service German international clients. Their priorities were economic goals which are viewed as superior to military ones. It was not run by private capitalist interests but rather by the colonial government itself. This was because many German companies refused to invest in the Far East. To demonstrate German superiority over other powers, especially the British, the port functioned as a model treaty port. However these efforts did not ease German aspiration. Penetration of the Far Eastern market never materialized. China remained a loss-making enterprise hence Germany failed to compete with the British in this sense (Steinmetz, 2009).

¹ This is based on the researcher experience teaching Malaysian History in tertiary level (General Studies).

To understand the incidents that led to the Battle of Penang, one must understand the situation in Asia at that time. Poverty stricken China was controlled by the foreign powers. Nonetheless China was rich with resources, one of these resources was opium but then again it was opium that caused a war. Following the Opium War (1839-1842), British had a strong influence in China. Britain controlled the economy and trade and a few principalities. Japan also wanted to control China. An opportunity presented itself when Japan won the Russo- Japanese war in 1905. Japanese seized some parts of China. In 1912, the Japanese controlled China northern sea board. The power struggle that followed the death of Empress Dowager in 1908 weakened China politically and led it to a state of civil war. The colonial powers predicted the likelihood of China to disintegrate hence took effort to protect their interest. They have placed their naval forces in the China Sea (Robertson, 2002).

Meanwhile, Saigon was controlled by Germany. This was 10 years before World War I; Britain had alliance with Japan but were affable with both Germany and Japan. South *Saigon* was controlled by French Indo China. A destroyer Squadron was placed there by the French. The French was in a naval arm race with Germany and British. Germany had a fortified squadron in Tsing Tao commanded by a Prussian admiral 51 years old Admiral Maximilian. Meanwhile, British post was at Wei Hai Wei in North China (Robertson, 2002).

The German High command wanted an armoured cruiser² for the protection of their interest in the Far East. The East Asia Asiatic Squadron was led by Admiral Graf Von Spee. The main ship was Scharnhorst, four more light cruiser were added to it one of it was SMS Emden. Emden commander was Captain Karl Von Mueller; he was famous for bombing Chinese rebel (Robertson 2002). In a tribute to Von Mueller, Prinz Hohenzollern wrote,

This truly noble man had greatness of character and goodness of heart. He was a friendly captain, always ready with help, and, to those who had the privilege of knowing him more closely, an excellent and steadfast friend. In the Emden I was a mere Lieutenant and I had no proper opportunity to come into prolonged and active contact with him. For so long as he was with us in captivity at Malta, he was, in the truest sense, a good counselor to me and I may also say, a faithful comrade (Hohenzollern, 1928: 59).

The British Admiral Jerram was sent to Asia in 1913, His main task was to protect British trade in China, and this also includes the areas of Malay archipelagos that were under the British control, the Bay of Bengal up to the west of Ceylon. This was due to ships coming all over the world to Malacca straits. In the event of war, Admiral Jerram had to cover a vast area up to south western pacific with the assistance from New Zealand and Australian forces. Hence it is crucial for Admiral Jerram to have large forces. Despite his role as a military commander, Admiral Jerram conducted several diplomatic visits to Japan and to German station (Robertson, 2002).

² The armored cruiser was a type of warship of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was designed like other types of cruisers to operate as a long-range, independent warship, capable of defeating any ship apart from a battleship and fast enough to outrun any battleship it encountered. Varying in size, it was distinguished from other types of cruiser by its belt armor-thick iron (or later steel) plating on much of the hull to protect the ship from shellfire much like that on battleships. The first armored cruiser, the Imperial Russian Navy's General-Admiral, was launched in 1873 and combined sail and steam propulsion. By the 1890s cruisers had abandoned sail and took on a modern appearance.

WORLD WAR I BREAKS OUT

World War I broke in results of tensions between Queen Victoria's grandson, King George V of England, Tsars Nicholas of the Romanovs and the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. British, France and Russia formed the triple entente while Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy formed the triple alliance. War finally broke out when Archduke Ferdinand was killed. As soon as war broke out troops from Australia and New Zealand joined British troops in Malaya (Andaya, 2001), Admiral Jerram had become a commander in chief of a multinational naval crew consisting of French, Australian, New Zealanders, and Russian and of course British troops (Hohenzollern 1928). The Russian ship Zhemtchug, was including the Mousquet arrived in Singapore from Saigon. The French Ships were put on patrolling duties by Admiral Jerram and were not send to Malacca straits (Robertson, 2002).

Admiral Jerram kept an eye on Tsing Tao; he knew that Admiral Von Spee's big cruiser was there, the SMS Emden already sprang into action. German realized that Admiral Jerram's ships would soon block Tsing Tao. SMS Emden was the only cruiser left because she was coaling, but she also quickly left, took with it a collier³ (Von Mucke, 1917). Admiral Jerram assumed that Admiral Von Spee had no fuel and any means of communication. Admiral Jerram further believed that Admiral Von Spee was on Yap Islands near Taiwan, since there is a German radio station on the Island. Upon arrival, Admiral Jerram realized that Admiral Von Spee was nowhere to be found. Admiral Jerram later destroyed the radio station (Hohenzollern, 1928).

Admiral Von Spee called his commanders, since they were using too much coal and were not hiding (Von Mucke, 1917). The squadron was heading to South America, making it hard for the allied forces to track it down (Hohenzollern, 1928: 27). Captain Von Mueller wanted to use *Emden* to raid British merchant ships this suggestion was endorsed by Admiral Von Spee (Von Mucke, 1917).

The Chinese wanted Germany out of Tsing Tao to regain control over the ports. Japanese did not declare war to begin with; in addition they had no reasons to declare one. Japanese's opportunity arrived when the public in Japan thought that they should join the war. The Japanese was determined to seize Tsing Tao and not to give it back to China, while British believed that they have to join Japanese quest to not lose influence in the region (Hohenzollern 1928). Japan intended to march through neutral Chinese territory to attack Tsing Tao, like what Germany did in Belgium. France and British also joined Japanese campaign (Robertson, 2002).

THE EMDEN EXPLOITS

The British Admiral Jerram continued to pursue Admiral Von Spee, and found a mail bag sieved from a captured German ship. Admiral Jerram then found out that Admiral Von Spee was heading to the west coast Sumatera. This is misleading since it is SMS Emden which was supposed to go there (*The First Fateful Shot: Port Philip Bay, August 1914*, 2014: 2). Admiral Jerram stationed himself in Singapore to trying to pursue Von Spee from there but finding nothing. The Zhemtchug was still in Hong Kong during this time (Robertson, 2002).

German had advanced wireless Telefunken radio sets; through this wireless sets they found out that Japan had declared war on them. The German listened but did not respond exercised complete radio silent. Emden destination was the Indian Ocean, since

³ A collier is a bulk cargo ship designed to carry coal, especially for naval use by coal-fired warships. In the late eighteenth century, a number of wooden-hulled sailing colliers gained fame after being adapted for use in voyages of exploration in the South Pacific, for which their flat-bottomed hulls and sturdy construction made them well-suited.

there were plenty of places to get lost and to get to their destination hidden (Robertson, 2002). This area which is Sumatra and Java was controlled by Dutch East Indies companies, which is a neutral force the Dutch, as believed by Germans; the Dutch would not give out German to the allies. The Dutch was however very strict on their neutrality, since German cannot find any coaling ships; they were allowed to do some coaling on Dutch territories, then leave immediately (Hohenzollern, 1928).

In early September that year, the Emden moved to Moluccas (Maluku) Straits, East Timor and finally to the Lombok Straits. Emden crews used a dummy forth funnel as disguise since ships are recognized by their funnel⁴ (Hohenzollern, 1928). After passing through the Lombok straits the Emden finally arrived in the Indian Ocean unspotted. The Emden continued its journey to Java and later Sumatra. The strings of island in Sumatra had become the Emden rendezvous' hideout (Von Mucke, 1917).

A German carrier, Konigsberg had sunken a British merchant ship, this was the first merchant ship that was lost during the war, part of the German strategy to disrupt Britain trade. Admiral Jerram heard that this ship was around Dutch neutral ports, so, Admiral Jerram sent Hampshire with French destroyer to the Malacca straits to carry out search. This almost unveiled and captured the Emden when the British ship and Emden sailed side by side. The Emden also had early warning from intercepted radio transmission from British ships, hence did not sail into Simeulue harbour until the next day, and she hid in the shelters of the islands in the Malay archipelagos and its bay for coaling. The Emden was now well hidden from the open sea. Admiral Jerram had missed the Emden and now convinced that there was no German battleship around Java or Sumatra. Jerram hoped the Bay of Bengal remained a peaceful spot (Robertson, 2002).

The British soon abandoned the precautions introduced during the beginning of the war. The war was going on for months, but nothing really happened in the Indian Ocean. The Emden captured British merchant ships and on board managed to acquire British newspapers. These newspapers published the details of ships journey and what the ships were carrying. In Penang, French destroyers⁵ were not prepared for war but rather they were busy servicing their engines and the crews were still adjusting to the humid climate. The small French destroyer left the crew no place to sleep but the deck. The torrential monsoon rain and the mosquitoes caused the crew a lot of stress and tension. French destroyer was assigned to the Hampshire to accompany her in her search for enemy ships in the coast of Sumatra. As soon as they reach Penang, she was detached, the Hampshire further joined Jerram in Singapore. In Penang, the French is getting very little help or cooperation from the British harbormaster. Another French destroyer came across the Emden and reported it to the admiralty. Unfortunately, the Emden cannot be identified so no action was taken, and the Emden steamed northward unseen (Robertson, 2002).

⁴ A funnel is the smokestack or chimney on a ship used to expel boiler steam and smoke or engine exhaust. They are also commonly referred to as stacks.

⁵ In naval terminology, a destroyer is a fast and manoeuvrable warship of long-endurance intended to escort larger vessels in a fleet, convoy or battle group and defend them against smaller, powerful, short-range attackers. They were originally developed in the late 19th century as a defence against torpedo boats, and by the time of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, these torpedo boat destroyers (TBD) were large, swift, and powerfully armed torpedo boats designed to destroy other torpedo boats. Although the term *destroyer* had been used interchangeably with the terms 'TBD' and 'torpedo boat destroyer' by navies since 1892, the term torpedo boat destroyer had been generally shortened to simply 'destroyer' by nearly all navies by the First World War.

THE ATTACK

Captain Von Mueller aspired to train the Emden crew to be a professional fighting team, hence imposed daily drills on the crew. This ensured that the crew practiced gunnery and seamen ship skills. The crew on board on the Emden was indeed very busy. The Emden started attacking ships and confiscating their cargo. Captain Von Mueller had maintained excellent rapport with the ship masters that he has taken. The crew of the captured ships did not resist or fight back, simply because they adored Captain Von Mueller good humour. The crew gladly handed him their ship logs and newspaper (Robertson, 2002).

The Emden listened attentively to any transmission in the area while observing radio silence. In the Bay of Bengal, was the vast triangle shaped bay on between the Malay Peninsula and India. This bay was a shipping route, the two most important routes was Calcutta to Singapore route and Rangoon to Madras Route (Robertson, 2002). During their spree in the Bay of Bengal the Emden came across an Italian ship, which is supposed to be a Germany ally. The captain of the ship Giacopolo was very surly and unhelpful; Captain Von Mueller did not trust him. His doubts were proven when a signal was sent by Giacopolo giving out the Emden location near Calcutta to the allies. (Hohenzollern, 1928).

Upon receiving this news, the allies' ships started hunting down the *Emden*, from the straits of Malacca; the allies were now well informed of the whereabouts of the *Emden*. The Emden now needed to 'disappear'. They stopped at the Andaman Islands to collect some coal. Later, he detached the collier Pontoporus and hid it off the Simeulue. (Von Mucke, 1917).

Until 15 of September 1914, Admiral Jerram thought that the Emden was in the Pacific with the rest of Admiral Von Spee Squadron. The Dutch knew about Emden's location but followed strictly the neutrality policy and told nothing to Admiral Jerram. To make matters worse, the wireless was very primitive in Singapore. This coupled with local thunderstorm made radio communication with scattered ships in a vast location very difficult. Admiral Jerram due to this issue moved his military headquarters to Fort Canning, connected to the transoceanic telegraph cable network and a radio station with tall mast. Communication was easy via telegram wireless equipment. As an important commercial hub Penang also had a cable station. Through this reliable communication to Singapore was clear. By 15 September, the Emden have sunken five allies merchant ships, this paralyzed the shipping trade. Admiral Jerram necessitated the capture of the Emden, so that New Zealand and Australia would not lose motivation due to frustration (Robertson, 2002).

The French have arrived in Penang and started to service and repair their destroyer, the British harbour master Duncan McIntyre, was quite uncooperative, basically, he did nil to curb any threats that might be posed by Emden (Robertson, 2002: 62-65). Von Mueller on board of the Emden, was avoiding Calcutta shipping lanes, he left the Bay of Bengal through a quick connective route via Rangoon. In Rangoon, she intercepted the *Douvre*, a Norwegian ship where the captain provided the Emden information on the location of two French destroyers in the straits of Malacca. (Hohenzollern, 1928).

The Emden was once more near the Hampshire, and detected the Hampshire presence through the same way it always detected other ships, strong radio signal. The *Douvre*, which were given task by Von Mueller, sent the prisoner of the Emden on shore on Rangoon, informed the authorities Emden was nearby. Unfortunately, the Indian authorities were late in informing the Hampshire. Upon returning from the Andaman Islands to Rangoon, the Emden already left. Three of Jerram Cruiser was hunting the Emden (Robertson, 2002).

The Emden now disappeared for one week, British re-open Calcutta-Colombo route. The Emden sailed across the Bay of Bengal and reached Madras, and attacked the

port in Madras (Hohenzollern, 1928). The Emden attacked the port, when it was in a state of unpreparedness and vulnerability. In this attack, the Emden destroyed Burmah Oil Company petroleum oil tank. The attack also caused 26 casualties. The Emden left without a scratch but not without first confusing the people that she was sailing northward when she was actually going southward (Hohenzollern, 1928). On her way to the south near Colombo, they captured Buresk a collier carrying the finest Welsh coal for Admiral Jerram Ships. This could keep Emden going forever. Later, the Emden moved further to the Indian Ocean nearby Diego Garcia Island (Von Mucke, 1917). Captain Von Mueller wanted to move straight from Diego Garcia to Penang. This was motivated by a radio signal that he intercepted declaring the route to Colombo is now safe (Von Mucke, 1917).

The Hampshire was still looking for Emden in the Maldives due to their ignorance of the current news that the Emden was in Colombo. They found nothing since the Emden was still hiding in Diego Garcia Island (Von Mucke, 1917). In mid September, Baron Cherkasov brought the Russian cruiser Zhemtchug to Singapore. The distance between the Emden and Zhemtchug was the furthest. The Zhemtchug was not in good condition. It desperately needed servicing, so it decided to stop in Penang for proper servicing. Meanwhile the French destroyer which continued to have problem with boilers and radio communication was down due to frequent thunder storm. The other French destroyer including Mousquet had maximum range of only for 60-70 miles. The wireless sets have become unreliable and ineffective (Von Mucke 1917). Smaller ships cannot transmit without dynamos. D'Iberville, a French destroyer had batteries but transmission was feeble, because of blocking caused by mountains (Robertson 2002).

Due to this, French met with the harbour master to request that a ship should be anchored in the northern harbor to act as radio relay so they could transmit to the outer sea, where their destroyer were patrolling. This suggestion fall on deaf ears of the harbour masters. The telegraph station, were staffed by Penang volunteer force. They received messages from Admiral Jerram in Singapore and could pass relevant messages, but did not do so. They only passed the message to the harbour masters but still this did not have much influence. The harbour master ignored basic security, when signal requesting identification were ignored, not responded and neglected. The illuminated buoys to the harbour channels and the harbour itself were left lit, to facilitate night ships coming in. The British in Malaya gave priority to trade rather than security. Besides cargo ships, local boats and small sampans⁶ movements were unsupervised (Robertson, 2002).

The French also urged change of anchorage to avoid unnecessary exposure during repair, and pilot launched at the harbour to monitor shipping movement. A British Captain, Captain Cochrane helped the French in their pursuits, by pulling ranks and giving McIntyre the harbourmaster direct orders. Now Captain Grant another British naval officer was ordered to look for the Emden. Following a hunch, Captain Grant decided to look for Emden in Diego Garcia Island. The day Grant left was the day Zhemtchug arrived. Japanese destroyer Chikuma also missed the Emden; Zhemtchug was intended to join Chikuma (Robertson, 2002).

The Allies believed that Emden was in Sumatra since two of the Emden collier was captured in Sumatra. This discovery and believe however failed to alert the Penang authorities to increase their security level. Upon arriving in Diego Garcia Island, the Yarmouth, The Hampshire and The Empress of Asia were greeted by news that they have missed the Emden. The situation was turning to be quite embarrassing for the British. The British publics have developed quite an admiration for the Emden bravery and chivalry. Von Mueller was a gentleman and did not inflict harm on non-combatants. The Emden

⁶ A relatively flat bottomed Chinese wooden boat. Some sampans include a small shelter on board, and may be used as a permanent habitation on inland waters. Sampans are generally used for transportation in coastal areas or rivers, and are often used as traditional fishing boats. It is unusual for a sampan to sail far from land as they do not have the means to survive rough weather.

heard from a radio signal that ships from Colombo was advised to use the shipping lane west of Colombo. Emden quickly move there, seized an English ship, managed to secure considerable numbers of provisions from it. Emden continued to stop other ships and collect provision. The Emden also managed to capture a collier with the best Cardiff coal. Emden now had two colliers with the best quality coal. Emden activities of seizing ships have caused a price hike in Indian curry ingredients in Malaya (Robertson, 2002).

Admiral Jerram now ordered the Zhemtchug to the Nicobar Islands, her need to attend to her boilers was put off. So Zhemtchug departed for a 10 days patrol in Rangoon, in search for German ships. Emden disappeared and reappeared, while steaming quietly to Penang. She steered clear of any ship fully prepared. The Emden expected to meet up with at least one French cruiser in her journey to Penang. The Emden cruised without light, she was never spotted she passed one or two ship at night. Zhemtchug now was in dire need of servicing. Admiral Jerram had no choice but to allow it. The French destroyer also needed servicing. Therefore only one destroyer would be patrolling the straits of Malacca. This was one of Jerram mistakes allowing so many ships to be repaired at the same time. German nationals, could move freely in Penang, the French were concerned that these Germans would be spies. They were now rounded up and kept under house arrest (Robertson, 2002).

Russian suffered more than the French in terms of weather, so many crewmen were given shore leaves (Von Mucke, 1917). McIntyre placed Zhemtchug on the outer harbour. Only the French Pistolet and Mousquet was available to patrol the outer harbour, and the outer harbour was lit without restriction of overnight travel. The defence of the outer harbour was left with the immobile Zhemtchug. The captain of the Zhemtchug was ashore meeting his wife in Eastern and Oriental Hotel. The Cherkasovs were a loving and doting couple. Many of Zhemtchug artillery were unusable and she sat there like a duck waiting to be shot at. The Zhemtchug was not anchored properly waves came and her gun was turned towards Georgetown (Robertson, 2002).

EMDEN'S RAID

The Emden arrived in Penang on 28th October, while the allies frantically searching for her. Captain Von Mueller didn't know that the two tenders have been captured. He hasn't seen any newspaper since he has been avoiding ships (Hohenzollern, 1928). The British although having superior intelligence, did not conceive that the attack on Penang was possible. Captain Von Mueller attacked Penang because he knew that there were warships in Penang. This was a real war; fighting soldiers instead of looting defend less merchant ship. The men on Emden were ready (Von Mucke, 1917). Captain Von Mueller has the element of surprise as leverage (Robertson, 2002).

Although the capture of allied merchant ships caused more damages to the allies, the deep psyche of young soldiers had instinct to fight, to prove their bravery. To get proper recognition from Germany people, Captain Von Mueller believed that he must be involved in a bloody battle and triumph (Hohenzollern, 1928). He planned his attack just before dawn, when the moon is down and the tide is high around five am. He expected the harbour to be lit, just like in Madras. He wanted to approach the outer harbour as fast as possible select a target and leave. Emden arrived off Penang at 2.00 am waited an hour or so for the moon to set. She was aware of torpedoes boat waiting for her (Von Mucke, 1917). Captain Von Mueller was a frequent visitor of Penang port in the pre war era. Von Mueller knew that the Emden was on the ebb, the current would be flowing northward and carries her flowing northward and carries her out giving her chance on a quick getaway (Hohenzollern, 1928). The silhouette of the Emden would be spotted even without the moon. Rigged up well in advance is the fourth funnel (Von Mucke, 1917).

Penang night time traffic was generally busy, another ship was no surprise. Some accounts said she was spotted earlier with a dummy funnel (Robertson, 2002).

The arriving ship was mistaken for Yarmouth. But this ship was 100 miles away and the authorities knew it (Von Mucke, 1917). Nevertheless no action was taken and no information passed. Pistolet the French destroyer was on guard at Swettenham Pier. If the Pistolet had received any warning that an unidentified cruiser with a possibly dummy funnel was lurking around, the Pistolet would find the Emden and inflict serious damage. Another oral account stated that by 4: 30 am the Emden was approaching very fast, she encountered native boats and identified itself as Yarmouth. It was not known which account was true. The Emden had passed the outer harbour without many difficulties. At 5.00 am entered the harbour and opened fire, Zhemtchug tried to fire back but hardly harmed the Emden (Von Mucke, 1917).

The watch keeper on board of Fronde, Pistolet and D'Iberville were surprised by all the commotion. They didn't think it was the Emden. They thought that Russia mistakenly had opened fire on an allied cruiser (Hohenzollern, 1928). They never have guessed that Russia ran out of ammunition. The Fronde checked what ship it was then realized that it was Zhemtchug that was on fire. Emden opened fires the second time. Russian gunnery has no opportunity to defend them. French destroyer dare not fight back, in fear of endangering the whole crew rather they were focusing on trying to save the Zhemtchug men (Von Mucke, 1917). The entire firing episode lasted 15 minutes (Robertson, 2002).

The Emden did not hurry away, but quietly made it way through the North Channel on her way to Tikus Island. But, then she turned north again, waited outside the harbour 15-20 minutes. The Emden tried to shoot the French cruiser but because of the limited view only able to shoot a harmless British government boat (Von Mucke, 1917). Since the French were busy saving Russian crews, they failed to warn their destroyer the Mousquet. The Emden encountered the Mousquet, opened fire and struck the Mousquet. The Mousquet appeared not to be defending itself. The Emden picked up Mousquet survivors (Hohenzollern, 1928). Admiral Audemard did not transmit Mousquet's alarm signal. The commanding officer of the Mousquet miscalculated, since she was waiting for the Emden to come close enough to actually fire her missile. Captain Von Mueller was too smart, he fired first; hit the forward part of the Mousquet. This disabled the canon. This is what eventually sank her (Von Mucke, 1917).

THE AFTERMATH

There were countless grounds that made the Emden's attack on Penang to be very triumphant. Among them were, precautions introduced at the beginning of the war were soon abandoned, in the south is Asia generally and in British Malaya in particular the war seems to be far away. Reports of sightings of unknown vessel by French destroyer were ignored. The British have always put trade as more important than safety (Hohenzollern, 1928). After the raid of Madras by the Emden, which intended by the Emden to destroy the morale and expose British vulnerability and proved to her colony that British were not invincible. Port security gave more emphasize to night time shipping, instead of security hence harbour, lighthouse and channel buoys were sufficiently lit. Not only that the ships can freely come at night without being identified. Destroyer ships anchored was exposed to danger, sampans and small boats came in and out without any precautions. Robertson 2002)

Admiral Jerram as the commanding officer in the south East Asia has failed first to plan ahead, when he has put everything right to the very last minute cruiser and destroyer were left for service at the very last minute. This was done while the heavy cruiser was away and the island has been left unguarded. He also miscalculated the Emden movements, he has captured Emden two tenders near Sumatra but yet he allowed the

warships to be closed for repairs (Hohenzollern, 1928). The second shortcoming of Admiral Jerram was he failed to monitor McIntyre properly. McIntyre has neglected security. McIntyre has failed to communicate to captain Cherkasov of Zhemtchug to be vigilant of the situations. Hence, Cherkasov was irresponsible spent the night ashore and failed to prepare his ship for attack due of lacked of briefing. The Emden had an upper hand in what we called the element of surprise, the absence of the Zhemtchug captain affected the morale of the crew nobody was able to work energetically. On top of these many problems radio communication was often disrupted by thunderstorm and the many mountains that worked as the backbones of the Malay Peninsula (Robertson, 2002). Finally, the careful planning and sheer luck on Emden's side, the careful observation radio silent while attentively observing other communication facilitated in planning and the luck that was on their side (Hohenzollern, 1928).

Julius Lautherbach was a prized officer on the Emden, he was captured after the Emden sank. Lautherbach was going to stir up British Malaya. Julius Lautherbach was a price officer on the Emden. Lautherbach was captured earlier on the Emden tenders Makromania and Pontoporus (Von Mucke, 1917). Admiral Von Spee squadron was also captured earlier and Scharnhorst was sunk Lautherbach capture was warmly welcomed by the expatriate community in Singapore, as he was a famous figure in Singapore. Even during the war British being the efficient businessmen, they were did not stop German businesses from operating. Until the battle of Penang actually culminated the British were flexible of the German movement. German nationals and prisoner of war were locked up in a penitentiary in Singapore (Robertson, 2002).

As Lautherbach planned with other prisoners to dig tunnel to escape, it was 17 meters long and it was near completion when he heard rumors of mutiny from Indian Sepoys⁷ guards. The Sepoys were quite taken by Lautherbach pleasant bubbly character had become friendly with him. This how he learned that the Sepoys detested the possibility of being send to European fronts. Lautherbach seized this opportunity to incite them with horrific ideas of the wars on the European fronts knowing the mutineer fear of death. He managed to persuade that the Germans were going to join them, influenced the mutineer to raid ammunition cart and released the Germans. Instead it was a journey towards freedom when Lautherbach and his party of 11 escaped. Defense assistance was immediately provided by Admiral Jerram, the head of this mutiny was captured and put on death sentence and the rest of the mutineer were put in prison. Lautherbach imposed as a Swedish national using a fake passport left for Sumatra just as allied forces was arriving in Singapore. He absconded from Java to China the Pacific, United State and finally Germany (Van Dijk, 2007).

The tendency to support German was already apparent among Muslim Sepoys, seeing that the German allied themselves with the Ottoman. This was followed by a *fatwa* from the Ottoman Empire calling for jihad. During World War I the Ottoman following the fall of the Mughal Empire was looked upon as the Supreme Muslim leader or the Caliphate. This placed the Muslim Sepoys in a very vulnerable position whether to Support the Ottoman or be loyal to their British Masters (Noor, 2010).

The movement to overthrow British rule in India had roots from the Emden appearances in the Indian Ocean. Although this insurgency had no significant impact, rather isolated and uncoordinated, it did have some profound effects on the locals. The delay of transfers of Indian troops from India and Australia due Emden raids facilitated this (Van Dijk, 2007) Numerous discontented Indians returned to India from America and

⁷ The term 'sepoy' is derived from the Persian Urdu Turkish word *sipahi* meaning 'infantry soldier' in the Mughal Empire. Commonly use as, *sepoy* was the term used in the British Indian Army, and earlier in that of the British East India Company. The term *sepoy* came into use in the forces of the British East India Company in the eighteenth century, where it was one of many, Close to 96% percent of the British East India Company's army of 300,000 men were native to India and these sepoy played a crucial role in securing the subcontinent for the company.

Japan during outbreak of the war, apparently they were supplied with money and arms to start a movement to overthrow British government (Robertson, 2002).

There were immediate and long term impacts of the attack, among them were impact on humanity, political, social and economic impact. Among the impact was lost of lives, endangerment of civilian safety, political instability and British government cover ups, The first and devastating impact, like in any war was human casualties or impact on humanity, 89 crewmen were left dead, 123 badly burned, wounded and mutilated. After four days, four more crewmen died and the dead bodies were still washed ashore. A few died on board of the Emden on their way to be transferred to Sabang. Perhaps out of guilt the harbourmasters McIntyre, that he provided countless assistance to the wounded. 36 were rescued by the Emden from the Mousquet, were brought to Sabang put on a merchant ship by the Emden (Hohenzollern, 1928). Among the positive outcome of this ordeal was the local people also displayed act of kindness that joined hands with expatriates to help the wounded. Sampans or small local boats clustered around the spots and rescued the survivors. A local Chinese company also provided clothing and boots to survivors (Robertson, 2002).

The second and instantaneous social impact of the incidents angered the local Penang residents and the expatriate, the general public was very vocal about their dissatisfactions. They argued that Penang lacked effective protection against enemy attacked. The expatriate community was led by Reverend Cross an expatriate clergyman. He held a sermon attacking the British authority; he also attacked the fact that the authorities tried to control the press from reporting neutral news. The people were not silent anymore and they considered this to be criminal negligence. There were also rumours circulating about drunk sailor on board and many others unexplained facts that led the general public to question the capabilities of the men's in service protecting Penang. The public request for inquiry was ignored by the local government (Robertson, 2002).

The inhabitants of the island of Penang were anxious, on the fact that a warship can enter Penang unannounced and attack a navy cruiser. The only person who knows this was the harbour master that was too busy to take any affirmative action. Reverend cross the day after the attack unaffected by neither superficial propaganda nor patriotism wrote a letter to the authorities demanding an explanations' on such events. We could assess the opinions of the expatriate community and how traumatized they were through the letter send in by reverend cross demanding the truth towards these allegations. The first was whether the crew was let ashore on 27th which is also their payday and they were drunk on the streets of Penang, second was the commander of the Russian army abandoned his post but checked himself in a hotel with his wife the night of the incident, it was true that French torpedoes boats were caught off guard, there were no lookout volunteer stationed on that day and the English interpreter were ashore. The most distressing questions were perhaps the fact that the Emden was allowed to pass merely because she looked like Yarmouth. Reading this letter surely reflects the traumatize situation the residents of Penang were in. If it is not for the chivalrous nature of Captain Von Mueller that did not want to cause unnecessary lost of life to non-combatant civilian a cruiser like the Emden would have easily reduced the tiny island of Penang to merely rubbles. Had these incidents happened in the Second World War where chivalry was not so common the outcomes perhaps might have been different? However, reverend inquiries as mentioned earlier have fallen on the authorities deaf ears (Robertson, 2002).

The third impact was the action British government took, which is stifling the press. The press in Penang was not allowed to publish any accounts of the Emden raid meanwhile the press in Singapore was given complete information and was allowed to publish the news. After the story was finally allowed to publish the story there was no eyewitness account of the incidents, it seems like the eyewitness who mainly comprises British naval officers and harbour authorities were told to avoid the press. This was clearly

an attempt to avoid criticism. This is perhaps the biggest mistakes, as army personnel many think that the media should be controlled. In truth this has made British navy a laughing stock (Von Mucke, 1917). What came next was a fabricated accounts of how the French were cowards and how Russian were incompetent in the field of battle. This alleged eyewitness accounts were published by New York Times. United States supposedly to be a neutral English speaking country was chosen to disseminate this propaganda (Robertson 2002).

At the time she had been in the harbour, the Russian had been bombarding her with shrapnel, but owing to the notoriously bad marksmanship prevalent in the Czar's navy had succeeded, for the most part, only in peppering every merchant ship within range. As the Emden neared the Zhemtchug again both ship were actually spitting fire. The range was practically point blank. Less than 150 yards away Emden passed the Russian and as she did so, torpedoed her amidships, striking the magazine. There was a tremendous detonation paling into insignificance by its volume all the previous din; a heavy black column of smoke arose and the Zhemtchug sank in less than 10 second while the Emden steamed behind the point to safety. No sooner had she done so than she sighted the torpedo boat Mousquet, which had heard the firing and was coming in at top speed. The Emden immediately opened up on her thereby causing her to run around in an endeavour to escape. It was too late. After a running fight of twenty minutes the Mosquet seemed to be hit by three shells simultaneously and sank very rapidly. The German had got a second victim (*New York Times*, 29th October 1914: 9).

All these further agitated the situation in Penang which rendered further criticism from reverend cross which could be considered the religious leader of Penang expatriate community. He vehemently accused the authority being irresponsibly to the undertaking they were assigned to. In this case, it was to protect the isle of Penang (Robertson, 2002).

Perhaps these allegations was best answered in Admiral Jerram official reports to the admiralty where he described Penang merely as coaling stationed without any mention that it was a well-populated island of 150,000 and full of British subjects. This was very clear indications that Penang citizens were of no importance to British like all other of its colony across Malaya. They were merely here to extract its wealth. British disrespect for the colonies can be seen in this escapism statement laced with white supremacist undertone was it is mentioned that in Jerram reports he justifies that the Emden was mistaken as Yarmouth because the patrol boat was manned by 'ignorant natives'. (Robertson, 2002).

The British strength did not come from military or the vastness of their occupied land but rather commerce. This has been the prime motivator for the harbour masters to ignore all security measure thus putting the residents of Penang in grave danger. Michael B. Miller in his book *Europe and the Maritime World* mentioned,

Moreover despite losses, throughout the first year and the half of the war no dramatic interference with shipping in fact occurred. Tonnage in mid 1915, though replacement or captured ships, was nearly what it had been in August 1914. Import volume into Britain between August 1914 to December 1915 was down 12%, a manageable level and far from life and death situation (Miller, 2012: 245 & 246).

This clearly indicated that there was no major economic repercussion specifically from the battle of Penang or from the raids of German cruiser on British ships.

In terms of politics, the British vulnerability was exposed clearly to the subjects of her colony. Thus somehow, in an attempt to cover up their own shortcoming, they have

managed to put all the blame both on Russia and France. British report was a sharp contrast from the French; it was prepared by a junior liaison officer lieutenant Maund, which was also a translator for the French. Maund indicated that the Emden was flying British colours and flags this is why she was allowed in without any proviso by the patrol. He also mentioned that the Emden was donning a fourth dummy funnel and the cruiser was painted British grey (Von Mucke, 1917).

Lieutenant Von Mucke in his book *The Emden* wrote how they entered the harbour of Penang uncontested,

Close to the entrance of the harbour we saw, to port of us, a bright white light that appeared and disappeared with lightning-like rapidity, remaining in sight only a couple of seconds at a time. Beyond a doubt it was an electric light, and was therefore, apparently, some sort of outpost or sentinel vessel. We felt quite sure of this, although we did not catch sight of the ship itself...

Just as our ship had reached the inner roadstead of Penang, the first darting rays of the coming day flashed into the sky. We have arrived at the right moment. During the brief and quickly passing dusk of dawn we discovered a large number of ships lying in the harbour... (Von Mucke, 1917: 152 & 153).

Meanwhile in the British government classified report, *Review of German Cruiser Warfare 1914-1918*, published in 1940 indicated that Von Mueller did show the German insignia,

The Captain of the Emden report contains various hints on the best method of effecting capture. He recommends that the ensign should not be shown until the ship to be boarded is only a short distance off and that the signals 'stop' and 'do not use your wireless' should be hoisted at the same time... (*Review of German Cruiser Warfare 1914-1918*, 1940: 6).

This was clearly massaging the truth as far as German ship goes all of them were painted grey during the war and no other eyewitness accounts mentioned about Emden flying British colours. And if she was mistaken as the Yarmouth why she did not flashes the proper signal. Lieutenant Maund also managed to paint a picture of that accused French of cowardice and Russian were incompetent. This was accepted by Admiral Jerram and the admiralty as the official reports, with that the truths about British negligence were buried. It could be said that this was somewhat a good geopolitical strategy, in terms of maintaining support and morale from the colony. British was an empire where the sun never sets in the early 20th century, for such empire to be made a fool by a small German cruiser would be somewhat embarrassing hence massaging the truth would be the perfect strategy to save face (Robertson, 2002).

The fate of the Emden was consistent, bold and energetic action of Von Mueller led the Emden to cruise another 30,000 nautical miles. The Emden continued its exploits until she was destroyed in the battle of Cocos by Australian light cruiser HMS Sydney (Robertson, 2002).

The Emden expedition has profound impact on both German and British. On the part of the British their military strengths and infallibility were now questioned. Meanwhile on the German side they were viewed as chivalrous heroes despite their rather insignificant role as coloniser in Asia.

Social and politics suffered the biggest blow from Captain Von Mueller strategy, appearing and disappearing and strategic planning to overcome his enemy. His operation was not only an accomplishment but his capture was rather unfeasible. Von Mueller ability forming an accurate of the situation that he was in with limited information has often been mistaken with luck (*Review of German Cruiser Warfare*, 1940: 4 & 5).

The British was clearly embarrassed by the Emden raid, since they are made a fool not only once but twice one in Madras the other in Penang. British although were equip with state of the art war vassal do not managed to apprehend this small cruiser until much damage have been done. This was due to British negligence that put precedence on trade over safety. A lot was done on the British part to massage the truth by controlling the press, organizing eyewitness account and releasing news through New York Times that have been fashioned in such a way that it is done to save face of the British command in Penang.

Perhaps the most interesting fact about this saga was not German notoriety that had significant impact on British commerce but rather the chivalrous nature of Von Muller and his crew. This chivalrous nature was common those days but rather exist as a fictional character at this day and time. Captain Von Mueller ensured that non-combatant were not hurt during his forays, on every occasion he raided a ship, he transferred everyone on board of his ship before sinking the merchant ships later stopping neutral ships transferring all the survivors to the nearest port. Except for his raid of madras no other innocents' non-combatant life was lost. This chivalry was extensively demonstrated even during battle when the Emden shot the French destroyer the Mousquet, they turned back and rescued the survivor, some of the survivor that died on board of the Emden due to injuries was given proper funeral that was attended by the whole Emden crew properly dressed and those that died were given proper honour (Von Mucke, 1917).

The China Mail reflected the reaction of the colony in a protracted November editorial about the Emden,

Her exploits must move us to a certain amount of admiration. We can afford to salute Commander Karl von Muller, her commanding officer according to the last official information, for his enterprise because he seems to be behaving not merely with humanity but with consideration towards the British crews. He is making history because he is doing what hardly anyone thought could be done (*China Mail*, 2014: 5).

This chivalry, although was admirable even by the British public, add salt to the already wounded British navy dignity (Von Mucke, 1917). Germany was rather an insignificant power in Asia, if compared to the majestic British, which have gained a strong foot hole economically in Asia. Nonetheless German managed to attack two British colonies Asia and caused chaos. Finally it is clear that British economy was not significantly affected by these raids, hence German motives could be questioned, and Von Mueller himself acknowledged that his soldier longed for battle. This concludes that the German simply wanted to destroy not the economy but rather the dignity and pride of British as an empire where the sun never sets. The image of British as an invincible force in the eyes of its colonies now shaken, and completely removed at the dawn of world war II when Japanese managed to oust them from their South East Asian Colony.

CONCLUSION

The most important impact of this battle was perhaps the shift of geographical location of the war from exclusively a European war, to a war similar to World War I, that had spill over affects not only Europe but also European colonies in Asia, in this case British Malaya.

This event is quite a turning point in terms of the humiliation faced by British navy, and the safety of the residents of Penang. The infallibility of British Malaya especially Penang which was a military base was compromised. This shows lack of responsibility on

the British Malaya side, which ignored warnings and jeopardised the lives of the inhabitants of Penang Island.

Secondly, British have plagued British Malaya with propaganda at the beginning of the war. The two main propaganda was first the German were cruel and committed heinous war crimes, secondly was the war was not a religious war due to German association with the Ottoman Empire in this war. Both of this propaganda was debunked firstly by Captain Von Mueller chivalrous of sparing civilians and respecting his enemy. Secondly by the Indian Muslim sepoys mutiny instigated by Lautherbach which proves the Muslim soldiers loyalty still divided and British propaganda didn't work. This however did not stop British from stifling media reports on the Emden attacks on Penang.

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