

The area of Malaya is approximately equal to that of England and Wales excluding the western Welsh counties and the Devon-Cornwall Peninsula. The Island of Singapore corresponds approximately in size and position to the Isle of Wight. The distance from Singapore to the Thai border is much the same as that from the Isle of Wight to the Tweed.

An extensive mountain range forms a backbone to the peninsula separating the western and eastern areas. There are only a few communications between West and East. Apart from this mountain range the country is for the most part low-lying and rather featureless except for a few small hills on Singapore Island.

2. Malaya is thickly covered with vegetation. Where the country has not been brought under cultivation it is covered with jungle. This jungle is of varying types. Some of it is dense and difficult to penetrate while in other parts it consists of heavy timber and, while providing cover from view, is little or no obstacle to the passage of animals or men. Of the cultivated areas the greatest part is planted with rubber. Rubber plantations, while providing good cover from the air, can easily be traversed by men on foot, by animals and in most places by light tracked vehicles. There are also coco-nut and other plantations. Rice is grown in the north of the peninsula, which is generally more open, and also in certain areas on the west coast. In the centre and parts of the north there are rich tin-mining deposits, the working of which has resulted in more open areas. Except for the rice and tin-mining areas visibility is almost everywhere restricted to a hundred yards or even less.

The west coast area is much more developed and more thickly populated than is the east. Through it run the main road and rail communications linking Singapore with the North. There are also a coastal road, a number of lateral roads, especially in the central area, and branch railway lines linking the main line with coastal centres. The east coast railway branches from the main line at Gemas and, running east of the mountain range, strikes the coast in the State of Kelantan in north-east Malaya and then, running parallel to the coast, rejoins the main line at Haad-yai in Thailand. There are very few roads in the east coast area, the only ones of importance being those constructed to connect the ports of Mersing, Endau and Kuantan with the interior and the internal road system of the State of Kelantan. The only land communications between this latter State and the rest of Malaya are a single line railway and a fine-weather coastal track.

On the east coast there are good sandy beaches almost throughout. There are also some good stretches of sandy beach on the west coast, but a great deal of this coast line is covered by mangrove swamps.

Numerous rivers and streams, rising in the mountain range, traverse the coastal areas before reaching the sea. The largest of these is the River Perak in the northern part of the west coast area.

The Island of Penang lies off the west coast of Malaya some 350 miles as the crow flies from Singapore.

To sum up, the country generally tends to restrict the power of artillery and of Armoured Fighting Vehicles. It places a premium on the skill and endurance of infantry. As is true of most types of close country, it favours the attacker.

3. The climate throughout Malaya is humid and enervating, though not unhealthy for normal people. The temperature, which is not excessive, varies little throughout the year. Similarly the rainfall, which comes mostly in tropical storms, is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. Between April and September the wind blows from the south-west, and between October and March it blows from the north-east. During the latter period rough seas are at times encountered on the east coast.

The efficiency of Europeans who work at high pressure for long periods is liable to be affected unless periodical visits to places where the climate is more invigorating are possible.

Malaya is a country where troops must be hard and acclimatized and where strict hygiene discipline must be observed if heavy casualties from exhaustion and sickness are to be avoided.

SECTION II.—THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

4. The form of government of Malaya was probably more complicated and less suited to war conditions than that of any other part of the British Empire. This resulted in the main from the way in which it had grown up. Broadly, it was divided into three parts, i.e.

(a) The Straits Settlements of Singapore, Malacca and Penang with Province Wellesley. These formed a British Colony and were administered from Singapore by the Governor acting through the Government of the Straits Settlements;

(b) The Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang. These States were Malay territory and were governed by their own Sultans assisted by British Residents. They were federated for certain centralized services which were administered by a Federal Government at Kuala Lumpur. The Governor of the Straits Settlements was also High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States.

(c) The Unfederated Malay States of Johore, Trengganu, Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis. These States also were Malay territory, incorporated in the British Empire by separate treaties. They were governed by their own Sultans with each of whom was a British Adviser. The Governor of the Straits Settlements was also High Commissioner for these States, with each of which he communicated direct through a Secretary for the Unfederated Malay States.

In pan-Malayan matters the High Commissioner could not deal with the four Federated States as one entity. He had to consult each, either direct or through the Federal Secretariat. More often than not, he had to deal with ten separate bodies, i.e. the Colony plus the nine States, and sometimes with the Federal Government as well, making eleven. This naturally tended to cause delay when subjects affecting Malaya as a whole were under discussion.

5. The British Government had by various treaties promised to afford protection against external aggression to most, if not all, of these