

Malaya was carried out have already been explained in Section V. Finally, all defence works were incorporated in the Defence Scheme Malaya which was subject to approval by the Committee of Imperial Defence and subsequently by the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

436. Not long after the commencement of the Malayan campaign it became apparent that we might be driven back to Johore or even to Singapore Island. On the 23rd December I therefore issued orders as under to the Commander, Singapore Fortress. (See Appendix 'C'.):—

"The Commander, Singapore Fortress will arrange for reconnaissance of the north shore of Singapore Island to select positions for the defence of possible landing places."

Early in January orders were given that the preparation of the defences of the northern part of Singapore Island was to be undertaken at once as an urgent measure.

Labour difficulties, however, then intervened. All the troops on Singapore Island had their allotted tasks in manning the defences, and the military labour companies, of which for reasons already explained there were only three, were fully employed on administrative work. Civil labour, from the beginning of January onwards, failed to an increasing extent as the bombing became heavier. I had, as previously stated, agreed to give priority to the Air Force for this labour for work on the aerodromes and new air strips. The Air Force seldom got enough and there was none available for our defence works. In fact, I had to make available men from the Reinforcement camps for work on the aerodromes.

As regards material, priority was given to the forward areas and a great deal of engineer material was lost at Batu Anam, at Kota Tinggi and elsewhere. There was a general shortage at this time of steel rods for making reinforced concrete.

Nevertheless, a great deal of work was done. The defences were planned in skeleton as it was not known what the strength of the garrison would be. Sites for the forward defended localities and for reserves were selected. Artillery observation posts and gun positions were reconnoitred and selected. Locations of formation headquarters were fixed and communications arranged. Machine gun positions were constructed. The 44 Indian Infantry Brigade worked in its area. Oil obstacles and depth charges were placed in creeks which appeared to be likely landing places. All available spare searchlights and Lyon lights were collected and made available. Anti-tank obstacles were constructed and made available.

437. On the 23rd January I issued a secret letter to formation commanders giving an outline of the plans for the defence of the Island, from which the following is an extract:—

*Policy for Defence.*—

The northern and western shores of the Island are too intersected with creeks and mangroves for any recognized form of beach defence.

The general plan in each area will therefore include small defended localities to cover known approaches, such as rivers, creeks and roads to the coast or tracks along which vehicles can travel.

These localities will be supported by mobile reserves in suitable assembly areas, from which they can operate against enemy parties seeking to infiltrate near these communications or in the intervening country.

The essential requirements of these assembly positions will be concealment from air and ground observation. Slit trenches, shallow and narrow, will be dug.

The covering positions should, where possible, conform to these requirements but must be sited to cover the approaches with fire.

*Preparation of Defence* —

The present Fortress Commander, Major-General F. Keith Simmons, will be responsible for developing the above outline plan. For this purpose, a special staff will be appointed under him. The senior officer of this staff will be Brigadier A. C. Paris. Commanders 3 Indian Corps and A.I.F. will each detail a selected senior officer to report to Brigadier A. C. Paris at Fortress Headquarters as soon as possible to work on his staff.

A sketch map was attached which showed formation and unit boundaries, sites selected for foremost defended localities and reserves, etc.

438. *The Anti-Aircraft Defences.*—These defences had been sited in accordance with a War Office Plan which was designed eventually to cover the Naval Base, Keppel Harbour and Seletar and Tengah aerodromes, but the lay-out was not scheduled to be completed earlier than the middle of 1942. It was, moreover, based on a lower density than had been found necessary in the defence of London during the German air raids. Sembawang and Kallang aerodromes were given some measure of protection by the defences of the Naval Base and Keppel Harbour respectively. Similarly, Singapore Town and the Base Supply and Ordnance Depots at Alexandra were partly protected.

Towards the end of January all the guns and searchlights from Johore had been withdrawn on to Singapore Island. One Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment (less one battery) and one Light Anti-Aircraft Battery were despatched to Sumatra for the defence of aerodromes. There remained for the defence of the Singapore Fortress area four Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiments plus one battery, two Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments less one battery, and one Searchlight Regiment.

The Anti-Aircraft Defence Headquarters were at Fort Canning and were linked by telephone to the Fighters Operations Room at Kallang.

With the withdrawal from the mainland the Anti-Aircraft Defences were deprived of the help of the Warning System which had been carefully built up. Their efficiency was thereby reduced though the G.L. sets proved of great benefit.

439. Singapore was not a Fortress. It comprised a large area of land and water with strong anti-ship defences, reasonably strong anti-aircraft defences, but weak infantry defences and no tanks. The coasts facing the Straits of Johore were, when war broke out, completely undefended for reasons which have been explained above. From time to time exaggerated statements had appeared in the Press as to the strength of the Singapore defences. It is probable that, as a result partly of these statements, the public believed the