

to India were not very large or frequent at that time. Eventually Australia agreed to accept 1,500 Chinese and a number were sent to Ceylon.

419. Our task being to protect the Naval Base, there was obviously no question of evacuating the Army even if shipping had been available, which in fact was not the case. I refused to allow any discussion of the question of evacuation.

I approved, however, of secret arrangements being made with the Dutch Authorities for the preparation of a route across Sumatra for the use of individuals or small parties who might for one reason or another be given permission to leave Singapore. I refused, however, to allow information of the arrangements made to be circulated among the troops as I feared that any talk of evacuation would cause a loss of confidence both among the troops and among the civil population.

PART III. THE BATTLE OF SINGAPORE.

SECTION XLIV.—TOPOGRAPHICAL AND CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

420. The Island of Singapore is oblong in shape with a maximum length from east to west of 27 miles and a maximum width from north to south of 13 miles. It is separated from the mainland of Malaya by the Straits of Johore across which is a causeway 1,100 yards long. The Straits west of the causeway, which are the narrower, vary in width from 600 to 2,000 yards. They are navigable at high water for small medium draught vessels, though the channel is narrow and tortuous. East of the causeway the Straits vary in width from 1,100 to about 5,000 yards and are navigable for the biggest vessels afloat as far as the Naval Base. In the middle of these Straits at their widest point lies the Island of Pulau Ubin, with a length of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles and a width of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This island is marshy in the centre and is developed in a few areas only. To the east of Pulau Ubin is the mouth of the River Johore. This river, which is navigable for light craft as far as Kota Tinggi, gives access to the main Johore Bahru-Mersing road. Covering the mouth of the River Johore is the Island of Tekong. A few miles east of Tekong lies Pengerang Hill at the southern tip of the Johore mainland.

421. Immediately south of Singapore Island and separated from it by the waters of Keppel Harbour lie the Islands of Blakang Mati and Pulau Brani. The former, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length and $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles in breadth, was a military reserve.

422. Three miles south-west of Blakang Mati lies Pulau Bukom, $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles long by $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide, where was situated the Asiatic Petroleum Company's main reserves of naval fuel, petrol and lubricating oils. Further to the west and separated from the south-west coast of Singapore Island by only a narrow channel lie the Sembilan Islands, a group of low-lying islands of varying size inhabited only by Malay fishermen.

423. South of Singapore Island, and not very far from it, is the Rhio Archipelago Group of Islands of the Netherlands East Indies, while to the west lies Sumatra. The Island of Singapore is approached by four main channels—the Malacca Straits to the west, the Durian and Rhio Straits to the south, and the main channel

between South-East Johore and Dutch territory to the east.

424. The town of Singapore is situated in the south of the Island and extends for some 6 miles along the water front with a depth of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Immediately north of it is an extensive residential area covering several square miles of country. The town is divided into two portions by the River Singapore, a muddy tidal waterway crossed by fine modern bridges. On either side of this waterway are the public buildings and the main shopping and business centres. Further west lies the extensive Docks area. The population of Singapore Town in peace-time was in the neighbourhood of 550,000 but by the end of January, 1942, it was probably nearer a million.

425. From Singapore Town main roads radiate in all directions. The principal is that known as the Bukit Timah Road which, crossing to the mainland by the causeway, becomes the main artery to the north. Other important roads are the Thomson Road, a narrow winding road running out to the Naval Base, the Serangoon Road, a good broad highway running north-eastwards and eventually leading to the Seletar Air Base, and the road which runs due east to the military cantonment at Changi. In addition to these, good roads follow the coast line for several miles in each direction from Singapore Town.

426. Although the Island is thickly populated there are few places of any size outside Singapore Town itself. The most noteworthy are the townships or large villages of Paya Lebar on the Serangoon Road, Nee Soon on the Thomson Road, and Bukit Timah on the Main (Bukit Timah) Road. These lie at important junctions where lateral roads join or cross the roads mentioned above.

427. The only hill features of importance on Singapore Island are (a) The Bukit Timah group of hills which lie just north of the village of that name and from which an extensive view can be obtained over the greater part of the Island, (b) Bukit Mandai, some 3 miles north of Bukit Timah, from which a good view can be obtained over the Straits and Johore Bahru, and (c) The Pasir Panjang Ridge, 4 miles in length, running from Pasir Panjang Village to the western outskirts of Singapore Town. From this ridge an extensive view can be obtained over the western approaches to Singapore and also over the country to the north. In the west of the Island there are other minor hill features.

428. Apart from the built-up areas, Singapore Island like the rest of Malaya is thickly covered by rubber and other plantations, while on the northern and western coasts there are extensive mangrove swamps. These swamps had of recent years, owing to extensive irrigation works, lost much of their value as a military obstacle.

429. In the centre of the Island lie the important MacRitchie, Peirce and Seletar reservoirs and the Municipal Catchment area, a large jungle area traversed only by a few tracks. To the north the Naval Base reservation covers a large tract of country.

430. Visibility is everywhere restricted. Even from the hill features referred to above little detail can be seen of ground objects.