

a formation of air-borne troops. His land forces included an armoured component.

Our forces were approximately as under:—

*Eastforce.*—One Brigade Group at full strength.

*Westforce.*—The equivalent of one strong division.

*11 Indian Division.*—The equivalent of about 1½ brigade groups.

*Singapore Fortress.*—Two weak Infantry Brigades and the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force.

Fixed Defences at full strength.

*Anti-Aircraft Defences.*—At full strength.

*Command Reserve.*—One Brigade Group.

This gave a total of approximately three divisions with Fixed and Anti-Aircraft Defences. In addition we might expect to receive by the end of the month the equivalent of one additional division and a number of reinforcements

338. *Air.*—Before the arrival of the Hurricanes (See Section XXXVI) our Air resources had sunk to a very low level. It had not been possible to replace the daily losses and, owing to the length and dangers of the route, not more than half of the reinforcing aircraft which had been despatched to Malaya by land route had reached their destination. In consequence, there were seldom a dozen aircraft, and often considerably less, available for attacks on selected targets. The A.O.C. did his utmost with his limited resources to meet the Army requirements but it was practically impossible to give any effective support to troops in the forward areas.

The Japanese Air Force on the other hand had been able to give continuous support to their troops in the forward areas and to their sea-borne landings on the West Coast. They had also carried out a series of attacks against the Kluang aerodrome in Central Johore. During the first ten days of the month there had been nightly attacks against targets, generally aerodromes, in the Singapore area. From the 10th January onwards these attacks were usually delivered by day as the Japanese were then able to escort their bombers with fighters based presumably on Kuantan. On the 12th January three attacks were made on the Singapore aerodromes by a total of 122 aircraft while on the same day our photographic reconnaissance recorded 200 enemy aircraft on aerodromes in Malaya excluding those in Kelantan.

339. *Naval.*—The enemy continued to exercise complete control of the waters east of Malaya. Off the West Coast his coastal vessels were able to move freely under air protection. We felt, however, that these coastal operations would become more difficult for him as he moved further south and as the length of the coastline to be watched by our forces decreased.

340. *Topographical.*—Broadly speaking, the Western area of Johore is much more developed than are the Central and Eastern areas.

In the eastern area the Mersing and Jemaluang districts are for the most part under rubber plantations, but south of the Jemaluang-Kahang road there is a wide belt of untouched jungle passable only for infantry without wheeled transport. On the east coast there are numerous creeks and waterways which give access to the interior.

In the central area east of the railway the country is broken and hilly and has been less developed. Communications are poor.

The west coast area has, except for a few swamps and patches of jungle, been extensively developed. It is mostly covered by rubber plantations, though there are also coconut, pineapple and other plantations. Through it ran the railway, the main trunk road and also a coastal road. The large rivers at Muar and Batu Pahat are crossed by ferry only. Along the coastal belt the country is low-lying and swampy. In the Batu Pahat district there had before the war been extensive Japanese-owned estates.

341. *Communications.*—The greatly increased length of the Japanese communications must without a doubt have complicated their supply and maintenance problems. They had behind them a large number of broken bridges both on the roads and the railway. We also hoped that the guerilla bands which had been organized to attack their communications would soon be having effect. To offset these difficulties, however, the Japanese had control of the sea and of the air and were known to be making use of these elements.

Our own communications were now getting shorter but they were constantly subject to enemy air attack.

342. *Aerodromes.*—The large modern aerodrome at Kluang and the unfinished aerodrome at Kahang would be of great value to the enemy if they fell into his hands. Experience had shown that demolitions could not deny an aerodrome to the enemy for more than a few days.

The aerodrome near Batu Pahat was a smaller one and suitable only for light and medium aircraft.

343. *Morale.*—The fighting qualities of some of our troops had naturally been affected by the long and continuous withdrawals and by the enemy's superiority in certain types of modern armament. This was particularly the case with some of the Indian infantry who had up to date borne the brunt of the front line fighting. On the other hand, the A.I.F. were fresh and comparatively well trained and we had two recently arrived brigade groups which had not yet been in action.

344. *Political.*—The State of Johore was an Unfederated Malay State bound to us by treaty. It maintained at its own expense a small military force and had in the past made a generous contribution to Imperial Defence. These factors made it politically desirable that we should do our utmost to hold as much of that State as possible.

345. *The Japanese Course of Action.*—It was clear that the Japanese intended to press on as fast as possible down the West Coast. It seemed probable also that a landing would soon be attempted on the east coast of Johore, probably in the Mersing area, from where the enemy could either develop another thrust towards Singapore or open the lateral road to Kluang. A direct sea-borne attack on Singapore was still, as before, a possibility, though it seemed probable that this, if contemplated, would be deferred until it could be combined with an attack from the landward side. Finally, there was the possibility of an airborne landing either in Johore or direct on to Singapore Island.