



BLACK STAR

Britain, the U. S. and Holland once supplied Malaya's steel needs—now Singapore foundries (above) work 24 hours a day to keep up with the great demand



Australian troops and tank corps will have the job of defending Singapore and its great naval base if war comes. Singapore enjoys its rowdy Aussies' jokes



HARRISON FORMAN

Singapore is ready for anything, from inside or out. The island is literally ringed with guns, and above is a pillbox in the center of a business street

# Singapore Scenario

By Martha Gellhorn

It looks like a Hollywood set out of De Mille. Singapore, bristling with pillboxes, planes and uniforms, lives in an atmosphere of parties, gin slings, gossip, intrigue and easy money—and a possible war. And if the worst comes to happen—well, there's always the United States Navy

British and Indian officers (right) plan operations at a fire-control post hidden on a rubber plantation. It's part of the defenses of the naval base

SINGAPORE is like a movie about itself. It has everything: the deadly heat, rickshas and Rolls-Royces, the native kampongs, Chinatown, low dance halls, the country club for white gentry, beautiful houses, Indian officers with beards and bright turbans, Australian troops in rough-rider hats, English officers like actors impersonating English officers, Chinese taxi-dancers, elegant milky-skinned ladies, planes zooming overhead, Malayan royalty, orchids for five cents a bunch, tropical trees, pahits, gin slings, gossip, intrigue, parties and a possible war. Not long ago a seventeen-foot python emerged from the drains in Raffles Place. It was not an unusual event. This is just about like catching a seventeen-foot python coming out of the sewers on Park Avenue, near the Waldorf. Such odd and exotic features are perfect for a movie. And the British Empire angle makes the whole thing both timely and important. All that is really needed is Miss Marlene Dietrich in the role of a water-front siren, vamping the army, navy and air force.

The theme song of this movie is: "I am not at liberty to reveal." Every official in Singapore is choking on red tape but, if not actually speechless, they are apt to give you the old refrain: "We're at war here. Of course you understand. I am not at liberty to reveal . . ." It is a theme song that sounds as bad in any language. After a while the suspicion grows that there is very little to reveal. Hush-hush, obstructionism, a harsh censorship and oppressive red tape are usually the signs that all is not well.

If you relax and decide you are a part of the movie, an extra perhaps, you can have a wonderful time. You can dine in magnificent homes (only houses in movies look as rich and ornamental). You are waited on by the legendary silent-footed Oriental, and Singapore is one of the few places left in the world where you can still eat fresh caviar. (Every luxury is on sale in Singapore, from perfume to champagne. Life is expensive but the upper classes have plenty of money.) The ladies, in the wonderful houses, are as elegant as women were in Paris when Paris was French. The male company, augmented by the young English lieutenants, is mostly in uniform and extremely gallant. There are very few white women in Singapore and each one is a queen. The conversation, considering that this is 1941, is startlingly unreal. It could have been written by Noel Coward on a day when he was not writing as well as usual.

Or if you tire of nightly dinner parties, you can visit the young gentlemen in their barracks. At Changi there is a great handsome yellow stucco barracks and two Scots regiments are stationed

here. Just at sundown, and just before cocktails, you can drive out and listen to the bagpipes playing Retreat, in the barracks square. It is a picturesque and moving ceremony, and the bright, hot, colorful uniforms, with wool kilts and all, must be a horror to their wearers. After this you follow the gay throng, the pretty ladies and the visiting officers from other regiments, to cocktails in the officers' mess. The officers' mess is a large, cool building, with a billiard room and a well-furnished lounge, and from it you move on to the Tanglin, which is a lavish country club where a no-good orchestra plays dance music all evening for members only. If crowds of pale, well-dressed women with perfect hairdos and good-looking officers and civil servants who are lordly, well-paid and all waiting for their retirement, finally tire you, you can dine in one of the two small, chic, very European restaurants, or drive out to the Gap and watch the moon rise over Singapore harbor and all the tiny black islands on the flat, moonlit sea. There was even a fair at Johore, to vary the pleasures. The only thing was that it rained all afternoon, a true flooding tropical rain, so the fairgrounds were more than ankle-deep in mud. The common people plowed around in the mud, and the Australian soldiers drank beer and had a fine time, but the gentry—staying mostly inside the royal enclosure of the sultan of Johore—ruined their shoes and were pretty bored. There were English games to play in the various booths, and native handwork to buy, and a dance pavilion where Malaysians danced to their own monotonous music. The wealth of Singapore came, at one time or other during the evening, and retired covered with mud. The fair made \$6,000 for the Bomber Fund.

## Things You Mustn't See

A part of the movie has of course been cut. Singapore has about 600,000 inhabitants, and 82 per cent of these are Chinese. You do not spend any time in the Chinese section of the city, where the Chinese live as usual, ten in a room. You do not see the tin mines nor the hovels where the miners live. You do not see the kampongs of the rubber plantation workers, you only drive on fine roads past the neat, unending trees. You do not realize that this wonderful, rich movie is racking along, gay and glittering if somewhat heat-struck, on a basis of 50 cents-a-day wages for most of the population. This would be a grimy note and spoil the scenario.

The plot of the movie is: "There's a war on." In fact, the war in England is farther away from Singapore than from New York. During one tense week the war became terribly real, because some ships bringing English cigarettes were





ACME

sunk and there was a tobacco shortage in Singapore. Meantime, the war they are preparing for in Singapore is a war against the Japanese. All the stupidity which attends any actual war, the pompousness and paper work and nuisance laws, are in Singapore in force: but there is no war. When you are in Singapore, deep in the movie atmosphere, you do not feel there ever will be a real war and the preparations seem rather like the extras being herded around in order to stage a battle scene.

There are some very good modern airfields on the island of Singapore itself. As every taxi driver knows where they are, and as one of them is the regular commercial field, it appears futile to forbid the press to mention them. There are a certain number of Brewster Buffaloes, Lockheed Hudsons, English pursuit and bomber planes, Australian trainer planes, and they are getting some American PBY bombers. How many planes there are is a secret, naturally. There are new airfields, scattered throughout Malaya. They have been made in the jungle and most of them are unreachable by any other means than the air. Their location and number is a secret, again naturally. None of this preparation is surprising or new: and by now (considering that the whole world is either fighting or getting ready to fight) it is not even particularly interesting. The air force flies a patrol over the waters surrounding Malaya, as is to be expected; pilots are being trained and promoted; and in various maneuvers the air arm co-operates. Despite the false air of mystery of Singapore, and the comic solemnity of the censorship, there is nothing more to it than that.

From the point of view of invasion by sea, there are only certain spots which are feasible. The west coast of Malaya is a vast mud shallow with two good ports. To invade the west coast, the Japanese fleet would first have to pass Singapore, an unlikely operation unless the Netherlands Indies was already overrun. If that can be done, Singapore is lost anyhow. The defenses are therefore logically concentrated around Singapore island itself and the few places on the east coast which are open to attack, and on the border between Thailand and Malaya. It must be remembered that Malaya has its own natural Maginot line of jungle, and where there are no roads an invading force would simply find itself stuck in jungle which kills off all people who are not specifically trained and armed to survive in it. Sand bars block the entrances to the sluggish, coiled rivers. But there are a few points of entry on the east coast and at these troops have been stationed who are trained in jungle fighting and who have themselves built the beach defenses. The defenses,

again, are just regulation; machine-gun pillboxes and barbed-wire blockades. The roads, leading back to Singapore, are similarly organized. If you have seen the same type of defenses at Hong Kong, Singapore makes a rather feeble impression, by contrast.

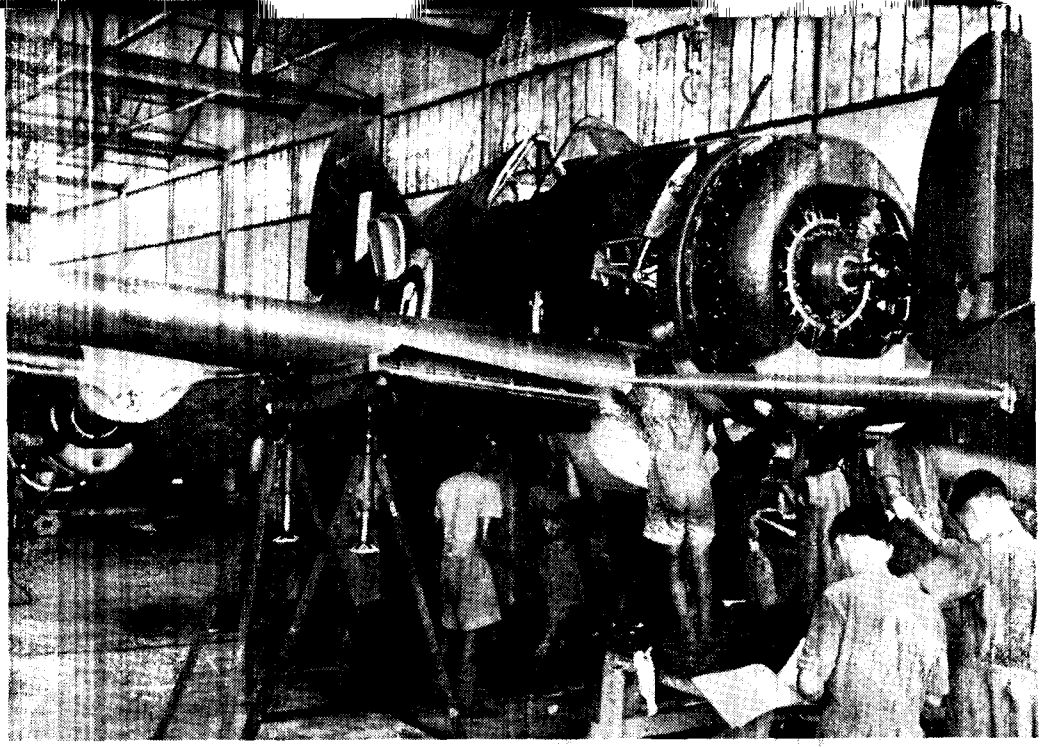
Singapore is, as everyone knows, one of the greatest naval bases in the world. It has practically no ships now, but that is temporarily unimportant. The island is literally ringed with guns, counter-bombardment and coastal defense guns. All military points are protected as well by anti-aircraft guns and, of course, by the air squadrons stationed on the island. Around Singapore, scattered as if they were thrown out like a handful of gravel, are dozens of small islands, mostly uninhabited. They are of great strategical value because they break up the field of operation for enemy battleships. The waters around Singapore are mined and the lanes must be swept every day. A few commercial ships have hit the mines and their masts, sticking up above the water, bear testimony to the efficacy of the mine fields.

#### Consider the Young Lieutenant

There are a great many soldiers in Malaya now. There are Scots and English regiments, Indian regiments, Australian divisions, Royal Artillery and Royal Engineer regiments, a Malayan regiment and airmen from every part of the empire. They are all colorful to look at and they have fine regimental fighting records. They all wish they had something better to do than wait for a war, especially in this climate.

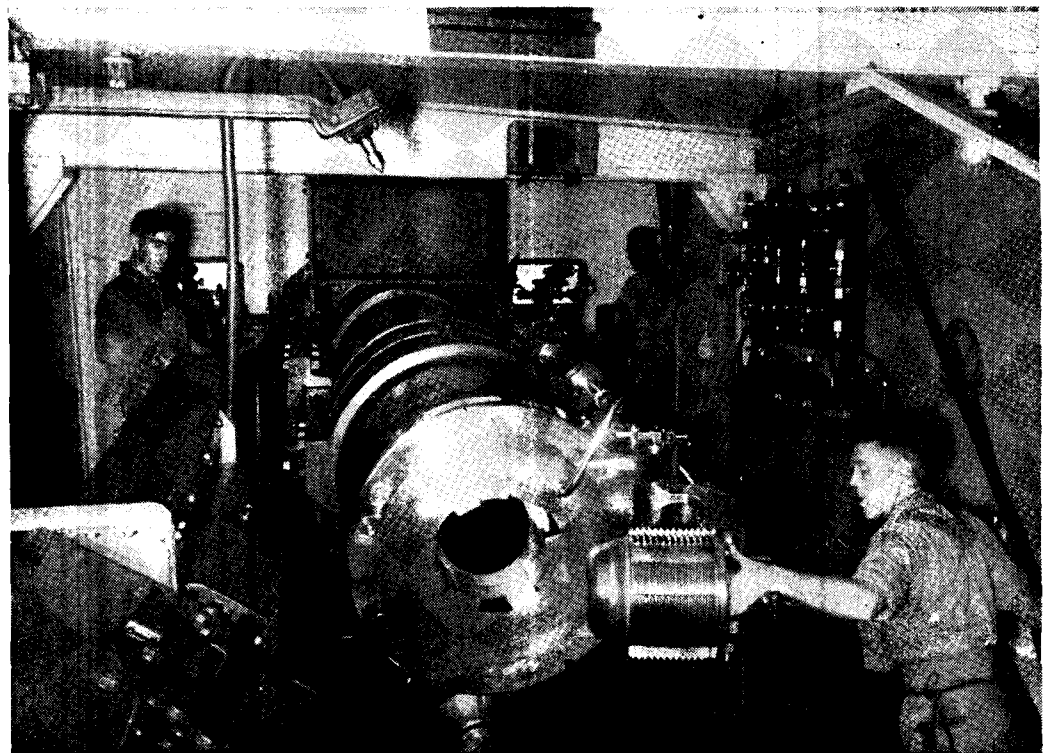
I was talking to an Englishman who had been an officer in the last war and is now a rubber planter. We were talking about the young lieutenants. The young lieutenants are all over the place and very charming. You can be a lieutenant if you come from the right school and the right family after a nine weeks' training course. At one time in the British army no training course was required. Nine weeks is not a lot of time in which to learn a highly technical trade like soldiering. (We had our own ninety-day-wonders, in the last war.) Fortunately, back of every lieutenant there stands a sergeant who did not go to the right school and whose family is socially unknown, but who has been in the army for ten years or more. I was pointing out with irritating civilian logic, that it would seem more sensible simply to make the sergeants into lieutenants. So the Englishman explained to me, "The troops will follow those boys when they would not follow the sergeants. They have confidence in them, and they will trust them and obey them. You can only judge when the real fighting begins. And you can be sure of one

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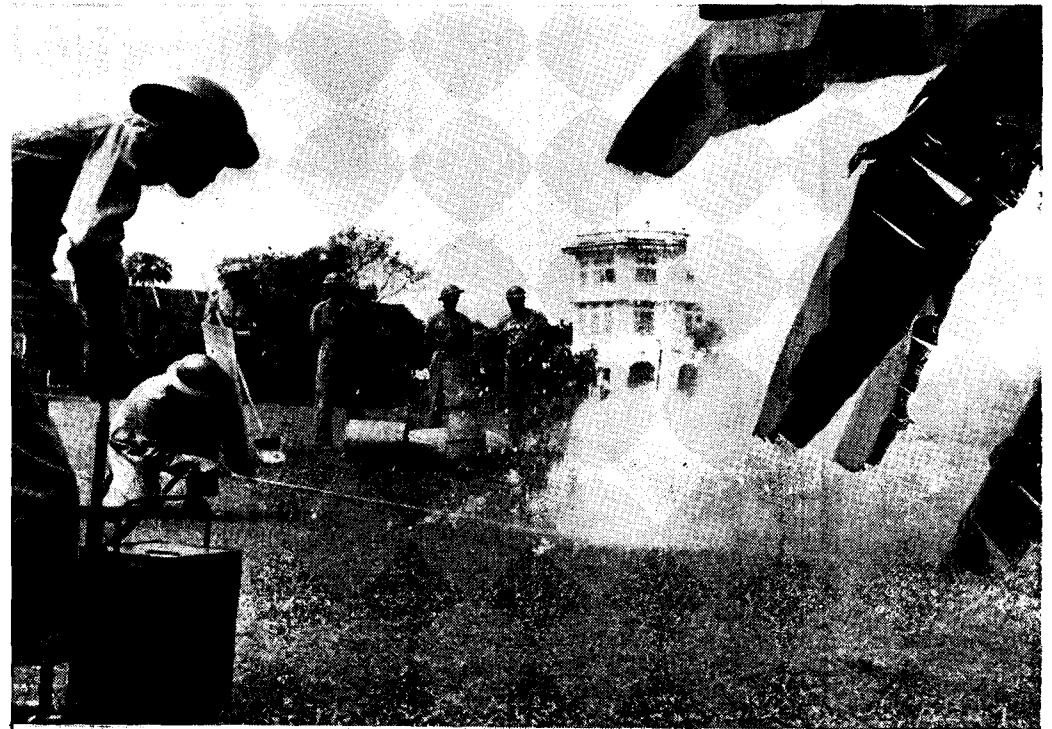


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**Brewster Buffaloes, American-made planes, are assembled at an R.A.F. station. They are flown by British pilots, many of whom have fought Nazis over Britain**



**One of the medium coast-defense guns points toward the China Sea, a unit in the air-, land- and water-defense network built around the naval base**



BLACK STAR

**Singapore's crowded Chinese districts are especially vulnerable to air attack. Here native air wardens are learning how to extinguish incendiary bombs**





## Worth a Premium

By Ted Flynn

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SWEENEY

"He's all I've got," the kid said. "There ain't enough money in your Army to buy him"

The kid figured Smoky would make a good Army horse; the horse didn't agree. So it was a good thing the major recognized soundness when he saw it

MY TEMPER would have been worse than Major Clive's, the way things were going.

"Once more, gentlemen," the major was saying wearily to the crowd of Mexicans, Navajo and Apache Indians, homesteaders and ranchers. "We won't buy mares or paint horses. Or gray horses. Or anything under five years old. We want a definite type—"

Just then this grullo horse and rider came in at a fancy gallop and the rider pulled up short. A bad cinch let go. Whoops and laughter came from the crowd as the rider slammed into the dust almost at Major Clive's feet.

A leather-faced cowhand yelled, "He flies prettier'n a young buzzard!"

"Corporal Kinson, move that horse back!" the major snapped at me.

A cowhand already moving to the grullo's head stopped warily at a dry warning from an elderly rancher:

"That's the man-hating grullo who crippled Skin Higgins. Better watch him."

"And we won't buy vicious horses," said the major in a voice that made Captain Bell lift an eyebrow at Lieutenant Fortner.

"Smoky's gentle. We come better'n sixty miles since last evening an' he's fit to go back. Ain't a better horse in New Mexico."

The kid was grimy, gaunt, shabby, as he came out of the dust. Maybe he was seventeen, yellow-haired, knobby, awkward-looking as he caught the grullo's reins and turned back to pick up his ancient saddle.

The major gave him a hard look. "You've just ridden that horse sixty miles?"

"We laid up a little in Cold Water Canyon last night," the kid said. "Didn't hear about this horse-buyin' till near sundown yesterday."

The same prosperous-looking old rancher volunteered: "Bud Shumlin there's been with Patricio Garcia all winter and spring. I'd make Garcia's place closer to seventy miles by the canyon."

"We won't look at hot horses. Cool him off for an hour or so," the major said, turning back. "Next horse."

Here in Three Forks we were seeing the finest bunch of hammerheaded broomtails in northern New Mexico. Twenty-five dollars out here would buy a saddle horse. When word went out that the Army would pay a hundred and fifty up for good horses at Three Forks today, they cleaned the ranges.

THE major was in uniform, like the other officers. But he was all Army, all hard-boiled cavalry. He knew horses, knew what he wanted. He was rejecting nine out of ten horses offered and getting more exasperated and particular. When this kid, this Bud Shumlin, finally edged up on this smoky blue that the Mexicans call grullo, I had a hunch that the major was going to make short work of him and his horse.

"Walk him out a hundred yards and neck-rein him back," the major directed briefly, and showed no interest while Captain Bell and the lieutenant closely sized up the grullo's looks.

I was a little surprised that the kid was allowed the next step.

"Trot him cleanly about two hundred yards and bring him back fast. Get some wind on him," the major ordered.

That little trot and gallop put many a good-looking horse out of the running.

The grullo looked a little heavy-footed on the trot; but when he busted back at a gallop, he stayed low and stretched out, coming fast. Captain Bell waved his arms for the kid to pull up short before them. But the grullo went past before the kid got him stopped.

"Got a hard mouth, has he?" Major Clive snapped.

"No, sir," said the kid, patting the grullo's neck. "I was afraid that cinch'd let go again if I pulled him hard."

The major grunted like he'd heard that talk before. "Get down and take the saddle off." And it was the major himself who put his hand over the grullo's right nostril and his ear to the left nostril to catch the breathing, and then reversed nostrils.

I could tell by the way the major went after distemper sign back up under the jaw, and went over legs and hocks, that he was ready to throw the grullo out for half an excuse.

"So he was a bad actor," said the major ominously, and I figured this was the pay-off.

The kid hesitated. "He's gentle now, mister look at him."

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