

Camber and the R.A.O.C. Depot all suffered some damage, though casualties were few. The civilian population in Hong Kong remained calm, though naturally the news of early evacuation of the mainland came as a considerable shock.

29. *Withdrawal of troops from the mainland (11/12th December).*—(a) Careful plans had been drawn up by Brigadier Mainland Infantry Brigade, and all troops were employed on successive positions.

The operation was well carried out. However, HQ details of 2/14 Punjab Regt. and some others came down on to Kai Tak aerodrome by mistake in the darkness and became involved in street fighting in the outskirts of Kowloon City. A launch was sent over at about 0100 hours but could not gain contact with them. The bulk of the Company, however, were taken off at Star Ferry pier at dawn, breaking off a running fight with the enemy as they actually cast off from the pier side.

(b) Battalion HQ of the 2/14 Punjab Regt. and two Companies had been unable to maintain the timed programme during the night owing to enemy action, and at dawn they were withdrawing down the West side of Devils Peak Peninsula. They stayed that day dispersed in the foothills at the southern end, whilst two companies of 5/7 Rajput Regt. held the Ma Lau Tong line as planned, with one company on the rear position Hai Wan.

(c) The personnel of both Indian battalions were in good heart but somewhat exhausted after four days of continuous day and night vigilance and long night carries, over rough tracks and coolie paths, of many machine guns, light automatics and mortars. Owing to the simultaneous withdrawals of all three battalions, the 5/7 Rajput Regiment's transport had not been augmented by mules from the other battalions as planned, and this emphasised the shortage of mule transport which had always been apparent on peace exercises. It will be realised that units were on an improvised scale of trucks, lorries, and mules, as pooling of the inadequate "Colonial" establishments had been found to be necessary. The transport situation had become much worse with the arrival of the two Canadian battalions, for their transport had been shipped in a different vessel, diverted via Australia, and had not arrived before war with Japan broke out.

(d) At midnight 11/12th December the Hong Kong Telephone Company cut all communications between the island and the mainland.

(e) One troop of 3.7-in. Howitzers remained at the southern end of Devils Peak in support of the Ma Lau Tong position. Mainland Infantry Brigade HQ also remained on the Peninsula pending further developments.* Most of the Bren carriers and all the armoured cars were safely evacuated from the mainland.

(f) At 0600 hours 12th December military cables to Kowloon were cut at the R.N. Yard cable hut.

(g) At dawn 2 Royal Scots temporarily took over the North East sector of the island defences, this being largely a precautionary measure only, as the occupation of the Devils Peak Peninsula by the 5/7 Rajput Regt. covered this sector effectively. This North East

sector had previously been manned in skeleton form by some HQ personnel of 1 Middlesex Regt. plus a platoon of No. 3 Company HKVDC. In the North West sector was "Z" Company 1 Middlesex Regt., consisting of spare men of machine gun companies plus battalion cooks, storemen, bandsmen, etc., manning forty machine guns from Fortress reserve stocks. This Company constituted a valuable fighting force enabling *inter alia* the 1 Middlesex Regt. to man the pill boxes on the entire perimeter of the island from 11th to 13th December.

30. Air raids and shelling of the island continued throughout the day 12th December. The North shore Dockyard was badly damaged and also the R.A.O.C. Depot, which was hit on five occasions. Aberdeen and Green Island cables were both cut. By now many coast defence guns, especially 6-in., were being used for landward firing, calculations to hit one hundred points having been worked out in peace time. Harassing fire by night, and counter battery fire and the engagement of observed targets by day, was carried out.

The allowance of 25 rounds per gun for such landward firing was greatly exceeded. High explosive Mk XIII shell of 1918 manufacture was faulty, several bursting immediately in front of the muzzle.

31. A.A.—There were insufficient guns to give adequate gun density at any point. More 3.7-in. guns were expected shortly and also more Bofors (the garrison had but two), for "release telegrams" had been received from HQ Far East. The A.A. defences were well known to be inadequate, but I realised that the call for the European and Mediterranean theatres of war had prevented reinforcements. Targets were numerous (12th December) but the A.A. positions extremely few owing to the mountainous nature of the country of Hong Kong Island. The enemy, with such good observation from Kowloon, was very quick on to any A.A. section opening up, and I consider that Lt.-Colonel F. D. Field fought his command very well. The scarcity both of transport and roads severely handicapped the mobility of the guns and also the ammunition supply and administration of the sections. The shortage of British officers was very much felt. During the night one of the A.A. searchlights on Green Island acted as a sentry beam on receipt of a report that the enemy were landing near West Point.

At this juncture Wing Commander H. G. Sullivan, the Officer Commanding R.A.F., offered the services of one officer and 16 N.C.Os. for wireless and telephone duties, which I gladly accepted. They were incorporated with Royal Signals.

The morale of the civilian population had been considerably shaken, and fifth columnists became more active. Rice distribution and the monetary situation caused anxiety and necessitated urgent measures.

32. During the afternoon 12th December the enemy was reported to be occupying George Island (off Lamma) and there was considerable activity seawards.*

33. In the late afternoon a strong enemy attack (about one battalion) developed against the left company of 5/7 Rajput Regt. on the Ma Lau Tong line but was successfully beaten off, assisted by quick support provided by the

* Owing to shortness of time communications in the Devils Peak area were incomplete, but excellent work by Royal Signals provided efficient field cable circuits in time.