

the East but enemy house to house infiltrations continued to be reported even as far West as the China Fleet Club. This report I discounted, but awkward fighting was developing, for I was unable to employ suitably the available artillery in this street fighting, apart from the desire to escape causing innumerable civilian casualties in such a congested area. The Japanese on the other hand, with their overwhelming superiority of artillery and noted carelessness for loss of life, had no hesitation in putting down in such areas heavy concentrations, with mortars super-imposed, lasting half an hour, and with a rate of fire comparable to those of the Great War.

At 0800 hours the enemy were on a front from the South end of Canal Road to the West arm of Causeway Bay, with snipers in houses further forward.

At 0830 hours, 25th December, the Royal Navy contributed a further small reinforcement which was placed at the disposal of the Officer Commanding 1 Middlesex Regt. (Lieut.-Colonel H. W. M. Stewart, O.B.E., M.C.) who thereupon put in hand the building up of a second line running North from the Mount Parish area—Wanchai Market, O'Brien Street—to the water front ("O'Brien Street Line").

141. At daylight our troops were still holding the eastern slopes of Bennets Hill.

142. At 0900 hours Major C. M. Manners (q.v. paras. 84 and 90) and Mr. A. L. Shields came across from the Japanese lines under a white flag. They had been told that they could talk freely. They informed me of their march with civilians of both sexes from Repulse Bay Hotel via Wong Nei Chong Gap to North point, of the "incredible" number of guns and troops seen during the last half of their "trek" and (in their opinion, *not* put forward by the Japanese) the uselessness of continuing the struggle.

A special defence meeting was immediately called, where it was decided that there could be no talk of surrender.

The Japanese Commander sent one message—that their forces would not initiate active hostilities for three hours. I conformed, including regretfully closing down on a promising counter-attack by Canadian troops on a large enemy "pocket" North-West of Bennets Hill. This impromptu "truce" was difficult to stage, for Japanese planes, operating from Canton, did not conform and bombed Stanley, Aberdeen and Mount Gough. Stanley was also shelled. A constant service of launches was maintained over Kowloon Bay and Japanese artillery continued bombarding the Gaps.

143. At 1030 hours the Royal Marines patrol (q.v. para. 132) reported having established contact with 2 Royal Scots at Wanchai Gap. This patrol had meanwhile been increased by thirty all ranks of Fortress R.E. who were reserved for a minor operation that night, i.e., the mopping up of an enemy post on Stubbs Road. At mid-day Japanese artillery opened up punctually on a large scale, and later hand to hand fighting was reported by 5/7 Rajput Regt. on Mount Parish, where a platoon was surrounded. Shortly afterwards Mount Parish fell into the enemy's hands, and an advance along Kennedy Road was threatened. This put

Fortress HQ area, which had a garrison of only one platoon of 2/14 Punjab Regt., in jeopardy. More road blocks and anti-tank mines were put out.

By 1300 hours, 25th December, the 2nd ("O'Brien Street") line was established, held by some 60-70 men of 1 Middlesex Regt., including small parties of Royal Navy, Royal Engineers, and 5/7 Rajput Regt. The enemy was now in the Wanchai A.R.P. tunnels (q.v. para. 135) but about noon an 18 pounder gun had arrived there, which, mounted in the main street, covered several of the exits. A number of rounds were fired at these exits, more as a deterrent than anything else. No casualties were observed to have been caused, and no enemy emerged.

144. Communications were increasingly difficult to maintain: between 1100 and 1200 hours there were none to Stanley area, Wanchai Gap and Magazine Gap, nor to the 2 Royal Scots.

145. There were, at noon, only six guns of the mobile artillery left in action, with an average of 160 rounds per gun available.

146. At 1430 hours two officers and fifty other ranks of 2/14 Punjab Regt. reached the Officer Commanding 1 Middlesex Regt., who had given warnings several times that his men, though in good heart, were being slowly but surely overwhelmed. A further withdrawal was enforced from the Canal Road area, and the "O'Brien Street line" became the forward active line of defence. HQ 1 Middlesex Regt. withdrew to Murray Barracks.

147. Very heavy dive-bombing attacks were made in the Wanchai Gap area between 1400 and 1430 hours, and shortly afterwards this Gap was reported lost.

Magazine Gap was similarly attacked and incendiaries were dropped—most effectively, for the hillside was set on fire and field cables were burnt. A little later the Gap itself came under mortar and small arms fire, and Commander, West Infantry Brigade, reported that the area could not in his opinion be held for more than 24 hours at the most against a determined attack.

148. At 1450 hours the Officer Commanding 1 Middlesex Regt. reported that his forward positions were being shelled from both Kowloon and North Point and that Captain C. M. Man, the Officer Commanding "Z" Company, had telephoned "the line is breaking." Lt.-Colonel Stewart said he would try to form yet another line East of the R.N. Yard if necessary, i.e., just below, and to the North of, Fortress HQ. The "O'Brien Street line," if seriously attacked, could not hold out long—perhaps half an hour.

149. I had no communications with East Infantry Brigade HQ at Stanley and consequently had no information.

As far as it was known, the force surrounded in Little Hong Kong Magazine area, was still holding out.

Bennets Hill had been heavily attacked, had been completely surrounded and by 1500 hours had been forced to surrender. The Canadian line north of Bennets Hill had been forced to give ground.