

often short of water and hot meals. Whether Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Signals, Infantry or members of the ancillary services, one and all played their part fully in the true traditions of the services.

The casualties suffered and those inflicted on the enemy speak for themselves.

In closing my despatch I wish to pay a special tribute to the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. They proved themselves to be a valuable portion of the garrison. In peace they had surrendered a great deal of their leisure to training, their mobilization was completed smoothly and quickly, and in action they proved themselves stubborn and gallant soldiers. To quote examples seems almost invidious but I should like to place on record the superb gallantry of No. 3 (Eurasian) Company at Wong Nei Chong Gap and of No. 1 Battery who undertook infantry defence in the Stanley area, while the efficiency and gallantry of their Signal section and despatch riders were outstanding.

My thanks and deep appreciation are also due to H.E. The Governor who was a tower of strength to me in our trying ordeal; and similarly I must place on record my admiration for all the members of his civil defence services who displayed magnificent fortitude and energy in their multitudinous activities.

APPENDIX A.

WAR NARRATIVE.

This War Narrative of the defence of Hong Kong is built up on the detailed record of Battle (Fortress) HQ kept at the time, minute by minute.

In some cases, where subsequent knowledge of facts has made it possible to insert items to make a clearer picture, this has been done in the text, but care has been taken not to include anything which would have a bearing on possible decisions which might have been taken. Frequently subsequent knowledge has been included in footnote form only. This despatch was compiled in a Prisoner of War Camp under constant fear of observation or search and with no clerical facilities. All maps, plans, schemes, orders, etc., were destroyed on capitulation and the officers and men marched to Shamshuipo, a distance of 5 miles, and were permitted to take only what they could carry on the person. The Fortress HQ War Diary was concealed and brought away. Cross checking has taken place where possible with survivors, but the Canadian troops were moved early to another camp and no visiting was allowed to hospitals, hospital camps or Indian camps. The timings are based on Hong Kong winter time then in force.

PART I.

Own Forces—Before the outbreak of war with Japan.

1. On the outbreak of war with Germany the garrison consisted of three infantry battalions and one machine gun battalion which permitted the employment of only one infantry battalion

on the mainland; its role was to cover a comprehensive scheme of demolitions and to act as a delaying force.

With the arrival on 16th November, 1941, of two Canadian battalions a new defence plan was brought in which had been originally outlined in 1937. It had never been fully practised, as troops had never been available in sufficient numbers. It employed three infantry battalions on the mainland on a front of 10½ miles—the so called "Gindrinks Line" sited on very commanding country but with certain inherent weaknesses. It had necessarily little depth, which in two localities was particularly dangerous, viz., Customs Pass and the Pass between Golden Hill and Laichikok Peninsula.

2. Owing to the extensive front, each battalion's layout consisted of a line of platoon localities, the gaps between which were covered by fire by day and by patrolling at night. One company only of each battalion could be kept in reserve and this was normally located in a prepared position covering the most dangerous line of enemy approach. The reserve company of the centre battalion (2/14 Punjab Regt.) was employed initially as "Forward Troops" on the Taipo Road to cover the demolitions and to delay the enemy's initial advance.

3. Directly the news arrived of reinforcement by two Canadian battalions, reconnaissance was carried out by commanding officers only, in order to maintain secrecy. The existing garrison carried out detailed reconnaissances down to platoons later, and worked out the exact defence plan for holding the Gindrinks Line. A considerable amount of work was found to be necessary, for (except for the centre sector) the line was in its partially completed form of three years previously, when the general policy of defence was altered and the Gindrinks Line abandoned.

4. A few days before the Canadian battalions arrived large working parties were found by the mainland battalions and a little later the three battalions occupied their sectors permanently to push on the work faster.* It was in these battle positions that the 5/7 Rajput Regt. (Right battalion), the 2/14 Punjab Regt. (Centre battalion) and the 2 Royal Scots (Left battalion) were located when war against Japan broke out.

The time was too short, however, for either of the (new) flank battalions to be practised properly in their defence roles by a series of four-day exercises which had been the custom in the past. These battalions, therefore, were not familiar with the successive rear defence positions. It was indeed unfortunate that the timing of events occurred in such a way that the Japanese attack developed when of the six battalions in the garrison, only two knew their roles in exact and practised detail. (The 1 Middlesex Regt. throughout had retained its role of beach defence and the 2/14 Punjab Regt. had been "Mainland battalion" centred on the Taipo Road.)

* The urgent necessity for speed called for this to be done in spite of it being a malarial time of the year. The 2 Royal Scots were in an area which was highly malarial and they had many cases. This weakened them considerably and, the hospital being full, many were sent back without the normal ten days convalescence. The battalion was 771 strong but only 600 effectives.