

This Island Defence Plan had been developed in great detail in co-operation with the Royal Navy over a period of years. It needed extremely careful study to get full value from every man in the extensive defence sectors (especially in the South East and South West), and it needed careful rehearsals, as had been done in the past. The date of attack, however, forestalled combined training with the Canadian troops.

The change over to holding the Gindrinkers Line necessitated a change of policy re deployment of artillery. Previously it was too risky to deploy any of the Hong Kong Regiment H.K.S.R.A., i.e., the mobile artillery, on the mainland, when the one battalion only could not hope to cause more than 48 hours delay if the enemy attacked in strength.

The new plan deployed the following on the mainland:—

One Troop 6 in. Howitzers—4 guns (2 Scammels for haulage).

One Troop 4.5 in. Howitzers—4 guns (hired vehicles).

Two Troops 3.7 Howitzers—8 guns, one troop only had mule transport.

Troops were sited for support as follows:—

One 3.7 in. Troop to cover the Right battalion.

One 3.7 in. Troop and the 4.5 in. Battery to cover the Centre and Left battalions.

The 6 in. Troop was to cover from the centre of the Right battalion to the extreme left on the Castle Peak Road. Additional support could be given to the Right battalion by two Sections of 6 in. Howitzers on the island.

5. The infantry organisation was also changed. Brigadier C. Wallis was appointed Mainland Commander, and the Island Commander (the two Canadian battalions and the 1 Middlesex Regt.) was Brigadier J. K. Lawson.

6. The evacuation of the mainland battalion under the former plan was the task of the Royal Navy ("Operation W/M"). It was not easy and had been practised three times. There was obviously no opportunity to work out full detail and to practise the new withdrawal operation. It was to the credit of all concerned that the eventual withdrawal from the mainland was carried out without any loss of guns and with less than forty men being cut off and captured.

Communications.

7. The change over to three battalions to hold the Gindrinkers Line necessitated complete reorganisation of the mainland communications and the carrying on of buried routes from the partially completed system that existed. Contracts were not completed when war came, in spite of the best endeavours of the Royal Corps of Signals which did excellent work.

8. It was unfortunate that the equipment situation in other theatres of war had not permitted earlier despatch of the garrison's infantry mortars and ammunition. For instance, the worst case, the 2/14 Punjab Regt. had had one 3 in. mortar demonstration, of a few rounds only. but ammunition in any

appreciable quantity did not arrive until November and then only 70 rounds per battalion both for war and for practice. Hence these mortars were fired and registered for the first time in their battle positions and twelve hours later were in action against the enemy.

The 2 in. mortar situation was worse, for there had been no receipt even of dummies, consequently the men had had no instruction in detonating. There had been no preliminary shooting and the 2 in. mortar ammunition was delivered actually in battle.

For 3 in. mortar there was neither pack mule nor carrying equipment for the men, consequently everything, including ammunition, had to be manhandled.

PART II.

Enemy Forces.

9. Appreciations of the situation at varying times during the preceding two years estimated two to four divisions of Japanese as available for the attack on Hong Kong.

On the evening of 6th December Chinese reports showed the arrival of three Japanese divisions at To Kat 8 miles from the frontier, on the previous day.

Information from the Far East Combined Bureau Singapore showed that attack was likely by one division, with another division in reserve. This I believe to be incorrect, as a Japanese Staff Officer informed me after the capitulation that two divisions had been deployed on the island and a third was held in reserve.

10. Three to four weeks before the outbreak of war all intelligence sources pointed to very unusual activity in Canton and Bocca Tigris, but the best efforts could not ascertain the contents of the shipping employed—the activities being equally explainable by either:—

(a) a concentration for an advance North West from Canton on to Kunming, or,

(b) development of a base of supply and staging depot for attack on Thailand.

The shipping was not universally fully laden towards Canton, and empty outwards. Information also showed that the Japanese defence lines round Canton had been drawn in so as to encircle the city more closely. It is clear that the Field Security Police of the Japanese Army had a high degree of efficiency.

Available information led to the following conclusions. That the:—

(a) Japanese night work was poor.

(b) Japanese preferred stereotyped methods and fixed plans.

(c) Japanese light automatics were not as numerous as ours nor so up to date.

(d) Japanese "Combined Operations" were thorough and that they had excellent boats and equipment but that their successes against the Chinese were flattering as there had never been real opposition.

(e) Japanese Air Force was not up to first class European standards, that their bombing was poor, and that they would not go in for night bombing