

remained in enemy hands. Information indicated that the enemy's local HQ and organising centre was at Wong Nei Chong Gap, but owing to the configuration of the ground it was not possible to shell this over the top of Mount Nicholson, for the remaining sections of mobile artillery were in positions in the area Victoria Peak-Mount Gough-Mount Kellett. However I am confident that heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy on the stretch of Blacks Link between Wong Nei Chong Gap and Middle Gap, for a 9.2-in. gun from Stanley had been engaging enemy in this area for the last two days with immediate observation from Shoushon Hill nearby. In addition Major H. Marsh had expended some 20,000 rounds from his medium machine guns on very good targets at ideal ranges. It was now learnt that two small ammunition convoys had got through to Little Hong Kong during the previous night and had returned successfully with much needed supplies. At this time Stanley was being supplied with ammunition by motor torpedo boat.

118. Meanwhile the situation to the North was causing me considerable anxiety. The composite company of 5/7 Rajput Regt. much reduced in numbers and short of ammunition and food, had been forced to withdraw at about 0800 hours, exposing the right flank of the Middlesex Leighton Hill position held by Captain C. M. Man's "Z" Company. At 0922 hours he was holding on, though the enemy was infiltrating into the houses and streets around him. He had only forty men, with six machine guns. At 1000 hours the enemy attacked him strongly, and heavily shelled the Bowrington area.

At 1100 hours the bombardment again intensified and the positions of one machine gun platoon were completely destroyed. The guns, however, moved into the Lee Theatre to hold the North flank. At Fortress H.Q. fifty Royal Artillery and 2 Royal Scots personnel were collected and sent to reinforce 1 Middlesex Regt.

119. At 1000 hours 23rd December Commander East Infantry Brigade reported that a counter-attack on Stanley Mound had failed. The Royal Rifles of Canada had had heavy losses, the enemy were infiltrating and the Commanding Officer felt he must fall back. The Infantry Brigade was in the process of reconnoitering and organising three defensive positions in depth which were to be held to the last, the most northerly being well forward of Stanley Village. The Canadians felt that they could put up a better resistance on flatter ground, and on a narrower front, where communications would be simpler. The loss of the tactically important high ground was fully realised and very regrettable.

120. At 1000 hours the enemy were attacking Bennets Hill and bombing Aberdeen Dockyard, also A.A. positions in Victoria City.

121. At 1130 hours HQ 1 Middlesex Regt. was forced to withdraw to a prepared position. At noon the line ran:—South-east corner Race Course to (exclusive) Leighton Hill (sixty men of 5/7 Rajput Regt.)—Leighton Hill and northwards (by 1 Middlesex Regt) to pill box 55.

At about 1500 hours the enemy attacked, but was beaten off.

122. At 1330 hours 23rd December communication was re-established with HQ West Infantry Brigade at Magazine Gap and it was learnt that about 250 enemy were round St. Albert's Convent, that our troops on the Northern slopes of Mount Cameron were withdrawing* and that Magazine Gap and Wanchai Gap were being heavily bombed. The positions at every "gap" were unenviable, for the nature of the country was such that local defence was bound to be restricted and confined to the gap itself, thus providing an excellent target for the enemy air force, which did not fail to take due advantage of the opportunity. These positions were originally prepared for limiting any enemy exploitation after a South shore landing.

At 1430 hours our line ran from Bennets Hill to Wanchai Gap, and a patrol of 2 Royal Scots was going out to Mount Cameron.

123. At 1645 hours 23rd December the last Army W/T set was knocked out by shell fire, and communications with the United Kingdom and Singapore ceased except that military messages could be and were transmitted by Royal Navy W/T.

124. At 1730 hours communication was reopened at HQ 2 Royal Scots at Wanchai Gap, who reported that they were holding the western slopes of Mount Cameron.

125. With difficulty eight ammunition lorries had been collected and organised, and during the night six of these managed, with the help of an armoured car of the HKVDC, to get to the Ordnance Depot at Little Hong Kong and obtain some badly wanted gun and mortar ammunition. There were unfortunately no hand grenades there (they were in the other Reserve Depot at The Ridge), for these were now urgently needed in the street fighting which was developing in the area North of the Race Course.

126. Morning (23/24th December) dispositions of West Infantry Brigade were—Brigade HQ Magazine Gap, HQ 2 Royal Scots and Winnipeg Grenadiers at Wanchai Gap, 2 Royal Scots still holding the West slopes of Mount Cameron and patrolling forward, Winnipeg Grenadiers holding down to Aberdeen Reservoir, Little Hong Kong area still holding out, 4 and 7 Companies HKVDC on the new line to which they had been moved (Mount Kellett to Mount Gough).

127:—(a) At about 0400 hours 24th December the Royal Rifles of Canada were back on a line across Stanley Peninsula from near pill box 27 on Tytam Bay, through St Stephens College buildings to West Bay, but the battalion required regrouping. A forward line had been formed through the Police Station manned by "B" and "D" companies 1 Middlesex Regiment, some H.K.V.D.C., prison warders (enlisted as volunteers), and a few other personnel. The 1 Middlesex crews from the pill boxes in the area of Repulse Bay had been ordered to withdraw and had joined the Stanley Forces with all their machine guns, equipment and most of the small arms ammunition—a timely reinforcement and an excellent achievement.

(b) Brigadier Wallis assured me that Stanley Force were in good heart and that he was con-

* It was not till some time later that this statement re withdrawal was found to be untrue.