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10,000 Empire Troops Battled 60,000 Japs Before Hong Kong Fell

By GRAHAM BARROW

Chungking, Aug. 28 (Reuters).—Ten thousand British, Indian and Canadian troops, without an air force, without a navy, faced 60,000 Japanese in the siege of Hong Kong in December, 1941, Maj.-Gen. Michael Maltby, who commanded the garrison, said today upon arrival here with high American, British and Dutch officials released from Japanese prison camps.

Gen. Maltby paid tribute to his men, who, he said, wiped out far more Japanese than the casualties the garrison suffered. Two Indian battalions, he said, fought with particular gallantry, but were swamped eventually by superior numbers before the enforced surrender on Christmas Day.

(The Canadian Hong Kong contingent included two battalions, the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, and a brigade headquarters, numbering in all about 1,985 men. After the surrender the Japanese reported they took 1,689 prisoners. It has been officially assumed that 296 Canadians were killed or missing in the fighting. Some of those taken prisoner are known to have died since.)

Makeshift Hospital

Several British military and civilian officials told correspondents of their experiences since they were imprisoned by the enemy. Hardly able to believe they were back in the world again, they said they had only heard eight hours ago of President Roosevelt's death in April and Prime Minister Churchill's defeat in the July British elections.

They were bitter about their treatment and the lean diet they received.

Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of Malaya, said he had been shelled out of Government House at Singapore two days before the Japanese entered the city. Civilians then were marched 10 miles to prison outside the city, where they were interned.

Lady Thomas, he said, had dysentery and was taken to a makeshift hospital in a lunatic asylum where the insane were on one side of a ward, ordinary patients on the other. Some internes were more than 90 years of age.

In August, 1942, Sir Shenton was taken to Formosa in the hold of a cargo ship in which there was not room to lie down and where rats were plentiful. In two camps on Formosa, he lost 64 pounds. Last October he was transferred to Manchuria.

"Most Cheerful Incident"

Gen. A. E. Percival, commanding general at Singapore, said that after the city's fall British troops were separated from Indians, Chinese and Malayans and taken to the outskirts of the city where officers were permitted a certain amount of command over their own troops. Later they were transferred to other camps, and finally to Manchuria.

Sir Mark Young, Governor of Hong Kong, was confined to his hotel for seven weeks after the island fell, and was not allowed to communicate with any one. Then he was flown to Shanghai and placed in a camp with 1,500 others. After seven months he was flown to Formosa.

C. R. Smith, an official of North Borneo, told of seeing a ship torpedoed in the convoy taking him to Formosa and he said watching the panic-stricken Japanese was "the most cheerful incident I ever witnessed."

Sir Percy McElwaine, a justice of the peace in Malaya, commented: "My job for years has been to supply tenants for the Singapore jail. I never expected to become one myself."

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