Ralston Announces Canadian Soldier Dead at Hong Kong

Ottawa, May 1.—(CP)—Lt.-Col. John L. R. Sutcliffe, officer commanding the 1st Battalion of the Winnipeg Grenadiers at Hong Kong, had died of illness while a prisoner of war, Hon. J. L. Ralston, defence minister, announced to-day.

The information reached national defence headquarters here in a message from the International Red Cross at Geneva.

The date of Col. Sutcliffe's death was not stated and Col. Ralston said further details are being awaited.

Col. Sutcliffe was senior battalion commander with the Canadians at Hong Kong. He took over command of the Canadian contingent after Brig. J. K. Lawson, of Ottawa, brigade commander, and Col. Patrick Hennessey, of Ottawa, second in command, were killed by Japanese shellfire.

Col. Sutcliffe carried on with the remaining Canadian forces until the British garrison in the Far East colony was compelled to capitulate to superior numbers of Japanese last Christmas day.

Canada's Hong Kong contingent numbered 1,985 officers and men, mostly members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and Quebec Royal Rifles. The Japanese have reported that 1,689 Canadians were taken prisoner when Hong Kong fell. On this basis it has been assumed officially that 296 members of the Canadian contingent lost their lives in the Hong Kong fighting or are missing.

Fate Unknown

Fate of individual Canadians in the Hong Kong defence force is known only in a few isolated cases. Several have been listed previously by the national defence department as having died while prisoners of the Japanese.

Representatives of the Argentine government—until recently Canada's protecting power in relations with Japan—made requests to the Japanese government for permission to visit Hong Kong, but that permission was refused.

The Canadian contingent of 1,985 officers and men sailed from Canada at the end of October last year and reached Hong Kong in the middle of November. Only a few weeks later Japan entered the war.

Sir Lyman Duff, chief justice, recently completed a royal commission inquiry into the dispatch of Canadian troops to Hong Kong. His report is expected to be issued in the near future.

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