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*The battle of Hong Kong 1941: A note on the
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*The battle of Hong Kong 1941: A note on the
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The Battle of Hong Kong 1941: a
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Abstract

From the stance of a person growing up in Hong Kong, this short essay re-assesses the Battle of Hong Kong of December 1941 as recorded in the English and Chinese literature largely found in the University of Hong Kong Library. It examines the views of political leaders, war historians, veterans and civilians of different persuasions and makes some informed speculation about their focus. It argues that a common omission is the relative fighting power of the defender of Hong Kong. The essay argues that the performance of the Hong Kong garrison was much better than the defender of Crete or Singapore. It makes a few speculative suggestions for the effectiveness of the defence and concludes by making a case for further research into the Battle from historical and military science points of view.

Introduction

" Memories of the war in Hong Kong, of the sharp and bitter struggle which ended with the capture of the Colony on Christmas Day, are kept on a more realistic plane than most other places. It was by tacit agreement decided that the war in Hong Kong had best be forgotten." This statement in a publication of Ricci Hall of the University of Hong Kong (Ricci Hall 1954) reflected the peculiar political context of Hong Kong as a Crown Colony in China. The Union Jack as a symbol of

British reign in Hong Kong has gone, and the ruins of the Second World War, associated with Hong Kong immediate colonial past, lie wasting. The military cemeteries in Stanley and Sai Wan, however, have been as well maintained as before¹. The respect for those who sacrificed their lives for a just cause has not been altered by a change in governance.

Military operations in Europe and North Africa in the Second World War II have been intensively studied by authors from the belligerent countries since the end of the hostility. The intensity of the studies is mirrored by the meticulous interest of model enthusiasts. There has been less interest in events in Asian theatres of war, particularly those before the change of the tide of war after the Battle of Midway. Save for a few battles, little has been written in English about the major battles in the Pacific War. One exception is the Battle of Hong Kong fought against the Japanese forces in December 1941. In this Battle, two brigades of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps without air cover fought three full-strength Japanese divisions supported by an air fleet.

The Battle broke out at 08:00 hour on 8 December, when the air raid on Kai Tak Airfield began, and lasted to 15:25 hour on Christmas Day, when the Governor Sir Mark Young made the decision to surrender. This led to the official ending of the almost 18-day fighting, which was intended to cease at 18:00 hour, when for the first time in history, a British Crown Colony was surrendered to enemy forces with her governor taken as a prisoner. This surrender occurred one hundred years after the creation of the colony. A miserable 3 year and 8 months period

followed for the captive defenders and civilians until the British administration returned on 30 August 1945.

Briefly, the Battle was conducted in two distinct phases². From 8 to 13 December, it was fought in the New Territories and Kowloon. This phase ended with the fall of the Shing Mun Redoubt of the Gin Drinkers Line on 11 December and the final evacuation of defence forces to the Island of Hong Kong two days later. The second phase commenced in the early morning of 18 December when the Japanese made their first attempted landings on the Island near Lei Yue Mun Strait, the eastern approach to Victoria Harbour, and ended with the surrender one week later. Before the final capitulation, the Governor had rejected the Japanese request for surrender twice, on 13 and 17 December.

We shall consider a brief textual review of the English and Chinese publications and materials on the Battle of Hong Kong available in the University of Hong Kong Library which provides points of reference for our re-assessment of the performance of the defender of Hong Kong.

A Review of the Literature³

Strategy

In terms of the strategic and historical aspects of the Battle, the best known works from the British points of view are those of Winston Churchill (Churchill 1950), the Minister who led Britain to final victory, and Liddell Hart (Liddell Hart 1970), the strategist renowned for his theory on the use of tanks in modern warfare and "indirect

approach"⁴ (Liddell Hart 1991) as a general war strategy. There are few recent works in English that make reference to Hong Kong at this level of analysis. The common tenor of Churchill and Liddell Hart was that Hong Kong could not be defended. The former, however, held that Hong Kong should be nominally defended to deter the Japanese. In early 1941, Churchill told General Sir Hastings, his Chief of Staff:

"There is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of augmenting the garrison it ought to be reduced to a symbolic scale....Japan will think long before declaring war on the British Empire, and whether there are two or six battalions at Hong Kong will make no difference to her choice."⁵

It was true that Churchill's Chiefs of Staff⁶ favoured reinforcing the Hong Kong garrison so that it could maintain a "more worthy" defence or even a degree of deterrence, and Major-General A.E. Grasett, the former General Officer Commanding in Hong Kong, made a contribution to the strength of the defence by arranging for two Canadian battalions to arrive in the Colony in October 1941. Yet, under the dominant influence of Churchill's strategic concept, The Hong Kong garrison was outnumbered by the Japanese 3 to 1 when the invasion occurred.

Churchill's position and decision apparently attracted universal criticism after the war⁷. Liddell Hart thought that this was a patent mistake, which was exacerbated by the Grasett's contribution, which cost many lives of the garrison. In other words, Liddell Hart considered that as Hong Kong could not be defended, it should not have

been defended. In his *History of the Second World War*, Liddell Hart recalled what he said to General Dill in March 1935 about Hong Kong (Liddell Hart 1999):

"I suggested, and he appeared to agree, that it would be better to risk its loss by holding it too lightly than to strengthen it so much as to make it, morally, a "Verdun" or "Port Arthur" with great danger to our prestige if lost."⁸

Some veterans complained about the lack of sympathy of London with colonial subjects, as evidenced in Colonel Anthony Hewitt's⁹ comments in his foreword to the work of Ko and Wordie (Ko and Wordie (1996)). Hewitt's passing comment is mild compared with the criticism of military historians of the allied countries. Vincent (Vincent 1981) and Ferguson (1980), Cameron (Cameron 1991) and most Chinese authors such as Yip (Yip 1982); Yuen (Yuen 1988) and Tse (Tse 1995) criticised the British Government for being totally unprepared for the invasion of the Colony. The critical views expressed in English works in this period were pertinent to post war claims for compensation by ex-servicemen in Commonwealth countries. The prevailing Chinese position is that Hong Kong should be defended and could be defended. An odd view is Tse (Tse 1995) who argued that Japan made a strategic mistake by taking the Colony, as it would serve no useful military purpose.

Bell's archive research (Bell 1996) established that Hong Kong was not treated as an outpost but "an integral component of an offensive strategy" based on faith in the superiority of the Royal Navy and the certainty of Hong Kong's relief. However, Bell's offensive strategy

view is hardly consistent with the absence of fighters or bombers in the Colony before the outbreak of the Battle.

"Britain did not have enough men, or enough guns, tanks, ships and aeroplanes for the war against Germany. So it was impossible to send sufficient men and supplies for the defence of Hong Kong. These included the men of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. These men - English, Chinese, Eurasians, Portuguese and others - whose homes were in Hong Kong, prepared to defend the Colony from attack."(Stokes, 1965, p.89)

Though it is highly questionable whether the Scottish, Canadian and Indian soldiers in the "others category" mentioned by Stokes would regard Hong Kong as their permanent homes, Stokes' description is one of the best descriptions about the background Battle of Hong Kong.

The Battle itself

In terms of the actual fighting, a host of publications specifically on the facts of the fall of Hong Kong and its aftermath, both English and Chinese, has been published, beginning in 1943 with Harrop's memoir, *The Hong Kong Incident* (Harrop 1943). This was followed after the war by the despatch by Major-General C.M. Maltby to the Secretary of State in the *London Gazette*, "Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December, 1941" of 1948 and a Hong Kong Government publication in the same year, *Events in Hong Kong on 25th December 1941* (Hong Kong Government 1948) and in 1953, *A Record of the Actions of*

the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle of Hong Kong. 7 years later, Carew's book *The Fall of Hong Kong* was published (Carew 1960). Endacott's *History of Hong Kong*, first published in 1958 (Endacott 1958), and Fung's Chinese counterpart of 1967 (Fung 1967) represented the earliest local works that put the Battle in the historical context of the Colony.

Another 17 years lapsed before another phase of active publication occurred, starting with Coates' *A Mountain of Light* (Coates 1977). One year later, *Hong Kong Eclipse* commenced by Endacott and posthumously completed by Birch appeared (Endacott and Birch 1978) when Lindsay's *The Lasting Honour: the Fall of Hong Kong 1941* (Lindsay 1941). Birch's own Radio Hong Kong broadcast on the Battle was published one year later in a book entitled *Captive Christmas: the Battle of Hong Kong* (Birch 1979). In 1980, Ferguson's work, *Desperate Siege: the Battle of Hong Kong*, was published (Ferguson 1980). In the following year, Vincent's work, *No Reason Why: the Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy: an examination*, and Lindsay's second work, *At the Going Down of the Sun: Hong Kong and South East Asia 1941-1945* (Lindsay 1981), were in print (Vincent 1981). This active phase of publication ended with the first systematic Chinese account, *A History of the Fall of Hong Kong*, of Yip (Yip 1982) and *The Royal Hong Kong Police 1841-1945*¹⁰ written by Crisswell and Watson (Crisswell and Watson 1982). Most English works in this period retained a condescending view about the reliability of Chinese soldiers who happened to be in the Colony and Chinese civilians who helped the defence of Hong Kong. The odd exception was the Chinese translation of Walter Easey published in 1977 (Easey 1977).

During the last 7 years of the so-called "transition period", i.e. the 13 years from the Sino-British Agreement over the return of Hong Kong on 1 July 1997 as a British Colony to China witnessed another boom in literal outputs related to the fall of the colony to the Japanese and its aftermath. The first work was Bruce's *Second to None: the Story of the Hong Kong Volunteers of 1991* (Bruce 1991). The second work was Rollo's *The Guns and Gunners of Hong Kong* (Rollo 1992). Next came a Chinese work on the communist guerrillas that operated in occupied Hong Kong, Tsui's *Partisan Activities in Hong Kong* (Tsui 1993), published in 1993. The following year saw the work of Wright-Nooth, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads: the Fall of Hong Kong and Imprisonment by the Japanese* (Wright-Nooth 1994). In 1995, two more Chinese works appeared, Ko and Tong's *Hong Kong: Japanese Occupation Period* (Ko and Tong 1995) and Tse's *The Fall of Hong Kong* (Tse 1995). *Ruins of War: a Guide to Hong Kong's Battlefields and Wartime Sites*, written by Ko and Wordie (Ko and Wordie 1996), was the major last work of this period. The publications in this period are generally less restrictive than earlier works in that they (a) give due credit to the Chinese defenders in the Battle and communist partisans, with their base in Sai Kung, New Territories, during the occupation; (b) spell out the potential and actual contribution of Chinese soldiers in the Colony; and (c) give sympathetic consideration to the Chinese civilians. The same is true of general history books on Hong Kong such as Cameron (Cameron 1991); Welsh (1997) and Morris (1997) and Chan (1990).

Churchill's Wisdom of Defending Hong Kong in Retrospect

The recurrent theme of unofficial publications is that the fall of Hong Kong was inevitable and its belated reinforcement by the two Canadian battalions was pointless. We hold that in this regard a more comprehensive view of the battle requires an appreciation of the post-war history of British Hong Kong. The books referred to above have not discussed the political consequence of not fighting an impossible battle.

One may speculate that had the British Administration given up the Colony without a fight, it would have lost the Colony forever. The reality is that the British had been able to retain Hong Kong as a colony for another 52 years after August 1945, notwithstanding the promise of Britain to the Chinese Government in 1943 that she would return all her possessions in China after the end of the war. In this light, Churchill's decision was not irrational, and the garrison's sacrifice was a contribution to the way of life and system of government in Hong Kong today.

In terms of duty and moral responsibility, Churchill's decision was also reasonable, given the constraints confronting his administration. For the sake of argument, what other options were available to Churchill in December 1941, assuming that "the British Far Eastern Strategy" (Bell 1996), for which he was not responsible, with respect to Hong Kong had been wrong? Should he have handed over the Colony to the invading Japanese forces without a fight? Should he have "returned" the Colony to the Chinese Government, which had lost control of Canton and a meagre military presence in or near Hong Kong? Or should he have made efforts to evacuate the Governor and the Hong Kong garrison by sea or air and left the rest of the population of Hong Kong in a state of

anarchy¹¹? Bell suggested that demilitarisation and evacuation were feasible options and that the ruling out of these options by the British Government was not justified (Bell 1996). We do not think that these options were politically sensible or morally responsible. Therefore, we dispute the view that the efforts of the Hong Kong garrison, though military probably doomed to fail, were unnecessary or pointless. The complaint by some authors, such as Blackburn 1989) about looting by the "Chinese" during and after the fighting testified the need for British military presence in Hong Kong to avoid a state of anarchy for the population of Hong Kong. We dispute the view of some recent authors that the British administration was humiliated in the eyes of the local population when the small Hong Kong garrison surrendered. That would have been the case had they fled or surrendered Hong Kong without a shoot. The majority of the law-abiding Chinese population, irrespective of their views towards colonialism in Chinese territories, had always been supportive to measures that defend their liberty, lives and property against Japanese invaders. At the time the Japanese troops marche

The Performance of the Hong Kong Garrison

While politics and good will may be controversial, an objective assessment of the actual performance of the defender vis-à-vis the invader is not impossible.

All authors referred on the literature above pointed out that the Hong Kong garrison was militarily facing a hopeless situation on 8 December 1941. The Colony was isolated, with virtual no air cover or naval support, outnumbered 3 to 1 by the Japanese, and largely without combat experience, adequate training, sufficient ammunition or even winter uniform. Furthermore, it was an assortment of nationals who spoke different native languages, English, Cantonese and several Indian dialects. It was thrown into a battle against well-prepared and veterans of the Japanese Imperial Army, which had at least 5 years combat history in China and was well supplied with detailed intelligence and mapping information about the Colony. During the Battle, the invader was also assisted by Japanese agents and Chinese collaborators living in the Colony. On the other hand, the British forces laboured under the impression that the offer of assistance by the Chinese forces and other Chinese groups as being unreliable. The final collapse of the resistance happened not only earlier than the London authorities had expected, 17 days instead of 90 days¹², but also far ahead of schedule of the Japanese, who contemplated that half a year¹³ would be required to conquer the Colony. Thus, many commentators argue that the defence of Hong Kong was a shambles. However, no author has actually attempted to measure the "fighting power" or effectiveness

of the Hong Kong garrison or made a comparative study of the tactics of the defender vis-à-vis the invader.

We argue that it is unfair to pass judgement on the performance of the garrison by solely comparing the actual and planned duration of the battle or any other military dimension of the fall of the Hong Kong. The performance of a military force is always a relative term in many senses. Authors on the Battle of Hong Kong have not rigorously compared the performance of the Hong Kong garrison with that of the Japanese invader, save statistics of casualties and strength. Nor have they compared the performance of the garrison with British garrisons in other theatres of war.

It is true that the better performance of the Hong Kong garrison did not prevent the fall of Hong Kong. Yet, it should be recognised by the military historian that the Hong Kong garrison, notwithstanding its inferior strength, did not only (a) manage to hold out for a much longer period of time; but also (b) sustain a much lower loss rate, as weighted by relative strength, than its adversary relative to the latter's strength. The former was probably the true mission of the garrison as contemplated by Churchill and both (a) and (b) testified the battle worthiness of the garrison.

Evidence of these two points is adduced in Table 1, which compares several dimensions of the Battles of Crete, Hong Kong and Singapore. These battles all involved British forces repulsing invading well-prepared axis forces which had either absolute or relative local air superiority and which succeeded eventually in overrunning the defended territories, taking a large number of prisoners. Each battle has

attracted much post-war criticism of the failure of Churchill's strategy or tactics about defence of the island concerned. In all cases, the battles were mainly fought on land, though German invaders of Crete were air-borne. In the cases of both Hong Kong and Singapore, the conflict was largely between infantries supported by artillery and there was no naval support during the hostility as the navy either was absent or had been wiped out. Evacuation by sea was only possible for a part of the Crete garrison.

Table 1: The Battles of Crete, Hong Kong and Singapore Compared

British Possessions Taken by Axis forces (Date)	Crete ¹⁴ (evacuation: 31.5.1941)	Hong Kong ¹⁵ (surrender: 25.12.1941)	Singapore ¹⁶ (surrender: 15.2.1942)
Land Area defended (approx. square km)	8300 ¹⁷	1013 ¹⁸	582 ¹⁹
Local British Air Superiority immediately before and during the battle	no	no (virtually no air combat capabilities force ab initio)	no
Local British Naval Superiority immediately before and during the battle	yes	no	no (due to loss of the <i>Prince of Wales</i> and <i>Repulse</i>)
Length of Fighting prior to evacuation/ Surrender	11 Days (20.5.1941- 31.5.1941)	17 Days (8.12.1941- 25.12.1941)	7 Days (8.2.1942- 15.2.1942) [Battle of Malaya: 70 days: 8.12.1941- 15.2.1942]
No of British POW taken by Axis forces	12,000 approx.	10,000 approx.	130,000 approx.
Strength of defendants prior to Axis invasion	42,640	12,931	85,000
Strength of invading Axis forces	22,000	40,000 (excluding naval and air forces)	35,000 (excluding naval and air forces)

Ratio of strength of invading to defending forces (X)	0.52	3.09	0.42 [Battle of Malaya: 0.5]
British Losses During hostilities [loss rate]	15,743 (killed in action: 3,000) [37%]	4,413 (killed in action: 2,113) [34%]	3,708 [4%] [Battle of Malaya: 138,708 killed, wounded and captured]
Axis Losses [loss rate]	6,580 (6000 paratroopers) [30%]	2,096 (killed in action: 683) [5%]	5,093 (killed in action: 1715) [15%] [Battle of Malaya: 9,612: 3,507 dead, 6,105 wounded]
Ratio of British/Axis losses (Y)	2.39	2.11 (killed in action: 3.1)	0.73 [Battle of Malaya: 14.43]
Relative loss rate of defenders to invaders in combat weighted by relative strength of invaders to defenders (Y/X)	4.60	0.68	1.74 [Battle of Malaya: 28.86]

The British defenders of Crete and Singapore outnumbered their invaders. The German forces that invaded Crete had a strength that was only about 50% of the British garrison. The garrison in Singapore had a numerical superiority of more than 2 to 1. Yet, Crete yielded in 11

days and Singapore surrendered in one week. The outnumbered garrison in Hong Kong, however, was able to hold out for more than half a month.

The loss rates for the three invasions for both sides were high in the Battle of Crete. The Axis loss, including missing figures, was 30%, which also meant a hard blow on Hitler's paratroopers' strength. The British loss was 5% higher and was almost 40%. In the case of Hong Kong, the loss rate of the British forces measured in terms of killed and wounded alone amounted to 34% whereas the Japanese incurred just 5%. If we compare only these rates of Hong Kong with those of Singapore, it would seem that the Hong Kong garrison was less effective in inflicting casualties on the enemy. Both the Crete and Hong Kong garrisons had sustained a relative loss rate of more than 2 to 1. However, if we weigh the relative loss rate of the British garrison by its relative strength vis-à-vis the invader for each battlefield, then we would come to the conclusion that the Hong Kong garrison was most effective in inflicting disproportionate casualties upon the invader. As indicated in Table 1, the Japanese outnumbered the Hong Kong garrison by 3.09 (X). However, they could only inflict a casualty rate of 2.11 (Y). The Singapore garrison, by comparison, fared better than its counterpart in Crete.

Some Speculative Thoughts regarding the merits of the defence

Constrained by the statistics available to the author, the above analysis is crude indeed. However, it raises the point that the Hong Kong garrison, however unprepared and poorly equipped, had fought quite

well. There are indeed sources that suggest a much higher casualty rate for the Japanese. Why was this the case?

Any answer to this question surely requires a much more rigorous study. A number of speculative points and observations worthy of attention are raised below. Firstly, the *geography* of Hong Kong rendered defence more effective than that of Singapore. It is a cliché that the Japanese forces were well trained and prepared. Yet, they did suffer great losses. Most such losses were incurred when they made attempts to cross the harbour and in fighting for control of the hills and gaps on Hong Kong Island. In both the Battle of Singapore and the Battle of Hong Kong, the Japanese forces aimed at capturing reservoirs as their tactical targets, as they had anticipated long resistance and the loss of water supply would erode the morale of the defending forces and their ability to continue fighting. Unlike the Island of Singapore, Hong Kong Island is much larger in size, and is highly rugged in relief with several reservoirs in different parts of the upland areas.

Secondly, the *size of the garrison* was also a factor. Comparing again Hong Kong and Singapore, a smaller garrison operating in a more defensible topography proved to be more battle worthy than a large number of troops congested in a much smaller flat island devoid of air cover and was running out of fresh water.

Thirdly, notwithstanding criticism of the design weakness of the Gin Drinkers Line, the Hong Kong garrison fought orderly according to a *pre-conceived plan with defence structures well in place*. As soon as the under-powered Shing Mun Redoubt was lost, the garrison evacuated the New Territories and Kowloon to prepare for fighting pitched battles

in fence works on the upland and coastal lowland of the Island of Hong Kong. The defence works in the uplands did pose for some time death barriers for the advancing Japanese infantry, though these works were often only defended with small infantry arms. It is well reported that the Japanese had good maps as to the locations of these defence positions. It is also correct to say that the best post war documentation of the routes of invasions and battles is that produced by Japanese authors rather than the British. Nevertheless, there are reports that the Japanese Army had to make several pointless raids on unmanned defence positions, such as those in Sai Kung, and that it had to force civilians to be guides when approaching lines of resistance. It is interesting to know just how well informed the Japanese were about these defence works at the time of the hostility.

Fourthly, while the British might have made a tactical mistake by abandoning the defence works in the Devil's Peak area on the Kowloon side, *the Japanese also appeared to have committed a number of tactical mistakes* that delayed their victory. The withdrawal of the defending forces and equipment to the Island from the mainland was unhindered by much Japanese interference. As commented on by Tse (Tse 1996), the Japanese apparently missed an opportunity to pursue the retreating British forces. Besides, the Japanese infantry suffered huge losses on the Island until it had obtained artillery support.

Fifthly, the frequent argument that the Hong Kong garrison was significantly less well-equipped in weaponry than the invading forces must be carefully interpreted. While it is true that the Japanese had an absolute control of the air, the Battle of Hong Kong was mainly fought on the ground. A close analysis of the weapons and transport

equipment possessed by the Hong Kong garrison shows that the defenders had at their disposal quite a high percentage of machine guns, field guns and conveyances. The garrison had over 2,042 machines (a very high ratio of one per 6 defenders); 152 mobile guns (comprising 49 field guns²⁰; at least 27 anti-aircraft guns and 86 mortars) as well as 31 coastal defence guns²¹ in fixed locations. Ignoring the fixed guns, the defenders used 152 mobile guns to contest 203 guns and mortars, of various calibres, of the invaders. The defenders were not overwhelmingly outnumbered in the number of mobile guns in absolute terms. In relative terms, the defenders had one gun per 85 persons and the Japanese one per 197. This observation should of course be qualified by the claim that the defenders faced shortages in ammunition, notably for mortars. However, the movement of the defenders' guns within the defence perimeter throughout the Battle was rather hectic, aided by at least 20 armoured cars and more than 3,000 motor cars and 600 trucks. This indicated that the artillery arm of the garrison was playing a key role in prolonging the duration of the defence. Therefore, the effective firepower of the defenders did not appear to be as weak as frequently represented in publications up to now on the Battle of Hong Kong. The story of the defence of Hong Kong apparently could well have been distorted in favour of the winner.

Conclusion: a Plea for Further Study

The above points are just informed speculations and the Battle of Hong Kong is certainly an under-researched military episode in the Second World War. This being the case, it should be just a matter of interest not only to those directly involved.

In broad historical terms, the significance of the Battle of Hong Kong should not be limited to a matter of war relics or past history. It has implications for the post-war political development of Hong Kong, a living issue that affects the present both physically and socially. We have mentioned the credibility of the defence of Hong Kong as a matter of responsible government and a matter of fact but not as an apology for British colonialism. There are still unknown numbers of unexploded bombs, both Japanese and Allied, yet to be unearthed in highly congested urban sites. There are also quite a number of old people in Hong Kong (and elsewhere in Asia) who still hold Japanese military currency, forced upon them when their convertible currencies were expropriated during the occupation, in the vain hope of obtaining compensation by the Japanese government.....(Takagi Keniti; Kobayasi Hideo and Isida Jimtarou 1995)

The military aspects of the fighting itself should be interesting case study materials for the military scientist. Many other questions have remained unanswered. The size and role and size of the "fifth columnists", the tactics of the Japanese and the use value of occupied Hong Kong to the Japanese are just a few examples. Though these questions for a minor theatre of war may not catch the attention of those who are only interested in the broad brush views of Liddell Hart (1970), it should not be ignored by those who follow the steps of experts in military studies, people such as J.A. English and Gudmundsson (1994), Ponting (1995) or van Creveld (1982).

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Footnotes

¹ Though some veterans may believe that the new government in Hong Kong will remove every object reminding the colonial history of Hong Kong. For instance, see Neillands (1996): 600-601.

² For an excellent succinct account of the Battle and description of its sites, see Ko and Wordie (1996). For greater details from official sources, see "Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December, 1941", Despatch submitted to the Secretary of State for War by Major-General G.M. Maltby, *London Gazette: Supplement, 29 January 1948*; *A Record of the Actions of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle of Hong Kong December, 1941* (1953). For the official Hong Kong account of the surrender, see Hong Kong Government (1948).

³ The literature referred to in this section is not exhaustive and focuses on books and reports only. English and Chinese newspapers and periodicals from time to time carry articles on the Battle. Post-war annals of universities, university halls and secondary schools in Hong Kong are also a good source of materials about the Battle. There are also a number of novels on war events.

⁴ The emphasis is placed on attacking the enemies' "line of least resistance" or "line of least expectation".

⁵ As quoted in Ko and Wordie (1996), p.18.

⁶ They were influenced by the views of Air Chief Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, the British Commander-in-Chief in the Far East.

⁷ During the initial stage of the Battle, the BBC broadcast (Orwell 1987) played high hopes on the availability of Chinese forces in the vicinity of Hong Kong. Such forces were never to come.

⁸ Liddell Hart (1999): footnote at 219.

⁹ Colonel Hewitt is the author of a number of books on the Battle and Japanese occupation of the Colony.

¹⁰ The title of the book is a misnomer as the police force obtained the royal title only in the late 1960s.

¹¹ Blackburn gave an account of the anarchic situation of Hong Kong shortly before the surrender (Blackburn 1989).

¹² On 23 October 1937, the Joint Overseas and Home Defence Committee considered re-fortification or de-militarisation of Hong Kong, assuming that it took 90 days for the British fleet to relieve Hong Kong. Rollo (1992): 113. According to Aldrich, the British Chiefs of Staff considered the abandonment of Shanghai and demilitarisation of Hong Kong to avoid confrontation with Japan. Aldrich (1993): 261.

¹³ Yip (1982): 94.

¹⁴ Figures on losses for the Battle of Crete include those of killed, wounded, captured and missing. Source: Arbeitskreis fur Wehrforschung (1994)

¹⁵ Figures on losses for the Battle of Hong Kong are those on casualties only, i.e. those of killed and wounded. Source: Ko and Wordie (1996)

¹⁶ Figures on British losses are estimated by deducing total casualties in the Malaya campaign as reckoned by Leasor minus those losses incurred on the Malay Peninsula loss recorded by Liddell Hart. Japanese losses for the Battle of Singapore are those on casualties only, i.e. those of killed and wounded. Source: Leasor (1968); Liddell Hart (1970)

¹⁷ <http://www.crete.tournet.gr/crete-intro-Location and Size-15-en.html>

¹⁸ *Annual Report*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government Printer, 1938.

¹⁹ *Singapore Year Book*, Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1965.

²⁰ According to Rollo (1992), this figure includes 6 x 18 pdr; 6 Lewis guns; 2 Bolfors; 4 x 2 pdrs; 8 x 4.5 inch guns; 23 x 3.7 inch guns. The total figure is very close to the numbers of field guns claimed to be captured by the Japanese: 47 guns.

²¹ According to Rollo (1992), this figure includes 3 x 9.2 inch Mark VII; 5 x 9.2 in March V; 12 x 6 inch CP II; 2 x 6 inch naval; 2 x 4.7 inch; 4 x 4 inch naval; 2 x 60 pdrs guns. Most of these guns were in active use in the defence.

²² Except those with asterisks, the references are those available in the University of Hong Kong Main Library and those quoted in Birch and Cole (1979); Tse (1995); and Ko and Wordie (1996).

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