

Withdrawal Made From Kowloon to Bolster Hong Kong

ARTILLERY DUEL

London, Dec. 15 (CP).—Britain was withdrawing her forces tonight from Kowloon, the mainland section of Hong Kong, apparently to strengthen the island part of the colony against an expected assault across its mile-wide water barrier. Advices from Hong Kong said Imperial forces on the peninsula, in the face of preponderant Japanese strength, had begun a methodical withdrawal.

A Reuters despatch from Singapore indicated, however, that this manoeuvre had been completed, saying Kowloon unquestionably was in Japanese hands, and a later Singapore communique declared there was no further news from the Hong Kong front.

An earlier Singapore communique reported a heavy artillery duel. Other British reports said that light guns are hammering at the Japanese but that the colony's biggest cannon probably were mounted to resist sea attack and could not be used effectively against Kowloon.

Despite this and a hard pounding of the colony by Japanese air forces during the last two days, there was nothing in the British despatches to support optimistic Tokyo claims that its defenses were crumbling and its fall merely a matter of days.

Hong Kong, strongly reinforced in recent months to face this threat, already had rejected a Japanese ultimatum which, according to a German broadcast today, was delivered Saturday morning and expired Saturday afternoon.

(British authorities at Singapore said that the Imperial garrison of Hong Kong probably would have to fend for itself since there was scant hope of sending reinforcements to the colony, according to the British United Press.

(Spokesmen found some encouragement, however, in the fact that the beleaguered island's defense plans had been founded on the assumption that it must stand on its own feet in case of the war which now has beset it.

(The garrison was reported dig-

ging in on Hong Kong island behind a maze of barricades and bristling defenses along the world-famous waterfront facing the mainland to defend it "to the last drop of blood" against the Japanese air, land and sea forces.)

A BBC broadcast said that Japanese artillery probably had been placed on Kowloon Heights within four miles of Hong Kong, and that civilians on the island might be evacuated, but added that it would be defended to the last.

The broadcast pictured Hong Kong as well protected by a honeycomb of shelters under "The Peak," its steeply rising, gun-encrusted backbone, and by specially trained Imperial forces ready behind barbed wire, land mines and sharp bamboo spikes to resist any landing attempt.

Some British sources watched intently for development of a Chinese relief expedition attacking the rear and flanks of the Japanese, but there was no indication so far that it could divert the invaders' main forces facing Hong Kong.

There was no information here beyond Chungking reports that a heavy Chinese onslaught was in full swing against the Japanese in the vicinity of Tamshui, about twenty-eight miles north of Hong Kong's mainland frontier, and that many Japanese positions had been destroyed there.

Although these indicated a major operation with General Tsai Tingkal, the Cantonese general who defended Shanghai against the Japanese in 1932, as one of its commanders, some British observers suggested it was more of a guerrilla and sabotage attack.

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
US
JAPAN