



Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



Editorial Letter to Accompany OPs 30 and 31

Dear Members and Readers,

This editorial letter introduces Occasional Papers 30 and 31 which examine the local Hong Kong belongers who served in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps at the outbreak of the fighting in December, 1941. This is a most worthy and important topic because of the fine reputation which the Corps earned for itself during the Battle of Hong Kong, as cited in OP30 from General Maltby's post-war despatch on the defence of the Colony.

It is important for us to know who these men were, and hopefully these two papers help to make this clear.

Occasional Paper No.31 is especially memorable for its description of the sad fate of the man who would have become the writer's future father-in-law had he survived, William Henry Peters. Also for the most interesting extracts from Philippe Remedios' diary, kept during his incarceration in Shamshuipo POW Camp, which shows how hard worked the POWs were, on very little food, for years on end. Human fate is hard to comprehend, especially amid the vagaries of war, which spare some but give others a very hard time, even unto death.

The "local belongers" were a marked and important feature of pre-war Hong Kong, contributing much to the clerical ranks of the small civil service, banking, and the business world. This had continued into the early post-war years. When I joined the Hong Kong Regiment as it then was in 1956, my platoon (No.3 of 'A' Company) largely comprised Eurasians and local Portuguese, whilst the Company itself was commanded by the talented and amusing Major M.E.(Mickey) D'Almada Remedios. But the number of "local belongers" in the Colony was diminishing fast, and within a few short years many of those in 3 Platoon had left Hong Kong. I had been sorry to see them go, for they were a very likeable and capable bunch, a loss both to the Regiment and to Hong Kong. Mickey Remedios had also gone.

Anxiety for the future of Hong Kong following the Communist take-over in 1949 was a factor in the exodus, and more especially concern over their own fate were the new government of China to decide to take back the Colony. But our medical officer, Dr Eddie Gosano, another Portuguese, told me of a contributory reason: that they had felt let down by the British, having been led to believe that "things would be different after the war" – meaning that more senior posts in the civil service, banking and business would be open to them than in pre-war days – and they had not.

This new batch of papers will be issued before ANZAC Day on 25th April, when our Association will again provide a small contingent for the customary March through Central Sydney on that day. This year's March will be an especially significant event, since 2015 marks the centenary of the ANZACs' landing on Gallipoli which has so inspired our nation. It is worthy of note that our Association has taken part every year since its formation.

Henry and I send best wishes to our Members and to all readers
James Hayes, Series Editor Sydney April, 2015