

HONG KONG—OCTOBER 1956

As you have no doubt read in the Press, rioting broke out in Kowloon on October 10th, but thanks to the prompt and very efficient action taken by the Hong Kong Police Force and British Military Authorities the disturbances had ceased by the 14th, and the last of the curfews was lifted on 16th October.

Casualties numbered about 50 dead and 380 detained in hospital, including 18 policemen and 4 servicemen. During this period some 5,000 arrests were made for various offences such as curfew breaking, loitering, rioting. This alone shows the high standard of efficiency of the Hong Kong Police in dealing with this situation.

Mobs at times numbered about 4,000 and when the Police were unable to keep the situation completely

under control the Military were then brought in and they cordoned off the area, but it was not necessary for them to open fire.

Our Married Quarters were in the middle of the trouble area but fortunately no attack was made on them. M.Q. residents at Argyle Street had a grandstand view of Army Headquarters which was set up about 100 yards away. The dockyard mateys were recruited into a watch-keeping organisation with naval ratings and a continuous lookout was organised to give warning of the approach of mobs and whether it had become necessary to evacuate the M.Q. personnel to safety. Fortunately the latter was not necessary; it is rumoured that the organisation of this watch-keeping caused C.Y.S. Spence to keep his first middle watch in ten years. It was apparently necessary for the Commodore's Coxswain to have the watch-keeping system explained to him.

Several families living in private accommodation had to be evacuated to the China Fleet Club.

The watch-keeping organisation at H.Q.B.F. was maintained throughout the trouble period and the Chinese staff showed great initiative in getting to work from Kowloon.

Camp beds were provided for them and several slept at H.Q.B.F. for a few days.

Ratings living in M.Q. at Jubilee Buildings were brought over direct by M.F.V. and those living at M.Q.s at Argyle Street were brought to Kowloon Dockyard by naval armed escorts (composed of ratings from H.M.S. *Concord*) and thence by M.F.V. to Hong Kong.

All public transport in Kowloon ceased and the Star Ferry was stopped; this action prevented the trouble spreading to Victoria Island.

Marine Police assisted by Naval Patrol vessels, patrolled the harbour and kept a careful check on such sampans and boats that ventured the crossing. Many inhabitants of Hong Kong were stranded in Kowloon and vice versa when the Ferry stopped at very short notice.

No difficulties were experienced over food as NAAFI mobile shops, heavily protected by military escorts, visited the married quarters daily. Bread was however in short supply as the premises of the Garden Company, one of our main suppliers, was gutted by fire in the early stages of the disturbances.

All cinemas, cabarets, restaurants, etc. on the Kowloon side were closed and all leave (except to *bona fide* natives) was stopped.

The children were, of course, delighted when all schools were closed, this announcement made on Rediffusion and Hong Kong Radio, was really the first indication we had that the situation was so serious.

However all is well now and once again the rich whites are back to normal riotous living in Hong Kong.—W.G.D.