

Tributes to Admiral Chan Chak

1) There were many remarkable adventures during World War 2, but few can rival the escape from Hong Kong to mainland China of sixty eight men under the noses of the Japanese invading army. There can be no doubt that the success of the escape was largely due to the leadership of **Admiral Chan Chak**, who had been the representative of the Chinese Government in Hong Kong.
HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh: 31st July 2009

2) I have already recommended by telegram to Their Lordships for immediate recognition the services of **Admiral Chan Chak** and **Lieutenant Commander Hsu Heng. Vice Admiral G Leyton Commander in Chief: 11th February 1942**

3) I strongly urge immediate award of K.C.B. to Chinese **Admiral Chan Chak** who escaped from Hong Kong after its fall and assisted a party of 60 British officers and naval ratings to cross China. Value of **Chan Chak's** activities against fifth columnists in Hong Kong has been strongly emphasised by British officers who were in garrison and who consider his efforts contributed directly to lengthening siege. During his escape he displayed great energy, leadership, and disregard for personal safety under heavy enemy fire in spite of physical disability. (Only one leg and bullet wound in wrist), and it was entirely due to his organisation and personal authority that his party reached Free China safely. I understand that Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr has already made this recommendation, and I strongly endorse and supplement it. **General Archibald Percival Wavell, 1st Earl Wavell, late C-in-C, India. 18th April 1942**

4) His Excellency **Admiral Chan Chak** remained in the Methodist Mission in Shaoguan to recover from his wounds and the hardships of the journey. Throughout our trip His Excellency was most attentive to our welfare and comfort, and in spite of his wound and ill health furnished us a most noble example of fortitude and cheerfulness. His instructions were zealously executed by his Aide de Camp, **Lieutenant Commander Hsu Heng** whose character and ability we came to admire extremely. All our party would be highly gratified if you should see fit to commend the assistance furnished by these officers of the Chinese Navy to the attention and gratitude of Their Lordships. Also I would commend to your notice the generosity of the VIIIth Army Command in providing us with road transport in spite of their own urgent needs. Also the generous hospitality of the villages that provided food for us during our march. It is fervently to be hoped that these good folk will not suffer reprisals from the Japanese. To this end, all members of the party have been instructed to regard details of our route and also the fact that officers of the Special Service were with us, as most secret.

Commander H M Montague, RN. (Retd)(Senior British RN officer on the escape) 11th February 1942

5) Admiral **Chan Chak** was brought onboard with a bullet wound in his wrist...He radiated confidence and what is more imparted it to others. He was a great little man.

Lieutenant Commander G H Gandy RN (Retd), 2nd MTB Flotilla Senior Officer Ref: Diary (Held at the IWM London)

6) I would go as far to say that, apart from Mountbatten, under whom my father served later in Burma, **Chan Chak** made the highest impression on him of anyone he ever met.

From Vaughan Ashby, son of **Lieutenant Ron Ashby DSC VRD RNVR**, MTB 07.

7) I can't say much about **Chan Chak** that isn't known already. Amazing man, despite having only one leg, full of energy. We covered seventy five miles in five days – 14 miles per night due to his planning and the work of his ADC and our commander. If you knew that countryside you would realise it was some job. It was only because of the Chinese we got through. **Charles Evans**, Leading Stoker Mechanic, MTB 07. (Radio broadcast 1942 now held at the Imperial War Museum London).

8) The success of the escape was mainly due to the courage and resourcefulness of **Admiral Chan Chak**. On the whole of the journey the hospitality of the Chinese was wonderful. We were passing through the poorest part of the interior of China, but whatever place no matter how large or small, the people gave us the best they could. **Stephen [Buddy] Hide** Acting Stoker Petty Officer, MTB 07

9) (After the escape) I talked to the small (British) party that came to ChungKing and found everyone most enthusiastic about the gallant and efficient way the Admiral had looked after them and organised the march. Throughout most of the war **Chan Chak** remained in Chungking and was consistently friendly and helpful. Although he was modest and reserved, he had a very fine character, and is one of the Chinese I remember with most affection. **Maj-Gen Gordon E Grimsdale**, British military attaché to China 1942

10) Respect for **Chan Chak** everywhere we went; at every stop we got green tea and rice thanks to his popularity and importance. We said goodbye to **Chen Chak's** staff with real regret and were each given a copy of the group photograph taken at Waichow. It would clearly take more than one Japanese bullet to quench the dauntless spirit of this old warrior. **Lieutenant Alexander Kennedy** MTB 09 (extract from "Hong Kong Full Circle" by A Kennedy, P 50 & 65)

11) One of the Chinese officials who started out with us was **Admiral Chan Chak**. He was a grand old chap of about fifty, and had lost a leg while serving in the Chinese Navy. He had his ADC and a bodyguard with him. The ADC was a young Chinese whom we all called Henry, an excellent athlete and one of the champion swimmers of Hong Kong. When the order was given to abandon the boat they put a life preserver around the bodyguard, who couldn't swim, and pushed him off. The Admiral ordered his young ADC to beat it as he was going to make his own way to the shore. Henry dived overboard and waited to help the Admiral, but was again ordered to save himself. The old boy then threw his wooden leg over and jumped in after it. Just before he jumped a bullet

smashed into his arm and fractured one of the bones. With only one leg, and now with only one arm in use, he made the shore. He had lost a good deal of blood, and before we first started off to explore the island we told him to lie still behind the rock and we would come back for him later. **Ted Ross** Of the Colonial Office, Ministry of Information (letter to his mother)

12) After tea I said goodbye to the gallant little Admiral, whom I was very sorry to leave. I had liked him well in Hong Kong, and grown to love him during our journey, for he had shown himself not only a man of infinite pluck and resource, but also extremely thoughtful for others. **Lt-Colonel Arthur Goring**

13) I shook hands with the man who was to have such an extraordinary effect on my life in the coming months. Indeed, for the rest of my life, because I shall never be able to get him out of my thoughts. This Admiral **Chan Chak** was no ordinary Chinaman. Yet my heart warmed to him. **Captain Freddie Guest**, 1st Middlesex Regiment. (Extract from "Escape from the Blooded Sun")

14) I have the honour to refer to my predecessor's telegram of the 11th January 1941 recommending that the decoration of **K.B.E.** be conferred on **Vice-Admiral Chan Chak** and the subsequent correspondence ending with my despatch of the 6th November 1942 reporting that I had presented the insignia of that order to the Vice-Admiral. It will be recalled that the singling out of **Vice-Admiral Chan Chak** for this decoration was the sequel of his gallantry and skill in leading a party of British escapees from Hong Kong shortly after its fall. **The Right Honorable Anthony Eden MP MC** , Foreign Office, London SW1 Ref: FO371/35862

15) With reference to His Majesty's Ambassador's despatch on 21st July 1943 concerning the purchase of a new wooden leg for **Admiral Sir Chan Chak K.B.E.** I have the honour to report that a further sum of Rs300.0.0 has been paid. **The Right Honorable Ernest Bevin MP**, Foreign Office, London SW1. Ref: FO371/35862

16) **Admiral Chan Chak** was a tough little fellow with a wooden leg and a body that had been battered in every war and dust-up since the revolution. He'd played a big part in the building up of the Chinese Navy, which by now had been pretty well wiped out. His philosophy was to go steadily plugging along regardless of how badly the cards might seem to be stacked against him. **General Morris "2-Gun" Cohen** (1887 – 1970) Ref: (Life and times of General 2-gun Cohen, by Charles Drage).

17) During the battle, the inspiration behind the gallant support by official Chinese personnel and organisations came from **Admiral Chan Chak**. Disregarding personal danger he saw the siege through to the bitter end. Not till his responsibilities had been terminated by the colony's surrender did he feel free to embark on a last desperate effort to regain his own country. **David M MacDougall**.

Ref: (Article written after the escape, before he became Brigadier Colonial Secretary to Hong Kong).