

PART III

PRISONERS OF THE JAPANESE

by

A. J. SWEETING

CHAPTER 23

CHANGI, BICYCLE CAMP, AND OTHER MAIN CENTRES

THE wave of Japanese victories ending with the capture of Java in March 1942 left in its wake a mass of Allied prisoners, including many Australians. The largest number of Australians (14,972¹) had been captured at Singapore; other principal Australian groups were in Java (2,736); Timor (1,137); Ambon (1,075) and New Britain (1,049).

After the capitulation at Singapore on 15th February there were more than 50,000 British troops on Singapore Island, including the Australians. At the outset the Japanese were quite friendly, refrained from looting, gave cigarettes to their prisoners, and appeared to be under perfect control. Only picquets entered Singapore on 16th February. Next day the real entry began. A constant stream of trucks, lorries, limbers, cars, motorcycles and bicycles flowed along Bukit Timah road towards the town. Every vehicle flew small Japanese flags, and every driver who had a horn kept on blowing it. "The noise was fierce but cheerful," wrote an observer; "in fact there was a holiday spirit about the whole affair."

On the 16th orders had been issued to the A.I.F., except a small group appointed to act as local police, to pile arms in Tanglin square. At this stage and in the succeeding few weeks the discipline of the prisoners was at a low ebb. In the general acrimony that followed defeat the men blamed their officers for the disaster, junior officers blamed senior officers, and junior formations blamed senior formations.² The men were despondent and listless, uncertain of their position in the scheme of things, and obeyed orders grudgingly. Would officers be permitted to exercise any control over them or were they shorn of all power? The bitterness of defeat, and

¹This figure, drawn from Lieut-Colonel Galleghan's "Interim Report—PW Camps, Singapore", is evidently based on the ration strength at Changi. The total number of Australians taken prisoner at this time was estimated by the Central Army Records Office, Melbourne, as 15,384. Either figure represents by far the largest number of Australians ever taken prisoner in a single operation. Previously the largest group of Australian prisoners had been in Crete where 3,109 were taken. The total number of Australian soldiers taken prisoner in 1914-1918 was 4,044.

²This attitude is illustrated by the following verse written in Changi and circulated among the prisoners in 1942:

It's the fashion now to laugh
When one talks about the Staff
In a cynical and deprecating way.
But now that they're not manning
The defences at Fort Canning,
I think it's time we let them have their say.

"What really made us sore,"
Says Command, "Is that Third Corps
Simply never would see eye to eye with us"
And "Q" believes that "G"
Were as stupid as can be
And as for "I" they always missed the bus.

Third Corps do not confess,
That they got us in the mess,
But blames the whole disaster on Command;
While the men that did the fighting
Are now all busy writing,
And "sack the bloody lot" is their demand.

the prospect of indefinite captivity by an enemy of whose tradition, customs, outlook and language most of the Australians knew little or nothing made the future seem black indeed.

On 17th February the prisoners were moved by route march to Changi, which was to be Prisoner-of-War Headquarters on Singapore Island for the rest of the war. Changi, situated on the north-eastern tip of the island, was formerly occupied by the British peacetime garrison, and included a collection of large and airy barrack buildings, three storeys high, each storey built to house a company of the regiment in occupation; together with a large number of bungalows and offices for married soldiers and the administrative staffs. Parade grounds and surroundings were well laid out, and lawns and trees gave a pleasant suburban atmosphere to the area.

The A.I.F. area of Changi until June 1944 was the Selarang Barracks, though for a time in 1943 only portion of the barracks square was occupied by the A.I.F. Quarters generally were good, but for long periods they were gravely overcrowded. Many buildings had been bombed and had to be repaired before use. The climate alone saved troops from the worst results of overcrowding, as many slept in the open, either from choice or of necessity. With the ability possessed by Australian troops to make themselves comfortable in the worst of circumstances, many built wood and wire stretchers to lift themselves from the concrete floors.

Soon after the prisoners' arrival in Changi the Japanese administrator issued orders that Allied officers would be responsible for discipline and cases of insubordination would be harshly dealt with if referred to him. There would be no segregation of officers and the administration of the prisoners would rest in their own hands.³ Despite the initial weakening of discipline, the whole force continued to function as an organised military formation, commanded as before by Lieut-General Percival. His four principal subordinates were Lieut-General Heath, commanding III Indian Corps; Major-General Beckwith-Smith, of the 18th British Division; Major-General Key, of the 11th Indian Division; and Major-General Callaghan, appointed by Percival to replace General Bennett in command of the Australian Imperial Force and the 8th Division. From the outset the Australian divisional staff set about its problems energetically. On the second morning after arrival in Changi officers were called together and warned of the necessity to preserve discipline and obey within reason the orders of their captors. Strictness with hygiene and sanitation were underlined as being essential to survival. All ranks were warned of their liability to military discipline as prisoners of war, and strict supervision of the issue of food and clothing was instituted.

The Japanese ration scale which soon came into effect allowed each prisoner a daily ration of 1.1023 pounds of rice, .11032 pounds of meat, .11032 pounds of flour, .22 pounds of vegetables, .033 pounds of milk,

³ As from 4th March officers were not permitted to wear badges of rank, but were allowed to distinguish themselves by a star on their left breast.

.044 pounds of sugar, .011 pounds each of salt, tea and cooking oil.⁴ The first truckloads of rice were greeted by some with enthusiasm. Here at last was something to assuage the pangs of hunger.

As the unloading parties staggered under the weighty sacks (wrote a young soldier) the onlookers conjured up pictures of gargantuan feasts. Memories of fine white rice cooked by expert Chinese and served at delicious curry tiffins flashed through many minds. And a nice piece of fish; nothing better than a nice piece of fish!

The dismay, the bitterness of disappointment which followed the first efforts of army cooks to cope with rice defy description. It appeared on the plate as a tight ball of greyish, gelatinous substance, nauseous in its lack of flavour and utterly repulsive. The fish, when it came, which was not often, proclaimed its arrival by an overpowering stench and massed squadrons of flies. To gaze on a sack of rotting shrimps moving slowly under the impulse of a million maggots was a poor prelude to the meals which followed, meals which were nothing but a series of gastronomical disasters.⁵

Prisoners of the Japanese, both at Changi and elsewhere tended rapidly to become food conscious and "such will of the wisp as vitamins, proteins and carbohydrates . . . became household words". The immediate need at Changi, however, was to devise a means by which the rice could be presented to the men in an edible form. To this end mud stoves were built, rice grinders improvised, and, although the rations provided by the Japanese remained atrociously inadequate by Australian standards, the cooking steadily improved, until a remarkable standard of imaginative preparation had been attained.

Changi was dependent on the Johore water supply, and as the pipeline and the causeway carrying the pipes had been damaged, it was apparent that the prisoners would have no direct connection to a water supply for some months. The force had been permitted to bring three or four water carts into Changi, but as the nearest water-point was some miles distant, a limit of half a gallon of drinking water a day for each prisoner was imposed. On 3rd March this amount was slightly increased.

Deep anti-malarial drains which ran through the area were a potential source of water for washing, but these were choked with litter and wreckage. When they were cleaned water was drawn from them for washing and bathing, and in a short time showers, worked by hand, were functioning in the Australian area.

At the end of February 1942 the Japanese administrator had warned the prisoners that they must be self-supporting except for rice by the end of April. On 5th March an A.I.F. gardening scheme was instituted under the direction of Major A. M. Maxwell, formerly a planter in Malaya. All available labour was drafted to the project and by 1st April some 50 acres of land were under cultivation. Besides this communal garden, units were instructed to cultivate every available piece of ground. Steps

⁴ In October the rice and vegetable rations were increased to 1.1475 lbs and .5975 lbs respectively.

⁵ David Griffin, in *Stand-To*, Feb 1952, p. 8. (Griffin was a sergeant in the 2/3rd Motor Ambulance Convoy.)

were taken to conserve the fruit on all coconut and paw paw trees in the area.

On 12th March orders were received that each division must wire in its area. Until then the whole of the Changi area had been accessible to all. Troops had been able to roam from the waterfront on Johore Strait to the sea beach on the east, and thence for several miles to the vicinity of the Changi gaol, where the civilians were interned in March. There a barbed wire fence had been erected to prevent straying and to mark the limit of the prison camp. By 17th March each division had surrounded its area with a double apron of barbed wire and mounted guards at the entrances.⁶ Thereafter movement outside divisional areas was restricted to persons or parties carrying flags or special armbands (of which few were available).

Renegade Sikhs were posted by the Japanese to check all traffic between units. Orders were issued that these guards were to be saluted, and the enforcement of the salute by the Japanese as well as the Sikhs themselves was a source of considerable resentment. Later a section of Japanese soldiers was stationed at the northern extremity of the prison camp, but these proved unobtrusive. Despite the barbed wire, however, a fairly free means of intercommunication between areas became possible as time passed. Each division allotted a flag to a "ferry service" which operated hourly, and it became possible by linking up with the service to move throughout the whole area.

A forestry company was organised in March 1942 to cut firewood for the kitchen fires—a task which only the fittest among the ill-nourished prisoners could undertake. Subsequently the A.I.F. forestry team combined with teams from other formations, but up to December 1942 about 2,150 tons had been cut for the A.I.F. alone. Delivery from the cutting area was partly by truck and partly by trailers pulled by teams of prisoners.⁷ As the cutting areas became more remote the strain on labour for trailer parties greatly increased.

Replacement and repair of clothing soon became a problem.⁸ After supplies from the Base Kit Store, to which the Japanese provided access, were exhausted, diminishing scales of clothing were laid down, and anything which a prisoner possessed above that scale was taken from him and issued to men in need. Mending of clothing and footwear was made difficult by the lack of needles and materials. Sewing machine needles were manufactured in the camp and a machine for making sewing cotton from canvas and other fabrics was devised.

⁶ There were six principal areas at this stage: the A.I.F.; 18th Division; 11th Division; Southern Area, Temple Hill, and the Hospital area.

⁷ These trailers, consisting of motor vehicle chassis, stripped of engine and bodywork, on which a flat platform was built, were a feature of prison life. For the most part they were heavy and cumbersome and were manhandled by teams of prisoners pulling on traces. They were used for the transport of food, fuel and the sick, and in the absence of other means of transport filled a great need.

⁸ One battalion commander wrote that on his first battalion parade in Changi "there were two men in Scotch kilts, one in a top hat, another in a lady's white satin cocktail hat, a few in white tennis trousers, and many in tam-o'-shanters".

In the conditions then prevailing flies—fed by corpses, offal, rotting garbage and unprotected latrines—bred in thousands, and outbreaks of diarrhoea and dysentery had begun within a fortnight of the arrival at Changi. The urgency of preventive measures was obvious, and soon hundreds of men were working in shifts digging latrines to a depth of 14 feet and boreholes to 12 feet. The Japanese provided timber to build fly-proof structures over the latrines, and thereafter admissions to hospital declined monthly. By August only 63 were in hospital suffering from these complaints; but in those five months between March and August, 18 had died of dysentery and a further 10 of its after effects.⁹

In May 1942 an A.I.F. Poultry Farm managed by Captain McGregor¹ was established by the headquarters of the 27th Brigade (but later transferred to the control of the A.I.F. as a whole) and the eggs were distributed under medical direction. Between 1942 and June 1945 it produced about 40,000 eggs. Other poultry were privately owned.

The main preoccupations of the prisoners were food and health, but these were not the only ones. Throughout the imprisonment at Changi, and particularly in the early stages, elaborate efforts were made to maintain and improve military efficiency, and from the beginning education and entertainment were organised.

Until April 1943 when large forces were moved out of Changi and the numbers of Australians dropped to fewer than 3,000 (and in May to fewer than 2,000) a mixed brigade was organised on paper to operate against the enemy if the opportunity arose. Many lectures on military subjects were given, classes for N.C.O.'s were held, drill continued.² Air raid precautions were organised. The general staff supervised distribution of wireless news, which was received without interruption on concealed sets.

The leaders at Changi were not long in appreciating the importance of entertainment, education and occupation in a prisoner's life.³

⁹ The medical aspects of the period of captivity are dealt with in A. S. Walker, *Middle East and Far East* (1953), in the medical series of this history.

¹ Capt I. A. McGregor, QX6480; 2/26 Bn. Bank officer; of Brogo, NSW; b. Broken Hill, NSW, 13 Aug 1907.

² "The Command determined to maintain full military discipline and establishments, regardless of circumstances or psychology. . . . Accordingly two principles seemed to guide every decision. One, to retain full divisional and regimental staffs pottering round achieving nothing useful at all in divisional and regimental offices; two, to preserve the officers-other rank distinction by as many tactless and unnecessary orders as could be devised. . . . These orders were inspired by a sincere conviction at top level that it was absolutely necessary in the cause of an imminent invasion, which in fact never came, to preserve class distinction by privileges not based upon responsibility."—R. Braddon, *Naked Island*, p. 154 (Braddon was a gunner in the 2/15th Field Regiment).

The introduction of lectures and drill was not entirely welcomed, however, even by the officers upon whom it supposedly conferred privileges. "Our peace was shattered," wrote one young British subaltern, "by a foul series of lectures . . . including three-quarters of an hour's drill before breakfast every day for a fortnight! The troops were as amused and incredulous as we were indignant . . . the basic reason for the anger of . . . nearly all the junior officers was due to the fact that . . . our lecturers, in spite of . . . Spitfires and Churchill tanks, still seemed to prefer to meander back to the plains of Salisbury before such nasty modern things were invented."—J. Coast, *Railroad of Death*, pp. 53-4.

Later, drill was cut to a minimum because of the wear on boots and the inability to replace or repair them.

³ "So much was bizarre, fearful and uncomfortable by necessity that for intellectual escape—the only variety that was available in Changi—the prisoner strove to attain the virtues of everyday living. Each man created for himself a microcosm into which he could crawl: flowers, hobbies, poultry, painting, writing, what you will. And the most contented prisoner was he who could build the most perfect microcosm and disappear most effectively within it."—David Griffin in *Meanjin*, Autumn 1954.

A comprehensive education scheme was drawn up under the guidance of Brigadier Taylor, with Captain Curlewis as assistant and vocational adviser, and by 1st March three departments—Agriculture, Business Training and General Education—of what came to be known as the “Changi University” were functioning. Other departments or faculties, such as Languages, Engineering, Law, Medicine and Science soon followed. Some of the departments were allied with the immediate needs of the prisoners in Changi. For example, the agricultural classes under Major Maxwell naturally worked hand in hand with the A.I.F. gardening scheme, and of the 1,000 men employed daily in the gardens from 600 to 700 were anxious to continue farming after the war, or sought agricultural training. The enrolment of students for business principles totalled 1,900, with 80 to 90 instructors; there were 870 shorthand pupils, with 20 teachers. For “general or primary education” there were about 2,300 enrolments and 120 teachers. This was the largest of the educational departments, providing elementary instruction in English, arithmetic and geography. Language classes also were included in the sphere of general education, and about 30 qualified instructors were found for some 650 students interested in learning French, Malay, German, Dutch, Spanish or Italian.

The engineering department, like the agricultural, was of practical value to the whole of Changi once it was under way. Of less immediate value was the Legal Department, in which 140 students were enrolled and about 15 lecturers and tutors enlisted. Medicine and Science were coupled in one department, but were studied in two classes. Though small in numbers, both classes flourished, and a course in medicine was given for students who had been in the midst of their studies when war broke out.

A diversity of subjects came under the heading of “Miscellaneous”. Classes were held in Commercial Art and Art under the tutelage of the Australian war artist Murray Griffin;⁴ a play-reading group was formed, debating societies and groups held regular meetings within units, and bi-weekly educational talks and general lectures covered a wide variety of subjects. Perhaps most popular of all groups or classes was the “Department of Social Studies” consisting of sixteen groups of twelve members, each of whom was required to possess either a practical or academic interest in the principles of economics and contemporary history. The first year in Changi was, in fact, an “era of lectures and clubs”.

Nightly the various halls and open air assembly points were thronged with expectant audiences, the more earnest equipped with paper and pencil to note an arresting dictum on political economy or on the prevalence of lice in poultry. The Clubs met with the zeal of revolutionaries. At the “Yachtsmans” the wind howled through a totally absent rigging while the members made a post-war tour along the waterways of France and Germany. Elsewhere the “Sussex Yokels” met in a tavern thickening hourly with reminiscence and dialect. . . .

A body was formed under the ambitious title of “The Social Reconstruction Group”. At a formal meeting held on the lawn beneath casuarina trees a panel of

⁴ V. M. Griffin. Artist; of Melbourne; b. Malvern, Vic, 11 Nov 1903.

chairmen was elected and a comprehensive agenda drawn up. While the general tendency of its policy wavered towards the Left, a strong bracing by the Right curbed the theoretical enthusiasm of the more radical reformers. Meetings were called for each Tuesday night on a grassy slope still singed from the blast of bombs. Guest speakers were invited to address the group and launch the meeting into lively debate.⁵

The comprehensive education scheme initiated in February had to be abandoned when the departure of working parties reduced the number of men in Changi, and depleted the teaching staffs. Thereafter education was supervised by an Education Centre controlled by Captain Greener.⁶ Lectures and classes on a wide range of subjects were organised and a library was maintained.

The Australian Concert Party, at first directed by Lieutenant Mack⁷ and later (from September 1943) by Acting Staff Sergeant Wood,⁸ won a reputation for the originality and excellence of its entertainment. A large garage was converted into a concert hall, and the concert party staged increasingly-elaborate plays, variety shows, and concerts, using scenery, costumes, and musical instruments made in Changi. Much of the script and music was written in the camp, and many of the musical and straight plays were entirely original in concept and production. In addition to local performances the concert party staged entertainment in the areas of other formations. Recordings for broadcast were made at the invitation of the Japanese thrice between 18th October 1943 and January 1944. On each of these occasions the programs drawn up by the Australians for broadcast included the names of as many prisoners as possible, and attempts were made to include, in disguised form, information about diet and organisation.

A variety of games also was played until the prisoners became so weak because of deficiencies in diet that outdoor sport was forbidden for their sake and because medical supplies and anaesthetics upon which football injuries particularly made many demands, had to be conserved.

Dietary deficiencies led to the appointment soon after arrival in Changi of Captain Bennett⁹ of the Australian Army Service Corps as director of fishing for the A.I.F. A group of experienced fishermen were enlisted, traps were built of improvised materials, and some hooks and lines obtained. At first the yields were good, but constant damage to traps, and poaching by Malays caused catches to dwindle until, in August, the experiment was abandoned. In the six months 1,693 pounds of fish were obtained, all of which was sent to the hospital.

⁵ David Griffin, in *Meanjin*, Autumn 1954.

⁶ Capt H. L. Greener, NX15946; HQ 8 Aust Div. Journalist; of Sydney; b. Capetown, South Africa, 13 Feb 1900.

⁷ Capt V. Mack, QX17732; 2/10 Fd Regt; AGB Depot, Singapore. Regular soldier; of Moonee Ponds, Vic; b. Heywood, Vic, 16 Jul 1896.

⁸ Cpl J. Wood, NX65819; 8 Div Sigs. Actor; of Neutral Bay, NSW; b. Forbes, NSW, 11 Nov 1909.

Wood was receiving a corporal's pay. Although the office of the Military Secretary allowed liberal promotions in excess of unit war establishments up to the time of the capitulation, none of the acting promotions, so far as is known, made after that time were recognised after release.

⁹ Capt J. W. Bennett, NX19301; AASC 8 Div. Accountant; of Bexley, NSW; b. Millthorpe, NSW, 4 Sep 1906.

Perhaps no other activity in Changi or elsewhere was subject to so wide a diversity of opinion as the "Black Market". The official view may perhaps best be indicated by quoting the words of the official report of the A.I.F. in Changi:

Check and detection of operators [on the Black Market] was undertaken by the "G" Staff, particularly in those cases where trading in drugs was involved. Some convictions were obtained on the evidence thus gathered, but the activities had the effect of lessening considerably the black market operations. Right from the start of our PW life, the question of black market was regarded as serious, involving as it did the creation of a market for stolen goods, the disposal of valuable drugs, the raising of prices of foodstuffs for canteen purchase, and the security angle of illegal contacts.

No doubt, taken from a severely official point of view all this was so. Certainly where such trading encouraged the theft of blankets and clothing which could ill be spared it was a bad thing; and the theft of precious drugs was criminal. Although the operators of the black market sometimes charged prices for goods that bordered on extortion, the prisoners who accepted the goods obtained them without risk while the operator went at first in fear of his life. When the Changi area was wired the Japanese announced that any prisoner found outside the wire would be shot. However, when it was found that the threatened shootings did not take place the number of traders increased, and from their activities, particularly before the canteens were established, flowed a regular supply of food. A minority of such men both at Changi and elsewhere used their accumulated funds for liquor or gross feeding at canteens, or lent money to the desperately ill at extortionate rates of repayment. But the majority with money obtained in this way gave generously to the sick and not a few risked their lives to provide food which saved many.

As in most communities there were men who sought to make profit out of the circumstances in which they and their fellows were placed, and lent money at such high rates of interest, or set so low a rate for Japanese dollars in exchange for the pound sterling that it amounted to usury.¹

It is known (said a camp order of 24th July 1943) that persons are lending money in the Japanese dollar currency upon the security of promissory notes, cheques and other negotiable instruments expressed in sterling currency, and that the rate of exchange is often as low as \$2.00 to the £1 sterling or its equivalent.

Prices of canteen commodities had jumped to an extraordinary degree and cigarette tobacco at this stage cost 150 to 160 dollars a pound. Thus on the rate of exchange quoted above one pound of tobacco would cost in terms of sterling currency £75.

There can be no moral justification for charging such a harsh and unconscionable rate (continued the camp order) and those doing so are exploiting for their own profit the needs of their fellow-prisoners due to sickness or misfortune.

¹ The Australian headquarters had attempted in 1942 to stamp out the black market by gaining control of all moneys; a camp-wide canvass was made to have all moneys deposited and credited to paybooks. It was intended to use the money thus pooled for collective buying, and issue on a common basis. The canvass was only partially successful and, in fact, lacked the support of some senior Australian officers.

No attempt was made by the camp administration to suppress lending of money at reasonable rates; indeed it would have been undesirable if not impossible to do so. Nevertheless a rate of exchange was fixed and money-lenders were forbidden to accept any negotiable security, promissory note or cheque at a rate of exchange less than 8 dollars local Japanese currency to £1 sterling.

Within a week of their arrival in Changi the Japanese had begun to appreciate the value of the enormous labour potential that had fallen into their hands, and work parties were being formed for tasks in damaged Singapore, on the wharves and godowns of Keppel Harbour, and elsewhere on Singapore Island and the mainland. The first work party, 750 strong, left Changi on 22nd February. By 4th April 5,000 were employed outside Changi; by 16th April, 6,000; and by 5th May, 8,200. The working parties were popular because they freed the prisoners from some of the restrictions imposed in Changi and because men received 4 ounces of meat a day in addition to their ordinary rations. They were also able to buy extras from their canteens when in June working pay became available. Also there were opportunities outside Changi of supplementing the day-to-day rations by looting dumps and raiding godowns (practices in which the Australians rapidly became expert); and the generosity of the Chinese traders and merchants often contributed to their fare.

A variety of tasks were performed. Some parties levelled bomb shelters and filled shell craters; others worked on the wharves, unloading ships or stacking and storing food and merchandise; 2,800 were employed helping to erect a monument to the "Fallen Warriors" at Bukit Timah. Others collected scrap iron and furniture for shipment to Japan. In April a party of 46 went to Mersing to find and demolish mines laid in the area by the A.I.F. as part of the Mersing Defence Scheme. Some of the camps which sprang up at this time—River Valley Road and Sime Road, for example—became permanent areas for the accommodation of prisoners, although the personnel frequently changed; others—Blakang Mati² for example—became permanent in both respects. On 14th May the Australian strength at Changi was greatly decreased by the departure of the first large overseas party: "A" Force, 3,000 strong, commanded by Brigadier Varley. This was followed by the departure on 8th July of "B" Force, 1,496 strong, commanded by Colonel Walsh.³ At this stage the strength of the local Australian work parties amounted to 8,100, and only 2,300 remained in Changi. The next overseas parties left Changi on 16th August, when a group consisting of all senior officers above the rank of lieutenant-colonel,

² Blakang Mati, where some 1,000 prisoners (including 600 Australians) served throughout the war, was used as a supply base for the Japanese air force, and the amount of work required of the prisoners was reflected by the activities of that force. There were several notable features about Blakang Mati: accommodation was good, rations were usually sufficient, and there were no deductions of rations for men sick or off duty. During the three and a half years of captivity only 4 men died of the 1,000 there, two of these by drowning and two after they had been evacuated to Changi.

³ Col A. W. Walsh, OBE, VX40155; CO 2/10 Fd Regt. Regular soldier; of North Balwyn, Vic; b. Tallangatta, Vic, 6 Aug 1897.

brought up to a total of about 400 by the addition of engineers and technicians, and a working party of 1,000 were embarked at Keppel Harbour.

The Japanese sought to persuade prisoners to divulge information of military value, and on 19th February a special order of the day issued by General Yamashita was read to a party of senior officers by Colonel Sugita, who had come to Singapore from Tokyo with a group of Intelligence officers to interrogate the British prisoners. The order said in part:

When officers or other ranks of the Imperial Japanese Army are investigating any matter, those under investigation must answer all questions put to them according to the best of their knowledge and without evasion. It must be clearly understood that there is no alternative—opposition to this demand will not be tolerated. The attitude of the Imperial Japanese Army towards British prisoners of war will depend upon the strict compliance with the above declaration.

When this order was read General Percival asked Colonel Sugita whether the Japanese subscribed to the Hague Convention on the interrogation of prisoners of war, pointing out that the British had a code of honour which he presumed would be observed by the Japanese. However, no orders were issued either by Percival or Malaya Command prohibiting prisoners from answering questions.

The interrogations of the Australians began in March. A particularly full account of the interrogation of Colonel Thyer exists. He was taken with Colonel Kent Hughes and Lieut-Colonel Stahle to a room in Changi Gaol. They were then taken individually to Sugita.

He had before him (wrote Thyer) an Australian Army Staff List which was fortunately out of date. It did not show me as having been in Darwin as "G" to H. C. H. Robertson. If it had I should have been very much worried because they were looking for people who knew something of Darwin.

The questions were of a conventional nature. Sugita asked where the five divisions shown in the Staff List were disposed. Thyer said that the secrecy with which the Australian Army acted was as great as in the Japanese Army. Sugita asked what Thyer thought of their campaign in Malaya. Thyer said he thought it a "masterpiece". "Sugita consulted his dictionary and our association moved immediately to a higher plane," wrote Thyer. Afterwards rules were laid down for officers to observe when being interrogated. Since the Japanese had captured all British Army text books, it would be in order to tell them anything that had appeared in a text book, but the answer was to be garbled. So far as Australian defence preparations and the movement overseas of the A.I.F. were concerned, officers should plead ignorance, using the plea of secrecy. The senior officers agreed that adherence to the traditional attitude of restricting information to personal details might spell disaster. At this time a stream of officers was moving to and from Changi Gaol where they were set to writing essays on military subjects. At length Sugita sent for Thyer again and ordered him to explain how the

army was disposed for the defence of Australia. Thyer said he could not possibly answer the question, whereupon Sugita altered the question to "How would you use the five divisions to defend Australia?" He was then taken to a warder's cottage where he met Kent Hughes and Stahle. There he learnt that Kent Hughes had been ordered to write a paper on "Administration in a Division"; and Stahle on "Ordnance Administration in a Division". Although the questions asked of Kent Hughes and Stahle were of an innocuous nature, all took the view that to answer would be traitorous. A message setting out the stand they were taking and asking for a direction was sent by Thyer to Percival, but when, two days later, no reply had been received, the Australians drafted letters to Sugita, telling him their reasons for non-compliance. On 21st March Sugita arrived to interview the three Australians. The atmosphere was tense. A copy of Yamashita's order was produced and a somewhat involved discussion, through the interpreter,⁴ followed on the ethics of giving orders to prisoners and of prisoners obeying them in certain circumstances. At length a compromise was reached and again through the interpreter Sugita was given the Australian answer: "As Colonel Sugita has given an order we cannot and do not expect him as a soldier to withdraw it. We will obey that order as soldiers and would ask of him that he will not issue any orders, obedience to which would make us traitors to our country. Under such conditions we should have to refuse to obey his orders which we do not wish to do."

On the following day a paper was drafted jointly by the Australians.

We had great fun concocting it (wrote Kent Hughes afterwards). I wrote the first two pages which were an illuminating discourse on the climate and topography of Australia, and how droughts and heavy rains at any old time made it impossible to station troops anywhere with any certainty that they would stay there.

After the paper had been completed the Australians were allowed to leave.

Not all the interviews that took place during this period were concerned with matters of principle or conducted in so tense an atmosphere. One interview which took place in July 1942 between the A.I.F. education officer, Captain Greener, and Lieutenant Yamaguchi was in distinctly lighter vein. After a series of routine questions about Greener's enlistment and his reasons for fighting in Malaya the conversation ranged farther afield.

Yamaguchi: Is it wise, do you think, to appoint a man with only one eye [Wavell] to watch over all India?

Greener: India can be fixed firmly with the glass eye. With the other he will watch the Japanese. (*Japanese laughter.*)

Yamaguchi: Are the Australians not worried that there are so many Americans in Australia, making advances to their women while they are away at the war?

Greener: They do not seem to worry. You see, we have great confidence in our women. (*Laughter.*)

⁴ Sugita spoke English perfectly, but preferred to conduct the interrogation through an interpreter.

Y. It is said that they are marrying many of your girls. There will be perhaps none left when you get back. Is that not bad?

G. Oh no. Those Americans will stay in Australia and we wish to increase our population.

Y. And who will your young men marry?

G. We shall send for some girls from America. It is only fair. (*Laughter.*)

Y. We are told the Americans in India have better conditions than the British, and they are stuck up.

G. People are often stuck up when they have more money.

Y. But will not such jealousy impair your war effort?

G. In the last war there was much jealousy. American and British troops used to fight in the estaminets in France. Yet we won the war together.

Y. I cannot believe there is affinity of spirit between the Allied Nations sufficient to win the war.

G. Do you believe that there is much affinity of spirit between the Germans and the Italians? (*Loud and prolonged mirth.*)⁵

The skilful parry and thrust of the conversation quite obviously appealed to the Japanese, and the interview concluded harmoniously. Greener was handed a copy of an issue of *Contemporary Japan*, a Japanese journal in English, and given the opportunity of writing a series of articles for publication abroad on life in a Japanese prison camp. Greener, a novelist and journalist, was convinced that he could let the truth be known without offending the Japanese, but A.I.F. headquarters withheld consent to his attempting the task.

Before the departure of the higher ranking officers General Percival appointed Lieut-Colonel Holmes⁶ of the Manchester Regiment to command "British and Australian Troops" in Changi, and General Callaghan appointed Lieut-Colonel Galleghan to command the A.I.F. Percival appointed Galleghan also deputy commander of the combined force.⁷

From the day of surrender to the end of August 1942 the prisoners at Changi had been regarded as "captives"—not prisoners of war—by the Japanese.⁸ As a result, the prisoners in Changi had seldom seen the Japanese during the first six months of imprisonment, and only those employed outside the camp on working parties came into close contact with them. During this period Colonel Sugita and his Intelligence officers controlled the inhabitants of Changi and the civilian internees in the Changi Gaol, the link between Sugita and the prisoners being Lieutenant Okazaki, the Camp Commandant. In August the camp was placed on a new footing, when Major-General Fukuye, with a large P.O.W. administration staff and numerous interpreters, arrived at Changi.

⁵ The interview took place on 13th July 1942 and the incidents therein recorded were set down on paper by Greener immediately afterwards.

⁶ Col E. B. Holmes, MC. Comd British and Australian Troops, Malaya 1942-45. Regular soldier; b. 3 Jan 1892.

⁷ The staff of Headquarters AIF during all or part of the period from August 1942 to mid-1944 comprised: *AA&QMG*, Lt-Col W. W. Leggatt; *DAAG and Legal Officer*, Maj P. L. Head; *DAQMG*, Maj A. N. Thompson; *GSO2*, Maj J. W. C. Wyatt and later Maj G. P. Hunt; *GSO3*, Capt F. S. B. Peach; *LO*, Capt N. G. Macaulay; *Supply and Transport*, Capt G. J. Boreham; *CRE*, Maj R. J. Bridgland; *ADMS*, Lt-Col J. Glyn White; *Staff Captains*, Captains N. P. Madern and J. W. Bennett.

⁸ It seems possible that the Japanese were unprepared for the large numbers of prisoners—their own doctrines forbade surrender—and were somewhat embarrassed by them.

The breathing space afforded by Japanese unpreparedness to cope with their prisoner-of-war problem was over, but good use of it had been made by the prisoners. Discipline had been restored, efficient sanitation established; some barracks had electric light, and tap water was becoming available in the camps. The sick were looked after in hospitals, and dental centres functioned, though with much improvisation.

The arrival of Fukuye coincided with a tightening of security, and on 30th August 1942 the Japanese announced that all prisoners should sign the following statement:

I, the undersigned, hereby solemnly swear on my honour that I will not, under any circumstances, attempt escape.

All refused to sign. On 2nd September the Japanese executed four men who had tried to escape and insisted on the senior commanders witnessing the execution. The four men executed included two Australians—Corporal Breavington⁹ and Private Gale¹—who had escaped from a camp at Bukit Timah on 12th May, obtained a small boat and rowed it about 200 miles to the island of Colomaba. There in a semi-starved condition they had been rearrested, and at length returned to Singapore where Breavington was admitted to hospital suffering from malaria. At the execution ground Breavington, the older man, made an appeal to the Japanese to spare Gale. He said that he had ordered Gale to escape and that Gale had merely obeyed orders; this appeal was refused. As the Sikh firing party knelt before the doomed men, the British officers present saluted and the men returned the salute. Breavington walked to the others and shook hands with them. A Japanese lieutenant then came forward with a handkerchief and offered it to Breavington who waved it aside with a smile, and the offer was refused by all men. Breavington then called to one of the padres present and asked for a New Testament, whence he read a short passage. Thereupon the order was given by the Japanese to fire.

That day the British and Australian troops, 15,400 in all, including 1,900 Australians, had been concentrated on the Selarang Barrack Square, an area of a little more than eight acres. There were only two water taps and rations were cut to one-third. The commanders negotiated for either an amendment of the declaration or an order, not a request, that it must be signed. Finally the Japanese issued such an order and the British and Australian commanders ordered their troops to sign, explaining what had happened and pointing out that men would die of disease if resistance continued. On 5th September the Japanese allowed the prisoners to move back to their former areas. "The most notable feature of this incident was the cohesion and unity of British and Australian troops, and the fine morale and spirit shown," wrote Lieut-Colonel Galleghan.²

⁹ Cpl R. E. Breavington, VX63100; AAOC. Police constable; of Fairfield, Vic; b. Southend, Essex, Eng, 14 Apr 1904. Executed by Japanese 2 Sep 1942.

¹ Pte V. L. Gale, VX62289; 2/10 Ord Workshops. Fitter and turner; of Balwyn, Vic; b. Toronto, NSW, 13 Feb 1919. Executed by Japanese 2 Sep 1942.

² PW Camps, Singapore; interim report by Lt-Col F. G. Galleghan.

Evidently relations between British and Australians in Changi had fallen far short of cordiality. "It was not long after taking up life as a prisoner of war at Changi that I became aware of an

In October 1942 the A.I.F. gardening plan commenced under Major Maxwell gave way to a central camp garden scheme outside the perimeter of the A.I.F. area. This was supervised by the Japanese, but in fact was controlled by a prisoner-of-war group known as the "Garden Control Group" as from November, and included Australian representatives. The area of the gardens exceeded 120 acres and at times over 85 acres were under cultivation.³ By October 1943 410,000 pounds of leaf and root vegetables had been produced and distributed as rations by the Japanese;⁴ in addition within the Australian camp area, unit and group gardens continued to be maintained.

In November 1942 the smouldering resentment of the prisoners towards their Sikh guards (whom they regarded as traitors and whose demands became more and more absurd as time passed) culminated in the issue of an instruction by the Japanese to the commander of the Indian garrison at Changi on recognition of salutations made by prisoners of war. This demanded the recognition of all forms of salutations, and forbade entry of Indians into the prisoner-of-war area except on duty, and any form of retaliation by striking for failure of prisoners to salute. These orders, genuinely aimed at removing causes of trouble though they may have been, left loopholes that English-hating Sikhs were not slow to find. Hitherto drafts passing sentries had to salute with Guards-like precision otherwise the offender, escorting officer or whole draft might be beaten up. Now alleged offenders would be drilled in broken English by the Indian guard, or stood to attention for long periods. On some occasions escorting officers were made, at the bayonet point, to strike prisoners.⁵

The number of prisoners in Changi had fluctuated considerably after the departure of the senior officers' party, particularly during October and November 1942, when considerable numbers of British and Dutch prisoners were sent direct from Changi to Thailand. The destination of these "up-country parties" was kept secret. Equally large groups of prisoners, including Australians, from the Netherlands East Indies began to pass through Singapore on their way north. At the end of November a third force ("C"), 2,200 strong (including 563 Australians), was embarked from Singapore for Japan.

antagonism directed at everything Australian by a considerable proportion of the Englishmen with whom I came in contact," wrote an Englishman who had lived for many years in Australia and was serving in the Indian Army. This antagonism had its origins partly in faulty propaganda, but partly in the tendency of upper middle class Englishmen to place themselves on pedestals from "which they looked down with amusement on those who did not come up to their standards". G. Round, "Road from Singapore" (in manuscript at the Australian War Memorial).

³ In October 1,000 men worked in the gardens each day. This number was increased to 1,200 in November and 1,500 in December. This strength was maintained until April, the Australians providing about 800 men a day. After April the numbers dwindled to about 170 a day, of which the AIF provided about 70.

⁴ The principal crop was sweet potato, specially fertilised to give a large quantity of leaf, but tapioca, various types of spinach, beans, chillies, egg plant and taro were also grown, despite a lack of suitable manures. Harvesting commenced in March 1943, and by the middle of May ten truckloads of greens a week were being delivered, and sweet potato tubers were cropping 2½ tons an acre.

⁵ A description of a clash between the prisoners and the Sikh guards at Changi, including an illuminating conversation between a British officer and the Indian guard commander is given in J. H. H. Coombes, *Bangkok Express*, pp. 72-3.

During 1942 the strength of Australians at Changi had seldom exceeded the numbers employed in Singapore and elsewhere on working parties, but in December the Japanese began gradually to concentrate local working parties until by February a peak had been reached when the number of Australians in Changi itself exceeded 10,000. In January a number of senior Allied officers including General ter Poorten, Air Vice-Marshal Maltby and Brigadier Blackburn passed through Changi on the way to Formosa. The purpose of the Japanese in thus concentrating the prisoners was evidently to pool their resources of fit men, for on 5th March Lieut-Colonel Gallegan received a warning order from Malaya Command that a party of 5,000 (to be known as "D" Force), including a maximum of 50 officers, would be required to go north about 15th March. The A.I.F. quota was to be half, but was later reduced to 22 officers and 2,220 other ranks. The Japanese warned that all men would need to be fit for "heavy manual labour in malarial area" and that men who had suffered from malaria or dysentery should be excluded. This order was later amended so that any men fit to work could be included. Lieut-Colonel McEachern was selected to command the Australian part of the force which left in four flights, each of 555 officers and men, between the period 14th and 18th March.

This large force was followed before the end of March by "E" Force, 1,000 strong (including 500 Australians), destined for Borneo, and several others in swift succession. The largest of these and next to depart was "F" Force, 7,000 strong (including 3,600 Australians) which left for Thailand between 18th and 26th April; it was followed by "G" Force, 1,500 strong (including 200 Australians), which sailed for Japan on 26th April; by "H" Force, 3,000 strong (including 600 Australians) which left for Thailand in May; by "J" Force, 900 strong (including 300 Australians, mainly convalescent), which sailed for Japan on 16th May; and by two smaller parties, "K" and "L", mainly medical, which left in June and August for Thailand.

After the departure of the main parties the strength of the Australians in Changi fell to less than 2,500, and the whole camp, including the hospital, was moved to Selarang where, by May, electric light reached all buildings. Few fit men then remained in Changi, which became in fact a backwater of prisoner-of-war activity until December, when remnants of "F" and "H" Forces began to reach Singapore.

It was not until March 1943 that the Australians in Changi received their first letters from home. Six subsequent bulk deliveries were made before the end of the war. The dates of delivery and the numbers of letters received were:

1943		1944	
6 March	40,200	16 January	8,987
4 August	4,942	21 April	18,218
28 August	21,255	12 May	52,382
9 October	663		

Only a proportion of the 146,647 letters thus received at Changi was for the A.I.F. in Singapore. The remainder was sorted under the headings "casualties" and "oversea parties", readdressed, and returned to the Japanese for disposal.

The men were starved for news of home. Consequently on those rare occasions when batches of mail were received at A.I.F. headquarters, "Mail News Summaries" collating the information contained in the letters were produced and circulated. For example, in May 1944 a five-page summary was published which contained over 160 items. These items provided an interesting guide to Australian conditions: from them the prisoners learned, for example, that men's suits were being produced without trouser cuffs; that vests had only two buttons; that beer was 3/- a bottle in Queensland, but only 1/7 in Victoria; that cigarettes were 10d. a packet of 10 (both these last items were declared "hard to get at any price"); that tea, sugar, butter, clothing and petrol were rationed on a coupon system; and that it was hard to get a seat in a railway train. The scarcity of mail from home was paralleled by the limited number and size of letters a prisoner was permitted to send. Postcards were written by all prisoners on 22nd February 1943 and again on 8th December, each limited to 25 words and confined to personal messages. In November 1942 the Australian prisoners had been given the opportunity of writing short messages for broadcast by the Japanese, but this offer was refused. When in March 1943 it was repeated the Australians accepted the offer, having learnt meanwhile that no official prisoner-of-war rolls had reached Australia.⁶

It is difficult to comprehend the attitude of the Japanese towards the prisoners' mail. At the end of the war large quantities of undelivered letters were recovered in almost every area occupied by the prisoners. There is evidence, however, that the dilatoriness in delivery was not caused by a collapse in the channels of communication; for example, a message advising a soldier of his mother's death sent from Australia to Geneva, and relayed to A.I.F. headquarters, Changi, by way of the Japanese Red Cross in Tokyo, reached Changi only fifteen days after the mother had died.

The lot of the administrative staffs at Changi and elsewhere was complicated by a general shortage of paper. Hence one who delves through the records, four feet and a half high, of the headquarters of the 8th Division in captivity, is impressed by the strange assortment of salvaged paper on which the history of this period was written, and the tenacity with which it was preserved. The paper is of all shapes and sizes, ranging from scraps to large 10 by 8-inch sheets, and of all qualities from the best linen to Japanese toilet paper. Some reports were written on Japanese notepaper, others on the prison record sheets of the Changi Gaol; the A.I.F. Concert Party's first annual report was typed on the reverse side of musical score sheets.

⁶ The problems confronted by the Australian Central Army Records Office, Melbourne, as a result of the Japanese policies towards their prisoners are set out in Appendix 6 to this volume.



The Changi area, looking south-east. Batu Puteh is in the centre foreground.



(Brig F. G. Galleghan)

The move of Australian prisoners at Changi to Selarang Barracks Square. A photograph preserved during captivity of the incident of September 1942.



(Australian War Memorial)

Rice distribution from the cookhouse outside Changi Gaol. Photograph taken after liberation.



(Australian War Memorial)

A hut of the 50-metre type, used by the Japanese at Changi to accommodate about 250 prisoners.

One of the offshoots of Changi was the Broom Factory. Before the end of 1942 the brooms and brushes at Selarang had worn out, and in November the "R.A.A. Broom Factory" began production with the object of supplying the needs of several large barracks buildings occupied by the three Australian artillery regiments—2/10th and 2/15th Field, and 2/4th Anti-Tank Regiments.

Broom heads were made from the doors of barracks buildings in the Selarang area, which rapidly became doorless; bass brooms, suitable for outdoor work, were made of split bamboo; the centre rib of the coconut palm leaf was used in brooms of the millet type. As the supply of mature bamboo became exhausted, palm leaf ribs were used for all hard brooms, and the tips of the ribs were made into scrubbing brushes. Soft brooms were made of beaten-out coconut fibre; squeegees from old truck tubes.

The program increased month by month as other units called on the factory to supply their needs; materials became harder to get. "Authority," remarks the diarist of the broom makers, "though very pleased to get brooms was not very keen on providing the necessary men and materials," so barter was resorted to. The Detention Barracks, never short of labour to strip the palm fronds, offered to supply large quantities if the factory would keep them in brooms, and this scheme worked admirably.

Various side-lines to the broom factory were developed: chalk was made by precipitation of white clay; glue was manufactured from fish scales; rustless darning needles from hard copper wire. In fact no limit seemed to be placed on the ingenuity of the factory. Toothbrushes were reconditioned; fashionable bosoms made from coconut shells were provided for the female impersonators in the A.I.F. Concert Party; a species of ornamental aloe provided a fibre suitable for soft shaving brushes. After the move to the Changi Gaol the British Brush Factory and the R.A.A. Broom Factory were merged, and became known as the Changi Broom Factory.⁷ In the period between October 1942 and November 1944 the Australians produced 1,859 brooms, 202 squeegees, and 706 scrubbing brushes, and thus in no small way contributed to the standard of hygiene in Changi.

There were no major changes in the ration scales at Changi during 1943, but in February a reduction of rice to 15 ounces was ordered, and separate scales for outside workers and camp administrative personnel were introduced by the Japanese. There were, however, several alterations in the type of ration. In September dried fish replaced fresh fish, and later in the year dizu and soya beans, and maize, were at times substituted for part of the rice ration. Rice polishings were issued for a short period in May. Although the official scale remained substantially unaltered short weights were delivered and the prisoners could not remedy the deficiencies. Avitaminosis, of which eye lesions were a principal symptom, was being suffered by 1,000 in February 1943, but ceased to increase in August

⁷ The Australians permanently employed in the factory were Bdr F. C. Roche, Gnrs A. Baldwin and D. Reisir (2/10 Fd Regt); Gnr A. T. Groves (2/4 A-Tk Regt); and Gnrs J. Woodford and J. Cracknell (2/15 Fd Regt).

when some "Marmite" was received for the worst cases.⁸ Malaria became prevalent in March, and when prisoners returned from Thailand the number of cases became so great that a special hospital was formed for them.

The employment of prisoners of war in Changi took a new turn in September when work was begun on the Changi aerodrome. To find the 800 men required daily by the Japanese demanded the employment of many unfit men and others needed for essential camp work. These were organised into parties 100 strong commanded by British and Australian officers. The hours of work in the tropical heat were long—men left camp at 8.30 a.m. and returned at 6 p.m.—and boots and clothing wore out rapidly. This work was continued by groups of varying sizes until the end of May 1945.

In November 1943 Colonel Holmes, who had long been concerned about the severity of punishment inflicted by the Japanese as a penalty for attempted escape and also about the conditions prevailing at Outram Road gaol, where prisoners were undergoing sentence, wrote a courteous and conciliatory letter of protest to the Japanese commander at Changi. He asked that his submission be brought before the notice of General Arimura, who had taken over from General Fukuye, and sought permission for a visit to the gaol of an International Red Cross representative. Holmes and Galleghan presented this to Captain Tazumi, who said that he realised that treatment was not good, but doubted whether even Arimura had the power to intercede officially. At length Holmes was ordered to report alone to the Conference House, where he was addressed by Captain Tazumi in the presence of General Arimura's adjutant. Tazumi declared that, although Japan was a signatory to the 1907 convention, it was also provided therein that prisoners must obey their captors, and that as prisoners they had no rights to protest on any matter. He read extracts from Japanese law to the effect that any Japanese soldiers taken prisoner would be shot on return to Japan. Holmes was instructed that he was no longer to sign letters as Commander, British and Australian troops, but as "Senior Officer, No. 1 PW Camp Changi", and, as punishment, to go each day for a fortnight to the ground levelling party.⁹

In the opinion of the 8th Division's diarist, news bulletins, illicit and prepared and circulated at great risk, ranked in importance second only to food in the prisoners' lives. At the outset the Japanese had issued occasional copies of the *Nippon Times* and made a regular distribution

⁸ On 11th July 1943 at Changi a circular to all units warned that the Yeast Centre would no longer be able to produce sufficient concentrated extract to make a prophylactic issue, and advised the preparation of a grass soup to help prevent eye trouble. After detailing the method to be used in its preparation, the circular added: "Any type of grass is satisfactory except lalang, and even the latter is suitable if young. Blue couch grass is one of the best." The ingredients were four pounds of grass, cut finely, washed, boiled for ten minutes, allowed to stand for four hours, and flavoured with extract of lemon, if available.

⁹ The conditions at Outram Road gaol persisted despite Holmes' protests, and in October 1944 seven Australians were returned to Changi hospital in a condition showing signs of such gross neglect that Galleghan felt compelled again to protest. Of the seven men, two died, all were seriously ill, some dangerously. Two had lost the power of speech, another's sight was failing, yet another was so emaciated that he weighed only 90 pounds. All were incapable of walking, and most were incapable of standing even when supported by two assistants.

of limited numbers of the *Syonan Simbun* (Singapore Times). Both papers were printed in English; both were frankly propagandist in outlook. When this distribution ceased the camp was dependent on news supplied by individuals operating wireless sets, but this, circulated by word of mouth, was in the long run hardly more dependable than the Japanese newspapers mentioned above. In July 1942 Major Bosley,¹⁰ seized by the troops' need of a reliable news service, undertook the production of a daily bulletin which later came to be recognised as the official news bulletin of the A.I.F.¹

In 1942 the bulletins had seldom exceeded a page and a half of long-hand, but in 1943 their length began to increase until each bulletin exceeded seven sheets and two shorthand typists were employed in their production. In April the bulletin was taken over by the Camp Administration and became the official news publication for the whole of Changi. In December the issue of the printed bulletin ceased and the news was issued verbally to representatives of the A.I.F. and other groups in Changi separately. This procedure continued until April 1944, when "a change in policy" caused the cessation of the news bulletin which, in the words of its progenitor, Major Bosley, "had been published and promulgated every day" since its official commencement in 1942.²

The change of policy referred to resulted from the concentration of the prisoners on Singapore Island within the Changi Gaol area. Nevertheless, despite the increasing difficulties, a small band of prisoners, including Signalman Sim,³ Private Wall⁴ and Private Taprell⁵ of the A.I.F. and Private Thompson of the Volunteers, continued to maintain and operate a receiving set even within the confines of the gaol, and did so until April 1945 when, on the orders of Colonel Galleghan, the receiver

¹⁰ Maj W. A. Bosley, MBE, ED, NX71075; Aust Gen Base Depot 8 Div. Commercial buyer; of Fymble, NSW; b. Marrickville, NSW, 10 Mar 1910.

¹ Maintenance of radio sets presented a distinct problem. All radio equipment, including spare parts, in the AIF area, was collected and placed in charge of L-Sgt G. F. Noakes (of Maxwellton, Qld, and Haberfield, NSW) and Sig N. J. Arthur (Fairfield, NSW). As time passed, however, the difficulties of finding serviceable replacements among the stocks in hand increased substantially. An added drain on replacements was caused by a decision to provide up-country and overseas working parties with the means of keeping in touch with the outside world. As a result of this decision "D", "E", "F" and "H" Forces were all issued with complete receiving equipments, or the means of making them. In addition a 15-watt transmitter was built and held against the contingency of it being required by Colonel Galleghan; a 100-watt transmitter was constructed and taken by "F" Force. In the later months of 1942 one transmitter was operated from the central gun emplacement of the Johore heavy battery by Cpl S. K. Elliman (of Claremont, WA) and messages reporting Japanese shipping movements were acknowledged by a station in India.

² In March 1944 preparations were made for the periodic transfer of the operating receiver for security reasons. On the night 1st-2nd April the Japanese carried out an abortive search of premises whence the operating receiver had just been removed. The possibility of leakage of information from within the ranks caused Galleghan to order a complete change of all places of concealment. Receivers in use were dismantled and repacked and less serviceable items disposed of. A complete equipment which had been built against the needs of working parties was transferred to the officers' area and operated from 15th November 1944 by Lt R. F. Wright (of Hawthorn, Vic), who supplied news directly to Colonel Galleghan and the officers' area organisation at Changi Gaol.

³ Sig S. Sim, BEM, NX71306; 8 Div Sigs. Radio mechanic; of Canterbury, NSW; b. Redfern, NSW, 24 May 1920.

⁴ Pte D. Wall, NX36620; 2/20 Bn. Commission agent; of Narrandera, NSW; b. Bombala, NSW, 17 Jan 1920.

⁵ Pte R. M. J. Taprell, NX10970; 2/20 Bn. Labourer; of Neutral Bay, NSW; b. Darlington Point, NSW, 19 Nov 1917.

was handed to the camp quartermaster.⁶ A second receiver was then constructed and thereafter the news was passed verbally to Australian prisoners in the gaol. In the final stages of captivity "flashes" and Australian news items generally were passed to the officers' area organisation for inclusion in their news bulletin.

The move to the Changi Gaol area followed the replacement in March 1944 of Arimura by General Saito as commander of the prisoners in Malaya and Sumatra. The prisoners in the Selarang area (including "F" Force which had by then returned to Changi) were ordered next month to Changi Gaol to make way for Japanese air force units then arriving at the Changi airfield.⁷ The move to the gaol—a major feat in the circumstances—was accomplished in May. Only three lorries were allowed as transport, all other haulage being trailers of the type mentioned earlier. The camp was laid out into four main accommodation areas: the gaol building, a hospital, an officers' area, and an other ranks' area comprising 100-metre atap huts outside the gaol wall. The overcrowding was appalling. Into the gaol building itself, designed to accommodate some 600 Asian and 50 European prisoners, were placed some 5,000 prisoners of war. Cells built to house one Asian criminal contained three, frequently four, prisoners, while four senior officers and two batmen lived in an Asian prison warder's family quarters. When the men from Sime Road camp—where most of "H" Force was accommodated after its return from Thailand—and from other smaller camps had returned to Changi there were in the gaol area 11,700 prisoners. This figure included about 5,400 British and 5,000 Australian prisoners of war. The remainder were made up of twelve other nationalities including 1,100 Dutchmen, 50 Americans, and 19 Italian officers and men from Italian submarines. The gaol hospital and the main Selarang hospital installations with about 1,000 patients were moved to Kranji, which then became the principal hospital area for prisoners on the island.

Colonel Holmes had fallen into disfavour with the Japanese since the episode culminating in his relegation to the ground levelling party (as it was euphemistically termed) and in July 1944, without consulting Holmes, the Japanese appointed a new representative officer for the other ranks' camp. Holmes and his deputy, Galleghan (hitherto representative officer) were to take no further part in the camp organisation and administration. This action coincided with large reductions in the numbers of officers permitted by the Japanese to be employed with the troops, and by September the assumption of command of troops by warrant officers; only a few technical officers were allowed to remain for essential light, water and garden services.

⁶ The set was built in the main from one stolen from a Japanese house in the vicinity of the gaol by Sig Sim in June 1944, and completed from four other sets and parts removed from a Japanese wireless store at Selarang and brought back to camp at considerable personal risk by Sim, Spr P. J. Matthews (of Melbourne) and Gnr W. S. Beadman (of Blackheath, NSW) of the 2/15th Field Regiment.

⁷ The civilian internees hitherto occupying the gaol were transferred to the Sime Road camp. Two noteworthy changes which took place at this time were the introduction in April of Japanese words of command, and the restitution of badges of rank to officers.

A new and difficult era now dawned in the administration of the A.I.F. in Changi. The extent of Lieut-Colonel Galleghan's control over his officers and men was greatly restricted, despite his protests. In addition the Japanese imposed severe restrictions on camp entertainment and lectures. Audiences at lectures were not permitted to exceed 25 in number; and all theatrettes outside the gaol were closed. The gaol theatre equipped with an orchestral pit and wings, curtains and other appliances, was limited to two performances a week, the Japanese declaring that the prisoners were getting far more entertainment than their captors.

On 5th November 1944 about 40 American aircraft raided Singapore; this was followed by a similar raid on 1st January. Thereafter the appearance of Allied aircraft became more frequent until, by July 1945, it had become a daily occurrence.

A most unhappy period in the administration of Changi ended in July 1945 when Lieut-Colonel Dillon⁸ was appointed Representative Officer. The A.I.F. then reverted to regular administration of punishments by their own officers; one district court martial was held despite Japanese orders to the contrary.

Meanwhile in March the A.I.F. Concert Party had been disbanded. The Japanese claimed that an item in a current show had offended them, and in consequence General Saito had ordered that the play cease and the theatre be demolished. It was a peculiar ending to a long and valuable history of entertainment; all scripts of entertainments had been submitted to the Camp Office and to Japanese representatives before presentation. It was a blow to the men who had worked together for three years in the party to find themselves being returned to units that they no longer considered their homes.

In March 1945 also the Japanese, who were issuing half rations for the sick, three-quarter rations for semi-sick, and full rations for the fit, cut the rations by roughly 25 per cent, and forbade any pooling of rations. The cut was extremely severe. Thenceforward the prisoners were receiving a daily ration of less than 8 ounces of rice, 4 to 6 ounces of vegetables, and practically nothing else; because of inflation the prisoners' pay was almost valueless.⁹ "In common with everyone else, am terribly hungry," commented one prisoner; "am unable to go to sleep at night, for my stomach is empty and feels that it is touching my backbone."¹ That month a Red Cross ship arrived with 1,200 tons of stores, and in April the Japanese began small twice-weekly issues which although not substantial were "wonderfully welcome".² The dollar had now lost its purchasing power to the extent that even a relatively well-paid officer—an Australian major for example—was not a great deal better off than a private soldier. At this stage, out of his monthly pay of 170 dollars the Japanese deducted

⁸ Brig F. J. Dillon, OBE, MC; RIASC. Regular soldier; b. 19 Oct 1898.

⁹ Maize flour 8 dollars a pound; sugar 12 dollars.

¹ In April the ration was assessed at from 200 to 700 calories below the basic metabolic standard.

² The rations continued to be supplemented in this way for about eleven weeks. The work of the Red Cross in this period is described in A. S. Walker, *Middle East and Far East*, in the medical series of this history.

60 dollars for board and lodging and held 60 in credit, leaving a balance of 50 dollars. The disbursement of this balance was: Camp Maintenance Fund (used to supplement the rations of other ranks), 20 dollars; officers' mess contribution, 9 dollars; unit hospital fund (perhaps), 2 dollars; balance 19 dollars, or enough in fact to buy about a pound of sugar and perhaps a pound of peanuts (if available) at the then ruling rates.³

The supply of firewood, always a large problem to the undernourished prisoners, was accentuated in 1944 and in the last twelve months the supply of even the barest minimum was difficult. In August 1945 the Japanese commenced the issue of an oil fuel which obviated an immense amount of labour. So intricate, however, was the prison camp economy that the cessation of the wood supply set up a train of deficiencies: the manufacture of milk of magnesia, dependent on the supply of wood ash, had to be suspended, and the production of tooth powder similarly fell away.

Despite the deterioration in health of the prisoners, the Japanese early in 1945 demanded work parties totalling nearly 6,000 for work around Singapore Island and Johore Bahru. These parties were employed in digging tunnels and defence works. Although they were usually well accommodated and on better rations, the long hours they were compelled to work, the distance of camps from work, and the type of labour all taxed the strength of undernourished men severely. In May work on the aerodrome ceased and fit men from there became available for the working parties. Many were injured by falls of earth during tunnelling, and one death occurred. Towards the end a number of prisoners were wounded during the increasingly severe Allied air raids.

The second largest concentration and transit area for Australian prisoners in 1942 and 1943 was Java where about 3,000 Australians remained after the capitulation of 9th March 1942. Some men remained at large for many months seeking to escape, but many, probably the majority of those who followed the ordinary pattern of surrender, were concentrated in an area to the south-east of Bandung, round the villages of Garut and Leles, and other centres near places of capture. Most of them for a time were allowed much freedom by Japanese pre-occupied with the task of taking over Java. They were free to visit shops and coffee houses in near-by villages, and generally enjoyed what one of them described as an "idyllic existence" in "pleasant surroundings". No rations were provided by the Japanese, but this created no special hardship. A small amount of transport was retained. The prisoners were invited to write letters home without limit as to length. None of these seems to have reached its destination, and the invitation was probably intended by the Japanese merely to provide them with information. An Allied General Hospital in Bandung, formed by members of the 2/2nd Australian C.C.S., and an R.A.F. hospital

³ At that stage almost every delivery of foodstuffs to the canteens was so meagre that it was necessary to hold a ballot and then sell on a roster basis. In June the price of a duck egg was 8 dollars; of a laying fowl 95 dollars.

unit, continued to function until 18th April. The sick were carried there daily by ambulances, which brought back convalescents to camp. Then, at a few hours' notice, the hospital was disbanded, and the staff and most of the patients were marched to an overcrowded native gaol, where "medical arrangements were negligible, rations deplorable, and no recognition was given to medical prisoners".

Late in March advanced parties from Leles (where many of the Australians were concentrated) were sent to Batavia to prepare a camp for the remainder of the prisoners. Instead of being put to the task they were placed in a congested Chinese school, with British and American troops, and did not rejoin their comrades until May. Between 30th March and 14th April most of the Australians in the Leles area were taken by rail to Koenigplein, a suburb of Batavia, where they were billeted in a Dutch barracks—the Bicycle Camp as it was commonly known—which was to be their home for the next six months.

There were at that time at the Bicycle Camp survivors of the *Houston*, about 250 of the battalion of the 15th Punjab Regiment which had fought in Borneo, some British and Dutch troops, and 300 survivors of H.M.A.S. *Perth*. The latter had begun prisoner-of-war life "quite naked". Many had been rescued by a Japanese destroyer after immersion in oil-covered water for between 7 and 15 hours and their clothing had been immediately jettisoned. They had been lodged for some six weeks at Serang in a native theatre or at the local gaol, where lack of food and adequate sanitation had brought a wave of dysentery. At first the Japanese enforced strict discipline, with rifle butts or sticks, and warned the prisoners that any attempt to escape would result in death to all; later they had relaxed and, becoming more friendly, organised daily bathing parties to a near-by canal. "Recreation" at Serang took the form of compulsory physical training—a hardship for men whose physical condition at that time was far below normal. Before their departure for the Bicycle Camp on 13th April they were issued with shorts and shirts, but remained bare-footed. They were commanded by Lieut-Commander Lowe.⁴

After the transfer of the larger group of Australians to the Bicycle Camp, there remained some 600 Australians, mainly of the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, in the Garut area who continued an easy-going existence until June, when they were transferred to Bandung. There they were billeted in the former barracks of a Dutch regiment, which became known as No. 12 PW Camp, Bandung, and joined members of the 2/2nd C.C.S. commanded by Lieut-Colonel Dunlop,⁵ and a number of Australians who had remained at large after the general surrender.

Most of the latter had been taken to Sukabumi after capture, and placed in a concentration camp with Indonesians and others. Their hair was close cropped (this became general in Java) and drill orders and

⁴ Capt R. F. M. Lowe, DSC; RAN. HMAS *Perth* 1941-1942. Of Castlemaine, Vic; b. Clifton Hill, Vic, 30 Aug 1907.

⁵ Col E. E. Dunlop, OBE, VX259. Med Liaison Offr, Brit Tps Greece and Crete 1941; 2/2 CCS; CO No. 1 Allied Gen Hosp Java 1942. Surgeon; of Melbourne; b. Benalla, Vic, 12 Jul 1907.

numbering were given in Japanese. The rations at Sukabumi consisted of half-cooked rice and "shadow" soup. Discipline was extremely harsh, there were many pinpricking regulations, and the prisoners were required to fill in questionnaires. Sports competitions had been held by the Japanese between the British prisoners and the native internees and prisoners of war, of whom there were many. In June and July parties were moved from Sukabumi to Tjimahi, about 6 miles west of Bandung, where for a time they were billeted in a Dutch army barracks. The camp was administered by the Dutch under Japanese supervision; sanitary arrangements were good, food was ample, and there was a canteen where tea, sugar and bread could be purchased. In mid-June the transfer of all British troops to Bandung began.

With the arrival of the prisoners from Garut the camp at Bandung was reorganised. Lieut-Colonel Lynham of the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion took over command of the Australians. The camp at this stage possessed poor conveniences: there was a shortage of water, sanitary arrangements were crude, and the camp generally was in a filthy condition. The food ration, of rice and dried potatoes with some green vegetables and a small quantity of meat, was deficient in protein, fats and vitamins.

At the Bicycle Camp conditions were "not bad" from the point of view of the prisoners from Leles; in the eyes of the prisoners from Serang they were "excellent". Accommodation consisted of large brick barrack huts, each holding about 300 men. Water and electricity were laid on; kitchens were well equipped; sanitation was adequate; a good canteen was set up; and secret wirelasses brought news of the outside world. On 14th May all British and Dutch troops were moved elsewhere, and their places taken by Australians from Glodok gaol and the Chinese school (including the advanced party from Leles) and Americans of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment. The numbers held at the Bicycle Camp remained constant thereafter until 4th August, when 20 officers and 20 N.C.O's under command of Lieut-Colonel Leggatt arrived from Timor. In this period the senior officer was Brigadier Blackburn, with a camp staff which included as second-in-command Colonel Searle (U.S. Army), and Wing Commander Davis⁶ (R.A.A.F.) as camp administrative officer. The Australians occupied huts on one side of a central camp road; the Americans the huts on the other side. One corner of the camp was fenced off with barbed wire, and contained Major-General Sitwell, Air Vice-Marshal Maltby, and many other senior officers of the British and Dutch Services, including the Governor-General of the Netherlands. In this period rations were poor; only rice, and a small quantity of green vegetables in a thin stew "barely flavoured with pork".

At the Bicycle Camp as elsewhere working parties were sent out and all manner of tasks performed by the prisoners, from filling ditches or rolling steel drums from A to B, to sorting out spare parts for motors. These working parties seem to have been welcomed by the prisoners at

⁶ Gp Capt R. H. Davis, OBE, Comd No. 1 Sqn RAAF 1941-42. Regular airman; of Archerfield, Qld; b. Sydney, 8 Apr 1912.

the outset for the opportunities they afforded both of escape from the monotony of camp routine, and for bringing articles of value and food into the camp. Lectures and classes were organised on a wide variety of subjects, each one conducted by an expert in his own particular field. A large building was used as a theatre.

In May and June a number of officers were taken away from the camp for questioning by the Japanese. Some were brutally treated and tortured when they refused to divulge information on matters of military importance. One officer who was interrogated at this time recalled that for a month he spent his nights at the gaol and daylight hours at the headquarters of the *Kempei Tai* undergoing questioning. No food was given to him for five days. At the end of that time it was placed before him on a table; he was informed that if he answered the questions put to him the food would be his. At other times

I was tied to a chair and they kicked it . . . and pushed it round the room. Sometimes I was on the top and sometimes on the side. The ropes tightened when I was being pulled all over the place. They also made me drink water. Their idea was to fill up my lungs, but fortunately I did not get the whole of that. They also tied me to the chair and twisted my legs around. They burnt my feet with cigarette butts. At the end they took me outside, blindfolded me and told me that if I did not answer the questions they would shoot me. . . . They also promised me a house in Batavia and a servant if I would answer their questions, but they got nothing from me.⁷

Others were subjected to treatment even more brutal.

In July the prisoners were ordered to sign an undertaking to obey all orders of the Japanese and not to attempt to escape. When they refused the canteen was closed, and lectures, church services and concerts were forbidden. Communication between officers and men was prohibited and movement between huts restricted. On 4th July (ironically enough, American Independence Day, as an Australian noted) Brigadier Blackburn, the camp staff and hut commanders were placed in the Japanese guardhouse and not allowed to speak to each other. All other officers were marched out of camp. Believing that further resistance might provoke unduly harsh reprisals, Brigadier Blackburn sent a message authorising the Australians to sign the undertaking. The Americans were already doing so.

Prison life soon returned to normal except for certain lectures and classes which continued to be forbidden. Discipline, however, was noticeably tightened, and rigid orders on the payment of compliments were instigated.

Everybody had to salute every Japanese, irrespective of rank, and the whole compound had to spring to attention, bow or salute (recalled a prisoner). We were not allowed to straighten our backs until the person taking the salute allowed us to stand at ease. . . . If a cook came through the camp we had to salute him. The whole compound bowed or stood up to him. Brigadier Blackburn and Major-General Sitwell were compelled to salute privates and Korean guards.⁸

In September news was received that a large-scale evacuation of prisoners from Java "to a better land where food would be available" and

⁷ Lt-Col J. M. Williams, CO of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion.

⁸ Lt-Col J. M. Williams.

prisoners "could earn money to buy extras" was planned. No clue to their destination was given.

On 1st October a small advanced party of Australians, led by Lieutenant Mitchell,⁹ left Batavia; on the 7th the personal belongings of all men remaining at the Bicycle Camp were searched, and at 2 a.m. on the 8th more than half the inmates (about 1,200) led by Colonel Williams filed through the gates of the camp and were taken by rail to Tanjong Priok for embarkation on the *Kinkon Maru*. A second group of prisoners (commanded by Colonel Tharp of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment) left the Bicycle Camp on 11th October, and embarked that day on the *Nichi Maru*. The second group contained 362 Australians led by Major Robertson¹ of the 2/6th Field Company. The destination of both groups was unknown. After their departure the camp was for a time empty except for the group of senior officers.

Substantial numbers of Australians remained in Java even after October. At Bandung where there were about 700 Australians, educational classes were started, and a daily news sheet based on a Japanese paper and including camp news was produced. In July the men were paraded according to their States, and Queenslanders and Western Australians were questioned by the Japanese. A few, including Major Wearne,² were taken away for further interrogation. At this stage the Australians were in bad odour with the Japanese who complained about their "lack of courtesy". The Japanese "have a dead set on A.I.F.", wrote a diarist. In August meals were getting smaller, and it was all a prisoner could do to save sufficient in three days for one night supper in his room. In September there occurred an epidemic of bashing, mainly caused by prisoners who disobeyed Japanese orders forbidding smoking out of doors. Work parties went out daily, but these, involving carting wood, shifting bomb dumps, or carrying rice, were not particularly strenuous. Meals were served thrice daily, at 8 a.m.—thin rice porridge; 1 p.m.—vegetable soup (no rice); 6 p.m.—rice and soup. There was an issue of meat every second day.

In September a new camp commandant arrived, and as a result of protests bashings diminished. However, the guards seemed to be on the lookout for the least excuse, and tension in the camp was somewhat acute. Working parties went out in large numbers, and an Australian employed handling firewood complained that he "worked solidly till 4 p.m. without food or rest" and that "heavy guards gave no consideration". The civilians were not permitted to wave or smile at the prisoners and the prisoners were not allowed to look at them. "These guards (rawest of raw recruits)," noted the same Australian, "are individually and collectively scared."³

⁹ Lt C. J. Mitchell, VX30705; 2/2 Pnr Bn. Accountant; of East Malvern, Vic; b. Richmond, Vic, 14 Oct 1912.

¹ Maj L. J. Robertson, NX12406. 2/4, 2/6 Fd Coys. Lighting engineer; of Melbourne; b. Melbourne, 19 Jan 1904.

² Col W. W. Wearne, OBE, QX6043. 2/9 Bn; BM 24 Bde. Regular soldier; of Brisbane; b. Bundaberg, Qld, 26 Aug 1912.

³ Sgt A. E. Field, DCM, MM, 2/6 Fd Coy. Field was one of a number of old soldiers who entered captivity. These included the only Australian Victoria Cross winners of the 1914-18 War then serving overseas in the AIF: Sgt Walter Brown, 2/15th Field Regiment; S-Sgt

That month pay was made available to working parties and regimental funds were considerably swelled by officers' pay. A camp café was opened where it was possible to buy eggs and toast, coffee and various trimmings for rice. In October half an ounce of tobacco was being issued weekly. For small offences the Japanese were then inflicting such punishments as standing men motionless in difficult positions for periods varying from two to fifteen minutes, and making Australian N.C.O's slap the faces of their own men. Lack of adequate food was making itself felt and many were suffering from vitamin deficiencies, of which the more common manifestations were aching and burning feet, headaches and ulcerated mouths. That month the camp news sheet reported the shelling of Sydney by submarines in May 1942. "Kempetai greatly impressed by news of cremation of Japs killed in Sydney raid," noted a diarist. "A.I.F. are today very much in the boom."

In November a majority of the Australians (about 1,000) were moved to Makasura, a staging camp of bamboo huts about 4 miles from Batavia, where most of them remained until January. The camp was restricted in size and there was only a small area set aside for recreation. Dunlop, who now commanded the camp, pursued a policy of fostering healthy minds and defeating boredom. Classes begun at Bandung were revived; cricket matches were played; contributions from officers who were now regularly paid were instituted, and from the fund thus created aid was given to all in Makasura regardless of nationality. Little work was done at the camp, although the Japanese created tasks such as sweeping leaves around their headquarters, and carting pebbles from a stream a few miles away. The food situation was not bad, and fruit and sugar were cheap. An occupant of the camp wrote subsequently that one of its outstanding features was "the devotion of most men to things spiritual". Camp services were held, and were attended by large numbers.

One happy personality was an Australian Catholic Priest who virtually lived with men of all creeds. The fact that he held his morning mass under the palm trees, surrounded by enemies of Christianity . . . as well as cynics within our midst did not detract from the dignity of devotion to God. Every morning that captives prepared the altar they ran the risk of having it kicked over and the faces of worshippers slapped.⁴

The guards were described as "fairly decent", the camp routine not specially tiresome; and in December about 100 radio messages from home were received. The men were allowed to send radio messages home four times a year—in December, February, April and August. These comprised three coded messages out of a selection of 14, and also 20 words freely written, once a year. The radio messages received were in response to some sent earlier.

Walter Peeler, 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion; and Brigadier Blackburn. Brown and Peeler had both understated their ages in order to enlist. Peeler, born in 1887, understated his by 14 years; Brown, born 1885, by 15 years. Peeler survived, but Brown is believed to have been killed while attempting to escape.

⁴ F. Foster, *Comrades in Bondage*, p. 64.

On 4th January Dunlop Force (about 900 strong) marched out for Batavia for embarkation. There was at this stage a good deal of movement into or out of the camp. The Australians who remained at Makasura—a few over 100—sometimes fed “like fighting cocks” because rations would arrive after a draft had departed, and perhaps 1,500 rations would have to be eaten by 600. The number of the Australians fluctuated: on the 28th, 350 Australians (mainly 2/40th Battalion from Timor) arrived from Tanjong Priok, and another 100 of mixed units from the Bicycle Camp.⁵ Most of the camp posts were then held by Australians. “For once we have got in on the ground floor for paid jobs,” commented one of them. In March they were transferred to Tanjong Priok where they shared a camp with American and British prisoners and worked the docks. There were daily swimming parades and weekly concerts. Evidently the condition of officer prisoners was not much below normal. In April a prisoner records witnessing a “sparkling exhibition of Rugby Union football between Aussie officers and the Rest”. That month the Australians were moved to the Bicycle Camp, where food was good and well cooked by the Dutch although the rations were rather scanty. The camp routine was: reveille 7.30; check parade 7.40; breakfast 8.30; 9 a.m. working parties sent out; 9.30 general parade. (Those in camp had to remain out of huts and “be doing something”.) 10.15 to 10.45 smoko; 12.30 dinner; free till 3 p.m.; smoko 3.45 to 4.15. In May letters were received from Australia; these were dated about June 1942 and were the first letters that some had received for 15 months. That month the prisoners at the Bicycle Camp were divided between Glodok gaol and Makasura, whither 60 Australian officers and 10 sergeants were sent on 19th May.

At Glodok the A.I.F. (mostly 2/40th Battalion) were employed spinning yarn. Food was ample; men were contented, but quarters were very cramped. At Makasura the principal occupation of the prisoners was gardening. In June the Japanese took propaganda photographs at all camps: from the Bicycle Camp a party of “Golfers and Swimmers” was sent to Sukabumi for three days fully equipped with sports gear; a party of 65 left for Bandung for a month’s convalescence; and a group of 100 Australians were sent to a theatre in Batavia to provide “applause, laughter, etc.” for a prisoner-of-war play that was being filmed by the Japanese. Movement to and from the Bicycle Camp continued. The Japanese were now sending large numbers of prisoners both north and east. Those moving to other areas to the east left from Surabaya; those moving north from Tanjong Priok. At the end of August only about 80 Dutch prisoners and a small number of Australians remained at the Bicycle Camp, but within a few days the number had jumped to over 4,000 and the camp accommodation was badly overtaxed. At that time fish replaced meat on alternate days. On the 26th September a mixed Dutch-British force of 2,500, including Wing Commander Davis and

⁵ Most of the Timor prisoners had arrived at Surabaya on 25th September, after a two days’ voyage from Koepang. Thence they had been sent to Tanjong Priok. A number of them embarked with Dunlop Force.

Lieut-Colonel Lyneham and seven other Australian officers embarked from Tanjong Priok.

Early in 1944 most of the prisoners of war in Java were concentrated in the Batavia area. Some 400 Australians were distributed between Glodok, the Bicycle Camp and Makasura. A few were employed at Adjick on wood cutting, and about 70 were sent to Serang. Some of the Australians were employed in a tobacco factory in Batavia, others in vegetable gardens in the Makasura area. Some medical stores from the British Red Cross were received in June, but most of these were confiscated by the Japanese. That month the meat ration was reduced to offal only, and supplemented by an almost negligible quantity of vegetables and paw paws. In July the island was in a permanent state of brown-out, and the men, learning from the Japanese of heavy sinkings of transports leaving Java and seeing for themselves the pitiful state of the working parties returned from Ambon and elsewhere, did their best to avoid being drafted to overseas parties. In October most of the officers were concentrated at Bandung in what seemed to be a belated attempt by the Japanese to produce a good effect. At Makasura the prisoners in December were passing through what one of them described as "one of the more miserable periods of PW existence . . . much rain, much mud, no news, no sign of action, very little food (now only rice and green leaves with a vestige of offal)". In January 1945 most of the work parties were cut down or cancelled. That month many of the Australians remaining in Java were transferred to Singapore, where some occupied the River Valley camp (recently vacated by parties sent to Japan) and other improvised camps, gradually taking over tasks in the vicinity of the docks from local prisoners of war.

By April most of the remaining British prisoners in Java had been concentrated in a native gaol at Bandung. There, in conditions closely resembling those already described at Changi, some 6,000 were crowded into the gaol under Japanese guards whose attitude towards the prisoners was uncompromisingly harsh almost to the end.

Some of the Australian officers and men who left Singapore before the capitulation and were captured in islands farther to the south were taken to Palembang in Sumatra, where many of them remained until as late as May 1945 before being transferred to Singapore. The principal prisoner-of-war camps at Palembang were the Mulo and Changwa schools and at the airfield, although not all of these were occupied all the time. In September 1942 the men at these camps, some 1,600 in all, included about 60 Australians of the three Services. At Palembang that month, as elsewhere, the prisoners, once sufficient evidence of compulsion had been established, signed forms promising that they would not attempt to escape.

Food supplied by the Japanese consisted of rice, vegetables and proteins in the form of fresh fish, salted fish or dried fish, and occasionally dried meat. The rice ration fluctuated between 190 and 500 grammes, with about 250 grammes of vegetables. The amount of fish or meat supplied averaged about half a cubic inch a day throughout the period of captivity. In 1944

food became steadily less in quantity and inferior in quality; the rice was often full of grit or other impurities, and the vegetables were decayed. When available "snails, rats, cats, dogs, snakes, iguanas, were all eaten". Snails were regarded as "quite a treat from the viewpoint of nourishment".

In May 1945 about 1,400 prisoners were shipped from Palembang to Singapore—a journey lasting five days in conditions so crowded that many of the prisoners had to stand for much of the distance, and a number died.

Among the many hundreds of prisoners of war and internees, including about 220 Australians who remained in Sumatra after this large-scale movement, was a group of Australian nurses, survivors of the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke* and the massacre of nurses on Banka Island in February 1942. After about two weeks at Muntok they had been transferred by ship to Palembang, where the Japanese officers at first endeavoured to persuade them to staff a brothel for their use. The nurses (32 strong) resisted these demands and, after defying threats of starvation, were transferred to bungalows in another quarter of the town where up to 30 prisoners were crowded into one three-roomed house. There they joined Dutch women and children, slept on cement floors and used rice bags and curtains as coverings. Sanitation was inadequate, fuel scarce, and mosquitoes abounded.

Their diet was at first low-grade rice and vegetables, sometimes flavoured by minute portions of duck; later it became more meagre. The nurses did not possess the means to make purchases at the canteen, where beans, sugar and fruit were available, and several developed beri beri. In September 1943 they were transferred, with the women and children, to a desolate camp of bamboo and atap, where leaking huts, mud floors, trench latrines, and the need to draw water from wells, made life still more miserable.

In October 1944 they were returned to Muntok by a small river boat on which 200 women were herded together with barely sufficient space to sit down. Rations became worse than at Palembang; there were few medicines, most of the prisoners developed malaria and the hospital, staffed by the Australian nurses, became filled with sick and dying women and children. In February and March 1945 four of the nurses died.

In April they were returned to Sumatra and, after an appalling sea journey during which women and children were packed into the holds of a small ship and for long periods were unable to move from a cramped knee-to-chin position, entered a camp at Lubuklinggau. There they were housed in old and verminous atap dwellings, which leaked during the wet season, and where overcrowding was extreme. The women were expected to work hard at camp maintenance and their health steadily declined. Between April and August four more nurses died. They were buried by their colleagues.