A PRISONER OF THE JAPANESE

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IN this paper, based on experience of three and a half years as a P.O.W. of the Japanese, I shall present some general features of our life, as well as a few details of medical problems confronting the P.O.W. doctor.

A brief description of my own itinerary is as follows: I was captured at Padang, Sumatra, on 17.3.42, proceeding to Burma by road and ship in May, then a sojourn at Mergui until August, then on by ship to Tavoy, by road to Thambyuzayat in February, 1943, a jungle trek across southern Burma during 1943, thence to Nakompaton near Bangkok by rail in January, 1944, where I remained until the Jap capitulation.

Treatment by Japanese

At the time of capture, our party of 1,000 relics from sunken ships, mixed British, Australians of all services, merchant marine and civilians, including fifty severely wounded who had been evacuated or escaped from Singapore, was waiting for a relief ship to take us away. We had crossed Sumatra by river, road and rail, with the help of the Dutch, who were themselves mobilizing to resist the Jap invader. Facilities for the treatment of our own wounded from bombed ships had been few on the east coast on the island, but on arrival at the west area, Sawah-lento and Padang, hospital accommodation was available. By the first week in March all our sick and wounded were ready for evacuation by the ship that never came. The Japs sank it off the west coast of Sumatra. An R.A.M.C. officer, Lieut.-Col. Hennessy, and I were waiting with the last party at the time of the Jap arrival. Hennessy and a Scotch Major, Kilgour, and I had formed the staff of a temporary C.C.S. at Tembilihan on February 15th and we had provided a medical service for three thousand odd evacuees and escapees during the three weeks in question. The primitive methods adopted in the early surgical work were a necessity because of lack of instruments, etc. The

hardships endured by the troops and civilians during this period were a fitting prelude to later P.O.W. experience.

Whatever the reason, the evacuation across Sumatra cannot be regarded as having been a perfect feat of organization. It is to be classified as a part of the general confusion in the Far East which occurred among the Allied Forces at that period of the war. In the middle and later stages, Lieut.-Col. Dillon, R.I.A.S.C., and Lieut.-Col. Warren, Royal Marines, did a splendid job organizing the evacuees and refugees. Both were captured by the Japs. Though capture seemed inevitable for at least ten days before the Japs arrived, I shall never forget the mental anguish and disappointment which we experienced at the time of actual incarceration. Nor shall I readily forget the spectacle of 1,000 men in rags, many bootless, shirtless, hatless, entirely without kit, marching into the P.O.W. compound. Why they had not been equipped from the local Dutch Army stores (Padang being a depot) during the period of waiting, or from the local town clothing supplies, is just another of the mysteries of the early Far Eastern campaign. More than half of these men subsequently died as P.O.W.s either on the Burma Railway or on bombed Japanese ships.

The Japanese troops treated us reasonably as regards food, accommodation and the care of wounded. The P.O.W.s were confined to the Dutch barracks, fed on rice and a little meat, and a ration party was allowed to go to town each day to purchase extras such as bananas and eggs. I was posted in the local hospital with the wounded and allowed facilities for drug supplies, X-rays and operating theatre. I was also given a permit to visit the wounded women, nurses and others in a mission hospital a mile away. The Jap A.D.M.S. was very respectful to me and the local Jap S.M.O. saw me regularly and insisted that he teach me Japanese. A Jap officer and orderlies visited the hospital, saw my wounded and said, "I have fought with you in last war, in China—I have been wounded myself. Please give your wounded men my sympathy. I am sorry for them. They have served their country."

For the first month it appeared that the conditions were not really bad. The control of P.O.W.s passed out of the hands of the local garrison (Japanese) at the end of April and the special P.O.W. guards organization took over. From then on conditions became worse. The first evidence was a visit by a Jap officer to the hospital. He was a coarse brute who spoke English and

violently attacked a Dutch doctor because he did not bow sufficiently low. The local Jap resident officer was appointed, also English-speaking, and he did an inspection of all the hospitals. I accompanied them. A brutal Jap sergeant-major bellowed at all patients, compelling them, even pregnant women near term, to spring to attention. He derided many bombed patients for having been the victims of bombing. He would ask me roughly what so and so had, pointing to a serious chest wound. As I replied, he burst into a guffaw with "Very good, plenty bombs for you."

Shortly after this we were forced to put the wounded in the prison camp. It was not a bad building, a portion of the Dutch barracks. The Jap officer commanding the camp paraded all P.O.W. officers and said, "I am leaving you to go and look after some of your compatriots at Palembang. You will remember that you are men of honour, you have fought bravely and been unfortunate, your sword is broken, but always keep yourselves holy."

On May 9th I was hurried off at twenty minutes' notice with 500 British P.O.W.s to the local railway station. Owing to some mistake of the interpreter and consequent confusion, I landed my first beating. Knocked over on the station platform, kicked and punched as I lay on the ground by a heavy Jap lieutenant, in front of the other P.O.W.s, was not an experience calculated to endear one to one's custodians. I resolved that never again would I soil my lips with a Jap word except when forced. It is of interest that later at Tavoy the little Jap sergeant in charge of the camp, Kurmata, an English-speaking graduate in Economics at Kobe University, used to sit with me and discuss many things. Speaking of language in the Pacific, I told him that one of his officers on the luxury liner England Maru, the Jap hell ship in which I had travelled to Burma, had upbraided me because of my failure to learn the Jap language. Kurmata replied that it was quite unnecessary as English would always be the language of commerce on the Pacific seaboard. He said that even then (1942) English was being taught in the high schools and colleges of Japan. This little fellow always addressed me respectfully as Sir. On one occasion I asked him "What news?" He said, "Fighting in Solomons." I asked why. He replied, "If we do not take Solomons we will not take Australia, and then we shall lose the war." He asked me how long the war would last. I said, "Four or five years." He asked why. I replied, "Because great nations such as Britain and U.S.A. like

long, big wars. Everything they do is in a big way. Their resources are enormous and will develop each year more and more so that by 1945 there would be thousands of battleships and millions of aeroplanes available to attack Japan." He shook his head regretfully and said, "Yes, I know, you have all the resources." He did what he could for us in the camp, where we had 500 sick. Even on New Year's Day, 1943, he brought us a little milk and some special cake they had for the celebration.

Contrasting with that fellow was the Jap doctor at Tavoy who insisted that all major operations for our P.O.W.s be done in the civil hospital five miles away and the patients returned over a rough road to the camp the same night. No nursing was allowed there. This resulted in two deaths and I thereafter operating clandestinely in the camp. He hurriedly sought my aid one day when operating on a Jap. He had cut open the abdomen in the wrong place to find the appendix and had succeeded in dragging out several feet of intestine which became strangled and hung as a dark purple mass like sausages over the side of the table. The poor patient had only a little local anaesthetic in the abdominal wall and was screaming and kicking. The humiliated Jap doctor could think of nothing better than to invoke my aid. I insisted on a colleague, Major Chalmers, giving the patient chloroform and then we soon returned the insulted intestine to a more salubrious position and presented the appendix to the doctor. He removed it *secuntem artem,* and having saved half his face, he bounced me out of the theatre. I followed him and asked for drugs and dressings for our men. He gave me the most extraordinary fee I have ever received for a major operation, a tin of condensed milk and a packet of cigarettes. Later he supplied me with several large bottles of medicine and some dressings and returned one of our microscopes.

During the months of September to December, 1942, P.O.W.s in Burma from Victoria Point, Mergui and Tavoy had been moving up to the Moulemein area for the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway. One remembers the parting dinner given by the local Jap commander at Mergui. A first-class Chinese meal in a local restaurant with brandy in quantity was served and the representative officers of the P.O.W. units were there. My colleague and I were the medical representatives. There was much talk of good fellowship by the Jap through the interpreter. Only a day or two before a few of our men who had tried to escape (one was an inmate of the hospital, a mental

case) were taken off and forced to dig their own graves and then shot. No record of their burial place was allowed the P.O.W. officer-in-charge. Later, working parties discovered the graves accidentally. These stories illustrate the strange contrast in the Jap character which made it so difficult for us to understand them.

In mid-1943 my party had made its way to the western end of the Burma-Siam Railway, Thambyuzayat. Heavy casualties were accumulating in the jungle camps along the railway. I was sent to a camp 30 kilos from the base to establish a hospital for 2,000 sick. It only just began to function, i.e. our 2,000 sick were there alright, when a Jap, General Sasa, flew through the place with his retinue and he decided that the sick were not sick enough. The dying were sent to the base, and the rest back to the working camp. The result was tragic. Many of the men who, with rest at that time, even despite the absence of drugs, might have recovered were sent to certain death.

The system of control of P.O.W. working camps in Burma was as follows: A Jap Commanding Officer or N.C.O., with a staff of guards and Q.M.; a P.O.W. combatant officer, usually a lieutenant-colonel, and adjutant, Q.M. and medical officers as R.M.O.s.

A small hospital hut accommodated the sick in the camps and gradually as the numbers increased several huts would be so occupied and the camp became one big hospital. When the 30 kilo camp was closed because of the order of the Jap General Sasa I was sent to a jungle working camp as a freelance with no job. At this camp, 75 kilo mark, I saw the work of the R.M.O.s at first hand. There were 3,000 Australians in the camp. They were working night and day on the railway. Commencing at daylight, the parties of P.O.W.s would be taken out to the cuttings and they would remain often for from eighteen to thirty-six hours on end without rest. Rice would be prepared for them at the job. The men received 20 cents a day and could purchase a small amount of extra food, such as brown sugar and cheroots from the canteen, but nothing else. Sick would be paraded each day by the R.M.O.s and arguments would then follow as to why a man regarded as sick by the R.M.O. should be off duty. A Jap private would feel the pulse, look at the patient, and if he considered him fit for work, despite all protests from the R.M.O., he had to go. The picture illustrates this daily clash of guards and doctors.

The Jap doctor, Higuchi, M.O. to P.O.W.s in Burma, visited the camp and carried out an inspection of sick in my presence. Reviewing over a thousand cases by simply walking past them as they stood, sat or lay in line, he ordered that all but three hundred helpless lying cases should march on to the next camp, 30 kilometers away. Lieut.-Col. Ramsay, one of the P.O.W. officers in charge of a section of the camp, remonstrated with the Jap doctor and I spoke to him, but all to no effect. He smilingly informed me that they would soon have a long rest. His words proved literally true for many of these poor men. Their bones rest in Burma today.

This mad rush to complete the railway must have had some military importance at the time. The same attitude of the Jap slave drivers was in evidence on the Siam side and an even worse fate befell the body of P.O.W.s known as H. and F. Force from Malaya, which was hurriedly brought up in April, 1943, and marched most of the way from Bambong, Siam, to the 50 kilo mark in Burma. Major Bruce Hunt and Captain Frank Cahill, Australian M.O.s with that force, had a nightmare journey with their sick.

After the 75 kilo camp had been evacuated of all P.O.W.s who could walk, the remainder, about 300, were left on my hands for treatment. There were no drugs, except quinine, which was supplied in quantities for prophylaxis, i.e. 5 grains per man per day. For six weeks we struggled along without help, no other medical officers, no medical orderlies and no drugs. All but two medical orderlies had been sent to work on the railway, except a few retained at Thambyuzayat. The two medical orderlies had to be evacuated to Base. I acted as a medical attendant, and an observer of pathological processes. During this period a part of the camp vacated by our own P.O.W.s was occupied by Tamils brought from Malaya. Cholera broke out among them and in a hut 25 yards from the one in which I was quartered they died at the rate of fifteen a day. Great care was exercised as far as possible to prevent the outbreak of the disease among our P.O.W.s. Fortunately only two cases developed the disease. I called for a team of volunteer orderlies from among the recovering patients and was delighted at the response. A number of Dutch P.O.W.s, educated men, rendered a splendid service in that camp. We set up a special hut for suspects, isolated them and the orderlies and carried out all the hygienic measures possible. The wet season came upon

us and the transport by Jap trucks broke down, bridges collapsed and we were marooned in the camp. On one occasion I sent thirty-five sick P.O.W.s to the Base at Thambyuzayat but only one is alive today. Most of them died on the journey or soon after arrival. Thousands of Japs passed through this area during that period, May-June 1943. They would camp in neighbouring huts for the night and set off each day, pushing hand-carts, carrying guns and baggage in the rain en route for the Burma Front. At least they were well clothed and well fed.

A Jap M.O. who had been sent to look after the Tamil sick and organize a rough medical service for them was quite genial. He discussed the war with me, promised to get me drugs and books and better food, etc. He had several long talks with me, and was convinced that the war would be over in 1944. He grumbled because he, a psychiatrist, well educated, English speaking, should have been uprooted from his civil job and turned into an R.M.O. for coolie P.O.W.s. One morning, he agreed to take me by car to Thambyuzayat to see Brigadier Varley, but when the necessary arrangements were being made I received a rebuff from the guard commander, a sergeant, and no further communications between the Jap M.O. and myself was allowed, nor were his promises fulfilled.

In the later weeks at that camp, whilst laid up with tropical typhus, Lieut.-Col. Nagatomo visited us in the company of Brigadier Varley. Nagatomo asked me if I would be soon fit enough to take charge of a hospital at the 55 kilo. I replied that I would do as they wished if my services were required.

In 1943, 1,800 of the worst casualties of the railway work were concentrated at Kohn Kuhn, the 55 kilo camp, and there I was sent on a stretcher to take charge of the medical work. Lieut.-Col Gottschall, a Dutch officer, was in charge of discipline, roll calls, etc. There were many of the tropical diseases which are so deadly, but the most important were malaria, for which there was insufficient quinine, deficiency disease (i.e. starvation, in various forms), famine oedema and pellagra, a little beri-beri and ulcers of the leg. The "hospital" consisted of bamboo huts, with no equipment of any kind. Even tins for carrying water, such as petrol drums, etc., of which there were many at the local siding, could not be got. In that region, fortunately, bamboo grew to a great size and the bamboo water container came into universal use.

For 500 ulcer patients I received six bandages a fortnight from the Japs, and a few cakes of sulphur. For the dysentery

patients of some hundreds I received 1 lb. of Epsom salts for a similar period.

Many of the ulcer patients developed gangrene of the leg and 120 had to be amputed. The primitive operating theatre is seen in the slide. I was not allowed to build anything better, though quite an elaborate mortuary was provided by the Japs. Brigadier Varley, since deceased in the sunken Jap transport, was a tower of strength at Thămbyuzayat, and by letter passed through the "unofficial channels" I informed him of the position. Unfortunately the correspondence was buried in Burma and I cannot ascertain if it has been recovered. Brigadier Varley's letters to me, however, were retained by me and the originals, together with copies of complaints to the Jap Lieut.-Colonel in charge, are now in the hands of Sir William Webb, of the War Crimes Commission, as evidence. The gist of the matter was that the Jap doctor through whom I could gain access to the Jap authorities would not pass on my complaints, nor would he listen to any pleas for more food, dressings, drugs, equipment, etc. Thirty patients had died of amoebic dysentery and I had certified them in the Jap return as such. The Jap M.O. ordered that the term Am. Dys. was not to be used, that I did not know they had it, as I could not see amoebae since I had no microscope. I replied that I understood the clinical condition, I had watched their progress and seen the post-mortems, and my diagnosis was Amoebic Dys. I therefore asked for Emetine, the specific drug for the disease. The Jap M.O. retorted through Col. Nagatomo, by a circular issued to all M.O.s, that we were wasting drugs and failing to diagnose the diseases. He told me that the alleged Amoebic Dys. cases were Hill Diarrhoea. Another cause of friction was the fact that the Japs allowed only one disease per patient, hence quinine lack.

I therefore asked Brigadier Varley to represent the matter over the head of the Jap M.O., Higuchi, to Lieut.-Colonel Nagatomo, P.O.W. Commander, Burma, who had been a Japanese attache in Paris. There was a great to do, as you may imagine, but the upshot was that Nagatomo visited the camp, saw the appalling conditions, then sent a junior medical officer, Dr. Aonuma, as the camp commander. He also issued a printed order stating that he was trying to get Emetine from Rangoon and Bangkok. Shortly after a bottle of Ipecacuanha was supplied through Lieut.-Col. T. Hamilton to me and from it we extracted 120 doses of Emetine.

The following extract from my own report to the Japs gives some idea of conditions in the camp: "The spectacle of emaciated skeletons of men on the one hand, and the oedematous, water-logged wrecks on the other, many with rotting gangrenous ulcers of the leg, emitting a nauseating stench, lying in their pain and misery, was such as I never wish to witness again. The daily procession to the graveyard of numbers of patients was a reminder to those still alive that the consolation of death would soon end their sufferings. The memory of it is not easily obliterated."

A certain Jap General in charge of P.O.W.s at the Bangkok end sent a circular to us urging men to work for the Emperor, pointing out that sickness was a state of mind, that it could be overcome by the right mental attitude, and such-like nonsense, together with threats of punishment for failure to complete the railway in time.

The underlying trouble was food deficiency (starvation) and chronic malaria. The ulcers of the legs would have healed if there was any healing in the patient. The outside dressing was not important. It was the inside processes which were wrong. Many post-mortems were done; the usual finding was shrunken organs and a stomach and intestines like tissue paper. All the lining had atrophied, and there was no power of absorption of the scanty food we received.

I shall not alarm you with an account of the morbid conditions in the camp. Suffice it to say that it was a pestilential place, that the inmates were starved, denied drugs and dressings, and had been exhausted with hard work. Leaves from the local jungle had to be used instead of dressings for the large ulcers of the leg. There was no morphia or any other drug to relieve pain.

The little Jap M.O., Aounma, took a slight interest in conditions, held a meeting, asked for requests, etc., then later informed us that no canteen supplies could be obtained as we were not allowed contact with the Burmese. He could get us no drugs. However, a secret extra mural traffic with the local villages was set up and some of the more adventurous P.O.W.s obtained meat and live cattle in the village, which was killed outside the camp at night, and the result of the meat so supplied was soon observed in the cessation of amputations. Pus began to form in the ulcers which had been dead and dying areas. The pus was a herald of healing. Many men had spreading ulceration

of the leg, involving the bones, and great pieces of dead bone came away, but the limb was saved.

The local camp manufacture of alcohol from rice by a Dutch chemist, Van Boxtel, provided us with an antiseptic. Catgut for ligatures was made from the intestine of the ox, sterilized by heat and alcohol. Emetine was extracted from Ipecacuanha and 150 doses were given to patients with amoebic dysentery.

Cocaine, of which I had a few tablets, was made up in a dilute solution and given in tiny doses into the spinal region, thus producing anaesthesia of the lower limbs in the patients submitted to amputation.

The activities of the chemist were not confined to medical affairs. He made batteries from bamboo and ox hoof jelly and ammonium chloride obtained under the lap. These batteries were carried in a bamboo walking stick and the rest of the apparatus was in a water bottle with a false bottom. The only trouble was the ear phone, which could not be disguised. We had a ball-to-ball description of the landing at Cape Merkus with that apparatus. One of the patients who was assistant artificial limb maker, and hence could carry tools, made an outfit from a magneto of a motor cycle, an emery wheel, and valves obtained secretly, and he sat in a hollow jungle tree a mile from the camp each night and obtained his overseas reports. On our move to Siam at Christmas 1943, he unwisely packed his outfit in a box and labelled it "artificial limbs". To his and our consternation on arrival at the camp all gear was searched. The story of the disposal of that stuff, after it had been confiscated by the Japs and taken to the guard room, is perhaps a little premature. The man in question was locked up, but by devious means he obtained release and suffered no bodily harm. In a camp a few miles from that in which this search occurred, the discovery of a radio had been made, and three British officers had been beaten to death some weeks before for the possession of just such a piece of apparatus. I learned last week that three Japs in question had been recently executed for this affair.

The morale of the men during this period was remarkably good. The pain suffered by the leg ulcers was severe, but men consoled each other as they lay in their rags on the bamboo platform and had their ulcers scraped and dressed. A sense of humour especially among the Australians did much to mitigate the situation. Lectures, which as a rule were not encouraged or later even permitted by the Japs, were ordered. I was told to

prepare a syllabus of health lectures for 1,800 derelicts, many dying. There was a touch of sense in this, for it gave an opportunity for the medical officers to preach hygiene and mental tranquillity, and generally helped in morale building. One lecture of my own on anthropology gave some amusement as I made fair game of our custodians. Combatant officers and patients in the camp helped by organizing a washing service, making crutches and rough beds, helping with dressings and generally assisting in the medical work. Major J. Harris and his two sons, Captains Nason and Campbell, did especially good work.

In January, 1944, a few of us Australian P.O.W.s and a Dutch M.O. were taken to Nakompatom, thirty-five miles west of Bangkok, there to witness the construction of a camp for 10,000 sick and disabled P.O.W.s from the B.S. Railway. Fifty bamboo huts were built in a rice field, wells were sunk, kitchens made, and then in March the first batch of the sick arrived. There was an enquiry by the Japs at this time into the conditions on the railway. Questionnaires were circulated and some of us were asked to write essays giving a frank statement of the conditions. Different opinions were expressed by officer P.O.W.s as to how these essays should be written. Some Australian officers maintained that a disclosure of the truth in all its ugliness might jeopardise our interests for the future. Others claimed that the naked truth should be told in no uncertain manner so that if the Japanese high authorities were genuinely interested in P.O.W. welfare they would have some starting point at least. I observed the latter rule in all my essays and reports to the Japs, from the 55 kilo camp onward, and never did it cause any trouble. On one occasion the Jap M.O., on reading my reports (translated), made some strange violent noises but he did not deny my charges. These facts lead one to believe that there was some attempt by higher Jap officials in 1944 to correct the anomalies of 1942 and 1943. American Red Cross supplies arrived at Nakompatom in May, 1944, and again in July, and the drugs and supplies enabled us to proceed to treat some of the worst cases of dysentery, deficiency disease and malaria. A Jap interpreter who showed me over the grounds of the new camp at Nakompatom before building was complete informed me that it was to be run on Geneva lines.

The organization of the camp is shown on the table (see slide.)

The group system of control and organization of P.O.W.s was replaced in late 1944 by a simpler arrangement. All patients admitted as chronic sick became members of the Nakompatom group. The system of dual control, i.e. by a combatant officer and a chief medical officer, continued until January 1945, after which date all non-medical officers were segregated in a separate camp at Kanburi.

There were 8,000 mixed P.O.W.s in the camp hospital by May 1944, about 4,000 U.K., 2,000 Dutch, 2,000 Australian and 35 American. The appointment of P.O.W. officers in control was as follows: In Burma, I had been ordered by Brigadier Varley, the senior P.O.W. officer in Siam and Burma, to take up the control of Group 3 (Australian and Dutch) patients on arrival at Nakompatom. I found Lieut.-Col. Sainter in charge of the building party. He had been P.O.W. Commander, British Hospital, at Chungki. When the hospital was completed in February 1944, I was sent for by the Jap commander and medical officer and ordered to take charge of the internal medical arrangements, to nominate staff and to appoint medical personnel. I carried the title of Chief Medical Officer. Lieut.-Col. Sainter was ordered to take charge of discipline, accommodation, cooking, rations, etc. He was known as P.O.W. Commander. For the twelve months of operation of this system Lieut.-Col. Sainter and I collaborated fully. We were billetted together and by close personal attention to policy and detail many difficulties were overcome. The same collaboration between Block Commanders and S.M.O.s, Hut Commanders and Ward M.O.s was observed. Dutch officers were placed in a position to look after Dutch nationals where possible, but the hospital was an entirety on a disease basis without any attempt being made to split it on a nationality basis. A General Purposes Medical Committee, consisting of Lieut.-Col. Malcolm (B.), Lieut.-Col. Larsen (Dutch) and the C.M.O. decided all matters of major medical policy. We met regularly and solved our problems before submitting anything to the P.O.W. Commander or the Japs. There was never any disagreement before the Japs. This united front, despite provocation many times by our enemies, caused some surprise.

Diet and Drugs Committee: Captain Vardy (British), who acted as my adjutant and registrar, Lieut.-Col. Larsen (Dutch), who acted as Deputy C.M.O., and Major W. E. Fisher (Australian), who was the consultant physician, advised the C.M.O.

on all special matters of distribution of food, special diets for the sick, and distribution of drugs, etc. This committee was a most valuable body and its activities continued until the capitulation. The problems confronting it seemed insuperable at times, but it succeeded in submitting regular reports which were invariably acted upon. A Finance Committee, consisting of representative combatant officers, advised the P.O.W. Commander and he and I then decided on the best way of meeting the needs of the camp with the funds available. The extra medical activities were welfare, laundry, workshops, library and entertainments. Five hundred books were brought into the camp by P.O.W.s and these were circulated. The first entertainment allowed in 1944 was a Christmas concert. For some reason the Jap did not consider that sick P.O.W.s should be entertained and of course at that time lectures were forbidden for security reasons. Even church services, which were forbidden for many months, when finally allowed were always attended by the Jap interpreter. Five or six services would be in progress at once, the Jap sitting on a little seat in a central position, supposedly listening to all preachers and priests. Needless to say the preachers and congregations were a little distracted, as some sang while others prayed or exhorted, all within a few yards of each other.

As the Jap would not give more than a third of the usual P.O.W. meat ration to the sick, the principle being that sick do not eat and Jap regulations provide no pay for the sick, our hospital was worse off than any other camp. A little money collected in other camps was brought in clandestinely, but the thorough search of incoming and outgoing P.O.W.s soon stopped that avenue. Levies from officers' pay brought in 3,000 dollars a month but the extra diet bill was 15,000 to 20,000 dollars a month. Contacts with outside sources (Siamese) brought a few thousand but the camp-breaking messenger was caught and tortured, and then followed a general tightening up of control. The Jap M.O. was appealed to and the deplorable drift of many hundreds of patients into a condition of avitauinsis (food and vitamin deficiency) demonstrated to him. Letters were written by Col. Sainter and myself to the Jap Commander.

A supply of drugs (Red Cross) arrived in May-July 1944, also a small consignment of food, i.e. a Red Cross parcel for thirteen men, but food was still a big problem. It was alleviated to some extent by the policy of employing as many as possible

of those convalescing and disabled on some form of work—volunteer orderlies, sweepers, cleaners, cigarette making, fly catching, bag making. The Japs did show some desire to help us to get around their own regulation which did not permit of any more ration supply than that issued. Col. Ishi, the Jap Commander in 1944, did nothing but with the arrival of Col. Yamagita an improvement occurred. They permitted us to buy canteen supplies and also allowed the officers' pay to be used, and gave 20,000 dollars (one month's needs) for the sick. (Afterwards I learned that this was a donation of Red Cross money from the Swiss Red Cross Bk.)

I shall not go into detail of the ration issue. Roughly it was rice, sufficient, meat, 1 oz. a man, vegetables, mainly cucumber, melon, occasional onion, sweet potato, and tea. Such food, which contained a lot of roughage, was not suitable for the sick, e.g. 1,500 dysentery patients. The meat contains protein. This is essential to life. Protein deficiency was one of the main causes of breakdown and death. Even after capitulation we had many patients showing protein oedema. There was no fat ration and the lack of such a necessary component of the diet was serious. The table shows the low ration scale. To get anything like sufficient from the canteen required at least one dollar a day per man – 20,000 dollars a month, instead of 5,000 to 10,000. The supplies were in the town of Nakompatom, as we saw when we left the camp for a visit on 17/8/45.

A lively trade with the Siamese went on, i.e. the sale of all sorts of valuables, clothing, etc., and that brought money into circulation. It was strictly forbidden and in March, 1945, when I was both P.O.W. Commander and C.M.O., I was called to the Jap Commander to answer a puzzling question. The canteen books were signed as correct each month and a statement of receipts and expenditure submitted to the Jap Q.M. This month the book showed 6,000 dollars more spent than could be accounted for by pay received. During 1944 this had occasionally occurred and it was explained by the spending of funds in hand. But in January 1945 all funds had to be declared, and no money was to be in the camp. All valuables were taken by the Japs, even fountain pens from M.O.s. On the occasion in question it was a poser. Under close interrogation I deemed it wise to explain to the Jap officers that I was trained as a surgeon from early childhood and as was the custom in my country such early specialization (which by the way they appreciate themselves) did

not allow of my being taught arithmetic or any figure work. I was thus quite ignorant of the meaning of the forms submitted. After some debate and a doubtful look from the Jap adjutant, and a knowing smile from the interpreter, a decent fellow, I saved my face.

Among the paying occupations, one of the most successful was fly catching—10 cents for 15,000 flies was paid. This appealed to the Jap as the menace of flies was not confined to the P.O.W.s in an area where thousands of Japs were also concentrated. So bigger and better fly traps were built by enterprising P.O.W.s and 75 dollars a day was paid for flies. It appeared that we attracted all the flies in the northern hemisphere to Nakompatom, but it paid. Private enterprise was allowed to operate for a time, individuals earning several dollars a day, and when it was apparent that we had reached a reasonable limit without arousing too much suspicion we transferred the private companies into a camp concern for the general welfare.

The manufacture of cigarettes was arranged on a camp basis, permanently disabled men being employed. Tobacco, bought at the canteen, was rolled up in old paper cut from books. Paper splitting became a skilled trade. Private firms soon started operating and could pay as much as 40 dollars for a good book. Bigger and better cigarettes were turned out and numbers of men were employed privately by individuals who ran a team of cutters and rollers on a piece-work basis. Hundreds of dollars were earned by them. This keen competition with the official canteen cigarette factory gave me some concern in April 1945. The difficulty was overcome by taking the directors of the private factories into the canteen factory, thus raising the standard of work. A bank director from Java was one of the private owners and he became as it were a Government manager.

The manufacture of all kinds of useful equipment such as instruments, operating theatre tools, tables, pumps, stills for extracting alcohol, artificial limbs, mechanical apparatus for physiotherapy, etc., was carried on under the direction of appropriate tradesmen P.O.W.s. Scientists made a variety of things such as ink, paper, dyes, stains, thus enabling us to do the routine investigational work in pathology. Surgical operations were done and diagnosis made by the simple methods known to our forefathers. Post-mortems were regularly reviewed at meeting of M.O.s, and clinical meetings held weekly were a source of stimulation and intellectual refreshment.

Though there were only thirty M.O.s for 7,000 patients, they worked well and availed themselves of every facility, such as they were. Free consultations and discussion of difficult problems brought the talent of the camp to bear on any serious case. The results are seen in the mortality figures of under 3 per cent for a hospital through which 10,000 derelicts of the jungle had passed in eighteen months. There were no murders, only two suicides, and thirty mental patients under restraint. Some of these were organic, i.e. cerebral malaria—head injury due to Jap brutality. Sexual perversion was rare; the bland diet was certainly not exciting.

Radio communication was out of the question in 1945 because of the thrice daily searches of the camp by the Jap guards. Twice a night each man was counted and inspected by the sentry carrying a torch. Two or three times a week sudden searches of the whole camp took place. Now and then the Kempi tai (Gestapo) paid an unexpected visit and ransacked everything, including all medical and surgical kit. All pencils, paper, notes and records were in the hands of the Japs, even records kept in the wards had to be returned to the Jap office at 5 p.m. (Our own war diary notes were secretly kept and buried. They are the basis of this and other papers, as well as the evidence for the War Crimes Tribunal.) Fortunately there was a Dutch interpreter who was friendly with four Koreans, clerks in the Jap office, who had at all times shown themselves, as far as possible, reasonable with us. This Dutchman was very shrewd and reliable. He was a rich diamond merchant, but a communist. Without committing ourselves, we arranged in early 1945 for an interchange of help, i.e. the Koreans gave us the low-down on the Jap affairs. Thus we had a regular news service, which was unknown to all of the camp except the Deputy C.M.O., the Adjutant and myself. News was given out as rumour at intervals after its reception. We knew the day Germany fell. We also knew of the Jap secret instructions to deal with us if the Allies tried to release us. We saw the machine gun nests in our camp, every hut covered, and we knew of a store of hand grenades and of the guards' instructions for their use. I ordered the expenditure of all funds by mid-September. We would be free or dead.

In July I was approached and asked to give a written statement to each of the Koreans involved, to be found on their bodies if they were killed in the scrimmage, and they proposed

to do what they could to save us. I refused to write, but verbally promised help and a written document after the capitulation.

We learned of the terrible destruction of Nagasaki. We read the consternation on the faces of our custodians. The Korean informers continued the good work and two days before the capitulation we were aware of the discussion in Tokyo and the reluctance of the army to toe the line. Twenty minutes after Japan agreed to capitulate we knew it in the camp. No sleep on the night of August 15th. On August 16th I ordered a special dinner and while visiting the boys during the meal I was called to the Jap Commander, Lieut.-Col. Yamagita. Parading a number of N.C.O.s who were acting as Hut Commanders, we received the news formally. The Jap officers were in full military dress and treated the matter as a serious formal affair. Yamagita announced through the interpreter that there was an armistice on all fronts, that we were now free men and that we had to look after our own administration and food supplies and that there was enough food in the store for immediate needs and that we would guard ourselves. I demanded the immediate delivery of Red Cross stores which we knew the Japs had been holding—food and clothing. I left my adjutant to receive detailed instructions and at once called on Lieut.-Col. Dunlop to mobilize his guards (previously selected and instructed) to man the camp walls. In twenty minutes the Korean guards had been replaced by our men. Our bugles sounded the Fall In, a monster meeting of P.O.W.s was held and the good news given out by Lieut.-Col. Larsen (Dutch) and myself. Flags were run up—where they came from was a mystery. An impromptu concert was held. The men behaved splendidly. The discipline developed during the previous twelve months, the saluting of officers, the regular inspection of official and orderly rooms, and the secret transfer of a cadre of the best N.C.O.s and Petty Officers into all huts for the preservation of order now produced results. During the night excited Siamese tried to get into the camp and our guards, armed only with bamboo sticks, had a task. One crowd of natives tried to raid the Jap officers' compound but were driven off by our men. Next day I sought help from the Japs in the form of trucks and arms. These were refused.

The senior officers, British, Dutch and Australian, accompanied me to the section of the camp then accommodating Jap wounded (5,000). We offered our services if they required them. The Jap medical officer, a colonel, was much affected but stated

that they had no permission to avail themselves of the help offered. We senior officers then walked down town, were saluted by the Jap guards, and proceeded to the Siamese Governor's House. Here we talked for two hours about supplying food, radios, money and suchlike matters. The Governor was rather difficult and it became my painful duty to remind him that the Allies had won the war and he belonged to the beaten enemy, and that if he did not give the help we desired he would know more about it when the British arrived. He brightened up at this alarming suggestion and offered at once to supply a motor car and his assistant to take some of us to Bangkok. On arrival back at the camp after a good dinner in a Chinese restaurant, the first for three years, we were met by the Jap officers, who ordered us into the presence of the Jap Lieutant-Colonel. I refused to be ordered by them and stated that in the circumstances I would be willing to discuss any matter for the welfare of the P.O.W.s with the Jap Lieutenant-Colonel. The latter was quite polite and instead of sitting at the head of his table he sat opposite me at the upper end with corresponding officers, Jap and P.O.W. on each side. We discussed the situation—the Japs had received a special order that as fighting had not ceased in Siam, many Japs were ignorant of the capitulation, and as the atomic bomb was the sole reason for the cease fire—the Jap armies having not been defeated—we were not allowed out of the camp. I thanked the Jap Lieutenant-Colonel for his consideration but pointed out that on his own showing he was not in a position to order me to do anything, but that as a reasonable man I agreed to his suggestion and hoped that we would collaborate in the period pending the arrival of Allied forces.

Rations were raised by one dollar per day per man. Purchases of food, of which there was a plentiful supply in the town, and the long-delayed issue of the Red Cross clothing soon put our men in a good frame of mind.

A thanksgiving service was held that day and addresses delivered by the senior officers to their nationals. After an interval of one week, during which Red Cross representatives from Bangkok, Swiss gentlemen, visited the camp and promised many drugs. Lieut.-Colonels Dunlop, Larsen, MacFarlane and I went to Bangkok to arrange with the Jap headquarters for better hospital accommodation. The Siamese director, a Major-General of the Red Cross Hospital, was not friendly but offered the coolie lines for our people. The arrival by plane of the

R.A.P.W.I. representatives and especially of Brigadier Bush (an Australian in the Indian Medical Service) served to remove any such foolish ideas from the mind of the Siamese Major-General. He was sacked and the hospital taken over by the British. Food was dropped from the air on all the camps.

Lady Louis Mountbatten arrived a few days later and, accompanied by her two lady assistants, visited Nakompatom Hospital, spent three hours talking to the sick individually and then addressed a large group of P.O.W.s from a platform. Her two ladies spent several weeks in the camp assisting in the nursing of the sick and cheering up the men generally.

On the journey from Bangkok to Nakompatom, Lady Louis Mountbatten travelled in a jeep, with a ragged ex-P.O.W. Australian driver, a real tough bloke, and myself for company. The jeep was preceded by a Jap General and several Colonels in a beautiful car, then behind them followed a car load of British Medical Staff Officers and a General, then the Siamese police. We passed through the country infested with 40,000 Jap troops. Their discipline was perfect. The Jap General and officers proposed to take part in the procession through the hospital, but it was my pleasing duty to inform them through a junior officer that the days for their visits to Nakompatom were over and that the Lady would see the ex-P.O.W.s alone. This visit made a wonderful impression on our boys and did much to cheer them and counteract the impatience and irritability which was a natural consequence of the long delay in their release. The subsequent events have been reported in the press.

During the interregnum whilst I was at Bangkok acting as Senior Medical Liaison Officer for the Allies, the Japanese medical officer-in-chief-P.O.W.s asked me for records of our P.O.W.s. I informed him that it was strange they should expect us to have records when they had deprived us of pens and pencils, and denied us paper except for the records which we had been compelled to keep for them. He told me that all their records had gone. That we knew, as we witnessed the bonfires in our camps. He stated that he would get into serious trouble with the British and that he might be killed if he did not produce them. I reassured him by reminding him that he would receive British justice. He pleaded that he was not responsible for all those men who had died on the railway as he had only come to Siam recently. He gave me his motor car, bearing a red cross on its sides, and in this car I was able to carry out many

duties during the following fortnight. A.D.M.S.s for the British, Australian and Dutch were appointed for their own nationals and when I handed over to the British A.D.M.S., Col. Leaming, I devoted my remaining days in Bangkok to collecting documents and had copies made for the U.K., Australian and Dutch Army medical authorities.

Comments by an ex-P.O.W. doctor on the reasons for the evil conditions in Japanese prison camps is perhaps pointless, but I suggest the following possible contributing factors.

(a) The low rank and small authority of Japanese medical officers of P.O.W. hospitals. Often there were no more than a sergeant of the guard as camp commander and no doctor at all. The highest ranked medical officer we had at Nakompatom Hospital for 8,000 P.O.W.s was a 1st lieutenant.

(b) The complete subservience of the Jap P.O.W. medical organizations to the A.Q. Department. Roll calls, saluting of guards and all the irritating routine took precedence over medical care.

(c) The employment of Jap M.O.s as policemen or agents of the task masters.

(d) The apathy and inertia of the Jap M.O. even when medical matters could be brought home to him by our own doctors.

(e) A callous disregard of the decencies and ethical principles which Western medicine has inculcated over the centuries.

Summed up, it means that a Jap P.O.W. medical officer was nothing more than the submissive tool of a cruel controlling authority. In our Army the medical officer enjoys some rank and prestige and his appeals to executive authority are usually heard and often acted upon. We doctors and lawyers realize that the preservation of our free institutions and the upholding of ethical tradition is a sacred duty of all members of the learned professions, at all times and in all circumstances. Our interest is primarily in the individual man however he may be organized in Army, State, Church or hospital.

In conclusion I wish to express the thanks of the medical personnel in the P.O.W. hospital camps in Siam and Burma to the officers and men, British, Dutch and Australian, who at all times did their best to assist us in our work.