

WAR PRISONERS TELL OF HORRORS OF JAPANESE CAMPS

(From Our Special Correspondent, John Loughlin)

TOKYO, Sunday.

Stories of the terrible punishment inflicted by the Japanese on Allied war prisoners have been told by men who have been rescued from Ofuna, one of Japan's secret war camps deep in the mountains.

As we splashed the last miles along a road through paddy fields in which our car became bogged, some prisoners appeared around a bend and rushed down a hill to greet the first members of the Allied landing forces to reach them.

They were shouting hysterically and stumbling as they ran with hands outstretched.

They stated that for the past week they had had complete freedom with a new set of guards, whom we saw in groups inside the camp. They were smiling and bowing to the prisoners and saluted us.

The majority of the prisoners were Americans, shot down over Japan. There were a few British but no Australians, although some had passed through the camp.

They stated that a Swiss representative who had visited the camp a few weeks ago, had told them that Ofuna was an unregistered camp and he had not heard of its existence till then. He was horrified by the condition of some prisoners who were living skeletons. He ordered the removal of 34 of them to hospital. Seventy per cent. of the prisoners were suffering from beri beri. Some of the more recent prisoners, chiefly survivors from B29's shot down during the first raids, told their stories with bitter rage.

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Misery of Petty Tyranny

Others who had been longer in this Japanese hell camp recited a terrible story of brutality, sadism, starvation and a long, slow misery of petty tyranny by guards trying to outdo each other in humiliating white men.

Each lot of new prisoners brought to the camp was admitted by an officer they called "little admiral." He told them they could now consider themselves as no longer existing, because the outside world would hear nothing of them.

Although Ofuna was chiefly an interrogating camp, some of the prisoners were there for as long as two years. They became weaker on a starvation diet of half a bowl of plain rice or barley each meal and from neglect and ill-treatment.

Beaten with Batons

During their first few weeks in the camp the prisoners were regularly beaten with batons at night when they laid down in agony. Every time the guard was changed, every two hours, the new guards would enter a prisoner's cell, make him stand to attention and punch him in the jaw, slap his face or make him stand on his bed naked while he was battered with batons.

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Terrible beatings were given for the slightest misbehaviour, such as talking to fellow prisoners, leaving a magazine on the ground, failing to bow and say "Good morning" to the guards.

Three prisoners were said to have died from the effects of beatings. A favourite form of punishment was called the "Ofuna crouch." Prisoners were forced to crouch on their toes with their knees bent and hands up-raised, while guards went behind

them bashing anybody who tried to straighten the knee or lower his arms. Prisoners' legs and arms became numb and they collapsed.

Another regular punishment was to make the prisoners run from one end of the corridor to another, bent double and pushing a hand-mop along the floor. This went on until they collapsed and then the guards would begin to beat them with batons.

No Medical Attention

The prisoners told us that there was no doctor in the camp. The sick bay attendant was just a "brutal slugger."

Airmen brought in with shrapnel or bullet wounds were left unattended, until the wounds were in a terrible condition.

Men with fractured legs were given no treatment and limbs and the bones set in distorted shapes. One prisoner, whom we brought out of camp, was a British Fleet air arm pilot, Lieutenant Cameron, of Wellington, N.Z.

The first member of our Press party that he met was Sub-Lieut. Jones, now Navy photographer, who was a squadron pal of Cameron's on the Illustrious during the British Fleet's operations in the Sakashimas this year.

It was over Sakashima that Cameron was shot down by flak during May. He drifted into Ishigaki Island where he was captured. The Japanese forced him to march through a village while the towns-

people beat and stoned him.

Taken to Formosa he escaped from the prison with three other airmen but was recaptured and flown to Japan, via Shanghai, bound, gagged, blindfolded and tied to his seat. He suffered severe beatings for a week.

"It depended on how you took beatings on how much you got," he said. "If you stood up and took it they got tired of getting no satisfaction out of it, but if a man cringed and asked them to stop they were delighted and beat him unmercifully. They were sexual perverts."

Lieut. Cameron stated that on Sundays the Jap guards would bring their girl friends into the camps and turn out the prisoners and make us parade for hour after hour, despite the weakened condition of some of us from starvation.

The guards would walk up to the prisoners and flip them on the forehead and call them "bakif" and fools. The Allies were sometimes allowed two cigarettes a day, and if they killed hundreds of flies they were granted an extra cigarette.

Rail Workers Died of Starvation

A message from Allied headquarters in Burma announced that Col. J. M. Williams, of the Australian Pioneer Corps, stated that 884 Australians were employed on the construction of the railway from Thailand to Burma and by the time the work had reached 130 kilometres to the west, only 34 remained, the remainder having died or were in hospital.

In addition, the work on this jungle railway was stated to have cost the lives of 20,000 Tamil slave-workers from Malayan rubber plantations.

Colonel Williams explained that when he and seven other officers were captured, the Japs tried to break down their morale to disclose what they knew of the defences of Australia, but they failed.

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Other prisoners tell how men died almost daily through starvation and lack of drugs to combat jungle diseases. The men were compelled to work 18 hours daily.

They tell how officers of the signal corps constructed small wireless sets which were capable of picking up news from India, and that helped to keep the men sane.

A Japanese broadcast over Singapore radio stated that prisoners wanted newspapers and periodicals so that they could read of the progress of the war in tabloid form; they also desired drugs and cigarettes.

Jap Cruelty to Soviet Prisoners

MOSCOW, Sunday.

Reports of Jap atrocities committed against the Russians were made public to-day.

They state that the enemy tortured and wounded prisoners by slicing them with knives and bayonets.

A nurse, captured on the battlefield, was blindfolded and then slowly cut to death.