

Commission appointed by the Authorities of Sime Read Internment Camp to take and record evidence from internees who were arrested by the Japanese Military Police in consequence of a raid on Changi Camp on 10th October, 1943, first sat on Thursday, 30th August 1945, and completed the record of evidence on Sunday evening, 2nd September 1945, having taken statements from 36 of the survivors. It was considered urgent to record this evidence prior to the dispersal of the Camp, which, it is believed, might take place as early as the 3rd September, 1945.

On 10th October 1943, all internees in Changi Prison were paraded soon after dawn in the Main Yard as if for a routine roll-call. Soon after this the Military Police arrived and armed soldiers picketed all doors. A number of internees were called out by name, labelled and segregated. Internees were then ordered back to their Block Yards where further labelling and segregation took place. Meanwhile, a search was made of the personal belongings of all internees, during this search there was looting and wanton destruction by the Japanese. The investigation finished after dusk and the internees were allowed to return inside the Prison. Many of them had had no food since 6p.m. (T.T) on the previous day, and some suffered distress and even collapse owing to the day long exposure to the sun without.

In consequence of this investigation, 57 internees were removed from Changi Prison by the Military Police on or after 10th October 1943. With one exception, these were all interrogated at Japanese Military Police centres at Singapore. The course of the interrogation showed that the Japanese were trying to establish that there was a spy organisation in Changi Prison which received and transmitted by Radio-telephony, which had established contacts in the town for the purpose of sabotage and stirring up Anti-Jap feeling and which collected money from outside for this purpose. In fact, there was no spy organisation no radio transmission and no attempt to promote anti-Japanese activities outside the Camp. There were, however, radio receiving sets in the camp which were used solely for the reception of news, and money was collected from outside the camp with the sole purpose of supplementing the totally inadequate rations supplied by the Japanese.

The conditions under which the internees were detained by the Military Police were rigorous in the extreme. They were crowded, irrespective of race, sex or state of health, in small cells and cages. They were so cramped that they could not lie down in comfort. No bedding or coverings of any kind were provided and bright lights were kept burning overhead all night. From 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. inmates had to sit up straight on the bare floor with their knees up and were not allowed to relax or put their hands on the floor or talk or move except to go to the lavatory. Any infraction of the rigid discipline involved a beating by the sentries. There was one pedestal water-closet in each cell or cage, and the water flushing into the pan provided the only water supply allowed for all purposes, including drinking. It should be recorded here that nearly all of the inmates suffered from enteritis or dysentery. No soap, towel, toilet articles or handkerchiefs were permitted and

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inmates had no clothes other than those they were wearing.

The food supply, normally rice, occasionally vegetable, and weak tea with no milk or sugar, was less than half that supplied by our Prison Department as punishment diet for Asiatics. It was insufficient to support life over a long period and led to serious deficiency diseases in all cases of long detention.

Medical facilities afforded, whether visits of medical personnel or the supply of medicines or drugs, were for all practical purposes non-existent. In many cases; our own doctors sharing cells with the sick, made urgent requests for prompt medical attention on their behalf, particularly where the victims were on the point of death, but these requests were invariably ignored. In one case, the Japanese doctor, who was called to see an internee suffering from a fractured pelvis and possibly ruptured kidney, remarked that the man was not sick enough.

The three women taken from Changi Prison were detained in exactly the same conditions as the men and shared cells with male prisoners of all races. They were afforded no privacy, even for their most intimate requirements and any attempt on the part of any European man to screen them was broken down by the guards. They were subjected to insults and obscene gestures by Japanese prisoners in the same cell and the Japanese prisoners, with the assent of the guard, tried to compel them to perform the most sordid tasks in the cell.

The buildings occupied by the Japanese Military Police resounded all day and all night with blows, the bellowing of the inquisitors and the shrieks of the tortured. From time to time, victims from the torture chambers would stagger back or, if unconscious, would be dragged back to their cells with marks of their ill treatment on their bodies. In one such case, an unconscious victim so returned died during the night, without receiving any medical attention, and his body was not removed until the afternoon. In these conditions, and this atmosphere of terror, these men and women waited, sometimes for months, their summons to interrogation which might come any hour of the day or night.

Usually interrogation started quietly and would so continue as long as the inquisitors got the expected answers. If for any reason, such answers were not forthcoming physical violence was immediately employed. The methods used were:

1. Beating with iron bars, brass rods, sticks, bamboo, wet-knotted ropes, belts with buckles, or revolver butts, all over the body. While these beatings were being inflicted, the victims were sometimes suspended by the wrists from a rope passed over a beam. Sometimes their hands were tied behind their backs and they were forced to kneel on sharp pieces of wood or iron, while sharp edged pieces of wood or metal were placed behind their knees so as to cut into the flesh as they knelt. While they were so kneeling, the Japanese

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would jump on their thighs or on the projecting ends of the bar or wood behind their knees, a Japanese would perch himself on the shoulders of the victim, or the victim with hands untied, would be compelled to hold heavy weights above his head. They were often forced to remain in this position without intermission for 9 to 10 hours during which period interrogation would go on remorsefully punctuated by blows. At times the victim would be tied to a table and flogged until he lost consciousness. This treatment was, in some cases, carried on daily for 4 to 5 days, consecutively. In one case, a European who died later, was interrogated with the usual beatings for 55 hours at a stretch and another European, since dead, underwent 144 hours of beatings in all according to the estimates of his cell mates.

(2) Water Torture. There were two forms of water torture. In the first, the victim was tied or held down on his back and a cloth placed over his nose and mouth. Water was then poured on the cloth. Interrogation proceeded and the victim was beaten if he did not reply. As he opened his mouth to breathe or to answer questions, water went down his throat until he could hold no more. Sometimes, he was then beaten over his distended stomach, sometimes, a Japanese jumped on his stomach or sometimes, pressed on it with his feet.

In the second, the victim was tied lengthways on a ladder, face upwards, with a rung of the ladder across his throat and his head below the ladder. In this position he was slid head first into a tub of water and kept there until almost drowned. After being revived, interrogation continued and he would be re-immersed.

(3) During interrogation the inquisitor, in many cases, burnt the victim with cigarette and cheroot ends, even on the most sensitive parts of the body, i.e. the arm-pits, between the toes, on the scrotum and penis. Several Asiatics had ~~water~~ petrol poured on their bellies and ignited, and another Asiatic had his hands tied together and immersed in a bowl of methylated spirit which was then ignited.

(4) In addition to these forms of torture, the inquisitors often employed other methods such as ju-jitsu, twisting of limbs, bending back of fingers, twisting of sharp edged wood between fingers, punching, repeated blows on the same spot, and so on. These methods, in many cases resulted in dislocation and permanent damage to limbs and joints. In one case, the inquisitor punctuated his questions by flicking off, with frayed end of a bamboo, flesh bruised in a previous beating. This left a permanent scar, six inches by three inches, on the victims thigh.

(5) In several cases, victims were led to believe that their execution either by beheading or shooting, was imminent. They were advised to write a letter of farewell. Preparations for execution were carried out, up to the penultimate stage, with such realism that in two cases the victims fainted.

(6) Threats to families. Threats were also made to take action against the family of the victim (the wives of some internees were believed to be in Japanese custody in other parts of Asia).

Torture was carried out to the limit of human endurance. One internee attempted to commit suicide by jumping over the verandah. In his fall, he fractured his pelvis, but despite his condition, his Interrogation under torture was continued until just before he died. In another case, the internee asked his inquisitor for the means to commit suicide. A pistol was purchased and snatched away only when the man was about to carry out his declared intentions.

Of the 57 internees detained as a result of the investigation on 10th October, 1943, 12 died of sickness directly attributable to the appalling conditions under which they were detained, and, ~~it~~ as in the preceding paragraph, as a result of his fall and ~~xxxxx~~ torture, and one was executed.

The survivors who returned after lengthy custody by the Military Police required prolonged treatment in the Camp Hospital for dysentery neuritis, sores, ulcers, scabies, beri-beri, weak hearts, or injuries to joints and limbs.

The Commission also record the evidence of the three surviving members, out of six of the body disposal squad, who were arrested by the Japanese Military Police in the Municipal Building, Singapore, in March 1942, and who were sentenced, after a so-called trial, to two years solitary confinement each for "anti-Japanese talk". While in Prison three of the six died without receiving any medical attention whatsoever. Requests made for medicines on their behalf evoked the reply "They are enemy prisoners and are not allowed any medicine".

Signed S.N. King, M.C.S. Chairman
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Sime Road Internment Camp,
Singapore,
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