FIGHT TO BITTER END AGAINST TERRIFIC ODDS AT HONG KONG

Troops Packed Like Rats Below Deck For Transfer to Nipponese Homeland

(By Colonel R. S. Malone)

Yokohama, Sept. 3.—(BUP)—Stories of maltreatment at the hands of the Japanese, and of three years' existence on the absolute minimum of food were told to-day by Canadians who were captured at Hong Kong.

200 Processed

To date, nearly 200 Canadians who were Jap prisoners are in Allied hands, and have been processed through American hospital ships for medical examination and new clothing. The cot cases are kept aboard the mercy ships, while others are transferred to troop ships in Tokyo bay. Canadian Dominican and Franciscan brothers also were processed through the ships.

Generally, the Canadians are in fair health, but a small percentage are suffering from beriberi, and among those processed so far, there are three cases of tuberculosis.

Most of the processed Canadians were from camps at Niigata, Shinagawa and Moori. Niigata was considered the hell camp of all Japan.

Ottawa, Sept. 4.—Defence headquarters last night released a list of 36 non-commissioned officers and men of the Canadian force captured by the Japanese at the fall of Hong Kong on Christmas day, 1941, who, according to unofficial information, "are now safe in Allied hands."

Following is the list:

H.Q. "C" Force — Sgmn. William Allister and Cpl. Earl Burgess.

Royal Rifles of Canada—C.S.M. Albert Bilodeau; L.-Cpls. George Findlay, Malcolm Gillis and Quentin Mulrooney; Rfmn. Jack Arthur, Kenneth Beattie, Leon Cyr, Donald Dainard, William Day, Kenneth Ewing, Arnold Graves, Gerald Hachey, Patrick Hannan, Otis Harrison, Philip Lawlis Patrick Metallic, Gerald Myers, Eric Ross, Leo Ross, John H. Smith, Gerald Sunstrum, Charles Vincent.

Winnipeg Grenadiers — Sgt. Charles Bamendine and Ptes. Stanley Duplaga, Peter Gregg, Frank Harding, Paul Luchka, John MacPherson, George Meagher, John Mosionier, Stanley Olcen, John Stephens, Guy Stewart, Steven Yormolo.

I interviewed some of the liberated Canadians to-day in company with Major Alan Palmer, an Australian army public relations liaison officer, and we heard stories not only of their treatment at the hands of inhuman captors, but also of the last desperate days in the battle for Hong Kong.

Make First Contact

Canadian troops made their first contact with the Japs on December 19, at Kowloon, and opened fire with small arms—which were their only weapons. The Canadians held out for two days, but then were forced back into the island, leaving a small rearguard of Winnipeg Rifles to cover their withdrawal. Most of the rearguard escaped across the causeway to Hong Kong before it was demolished, but the last few had to swim to the safety of the island.

The Japs swarmed in for their final attacks on Hong Kong under smoke screens, and landed by the thousands, with powerful artillery and air support. Still, isolated Canadian positions continued to hold out several days, but by noon on Christmas day the Japs were in the town of Hong Kong and the main Canadian positions were forced to capitulate due to the lack of water and a dire shortage of ammunition.

Taken to Japan

The Canadians were scattered through prisoner of war camps and were continually shifted to other locations, the majority being finally taken to Japan.

A staff sergeant of the Canadian Dental Corps, who was attached to brigade headquarters and was among those who surrendered at Stanley fort on the beach, said that he was confined in a camp at North Point where more than 2,000 were packed like sardines.

He said the camp was filthy and the prisoners had to endure misery for eight months, when they were moved to another camp near Kowloon. Three months later they were packed like rats below the deck of the liner Tatuta Maru and transported to a camp near Kawasaki in the Japanese homeland.

All of the prisoners in his group worked as labourers in nearby shipyards, building destroyers, gunboats and smaller naval craft, the sergeant said, adding that their camp was at first set up as a model for propaganda purposes, with clean new buildings and fair living conditions.

Treatment steadily worsened and the food deteriorated to the point where it consisted of watery soup and a small amount of rice daily.

During the whole period of imprisonment, the sergeant said, he received three and one-half Red Cross parcels, which were a "godsend." From these he traded clothing with the Japanese for cigarettes and food.

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149
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