

attached to the Navy for whatever duties they wished to allocate us. I was posted to a machine-gun position on a hill on the right flank of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, with instructions to hold it at all costs. I had three machine guns and eighteen men.

We could see the Japanese clearly, and I must say they were determined. About half a mile away, in a valley, they had occupied an isolated hillock and placed a flag on the summit. We could see Japs moving on this hill; so we informed a battery of howitzers immediately in our rear. That afternoon the howitzers literally blasted the top off the hill. But ten minutes after the last shell struck, the Japs were back again with another flag. This business of knocking the Japs off the hill, only to see others take their places, went on for several days, and the enemy's casualties must have been considerable.

The position we had been defending covered the entrance to the reservoir and the main road coming away on the side of the hill to Naval H.Q. It was subjected to intense mortar fire from positions immediately below, and so we were ordered to take up another position covering the main road two miles to the rear. There we mounted a gun on either side of the road.

As you know, however, Hongkong was unable to hold out, and after our capture the Japs marched us, with six thousand other men, through the main streets of the island. Every man, including the G.O.C., the Commodore, and the Air Officer Commanding, had to carry his own kit. The Chinese in the streets watched us pass in silence.

Our destination was a former British barracks on the mainland. The Japanese had stripped the buildings of everything of use and value. Floorboards, pipes, wiring, taps—all had been removed. Officers were not separated from the men, and we had also in the camp a number of Indians and Chinese.

For nearly two months we lived on third-quality Saigon rice, which we cooked ourselves in 30-gallon petrol-tins cut in halves. My portion was two "555" cigarette-tins a day. Water, however, was plentiful. The building

which the sentries used as a guardhouse had been the British troops' recreation hut, and over the door was a large sign, "Welcome." In the compound there were no trees: it was bare. But there was room enough to take exercise.

After five weeks here on two cigarette-tins of rice a day, things were getting pretty grim. The commonest complaints were dysentery and constipation. There were more than two hundred cases of amoebic dysentery, and because we had no medical supplies of any sort nothing could be done for them.

You can imagine, too, how, with six thousand men confined in a small space, fantastic rumours quickly circulated. Two of the commonest were that Hitler had committed suicide and that the German Army had been totally defeated. When I later found out how things actually were, I was naturally badly shaken.

The greatest difficulty we had to face in planning an escape from this camp lay in the fact that the only way out was through China. We knew neither the land nor its people, but we had heard that bandits infested the surrounding countryside. In addition, the Japs had spies in our camp.

An exchange of some Chinese sweets for a bottle of soya-bean sauce was to help me a lot. I made the exchange with a Chinese who put me in touch with a British Army officer in the camp who spoke Cantonese. This officer, who had an extraordinary Oxford accent and wore a monocle, was an Army doctor married to a Chinese who was a friend of the owner of the soya-bean sauce.

He and I compared notes and plans for almost three weeks. We were trying to discover the positions of the Japanese troops, for if we were to escape we would have to cross the main road. A break in the night wouldn't lessen the problem much, since the road was brilliantly lit.

One by one our plans went astray, until in the end our position looked hopeless. More and more sentries were posted round the camp, and the barbed wire was first doubled and then tripled. An outside contact we had managed to make came to nothing, and the attempt we finally made to escape was a desperate