THE DEVIL'S GRIN

Why and How the Japanese Military Imprisoned
Dutch Civilians Living in the Dutch East Indies
During the 1941-1945 Pacific War

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Conceived, designed, researched, written, produced, and
self-published (March 2013) in Toronto, Canada

by

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Edited by Ria Harting and Michael Van Winkle.
Printed by Timeline Printing Inc., Toronto.

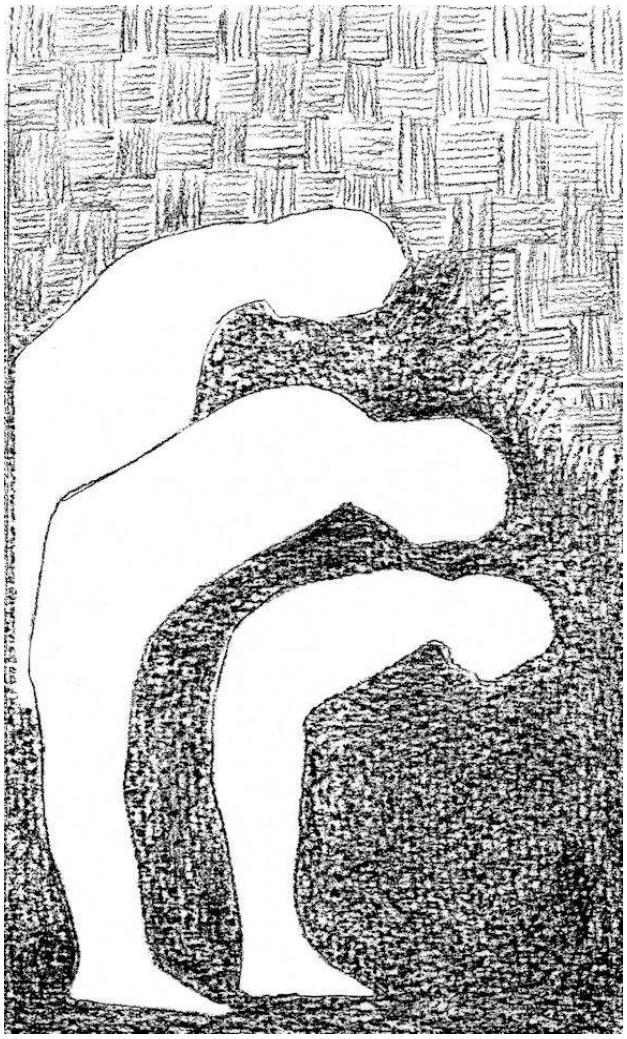
The Devil's Grin is intended for people who want to improve their knowledge and understanding of the 1941-1945 Pacific War situation in the Dutch East Indies colony in Southeast Asia, now The Republic of Indonesia.
The book is therefore offered to everybody free of charge as a pdf file; a limited number of printed books is also available.
See my website *www.toniharting.com*.

To the memory of my parents:

Tine Harting - Pons
Anton Harting

Tine and Anton engaged to be married
Batavia, 29 September 1920

“Hope is one of the most important reasons for survival. Hope that the war will end soon and hope to meet their loved ones will hold people up. If there is no hope, people are often being pulled down, becoming depressed, strongly diminishing their chances of surviving the camp ordeals.”



The image on the cover of this book is a photograph of the four-centimetre-high head of the grinning devil, Diablo, my companion throughout the camp years.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The discussions in this book are only relevant to the situations before and during the Pacific War, not to those after the war when a different, democratic, and more humane Japan arose.

The Devil's Grin aims to provide insight into, and information about, the mentality, philosophy, and motivation of the Japanese people, especially the Japanese military, before and during the 1941-1945 war in the Pacific, as well as their system of civilian concentration camps in the Dutch East Indies colony in Southeast Asia.

The book also portrays the story of a young Dutch teenage boy developing into an eighteen-year-old man under brutal circumstances as a civilian prisoner of war in Japanese concentration camps in the Dutch East Indies. The story is formatted not as a conventional, detailed memoir but as an informative, journalistic report inspired by, and to a large extent based on, my own experiences, observations, and thoughts as a civilian prisoner of war.

A broad, not overly specific picture of life in the camps is presented through an overview of what happened to our family, mainly myself and my father but also to some extent my mother and brother. An extensive study of literature, websites, and videos, as well as personal interviews with camp survivors has produced much priceless second-party information (see Chapter 25, Sources of Information).

The purpose of this book is to offer an English-language source of information to the general public on the state of affairs in the Dutch East Indies colony, which has now become Indonesia, when the country was conquered and occupied by the Japanese during the Pacific War. Particular attention is paid to events taking place in those concentration camps where a great many Dutch nationals were incarcerated. In the extensive collection of written history on this war, the state of affairs in the occupied Dutch colony has regrettably not received the attention it deserves. I hope that this book will remedy that unfortunate situation to some degree by offering it to as many people as possible as a free-of-charge, digital pdf file that can be ordered by email and can be read on any computer and on most tablets etc. when

using the proper software. A number of printed books is also available. See my website *www.toniharting.com.*

Obviously, not all facts, events, and characters can be remembered accurately or traced through research after such a long time. In the necessarily subjective recollecting and recounting of past events, inaccuracies may have occurred. The narrative has been strengthened and filled out by the introduction of a few events that have taken place in other camps or happened to other people, thus giving some understanding of the quality of life in most camps in the Dutch East Indies. However, all accounts in the book are based on facts. The names of several of the main characters have been changed to protect their privacy. Indonesian names and words are spelled in the manner customary at the time.

I was 86 years of age and in failing health when I finished this book in March 2013 after years of data collecting, analysis, writing, and rewriting. I sincerely hope that my effort will be an example to many other "old-timers" and maybe encourage them to tell their own stories and memoirs, so future generations can learn more about what happened in the Pacific War.

The book presents just one of the Pacific War stories that have come out of the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children imprisoned in countless civilian and military concentration camps in the Dutch East Indies and other countries in East and Southeast Asia under Japanese rule. All camps, some worse and some better than the ones visited in this book, were places where defenseless people suffered for years and in varying degrees the inhumanities of a ruthless war.

It should be realized, however, that the suffering caused by this war was by no means limited to those people locked away in concentration camps. Many of the Southeast Asian native population living in the so-called "free" world outside the camps, especially those at the lower end of the economic ladder, suffered terribly under the increasingly harsh Japanese rule that destroyed their economy and took away millions of their men and women as forced laborers and sex slaves. In addition, the Dutch-Indonesians generally called "Indos" (see below, where Totok and Indo are discussed), who for the most part had not been imprisoned because of their mixed Dutch-Indonesian ancestry, were subjected to debilitating discrimination and economic hardships, not only by the

Japanese occupiers but also by many native Indonesians.

TOTOK — INDO

During the colonial era of Indonesia, most people having the Dutch nationality were members of one of two main ethnic groups:

Totok: Dutch persons, born in Holland from Dutch parents without mixed ancestry and who later migrated to the Dutch East Indies; also their children born there; the word *Totok* is Indonesian for "newcomer"; *Belanda Totok* is also used where *Belanda* is Indonesian for Dutch.

Indo: Dutch persons, born from parents with a mixture of Dutch and Indonesian ancestry; the word *Indo* comes from Indo-European; *Belanda Indo* is also used. In English this group is often called Dutch Eurasian and sometimes Dutch Indonesian, which is a rough translation of the Dutch term *Indische Nederlander*.

In this book the two universally accepted and conveniently short terms *Totok* and *Indo* are used to indicate the ethnic background of various Dutch characters. At the start of the war in Decmber1941, there were about 150,000 Totoks and about 170,000 Indos in the Dutch East Indies. The native inhabitants of the Republic of Indonesia are called Indonesians.

The suffering in the Japanese concentration camps by the Dutch and the number of victims involved was obviously not of the same magnitude and inhumanity as the gruesome holocaust horrors committed in the Nazi concentration camps in Europe. In those massive slaughter houses millions upon millions of people were killed in a huge, monstrous organization especially set up for the purpose of systematic annihilation of all members of the Jewish race, and also many other unwanted elements in the Nazis' ultimately failed attempt to create a mythical "pure Aryan" society.

Japanese concentration camps in the Dutch East Indies were of a different kind from the ones run by the Nazis. They were not created to eliminate huge numbers of prisoners through a highly organized and uniformly applied system of pathological pre-meditated murder as was the case in Nazi-controlled Europe. Instead, the Dutch camps existed because the Japanese wanted a convenient way to remove the past colonial masters in Southeast Asia from the face of the country they

had ruled for so long, to get them off the street, out of the way. And, because the Japanese looked very much down upon the Dutch colonials, also to deeply humiliate them. The Japanese camps were therefore not annihilation facilities. Deaths were most often caused by neglect and indifference from the Japanese and Korean camp guards, especially the Japanese camp commandants — resulting in serious and often deadly malnutrition and starvation, widespread illnesses, and lack of medical support — not through organized mass killings of large numbers of prisoners. There certainly were numerous instances of extremely inhuman behaviour by the Japanese overlords in the camps in the Dutch East Indies. Deliberate starvation, torture, severe beatings, slave labour, and other atrocities were quite common — even killings by beheading and bayoneting were taking place — however not at the scale of the horrific Nazi atrocities in Europe. To use the word “holocaust” in the context of Japanese atrocities in the Dutch East Indies is surely not justified.

Still, regardless of the various war theaters, whether a person is beaten to death with a bamboo stick or poisoned by Zyklon B gas, each victim suffers their private hell in their own way.

CONTENTS

Prologue FAMILY 1920-1941

Before the Pacific War, before the Japanese concentration camps, before hundreds of thousands of starving prisoners were forced to eat cats and dogs, rats and snakes, bugs and maggots, anything at all to stay alive, things were very different. For my Harting family, life was good then, full of promise and opportunity. The future looked bright. During those peaceful times, I, blond and blue-eyed Ton Harting, was a carefree, boisterous, fun-loving, adventurous member of our close-knit family who thoroughly enjoyed their life in the tropics.

Our family had its beginning in 1919. In that first year after the First World War, my future parents migrated, separately and unaware of each other, from Holland to the Dutch East Indies in Southeast Asia, eager to build a new existence in the large colony. Tine Pons was an adventurous thirty-year-old registered nurse who had worked for several years for the Dutch Red Cross in Germany during the First Word War. She was a modern, independent, strong-willed woman who wanted to travel and experience more of the world. Antoni (Anton) Harting was a twenty-nine-year-old professional engineer with a Master's degree in mining technology, who came to the colony on a Dutch government contract to work on geological engineering projects.

They met, fell in love, got engaged, and then married in October 1920 in the capital city of Batavia on Java, the main island of the Dutch East Indies (see the map on page 12 and Chapter 26, Photographs). In December 1921, their first son, Dirk (Dik), was born, followed in Fe-bruary 1924 by a second son, Willem (Wim), and finally a third son, Antoni (Ton), in February 1927. The family followed our father to whatever location his research work required him to go to on the islands of Java, Borneo, and Sumatra. These travels created the foundation for the great love they felt for their adopted country and its diverse people, a love that made their lives richer and even more meaningful.

In those years, the Dutch East Indies was a colony where a small minority of Dutch people ruled the vast majority of native Indonesians. However, at a time when colonialism was widely accepted by most people in the west to be a normal state of affairs, this was a quite enlightened colony where oppression, abuse, and racial strife were

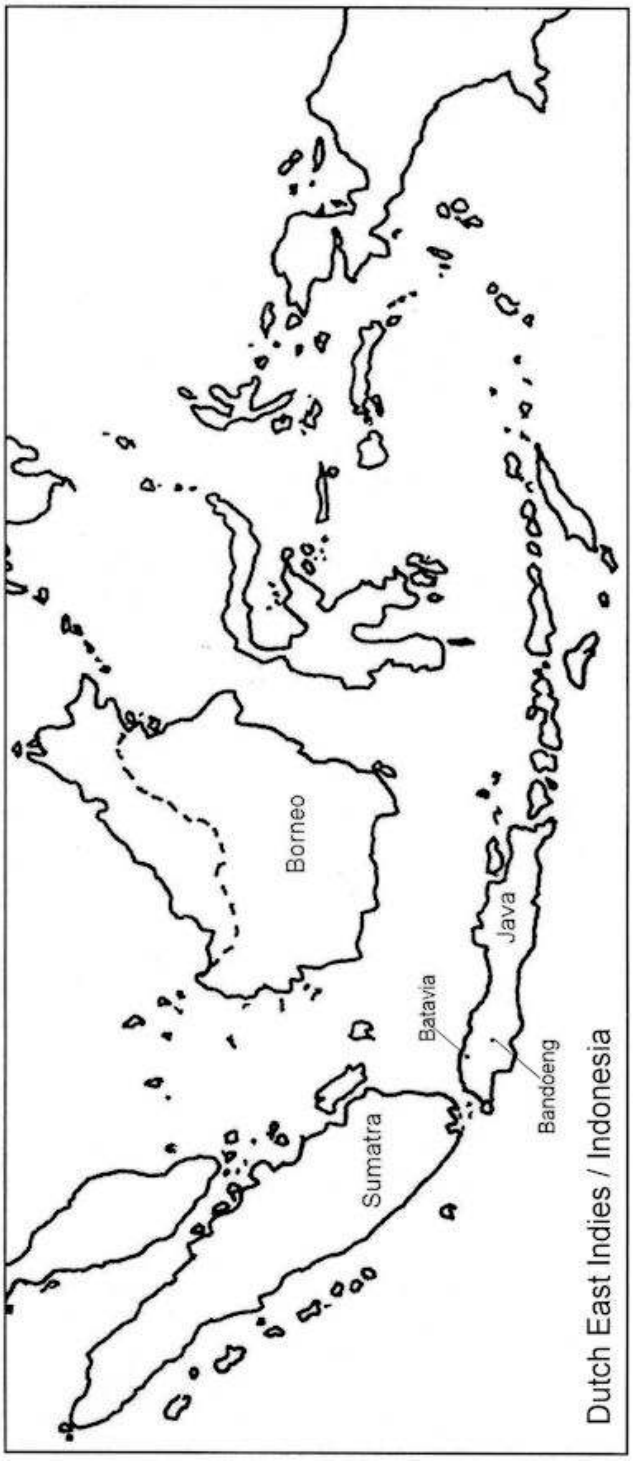
much less prevalent than in most, if not all, other colonies in the world. The five Hartings, all of them Totoks, fully accepted and valued the different races and cultures in their multi-faceted country. They developed a strong, respectful, loving bond with the land in which the parents had chosen to live, the birth country of their three boys, their home-land where they hoped to be able to spend the rest of their lives. In 1934, the family settled in the highlands of western Java, in the large, beautiful city of Bandoeng, now called Bandung, where the headquarters of Anton's Geological Research Department was located.

In 1938, Dik left for Holland to study at a vocational school. The four Hartings remaining in the colony prospered and their life in Bandoeng was a happy one, with many friends of different social levels and races. They thoroughly enjoyed numerous diverse aspects of Indonesian cultural life, not in the least the wonderful spicy food of the country, the mesmerizing wayang shadow puppets, and its melodious gamelan music. Wim and Ton went to school, did sports, roamed the country, explored the wilderness, climbed trees, swam rivers, flew their kites. Tine was a dedicated volunteer in various charities and hospitals. The parents took their sons on adventurous trips in the mountains to show them the natural beauty of their land. They also educated the boys to be free in their thoughts and actions, to not depend on others to tell them how to run their lives, and to be caring to those in need.

In September 1939, the Second World War broke out in Europe, and in May 1940 all contact with Holland was cut off because the German forces had invaded the mother country. For the Hartings and tens of thousands of other Dutch people in the colony, this meant no more letters and photographs from family members such as Dik in now occupied Holland. In general, the people in the Dutch East Indies adapted quickly to the new situation. Life in the colony went on without too many problems.

In December 1941, the Pacific War erupted and Japan began its conquest of most of Southeast Asia. In a short three months, the Japanese forces advanced to the very heart of the Dutch East Indies. It took only four days after landing on the north coast of Java on 1 March 1942 for the Japanese army to easily sweep all resistance aside and occupy the capital city of Batavia. On Sunday, 8 March, the Dutch colony was forced to surrender. On 9 March the victorious Japanese entered Bandoeng.

The conquerors had arrived.


Borneo
Batavia
Java
Bandoeng
Sumatra
Dutch East Indies / Indonesia

Chapter 1 INVASION

Bandoeng, 10 March 1942, Tuesday, early evening

"Kore wa totemo yoi desu ne!"

Three Japanese soldiers, guns in hand, still grimy from recent combat, dashed up the dark driveway of our family's home they had just decided to investigate. Their split-toe canvas combat boots sent gravel flying, hitting the flowers in the tidy beds on the side of the path to the entrance. An impatient foot slammed hard against the front door, demolishing its glass pane into sharp fragments. The men yanked open the double door and burst into the large room where my mother, father, brother, and myself were having dinner.

For a moment the invaders just stood there, three battle-hardened storm troopers from the most successful army in the world, glaring threateningly at those scared, inferior western people. Three close-cropped, unshaven, rather short young men from another land, another culture, a mysterious world with a radically different outlook on life. Three proud members of the superior, godly Nippon race, dressed in shoddy but practical baggy pants and short-sleeved army outfits, complete with dirty putties on their lower legs and torn sunflaps dangling from the backs of their simple cloth caps. They were each holding a huge rifle topped by an improbably long and lethal-looking bayonet, making the men look even smaller.

"Herro!" said the tallest one, proudly offering his only English word: "Herro!"

The soldiers had at random picked our house, located on a quiet street in the city's outskirts a short distance from the temporary bar-racks their troop now occupied. They wanted to have a look around, find out what kind of mysterious people their glorious military might had conquered so easily. What these simple, unsophisticated fighting men were finding in all the "western" cultures they had overrun was, for them, unbelievable luxury, affluence beyond their wildest imagination. During the few months they had been at war they had conquered people dressed in expensive clothes, living in lovely big houses, driving huge cars, eating strange food,

having lots of pets around, living a kind of privileged life far outside the soldiers' limited experience.

The triumphant soldiers wanted to have some of these wonderful things too. Now!

Quickly approaching the table, the men ordered us to stand in one corner, using their rifles to push us back against the wall and motioning us not to move or even to speak. The soldiers talked excitedly among themselves, uttering strange Japanese sounds we couldn't understand. After trying some food from the table but grimacing at the peculiar taste, the men found familiar beer in the kitchen and drank it with great enthusiasm: "Biiru! biiru!" They explored the house, opening doors, inspecting cupboards, throwing all kinds of stuff on the floor, making a mess. It seemed that these dangerous, hardened warriors with their formidable weapons were just curious, enjoying themselves like boisterous children at a fair. Until one of them reached out to get hold of my mother's necklace.

Impulsively reacting to protect my mother, I grabbed the soldier's arm, trying to pull it away. But I was immediately thrown to the ground and threatened by the enraged man standing over me screaming, rifle raised, ready to punish me for my disgraceful disregard of Japanese authority. Before the man could strike me and do any real harm, he was ordered back by one of the other soldiers, seemingly of superior rank.

My brother, Wim, held back our furious father from attacking the soldier who had threatened me. The very angry man jabbed my father hard in the face with his gun and snatched his pocket watch. He also quickly seized a silver salt shaker from the table and grabbed my mother's necklace. Our family's resistance and lack of proper respect had turned the invaders into threatening, violent, intimidating thugs. They yelled at their frightened prisoners while ransacking the house, keeping us huddled together against the wall.

When finally leaving, the unpredictable warriors smiled and bowed, saluting politely. The tallest one again said, "Herro!" They gently closed the damaged door behind them.

Chapter 2 OCCUPATION

For more than 2,000 years, the Japanese people had considered themselves a divine and superior race, destined to subdue and rule the whole world. They were convinced their invincible Imperial fighting forces would always gloriously conquer all opponents. True, in its long history Japan had never lost a war.

It seemed that would be the case once again. Early in the 20th century, Japan had initiated armed conflicts aimed at expanding their severely limited territory and to obtain essential raw material. It first conquered and colonized Korea in 1910, followed in 1931 by the invasion and subsequent occupation of Manchuria and, later, parts of eastern China. The Japanese were of the opinion that they ought to take over China because according to them the despised Chinese were not worth the country they were living in. Although Japan was one-twentieth the size of China and had one-sixth the number of its inhabitants, Japan considered the occupation of China to be the first step to world conquest. The ultimately unsuccessful fight for China cost many millions of Chinese lives.

Then, on 7 December 1941 (American date; Asian date was 8 December), Japan started the Pacific War by attacking the United States in Pearl Harbor on Hawaii. Through this dangerously optimistic and reckless act the relatively small country now was at war with the USA, Great Britain, the Netherlands, China, Australia, New Zealand, France, the Philippines, and several more countries.

The Japanese acted fast. By early 1942, their army and navy had obliterated all opposition and occupied immense areas in East and Southeast Asia and in the Pacific Ocean. This military aggression was carried out with extreme savagery, following the established *bushido* (Way of the Warrior) code of honourable Japanese conduct. According to their grand plan, the Japanese were confident they would soon win the Pacific War by seizing British India and Australia as well.

By all measures, their achievements in the last decade had indeed been incredible. Ruled by what they believed to be a living god, His Imperial Majesty, the Tenno Heika, the ambitious nation's view that

they were on a holy mission to conquer all other people was stronger than ever. Theirs was truly *Dai Nippon*, Great Japan.

The Japanese were proud they had kicked the, what they called, "white colonial oppressors from the west" out of many Asian countries, and established a new order, the Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Of course, they intended this new order to operate under *"the divine leadership of supremely powerful Japan, the wise, all-knowing and authoritative older brother of East Asia,"* as they stated themselves. Another statement by the Japanese military said: *"Japan's national structure is the highest principle of mankind. .... All the countries then form an organic unity, with Japan as brains, growing and developing as a living being under the supreme guidance of His Excellency the Emperor."* And still another statement proclaimed: *" ... The Japanese people, having a superior mind, plan to make the whole world into one house, ruled as a father by the Japanese Emperor. In order to reach this goal, the Japanese still have to conquer the misplaced pride of other people and their immoral resistance to imperial authority. ... The Japanese had come to the Dutch East Indies to convert the Indonesians to subjects of the God-Emperor. ... The Indonesians will gradually understand the power of the Emperor and they will be happy as imperial subjects. ... The Japanese should never forget that their country is in the process of conquering the world and Japanizing it."*

That these concepts were in fact a new form of colonialism aimed at acquiring vitally important living space and raw material for overpopulated Japan, was never mentioned in the Imperial dispatches. The Japanese people's unbelievably naive, self-delusional hubris, based on blind wishful thinking, is embarrassingly evident here.

The scope of Japan's self-appointed task was mind-boggling. The population of about 70 million Japanese now had the enormously difficult and complex task of occupying and administering an immense area many times larger than their own mountainous country — which is slightly smaller than the state of California — and controlling many hundreds of millions of conquered people. They were to discover that, in a war, conquering an area is not the real problem, but that occupying and controlling it is the true challenge.

Their latest conquest, the Dutch East Indies, was a huge country 50 times the size of Japan. It consisted of about 17,500 islands located

thousands of kilometres from the homeland Japan, making efficient communication very difficult. Java, the heartland of the country, had almost 50 million inhabitants, including more than 300,000 Dutch and one million Chinese. In all of Indonesia there were about 320,000 people with the Dutch nationality, 150,000 Totoks and 170,000 Indos, out of a total of about 72 million inhabitants.

In the ongoing explosion of Japan's military expansionism, its conquest of Java had been particularly swift and deadly, a good example of the superior fighting quality and discipline of its ruthless, battle-hardened soldiers.

On Sunday, 1 March 1942, 48,000 Japanese soldiers had landed in three locations on the north coast of Western and Eastern Java. There was little opposition from the badly underpowered Dutch forces who were insufficiently equipped and trained. Only four days later, on 5 March, the capital city of Batavia was occupied. The major city of Bandoeng, located on a broad valley in the highlands about 120 km to the southeast, now became seriously threatened. In 1941, Bandoeng had 240,000 inhabitants, of which 173,000 were Indonesian, including Arabs and people from India, 30,000 European, and 27,000 Chinese.

On 8 March, the Dutch defences collapsed and the country had to surrender. Japanese forces gradually occupied the land and about 80,000 soldiers of the Dutch forces became prisoners of war.

In the afternoon of Monday, 9 March, the triumphant Japanese forces marched from the north down the mountains into Bandoeng. The mood of much of the native population was festive because the Japanese had liberated them from their Dutch colonial masters.

In the few days after the Japanese forces had gained total control of the country, the situation had changed dramatically for the former rulers, the defeated Dutch. Almost all high-ranking leaders in the civilian administration had been arrested and new Japanese and Indonesian functionaries installed in their place. Life for the Dutch was purposely made very difficult by the victorious Japanese authorities who took many measures to quickly and permanently eradicate the Dutch influence in the country. The previous colonial masters suffered rapid and humiliating loss of freedom and prestige, drastic cuts in income, freezing of bank accounts, rapidly rising cost and badly decreasing availability of food. This quickly resulted in increased economic hard-

ship, deteriorating health care, mounting insecurity and fear for everybody, Dutch as well as Indonesian. Many houses occupied by Dutch people were confiscated without compensation, to be used by Japanese military and civilian personnel. The Japanization of the Dutch-Indonesian society was being implemented with great urgency. (See Chapter 4, First Year.)

By the second week of March 1942, my father had been ordered by the Japanese administration to continue working at the Geological Research Department in Bandoeng at a drastically reduced salary, until his responsibilities could be taken over by a suitable Japanese or Indonesian engineer. Together with a number of other Dutchmen, at least several thousand in the whole country, he was now a specialist advisor, a so-called "Nippon worker." These were used by the Japanese to help get the country on its feet again, and once that would have been accomplished, they would loose their special status and be treated like all the other Dutch people in the occupied country. Being a Nippon worker lessened the chance we would be kicked out of our house by the Japanese military. Although afraid of being branded a traitor by other Dutchmen, my father knew very well he had no choice but to do what he was told by the Japanese. Refusal would have endangered his own life and the lives of our family. He was relieved that his work had no direct military significance; it was concerned mainly with the supply of drinking water to major cities in western Java.

Nippon workers had to wear a white armband with a large, round, red dot and a few Japanese words on it, to ensure they would not be picked up at the frequent street raids to randomly arrest Dutch men and older boys. The Nippon workers' lives were very insecure, constantly threatened by the possibility of arrest by the Kempeitai, the ruthless and widely feared Japansese military police, who might accuse them of charges of sabotage for which the death penalty was the usual punishment. In the course of 1943, most Nippon workers had been replaced by Indonesians. By mid-1944, only a few specialized Nippon workers, mostly high-level engineers like my father, were still forced to work for the Japanese.

My father was lucky that his new Japanese superior at the Geological Research Department happened to be Professor Tanakedata, an internationally respected, western-trained engineer my father had met twice before the war at international conferences. Although Tanake-

data was a civilian in a society controlled by the Japanese military, he was an influential man and highly regarded by the military who realized that a steady supply of safe drinking water was of crucial importance. Tanakedata was very protective of his Dutch advisors/ engineers and did all he could to keep them under his supervision.

Because the Japanese authorities wanted to stifle the Dutch influence at all levels, public and private education of Dutch citizens, including small children, had been strictly forbidden by mid-March, only about one week after the start of the Japanese occupation. All Dutch schools had to close immediately, including my school, the Christelijk Lyceum. Many parents therefore tried to organize some lessons in their homes. This proved to be very risky; several parents were beaten harshly when the Japanese authorities discovered these illegal activities.

My parents also attempted to help Wim and I study at home. They insisted we spend a few hours each day studying our books, so we'd have the required background to eventually go to university. But it was impossible for us to sit still at home while there were so many tempting opportunities for dangerous and exciting adventures outside. As was the case with most of our friends, we were hard to control by our parents and keeping us in line became a major problem for them. We had too much spare time on our hands and began to do stupid things, such as being out on the street when another one of the now frequent raids was going on.

A friend of mine and I also took great risks when we climbed on the roof of his house to have a look across the street at the garden of the Kempeitai headquarters, the notorious and feared Japanese military police. There one day we saw how an Indonesian man, apparently accused of theft, was punished horribly by having his right hand abruptly cut off by an officer wielding his long and deadly *samurai* sword.

I gagged and almost threw up when I saw all that blood squirting out of his stump. It was a ghastly, bloody sight, like a chicken with its head hacked off, running around spewing blood all over the place. The gruesome spectacle shocked us deeply. We were just fifteen years old and had never seen such barbaric brutality. But we were also intensely curious and fascinated by what we saw. Besides, it could easily have been much worse, we might have witnessed an actual beheading. We'd heard that cutting off heads was something the Japanese military did regularly to instill a chilling fear in the population they ruled so ruth-

lessly. They often used this extremely savage punishment even for what everybody except the Japanese thought were relatively minor offenses.

One day in mid March, Wim, his friend Bob, and I, all three of us unthinking, invincible, gung-ho teenagers who had no idea what dangerous things we were doing, pulled off an incredibly stupid stunt that could easily have cost us our lives. In a field not far from our neighbourhood we had discovered an abandoned Dutch military armoured car. Without a second thought we climbed in and Bob managed to get the car going. We drove around on the streets for a while, imagining ourselves to be fearless, heroic fighters and very much enjoying the startled faces of the Indonesians on the road. But then we were stopped by a very angry Indonesian police officer who took us to his station where he put us in a cell overnight. Next morning, we were picked up by our deathly worried parents who were told by the policeman that if the Japanese military police, the Kempeitai, had stopped the car, we would have been shot on the spot, possibly even beheaded. By not re-0porting us to the Japanese, the police officer risked his own life. We were extremely lucky he let us go with only a very serious warning not to do such dangerously foolish things again.

Not only for the Dutch, but also for the native Indonesians their quality of life was deteriorating quickly. In a short time span, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians lost their jobs because Dutch families were no longer allowed to employ household servants. Before the Japanese occupation, having several servants in most Dutch households — and also in the households of affluent Indonesians — was the normal state of affairs in this colonial society. Like all Dutch families, we too had to let our four servants go, which for us was of course very inconvenient, but it was an absolute disaster for the servants and their families who instantly lost their only source of income.

Having to say goodbye to these good people was a great shock for me; over the years I had become very attached to Simin, our principal servant or *djongos*. Although Simin was an employee of our family and sixteen years older than I, we had built a warm friendship since Simin had begun to work for us eight years ago, when I was seven. We were buddies who shared many a laugh and wonderful stories. Simin called me *sinjo* (boy) Tonnie and sometimes, jokingly, *toean moeda* (young

sir). He comforted me when our beloved family dog, Bobbie, had been killed in front of the house by a speeding car, and it was Simin who had helped bury the dog in the garden. It was Simin who had taught me several delicious curse words in his local Sundanese dialect, assuring me the profound respect of my friends at school. It was Simin who helped me grow up in a rich childhood filled with love for and understanding of the land I lived in and its people. We communicated in *bahasa Malayu Pasar*, a simplified, easy-to-learn, basically artificial, Malay-related language, in Dutch called *pasar maleis*. This planned, scientifically developed language had in essence become the "lingua franca" throughout the Dutch East Indies, maturing rapidly and eventually developing into *bahasa Indonesia*, since 1948 the official language of the Republic of Indonesia.

And it was Simin who, when I was eleven, had given me something that would play a very important part in my life in the years to come. It was a four-centimetre-high head of a broadly grinning devil, made from amber-coloured plastic, that Simin had found attached to the radio antenna of a wrecked car. I later used the little icon as a symbol of my authority as the leader of a group of adventurous twelve-to-fourteen-year-old neighbourhood boys who roamed the streets and fields on roller skates and bicycles. I became very attached to this special, always grinning friend, whom I named Diablo.

After Simin and our three other servants had been forced by the Japanese to leave us, I never saw him again. I sincerely hope that Simin and his family survived the war without too many problems, and that he remembered his *toean moeda* as fondly as I still remember him. I am very proud to have had this fine Indonesian gentleman as a true friend. *Selamat jalan* (farewell), Simin!

Another close Indonesian friend I had to say goodbye to because of the war was Wiweko Soepono, a pupil at the Dutch high school HBS in Bandoeng. Wiek, as we called him, and several Dutch school boys had formed the BJLC, the Bandoengsche Jeugd Luchtvaart Club (Bandoeng Youth Auronautics Club) in 1937. In about 1939 I had become a member too. We all were fanatical model airplane builders and Wiek was the one who knew most about that technical craft. He was just 16 or 17 at the time, about four years older than I and already very well informed about airplanes. He gladly taught me the basics of aerodynamics and how to use balsa wood, paper, and glue to put a flying

model airplane together. We all loved airplanes and Wiek and I had a great time together designing, building, and flying various models, including the first gas-engine-powered and radio-controlled model airplane in Southeast Asia. I was truly sorry when the Japanese actions of December 1941 interfered with the club activities and my relationship with Wiweko. After the war, Wiweko would eventually become a very prominent member of the new Republic of Indonesia, heading the state airline, Garuda, from 1968 to 1984. Wiweko Soepono died on 8 September 2000.

In March and April 1942, the Japanese were beginning to implement their plans to remove all Dutch nationals from the new Japanese-Indonesian society. Initially, the total internment of all "enemy civilians" was not considered necessary, because the Japanese believed that most of the Dutch Totoks and Indos would understand and accept the Japanese world view and would adapt to the New Order the Japanese were aiming to put through. It was therefore decided by the Japanese that the Dutch civilians had to be persuaded to work together with the Japanese military government. Only those civilians not willing to do so would be interned, or perhaps "deported" to an Allied country prepared to take them (which never happened). That these naive and unrealistic plans to convert "enemy civilians" to pro-Japanese people did not work because very few people converted, is no surprise. So, internment of a massive 250,000 to 300,000 civilians was the only option, for which the Japanese were not really prepared.

In the vast regions occupied by the Japanese everything now got worse quickly. In March and April 1942, the entire European civilian population of the former Dutch East Indies, excluding Java, Sumatra, Celebes, Borneo, the Moluccas, and Timor, was imprisoned in camps. On Java the internment mainly took place at a later date and in stages. In mid-April 1942, the mandatory registration of all Dutch nationals 17 and older as well as other "aliens" such as Englishmen, Americans, and Australians was announced, the first step in the removal of all Caucasian enemies from the new Japanese-Indonesian society. One month later the Japanese decided that most Dutch people, meaning all Totoks and a number of Indos, were soon to be interned in special so-called "protection" camps where they would eventually be completely isolated from the outside world. These camps were mostly abandoned

military barracks, convents, correction centres, schools. The Japanese administration declared that this was a necessary measure to protect the Dutch from the supposed anger of the Indonesian population who, the Japanese assumed, wanted to punish the Dutch colonials for their past bad treatment of the native population. (See Chapter 3, Camps.)

Before long, the dreaded internment was started to remove all Dutch. On Java, from mid-July 1942 on, large numbers of men and boys 18 and older were put away in men's camps. On 19 August, my 18-year-old brother, Wim, together with many of his friends, disappeared into the LOG camp on the outskirts of Bandoeng. Life in this very crowded camp, which before the war had been a prison, was hard for everybody. They quickly had to get used to being despised and worthless prisoners of a ruthless oppressor who had taken away their freedom and all hope for a decent life. In a matter of months all communication with the outside world was made impossible and food, medical care, and living space became badly restricted.

Beginning in November 1942, countless Dutch women and children were being locked up in women's camps. One of the largest of these was Camp Tjihapit in Bandoeng, where eventually more than 14,000 women and children, and also some men of 60 and over, were packed together in many small, forcibly evacuated civilian houses in a section of the city completely surrounded by *gedèk*, a wall of woven bamboo strips topped with barbed wire. At first, some contact between people inside and outside the camp was still possible, but by the spring of 1943 the gates were closed and any contact was prohibited and severely punished by the Japanese authorities.

Because my father was a Nippon worker and under the special protection of the influential Professor Tanakedata, my parents and I could remain outside the camps, at least for the time being. In Bandoeng several hundred other Nippon workers were temporarily left alone for similar reasons. They were also allowed by the Japanese authorities to remain in their houses, but the families of two other Nippon workers had to move in with us. Life became much harder and the squeezed-together families had to deal with an increasingly stressful situation of overcrowding, serious lack of sufficient income, shortage of food, insufficient medical care, and, especially frustrating, an uncertain future.

Like numerous others who had lost all or most of their income and savings and who were still outside the camps, our family too had to sell jewellery, furniture, clothes, etc. to get some extra money for increasingly expensive food and other goods and services. My father's salary, which

before March 1942 had been 1000 Dutch guilders per month, had been slashed to 180 Japanese guilders per month when he became a Nippon worker. I was lucky in finding a way to make a bit of money to help with the family's expenses. I had been invited by my friend, Pans Schomper, to join a small group of Totok and Indo boys of similar age who, for a reasonable fee, transported all kinds of household goods belonging to women and children who were being interned in the big women's camp Tjihapit. Pans, a few months older than I, was an inspiring leader and organizer, a clever entrepreneur who always found ways to make money, even at his young age. This transportation group was another great success. We used a few large two-wheeled wooden carts, pushing and pulling these heavily loaded *grobaks* over Bandoeng's often quite hilly roads to and from the camp. It was an adventurous and exciting life for us, also bringing in some welcome money during the several months Pans' group was in operation in late 1942 and early 1943.

Although my father continued to be forced into being a Nippon worker, albeit offering him some protection from the military, he felt increasingly unsafe, convinced that his relative good fortune couldn't last. He was right. In early August 1943, after seventeen long, and often boring — at least for us, teenagers — months since the Japanese had taken over the country, the announcement was made that we would soon be locked away in a special concentration camp, together with many other Nippon workers. We were scared to death and increasingly doubtful about the future, wondering what had gone wrong to get us in this awful situation. And who would take care of our cats when the family had left the house?

How was it possible that everything had changed so fast? Just a few months after the Pacific War had started in December 1941, the Japanese forces were in control of much of East and Southeast Asia. How long would this horrible war last? What would happen if the Japanese would go on winning and actually defeat America and England and Australia and everybody else?

Chapter 3 CAMPS

When the Japanese forces occupied the Dutch East Indies during the first few months of 1942, they quickly found out that dealing with the more than 320,000 people of Dutch nationality living in the country, about 150,000 Totoks and 170,000 Indos, would not be a simple task. The solution they adopted was to gradually imprison all the Totoks as well as many of the Indos in a large number of concentration camps spread out over the country, but mainly on Java where most of the Dutch lived. This procedure would obviously require an enormous amount of organization, money, and manpower to select the future prisoners and then administer and guard the camps. On Java, the internment happened in stages: – in April 1942, the first wave of men 18 to 60 year of age disappeared into men's camps; – in November 1942, the first women and children were put in women's camps (called "protected areas" by the Japanese), including boys 17 years of age and younger (Camp Tjihapit in Bandoeng was probably the largest of these camps with a maximum of over 14,000 people); – by the end of 1942, men 60 years of age and over were also put in women's camps, often in separate locations; – in the course of 1943, several family camps for Nippon workers and their families were established, such as Camp Tjiboenoet in Bandoeng.

The ages of the boys imprisoned in men's camps gradually went down: – from August 1942, men and boys from 18 and up were put directly in men's camps; – from early 1943, boys 17 (even 15) years of age were transferred from women's camps to men's camps; – by the end of 1943, boys from 14 (even 12) years of age were taken from women's camps and put in mens' camps; – in early April 1944, when the Japanese military took over control of all civilian camps, the treatment got much tougher; – following established Japanese custom, boys of 10 years old were considered to be adults and were treated as such; – from July 1944 to the beginning of 1945, boys from 10 years old (sometimes even nine) were taken from women's camps and put into a number of separate boys's camps; – in April and May 1945, a total of about 800 boys were transferred to Camp Tjikoedapateuh and

housed in separate barracks called Boys' Town, which by design had very little communication with the main camp; – in August 1945, a total of about 3,600 boys of the youngest age category were housed in special boys' camps.

The number of civilian and military camps in the whole occupied country varied over time; in the literature these numbers are often not in agreement with each other. Several sources mention that after internment began, there were initially some 155 civilian camps, many of them small; in early August 1945 only about 43 were left because a number of the smaller camps had been closed. One source even mentions a minimum of about 530 camps but these included camps other than the "normal" ones for military and civilian prisoners. Among these "special" camps were: camps to help needy Indos and others, agricultural camps, penal camps for Indo boys, camps for collective political internment, and collection camps.

Because correct numbers are simply not available, also the number of civilian people interned in the country is not consistent in the literature, ranging from 80,000 to 170,000, with 100,000 mentioned most often. However, this number is probably too low. When the calculations are performed differently, 150,000 seems to be a reasonably reliable number. If it is assumed that in 1941 there were 320,000 people with Dutch nationality in the Dutch East Indies (150,000 Totoks and 170,000 Indos, including about 20,000 military Totoks and 30,000 military Indos), and assuming that all 130,000 civilian Totoks were interned, there would have been, in the course of the war, 130,000 civilian Totoks and about 20,000 civilian Indos (see Chapter 16, Outside) in the civilian camps for a total of 150,000 Totoks and Indos, leaving about 120,000 (170,000 - 30,000 - 20,000) civilian Indos outside the camps. [Please note that these are rather arbitrary numbers, used to provide rough estimates only to give a general impression of the total number of civilian internees. For instance, the total number of Dutch military was about 42,000 (see below) and not 50,000 (20,000 Totoks and 30,000 Indos) as was assumed to make above calculations somewhat easier to perform.]

In order to re-organize the populations of many camps, the Japanese constantly moved the occupants around between camps. Disastrous side-effects of these forced moves were the gradual loss of much of the

prisoners' property as well as the break-up of all-important groups of friends formed between the prisoners in the camps. From the end of 1944, men's camps were concentrated in the centre of Western Java, away from the coast, and women's camps were moved to the coast.

[The Japanese had also imprisoned about 42,000 Dutch military. In Germany and Italy the death rate of military POWs was 4% whereas the death rate of POWs under Japanese control was 27%. In China, the death rate was much higher.]

Compared to other countries in the region, the numbers of civilian Europeans inside and outside the camps in the Dutch East Indies were exceptional. In no other western colony in Southeast Asia was the number of Europeans as high before the war, and nowhere else had the Japanese occupying forces imprisoned so many European civilians. Those imprisoned in the Dutch East Indies amounted to 80% of the total number of civilian internees in Southeast Asia. Only in the Dutch East Indies were families separated and interned by gender. Also, in no other allied country was the number of imprisoned civilians higher than the number of military prisoners of war.

Chapter 4

FIRST YEAR

The following is an overview of the state of affairs, mostly on Java, during the first year, March 1942 to March 1943, of the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies.

Initially, the general situation in the area occupied by the Japanese was surprisingly calm, but prominent political figures and civil servants were quickly arrested. Except in some isolated cases, the great majority of the Indonesian population did not seek revenge on their past masters for the supposed mistreatment during the colonial times of the country's suppressed original inhabitants; in fact, there were few acts of violence against the now conquered Dutch. Still, there was a feeling of panic among many Europeans. Incriminating documents and military uniforms as well as pictures of the Dutch Royal Family and other leading figures such as Churchill were discarded or burned. Some properties were plundered by mobs of Indonesian civilians, especially properties belonging to Chinese merchants. The Europeans and Chinese tried to keep out of sight and trouble.

In the first few days and weeks, in many of the recently occupied cities the Japanese conquerors set out to take over the administration of the country with Indonesian assistance. Eventually, the occupying forces introduced measures to help control the new situation, eliminate Dutch influence, and disgrace the previous colonial power. Among these measures were the following: All communication with the outside world was stopped. – Newspapers and radio programs were fully controlled by the Japanese. – Espionage, treason, sabotage, and other anti-Japanese activities were punishable by death. – Plunder, arson, and vandalism were severely punished as was spreading rumours. – Exporting food and fuel was not allowed. – All fire arms and ammunition had to be given up. – Associations and meetings were prohibited. – Curfew was ordered between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.. – Listening to foreign radio broadcasts was not allowed as was hoarding of food and other goods. – The Dutch national flag was forbidden. – All cars had to be registered.

Special Japanese banknotes, on which the text continued to be printed in the Dutch language, were issued as legal tender (see Chapter 26, Photographs). These Japanese paper guilders, also called "army money" or "invasion money" or "Jap money," had been printed in Japan and brought along by the invaders. It was unsecured and distributed in unlimited amounts to replace the previous Dutch guilders. At a later date, the Dutch text was replaced by Indonesian. Postage stamps and other official documents received the overprint *"Dai Nippon"* (Great Japan).

All territories occupied by the Japanese had to adopt Japan Standard Time without time zones. This meant that in Bandoeng the clock had to be put forward 1.5 hours. Also, the Japanese date system was adopted whereby 660 years had to be added to the Western system, turning 1942 into 2602.

An order was issued in several places on Java that women and girls were not allowed to wear shorts or trousers because those "improper" garments were considered to clash with the Japanese sense of decency. In mid-March, schools providing instruction in the Dutch language had to close; there would be no more western-based education.

On 16 March 1942, a particularly controversial measure was announced: as a matter of properly expressing their respect, all non-Japanese had to bow in the correct manner before all Japanese people. Although this measure was considered to be extremely humiliating and created much resentment among Europeans and Indonesians alike, it was in fact nothing more than conforming to the long-established Japanese custom of polite interaction between people.

The bank accounts of Japan's enemies (Dutch, American, English, etc.) were temporarily frozen. All salaries above a certain minimum were drastically lowered. The increasing shortage of money became a serious problem for everybody.

Life for the Dutch and other foreign communities was made very difficult by the unpredictable Japanese authorities: rapid and humiliating loss of freedom and prestige, mounting fear and insecurity, increasing economic hardship, rapidly increasing cost and decreasing availability of food, deteriorating health care, no reliable sources of information about the progress of the war.

In the last week of March more measures were announced, such as: All hospitals would be controlled by the Japanese. – Anti-Japanese

books (in fact all Dutch books and other publications) were removed from libraries. – All Japanese-speaking people had to report to the authorities. – Bank accounts were re-opened so that some money could be taken out to a limit set by the Japanese authorities.

During the following months the new administration continued to take measures aimed at eradicating all Dutch presence and remaking the country according to the Japanese model: – Pension income of about 86,000 civilian and military government pensioners was cancelled, resulting in widespread poverty. – On 7 April, three workers at the national Dutch radio station were beheaded because they had allowed, until 18 March, the Dutch national anthem to be played following the end of the daily programs. – Private motor vehicles had to be surrendered. – Several people were executed because they had listened to forbidden radio broadcasts. – Censorship on all newspapers and magazines and on films and photographs was implemented. – Movie theaters opened again but Europeans were allowed to sit in the cheapest seats only. – Papers and magazines published between 1 December 1941 and 10 March 1942 had te be handed in for post-censoring. – Praying for peace would be punished. – Non-natives were not allowed to visit schools. – In the Indonesian schools, learning the Japanese language was mandatory. – Much attention was paid to singing Japanese songs and to physical fitness. – Propaganda films were produced to indoctrinate Indonesian youth and the Indonesian population in general. – Most European civil servants had been fired by now. – The Salvation Army was forbidden because the Japanese thought it was a regular army. – Religious services in the Dutch language were forbidden. – Freemasons and Jews were regarded to be members of a secret society acting as enemies of Japan. – The Kempeitai, Japan's secret military police, had the right to kill people on the spot without prior trial. – Registration of radios was ordered. – Censorship on all kinds of publications was implemented. – Printing, sending, and distributing without permission of books, magazines, and newspapers was forbidden. – On Java children were not allowed to smoke or roller skate. – Agricultural enterprises, plantations, etc. were confiscated. – The number of arrests by the Kempeitai was increasing dramatically. – On 29 April 1942, a very important date in Japanese culture, the Emperor's 41st birthday, was universally celebrated. – Instead of "Japan" the name "Nippon" (meaning "The Origin of the Sun") had

to be used, because that was the correct name all the Japanese people themselves were using for their country. – On 17 June, the last Dutch newspaper stopped publication; most had already disappeared in March.

More rules and regulations would be issued in the future, increasingly limiting the freedom of movement of Japan's enemies. The transition to a Japan-based order progressed quickly, reducing the former Dutch colonial society to a shadow of its pre-war prosperity.

The new situation also had, of course, a profound impact on the lives of the Indonesian population. Many hundreds of thousands of jobs, previously provided by the Dutch, were lost and the people began to suffer terribly because of the lack of income. The Japanese administration also implemented their own harsh and unforgiving justice system, which was a radical departure from the much more humane Dutch/Indonesian justice system.

It was clear that things were not the same anymore, that everybody under the control of the Japanese was subject to a new and strange way of thinking and behaviour. Life was going to be radically different from what it had been before the Japanese forces took over, and the people had better get used to it quickly, or else!

Already in March and April 1942, special groups of Dutch people (mostly Totoks but also some Indos) had been arrested all over the country, such as prominent civil servants, leading members of the police force and other organizations. For the time being the majority of the Dutch population had been left alone.

The first signs that this was going to change came on 11 April 1942 when the registration of all Dutch nationals and other foreign enemies such as Englishmen, Australians, and Americans was announced, so that lists could be made of people to be interned in the near future. This dreaded internment was announced on 17 May 1942. Supposedly in order to achieve "protection against revenge from Indonesians" — who, at least according to the Japanese, wanted to punish the Dutch colonials for their past bad treatment of the native population, but in reality to be able to fully control the enemy — the internment of all Dutch men between 17 and 60 years of age not employed as Nippon workers, as well as other alien civilians, was ordered by the Japanese. First the Totok men were interned and later also many Indos, depending upon the number of their native ancestors as reported at the regi-

stration. On June 1942, the upcoming internment of Dutch women and children in so-called protected areas was announced.

The downfall of the Dutch community began in earnest when the concentration camps gradually opened to enable the massive internment of the Dutch, first in July 1942 for the men and in then in November 1942 for the women and children. Beginning on 17 July 1942, large numbers of men and boys were moved to concentration camps for men in various cities, mostly abandoned military barracks, convents, correction centres, schools, hotels.

In mid-October 1942, the preparation of women's camps began. In Bandoeng, a huge concentration camp, Tjihapit, for more than 14,000 women and children was created by surrounding part of the city, consisting of dozens of blocks of forcibly evacuated civilian houses, with a wall (*gedèk*) of woven bamboo slats topped with barbed wire. By the end of November, this and other similar camps on Java received their first women and children inhabitants and some men of 60 and over. Initially the new inhabitants had some freedom in the selection of their living quarters. But as the Tjihapit camp gradually became more crowded, less space was available and groups of people had to live in one small room or garage. Overpopulation and sanitation became serious problems. At first, some contact between people inside and outside the camp was still possible, but in March 1943 the gates were closed and any prohibited contact was severely punished by the Japanese authorities.

Of course, the quality of life in the "free" world outside the camps also kept changing. Many new rules and regulations were being implemented: Making photographs was forbidden. – Work by the Red Cross was stopped. – On Java the native population suffered increasingly from a shortage of clothing and other textile products. – Batavia was renamed Djakarta and Java became Djawa (eventually to become Jakarta and Jawa). – On 25 December 1942, Christians in the country celebrated Christmas with great difficulty. – The Indonesian press repeatedly told the Indos they should decide whether they wanted to be Dutch or Indonesian. Indos had to realize they were Asian and should therefore support Japan's struggle for an Asiatic community. – Many Indos considered becoming Indonesian a degrading act and a loss of status. – Numerous people were condemned to death because they owned Dutch flags, weapons, portraits of the Dutch Royal Family, etc.

– In general the health of the population became worse. Local epidemics occurred, mainly malaria but also plague, cholera, dysentery, and others. – Black markets flourished and price gouging was increasing. – From 1 January 1943 on, it was forbidden to speak Dutch or English on the streets and when making telephone calls.

In order to reshape the Indonesian people into the Japanese model, all western influences had to be completely destroyed. For the European population the immediate result was that they suddenly changed from a privileged class to a group without any rights at all. The European population was in fact still present, but by law they didn't exist.

Chapter 5 CAMP TJIBOENOET

Eventually, the time came for us, the three remaining members of the Harting family, to be imprisoned too. On 19 August 1943, exactly one year after Wim had had to leave us, we were moved to a small camp for families of Nippon workers. Located a short distance east of the centre of downtown Bandoeng and just south of the railway line, Camp Tjiboenoet (also called Camp Oosteinde) was a closed residential complex, consisting of a small section of the inner city with about 60 houses confiscated by the Japanese, with room for roughly 350 people. The whole camp measured only 110 by 250 metres and was fenced in by three-metre-high *gedèk* walls. Among the 70 or so families in the camp, we knew several quite well, such as the Brons family, consisting of the parents, two daughters, and a son. Our houses were close together, enabling us to share each other's company and offer help and support in these difficult times. We all had to try our best to adapt to the new situation, also because we obviously had no choice.

Compared to the state of affairs in huge Camp Tjihapit, where the thousands of women and children internees were increasingly packed together in modest-size houses with small rooms, the accommodation in Camp Tjiboenoet was really quite acceptable. We hoped we'd be able to use some of what was left of our furniture, but we had to get rid of much of our possessions because we just did not have enough space for it all.

Tjiboenoet was supervised by Indonesian civilian personnel who maintained a rather relaxed discipline. Unlike the men, who had to go to work outside the camp, the women and children were not allowed to leave the camp. (However, for a short while in the beginning women and children would be able to go out to do some shopping and for private lessons.) Only in case of real emergencies, such as visits to the hospital in the city for very serious medical problems, was permission granted for temporarily leave. In the camp we had one medical doctor who tried to help his patients as best he could with the minimal medications and equipment he had.

There was a limited but mostly sufficient amount of food available, prepared by the internees themselves in the kitchens in their houses.

The ingredients were probably bought in a camp store (I can't remember exactly) run by the internees, where food and a few other essentials were available, supplied by the Japanese. Over time, the amount and quality of the food diminished. We could still buy some extra food, basic medication, and a few other goods from outside the camp, because Indonesian salesmen were occasionally allowed by the camp commandant to come to the camp entrance with their wares. The biggest problem for the prisoners was an increasingly serious lack of money, because all salaries had been very drastically reduced by the Japanese.

Confined all day to the small, stressful camp, my mother worried so much about the unknown future of her family that she developed health problems. In the more than seventeen months that the Pacific war had been going on, Mam, as my mother was lovingly called by us, had lost considerable weight, her gloriously shining brown hair, so a-dored by her husband, was turning grey, her heartbeat was sometimes irregular, blood pressure was rising, and arthritis was slowly affecting some of her joints. She was only fifty-four, but beginning to look old. Mam now had to adjust to the severe restrictions of camp life whereas in the past, in complete freedom and without financial worries, she used to run a happy household of five (later four, when Dik had left for Holland), assisted by four trusted servants. But in this camp servants were, of course, no longer allowed. Mam's good friend, Auntie Ria Brons, who fortunately lived close by, supported her as much as she could.

Mam was also deeply concerned about the well-being of her middle son, Wim, who had been away in a men's camp somewhere for more than a year now. Communication was forbidden between people in the various camps, so we knew nothing about him. Where was he? How was he doing? Was he even still alive? Would we ever see him again? It was horrible to think of him starving in a cell somewhere, covered in blood from wounds opened up by vicious beatings. And Dik, in occupied Holland, how would he be doing? Not knowing what was happening to her boys made my mother feel terribly lost.

Because all formal school education for Dutch children had been strictly forbidden by the Japanese, there was no official schooling in the camp. However, some children received lessons in secret, individually or in small groups, given during the evening by several parents who had the knowledge and capability to teach various subjects.

A big problem was the lack of school books and teaching material. The sad result of this severely limited schooling was that most if not all young people imprisoned by the Japanese lost several years of crucial education by the time the war ended.

The day-to-day affairs of the camp were managed by a small group of internees, appointed and supervised by the Indonesian camp commandant. The leader of that committee was bushy-haired, skinny, bossy Mr. Schiphuis, who made it a priority to get the young people in his camp to lead as meaningful a life as possible. He would tell us we'd have to obey some rules if we wanted to live together peacefully in this crowded camp. Our first priority was, of course, to learn as much as possible from our secret private school lessons, and we should never forget that! But there were also all kinds of jobs to be done here, such as cleaning streets and gardens, garbage collection and disposal, various repairs, helping in the camp store, moving stuff around, helping older and sick people, patrolling the streets to keep an eye on things. These were all honest, important jobs that just had to be done, so we should not fool around. We loved him. Mr. Schiphuis was a no-nonsense man who told us exactly what life in the camp was all about. He gave us much-needed direction.

He also made it possible for several of the older boys to form a boxing club. A few times a week we would get together in an unoccupied old house where we had constructed a simple boxing ring in one of the rooms. Using old gloves that somebody had given us, we then seriously tried to knock each other silly, thus getting rid of some of our feelings of aggression. We even held small boxing competitions where everybody in the camp was invited to be spectators, cheering us on. Boxing proved to be an excellent way to give us young boys something healthy to do in a boring camp where very little was happening to stimulate our growing bodies and minds.

In the garage of one of the houses in the camp, my friends and I — about ten teenage boys and girls — often got together to play swing records by famous American big-band leaders such as Artie Shaw, Bennie Goodman, Glenn Miller, and Tommy Dorsey. We borrowed the precious twelve records and the small hand-cranked player owned by one of our parents. This was our first encounter with jazz and it made such a deep impression on us that we adopted this so-called "jungle" music as our own, not just that of our parents.

We also sang and danced and played music ourselves on mouth organ, bamboo flute, a self-made drum, and a guitar. We were young

and lived happily day by day, having no real concept of the dangerous situation we were in. Life was still a big adventure for us, even as prisoners locked away in a camp. However, we were often quite bored because much of the time there was not much to do for us in this small camp that was almost completely cut off from the big world outside.

I was the leader of this group, someone my friends looked up to and knew they could trust, a born leader you didn't fool around with. My dark-blond hair, blue eyes, and athletic build made me quite good-looking and adored by several of the girls. All in all, an appealing, sensitive guy with a strong sense of right and wrong. But I had a short temper. I would explode far too easily into using my fists to settle a dispute or a challenge to my leadership. This temper had caused me some nasty moments in the past and my parents were very worried it could lead to big trouble with the camp guards.

I was also something of a thinker and a dreamer. I loved to lie on my back on the low stone wall surrounding the garden in front of our house, looking up at the star-filled sky, wondering, always wondering. I'd think about the inexplicable beauty up there, how it all had come to exist, what the purpose was of this mysterious, unknown universe. Were there other worlds somewhere with people? What is life, what is death? How did everything come about and why is it the way it is? Why did this war happen now, causing so much suffering, locking up innocent people in concentration camps? The words 'how' and 'why' were playing an increasingly important role in my intense search for knowledge and understanding.

In February 1944, I had turned seventeen and the transition from child to adult was in full swing. I was growing up fast. Manhood was beckoning impatiently. In delightful, dark-haired, supremely seductive fifteen-year-old Annie, the youngest daughter of Auntie Ria Brons, I had found a perfect companion for my trips of discovery into the thrills of teenage passion, the urgent mysteries of sexuality. Annie's enchanting laughter made me melt with desire for her caress; her dark eyes twinkled like stars, driving me deliciously crazy. And her lips, her lips...! With wildly beating hearts and trembling hands, we thoroughly enjoyed our heavy petting, eagerly discovering the hot delights boiling in our growing bodies. Life was great!

Chapter 6 NIPPON

My father had to leave the camp each day and report to work at the Geological Research Department (GRD), of course no longer in a senior management position but now as a specialist technical advisor. He and several of the other Nippon workers living in our camp were allowed to walk or bicycle to their respective places of work, but they had to follow prescribed routes at set times. They would observe events happening on the streets of Bandoeng where life went on seemingly much as before. Practically nobody from the Indonesian population on the streets payed much attention to the humiliated Dutch with their Nippon worker's arm bands.

At the GRD, my father's situation was a precarious one. He was no longer the leading research engineer, and his direct superior now was an Indonesian technician who previously had been a junior member of my father's team. But throughout his career Anton Harting had always had good, respectful relations with his personnel, whatever their racial origin, so the new situation did not cause too much stress.

One of his past assistants, Sapantri, a young Indonesian with a good mid-level technical education who now was an associate director of the GRD, even tried to help his previous superior, although he was officially forbidden to be friendly with the few Dutchmen now working for him. He offered my father to look after a small wooden trunk filled with several items that were very important to our family: albums with family photos, some jewellery, and a few other cherished mementoes. Sapantri promised to hide the trunk for as long as we were imprisoned and that he would return it after the war. My parents were deeply touched by his humane, compassionate gesture that could well turn into a disaster for Sapantri if it was ever discovered that he was helping an enemy of the Japanese.

My father had met the present director of the GRD, Professor Tanakedata, earlier in his professional life, before the war. The two professional engineers were of similar age and, though from radically different backgrounds and cultures, respected each other and got along reasonably well. It was obvious, however, that they looked at the war from diametrically opposed viewpoints, and that it would be nearly

impossible for them to find acceptance and understanding for their different outlooks on life.

For some reason, maybe a latent sense of wonder and doubt, or even a conflicting feeling of guilt in this university educated intellectual who had spent years in the west, Tanakedata tried passionately but politely to explain to my father Japan's position in the world and the Japanese philosophy of life. The following revealing and important information is what my father learned about Japan and the Japanese, providing an utterly fascinating look deep inside the cultural mind-set of the country at that time in history:

Japan (or more correctly, Nippon) had always been an overpopulated island nation with few natural resources, making it highly vulnerable in case of prolonged, large-scale warfare. This seriously hampered the country's opportunities to develop into a powerful, modern state, which it desperately wanted to become because of a strong fear of western dominance.

After successfully attacking Korea, Manchuria, and China in the first decades of the 20th century in order to obtain more resources and living space, the military establishment had become the dominant force in Japanese public life. During the 1930s, the military were in control of the country, holding on to power by any means. Seven prominent Japanese politicians, including two prime ministers, were murdered by military officers. Intimidation and threat by the armed forces were pervasive. Then, in December 1941, Japan attacked the United States. In the ensuing Pacific War, Japan's stated aim was to be the divine leader of a free East Asia organized in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The Japanese were a distinct people with unique believes, convictions, and practices, such as:

– *Shinto* ("Way of the Gods"), the indigenous spirituality of Japan and its people. It is a set of practices, to be carried out diligently, to establish a connection between present-day Japan and its ancient past. The vast majority of Japanese who take part in *Shinto* rituals also practise Buddhist ancestor worship.

– *Shinto* was founded on the belief that the Japanese people had received a religious revelation meant for the Japanese people only, therefore considering themselves to be a chosen people. This explains the

unlimited respect they demanded from all others, not only for the Japanese people but also for each individual Japanese person.
– Japan was literally an invincible, god-given piece of heaven, a divine land of the gods destined to rule the whole world, which was the Japanese people's manifest destiny.
– The Japanese considered society to be built according to the principles of hierarchy, which formed the foundation of the whole universe.
– Japan's hierarchy was strictly organized from the top down: the infallible God-Emperor Tenno Heika as the supreme leader, followed by the royal family, the aristocracy, families, and individual people.
– Hierarchy, order, and honour were the most essential aspects of Japanese social life.
– All Japanese had to be absolutely loyal to the Tenno Heika, the Heavenly Emperor, their Imperial Majesty Hirohito, who was a direct descendant of the sun goddess, *Amaterasu*, the supreme deity of the *Shinto* faith; the Emperor of Japan was therefore an *arahitogami*, an incarnate divinity.
– The Tenno Heika was literally their living God who had a divine power over his country and to whom all Japanese had to be deeply thankful for everything that was important in their lives; he was the soul of Japan itself.
– No god was above the Emperor; he was the "heavenly sovereign" and his commands were "heavenly commands."
– All universal religions were wrong because they placed a god above the Emperor.
– All Japanese people belonged to the Emperor.
– Because the Japanese believed that Japan and the Japanese were superior to all other countries and people, they did not need to have a moral philosophy (code of ethics) like, for instance, the Chinese and the western people.
– The Japanese considered themselves to be good by nature; in their souls lay automatically the right path.
– The Japanese could not imagine that other people thought differently than they did; their point of view was that only one way of life was possible, theirs, the best one. This opinion was beyond discussion.
– The Japanese had to submit without question to authority and rigid discipline.

– Bowing deeply to superior people was required to show total subservience.
– A Japanese person did not follow the same rules of conduct towards all people, but very different ones, depending upon the place in the social hierarchy occupied by the person he was facing. Rules of conduct towards strangers did not exist.
– Japan was guided only by her own sense of what was right or wrong, not by the standards of Western democracies.
– The Imperial army was unbeatable and its almost religious fanaticism would admit neither defeat nor surrender under any circumstances, choosing death instead.
– The power of the military had to be accepted without question.
– Brutal violence and death were cultivated.
– Hard physical punishment was standard practice.
– It was everybody's sacred duty to fight to the last breath in case of conflict.
– According to *Shinto* beliefs, when a Japanese person dies, he becomes a *kami*, a supernatural being who can be asked for help by his still-living relatives.
– Japan was a thoroughly conformist society where group solidarity and saving face were of the utmost importance.
– Individualism was wrong and had to be suppressed.
– Japanese males were taught not to pay attention to opinions from females.
– Children were educated to be absolutely obedient to orders.
– Boys' education was supervised by military officers.
– Everything the Japanese people did was based on their unshakeable believe in the superiority of their highly refined culture and race.
– In the Japanese ideology, many non-Japanese peoples, such as the Chinese, were considered to be sub-human vermin that should be destroyed. (This point of view was, of course, shared by the Nazis who considered, for instance, the Jews and the Slavs to be sub-human vermin to be slaughtered.)
– The Japanese were convinced that, because of their special origin, they were braver, more virtuous, and more intelligent than other people and that they were destined to rule everybody else. In 1935, Baron

Chigaku Tanaka expressed these thoughts in a message to all people, *What is Nippon Kokutai* (the Japanese government): *The Empire was founded, by making, according to the divine command, natural laws and justice crystallize into state and life, with a view to selecting and founding a country, showing the world the way to virtue, governing the people, and also taking thought for the future of mankind, and establishing absolute peace in the world. The world begins with Nippon and ends with Nippon ... if Nippon were well understood, the world or mankind would get on perfectly ... Nippon is a model country for the world, it ought to have, in all ages and to all countries and races, solemn universality, perfection, thorough-going power and the power of supreme command. Then each country would take its correct place in a perfect hierarchy under Japanese leadership.*

My father was quite astounded to hear those, for him, alien ideas from a man who, as a consequence of his extensive exposure to rational western thought, should have known better than to be guided by such ancient demagoguery based on superstition, myths, legends, and confusing delusions. The misleading illusions of grandeur outlined above were painfully obvious to my father, a life-long atheist, for whom concepts such as gods, divinity, religion, grace, destiny, chosen people were essentially part of man's possibly futile search to find meaning in the mysteries of life and death.

While trying to understand the mind of the enemy, he had a very hard time realizing that his future and that of his family, in fact the future of millions of others, depended upon the irrational beliefs of a self-declared divine people.

Chapter 7 FLOWER CAMP

Our relatively uneventful life in Tjiboenoet lasted less than a year. Early July 1944, about 170 of us were ordered to report to the camp gate, each with only the possessions we could carry: a bag or suitcase with clothing and other essentials, also a mattress, preferably a thin one and rolled up. We were transported by busses to another "protected area," a family camp, Flower Camp (*Bloemenkamp*), that was part of, but separate from, the huge Camp Tjihapit in the northeastern part of Bandoeng, possibly the largest civilian camp for women and children of the many in Southeast Asia (see Chapter 3, Camps). Tjihapit consisted of a collection of mostly small houses in a section of the city that had been forcibly evacuated by the Japanese authorities and surrounded by a *gedèk* wall to provide room for eventually about 14,000 women and children, squeezed together in an area some 1200 x 550 metres in size. (It is estimated that before the war about 1500 people lived in this area.) Any contact with the outside world — talking and also trading for food and other goods across the *gedèk*, using several openings the internees had made in the bamboo barrier — was strictly forbidden and therefore difficult and dangerous. But, driven by desperate need, people always tried to trade anyway, whatever the consequences.

Flower Camp had roughly 1600 inhabitants and was about one-third the size of the main Tjihapit Camp, with its own *gedèk* wall. The name *Bloemenkamp*, Flower Camp, came from the streets in the camp, many named after flowers. Together with several families from other camps, our family was placed in a separate, small sub-section of Flower Camp, Camp D, reserved for select Nippon workers and their families and located in the northern top of the triangular Flower Camp. Camp D was quite tiny, which created an unsettling feeling of isolation for the few hundred men, women, and children imprisoned there. The three of us were assigned a small room in the back of a house that used to accommodate five people but now had to hold more than thirty, including babies and small children. This overcrowding led to severe problems with noise and in particular sanitation. The lack of privacy was much worse than in the previous camp, Tjiboenoet. The kitchens

in the houses were now used as living accommodations because all food for both camps was prepared in three central kitchens in the main Tjihapit Camp.

The tasteless food produced each day by these kitchens was on the whole quite insufficient in quality and quantity to keep the prisoners reasonably well fed and healthy. An increasing number of prisoners was suffering badly from malnutrition and vitamin deficiency. Mothers with babies and young children were hit extra hard because there was almost no milk available. Tragically, to keep their infants as well fed as possible, many mothers gave part or all of their own food to their children. This was very unwise because these seriously underfed mothers would get dangerously weak and might even die, leaving the children unprotected.

Because there was almost no meat in the food supplied by the Camp Tjihapit kitchens, several of the older boys in the camp, myself included, felt compelled to hunt and kill for food any animal we could find. So we caught and slaughtered several of the few cats and dogs that were still running around, most of them somebody's cherished pet and companion. Hunger began to influence behaviour and, in spite of strong feelings of guilt, established ways of life had to be adapted because of the overriding instinct to survive. I sadly remembered the cats and other animals we had owned and loved before the war.

Already in mid-1943, it became clear to the Japanese that the war did not go according to their plans, and that consequently the treatment of their prisoners needed to be re-organized. Therefore, on 1 April 1944, in order to further tighten their grip on their imprisoned enemies, the administration and control of the civilian camps was taken over by the Japanese military to replace the Japanese and Indonesian civilian authorities who had been in command till then. The camps were now called Japanese Army Internment Camps and new rules and regulations were implemented that quickly made life in the camps much worse. The civilian internees were registered as Prisoners of War (POWs). The new guards were Japanese officers and Japanese and Korean soldiers assisted by Indonesian volunteers called *heihos* ("armed" with obviously fake wooden guns) and by Indonesian policemen. In general the internees were subjected to military discipline and organization, whereby the punishments were applied following army rules. Harsher and more inhumane methods to keep the prisoners in check, such as

deliberate starvation, severe physical punishment, as well as torture were introduced. The presence of the dreaded Kempeitai, the secret police of the military, became much more evident.

Communication with these new guards became a serious problem, because they only spoke Japanese and Korean and some of them a little Indonesian, but practically no English or Dutch. For these officers and soldiers, having to serve as camp guards of despised Dutch civilian women and children, instead of actually fighting and perhaps gloriously dying at some front, was extremely humiliating and made their attitude towards their defenceless captives even more unpredictable, intolerant, and inhumane.

On 1 April 1944, a system of identification was implemented that gave each of the prisoners on Java a personal number, depending upon the district *(bunsho)* their camp was located in. *Bunsho* I was Batavia and surroundings, *bunsho* II was the rest of Western Java (Bandoeng and Tjimahi), and *bunsho* III was Middle and Eastern Java. When we en-tered Flower Camp D (in *bunsho* II) in July, my father, mother, and myself respectively received the numbers II-40513, II-40514, and II-40515 (see Chapter 26, Photographs). Everybody had to wear their number clearly visible on their clothing at all times. If caught without number, we could be punished badly by the guards. For many prisoners being identified by a number became a dehumanizing nuisance; for them it was important to have a name to be a real person.

At about the same time, early 1944, the Japanese began reorganizing the civilian concentration camps on Java. The men were being concentrated in a number of large inland camps in and near Bandoeng, and later, by the end of 1944, most of the women and children had been moved to several big camps near the coast of Middle and Western Java.

Annie, the sweet, velvety-skinned girl of my lusty dreams, did not live in the separate little family Camp D where I was. Her family had been placed in the main part of Flower Camp, together with other families from Camp Tjiboenoet whose fathers had been fired from their Nippon worker jobs and immediately sent to men's camps.

A few days after moving into my new home, I took the risky step of trying to get to my sweetheart, although a strictly out-of-bounds *gedèk* wall separated the camps. I waited until the dark of early evening and then, lying on my back, squeezed through a shallow, gully-like

depression I had discovered under the *gedèk*. When I was halfway through, with my head and upper body already in Annie's camp, an unseen hand roughly grabbed my hair, yanked me out of the narrow gully, and dropped me hard on the ground. The Japanese guard who had found me, kicked and hit my squirming body furiously where he could, yelling like a madman, smashing his bamboo stick into my face, opening several cuts. When the guard finally stopped beating me, I quickly wriggled through the shallow gully back to my own camp, bleeding and badly scared.

This, my first personal encounter with Japanese brutality, left me profoundly shaken and hurt, but I later proudly showed off the prominent scar in my left eyebrow where the guard's stick had hit me hard. In the camp, nobody except my parents paid much attention to the assault. All had their own burdens to carry and probably thought that I had just acted stupidly. Rightly so.

Japanese guards had the very unpleasant habit of sometimes punishing a whole group of people, possibly even a whole camp, if one of the members of the group had done something that very much displeased the guards. Their favourite mass punishment was to cut off the supply of food for one or more days, which was a real disaster for us, seriously underfed prisoners. It was therefore very important not to let the guards become aware of something that could make them stop our food supply. For instance, when I was able to rescue a man who was stuck in a 30-metre-long water-carrying culvert that ran from our camp to the main Tjihapit Camp, going under the road and the *gedèk* wall separating the two camps.

This man, who was living in our Camp D, had crept through the about 70-centimetre-wide culvert to Tjihapit to visit his girlfriend. On the way back late at night he became completely exhausted and could not move further, only a few metres from the opening of the culvert in our camp. Fortunately there were no vertical metal bars that normally blocked the opening; these had apparently been removed. His struggles to get a grip on the slippery walls of the culvert were in vain and he just had no strength left to pull himself forward. To make matters worse, the man had only one hand, his left one, the right one having been cut off in an accident years ago. Not being able to move in the pitch-black culvert, he panicked and yelled for help. Nobody heard him. It was dark and people were asleep.

Only some time later, when the sun was starting to rise and people came out of their houses, did we hear his cries. Several of us gathered at the opening of the culvert, anxious to get the man out as soon as possible so that the commotion would not attract any guards. With a rope tied around my waist, held by several people outside, I crept into the quite narrow culvert, which was fortunately not carrying too much water. With great difficulty I managed to grab the soaked man's left hand and the people on the other side of the rope were able to pull us out, both of us stinking dirty and with badly scraped elbows and knees. I realized later it was pretty stupid to risk my life for this nutcase of a man, but at least I had saved our camp from possibly great trouble.

Despite this exciting event, we teenagers were often bored because there was very little to do. Living in a small, closed camp where nothing interesting ever happened made us rebellious and we listened less and less to our parents. Again, schools were forbidden. Even possession of paper, pens, and pencils was not allowed for fear prisoners would keep diaries or make notes about their internment. The Japanese were quite paranoid about their prisoners leaving written records of their experiences in the camps.

One day in mid-August 1944, my friend, Hubert, and I, both thoroughly bored and looking for any kind of adventure, climbed over the wall separating our camp from the neighbouring house in the street. We discovered that this house was used by the Japanese to store some of the extensive loot confiscated from prisoners in various camps and then collected in several houses. These uninhabited houses were strictly off-limits to all prisoners. The two of us searched quickly through the house stuffed with furniture, stoves, and other big household items, even a few refrigerators, but initially found nothing we liked.

Then, to our great delight, in the garage of the building we discovered an unbelievable treasure. A huge pile of gramophone records filled much of the garage, thousands of records with or without their paper sleeves, just thrown on top of each other. We had found a truly fabulous collection of all kinds of music, from popular songs to opera, from church hymns to jazz. Thousands of records lying on the floor, just for the taking! We searched all over the garage for a player and luckily found one, still with a needle in it. We listened to a few records, marvelling at the scratchy but wonderful sounds created by the simple

machine. When we left our musical treasure and carefully climbed back over the wall, we decided to come back soon.

Early next day I returned alone. I needed to hear the music again and couldn't wait for Hubert to join me. I got the player going and listened to several records, among them the mesmerizing song *Strange Fruit* sung by a mysterious singer named Billie Holiday. I was captivated by the sensual sound of her voice and the intriguing melody, but did not understand the text of the song. *Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees,* what could that mean?

I was totally absorbed in the music and didn't hear the noise outside. The garage door swung open and a Japanese guard burst in.

Chapter 8

LESSONS

My blood froze when I saw the furious man coming at me. A crushing blow of the guard's wooden stick to my head beat me half unconscious to the ground. I barely realized that I was grabbed by my shirt and hauled out of the garage, dragged down the street to the camp gate, and thrown on the dusty floor in front of the guards' building.

For the guard who had caught me this was a fine opportunity to teach those stupid dogs of internees a good lesson about Japanese discipline. He ordered the Dutch camp leader to get many people together near the building. When several had assembled, including my mother, the guard yelled in broken English: "This man bad, try escape, insult Nippon, punish hard!" and proceeded to teach me in typically ruthless Japanese fashion not to disregard the camp rules. So he beat me with the stick where he could and brutally kicked my head and body. I tried to shield my head with my arms but the blows and kicks kept coming, drawing blood everywhere.

My mother was horrified. She rushed in to help me, yelling at the man to stop. But before she could get to me, she was kicked to the ground by the screaming man and also beaten and hit viciously. It was frightening to see this small man lose all control and continue thrashing my mother, a middle-aged, defenceless woman. The crowd of prisoners stood there paralysed, forced to witness the inhuman beatings, unable to protect mother and child from the appalling punishment inflicted by a fanatic Japanese soldier.

When the beatings finally stopped and the man had disappeared into the guard's building, my mother and I struggled to get up. With the help of friends we managed to reach our room, where we sat down on my parents' bed, completely exhausted. Mam and I looked at each other in disbelief that such terrible, savage things could have happened to both of us.

Mother was covered with appalling cuts and bruises on her body and arms, and her left hand was hurting badly because the guard had stepped on it heavily. I was bleeding from several wounds on my head and body. I could not hear with my left ear because I been hit hard

repeatedly on that side of my head. My mouth was hurting and my lips were swollen, covered in blood. I was lucky that my eyes appeared to be undamaged and that I had no broken bones. In spite of our quite serious conditions, we could do little to treat our wounds. There was no appropriate medical care available in the camp and the Japanese guards did not allow us to go to the hospital outside of the camp.

When my father got back from work a few hours later, he was profoundly shocked that my stupidity had put his wife and son in such grave danger. While she lay exhausted on their bed, he tried with infinite care to sooth Mam's pain and clean her wounds, comfort her. He looked at me with angry but sad eyes. I couldn't say anything. I felt devastated to the core that my foolish behaviour had led to such horrible consequences.

Deeply shaken to see my mother suffer so much, I swore this would never happen again. I would never ever again let my youthful curiosity and need of adventure lead to a situation where my parents could be hurt. Never! I had learned a dreadfully valuable lesson.

Because of the terrible stress I was under, I was afraid my parents would no longer love me, that they would push me away and reject me because of my irresponsible actions. But instead they were a wise and understanding couple, holding their son close and gently stroking my hair, giving me their great love in spite of the pain I had caused.

Later that night, when the lights were out and the house was asleep, I lay curled up on my mattress on the floor, tears flooding my eyes. I desperately needed to cry but could not let myself go because I didn't want my parents sleeping nearby to know my anguish. This day had surely been the worst day of my life; I couldn't shake the horrible image of my hurting and bleeding mother from my mind. I held my comforting Diablo clasped close to my chest, gradually drifting off into a restless sleep.

By early October 1944, our family had been in the small family Camp D for almost three months. Not much had changed since we had arrived here. Our basic food was as bad and insufficient as always. Malnutrition now affected more and more prisoners. People felt defeated, powerless. We were losing confidence in the outcome of the war, afraid that the liberators would not come soon enough to get us all out of this ever-deepening misery.

Then, one day, my father had to tell us the bad news he had received at the Department. This news was devastating. All the Nippon workers at the GRD, my father included, had been fired because the military had put real pressure on Tanakedata to dismiss the remaining Dutch workers on the spot.

And there was more bad news. Tanakedata had also said that before the end of the month, all Dutch men in Flower Camp, including boys sixteen and over, would be put in men's camps. Sadly, this would mean my mother would shortly lose both of us too.

Her trembling legs forced Mam to sit down on the bed. She pulled me to her and held me close, realizing that soon she would have to say goodby to me and my father. Then her three men would be gone, hidden away in unknown concentration camps somewhere. First Wim, and now her husband and her youngest son too; he was just seventeen, so young, just a kid. And who knows what was happening to Dik in Europe? If the war didn't end soon, this could very well mean she would never see any of us again.

That evening, the three of us sat together in our room, trying to come to grips with our uncertain and frightening future. My father talked to us in his usual no-nonsense, down-to-earth way. He said that in a few days our family would be torn apart even further and we'd each have to try to survive on our own. Life might well become more hellish and we should all prepare for the worst. We might die. There was nothing we could do about it. All we could do was to make the best of any situation.

Mam looked at him, tears in her sad, brown eyes. Pa said he was really sorry that he'd have to talk like this but he wanted us all to face reality and understand what might happen. We were victims of a rotten war beyond our control, with a remorseless and unpredictable enemy who was utterly different from us. The only things that could help us get through the coming ordeal were our own wits and lots of luck.

My mother replied softly that she was very worried about me, her Tonnie; he was so young and inexperienced and had seen so little misery. How could he cope with life in a men's concentration camp where who knows what could happen? My father told her she should not worry too much about me, that I might be short tempered and often too impulsive, but I was not stupid, with a keen mind ticking inside my hard head. I had the makings of a survivor.

To me Pa said, that in my youthful optimism I might think I was invincible and would, of course, pull through all these coming problems. But I should remember that I was not in control, I could not run away, could not hide from the enemy, I could not escape, I was at their complete mercy. My task was to adapt to whatever was coming and direct all my actions towards survival.

The best thing for me to do, he said, was to consider the coming time in the men's camp a school of life where I could observe and learn important lessons about some of the good and bad sides of humanity. The more I learned, the wiser I might become. I would gradually gain some knowledge and understanding of my world. I might even get a glimpse of understanding the hows and whys of life itself. That was what it was all about, life. It was important for me to grow into a sane, balanced person. And I could only do that if I fought for it.

My mother hugged me, her baby son, and said that she really hoped Pa and I would stay together in the same camp and that I should promise her to help my father as much as possible. I was so much younger and should stay healthy longer, so I had the responsibility to look after him; I should not let him suffer unnecessarily, especially if death appeared to be inevitable. Life was too precious.

Without looking at my mother I mumbled that I`d do my best. I was quite embarrassed by all these outpourings of emotion, but I also felt the significance of what was happening at this moment. I understood that the guidance and strength I received from my parents was to be of crucial significance in my life.

At the end my father added something very important for the three of us. He emphasized we should try very hard to remember as much as possible the things that would happen in the camps we'd be in. It was imperative that, after we were freed, we'd be able to discuss the situation and our treatment in these camps. Once the war was over, everybody should know about our treatment and its reasons. As the Japanese didn't allow us to write down anything at all, the best we could do was use our memory, it was all we had. We were to use it well. Watch, listen, remember!

There was nothing more to be said now and we remained silent, sitting close together on the bed. I felt small and intimidated by the overpowering magnitude of the situation; I had a dreadful fear for our unknown future. But deep in my heart I was convinced I could handle all this. I would damn well show everyone how tough I was!

Chapter 9 CAMP TJIKOEDAPATEUH

I would soon get lots of opportunities to try and show how tough I was. In the third week of October 1944, my father and I, then 17 years old, and about 160 other men and boys from Flower Camp had to assemble near the camp gate, carrying a minimum of baggage, ready to be moved to a men's camp nearby. Having to say goodbye to their loved ones was a terrible ordeal for everybody, especially the parents. My mother tried very hard not to let he emotions make it even more difficult for everybody, but it was not easy. The poor woman really suffered badly, like all the other mothers who had to say a heart-wrenching goodbye to husbands and sons.

We had to walk to a large, well-known camp for civilian men, Tjikoedapateuh, located just east of the centre of Bandoeng and only a few hundred metres by road from Flower Camp. "Tjikoedapateuh" is Indonesian for "River of the Crippled Horse" and is the name of a small creek running through the neighbourhood northeast of the camp. Before the occupation this camp consisted of a complex of Dutch military barracks, a section of which was called 15th Battalion. Camp Tjikoedapateuh was, and is, therefore often called 15th Bat (*15de Bat*, in Dutch).

Tjikoedapateuh was not a very big place, about 300 by 700 metres, surrounded by city roads and closed off from the world by a three-metres-high *gedèk* wall with one main gate in the west wall and a couple of smaller gates. Several dozens barracks and a number of small dwellings housed the imprisoned men. There also was a kitchen, some work-shops, and storage places, as well as an area near the main gate with separate buildings for the guards.

From March 1942 till January 1944, the whole camp had been used to incarcerate Allied military prisoners of war to a maximum of 11,700 people, but by January 1944, Dutch civilian men and boys 16 years of age and older had started to move in, replacing the military. The space available for the newcomers had been reduced at the north end of the camp by taking off about 100 metres for barracks to house Indonesian *polisie istimewa* (special police). Another 50 metres was taken off in May 1945 for Boys Land (or Boys Town), a separate camp, cordoned off by *gedèk*, for eventually about 800 boys 10 years of age and older

who, according to Japanese customs, were considered to be adults and regarded as dangerous and were therefore removed from their mothers.

So, the size of the men's Camp Tjikoedapateuh then was actually only about 300 x 550 metres. The number of civilian prisoners packed in this camp varied considerably from about 10,000 in February 1944 to about 8,800 in April 1944 to about 5,500 in August 1945.

Tjikoedapateuh was probably one of the largest of the many camps for men and boys spread out over the country, especially Java (see Chapter 3, Camps). As was the case in the numerous camps for women and children across the country, the quality of life in the men's and boys' camps varied considerably from barely liveable in a few camps to absolutely horrible in most, to a considerable degree depending upon the attitude of the Japanese camp commandant. (See Chapter 17, Reports by van Karnebeek and Thijs.)

The prisoners in Tjikoedapateuh had an important advantage over others living in camps where the climate was not as good. Bandung, as Bandoeng is now called, is located on a 770-metre-high plateau, a river basin surrounded by volcanic mountains, and has a pleasant, sometimes rather cool, climate, not the stifling, humid heat as in Batavia (now Jakarta) on Java's north coast. The wet season lasts from November till April; the rest of the year the season is dry. My father and I were also very lucky to be together in the same camps throughout the war.

When we had reached our new camp and were standing near the main gate, several guards were waiting. They ordered us to put the few things we had been able to bring on the ground. One of the guards, a lieutenant or a sergeant who probably was the commandant, gave us a short speech in Japanese, of which we couldn't understand a word. After he had finished his "welcome" lecture and we had bowed deeply, the guards ordered us to open our packs so they could check our possessions. Many forbidden items were thrown out, such as knives and forks that were considered too large, some of the money we had brought (only a certain amount, 10 guilders per person, was allowed), notebooks, pencils, pens. They didn't see Diablo because I had concealed him in the scarf around my neck.

Our names and numbers were then checked against a registration list, and next we were ordered to walk through the gate into the camp. On the open space behind the gate a small, sun-baked metal-and-bam-boo cage held a man lying on the dirt floor, not moving. Nobody was allowed near the cage because this man was being punished by the guards.

A few prisoners, many dressed in torn, shabby clothes and some of them barefoot, looked at us, hoping to recognize a family member or a friend. Our group of newcomers was split up into several smaller groups. My father and I were told to follow an internee who would bring us to our new dwelling. This turned out to be one of the barracks in the K block, a brick barrack with the name *Wandbeer Hotel* (Bedbug Hotel) written in small letters over the entrance. We were home.

Bedbug Hotel already housed more than 100 men who were not at all pleased they had to give up precious living space to us, the unwelcome newcomers. But after some hassles we each got our space on the tile floor where the inmates had a small personal space, about 60 cm wide and two metres long, where we had to sleep as well as store what was left of our meagre possessions. Permanent dividers between the beds were not allowed; there was no privacy.

I quickly put my stuff on the place assigned to me, next to my father, in the middle of the long row along the south wall. I hid Diablo in the little pocket I had made in one corner of my thin mattress. We were soon approached by several men who had heard that we had come from camps in the Tjihapit area. They eagerly asked us if we knew their wives or family or friends staying in that huge women's camp. Sadly we didn't recognize any of the names.

Life in this big barrack together with many dozens of unknown men was quite an unpleasant change from living in overcrowded houses we had been in till now. There never was a moment of quiet, always something or other was happening. No privacy at all. Also, there were bedbugs and lice everywhere: the mattresses, the clothing, on the men's bodies, the floor and wall. For my father and I this was a very unpleasant discovery, but something we would have to get used to very quickly because biting, bloodsucking, stinking bugs were a way of life here.

Even at night, people suffering from diarrhea shuffled to and from the latrines constantly. There always was a lot of snoring and sneezing and coughing and farting. (Producing a silent fart was an art much appreciated by all.) There were loud arguments in the middle of the night. The disruptive and often lengthy roll-calls *(tenkos)* took place a couple of times a day and, as punishment, sometimes at night too. Because of all these distractions it was impossible for us, exhausted and haggard-looking, to have a restful, uninterrupted sleep.

Welcome to the new centre of our limited universe, the Japanese concentration camp for men.

Chapter 10

CAMP LIFE

During the first few days in this new prison, I walked along many of the streets and paths between the buildings to determine the layout of the camp and to discover how it was operating. There was no doubt it was bigger and more complicated and threatening than the family camps I had been in. Little natural growth could be seen, few trees or plants, some grass, a few small vegetable gardens; most of the camp consisted of hard, brown, dusty soil with buildings and paths. There was very little colour. I had to get used to the absence of women and children, something that had been part of my life until now. Here it was men, just men, lots of men. The camp was very crowded, there were people everywhere, most of them looking listless and bored. By talking to some of the men, I learned that this was a hard camp with tough discipline. I realized that I'd better adapt quickly how to survive. Here are some of the random observations I made:

First of all, **bowing** correctly to all Japanese personnel was of prime importance and strictly enforced. This practice of paying respect to the Japanese was deeply resented by the prisoners who considered it to be demeaning, humiliating, and insulting. In fact, bowing is very much part of the proscribed and utterly polite Japanese culture, the rules of etiquette of which are so very different from our own. The Japanese themselves bow to each other all the time as a civilized form of greeting and gesture of respect. The prisoners were therefore expected to bow correctly to all Japanese personnel, who were considered to be the personal representatives of the Japanese Emperor. By bowing the prisoners expressed their deep respect for the Emperor. Not bowing or doing it incorrectly was a grave insult and a major cause for often severe punishment. The Japanese also insisted on absolute obedience. So, every order or command should therefore immediately be obeyed without question,

In the single communal **kitchen**, located near the southeast corner of the camp, much of the food was cooked by teams of inmates using huge iron drums over open wood fires. At mealtime, the food was picked up in smaller drums and in wooden boxes and then transported by a few men to each barrack or house, where the distribution was

supervised by the barrack's leader. The quality and quantity of the food appeared to be at low levels indeed. A simple camp store, stocked with goods supplied by the guards, gave inmates who still had money the opportunity to buy such things as a bit of extra bread, sugar, salt. However, the variety and availability of goods for sale varied widely; often there was nothing.

In a small **clinic** that everybody grandly called hospital, a few physicians, with the assistance of various volunteers, were doing their best to help sick and wounded men. There was hardly any medication and equipment available and the medical staff had to deal with several deaths a week, sometimes each day, due to starvation, lack of vitamins, various diseases, and traumas from beatings. Even the hardened medical staff had tears in their eyes when they looked at the emaciated, cadaverous bodies waiting for their deliverance. However, each time somebody died meant a bit more space in an overcrowded barrack.

The original **latrines** were not working properly because of overuse and lack of water. The men therefore had to squat over a narrow ditch in which a small stream of water flowed, if there was in fact any water at all. Low separating walls of woven bamboo slats provided a minimum measure of privacy. These ditch-latrines, called *poepsloten* (shit creeks) by everybody, were not sufficient for the large number of inmates and consequently the area was impossible to keep clean. The smell in this whole area was awful and overpowering. Many men, especially the older and weakened ones, had great problems squatting and occasionally stumbled and fell into this ditch from which they had to be rescued.

Outside many of the barracks and houses, prisoners were always busy hunting and killing the ever-present **bed bugs**. They spread out their mattresses and sleeping mats and other possessions in the sun so that these bugs were forced by the heat of the sun to abandon their hiding places and then could be killed by stepping on them. The awfully pungent, musty-sweet smell of the dead bugs was everywhere. And always there were several urine-soaked mattresses drying in the sun too, adding to the nasty stink.

Particularly demanding and feared was ***tenko*** (counting, roll-call) taken by the guards outside the barracks and strictly enforced at least twice a day, regardless of the weather, to check if all prisoners were accounted for. It often was a lengthy, draining, and humiliating affair,

especially for the sick and weak who also were forced to attend, whatever their condition. Like beatings and torture, unexpected *tenkos* were used methodically any time of the day or night as punishment for not following the guards' orders or for any other transgression they considered a "crime." All *tenkos* were handled the same way. Once the prisoners were standing in line, they had to bow deeply to pay homage to the Emperor. Not bowing correctly would lead to often severe beatings. Bowing was followed by counting, which the prisoners themselves had to do in Japanese. Counting could become complicated because it appeared that many Japanese guards could not count higher than four or five. Inevitably many mistakes were made because counting often involved hundreds of inmates. And if mistakes were made, beatings always followed. Each and every prisoner had to be accounted for; people on work details inside and outside the camp, kitchen workers, medical personnel, even the sick and the recently dead had to be checked and counted, just like everybody else. Only when the Japanese were satisfied all prisoners had been counted correctly, could we leave, exhausted and thirsty and hungry after standing at attention for hours, often in the blazing tropical sun or the chilly night.

In many of the camps, the notorious **cage** was used regularly to discipline internees who had broken the rules. They were locked up for hours or even days in this small bamboo-metal cell placed near the camp gate in the burning tropical sun, without water and food and in full view of everybody. These cages were often so small, they could just hold a man sitting on the ground. It was not unusual for prisoners who were put in the cage to slowly die of dehydration and starvation.

As was the case in all concentration camps, the inmates, mainly young ones, had to perform **work details** (*corvée),* consisting of all kinds of jobs, large and small, that needed to be done in order to keep the camp functioning, such as: kitchen-cleaning duties (no lack of volunteers here because of possible access to some extra food!), cleaning latrines, keeping the hospital in good working order, cleaning and repairing barracks, especially abandoned ones, collecting and sawing wood for the kitchen fires, maintaining paths and streets in the camp, repairing the bamboo wall surrounding the camp, transporting sick people to and from the hospital, collecting deceased prisoners and transporting the bodies to the dead-men's shack for speedy burial somewhere outside the camp. In many cases we received a few cents a day

for work we'd done, which money we could use to buy some overpriced extra food in the camp store. There were also jobs outside the camp, such as: cleaning abandoned camps (for instance Tjihapit), digging water channels, cleaning streets, collecting and sorting furniture and other goods confiscated by the Japanese. Inmates were also put to work in gardens where vegetables were cultivated to be used in the special kitchen for the Japanese guards.

In all camps on Java, the daily affairs were the responsibility of the **Dutch camp leadership**. Food preparation and distribution, running the camp store, cleaning the camp, organizing work details, administration, medical care, and more had to be organized by the camp leaders following guidelines given by the Japanese.

For many internees, **boredom** was a constant and highly depressing companion. Some tried to overcome this debilitating boredom by participating in various organized activities, but not everyone could bring himself to do this. Therefore, numerous were the empty-eyed prisoners sitting on the side, doing nothing but worrying, on the road to depression..

Chapter 11

PEOPLE

A concentration camp is a melting pot of a great variety of people, detained and confined in a designated, closely guarded compound where prisoners are concentrated under typically harsh conditions and rules, and forced to live in close proximity to each other. Any idea to somehow escape from the camp and live in the outside world was, of course, quickly abandoned by the Totoks and also many European-looking Indos, because their European looks would make it impossible to live safely among the Indonesian population.

Our camp was indeed such a harsh melting pot. The inmates were extracted from all levels of the Dutch society as it had existed in the Dutch East Indies colony, from high to low, rich to poor, and every-thing in-between: civil servants, teachers, professors, engineers, doctors, shop keepers, pensioners, labourers, poor people, rich people, hotel owners and employees, train station masters, owners and employees of grand plantations, journalists, artists, scientists, and many more. Variety in skin colour also existed, because there were quite a few Indos and several Chinese among us. Unfortunately this allowed a few of the Dutch Totoks to continue exhibiting their detestable racism, even in this situation of us all being equally lowly prisoners. Looking down upon "coloured others" must have given them some feeling of power, something they had lost when they were imprisoned and when every-thing they were and owned was destroyed or had disappeared.

All these proud and privileged members of the past Dutch colonial establishment, including the previously pampered very rich, were now reduced to long lines of hungry bodies, anxiously waiting for their next meagre meal. But even under these circumstances there were still a number of formerly "important" people who tried to avoid having to do "demeaning jobs below their status," such as cleaning latrines, repairing roads, and chopping wood for the kitchen. If they still had enough money they could pay some poor soul to do this job, otherwise they had no choice but to pick up their tools themselves. Apparently they had never learned that it's not how important you are, it's how you are that's important. It was a hard lesson for these spoiled ex-colonials to

realize that we were all, without exception, unworthy prisoners, slaves who had to live very closely together in overcrowded barracks, houses, and shacks, forced to do literally everything the Japanese overlords commanded. Status symbols like expensive clothes and jewellery were no longer valid or available. Concentration camps certainly are great equalizers.

And it was not only the social hierarchy that was being levelled, also physical appearances changed across the board. All prisoners, some more than others, lost weight as soon as they were exposed to the miserable low-calory camp diet; eventually many lost so much weight that they looked like walking skeletons. Being fat when coming into the camp turned out to be a disadvantage; the thin, skinny ones appeared to have a better chance to survive the ordeals than the fat ones.

There were also quite a number of men who had apparently been obese before they were incarcerated and who had lost so much weight in a short time that the empty excess skin of their formerly huge bellies hung in front of their crotch and thighs like an apron. Flaps of empty skin were also hanging from their previously fat-filled arms and legs. This condition could only be treated by surgery, which was, of course, not possible in the camps. Keeping these fearsome-looking bodies reasonably clean was a major problem, even more so because there never was enough clean water available in the camp for proper washing. These unfortunate men therefore often had chronic infections and ulcerations, making this not only a cosmetic problem but also a serious medical one.

Another group of inmates with special problems were the ones who needed glasses, hearing aids, artificial limbs, and such in order to function well. If anything went wrong with those devices, they were obviously in serious trouble. And then there were the many extremely vulnerable patients with chronic ailments like asthma, tuberculosis, heart and lung diseases, various forms of cancer, diabetes, skin conditions, and many more.

There also were the people who were always struggling with deeply hidden, private, mental demons, such as: – the well-dressed, very thin prisoner who spent each and every day walking back and forth in front of a specific stretch of the *gedèk* camp wall, always mumbling to himself; – the Jewish orthodox man who was tormented because he was not able to follow a kosher lifestyle prescribed by his religion; – the wild-eyed middle-aged man who always carried a small, stuffed, baby teddy bear tucked in his belt, violently keeping other prisoners from touching it; – the filthy, stinking man who angered everybody by

ceaselessly talking about his dream to have luxurious showers with lots of nice-smelling soap, not the "bath" we rarely could have with the little bit of rainwater we might collect.

After having been subjected to our starvation diet for some time, in some cases after just a few months, many prisoners began to show signs of deadly malnutrition: these walking ribcages looked horribly emaciated like a bag filled with bones without any fat on their wasted bodies, their ribs could be easily counted and arms and legs resembled sticks with some threadlike muscles attached to it, their skin was often covered with ulcers and scabs, lifeless eyes in shrunken, gaunt faces looked around but did not see anything. It was a miracle that these corpses were somehow still alive.

As in all societies, ours too consisted of "good"people who helped each other and were willing to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of others. They could be amazingly compassionate, caring for the sick and helping those in need to survive the hell we were living in. But we also had our share of "bad" people who only thought of their own self-preservation and for whom helping others was out of the question. If they could, they stole valuable things from their camp-mates, even vitally important food, water, and medication. Corruption, favouritism, jealousy, mutual distrust, and arguments also existed in the camps.

Many prisoners became increasingly fearful that their situation would not improve any time soon and that the war might eventually be lost. These often very lonely men, constantly worried about their wives and children, would become seriously depressed because they were convinced their chances of survival were quickly diminishing. Others remained optimistic that the war would end soon and tried to help their demoralized mates.

In the Bedbug Hotel where my father and I had found a place to settle down, there lived a fascinating microcosm of people, each with their own way of living. We met and eventually befriended some of our new neighbours, three of whom would turn out to play very important roles in my camp life:

– Otto Verkerk, a 50-year-old Totok history teacher who had the nickname "*Meneer*" (Mister, Sir). Although he was not Indo, he was always conveniently dressed in old pyjamas, a widespread habit among elderly Indo men throughout the Dutch East Indies. I became quite attached to Meneer who taught my growing mind a lot about beauty,

suffering, acceptance, understanding, life, and death. This highly intelligent atheist strengthened in me my strong suspicion of anything to do with religion and the widely accepted concept of a creator/god;

– Jacky Santini, a very down-to-earth, possibly bisexual, 24-year-old Indo from the city of Batavia who looked pure Indonesian, and was said to have been running a brothel before the war. Why Jacky ended up in this mainly Totok camp was a great mystery. He just grinned and said nothing when we asked him about it;

– Henk Jansen, a 30-year-old minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, about the strictest and most conservative of all Dutch protestant religions, who was called "*Dominee*" by everybody, this being his professional title. Dominee was a sweet, giving, utterly unselfish man who always was there to help those in need, of course including non-believers. He was absolutely convinced that his particular religion was the only way to heaven and salvation. Dominee prayed a lot.

When we got together with some of our other friends and discussed the great variety of imprisoned people, there was one subject that often arose: who was likely to survive the camps and who was not? There are so many variables that determine the answer to this important question that it is almost impossible to find a satisfying one, but obviously the mind and its processes are critical to survival. You also have to be smart and lucky, very lucky.

Several of the **main variables** and related issues are discussed below:

– *Hope* is one of the most important reasons for survival. Hope that the war will end soon and hope to meet their loved ones will hold people up. If there is no hope, people are often being pulled down, becoming depressed, strongly diminishing their chances of surviving the camp ordeals.

– The *will to live* in a life-and-death situation often separates those that live and those that do not. Stories of heroic feats of survival by regular people with little or no training but a strong will to live are not at all uncommon. Having a goal or purpose to your existence is a tremendous impetus to survival. Your captors will try to dehumanize you to reduce your will to live and make it easier for them to justify their abuse.

– Your *sense of self-worth* is very important in building up resistance to destructive thoughts and attitudes that would inevitably bring you to

accept the negative situations in your camp. Your self-worth should strengthen you in your struggles against insecurity and depression, and to improve it, you should always attempt to treat yourself with care, compassion and respect.

– *Religion*, and the associated believe in an all-powerful personal god or gods, is an extremely powerful method, at least for many people, to try and overcome insecurity, ignorance, fear, and other demons in one's life. Most religions have a highly organized structure, making them useful to let groups of people come together, such as in communal prayer meetings, to keep a strong connection to their religious beliefs, focussing on the same goals of afterlife and salvation.

– The prisoner's *health* prior to and during internment is obviously a deciding factor in the fight for survival. The healthier one is, both physically and mentally, the more chance one has to survive the camp ordeals.

– The quantity and quality of the *food* supplied in the camp determines to a large extent the health of the prisoners and consequently their chances of survival.

– *Friends and relationships*: being deprived of a social network is fatal to the innately social human. Camaraderie in suffering eases the pain, and knowing that you have someone to rely on and who relies on you is comforting. Most survivors retain a sense of community and several friends. Self-absorption is the beginning of the end, it makes everything depressing.

– The *camp* one is forced to live in is obviously crucial to one's chances of survival. The size and type of camp, its location, the attitude of the guards and especially that of the commandant, the food, the work, the health services, everything related to the camp strongly influences the prisoners' life and well-being.

However, there are many **more variables**, some presented randomly below together with a few related comments, that play a role in deciding if one has a better chance of surviving the camps than other prisoners who could not make it:

– People of all *ages* can do well in the camp, but the very young and very old are obviously more vulnerable than those in the prime of life. For me, and surely for other teenaged boys growing up in the camps, being exposed to such a diverse group of people who had so many different outlooks on life and who were forced to live together in such

extreme circumstances, was a unique and potentially most valuable learning experience.
– *Gender*: women with babies and small children have a tougher time surviving their camp than most men; women are also often subjected to sexual predation by the guards.
– *Stress*: situations can be stressful to the level that even trained experts may be mentally affected. Try not to create situations that will be overly stressful.
– *Training*: the benefits of learning to function under stress are considerable. There are certain strategies and mental tools that can help people improve their skills to cope better in a survival situation.
– *Being helpful* can be a very productive strategy: people need to care and give, to receive and be cared for, feel to be needed.
– Owning *money and property* gives one a good opportunity to buy or trade extra food and other vital goods, improving one's camp life.
– Having the *responsibility* over children, sick family and friends, and others will be beneficial.
– Participating in *activities* of all sorts will keep your body and mind occupied and make you less vulnerable to negative thoughts.
– *Future projects* that the prisoner feels a need to complete, such as tasks waiting for them to fulfill after the war, are a fine incentive to try and stay alive.
– *Be optimistic*: happy people suffer fewer diseases and live longer than unhappy people. Upbeat individuals are more easily accepted by a group and given physical and social support. Keep focussed on the few nice things that are still in your life and try not to dwell on the unpleasantries.
– Strengthen your *spiritual life*: people who are used to a rich intellectual life are sometimes able to retreat from their terrible surroundings in the camps to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom, preserving a trace of spirituality and independence of mind, giving them more strength to resist their jailors.
– *Depression* should be avoided at all costs.
– *Be curious* about all aspects of life; it will strengthen your mind and keep it busy, away from negative thoughts about the camp and your chances of surviving it.

It may be of interest to learn **how I managed** to come out of the camp without too much damage. The main reason would be that I was

always trying to be active, always doing something like trading, smuggling, participating in as many work details as I could muster, secretly preparing extra food, going to "school," reading, having discussions with friends, and more activities, anything to help me strengthen my chances of survival by staying busy.

And then, of course, I always had with me my steady companion, Diablo, who played a decisive role in keeping me functioning in the mad camp world. Diablo was my "always-there" friend who I could hold in my hand and talk to if a needed a word of understanding and comfort. I had been able to smuggle him into all camps I had been in, and the more "difficult" the camps became, the more important the little devil's role turned out to be. His perpetual grin, so disturbingly like that of some of the Japanese and Korean guards while they were beating up somebody, never failed to fascinate me. Diablo also reminded me of the terrific youth I had had before the war, including chatting and laughing with our *djongos* (main house servant), Simin, who had one day brought the toy to me. I will always be thankful to my fine Indonesian friend for getting me that wonderful surprise, which after all those years still has a place of honour in my home and whose grinning image graces the cover of this book.

We, the prisoners, were, of course, not the only people living in the camps. There also were the guards who initially consisted of Japanese and Indonesian civilian personnel and later, from early 1944 on, were made up of Japanese and Korean military personnel as well as Indonesian volunteer (but increasingly forced to join) "assistant soldiers" called *heihos*.

Although in their relationship to us, their prisoners, the Japanese and especially the Korean soldiers were almost uniformly ruthless and often sadistic, that attitude changed markedly when they were among themselves, away from their despised prisoners. Then they often were the lonely and insecure young men who had the utterly demeaning duty of guarding detested foreign prisoners instead of fighting at the front till an honoured death for the glory of their godly Emperor would elevate them too to the exalted status of a *kami*, a god-like supernatural being. These men hadn't seen their families in Japan or Korea for a very long time and possibly hadn't even had any news from the home country because by 1944 communication between Japan and Southeast

Asia had been made practically impossible by the actions of the American Navy and Air Force. To make matters worse, towards the end of the war they must heave realized that there was very little hope they would ever see their families again. It was undoubtedly a tough, extremely frustrating life for these men, locked away in a strange country far from home. No wonder they increasingly took their frustrations out on their defenceless prisoners.

But, behind all their terrible cruelty some of them could still be humane. For instance, the Japanese guard I often traded with, Goldmouth (see Chapter 13, Trading), turned out to be a simple, quite nice, unsophisticated but reasonably well-educated, rather folksy young man of about 22, who, when I met him to trade gold for food and medication, talked incessantly — using some Indonesian and English — about his parents and sisters in Nagano in northern Japan. He delighted in showing me some stiffly posed family photographs he deeply adored. With me, in private, he was just a normal, be it very lonely young man. But as soon as some prisoners were around, his attitude changed into that of a typical stick-wielding bully of a guard who couldn't wait to beat some poor prisoner almost to death. This change in attitude was most evident when there were other guards around, especially officers. However, Goldmouth never laid a finger on me, always ignoring my presence when he was looking for somebody to beat up.

Chapter 12 MIND

From early on in the existence of the camp, it had been clear that a major problem for its inmates was how to keep their minds active in a positive way while their starving bodies were being abused, and not to dwell too much on the overwhelmingly negative aspects of their imprisonment. There had to be several ways, at least temporarily, to help them escape their predicament and make their lives less of a burden, more relaxed, productive even. To that end various activities had been organized over time by the prisoners, such as lectures, courses, discussion groups, theatrical and musical performances, cabaret, story telling, bible readings and other religious activities, book readings, bridge/checkers/chess competitions, even astrology and palm-reading had its fans. Also, a well-organized school system had been set up especially for the younger inmates. Luckily, we had a "library" of a few hundred books of all kinds brought in by the prisoners when they entered the camp.

Eventually, a true underground camp culture had been created that succeeded in a limited way to help at least some of the people get through these hard times, and prepare the young ones for their future. Unfortunately, because most of these activities, in particular the school system, were forbidden by the Japanese, especially in the later camp years, they had to be performed in secret and for small groups only, in out-of-the-way places and hidden corners, away from the guards` prying eyes and ears. We constantly had to keep an eye open for them.

Probably the most popular of these activities were the cabaret shows enthusiastically performed by a few talented (but mainly by untalented) men who often created their own material based on situations and events that had taken place in the camp. My friend Jacky was one of the stars; his rendition of "a woman of the street" was hilarious and made him quite famous. My father was also involved as an actor, and I sometimes helped out as a stage hand (my acting ability being next to zero). The public "applauded" almost silently by hissing and by tapping their index fingers against each other, making a characteristically soft, rustling sound. Singing was forbidden because it could make the prisoners happy, so we softly hummed the songs instead. Of course, we

had to be very careful not to make too much noise during these performances, so we would not be discovered by the guards. If they did find out about a clandestine cabaret performance or other illegal gathering, all the organizers and performers were beaten hard and sometimes the whole camp was punished by withholding all food for several days.

Humour played an important role in keeping the spirit up as much as possible. Tellers of funny jokes were greatly appreciated. For some reason, infantile scatological poo-and-pee jokes always were among the most popular. Of course, the purpose of all this was to make the men laugh so they could feel somewhat more alive.

The school system that had been organized in our camp since February 1944 eventually became quite elaborate and the curriculum contained an impressive number of subjects. The system had been adapted to the camp circumstances, and was not organized as the classic school system with different classes and many subjects, but offered one subject at a time taught by one teacher to only a few pupils. In spite of some serious problems such as the demanding, mandatory work details, persistent feelings of hunger, and the need to keep everything secret, the camp school system worked quite well and many boys benefited from it. The system indeed managed to save hundreds of boys from the mental deterioration intended by the Japanese when they put all Dutch Totoks and many Indos in concentration camps during 1942 and 1943.

There was very little paper and only a few pencils in the camp, so much of the time we had to write in the dust with a stick. Tests were therefore mostly oral.

Fortunately, there were quite a few school teachers and other well-educated men in the camp, so there was no lack of qualified people. My father — who had a master's degree in mining engineering — was part of that group, teaching mathematics and calculus as best he could from memory. He welcomed these lessons because they gave him something meaningful to do in a life that was otherwise drowning in a sea of boredom, lack of hope, and a desperate longing for news about his wife and two missing sons.

Having to "go to school" was not always easy for me. On the contrary, I often struggled to remember what was being taught, because it was frequently very difficult for me to pay attention and study; I would rather do something exiting like trading or smuggling. It's a strange experience growing up as a rebellious, headstrong, impulsive, aggressive,

emotional, risk-taking, to a limited degree sexually active adolescent in a concentration camp where the harsh realities are dominated by hunger, oppression, sickness, beatings, degradation, and ever-present death. However, my father kept trying successfully to make me appreciate the importance of study, the only way leading to knowledge and understanding and a bright future.

An effective way to keep the people's mind occupied, at least if they were religious, was to practise, if possible, the various rites and rituals inherent in their particular religion. For instance, many of the prisoners benefited in some way from believing in a god, or gods, to pray to for help in times of need and great fear, be they Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Moslem, Hindu, or any of the other religious persuasions present in the camp. On the other hand, of course, there were the non-believers, those who called themselves atheist or agnostic or whatever term they considered appropriate, who hoped to find support for their troubles and a solution to their problems by forming small groups to discuss subjects related to the mysteries of life and death without adhering to the concept of supernatural, all-powerful beings. Because in general the guards would not allow open, large-scale church services of any religion, the prisoners had to be very careful not to be discovered and punished, and only met in small groups.

Besides these organized activities, there also were things we did by ourselves to escape the unpleasant reality. For instance, I became mesmerized by the beautiful colours created when sunlight is split into its components by a broken piece of glass. And hearing Jacky talk about it, I became very interested in Indonesian gamelan music that he explained to me by playing an imaginary instrument and singing the melody.

My father, who was quite an avid amateur photographer, tried to remember "photographs" he made in his head of many scenes in the camp so he could describe them after the war, calling it "mind photography." Cameras were, of course, absolutely forbidden in the camp; they had all been confiscated at the gate.

What the men missed very much was the beauty of women, children, flowers, colours, music, smells, animals, laughter, etc., things they had taken for granted before but for which they now had a terrible longing. Somebody had one photograph of a naked woman. Everybody wanted to have a look, some for sexual stimulation, some for a touch

of beauty. Several men cried when they saw it. I often thought of my girlfriend, Annie, how soft she was and how wonderful she smelled. It was upsetting that I missed her femininity so much. I had no idea where she was or even if she was still alive.

A favourite escape was sex, or what the emaciated bodies of the men still were capable of. What sex there was in the camp was mostly solo work: masturbation. Jacky's advice when the sex urge got too difficult was: "Find a quiet corner and just play with yourself. But don't go to the latrines because that's where they all do it!" However, it was very hard to find privacy in this badly overcrowded camp. My favourite English slogan that I had proudly invented myself was: "My hand, my friend, my master!" There was little overt homosexuality but there were, of course, a few men who secretly helped and comforted each other in these lonely and insecure times. Most inmates didn't object to those activities, but there were quite a few who thought it to be terribly sinful.

An artist drew portraits of prisoners, often for a few slices of bread or some money as payment. He owned two small pencils that he treated with great care and tenderness. His big problem was finding suitable paper. I was greatly impressed by the artist never having to use an eraser, obviously because he didn't have one. On the occasion of my mother's 56th birthday on 14 February 1945, the man drew portraits of my father and me (dressed in the only nice, clean shirt I still had and never wore). However, I was not happy at all with my picture because I thought I looked like a young kid instead of the tough, grown-up guy I was convinced I really was. The artist agreed to make both of us look much healthier and less thin than we really were, because my father didn't want my mother to feel sad when she would see the pictures after the war (see Chapter 26, Photographs).

Our good friend Otto Verkerk, or Meneer as everybody called him, tried to help me get away from the misery in the camp and the feelings of hate by convincing me that there was still much beauty in the world, even in this godforsaken camp; you just had to find it. Although practically the whole camp was a depressing brown and grey with very little colour to please the eye and mind, one could still find an occasional touch of colour in many little things, a secret flower, a red piece of cloth, reflections in a raindrop, even just the blue sky. Meneer advised me to concentrate, just before going to sleep at the end of each day, on some small example of beauty that I might have discovered that day. It

would help me to remain human in this sea of misery and also make me fall asleep.

Although finding proper paper and pencils was almost impossible, keeping a diary was attempted by several prisoners, even though it was absolutely forbidden by the Japanese. If they found out that a prisoner was keeping a diary, the repercussions could be most severe for the guilty man, such as being locked up for days in the cage or even having a hand cut off. Furthermore, the whole camp, or at least the culprit's barrack, might be punished too by stopping the distribution of all food for several days. So, keeping diaries was opposed by most prisoners, it was just too dangerous for everybody. However, some of us still secretly made notes on scraps of paper they managed to find because they wanted to keep a record of their experiences to show their families and the world after the war how badly they had been treated by their jailers.

After many months in captivity, numerous prisoners had lost hope and had become disenchanted and perpetually bored with everything, in spite of the "entertainment" that was available. They got so tired of everything, couldn`t be bothered, were just sitting around, doing nothing, only coming to life when it was feeding time. The main subjects of everybody's conversation always were: food, health, family, and sex, in that order.

My father was afraid this camp would be very hard on me. He hoped his young son would somehow manage to survive all the hardships and come out alive, not too badly damaged in body and spirit. However, I took the happenings as they came and accepted them as part of my new life. I remained the youthful optimist, convinced I was invincible and in control, and that everything would come out all right.

Chapter 13 FOOD

During the course of the war, the supply of nutrition in most camps on Java could be divided into three phases. The first phase, lasting from about December 1942 till December 1943, saw in general no really serious shortage of food, although there were camps where food was already in very short supply. However, when the second phase started in roughly January 1944, the amount of food entering the camps was much diminished, and increasingly so when, in early April 1944, the camps came under the control of the Japanese military. The third phase lasted from about January 1945 till the end of the war in August 1945 and saw food for the prisoners being cut down to alarmingly low quantities, leading to sharp increases in death rates. If the war would not have been over by August 1945 and the amount of money available to the Japanese to buy food for their prisoners had remained the same, together with the continuing price increases and inferior quality of the food, a period would have been entered where everybody in the camps over the age of 50 would have starved to death, as well as half of all people under that age.

The food that came out of the communal kitchen for thousands of people in our camp was very much lacking in quality and quantity as it was made from the meagre rations supplied by the Japanese. In many of the civilian camps throughout Southeast Asia, the basic ration per person per day varied considerably from camp to camp. However, already by early 1944 (some sources mention the second half of 1943), it generally consisted in most camps roughly of: as little as 100 grams, but often no more than 80 grams or even less, of uncooked white rice (see Chapter 25, Photographs), becoming about twice that in volume when cooked; a ladle of watery soup with some strings of vegetable and sometimes a few tiny pieces of fish or meat or, increasingly, offal such as intestines from the animals slaughtered for consumption by the Japanese guards; and a piece of hard, sticky tapioca bread good for a few small slices. Very rarely — and increasingly even less as the war progressed — a bit of salt and sugar or some other condiments, a hard-boiled duck's egg, a piece of fruit, some rare extras such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, soy beans, oil, and tea. Written out like this it doesn't

sound too bad, but it really was a genuine starvation diet. This was the main meal for the day, served at noon. Breakfast and dinner generally consisted of one ladle of slimy starch paste (*boeboer atji*) with practically no nutritional value, and maybe a bit of soup. Occasionally the evening meal consisted of a piece of hard black or brown bread, made without yeast, and sometimes some soup.

Much of the time our rice was of seriously inferior quality and contaminated by vermin. The meat, fish, and vegetables were often half-rotten leftovers picked up after the markets had closed, the meat consisting mainly of skin and bones. These more or less edible pieces of meat and vegetables were also collected from the dirty sweepings off the market floor. In one of the women's camps, with more than 1300 prisoners, the amount of such "meat" for the whole camp was about 7 kg per day. There were a few tiny gardens in our camp that provided us with some very welcome fresh vegetables, if these were not stolen before we could harvest them.

Not only did this camp food provide insufficient fat, vitamins, proteins, and calories, it also had practically no taste. Most prisoners received only this basic ration, which, as the war progressed and Japan's fortunes began to turn for the worst, rapidly grew even more limited with disastrous consequences for tens of thousands of prisoners. Remarkably, the food situation was not the same across the board; both quality and quantity varied from camp to camp, to a large extent depending upon the attitude of the Japanese camp commandant. A few camps were not too bad but most were hell holes where food was a true obsession and starvation a way of life. Stealing food from each other was commonplace. If you had a little piece of bread left over for later, you should never hide it under your mattress because that's where the thieves looked first. Firewood for the camp kitchen was another one of our problems. Often the Japanese didn't supply enough of it to cook the meals for the whole camp; that could mean less or even no food at all.

There was a marked difference between various people in the camps: although most were always hungry, several managed to avoid that problem to some degree. People who somehow had access to a bit of money, such as those who performed meagrely paid work details in and around the camp, could still buy some expensive extra food and other goods in the camp store (if there was one). And those who still had a few valuable possessions, such as watches and fountain pens and

good clothing, could trade these for food with corrupt guards or with Indonesian traders across the *gedèk*. But trading was very risky and could, if one was caught, lead to harsh beatings and confiscation of all merchandise, so few prisoners dared to do it. And then, of course, there were the lucky people working in the kitchen who often looked remarkably healthy, thanks to easy access to the food they prepared for the camp.

A couple of times I was part of a group of young guys who traded across the *gedèk* with Indonesian men who had brought a freshly killed dog they wanted to exchange for some clothes. We skinned the dog and cooked it in a pot, not frying or barbecuing it because the delicious smell would have betrayed the existence of our treat and attract unwelcome co-eaters. If we had some rich-tasting dog soup left over we would sell that by the cup to hungry camp-mates. Dog meat can be very fatty, depending on how it is cooked, and tastes a bit like wild game such as venison, deer, or pheasant. The texture can be quite stringy, depending on the breed of dog. Occasionally we also got hold of some delicious cat meat, which is quite light, white in colour, not particularly fatty, and tastes a bit like chicken or turkey. Eating cats and dogs could cause unexpected mental anguish because these animals were often part of a family, hence eating them could feel like performing an act of cannibalism. But when you're actually starving, there is little that can keep you from devouring the little food you can find.

It quickly became very clear that for most prisoners who had to live exclusively on food they received from the communal kitchen, this was far too little and not nourishing enough to remain healthy. Malnutrition was a deadly serious, fast-growing problem that affected an increasing number of prisoners. Signs of hunger and vitamin deficiencies were everywhere. In addition to frequent hunger pains in their stomachs and intestines, many people became anaemic, irritable, and apathetic, their muscles started to ache, and they developed beriberi, pellagra, diarrhea, skin rashes, as well as other symptoms of an increasing lack of proper nutrition. The death rate of weak and vulnerable people such as the sick, old, very young, and handicapped, was steadily rising. Eventually the food situation became so utterly deplorable that people starting fighting over food and even stole food from each other. A couple of times, I stole too.

In early 1945, my father and I had been in Camp Tjikoedapateuh for about three months and it clearly showed: the seriously deficient amount and quality of the food had made us lose lots of weight in that short period of time. Especially my father was increasingly weak, and his resistance to diseases had greatly diminished. He had recurring diarrhea from dysentery, suffered from tropical ulcers on his legs, his eyesight got worse, arthritis in his knees and hips was very painful, and his hands often trembled uncontrollably. I was less seriously damaged but still my health was nothing like that of that of a normal 17-year-old. Although our last camp had been far from pleasant, our present situation was so abominable that we looked back upon those times with some nostalgia.

To hunt small animals like cats, rats, mice, birds, and frogs, I wanted to make a catapult but I never could find a proper piece of elastic band. There were no more dogs to be found by us, all had already been killed and eaten; capturing cats was increasingly difficult because there were so few. Eating rats, running around all over the place but not easy to catch, was not advisable because they might carry dangerous diseases, but few of the starving men listened and ate them anyway. Rat's flesh has a rubbery, chewy texture, and tastes somewhat like turkey meat with a bit of gamey flavour. The best hunting ground for rats was around the kitchen but there the kitchen workers ruled and did not let any outsider come near their treasured source of meat. To work in the kitchen was a much-desired job because of the extra food available to the kitchen workers. I tried in vain to get a job in the kitchen but only succeeded in becoming responsible for transporting prepared food from the kitchen to my barrack, where it was distributed to the prisoners under the supervision of the barrack's boss. Unfortunately there was no extra food to be earned by this transportation job.

The water supply in Tjikoedapateuh was very bad indeed. At the early stages there was hardly sufficient drinking water available; all water for the thousands of men in the camp came out of a couple of slowly trickling taps. Water to clean bodies and clothing was practically not available; for this purpose rainwater had to be collected if there was any. Later the guards allowed a few wells to be dug by the internees.

When on a work detail outside the camp, such as digging ditches or cleaning swamps, it was sometimes possible to catch a snake or lizard or

frog, which made good eating. Frogs might have poisonous skins, so they had to be handled carefully. Large snails made good and healthy eating, but took a long time to cook properly because they were extremely tough, which was a problem because there was very little wood to be found for (illegal) cooking fires. We ate anything that could provide any nutrition at all: insects, maggots, larvae; everything that moved by crawling, flying, or swimming and we could catch ended up in the soup.

For three weeks in March 1945, the camp food consisted solely of carrots twice a day with occasionally a very small piece of bread, nothing else. Everybody turned yellow, as if we all suffered from jaundice. Some of us got very bad diarrhea and many became alarmingly constipated. Loud straining noises could be heard in the latrines. Many people developed severe intestinal problems and some even died from this one-sided, very unhealthy diet. I did not defecate for weeks and was suffering from awfully painful belly aches. Jacky gave me deep massages of my belly and made me exercise and walk to get rid of the constipation. It worked and finally, after more than four weeks, I enjoyed some difficult but wonderfully liberating, quite painful and noisy bowel movements.

Meneer, who was suffering badly from hunger oedema, his legs dangerously swollen with liquid, and I discussed severe hunger, the limits of starvation. Did cannibalism exist in the camp? Would there be people here who were capable of violating one of the strongest taboos our society has? Nobody knew for sure but we had our suspicions; anything was possible when you were dying of hunger. Man's survival instinct is extremely strong! Would it really be wrong to eat human flesh if you yourself were starving? We agreed it would be morally acceptable if you didn't harm anybody and if you had some kind of permission from the person to be eaten once he had died. Indeed, a rather radical point of view but a realistic one. It's all about survival.

What a thin line there exists between life and death.

Chapter 14

HEALTH

Everywhere many people are living very closely together, hygiene tends to be a serious issue. This is especially the case where, such as in a concentration camp, conditions are very cramped with severely limited sanitation, lack of proper food and water, as well as insufficient medical care. As a result, in these camps many men look like skeletons suspended in a bag of skin, subjected to various diseases.

Hygiene in our camp was indeed a serious problem. The few medical staff in the small, ill-equipped camp clinic, that was relatively clean but by no means free of bedbugs and various kinds of lice, had to deal with many diseases and other problems that plagued the prisoners: starvation, beriberi (both dry and wet), oedema, dysentery (both amoebic and bacillary), tropical ulcers, diphtheria, infections, eye infections, vision and hearing deterioration, dental problems, ulcers, boils, crabs, sores, bug bites, parasitic infestations, jaundice, vitamin deficiencies, scabies, pellagra, dermatitis, wounds and broken bones caused by falls and beatings, depression, and more. Most patients suffered from several of these diseases at the same time. A few of the more common ailments are discussed below:

Beriberi was one of the worst sicknesses in the camp, the result of prolonged thiamin (vitamin B1) deficiency and manifesting itself in two forms: wet and dry beriberi. *Wet beriberi* affects the heart and circulation, causing a combination of heart failure and weakening of the capillary walls. Common early symptoms of wet beriberi are: fatigue, poor reflexes, irritability, memory loss, sleep disturbances, increased heart rate, leg pain and swelling, accumulation of fluid around the lungs, shortness of breath. As the disease begins to take hold, the patient will drink increasing amounts of water and his body will begin to fill with fluid. Any piece of loose flesh such as the scrotum, ear lobes, eye lids, and cheeks will swell and the body's weight will increase alarmingly. Even at this stage, if the patient will get any form of vitamin B1, such as yeast and rice polishings, the patient might start passing great amounts of water and quickly improve his or her health. If left untreated, wet beriberi is a serious and potentially life-threatening

condition. *Dry beriberi* causes wasting and partial paralyses resulting from damaged peripheral nerves. The main symptoms are: difficulty walking, loss of muscle coordination, loss of sensation, memory loss, confusion, encephalitis, paralyses, severe discomfort or pain, slurred speech, tingling or other unusual sensations in hands and feet, uncontrolled eye movement, vomiting. The nervous system deteriorates and the heart generally becomes affected. Without administering vitamin B1, death usually follows quickly.

Pellagra is another result of chronic vitamin deficiency in the diet, in this case niacin, also called vitamin B3. Symptoms include: fatigue, high sensitivity to sunlight, irritability, anxiety, aggression, dermatitis, skin lesions, canker sores, weakness, restlessness, apathy, insomnia, paralyses of extremities, digestive disturbances, vomiting, diarrhea, thickening of the skin, hyperpigmentation, inflammation of the mouth and tongue, mental confusion, amnesia, depression, delirium, dementia, and eventually death if left untreated. Pellagra is generally treated with a nutritionally balanced diet including liver, chicken, beef, fish, cereal, peanuts, legumes, eggs, fruits, vegetables, seeds, and fungi, none of which were available in the camps. Consequently, a considerable number of prisoners suffered from pellagra.

Dysentery, another ruthless killer, is an extreme disorder of the intestine, especially of the colon, that results in severe and frequent, watery, usually foul-smelling diarrhea containing mucus, blood, or pus in the faeces. Other symptoms may include: sudden onset of high fever and chills, abdominal pain, cramps and bloating, flatulence, urgency to pass stool, feeling of incomplete emptying, loss of appetite, rapid weight loss, generalized muscle aches, headache, fatigue, vomiting, and dehydration. In severe cases, vomiting of blood, extreme abdominal pain, shock, delirium, convulsions, and coma can also be symptoms. There are two main types of dysentery: *amoebic dysentery,* which is caused by a single-celled, microscopic parasite living in the large bowel, and *bacillary dysentery* caused by invasive bacteria. Bacterial infections are by far the most common cause of dysentery. Mild cases of bacillary dysentery may last four to eight days, while severe cases may last three to six weeks. Amoebic dysentery usually lasts about two weeks. Poor hygiene and sanitation as well as overcrowding, such as happened in the camps, greatly increase the risk of dysentery by spreading the parasite or bacteria that cause it through food or water

contaminated from infected human faeces. Patients have to drink as much water as possible to replace the water lost from diarrhea (in extreme cases dysentery patients may pass over a litre of fluid an hour). In most camps this was the only remedy that could be used because proper medication was not available. If left untreated, dysentery can be lethal.

Tropical ulcers where possibly the most hideous and terrifying disease in the camps. These lesions may frequently develop on pre-existing abrasions or sores sometimes beginning from a mere scratch or insect bite or small puncture on exposed parts of the lower limbs, usually below the knee around the ankle, and rarely on the thighs and arms. Subjects with poor general health and poor nutrition, like the prisoners in the camps, are at higher risks. To avoid getting tropical ulcers, it's important to wear adequate footwear, a major problem in the camps. Once developed, the ulcer may become chronic and stable, but it may also become infected with a variety of organisms and can then run a destructive course with deep tissue invasion, eroding muscles and tendons and sometimes the bones. The foul stench of putrefying flesh is horrible. One of the methods to treat these ulcers in the camps where proper medical treatment was not available, was to scoop out the bad flesh with a spoon, sharpened on one side like a knife. The ulcers themselves can be 10 cm or more in diameter; sometimes the whole lower leg can be affected. Tropical ulcers are agonisingly painful; the scooping-out treatment brings excruciating pain beyond endurance because in the camps there were no anaesthetics available. Occasionally, also in case of gangrene, it would be necessary to amputate the diseased limb, using a handsaw or a carpenter's saw or a meat saw, and again without anaesthetics; the patient usually dying of shock in great pain. However, some successes were known. In the camp the staff did their best to help the sick people coming to the clinic but could in fact do very little but just wait for many of them to die.

Electric feet, also called "hot or burning feet," is a very debilitating affliction caused by malnutrition in which the victim experiences pain like that of multiple needles being plunged into the flesh of his feet night and day, without relief. Another name is "restless leg syndrome."

Bug bites by bed bugs and lice (head, body, pubic) were a major problem in the camps:

Bed bugs (*wandluis* in Dutch and *koetoe boesoek* in Indonesian; see Chapter 26, Photographs) are parasitic insects with flattened, oval-

shaped, light-brown to reddish-brown bodies and no wings. Forty of them can become about 6,000 in six months. The eggs are white and about 1.5 mm long. Newly hatched nymphs are translucent, lighter in colour, and become browner as they moult and reach maturity. Adults grow to 4-5 mm in length and 1.5-3 mm in width, roughly the size of an apple seed. They have piercing mouthparts to feed on human blood, often but not always inflicting very little pain, and they can go more than a year without food, normally trying to feed every five to ten days. They often lodge unnoticed in dark crevices, and eggs can be nestled in fabric seams. Aside from bite symptoms, signs of bed bugs include faecal spots, blood smears, and molts. Bed bugs can be detected by their characteristic pungent, musty smell of over-ripe raspberries. They are attracted to their host mainly by carbon dioxide and also by body warmth and certain chemicals. Bed bugs are elusive and usually bite at night all over the body, primarily where skin is exposed during sleep around the face, neck, upper torso, arms, and hands. Most bed bug bites are initially painless, but can turn into small bumps or large, intensely itchy skin welts, or even prominent blisters. Other significant health effects, especially in case of serious infestations and chronic attacks, are extensive skin rashes, allergic symptoms, anaemia, and psychological reactions, including stress, anxiety (leading to insomnia), fatigue, and depression because people may develop an overwhelming obsession with bed bugs. The most common rash is made up of localized red and itchy flat sores. Often bed bug bites appear in groups of three. Some people have no reaction at all, but for others, bite marks may appear within minutes or days. Many bed bug bites eventually go away by themselves in a few days and don’t need treatment, but in unusual cases the welts may persist for several weeks. It’s important to keep the skin clean and not scratch. Several medications to help alleviate the itch and other problems exist, but in the camps these were not available. There, bed bugs were everywhere, almost nobody could stay away from the blood suckers. Healthy or sick, rich or poor, black or white, male or female, young or old, everybody was fair game for the nasty little beasts. Sleeping places, mattresses, blankets, clothing, packs, trunks, bedside clutter, everything was crawling with the bugs. The only thing we could do was try to catch and kill as many as possible, but it was a losing battle.

Lice were also a problem in the camps but to a lesser extent than

bed bugs. Head lice occur on the head hair, body lice in the clothing, and pubic lice (also called crab lice) mainly on the hair near the groin. Head lice are generally spread through direct head-to-head contact with an infested person. Body lice are spread through direct contact with the body, clothing, or other personal items of a person already carrying lice. Pubic lice are most often spread by intimate contact with an infected person. From each egg or nit may hatch one nymph that will grow and develop to the adult louse. Full-grown lice are about the size of sesame seeds. They feed on human blood and itching from lice bites is a quite common symptom of this condition. The itch-scratch cycle can sometimes lead to secondary infection. Appropriate medication and methods to eradicate lice were not available in the camps. All we could do was labouriously search for the insects and their eggs and kill them one at a time by squeezing them between our finger nails.

Contagious diseases like typhus and cholera were extremely feared by everybody, especially the guards.

Malaria was fortunately not a big problem in our camp because the climate in Bandoeng was too cool. However, in many other camps it often was a major killer.

Dental problems were also being treated by the clinic as much as possible. These were the responsibility of a young man who, before the war, had studied veterinary medicine and had some knowledge of pulling teeth. That's about all that could be done here. Repairing and filling teeth was not feasible because there was no proper material available, or even tools. A primitive bicycle-driven drill machine with a few blunt drill bits could be used to release the pressure of pus inside teeth with root-canal problems. Here too, all treatments had to be performed without any anaesthetic; patients just had to be held down by some assistants.

The lack of water was very troublesome, especially in the May-November dry season. Because there often was so little rainwater available at those times, we could not always use the *botol tjèbok* (Indonesian for rinse bottle) to clean ourselves with after defecation. This bottle is an ancient, simple, cheap, hygienic method universally applied in Indonesia and other southern countries. The rare toilet paper that could be found in the camp was, of course, only used for writing or for rolling cigarettes. So we took the water-filled *botol tjèbok,* holding it in one

hand and pouring some water from it down our behind, then cleaning the anal area with the other hand and the water. This was especially useful for the many of us who were suffering badly from diarrhoea, constantly dirtying themselves. Sadly, there were men who had become so weak from starvation and various sicknesses they were not even able to properly clean their own behind.

Early in 1945, I was put in a work detail to clean up and repair the damaged shit creek that was blocked by part of the wall that had collapsed when somebody fell into it. This was an extremely disgusting but also dangerous job, exposing the workers to direct contact with human waste products, the source of various dangerous illnesses. We had few proper tools to do the work with and had to use our bare hands much of the time. A serious complication was that cleaning up properly afterwards was almost impossible because there was again very little water available for washing. The few taps that were still running in the camp did so intermittently and very slowly, primarily supplying drinking water. There was also not much rain water available. Many of us had not had a proper wash for months.

In spite of being very careful to contact the nasty stuff as little as possible when working in the shit creek, I got contaminated and developed the highly contagious bacillary dysentery that put me into the isolation room of the clinic for some time. While there, I was getting clean water and some extra food and the little medication that was available to the hospital staff.

Everybody in the camp had the greatest respect for the people working in the hospital. These courageous men constantly had to deal with patients suffering from all kinds of diseases, often highly contagious, for which they had no proper medical treatment. Consequently, quite a few of the sick men just died, a terribly frustrating experience for the hospital workers who had to look at dying and dead faces each day.

Being a patient in the hospital could have unexpected consequences. One patient was rumoured to have died and as a result some men in his barrack stole all his stuff, mattress included. However, he was still very much alive and when he returned to his place everything was gone, he had nothing. Fortunately, he got most of it back.

One of the hospital staff members was Dr. Nelson, an Englishman who was working in one of the hospitals in Bandoeng when the city was captured by the Japanese, and had been imprisoned in one concen-

tration camp or another since July 1942. I tried to speak only English with the doctor so I could improve my knowledge of the language I hoped to use later in my life. If ever the war would end, I would like to go to university and study aeronautics technology, the international language of which is English. As a young boy, before the war changed everything, I had been an enthusiastic model airplane builder and had always wanted to make aeronautical engineering my career.

A fine example of man's creativity in times of need was the production of yeast from urine. At several places in the camp, barrels had been placed in which everybody was requested to deposit their urine, especially the early morning urine that was supposed to be the best. These smelly piss-barrels *(pistonnen)* were emptied regularly and the urine was used by some chemistry expert, often a pharmacist, in a clever process to produce yeast that was used in the production of bread, and also as a medication to treat beriberi because of the vitamin B1 in the yeast.

A small but nagging problem in the camp was how to properly cut hair and nails and how to shave, because there were few appropriate scissors and knives allowed. One man who owned a small pair of scissors made a living as a barber and was paid in food (such as pieces of tapioca bread) or money. He was a good man, occasionally cutting hair without payment for some internees who didn't have anything to pay him with. He was very protective of the scissors and always wore them on a string around his neck.

Proper clothing and footwear were, of course, of great importance to keep the prisoners' bodies protected. Unfortunately, most men had sold their best clothing and shoes for some extra food and so walked around in torn rags and shoes, often barefoot. Shoes had been replaced some of the time by self-made wooden or rubber (from car tires) clogs secured to the feet by narrow canvas or leather strips. However, this makeshift footwear was hard and uncomfortable, easily creating cuts in the wearer's feet and often leading to nasty and potentially dangerous infections.

A short time after our arrival in the camp, I had my first personal experience with death. On his sleeping place close to me, a sick, emaciated, starving man, who looked 80 but was only about 40, lay dying alone during one night. The only noise he made was a belaboured wheezing and breathing that gradually diminished and finally stopped.

The smell of excrement and urine released by the corpse began to spread. I had never experienced death of a human close up. I just sat there, observing, listening, utterly fascinated.

When the morning light finally came, I looked at the lifeless body and saw the half-open mouth, the dead eyes quietly staring up in the distance, the hands open and relaxed. The poor man's suffering was finally over. I was completely transfixed by this scene, the mysterious transition of one profound mystery, life, to another one, death. What was it that I was looking at? What is the dead body of a human being? Is it the empty container for what many people consider to be the soul, or just a mysterious collection of chemicals?

That morning the body was taken out of Hotel Bedbug and deposited at the small shack near the hospital from where all dead were quickly disposed of outside the camp in unmarked graves, perhaps even in mass graves, if possible the same day by an Indonesian contractor. The Dutch camp leaders, who ran the day-to-day affairs of the camp under the control of the Japanese guards, kept track of the names and other information of the deceased, in an effort to provide necessary data after the war.

This was my first hard lesson of dying as a reality of camp life. I quickly learned that death was an integral and inescapable part of life here, it was everywhere. Each day people were dying, their thin bodies collected at the corpses' shack for removal. Especially for the young boys in the camp this was a horrible experience, damaging some of them for life, although most hardened quickly. Looking at a dead body that had been alive a short while ago was a mystifying and humbling experience.

I talked about it with my father and Meneer. Death and dying was not something my father was very familiar with, and the death of our neighbour had shocked him profoundly. But as a parent he tried to hide his fears from his son. Meneer stated from his common-sense point of view as a hard-line atheist that the quality of life for this man was zero and that he had no hope at all of any improvement, so he was better off dead. His time had come. As always, Dominee was on his knees praying, desperately looking for comfort from his God.

Chapter 15 TRADING

Because the food situation in the camp was disastrous and becoming worse over time, trading with the outside world for food, and smuggling in and out of the camp the things we traded, was very important, in fact essential for survival. But trading was strictly forbidden by the guards, so we had to be extremely careful. Sometimes we got caught anyway and were kicked and beaten hard. Worst of all, the precious trading wares were immediately confiscated. The opportunity for trading varied widely from camp to camp throughout the country.

Anything could be traded for anything: food, medication, watches, gold, jewellery, shoes, tobacco, sheets of paper, pencils, fountain pens; anything had value one way or another, especially textiles such as clothing, sheets, handkerchiefs, etc. We traded with Indonesians outside the camp, either through holes we had made in the *gedèk*, or when we were on an outside work detail. But there was also lots of trading going on with some of the corrupt Japanese and Korean guards, and with the Indonesian *heihos* (volunteers, assistant soldiers) as well; and among ourselves too, of course. It was important to build up a good relationship and a system of "channels" with the guards because they controlled the situation.

I learned to trade gold and watches and other luxury items that I bought from various camp-mates and then sold at a reasonable profit for food, medicine, and sometimes money, to my favourite channel, the relatively humane Japanese guard Goldmouth (see Chapter 11, People).

The same man who dealt with dental problems at the clinic, also took care of a delicate but profitable sideline: he removed gold-filled teeth from the corpses that were brought each day to the morgue shack next door to the clinic. If the dead supplier of the gold had any family members in the camp, the precious metal was handed to them. If there was no family, the gold was secretly traded by the Dutch camp leaders with one of the Japanese guards for extra food and medication that was used for the benefit of all camp inmates, especially those sick ones in the clinic. The young gold-extractor was respected by everybody for his honesty, because apparently he never pocketed any of the gold he extracted. I was involved with this "teeth-gold" business because I

sometimes dealt with such gold that I had obtained from family members of a dead supplier and then traded it through the channel I had managed to set up with the Japanese guard, Goldmouth.

It was amazing to see to what length people would go to get what they thought they absolutely should have. For instance, some people would do almost anything to get a smoke. They were so heavily addicted to cigarettes that they would barter their food and possessions for tobacco, literally smoking themselves to death. It was even not unusual for an addicted smoker to pay for a puff from somebody's cigarette. The smokers had to walk around with a tin can held in their hand; some had it hanging from their necks on a piece of string. The Japanese had a very strict rule that the camp should not be dirtied by cigarette ash or buts that should be deposited in the tin can instead. Any smoker not following this rule could count on a severe thrashing.

Among the various work details we had to do, there was one that was quite popular: cleaning up Camp Tjihapit. There we could find all kinds of things left behind by women and children who had been moved to other camps. In March 1945, I and my friend Jacky and several other camp-mates were selected for this *corvée*. We walked the short distance to Tjihapit and there had to clean deserted houses, collecting furniture and other valuable items to be sold by the Japanese to Indonesian and Chinese traders outside the camps.

We sometimes found personal belongings the people had left behind, such as family photos, playing cards, even small Christmas candles, often things we could trade in our camp. When caught smuggling possibly useful items back to our own camp, we were often punished severely. After beating the "guilty" men, the guards might keep the whole group standing at the gate the whole night and didn't allow them in the camp to rest and eat or go to the bathroom. For us starving, weak men this was terrible punishment indeed. Sometimes we were successful, though, and could smuggle interesting or useful items into the camp. One of the valuable things I found while working in Camp Tjihapit was a small magnifying glass. This enabled me to earn some money or food by making wooden identification tags with the prisoner's number burned in a flat piece of wood, using the glass to focus the sun's rays onto the wood, burning the number in it (see Chapter 26, Photographs). I and a few friends even smuggled the corpse of a dog we had killed in camp Tjihapit for food, cut in little pieces and tied

around our bodies with bits of string.

One guard enjoyed making the men coming back from Tjihapit drop their trousers and bend over so he could have a look at their anuses to check for smuggled jewellery, so he said. He sometimes hit the bent-over prisoners against the testicles with a stick and laughed out loud when they squirmed in agony. This guard was a feared Korean bully and had been given by the prisoners the appropriate nickname of *Jantje Smeerlap* (Johnny Dirtbag).

When we were working in Camp Tjihapit, Jacky happened to meet an Indonesian man who was there to buy from the Japanese some of the furniture and other items collected by us. He gave us very disturbing information about the situation in the "free" world outside the camps. What he told us was shocking indeed: many Indonesians were suffering badly, hunger was increasing rapidly among the population and there were many cases of starvation. Serious shortages of food and clothing existed; the Japanese were stealing the country blind, for instance by confiscating precious medical provisions; the economy was very unhealthy, there was rampant inflation. Jacky was extremely upset to learn all this bad news about the Indonesian and Indo peoples outside. Persistent rumours were going around that Japan was gradually losing the war, but nobody knew if that was true because all official news sources were tightly controlled by the Japanese and listening to foreign sources was absolutely forbidden.

During work in Camp Tjihapit, I found a large blue lampshade made of cotton. I carefully took the cloth off and smuggled it into my camp. I decided to fabricate a much-needed pair of shorts from the lampshade cloth, because I had almost no clothing left after trading most of it for food. I normally wore just a loincloth, *tjawat*, and sometimes a much-repaired shirt. I also owned some other old but serviceable clothing: a shirt, one pair of trousers, and a battered raincoat, but I wanted to keep those for the better days after the war had ended, or to use for trading if the situation would turn desperate. I had no shoes and walked barefoot on thickly calloused feet. Most adult Totoks were wearing shoes all the time, so their feet were not protected by callouses. However, their children, especially those born in the country, often walked barefoot, developing well-protected foot soles. For special occasions, such as visiting the dirty latrines, I had made a pair of clogs from a piece of wood, leather straps, and a few nails.

I managed to borrow a sewing needle and obtained some sewing thread (apparently found by somebody in Camp Tjihapit) by trading it for food so I could produce my precious pair of shorts. It was secured to my hips by means of a short piece of rope. It had no pockets and no buttoned fly because those were too difficult to make. I became very attached to my creation and only wore it on special occasions. I was convinced that if the lampshade shorts survived the war, so would I.

Chapter 16

OUTSIDE

Obviously, the situation in the so-called "free" world outside the camps was changing too. Along with their efforts to radically alter the role of the Dutch, the occupying forces also introduced measures aimed at the Indonesian population. These rules and regulations made the people more and more subservient to the Japanese war effort, seriously diminishing the population's already low standard of living. The people began to suffer badly. Especially vulnerable were those whose only source of income depended directly upon work previously provided by the Dutch. This was no longer allowed. Opportunities for work in factories, plantations, the military, and many other places also no longer existed.

The disappearance of many jobs was just one of the profound changes brought about by the Japanese administration. Also the Japanese justice system they introduced was fundamentally different, shocking many in the much more peaceful Dutch/Indonesian society they had conquered. Following long-established Japanese tradition, the Japanese military judges often treated transgressors without mercy. They very severely punished so-called "crimes" that were relatively minor according to Dutch/Indonesian custom. Long prison terms, brutal corporal punishment, even beheadings were not uncommon. On a regular basis, the Japanese beheaded looters (*rampokkers*) in front of large crowds. People were shot to death on the spot because they were listening to forbidden radio stations. That was something the Dutch and the Indonesians had never experienced and just could not understand. Having to bow correctly for Japanese personnel was considered to be a grave insult by the Indonesian population.

From late 1943 on and especially on Java, the native population suffered more and more from a serious shortage of food, clothing, and many other essentials. Hunger was increasing steadily and people began to starve to death. Because of the devastating drought at the end of 1943, followed by an unsuccessful rice harvest, an estimated several hundred thousand people had died in Middle Java. In general the health of the population worsened rapidly. Medical provisions and many other goods were being confiscated by the Japanese. Local epidemics occurred, mainly malaria but also plague, cholera, dysentery, and others. The

economy was very unhealthy, black markets flourished, price gouging and rampant inflation became huge problems. In particular the poor people in the *kampongs* (villages) had a very hard time surviving all this misery. During the Japanese occupation in 1944, prices were in general six times the prices in 1938 under the Dutch government. Gold, silver, and jewellery had to be sold at low prices to the occupiers. Car tires and oil were only available to the Japanese army and authorities.

Many Indonesians suffered deeply under their new leaders and were bitterly disappointed, resenting the Japanese because these so-called "bringers of prosperity" treated the Indonesians only as a source of cheap food, supplies, and labour. Already in early April 1942, Indonesians were heard saying: *"Asia Raya, Nippon kaja,"* meaning *"In Greater East Asia, Japan becomes rich."* Many people then added: *"Dan saja pajah,"* which means *"And I poor."*

The occupiers took everything that could help them in their war effort. For instance, whole railway lines and rolling stock, as well as many industrial plants were appropriated and shipped to Japan; machines and especially parts made from copper were removed; parts of factory installations were sold as scrap iron; on Java, large sections of the railway lines were demolished, leading to a complete disruption of the transportation system; also the roads were severely neglected; harbours and river mouths were not dredged for years, leading to stifling inefficiencies for shipping; irrigation systems were insufficiently maintained; many road and railway bridges were taken apart and sold as scrap iron. Of the agrarian and industrial production of the country, a large part was confiscated by the army to the serious det-riment of the Indonesian population. Enormous shortages of rice, textile, and fuel made the people suffer immensely.

It is obvious that the Indonesians were mercilessly exploited by the Japanese occupiers. I quote from *The Collapse of a Colonial Society* by L. de Jong: ... *when commandeering what was required to make the [Japanese] troops self-sufficient they took no account of the needs of the local population. A large part of the rice harvest in particular was always requisitioned, and in this case the concept of 'making the troops self-sufficient' was interpreted to mean that Java must provide rice not only for the Japanese soldiers stationed there (perhaps 25,000 counting both army and navy at the end of 1942) and the civilians (over 23,000 in the government alone) but also for Japanese soldiers*

and civilians in other parts of the Nampo [south Pacific]. [This] brought about a substantial decrease in production in the Indies. ... for the whole archipelago and compared with the years 1937-1941, during and as a result of the Japanese occupation the production of rice fell by 32% (... this did not mean that a little more than two thirds was now available for the population, because the amount commandeered by the Japanese came out of the two thirds.), of maize by 66%, of cassava by 56%, of sweet potatoes by 27%, of peanuts by 64%, and of soy beans by 60%. Commercial agriculture came to a virtual halt. The Western agricultural concerns were practically all closed down. The cultivation of annual crops, such as sugar, was almost entirely halted. Livestock decreased by about one half during the war years. The fishing fleet declined by 30%. There was also a severe shortage of fishing gear.

The Japanese made widespread use of slave labour, recruited from the hundreds of thousands of civilian and military prisoners in concentration camps in many countries, but mainly from the local, native population. In the Dutch East Indies alone, a great many (estimates vary from 300,000 to four million, even ten million) Indonesian men and older boys were mobilized, mostly from Java, at first voluntarily but soon by punishing force to become *romushas*, unfree manual labour, "economic/work soldiers," who were put to work for the Japanese occupiers all over Southeast Asia and also in Japan, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. Raids were a preferred method for the Japanese to obtain more slave labour. Whole villages were surrounded and the men and older boys taken away by force to become *romushas*. The families left behind did not receive any compensation or support payments. The men's working conditions were often horribly inhumane, their suffering beyond belief. In many of their camps there was no medical personnel, no medication; they were fed one small meal of rice each day, if at all, and had to find their own "vegetables" in the forest. Most of them didn't have sufficient clothing or a mattress, in fact they had practically nothing. Clothing was never issued and there was no pay. The Japanese considered *romushas* to be lowest-of-the-low slaves who could be treated any way the masters wanted to. They were worse off than the regular prisoners of war. Many of them died from overwork, ill treatment, exhaustion, and, especially, starvation. Of these Indonesian slave labourers, many thousands, maybe even 300,000, never returned home.

Besides the *romushas*, the Japanese also forcibly recruited thousands of Indonesian and Dutch women to become "comfort women," involuntary sex slaves, to service the Japanese occupiers in what was in fact serial rape. It is estimated that more than 200,000, maybe even 400,000, women from the countries occupied by Japan, such as Korea, China, Formosa, Dutch East Indies (including Dutch internees, Totok as well as Indo), the Philippines, and Burma, were made into sex slaves to be used at will by the Japanese military.

During the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, about four million people died as a result of famine and forced labour, including many thousands of Europeans in the concentration camps. The Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies had become the most tyrannical and catastrophic colonial regime in Indonesian history.

Of the more than about 170,000 civilian and military Dutch-Indonesians, commonly called Indos, it is estimated that about 20,000 civil-ians were imprisoned in concentration camps; the remaining 120,000 civilians stayed outside, depending upon the number of Indonesian ancestors in their families (see Chapter 3, Camps). The large number of Indos in the country made it virtually impossible for the Japanese to imprison them all because the occupiers did not have enough room, guarding capacity, and food to accommodate that many Indos. Most of the Indos who stayed outside the camps had a very difficult life plagued with fears of internment and poverty. In many cases the husband had become a military prisoner of war and the wife and children had been left behind without any income. They often had no money, no jobs, no adequate or safe housing, no health care, no protection, and had to try very hard to make some money any way they could, living extremely frugally. Often their houses were confiscated without compensation by the Japanese. Because of the many different measures taken by the Japanese, the lives of the Indos remaining outside became increasingly grim. Breaking the rules could lead to imprisonment and possibly torture.

A few private people, such as a Dutch female doctor who had not been interned, were able to organize the distribution of some rice and money to many hundreds of destitute people, all Europeans but mostly Indo women and children of soldiers from the imprisoned Dutch army, who had no source of income whatsoever. This charity work could not do very much but at least it helped alleviate the worst hunger. There were also a few other locations, organized by the church, municipality,

and private people, where the Indos who had not been interned could find a minimum of help to survive the downward spiral into abject poverty. Since January 1944, support (in he form of housing, food, and work) for the Indos in Bandoeng, and several other large cities, was organized by the Indo Committee. An important part of the Committee work were poorly paying projects for hundreds of poverty stricken women and girls who were put to work sewing and knitting textile products for the Japanese, such as socks, underpants, short and long pants, leggings, blouses, uniforms, etc. Thanks to these and other charitable support systems, many members of the Indo community managed to survive the war without too many life-threatening problems.

Indos were constantly being pressured to reject their Dutch nationality and become Indonesian. If they did not, the Japanese army then considered them to be alien enemies and they could be subjected to hard measures. Even then, only a few Indos gave up their Dutch nationality and became Indonesian. There were programs set up for education and re-training in attempts to integrate the Indos with the Indonesian population. The existence of Indos who decided to remain Dutch often was a very precarious one as they were subjected to debilitating discrimination, mistrust, and economic hardships, not only by the Japanese occupiers but also by many native Indonesians. Although Indo children were eventually allowed to go to Indonesian schools, few actually did.

During the last two war years, there were several penal colonies created for Indo boys who were suspected of anti-Japanese attitude and subversive activities; they were put to do work in the fields. Starting in June 1944, Indo boys of 14 and older were called up to receive training and to work on the plantations. These penal colonies were, of course, under permanent Japanese supervision. In general the internees received very bad treatment in these places. Out of the 300 imprisoned Indo boys in Glodok Prison, 80 died, and 300 out of a group of 700 died in Ngawi. In October 1944, 150 completely innocent boys were rounded up, accused of arson during an air-raid alarm. Six boys died as a result of the brutal interrogation. At the subsequent trial, 14 boys were sentenced to death and on 5 June 1945 they were decapitated.

Another group that suffered immeasurably under the Japanese occupation were the Chinese, about one million on Java alone and about 1.5

million in the whole country, who had historically played a significant role in the economy of the Dutch East Indies as traders and shop keepers. Just because they were Chinese and therefore related to the inhabitants of mainland China, whom the supremely racist Japanese hated passionately and considered to be sub-human vermin, the Chinese in the occupied Dutch East Indies were treated with contempt, persecuted, and discriminated against in many ways, whenever and wherever possible.

Chapter 17 REPORTS BY VAN KARNEBEEK AND THIJS

From January 1944 till the end of the war in August 1945, the Dutch camp leader of camp Tjikoedapateuh, also called 15th Battalion, was H.A. van Karnebeek (1903-1989), a man of great capability and courage who was very highly regarded by all the prisoners in his camp. During his camp years he was most ably assisted by his interpreter, J.H. Thijs. The following reports, written by the two men after the war, give clear insight into the horrible situation in the camp, and the great difficulties they had in dealing with their Japanese superiors.

The reports are reproduced here from the book, In Naam van de Keizer *(Lavaleije, T. et al), with permission from the publisher, Stichting Jongens in Japanse Kampen. They are slightly edited for punctuation, typos, and some obvious misspellings.*

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REPORT BY JHR. H.A. VAN KARNEBEEK

Throughout the 3½ years of Japanese occupation, I, the undersigned, Jonkheer H.A. van Karnebeek, Managing Director of the "N.V. Standard Vacuum Petroleum Maatschappij," was camp leader of the POW camp at Jakarta (Glodok prison) and of the camps for civilian internees in Java, viz. the "Struiswijk" camp at Jakarta and the so-called "15th Battalion" camp at Bandung.

Without entering into details, I should like to make the following observations as regards the way in which the civilian internees were treated by the Japanese.

The accommodation in the camps was deplorable. In the internment camps at Bandung 70 to 80 men were crowded together into one-family houses, and there was so little room that bathrooms and even lavatories had to provide sleeping accommodation. I frequently drew the attention of the responsible Japanese authorities to this bad and inadequate

accommodation, but the only reaction was that still more people (from other camps or from Kempeitai prisons) were put in the camps.

The food was absolutely inadequate. The caloric value and the protein content fell far short of what a human being normally requires without doing heavy labour. This paralyzed the energy of the internees, and in many cases even the will to live was extinguished. It further caused psychical depression, which the Japanese cunningly exploited by offering work to the internees against payment of 15 cents a day, with which they could buy extra food. In practice, however, the quantity of extra food, which could be bought with the money thus earned, diminished day by day and at last dwindled down to practically nothing, owing to rising prices and Japanese corrupt practices.

The water supply in the Bandung camp was execrable. At the early stages there was hardly sufficient drinking water available. In order to get some water from a couple of slowly trickling taps, the internees had to queue up for many hours before they could quench their thirst. Water for a bath was practically not to he had. This caused the internees to dig wells under difficult circumstances and with the aid of primitive self-made tools in order thus to put an end to a state of emergency, which defied all description.

Clothing. With the exception of some clothes, which the Japanese had taken from the women's camps and distributed among small groups of "privileged" workers, no clothing was ever supplied to the internees. As the old people, invalids, and the sick did not belong to the "privileged ones," they did not receive any replenishment of clothing. As most internees had not much clothing with them when they entered the camp, they were walking about in shabby rags when the end of the occupation drew near, as was the case with so many others who had not brought a small supply of clothes with them. A number of internees who had previously been locked up in Kempeitai prisons, had already been robbed of all "superfluous" clothing in those prisons. The shortage of clothing was seriously felt especially when the camps in the hot regions such as Jakarta, Surabaja, and Semarang were closed and the internees were assembled in the cool mountain city of Bandung. Neither blankets nor extra clothes were then supplied for protection against the chilliness of the night.

I frequently pointed out to the Japanese camp authorities the existing conditions regarding food, water supply, and clothing, but it was

of no avail. More than once the Japanese guards reacted with the remark "boleh mati" ("we don't care if they die"). The result was that the number of sick people and deaths increased day by day. That the sick rate and mortality rate did not increase more was only thanks to the internees' own efforts such as for instance, the constant care of the doctors and food experts who, by carefully preparing the diet, preparing the yeast, and so on, tried to enhance the nutritive value of the foodstuffs officially supplied.

I might add to this that the internees themselves did their utmost to keep themselves alive by smuggling money and foodstuffs into the camp, although they ran the risk of being severely punished for it. A great many more internees would have starved to death but for these "illegal" actions.

The supply of medicaments by the Japanese fell far short of the required minimum. There was a serious lack of the most essential medicaments. At the outbreak of a dysentery epidemic, for instance, there was generally no emetine available or only very little of it. When this state of emergency was pointed out to the Japanese authorities they only reacted by remarking that the army too had not sufficient medicaments and that therefore the internees had to do without them. Meanwhile it was known that large quantities of medicaments were lying in a warehouse within the Bandung camp, without their being used by the army. When the Japanese guards were informed of that fact they bluntly denied that there were medicaments in the warehouse in question, which was carefully bolted. In the meantime the state of emergency had become so acute owing to lack of emetine or other essential medicaments, that some internees forced their way into the warehouse in question and laid hold of a quantity of medicaments. Thanks to this action the lives of many serious patients could be saved. At first this burglary resulted in severe measures from the Japanese guards, but as the Japanese guards would finally be held responsible by their senior officers for this "indisciplined" behaviour of the internees, they were not unwilling to settle this incident "in an amicable way." This "theft of medicaments" was covered up by falsifying the inventory.

The above events clearly illustrate the fact that the fight against serious diseases could only be fought by means of "illegal" practices by the internees. I may add that only at great risk could small quantities of medicaments be smuggled into the camp. When a smuggler of

medicaments was caught in the act by the Japanese guards, he was severely tortured and sometimes flogged within an inch of his life. That the number of deaths (the mortality rate) in consequence of the lack of medicaments did not reach a much higher level, was due only to the efforts of the internees who, in the eyes of the Japanese, were blameworthy.

In the course of 1944 and 1945, the internees who were seriously ill were, together with the invalids and the old people, removed from the Bandung camp and transported to Djakarta or to Central Java. The promise was held out to them that they would be taken to a "place of retreat for recuperation" where they would get better food and sleeping accommodation. In practice, however, the new camp turned on to be anything but an improvement. Food in the new camp was rather worse than better, and the general care had not improved either. The way in which the yelling and shouting Japanese dragged and pulled the patients, invalids, and old people to and on the trucks for transport, was indeed inhuman. Even corporal punishments were inflicted when those who were on transport could not keep pace with the Japanese.

The punitive measures of the Japanese guards were generally beneath criticism. The slightest offence or alleged offence exposed the offender to a severe thrashing with bamboo sticks, severe kicks, or torture. Even old people or children under 14 years were not spared such treatment. The most cruel tortures were applied in order to extort confessions. Their regime was a veritable reign of terror. During some months, the camp at Bandung was made unsafe every Sunday evening by a Korean called Yoshitake who, under the strong influence of drink and brandishing his bayonet and shouting loudly, ran through the sheds in search of a victim on whom he could exercise his unbridled sadism. He always found a harmless victim who, for no reason at all, was cruelly tortured. As the Japanese camp commandant himself was afraid to incur Yoshitake's rage, the Dutch camp management could do nothing to prevent those brutalities.

Hardly a day passed without more or less brutal tortures, which were either without any cause whatever or extremely disproportionate to the offence. That on account of the maltreatments the conscience of many Japanese and Korean guards were rather uneasy was apparent from their attitude and behaviour after the announcement of Japan's surrender. Many of them asked me to be lenient to them in the coming

days, pointing out to me that they had maltreated the internees only by order of their superiors.

In conclusion I would like to draw attention to the following instances of Japanese brutality committed on the internees:

a. In the course of 1944, some 800 boys of 10 to 14 years were taken away from their mothers in the women camps and put in the already overcrowded Bandung camp. At the gate the few things they had with them were thoroughly searched. During the search some boys were beaten for no reason at all. The special quarter of the camp in which the 800 children were accommodated was closely watched by patrols. Harmless recreation was forbidden and the boys were forced to work regularly for the Japanese under close supervision.

b. The Red Cross parcels, which were sent to the internees by the International Red Cross, were for the greater part rifled by the Japanese guards. Only a very small quantity of the contents of those parcels was distributed among the internees.

c. Free correspondence with relatives was not permitted. The inter-nees were only allowed (officially twice a year, but in practice not even these few times) to choose from 15 decreed sentences in Malay which they were permitted to write on a postcard and send to one relation. Great numbers of these postcards, however, simply disappeared. The deaths of nearest relatives were passed on in very exceptional cases only.

d. Free worship was forbidden. Ministers, who were suspected of holding secret meetings, were severely punished. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Surabaya was once tortured in a brutal and disgraceful way because he was held responsible for alleged “illegal” proceedings of Roman Catholic priests.

From the above it should be inferred that the Japanese treated the internees in an inhuman way by accommodating them in camps or prisons that were unsuitable to provide accommodation to so many people, by supplying absolutely inadequate foodstuffs and medicaments and practically no clothing, and by instituting a veritable reign of terror.

The Hague, 29 March 1955
certified true copy
(sd.) H.A. van Karnebeek

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REPORT BY J.D. THIJS

Before me, G.J. Jongejans, Officer of the Netherlands Foreign Service, 4th Class, acting under official instructions to take statements of former civil internees held by the Japanese forces in the former Netherlands East Indies, personally appeared this eighteenth day of March nineteen hundred and fifty-five, Mr. Thijs, Johannes Derk, who, having been duly informed of the purposes of the present investigation, states as follows:
(NAME: Thijs, Johannes Derk.
BORN: at Batavia on April 24, 1912.
Lived at 14, Kebonsirih Park, Batavia, at the outbreak of war. Was at this time employed by the N.E.I. Government.)

I was picked up in my house in Batavia in early June 1942, escorted to the police station, and moved from there to Adek Internment Camp. From Adek, Batavia, we were later moved collectively to the 15th Battalion at Bandung. At both Adek and the 15th Battalion, I was continuously employed as official camp interpreter, and since the general conditions of those two camps must have already been fully reported on by many others, I propose to restrict myself to some specific recollections in direct relation with my particular position. In course of time, an official camp interpreter would obtain detailed knowledge, not only of life among the internees, but also of what went on among the Japanese guards and in the Japanese camp command. I gained an intimate knowledge of many Japanese individuals, and, in turn, I became a familiar figure to many Japanese camp guards. Sergeant Tachibana, for instance, for a long time in charge of daily management of the 15th Battalion and later serving time as a war criminal at Sugano, Tokyo, is bound to remember “Tehs” quite clearly.

Adek Camp originally was under direct Kempetai control, later released to Indonesian civilian management. The idea was first to inject a measure of terror into the inmates, and, having thus suitably “conditioned” them, to hand them over to civilian control.

During the Kempetai period, four inmates were caught at smuggling. They were first tortured for several days outside the camp proper. They looked like human refuse when they were brought in again one day. The entire camp was then told to parade. The four

victims were then bodily carried through the ranks of the internees. Finally, they were tossed high in the air and simply dropped flat to the ground. All this was done before the assembled inmates who were ordered to clap their hands and to "laugh" – an order which was being severely enforced. This tossing in the air was repeated several times and resulted in a number of fractured ribs.

An internee suffering from diabetes entered the camp without insulin. He was evacuated to a hospital, but during his absence money was found among his belongings left at Adek (possession of money at that time was prohibited). So this man was hauled back to Adek and incarcerated in the guard room cells. Although the Japanese were aware of his condition, he received no treatment at all and died in three days.

Homosexuals among the Japanese guards ordered young boys from among the internees to report to them after eight o'clock in the evening. Internees tried to foil these activities as best they could, but often did not succeed. After a while, it was deemed necessary and appropriate that one Protestant minister, (Dr. C.L. van Doorn), and one Roman Catholic priest, (Pater Ruygrok), from among the internees should make a properly phrased representation to the Japanese camp commandant. This was done – and resulted in one of the most brutal beatings I have ever witnessed. It was carried out in front of the guard room, in full view of the internees. No matter how justified the complaint had been, it was supposed to be an affront to the Japanese Army, which had thus lost face. As the same time, we felt, the occasion was seized in an attempt to make the clergy lose prestige with their fellow internees. When the Japanese were through with the two victims, their faces were utterly unrecognizable masses of torn and swollen tissue. They were totally incapacitated for weeks.

The Japanese guards at the 15th Battalion, Bandung, were a totally corrupt lot. Sergeant Tachibana controlled one squeeze channel, Takenishi, in charge of the cookhouse, the other. I suspect that there must have been some understanding between them. Both heavily taxed the purchases of the camp shop.

At one stage, the camp had no emetine left at all to treat dysentery patents. The most urgent requests were made to the Japanese for this vital drug, both formally and informally, while many internees were actually dying for lack of it. The Japanese, courteously but monotonously, insisted that none was available and that "even the Japanese

Army did not have emetine." Now it was known to the internees that vast quantities of a great variety of drugs, including emetine, were stored within the confines of the camp. It was also known that the Japanese were fully aware of the presence of these stores. The fact was moreover pointed out to Sergeant Tachibana by me. Obviously, the Japanese were simply not prepared to issue those medicines even in our emergency. So our Dutch camp chief gave his blessing to some volunteers among the internees who offered to burgle the stores and produce emetine and some other essential drugs. The operation was carefully prepared, skillfully executed and was a great success. However, of course, one day, the Japanese learnt of it, and we were all faced with a very grave problem, including the possibility of Kempetai intervention! Finally, in the nick of time, a solution was found by bribing Tachibana, and we fortunately had no cause to regret our venture after all.

One bad feature was the so-called "move of the aged and the sick to hospital and rest camps in Central Java, where they were to be very well looked after." The operation resulted in nothing of the sort, merely in reducing Bandung Division's sick lists. The "beneficiaries" had to report at the gate, where the Japanese took full charge of them, which they did by simply tossing these extremely debilitated people on to lorries where they were inhumanly squeezed, sometimes on top of one another. Much later we learnt that these moves were nightmares and that the "rest camps" proved worse than the 15th Battalion.

One Korean guard, named Yoshitake, in particular was very rough on internees. He used to drink himself into a very ugly temper regularly on Sunday nights. Entering the camp on these occasions, he would yell for me, the interpreter, and, brandishing his bayonet, he would announce: Come, I want to kill somebody. He never actually did, but was very close to it once, when, in a fit of rage, he plunged his weapon into our Dutch camp chief, missing his heart by inches. But if he did not kill anybody, he was a regular terror to internees, who used to evaporate at the mention of his name. Those who were unlucky enough to run into him suffered terribly and for no real reason at all. The first, of course, who came cringing before us after Japan's surrender, was Yoshitake – followed by all the other Koreans and Japanese.

The "water cure" (forcibly pumping water into the victim's mouth) was applied once to some inmates, who had first been beaten terribly with whole chairs.

Religious services were officially prohibited at Bandung, but in practice were being allowed until some incident occurred, in the course of one service, over saluting. The prohibition was enforced from then on. Yet, strange to say, the Japanese insisted on a clergyman – any clergyman – officiating at funerals, no matter whether the deceased was religiously affiliated or not.

(Sd. J.D. Thijs)

Done at The Hague,
18 March 1955

(G.J. Jongejans)

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Chapter 18 CAMP CRUELTIES

Because it is so important to understand what violent behaviour the Japanese forces were capable of, this and the following chapter will present a limited overview of cruelties and atrocities perpetrated by the military inside and outside of the camps.

In general the situation in the civilian camps was about similar to that in the military POW camps, especially after April 1944 when control of the civilian camps was taken over by the Japanese military. During the last two war years, 1944 and 1945, the state of affairs in the camps gradually worsened from bad to critical, and increasingly the prisoners had to deal with: – shortness of food; – lack of medical care and medication; – obligatory work details inside and outside the camps; – overpopulation; – insufficient hygiene and supply of drinking water; – excessively severe and often violent and brutal collective and individual punishment for even the smallest disciplinary transgression of the rules; – interrogations and torture by the Kempeitai; – deliberate humiliation; – almost total isolation; – international organizations such as the Red Cross were not allowed to control the camps and provide regular relief.

The long-term results for the condition of the internees were: – general undernourishment and weakening; – hunger oedema and various other illnesses caused by a serious lack of proper nutrition; – dysentery and other contagious diseases; – a quickly increasing number of dead, especially during the last war year.

The punishments the prisoners received varied from camp to camp, mainly depending on the measures and policies adopted by the Japanese camp leadership. One of the Japanese character traits feared very much by the prisoners, was their incomprehensibly bad temper; in an instant a Japanese could explode in a violent, uncontrollable rage. If the prisoner who was the victim of such a rage was foolish enough to try and defend himself by striking back, all hell would break loose and the prisoner would be even more severely punished so that his survival could be in doubt. Often the whole camp was punished collectively as well. Each member of the Japanese camp staff was allowed to beat and kick anybody in the camp or put them out in the hot sun for long peri-

ods of time. The punishments followed the same pattern everywhere. A very common punishment, that could be handed out for all kinds of small violations of the rules, was beating the face with a flat hand or hitting it with a fist. If the Japanese then decided to deliver a real punishment, beatings with a belt, rod, or bamboo stick on the whole body followed. If the victim fell to the ground, they were kicked upright for more beatings. If somebody lost consciousness, they were revived to be beaten again.

The following is a very limited, randomly presented overview of some of the cruelties the Japanese forces perpetrated during the Pacific War in civilian concentration camps (men, women, boys, see Chapter 3, Camps) in the Dutch East Indies. In general, violent behaviour in the civilian camps was restricted to a relatively small number of prisoners. Most inmates were never subjected to physical abuse.

– In most of the men's camps and also in numerous women's camps, but mostly excluding the camps for very young boys, beatings, torture, and starvation were methodically used by the Japanese and Korean guards to control the prisoners by relentless physical intimidation.

– The guards were always looking for opportunities to beat somebody up to amuse themselves and just because they could. The most insignificant reasons were enough to get their sticks out, holding them in both hands to make the beatings more effective.

– A woman was beaten so viciously for smuggling cigarettes that after five months her eyes, nose, and mouth were still partly closed.

– Two women who were caught stealing some food were suspended upside-down for hours.

– A prisoner who had remained outside the barrack after nine o'clock was beaten hard with fists and a leather belt.

– A few men who had smuggled food were battered with a wooden club, leather belts, and thin sticks; they were then locked in a cell for eight days, three without any food; one of the men died of his wounds.

– Eleven prisoners were beaten savagely with a belt and a stick because a small electric light in the barrack, covered with a piece of black cloth, was still burning in the morning.

– Men and boys were kicked repeatedly in the stomach.

– Some young boys were forced to participate in sadistic sexual games.

– A guard burned off the eyebrows of two boys.

– In several camps, the notorious "cage" was used on a regular basis to discipline internees who had broken some rule. They were locked up for hours or even days in the hot tropical sun without water or food in this small bamboo-metal cell placed near the camp gate, in full view of everybody as a deterrent. Occasionally the victims were taken out of the cage and beaten up by the guards, and then returned to their cell. The severely weakened prisoners suffered badly from dehydration, starvation, and exhaustion. Deaths were not uncommon.

– *Tenko* (counting, roll call) was used by the guards at least twice a day and often at night, in any weather, to check the number of prisoners in each barrack, or just to punish them. Everybody, the very sick included, had to line up to be counted, an often very lengthy and always exhausting process that much of the time confused the guards who were on the whole not able to count beyond the number four or five. Prisoners who did not stand at attention correctly or who talked among themselves or who irritated the guards in any way were beaten and kicked hard as punishment for insulting the glorious Japanese Imperial forces. Even a crying child was reason enough for the guards to beat up the mother.

– A boy was beaten almost to death because a guard thought the boy had made fun of him by smiling during *tenko*.

– There are numerous examples of Japanese guards deliberately destroying food that was brought into the camp to be processed in the kitchen or that was being transported to the barracks for distribution. The guards might kick the food containers to the ground and order the prisoners to bury the food in a hole they had to dig first. Or they might thoroughly trample the spilled food, thus making it inedible.

– One day, when a friend and I were carrying a box with rice from the kitchen to our barrack for distribution, a much-hated Korean guard ordered us to put down the box and open the lid. He then proceeded to urinate profusely upon the rice in the box, all the time laughing out loud, tremendously enjoying this fine insult to the despised prisoners. All we could do was take the box back to the kitchen, wash the rice the best we could with the little water available, and then bring the soggy, still smelly rice back to our barrack for distribution. Many of use had a hard time eating the stuff, but starvation is a demanding taskmaster. Apparently this happened several times in the camp with other barracks.

– A favourite punishment was the withholding of all food to the bar-

rack or even the whole camp for a few days, if just one of the prisoners in that barrack or camp had done something that displeased the guards. This happened often when men after returning to the camp from outside work detail were searched and smuggled wares were discovered. A terrible ordeal for the starving prisoners.
– Several times during the camp years, a number of parcels with food, medication, and other gifts was sent by the International Red Cross to be distributed among the prisoners. However, we rarely saw any of those parcels because the guards appropriated almost all of them.
– The Japanese withheld most medication required to treat the many sick prisoners.
– Random violence was regularly used to keep the prisoners in line. A guard walking in the camp might suddenly, without any provocation, lash out with his whip or bamboo stick at the nearest person and beat the man mercilessly just for the joy of being able to do so. Or a guard might come into a barrack in the middle of the night and wake everybody up by hitting as many prisoners he could get to, including the sick and wounded.
– One guard made it a nasty habit to stand in the door of the barrack, just looking at us inside, not doing or saying anything. These silent threats were most disturbing and unnerving.
– The Kempeitai often came into the camp and dragged prisoners out to be interrogated and tortured because they were suspected of some serious forbidden activity, such as listening to a hidden radio.
– Trading through the *gedèk* was often punished by being locked up in the cage for days.
– In the women's camps it was not uncommon for guards to come in and collect good-looking teenage girls and young women to be used by the military as sex slaves, "comfort women."
– Many more cruelties perpetrated in the camps are mentioned in the literature.

There was considerable variety in the behaviour of the guards, some were much worse than others. Many of the Korean guards were especially vicious because these men, pressed into military service by their conquerors, who had occupied Korea since the early 20th century, were now in a position to take out their frustrations on the helpless prisoners who had the lowest status of all, no status.

What we most feared in the camps was the unpredictability of the often extremely violent behaviour of the Japanese and Korean guards. They could hit on us at any time, supposedly because we had broken some rule, and let their angry cruelty rain down on us without any restraint. If you walked past a guard and bowed correctly but was stupid enough to look the man directly in the eyes, you`d had it; a very painful beating might well follow. Also, it seemed they often picked their victims at random, paying no attention to glasses or dentures or artificial limbs that often went flying about.

After the war, a number of Japanese and Korean camp guards were sentenced to imprisonment or the death penalty because of the following reasons: – internment of civilians under inhuman conditions; – deliberate refusal to issue medications to civilians; – bad treatment of interned civilians; – systematic terror; – torture of civilians; – enforcing collective punishment.

Many criminal actions of war were not creating feelings of guilt in the Japanese military because they were supposed to be performed in the name of the Emperor. That a nation with pretensions to civilisation could have defied every principle of humanity and the rules of war, seems utterly incomprehensible. However, the Japanese were, of course, not alone in this, other people could be very cruel too. Throughout history there are countless examples of cruelty on a smaller or larger scale, perpetrated by people from many nations and religions. Cruelty appears to be just one of humanity's worst vices.

The terror of the Japanese military occupiers in Tjikoedapateuh increased strongly during 1944. Especially the conduct of the Korean guard Yoshitake was horrible. On a regular basis he walked through the camp on Sunday evening, roaring drunk and armed with his bayonet, looking for victims. Many unsuspecting prisoners suffered terribly from his unprovoked attacks. See Chapter 17, Reports by van Karnebeek and Thijs.

For some reason, maybe because I was young, defiant, not submissive enough, and as a teenager far more prone to risk-taking than adults because I was lacking to a large degree their sense of caution and restraint, I was quite often the recipient of the guards' violent attention. I will not recount all the nasty stories of these punishments, but one event may give some idea of what happened to me, and others, on a

rather regular basis.

In mid-January 1945 I was getting the worst thrashing of my camp years. Contrary to the careful attitude of most men, I, as a rebellious, smart-ass teenager, with a know-it-all-I'm-always-right-and-invincible attitude, was sometimes sloppy in following the strict camp rules. So, one day I stupidly neglected to bow deep enough for a Korean guard who immediately started beating me with a bamboo stick split into several razor-sharp strips. The enraged man also used the butt of his rifle to hit me viciously on the head, all the while kicking me in the face and stomach. I was hurting like hell.

In panic I tried to run away but was shouted back by the guard who threw me down on the ground with my face in the dust. He then attacked me with his bayonet, cutting my hands and leg and shoulder while I rolled over the ground trying to avoid the weapon. He was obviously not trying to kill me by thrusting the blade directly into my body but must have used me for bayonet practice, something the Japanese soldiers often did on living prisoners, but then almost always killing their victims.

My father, who initially was kept away from the scene by some camp-mates, yelled at the guard to stop hurting me. The man angrily ordered my father to come to him, had him stand at attention, and hit him very hard once in the stomach with his fist. My father collapsed on the ground but was still able to get up after a while and flee. He had been very lucky, ignoring the simple rule that if you wanted to live, you should never interfere while a guard was beating somebody.

The angry guard then turned his cruel attention to me again. More beatings followed while fear was biting my insides. Then the man stopped his attacks and walked away, leaving me lying on the ground, bleeding profusely and feeling utterly miserable, crying with fear, frustration, anger, and pain, deeply humiliated because I had shit my pants. Several friends helped me to the camp clinic where my cuts were treated as best as possible with the limited resources available. Besides cleaning the wounds and somehow bandaging them, the doctor could not do much because the primitive clinic had an almost complete lack of medication, equipment, and supplies. Even clean water was available only rarely.

After having been treated, I hobbled back in great pain to my sleeping mat in Hotel Bedbug where I lay down to recuperate. My

father was mad at my stupid behaviour but also very concerned. I thought, this must be another one of those “lessons” my parents had talked about when my father and I were leaving Flower Camp a few months ago. I was learning fast that life was no picnic here. The typical teenager belief that only old people die and never the young ones, turned out to be not true at all. My friend, Jacky, came over and tried to distract me by telling hilarious stories about his life as a pimp in Batavia.

At night, sleepless with pain, I followed Meneer`s advice and tried to create images of something beautiful in my mind to distract myself. I fell asleep dreaming of clouds drifting in front of the full moon.

Next day, when I angrily expressed my feelings of hate towards the Japanese, my father tried to make me understand the situation by explaining why the Japanese military behaved the way they did. He thought it very important for me to understand why we were all being treated like dirt.

While he was a Nippon worker until October 1944, my father occasionally had discussions with his Japanese superior, Professor Tanakedata, about what motivated the Japanese behaviour (see Chapter 6, Nippon). He learned it was because they were absolutely convinced they were better people than anybody else in the world. The real power in the Japanese state, the military, developed a relentlessly extreme militaristic culture where ultranationalism, obedience, cruelty, and violence were central to their behaviour. The training future soldiers received was exceptionally brutal and hard; severe physical punishment was fundamental. Japanese men were what they were because they had been conditioned from early childhood to behave in a certain, rigidly prescribed way, to the point that personality ceased to exist. The military regime in power considered boys to be adult men at 10 years of age, ready to be brainwashed into becoming automatons, soul-less robots, by an extremely strict educational system that put honour above all else and did not accept the possibility of defeat, choosing death instead. A man could do nothing more shameful than to surrender. The result of all this was an exceedingly hard, ruthless, non-thinking killing machine, responding instantly and unquestioningly to orders, hence performing very well indeed on the battlefield, of course always in the name of the Emperor.

Understanding these character traits was vitally important when

studying the behaviour of the Japanese fighting forces once they set out to conquer huge areas of East and Southeast Asia. And now that the Japanese were in power, their prisoners of war had to behave the way their masters told them to: *their* way, following the unbending demands of *their* culture. The Japanese forces were in complete control. So the conquered people better learn quickly to understand the new situation or they would be punished, hard. Eventually, everybody was a victim of this ruthless, militaristic philosophy, the west as well as Japan.

Ironically, a few days later I found a broken bayonet, probably Japanese, buried in the ground in a corner of Camp Tjikoedapateuh and made it into a dagger by patiently grinding it to a sharp point on a rock. I very much wanted to have a weapon of my own, which I might need one day to defend myself against some enemy. I knew very well that by having this lethal weapon in my possession I was living dangerously and possibly asking for serious trouble, but the need to protect myself was very strong. Of course, it was absolutely forbidden to own a weapon like this bayonet; I would have been killed instantly if the Japanese had found out. In spite of that possibility, I was determined enough to hold on to the bayonet. It was added to my small collection of treasures, which also contained Diablo, whose strange grin was always there when I needed an understanding friend to talk to.

Another example of bizarre and disgustingly cruel behaviour of the Japanese military happened a few months after the above event. Two of my best friends in the camp were Willy, who was three years older than I, and Jan, a 35-year-old owner of a book store. They formed a truly dedicated and loving couple. Many hypocrites in the camp resented their homosexual relationship but the two didn't care, they were happy with each other. Willy grew a few *katjang idjoe* (mung beans) in tin cans. He was fascinated by the process of growth and wanted to become a farmer.

In May 1945, Willy and Jan were savagely beaten by a feared Japanese guard, Mr. Goddam, because they were holding hands while bowing to him. Willy instinctively tried to defend Jan and attacked the guard who struck him down with hard blows to the head using his rifle. The man proceeded to beat and kick them both mercilessly, his face distorted with hate, his mouth open and lips pulled back, showing two rows of gleaming teeth. I was shocked to see the resemblance between Diablo's grin and the face of the enraged, out-of-control guard who

tortured my friends. Truly a devil's grin.

The man then roughly pushed his two victims into the small metal-bamboo cage placed in the hot sun near the camp gate. Willy and Jan suffered terribly and were not allowed to get any medical attention, nor food or drink. It took Willy two days to die from his wounds and dehydration. Jan was delirious and held the body of his dead love in his arms, wailing softly, rocking back and forth in the tiny cage.

My father, Meneer, I, and others helplessly looked at all this from a distance. This was not the first time I was directly confronted with the process of slow death by torture because this kind of punishment was not at all uncommon in the camp. Dominee, the young Dutch Reformed minister, was on his knees, crying and praying. Meneer angrily expressed his anti-religion feelings: "Is this what your wonderful God does for his beloved children?"

Finally, on the third day, Willy's already decomposing body was removed to be buried somewhere outside the camp. In the evening, Jan tried to commit suicide by slitting his wrist, but his weakened body was not strong enough to cut the skin with his small, blunt knife. His friends tried to comfort him the best they could, especially Dominee, who again showed to be a warm-hearted, truly compassionate man, always there to help others in need, whatever their religion or lack thereof. I was deeply touched by it all and at night struggled to fall asleep while unsuccessfully trying to think of something beautiful.

Following Willy's death and Jan's suicide attempt, my father, Meneer, Dominee, Jacky, and myself tried to come to grips with what had happened. More than anything, we wanted to know why all this horror could happen in a just world. Were these horrible events really taking place according to the plans of a compassionate divine power? Was there a purpose to all this suffering? Or was there something else happening here, something too complicated for us people to understand, something leading to the invention of belief?

Meneer, ever the confirmed, hard-core humanist/atheist, was extremely angry and denounced the brainwashing-based tyranny of organized religion and the unreasonable belief in a supreme, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God. He realized that religion was crucially important for many people, because without their God they didn't have a moral compass to steer their lives by. Besides, numerous prisoners in the camp appeared to be receiving vital support from the particular

religion they believed in. And they had ample opportunity to select the, for them, most appropriate one. According to some estimates, there are roughly 4,200 religions in the world, from Animism to Zoroastrianism and everything in-between, each one promising their one and only true path to salvation. Finding strength in their personal faith might very well help many internees to survive various wartime ordeals, but Meneer was afraid of religion's power over them. He likened it to the absolute power the Japanese had over the prisoners, inflicting punishments and granting rewards at will.

This God many people so strongly believed in was an utterly mysterious and contradictory enigma. If God was good, why didn't he intervene in all the misery around us? Why was a just God allowing all this to happen? Apparently, God was either ignoring what was happening or approving of it. Why shouldn't this mad God be accused of cruelty against the people of his own creation? Wouldn't it be much more logical to say, or maybe believe, that there was no God, in fact deny him? That would solve many problems but, of course, create a host of new ones. Ah, so many questions, never to be answered rationally! We just don't know, we're really completely ignorant about these matters, and that's why so many people resort to believing in a supernatural force, their God. That humanity is able to function just because it believes that an ancient collection of myths, stories, and lies is true, is absolutely incredible.

Dominee was utterly crushed by these hard, atheistic words of Meneer`s; he clung desperately to his believe in a good God glorified by a powerful, infallible religion because it was all he had ever known. It just *must* be true because he could *not* conceive of any other reality. He emotionally rejected Meneer`s conviction that the concept of God was something invented by man to construct an "explanation" for man's ignorance of the meaning of being, of life and death, in fact helping us to deal with these most profound of mysteries. Dominee could not doubt God and his mercy. He also could not understand Meneer's question if there was anybody who might explain the world of suffering so many people were living in right now, in fact had been living in since mankind's beginning. There just must be a divine purpose to everything, he thought, also to the terrible torture and death they had just witnessed, even if we couldn't understand that purpose.

Much of this was too difficult for me to comprehend but I felt in-

stinctively that it was important to try and remember what was happening here. My father emphasised that it was essential that people were not mentally damaged by experiences like the savagery we had just witnessed, but should always try to think clearly and honestly without resorting to easy answers.

Over time, I also received other most important lessons from Meneer — suffering very badly from hunger oedema at the time — who talked about his philosophy of life, politics, power, love, morality, religion, freedom, and the profound mysteries of life and death. Is it morally justified to lie or kill in order to save lives? What is evil? What is good? What is this thing people have about God? Do we need one to be moral? What is morality? Do we really *know* anything? All most people have is their religion, their self-invented belief in something unexplainable. This was heavy but fascinating stuff for me and I tried very hard to understand it.

Out of curiosity I began to listen to bible readings for interesting and entertaining stories and "history" without believing anything literally. My discussions with my father and Meneer and others had made me a confirmed agnostic/atheist — without fully realizing it intellectually — who always wanted to think for himself, instinctively rejecting the concept of an all-powerful and all-knowing God who rules everything.

Chapter 19 ATROCITIES

It is a sad but inescapably hard truth that in the wars fought by the Japanese during the first half of last century, and also in earlier wars, excessive cruelty played a decisive role in the way the Japanese military conducted their battles and treated the people they had conquered. Atrocities committed by the Japanese were frequent and systematic, displaying a pattern of criminality that was condoned at the highest levels.

In order to understand the cruel behaviour of the Japanese military forces, we must have some insight into the soul, the psyche of the Japanese people of those times. The main problem when dealing with the Japanese was that to the rest of the world they were a totally different, even alien people with a radically dissimilar culture, religion, morality, and way of life; a people coming from a long tradition of extremely rigid conformity. The Japanese were absolutely convinced to be superior to everybody else in the world. They considered their country to be literally a god-given piece of heaven, ruled by an all-powerful aristocracy with the infallible God-Emperor at the top as the supreme leader.

Everything the Japanese people did was based on their unshakeable believe in the superiority of their highly refined culture, religion, and race, founded on concepts that to a large extent were foreign to much of the democratic western world: God-Emperor, importance of hierarchy and honour, absolute power of the military, unconditional submission to authority which was fundamental to the *samurai* spirit of their *bushido* code of honour, a blind faith in their leaders, unbending discipline, cultivation of brutal violence and death, supremely important group solidarity, individualism was bad and had to be suppressed, hard physical punishment was standard practice, displays of emotion were unacceptable. Japan was a supremely racist society, looking down upon and despising other races as unworthy and even subhuman. Some thoughts on this are presented in Chapter 6, Nippon. See also the remarks made in Chapter 18, Camp Cruelties, on the real power in the Japanese state, the military.

In his book *Horror in the East*, Laurence Rees sums up the state of

affairs quite well, and I quote: *A combination of cultural belief and geographical and historical circumstance caused Japanese society to evolve, in the first half of the 20th century, to the point where the very human desire to belong, to fit in, to be part of the group had been elevated to an all-embracing quasi-religion. It needed only a group of ardent militaristic nationalists to make of this society a powerful and fanatical weapon, able to produce an army capable of great crimes.*

Obviously, these deplorable character traits of the Japanese nation have indeed led to great crimes. There is no shortage of examples of atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese military forces during their last century's wars. The following gruesome list presents a number of those crimes, but by no means all. A more comprehensive collection would take many more pages.

– **Massacres and atrocities** were performed by the Japanese on civilians and military all over the occupied territories, such as: Chekiang massacre, Jesselton massacre, Milne Bay massacre, Akikaze atrocities, Truk massacre, Luzon atrocity, Submarine I-8 atrocities, Tone massacre, Kota Radja atrocities, USS Houston massacre, Cheribon atrocity, North Borneo massacre, Mandor massacre, hell ships atrocities, Andaman massacre, Pig basket atrocity, Loa Kulu massacre, Attu atrocities, Makin Atoll atrocities, Tone massacre, Banka Island massacre, Parit Sulong massacre, Palawan massacre, SS Tjisalak massacre, Wake Island massacre, Changjiao massacre, Kalagon massacre, Manila massacre, Pantingan massacre, Tjiater Pass massacre, Tjepu massacre, Sook Ching massacre, Tol plantation massacre, Tarakan massacre. Mass killings took place on a huge, often genocidal scale, especially in China because the Japanese considered the Chinese to be sub-human vermin and not worthy of life. Estimates of civilians from China, Indochina, Korea, Dutch East Indies, Malaya-Singapore, Philippines, Burma, and Pacific Islands killed by the Japanese vary from about five million to 30 million, with possibly 19 million killed in China alone. The most infamous mass slaughter was the horrendous Nanking massacre:

– **Nanking massacre**: From 13 December 1937 till early February 1938, China's capital Nanking was ravaged by Japanese soldiers killing about 300,000 civilians and surrendered Chinese soldiers using unbelievably atrocious methods, and brutally raping 20,000 to 80,000 women and girls of all ages, many of whom were mutilated and killed when the Japanese troops were finished with them. The troops were encouraged by their officers to loot, burn, rape, and butcher. The Japa-

nese rounded up about twenty thousand young Chinese men and transported them in trucks outside the city walls where they were killed in a massive slaughter. Batches of Chinese civilians were rounded up and herded into killing pits. Here the Japanese soldiers would either bury them alive, hack them to death with their swords, use them for bayonet practice, or pour petrol on the victims and burn them alive. The bodies of thousands of victims of the slaughter were dumped into the Yangtze River until the river was red with their blood. Many thousands of victims were tortured and mutilated in the most horrible fashion surpassing the limits of human comprehension, for instance killing them by being frozen in sub-zero weather and then riddling them with bullets, saturating victims in acid, impaling babies with bayonets, flinging a group of refugees in a pond and killing them with hand grenades. After looting Nanking of anything of value, the Japanese started fires that gutted one third of the city. Many more examples of utterly gruesome killings can easily be found. In her 1997 book, *The Rape of Nanking*, Iris Chang writes about this worst atrocity of the war: *"The Rape of Nanking should be remembered not only for the number of people slaughtered but for the cruel manner in which many met their deaths. Chinese men were used for bayonet practice and in decapitation contests. An estimated 20,000-80,000 Chinese women were raped. Many soldiers went beyond rape to disembowel women, slice off their breasts, nail them alive to walls. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, and sons their mothers, as other family members watched. Not only did live burials, castration, the carving of organs, and the roasting of people become routine, but more diabolical tortures were practised, such as hanging people by their tongues on iron hooks or burying people to their waists and watching them get torn apart by German shepherds."* It is claimed that the brutal behaviour of the Japanese forces in Nanking was by no means an isolated accident, but fit into a pattern of Japanese atrocities in the Lower Yangtze area against Chinese since the battle of Shanghai.

– **Bayonet practice** on live prisoners was widespread, especially in China. This gruesome practice was part of the military training program to harden the men to such a degree that they would willingly and unthinkingly use their bayonets to kill men, women, and children of any age.

– **Beheadings** and torture of prisoners for small infractions of discipline were commonplace. Killing contests were organized to find out

what Japanese officer or soldier could decapitate the most heads. In Nanking, beheading competitions saw 100 to even 150 victims hav-ing their heads cut off by the contestants. Japanese troops decapitated 200 wounded Australians and Indians left behind when their troops withdrew through the jungle from Muar in Malaya. Instead of being imprisoned after their planes had been shot down, many captured American airmen were beheaded. Such desensitization exercises were practised by the Japanese forces across China during the entire war. Beheadings, ancient acts of pure terror, were commonly executed by the Japanese military *samurai* sword, the *katana*. The *samurai* is a warrior bound by a strict code of honour, the *bushido*, which stresses honour, self-discipline, bravery, and simple living, also teaching that the *samurai's* soul is in his *katana*.

– **Torture** in all its monstrous forms was practised extensively, especially by the Kempeitai, the military police. It is reported that their methods of torture included burning with cigarettes, lighted candles, hot irons, and boiling water, electric shocks applied to sensitive parts of the body, removal of finger and toe nails, breaking of fingers, flogging, water torture where the victim was forced to drink water until he lost consciousness and was then jumped upon to force the water out. Victims had their wrists tied behind their back and were then suspended from a hook with a rope tied to their wrists. Nose, ears, hands, feet, breasts, genitals were cut off. The list of tortures utilized by the Japanese is virtually endless.

– **Rape** of countless women and girls all over the occupied territories was authorized standard practice to provide the Japanese soldiers with one of the few pleasures in a comfortless and deprived life.

– **Military prostitution** (sex slaves, "comfort women"): the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy were either directly or indirectly involved in coercing, deceiving, luring, and kidnapping women, many of them underage, throughout Japan's occupied territories, generally assumed to be about 200,000 and possible even 400,000 in number. A majority of the women were from Korea, China, and the Philippines, although also women from Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia (including, from early 1944 on, Dutch girls and women, Totoks as well as Indos), and other Japanese-occupied territories were sexually abused in military "comfort stations," brothels set up in those territories. Many of the women were abused by up to 50 soldiers each day in 12-hour shifts. In the course of several years, there were women who were ra-

ped thousands of times. The purpose of these brothels was to reward the soldiers for fighting on the battlefront for long periods of time, to contain sexually transmitted diseases through the use of condoms, and to reduce local resentment against Japan by not raping the local women.

– **Slave labour** was used extensively on military work projects everywhere. Besides Allied prisoners of war and civilians, huge numbers of Indonesian *romushas* were used as slave labour in numerous projects. Also countless native inhabitants from other Asian countries were forced to work for the Japanese as slaves. In China, more than 10 million civilians were mobilized for forced labour.

– **The Burma-Siam death railway** was a 415-km-long railway between Thailand and Burma, built between June 1942 and October 1943 under the most horrible and inhumane conditions by slave labour to avoid the dangerous sea route for the Japanese forces in the Burma campaign. About 270,000 Asian *romushas* (many Javanese but also Tamils, Malay, Burmese, Chinese) and 62,000 Allied prisoners of war (18,000 Dutch of which 2,500 died) worked as slave labourers on the railway, under horrific conditions of starvation, beatings, extreme jungle heat and humidity, rampant disease, and seriously inadequate medical provisions. Of these men, around 90,000 Asian labourers, but probably many more, and 16,000 Allied POWs died as a direct result of their work on the railway. After the project was finished in October 1943, many of the remaining POWs were transported to Japan, Manchuria, and other places to work as slave labourers in mines and other locations.

– **The Pakan Baroe death railway** was a 220-km-long railroad built by slave labour through the jungles of central Sumatra, from Pakan Baroe to Moara, between April 1943 and 15 August 1945. Of the 5,000 Allied prisoners (Dutch, British, Australian, American, New Zealand) who worked on the railroad from April 1944, about 700 died, and of the about 120,000 native slave workers, *romushas*, working there for 2½ years, about 96,000 died. The railway was only used once and does not exist anymore.

– **The Bataan Death March** was a 100-kilometre forced march through intense heat with almost no water and food and guarded by brutal Japanese and Korean soldiers, of approximately 78,000 military prisoners of war (including 12,000 Americans and 66,000 Philippinos) in the Ba-taan peninsula of the Philippines. Starting the march on 10

April 1942, the exhausted, starving, and emaciated men were beaten and tortured randomly and denied food and water most of the time. Those that could not keep up would usually die from crushed skulls, *samurai* swords, bayonets, and bullets, or just being left behind to die. The death toll was appalling: some 5,000 to 10,000 Philippino and about 650 Amer-ican prisoners died before the end of the march one week later, and thousands more died afterwards in the appallingly overcrowded prison camp they were housed in. When the camp was closed eight months later, 26,000 of the 50,000 Philippino prisoners there had died. Two-thirds of the American Bataan survivors later succumbed in various slave-labour camps in Japan and Manchuria where they had to work in factories, coal mines, and quarries.

– **The Sandakan Death Marches** were a series of three forced marches from Sandakan to Ranau, about 260 km to the west, through the virtually impenetrable primary jungle and marshland of north Borneo, taking place between January and June 1945. The incarceration in the Sandakan and Ranau prison camps of about 2,400 captured Allied soldiers, as well as the three death marches almost 1,000 of the men were forced to participate in, resulted in the deaths of practically all of the 2,400 weak, sick, and starving Australian and British prisoners of war. On the three marches, many of the men were immediately killed by the guards, mostly Formosan (Taiwanese) under the command of Japanese officers, if they collapsed exhausted on the trail, leading to more than 500 dead, their bodies littering the route. It is reported that hungry guards cannibalized several of these prisoners. Miraculously, six Australians survived, who had all escaped into the jungle and were rescued by the local population. Practically all the Indonesian *romushas* forced to work on a military airstrip in Sandakan, together with the Allied prisoners, also died: fewer than half a dozen of the 4,000 Javanese slave labourers were alive at war's end.

– **Biological and chemical warfare.** Japan's covert Unit 731's Research Base, located at the Pingfang district of Harbin in Manchukuo (northeast China), was the world's largest biological weaponry research, testing, and production base, the headquarters of a number of such units. Their research methods were incredibly cruel and devoid of any human compassion. Unit 731 conducted a great variety of often extremely bizarre in-vivo experimentation without anaesthesia on live human subjects, and performed research in areas such as frostbite testing, bacterial infection rates, and epidemic proliferation. It is believed that

at least 1,000 people, including surgeons, were involved in vivisections over mainland China. In Unit 731's main base at Pingfang, probably about 3,000 people were working. Live human targets were used for weapons testing and for different forms of germ and biological warfare, which were also tested by dropping bombs infected with lethal agents such as cholera, anthrax, and plague on several Chinese cities. More than 10,000 people, mostly Chinese and Korean and including men, women, and children, as well as infants, the elderly, and pregnant women, were subjects of the experimentation conducted by Unit 731. The number of civilian and military people killed by the Japanese Army human experiments and germ war-fare may be as high as 580,000.

– **Chemical weapons.** In 1938, the Japanese Army began full-scale use of phosgene, chlorine, Lewisite, and nausea gas, and the following year mustard gas was used against both Kuomintang and Communist Chinese troops. It is alleged that the Japanese Army used poison gas over 2,000 times in China and that well over 32,000 Chinese soldiers and 9,000 civilians died as a result. Cyanide gas was tested on Australian and Dutch prisoners in the Kai islands in November 1944.

– Miscellaneous atrocities

– In China, a barrack containing 250 Tamil prisoners — men, women, and children — infected with cholera was burned to the ground.

– Prisoners were buried alive for the amusement of the Japanese troops. Some were only partially buried and then hacked to pieces by swords or run over by horses or tanks.

– At a hospital in Singapore the Japanese bayonetted and shot to death all 300 patients, doctors, and nurses. Similar atrocities took place in hospitals in Hong Kong, Manilla, and Burma.

– In Singapore the Japanese intended to exterminate the entire Chinese population of the city, succeeding in shooting or beheading about 20,000, some sources mention 100,000. Several other massacres were perpetrated on Singapore Island, costing thousands more Chinese their lives.

– Hell ships were ships with extremely life-threatening, inhumane living conditions, and manned by cruel crews who starved and mistreated their prisoners. Many dozens of hell ships were used by the Imperial Japanese Navy to transport over 30,000 Allied prisoners of war from the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, and elsewhere to Japan, Taiwan, Manchuria, and Korea to be used as forced labour. Several of these ships were sunk by Allied submarines and aircraft because they

were not marked as carrying Allied prisoners, resulting in thousands of deaths by drowning.

– Laha airstrip killings on Ambon Island. More than 300 Australian and Dutch prisoners of war were beheaded after the Allies had lost the battle of Ambon. Three-quarters of the Australians captured on Ambon died before the war's end. Of the 582 who remained on Ambon, 405 died of overwork, malnutrition, disease, and one of the most brutal regimes among camps in which bashings were routine. Similar atrocities took place on the islands of New Britain and Timor.

– Philippines massacres. At the War Crimes Trial in Tokyo, 72 large-scale massacres of Philippinos by Japanese troops were listed with 131,028 murders as a bare minimum.

– Balikpapan massacre. Because the Dutch had destroyed the Balikpapan oilfields before the arrival of the Japanese troops, 78 Dutch soldiers and civilians were killed by the Japanese.

– Port Blair atrocities. After occupying the British-controlled Andaman Islands, the Japanese forces started a wild orgy of looting, raping, and murder. During the 3½ years of Japanese occupation, out of the 40,000 population of Port Blair, around 30,000 were brutally murdered.

– Eight US airmen were used for medical dissection at Kyushu Imperial University with their organs removed while the prisoners were still alive.

– Hundreds of Indian POWs were massacred in north Borneo in 1942.

– The Haga process. In Bandjermasin, Borneo, about 250 civilians were killed because the Japanese suspected an uprising.

– Looting by the Japanese government and individual military personnel was widespread. The stolen property included not only private land, but also many different kinds of valuable goods, including a huge amount of cultural property, stolen from banks, treasuries, depositories, temples, churches, mosques, museums, private homes, and commercial premises.

– Japan’s requisition of large amounts of rice from Vietnam in 1945 contributed to the great famine in the northern part of that country, leading to almost two million deaths.

– Cannibalism by Japanese officers and soldiers of prisoners, natives, and fellow soldiers, often but not necessarily always related to a shortage of normal food, has been documented on several occasions.

– From March 1943 on, after their ships had been sunk, all Allied merchant seamen were slaughtered by the Japanese Navy instead of being

rescued and imprisoned.
– On the island of Saipan the Japanese Army ordered the civilian population to kill themselves and their children rather than endure the shame of being captured. Back in Japan these child murders and civilian suicides were praised and encouraged. Also in Okinawa Japan's military often forced natives into such collective suicides.
– The Pontianak massacre. In Balikpapan, Borneo, about 1200 people were executed for allegedly plotting against the Japanese. Almost all victims belonged to the affluent and intellectual circles of the large Chinese community.
– Leper colony massacre. In March 1945, a village with about 40 lepers, half of them women and children, was wiped out because the Japanese were afraid of contamination if they'd remove the patients.
– The Japanese bombed clearly marked hospital buildings and ships.
– On the Alaskan island of Attu, Japanese troops slaughtered all the patients and medical staff of the field hospital.
– After capturing Shanghai in November 1937, the Japanese marched hundreds of Chinese prisoners of war down to the river bank, and slaughtered them by machine gun in full view of horrified observers aboard foreign ships moored in the river.
– On page 234 of the 2002 edition of *The Knights of Bushido*, Lord Russell of Liverpool describes an unprovoked murder of two Dutch civilian administrators at Balikpapan in Borneo after the Japanese invaded that Dutch colony in 1942. An eyewitness to the murders gave the following horrific account: *I saw a district officer and a police inspector, both in uniform, in conversation with a Japanese Army officer. During the interview, the officer had been continually ill-treating the district officer (a Dutchman), slapping his face and hitting him all over his body with the scabbard of his sword. Suddenly, the officer drew his sword and hacked off both the Dutchman's arms just above the elbows, and then both his legs above the knees. The trunk of his body was then tied to a coconut tree and bayoneted until life was extinct. The Japanese officer then turned his attention to the Dutch policeman, who had his arms and legs hewed off in like manner. The policeman struggled on to the stumps of his legs and managed to shout 'God save the Queen'. He then fell dead, a bayonet through his heart.*
– And many more atrocities mentioned in the literature.

Chapter 20 SICK

By mid June 1945, my father's starving body had become very weak and emaciated. For several months now, he had been increasingly sick with various diseases, including large, extremely sore tropical ulcers on his legs — which might necessitate excruciatingly painful amputation if they got worse — and debilitating dysentery that required him to be put in isolation at the clinic. Still, in spite of somewhat better care there, he was turning for the worst and seemed to be slowly succumbing to a truly horrible death, which might take weeks. There was no real possibility of healing, his needless suffering was awfully cruel and made no sense at all; it would always haunt his family to know that he had died such a terrible death. Under these circumstances life had no meaning for my father anymore; his quality of life now and in the future appeared to be zero. He became more and more depressed and was giving up hope he'd ever see his wife and other sons again.

In desperation my father begged dr. Nelson to put an end to this unbearable situation by killing him in some way. The doctor refused euthanasia for professional, ethical, and moral reasons but he would not object letting somebody else do it for which, however, he had no appropriate lethal chemicals. I absolutely refused to let my father suffer such a horrible, inhumane death, realizing it might be my duty to end his life myself, maybe by suffocating his very weak body with a pillow, if ever his suffering would become truly unbearable.

I hoped I was now, at 18 years old, sufficiently mature and wise to understand the significance of the immense sacrifice I was convinced I would have to make for my father's and the family's sake. I just *had* to make this extremely difficult decision. I was sure my mother would have agreed because, when still living in Flower Camp and my father and myself were about to leave her to go to the men's camp about ninth months ago, we had talked about the possibility of such things happening. Both my parents were intelligent humanists/atheists who thought realistically about life and death and for the need to have a choice when the time to die came. They were fine examples of strength and wisdom to me, who had inherited the same philosophical ideas. In making the decision to euthanize my father, I was not burdened by a

belief in a god who controlled me and a religion that prescribed all my actions. Even though I might be young and relatively inexperienced, I cherished my moral freedom to decide this for myself, following my own conscience and my own concepts of good and evil.

In our barrack, while methodically and slowly going through my father's few possessions, I thought deeply about death and the defining importance of quality of life, trying to understand the limitations of life and its inherent beauty and cruelty. I was now fully determined to help my father die a peaceful and dignified death when the time came, whatever the consequences to myself. This was to be my supreme act of love for my parents. I knew that my father wanted me to keep on fighting for the things I believed in, to consider the present situation the toughest and perhaps most important lesson I would learn in my life. I was intensely troubled that I had failed to protect my father as I had promised my mother.

Diablo was with me, safe in my pocket, giving comfort now that it was needed most. But I could not fall asleep. This time the think-of-something-beautiful trick didn't work.

To everybody's great surprise and delight, after a few weeks in the clinic my father slowly regained a bit of health, although remaining very weak, lying like a barely moving skeleton on his cot. I helped taking care of him, spoonfeeding him when necessary, and also cleaning and washing him as best I could. At first I was quite uncomfortable handling my father's genitals and anus, but got used to that too. Fortunately, I was also able to trade a few pieces of used clothing for some real food, such as duck's eggs and sweet potatoes, that helped to improve my father's health. Of course, I was hugely relieved that the need for euthanization was no longer obvious.

When my father was in the clinic recuperating, he and I talked about our family. He was very proud of my mother, an intelligent, strong-willed, independent woman with a rather short temper (I surely had inherited that from her), who hated to be teasingly called "Fatso." Was she still alive, rotting away in some camp somewhere? My father also sincerely hoped that Wim would get through this terrible war alive without too many scars. It was sad we didn't even know where Wim was. Was he still alive?

My father said he terribly missed the little things he shared with his wife in their wonderfully loving relationship, such as: her tender after-shave kiss on his now smooth skin; the laughter when he tickled her; their

playing like children; their nicknames for each other: Tobias and Poopie; their walking hand-in-hand. He was also very attached to his moustache and fiercely protected it so his wife could again trim it after the war, a ritual loved by both of them. He hated that it had turned grey.

He also told me that I was conceived because Mam had put her contraceptive diaphragm in crooked after a lively party. Life indeed appears to be ruled, and in my case created, by accidents. We laughed and cried together.

In the meantime, Meneer`s wet-beriberi oedema had been getting very serious indeed. His legs and lower body, the genitals included, were swollen grotesquely with liquid and Dr. Nelson feared for his life. Quite a few men were suffering from this notorious disease caused by vitamin deficiency and starvation, that affects the heart and often was fatal. Proper nutrition and vitamin B1 could have saved him but there wasn't any available in the camp.

By the end of June 1945, Meneer`s end was near; he was transported to an extra-quiet place in the clinic but it was too late. In the evening he died quietly, with his friends at his side. Of course, Dominee was there too, paying respect to the man he had fought so often on spiritual issues, a man he admired tremendously in spite of his radically different views on life, death, and God. Together we sang softly for our Meneer, the last music he would hear, because soon after he was dead.

I was utterly devastated and sobbed in my father's arms. I had come to love and respect Meneer for his wonderful wisdom and humanity, for all the great things he had taught me about life and living. This was indeed a good man, yet one without a god. At night, I desperately tried to think of something beautiful to help me relax as Meneer had taught me, but failed.

Next day, the body of Otto Verkerk, my beloved Meneer, was transported to the cemetery somewhere outside the camp. Following his wishes, there was no ceremony, no service, no honour guard, no string of mourners; his dead remains leaving us was just a completely anonymous event. When the horse-drawn cart with his and several other corpses, rolled in woven bamboo mats because of the lack of proper coffins, slowly moved out the camp gate, fluid released by the dead, water-logged body dripped onto the ground.

Chapter 21 TJITJALENGKA

In mid-July 1945, I was part of a group of 1000 internees, men and boys, who were assigned a big work detail outside camp. Early in the morning we were taken by a fourth-class, closed, badly overcrowded train to a place called Tjitjalengka, 30 km southeast of Bandoeng. There we had to clear *sawahs* (rice fields) and native *kampongs* (villages) to make a railroad that would connect Tjitjalengka to Madjalaja, about 15 km to the southwest. At the end of the working day we were transported back to Camp Tjikoedapateuh by train.

These 1000 mobile men from Camp Tjikoedapateuh, and another mobile group of 1000 from a camp in Tjimahi, a small town a few kilometres west of Bandoeng, became part of a total workforce of 4500 slave labourers. The 2000 mobile men from Bandoeng and Tjimahi worked on the railroad just west of the train station in Tjitjalenka. Of the 4500 labourers, 2200 were living in a camp existing on the site, Railroad Camp North, located on a flat, dry, windy, sun-drenched plane, five kilometres walking from the railway station in Tjitjalengka. From 15 July 1945 on, these 2200 men had come from a camp in Tjimahi. They were housed in very primitive bamboo shacks previously used to dry bricks and roofing tiles made on location. The place was unlit and there was no proper floor, only dried mud. Everything was surrounded by a barbed-wire fence.

In Madjalaja there also was a camp, Railroad Camp South, that during the first few weeks of August housed 300 men from Camp Tjikoedapateuh in an abandoned weaving mill.

A friend living in the north camp told me that his camp was a real disaster, life was exceptionally hard, the shacks were horribly overcrowded pigsties, the 2200 men had to sleep packed so close together on woven bamboo mats (*gedèk*) placed on the bare, rough earth floor that their bodies always touched each other. The *gedèk* walls of the shacks had large openings to let the wind go through to dry the bricks and tiles, and the badly damaged roofs were leaking all over the place. The nights were cold. Everything was filthy and crawling with lice and bedbugs and other vermin; rats were a big problem too. The men in the camp had very few clothes and blankets and there were no mattresses.

Sanitation was a filthy disaster; latrines consisted of a long, uncovered ditch on one side of the complex, with little or no water going through it, where the men had to squat on bamboo poles placed over the ditch. Consequently, many men suffered badly from diarrhea and dysentery. Again, medical provisions were practically non-existent; there was a tiny, primitive clinic and a few medical personnel. Seriously sick people were transported back to their original camps.

The food was as bad as usual, pure starvation diet. There was practically no clean drinking water; everybody suffered terribly from thirst under the burning sun. Water for washing and cleaning was not available.

The desperately hungry men had to eat partially raw the few snakes and tadpoles they could catch because the illegal open fires they secretly tried to roast the animals over were too small for proper cooking because they didn't have enough wood. The starving prisoners also caught and ate frogs, lizards, earthworms, anything they could make into food. Even in these moments of horrible suffering, with death staring them in the face, many men — but by no means all — didn't hesitate to share with each other the little food they could find.

I caught a water snake in a swamp near the railroad and tried to smuggle it into my Camp Tjikoedapateuh by wrapping it around my body. But the snake was discovered by the guards and I was beaten hard for breaking the rules. Two days later I caught two more snakes and this time successfully smuggled them into Camp Tjikoedapateuh by sliding them into a hollow bamboo stick used by workers to suspend the food barrels we had to bring back to our camp. In the evening I "fried" the snakes using, instead of oil (which we didn't have), small red and green Christmas candles I had found in the Tjihapit women's camp on a previous working detail. It became a joyful party with my sick father and some friends, each of us thoroughly enjoying a small snack of brightly coloured snake.

The railway line had been planned to go in part across a series of wet *sawahs*. The mud from these *sawahs* was scooped up with shovels, deposited in baskets, and then dumped on the railway line. This obviously was not the right way to do things, because the soft mud gradually oozed away and did not stay put. But that was how the Japanese wanted to build the line, so that's how we did it. In other places the ground was rock-hard, completely dried out, and badly cracked; it was the middle of the May-November dry season. It was almost

impossible for these severely weakened, starving men to pry loose big blocks of dried clay and deposit them on the railway line. Having to do this meaningless work under the blazing sun, with practically no water to drink all day, was a terrible burden for the seriously worn-out men, especially the older ones. Many of them drank untreated water from muddy puddles and creeks and got sick.

There was one good thing about this work detail: the opportunity to trade. Because the native Indonesians living in the area around the planned railway line had not been removed, making contact with them was easy. So we traded everything of any value at all, in particular clothing, for food and then especially hard-boiled ducks' eggs, very welcome to supplement the meager food we got from our camp kitchens. Many guards were active participants in these activities.

Of course I also took part in this trading business and smuggled many hard-boiled ducks' eggs into Camp Tjikoedapateuh by cutting them and rolling the pieces in a cloth I wore around my neck. These eggs must have helped save my weak, starving father's life.

The work detail of the 1000 men coming from Tjikoedapateuh and the 1000 from Tjimahi each day was stopped in early August. But the men living in Railroad Camps North and South had to keep on working. Then, in mid August it was suddenly over for them too; the work on the Tjitjalengka-Madjalaja railroad was stopped by the Japanese without explanation, and by 19 August all prisoners had been transported back to their camps. By then, only a small part of the work had been finished. For many of the men, this was just in time; they were on the brink of succumbing to exhaustion and starvation. They were happy to survive what was possibly the worst time of their concentration camp years.

Nobody understood why this very short railroad had to be built at this time, because there were persistent rumours that Japan was actually losing the war, which made creating a railroad a really stupid endeavour. Could this be another effort to exterminate great numbers of prisoners of war through starvation and slave labour? It was utterly meaningless, insane, like so many things the Japanese did.

Chapter 22

FREEDOM

After 6 August 1945, rumours began to circulate in the camp that something catastrophic had happened in Japan that might soon end the war. But there were always rumours going around so we didn't really know if anything was any truth in this. Besides, the Japanese guards' behaviour did not change; they were as nasty and unpredictable as ever.

Then, on 15 August, August 14th in the USA, the Dutch camp leaders learned from a clandestine radio in the camp — that a few prisoners had been able to keep secret from the guards over the years — that the Japanese Emperor had apparently told his people Japan had lost the war. Hirohito had decided to surrender because two devastatingly powerful bombs, atomic bombs dropped by the Americans, had obliterated most of two major cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, instantly causing immense, widespread suffering and the death of hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians. Our camp leaders approached the Japanese commandant who acknowledged that it had indeed happened but that he awaited orders from his headquarters before he was allowed to do anything.

So, nothing much changed in the camp; we still had to stay inside the *gedèk* walls and the Japanese and Korean guards still manned the gates. However, bowing and beatings were stopped and much more and better food and some quality medication were brought in, including parcels sent to us by the Red Cross that had previously been appropriated by the guards. Obviously, the stories the Japanese had told us in the past, that they didn't have enough food and medication for their prisoners because the Japanese military were also suffering from barely enough food and medication, were just blatant lies.

For the Indonesians there was one good thing coming out of the war: their liberation from being a colony of The Netherlands. During the occupation they had tried hard for the Japanese to immediately give them their national freedom, but the Japanese had always refused. Eventually, towards the end of the Pacific War, the Japanese had to relent and on 17 August 1945 the Indonesian national leaders Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia to be an independent country, unilater-

ally ending the Dutch colonization of Indonesia by stating: *"We the people of Indonesia, hereby declare Indonesia's independence. Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time."* Unfortunately, the transfer of power would not be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time. People on both sides of the issue, Indonesians as well as Dutch, would have to suffer through several years of much brutal fighting, misery, and hard diplomatic negotiations before peace would be established and Indonesia fully recognized by the Dutch in December 1949.

At first I had great difficulty accepting the newly proclaimed Indonesian independence. But after thinking the matter through as best I could, and discussing it with my father and others, I eventually came to the inevitable conclusion that the Indonesians had been right to force the issue and grab their freedom when they did. By the end of the first half of the 20th century, colonialism had become an outdated concept and the time had come for the Dutch colonials to transfer the country back to its original inhabitants. But it was, of course, a great pity that the Republic of Indonesia was recognized only after much vicious fighting and bloodshed between the Dutch and the Indonesians. It would have been so much better for everybody if the transfer had been a peaceful one between friends and equals, creating a new nation that Indonesians as well as Dutch could be proud of and love. However, mistakes were made on both sides and the result was an ugly, bloody war of liberation. But whatever happened in the world of big politics, the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, is the country of my birth where I lived the first 20 years of my live, and where I had a terrific childhood followed by several hard years in concentration camps. For me, Indonesia was, is, and always will be my *Tanah Air Kita* (Our Land and Water).

All over the Japanese-occupied country, no one was allowed to leave the camps because there were as yet no Allied troops to liberate the prisoners and protect them from the Indonesians who now were fighting the Dutch for de-colonization of the country. Although we were not allowed to leave the safety of the camps, numerous prisoners didn't listen and left anyway. Many Indos joined their families in the free world outside, and a number of Totoks left the camps any way they could to try and find members of their often widely dispersed families still locked up in camps somewhere.

On 19 August 1945, my brother, Wim, left his camp in Tjimahi, about 15 km west of Bandoeng, walking, and also hitchhiking in a Japanese army truck, the short distance to Bandoeng, finally showing up in our Camp Tjikoedapateuh where he found a place to stay in Hotel Bedbug together with our father and me. We hadn't seen Wim since 19 August 1942, exactly three years ago, three years he had been incarcerated in several concentration camps, from when he was 18 till he was 21, three years he had completely disappeared from our family's life. First he was imprisoned in the men's camp LOG on the outskirts of Bandoeng, in January 1944 followed by two weeks in Tjikoedapateuh in transit to the big Camp 4th-9th Battalion in Tjimahi, where he was kept for 1.5 years until he left on his own on 19 August 1945. Wim apparently had a very tough time in the camps with memories of sufferings that must have haunted him until he died in 2003. Unfortunately he decided never to talk to our family about his three camp years, so we have no idea of what had happened to him, a lack of crucial information that has always greatly saddened his three children. Nowadays, Wim might well have been diagnosed as suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

At last, on 23 August 1945, the men in our camp were told by the Japanese commandant that the war was indeed over. There were some remarkably subdued celebrations by the ex-prisoners to welcome their newfound freedom: singing of the national anthem and some Dutch popular songs as well as religious hymns, raising of a quickly made Dutch flag, display of pieces of orange-coloured cloth and paper, the Dutch national colour. There was much hugging and back-slapping, and people shed copious tears of joy. Those early days of freedom we thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful open-air concert as well as the much increased availability of food and other goods in the kitchen and the camp store. There were no problems walking right out of the gate to trade with the Indonesians waiting for us outside; most of them were happy to see us and greeted us with enthusiasm. Of course, there was no more *tenko* and most work details had been stopped, except for the essential ones such as kitchen and hospital duties, and keeping the camp clean.

Unfortunately, for too many prisoners the end of the war had come too late; in spite of better food and medical care there were still people dying of the after-effects of starvation and various serious ailments. A few of us wanted bloody revenge and kill some of the worst guards but

the Dutch camp leaders were fortunately able to avoid that. However, a notorious Dutch prisoner who had betrayed several others to the Japanese, was quietly beaten to death by us.

After a few days of this "liberty," people were beginning to feel bitterly disappointed with the complete absence of instant freedom. How long was it going to take the Allied troops to reach us? Surely not longer than a few days, or at the most a week! The world outside the camps was becoming increasingly hostile and dangerous; Japanese soldiers were ordered to protect the camps from attacks by fanatic Indonesian freedom fighters. The *bersiap* was on (this is the Indonesian word for 'get ready' or 'get prepared' and is the name of the period of chaotic revolutionary violence that lasted on Java and Sumatra from September 1945 to December 1946). Fortunately, on the whole the Japanese soldiers did a good job protecting us. At the end of the war in August 1945, several camps were not immediately opened because of the troubles caused by the *bersiap* movement. Many hundreds of Dutch camp inmates and also Dutch people from outside the camps were taken prisoner by the *bersiap* fighters and again put into concentration camps, this time controlled and guarded by Indonesians. It would take months and in several cases even almost two years before the prisoners could leave the camps.

It was a bizarre situation: from oppressors the Japanese had turned into protectors overnight, by just following orders as they had always done. Of course, these were very hard times for the Japanese military trapped in Indonesia. In spite of their capitulation, the Japanese military organization remained intact. Not only had these men lost a war, which was an unimaginable calamity in their ancient culture, but they were stranded in this unfamiliar country thousands of kilometres from home, not knowing if their family had survived the bombardments and starvation. In this war, like in most wars, everybody was a victim.

For my deathly sick father the situation had changed dramatically. Because better medication, material, and food was becoming available in the camp clinic, he began to receive much better care, and his health started to improve rapidly. It was just in time because my father had lost 40% of his body weight and was extremely weak and close to death. He could barely walk.

It was depressing to see how several people had not learned anything during the war years. Some of them who had been "important" before the war and who had been reduced to less than nothing in

the camps, now picked up airs again and started ordering people around to do things for them, like they used to in the past. Depressing indeed; people just don't learn.

On 25 August, I got a job as a mechanic at a car repair and transportation service housed in a nearby building outside the camp. The Motor Transport Dienst had been set up to provide transportation for members of the old Dutch government and civil service who were attempting to re-organize the Dutch society. Because there were not enough professional car mechanics available, I offered myself as an experienced mechanic (repairing bicycles as a young boy's hobby before the war!) and got this job to repair and maintain Bantam Blitz Buggies, the forerunner of the Jeep, which had been acquired just before the war by the Dutch military. I quickly learned on the job everything I needed to know about those unforgettable cars and how to repair and drive them, and I also made some good money.

At the end of August, some clothing was made available to the ex-prisoners by the Red Cross. I received two shorts, two shirts, and a pair of shoes, as well as a woolen blanket with USA Army printed on it. After having lived with rags and walking barefoot for so long, this was amazing luxury, although walking in shoes was no fun at first.

On 30 August, my father and Wim left the camp and moved to the Juliana Hospital in northeast Bandoeng where my father could receive better care. The hospital was protected from *bersiap* attacks by Japanese soldiers. Wim got a job in the hospital as an orderly. I stayed in Tjikoedapateuh because I wanted to keep working at the MTD.

On 2 September 1945, Japan signed the instruments of surrender on the battleship Missouri moored in Tokyo Bay, officially ending the Pacific War (and with it the Second World War), a disastrous war that had lasted only three years and eight month at a cost of untold suffering and probably 38 million civilian and military lives. General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allies, opened the 23-minute surrender ceremony by stating: *"It is my earnest hope—indeed the hope of all mankind—that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past, a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfilment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice."*

On 4 September we learned from the Red Cross that my mother was still in the Tjideng camp in Batavia but could not travel to Ban-

doeng because of her bad health. Also, the situation on the road between the two cities was very unstable and dangerous because of the Indonesian *bersiap*. We wrote her letters telling her that her husband and sons were safe in Bandoeng and that we hoped she would be able to come to us as soon as possible.

In mid-September, for the first time in almost four years, the men who were still living in Tjikoedapateuh were shown a movie. The Hollywood musical *Two Girls and a Sailor* was projected on a large screen set up in a nearby building, I can't exactly remember where. We were spellbound, hadn't seen anything so magical for a very long time. To see all those healthy, beautiful, colourful people dancing and singing on the screen made us realize how much we had missed these simple pleasures over the years. There was no lack of tears shed by us.

On 19 September, I took the shorts I had made from the blue lampshade and cut it in little pieces, which I burned to celebrate the end of my time as a prisoner. I threw away most of the rest of my camp clothing and mattress, keeping only a few other mementoes from my time in the concentration camps: my and my father's identification numbers, our two pencil-drawn portraits, several bills of Nippon money, one camp postcard, the dagger/bayonet, and my cherished grinning devil, Diablo, all packed in my old duffle bag. Together with the clothes, shoes, and blanket I had received from the Red Cross, that was all I possessed in the world.

At last, on 20 September I left Hotel Bedbug, my home for one unforgettable year in Camp Tjikoedapateuh that had taught me so much about life. I said an emotional goodby to Dominee and other campmates who had also survived the camp years. Jacky had disappeared as soon as the war was over, and Meneer was, of course, no longer with us. Those goddamned concentration camp days were finally behind me!

To be with my father and brother, I moved to the Juliana Hospital, where I got a job as an ambulance driver. I now had to help evacuate sick people and pregnant women from the area in south Bandoeng occupied by the Indonesian freedom fighters, experiencing some very scary, life-threatening moments as I drove in and out of the war zone in my trusted ambulance. That I came out of those heart-stopping adventures alive, not even badly wounded, was a true miracle. I also started school again part-time at the hospital with volunteers, among them my father, as teachers. I had lost almost 3.5 years of school and would have to work very hard to overcome that huge setback.

Unfortunately, I had great difficulty adapting to the unfamiliar peace-time situation; being in a real school again after years of imprisonment was not easy. Freedom did not taste as sweet as I had thought it would. At the hospital I had for the first time looked at myself in a full-length mirror. It was scary, I didn't recognize the guy standing there.

On 25 September, when searching for the home in northeast Bandoeng our family had lived in before the war, which was now occupied by an Indonesian family, I met my Indonesian friend Wiweko on the street. He greeted me with the word *merdeka* (freedom) and appeared to be a bit embarrassed to be seen in the company of a Dutchman, although he personally seemed very glad to meet me again after all those war years. We talked about my camp years and the Indonesian fight for a free country; I expressed my strong desire to remain on good terms with the people of my beloved birth-country. When we parted, he again said *merdeka,* which is the standard national Indonesian greeting, as ordered by Soekarno. So I replied: *merdeka,* Wiek!

By the end of September, my father had been healed enough to visit his old workplace, the Geological Services Department, where he was welcomed by the man who had been his Indonesian assistant before the war, and very gratefully retrieved from him the wooden chest with our cherished family mementos.

Only on 17 October, that is a full two months after Japan's capitulation, British troops (only the officers were British, the men were Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Mahrattas from British India) finally entered the Bandoeng area to stabilize the situation and "liberate" the camps. They took over from the Japanese soldiers who had been protecting the camps from attacks by Indonesian freedom fighters.

On 22 October, the three of us, father Anton, Wim, and I, were finally reunited with mother Tine who had been imprisoned in the Tjideng concentration camp for women in Batavia on Java`s north coast. It was heartbreaking to see my severely weakened mother having so much trouble getting off the bus that had brought her from the Bandoeng train station to the Juliana hospital. When she saw her husband and two of her sons she stopped moving and just stood there, looking at us, eyes flooded with tears and hands trembling. My father rushed to her and with great care took his wife in his arms. My reunited parents embraced each other silently for a long time, tears streaming down their faces. Wim and I stood alongside, crying.

My mother had lost a lot of weight, 40% by the end of the war in

mid-August. However, several weeks later when we finally saw her towards the end of October she had regained some of her health but was still looking very thin and weak. I had trouble recognizing her because she really looked like a starvation victim, her hair and skin having turned a lifeless, unattractive grey.

But at least our family here had survived the war. Through the Red Cross we learned that my eldest brother, Dik, had died in 1944 in France where he was working as a forced labourer for the Germans. Very sad news for all of us.

Later, when we were together in my father's room, my mother told us what had happened to her after my father and I had left for Camp Tjikoedapateuh on 15 October 1944, a year ago now. First, the women and children of Flower Camp were moved to main Camp Tjihapit, and late December 1944 she was transported together with many other women and children by badly overcrowded train to Camp Tjideng in Batavia. Life in both camps was horrible but especially the eight months in Tjideng were hell filled with starvation, degradation, sickness, beatings, torture, and death. Many of the women did not have breasts or buttocks anymore, and for most women menstruation was also a thing of the past. Tragically vulnerable were mothers with young children who they put to bed with all their clothes on tightly and well covered with blankets so that they would sleep soundly and hopefully forget about the gnawing hunger in their bellies. It was heartbreaking to see so many hungry, emaciated children in the camp, some of them dying for lack of proper nutrition and care. By the end of the war, there were quite a few orphans in the camp, whose mothers had died and who lived a filthy, hungry, desperate life, trying to survive with the help of foster mothers.

Tjideng was the camp where the notorious Sonei Kenichi was camp commandant from March 1944 till June 1945. Sonei was a moonstruck lunatic, a sadistic, manic-depressive psychopath who took great pleasure in beating, kicking, and torturing women and children alike. He suffered from unpredictable attacks of rage and irrational cruelty and very much enjoyed cutting off women's hair. Also his Japanese and Korean subordinates feared his unpredictable reign of terror. After the war, Sonei apparently complained that as a commandant having to deal with 10,000 difficult and recalcitrant women, so different from the women in Japan, was a serious ordeal for him.

In Tjideng, a very small camp consisting of a fenced-of (by *gedèk*) section of a Batavia suburb, more than 10,000 women and children were packed together under extremely miserable living conditions. Originally the camp had about 2,000 inhabitants living in a reasonably sized camp. However, its size was gradually diminished to about one-quarter, while the number of women and children rose to more than 10,000, leading to horrible overpopulation. Sanitation was a very dangerous disaster, because the toilets in this terribly overcrowded camp were no longer working, so old tin cans had to be used to collect the huge mass of excrement produced by so many women and children, and dump the foul stuff in holes and open ditches. The terrible stench was so overpowering that even the Japanese guards avoided entering the camp. Tjideng was also infested with bed bugs and lice; they were everywhere and everybody suffered terribly from their bites. Numerous rats climbed over sleeping mats and people's bodies. Amazingly, this stinking sea of suffering humanity was said to be guarded by a total of only about ten Japanese and Korean soldiers.

The food was absolutely insufficient in quality and quantity — as was the case in probably all Japanese concentration camps at this stage of the war — and consequently many people died of starvation, various sicknesses, and other camp-related causes. By early August 1945, about five deaths a day would have to be taken care of in Tjideng.

Mam also told us that Auntie Ria and her daughter, Annie, were still in a hospital in Batavia, both recuperating from serious malaria attacks. (I never saw my dear Annie again; sadly I don't know what happened to her.) Upon hearing all this awful news, I finally broke down and cried uncontrollably. I just had to let the tears flow because of all those years of frustration, camp life, slavery, starvation, illness of girlfriend, abuse of mother, death of Meneer and illnesses of my father, all the terrible things that had happened to the people I loved, and also to me. My crying finally broke the shield that I had built up to protect myself from the mad world I had been forced to live in the last few years.

When somewhat calmed down, I told my mother about the dreadful sickness of my father and that I had even considered euthanizing him, but that the end of the war had prevented that. My mother was shocked deeply but she hugged me and held my face in her hands: "Your father and I gave you life and we'r e so grateful you try to use it wisely. The ugly times are gone now, Tonnie, and you will have to start over again." She tenderly kissed my face.

Chapter 23 END-GAME

My personal Pacific War story has now been told. I trust it has given the readers of this book a better understanding of the behaviour of the opposing parties involved in those turbulent times: the Japanese captors and their prisoners. However, truly understanding the often erratic and unpredictable Japanese, especially the military, is not easy

For instance, it's very hard to explain why the Japanese government did not realize already in the second half of 1944, or even earlier, that Japan was fighting a losing war and that continuing it made no sense. Japan's civilian population suffered severe shortages of everything they needed in their lives. Lack of food, leading to weak bodies, was the main reason for the large absenteeism, up to 50%, among all Japanese workers. The production of medication diminished by 70%, most of what was left went to the army. Because of the overwhelming power of the American Navy and Air Force, Japan had lost control of the sea and the air since July 1944. At that time the Americans had begun to employ conventional bombs to rain down death and destruction on the Japanese home front, but these efforts had apparently not been effective enough to make the military hardliners in Japan's government agree to end the war.

The aerial attacks became much more lethal when, on the night of 9-10 March 1945, after bombing tests in February, the city of Tokyo, largely consisting of wooden buildings, was firebombed by 325 giant Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers. Unopposed by Japanese fighter planes, the bombers dropped thousands of incendiary napalm bombs for a total of around 1,700 tons. This created a gigantic firestorm that layed waste to 41 km² of the city, destroying more than 260,000 buildings, causing more than 100,000 dead, one million injured, and one million homeless. The Tokyo firebombing was the most destructive and devastating air strike in history and probably created the highest single-day death toll of the Second World War. The wholesale slaughter of civilians was horrifying, but Japan's industry, consisting in part of thousands of tiny home factories, had to be destroyed, and all human resistance had to be broken in order to end the war as quickly as possible.

The firebombing of Tokyo was followed in the next five months by the equally horrendous, near-nightly firebombing of more than 60 Japanese cities (again including Tokyo), resulting in a great many dead and the widespread destruction of Japan's economy and military production facilities. The March-July firebombing campaign is estimated to have taken more civilian lives than the half-million, possibly even almost a million, killed during five years of Allied bombing of Germany. Meantime, by the spring of 1945, U.S. submarines and bombers had destroyed Japan's merchant marine, and the country had been isolated because its harbours and coastal waters had been mined. Thus, by early summer, virtually all shipping, manufacturing, trans-portation, and food distribution had ground to a halt. Still, the Japanese megalomaniac military hardliners from the army and the navy, who dominated the Japanese government and were blinded by their age-old *bushido* code of military honour, again rejected all attempts to stop the war. The American President, Harry Truman, therefore decided he had no choice but to drop two atomic bombs to show the Japanese what could be in store for them if they did not immediately surrender unconditionally.

For us in the concentration camps, the atomic bombs came just in time. I vividly remember how, as the war progressed into 1945 and Japan was losing on all fronts, the living conditions in the concentration camps had become utterly dreadful and were rapidly worsening even more. It was so bad that in early August 1945, the basic rations supplied by the Japanese military to their prisoners were criminally low indeed, with disastrous consequences for tens of thousands of people. For many of us, death was waiting just around the corner.

But then, in a blinding flash of light, radiation, heat, shockwaves, and sound, everything changed instantly; humanity suddenly entered a new, frightening phase in its history. At 8:15 local time in the morning of Monday, 6 August 1945 (August 5th USA date), an atomic bomb exploded over the centre of the city of Hiroshima in southern Japan, instantly killing more than 80,000 human beings, some of them military but mostly civilian, including prisoners of war employed in the city as slave labourers. Over the years, the bomb's after-effects would condemn tens of thousands more to a horrible, radiation-related death. Hiroshima was a city of about 350,000 inhabitants, and was of considerable military importance, containing Japan's Second Army Headquarters, as well as being a military communications centre and an army storage depot. The city had been selected as the target for the first

atomic bomb because it had not been bombed before and was therefore an undamaged city with obvious strategic significance as a major staging area for Japan's military operations in China and Southeast Asia, a large military population, and many war industries.

The bomb had been dropped by the United States Air Force to establish a quick end to the war, because the Americans were convinced that an invasion of Japan would lead to appalling losses in lives on both sides. Also, as became known later, the threatened massacre of civilian and military prisoners of war by the Japanese militarists — more or less standard practice when they were losing a battle — would have wiped out many tens of thousands of men, women, and children, slaughtered in a rage of defeat.

Because the Japanese government still gave no sign that they wanted to end the war unconditionally, a second atomic bomb was dropped three days later, on 9 August, this time on Nagasaki, instantly killing more than 70,000. Uncounted numbers would succumb in the coming years because of the bomb's after-effects. Nagasaki was one of the largest sea ports in southern Japan, and its wide-ranging industrial activity produced much war material. That same day, 9 August 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Japan-occupied Manchuria.

The urgent need to use the atomic bombs is stated by the American historian W. Gruhl on the website http://www.hnn.us/articles/44729.html : *The long, destructive war Japan started and refused to end on terms that would assure it would not attack its neighbors again, led to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By August 1945 each added week of war condemned more Japanese and Allied cities and villages to destruction and doomed approximately 100,000 Chinese and other Allies plus 50,000 Japanese to death; together, about 150,000 per week. The two A-bombs took approximately 150,000 lives, which equaled the carnage of one week of war. There is every indication that the bombs shortened the war by months. My projections show that the use of the atomic bombs saved from one million to three million lives and spared many millions more physically and psychologically wounded victims. City after city in the path of a longer war throughout Asia was spared destruction.*

It is remarkable that in the popular memory of the Japanese — and also the rest of the world — the horrendous firebombing of Tokyo and other

cities is rarely remembered, whereas everybody is keenly aware of the devastation caused by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Japan, the many victims of the atomic bombs are honoured and regularly memorized, but there is very little attention paid to the numerous victims of the firebombing of Tokyo and many other cities. Maybe this has something to do with the fact that the atomic bombs were a new, unique form of warfare, whereas the firebombing of cities was an existing technique that had already been used in Germany. Also, mourning the Hiroshima/Nagasaki victims probably reinforces the conviction many Japanese still have that Japan, instead of being the aggressor that started the war, was a victim of western expansionism and should therefore be treated with understanding and compassion.

The Japanese armed forces, who had been responsible for starting the war in December 1941, still intended to block any attempt to end the war, even after the dropping of the atomic bombs. However, in spite of very strong opposition from the military leaders under the command of the ultranationalistic War Minister, General Anami, Emperor Hirohito and the civilian members of his government decided, after the battle of Okinawa, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the declaration of war by the Soviet Union, that Japan could not possibly win this war. Furthermore, they were convinced that immediate surrender was required in order to avoid the gruesome prospect of the death of possibly millions of Japanese and Allied military personnel and civilians if the war were to be continued on the Japanese mainland. That the war be fought to the bitter end by *all* Japanese men, women, and children, whatever the consequences, was the singleminded objective of the fanatical Japanese militarists who held this to be a holy war for the survival of the sacrosanct Japanese way of life.

In the days following the dropping of the bombs, a momentous event took place in Japan. At the stroke of noon Japan Standard Time on Wednesday, the 15th day of August 1945, every Japanese citizen who had access to a radio stood respectfully bowed at attention listening in revered silence to the voice of a man. It was their hallowed Voice of the Crane, Japan's Tenno Heika, their 124th Heavenly Emperor, 44-year-old Imperial Majesty Hirohito. In his *Gyokuon-hōsō*, the Jewel Voice Broadcast, their God-Emperor spoke in a highly formal form of Japanese used by the Imperial Court in Tokyo, a somewhat

archaic language that many of his subjects could not understand. The Emperor read out the Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War (see Chapter 26, Photographs), telling his people that the Japanese government had fully accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. This joint declaration had been signed by the United States, Great Britain, and China on July 26, 1945, demanding the unconditional surrender of the Japanese military. Without saying so directly, Hirohito admitted that Japan had lost the Pacific War. Indeed, for the first time in its two-thousand-six-hundred-year history, the Great Nippon Empire had lost a war. This was beyond all shame; this was a horrific calamity.

The Emperor's five-minute spoken message had been pre-recorded on a gramophone record only the night before. It was the first time the common people of Japan heard the voice of their divine emperor speaking directly to them. The following is a rigorous translation that preserves the archaic formality of Hirohito's speech:

To Our good and loyal subjects.

After deeply pondering the general trends of the world and the current conditions of Our Empire, We have decided to effect a conclusion to the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure. We have ordered Our Government to communicate to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union that Our Empire accepts the provisions of their Joint Declaration.

To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations, as well as for the security and well-being of Our subjects, is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by Our Imperial Ancestors and which lies close to Our heart. Indeed, the Empire declared war against the United States and Great Britain out of Our sincere desire to preserve, by ourselves, the Empire's existence in East Asia and for the region's stability, it being far from Our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.

But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Although the best has been done by everyone — the gallant fighting of the military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of Our servants of the state, and the devoted service of Our hundred million people — the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interests.

The enemy, moreover, has begun to employ a new most cruel

bomb, the power which to do damage is indeed incalculable, taking toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in the ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but would lead also to the total extinction of human civilization. Such being the case, how are We to save millions of Our subjects, or Ourselves, to atone before the hallowed spirits of our Imperial Ancestors? This is the reason why We have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Powers.

We cannot but express the deepest sense of regret to Our Allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently cooperated with the Empire toward the emancipation of East Asia. The thought of those officers and men who have fallen on the field of battle, of those who have died at their posts of duty, or those who have met with untimely death, and of their bereaved families, pains Our heart night and day. The welfare of the wounded and war victims and of those who have lost their homes and livelihood are objects of Our profound solicitude. The hardships and sufferings to which Our nation is to be subjected hereafter will certainly be great.

We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all ye, Our subjects. However, it is according to the dictate of time and fate that We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable. Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the Imperial State, We are always with you, Our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity. Beware most strictly least any outburst of emotion, which may engender needless complications, or any fraternal contention and strife, which may create confusion, lead you astray and cause you to lose confidence of the world. Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith in the imperishability of its divine land, and mindful of its heavy burden of responsibilities and the long road before it. Devote your united strength to construction for the future. Cultivate ways of rectitude, further nobility of spirit, and work with resolution, so that you may enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.

It took great courage for the Emperor and his government to tell the Japanese people this crushing news of surrender, which, by tradition, was an unbearably shameful act. The brutally autocratic and oppressive mili-

tary establishment that effectively ruled the country was vehemently opposed to any action that would diminish the glory of their *bushido* warrior code of honour. This ancient code held as an inviolate truth that surrender under *any* circumstances was out of the question and that, instead of being defeated, death was the only honourable option.

Even before the broadcast, numerous officers in the Japanese military were extremely upset that the war might end in what was for them an unimaginably horrible way. Many officers and soldiers attempted to raid the Imperial palace on August the 14th in order to destroy the phonograph recording. However, the recording was hidden in a shoulder bag and then successfully smuggled out of the palace to the radio station early in the morning of the 15th. Just before the actual broadcast, another unsuccessful attempt was made to stop it from being played. But finally their living God was able to tell his people that they had lost the war. After the traumatic broadcast of Hirohito's message, hundreds of Japanese military men and civilians committed *seppuku*, ritual suicide. In their view they were safeguarding their honour, rather than having to face the humiliating reality of defeat.

One may say about Hirohito that he was a war criminal who should have been court-martialled. That he also was a weakling who should have ended the war two years earlier. Or that he was a gentle but simple man who had no understanding of the problems of his subjects' everyday life. All of this is probably true. But with the wise and courageous decision to stand up against the military establishment and to insist on telling the hard truth, he and his government showed great insight into the reality of the situation.

It may sound ironic now, but we, the former prisoners of Japan, should indeed be thankful to this small Japanese man for saving many of us from the wrath of the military, who wanted to keep on fighting at literally all costs. If he had not opposed the military, a great number, if not all, of civilian and military prisoners of war from many nations, including countless women and children, might have been killed by the vengeful Japanese forces before the end of 1945, as they reportedly were planning to do. Some reports even state that the date of total annihilation of all military and civilian prisoners of war had been set by the Army at 26 August 1945.

These gruesome plans by the Japanese military have been reliably documented: on 1 August 1944, twelve months before hostilities ended,

the following orders, addressed to the Commanding General and Commanding General of Military Police, were issued: *Extreme measures for POWs. At such time that the situation becomes urgent ... the POWs will be confined under heavy guard and preparation for final disposition will be made. Whether they are destroyed individually or in groups or however it is done, with mass bombing, poisonous smoke, poisons, drowning, decapitation, or what, dispose of them as the situation dictates ... In any case it is the aim not to allow the escape of a single one, to annihilate them all, and not leave any traces.* A copy of this message was found during the invasion of the Philippines and another document in Taiwan was not destroyed by the Japanese military. (However, Japanese documents that clearly show that all Dutch civilian internees were to be killed if Japan had lost the war, were never found.)

But thanks to the Voice of the Crane speaking his fateful message on the radio, that final massacre did not happen. For most of us in the camps, the 15th of August was just another day of hunger, beatings, humiliation, endless *tenkos*, exhausting struggles to stay human in a sea of misery. This day was like so many days before and surely many days still to come. We had no idea something very important had taken place in Tokyo. It was several days later, but in many camps even weeks later, for the prisoners to be informed they were now free, that the war was finally and truly over.

Hundreds of thousands of long-suffering civilian and military prisoners of war, myself included, were eventually set free to go home again and try to start a new life. My family survived the war, although both my parents had lost much of their normal body weight and were close to death. It took them a long time to recuperate from their ordeal and become whole again. We were lucky, though; countless fellow prisoners had suffered a senseless death in the camps, victims of an insane war. For many ex-prisoners the moral issue of “forgive and forget” became an unsolvable dilemma (see Chapter 24, Forgive).

I came out of the war a physically damaged, quite unhealthy, thin 18-year-old, very mature and wise for my age. Indeed, a pretty cynical young man who in a short time had learned much about the human species, both its good and bad sides. Life in the camps had been a hard struggle, but it had helped me grow. I had experienced terrible things

that could easily have destroyed me and make the rest of my life a living nightmare, as has happened to far too many survivors. But I was lucky. Instead of beating me down, the war experience has made me stronger, more critical, compassionate, and understanding, also wiser, with a powerful will to live and the need to know what life is all about, a seeker of freedom with a strong aversion to authority and injustice. In the camps I rarely lost my sense of self-worth. My happy childhood provided by my wonderful parents must have greatly contributed to my inner strength, helping me to survive the camp ordeals where I learned that it's not *that* you live, it's *how* you live that's important.

However, I cannot forget. I shall always remember horrible events in the camps and see the pictures in my mind: my father almost dying of dysentery and being eaten alive by tropical ulcers, friends being attacked savagely by the guards because they didn't bow deeply enough, desperate people hungrily eating maggots and cockroaches, an emaciated young mother clutching her starving baby because her milk had dried up, the sickening memory of my beaten-up mother begging our Japanese torturer to let us go. And I suffer deeply when I see those images before me. But I can handle them. I have to. Life goes on.

I am proud to have had the opportunity and strength so late in life to create this book, *The Devil's Grin*, testifying on what happened inside and outside the Japanese concentration camps in Southeast Asia, a book about what horrifying things a regime of total control by the Japanese military did to people, Japanese and others. It is very important for all of us to know and understand what the Japanese accomplished before and during the war and why that happened, originating as it did from a deeply rooted racism fuelled by archaic beliefs born from quasi-religious extremism. This volatile mixture was easily abused by a fascist government and a docile, impotent, and thoroughly brain-washed citizenry. From all this we should learn the crucial lesson that religious zealotry can easily and inevitably lead to terror and abuse on a massive scale.

Of course, whenever I write or speak about those dark subjects, the same questions come up: who, how, when, what, and above all: why? In this book I have tried to answer a few of those questions. However, there is one question nobody seems to be able to answer, the *why* of it

all. Why are we so cruel to each other? Why all the slaughter? Why is it so easy for many of us to descend into barbaric behaviour? Why don`t we learn from the past? So many difficult questions looking for meaningful answers.

Victor and vanquished alike, we remember the suffering and mourn our dead.

Chapter 24 FORGIVE

At the conclusion of this book, we are left with two important questions, one of which is impossible to be answered in a rational manner. The questions are: are we willing and able to forgive the Japanese for what they did to us and many others, and should we forget the immense suffering they caused?

Let's first look at the easy one, *forgetting*. Regrettably, there are those among us who just cannot talk about their Pacific War experiences and who keep all their horrible memories hidden deep within themselves, still suffering in silence. We should of course respect that. But we should also realize that for the generations born after the war it is of vital importance to know and above all to understand what their parents or grandparents went through in the concentration camps and why, and that we have to avoid the same things from happening again, now and in the future. Obviously, such insight can only be achieved if we are able to freely bring everything out into the open, the good as well as the bad.

So, to the question *should we forget?* there is but a simple answer: NO! NEVER!

Forgiving, however, is quite another matter. The Oxford Canadian Dictionary defines *to forgive* as: *cease to feel angry or resentful*. In many religions a fundamental tenet holds you should always forgive, and even love, your enemy; you should turn the other cheek whenever they do you harm. Indeed, it is stated almost universally that you should always cease to feel angry or resentful.

On the face of it this sounds good, very moral, a wonderful solution to the problem of how to get along with each other. But it is in fact not that simple; it is an illogical procedure that is impossible to implement fully, and can easily lead to self-destruction if applied rigidly in all cases of conflict. There are crimes so horrendous, so inherently evil (for instance the Nazi holocaust, the rape of Nanking, the Uganda genocide, and many others throughout history such as the slave trade and the Inquisition), that forgiving their perpetrators is absolutely out

of the question, most certainly for non-religious, rational, critically-thinking, free-thinking people like myself. For them, it's just not a realistic, intelligent option. For religious people with strict rules to follow, it is, of course, quite another matter. In their case, the rule "forgive and love your enemy" is a prescript, a duty, they just have to follow in order to be a good religious person; it's all a matter of faith. However, if we do not oppose that horrendous evil by hating it and fighting it with all our might, by not forgiving and by not turning the other cheek, evil will eventually win. And then, what? Then we're in really big trouble! So, don't fool yourself by thinking that forgiving and loving your enemy always solves the problem of open, peaceful communication between perpetrator and victim.

What does it actually mean, to forgive? If one ceases to feel angry, does that really mean one accepts what has happened as "something that's okay, it's not that bad, it's not important anymore, let's forget about it, let's stop talking about it, it's over and done with"? If that is indeed the case, it would be the gravest of insults to the victims of the evil actions.

In the case of the atrocities committed by the Japanese military forces, it is of crucial importance to know who were involved in any way in these crimes and who you might want to forgive or not. Would it be all Japanese people — just because they are Japanese and are living today — or only those Japanese people who perpetrated the atrocities so long ago, most of whom will be dead by now? And do those people, in the past or present, have to show genuine remorse for what they, or their forefathers, did in order to be forgiven? And are the many soldiers who did "bad" things personally responsible for their misdeeds or is it the military establishment they were part of that is the guilty party, the ruthless military society that had brainwashed them into mindless, soulless robots, too often behaving in an inhuman, unforgivable way because they had been conditioned and ordered to do so? This is, of course, the notorious *befehl ist befehl* (an order is an order) conundrum that defies simple answers.

As far as my own experience with the Japanese military is concerned, I find it impossible to forgive them for what they've done in the past to so many of their victims. In fact, I don't *want* to cease to feel angry, and I certainly don't want to love this enemy! Should I forgive those Japanese soldiers for enslaving human beings in concentration camps, starving them and beating countless men, women, and children

to death? Do I really want to forgive them for ruthlessly exploiting practically the whole Indonesian population, including the several millions of romusha's they subjected to horrible slave labour? And what about the hundreds of thousands of women from many nations they forced to become sex slaves to fill the brothels of the Japanese military? Should I, a survivor of the war in Southeast Asia, ever cease to feel angry with that Japanese guard for viciously beating and kicking my mother while she was trying to protect her child? Absolutely not! Never!

However, in spite of those strong feelings of hatred I still feel about some dreadful events that happened many years ago in my youth, I have always been a balanced human being without big inner conflicts. I feel confident and good about myself, I feel free. The hatred within me is not destructive; I don't need to free myself from those feelings. I am a happy person. I don't want to buy the self-serving notion, in essence a selfish act, that you have to forgive in order to have peace of mind and not be controlled by past events. I feel angry and resentful for what has happened during the war but it does not control my life in any way, it's by no means an obsession; although I remember those events, I can live with those memories. I don't hold a grudge at all against present-day Japanese because of the horrible events that were perpetrated by other Japanese in the past, provided those present-day Japanese acknowledge what has happened and show remorse and regret for the misdeeds of their forefathers. I am not at all looking for revenge, just understanding and insight on both sides.

There are no easy, absolute answers to this dilemma that are valid for everybody; everything is relative and a matter of degree. To forgive or not to forgive is very much a deeply private decision based on one's individual outlook on life, one's religion and moral convictions, one's experience, personality, and expectations. Everybody has to decide for themselves whether they should forgive or not. Not an easy task.

Chapter 25 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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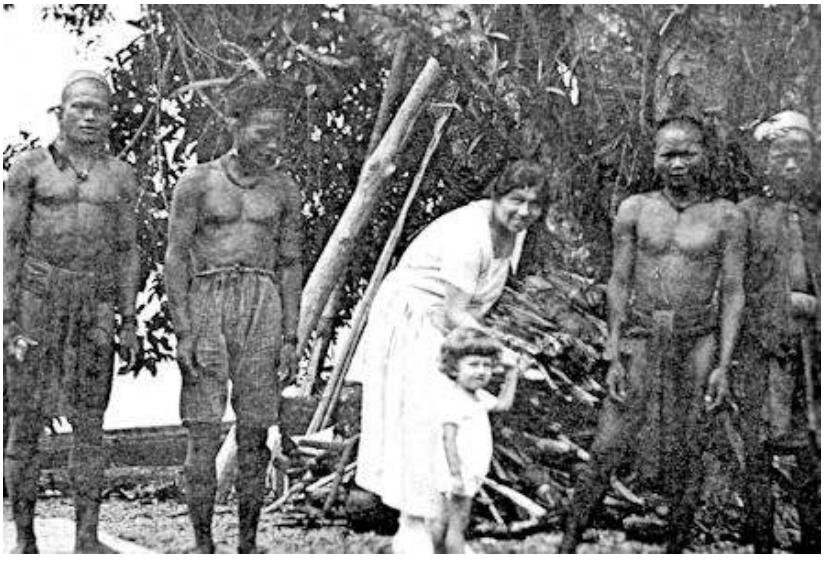
Chapter 26

PHOTOGRAPHS

1920-1945

Tine and Anton getting married in Batavia, 23 October 1920

Anton on a geological research expedition in Sumatra, 1921

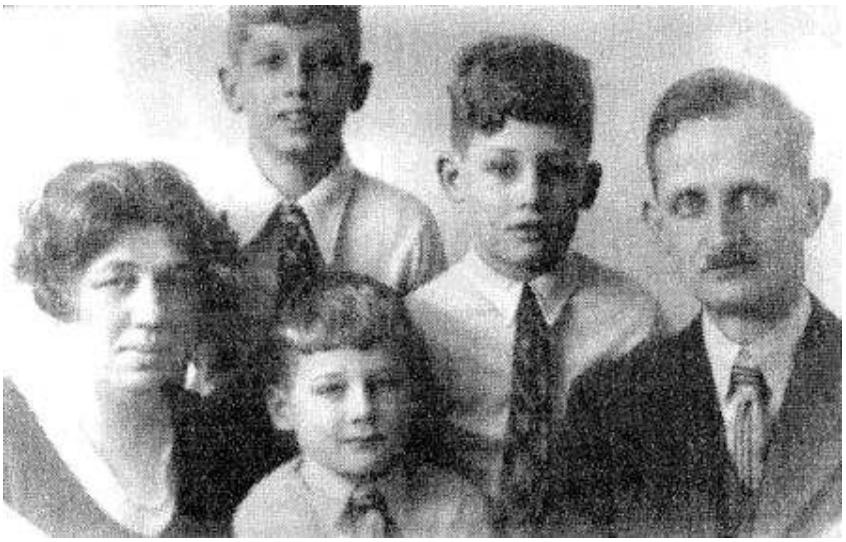


Dayaks visiting Tine and first son Dik (born in 1921) in Borneo, 1923

Second son Wim (born on Borneo, 1924) being admired in Borneo, 1924

Third son Ton (born on Sumatra, 1927), Mother, and brothers, Sumatra, 1927

Mother Tine and youngest son Ton 1929



The five Hartings, Bandoeng, 1935

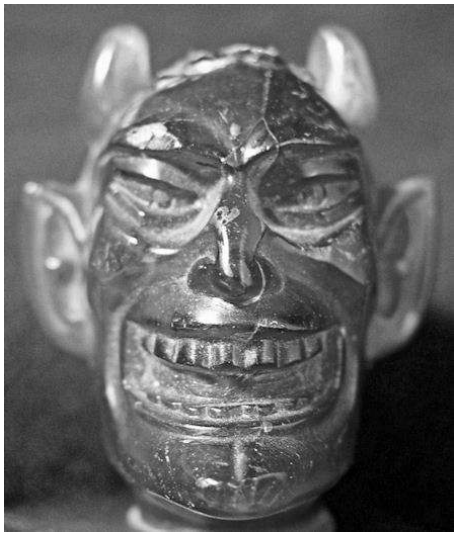
Anton in a volcanic crater, 1937

Simin and family
Bandoeng, 1938

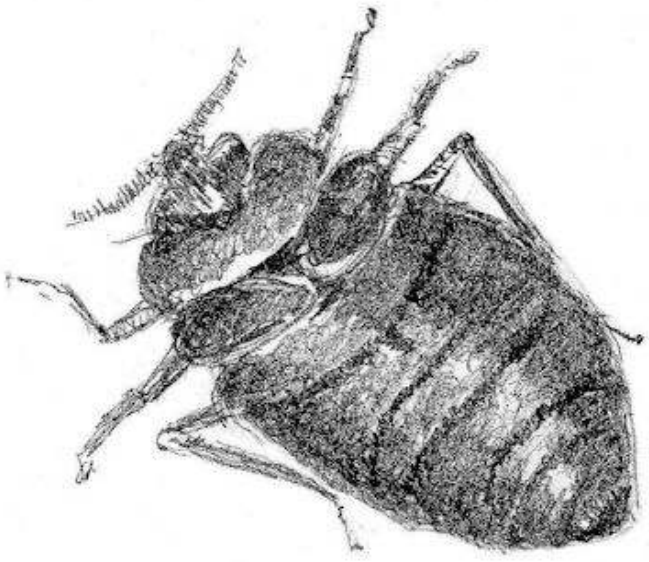
Ton with model airplane
Bandoeng, September 1941

Samples of Japanese army money, 1942, not to scale

Diablo



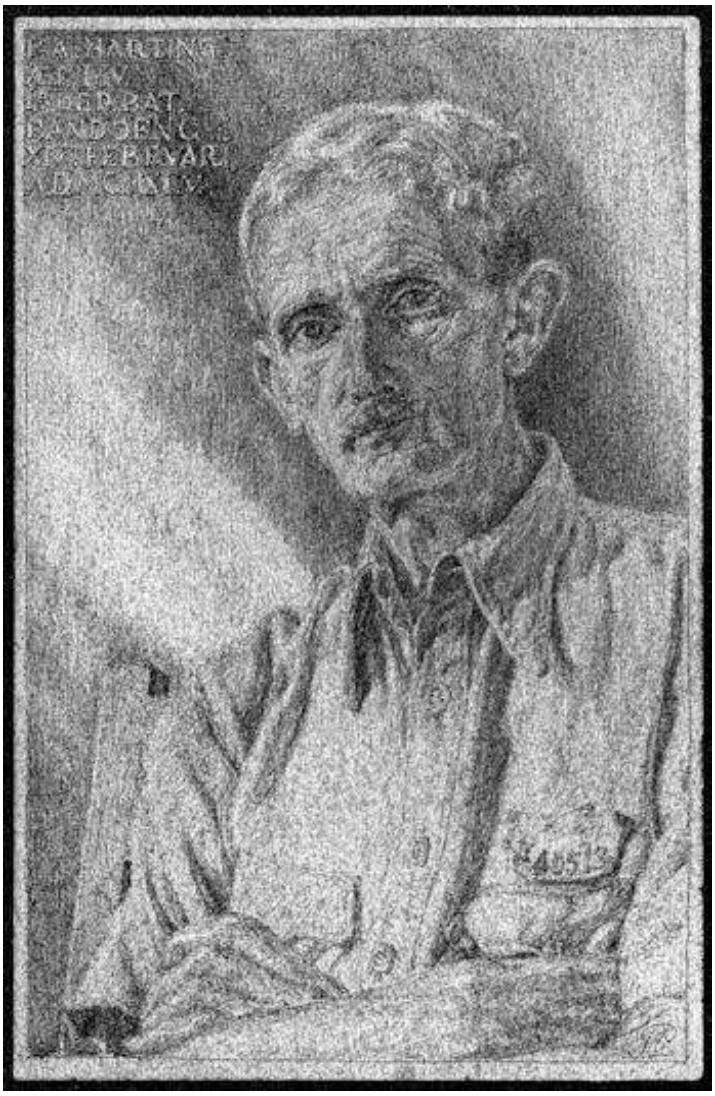
100 gr white rice in a 120 ml measuring cup



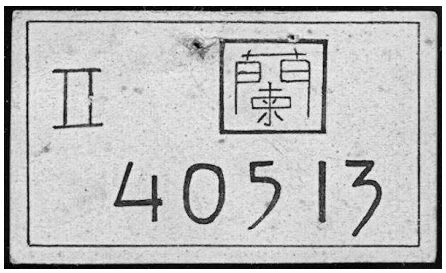
Bed bug; actual body length about 5 mm

Ton in camp Tjikoedapateuh, Bandoeng, 14 February 1945

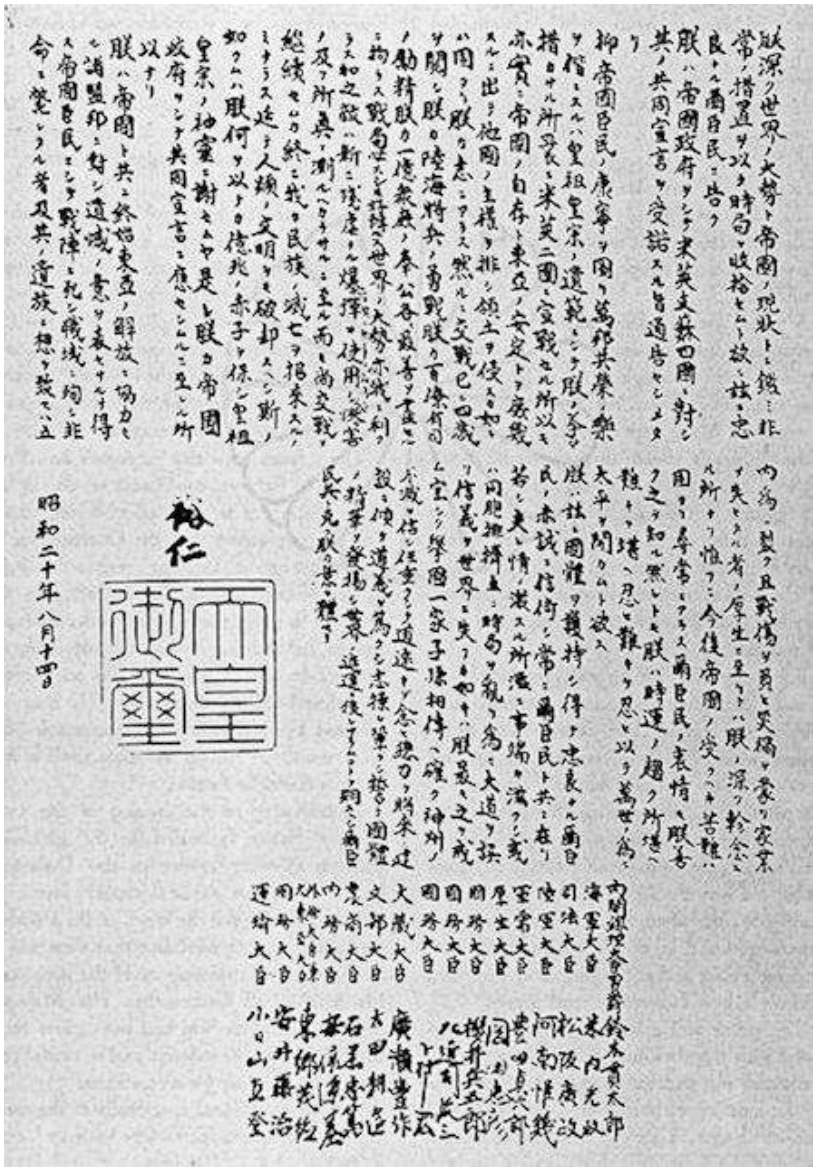
Ton's camp identification number



Anton in camp Tjikoedapateuh, Bandoeng, 14 February 1945



Anton's camp identification number



Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War

aims to provide insight into, and information about, the mentality, philosophy, and motivation of the Japanese people, especially the Japanese military, before and during the 1941-1945 war in the Pacific, as well as their system of civilian concentration camps in the Dutch East Indies colony in Southeast Asia.

The book also portrays the story of a young Dutch teenage boy developing into an eighteen-year-old man under brutal circumstances as a civilian prisoner of war in Japanese concentration camps in the Dutch East Indies. The story is formatted not as a conventional, detailed memoir but as an information-presenting, journalistic report inspired by, and to a large extent based on, my own experiences, observations, and thoughts as a civilian prisoner of war.

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"It's a strange experience growing up as a rebellious, headstrong, impulsive, aggressive, emotional, risk-taking, to a limited degree sexually active adolescent in a concentration camp where the harsh realities are dominated by hunger, oppression, sickness, beatings, degradation, and ever-present death."