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NAURU OCCUPIED BY AUSTRALIANS

Jap Garrison And Natives Starving

From a Special Correspondent

On the quarterdeck of the Australian frigate *HMAS Diamantina* on Thursday Captain Hisay-aki Soga, commander of all Japanese forces there, surrendered the phosphate island of Nauru. The surrender was accepted by Brigadier J. R. Stevenson, representing Lieut-General V. A. H. Sturdee, GOC 1st Australian Army.

A tale of cold-blooded cruelty and murder was revealed when a Japanese envoy boarded *Diamantina* at Nauru to open negotiations for the surrender. He was Lieut-Commander Akiko Hishimoto, and he was accompanied by a Chinese interpreter, Marr, who promptly made his nationality known when he set foot on the Australian frigate. Hishimoto revealed that food was so short on the island that at last the garrison, natives, and Chinese eked out existence with fish supplemented by pumpkins. About 300 Japanese died of starvation alone, despite the fact that they had seized all the best cultivated ground on the island and had forced the natives and Chinese to work for them. Among themselves the Japanese practised cannibalism, eating those who became too ill to fend for themselves.

When told that the Japanese must evacuate the whole of the main residential area by 3pm on Thursday, Hishimoto pleaded for permission to continue fishing in the adjacent sea, as fish were all they had to live upon. He was told abruptly by Captain George Renwick, of *Vaucluse*, Sydney, "We will deal with the feeding of Japanese later. Meanwhile these instructions will be carried out."

As the Japanese party was flung out for return to the island with the instructions, Lieutenant George Lording asked the Chinese interpreter Marr if he felt that his life would be in any way endangered by returning to the Japanese. Marr shook his head doubtfully, and was given permission to remain for a time on board. Speaking with great emotion, Marr said: "For years we have waited and longed for this day, as our population slowly dwindled under starvation and ill-treatment. The most-used phrase on the island was, 'When the British come back!'"

The vivid contrast of British and Japanese codes of decency is demonstrated by the Australian forces occupying Nauru. While relatives of Australian soldiers captured by the Japanese waited years for news, the Australian commander, even before the occupation had perfected plans for prompt notification to Tokyo of names of Japanese prisoners in their hands.

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BIG JOB FOR POSTAL DEPARTMENT

Arrears of 'Phones, New Buildings

From Our Canberra Correspondent FRANK FITZGERALD

There is little hope of any immediate improvement in the telephone and telegraph services in Australia, which, on the admission of the Postmaster-General himself, are in a very unsatisfactory state.

Shortly after his appointment as PMG a few months ago, Senator Cameron said the aim of the department was to provide a telephone for every home that wanted one. Since then he has been bombarded with applications for telephones. He said yesterday that the department had between 30,000 and 40,000 applications which could not be supplied.

Plans have been prepared by the department for a nation-wide building and equipment programme, on which it has been authorised to spend £18 million. The programme is to include building and equipment of a number of new automatic telephone exchanges, conversion of manual exchanges to the automatic system, extensions and improvements to hundreds of country post-offices and postmasters' residences, and installation of some thousands of new telephone services in city and country. It is proposed to install about 400 automatic telephone exchanges in country districts and to bring all telephone and telegraph services up to date.

There are many telephone exchanges in the capital cities that should have been scrapped years ago," Senator Cameron said. "Automatic exchanges which have been provided were built without taking into account needs of the future and are already inadequate for present requirements."

In Melbourne and Sydney telegraph operators have to work under crowded conditions which make it impossible for them to give the best results. Our new building programme will be put in hand as soon as the necessary manpower and equipment are available. We are now awaiting release of trained personnel from the Army and the procurement of equipment from overseas."

MEANS TEST IN SOCIAL SERVICE LEGISLATION

Abolition of the means test in social service legislation would cost £35 million, Mr Chifley, Prime Minister, said yesterday. It was a very desirable objective, but it might take some years to achieve.

The question was being examined, but a problem was how the reform could be financed.

A number of organisations had sought removal of the test.

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WAR CORRESPONDENT INDICTS JAP POW AUTHORITIES

Burma-Siam Atrocities

By ROHAN D. RIVETT, formerly of THE ARGUS, who was sole British war correspondent among the prisoners in Burma and Siam, and who has just returned after three and a half years in the hands of the Japanese.

I accuse the Japanese POW authorities in Burma, Siam, and at headquarters in Tokyo:

(1) Of sending 60,000 European officers and men into Burma and Siam without provision for their welfare supply, medical care, or maintenance.

(2) Of seeking to debase and humiliate Allied officers and other ranks to the level of beasts under the eyes of the local Asiatic population, and, in defiance of all international agreements, of treating war prisoners as common criminals sentenced to hard labour, officers being compelled to work under the eyes of the local Asiatics naked except for a loin cloth and wooden clogs.

(3) Of setting a ration scale totally inadequate for white men labouring under tropical conditions, and of allowing the actual supply to fall far below even this scale, thanks to the interminable "squeeze," racketeering, theft, and maladministration of POW rations.

(4) Of leaving many camps for months on end without meat, green vegetables, oil, sugar, or protein foods of any kind, the ration of rice, melons, and jungle roots supplied being inadequate to support European life in such conditions.

(5) Of leaving prisoners in rags without hats, shirts, pants, coats, blankets, or boots through the rains and through the cold nights lasting from November until March.

(6) Of crowding POWs in a fashion which made mass infection and epidemics inevitable, in bamboo attap huts which were verminous, leaky, and often flooded.

(7) Of rejecting and obstructing the demands of POWs for establishment of reasonable hygienic and sanitary arrangements in camp areas.

(8) Of repeatedly ignoring the desperate pleas of qualified Allied medical officers for even a small fraction of the essential requisites for their battle against dysentery, malaria, beri beri, cholera, and tropical ulcers.

(9) Of allowing ignorant officers, NCO's, and even privates to overrule Allied medical officers and drive out to work diseased and debilitated men, often totally unfit to walk.

(10) Of allowing and sometimes organising the wholesale misappropriation of Red Cross foodstuffs, clothes, comforts, and medical supplies designed for the prisoners, many prisoners receiving no Red Cross goods whatever until December, 1943, and all prisoners receiving very little thereafter, only one-sixth of one Red Cross parcel being received by all prisoners during 42 months' captivity.

(11) Of providing Japanese front-line troops, engineers, and guards with Red Cross boots, cigarettes, and medical stores sent to POWs, for

lack of which thousands of prisoners died.

(12) Of denying prisoners mail even years old through a capricious, sporadic censorship which kept letters lying sometimes for years within a few yards of the men for whom they were intended, thus adding a tremendous mental strain and worry to the prisoners' physical burdens.

(13) Of encouraging the most brutal beatings with bamboo, tool handles, and fists for the smallest offences or imagined offences and giving the fullest licence to the sadistic bullies specially placed in all camps, while cynically ignoring repeated official protests.

(14) Of shooting or bayoneting to death prisoners caught outside camp bounds, including several men mentally unharmed by cerebral malaria wandering about without any idea of escape.

(15) Of permitting to go unpunished several individual guards who committed cold-blooded murders or inflicted permanent bodily injury on their helpless captives.

(16) Of deliberately placing prisoners camps against and amid major military objectives without allowing any identification marks even for the hospitals, where hundreds lay helpless.

(17) Of ignoring or making fun of protests when as a result of this practice camps were bombed and prisoners killed and maimed in considerable numbers.

(18) Of deliberately seeking to break the prisoners' morale by innumerable petty restrictions and senseless deprivations which marred the scanty recreation hours, and of constantly obstructing every effort of the prisoners' own administrations to alleviate conditions.

(19) Of giving promises and assurances regarding the future which were subsequently repudiated or ignored so that the prisoners' own administrations were often helpless before a wall of dishonest chicanery and lies against which their best efforts were unavailing.

(20) Of totally disregarding all conventions concerning prisoners, including the Hague agreement, to which Japan was a signatory, and of stating repeatedly that the Japanese army was not bound by its own government's signature.

Specific Japanese officers in Burma and Siam indictable under many of all of these counts are:

The general of engineers commanding all Siam POWs 1942-1944: Colonel Sugawara, commanding all prisoners 1944-1945: Colonel Y. Nagatomo, commanding all Burma prisoners 1942-1943: And Captains Mizdani, Neguchi, Naito, and Lieutenants Heguchi, Hoshi, Hosoda, Motogima, Suzuki Teruchi, Komi, Kanematsu, and Takahatchi.

A full list of officers, NCO's, and privates indictable under at least 100 should be available to the military authorities in Siam within the next few weeks.

There are still 40,000 living witnesses—British, Australian, American, and Dutch—to the truth of these charges. But even more unimpeachable testimony comes silently from the 15,000 jungle graves along the Burma-Siam railway.

200 ST KILDA ROAD TREES TO GO

"We expect some criticism over removal of the poplar trees from St Kilda rd, but members of my committee consider they have taken the correct procedure," Cr W. J. Brens, chairman of the City Council's Parks and Gardens Committee, said last night.

Cr Brens said his committee would recommend to the City Council on Monday that more than 200 old poplars and other trees which were regarded as dangerous to motorists should be removed and the more modern type of Desert Ash tree be planted.

"Our experts have proved after considerable research that the Desert Ash will prove most suitable for the plantations along St Kilda rd," he said. "Five years after planting the trees should be showing signs of providing a decorative effect to St Kilda road."

REPATRIATION MINISTER'S SON SAFE

Mr Frost, Repatriation Minister, yesterday received advice that his eldest son, Lieutenant Stewart (Jack) Frost, who had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese for three and a half years, was safe.

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