

Hong Kong Men's One Aim— To Get Home—And Fast!

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HONG KONG, Sept. 4—(CP Cable)—Jubilant at rescue after more than 3½ years in Japanese prison camps following the fall of this Crown colony Christmas Day, 1941, hundreds of Canadian soldiers Monday night had one object in life—to get home.

However, those men who battled gallantly with Britons and Indians against overwhelming Japanese odds appeared patient about repatriation.

The Canadians freed last Thursday when landing parties from the Canadian anti-aircraft cruiser Prince Robert entered a prison camp at Shuon, on Kowloon peninsula opposite Hong Kong, paid highest tribute to the Indian fighting men.

Subjected to the most intense Japanese propaganda, the Indians generally remained staunchly loyal despite public executions and other methods of torture.

Prisoners told a story of poor treatment by the Japanese, insufficient rations and lack of medical care after the fall of the garrison where the Canadian contingent from the Winnipeg Grenadiers, the Royal Rifles of Canada and a brigade headquarters numbered 1,985 men.

Four drafts of Canadians were taken from the Hong Kong camp—in January, August and December, 1943, and in April, 1944. In some cases the men were selected by the fact that they were able to walk across one of the camp roads. Those who couldn't make it, stayed behind. Altogether 1,084 were taken away.

When the landing parties from Prince Robert stopped at the Samshuipo camp on their way from the naval dockyard, I went along with marines and seamen who occupied the area. I found Capt. Alex Prendergast, with whom I had had a telephone conversation previous and introduced myself.

Prisoners said medical supplies were adulterated by the Japanese and only 50 percent effective. They said also that the Japanese had told them that the Canadians put up the best opposition they had encountered.

When I entered a little hut which was used as Canadian headquarters, I was greeted by Lt.-Col. William James Home of Quebec City, who is commander of Canadian personnel here. Col. Home has a file containing the nominal role of 369 other ranks now in the camp as well as many other

records, including a file of Japanese propaganda leaflets. He had difficulty in keeping records, for the Japanese usually seized such documents.

I met other of the prisoners during a lunch of improvised prison fare, but it was hardly possible to ask the men any questions since they were so eager to catch up on the accurate news of what had happened since they left home.

The prisoners were in far better condition now than they had been during their internment, particularly during 1942.