

# LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

## PRISONERS OF THE JAPS

Sirs:

I met the writer of the following letter in Chungking, China, a few weeks ago. He is a reputable American businessman who had escaped from Hong Kong. He had just read your article describing the luxuries which Japanese diplomats were enjoying during their internment in the U. S. (*LIFE*, Feb. 16). He was overcome with bitter indignation as he read this description in the light of the experiences which foreigners were undergoing at the hands of the Japanese in Hong Kong, and insisted that I bring back this message to *LIFE*.

The writer asked to remain anonymous for understandable reasons.

RAYMOND CLAPPER

Washington, D. C.

Sirs:

Having escaped from Hong Kong in the middle of February, my heart fills with horror and dismay on reading your story describing the luxuries offered Japanese officials at the Homestead, on the assumption that national honor demands extreme consideration. While 250 Japs, attended by 700 waiters, maids, masseurs and whatnots, were rocking on the porch of the world's best hotel, the captured American consular staff in Hong Kong was herded into two small houses without water, electricity or primitive comforts. The extreme consideration shown to Japs in the U. S. A. is interpreted not as honorable hospitality but as a sign of American weakness and fear of Japs' superior strength.

The American people must know that Jap treatment of American non-consular civilians is deliberately cruel, highly inhuman and insulting. American men, women and children, carrying on their backs bundles of the few possessions they saved from Jap looting, were driven like cattle on foot to be interned in the filthiest hotels the Japs could find in Hong Kong. A 6-ft.-by 8-ft. cubicle without windows was allotted to five internees, two sleeping on a single bed, three on the floor with their legs under the bed for lack of space. For five weeks they lived thus, with no air, no light and no permission even to stretch their much-cramped legs, with one water closet for 53 people, no baths, no money, no permission to see outsiders. Their rations were two bowls of cooked rice, scraps of vegetables,  $\frac{1}{16}$  oz. of salt and sugar per diem. No milk was allotted for babies. Hospital facilities and the most primitive medical attention were refused to people dying from dysentery.

Many prominent Americans had their faces slapped by Jap soldiers for fun. American residences were completely looted. During the first three days after surrender, Japs went on a rampage of rape and bloodthirsty killing much fiercer than related in Anthony Eden's cautious statement in the House of Commons.

Beginning in February all internees were removed to Stanley Peninsula to live in a concentration camp. They are sheltered in some ruined houses where conditions are slightly better inasmuch as fresh air and exercise are graciously permitted behind barbed wire. Food conditions, however, are getting worse. As treatment of internees does not bear investigation, Japs have refused permission for operation of the camp by the International Red Cross on the grounds that the Imperial Japanese Army knows what treatment should be given enemy aliens.

The condition of British military prisoners is even worse. One death from starvation had occurred already by the end of January; others since have died.

In justice and consideration to American nationals suffering in Jap hands, Jap internees in the U. S. A. should receive similar treatment and similar food rations.

Please consider the above as an eyewitness sworn statement. For obvious

reasons and fear of reprisals on interned relatives, the writer requests that his name be withheld from publication.