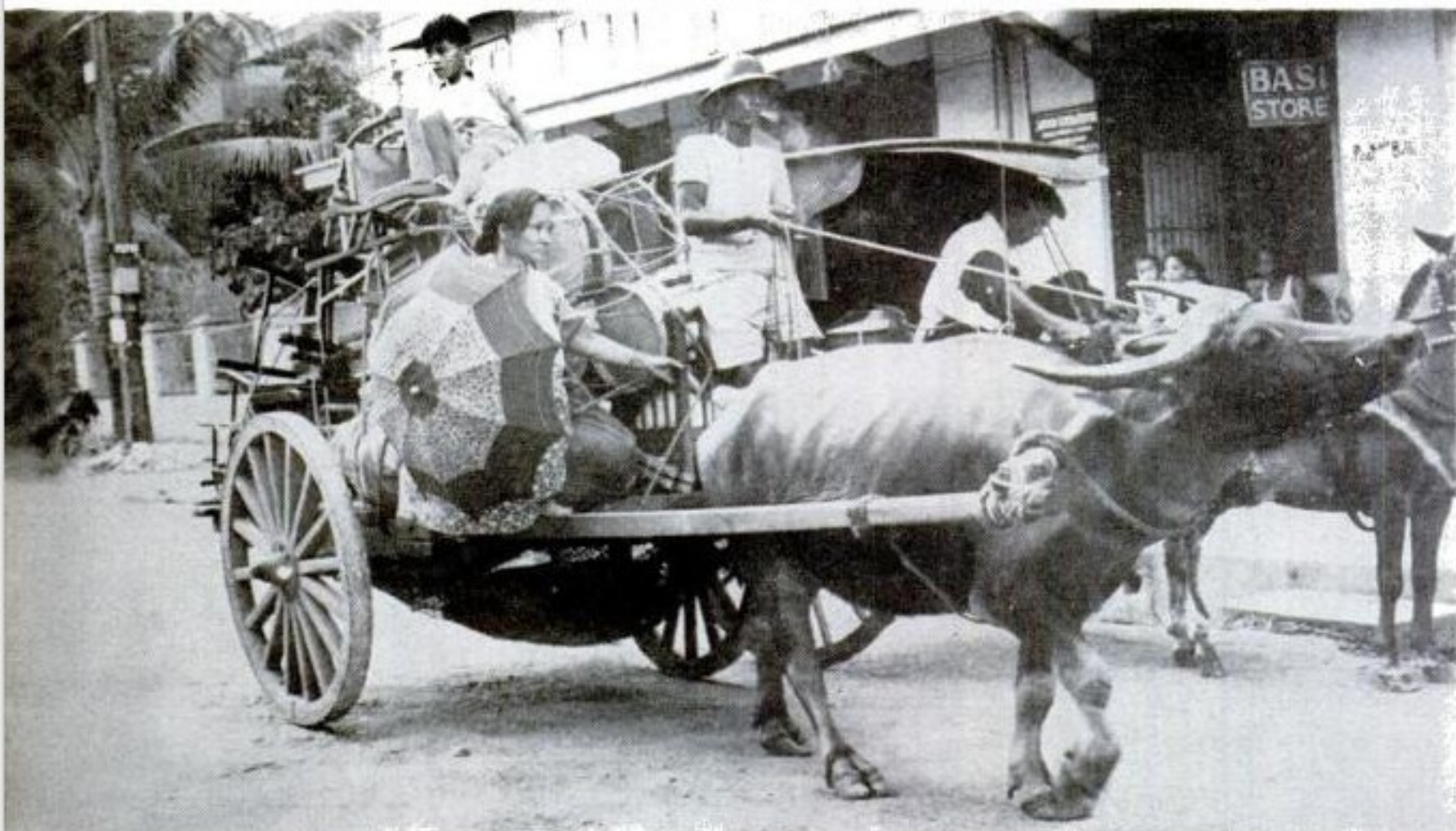




MEMBERS OF PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY ROUND UP MANILA'S MANY JAPANESE NATIONALS ON FIRST DAY OF THE WAR



A NEWSPAPER BUILDING WITHIN MANILA'S WALLED CITY



THE FAMILIAR SCENE OF REFUGEES FLEEING WITH ALL THEIR HOUSEHOLD GOODS RECURRED AT MANILA DEC. 8, 1941

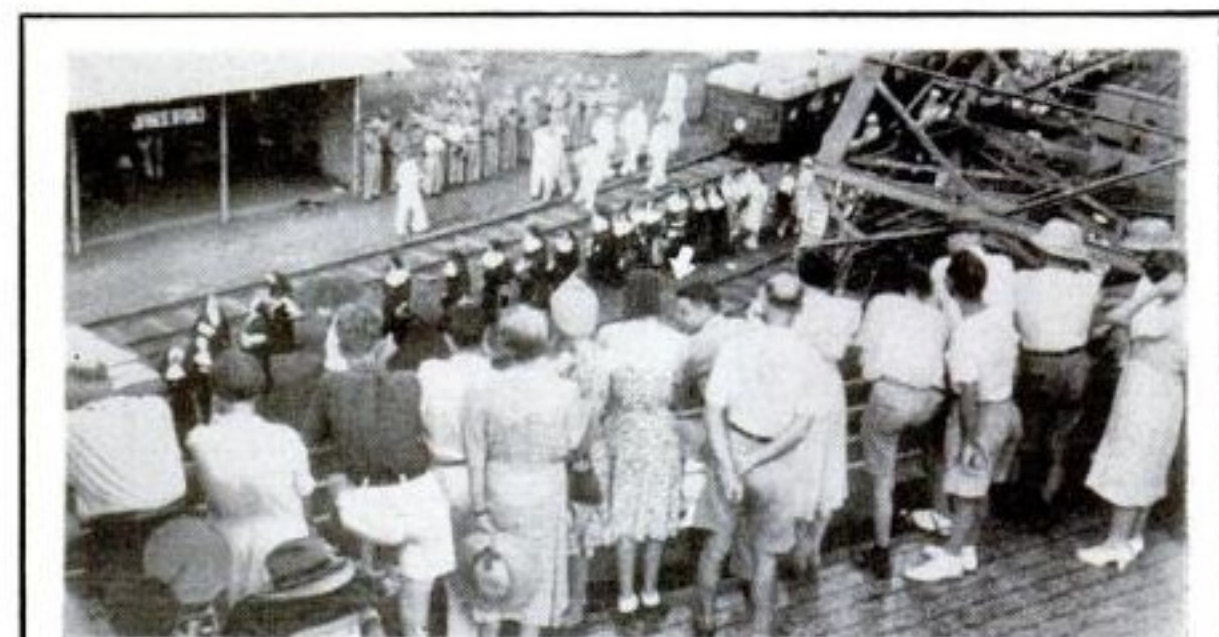


THE MYERS BUILDING, ONE OF MANILA'S MOST MODERN,

# "TOMORROW WE WILL BE FREE"

After 21 months as prisoners of the Japanese, LIFE's photo-reporter team comes home to America

by CARL and SHELLEY MYDANS



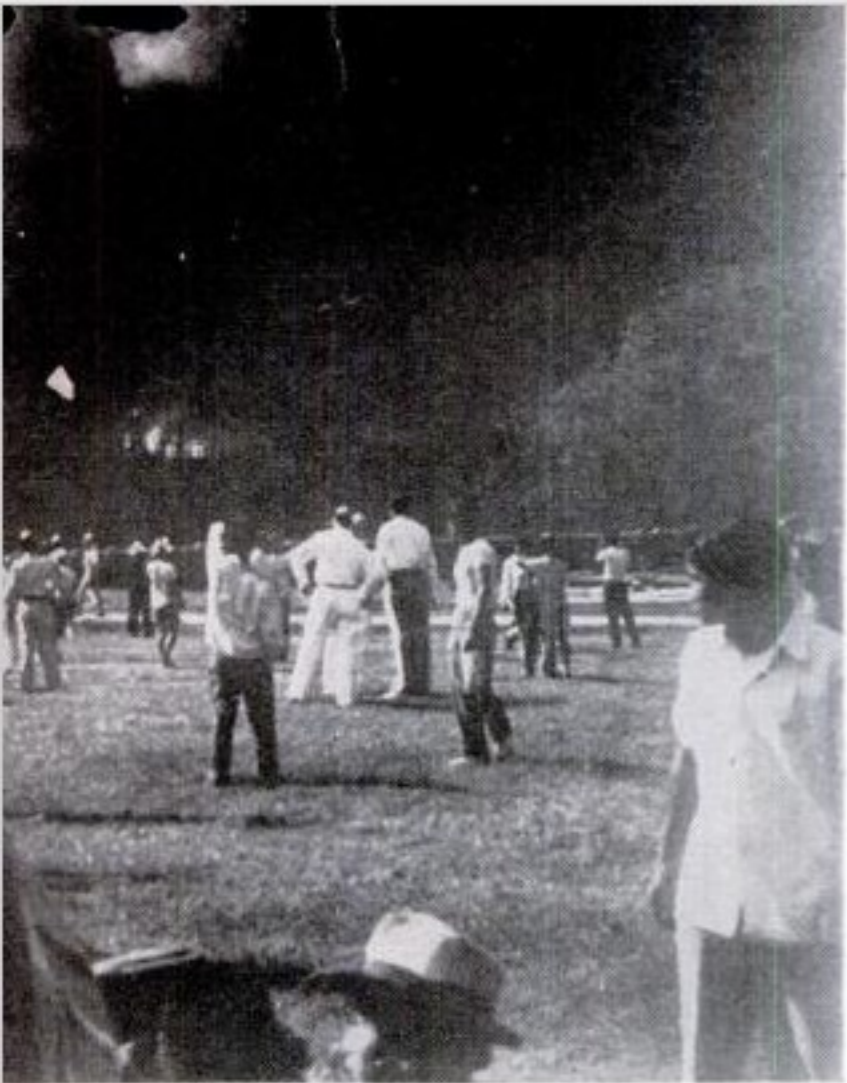
Exchange point for Americans and Japanese was Portuguese port of Mormugao off India's west coast. The picture above was taken from the *Gripsholm*, shows the Mydanses (arrow) watching as repatriate nuns file aboard.

FOR 21 months we have been prisoners of the Japanese. Here in the neutral harbor of Mormugao, as we line the rail of the *Teia Maru* and stare across at the repatriation ship *Gripsholm*, we are still prisoners. But tomorrow we are going home.

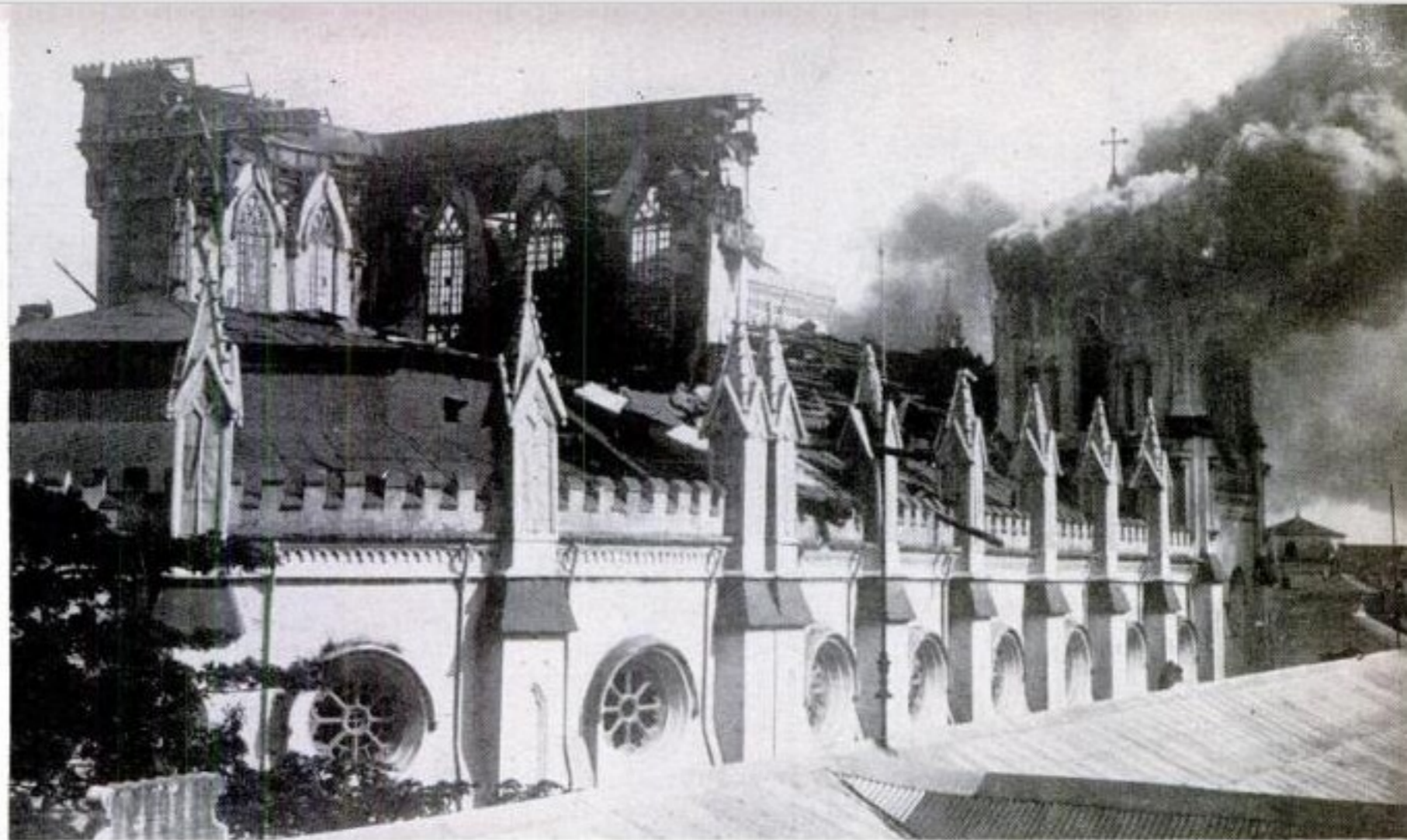
We have been aboard the *Teia Maru* for three weeks. We have been well-treated, because the Japanese want their own nationals who came from America on the *Gripsholm* to be treated well; and we know that barring acts of God we will be free in a few hours. Yet we still instinctively fear to approach a Japanese. We still glance over our shoulders when we talk, and this cable is being written on toilet paper in a hidden corner of the ship.

Yet we have not been military prisoners—simply civilian internees, with many more liberties and comforts than captured soldiers have. We fear the Japanese because for a long time we have lived inside their network of conquests, seeing their methods, learning to understand at firsthand their subtle and brutal minds.

We saw our first Japs the day after New Year's, 1942. Manila, evacuated by all U. S. armed forces, lay ringed by fire waiting for the conquerors. From the



SENDS UP BILLLOWING SMOKE AFTER JAP BOMBS STRUCK



THE JAPS BOMBED INDISCRIMINATELY, DESTROYED MANY PUBLIC BUILDINGS INCLUDING THIS FINE OLD CATHEDRAL



WAS WRECKED BY BOMBS AND FIRE ON CHRISTMAS EVE



UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMÁS WAS TURNED INTO AN INTERNMENT CAMP. HERE THE MYDANSES LIVED FIVE MONTHS

top of the Bay View Hotel we saw the work of our demolition squads, who were racing for Bataan. Black smoke from oil fires rose around us. The river was ablaze and the Bay, dotted with the husks of sunken ships, was scummed with thick oil. As the smoke condensed in the thunder clouds above us, it rained black rain. Except for the sound of the demolition charges and the roar of the flames, the city was oppressively silent. The worst had been rumored about the occupying forces, and the worst was expected. Now, with nerves frayed, the citizens waited.

At dusk on Jan. 2, the Japanese advance forces entered the city. Their vanguard moved warily up Dewey Boulevard, a column of tiny, single-cylinder motor bikes that coughed and sputtered. The little men on them with their tropical uniforms and Rising Sun flags looked like dolls. We were amused and then ashamed.

Slowly, these miniature soldiers embraced the city and permeated it. With a minimum of direct contact and in good order, they separated us from the Filipinos interned with us, confiscated our property and businesses, then moved on toward Bataan, leaving Manila a breadless, inert city.

In the three days following, nearly 3,500 Americans were hauled to the campus of the University of Santo Tomás and housed in two large buildings. No provision was made for our feeding, water supply, sewerage and garbage disposal, or medical care. The only food we had for a week was that thrown over the fence by Filipino friends. As the Jap commandant observed in high humor, we were being fed like "a pack of monkeys in the zoo."

It was not until six months later that the Japanese began to provide and pay for our food. Meantime, under the suspicious but tolerant eye of the commandant, we organized our camp routines, bought our own food with our own funds, and had it cooked by our own members. In time we created a small, efficient city. The Japs looked on with interest; and typically, they copied our methods and applied them to camps formed later in Shanghai, North China and elsewhere.

We saw some of these camps during the course of our captivity and heard of others, and the pattern that emerges is fairly uniform. There is not much outright brutality. A new guard in our Shanghai camp who slapped the face of a young American because he failed to bow was so publicly humiliated by his captain for the act that he later attempted hara-kiri. The real torture we suffered from the Japs was mental, and it was the result of poor planning rather than intentional cruelty. We had promises of better food, better hospital facilities, more living space and possible repatriation, and as the delays mounted and our frustrations grew we finally realized that Jap administration suffers from simple incompetence. The civil organization is as slipshod as the military organization is efficient; which is one reason why the Japanese will never be able to make a going concern of their vast and complex conquered territories.

### No affection allowed

It was this mental unease that made us lose weight—the average loss was 15 pounds—because the food itself was adequate. Indeed, everything was adequate in the sense that it was enough to keep us alive and even theoretically in good health. We had beds to sleep on; but there were 30-odd men or women in each room, typically the size of a high-school classroom. There were sanitary facilities; but one always had to stand in line to use them. In one camp there were three showers and four toilets for 450 women, and in another there were only seven showers for 1,100 men. Husbands and wives were permitted to see each other. But "displays of affection," such as hand-holding, were not allowed on grounds that they "might corrupt the young Japanese guards." In Santo Tomás pregnancy is punished by 90 days in the camp jail for the father.

The Japs' solicitude for the moral feelings of their guards is unwarranted in more ways than one since, as a matter of fact, they see very little of the

prisoners. Whatever business we had to take up with our jailers was handled through an internee committee which dealt directly with the commandant. Occasionally, of course, we were inspected, counted and ordered about, and we came to know our captors well enough to refer to them (among ourselves) by such informal names as Hook-nose, Gold Tooth and The Man From the Trees. We will never forget the time at Santo Tomás when a guard wandered into the dormitory one night to find a group of men on hands and knees examining a smuggled map. For a moment there was a dreadful silence. Then the guard suddenly squatted, put a stubby finger on San Francisco. "Boom!" he cried, "Chicago, Boom! New York, Boom!" An internee reached over to Tokyo and murmured, "Boom Boom." The guard jumped up furiously, scraping his heavy boots and pointing to the corner. "You," he barked, "go bed!"

That is a famous story among the Santo Tomás prisoners; it is one of the few funny ones we can tell about our jailers. Generally we looked upon them with a nervous foreboding that made the few small glimmers of humor seem hilarious simply because they relieved the tension. We knew that at any hour of the day or night any of us might be taken, without warning, for questioning to Manila's Fort Santiago, Shanghai's Bridgehouse, Hong Kong's Stanley prison—places of such reputation that we spoke of them even among ourselves reluctantly, in whispers.

In this atmosphere of constant, oozing fear and unrelieved physical discomfort, minds as well as bodies deteriorate. We found ourselves losing the power to think logically, to keep perspective and to remember who we really were and the lives we used to lead. With no purpose and no future, we were sometimes overcome with a feeling of futility. Internees stood in line for hours without grumbling. One often heard the old laconical prison remark, "I'm not going anyplace."

### Santo Tomás to Shanghai

As it happened, a few of us were to go someplace. Suddenly, in September 1942, the commandant announced that a boat was leaving Manila for Shanghai and that 125 of the Santo Tomás internees would be allowed to shift to the greater freedom of the Shanghai foreign settlement. It would be a risky trip, for American submarines had been active in the waters en route and, moreover, eight months of internment had weakened many of us so much that a rough voyage on an open deck might be fatal. Consequently, despite the greater chance for repatriation we would have from Shanghai, there was trouble in filling the quota. We finally left Santo Tomás on Sept. 12 and embarked on a 2,500-ton freighter, *Maya Maru*, which had been converted into a rough facsimile of a troop transport. It was one of four small ships which formed a convoy guarded by a single destroyer.

It was a fantastic and also an illuminating trip. The deck was a mass of gear, cargo, humans and animals. We competed for space with 60 Hindus, many of them women with babies on their laps; with 20 Formosan prostitutes who had completed their work with the army of occupation and were returning home for a rest; with 200 captured U. S. Army horses and mules; four U. S. Army staff cars; odds and ends of other campaign loot; three American officers; and about a thousand Japanese officers and men. Besides our contingent

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 111](#)



**In Italy** in 1940 Mydans photographed empty bravura of a third-rate nation pumped up by Fascist wind to look first-rate. The scene was at Victor Emmanuel II monument.

from Santo Tomás, about half English and half American, there were 20 neutrals of various nationalities who squeezed themselves in and shared alike with us.

As this absurd and top-heavy ark moved to sea, I wondered how, granting that we could all squeeze out a few feet to sleep in, the Japs expected to get us fed. It was simple. Food for the whole 1,200 was prepared in three big steam kettles in the waist of the ship. The meals were three times daily, simple and substantial. Groups of 15 shared a bucket of rice and a tray of fish, salt, plums, pickles, spiced seaweed and other Japanese foods, which preserve well and take up little space. All the work was done by two cooks and a boy—and the whole ship was served in three quarters of an hour.

It was a perfect example of how the Japanese can move large bodies of men on small ships with a minimum of effort. This was the way the invasion forces came to the Philippines, and it is the way the Japs are moving troops and supplies throughout the Pacific. It indicates what our submarines must do in order to cripple Japan's overwater communications, for the Japs can do much with less than seems possible.

Despite the crowding, we were fairly comfortable on the bulging *Maya Maru*. We shared the Jap soldiers' food and facilities: we got our allotment of Army cigarets, and when the troops were given beer, we were too. We were herded below decks only during lifeboat drill and again when we approached the highly fortified Formosan port of Takao. The second time, when we were allowed to come back up, we were inside a snug harbor surrounded by hills and rimmed with modern docks and warehouses. The harbor was crowded with troop transports forming into a big convoy; and across from us, lying high and distinctive and now loading Japanese troops, was the captured S.S. *President Harrison*.

At Formosa we left the convoy. Protected only by a dummy wooden gun on the top deck and wearing our life belts constantly, we zigzagged our way to the China mainland. Then, for nine days, we hugged the coast until we arrived at Shanghai.

## Internment again

It was a strange place. For their own purposes, the Japs had allowed the International Settlement to keep an appearance of extra-territoriality. It was filled with every nationality and race, mixed like vegetables in a stew, and even the nationals of countries at war with Japan were given liberty of movement within the confines of the pot. Immediately after our arrival, however, the first of a growing series of restrictions was applied. Enemy nationals were ordered to wear red armbands and public places were closed to them. Their homes were raided by the enemy alien property bureau and stickers were pasted on the furniture to earmark it for later confiscation. Soon after, without warning, the Japanese police broke into the homes of the Americans, British, Dutch and Greeks, routed them out of bed and carried 360 of them off to the Marine barracks where they were interned as political prisoners. From them on it was a series of raids and seizures, until by last March all the 8,000-odd enemy nationals in the Shanghai area had been interned.

Again, however, as we had noticed before and were to again, the Japs showed no special animosity toward their enemies. One white face seemed to look very like another to them. French nationals were advised to move to Indo-China, and the 20,000 mixed refugees who had found shelter from Nazism in Shanghai were dumped into the Ghetto and the Hongkew area. It was not a case of national but of race hatred—of "Asia for the Asiatics."

In Manila, Shanghai and elsewhere along the route of our long journey home, we had a chance to see how the Asiatics themselves have reacted to this slogan. On the whole it seems to have no magic for them. In the hot, primitive territories, where the people are docile, they have docilely adapted themselves to the change in masters. The rubber strippers of Malaya, the day laborers of Java and Sumatra, the ignorant peasants of Burma plod along with few convictions pro or anti Jap or Briton. The one notable exception is the Filipino. From high officials to sleepy villagers, they are in concert in a policy of noncooperation and an attitude of sullen hatred. As the Japs themselves put it: "Filipino very little use to us. He has been spoiled by Americans."

In the northerly, more advanced areas of Asia, "coprosperity" has had a mixed but generally cool reception. Sycophants of the Nanking puppet government cater to the Japanese, happy to make money in whatever way they can, ready to turn back to the Chungking government whenever the wind blows the other way. Respectable Chinese businessmen make a show of supporting the new regime, marking time and hoping to survive until the time of liberation. But the great masses—the laborers, white-collar workers and peasants—are



**In Finland** in 1940 Mydans photographed a scene then new and shocking, but now familiar all over the world—mother and children huddled in fright as bombers pass.

## **CARL AND SHELLEY MYDANS** (continued)

beginning to show an active, deep-seated hate. Japan's own food situation is critical, but that of the invaded territories is nearly desperate. Under coprosperity the average Chinese, who used to spend 40% of his income for his family's rice, now needs four times his income to maintain his previous low standard of living. The result is almost universal hunger.

There has been no mass uprising—nor is there likely to be—because the Japanese fortify their sweet talk with an efficient system of discipline. It is the typically Oriental method of group responsibility and communal punishment. In China the old Pao-chia system of family neighborhood societies has been perverted into a network of civilian police; in the Philippines a similar organization called the Neighborhood Association has been started. In Shanghai any section of several blocks may suddenly be roped off for days at a time, isolating the residents even from outside food sources while the police search for "terrorists." In Manila the custom is to cut off a section of the city, herd all men from 16 to 60 into any available church or public building and hold them without food or water until they betray any guerrillas who may be among them.

Group punishment is an official policy evolved in Tokyo. But the Japanese mind, having no conception of individual dignity, is peculiarly cruel in dealing out individual discipline. If a Chinese in a local court fails to pay the proper "squeeze" to a Japanese supervisor, he may be placed on a small table for several hours with his hands to his ankles. If a Filipino neglects to bow to a Japanese sentry, he may be bound and stretched out on a sidewalk in the tropical sun until he loses consciousness. If a ricksha boy breaks a traffic rule, he can expect to be slapped or kicked on the shin.

One of the best illustrations of coprosperity was an incident we saw from the deck of the *Teia Maru*. We had anchored down the river from Saigon, Indo-China, and in their normal fashion natives



**In China** in 1941 he learned meaning of guts from a people who had already been at war with Japan four years. This scene shows a relatively unhurt part of Chungking.



**In France** in 1940 he took this memorable picture of panicky civilians clogging the roads just after the fall of Paris. Mydans himself was nearly shot as a fifth columnist.

in tiny sampans had pulled alongside to peddle bananas and pineapples. Suddenly a Japanese naval launch whirled in among the boats. Marines jumped aboard, kicked and beat the natives and dumped the fruit into the river. It was a cruel and senseless display; and although we repatriates were still in enemy hands, we could not resist booing.

Obviously sadism and indignity such as this will have its effect among the conquered people. Yet it is doubtful that the Japanese see any inconsistency in preaching Asiatic brotherhood while behaving like members of a Master Race. The Jap soldier and civilian take obedience and strong personal discipline as a matter of natural course. During our trip to Shanghai aboard the transport a young Formosan recruit threw garbage over the windward side. The officer on duty called him to attention and slapped him across the face. The recruit lost his balance but collected himself, stood at attention again and received another blow on the other jaw. He bowed and was dismissed. Then he wandered off to join his comrades and seemed to take his punishment no more seriously than an American would take a sharp call-down.

### **A new propaganda**

The recent Japanese gift of "independence" to the Burmese and Filipinos, the canceling of the foreign concessions in China and the promise of some sort of political representation to the Malayans have left the people of Greater East Asia unimpressed. Hunger and physical mistreatment are extremely personal and tangible facts, not to be outweighed by slogans and gestures of goodwill. The Japanese political campaign in the conquered areas is failing.

Perhaps the failure is becoming apparent to the Japanese, as the eventual failure of the military policy must be apparent. At any rate, the propaganda line has undergone a radical change. It is wildly inconsistent and evidently uncoordinated. It still produces absurd claims

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**



**In Singapore** in 1941 he photographed the "impregnable" defenses such as this coastal gun. Unfortunately, like nearly all the others it was pointed in the wrong direction.

of American losses and nonexistent Japanese victories. But also, more and more often, it heaves up spasms of candor and gloomy realism. It seems to be preparing the Japanese people for reverses on a wide front.

Six months ago, in the picture drawn by the official propagandists, the American soldier was weak and cowardly. American air raids on Japan were impossible. America's production potential was a joke—"They are ideal fools who think they can win with production." Japan would soon have both India and Australia. And Japan would write the peace "on the White House lawn."

## America is tough

Today the Japanese citizen is told that "... the degenerate American professional soldiers" in the South and West Pacific have been replaced by "American students who are young and tough. Japanese students are now being sent to meet them." Air raids are coming for certain, and "this time it will not be a dress rehearsal." America is piling up mountains of weapons, and Japan will face a terrible trial "when America couples its great industrialization with moral regeneration." It is the Burmese-Indian volunteer armies now forming in Burma and not the Japanese themselves who will invade India; and Australia is unimportant. According to Aki Yama, a well-known Army spokesman, "It is not necessary to occupy Washington and London now. Our successes will come through the Pacific."

Significantly, also, glorious death is no longer held up as the supreme goal of every Japanese. The last-man stand on Attu was a perfect opportunity to ring changes on this theme and the propagandists used it; but the public was largely apathetic. They were numbed from all the previous eulogies of such glorious dead as Admiral Yamamoto. Today a distinction is beginning to be made between "brave self-sacrifice" and stupid self-sacrifice. The propagandists are groping to create a positive spirit of initiative and action in place of the negative and ingrained Oriental spirit of supreme sacrifice and passive acceptance.

Despite the propagandists' new respect for America's power, they temper their warnings about it with encouraging news of America's internal problems. We who have been away for two years can tell you all about the zoot-suit riots, the coal strikes, the train wrecks and industrial sabotage, the race riots, the black markets, the successes of isolationist Congressmen, the shabby politics, the grumbling under rationing. We suppose that many of these things are true. And we are disturbed. Because whatever signs there may be that Japan is weakening, she is still strong. And however proud we may be when we hear from the Japs' own spokesmen that Japan has "shifted a base" from Guadalcanal and actually "withdrawn" from Kiska, we know that Japan's main fleet and armies have barely been touched, and that the real fight hasn't even begun. We know that whenever an American soldier meets a Japanese, he faces a human animal with the discipline of a feudal serf, a tough, untiring body and an unbeatable spirit—an animal that must be killed to be managed.

We internees know what regimentation and privation mean. We are pretty sure that when people in America complain about them in their own wartime lives, they don't know what they're talking about. They have been at home these past two years. We can't tell you how often and desperately we have dreamed of that—to be home, free, in America. We can't tell you how much it is worth fighting for.



**In the Philippines**, after Dec. 7, 1941, he saw a proud and effective native army die fighting the Japanese. These troops are stringing barbed wire along Lingayen Beach.