

Escape Organisation.

597. Col. van der Post, a British officer believed to be of South African Dutch descent, had remained in Java in order to organise a means of escape after the foreseen occupation of the island by the Japanese. He initiated plans for assembly points in the mountains to the southward of Batavia and tried to organise shipping and boats for surreptitious evacuation from the mountainous S.W. coast. Lack of time prevented his plans maturing. Great credit is due to this officer for his activities, attended as they were by considerable personal risk at the hands of the enemy, a fact of which he was well aware. In anticipation of Col. van der Post's plans succeeding, authority was given by the A.O.C. for the issue from public funds of 2,000 guilders to each of twenty individuals to finance the attempt; action was to be taken by Air Commodore Staton to select them.

598. Despite the necessity for abandoning the organised escape scheme, many still wished to make an attempt to leave Java. The hazards involved by the doubtful attitude of the natives and the malarial nature of the country were pointed out; if nevertheless they wished to persevere in their attempts they were assisted by advice and the advance of money from the funds already drawn for the organised escape scheme.

POST-CAPITULATION PERIOD, 8TH—30TH MARCH,
1942.

8th—10th March.

599. By 2200 hours 8th March the concentration in the hills, as ordered, was complete. Distribution of Royal Air Force personnel was:—

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| In Tjikadjang area, in the hills, armed | 2,200 (approx.) |
| Tasik Malaja and other areas, in the plains, unarmed | 2,500 (") |
| Stragglers, detached and in hospital in Bandoeng ... | 400 (") |
| | <hr/> 5,100 (") |

600. On 9th March a second order was received from A.H.K., containing instructions to collect arms, to display white flags and to make surrender arrangements with the nearest Japanese General. The A.O.C. accordingly went to Bandoeng on 9th March and on 10th March contacted Lieut General Maruyama, the Japanese Commander in the Bandoeng district. From him were received instructions about collecting arms and troops and handing them over to Japanese representatives. Accommodation and promises to help with supplies were also obtained. He forbade communication with outside countries, but implied when pressed, without committing himself fully, that prisoners would be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1929.

11th—12th March.

601. On 11th March the four Senior Officers (British A.O.C. and G.O.C.: Australian—Brigadier Blackburn; American—Col. Searle) were summoned to Garoet. They were conducted during the night from there to Bandoeng. The true reason was not told them. After being

kept waiting all night they were assembled at 0730 hours 12th March for the formal signing of the surrender terms before General Maruyama.

602. In front of a number of Japanese witnesses General Maruyama undertook that prisoners would be treated in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1929, an undertaking which was recorded in writing.

603. An undertaking that the British and American troops would obey all orders of the Japanese was also included. An attempt to introduce the word "lawful" before the word "orders" was refused by General Maruyama who stated that it was unnecessary since he was giving P.O.W's. the protection of the Geneva Convention, under which no unlawful orders by the Japanese Army would be possible. It was evident that further insistence on the inclusion of the word "lawful" might lose the grant of the terms of the Geneva Convention. It was, therefore, erased from the original Instrument of Surrender, which was retained by General Maruyama.

13th—20th March.

604. Arms and equipment were subsequently surrendered at Garoet, all equipment and weapons in possession of the R.A.F. except some M.T., a number of rifles and bayonets, some field glasses and minor equipment, having been destroyed. Some difficulty arose about this, but an explanation that it was a point of honour with the British not to let arms fall undamaged into the enemy's hands was accepted.

605. On 17th March all senior officers were summoned to Garoet for the first cross-examination by the Japanese Intelligence Staff: a few other officers who happened to be nearby also became involved. So far as the G.O.C. and A.O.C. were concerned, it was conducted entirely correctly. Refusals to answer questions, based on the Geneva Convention of 1929, were generally accepted.

606. Brigadier S. R. Pearson was, however, faced by a firing party but, on still refusing to speak, was pardoned. Pilot Officer R. L. Cicurel was threatened with mutilation but, still refusing, was also pardoned.

607. On 20th March occurred a further deliberate and flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention. General H. D. W. Sitwell, Air Commodore W. E. Staton, Brigadier S. R. Pearson, Group Captain A. G. Bishop and Colonel A. E. Searle, U.S. Army, went to Bandoeng ostensibly to attend a conference. They were, instead, subjected to interrogation for military information by Major Saitu, an Intelligence Staff Officer. The first four were subjected to a month's rigorous imprisonment, which in Japanese hands is truly rigorous, for refusing to answer questions, after which they were released. Whether or not representations made by the Dutch Representative of the International Red Cross in Bandoeng and by Col. E. E. Dunlop, C.O. of the Australian Hospital in Bandoeng, to General Maruyama's H.Q. had any effect in bringing about their release will never be known; but there is reason to believe that this may have been the case, because these events coincided in time.

608. The Japanese subsequently endeavoured to extract information from aircrews of Nos. 232 (F) Squadron and No. 1 (G.R.) Squadron,