

# Tokyo Nightmare

RADIOED FROM RIO DE JANEIRO

By Robert Bellaire

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IN TOKYO

Six miserable months of terror and starvation in Japan's worst concentration camp, as told by a man who lived through it. You will wonder how he did it

IN THE darkened hallways of the Tokyo concentration camp, the murmur of muffled voices could be heard faintly. Outside, grim-faced Japanese sentries paced their posts, guns alert for use against any of us who might attempt the desperate break for freedom into the wintry night.

In the darkness, half a dozen Roman Catholic priests were quietly saying Mass. They spoke from memory, not daring to light even one candle, for the Japanese police had forbidden religious services in camp. Glass fruit jars served as chalices and water as wine. Several times during the night, footsteps were heard on the stairway leading up from the main office. The mumbling voices fell silent. The footsteps hesitated, then retreated. The mumbling began again. In all, seventeen priests said their Masses. They did not know the penalty if they were detected, but every night for two weeks they ran the risk without being caught.

After the Swiss authorities repeatedly protested against this anti-Christian regulation, the Japanese police finally grudgingly permitted the saying of Mass publicly.

This was the concentration camp Swiss authorities labeled "the worst in Japan." We had been arrested and brought here the day after war broke out, and locked up, thirteen men to a room. The building was formerly a French Catholic orphan asylum, but now heavy bars covered the windows, barbed wire encircled the grounds, and thirty armed sentries guarded us day and night.

A cynical Japanese premier once gave his officials these instructions for dealing with restless, starving peasants: "Neither let them live, nor let them die."

This same policy was adopted against us as enemy nationals. For years, Japanese propagandists loudly extolled the alleged virtues of *Bushido*, the moral code of Japan. They said *Bushido* was a higher moral code than Western Christianity or chivalry. But we who have experienced *Bushido* in this war have this definition for it: "Honor and respect your enemy—after he's dead."

On the first night of our internment, a bespectacled, moon-faced Jap detective in a shabby blue suit read the camp regulations. He barked at us in a menacing manner, frequently resting his hand on a revolver slung from his belt. Deprived of our shoes and shivering in the December night's cold, we sat huddled together in grim silence on the floor, as he read under the dim flicker of blacked-out lights.

"You will be shot on sight," he

snapped, "if you try to escape. Don't forget this." He said we were all very suspicious characters and would be held incommunicado indefinitely, and he added that if we permitted light to leak through the blackout curtains, we would be deprived of all lights. In conclusion, he told us he was "very sorry" for us because the camp kitchen hadn't yet begun to operate, and therefore we would somehow have to feed ourselves for the next three days.

When the camp kitchen opened three days later, it was evident that we would not receive sufficient food to maintain our health. The standard breakfast the Japanese government supplied during the next six months was half an orange, a cup of hot water slightly colored with tea leaves, one slice of bread, and ground fishbones which smelled like rotten fish as far as fifteen feet away. Lunch frequently consisted of greenish whale meat or rotten fish, with boiled alfalfa. A small, ground meatball and a boiled onion, or fish and rice, were typical dinners.

Even before the war, police investigations showed that ground meat served in the leading hotels of Tokyo and Yokohama was from dead cats and dogs. So there was no reason for us to believe we might get anything better in the worst concentration camp in all Japan. On holidays the cooks failed to appear and we had to eat as best we could.

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Otto Tolischus, correspondent for the New York Times, had been strangled and beaten in an effort to make him confess he had been spying



The camp manager showed me a stack of mail—letters from my wife and pictures of my children—then deliberately tore them into bits



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Approximately forty-five prisoners were held in the Tokyo camp. There were thirteen Americans, a dozen Britons, a dozen French-Canadian priests, several Dutch and Belgians, and one Honduran. Once a week we were offered a bath—in the same water thirty policemen and several greasy cooks had used ahead of us. A number of us received serious bites from the scorpions and spiders in the bath water. We also had our share of bedbugs and lice but kept them under control by organizing cleaning parties.

Every month we had a superficial medical examination. On one occasion we complained that diseases were spreading because of overcrowded conditions.

"There are too many men in our room," we said.

To which a Stanford-educated Japanese doctor replied, "Why don't you put skirts on some of them?"

Three times a day we were compelled to stand in line for roll call. At all times we were ordered to wear white cloth badges with our number, name and nationality painted on them. Inmates of various rooms were forbidden to speak to prisoners in other rooms; however, we risked punishment by passing messages back and forth through a hastily constructed camp grapevine. For two months, Swiss Legation officials were not permitted to see us, and the Red Cross representative was not allowed to call until the end of four months.

During the first two months of imprisonment, we were on display like circus freaks. High government officials, some bringing wives and children, visited the camp daily to see "white men behind bars." This attraction was especially popular with army officers; we were forced to stand while they stared at us. Frequently our visitors gave us lectures, telling us that Japanese forces would soon capture Washington and London; and until then, we could expect to remain incommunicado.

"The era of the white man is ended," they said, "and Emperor Hirohito will now run the world."

At the Yokohama concentration camp,

authorities ordered their prisoners to carry paper Japanese flags in a Victory Day parade after the fall of Singapore. When prisoners refused, the chief of police harangued and threatened them.

On several occasions during the winter, the camp's meager coal supply became exhausted, and through the days without heat, some of us remained in bed to keep from freezing. Almost all of us suffered such severely chapped hands that our knuckles cracked open. Suffering from the cold was increased by the regulation forbidding us to wear shoes indoors.

We were easily able to predict visits from the Red Cross. One Britisher, whose hobby was mathematics, carefully kept a chart of the daily sugar ration, and as soon as the chart showed a sudden spurt upward, we knew the Japs were expecting a Red Cross inspection. We never did receive anything from the Red Cross except visits.

### Attempts to Destroy Morale

Worse than the physical suffering were the mental tortures to which we were subjected. Frequently, plain-clothes men read us a Japanese report alleging American atrocities against Japanese internees, with the implication that serious retaliation was being planned against us. On one occasion we were told that a gang of "rightists," intent upon killing us, had attempted to raid our camp.

The police claimed credit for saving us but said it might be impossible the next time. Some of the prisoners were questioned about prewar activities and threatened with court-martial if they "refused to tell the truth." The obvious intention of the Japanese was to break down our morale—but they failed, although they were unable to understand why.

The priests and missionaries were insulted daily. Some of the priests were accused of having had mistresses among their parishioners and constantly were the butts of the guards' obscene jokes. The missionaries were not permitted to see their wives in their homes through-

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Smoke  
REGENT*



REALLY, D. J., you surprise me. You...a modern man...smoking a "shortie"! Get Regent...it's 20% longer than that dated "shortie" you're smoking...gives you much more cigarette for your money.

Yes—and Regent's modern in other ways, too. It's made in the world's most modern cigarette factory...is the King Size cigarette with the refreshing *new* taste because it contains Domestic and Turkish tobaccos *especially selected* for finer flavor...then Multiple-Blended for extra mildness!

And look, D. J....at Regent's streamlined oval shape. Yes—and at Regent's crush-proof box, too. It keeps each cigarette firm and fresh. So throw that crumpled paper pack away, D. J....go modern...get Regent...and you'll get *more* smoking pleasure!"



COSTS NO MORE THAN OTHER LEADING BRANDS

*The only modern cigarette with ALL the modern features!*



"Who has the eraser?"

Collier's

LEONARD DOVE

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Have your spark plugs cleaned and adjusted every 4,000 miles.

Replace badly worn plugs promptly.



**REMEMBER,**—dirty or worn spark plugs *waste* as much gas as *one gallon in ten.*

← GET PLUGS CLEANED  
Where you see this Sign

**"Keep 'em Rolling"**  
Buy War Bonds  
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out the whole internment, on the grounds that it would be bad for their morals. A few of the guards were former students of these missionaries. American church contributions had paid for their education, but they showed no appreciation and seemed anxious to humiliate their former benefactors.

Protestant missionaries also were forbidden at first to hold religious services. When permission was finally granted, it was on the condition they were *not* to use the Bible. The Japanese also required a list of names of all those attending religious services, with the possible implication that they might be especially punished. Armed police stood guard throughout Protestant services, and preachers were warned to avoid political subjects. Puzzled looks came over the faces of the police several times when they heard Protestant missionaries dedicate prayers to "Japan's welfare."

One day during the early part of my internment I was called to the main office and shown a stack of mail. Camp Manager Iwamoto said, "Here are some letters from your wife and some pictures of your children—but you cannot have them." He then coolly and deliberately tore the letters and pictures into bits before my eyes and threw them into a wastebasket. I pleaded for the scraps but was roughly ordered to get out of the office.

Later, I was given to understand that I might have had the letters if I had given a few presents, like shoes or clothing, to the police. At the same time, several of the police began indicating which of my shoes and suits they liked. So I gave them what they wanted and their attitude thereafter was less hostile; but they kept coming back until I had little left.

A favorite trick of the Japanese police was to make some concession to us just once. Between December and March we were permitted to take a long walk just once, permitted to have a visitor just once, permitted to send a message to our families just once. On the basis of these isolated concessions, the Japanese Foreign Office informed the Swiss Legation that we had unlimited freedom to go walking, to write letters and to see our friends.

Our exercise lot actually was a driveway, forty by twenty feet; so small that five minutes' walking produced dizziness. Actually, we were allowed visitors only five times in the six months, but many did not take advantage of this privilege after the first time because the police later severely questioned visitors

and warned them to stay away. We were not permitted to receive messages from our families abroad at any time.

The first two months of treatment were the worst. Then the novelty of having white men as captives began to wear off for the police. After the exchange of nationals was definitely arranged, the police showed more consideration—always pointing out that they expected us to tell, when we got to America, how well we had been treated. The Japanese provided us with practically nothing, but after the early weeks, they permitted us to help ourselves as much as we could while being incommunicado.

## Missionaries' Wives Bring Food

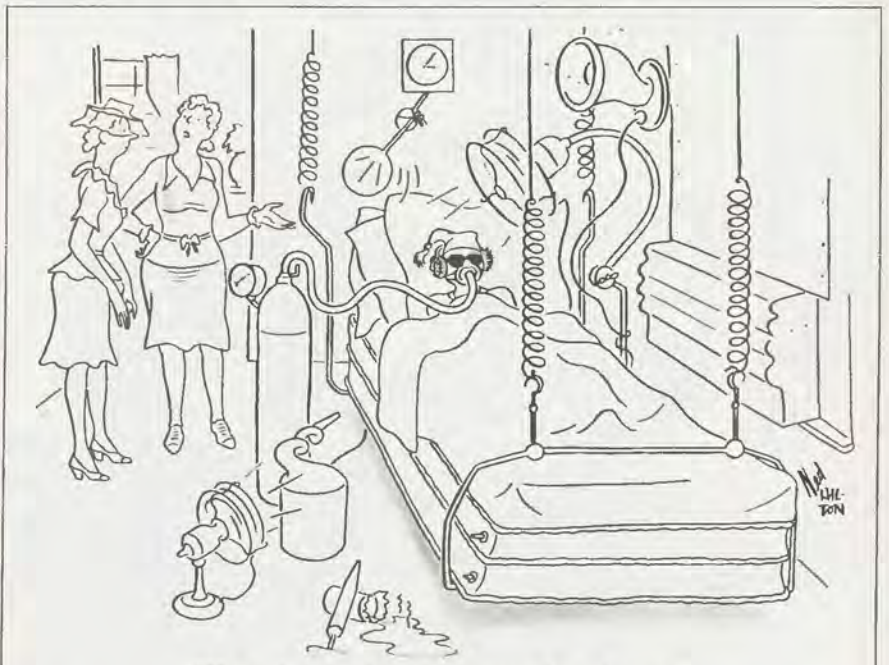
As far as food was concerned, the wives of American missionaries in Tokyo saved our lives. They bought and delivered outside supplies which our specially constructed kitchen cooked under the direction of Episcopal Missionary Paul Rush, of Louisville, Kentucky. They also organized our own educational program, including Bible classes (which the police tried to suppress), an American history course (which the police forbade), book reviews and various language classes.

Considering the treatment we received during the early months of imprisonment, what Ambassador Joseph Grew said for diplomats interned in the American Embassy might be said for us. In his protest to the Foreign Office, Grew declared the treatment "unparalleled in the history of intercourse between civilized nations." We were left completely at the mercy of low-ranking police officials who by training and nature knew only how to treat criminals.

Typical of their outlook was the farewell which Metropolitan Police Inspector Kikuchi gave the New York Times correspondent, Otto Tolischus, when the latter was released after six months of solitary confinement in an unheated cell on starvation rations. At various times he had been forced to kneel for a whole day until his knees were covered with open sores; and he had also been strangled and beaten in an effort to make him confess he had been spying. Tolischus had been convicted and sentenced to a year and a half in the penitentiary but sentence had been suspended.

Referring to the suspension, Kikuchi told Tolischus, "I am happy we didn't have to punish you."

THE END



"He wakes up just long enough to invent another sleep aid, then dozes off again"

Collier's

RED HILTON