

THE INTERNMENT OF WESTERN
CIVILIANS UNDER THE JAPANESE
1941–1945

A Patchwork of Internment

BERNICE ARCHER



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Japan went to war with virtually no policy for the treatment of prisoners, especially enemy civilian internees. It could further be said that this problem was not even one of great concern for the Japanese Government.

Japanese Historian, *Utsumi Aiko*, 1996

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PRESENTED BY THE WOMEN OF CHANGI
INTERNMENT CAMP 1942 TO THE WOUNDED BR.
AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS WITH OUR SYMPATHY
FOR THEIR SUFFERING.

IT IS OUR WISH THAT ON THE CESSATION
OF HOSTILITIES THAT THIS QUILT BE
PRESENTED TO THE AUSTRALIAN RED
CROSS SOCIETY,

IT IS ADVISABLE TO DRYCLEAN THIS QUILT.

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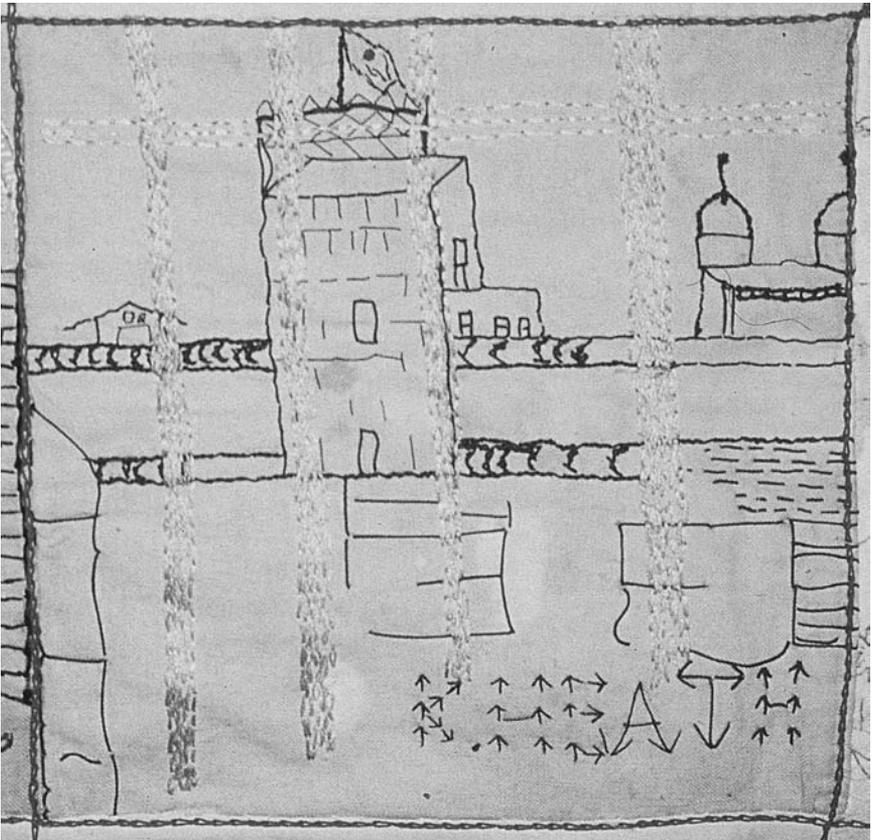
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Introduction



*Every story is a patchwork of tales.*¹

This book is subtitled *A Patchwork of Internment* for several reasons. First, because the whole story was produced by putting together pieces of material from a variety of different sources. These pieces included interviews with men, women and children ex-internees from a number of camps, in different locations throughout the Far East during the Second World War. The interviews were necessary in order to 'gain minute detail that was otherwise inaccessible', especially when it came to exploring the women's and children's experiences which were absent from official records and other source material.² The resulting interviews produced a variety of images and patterns that were, both individually and collectively, a patchwork of tales. When all the source material was carefully pieced together the interviews brought colour, depth and texture to the Far Eastern internment story. Consequently, they made a considerable contribution to the shape, structure and analysis of the book. (Further details on the interviews are in the Appendix.)

Secondly, it seemed to me that the iconography of the quilts made by the interned women in Changi Prison, and discussed in chapter three of this book, reveals the way in which colonial culture influenced and underpinned the general pattern of the internees' lives. As a result the quilts can be seen as a symbol for civilian internment in the Far East. They, like the internment camps, incorporated threads of cultural and national identity, solidarity and individual creativity. While they 'mirrored the wit and humour, tragedy and pathos and the indomitable spirit'³ of most of the civilian internees in the Far East at that time, they also reflect the patchwork of those individuals in the camps – the weak and strong, optimist and realist, skilled and unskilled, old and young, the men, women and children who, joined together by the unbreakable threads of cultural identity and a determination to survive, unconsciously reconstructed a cloak of cultural armour against the fear and uncertainty within the camps.

The term 'colonial culture', as used in this study, refers to 'the distinct ways of life, shared values and meanings common to' the British, American and Dutch groups or communities who governed and managed the Far Eastern colonies in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴ Implicit in their shared values and meanings was the way they viewed the colonised peoples, 'primarily in terms of what they lacked – that they were less developed'.⁵ Conversely, they perceived themselves and their own lifestyles as well developed, more civilised and intellectually and

racially superior. Intrinsicly linked with this perceived civilised and racially superior lifestyle was the importance of national identity, class structures, masculinity, femininity and clearly defined gender roles. These underpinned the distinct ways of life of the Dutch, British and American men and women who feature in this study.

The Second World War may be defined as a war against civilian populations.⁶

The Japanese advance into South East Asian territories in 1941/2 made captive many thousands of British Commonwealth and Allied Servicemen and placed in internment large numbers of civilians residing in those countries. The vast area involved, the speed of Japanese operations, and the capitulation of British Commonwealth forces on an unprecedented scale made the task of subsequent accurate documentation, based on the very few records which had been evacuated, almost impossible . . . The matter was further complicated by the complete lack of information supplied by Japanese authorities, who flagrantly disregarded the terms of the Geneva Convention regarding the notification of prisoners in their hands.⁷

This book focuses on some of the ‘large numbers of [Western] civilians’ who were, unexpectedly, interned by the Japanese in the Far East during the Second World War. The aim of the book is to show that far from being passive victims with no control over their lives, the interned Western civilian men, women and children were dynamic agents who, individually and in groups, used and adapted the social and cultural resources they inherited from their colonial lives to survive and to record their experiences. By focusing on the manner in which various groups of Western men, women and children adapted to, overcame and survived their humiliating internment, rather than the basic concentration camp ingredients of hunger, disease, indignity, cruelty, fear and death, this may not be perceived as a conventional concentration camp narrative. It is, nevertheless, an essential part of the Western civilian Second World War story.

The outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939, the fall of France, Belgium and Holland in May 1940, Japan joining with the Axis in September 1940 – all these turned the possibility of a Japanese attack on Western colonies in the Far East into a probability. On 7 December 1941, when the Japanese attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, that probability became a reality.⁸ The following one hundred days were cataclysmic moments in the lives of the Western

colonial communities in the Far East. Within a matter of weeks the Japanese attacks, advances and victories had completely undermined Western military strength and shattered all illusions of Western imperial power. The subsequent internment of over 130,000 Allied civilians (an estimated 50,740 men, 41,895 women and 40,260 children), was a degrading end to that imperial power and rule. The subsequent deaths of approximately 15,000 of these interned civilians was a devastating blow.⁹

The Japanese had no policy for the treatment of enemy civilian internees and, as Utsumi Aiko claims, 'It could . . . be said that this problem was not even one of great concern for the Japanese Government.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, research shows that from their initial victory over the Western Allies in December 1941 to their surrender in August 1945, the Japanese created hundreds of civilian internment camps in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China, French Indo China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Republic of the Philippines, Burma, Singapore, Sumatra, Java, West Borneo, East Borneo, and the Celebes (see map pp. xiv–xv). The camps themselves differed enormously. The smallest camp, Pangkalpinang in Sumatra, held approximately four people. The largest, Tjihapit I in Java, held around 14,000. In some areas, mainly Java and Sumatra, the men were separated from the women and children and, from about 1944 onwards, boys over ten years of age (the age differed over time and place) were transferred from the women's camps to the men's camps. In Java there were special camps for boys and the sick, and old men. In other areas, particularly China and Hong Kong, men, women and children shared the camp accommodation. Some internees remained in the same camp throughout internment: Stanley Camp, in Hong Kong, is one example. Others, particularly those in Java and Sumatra, were moved from camp to camp several times. Accommodation differed from area to area with the Japanese using a variety of schools, warehouses, university buildings, prisons, houses or bamboo barracks. In most countries people were interned almost immediately after the colony surrendered, but in Java internment took place gradually and was not completed until mid-1943. In parts of China, mass-internment began in earnest in early 1943. In some areas the Red Cross were allowed to visit the camps and a few parcels were received. Other camps received no visits or parcels from the Red Cross throughout internment.

Liberation also came at different times. It was in February 1945 that the American forces stormed the camp at Santo Tomas in Manila

and liberated all the internees. Others had to wait until the Japanese surrender in August 1945. But, as indicated in the quotation at the head of this chapter, records of all the camps were not available and it was November 1945 before the last group of women and children, in Aik Pamiénke in Java, was liberated.

A few fortunate internees were repatriated early. Three repatriations took place. The first, on 18 June 1942, was between the Japanese and the Americans, each of whom had large numbers of ‘civilian enemy Aliens’ to exchange. The second, on 17 August 1942, involved 908 British citizens including British Embassy consular staff, employees of China Maritime customs and the Shanghai Municipal Council, plus some ‘ordinary’ British citizens. These were exchanged for Japanese prisoners from British colonies. The third repatriation, of 1,540 Americans and 60 Canadians, took place in September 1943. In spite of attempts by the Allies to negotiate a second British and third American exchange, no further exchanges were made and those left behind waited another two years before they were finally released.¹¹

Although, clearly, no typical Japanese civilian internment camp existed, lack of space and material make it impossible to discuss every camp. This book, therefore, focuses on a relatively small but representative group of camps. The choice of camps was, partly, determined by the availability of source material, but I have made every effort to ensure that the camps include both mixed family camps (where men, women and children were housed together) and sexually segregated camps (where women and young children were separated from the men and older boys). The camps are also in different locations and are of different sizes, the majority containing between 2,500 and 4,000 internees. I have included those dominated by different national groups: British, American and Dutch.

Reflecting its multicultural society, the camps in Shanghai were occupied by a variety of nationalities. However, the former Kiangsu Middle School, seven miles outside Shanghai, which in 1942 became Lunghua Internment Camp, though housing approximately 1,725 men, women and children from the British, Russian, American and Dutch communities, was dominated by British internees. In Hong Kong, the bomb-damaged prison warders’ quarters at Stanley Prison housed 2,500 predominantly British men, women and children caught in the British colony. In both Stanley and Lunghua, men, women and children shared the accommodation and, where appropriate, they lived in family groups. In Singapore, Changi Prison, built

on a small hill about a mile from the east coast of Singapore Island, housed the 3,000 to 4,000 predominantly British men, women and children who were caught when Singapore surrendered. In this camp the men and older boys were housed in one section of the prison, while women, girls and younger boys were accommodated together in the other. Men and women were only allowed to meet occasionally, always supervised by a guard. In May 1944 the Changi internees were moved to a former RAF barracks a few miles away in Sime Road on Singapore Island, where they remained, similarly segregated, until they were liberated. In the Philippines there were a number of small camps set up on various islands but eventually many of the internees were transferred to the Santo Tomas University building in Manila. This camp contained between 4,000 and 7,000 (numbers increased as internees from other camps were transferred to Santo Tomas) mainly American men, women and children. The men and women were housed in separate dormitories, mothers with young children lived in an annexe, but the daily living and organisation were communal. In 1943 the camp became so overcrowded that approximately 2,000 internees were transferred to the Philippines Agricultural College at Los Banos, further south-east on Luzon, the main and largest island.¹²

In Java and Sumatra all the camps were dominated by Dutch internees and all were completely sexually segregated, with the younger children staying with their mothers. Initially there were approximately 114 civilian camps in Java, of which only thirty remained when the Japanese surrendered. In Sumatra there were ninety-three, of which only nine existed at the time of liberation. One reason for the reduction in the number of camps was that towards the end of the war camps were combined for ease of supervision and to save Japanese manpower. The camps mentioned in this book include Palembang in south Sumatra, where 150 women and children from Banka Island lived in a block of houses before being moved elsewhere. In Java the camps include Tjihapit I, where approximately 14,000 Dutch women and children lived in cordoned off blocks of houses in the city of Bandoeng until they were dispersed in November 1944; Grogol II where, in the compound-of the city's lunatic asylum, an unknown number of men and boys lived from September to November 1944; and Kampong Makassar barracks, which housed 3,600 women and children from January 1945. A block of houses in Bloemenkamp housed 1,200 women and children before they were moved to Ambarawa. Ambarawa camps ranged

from Ambarawa I to Ambarawa 9 in which the numbers fluctuated as internees were moved back and forth.

In spite of the number of Western civilians interned in the Far East during the Second World War, until recently little academic research had been carried out into their experiences. Two possible explanations for this are Eurocentrism and the ways in which memories of the war privilege masculine and battle experiences. When the war in the Far East commenced in December 1941, most Western populations were preoccupied with the traumas of the war in Europe. As far as the general public in the West is concerned, the war in the Far East is remembered mostly for the Japanese attack on the American naval fleet in Pearl Harbor. The simultaneous attacks on Hong Kong, north Malaya and the Philippines are rarely mentioned in the same breath.¹³ Although the Japanese attacks brought America into that European war as a welcome ally, in other respects they exacerbated the trauma of the European war, stretching Allied forces and thus threatening defeat in Europe.¹⁴ This Eurocentric perspective peripheralised the distant war in the Far East, with the result that the Western colonies, and the Western civilians who were caught in them, were marginalised and isolated. After Germany surrendered in May 1945, the relief of the Allied victory was rapidly followed by the concentrated rebuilding and reconstruction of Europe. The continuation of the war in the distant Far East remained of little concern for many.

More influential perhaps, is that, conceptually, ‘the discourse of war and militarism stresses masculine qualities which permeate the whole society’.¹⁵ Indeed images of military personnel, front-line dramas and heroics, with their largely military, male actors dominate the media coverage and public perceptions of war. Western civilians, which in general means women, children, the old and sick, are considered the ‘home front’: the safe, or perhaps safer feminised area, which has to be protected and for whom the men are fighting. To admit the capture and imprisonment of civilians, especially women and children, by a perceived inferior enemy is politically and socially embarrassing. It denotes failure and defeat and, uncomfortably, contradicts images of power and masculine ideals. Unfortunately, the war in the Far East highlighted most of those uncomfortable contradictions. Initially, at least, it was an embarrassing and demoralising failure. It undermined racial prejudices and shattered images of a powerful British Empire and Western imperialism. Rather than concentrate on such failures, ‘the competitive society’ wants to ‘celebrate its heroes’ and in the ultra-competitive atmosphere of war, heroes are

eagerly sought.¹⁶ Hence heroic military images dominate the public memory and are recorded, celebrated and commemorated, not only by the general public but also by the museum curators, the keepers and exhibitors of that public memory.¹⁷

The possible exceptions to this are the civilian victims of the Holocaust. The sheer size, unmitigated horror and proximity of this genocide not only made it impossible for politicians and the public to ignore but it also overshadowed the smaller, less violent and distant civilian internment during the same period. Consequently, survivors of these relatively less dramatic and more distant theatres of war have been inclined either to play down or dismiss their war memories as boring or inconsequential by comparison. The result has been both the public and private devaluation of those experiences and their related memories.¹⁸ Indifference by historians to the Far Eastern civilian experience has further compounded this invisibility and these stories have, until recently, remained largely undisturbed in Public Record Office files and the pages of private diaries and papers of ex-internees.

As a result much of the published material on the war in the Far East is dominated by military battles and political wrangling. If, and when, Far Eastern civilians are mentioned, they are considered as just another small group of unfortunate victims, or a voiceless group with 'walk-on' parts on a world stage where more important and prestigious dramas were being enacted.¹⁹ Where the internees have a more central role is in their memoirs, autobiographies and biographies.

The first memoirs appeared shortly after the war. Perhaps because of the large number of missionaries in the Far East at that time, many of these have a strong religious tone with authors seeing 'God's hand at work' in their internment experience and survival.²⁰ But others are more pragmatic. William Sewell, a Quaker Missionary in China, and his family, were caught in Hong Kong as he travelled from China, and Mrs Sewell and their three children travelled from England, with a view to meeting up for William's furlough. Strangers to Hong Kong and, unusually, interned with his whole family, Sewell's book, *Strange Harmony*, is both a sympathetic and detailed account of the struggle of bringing up a young family in Stanley Camp, coupled with observations of the dynamics of the camp community.²¹ Mary Thomas's, *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun*, is another.²² Thomas was an unmarried Oxford history graduate and had arrived in Singapore in December 1939, where she was employed as a teacher. Her unmarried, childless status relieved her of the anxiety faced by many

married women and mothers and perhaps gave her more time to reflect and write. Also, her recent arrival in the colony and the fact that she was not fully integrated into colonial social life (for example, she regularly travelled by public transport to and from her work, which was ‘regarded as something rather strange and not quite suitable’, and her happiest times were tramping alone in the Malayan jungle) probably influenced her account of the women’s experiences in Changi Prison. Her book is reflective, at times critical, and has a ‘distance’ and objectivity not found in some other accounts.

Less subjective and less personal are two ‘official’ histories of Santo Tomas, the American-dominated camp in the Philippines. Frederic H. Stevens was the Chairman of the American Co-ordinating Committee in Manila just prior to the war. While interned he kept a secret journal which, after his release, he used as the basis for his privately published book, *Santo Tomas Internment Camp*. The book has advantages over other similar narratives in that Stevens has incorporated into his account additional material written by a number of fellow internees. It is therefore a collective appraisal of life, thematically structured around the various activities of the internees in the camp. It was written, he claims, especially with a view to ‘convey our sense of gratitude to those men and women who made Santo Tomas more tolerable to live in’ and is full of praise for the Western men who ran the camp.²³ The women and children receive a small mention. The other ‘official history’, *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines*, is by A.V.H. Hartendorp. This is based on a daily record kept by the author who claims he was charged by the Executive Secretary, Jorge B. Vargas, to keep a record because ‘President Quezon wants you to keep the best record you can’.²⁴ As ‘camp historian’ he was given support and information from the camp committees, and his two-volume narrative is a very detailed chronological account of internment. It is interspersed with ‘stories’ based on interviews with internees from other camps, and events around the country at that time. Although there is a twenty-year gap between the Stevens and Hartendorp publications both are full of statistical information, camp ‘politics’ and internee activities and organisations, and both are excellent factual resources regarding the American internees in the Philippines.

In 1954 Betty Jeffrey’s *White Coolies* and Jessie Elizabeth Simons’ *While History Passed* were published. Both authors were Australian nurses who were captured when escaping Singapore. Agnes Newton Keith’s *Three Came Home* was published in 1965.²⁵ These books

apart, the 1950s and 60s show a marked decline in published memoirs and autobiographies.

A later and much larger wave of material was however published in the 1980s and 90s. Among these are American journalist Freddy Bloom's *Dear Philip – A Diary of Captivity, Changi, 1942–45*.²⁶ Freddy was educated at Barnard College, New York, and Trinity College Dublin. She and her new husband, a medical officer, moved to India to work. After his sudden and tragic early death she went to Singapore and found work on the Malaya Tribune Group of Newspapers. Her book is written in the form of a diary/letter to her second husband, Dr Philip Bloom, whom she married during the battle for Singapore and who was interned in Changi POW camp. The book is full of ironic humour and heartache mixed with details of life in the women only section of Changi.

Other books published at this time are the autobiographies, or memoirs, of ex-internee children, most of whom were born in, and all of whom spent their early years in, the Far Eastern colonies. Prior to internment, their only experience had been the colonial one. Now in their sixties and seventies, living in the West or in Australia, with children and perhaps grandchildren of their own, these children of the camps are, perhaps, 'pondering more and more about their lost [childhood] and adolescence'.²⁷ Written fifty years on, these retrospective accounts are all reflective, sometimes humorous and often painful recollections of confused and/or separated families. Though individually they are 'tempered by the passage of half a century and make no judgements or draw any in-depth conclusions', together they offer a picture of how these adults now reconstruct or 'compose' their childhood internment experiences.²⁸ Among the most well known of these is J.G. Ballard's semi-autobiographical novel, *Empire of the Sun*.²⁹

As indicated, these subjective accounts have been published predominantly in two waves. The first wave appeared soon after the war. Only one or two published accounts appeared in the 1950s and 1960s, but a second, bigger wave appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. This latter group included the re-publication of some of the earlier material.

In her discussion of Dutch memoirs of the same period, Esther Captain cites trauma as a possible reason for the pattern of published material. She uses a psychological theory developed by psychiatrist Mardi Horowitz.³⁰ Horowitz distinguishes four phases of adjustment after a traumatic experience. The first is outcry, shock, bewilderment

and disbelief. The second is avoidance. The third alternates between reliving the experience and denial. In the fourth phase, the event is integrated into the life of the individual. Captain suggests that the earlier writing is, for some survivors, a way of dealing with the shock, the intermediate silence can be attributed to the denial period, and the last wave is the writers coping with the trauma.

Memory is, however, complex and dynamic, and the debates about memory and trauma transcend disciplinary boundaries and are too numerous and complex to be discussed in detail in this introduction.³¹ I would, nevertheless, argue that the pattern of publications was influenced by three separate but interlinking factors – psychological, social and political.

Where psychological factors are concerned, the motives for autobiography are many and varied. Gabriele Rosenthal, working with Holocaust survivors and soldiers from the First and Second World Wars, argues that:

Autobiographers tell about their lives because they want to reassure themselves with regard to their past, present and anticipated future. They try through narration to bring their lives into some kind of consistency and to explain to themselves who they are and how they got there.³²

Naomi Rosh White, also working with Holocaust survivors, adds:

By bearing witness about the war, the survivor takes charge of his or her own image, personal narrative and, therefore, identity. In testifying about their experiences survivors recreate themselves, establishing threads of continuity with whom they were before the war and whom they have become subsequently. They also commemorate those who did not survive.³³

Some survivors themselves explain their reasons for writing, for example Primo Levi who states, ‘those memories burned so intensely inside me that I felt compelled to write as soon as I returned to Italy’.³⁴ Others felt differently, such as the Beirut hostage Brian Keenan who called his post-release autobiography ‘both a therapy and an exploration’.³⁵

As far as the earlier wave of material by Far Eastern ex-internees is concerned, it is possible that some survivors may have been dealing with the shock. Others may have been disorientated by discontinuity of both the internment experience and liberation. Their repatriation

to Europe, rather than staying in their homes in the colonies, may have added to the sense of lost identity and disorientation.

It is interesting to note that the early published material from Far Eastern survivors was not extensive and was published by either small and/or private publishing houses or missionary societies. None appears to have had a significant general, national or international impact. In view of all this, it seems reasonable to suggest that some of the early narratives, published soon after the internment experience, were written for the narrators themselves, and for their families, friends and other survivors.³⁶

The quieter period in the 1950s and 60s is, in my opinion, subject to a variety of influences. Captain claims that during the 1950s the internees may have been in psychological denial about their experiences. But traumatic memories are not always easily retrieved and they can become clouded by what is called 'interference'.³⁷ One form of interference is when the earlier memories are obscured by new memories. Another is when the old memories are deliberately denied or repressed. In Freudian thinking, this latter could mean the simple avoidance of unpleasant materials and/or an unconscious defensive process that protects the ego from threatening material. Although the denial to which Captain refers was probably generated by these two factors, and may well have been operative, as Captain herself suggests, one needs to integrate this with social and political factors.

From a social perspective, both in the East and West, this period was marked by the social and political notion of 'putting the war behind us'. The focus was on rebuilding and reconstruction. In the Far East some of the local people were starving and the populations of some of the Far Eastern colonies were seriously depleted. Many had suffered more acutely under the Japanese occupation than the Western civilian internees. For the British, having to restore not only the colonies to their former glory but also the severely damaged British reputation, it was neither politic nor appropriate to express unpleasant internment experiences. On returning to Britain, America and Holland other internees, who had left their devastated homes and the site of their trauma many miles away, found an unreceptive, unsympathetic society nursing its own war scars and memories.³⁸ As one of my British interviewees said ironically, 'when they knew we had not been raped by the Japanese they lost interest'.³⁹ A Dutch ex-internee recalls, 'most folk did not know anything about the war in the Far East and few had time to get involved with more stressed-out

people and their problems'.⁴⁰ She also sums up the atmosphere and problems faced by many returning Far Eastern civilian internees:

We were happy to live in a real house again, together as a family. We did not have any furniture, so we went to the greengrocer and borrowed some orange crates to sit on around the one and only kitchen table in the house . . . We visited an exhibition of war happenings in The Netherlands. Affected by the impact of what we saw, we volunteered some of our own experiences, but to our surprise our friends looked at us as if we had made up our stories. They did not even comment or ask questions . . .⁴¹

Those Americans returning to the United States also found difficulties in adjusting to the 'new' America. As Cogan points out:

Former internees had either lost touch with the American home environment or had not known it for years. Male internees also found themselves in competition for jobs with healthy people who had not been interned.⁴²

The post-war social and personal priorities at 'home' were to look forward and to reconstruct lives, homes and relationships. In this context, the aim was employment for demobilised soldiers, resumption of interrupted education for the children and the return to 'traditional' family life, with the accompanying maintenance of conventional gender roles. Returning Far Eastern ex-internees, found 'many adjustments had to be made . . . we especially needed to be mindful of the suffering and deprivations of people in England'.⁴³ They had to bite back responses to complaints about rationing; to the internees an egg a week was luxury. Eventually memories of Far Eastern internment became subordinated to the need to adjust, and the earlier memories became obscured by the laying down of new memories of new homes, schools and jobs, restored or different families and new and different lives.

In addition to this extensive 'interference' of internee memories, the cold and unsympathetic public reception they received would have encouraged them to suppress their memories. This, according to Gabriele Rosenthal, only added further to their psychological suffering:

The inability to talk about traumatic experiences leads to a second traumatization after the suffering is over. When it is impossible to turn

experiences into narration, the trauma accompanying the original experiences is consolidated. Where narrating is met with little or no interest then further attempts at narration will become even more difficult and the feeling of isolation will be strengthened.⁴⁴

This was especially true of the children from the camps whose parents remained silent about internment after the war.

Political and economic considerations also had their influence. Due to disagreements between America and the other Allies, the Peace Treaty with Japan was not signed until 1951. Nowhere in that treaty is there reference to compensation to the interned civilians. Both the British and American internees received small amounts of compensation which were taken from funds from Japanese frozen assets. Compensation claims against the Japanese government were discouraged.⁴⁵ In fact a Foreign Office paper of 25 May 1955 stated that in 1951 'HMG waived a very large proportion of their just claims against Japan in order to avoid ruining the Japanese economy'. This argument is not entirely sound. By 1952 Japan's annual growth rate was the highest in the world and Japan had overtaken Britain and West Germany in shipbuilding. Underlying the Allies' concern was, undoubtedly, the worsening tension of the Cold War and the Korean War. The fear was that Japan would recognise that 'democracies could not defend their country in the event of a general war and that there was a danger that Japan might decide that as they were unarmed they must reinsure against a UN defeat by making terms with the Communist bloc'.⁴⁶ These political and economic issues overshadowed consideration for the ex-internees and fed into the public discourse of virtual silence about their internment experiences. That lack of public interest remained for many years.⁴⁷

Why, then, the second wave of material? During the late 1970s into the 1990s many academic changes took place and human psychology became better understood too. There were also social, political and economic changes during this period. Academically, the 1970s and 80s saw changes in historical approaches. Social and labour history widened the historical picture to include 'history from below'. This in turn generated a commitment to oral history which has gained greater credibility over the years. It also brought into focus the relevance of the experiences of minority groups (including women and children) and these began to be more recognised. The growth of feminism prompted the recovery of women from the historical margins and shifted academic opinions so that women's war experiences

were brought out into the open. Consequently it became more socially acceptable for civilians, and especially women, to articulate their personal war experiences. Much subsequent academic work on the women's role in the Second World War has, however, focused on women's work on the 'home front' or women's military service.⁴⁸

From a psychological point of view, responses to and the way traumatic events are recalled vary from individual to individual. Although cues, either personal or social, are essential to the triggering process and recall, the retrieval of repressed memories may be triggered by a variety of different experiences or conditions, such as memorial rituals, a sudden loss or bereavement, retirement, failing health or a wish to put one's house in order before dying.⁴⁹ A number of events during the 1990s, five decades after internment, acted as 'cues' and 'triggers' for the retrieval of the repressed memories of the ex-internees.

During the 1990s the media focused public attention on the returning civilian hostages from the Middle East and the traumatised civilian men, women and children in Eastern Europe. All of these groups were encouraged to relate and record their ordeals. Their narratives, according to more than one of my interviewees, revived deeply repressed memories of their own earlier internment.⁵⁰ These personal testimonies, together with the various fiftieth anniversaries and the memorial rituals that commemorated the beginning and the end of the Second World War, undoubtedly acted as both personal and social cues that triggered the memories of those who had been interned.⁵¹

Age and bereavement also have psychological influences. Many older internees had long retired, and a significant number had been bereaved and may have wanted to put their 'house in order' before they too died. Many of the parents of those who had been children in the camps were also now dead, and some had left camp memorabilia to their children. These ex-children of the camps were now parents and were, themselves, coming up to retirement age. Those adults who were children in the camps and who were writing their autobiographies in the 1980s and 90s may have found some truth in Carolyn Steedman's words:

[C]hildren do not possess a social analysis of what is happening to them, or around them, so the landscape and the pictures it presents have to remain a background, taking on meaning later, from different circumstances.⁵²

Perhaps, then, during the five decades following internment, the children of the camps had developed the skills to analyse what internment had meant to them and the camp experience may well have taken on all kinds of meaning later in their lives. Writing from the emotional distance of five decades these later autobiographies may have been a way of seeing that past landscape from an adult perspective. In so doing these ex-children from the camps have been trying to make sense of that childhood experience and 'gaining an understanding that the child at the time did not possess'.⁵³

Artefacts, souvenirs and memorabilia can also trigger memories. In the closing passages of Ernest Hillen's recent autobiography the author refers to the return of a lost toy that he had in the camp. The toy was returned just a few years before he published his memoirs. Neil Begley ends his narrative explaining that forty years after the war he was working in the Solomon Islands where he lived on 'Tavio Ridge the scene of some of the most determined resistance by the Japanese troops. Shells, bullets and old helmets were often dug up in my garden.'⁵⁴ I suggest that both the return of the lost toy and the uncovering of items of war were the cues that triggered childhood memories of the camps and the subsequent writing of these two autobiographies.

It seems to me, therefore, that the fact that the camp population is ageing and maturing, the various cues, triggering events, anniversaries and commemorations, the recently released hostages and discovery of artefacts, together with the changes in attitudes and social and public discourses have *all* contributed to the more recent wave of Far Eastern war narratives.

Recent oral history work has, undoubtedly, added a new dynamic to the subject as interviewers have tried to 'uncover' individual experiences. Many authors/interviewers however concentrate on 'recovering' these 'lost' voices and use the transcripts of the interviewees extensively, 'letting the internees speak for themselves'.⁵⁵ These interviews are an invaluable source, offering insights into personal internment camp experiences. Of special interest and importance are Shirley Fenton Huie's interviews with Dutch/Australian women and children, who were interned in the camps in the Dutch East Indies. Her book, *The Forgotten Ones*, makes extensive use of verbatim quotes from her interviews, which are often harrowing and distressing. The book itself is a 'verbal kaleidoscope of many of the camps'.⁵⁶

There are a few early academic studies including Geoffrey Emerson's unpublished 1973 M.Phil., 'Stanley Internment Camp,

Hong Kong 1942–1945’, Catherine Kenny’s 1986 book, *Captives*, stems from her 1962 B.A. thesis ‘Australian Army Nurses in Japanese Captivity 1942–1945’ and Joseph Kennedy’s book, *British Civilians and the Japanese War in Malaya and Singapore 1941–45*.⁵⁷ These studies are informed by a variety of official sources as well as oral testimonies. Emerson’s study shares similarities with the thematic and statistical approach on Santo Tomas adopted by Frederic Stevens and A.V.H. Hartendorp. Kenny, on the other hand, although claiming not to offer an ‘analytical or academic work’, focuses on the group identity, comradeship and ‘egalitarian spirit’ of a group of Australian nurses who were caught by the Japanese as they fled Singapore, and interned in a variety of camps in Java. Kennedy’s book is a mixture of Malayan history and war experience of Western civilians. The small part of the book that deals with Changi is detailed and descriptive rather than analytical.

Later academic studies emerged during the latter part of the 1980s and 90s. During this period critic Lynn Z. Bloom wrote several articles, edited diaries and wrote introductions to memoirs relating to the experiences of the American internees in the Philippines.⁵⁸ In 1999 new larger academic studies appeared. The first, by Audrey Maurer, is a study of American women interned on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. The research is based on interviews with fifty of these women. The question of ‘What enabled them to survive?’ is addressed through the impact of key factors upon their physical endurance and emotional resilience.⁵⁹ The second is Robert Haver’s study of the experiences of British and Australian POWs held in Changi military camp.⁶⁰ Although not a study of civilian internment I have included it here because Havers has not written a traditional military study. This study, based on diaries kept by the men, discusses the ‘vibrant prison camp community’ and, in so doing, it brings a new approach and dimension to the study of military POWs. These studies are more objective than the biographical and autobiographical material but remain focused on one particular camp or country.

In contrast, three wider studies also appeared in the 1990s. The first, in 1994, was Van Waterford’s *Prisoners of the Japanese in World War II*, which covers both civilian and POW camps in the Far East. Van Waterford (a pen-name for ex-internee Willem F. Wanrooy), was sixteen when he was interned in the Dutch East Indies. Now an American citizen, his knowledge of the Dutch East Indies and the Dutch language has given him, and therefore non-Dutch speakers, access to many Dutch sources. In 1998 Norman Cliff, who was

interned in Chefoo and Weihsien Camps, China, when he was in his late teens, wrote *Prisoners of the Samurai – Japanese Camps in China, 1941–1945*. This is a study of all the civilian internment camps in China and Hong Kong. Together the works of both Cliff and Waterford give a fuller picture of the number, size and different types of camps created by the Japanese. Waterford particularly has compiled a complete list of civilian and POW camps as well as an extensive range of other material, statistics and archival collections. Both works serve as invaluable research sources.⁶¹ Lastly, in 1999, my own unpublished Ph.D. thesis was completed, from which this book stems.⁶²

Two books, one by Tyler Thompson on Changi and the other by Elizabeth Head Vaughan on Bacolod Camp in Manila, bring a more analytical approach to the subject. Tyler Thompson and his wife, both Methodist missionary teachers, arrived in Singapore in January 1940. Mrs Thompson was evacuated just before the final Japanese assault, leaving her husband to ‘throw in his lot with the people he came to serve’.⁶³ Thompson’s book, *Freedom in Internment*, was based on a daily journal which he kept buried in the earth of Changi Prison precincts during his internment in the men’s section of Changi Prison. Twenty years later the journal was edited and published. It concentrates on the men’s experiences and analyses the manner in which they democratically ‘governed’ themselves and organised the various camp ‘institutions’ and rich cultural life.

Elizabeth Head Vaughan’s *Community Under Stress*, aims from the start to be a sociological study of internment.⁶⁴ Head Vaughan, a former research assistant in the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina, went to the Philippines in 1937. When the Japanese attacked she, along with her two young children, was captured and interned by the Japanese in Bacolod Camp in June 1942. The camp closed in March 1943 and the internees were transferred to Santo Tomas. Her book, based on a day-to-day record she kept while in Bacolod, a mixed, family, multiracial camp with under 200 internees, is an ‘involuntary participant observer’ socio-psychological study of this small group of internees over nine months. Written in the late 1940s, her discussions on how this disparate group organised, fed and cared for themselves are informed by the then fashionable sociological and psychological theories relating to various types of stress created by enforced internment. Her comparisons are made with POWs, European concentration camps and Japanese interned in America. Head Vaughan asserts, with Dr H. Spicer, Head of the Community Analysis Division of the War

Relocation Authority: ‘There seems to be a basic similarity in what happens to all groups placed in artificial communities of the relocation centre or of the internment camp type.’ To this Vaughan, herself, adds:

There is a need for additional studies of such situations, with emphasis on the effects of the thwarting of basic and acquired drives upon personality and upon group organisation. From other such analyses, checked by different observers, there should come an ultimate theory of internment with the possibility of scientific social forecasting of individual and group responses in situations where mobility, association and general conduct are rigidly controlled.⁶⁵

While I entirely agree with Head Vaughan that there is a need for additional studies of such situations and that there may, of course, be similar sociological, emotional and psychological problems related to internment, her behavioural model excludes too many variables including age, gender, ethnicity, the nature of the internment and the regime in charge. All these, in my view, make an ‘ultimate theory of internment’ unachievable and therefore it is impossible to ‘forecast individual or group responses’. As the following chapters of this book will show, there are differences between the narratives from camps in Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai and the Philippines and those of internees in Java and Sumatra. The former make little reference to a Japanese presence. In many of the camps in these areas the behaviour of the guards was, apparently, less brutal and their presence less prominent than in the other camps in Java and Sumatra. Once the Western civilians were interned and ‘self-government’ established, the internee narratives either depict the Japanese as figures of fun, or completely ignore them. Only during times of crises, such as severe disciplinary action, is the power of the Japanese guards acknowledged. However, as will be seen in chapters four and five of this book, once the focus shifts south-west to Java and Sumatra where, predominantly, Dutch nationals were incarcerated in large sexually segregated camps, the narratives change and the Japanese presence is more prominent, constant and brutal.

As discussed earlier in this introduction, heroic tales, official histories and anecdotal and/or subjective personal accounts have already been covered at length by the memoirs, autobiographies and biographies of the internees themselves. Equally other authors and scholars have addressed the socio-psychological effects of internment on small groups. There is, however, a recurring theme in many

of the early and later narratives, the typicality of which is encapsulated by ex-internee Freddy Bloom who writes:

Of course there was hunger, disease, indignity, cruelty, fear and death. They are the basic ingredients of all concentration camps. They are an essential part of war stories.

It is those 'basic ingredients' that, not unreasonably, inform and colour many of these subjective adult and 'child' narratives. But, as Bloom goes on to say:

In reality, over any length of time, fear is like a bad smell. One gets used to it. Nobody can live indefinitely in a state of sustained horror.⁶⁶

How the internees 'got used to it', how they coped with the fear and internment, and what 'tools' they used to do so are rarely analysed in these stories.

Recent approaches to the subject, however, have opened up new ground. In 1999 Elizabeth M. Norman's *We Band of Angels* was published. Using journals, letters, government testimony and personal interviews with ageing survivors, Norman gives a vivid account of front-line nursing, capture and the captivity of ninety-nine nurses in the Philippines. The main story of the nurses' involvement in the bloody battle for Bataan is very moving, and the later chapters that chronicle the women's lives once they return to the United States, their treatment by post-war planners, doctors and psychologists, who 'focused exclusively on the health of the returning men, not the women', reveal a great deal about the gendering of war and heroes at that time.

One year later Theresa Kaminski's *Prisoners in Paradise, American Women in the Wartime South Pacific* and Frances B. Cogan's *Captured, The Japanese Internment of American Civilians in the Philippines, 1941–1945* were also published.⁶⁷ As the title indicates, Kaminski also focuses on American women captured and interned in the Philippines. Kaminski's sources include letters, journals, diaries, oral histories, memoirs and autobiographies spanning the decades from the 1940s to the 1990s and her feminist analysis concentrates on the women's perception of American womanhood and being a 'good wife' and 'good mother' as weapons for survival. One of the chapters in the book also chronicles the way many women risked their lives and endured rough living conditions and ill health to evade internment.

A more comparative approach to American civilian internment is, however, taken by Frances Cogan. Focusing on five different camps in the Philippines and using a wide variety of sources including government documentation, unpublished manuscripts, personal interviews, diaries, memoirs, medical data and Japanese soldiers' accounts, Cogan examines the experiences of men, women and children caught and interned during the Japanese victories. As such it is a broader, more detailed and comprehensive account of how all the American internees in different camps survived their internment.

This recent, comparative, analytical and informative body of work is long overdue and very welcome. However, I suggest that it is only through comparing the experiences of different groups of civilian internees in different parts of the Far East at that time that certain issues emerge and lend themselves for analysis. This book, which focuses on and compares the experiences of American, Dutch and British men, women and children in a number of camps in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines and Java and Sumatra, aims to fill this gap.

Although earlier in this introduction, I offered various theories of traumatic memory as possible explanations for the different waves of the historiography, the focus and framework of my particular account of internment is not couched in terms of the trauma model. Rather it is a social and cultural history of internment, and my principal concern is with the social and cultural 'tools' used by many of the British, Dutch and American civilians to survive internment. This does not mean, however, that I deny the internees were victims of the war and that many suffered enormous hardship under the Japanese. However, rather than concentrate on the dichotomy of victim and victimiser this study shows that both 'agency and victimhood cohabited' in a variety of ways in the internment camps.⁶⁸

My secondary sources include historical, biographical and autobiographical material covering the Far Eastern war and civilian internment. Primary sources in the War, Foreign and Colonial Office papers and intelligence reports at the Public Records Office have been studied, as well as International Red Cross war reports. Official documentation, diaries, letters, newspapers and artefacts in the Canberra War Museum, in Australia, were also used. Other primary sources include private diaries, personal papers and other internment records in the Royal Commonwealth Society Library, Rhodes House Library and the Imperial War Museum.

An essential source for my research, particularly in relation to the

women and children, has been personal interviews. These came about through a variety of sources and took place between 1991 and 1996, in England, Holland and Australia. These narratives were invaluable, adding texture, colour and shape to the book. (For a detailed discussion on these see the Appendix.) ‘No historian’, claims Elizabeth Tonkin, ‘would want to rely only on oral accounts without making use of other human features. Material evidence has all sorts of uses to those who wish to reconstruct the past.’⁶⁹ Material evidence was also an important source for my research. During my interviews I was shown a variety of material evidence which was often as revealing as the interviews themselves. They prompted further memories and discussions as well as ‘putting reality into their stories’.⁷⁰ The materials were crude and the products basic and at times almost child-like. Tiny notebooks had become ‘diaries’. Scraps of paper had been used to make home-made birthday cards and drawing books, slippers and sewing kits made from remnants of army jerkins and names of fellow internees were embroidered on small worn pillowcases and tablecloths. Some of this material evidence can be found in this book.

Fifty years on, the camps themselves have either been demolished or have reverted to their original use. Personal visits were, however, made to Stanley Prison, Hong Kong, where it was possible to tour the area occupied by the internees, and to Singapore where the outside of Changi Prison and the adjacent museum were visited. Consequently, I have obtained a greater personal understanding of the topography, accommodation and climatic conditions faced by the internees in these areas.

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter one explores the discussions, preparations, decisions, indecisions and confusion that surrounded the expected/surprise Japanese attacks. It also highlights the moral, economic, political, emotional and racial dilemmas faced by the ill-prepared colonial communities and their imperial powers.

Chapter two focuses on the civilian men, and analyses how the men adapted to camp life. The experiences of the men in the mixed camps of Stanley, Hong Kong, Santo Tomas in the Philippines and the men’s sections of Changi Prison in Singapore are the focus of much of this chapter.

Chapter three concentrates on and analyses the experiences of the civilian women in the mixed camps of Stanley, Hong Kong, Lunghua in Shanghai and Santo Tomas, as well as the women’s section of Changi Prison, Singapore, plus a variety of women’s camps in Java and Sumatra.

Chapter four examines the experiences of the children in both mixed and segregated camps in the areas covered by this book. Relying heavily on autobiographies and oral testimonies, it traces their responses to internment.

In conclusion, Chapter five seeks to reflect on both the conclusions specific to the analysis in this book and the broader meanings of the experiences analysed.

NOTES

- 1 Selma Leydesdorff, 'A Shattered Silence', In Luisa Passerini (Special editor) *Memory and Totalitarianism: International Year Book of Oral History and Life Stories* Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 145–63.
- 2 Jan Vansina, in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 135.
- 3 *Changi Guardian*, No. 117, 7 September 1942.
- 4 Catherine Hall (ed.), *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 11. This is sometimes described as the anthropological definition of culture encouraged by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder.
- 5 Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: difference, hierarchy, and history in early twentieth-century evangelical propaganda', in Catherine Hall, 2000, p. 323.
- 6 Annemarie Troger, 'German Women's Memories of World War II', in Margaret Randolph Higonet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (eds), *Behind the Lines* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 285.
- 7 Public Record Office (PRO) War Office, (WO)203/4576. Introduction to draft report 'Repatriation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees' (RAPWI) 1946.
- 8 The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor took place on 7 December 1941, but as a result of time differences across the Pacific Date Line it was already the morning of 8 December in some of the Far Eastern colonies.
- 9 Approximately 11,000 internees died in Java. This statistic, and the majority of those used throughout this book, is based on figures assembled by Dr D. Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen Voor Burgers Gedurende de Tweede Wereldoorlog – Japanese Civil Internment Camps During the Second World War* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1963). The main text in this book is in Dutch but the summary is in English. Other statistics come from Van Waterford, *Prisoners of the Japanese in World War II* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1994). Both have a detailed schedule of the camps. Van Waterford has carried out his own research but has based many of his statistics on Dr Van Velden's work. Norman Cliff, *Prisoners of the Samurai* (Essex: Courtyard Publishers, 1998) also uses figures from Dr Van Velden but supplements his statistics from *Internee Affairs*, the magazine of the Centre for Civilian Internee Rights Inc., Summer 1992. He claims the number of civilians interned in the Far East during the Second World War numbered 126,145. However, the repatriations, births, deaths and movements from camp to camp made for major fluctuations in numbers in some areas at various times. It is clear, therefore, that most statistics about civilian internees in the Far East during the Second World War have to be considered as approximations. A more detailed and comprehensive study of all the areas where the Dutch were interned can be found in J. van Dulm, W.J. Krijgsveld, H.J. Legemaate, H.A.M. Liesker, G. Weijers and E. Braches (eds), *Geïllustreerde Atlas van de Japanse kampen in Nederlands-Indië 1942–1945* (Purmerend: Asia Maior, 2000), written in Dutch.
- 10 Utsumi Aiko, 'Japanese Army Internment Policies for Enemy Civilians During the Asia-Pacific War', trans. by Meredith Patton, in Donald Denoon, Mark Hudson, Gavan McCormack and Tessa Morris-Suzuki (eds), *Multicultural Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 179.

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- 11 For more details of the repatriations, see P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages* (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1987). Also PRO, Foreign Office (FO) 916/439.
- 12 For further details and discussions on all the camps in the Philippines, see Frances B. Cogan, *Captured. The Japanese Internment of American Civilians in the Philippines 1941–45* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000) and Theresa Kaminski, *Prisoners in Paradise. American Women in Wartime South Pacific* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000).
- 13 As the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor they made simultaneous attacks on Clark Field (the key to the defences of the American-held Philippines), Hong Kong's Kai Tak airport and landed soldiers at Kota Baru in north-east Malaya.
- 14 The war in Europe began on 3 September 1939. The war in the Far East is generally accepted to have begun on 7 December 1941. (Some historians, however, may say that it started in 1937 when Japan invaded China.)
- 15 Margaret Higonnet, *Behind the Lines*, 1987, p. 4.
- 16 Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 80.
- 17 The Imperial War Museum's (IWM) 'War in the Far East' exhibition from August to December 1995 was dominated by military images and details. One corner of the exhibition was reserved for exhibits related to the civilian experience. In 1995 the museum at Changi Prison was also dominated by drawings and artefacts made by the military prisoners of war.
- 18 The situation changed, however, in Britain during the summer of 1995 when the manner in which the 50th anniversary of the end of the Pacific war was to be commemorated created controversy at many levels. Concern for offending the Japanese and/or the British veterans was a major cause of political tension and media attention. All this, together with the eventual commemoration of V.J. Day in London in August 1995, brought the war in the Far East and the experiences of the military and civilian prisoners to the forefront of many people's minds. Subsequent ongoing discussions with both British and Japanese political leaders, regarding an apology and compensation for their treatment from the Japanese has meant the issue has not been allowed to die away.
- 19 The range of written work varies from the sensational to the scholarly. For Hong Kong see, for example, Tim Carew, *The Fall of Hong Kong* (London: Pan Books, 1960) and *Hostages of Fortune* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971); Oliver Lindsay, *The Lasting Honour: The Fall of Hong Kong 1941* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978) and *At the Going Down of the Sun* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981); G.B. Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978). Covering the whole area see, Christopher Thorne, *The Far Eastern War States and Societies 1941–45* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986); Peter Calvoceossi, Guy Wint and John Pritchard, *Total War 2 Vols* (London: Penguin Books, 1989).
- 20 I would include in these David Michell, *A Boy's War* (Singapore: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1988) and Frances and Kenneth McAll, *The Moon Looks Down* (London: Darley Anderson, 1987).
- 21 William Sewell, *Strange Harmony* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1946). William Sewell's daughter, Ruth Baker, thinks there was another chapter to be included in the book but the Quaker publishers thought it was too critical and it was, therefore, excluded from the final publication. That chapter has not been traced.
- 22 Mary Thomas, *In The Shadow Of The Rising Sun* 2nd edn (Singapore: Maruzen, 1983), pp. 7–10.
- 23 Frederic H. Stevens, *Santo Tomas Internment Camp* ([n.p.] USA: Limited Private Edition, 1946), Preface vii.
- 24 A.V.H. Hartendorp, *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines 2 Vols* (Manila: Bookmark, 1967) Foreword xiii Vol. I.
- 25 Agnes Newton Keith, *Three Came Home* (New York: MacFadden-Bartell, 1965) and Betty Jeffrey, *White Coolies* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1954). Jessie Elizabeth Simons, *While History Passed* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Ltd, 1954).
- 26 Freddy Bloom, *Dear Philip – A Diary of Captivity, Changi, 1942–45* (London: Bodley Head, 1980).
- 27 Dieuwke Wendelaar Bonga, *Eight Prison Camps: A Dutch Family in Japanese Java* (Ohio: Ohio University Centre for International Studies, 1996), p. xii.
- 28 Neil Begley, *An Australian's Childhood in China Under the Japanese* (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1995), p. ix. See also Ernest Hillen, *The Way of A Boy. A memoir of Java* (Canada and

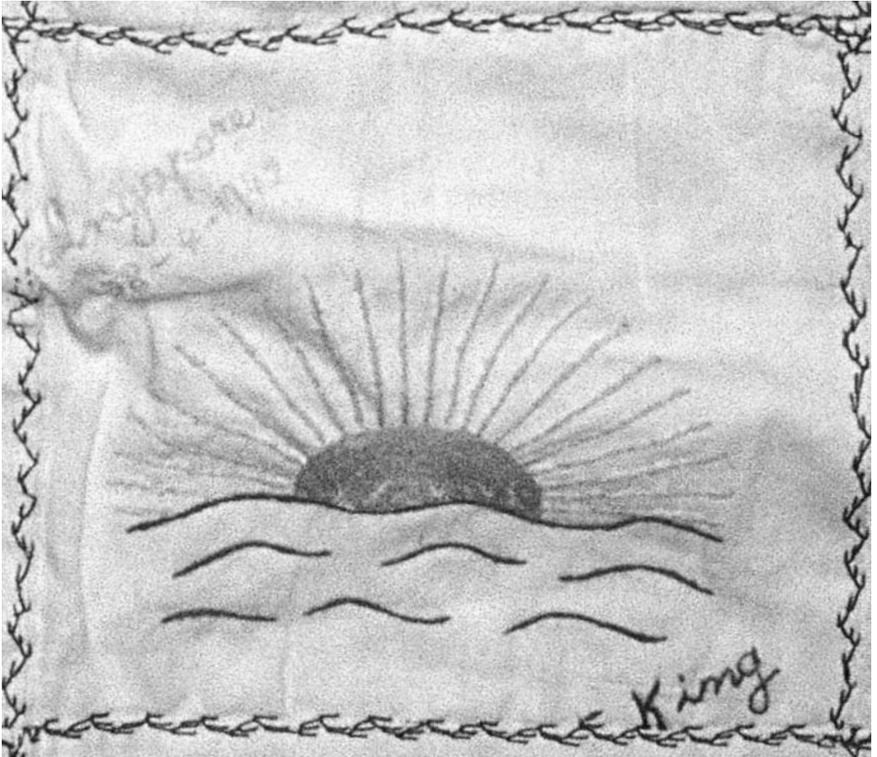
- Britain: Viking, 1994). Graham Dawson uses the double meaning of the word ‘composure’ to explain the manner in which accounts of experiences are created or constructed to produce a coherent narrative and one that can be lived with in relative comfort. G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes. British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- 29 J.G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1984). Later made into a film of the same name.
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- 37 Winter and Sivan, 1999, p. 12.
- 38 It is interesting to note that the initial response to returning Army and Navy nurses in Australia and the USA was much warmer.
- 39 Interview in February 1992 with woman ex-internee from Stanley Camp, Hong Kong.
- 40 Bonga, 1996, p. xi.
- 41 Bonga, 1996, pp. 202–3. A similar cold reception was mentioned by the Jews returning to Holland and there were also claims of unsympathetic listening made by Jews in Germany after their liberation from the camps.
- 42 Cogan, 2000, p. 313. For details of the difficult economic, social and psychological adjustments faced by some of the American internees when they returned to the United States, see both Cogan, 2000 and Kaminski, 2000.

- 43 Unpublished memoir of British ex-internee. Copy in possession of author.
- 44 Gabriele Rosenthal, 1991, p. 37
- 45 For more details of the compensation payments, see this book's Epilogue.
- 46 PRO FO 371/92529, 11 January 1951, File No. 59.
- 47 I am grateful to Keith Martin, ex-chairman of Association of British Civilian Internees Far Eastern Region (ABCIFER) and Gil Hair, Executive Director, American Centre for Internee Rights Inc. (CFIR) for much of the information on this issue. There are extensive files covering the Peace Treaty with Japan in the PRO. These include PRO FO 371/ 83828–83839 and PRO FO 371/92529–92600. For a discussion on the American situation, see Linda Goetz Holmes, *Unjust Enrichment* (Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2001).
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- 49 Martin Conway argues 'recovery of memories frequently occurs to highly specific cues often when the rememberer is in a "distracted" state'. Martin A. Conway, 'Past and present – Recovered memories and false memories' in Conway (ed.), 1997, pp. 170–1. Traumatic memory traces can also be unexpectedly triggered by 'similarities of ambience, noise, smell or mood. Individuals may have their own cues but ritual provides them with social cues . . . cues are essential for triggering the process of recall/retrieval . . . Social cues can include moments of silence or saluting the flag and so on.' Winter and Sivan, 1999, pp. 14–15.
- 50 See Brian Keenan, 1992. Terry Waite, *Taken on Trust* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993) and John McCarthy & Jill Morell, *Some Other Rainbow* (London: Bantam Press, 1993).
- 51 One interviewee claimed it was Terry Waite's interview on television, after his return from Beirut, that awakened memories and emotions for her. The fact that the Japanese comfort women waited fifty years to voice their experiences is evidence of the earlier social atmosphere that discouraged women admitting to rape and other unpleasant war experiences. It was the media coverage of these 'comfort women' that prompted another ex-internee to come forward and give her testimony in support and eventually write her memoirs.
- 52 Carolyn Steedman, *Past Tenses, Essays on Writing Autobiography and History* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992), p. 22.
- 53 Carolyn Steedman, 1992, p. 23.
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- 55 Michael P. Onorato, *Forgotten Heroes* (Westport: Meckler, 1990). This book is an example of extensive use of transcripts of interviews with people interned in the Philippines.
- 56 Shirley Fenton Huie, *The Forgotten Ones* (Pymble: Angus and Robertson, 1992). This book is based on interviews with women interned in the Dutch East Indies. Russell Braddon in the Foreword to Shirley Fenton Huie, 1992.
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- 58 Lynn Z. Bloom, 'Till Death Do Us Part: Men's and Women's Interpretations of Wartime Internment', *Women's Studies International Forum* 10, no. 1 (1987). Most of Lynn Bloom's other work is published in American journals (see Select Bibliography).
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- 60 R.P.W. Havers, 'Changi from Myth to History' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to Pembroke College, Cambridge University, 1999).
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- 63 Tyler Thompson, *Freedom in Internment. Under Japanese Rule in Singapore 1942–1945* (Singapore: Kefford Press, [n.d.] probably 1960s). Introduction, p. vi.
- 64 Elizabeth Head Vaughan, *Community Under Stress. An Internment Camp Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).
- 65 Vaughan, 1949, p. 140.
- 66 Freddy Bloom, 1980. Introduction p. 2. I would like to thank the late Mrs Bloom for a copy of the proof of her diary.
- 67 Elizabeth M. Norman, *We Band of Angels* (New York: Pocket Books, 1999). Kaminiski, 2000, Cogan, 2000.
- 68 Winter and Sivan, 1999, p. 19.
- 69 Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 95–6.
- 70 Shirley Fenton Huie, 1992, Acknowledgements. Also Mike Roper in his interviews with managers of British industry claims that when interviewing managers, ‘The currency between me and them was thus objects . . . Products seem to act as landmarks in memory, orienting managers in relation to their career history, and so bringing their past to life for the interviewer.’ ‘Product Fetishism and the British Company Man 1945–85’, in Roper and Tosh, 1991, pp. 192–3.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRELUDE TO WAR



Think of the opportunity. In what other task can you have so much power so early? You can at the age of twenty-five, be the father of your people: you can drive the road, bridge the river, and water the desert; you can be the arm of justice and the hand of mercy to millions. You can, in fact, serve England. You can indeed, in a vital moment, serve something that is greater than England itself. You can serve the cause of Christian civilisation.¹

With these words, in June 1940, Lord Lloyd, His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, bade farewell to a group of colonial officers before they 'went out to break a lance in life's tournament and to govern and protect that strange agglomeration of willing peoples'. The images of power, virility, invincibility, superiority, paternalism and an inspiring sense of mission he conjured up were part of the British colonial imperative. They underpinned the British rationale for colonialism, and motivated and shaped the lives and minds of colonial officers. Religious rhetoric regularly punctuated colonial service literature and discourse at that time. Men were *called* to service; they helped the colonial peoples find their *salvation* and they had to have '*faith* in the worthwhileness of their job and in the way of life which they were called upon to *preach* and to practise'² [my italics]. This describes a missionary zeal comparable to that of those men and women responding to the call of God and sent abroad by missionary societies. These hand-picked, highly trained and 'inspired' administrators, who led the colonial engineers, doctors, forestry experts, law enforcement officers and public works personnel, were the secular missionaries who supported a Durkheimian sacred 'civic religious' imperial institution that was replicated in numerous outposts of the British Empire.³

During his long farewell speech Lord Lloyd admitted certain weaknesses brought on by the war, but he remained reassuring:

For the last ten or fifteen years we have been knee-deep in the hostilities of peace, and find ourselves today right up against reality with too little material preparation made, but with the spiritual defences triumphantly strong . . . You are not going to have a soft job. You will indeed have plenty of hard work and not too many of the comforts of life, and quite possibly no lack of danger . . . When all is said and done, you are going out to a grand life.⁴

Just eighteen months later, however, that grand life was shattered as these colonial officers, and the rest of the Far Eastern colonial communities, found themselves right up against the reality of the

Japanese assault and the extension of the Second World War into the Far East. Between 7 and 10 December 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, landed at Kota Baru on the north-east coast of Malaya, attacked Kai Tak airport in Hong Kong, bombed Clark Fields in the Philippines, sank HMS *Peterel*, a small river gunboat moored in the Whangpoo River off the Shanghai Bund, and sank two British warships, *The Prince of Wales* and *The Repulse*, just off Singapore. Thus the war in the Far East had begun. During the following one hundred days Western colonialism in this region collapsed.

On Christmas Day 1941, just seventeen days after the initial attack and after a fierce and bloody battle, Hong Kong surrendered. On 2 January 1942 the Japanese occupied Manila, the capital of the Philippines. By 31 December 1941 the British and Commonwealth forces in Malaya retreated to Singapore island and on 15 February 1942, Singapore surrendered. Between 27 and 29 February a large-scale naval battle took place in the Java Sea, but on 1 March 1942 the Japanese landed in three different places on the north coast of Java. On 6 March, Batavia, the capital of Java, fell and on 8 March the Dutch East Indies capitulated. The speed and ferocity of the Japanese attack and the victories that followed shocked everyone in the West and shattered the colonial communities in the Far East. One woman in Shanghai expressed the thoughts of many at that time:

The news was absolutely shattering. We had been invaded, overrun and lost our protection all at the same time . . . You cannot imagine what a horrible thing it is to be cut off from the rest of the world with no means of communication; no access to funds, just a big blank and big questions: What will happen to us now?⁵

What happened was that approximately 130,000 Allied civilian men, women and children were captured by the Japanese and, subsequently, interned. In China 4,500 Western men, 3,350 women and 1,500 children were captured; in Hong Kong approximately 1,300 men, 920 women and 315 children were rounded up; in Singapore 3,175 men, 1,020 women and 330 children still remained; in the Philippines 4,200 men, 2,300 women and 1,300 children surrendered; in Sumatra 4,000 men, 4,500 women and 4,700 children were captured and, in Java the numbers rose to 29,000 men, 25,000 women and 29,000 children.⁶

Making extensive use of official documentation, this chapter explores the build up to, and the one hundred days following, the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and the Western colonies on 7

December 1941. It aims to assess the factors and/or influences that contributed to so many members of the Western colonial communities, especially women and children, remaining in the colonies at that uncertain time. The chapter argues that the very images of power, racial superiority, virility and invincibility that motivated and sustained Western colonialism and its agents did, in the end, trap many Western civilians in the Far Eastern war zone. But, as the following chapters will show, far from dismissing these images and ideals as useless or irrelevant, many of them were resurrected and adapted and became important survival techniques during internment.

Well before the European war began, concern about the situation in the Far East had been uppermost in the minds of members of the British government and, by 30 July 1939, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain confided to his wife that 'the attitude of the [Japanese] military in China itself, especially in Tientsin, Peking and Shanghai, remains intolerable, provocative and offensive'.⁷ On 2 August 1939 Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, informed the Cabinet that 'the situation in the Far East was now causing him more anxiety than the position in any other part of the world'.⁸ One month later, however, Germany invaded Poland and the war in Europe began.

The European war was, of course, the first priority of the British government but the defence of the Far Eastern colonies and the safety of the colonial communities were not ignored. The General Staff of the War Office, warned:

If [Japan] secured the N.E.I. she will be less economically dependent on the United States and will, accordingly, be less afraid of being involved in war against the United States.

Moreover, the two battalions at Shanghai were 'unsound military detachments and incapable of offering any effective resistance'. In the event of war with Japan:

Hong Kong would be isolated and the garrison would have very little hope of being relieved. It should be able to put up a stout resistance of the island but there is no intention to attempt to hold the mainland.

The garrison at Singapore and Malaya:

Had weak volunteer forces and about 40% of its authorised A.A. defences . . . Unless the RAF squadrons can be increased to the approved scale the security of the fortress in the event of a Japanese

attack would be seriously prejudiced. And the naval situation in the Far East would be one of 'great difficulty'.

All available resources were to be concentrated in Singapore, 'which is, after the United Kingdom, the most important strategic point in the British Empire'. Hong Kong was not to be reinforced; 'we should accept the fact that in the event of war it will almost certainly fall'.⁹ By October 1941, the British Ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Robert Craigie was arguing that:

It would be unsafe to assume too confidently that Japan does not want a campaign in the south at present. Japanese have a genius for secrecy and must be aware that we regard such a campaign as unlikely, a factor which would tend to recommend it to them.¹⁰

The level of danger was not, however, admitted publicly, nor could it be for fear of undermining faith in the British Empire, causing panic in the colonies, losing face with the colonised people and alerting the Japanese. Instead the colonial communities received two conflicting messages from their governments. On the one hand they were fed propaganda about the racial and military inferiority of the Japanese and the superiority of the West, on the other hand they were being subjected to travel restrictions and evacuation policies. Together, these were to cause confusion, conflict and tension.

After the British Commander-in-Chief for the Far East, Field Marshall Archibald Wavell visited Hong Kong in 1940, he commented that the Japanese soldiers were 'sub-human specimens who would not form an intelligent fighting force', and he also described them as 'bogeymen . . . they will not dream of fighting at night . . . we have nothing to fear from the Japs'. One historian argues that these comments 'seriously misled the military forces in Hong Kong'.¹¹ Such comments fuelled, massaged and confirmed the racial perceptions inherent in the colonial culture, which already perceived the Japanese as inferior, and would have lulled the colonial communities into a deeper, and still false, sense of security.

The Americans, not yet at war in Europe and not, until 30 November 1941, committed to supporting Britain in the Far East, shared the same sense of Western imperial power and racial superiority. Historian, Christopher Thorne claimed:

Among Americans in the Philippines were those who dismissed the very idea that Japan would be foolish as to confront the manifestly

greater power of the United States. Americans held the average Japanese in contempt.¹²

Claude Buss, a member of the American High Commissioner's staff in the Philippines, recalled:

In those days nobody respected the Japanese military very much. My Filipino friends as well as Americans in Manila would point out that the Japanese could not even lick China.¹³

Consequently many Americans erroneously believed that the Philippines were well defended against any Japanese attack.

Meanwhile, the Dutch in the East Indies were confident that they had successfully resisted Japanese demands for access to their territories' oil. In April 1940, the Dutch government informed the Japanese government that should The Netherlands become involved in the European war:

No protection for the Indies would be requested or accepted from any power and that the Indies Government was capable of insuring the fullest administration of those territories.¹⁴

Queen Wilhelmina of The Netherlands believed 'the time to deal with the Japanese was once Germany had been defeated: the West should then drown them like rats'.¹⁵ Equally misleading for all the civilians in the Far East was the propaganda surrounding the impregnability of Singapore, an island on the southernmost tip of Malaya. Between the wars Singapore was planned as a dockyard, a naval base, barracks and a communications centre. When completed it was expected to 'double-lock the gateway of the Empire so that it was useless for an unfriendly power, such as Japan, to dream of forcing an entrance'.¹⁶ Former teacher in Singapore and ex-internee, Mary Thomas recalled:

We were strong in the confidence of our own propaganda. We had the naval base so widely advertised and magnificent airfields. Ours was an impregnable fortress which could only be attacked from the sea and proper arrangements had been made to deal with that . . . Our attitude in Malaya remained casual and light-hearted.¹⁷

In contrast to these overtly positive messages were the covert messages of danger, which were implicit in the British Far Eastern

defence policies. These included evacuation of women and children from Hong Kong and travel restrictions on women and children going to Malaya. There were, however, many limitations on, and problems involved in, the imposition of these defence policies.

With the Americans and the Dutch lulled into a false sense of security, it was the British government that was called upon, during those early days of the Second World War, not only to face the problems of the war in Europe but also to take appropriate action to safeguard its colonial nationals. As far as Shanghai was concerned, its status as an International Settlement denied it the full protection of the British government. Americans had been advised to leave China and, in October 1940, the headmaster of Chefoo Missionary School wrote to parents informing them that ‘British authorities have not sent out any such advice, though it is evident to us that the situation is serious’. He added that, ‘in spite of the threatening outlook, our only course of action is to keep the school open’.¹⁸

During 1940 the British forces in the International Settlement were evacuated from Shanghai to Hong Kong and Singapore, and by August 1941 approximately 500 men from Shanghai had joined His Majesty’s Forces Overseas. Nevertheless, it was still claimed that ‘Shanghai evacuees are not our problem’.¹⁹ It was admitted, however, that the civilians in Shanghai could be a defence problem and that unless the remaining British subject residents were removed, they would automatically ‘become hostages of the Japanese and will hamstring our military effort in occupied China’. Moreover, of the approximately 10,000 British civilians, no more than 1,300 were self-sufficient or were likely to be assisted by employers, and it was clear that over 6,000 would, if evacuation was agreed, ‘have to be maintained from official funds’.²⁰ No official evacuation action was, however, taken by the British government. ‘The general attitude was that those who had no good reason to stay in the Far East would be well advised to consider leaving’.²¹ For various reasons, including over-optimism, financial considerations, confusion and delays, many, to their cost, ignored that advice. Most of the 10,000 who remained appeared to think the international status of the city would be to their advantage:

In most cases this attitude is still based, to some extent, on the assumption that even in the event of war with Britain it would be against Japan’s interest to disrupt life of the Settlement and that, although physically isolated, Shanghai would continue to be an international administered zone.²²

In this general confused atmosphere, as some Westerners left Shanghai others returned:

As Shanghai was not a British Colony there was no pressure on us to leave. A few families sailed away to Australia but after a year's exile they were fed up and returned. A lot was happening on the political front in East Asia but we continued to live normally and felt secure. So it was in October and November 1941 that women and children came back from Australia, and a trickle were heading away from China for safety.²³

On 9 November 1941 a Shanghai businessman, Herbert Wright wrote to his mother in England voicing his frustration and confusion:

How to leave, where to go and how to live once one has got there is far from clear! It is very strongly suggested that all dependants should be got out. But this is quite impracticable for those who are left, chiefly owing to financial difficulties. We ourselves are terribly averse to embarking on separation once again. To get out of China now to a country where I should have to make a completely new start, would use up nearly all my savings and would deprive me of a job which is still flourishing. Those who plan to go find that under the new regulations they cannot buy pounds or American dollars to pay their fares and the utmost they are allowed to buy monthly is fifty pounds which must include the cost of passages.²⁴

At the end of November 1941 the British consulate telephoned Mrs Flemons, wife of a telephone company official, to tell her that her son, who was due to sail to Australia on 1 December, could not sail 'because the ship was full'. Flemons continues, 'I did not think this was significant at the time but a week later the full impact of the delay became very apparent'.²⁵ The American 4th Marines also left in December 1941, after which, Hugh Collar claims, 'we felt defenceless and bare'.²⁶ On 8 December the Japanese overran Shanghai.

As the events in Shanghai unfolded, more serious thought was being given by the British government to the British civilians in the Malayan states, Singapore and the very vulnerable colony of Hong Kong. In these areas arrangements for Western civilians began with two initiatives: travel restrictions on women and children to and from Malaya and the compulsory evacuation of Western women and children from Hong Kong. In the event neither of these policies was fully realised.

According to one writer, Hong Kong was a barometer for the other colonies in the Far East:

The non-Japanese Far East was like a snake with Hong Kong the head. And like a serpent facing danger, head raised and eyes warily taking note, the warning undulations communicated themselves throughout the length of the entire body.²⁷

And, indeed, the ramifications of the problems arising in Hong Kong undulated through the Far Eastern ‘snake’ and communicated anxiety in other Far Eastern colonies.

The first evidence of any problems regarding Western civilians in Hong Kong began with the proposed evacuation of 5,000 British women and children and 750 other European nationals who would be sent to destinations in India, the Philippines and Australia.²⁸ The Chiefs of Staff concurred with the proposal, arguing that an evacuation might not be possible in the event of a surprise attack by the Japanese. No action was to be taken, however, until the Foreign Office was consulted. Meanwhile, the Governor of Hong Kong agreed that all necessary preparations, short of evacuation, would be made. These proposals assumed that both the American-held Philippines and the British Dominion²⁹ of Australia were safe places in the event of a Japanese attack, that they would readily accept evacuees and that British women and children would wish to leave. All three assumptions were, in the event, to prove misplaced.

While the British government was undoubtedly motivated by humanitarian considerations, it is also clear that the evacuation of civilians was politically influenced. The decision of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, not to recommend an evacuation was based on the supposition that it might be misconstrued by the Japanese as a sign of weakness. In his opinion, the ‘whole situation hinged on the attitude of the Japanese’. As a result, the War Cabinet decided on 22 June not to evacuate European civilians for the time being. At a War Cabinet meeting three days later, Eden challenged Halifax’s earlier supposition and argued that far from being misconstrued by the Japanese, the evacuation would have a ‘steadying effect on Japanese policy’.³⁰ Eden was supported by the Chiefs of Staff who maintained that the Japanese would not ‘interpret this step as a sign of weakness, rather the reverse’. After further consultation with the Governor of Hong Kong, the Foreign Office endorsed the evacuation order on 26 June and instructed Hong Kong to initiate the compulsory evacuation of European women and children.³¹

On 2 July all women and children of European descent were told to report for registration. By 3 August all the service families had been withdrawn to the Philippines, as well as the non-service British women and children who had registered, making a total of 3,474 evacuees.³² On the surface it appeared that the Hong Kong government had responded effectively and efficiently, but the hurried preparations and the imposition of a compulsory evacuation order eventually became so controversial that they were challenged by all factions of the colony's civilian population. They also heralded the beginning of evacuation problems and danger for the Western civilian communities throughout the Far East.

Criticism came from the business community who formed a pressure group called the Evacuation Representative Committee. One Hong Kong newspaper claimed the evacuation was 'clumsily carried out and entirely unaccompanied by any shock-absorbing arrangements'.³³ The manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, D.S. Edmonston, a highly influential member of the community, questioned the legality of the policy and threatened to take the case to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Large corporations were unwilling to let Chinese staff take over confidential administrative work in their offices, and consequently colonial businessmen found themselves caught between protecting their Western female staff by encouraging them to evacuate and their concern for their business operations. As a result, many requests were received for the exemption of their British female secretaries. One such letter to the Colonial Secretary, dated July 1940, states:

We have already lost two European stenographers owing to the evacuation and any further depletion of this section of our staff will seriously handicap us as a great part of our work is of a very confidential nature and cannot be entrusted to other than European stenographers.³⁴

How many of these requests came at the initiative of the women themselves or the employers is impossible to know but many secretaries remained in their posts in the colony.

Other Western women also began to find ways to circumvent the evacuation order. Exemptions were applied for from women wishing to do auxiliary nursing training, some from a sense of duty and others with a view to avoiding evacuation to remain with their loved ones. Taking a firmer stand, two female missionaries refused to leave until their appeals against the evacuation order had been decided.³⁵ Even more determined was Mrs Hilda Selwyn-Clark, wife of the Director

of Medical Services for Hong Kong, who wished to stay and carry on her work. She deliberately evaded evacuation by absenting herself and her young daughter from the colony on the day of registration.³⁶ In August 1940 the number of women granted exemption totalled 950; of those only 500 were deemed essential wartime personnel, 300 were running their own businesses and 150 had made their own arrangements.

In addition to the challenge from the Western colonial community, the Chinese community in Hong Kong was vociferous in its condemnation of the evacuation order. This group claimed that the preferential treatment given to European women and children was racial discrimination and questioned why the Hong Kong taxpayer should finance evacuation for a small privileged section of the colony.³⁷ In an attempt to answer criticisms of racial prejudice, in July 1940 the Australian government was approached to accept '1,500 wives and children of Chinese residents with records of service to Hong Kong thought to justify exceptional treatment'.³⁸ However, Australia's 1901 Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act, which became known as the 'All White Policy', resulted in the Australian government's refusal.³⁹ Even Western white women with mixed race children were denied entry to Australia. For example, a British woman who reached Manila discovered that the Australian immigration authorities had refused to accept her two children because their father was Chinese. The whole family had to return to Hong Kong.⁴⁰ In December the Hong Kong government further recommended the evacuation of approximately 3,400 Chinese residents, some with British nationality and all able to support themselves, but requests for their entry to Singapore were turned down by the Governor of the Straits Settlement, Sir Shenton Thomas.⁴¹

The refusal of these requests seriously undermined the authority of, and confidence in, the British and colonial governments. With the legality of the original compulsory order in question and the morale of the colonial and Chinese communities of concern, Governor Northcote terminated compulsory evacuation on 6 November 1940. As a contingency, however, he announced a voluntary evacuation scheme in early December, but the re-entry restrictions on women and children who had already left remained in place. While, on the face of it, the decision appeared equitable, the restrictions of safe havens for Asian and mixed race women and children remained. Moreover, the voluntary nature of the new evacuation policy removed the onus of funding evacuation from the Government and placed it on the

evacuees. Thus, further restrictions were added. It also gave the impression that the perceived danger had passed, or was at least less imminent. As a result, families who had already been separated by evacuation felt aggrieved and discriminated against. The situation did not improve.

On 4 December 1941 the Voluntary Evacuation plan was still in operation in Hong Kong and the War Office had stated it would only reconsider this policy if there was some 'radical change in the political atmosphere in the Far East'.⁴² The Japanese attack on Hong Kong three days later confirmed that there was not, and the fall of the colony within seventeen days left its population stunned. The propaganda and the misconceptions about Japanese military inferiority were totally discredited and Western civilians in the other colonies fell into a state of shock. That shock turned to fear when it was revealed that, during the short and bloody battle for Hong Kong, Japanese soldiers had murdered patients and raped nurses in a temporary field hospital in Happy Valley. And on Christmas morning approximately fifty-six wounded British and Canadian soldiers were bayoneted in their beds at St Stephen's College on the Stanley peninsula. Four Chinese and three British auxiliary nurses were raped, murdered and then their bodies and the bloody mattresses burned. Two doctors, Colonel C.D.R. Black and Captain T.N. Whitney tried to intervene to protect the nurses and patients, but were shot.⁴³

The dark shadow of these atrocities hung over the remaining 2,500 Western civilian men, women and children who were captured and interned in Stanley Camp by the Japanese. Those who had avoided evacuation and those who had challenged the British government's evacuation policy, for whatever reason, had many years to reflect on the consequences of their actions.

When the evidence of these tragic, but isolated, atrocities came to light, shock waves and outrage reverberated throughout the Far East, alerting the other colonies to the potential dangers facing their womenfolk.⁴⁴ The subsequent tension and confusion in Hong Kong echoed around London and travelled down the body of the Far Eastern 'snake' towards Malaya where similar problems were to arise and be replicated.

Much to the concern of the British War Office, under pressure from the Governor and members of the colonial community, the British government's travel restrictions on women and children travelling to and from Malaya met with resistance, and the restrictions were constantly amended. Objecting strongly to requests for women

and children to be allowed back into Malaya, or to join relatives for the first time, in July 1940 the War Office pointed out that this contradicted the evacuation policy in Hong Kong, claiming:

Not only is the question of food reserves for Malaya a very difficult one but the addition of European wives and children to the population of Singapore at a time when evacuation for families from Hong Kong is being carried out is unjustifiable and most undesirable from the point of view of defence.⁴⁵

As the following extract from a telegram from the Straits Settlement indicates, underlying the War Office's concern was the knowledge that evacuation of the women and children from Malaya would be impossible, and that they could face accusations of racial discrimination similar to those made in Hong Kong.

It will not be our policy to evacuate women and children because physically impossible to do so. Numbers estimated up to nine–ten thousand, shipping connections to Australia so poor that only a few hundreds could be so evacuated. Ships especially sent from Australia could not arrive in time to anticipate blockade. To have ships standing by perhaps for weeks or months is out of the question. This all apart from embittered feeling that racially discriminatory evacuation would excite.

However, a caveat stated that:

Women and children enter Malaya at their own risk and against the wishes of the Malayan authorities who will find them a grave embarrassment when the need for defence arises.⁴⁶

The acting Governor of Malaya took exception to the terms of the warning, however, and they were subsequently modified to:

Applicants must understand that they travel at their own risk and that their period of residence in Malaya may be curtailed if local circumstances make it desirable in the opinion of the Government that they should not remain in Malaya. In that event they would have to rely on their own arrangements to travel elsewhere, and it might not be practicable for them to secure shipping accommodation to return to the United Kingdom.⁴⁷

By deleting references to 'against the wishes of the Malayan author-

ities' or the words 'defence' and 'evacuation', with their connotations of war and danger, these instructions were, under the circumstances, misleading. Other amendments followed and by October 1941 all European women, boys and girls were allowed in if they were wives, sons or daughters of persons normally resident or employed in Malaya. Under pressure from parents, other orders contained special provision for schoolchildren from nearby countries to visit Malaya for their holidays. Rather than alerting the colonial community to the possible dangers, the removal of restrictions bolstered their confidence.

After the varying orders of the Government, the final removal of restrictions upon entry of women and children had necessarily given confidence to the public in Malaya. There is little doubt too, that each restriction had been relaxed as a result of the heavy and unremitting pressure exercised upon the Government by the local Europeans who, believing that Malaya was safe could not understand why their wives and children should not be allowed to join them.⁴⁸

At this stage, then, rather than war and the threat of a Japanese attack consolidating the Empire the conflicting perspectives on the assessment of the potential danger meant, slowly but surely, the caution of the British government was being challenged, its authority was being eroded, the unity of the Empire was being undermined and the safety of Western civilians was being seriously jeopardised.

On Saturday, 6 December 1941 Mrs Muriel Reilly, British cipher officer in the Singapore colonial office, voiced her fear of the Japanese bombing Singapore to the Governor, Sir Shenton Thomas. He responded:

Japanese bombs in Singapore!? You can take it from me there will never be a Japanese bomb dropped in Singapore – there will never be a Japanese set foot in Malaya.⁴⁹

Two days later the Japanese bombed Singapore and landed in north Malaya, creating chaos and confusion. On 16 December 1941 Sir Shenton Thomas called an extraordinary meeting of the Malayan government where he reminded his colonial officers of their responsibilities, not only to local communities but to the British Empire as a whole.

Let us admit, then, that we have had some shocks, let us admit also that we must expect some more . . . Singapore must not fall: it shall

not fall. From the sands of Egypt to the snows of the Antarctic the British Empire looks to us: no, not only the British Empire, but all the people who love freedom and justice and truth and fair dealing. Let us then steel ourselves to endure . . . In any withdrawal or movement of population there will be no distinction of race. No European civilian male or female will be ordered by the civil Government to withdraw. We stand by the people of this country, with whom we live and work, in this ordeal. We stand by the ship, gentlemen.⁵⁰

Such idealistic and high-minded aims were, however, impossible to achieve. Those who ‘steeled themselves to endure’ and who loyally and dutifully stood by the Malayan ship were to sink with her.

The days after the initial attack were chaotic. The Revd John Hayter, assistant chaplain at Singapore cathedral, recorded:

Orders no sooner issued than they were countermanded. Some [women] had instruction to leave South Perak only being allowed to go back the following day. Others were issued with train permits to go through to Singapore only to find themselves back in Kuala Lumpur the following day . . . The tragedy was that it undermined public confidence and the question on everyone’s lips was – what are we to believe?⁵¹

To help solve the problems the colonial government appointed a committee, under a Supreme Court Judge, to decide on priority for claims of passage for wanting to leave. The allotment was made on the basis of a woman with four children having priority over a woman with three and a childless woman having the last claim. Applications were considered from men too old, infirm or ill to help with the war effort and there was absolute equal and impartial treatment for all nationalities.⁵² A partial racial approach was, however, being adopted, albeit covertly. A telegram from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated 3 January 1942, stated:

As shipping becomes available we are evacuating women and children without restriction. Few Chinese women wish to go and the Consul General states that it is the policy of his Government to discourage them.⁵³

A week later it was argued that ‘China is our ally and it is essential we should give some facilities to the women and children if only as a gesture’.⁵⁴

For women of all nationalities, however, the complicated procedures and restrictions, and the cost of evacuation added to their confusion. 'The anxiety of those women who had left in haste and had no money can be imagined.'⁵⁵ As it was impossible to tell applicants where ships were going – whether to the Dutch East Indies, Ceylon, India, South Africa or Australia – passport visas from different offices had to be obtained. All jewellery had to be inventoried too, adding another burden. When all formalities were completed the women had to visit *all* the shipping offices for news of a steamer. During the time when the bombing in Singapore temporarily eased, and still no compulsory evacuation had been imposed, many British women relaxed and awaited a passage to England rather than accept one going elsewhere. Choices were, however, restricted. The Australian War Cabinet Minutes, dated 14 January 1942, indicated that approval would be given to only 200 European women and children from Malaya – a less than generous offer under the circumstances. Moreover, the women had to be 'in sound health, not undesirable persons, maintenance in Australia for at least twelve months had to be assured and they had to be able to bring £100 for each adult and £50 for each child'. This offer was later extended to 5,000, 'as long as they were of good character and independent means'.⁵⁶

Leo Amery, Secretary of State for India and Burma, caused further tension by accusing Sir Shenton Thomas of not grasping 'what the Cabinet had in view a month ago, namely the bulk evacuation of useless mouths from Singapore'. Amery went on to suggest, rather naïvely, that this could be achieved by setting up refugee camps in Sumatra and 'ferrying across tens of thousands of refugees fairly expeditiously'.⁵⁷ Under pressure, then, from all directions and being unable either to meet his duty as a colonial officer and be 'the father of his people' or adequately protect Western women and children or meet British government demands, Sir Shenton Thomas's angry telegraph on 24 January to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in which he describes what he has written to the governors of Australia and Ceylon on the matter, reflected his frustration:

In this city [Singapore] of 600,000 of whom 85% are Chinese it is absolutely essential that we should have [their] assistance but we cannot expect much if we are unable to obtain even temporary asylum for wives and children of those who wish to send them away . . . It is the duty of every civilised country in the Empire to receive them. I am having great difficulty with Australia but India has granted facilities.

Cannot Ceylon take a lead? I regard these decisions as utterly indefensible in these days . . .⁵⁸

According to Shenton Thomas the refusal of Australia and Ceylon to accept Chinese or Eurasian women and children ‘caused bitterness and uneasiness’.⁵⁹ Indefensible in war was indeed the claim, but such attitudes had certainly not been condemned in peace time. It was only when the British Empire was seriously challenged by outside forces that colonial racial prejudices were questioned and expected to be laid aside.

Evacuation was turning into an administrative and emotional nightmare. The ‘decision to evacuate was fraught with the constant conflict that something may happen to the boat and Singapore not fall’⁶⁰ claimed Duncan Wallace, the Manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in Singapore. John Hayter’s diary confirms this: ‘It was very hard for so many of them [the women] having to make up their minds at such terribly short notice.’⁶¹ As in Hong Kong, some women refused to leave. Among these were women missionaries who felt ‘a moral obligation to their congregations which compelled them to remain’.⁶² Others, as Sheila Allan, daughter of an Australian mining engineer, recalls in her diary, wished to remain with their husbands:

The Company were evacuating the women and children and paying their passage to Australia. I didn’t want to go but Dad insisted. Mum, at the last moment broke down and refused point blank to leave him.⁶³

The diaries of Captain E.A. Ross, a member of the Royal Auxiliary Singapore Corporation, and Mrs Reilly, Government cipher clerk, both record the *ad hoc* arrangements, chaotic situation and conflicting messages being received by the civilians. On 13 December 1941 Ross wrote:

There is no Government Policy for evacuation as in Hong Kong, the authorities are sticking to an idiotic policy of stay put for all the Europeans. This place is no place for the European woman in the present circumstances . . . The authorities are refusing exit permits to old men, some of whom are crippled and half blind from up-country. Since the men are not allowed to go, even at their own expense, so their wives will not go either. It’s a futile policy which the Government will live to regret.

A week later, on 21 December, he recorded:

To my mind the European women and children throughout the whole of Malaya, including Singapore, should forthwith compulsorily evacuate . . . U S citizens with no ties were strongly advised to clear out of the whole of the Far East months ago. In adopting a policy of no organised evacuation the Government are shouldering an entirely unnecessary risk which they may regret and be hard put to find excuses for.

And, on 29 December:

People keep asking me what to do about their wives and children. There is only one answer – get them out, but a number have not got the price to pay for the passage. It is criminal for the Government to hesitate any longer.⁶⁴

By 31 December 1941, five days after the fall of Hong Kong, Alfred Duff Cooper, British Far Eastern co-ordinator, claimed:

Orders have already been given that women with children whether service wives or not, should leave and steps are being taken to facilitate their doing so. But this will take time and we desire to avoid anything in the nature of a panic rush.

However, as in Hong Kong, the authorities in Singapore found themselves in a difficult position when they realised that Western women were invaluable to the war effort:

If wives of officers who have no children are compelled to leave, a very serious situation will arise as several hundred of such women are engaged in essential war services and cannot be replaced.⁶⁵

To add to the confusion, Winston Churchill announced that Singapore would be held at all costs and broadcast ‘news of enormous reinforcements en route to the fortress’. After Churchill’s announcement, Ross wrote, ‘I believe with the utmost confidence that come what may Singapore will be held’. But, by 30 January 1942, the reality had to be admitted:

The last of the wives and children of the European staff left Singapore today in a troopship. The rapid deterioration of the position has convinced me that my hopes for Singapore being held are based on wishful thinking and patriotic fervour without any common-sense reasoning to back them up . . . The truth is stark naked before anyone who has an ounce of grey matter . . . I cannot convey my thoughts to anyone.⁶⁶

On 31 January 1942 the Causeway between Singapore and the mainland was blown up, and the panic rush, that Duff Cooper had hoped to avoid, began in earnest. On 5 February 16,000 Allied troops arrived, and Ross recorded:

The remaining women and children leave on the boat tonight. The ridiculous restrictions with regard to evacuation have been removed and all women and children can leave on troop ships with a limited amount of luggage – no fares asked for. Many used merchant seamen boats.⁶⁷

On 12 February, Mrs Reilly, recorded ‘a very disturbed night’ but ‘I did not feel unduly alarmed as I knew reinforcements were being rushed to our aid and the Governor had repeatedly reassured me that Singapore would not fall’. However, the next day, she was told to make ‘no attempt to return to her house but to get out’. On hearing the news her businessman husband told her:

If things are as bad as they seem it means concentration camps and I shan’t be with you. Just imagine my feelings if you were in the hands of the Japs and I couldn’t help you.

Realising she would ‘only add to his trouble’, Mrs Reilly agreed to leave. Informing the Governor of her plans, his response was that ‘in his opinion there was not the slightest necessity for my getting out’.⁶⁸

On 14 February, the eve of surrender, the SS *Empress of Japan* left Singapore for England carrying 1,300 European women and children who boarded amid ‘the wildest confusion, and regardless of embarkation slips, passports and inventories the women and children poured on board’. Finally, on 15 February 1942, the island of Singapore, and all those on her, floundered and sank under the Japanese occupation. Among those captured were approximately 4,000 Western civilians.⁶⁹

Many of those last boats to leave Singapore, supposedly carrying women and children to safety, were either sunk or badly damaged by the Japanese. Survivors were returned to Singapore or captured and interned in Java or Sumatra. Among these was a group of Australian nurses who on 11 February, as reported by one of their number, had ‘flatly refused to leave – there was so much to be done but refusal was useless, we were ordered to leave . . . I have never felt worse about anything’.⁷⁰ Left behind to care for the sick and the injured were civilian nurses, including secretaries and wives of men

working in Singapore who had trained as auxiliaries.⁷¹ The belated, chaotic and confused evacuation from Singapore under Japanese bombing added to the distress of the civilian men and women. The men who remained had no idea whether their loved ones had arrived at any safe destination or whether the ships had been bombed and the women and children drowned or captured. The women, too, could not be certain if their menfolk had been killed in the final assault on Singapore or had been captured and imprisoned. This uncertainty was to exacerbate the trauma of internment.

Meanwhile in the Dutch East Indies, in September 1940, tentative arrangements were made with Australia for the possible evacuation of 100 British men, 300 women and 200 children from Java and Sumatra 'in the case of an emergency'.⁷² No evacuation plans were made for the Dutch women and children. On 22 December 1941, just before Hong Kong fell, the Commander-in-Chief in Batavia broadcast an exhortation to the army to defend the East Indies with the motto 'To die standing rather than live on our knees'. He concluded by saying, '[we are] determined to remain free, we shall remain free, we shall triumph . . . Long Live the Queen'.⁷³ As with similar exhortations elsewhere in the Far East, these were brave but empty words.

On 27 December 1941 the British Consul General advised British women, particularly those with children, in the East Indies to take any opportunity to leave for Australia or elsewhere 'as conditions may not be favourable later'.⁷⁴ However, none of my Dutch interviewees was aware of any evacuation plans for Dutch civilians and Daphne Jackson, a British woman living in Soebang, Java, claims:

Dutch families were not supposed to leave the Indies by order of the Government and it was obvious that in the event of a Japanese invasion the masses of women and children would be a very big problem.⁷⁵

In her diary on 4 November 1941, Jeannette (Netty) Herman, recorded the civil defence arrangements in Soerabaja, Java, where she lived with her husband, Dutch pilot Fokko Herman, and her two young daughters.

As far as air-raid protection goes, a lot of places in town have shelters much like trenches, often without a roof, just thick walls as protection against flying shrapnel. There are none in our area. I would not even know where to go during a real air raid. Maybe, if things get really serious, they'll evacuate us to the mountains. Let's hope it will never get that bad!⁷⁶

Sixteen-year-old Dieuwke Bonga, in Surakarta, Java, wrote: ‘Even after the shocking attack on Pearl Harbour our faith in our own military, navy and airforce was wholehearted . . . we carried on as usual.’⁷⁷

It seems, therefore, that it was as late as January 1942 that the plight of the Dutch women and children was addressed. The Australian government was approached once more and, once more, humanitarian support and Western solidarity were undermined by racial discrimination. A memorandum to the Prime Minister’s Department from the Commonwealth of Australia’s Department of External Affairs dated 29 January states:

The question of asylum to all the remaining European women and children in the south west theatre of war is, however, a difficult one . . . In the Netherlands East Indies alone there are 98,000 females classed as Europeans. Of these at least one half would be Eurasian of varying degrees of mixed blood, but they are all recognised as Dutch nationals and it would be difficult to discriminate amongst them. As to the children, there are 53,000 classed as European attending school and a total of 93,000 under 19 years of age . . . I feel that discussion with the Netherlands East Indies should not be entered into until the question has been carefully examined and submitted to cabinet.⁷⁸

With the Dutch East Indies already under attack, there was little time for careful examination or discussion. By the end of February, the streets were ‘suddenly wild with jeeps, trucks and wagons crowded with retreating troops’.⁷⁹ On 1 March 1942, the Japanese landed in three different parts of Java, cutting families off from each other and creating panic and chaos. ‘The small Dutch naval forces put up a courageous resistance for a time’, but on 8 March the Dutch Armed Forces surrendered.⁸⁰ Resistance in Sumatra lasted a little longer but in the end it too surrendered. Thousands of Dutch men, women and children were captured as well as British women and children who were living there, plus those who had, on the eve of surrender, hurriedly left Singapore for the ‘safety’ of Java or Sumatra. Any faith the Dutch civilians may have had in their own strength and that of the British and Americans was completely shattered. Later Daphne Jackson wrote:

It’s always easy to be wise after the event, but it would certainly have been better if all who wished to leave had been allowed to. Instead many ships went away empty in January and more were uselessly scuttled at the last moment.⁸¹

Meanwhile the American civilians in the Philippines were also receiving mixed messages as to their safety. In October 1940 all navy wives were ordered home and in March 1941, 1,400 army wives returned to the United States. In spite of this no compulsory evacuation plans were imposed on civilian American women and children, and this led to misunderstandings and misjudgements about the safety of the region. For example, in autumn 1940 a missionary, Judy Skogerboe, set sail for China with other Lutheran missionaries. When the ship arrived in China the State Department refused to let it dock, so the Lutheran Mission Board ordered the missionaries to Manila to wait for conditions to improve.⁸² In the spring of 1941 Helen Brush, her Methodist minister husband and their two daughters arrived in Manila. In an interview with Theresa Kaminski she recalls: 'Obviously neither we nor the Methodist Board of Missions believed that the Japanese would attack the Philippines.'⁸³ Even as late as September 1941 an American, Clair Phillips, and her infant daughter were allowed to return to Manila from the United States to stay.⁸⁴ In contrast, when Claude Buss wanted his family to join him 'the State Department always said "no". The State Department would indicate that things are much more intense than we in Manila could imagine.'⁸⁵ Nevertheless, 'in spite of recommendations to Washington, no official warning was to be given to American civilians to leave the islands . . . evidences of civil preparedness were far from concrete'.⁸⁶

Much of this confusion, argues Cogan, stemmed from the Far East Division of the State Department's 'opposition to the early warning and removal of American citizens and the State Department's special Division's obsession with thriftiness'. Breckenridge Long of the special Division, explaining his refusal to pay passages back for Americans stranded without funds, said: 'It was not the State Department's responsibility to bail out stranded Americans financially.' Loans were available to those who could 'prove family and employer's refusal to loan them passage money'.⁸⁷ Another historian claims that 'this cumbersome process would later handcuff efforts to extricate Americans from Asia'.⁸⁸ As a result the American civilians in the Far East were *advised* to make their own arrangements to leave and pay their own fares. 'They advised you, then it was up to whatever agency you were working with to take care of the expenses of going home,' recalled Claude Buss.⁸⁹ Such a policy restricted evacuation to those who could afford it, whose businesses were prepared to relieve them of their posts, and those who had contacts in America. Many Americans were therefore unable to leave, but the restrictions

themselves implied a level of safety which, in the event, was to prove false.

In July 1941 the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt placed all land and sea forces under American military and naval command but, as Federic Stevens wrote, in spite of the build-up of Japanese ships in the China sea, ‘Americans in Manila were quite inclined to accept all of these strategic movements by Japan, which were of a definite military nature, as merely ordinary training manoeuvres and as of no consequence to the Oriental situation.’⁹⁰ However, not all Americans, it seems, accepted this. Grace Nash, wife of an engineer working in Manila, just ‘felt that war was coming and that the islands were defenceless’. But with her husband’s company doing so well, he argued that ‘this was not the time to pick up and leave’. Although he was prepared to buy tickets for the passage home for Grace and her two sons, he would not leave, so Grace decided to stay to keep the family together.⁹¹

In contrast to the situation in Hong Kong and Malaya, where the colonial community challenged the perceived autocratic and over-protective attitude of the British government, some members of the American colonial community were unhappy with the rather relaxed view of the situation, and took matters into their own hands. Frederic Stevens, the first elected chairman of the American Co-ordinating Committee (later to become the American Emergency Committee), wrote:

As a result of the general lack of activity on the part of our government a number of Americans deemed it advisable that some civilian organisation be formed with a view to taking care of the interests of the Americans in the islands.

The committee sent out questionnaires to ‘all classes of American residents ascertaining their views on forming a permanent committee for both the welfare and protection of Americans in Manila’.⁹² Three hundred people were present at the first public meeting where officers and a committee were elected. From January 1941 the committee tried to persuade the High Commission and the military authorities to instruct women and children to return to the United States, but:

At the last moment the commissioner changed his mind . . . This the writer considers the greatest calamity in connection with the commit-

tee's work; the failure of the High Commission to take decisive action at a critical moment.⁹³

While they were not able to persuade the High Commission to arrange evacuation, the newly formed committee set about co-ordinating the efforts of the US Army and Navy forces with those of the US High Commissioner, the Philippine Commonwealth and the civilian population. The committee had the support of the High Commissioner's office, and plans were recommended for air-raided shelters and evacuation centres. American residents were advised to stock up on food, medical supplies and clothes, and the committee approached the Santo Tomas University as a possible internment camp. Even so, as Claude Buss recalls, the Japanese bombing of Manila came as a terrible blow causing confusion and panic.

A stubborn belief in a miracle persisted and no-one liked the excitement or unpleasantness of surrender . . . Throughout 1 January we encouraged the Commonwealth officials, we tried to calm the frightened and hysterical. For 24 hours we battled against incredulity and despondency.⁹⁴

A miracle did not occur and on 2 January 1942 the Japanese entered Manila. Now the Americans were faced with both the 'excitement' and the 'unpleasantness' of surrender. Also caught were those who had left Shanghai at the last moment on the SS *Anhui*, designed for only seventy passengers but in fact carrying 300, and the 300 or 400 passengers on the SS *Harrison*. Both ships stopped in Manila to pick up more passengers and supplies; all the passengers were caught with the Americans when the Philippines surrendered to the Japanese.⁹⁵

The Japanese attacks and victories had revealed the inadequacies of Western material preparation for the war against Japan. They had also put to the ultimate test the 'triumphantly strong spiritual defences'. Unfortunately, the Japanese had proved to everyone, including the colonised populations, that Western colonialism and its agents were not indestructible. This called into question the faith of those who believed in Western racial and military superiority; it challenged Western colonialism's civilising, Christian mission, and must have raised doubts and questions in the minds of those who served it.

On the face of it the British government's policies appear unreasonable and inadequate. But it must be acknowledged that they were faced with very difficult decisions. They were fully stretched with the

war in Europe, they knew they were unable to evacuate every eligible person from the Far East, they did not want to appear racist, they wanted to keep morale high and were desperately trying to avoid a panic reaction. Bearing that in mind, the initial policies they tried to impose for the safety of the Western civilian women and children in the Far East were well intentioned and did at least give some indication as to the level of impending danger. What is clear, however, is that the British government overestimated its own authority and the cohesion and solidarity of the British Empire. At the same time, it underestimated the overconfidence of the colonial communities, the critical reaction of the local communities and the sustained racial discrimination of Australia. Clearly, however, the idea and ideal of Western imperial power and Western racial superiority enabled British, American and Dutch governments successfully to mislead the colonial communities as to the invincibility of Western military might and the inferior fighting power of the Japanese.⁹⁶ A report on lessons to be learned from Hong Kong and Malaya, dated 4 December 1942, claimed that:

The Government of Malaya and the high Military officers there were at great pains to magnify in public estimation the preparations for defence and the impregnability of Malaya. Their primary object was to deceive the Japanese, though whether they succeeded is not apparent. What is however clear is that they deceived many members of the Government service. The effect of it on our own people indicates sufficiently clearly the dangers of misleading propaganda.⁹⁷

The misleading propaganda together with the self-images of virile paternalism and the inspiring sense of mission that the colonial male took with him to the colonies, made many colonial men – and the women who supported them – overconfident. Consequently, blinkered to the dangers of a Japanese attack, they misjudged the risks they faced and arrogantly challenged and resisted the British government's civilian defence policies. As a result, evacuation plans and travel restrictions were constantly diluted and amended to the point where they were almost nonexistent. By the time 'the truth was stark naked before anyone who has an ounce of grey matter' and they realised that their 'hopes were based on wishful thinking and patriotic fervour without any common-sense reasoning to back them up', it was too late.⁹⁸ The result was that 130,000 Western civilians, including a large number of women and children, were captured. Worse was yet to come.

After the surrender of Singapore, Japanese General Yamashita Tomoyuki announced: 'We hope that we sweep away the arrogant and uprighteous British elements.'⁹⁹ Thus, after defeating the Allied military armies, the Japanese swept through the Western colonies in the Far East removing and replacing all symbols of Western colonialism. They systematically appropriated the best colonial homes, clubs, sporting facilities, hotels and hospitals. National flags were torn down, Western monuments were demolished, European languages were banned in schools, Western street names removed, names of colonies changed to Japanese names and Tokyo time replaced local time.

On 8 December 1941 in Shanghai, the Japanese entered the Western banks, the British and American embassies and larger business houses, all of which were sealed. Motorcars were seized, cameras and radios were confiscated, private dwellings were searched and furniture itemised so that nothing could be moved without the Japanese knowing. The use of public transport, restaurants and cinemas was banned, and much residential accommodation was seconded. At lunchtime, on 11 December, the Japanese army entered the Shanghai Club giving members twenty minutes to leave. The Japanese navy took over the American Club in a similar way. At the time 'no one realised that the members were about to be submitted to the indignity of being turned out neck and crop from these sacrosanct premises'.¹⁰⁰ The Japanese army marched into the British Club where, 'we were half-way through our meal when we heard muffled sounds . . . A few minutes later the club secretary entered the dining room accompanied by a Japanese Naval Officer'.¹⁰¹ Not only were these 'sacrosanct premises' profaned and polluted by Japanese presence, but the Japanese humiliated the local British inhabitants by prohibiting pedestrians from walking on the pavement outside the club. They had to cross over the road and raise their hats and bow to the newly installed Japanese flag as they passed. More distressing was that some of the principal civic and business leaders were arrested and taken to Haiphong Road Gaol for questioning by the Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai. On 15 December 1941, Peggy Abkhazi, an unmarried independent woman who had lived very comfortably in Shanghai most of her adult life, recorded: 'Life these days is divided between queuing and then rushing home to bed in order to be warmed and rested and ready for the next queue'. By 31 March 1942 she had 'descended to selling vegetables to my trusting friends'.¹⁰² Just north of Shanghai, in Tientsin, the school and the Salvation Army missionaries' hostel where Salvation Army officer's

son Neil Begley lived, were taken over by Japanese soldiers for use as a barracks. To the west, at the British-run Chefoo school, the Japanese nailed a notice on the gate stating ‘the compound was now the property of His Imperial Majesty’.¹⁰³

In Hong Kong, on 27 December 1941, the Japanese flag was hoisted in the Central District. The British Governor was imprisoned and replaced by the Japanese Governor Isogai who proclaimed, ‘There is no question that Hong Kong belongs to Japan’. The days that followed, recalls William Sewell, ‘belonged to a new and an unreal world. Each felt that a chapter of a life had been closed and a new one opened in a manner which seemed to bear little relationship to the old.’¹⁰⁴ The statue of Queen Victoria, the symbol of British rule, was removed. British signs were taken down and public and commercial offices were taken over by the Japanese. Humiliatingly, British bankers were pressed into service in helping the Japanese take over banks, and the prestigious Hong Kong hotels now housed Japanese officers.

Shortly after surrender Singapore was renamed Syonanto (Syonan for short) in tribute to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito in the reign of Syowa. ‘Watching the 25th Army of Japan marching through the streets of Singapore was a nightmare come alive’, recalls one Chinese resident. ‘We felt that the sky had fallen; it seemed like the end of the world.’¹⁰⁵

On 27 December 1941 the Japanese entered Baguio, a town in northern Luzon, 200 miles from Manila. They occupied the City Hall and replaced the American and Filipino flags with the Japanese flag. Missionary Esther Hamilton saw the Japanese arrive.

I will never forget it. Our houses in Baguio were right next to a Japanese school where all the local Japanese, about 300, were concentrated. About noon they all marched out with Japanese flags to meet the victorious Japanese Army.¹⁰⁶

By 3 January 1942 the Japanese flag was flying from the tall mast in front of the High Commissioner’s residence in Manila. Japanese sentries were posted at all main street intersections, in front of clubs, hotels and apartment houses, which British and American occupants were ordered to leave. On 4 January the Filipino-owned newspaper proclaimed ‘the Sovereignty of the USA over the Philippines had completely disappeared’.¹⁰⁷

On 9 March 1942 ‘The Dutch East Indies became Indonesia and the natives became Indonesians. We were suddenly living in the year

2602 according to the Japanese calendar.¹⁰⁸ Netty Herman recorded in her diary:

Life has come to a halt. All banks and post offices are closed. All military men have been interned. Japanese money is being circulated and we have to bow to the heavily armed Japanese soldiers we see in the streets.¹⁰⁹

On the radio the Japanese proclaimed: 'We Dai Nippon, have come to free Indonesia from the white yoke of 300 years of domination and oppression placed upon it by the whites, mainly the Dutch.' It was a story replicated to a greater or lesser extent throughout the Far Eastern colonies. But, as the young Pans Schomper wrote, 'We did not know how much misery still awaited us'.¹¹⁰

In a final attempt to humiliate the agents of Western colonialism, the captured Western civilian communities were vilified by being rounded up and paraded in front of the colonised populations.¹¹¹ They were allowed to take the bare necessities with them. Eyewitnesses in Hong Kong recalled the scenes.

I saw them go past, there were old men and women struggling with what they had managed to save . . . There were women with children in their arms. Some carried blankets strapped to their backs with suitcases in their hands, others had packs, others still used Chinese poles. The rich and the poor were alike. It was a pathetic sight. Never in a hundred years had the Chinese seen such a thing.¹¹²

There were 142 marched to a boarding house in Western district. Each 9 foot cubicle had a wooden partition which did not reach the floor. There were two squat toilets for 142 people and they were given no food on the first day.¹¹³

Mary Thomas in Singapore remembered:

We left Katong at 10 a.m. and arrived at Changi at 5 p.m. Though the walk was hard on the older and more delicate women its real sting lay in being thus publicly compelled to do something so foreign to all the ordinary standards of European activity.¹¹⁴

The ultimate humiliation and indignity for Western civilians in Singapore and Hong Kong was their incarceration in prisons, places normally occupied by the lowest and most outcast members of the native community.

In Manila, suspect Americans were taken to Hai Lai . . .

. . . where the Japs had taken anyone they wanted to question. For the entire three days the captives were given nothing to eat and for 24 hours forbidden to speak.¹¹⁵

The Americans in the Philippines were proactive and had already started to prepare the University buildings for occupation. However, they found the humiliation just as great.

The Americans in Santo Tomas were the first, in all the proud history of the nation, to be thrown en masse into an enemy concentration camp. They were the first large body of American men, women and children held captive and deprived of the liberties they considered their birthright . . . Many of them were ill, all of them worried and apprehensive . . . Their businesses had been destroyed and homes looted. They had lost everything but their lives. But individual tragedy was lost in the general disaster.¹¹⁶

For many in Shanghai and the Dutch East Indies, initial internment was a slower, though nonetheless, frightening affair. Peggy Abkhazi in Shanghai wrote:

Since 8 December 1941 it has been a comparatively painless but very thorough process of gradual stripping; first a leg then a wing, so to speak. If one had been brought to this state by a single blow, it would have been nearly unbearable.¹¹⁷

And Jan Ruff-O'Herne, a teenage girl in Java, recalled:

The months that followed were frightening and put a strain on everyone . . . Long fearing this moment we had already packed away our most important papers and possessions. With the Japanese looking on we nervously packed our cases. We were allowed one case and one mattress each.¹¹⁸

If the Japanese attacks and victories were a shock, internment was a devastating blow to the Western colonial communities. It fractured family units and demolished colonial institutions and structures. The internment of women and children, particularly, called into question the role of the protective colonial male and challenged his virile self-image. The high colonial ideals proved impossible to maintain, seriously damaging Western imperial pride. Worse still, those ideals had,

in some cases, proved to be instrumental in jeopardising the safety of the communities which had held them. Unfortunately, faith in Western imperialism and the implicit racial prejudices towards the Japanese proved misplaced; imperial solidarity proved fragile, and duty and responsibility became a trap. Such thoughts were, no doubt, in the minds of many of those who, against advice and orders, had stayed in the Far East and were now having to question their wishful thinking and patriotic fervour.

However, as the following chapters will demonstrate, when the Japanese destroyed the tangible symbols of Western colonial culture and interned the civilian population, they did not fully understand how deeply the legitimacy of the colonial institution and its culture was entrenched in the psyche of the colonial communities. Far from rejecting those cultural values and practices that had apparently failed them and contributed to their demise, the men and women interned in the Far East deliberately resurrected and adapted many of them in internment and used them – along with their skills, expertise and experiences – as valuable survival techniques.

NOTES

- 1 The final passage of Lord Lloyd's speech to new colonial recruits in June 1940, in Sir Charles Jeffries KCMG, OBE. Deputy Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, *Partners for Progress: The Men and Women of the Colonial Service* (London: George Harrap, 1949), pp. 17–19.
- 2 Jeffries, 1949, p. 189.
- 3 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London, 1976). Cited in, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 268.
- 4 Lord Lloyd in Jeffries, 1949, pp. 17–19.
- 5 Stead Sisters, *Stone Paper Scissors* (Oxford: Oxon Publishing, 1991), p. 142. The book is based on the life of a British family in Shanghai.
- 6 Van Velden, 1963.
- 7 Birmingham University Library, Chamberlain Papers, NC 18/1110 Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 30 July 1939, in Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard 1989, Vol. II, p. 272.
- 8 PRO. Cabinet papers (CAB) 24/100. CC 40(39)4, 2 August 1939. In Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard, 1989, Vol. II, p. 272.
- 9 PRO, WO, 193/864. Secret memorandum by the General Staff entitled 'Military Situation in the Far East in Relation to Possible Japanese Demands', meeting 26 June 1941.
- 10 PRO, Colonial Office (CO) 968/8/11 Cypher No. 2079 from Tokyo to the Foreign Office, 22 October 1941, from Sir R. Craigie, Japan.
- 11 Comments made by Field Marshall Archibald Wavell in John Ferris, 'Worthy of Some Better enemy? The British Estimate of the Imperial Japanese Army 1919–41 and the Fall of Singapore', *Canadian Journal of History* XXVIII, August 1993, pp. 223–56. Also in Thorne, 1986, p. 18.
- 12 Thorne, 1986, pp. 18–19.
- 13 Claude Buss in Onorato, 1990, p. 240.
- 14 A. Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies: Its Government, Problems and Politics* Third edn

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944), p. 408. Herman Theodore Bussemaker claims: 'Although no formal defence arrangement existed the People's Council in the DEI, the Dutch press and the population of the Indies considered the British to be protectors of the Dutch colonial territories and many assumed an agreement was in place.' 'The Defence of the Netherlands Indies', *Journal of South East Asian Studies* Vol. 31. No. 1. March 2000.

- 15 Thorne, 1986, p. 19.
- 16 Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard. Vol. II, 1989, p. 395.
- 17 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 13.
- 18 Michell, 1988, p. 20. The school remained open throughout the war. The story of the school during that period can be found in Michell 1988 and Norman Cliff, *Courtyard of the Happy Way* (Worcester: Arthur James, 1977).
- 19 PRO, CO 273/669/6. Letter from Colonel G.E.J. Gent to R.A. Wiseman, 21 January 1942.
- 20 PRO, FO 371/27680. Telegram from Sir A. Clark Kerr in Shanghai to Foreign Office, 19 March 1941.
- 21 PRO, FO 371/278866. Advice from Sterndale Bennett at FO to British American Tobacco Company on 10 October 1941.
- 22 PRO, FO 371/27680. Mr Le Rougetel from Shanghai to the FO, 28 August 1941.
- 23 David Nichol, *Young Shanghailander*, unpublished war memoir, p. 8. Copy in possession of author. David Nichol was the son of a British Customs officer in Shanghai at that time.
- 24 Kenneth C. Morley, *One Man's Words 1920–1946: The Road to Lunghua: A Biography of Herbert Wright* (In.p.) England: Private Publication, 1987), p. 119.
- 25 A. Flemons, *Out of the Frying Pan*, unpublished memoir, p. 11. Copy in possession of author.
- 26 Collar, 1990, p. 13.
- 27 Amea Willoughby, *I was on Corregidor* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 56. Mrs Willoughby was the wife of Woodbury Willoughby, Executive Assistant to the High Commissioner.
- 28 Australian Archives (AA), Canberra, CRS A1608, item B39/1/3, part 1, Geoffrey Whiskard, British High Commissioner to Australia, to Prime Minister R.G. Menzies of Australia, 16 June 1939; Menzies to Whiskard, 22 June 1939.
- 29 Dominions and Colonies had a different status. Dominions are independent and autonomous communities equal to one another and Great Britain which is at their centre. The common link is to the single sovereign, and Britain was still responsible for defence. In this category would be Canada (1867), Australia (1900), South Africa (1909) and the Irish Free State (1922). The Dominion Office separated from the Colonial Office in 1925 to deal with these areas. Problems arose between the First and Second World Wars as the Dominions made trading treaties on their own. Sir Ernest Baker, *The Ideas and Ideals of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp. 95–8 and 103–11.
- 30 PRO, CAB 65/7, WM 181 (40)7, 25 June 1940.
- 31 PRO, CAB 65/7, WM 175 (40)11, 22 June 1940; PRO, CAB 65/7, WM 183 (40) 13, 26 June 1940; CAB 66/9, WP (40)222, 'Immediate measure required in the Far East', report submitted by Chiefs of Staff to War Cabinet, 25 June 1940; WO 193/864, War Office notes of previous Cabinet paper, 26 June 1940. For the Colonial Office analysis of the evacuation issue, see PRO, CO 323/1808/6, minutes of July–November 1940.
- 32 On 1 July, of the 1,833 service wives and their offspring, 1,640 were sent to Manila. Four days later a further 1,779 non-service British women and children, of the 2,129 who registered on 2 July, also embarked for Manila. PRO, WO 193/866, GOC Hong Kong to War Office, 24 June 1940; Endacott, 1978, p. 14.
- 33 Quotation in Endacott, 1978, p. 15.
- 34 I am grateful to a woman correspondent for letting me have a copy of this letter from her employers to the Colonial Secretary.
- 35 PRO, CO 129/587/12. Minute by W.B.L. Monson, Colonial Office Official, 7 July 1940.
- 36 Sir Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke *Footprints*, (Hong Kong: Sino-American Publishing, 1975), p. 63. Dr and Mrs Selwyn-Clarke deliberately arranged a visit to friends outside the colony to avoid registration.
- 37 Henry J. Lethbridge, 'Hong Kong under Japanese Occupation: changes in social structure', in I.C. Jarvie and J. Agassi (eds), *Hong Kong: A Society in Transition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 91–2. Endacott, 1978, also claims that 'The Legislative Council

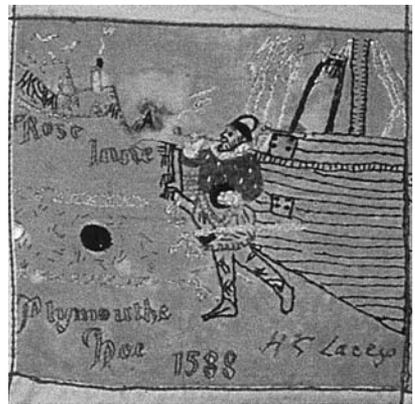
- refused to pass a token vote of \$10,000 for the costs of evacuation of non-service women and children on the grounds that Europeans should not be subsidised from general taxation', p. 15.
- 38 AA, A5954/1, item 370/1. Cipher from the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Hong Kong to Prime Minister's Department, 10 July 1940. Refusal 25 July 1940. The list includes families of past and present members of the Councils, Justices of the Peace, Serving members of the Hong Kong Volunteer Force, etc. About half were British subjects, the majority were 'educated class possessing ample means'.
 - 39 AA, CRS A1928, item 520/36, Senator H.S. Foll, Minister of the Interior, to Prime Minister Menzies, 13 July 1940; *ibid.*, report of conference concerning Hong Kong evacuees written by Dr F. McCallum, Senior Medical Officer, Department of Health, 28 August 1940; AA, CRS A1608, item B39/1/3, part 1, Prime Minister's Department to Governor of Hong Kong, 25 July 1940. AA, A433/1, item 49/2/44. Correspondence 29 July 1940 to 18 February 1942 between Department of the Interior, the Labour Party and Immigration Department regarding the refusal of entry to Australia of Chinese amahs with their European employers. The 'All-white' policy was abolished in 1974 by Australian Prime Minister Mr Gough Whitlam. For further details on this subject, see Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (London: Frank Cass, 1967).
 - 40 Interview between Dr Kent Fedorowich and a mixed race female interviewee and ex-internee now living in Australia. I am grateful to Dr Fedorowich for this information.
 - 41 PRO, FO 371/26622/F13400, Young to Colonial Secretary, 2 December 1941 and Thomas to Colonial Secretary, 3 December 1941. These various conflicts support Ann Laura Stoler's argument that 'European residents in the colonies were occupied with social and political concerns that often pitted them against policy makers in the metropolis as much as against the colonised'. Stoler 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:1, 1989, pp. 134–61.
 - 42 PRO, CO. 129/589/17, F.C. Scott, War Office Official, to G.E.J. Gent, Assistant Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 December 1941.
 - 43 Details of these atrocities can be found in several books on the battle for Hong Kong and officially in PRO, CO, 980/48 Lavalley Statement, 11 March 1943. For additional material, see IWM personal account of Mrs M.W. Redwood entitled 'Incident at Jockey Club, Happy Valley, Hong Kong December 1941', pp. 36–9.
 - 44 I use the word 'isolated' here because the evidence suggests that few Western women were raped during the battles. However, there is ample evidence to prove that thousands of Chinese and other Asian women were subjected to rape and forced prostitution at the hands of the Japanese.
 - 45 PRO, CO 273/664/1 Letter from WO to Lord Lloyd at CO, 11 July 1940.
 - 46 PRO, CO 323/1812/7 Cypher telegram from O.A.G. Straits Settlements to CO, No. 251 Government House Secret, 3 September 1940.
 - 47 PRO, CO 323/1812/7 Letter from C.C. Parkinson, CO, to Shenton Thomas, 6 September 1940.
 - 48 PRO, CO 273/669/10 Thirty-seven page report, September 1943, on the evacuation of Malaya, by Sir George Maxwell sent to CO, for clearance for publication in the *Association of British Malaya* magazine.
 - 49 Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM X11/5/24 War Diary Mrs Muriel M. Reilly. Mrs Reilly was married to a businessman in Singapore who was also a member of the Local Defence Corps. They had a five-year-old daughter in England. Mrs Reilly was evacuated, at the last minute, to Java and thence to Australia.
 - 50 PRO, CO 273/669/10, No. 29578. Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of the Straits Settlements at the extraordinary meeting of the Legislative Council, Singapore, Tuesday, 16 December 1941, 2.30 p.m.
 - 51 Hayter, 1991, p. 26.
 - 52 Sir George Maxwell report, 1943.
 - 53 PRO, CO 273/669/6. Extract from cypher telegram from Governor of Straits Settlements to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 January 1942.
 - 54 PRO, CO 273/669/10. From Sir Shenton Thomas to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 January 1942.
 - 55 Sir George Maxwell report, 1943.
 - 56 AA A1608/1 Item A1–139/1/3. Teleprinter message from Prime Minister's Department,

- dated 14 January 1942, to Secretary to the Department of Interior. Cablegram from Governor of Straits Settlement, Singapore, to Prime Minister of Commonwealth of Australia, 29 January 1942.
- 57 PRO, CO 273/669/6. Letter from Leo Amery, in the India Office, to The Rt Hon. Lord Moyne, DSO, 26 January 1942.
- 58 PRO, CO 273/669/6. Sir Shenton Thomas to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 January 1942.
- 59 Cypher telegram from Sir Shenton Thomas to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 January 1942.
- 60 RCS BAM X11/17. Papers of A.M. Duncan Wallace (Manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in Singapore).
- 61 Hayter, 1991, pp. 31–3.
- 62 Sir George Maxwell report, 1943.
- 63 Sheila Allan, *Diary of a Girl in Changi 1941–45* (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1994), p. 20.
- 64 RCS Library, BAM Papers, Addenda E.A. Ross, Singapore diary.
- 65 PRO, CO 273/669/6. Cypher from Alfred Duff Cooper, Singapore to Lord Privy Seal, London, 31 December 1941. (In August 1941 Alfred Duff Cooper, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, left for the Far East to examine the co-ordination between various British authorities in the region. After Pearl Harbor he was appointed Resident Minister in Singapore.)
- 66 Ross, Singapore diary.
- 67 Ross, Singapore diary.
- 68 Mrs Reilly, war diary.
- 69 Thorne, 1986, p. 106. For further discussions and debates from the military point of view and reaction of British soldiers to their defeat, see Havers, 1999.
- 70 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 3.
- 71 Catherine Kenny, 1986, p. 24. This gives more details of the last-minute departure. Also, Betty Jeffrey, 1995, and Statement by VFX 61330 sister V. Bullwinkel. Written Records 1939–45 11/2/14 Australian War Memorial. Also Sir John Smyth *The Will to Live* (London: Cassell, 1983).
- 72 AA A5954/1 item 370/3. Cablegram to the Australian Prime Minister's Department from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, London, 26 September, 1940.
- 73 Bulletin of International News. Vol. XVII, No. 26, 27 December 1941, p. 2037.
- 74 PRO, CO 273/669/6. Cypher from Batavia, N.E. Indies to Foreign Office, 27 December 1941.
- 75 Daphne Jackson, *Java Nightmare* (Padstow: Grafton Books, 1989), p. 17.
- 76 Ronny Herman, *In the Shadow of the Sun* (Manitoba: Vanderheide Publishing, 1992.), p. 4. Ronny was the daughter of Jeanette and Fokko Herman. Ronny combined the diary of her mother, who was interned in Java, with the memoirs of her father, who was 'outside', together with additional material that could not be included in her mother's diary.
- 77 Bonga, 1996, p. 21.
- 78 AA 1608/1 item A1–139/1/3. The questions arising over the evacuation of the Dutch women and children echo Laura Ann Stoler's research into mixed bloods in the Dutch East Indies. She argues that: 'The population that fell within, what I call these contradictory colonial locations were subject to a frequent shifting set of criteria that allowed them privileges at certain historical moments and pointedly excluded them at others.' Stoler in 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', p. 154.
- 79 Bonga, 1996, p. 23.
- 80 John F. Cady, *South East Asia its Historical Development* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 566.
- 81 Daphne Jackson, 1989, p. 1.
- 82 Judy Hyland, *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), p. 9, cited in Kaminski, 2000, p. 25.
- 83 Helen N. Brush to Helen Kaminski, 19 December 1995, in Kaminski, 2000, p. 26.
- 84 Cogan, 2000, p. 26.
- 85 Claude Buss in Onorato, 1990, p. 242.
- 86 Amea Willoughby, 1943, p. 58.
- 87 Cogan, 2000, p. 27.
- 88 Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, 1987, p. 12.

- 89 Claude Buss in Onorato, 1990, p. 237.
- 90 Stevens, 1946, p. 2.
- 91 Cogan, 2000, p. 29 and Kaminski, 2000, p. 28.
- 92 Stevens, 1946, p. 2.
- 93 Stevens, 1946, p. 3.
- 94 Claude Buss in Onorato, 1990, pp. 277–81.
- 95 Mrs Corfield was on the SS *Anbui*. Her experiences are recorded in Celia Lucas, *Prisoners of Santo Tomas* (England: David & Charles Military Books, 1988). Also personal interview with one of the Chinese families on the SS *Harrison* in Onorato, 1990, pp. 125–75.
- 96 J.A. Mangan, 'The Grit of our Forefathers' in John M. Mackenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 113–39. Mangan claims: 'There is of course a close association between propaganda and ideology. Propaganda can be a powerful tool of ideological persuasion propelling men into action.' He quotes Aldous Huxley as saying: 'The propagandist is a man who canalises an already existing stream. In a land where there is no water, he digs in vain.'
- 97 PRO, CO 877/25/7/27265/7, No. 1, 4 December 1942. [Lessons from Hong Kong and Malaya] report by Sir William Batterhill, G.E.J. Gent and W.L. Rolleston, paragraph 29.
- 98 Ross, Singapore diary.
- 99 Thorne, 1986, p. 144.
- 100 Collar, 1990, pp. 18–19.
- 101 Collar, 1990, p. 14.
- 102 Abkhazi, 1995, pp. 24–5.
- 103 Michell, 1988, p. 26.
- 104 Sewell, 1946, p. 30.
- 105 Elizabeth Choy in Zhou Mei, *Elizabeth Choy: More Than a War Heroine* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 1995), p. 61.
- 106 Esther Hamilton in Cogan, 2000, p. 47.
- 107 Hartendorp, Vol. I, 1967, p. 7.
- 108 Schomper, 1995, p. 82.
- 109 Herman, 1992, p. 31.
- 110 Schomper, 1995, pp. 82–4.
- 111 James Scott, has argued: 'Dignity is at once a very private and very public attribute. One can experience an indignity at the hands of another despite the fact that no-one else sees or hears about it. What is reasonably clear, however, is that any indignity is compounded greatly when it is inflicted in public. An insult, a look of contempt, a physical humiliation, an assault on one's character and standing, a rudeness is nearly always more injurious when it is inflicted before an audience.' James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 113.
- 112 George Wright Nooth, with Mark Adkin, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads, Horror, Hunger and Humour in Hong Kong 1941–45* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994), p. 79.
- 113 George E. Baxter in Endacott, 1978, p. 120.
- 114 Mary Thomas, 1983, pp. 49–51.
- 115 Celia Lucas, 1988, p. 11.
- 116 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 12.
- 117 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 49.
- 118 Ruff O'Herne, 1994, pp. 38–9.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MEN'S RESPONSE TO INTERNMENT



*Like Pelion piled on Ossa, so the incredible
Pursued the incredible throughout the land,
Shocking our minds with wonder and amazement,
Sowing dismay with wide-flung lavish hand;
Scattering complacency and the toil of years
Bringing the towers of lifelong misconceptions
Tumbling in broken fragments around our ears;
Parting us from wives and loved ones,
driving them far beyond the seas,
Holding us here interned, incarcerated,
Pent behind bars, ill-found and ill-at-ease.¹*

Empire played a symbolic and actual role in affirming masculinity. The ideal of a civilising mission as expounded by Lord Lloyd, and the idealised qualities of stoicism, courage, pioneering spirit, paternalism, athleticism, sexual purity, racial superiority, culture and technology – all of which were expected of those destined for positions of military and civil leadership in the far-flung British Empire – fed into and shaped colonial institutional life. These ideals coloured contemporary perceptions of heroism, manliness and notions of masculinity prior to the Second World War.² For colonial men, whose identity, sense of virility, status and masculinity were intrinsically linked with imperial prestige and colonial power, the demonstration of Japanese military strength and superiority had indeed caused amazement and ‘brought towers of lifelong misconceptions tumbling in broken fragments around their ears’.

The surrender of each colony and the colonial men’s failure to protect the indigenous populations shattered their personal pride. ‘We had let down the Asians, Malays, Indians and Chinese,’ recalls a British man.³ An American ex-internee recorded:

Spanish, Mexican, Nicaraguan, Cuban, Russian, Belgium, Swedish, Danish, Chinese and Burmese, for all these people the world had turned upside-down. The impossible appeared to have happened . . . The nation which they believed the most powerful on earth had failed them. They were at the mercy of an enemy Oriental power.⁴

This sense of failure, their own capture and that of the women and children challenged and overturned their self-image of the potent, virile, dynamic colonial male, and created a ‘crisis of masculinity’.⁵ A male internee, watching the women marching into Changi Prison, recorded:

A final sharp stab of agony as the women arrived a few days later marching and singing . . . My God what a useless set of cowardly swine we are. Usually we have kept our women out of our trouble . . . I went to my cell weeping.⁶

Another wrote:

There we were literally reduced to our bare selves. We no longer had about us the aura of our offices, our clerks and tambies, our cars and comfortable homes and servants. All the trappings of our Western civilisations had been ruthlessly shorn from us. We were prisoners and nothing more.⁷

How the men dealt with this crisis, replaced some of that ‘aura’, regained some of the ‘trappings of their Western civilisations’ and used them to survive is the focus of this chapter.

As discussed in the previous chapter, few Western civilian men either had or took the opportunity to evacuate before the Japanese attacks. Consequently, over 50,000 were interned by the Japanese in the Far East during the Second World War. Of this total, 36,710 were Dutch, interned in the Dutch East Indies. The available source material in the English language, however, determines that this chapter focuses mainly on the experiences of the British and American men interned in Hong Kong, China and the Philippines. Although this may seem a relatively small sample, it is, nevertheless, significant in that it includes men in mixed family camps and others in sexually segregated camps. The total number of internees in Stanley Camp, Hong Kong was approximately 2,800; two-thirds of them were male. In this camp the internees lived in family groups. In Changi Prison, Singapore, by the end of March 1942, there were 2,361 men, 369 women and 61 children. This number increased throughout internment. Here men and women were completely segregated and the younger children stayed with the women. By February 1942, 2,000 men, 1,200 women and 400 children were interned in Santo Tomas University in the Philippines; this number also increased enormously over the next year. In this camp men and women had separate dormitories and the younger children were housed with the women. They were allowed to live communally during the day. The various mixed family camps in China held a total of approximately 9,130 internees; of these around 4,400 were men.⁸

The experiences of some of these men are recorded in their

published autobiographies, official camp histories, medical and engineering reports as well as unpublished camp newspapers, diaries and memoirs. Some private diaries are, almost literally, a catalogue of personal weight loss and gains. Initially I dismissed these diaries as useless information and the diarists as hypochondriacs. My second response was to ask why these men used scarce writing materials just to catalogue their weights? Why was this information so important and why so private? I concluded that these diaries and lists of weights were catalogues of fear and insecurity. The body, its weight and shape, were private and personal barometers of individual survival, identity, power and masculinity; the decline of all these was inscribed on their bodies. The men would not discuss this openly for fear of being perceived as cowardly; thus it was recorded in their private diaries, for their eyes only.

In complete contrast to this are the 'public' newssheets that circulated in some of the camps.⁹ For example, from the *Internews* and *The Changi Guardian* 'newspapers' produced by the internees in Santo Tomas and Changi respectively, it is hard to detect any evidence of humiliation, decline and destruction. They hardly seem a commentary on the lives of men, women and children in prison camps; rather, they give an upbeat and buoyant impression of unchanged lives with each colony continuing as before. These far from private 'messages' were deliberately produced, perhaps, to compensate for, or even to suppress, suggestions of the men's depressing decline.

Straddling and underpinning both these contrasting themes are the official medical and engineering records, biographies, autobiographies and unpublished memoirs. On the one hand, these sources record the illness, deprivation and death in the camps; on the other, they construct internment as a challenging colonising project. They demonstrate how the men imposed themselves on their new environment and adapted their former institutions – administration, medicine, work, recreation, education and religion – to accommodate it.

Using a variety of these sources, this chapter explores these parallel but contrasting themes. It argues that individually the men were deeply demoralised, conscious of their vulnerability and in constant fear of losing their identities and lives. However, the manner in which they individually and collectively adapted their skills and experiences to develop their self-government, structure their work, organise their recreation and express their nationalism were all survival techniques. This dynamic, virile approach to internment acted as a life belt on to

which the men could cling, not merely to survive, but to survive in the most civilised, dignified and empowering way possible.

PRE-INTERNMENT

The British Colonial Service (the official face of colonialism) and the business community (the unofficial face) were distinctly hierarchical, male-dominated professional institutions.¹⁰ The Colonial Governor, who combined the function of monarch and prime minister, was at the apex of the official power and social pyramid. Below him were the judges, barristers, solicitors, bankers, doctors, teachers, university lecturers, and then the non-commissioned officers within the police and agriculture. The broad base of the pyramid was made up of the 'junior clerks, artisans, messengers, policemen, forest guards, instructors, mechanics, ships' crews and the like'.¹¹ A man's race and education influenced the job he would fill. His position in the pyramid defined which clubs he belonged to, where he sat in the bar, whether he was invited to and where he sat at formal luncheons and dinners. Members of the official and unofficial upper stratum needed a university degree and/or a professional qualification. Many colonial officers were enrolled on a one-year Oxbridge colonial administrative service training course to study colonial law, history, economics and political systems 'and a whole lot of other things a young man ought to know'.¹² Having become members of this select club, they spent a two-year probationary period in the 'field' and returned to an Oxbridge summer school for a second six-month follow-up course in more advanced subjects. In this way an elaborate colonial fraternity was constructed.¹³ It was considered that 'in as much as they [members of the colonial service] were hand picked for their jobs, their average of ability and character is probably above the normal'. As such, the men and women of the British colonial service were considered the 'tools used for extending the frontiers of civilisation'.¹⁴

Members of the business institutions in the colonies were also subject to strict control systems imposed by their companies which, in many cases, replicated or adhered to the rules of the colonial service. Senior managers for Butterfield and Swires Ltd, one of the largest trading companies in the Far East, were sought from Oxford and Cambridge graduates, interviews were rigorous and single men were discouraged from marrying during their first five years of employment. As far as the banks were concerned, a Hong Kong and

Shanghai Bank employee claims 'in those days, getting into the Bank was like getting into Eton'.¹⁵ Although highly educated and well trained, colonial officers and the staff of businesses were not only subject to social control by their chosen institution, they had little or no say in their postings, many having to 'cut their teeth' in less desirable areas first. A Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank employee remembers his first posting was Cambodia 'because it would do him good'. A favourite 'proving ground for juniors at Butterfield and Swires was travelling round the far flung Taikoo Sugar agents in interior China'.¹⁶

The American colonial administration did not, perhaps, share the same sense of destiny or training as the British colonial service. In fact Cogan claims that the Americans' approach in the Philippines was unlike that of the British and the Dutch; rather it was 'hesitant and reflected a strangely reluctant and morally insecure imperialism' and tended to be less overtly racist than the British or the Dutch.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there were still many similarities between the American and British colonial systems. Like the British the Americans desired strategic outposts, access to raw materials, and investment and trade in the East. American missionaries and teachers also felt the need to 'civilise' and educate the local inhabitants. Or, as historian Nick Cullather has put it, America's annexation of the Philippines was to . . .

. . . gain a haven for naval forces patrolling the China coast, to assure access to lucrative China trade, and to fulfil an imagined obligation to uplift and civilise Filipinos.¹⁸

The 'obligation to uplift and civilise' the perceived backward Filipinos, the administration of the colony, the lucrative trade in sugar, precious metals and other raw materials, and the strategic defence position of the Philippines, with its well-fortified port at Manila Bay, were reflected in the American Philippine community at that time. The Americans appointed a Governor-General (later to become High Commissioner) and the Philippine government was patterned on that of America. This administration helped impose Western cultural values on the Philippine islands by establishing American-style institutions, and 'dedicated teachers, missionaries, doctors, government officials and civil engineers arrived in waves'.¹⁹ One of the aims was to create a common language, with the subsequent creation of a colony-wide school system to teach the Filipinos English. American teachers, in fact, made up a large proportion of the Philippine civil service.²⁰ Missionaries also set up schools, hospitals and churches that

reflected their own culture and beliefs. The opening up of American markets to Philippine products, mainly sugar, attracted investment and a growing community of American traders and businessmen to the islands. With the focus on import and export there was a demand for easier transport. Consequently, engineers, scientists and other ancillary workers joined the work force to build roads and a railroad. The need for medical care and a social life meant doctors, nurses and entertainers swelled the American communities.

The majority of these communities were concentrated in major towns where they formed their own clubs, built their houses and consolidated American interests by organising their own chambers of commerce. The administration did include some Filipinos, and some of the American clubs, such as the Manila Rotary Club, allowed a select mixed race membership. Others, such as the Polo Club and the Manila Club and Golf Course, strictly maintained racial barriers.

The large American army and naval presence further increased the American population, and was important in offering support to the Philippine Commonwealth army and protection for American trade in the Far East. It was also mistakenly hoped that, during the build-up to the Second World War, this large American naval presence would act as a deterrent to any Japanese attack.

While race and class perhaps played a more important role in the power and social pyramid of British colonialism, economics and status fed into both the British and American structures. Internment, however, was to change this. Class and social status were ultimately useless tools for survival in internment; consequently, they gradually became less important. As far as economics were concerned, in some camps, such as Changi and Stanley, an internal money-based economy was virtually replaced by exchange of goods and skills. In other camps, such as Santo Tomas, a number of internees were able to draw from bank accounts or received loans or accommodations from employers. But, according to Frederic Stevens, 'there were always some who were destitute and who were dependent on camp funds'.²¹ As a result a money- and non-money-based economy seemed to run in parallel until the Japanese eventually stopped any outside trading. That said, the most invaluable tools for survival in all the camps were the adaptation of the men's social and professional organisational structures, their education, training, skills, professions, disciplined lifestyles, and the driving force – be it religious or secular – to be at the 'frontiers of civilisation'. All these had underpinned Western colonial culture and the men who dominated it.

INTERNMENT

'The old order had gone. A new life had begun . . . Who knew what lay ahead?' wrote Tyler Thompson on his first night in Changi Prison.²² In every camp, this new life was deeply humiliating and demoralising. In all the places chosen for internment, overcrowding was endemic. Sanitation was totally inadequate for the numbers crowded into the camps; a limited flush system augmented by bore-holes was the best that could be expected, and many places had much more primitive facilities. The camps had to be maintained and cleaned by the internees themselves. Basic rice and some vegetables were supplied by the Japanese but other food had to be purchased or grown and then prepared and cooked. All this was in marked and total contrast to the Westerners' previous lifestyle and, as was no doubt intended by the Japanese, the colonial communities were reduced to the level of the lowest and poorest natives. For example, in the bomb-damaged Prison Warders' quarters that made up Stanley Camp, Hong Kong:

The average floor space per person for all purposes was 41 square feet. There was a desperate shortage of clothes, beds, blankets, shoes, soap, toilet paper, brushes, disinfectant, refuse bins and materials for fly and mosquito control. Cooking apparatus and utensils were absent.²³

All rooms were overcrowded and in many cases one room contained a collection of men, women and children whether related or not. All possible odd spaces, holes under staircases, corners in passages, kitchens and pantries and servants quarters came to be occupied with no thought given to hygiene or public health.²⁴

Of the former Kiangsu Middle School, Shanghai, which had been taken over by Chinese troops in 1937 and which, in 1942, became Lunghua Internment Camp, an ex-internee claims:

It was a desolate place when we arrived. Two large blocks had been destroyed and the only accommodation that was available for 400 was three timber huts . . . We were thus grossly overcrowded . . . The width of your bed plus about two feet clearance was your home.²⁵

Within ten days of the surrender in the Philippines over 3,000 people had been interned in Santo Tomas University, Manila; 2,000 were accommodated in the main building, with thirty to fifty people to a room, 700 in the gymnasium and 400 in the annexe. The average floor space for each person was 1.4–1.8m²/16–20ft². In Singapore, the

sight of approximately 3,000 internees in Changi Prison, built to house 600, was described thus:

Day-break resembles an improvised casualty station in a besieged city. Prostrate bodies lie in closely packed rows. Some on rough wooden benches, some on mattresses, heaps of clothing or sacking on the concrete floor. Narrow irregular paths lead through the human morass. A miscellany of objects and articles of clothing slung across bamboo poles suspended from iron pipes and girders.²⁶

Food supplies were always inadequate and of poor quality. Red Cross parcels were rare and supplies from outside the camps – either through the black-market, friends or other suppliers – assisted only a few internees and ceased as time progressed.²⁷ In Santo Tomas, the Japanese refused to take responsibility for feeding the internees for the first six months, during which time the internees set up a central purchasing committee and from their own combined funds they made bulk purchases outside the camp. After six months the Japanese made monthly payments to the finance committee of US \$0.35 per head per day. This amount covered all utilities and medical supplies as well as food. A camp canteen and a ‘store’ were opened, with profits assisting the camp funds and the destitute. With rising inflation food scarcity and rising prices, ‘the camp was caught in a pincer movement and conditions [were] growing rapidly worse’.²⁸ The internees were, therefore, almost totally dependent on the Japanese for vital food and medical supplies. Rice and vegetables were delivered in bulk and had to be unloaded, stored, cleaned, prepared and rationed out by the internees themselves. In Stanley it was noted that rice often ‘contained much dirt and foreign material, one sample, the worst, losing one-third of its weight on sifting and washing’.²⁹ The debilitating physical and psychological effects of the poor and inadequate diet on these previously well-fed communities not only threatened life, it threatened the very identity and essence of the man himself. Tyler Thompson recalls the impact of this regimen:

A friend lost 62 per cent of his weight. Only those who kept in fairly close contact with him recognised him as the same person. My weight dropped another ten pounds and levelled out at 135 – the weight I had attained at the age of twelve.³⁰

As time progressed, the appalling conditions, the reduction of food and the dwindling medical supplies all took their toll. Immunity

to minor ailments was lost, sickness was commonplace, muscle and fat gave way to skin and bone, energy was sapped and, 'how am I doing?' became an obsession. Mike Bevan, interned in Stanley, kept a diary.³¹ During the first year, or so, Bevan logged details of camp activities and, perhaps twice, he recorded his weight. By 1944, however, the camp activities fade from the diary and, as shown below, his fear and increasing sense of panic are almost tangible as his declining weight is, often, the only entry on the day.

1944

12/2 – Weight 144 [lbs] with sweater, shoes, grey flannels, thick underwear.

4/4 – 144 [lbs] same clothes as 12/2 thin underwear.

15/4 – Weight 141 [lbs] same clothes as 4/4, but serge shorts.

25/4 – Weight 139 [lbs] shorts and shoes only.

12/6 – 138 [lbs] shorts and shoes only.

24/6 – Weight 136 and $\frac{1}{4}$ [lbs] as above.

25/6 – Start wearing splint 5 and $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs with shoe.

1/7 – Weight 138, $\frac{1}{2}$ [lbs] less splint 5 and $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. 133 [lbs].

Mike Bevan was not the only man in the camps so concerned. In Changi, checks for the first symptoms of beriberi, a potentially fatal condition caused by malnutrition when the body lacks vitamin D, were constant. 'One would get in the habit of checking several times a day – whenever you sit down your hand almost automatically falls to your shin bone to see if the tissue feels soggy', wrote Tyler Thompson.³² The slow deterioration was difficult to hide, as Duncan Wallace remarked: 'Normally we men run round in the most disgusting rags and the constant sight of skinny naked bodies has become somewhat revolting.'³³ 'The results,' claimed Tyler Thompson, 'were grotesque and plainly visible.'³⁴

In a community who previously overdressed for the Far Eastern climate, clothing was clearly not for warmth, it had greater significance. It declared the men's Western identity and acted as a display of 'bureaucratic loyalties' and status.³⁵ When their coverings were reduced to nothing more than loin cloths, or the equivalent, these men were stripped of any identifying features. Wasted bodies could not be camouflaged, status could no longer be indicated and, as the following anonymous ironic poem shows, the men became physically and psychologically vulnerable.

Though in Changi all class is the same,
 In the laundry some think it's a shame
 when they're stripped to the buff
 and their chests out they puff
 nothing indicates high rank or fame.³⁶

In addition, racial prejudices and sexuality came, uncomfortably, into view. In the eyes of these Western men, they had been captured by an inferior enemy. The physical attributes, the height, colour, shape of head and legs and the 'grunting sounds' of that enemy were a source of derision. Lancelot Forster in Stanley wrote:

If the Japanese, on average, had been about three inches taller they might have been ten times less aggressive. When they came in contact with Western nations they were immediately convicted of the inferiority in the matter of height.³⁷

The obvious deterioration of the Western men threatened to undermine their perceived racial superiority as 'time will show even a measurable loss of height [from] cumulative shrinking of the cushions of the backbone and [reduction of] the pad on the bottom of the feet'.³⁸ Thus the occasional refreshing nude bathing in the sea and appearing naked in front of 'the little yellow men'³⁹ was marred by their own humiliation and vulnerability. As they shrank, shuffled and changed colour with the sun and illness, perhaps they feared that they, too, were becoming inferior, little yellow men themselves. The nakedness of the Western men also highlighted their loss of personal space and exposed their sexuality. It was noted in Changi that:

Inadequate dress, especially when men are forced into close contact in the food queue, causes unpleasant reactions. We are in a prison but we are still decent people. Please gentlemen dress properly. I entirely support those who object to the wearing of 'scanties' by men in the food lines.⁴⁰

Nakedness and the absence of women, 'the markers of feminine otherness'⁴¹ in the men-only camps, was threatening to those men who were not confident about their own sexuality or sense of masculinity and gave rise to homophobia, as Duncan Wallace recorded:

One or two men in the camp [were] suspected of being 'nancy boys' because they were shaving under their armpits. Talk is quite general

and one is immediately suspect if one is found talking to a so-called 'nancy boy'. We must tread warily or we shall leave prison with our fair names tarnished.⁴²

Even more disturbing, in the same camp, was the case of a man found guilty of 'Gross Indecency' with a young lad.⁴³

This physical and psychological vulnerability, insecurity and fear added to the general demoralisation, powerlessness and tension that already existed in the overcrowded camps. Pilfering or stealing were regular occurrences among the internees, face slapping and rifle butting from the guards was endemic but, as the men soon discovered, beatings, torture and execution would also take place.

The Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai, were feared by all the internees. Though not a constant presence, they could come into the camps and search and question internees at will, particularly when a major breach of discipline had been suspected or discovered. Several of the civilian male internees from different camps were tortured or executed by the Kempeitai for a variety of reasons. For example, Frederic Stevens was removed from Santo Tomas and incarcerated for seven months in Fort Santiago. Sixty-four-year-old Stevens was imprisoned in a cell measuring 3.6 by 4.5m/12 by 15 ft with fourteen others, all of whom shared an oriental squat toilet in one corner. He was severely tortured and questioned for raising money to buy food for the internees and, more bizarrely, for his membership of the Masons who, his interrogators claimed, were involved in the decision of the United States to declare war on Japan.⁴⁴

Other internees were punished for more obvious reasons. In the early days of internment, when the men were relatively fit, several escape attempts were made from the camps. This was always a high risk activity as the Western men were dependent on local inhabitants for support and they could easily be identified among the Asian people. On or about 11/12 February 1942, after roll call at 8 p.m., Blakely Borthwick Laycock, Henry Edward Weeks and Thomas Henry Fletcher scaled the wall at Santo Tomas. They were apprehended five miles from the camp by the Japanese and, on 14 February, the Chairman of the internees was informed by the Japanese Commandant that the men had been sentenced to death by a Japanese court martial held in Manila. On Sunday, 15 February they were taken to Manila North cemetery where they were shot. In March and April, escape attempts were also made from Stanley. Those who were caught were beaten and incarcerated in the prison. In April 1942

four men escaped from St Stephen's College science building, Stanley Camp, Hong Kong. They were captured a short distance from the camp and paraded through the streets of Hong Kong, then jailed in Stanley Prison for two years.⁴⁵

Some prisoners, unwilling to risk escaping but hungry for news of the war, defiantly built secret radios. Having the skills and equipment to construct a radio was a two-edged sword. The men who built and operated them basked in the glory of hoodwinking the Japanese. They listened to the news of the outside world and then imparted it to other internees – a great morale booster for all concerned. If discovered, however, Japanese reprisals were harsh and demoralising. In Stanley five men were arrested, tortured, beaten and later executed not far from the camp after being accused of using a secret radio.⁴⁶ Later Lancelot Forster, a Stanley internee, expressed the horror, racial hatred and impotence felt by the rest of the men:

The whole affair sent a shiver of horror through the camp. We felt deeply for these men who had suffered this torture and death, and we felt deeply our utter inability to do anything about it. We had a sense not of defeat but of bitterness and anger that such a contemptible, despicable group of little men should be in a position, however temporary, to inflict torture and death upon those who were definitely superior to them in every way.⁴⁷

The most notorious event of this kind, however, took place in Changi Prison on 10 October 1943 (this being the tenth day of the tenth month it is generally referred to as 'The Double Tenth'). On that morning, without warning, the Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai, raided and searched the camp. The build-up to this event appears to have stemmed from the attack by the Australian navy and a British military officer on Japanese ships in Singapore harbour. As a result of this attack seven ships were sunk and others badly damaged. For some reason the Japanese connected these attacks with the internees in Changi, suspecting there was an anti-Japanese spy ring among the civilian internees and that messages were being transmitted from the camp plotting sabotage on Singapore Island. Consequently, on the morning of 10 October 1943 the internees were called to an early roll call. While they stood in the hot sun in the prison yard all day without food, the prison was searched by the Japanese soldiers with fixed bayonets. Although there were secret radios hidden in the camp these were only used for receiving news on the progress of the war, not for transmitting. On that day no radios were found, but details of

a BBC bulletin and some Japanese currency were found resulting in the Japanese arresting and interrogating a number of internees.

Among those internees arrested were Robert Scott, who had previously been the Director of Information, J. Leonard Wilson, the Bishop of Singapore, Hugh Fraser, the acting Colonel Secretary, J.S. Long, an Assistant Police Commissioner, Norman Coulson, a water engineer with the Public Works Department, and a number of senior government officers. Some of these men had held the position of camp leader. The arrests and interrogations lasted for over a year during which time many of the men were severely beaten and tortured. Sixteen died. Of these, J.S. Long was executed in November 1944, Coulson's dead body was returned to the camp on 17 July 1944 and Fraser was returned to the camp on 24 July 1944 only to die in the camp hospital on 25 July. D.W. Perry and J. Dalton both died in the camp hospital in September 1944 and J.H. Bowyer in November. Four others died in Miyako Hospital, Singapore. The sight of the broken emaciated bodies of the dead and the dying men as well as those that needed extensive medical treatment in the camp hospital after they were released from the hands of the Kempeitai⁴⁸ added to 'the atmosphere of fear and dread which hung over Changi long after'.⁴⁹ It was this sense of powerlessness and the gradual, but very real, physical and moral decline that underlies the catalogue of weight loss in the private diaries and undermined the men's masculine status.

In spite of these traumatic events, the debilitating environment and the acknowledgement that, 'Whether we like it or not, we in this camp are temporarily a defeated community', the rallying cry was clear:

All things may be taken from us but one; and that one we can keep only as long as we cherish it; that is the dignity of the conquered.⁵⁰

If we make up our minds that we are not going to lose control of ourselves then we will come out of this probably as well in health as we came in.⁵¹

How these temporarily defeated men took and kept control and cherished their dignity is discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

With the war escalating, the Japanese could not spare soldiers to guard the civilian internees; it was much easier to put them in confined areas and leave them to fend for themselves. Therefore, although Japanese commandants were in charge of the camps, and in some cases Chinese, Korean, Indian and Formosan guards assisted, the internal daily running of each camp was largely left to

the internees. The Japanese, however, made it clear to those in Lunghua how they expected the internees to organise themselves.

The Sections will be formed into groups, each of which shall have its own Captain. Orders shall be given to the Captains and they shall be transmitted through the Captains to the chiefs of sections who in turn shall convey them to their respective members. The Captains and the chief of sections shall act as intermediaries in communicating the wishes of their members to the officials in charge . . . In order to facilitate self-administration there shall be divisions in charge of general affairs, accounts, food, health, equipment education and discipline.⁵²

This hierarchical system was familiar to the Western men, replicating as it did much of their pre-internment business and social lives. As they established these various divisions to facilitate self-administration, it became clear that the variety of skills – mercantile and professional training, and their varied experiences – was to be a significant factor in the successful organisation of the camps. Soon they became a major contribution to the physical and psychological wellbeing and survival of the internees.

The census in Santo Tomas in February 1942 revealed that there were 749 businessmen, 721 engineers and seamen, 470 mechanics, as well as geologists and chemists engaged in mining construction and industrial work. There were also 12 lawyers and 16 doctors and dentists. Among the male internees in Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, were the Colonial Secretary, forty doctors, two dentists, one biologist, six pharmacists, numerous businessmen, lawyers, including the Chief Justice Sir Athol Macgregor, university lecturers, engineers and policemen. Changi, in Singapore, boasted the presence of the Governor (though only for a brief period), as well as doctors, engineers, seamen, planters, miners, teachers and administrators. In Lunghua, in Shanghai, there were many school teachers, eighteen doctors, a dentist as well as a pool of engineers, technicians, tool-makers and chemists. In addition, a number of clergymen from various religious denominations were interned in each camp – the Bishop of Singapore and his staff were in Changi. Many of these men met the challenge of internment with the same professionalism and endeavour as any colonial posting.

At the outset, the choices of ‘captains’ or ‘chief representatives’, requested by the Japanese, were arbitrary. Earl Carroll, production manager of Insular Life Assurance Company in Manila and the district leader of the American Red Cross Emergency Committee of

South Malate, reported his 'election' in the American-dominated Santo Tomas camp.

The Japanese officials approached me and said they wanted me to become the general chairman of the internees for the purpose of setting up an organisation and appointing leaders for each room. These had to be appointed immediately and we had to meet them downstairs in thirty minutes. At this meeting, instructions to room leaders were given and the authority to form an organisation was repeated.⁵³

American missionary, Tyler Thompson described how he 'volunteered' to lead the American group in temporary internment in Joo Chiat police station, Singapore, where they were interned prior to being moved to Changi.

Suddenly there was a change of theme in the [Japanese] officer's discourse: 'One representative of each nationality step forward' . . . There was an awkward pause. A vacuum of leadership presented itself, but no-one rushed in to fill it! While I waited for others I felt an unceremonious push from a dozen hands behind me. 'You will be the American representative!' I had become a volunteer willy-nilly. By a process somewhat comparable the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Netherlands, France, Canada and Ireland acquired representation.⁵⁴

Hugh Collar, a British businessman, recorded the Japanese at Haiphong Road camp, Shanghai, saying 'You are Mr Collar, Chairman of British Residents Association . . . Colonel Odera order you to take charge of the interned British men in the camp'.⁵⁵ Although those initial selections were *ad hoc* and lacked any democratic process, there was, according to Tyler Thompson, 'a general agreement that this provided us with the beginning of a framework'.⁵⁶ It was around this framework that the men gradually built familiar institutions through which they could function and survive with dignity.

The general administration of the camps was to be the first priority. In Hong Kong, the Governor, Sir Mark Young, was held in solitary confinement and the new Colonial Secretary, Mr Gimson, was imprisoned outside the camp for several weeks.⁵⁷ The disillusionment and bitterness surrounding the surrender and the chaotic evacuation policies were still evident when the internees reached Stanley.

The first impulse that ran through camp would, on a larger social scale, have been called revolutionary. On every side, by almost every mouth, the former leading men of the colony were bitterly denounced.⁵⁸

This revolutionary atmosphere was to herald conflict when the Colonial Secretary eventually arrived in the camp. Meanwhile, however, the first Temporary Committee was formed, on 24 January 1942, a matter of days after the majority of internees arrived in the camp. First elections were, of necessity, rather hasty, and carried out in geographical areas of the camp with each area electing members by a show of hands. At the first meeting officers were elected and, rather than choose a government official, the Director and General Manager of the *South China Morning Post*, Mr Benjamin Wylie, became the first Chairman. The group met daily, dealing primarily with problems of housing and food as well as discussing the necessary skills and groups needed to run the camp.

Mr Gimson arrived in the camp in March 1942. Concerned by the anti-government feeling, and no doubt by the ambiguity of his own position especially as he was new and unknown, he insisted that:

As chief representative of His Majesty he should conduct the foreign policy of the Government and be regarded as the sole channel of communication between the British community and the Japanese . . . For domestic matters the Colonial Secretary will leave the administration of the camp to a council.⁵⁹

In April 1942, he issued details of an ‘Agreement between the British Hong Kong government and the British Communal Council’ (BCC which ran the camp), which stated:

The Colonial Secretary on his arrival in the camp immediately, in the absence of His Excellency the Governor, assumed such functions as his office demanded in the eyes of the British Imperial authorities and of the British community of which he is rightfully the head and so represented the authority to which all British subjects must look as the person acting on behalf of His Britannic Majesty.

Having thus imposed his authority, in the name of His Majesty the King, on the camp, he directed the many government servants in the camp as follows:

Government servants are directed to observe any requirements which the Camp Council may consider necessary in the interests of the good administration of the camp, and may offer themselves as representatives on the said council if they think fit. Their first duty is to the British Hong Kong government. The officers concerned should be free to

consult the colonial secretary on any matter on which he fears his obligations to the Government and to the Council may conflict. In case of any embarrassment the officer must resign his position on the council.⁶⁰

According to Mr Gimson then, in spite of a Japanese victory, British colonialism had not ceased. The British Hong Kong government still existed, even in Stanley internment camp, and he considered himself very much its head. Once established, Mr Gimson was the only person in the camp with whom the Japanese would deal with directly, and he remained in his position as head of the Stanley Camp internees throughout the internment period. Other committees and internee representatives – nicknamed blockheads – were, however, elected on a regular basis. In spite of the fact that women made up a third of the camp, only one woman ever appeared in the main committee. Businessmen, doctors, lawyers, professors and churchmen were the backbone of the Stanley Camp internee administration, and were responsible for the internal running of the camp. However, Mr Gimson's symbolic role as head of state and colonial rule undoubtedly created an important sense of security and continuity for the internees at that time.

When Singapore surrendered, Sir Shenton Thomas, the Governor of Malaya, was removed from his post and was initially put into temporary internment in Katong. The Western men and women were segregated and the men were housed in the Joo Chiat Police Station barracks and the adjoining convent school at a seaside estate called Karikal.

That night it meant scraping a place on the floor and lying down there. In the process of accomplishing these tasks the first rudimentary organisation of the camp took place – though we scarcely realised it, and the development of a structure for self-government was, virtually, accomplished on the first day.⁶¹

Within sixteen days of the temporary camp being established in Katong, the Japanese authorities announced the imminent move to Changi Prison, on the eastern end of Singapore Island. The move began on 6 March 1942 under the leadership of Sir Shenton Thomas. When they arrived in Changi Prison they found that approximately 3,400 internees, 99 per cent of whom were British, were to be crowded into accommodation built for 640. Other groups were moved in units and stayed together, for example 'the entire membership of

House No. 1. at Karikal moved to the fourth floor of block B', and the basic organisation that originated in temporary internment was adapted to the new conditions.⁶² Each block elected floor officers who formed a floor council. The chairman of each floor was on the block council. The men living in workshops, dining rooms and corridors were split into comparably sized groups and given the same representation. The camp council consisted of block commandants plus the camp commandant who had been elected democratically.

Eventually, the whole community had the opportunity of voting in new officers every two months. As in Stanley, there was much anti-government feeling in the camp initially, due to the sudden and unexpectedly chaotic defeat of Singapore. However, the lack of respect shown to Sir Shenton Thomas and his brief solitary confinement in May 1942 was deplored by the internees. Apart from the humanitarian concern, it heightened their sense of powerlessness, and their concern for their own imprisonment and the destruction of British rule. At the beginning of August 1942 Sir Shenton Thomas was transferred to Formosa. In his farewell speech to the men he thanked them for a memorable five months and said:

I had wanted to be with you but I am going to take away with me the knowledge of a community spirit, of courage and resolve that is going to see us and the British Empire right through to the end of this war.⁶³

The Governor's final removal from the camp severed an important symbolic tie with that British Empire and colonial rule.

For the Americans in the Philippines, that tie had already been cut. The American High Commissioner, Francis B. Sayre, and his staff were ordered out of Manila by the American government before the arrival of the Japanese. Left in charge was Claude A. Buss, executive assistant to the High Commissioner, but the Japanese held him incommunicado in Yanchausti House, Manila. He too was later transported to Formosa.

There were, therefore, no American executive officials to whom the internees could turn and, by 24 January 1942, it was noted that, 'a cross section of American businessmen in Manila have been marshalled into the volunteer internee government which is responsible for the internal affairs of the camp'.⁶⁴ The five-man Executive Committee, headed by Earl Carroll, included the Vice Chairman of a mining company, the General Manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, a practising attorney and the Far

Eastern Manager of American Express. Two British members were added later that day to represent the minority British group. There was a nine-man advisory committee, 'all experts in their field', and 'sixteen department heads in direct control of the major activities of the camp'. The newly elected floor monitors bridged the gap between the individual internee and 'the government which has grown up by necessity around him'.⁶⁵ The organisation of Santo Tomas was, according to Hartendorp, considered 'comparable to the government of an international city'.⁶⁶ As in Stanley, few of the 400 women in Santo Tomas played any part in the main administration of the camp. Mrs K.B. Day shared responsibility with Mr Les Davis for education, and later some women joined the entertainments committee.

In Lunghua the British community created a British Residents Association which 'took over our affairs and ran them well'.

The elected committee being composed of British businessmen, we were in good hands. They conducted all the negotiations with the Nips regarding our internment, and looked after the people without funds and jobs.

This internee was also open in his criticism of the Shanghai 'officials':

None of us have [*sic*] any cause for regret that our consular people went away. We certainly welcomed their departure, for in the matter of dealing with the Nips they were 'Babes in the Woods' compared with the civilian community leaders.⁶⁷

One internee was elected camp representative and he had an elected council to assist him. Between them they did all the official work in the camp. The various heads of departments were appointed by the council. 'With goodwill, the organisation worked quite effectively'.⁶⁸

Once the organisation had been established in each camp, the internees endeavoured to create a democratic process for elections to committees; however, this was not always possible. In Changi it appears there were, eventually, regular democratic elections for camp leader and for members of all the committees. In Stanley however, as mentioned earlier, once Mr Gimson had established control, he was the only leader with whom the Japanese would consider dealing. There were, nevertheless, regular elections for members of the other committees in that camp. Aware of his undemocratic appointment in Santo Tomas, Earl Carroll, seeing the arrival

of Frederic Stevens, former elected head of the ACC, offered to let Stevens take over. But Stevens refused because things appeared to be running smoothly and he was aware that the Executive Committee had been approved by the Japanese whom it was politic not to upset. He was, however, willing to work with the committee.⁶⁹ Although there was some criticism of the undemocratic way the Central Committee was elected into office, they remained in their posts until July 1942 when a new committee was elected and the internees planned regular six-monthly elections. However, when the January 1943 elections took place in Santo Tomas the Japanese cancelled them, saying the 1942 committee should remain in their posts.

Elected or otherwise, facing every new and old committee member in every camp were the practical aspects of feeding, accommodating, caring for and supporting – both physically and mentally – large numbers of disorientated, demoralised internees who had been robbed of the means of supporting themselves. This was an exhausting and often thankless job. Regular elections, therefore, were not only to give individual internees the opportunity to participate directly in the government of the camp, but also to ensure the responsibility was shared by the maximum number of people.⁷⁰

The first elections in Santo Tomas were called when it was found that ‘many of the officers had worked all this time at the same job and began to feel that they had earned a rest’.⁷¹ The camp representative in Lunghua, it was claimed, ‘had an unenviable job, and was never finished with his work’.⁷² As Hugh Collar explains: ‘Changes did occur, it was usually because the incumbent got fed up. It entailed quite a lot of work and responsibility.’⁷³ Although their chosen ‘captains’ and chief representatives held important and responsible roles among the internees, they were, in truth, powerless where the Japanese were concerned. At best they were a buffer between the internees and the Japanese; mostly they were communicators of Japanese orders and were held responsible for the internees carrying them out.

In spite of this, it is clear that from the chaotic, demoralising beginnings and within the constraints imposed by the Japanese, the men began to develop some autonomy and their own community life inside the camp boundaries. Having established an important level of ‘self-government’, from this stemmed the various departments and functional branches such as ‘the sanitation branch, the medical branch, the legal branch and so on’, similar to those of any government or colonial service.⁷⁴ Their priorities and criteria followed

similar lines as those used to improve the conditions of a colonial plantation labour force.

The material points of attention were in such matters as better housing; safe drinking water free from the dangers of cholera, dysentery and typhoid; hygienic latrines to guard against hookworm and internal parasites and the eternal fight against malaria-carrying mosquitoes.⁷⁵

As with any new 'colony', the engineers surveyed and mapped the camps. They assessed how and where best to house people and where safe drinking water could be obtained. They located sources of electricity and created hygienic latrines. Members of the medical department advised how best to store, prepare and cook food; they organised hospitals, clinics and medical treatment. They, together with the chemists and biologists, advised on preventative measures that needed to be taken against malaria and other deadly diseases. Consequently, whether intended by the Japanese or not, within a relatively short time the men were able to begin to impose themselves and some of 'the trappings of Western civilisation that had been shorn from them' on the camps.

In the previous chapter I noted how the Japanese 'removed' Western imperial culture and imposed their own on the Western colonies by renaming countries, towns and streets. The restrictions of the internment camp did not deter the men from imposing themselves and their culture on and colonising – or Westernising – the internment space. In Changi, the area where the camp newspaper was produced was named Fleet Street and other blocks were referred to by familiar London landmarks: Tottenham Court Road, Downing Street and Piccadilly Circus. The main pathways in Lunghua were named Regent Street and Knightsbridge, and the water point was called Waterloo. To further connect them to home, Western symbols were sometimes used including hand-crafted replicas of London underground station signs. Other images of 'home' were captured in reports of stall holders at a craft fair being described as 'reminiscent of a fayre on Hampstead Heath'. In Santo Tomas, it was noted that, 'something of the spirit of the old "forty-niners" entered into naming shanty towns: Glamourville and Toonerville' and American pioneering terminology was used to expound the political activities of the camp's 'homesteading' areas where the 'citizenry gathered to elect their mayor'.⁷⁶ Although there was an element of ironic humour behind these names, by colonising this alien space with Western cultural

symbolism the men conjured up images of 'home' and Western identity which helped to disguise the reality of the demoralising alien camp environment.

The reality of internment life could not, however, be disguised when it came to work in the camps. The Japanese did not force the civilian internees into slave labour in mines or building railways as were the military POWs; rather the work the civilian men had to do was related to the maintenance of the camp and their own survival.

Besides the hospital staff we had the following places to be staffed: kitchen, boiler room, cobblers' shop, tin smith shop, salt distillery, carpenters' shop, printing press, camp police and our camp office which included executive staff, secretaries and records office. There were daily fatigues to fell and cut wood for fuel, corridors and floors had to be swept, rice had to be stacked, cleaned and ground.⁷⁷

Unlike in their pre-war colonial life, these men were without servants and local labour. Consequently, the 'much common work, skilled and unskilled which had to be done' had to be carried out by themselves. The men in all of the camps had some work detail even if it was just for a couple of hours each day, and it was not unusual in Changi to see:

Singapore's merchant princes, Malayan rubber and tin magnates and the heaven born themselves, scrubbing floors cleaning out drains, picking up rubbish and bathing in their birthday suits.⁷⁸

In Pootung, a camp in Shanghai housing mainly British men, Elizabeth Gale noted in her diary:

In the morning we watch the lavatory squad at work and are amused to see the three men on duty are a Bishop of the Church of England, the former manager of a large Shanghai bank and a well known street beggar. They work very well as a team and in their old clothes you can't tell 't'other from which'.⁷⁹

Initially there was no question of financial reward and little chance of special treatment or privileges for work carried out in the camps. Later, those involved in hard physical labour received extra rations. This was partly considered as payment for the work but it was also necessary to ensure those doing this work would be fit enough to continue. Financial gain was, therefore, not necessarily a motivation

for work; physical and psychological survival motivated many of the men. As Andrew Tolson has pointed out:

In Western, industrialised, capitalist societies definitions of masculinity are bound up with definitions of work. Whether it is in terms of physical strength or mechanical expertise or in terms of ambition and competitiveness, the qualities needed by the successful worker are closely related to those of the successful man. As individuals, men are brought up to value work as an end in itself and to fix their personal identities around particular occupations. The roots of gender identity are inter-fused with expectations of achievement – becoming someone through working ‘making something of yourself’, to be a breadwinner for the family.⁸⁰

The varied work in the camps gave the men the opportunity to show the greatest adaptability and ingenuity, to be competitive and to exploit to the full their wealth of expertise. In this way they could become someone once again, thereby regaining some self-respect, identity, masculinity and dignity.⁸¹

At the outset, the medical care of the internees demanded a variety of skills. First hospitals had to be ‘built’ and equipped. In Lunghua, a derelict building was converted into a medical unit. In Stanley, a small concrete-built block, which had formerly housed single Indian warders was transformed by the internees into a hospital that could accommodate thirty-eight male and thirty-four female patients, had an improvised operating theatre, a dispensary and stores. Later the leprosarium was cleaned out and used as an isolation hospital for tuberculosis sufferers. The Changi men’s hospital was set up in the jail hospital. It had a small, improvised operating theatre, dispensary and laboratory. In Santo Tomas, the medical department ‘just grew up. One day it did not exist, the next day it had already grown big.’⁸² The one-storey mining school building was made available for hospital purposes, providing space for eighty beds in four wards, an examination room, a small laboratory and a kitchen. As the camp became more crowded, a large wooden structure opposite the camp was rented and adapted for use as a larger hospital, and a smaller children’s hospital was opened in the women and children’s annexe. These ‘building’ projects were ambitious and no mean accomplishment bearing in mind the limited resources available to the internees. But circumstances dictated that compromises had to be made. In Santo Tomas, for example, a number of circus tents, loaned by a local showman, were used to isolate those suffering from acute infectious diseases.

In spite of the men's sterling efforts, the hospitals were always too small to meet demand, inadequately equipped and with poor sanitary facilities. These were compensated, however, by the wide range of available medical and scientific expertise among the internees. In Changi:

Dr D.W.G. Faris, Chief health officer of Singapore became Camp Medical Officer, and other medical and nutritional experts were to hand from former posts in Singapore and Johore. These included Dr Pallister, specialist in nutritional diseases, Dr Shelley who looked after the dysentery ward, Dr Landor who had a skin clinic and Dr Lowther, eye specialist and Dr J.A.P. Cameron who took charge of surgical patients.⁸³

In Santo Tomas, Dr F.E. Whitacre, who was caught in Manila on his way back to the United States, brought with him his own instruments and some medication. Nevertheless, the doctors were always frustrated by lack of drugs and equipment. Undeterred, they became very innovative. When newly interned in a camp in Yangchow the doctors had to operate on a boy with appendicitis. Elizabeth Gale, the wife of Dr Geoffrey Gale, records in her diary:

Within two hours of making the diagnosis, a table is made by Mr T., a carpenter, while the doctors and nurses make an anaesthetic mask, wind sewing thread for sutures, boil up aprons, towels, swabs and their one pair of rubber gloves and are well on their way with the few instruments they can put together.

When they moved to Pootung Camp, Geoffrey Gale operated on the mastoid of a young boy with 'carpentry tools and parts of a meccano set'.⁸⁴ Cogan records that in Santo Tomas 'Dr Nance had to perform an appendectomy without anaesthetic'.⁸⁵

As far as drugs and vitamins were concerned the chemists and biologists combined their modern Western scientific knowledge and expertise together with their experiences with local or primitive remedies, often using themselves and willing volunteers as guinea pigs. Among their experiments were using tapioca and soya beans for milk and sweet potato for yeast to provide vitamins B1 and B2. In his book, Frederic Stevens was full of praise for the medical services in Santo Tomas:

The splendid system of hospitals, clinics and laboratories established in the camp was well calculated to take care of the medical needs of

the internees, and the doctors had every right to feel proud of their work. Certainly the internees were under a lasting debt of gratitude for the generous service given by the camp physicians and the personnel of the medical department.⁸⁶

As well as receiving such praise and gratitude, there were other compensations for the hard-working medical staff. They were one of the few groups of men who were able to continue their chosen profession without interruption in internment. Being the source of life-saving expertise and advice made them respected members of the community and meant they were 'someone' in the camps. This was reflected in the privileges they were given, for example in Changi.

The doctors had an excuse for keeping a tiny light burning after the remainder of the Gaol was 'doused' . . . They met many men during the course of their work and all news from illicit receiving sets, camp scandal, rackets, wrangles, privileges all came from this little room. By comparison with men in the cells they were dwellers 'in great open spaces'.

In Stanley the medical staff established their own living accommodation by scrubbing out a building previously used for leprous prisoners. The building was away from the main part of the camp and afforded the doctors some space and privacy. Few begrudged the medical staff these small comforts.

They did live comparatively comfortably regarding space but with the grisly things they had to do with totally inadequate equipment, treating the ill of perhaps hundreds of patients a day they deserved this little concession.⁸⁷

Furthermore, the doctors were able to use their internment experiences for academic and medical research.

The imprisonment of three and a half years of large numbers of Europeans in Japanese prison camps provided medical officers with a unique opportunity for studying the effects on a white population of a semi-starvation diet.⁸⁸

The data they collected and stored was later published in medical reports on nutritional diseases and 'made no mean contribution to medical science'.⁸⁹

Supporting the medical staff in their fight against disease were the engineers and chemists. Once more their colonial experience came in useful as modern technology went hand in hand with innovation in the creation of essential equipment. In Lunghua the engineering section built the water points and kitchen stoves. In Stanley a small forge was created from oddments collected around the camp on which a large number of chisels, screwdrivers, drills, hammers and other tools were manufactured. A circular saw was created from a very large agricultural hoe found in the camp, a small motor and lathe were also made, and a great deal of ingenuity was exercised in the matter of making and improvising surgical and medical appliances.

A young girl's recovery from a spinal injury was greatly assisted by a support frame made from an old fan blade and galvanised sheet iron; after a period of six months it was found the patient could walk correctly. A shortage of plaster of Paris was overcome by the use of similar equipment, and walking callipers were made for some patients. A bandage sterilisation plant was constructed out of two old hot water boilers. Adapters for hypodermic needles were improvised and sound boxes for stethoscopes were turned on the lathe with bits of copper pipe and rubber tubing completing the devices. 'Some of the stethoscopes were in use throughout the period of the camp and, we were informed, that they had given satisfactory service.'⁹⁰ At a more mundane, but nevertheless essential level, the manufacture of folding chairs, frying pans and a rice-cleaning machine added to the range of invaluable items used in the camp.

In Santo Tomas, a Dutch mining engineer in charge of the blacksmith shop made 200 bolts from forged iron for the building of a shed, and tin smiths created a steam cooker to prepare 40 gallons of rice in fifteen minutes. T.A. DeVore, formerly a chemist with the Philippine Smelting Company, ran a 'factory' in which the chemists produced antiseptics and disinfectants, and he also initiated a soap-making project. M.E. McIntosh of General Electric 'was the genius who made the complicated piece of apparatus from practically nothing'. Engineers installed additional toilets and showers, the camp water supply was increased by tapping into the Metropolitan Water supply, laundry and dish-washing troughs were set up and a number of dish-washing installations were built. As Frederic Stevens noted:

All in all a very creditable job was done under trying conditions. Long arduous hours were spent, particularly by the chief superintendent and assistant manager of Cebu Sugar Central who handled all the mechan-

ical and repairs end and the chief geologist of Marsman and Company collected much of the equipment.⁹¹

In Changi, an insulated meat cabinet was designed by Singapore Cold Storage engineers who worked morning and afternoon for almost fifty days – ‘the work would have been finished much sooner had it not been for the difficulty of obtaining coconut husks for insulation’.⁹² Hand-drawn trolleys, 20-manpower, were constructed from old army lorries for dragging wood into camp.

Engineering, it was claimed by an ex-internee, A.W. Black, after the war, was ‘the main force in the advancement of civilisation’.⁹³ The engineers and other scientists certainly brought advancement and civilisation to the camps. They not only helped reduce the hard physical labour in the camps, but also the manufacture of primitive, yet essential equipment and basic but efficient utilities all significantly contributed to the comfort, health and safety of the internees. It also enabled both professionals and amateurs from different backgrounds to work together as a unified group. In August 1942 it was estimated that in Santo Tomas camp ‘the sanitation department employed the largest number of men, 515’.⁹⁴ This employment gave unexpected opportunities to many men who ‘by the force of circumstances caused by the great industrial depression at home during the period between the two wars had been obliged to leave the particular trade or profession for which they had been trained’.⁹⁵ The sense of empowerment and achievement in solving the problems and producing essential equipment for the internees made these individual and groups of men highly respected within the camp communities.

Valuable as administration, medical care and engineering were in the camps, as Hugh Collar wrote: ‘With a full belly one can face the world with some measure of confidence, without it nothing else is of any consequence at all.’⁹⁶ Therefore, the provision, preparation, cooking and serving of the limited food supplies were essential areas of camp life. Domestic cooking in the West at that time was traditionally carried out by women. For the colonial communities in the Far East it was inappropriate for a Western woman to run the kitchen and use the ‘native’ equipment. Domestic cooking was always done by an employed male cook. In camp, however, this feminine/servant role changed and gave some men unexpected opportunities to establish themselves as important members of the camp communities. In Changi, the one large kitchen was in the men’s section of the jail which made it impossible for the women to use. Thus the men did

all the communal cooking, taking large cans of food to the women's side of the camp where a group of women served the food out to their fellow internees. Even in camps where there was equal access to cooking facilities, communal camp cooking became a male preserve.

In Stanley, the rations were divided up and bulk-cooked in tin baths, dustbins and kerosene cans in improvised kitchens around the camp. Handling the large rice sacks and grinding the rice on old-fashioned grinding stones for rice flour was heavy work. Preparing food in the enormous cooking pans was exhausting, and the kitchens were always hot and uncomfortable. The job was arduous; for example, to have breakfast ready for all the internees in Changi by 9 a.m. it was necessary to start operations at 3 a.m. Previous cooking experience was not the essential qualification for the cooks; it was, according to W.F.N. Churchill, 'energy and courage to take on the job'.⁹⁷ *Internews*, the Santo Tomas newspaper, praised the kitchen workers: 'The men in the kitchens from the supervisors to the pot scrubbers are doing an excellent job, they work long hot hours.'⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the job of cook was popular. One reason was, of course, access to extra food, but when rations became short supervision was keen, and in Lunghua it was then that it was:

Hard to find anyone to do the cooking. Perks were too small to make the heat and filth attractive to anyone! And it needed a strong stomach to stand the smells of bad meat and rotting vegetables.⁹⁹

Another important reason for its popularity was that camp cooking required muscles, and muscles were considered 'masculine'. By being identified with this strenuous manual work, the daily struggle with the heavy cooking equipment, and the hot, uncomfortable conditions, the men were seen and/or saw themselves as 'manfully' participating in an important camp institution. Through this continual struggle to provide essential sustenance to the half-starved internees, these men gained respect from the camp population for their courageous work and a sense of achievement – and, maybe, a feeling of being the provider or breadwinner once again.

The daily struggle of the cooks was made possible by the more arduous task of the woodcutters. In all the mixed and men's camps this work was carried out by the younger, fitter men. In Stanley the younger members of the interned Hong Kong police force filled this role. In the men-only Changi camp, woodcutting and the woodcut-

ters had a particularly virile image. 'Wood cutters were youth, energy, aggressive toughness and self-confidence.'¹⁰⁰

After breakfast fatigue parties assemble for work outside the camp. The first squad comprises a score or so of muscular, athletic looking men with axes. Their bodies bare to the waist are tanned a deep mahogany brown. These are the permanent wood-cutters who are engaged every day of the week except Sundays, felling trees to supply the three and a half tons of firewood required daily for the kitchen boilers. They are followed by some 60 men of more miscellaneous physique divided into four parties each of which is drawing a hand cart. Their job is to collect the logs cut by the axe-men and load them into carts, which they then haul back to camp . . .¹⁰¹

In the early days this description may have been accurate. As the months passed it is open to question as to how real or how romanticised the images of energy, aggressive toughness and self-confidence were. Certainly during the third year of internment Gladys Tompkins, in the women's section of Changi, observed:

The men brought over the rice in large wooden tubs which they had to pull up quite a steep hill . . . These men looked as if they had risen from the grave to start work. It was a ghastly sight to see them looking as white as sheets and only the strongest could pull those tubs up the hill.¹⁰²

Undoubtedly, the self-confident, aggressive image is one that the woodcutters wanted to create. It was a defiant gesture to the Japanese, which boosted their own morale and that of the other men. It was, therefore, an image that they actively cultivated, not least by their brash, noisy manner and 'macho uniforms'.

They looked most picturesque as they crashed past the cells in the morning; battered slouch hat, filthy sweat rag round throat, heavily stained khaki shirt and pants, heavy boots, tin mug clanking at their side, axe over shoulder – obviously men equipped to face the rigours of any tropical jungle!¹⁰³

Dressed as the archetype intrepid pioneer or explorer 'equipped to face the rigours of the jungle', the woodcutters presented an idealised dynamic, heroic stance. The 'heavily stained khaki shirt and pants' and 'heavy boots' were uniforms that symbolised energy and enhanced or hid their failing bodies. All this defied and denied the

reality of the menial, degrading task and the humiliating situation. It was a courageous act that fed into the men's need to appear fit and manly, particularly in a camp devoid of women whose feminine presence would have helped affirm their masculinity.

For those men unable to work in the kitchens or lacking in 'youth, energy, aggressive toughness and self-confidence' for wood-chopping or cart-pulling, there were other avenues through which they could prove themselves. The shortage of food and the ensuing hunger was, indeed, a serious problem but more serious and life threatening was the lack of essential vitamins and minerals. To overcome this the men were encouraged – and in the end forced by the Japanese – to grow vegetables which became an essential part of internment working life. In Santo Tomas the men cleared an old dump site and planted a number of vegetables. Their first harvest produced ten large baskets of talinum greens, which were then sent to the hospital.¹⁰⁴ In their medical report on the camps in Singapore and Hong Kong after the war, Dean Smith and Michael Woodruff noted that the comparatively low mortality in the camps was due largely to the production, purchase and careful utilisation of beans, rice polishings, yeast and green vegetables.¹⁰⁵

Although the gardening work was hard, it was also popular for a variety of reasons. In Changi it was an opportunity to get outside the prison walls, 'We might walk six miles in the day and it was a compensation to see fresh areas.' It also created opportunities for the men in their gangs to compete against each other.

We have the best gardens, supplying large quantities of vegetable to the others – we have always put more effort into our work than they . . . I have taken over one of the sections, which is one of the best, if not the best in the whole camp.¹⁰⁶

It could also create an interesting hierarchical system. The ordinary gardeners worked in gangs of 80 to 100, doing the heavy clearing work.

It was curious to see the long line slowly working forward, changkols rising and falling . . . The impression that was always given me was that of some curious piece of machinery, tappets or pistons rising and falling.

For the more ambitious men, who did not want to be just a cog in a piece of machinery, the aim was to become 'skilled labour'. To differentiate 'skilled labour' from the run-of-the-mill gardener and perhaps

to 'professionalise' their role, these men had their own special uniforms, badges of office and regulations.

As skilled labour we had of course our badges of office including the almost inevitable apron. The apron was of sacking and had a capacious pocket in which we carried the 'cuttings' . . . My badge of office was four pegs and knotted string but Dick's, as the senior, carried the stick to make the holes for the cuttings . . . Another distinguishing feature of our job were measuring cords. We had two lengths of string 30 to 40 yards long tied to pegs at each end. We knotted the string at intervals approved by the camp 'agricultural' authorities. When we arrived at our working place we planted the pegs so that the string was approximately taut and then we placed the other string at right angles to it. That was my job as assistant planter and I had to be very careful to see that I got my right angles correct.

It was not only the status and individuality that made these 'superior' positions so attractive, there were also opportunities for enjoying a sense of freedom, individuality and getting away from the crowd that was constantly at one's shoulder in the camp.

A great attraction was that we were out of the gangs and on occasion we felt like being independent and possibly we stayed on planting half-an-hour after everybody else had gone – just for the sake of being independent.

In many areas of camp life the most menial task took on enormous importance, and previously insignificant utensils and rituals became recognised and respected markers and indicators of specialised roles that distinguished a man from 'lesser mortals'.

It seems quite fantastic now but the tea maker was really rather a big man. He was known as 'tea maker' and I was 'the assistant tea maker'. Organisation led to allocation of privilege. The tea maker drew the issue of tea and the small issue of matches. The assistant tea maker got handed the tea tin by the tea maker and also a little tin of his own in which he used to draw each day a small quantity of wood shavings from the carpenter's shop. There was also a small chopper in my care. Thus we were suitably distinguished from lesser mortals.

Equally fantastic was the amount of attention paid to previously unimportant detail.

He was frightfully particular about my chopping him exactly the size of wood he fancied. He took great pains to stop the tea getting smoky . . . it made some of the men feel they were being well looked after.¹⁰⁷

The sense of battling against the elements and the hard outdoor, muscular labour and competition gave gardening and the gardeners a virile image and, in circumstances where there was so little through which any man could distinguish himself from everyone else, the attention to minute detail was of major significance. Anything, however small, that elevated a man above the crowd helped his self-respect and dignity. Moreover, by giving such attention to minute detail and taking such pride in menial tasks, the men transformed the mundane into an art form. In this way the most menial task became 'professionalised' and the man who performed it became a respected 'professional'. Not only did this make the man himself special but, by implication, those who benefited from the professional treatment felt more valued and important.

While all the work in the camps was, undoubtedly, essential for physical survival, it was also important psychologically. It structured the men's time and gave them a sense of achievement; it made them feel valued. It gave opportunities for developing 'professionalism', competition and innovation; it gave a feeling of independence, restored self-esteem and helped the men regain some control and dignity. All these factors bolstered the men's morale and enhanced their sense of manliness.

Essential as work was in the camps, the importance of recreation in the internment camp should not be underestimated.

There is in our society a collective masculine culture of work that makes firm distinctions between 'work' and 'non-work', 'work' and 'leisure' . . . Non-work is not seen as a complement to work but as its antithesis – as compensation for effort or reward for success.¹⁰⁸

While offering some compensation for their hard work, more important was that recreation in the camps made the difference between surviving and living. The absence of the British or American club, which had been the social centre, library, hotel, town forum and recreation ground all in one, did not deter the men in the internment camps. Wherever and whenever possible a varied and wide-ranging recreational programme was devised from active physical sports to the more sedentary card-playing, lectures, concerts, plays, debates,

reading and educational classes.

From the outset sport was important to the men. 'The British', according to Jan Morris, 'took their games with them wherever they went',¹⁰⁹ and H.C. Jackson, writing of the Sudan Political Service, claims:

It is characteristic of the British Official wherever his duties may take him . . . to make the best of the situation in which he finds himself for the time being. He speedily settles down to his strange surroundings and forthwith sets about forming tennis, squash or five's courts. To keep fit is his main concern and this can only be done by regular and violent exercise.¹¹⁰

Cricket, football, rugby and boxing had been an important part of the education of British men at that time, and particularly for those who had been educated in public schools and those who went to work in the colonies. As the Revd J.E.C. Welldon, Headmaster of Harrow School from 1881 to 1895, wrote:

If there is in the British Race as I think there is, a special aptitude for taking up the white man's burden . . . it may be ascribed, above all other causes, to the spirit of organised games.

Such games, according to Welldon, taught men 'pluck, energy, perseverance, good temper, self control, discipline, co-operation, esprit de corps'. These, he insisted, were 'the very qualities that win the day in peace and war'.¹¹¹ For American men, the strong, rugged, frontier pioneers were part of their heritage, folklore and masculine image – 'muscles built America'. Sport and athleticism were also indications of their manliness. 'Athletes were not men who assumed static poses . . . theirs were dynamic statements . . . the Athlete as American football coaches have not tired of saying in over a century, was a man.'¹¹²

The need to demonstrate pluck and energy, to make 'dynamic statements' and restore some of this manliness was reflected in the early organisation of sporting activities in the camps. In Lunghua, within the first few months, 'we levelled and marked out a football pitch, some tennis courts and a bowling green'.¹¹³ On 23 April 1942, the *Changi Guardian* celebrated the formation of camp cricket teams and 'an elaborate set of rules rationalised the game in its seemingly hostile setting'.¹¹⁴ On one level these activities, of course, brought relief from boredom and work. On another level the demonstration

of sporting prowess gave opportunities for ‘manly’ competition and prestige, and gave the men the illusion of keeping fit, of continued superiority, strength and good health. Celebrating all this ‘heroism’ the *Changi Guardian*, on 11 June 1942, recorded with relish the boxing tournament of the previous day in an article entitled ‘BLOOD RAN’:

Changi’s first boxing tourney yesterday was a great success. Good boxing was seen, the boys mixed it, there were clever displays and – blood ran . . . The fur flew and the kunji and rice pudding simply steamed off them.¹¹⁵

Any victory of any kind, even over one’s friends, was a morale booster in these circumstances, and by winning games or boxing matches one could be ‘A hero in a playful war, But a hero all the same’.¹¹⁶

Lack of medical equipment and medication, however, gave the possibility of broken limbs and the flow of blood greater significance and enhanced danger. The shortage of food, the need for rest and the general physical decline caused many of these sports to fade gradually from the programmes. It was then that the more sedentary ‘static poses’ and less physical recreations became more popular, depressingly underlining the physical decline of the men. Among the most popular of the less physical games was bridge. This was easy to arrange, needed little equipment, demanded no physical energy, gave much-needed mental exercise and allowed for social contact and chitchat. ‘Playing Bridge’, wrote Duncan Wallace in Changi, ‘has become almost an obsession but it’s a form of mental exercise, a thing so necessary in here’.¹¹⁷ Another man in Changi recorded: ‘Our Bridge is going well, we are now first equal in the league table.’¹¹⁸ In February 1942, Santo Tomas boasted 106 bridge teams. Sedentary it may have been but there was still plenty of room for competition among the men.

Other opportunities for mental exercise were the programme of lectures and adult education classes available in all the camps.¹¹⁹ With so many experts in different fields, the lecture programme for adults was broad.

Lunghua Polytechnic ran some forty classes, which included fourteen foreign languages, accountancy, engineering, chemistry and architecture. In addition, Dr Cater ran a pre-medical class, which inspired several students to enter the medical profession after the war.¹²⁰

One inspired student was Ronald Huckstep, now Emeritus Professor of Traumatic and Orthopaedic Surgery, University of New South Wales, who dedicated one of his books to Dr Cater, thus:

Dedicated to Dr Cater. But for whose medical class in a Japanese concentration camp, several aspiring doctors would never have taken up medicine.¹²¹

The 'Changi University', run by Harold R. Cheesman, who had been the highest educational official in Malaya, offered scheduled courses in seventy-five subjects. In Santo Tomas the internees were able to study Spanish, Japanese, French, Mathematics, Accounting and various scientific and business subjects. Cogan noted that while many had been uninterested in adult education in peacetime, in Santo Tomas 'both technical and non-technical lectures could be sure of an appreciative audience'.¹²² Stanley Camp was also able to offer a similar range of subjects and, when the electricity was cut, talks from experts filled the long, dark evenings, as internees sat on the stairs, in groups, listening.¹²³ Hugh Collar, in Shanghai, recalls that the classes in the camps where he was interned 'were really valuable, not merely for their educational benefit but rather the time they occupied, the interest they added and the resulting enormous benefit to morale'.¹²⁴

Each of the camps created their own lending libraries. Stanley was fortunate to have a large part of the library from the American Club in Hong Kong brought into camp. The men in Changi pooled their books and later many books arrived from the Raffles Hotel library. Both Changi and Stanley boasted copies of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Many internees claimed to have made internment an opportunity for concentrated reading which helped relieve the boredom and frustration of prison life.

Other weekly entertainments attracted most of the camps' populations. The absence of props, costumes and make-up meant they started in a small way with play readings but, as the enthusiasm grew, elaborate plays with props and costumes were performed in all the camps. Santo Tomas's 'Little Theatre under the Stars' was started by Shanghai veteran night-club owner and radio personality Dave Harvey, who had arrived in the Philippines in 1939. The theatre began on soap boxes, but as internment progressed, it grew to a proper stage with curtain and lights. Stanley was fortunate to have a hall at St Stephen's School where some shows were staged. These

entertainments were very popular and gained a great deal of support. One Stanley internee recorded that:

It was really astonishing the amount of support this elicited – real genuine whole hearted support. No effort was spared, nothing was too costly. Men and material could be had for the asking. The stage scenes became more and more spectacular and the entertainment committee more and more ambitious. Actors and actresses emerged from odd corners, expert dancers and dancing teachers appeared as if by magic. Stage hands, carpenters, electricians, costumiers and scene painters offered their services freely.¹²⁵

The men in Changi also created a stage in the camp grounds where concerts, plays, skits and comedies were put on. Other productions were staged inside in the laundry area. The entertainments were one of the very few areas in mixed camps where both men and women took equal responsibility for organisation and performance. In the men's section of Changi, however, the absence of women meant that women's roles were taken by men dressed in clothes scrounged from the women's camp. Highlighting their sense of isolation from the women, one internee recorded: 'The "women" in the play were quite staggering to our starved eyes and I did not know an ex-hockey blue could make such a entrancing young girl.'¹²⁶

The entertainments were unifying events. As Stevens in Santo Tomas and Thompson in Changi both noted, the music and laughter crossed age, social and national barriers bringing together the internees into a community:

The kiddies always in the front row, the younger set by two and threes, the men with their pipes and the women with their knitting all attended and enjoyed these carefree moments.¹²⁷

The best of the comedy routines played upon and helped to build the shared symbolism of the community in a remarkable way. The best attended concerts came very close to drawing the entire personnel of the camp into one audience.¹²⁸

Also adding to the shared symbolism of the community was the celebration of religious beliefs and national identity. In spite of the absence of church buildings and religious and national artefacts, religion and nationalism played an important part in the organised recreation in the camps.¹²⁹ The clergymen in the camps continued regular religious rituals, both for themselves and for others who

wished to participate. Water replaced wine at communion services. In Changi, services were held in the exercise yard, Stanley internees used St Stephen's School hall and internees in Santo Tomas used the garden. At times, in Santo Tomas, religion and nationalism became inseparable.

Many meetings of a community nature were held directly under the Religious Department, such as Fourth of July, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving Day Services and celebrations – when the Executive committee was unwilling to assume responsibility.¹³⁰

Although a sense of personal nationalism and patriotism was strong in the camps, my research indicates that most of the time there was a public sense of Western unity rather than divisions along different national lines.¹³¹ In Changi, for example, the national groups shared each other's national celebrations, and the birthdays of the British and Dutch monarchs, Armistice Day, Thanksgiving Day and St George's Day were all acknowledged and celebrated as appropriately as possible under the circumstances, with special food, songs and music. On St George's day:

There was patriotic singing and reading which was most enjoyable and went with a real swing . . . For the first time the ordinary God Save the King was sung, permission having been sought and obtained for this.¹³²

One diarist recorded: 'Had quite a good show on 31 August – the birthday of Queen Wilhelmina – there are 26 Dutch men in the camp and there was a national concert and a reading in Dutch and English.'¹³³ On another occasion in Pootung Camp in Shanghai, a choir sang Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance*. Within this concert the tunes of *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the King* were successfully camouflaged from the Japanese, who had banned any such displays of patriotism. Nevertheless, when the internees recognised the tunes they leapt to their feet. The Japanese, unaware of the significance and perhaps caught up in the emotion of the moment, also stood and joined in the applause. Thus, the Japanese captors, paradoxically, became merged into one brief celebrating body with their captives.¹³⁴

All these social activities were, of course, forms of escapism for the men, but they also had other important functions. Sport, particularly, gave opportunity for competition and group or team activity and identity. Card games, lectures, reading and education relieved

boredom and kept the men mentally alert. Professors and teachers were able to put their academic knowledge and professional skills to good use, and the seasoned traveller or experienced professional could share his expertise. Entertainments, both large and small, were opportunities for individual internees to explore and develop their, perhaps latent, musical, acting or theatrical ambitions. At a group level social activities were an important safety valve bringing 'sunshine and happiness' to the dull routine of grim internment life.¹³⁵ They brought humour to a 'laugh hungry'¹³⁶ community, and acted as a safe outlet for subversive comments, jokes, laughter and gestures. They were a release from the 'guardedness of domination'.¹³⁷ The religious services and national rituals fulfilled many roles in the camps. They brought comfort to the internees, they highlighted the common struggle and broke down national boundaries. They also, metaphorically, broke down the prison walls, enabling the internees to cross geographical boundaries and forge emotional ties and solidarity with loved ones overseas who were, they hoped, singing the same carols, hymns, songs and prayers, and continuing the same rituals elsewhere. This provided a huge psychological boost for the internees.

Although our minds are largely preoccupied with our own trials none of us can forget what the people of England itself passed through in their darkest hour and the cross they have had to bear . . . There are still times of darkness to endure but no true son of the Empire doubts her ability to see the struggle through. These thoughts will be present with us tonight when the camp with due solemnity and hopefulness, commemorates the national day of England.¹³⁸

Tyler Thompson wrote:

All of the activities became part of the fabric of the community. Whether they survived into the hardest times or not, their memory and influence did. They formed part of the picture when the community thought about itself.¹³⁹

Helping to create, establish and circulate that picture were the camp newspapers. The production of newspapers in circumstances where survival itself was the main priority is an interesting phenomenon. Some men had obviously taken typewriters and a supply of paper into camp with them and the newspapers were, generally, a sheet or two with the copies produced with carbon paper and pinned

up on notice boards around the camps. The editors of *Internews*, later to be replaced by *Internitis*, the paper produced in Santo Tomas, Manila, claim:

This little sheet is intended primarily to supply internees with news of their internal government and to report on the negotiations between camp officials and Japanese authorities. Announcements published in *Internews* will be official. Beyond that, this newspaper will attempt to mirror a fragment of the daily life within Santo Tomas camp. From baseball to church are news within the scope of this journalistic effort. We solicit the leaders of the organised groups for help in reporting their activities.¹⁴⁰

The *Changi Guardian*, which replaced the earlier *Karikal Chronicle*, edited and produced by former British-born *Straits Times* news editor Harry Miller and Australian, Guy Wade, was:

Initially a joke, something to do to stop the days growing too long and too dark. Our idea of an internment newspaper was a bright snappy affair more suggestive of the lighter side of camp life than as a sober record of fact; but many factors militated against development in this way. *The Karikal Chronicle* took the bit in its teeth from the word 'Go' and we had to follow where it led. It started to record the events of the camp rather than its humour and there were so many pronouncements and items of 'legitimate news' that we found no room for the lighter side. That is the way that the 'Chronicle' and, later, the 'Guardian' just ran away with themselves; we had, perforce, to follow . . . We want your help, for it is your paper, (whether you like it or not) and you can assist greatly by bringing your bridge and cricket scores . . .¹⁴¹

The *Changi Guardian* had a sister paper called *The Changi Times*, which was published on a Sunday and for a while was edited by Dr Devine and Peter Gurney. However, this did not last long as the Japanese became suspicious of references to fictitious newspapers such as *The Dredgemaster's Weekly*, which supposedly praised *The Changi Times*. They assumed that the editors had contacts outside, and the two editors were locked up for an hour and their papers seized. As a result the Japanese began to censor the *Changi Guardian*, and Miller and Wade had to be careful what they wrote.¹⁴²

New rules and regulations coming from the Japanese, administrative notices about forthcoming committee elections and results were regular items in both Changi and Santo Tomas newspapers, but each wanted internee participation so that ordinary daily life could be

recorded and ‘mirrored’. In the absence of outside news, the newspapers were forced self-consciously to present and represent an internal domestic world. The lighter side of that world, the social activities of the internees themselves, dominated the newspaper columns. Through their different and varied activities the internees signified their national, Western and gendered identities and demonstrated how they tried to re-create their pre-internment lives.

There were no church buildings in any of the camps but it would be hard to detect this from the newspapers. They announce regular church services, administered by different denominations, taking place in various parts of each camp every Sunday with special services at Easter and Christmas. Also notices about forthcoming entertainments and glowing reviews of plays, concerts and musicals, performed on many Saturday nights, appear in the newspaper columns. National days gave the editors an opportunity to express and promote nationalism and patriotism. On 11 June 1942 the editorial of the *Changi Guardian* read:

On this official birthday of King George VI, Changi Internment Camp joins with the rest of the empire in echoing ‘Here’s a health unto his Majesty’ . . . Our hearts are buoyed up with the confidence that it will not be long before we come forth to shoulder, with our sister dominions and colonies our share of the work of rehabilitating the domains that have been battered. . . . Changi is far from down and hope and confidence will bring us quickly to the day when we go forth to rejoice with our King and our people.

The use of the inclusive terms ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘our’ and ‘the camp’ denotes a communal solidarity with England and the rest of the colonial world. This is superimposed over all members of the camp regardless of their nationality. And the ‘joining with the rest of the empire’ and ‘our sister dominions and colonies’ are indications that, although the colonies had surrendered to, and these men were imprisoned by, the conquering power – the Japanese – they still considered themselves essential and active members of the Empire.

A dominant feature in the papers reflected the men’s interest in sport. Regular sporting references to baseball, basketball and boxing matches celebrated the American national games. By parodying the sports pages of British newspapers, the *Changi Guardian* celebrated the virility, team spirit and competitiveness of the British men. On 15 July 1943 the paper recorded the results of the camp football league.

By defeating Newcastle 3–0 yesterday in a re-played semi-final, Plymouth Argyle meet Aston Villa tomorrow in the Cup final. Newcastle threw away their chances of appearing in the final.¹⁴³

Cricket and boxing matches as well as bridge tournaments were also regularly announced and the results published.

By encouraging the internees to participate in the production of the papers, the editors gave them more than just an opportunity to express opinions and to record their activities. They also gave them a sense of agency, community and group identity and – either consciously or unconsciously – encouraged the internees to monitor and police their own progress or decline. Rather than admit to any sense of demoralisation or deterioration, they deliberately and regularly represented themselves as dynamic and undiminished. Their response was to indulge in, or perhaps imagine themselves in, a fantasy world – a world where nothing had changed and Western colonialism and culture was not threatened, least destroyed. The agenda they set themselves and each other was an attempt to replicate, as near as possible, their pre-internment life. By regularly publicly announcing and celebrating that replicated lifestyle in this symbolic way, the editors of the newspapers and the internees colluded with each other in confirming the credibility of their fantasy world. Moreover, whether the internees did or did not take part in any of the activities or contribute to the newspapers, this regular public presentation of religious services, sporting events, entertainments, national days, births, marriages, deaths, anniversaries, humour and gossip perpetuated Western culture and created a sense of continuity. Not only did this confirm their survival and identity but it also served to underline the survival of Western culture, which they used to negate, deny or suppress the difficult and radical changes that had taken place in their lives. By publicising the sharing, recycling and attempted reconstruction and adaptation of the remnants of the pre-internment lifestyles, the camp newspapers did *not* mirror the men's lives; instead they mirrored the lives of the men's dream world, a fantasy Western colonised world unaffected and unchanged by war and Japanese imprisonment. It was, therefore, a Western colonial picture that the men deliberately publicly recorded and that the internees wanted to see when each community thought about itself.

CONCLUSION

The fall of each colony and the capture and internment of Western men, women and children in the Far East during the Second World War was shocking, humiliating and deeply demoralising for the Western civilian men. Stripped of the ‘trappings of their Western civilisation’ and ‘reduced to their bare selves’ they were ‘temporarily defeated’, vulnerable and insecure. In contrast, their recorded responses to internment are shot through with images of the ‘idealised qualities and notions of masculinity that were inculcated during the imperial period’.¹⁴⁴

In order to survive, they had to find ways to cooperate with their captors; confrontation ended in reprisals and/or disciplinary action. Restricting as it was to work within the constraints and the parameters imposed on them by the Japanese, and the internment environment, the men discovered ways to impose their characters, culture and identities on the camps. As was socially acceptable and expected at that time, whether they were interned with women and children or not, the men always took control. They dominated all the administrative committees and undertook the hard physical labour. As trained, they established their executive councils, their civil judiciary and legal staff, their public works and medical departments, their educational, religious and recreational facilities and their newspapers. They worked with the environment to create the best possible accommodation, living standards and work opportunities, and used all the local resources to help feed and support themselves.

The medical teams ‘built’ hospitals, gave medical care and worked together in the experimentation of drugs and treatment to maintain the health of the internees. The engineers, chemists and biologists surveyed the area, opened up communications and made the camps more civilised by creating and maintaining essential utilities. Thus the camps were made as hygienic and bearable as possible for the internees. Through this, and other work, the doctors, scientists and engineers were, individually and in larger groups, able to use their creativity and skills and enjoy the opportunity to design, produce, install and use a variety of new and innovative products. To be able to function in this way within the constrictions of the internment camp was gratifying and empowering for these men.

The cooking, woodcutting and gardening did not, perhaps, allow for the same amount of creativity and innovation. However, the

uncomfortable and challenging conditions created opportunities for private 'manly' competition – toughness, muscle, sweat and noisy brash behaviour all counted – and this fed into the public images of virility and manliness. The hierarchical structures, the special uniforms and equipment used by these manual workers, 'professionalised' their work and the workers. The pride the men took in the public display of providing for the internees also helped them to reaffirm themselves as breadwinners again. Through the work in the camps the men re-established their various masculine identities; they could be productive, professional or 'macho'. Individually, they were able to gain status by assuming important roles and receiving recognition for the essential work they were doing. They also had the opportunity to exploit their skills and expertise while working collectively, as a team, for the good of the community. All these factors gave the men a sense of autonomy, control, usefulness, dignity and high self-esteem which enhanced their masculinity. For the men in Changi, who were deprived of the presence of women and 'feminine otherness', these were particularly important identifiers.

Equally empowering and important for the men's psychological survival was the assertion of Western cultural practices which fed their minds and spirits. Imposing themselves on and 'colonising' the internment space by Westernising it with familiar British and American names and terminology made the camp less alien and gave it a feeling of home. The sporting activities gave the men avenues for competition and heroism, while the education, music, art, literature and religious observances helped feed their souls, spirits and their cultural and intellectual identity. And it may even have fuelled their sense of intellectual superiority over their captors. The entertainments made them laugh, relieved tension and gave opportunities for subtle subversion. The newspapers gave individual internees a voice, made them feel part of a larger friendly community and gave them the opportunity publicly to proclaim their power. All these activities gave opportunities to express nationalism and patriotism which helped the men feel free and at one with those back home.

The opportunities to appear courageous, civilised, athletic, sexually pure and racially, culturally and technically superior – qualities that were so deeply ingrained in their sense of identity – helped the men reinvent, or perhaps reaffirm, themselves as the virile, undiminished, pre-internment colonialists. While unable to 'father their people', they found alternative ways to, metaphorically, 'drive the road, bridge the river and water the desert and serve the cause of

Christian civilisation.¹⁴⁵ As the next chapter will show, however, many of the men did not achieve this without the willing support, service and encouragement of the women who were interned with them.

NOTES

- 1 AA PR 89/59. Anonymous poem entitled 'Thought for the Future'. Printed in a 'newspaper' called *Changi Chimes* No. 15, 28 June 1942. *Changi Chimes* was the 'weekend supplement' to the *Changi Guardian*, a paper created in the male section of the prison. A set of these papers can be found in Royal Commonwealth Society Library.
- 2 Helen Kanitkar 'Real True boys: Moulding the Cadets of Imperialism', in Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (eds), *Dislocating Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 184–96. John M. Mackenzie, 'The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter', in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 176–94. Janice Brownfoot, 'Sisters under the skin: Imperialism and the Emancipation of Women in Malaya, c.1891–1941' in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 1979). Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991).
- 3 RCS BAM 111/12. W.F.N. Churchill, 'Dabulu' To Those Who Laughed, p. 1. Unpublished memoirs of ex-Changi internee.
- 4 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. 1. pp. 11–12.
- 5 Roper and Tosh, 1991. In their introduction they claim: 'A crisis in masculinity expresses the contradiction between experience and expectation. Masculinity is always bound up with negotiations about power, and is therefore often experienced as tenuous . . . social conditions frustrate on a large scale the individual achievement of masculinity and at such times the social and political fall-out may be considerable.'
- 6 W.F.N. Churchill, p. 9.
- 7 AA 3DRL 7415A. A Report written in Singapore by an American missionary, Hobart B. Amstutz, interned in Changi. *Newsletter Years 1942–45*. 21 December 1945.
- 8 Van Velden, 1963.
- 9 Stanley, Santo Tomas and Changi each had their own newsheet. Owing to lack of paper, contributors, and maybe enthusiasm, the production of the Stanley camp newsheet, *The Stanley Journal* was spasmodic. The first issue appeared in June 1942; there was another in summer 1943. In Shanghai, on Monday, 9 July 1945, Vol. 1 No. 1 of *Camp Chit Chat* appeared. This was the newsheet created in Yu Yuen Road Camp, Shanghai. These newsheets did not last long and were irregular. However, the *Changi Guardian* (which was preceded by *The Karikal Chronicle* and also had a Sunday paper called *Changi Chimes*) produced by the men in Changi and *Interneus* produced in Santo Tomas were, initially, published daily, then every other day and then weekly as paper became more and more scarce. The *Changi Guardian* ceased after 10 October 1943 (the Double Tenth, see p. 78–9) but *Interneus* continued to the end of internment. Circulation of the papers was achieved by one or two copies being sent to each block and passed among the internees or posted on notice boards around the camp.
- 10 As Janice Brownfoot put it: 'The British Empire was organised by men for men. It was a masculine world of power authority and control in which women played no formal part,' in Mangan, 1990, p. 44.
- 11 Jeffries, 1949, pp. 96–100.
- 12 Jeffries, 1949, p. 84.
- 13 Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass Producing Traditions: Europe 1870–1914' in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 293.
- 14 Jeffries, 1949, pp. 6 and 189.
- 15 Harriet Sergeant, *Shanghai, Collision Point of Cultures 1918/1939* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1990), pp. 98–100.

- 16 Personal letter received from Charlotte Havilland, archivist for John Swires & Sons Ltd.
- 17 Cogan, 2000, pp. 11 and 18.
- 18 Nick Cullather, *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States – Philippines Relations, 1942–1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 7.
- 19 Cogan, 2000, p. 10.
- 20 A. Vandenbosch, 1944, p. 173.
- 21 Stevens, 1946, p. 38.
- 22 Tyler Thompson, p. 11.
- 23 Dean A. Smith and Michael F.A. Woodruff, 'Deficiency Diseases in Japanese Prison Camps', in Medical Research Council Special Report, Series No. 274, HMSO, 1951, p. 14.
- 24 Report by C.C. Roberts. Mr Roberts worked for Butterfield and Swires before he was interned. He became billeting officer in Stanley Camp. I am grateful to Charlotte Havilland for a copy of this report.
- 25 A. Flemons.
- 26 RCS, BAM X11/10. 'Impressions of the Male Section of the Camp in 1943'. Anonymous report by ex-internee of Changi Prison.
- 27 Internees in Stanley Camp claim to have received two-and-a-half Red Cross parcels throughout internment. Changi men's camp received two batches during three-and-a-half years. One parcel served five to six people. The parcels were mainly from the American Red Cross, and each of the twenty Americans in the camp received a whole parcel each. Few of the camps in China received more than two consignments throughout internment.
- 28 Stevens, 1946, p. 136.
- 29 Smith and Woodruff, 1951, p. 15.
- 30 Tyler Thompson, pp. 53–5.
- 31 Private diary written by Mike Bevan in Stanley Camp. The diary was written on scraps of paper and typed up after the war by Mr Bevan's sister. I am grateful to the late Naomi Price for a copy of this diary.
- 32 Tyler Thompson, p. 62.
- 33 A.M. Duncan Wallace.
- 34 Tyler Thompson, p. 52.
- 35 R.M. Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York, 1977) cited in Michael Roper, *Masculinity and the British Organisation Man since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 137.
- 36 *Changi Chimes* No. 91, Sunday, 17 May 1942.
- 37 RHL, MSS.Ind.Ocn. s177. Forster Lancelot, *Memoirs including education in Stanley Camp*, p. 49.
- 38 Tyler Thompson, p. 152. See also Smith and Woodruff, 1951. Similar racial comments were made in other accounts by the civilians. Havers also found the POWs 'echoed many of the contemporary images of the Japanese that constituted much of the pre-surrender propaganda'. They commented negatively about the height of the Japanese, shape of head and animal-like noises when they spoke. Havers, 1999, pp. 41–2.
- 39 W.F.N. Churchill, p. 1.
- 40 AA 3DRL 6805. Report by the Commandant of Block C in Changi, 9 July 1942.
- 41 Summerfield, 1998, p. 137.
- 42 A.M. Duncan Wallace. As Margaret Strobel has pointed out: 'Heterosexuality and virility were essential components of rule that reflected the power of the Raj itself. Homosexuality was proof that the empire and the men who represented it were impotent, powerless and feminine . . . The official mind linked control of sexual behaviour to social order. Exemplary behaviour was to be exhibited.' *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 3.
- 43 Duncan Wallace. In his diary he records, on page 146, a 'Eurasian charged for interfering with Eurasian boy in his hut'. On 9 November 1944 he records 'Internee charged with gross indecency was sentenced to 3 months deprivation of privileges, 3 months heavy fatigues and 3 weeks solitary confinement', all imposed by the internee disciplinary committee.
- 44 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol II, p. 577.
- 45 In March 1942 two groups escaped from Stanley to China. The account of one, Gwen Priestwood and Anthony Bathurst, is told in Gwen Priestwood, *Through Japanese Barbed Wire*, (London: George Harrap, 1944). There were other successful and unsuccessful escapes from Lunghua Camp.

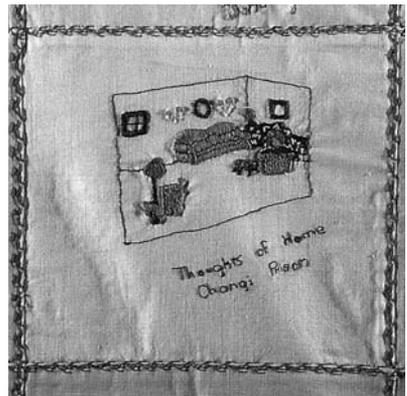
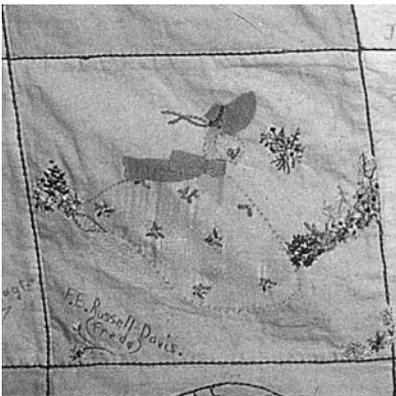
- 46 It is uncertain how the radio was discovered but seven men were eventually arrested, tortured and shot (or beheaded) by the Japanese just outside the camp.
- 47 Lancelot Forster Memoirs, 'Tragedies in Stanley', p. 2.
- 48 For further details of the Double Tenth, see Joseph Kennedy, 1987, Freddy Bloom, 1980, Ann Dally, 1968 and John Hayter 1991. A post-war War Crimes Commission passed sentence on twenty-one former Japanese secret police in Singapore.
- 49 Hayter, 1991, p. 157.
- 50 *Changi Guardian*, Thursday, 5 November 1942.
- 51 *Changi Guardian*, 23 April 1942.
- 52 Clause 8 of Camp Regulations. A. Flemons. Appendix.
- 53 Earl Carroll, in Stevens, 1946, p. 12.
- 54 Tyler Thompson, p. 3.
- 55 Collar, 1990, p. 68.
- 56 Tyler Thompson, p. 15.
- 57 Mr Franklin Charles Gimson (later knighted) was a long-serving member of the Colonial Civil Service. He was transferred from Ceylon in 1941 arriving in Hong Kong on the eve of the Japanese attacks. His diary of internment is in Rhodes House Library, RHL, MSS. Ind.Ocn. s222. Sir Franklin Charles Gimson diary.
- 58 G. Emerson, 1973, p. 47.
- 59 For further details see G. Emerson, 1973, Appendix VIII.
- 60 John Stericker, 'Captive Colony', unpublished manuscript held in University of Hong Kong (hereafter Stericker papers), Appendix 11. This was a very contentious issue in the camp. According to Gimson, he reorganised the British Camp Council (as the administration came to be called) while he maintained its elective basis. He also appointed senior, and generally acceptable, internees some of whom were colonial officers. See Gimson diary, pp. 8–10.
- 61 Tyler Thompson, pp. 15–16.
- 62 Tyler Thompson, p. 30.
- 63 *Changi Guardian*, 24 July 1942. On Thursday, 23 July 1942 a special concert was organized for his farewell. Sir Shenton and Lady Thomas had requested for her to go with him but the Japanese refused. The camp was informed that Sir Shenton arrived in Formosa on 31 August 1942.
- 64 Australian War Memorial (AWM). PR 00015. *Internews*, 24 January 1942.
- 65 *Internews*, 24 January 1942.
- 66 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. I, p. 14.
- 67 Kenneth C. Morley, 1987, pp. 127–8.
- 68 Herbert Wright in Morley, 1987, p. 130.
- 69 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. I, pp. 12–13.
- 70 Stevens, 1946, p. 16.
- 71 Stevens, 1946, p. 32.
- 72 Herbert Wright, in Morley, 1987, p. 130.
- 73 Collar, 1990, p. 79.
- 74 Jeffries, 1949, p. 28.
- 75 Selwyn Clarke, 1975, p. 44.
- 76 *Internews*, 3 March 1942 and Stevens, 1946, p. 230.
- 77 Hobart, B. Amstutz, Newsletter, years 1942–45, p. 8.
- 78 *Karikal Chronicle*, Thursday, 29 February 1942.
- 79 Elizabeth Gale diary, 26 October 1943. Elizabeth was the wife of Dr Geoffrey Gale who was interned with her. Elizabeth was also a nurse and both were missionaries with the London Missionary Society. They were first interned in the Columbia Country Club in Shanghai, then in Yangchow and ended their internment in Pootung Camp. I am grateful to Margaret White (Elizabeth's daughter) for a copy of this diary.
- 80 Andrew Tolson in Arthur Brittain, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1989), p. 84.
- 81 An Australian Army officer speaking to his men after the capitulation of Singapore claimed that the 'antidote to debilitation of mind, body and soul is work – physical and mental work'. Havers, 1999, p. 39.
- 82 Stevens, 1946, p. 109.
- 83 Joseph Kennedy, 1987, p. 91.

- 84 Elizabeth Gale diary.
- 85 Cogan, 2000, p. 256.
- 86 Stevens, 1946, p. 134.
- 87 W.F.N. Churchill, p. 9.
- 88 Smith and Woodruff, 1951, p. 169.
- 89 These two reports have already been noted in the footnotes. Smith and Woodruff, 1951, p. 1.
- 90 A.W. Black, M.I.Mech.E., M.I.N.A., M.I.Mar.E. 'Engineering in Adversity'. *Proceedings of the Engineering Society of Hong Kong* Vol. IX, pp. 126–8. Paper read by ex-internee of Stanley before the Engineering Society of Hong Kong on 15 April 1956.
- 91 Stevens, 1946, pp. 261–4.
- 92 *Changi Chimes*, 4 July 1942.
- 93 Black, 'Engineering in Adversity', p. 1.
- 94 *Internews*, 15 August 1942.
- 95 Black, 'Engineering in Adversity', p. 1.
- 96 Collar, 1990, p. 84.
- 97 W.F.N. Churchill, p. 4.
- 98 *Internews*, 9 May 1942.
- 99 Herbert Wright in Morley, 1987, p. 129.
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- 103 W.F.N. Churchill, p. 6.
- 104 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. 1, pp. 33–4.
- 105 Smith and Woodruff. 1951, p. 114.
- 106 Unpublished diary kept by Mr Llewellyn, male internee in Changi, p. 142 (hereafter 'Dearest Morag'). Mr Llewellyn wrote the diary in the form of a long letter to his wife, and typed it up after the war. A copy can be found in the library at the National Archives of Singapore.
- 107 W.F.N. Churchill, pp. 2–4.
- 108 Tolson in Brittain, 1989, p. 84.
- 109 Jan Morris, *Pax Britannia* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 283.
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- 112 Roberta J. Park, 'Biological thought, athletics and the formation of a "man of character" 1830–1900', Mangan and Walvin, 1987, p. 20.
- 113 Herbert Wright in Morley, 1987, p. 130.
- 114 Tyler Thompson, p. 125.
- 115 *Changi Guardian*, 11 June 1942.
- 116 *Radleian* No. 3, April 1865, p. 9, quoted in Mangan, 1986, p. 45.
- 117 Duncan Wallace, 17 April 1944.
- 118 Dearest Morag, p. 65.
- 119 The Japanese made no provision for children's education in the camps. Details of how the internees overcame this are discussed in the following two chapters.
- 120 Herbert Wright in Morley, 1987, p. 132.
- 121 R.L. Huckstep, *Typhoid Fever and Other Salmonella Infections* (Edinburgh: E & S Livingstone Ltd, 1962).
- 122 Cogan, 2000, p. 237.
- 123 G.P. de Martin, *Told in the Dark* (printed by South China Morning Post Ltd, Hong Kong), included some of the talks which were given in Stanley Camp.
- 124 Collar, 1990, p. 80.
- 125 Lancelot Forster Memoirs, p. 34.
- 126 W.F.N. Churchill, p. 4.
- 127 Stevens, 1946, p. 194.
- 128 Tyler Thompson, p. 117.
- 129 Both the communion cup and the silver altar cross had, in fact, been taken from the Peak Church into Stanley Camp, Hong Kong.

- 130 Stevens, 1946, p. 169.
- 131 Kaminski, 2000, p. 78. She quotes one of her informants making very anti-British and anti-Polish remarks, saying they were lazy and she was glad she was American.
- 132 Dearest Morag, p. 19.
- 133 *Changi Guardian*, No. 114, September 1942.
- 134 Jean-Marie Domenach, *La Propaganda* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1959), Politique Chp.V, pp. 70–1, cited in Toshio Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1991), p. 167. ‘Excitement and resonance is high when one hears hymns, party songs and national anthems. Group singing merges a crowd into one body and is the most effective way of getting members of a group to feel as if they were at one with each other.’
- 135 Stevens, 1946, p. 194.
- 136 *Internews*, 31 January 1942.
- 137 Scott, 1990, p. 116.
- 138 *Changi Guardian*, 23 April 1942.
- 139 Tyler Thompson, p. 126.
- 140 *Internews*, 24 January 1942.
- 141 The editorial of the first copy of the *Changi Guardian*, 19 February 1942. After liberation Harry Miller returned to work on *The Straits Times*, leaving again in 1960. Later he became the paper’s London Correspondent. It is reported that he has a whole set of camp newspapers in a bound volume.
- 142 Ex-internee Harry Hesp to author, 20 January 2002.
- 143 *Changi Guardian*, 15 July 1943.
- 144 Helen Kanitkar, 1994, p. 184.
- 145 The final passage of Lord Lloyd’s speech to new colonial recruits in June 1940, in Jeffries, 1949, p. 19. Havers also argues that, ‘the lack of initial prison structure obliged the British and Australian troops to create one of their own . . . the various troops brought skills and abilities to Changi, when harnessed to the existing military structure the Changi camp blossomed and the community put down firm roots’. Havers, 1999, p. 252.

CHAPTER THREE

The women's response to internment



Where medical men and administrators recorded day-to-day illness, events, food qualities etc., others, without access to the equipment to write, recorded in their own ways.¹

Heroes were always men; all the stories I'd heard said so. It was men who were brave, clever, wise, proud and saved everybody. Women were usually helpless and weak but good at having babies and bandaging wounds . . . Heroes protected women but didn't take them seriously . . . Women, though, were not heroes.²

Approximately 40,000 Western civilian women were interned by the Japanese in camps in the Far East, 37,090 of whom were interned in the areas covered by this study. (The remaining women, approximately 3,000, were mainly interned in Japan, French Indo-China, Thailand, Burma, Borneo, Ambon and New Guinea. The largest of these groups, over 1,000, were interned in Celebes (now called Sulawesi), an island in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies) off East Borneo. There were 3,350 in China, 920 in Hong Kong, 1,020 in Singapore, 2,300 in the Philippines, 4,500 in Sumatra and 25,000 in Java. British women dominated the camps in China, Hong Kong and Singapore. In the Philippines the women were predominantly American, and in Java and Sumatra they were mainly Dutch. In China and Hong Kong the women were in mixed camps with the men and children. In Singapore the women shared Changi Prison with the men but were segregated from them. In Santo Tomas in the Philippines, the men and women had separate dormitories but they lived communally during the day. In Java and Sumatra all the camps were sexually segregated, with most survivors only meeting again after the war.³

In spite of these numbers, public knowledge of the women's war experiences are sketchy and in some places, as one ex-internee explains below, the women have been erased from the public memory.

I have been told by Australian women that I could not have been in Changi because their husbands were POWs there and there were no women in the camp. Worse still, in 1980 I joined a small group who were visiting Changi prison . . . As we sat in a small room the British warder who was taking us round explained the various badges around the walls and gave a brief history of the fall of Singapore. 'Any questions?' he said when he had finished his talk. I piped up, 'You never mentioned the women who were interned here'. He had never heard that there were women.⁴

Why were these women excluded from the Singapore war history? As discussed earlier, despite some important exceptions, war is still too often considered a primarily masculine affair.⁵ Male images dominate the public memory and are recorded, celebrated and commemorated not only by the general public, but also by the keepers and exhibitors of that public memory, the museum curators.⁶ Women and children, and the old and sick, are considered as belonging to the feminized ‘home front’, the one which has to be protected and for whom the men are fighting. The capture and imprisonment of women and children is politically and socially embarrassing and undermines perceptions of power and masculinity.

Another possible reason is the greater authority and credibility assigned to the written word which devalues other forms of record-keeping. Thus, other source material has, until recently, been overlooked or ignored. Much of the conventional source material of internment was written by men; when the women ‘speak’ it is often quietly, modestly and unconventionally. ‘Oh, we just got on with it – we all did what we did best’ is a common response.⁷

Compared with the men, fewer women took conventional writing materials into camp with them. But, as Shirley Fenton Huie found when interviewing women for her book, *The Forgotten Ones*, ‘the women put reality into their stories by showing me their tiny diaries, recipe books, embroideries, handkerchiefs and boxes carved to hide treasures all saved intact from those far off days’.⁸ During my interviews, I had a similar experience. My interviewees showed me their home-made birthday cards and drawing books made from scraps of paper, slippers and sewing kits created from remnants of army jerkins, small worn pillowcases and tablecloths embroidered with internees’ names, and even a battered silver dessert spoon from the Cathay Pacific Hotel used throughout internment. Out of context these domestic objects are an unremarkable collection. What makes them remarkable is that these were not objects constructed or reconstructed after the event; their immediacy captured the realities of war and the women’s internment identity and experiences were bound up in them. These mementoes affirmed, recorded and communicated the victory of personal battles for survival.⁹

In order, therefore, to access the women’s experiences, this chapter makes extensive use of less conventional forms of record-keeping including personal interviews, embroidery, paintings and drawings. It will argue that the majority of women interned by the

Japanese during the Second World War proved that far from femininity and heroism being contradictory they are, in fact, complementary.

The camps I focus on in this chapter are the mixed camps of Lunghua in Shanghai, Stanley in Hong Kong and Santo Tomas in the Philippines. The segregated camps include Changi in Singapore, the Ambarawas, Tjideng, Tjihapit and Halmaheira in Java, and Irenelaan in Sumatra. Where appropriate, other camps are referred to.

PRE- INTERNMENT

Western women in the colonies were not socially homogeneous; there were class, educational and economic differences. They did, however, share the common factor of living and working within a male-dominated world. In British and American colonies the women were a minority group and, at the time of the Second World War, many were either wives or daughters of colonial servants and businessmen. Others, including missionaries from various religious groups, teachers and doctors – often employed by the colonial educational and medical services – and some secretaries, came to the colonies alone.¹⁰ Nevertheless, whether married or single, Western women in the colonies lived in a male-dominated social space and structure.¹¹ Within this space the majority of Western women, in whatever professional or domestic role, represented Western imperialism and contributed in one form or another to its 'civilising' aims.¹² Of the British women, Sir Charles Jeffries claims:

Some officers in the Colonial Appointments Department, wished to hand pick colonial wives but, instead accepted that providence no doubt arranges that the sort of chap who is the sort of chap they want in the Colonial Service chooses (or is chosen by) the sort of wife he ought to have.¹³

Although not hand-picked, like the men, and not having received any specific colonial training or holding any decisive political role, providence did indeed, through colonial social mores and control systems, shape the women's lives. Some married women had professional qualifications but few were actually given the opportunity to use them. While the unmarried women in the colonies were allowed, and in fact encouraged, to fill the professional teaching, nursing and secretarial posts, most married women were discouraged from seeking paid employment. 'Except for a few professional women,

doctors, nurses and teachers, hardly any woman ever did any work which could conceivably be delegated to a paid employee,' wrote Mary Thomas.¹⁴ Rather, Jeffries claimed, 'they looked after their husband's health and comfort, kept house and dispensed hospitality'.¹⁵

Although excluded from policy-making and business dealing, British colonial women, and especially wives of colonial officers and businessmen, were expected to show 'corporate' loyalty, sharing the same values, rewards and control systems 'which flowed across the conjugal link'.¹⁶ A British colonial officer's wife wrote: 'The part each woman played in the community was as much the subject of scrutiny by your elders as the quality of your husband's work in the office.'¹⁷ Another colonial officer's wife wrote:

If a woman is going to marry a man she marries the man and his job. The success and failure of HM Overseas Service has been the degree to which the women accepted that.¹⁸

Many of the married American women who supported American men in the Philippines were equally as dependent and as 'incorporated' as the British women. Anea Willoughby, the wife of Woodbury Willoughby, the new Executive Assistant to the American High Commission in Manila, describes her role in supporting her husband and the American Administration thus:

Although it was the menfolk who had the job the wives and womenfolk had well-defined responsibilities. Not the least of these was the promotion of good will by one's behaviour.

Part of this 'behaviour' was assisting Mrs Sayre, the High Commissioner's wife, in:

Fostering a better understanding of what we were all about. She found time for everything. In addition to routine dinners and receptions there were all sorts of benefits and drives – for the British War Relief, the Free French, the Chinese Co-operatives, the tuberculosis hospitals and the Culion leper colony; functions sponsored by the Red Cross and several churches; concerts and exhibitions. Mrs Sayre went to them all and I went along with her.¹⁹

For the majority of the other white middle-class American women in Manila life was leisurely. 'Work took on a new meaning', claims

Kaminski. 'It was rarely physical or hands-on; it required directing servants and taking on community projects.'²⁰ Their routine was:

Dinner dances, bridge games and elaborate children's parties. The more usual slings and arrows of ordinary life – pregnancies, unwelcome visitors, meal planning, child rearing, volunteer work – also punctuated the year.²¹

A cook, an amah, who looked after the children, and other servants were standard for most of the American women in the Philippines even for those who, when living in America, had done their own housework, washing and cooking, and would have taken care of their children themselves.

Whereas the British and American women were in the minority in their colonies Dutch women made up a high proportion of the Dutch population in the Dutch East Indies. By 1942 more than 70,000 Dutch women and children were living there, many were second-, third- and even fourth-generation immigrants. As historians Ann Stoler and Margaret Strobel have shown, there were economic differences among these women, but even so:

All but the poorest European settlers in the colonies had access to servants and the possibility of obtaining a higher standard of living. In pursuit of this, claim working-class women, 'we came to the colonies'.²²

My research shows that a child's maid, a gardener, a house cleaner and a cook were not unusual – even junior army people ran a substantial household. The wife of a Dutch fighter pilot arriving in Java in 1937 was told she would need to hire at least one female servant, a *baboe*, to clean the house and do the daily laundry 'since it was impossible to do normal housework yourself in the exhausting heat of the tropics'.²³

In much the same way as the British and American women in the Far East at that time, Dutch women were valued for their 'feminine' qualities, and their role was to provide a comfortable home for their husbands and children. Internee, Jan Ruff O'Herne remembers her mother, who had come to Java as a young Dutch bride:

[She was] a graceful vine around the house. Her touch was everywhere. She was a real-homemaker and a perfect hostess. Although I never saw her doing any real housework her hands were always busy. Apart from hours spent at the sewing machine and at the piano she had many

other interests. She was in charge of the library, at the Club, which was the centre of social life for the sugar-factory estate.²⁴

The presence of Western women in the colonies, perhaps the British especially, created complications for lower-ranking males. The social and professional pyramids invoked subordination towards more senior white men and their wives. Conversely, the clearly defined gender roles and colonial masculine ideal expected all colonial men to be dominant, pioneering, paternal and protective. The femininity of Western women, particularly colonial officers' and businessmen's wives, was no less ambivalent. On the one hand she was expected to behave in a superior and assertive manner to local populations, servants and lower-ranking white males; on the other, to be the colonial female ideal – tactful, charming, supportive, decorative and domestic.

His [the colonial officer] task is made infinitely easier if his table is graced by a wife possessing some measure of tact, charm and a pleasing appearance. Many inter-departmental difficulties and personal misunderstandings have been smoothed out over a cup of tea or a glass of port after a well served meal that might otherwise have been detrimental to the service or damaging to a career.²⁵

Married women adapted to these situations accordingly, creating comfortable homes and running their family and social lives around their husbands' work. Unmarried, working women adapted to the needs of their employers and/or the male-dominated institutions by whom they were employed. At first glance the married or single female missionary, doctor or teacher may appear to be outside the stereotype. However, as Jane Haggis has demonstrated, their path though apparently different was still 'firmly caught within the intricate web of race, class and gender that underpinned the age of Empire'.²⁶

As discussed in chapter two, prior to the Japanese attacks many of these women were ordered, advised or encouraged to evacuate. Those who remained, and thousands did, stayed for a variety of reasons. Underpinning and intrinsically linked with decisions to stay were the dominant racial attitudes at that time. The women, along with many of the men, assumed that if the Japanese attacked they would certainly not win against the perceived superior British, American and Dutch forces. Some made a positive decision to stay with husbands or fiancés. For example when offered repatriation

Elizabeth Gale, wife of missionary Geoffrey in China, wrote: 'I wouldn't leave G for anything. We will see this through together with Margie [their baby daughter] as ballast.'²⁷ Many marriages also took place during the last few days of fighting. Journalist Freddy Bloom and nursing sister Elizabeth Ennis both married their respective fiancé(e)s in the midst of the battle for Singapore. Female missionaries remained out of a sense of duty to their 'flocks'. Some doctors and nurses stayed out of an equal commitment to their patients. Secretaries involved in essential war work remained out of loyalty to their companies. Others were influenced by loyalty to and love of country. One woman claimed: 'My husband and I have been in Malaya twenty-five years. The country has been good to us, I wasn't going to run off and leave it as soon as it got into difficulties.'²⁸ Other women had little or no choice. All Eurasian women were forced to remain because other countries refused to accept them, but by far the largest group who stayed were the Dutch women in the Dutch East Indies for whom no evacuation plans were made. They were joined by Australian and European women living in the Dutch East Indies and those belatedly escaping from Singapore. All of them were captured by the Japanese.

Whether married or single, whatever their skills or professions or their motives for staying on, wherever they were, the shock of war, surrender, fear and separation traumatised all the women to a greater or lesser extent. 'Nothing,' wrote Mary Thomas, a single British woman working in Singapore on the eve of hostilities, 'had prepared us in the slightest degree for the sort of thing which actually lay ahead.'²⁹ And Mrs Duck, in Shanghai, no doubt spoke for many married women when she exclaimed:

I was completely flabbergasted and could hardly believe such a thing was about to happen to us. Just to walk out of our beautiful house, so carefully kept, and be driven to the camp and left there to sort ourselves out with a batch of municipal workers . . . It was worse than awful especially with my husband partially lame and our small boy, who had been under the ministrations of a good nanny, tutor, the best of everything for one of his age.³⁰

Regardless of how incapacitated her husband may have been, Mrs Duck was fortunate to have him with her. The majority of married women were now separated from their loved ones and would remain so for the next three-and-a-half years. Many women would never see their husbands, fathers, fiancés or brothers again. All had lost most

of their personal belongings, their beautiful and carefully kept homes, their servants, nannies, tutors and jobs. Most women were now reduced to the clothes in which they stood; some lucky others had an additional basket or bag of belongings. Now they were all forced to live in very limited personal space with no privacy. Internment, with the consequential loss of all that had previously defined their lives, was destabilising, disorientating and challenging. The women met this challenge in a variety of ways.

INTERNMENT

When Isla Corfield, wife of an official in the Chinese Maritime Customs in Shanghai, entered the crowded room in Santo Tomas University in the Philippines she was faced by:

One of the most extraordinary sights. The floor seemed literally awash with women all busily unpacking the few belongings that would stake their claim to territory.

Sharing a single mattress with her teenage daughter, Isla queued with twenty-two other women for the one shower and shared the three basins with all the women in the six lecture halls on the ground floor.³¹ Peggy Abkhazi's first thought, when she arrived in Lunghua in Shanghai, was 'this was barrack-room life with a vengeance'. The fifty-one beds in the long hut were designated for women without husbands. The washroom was made up of cement troughs round three walls with cold running water, two small washbasins and three flush toilets.³²

Before Stanley Camp was opened, many Europeans in Hong Kong were herded into Chinese hotels or 'brothels' on the waterfront at Kowloon where Peggy McMahon, teenage daughter of a Colonial Treasury official, recalls:

There were seven of us: my father, my sister, myself, my two brothers, and two other men. It was a small room with a wooden sort of bed. Three of us had to try and sleep on the bed, the men slept on the floor. It was horrible.³³

Although the conditions in Stanley were a little better, they were still very distressing. The first few days were spent 'trying to find somewhere to settle, as the room where we spent the first night was

now full with more relatives of the people who had first bagged it'. One young woman remembers her first night 'sleeping' on a wicker chair and, eventually, climbing into a camp bed with her mother, which collapsed.³⁴

Many of the predominantly British women caught in Singapore and finally interned in Changi, had already spent weeks completely segregated from the men in houses at Katong. Here they had created living space and cooked and cared for themselves and their children 'hoicking lumber, sawing and hacking'.³⁵ At 10 a.m. on 6 March 1942 they assembled in Katong to make the seven-mile walk to Changi Prison. Freddy Bloom recalls:

We had all dressed with only one idea, comfort. Style had gone west. I looked splendid in my khaki trousers and the looted white evening blouse. On my head was a nurse's veil tied like a turban with the brim of a looted hat on top to keep out the sun. To finish the ensemble was a big black looted umbrella to be used as a walking stick or sun shade. Can you imagine five hundred women dressed in similar fashion marching forth under a strong, armed guard?³⁶

As they neared the prison, Mary Thomas recorded:

At last the grey walls and roofs of the prison appeared on a small hill to our right. We were hot and tired and glad to see them. As we drew near some of the women felt a gesture of defiance was needed and they began to sing. We had left Katong singing *Tipperary* and we walked into Changi singing *There'll always be an England . . .*³⁷

In the prison the women were crammed two to a cell, spilling over into workshops and storerooms.

When Netty Herman and her two young daughters arrived at Halmaheira Camp, on the outskirts of Semerang in Java, she found it consisted of a few streets in a poor area of the town. The houses were brick but primitive with outside squat toilets. Of the house she had been assigned to, she wrote:

[It] consisted of two small rooms, already occupied, a hallway where our three mattresses just fit next to each other on the floor, with a little space left for a suitcase. Everyone entering or leaving the house had to pass by us.³⁸

The Dutch woman, An Jacobs also describes her arrival at Gloegoer Camp in Sumatra:

Gloeger! The great door with planks closely nailed drew open and we rode into the ex-POW camp . . . We were taken to the rotten hong [shed]. Did European women live here? It looked like a market shop in Java. The women lived on two long sleeping platforms which were built knee high along the two long sides. Next to and opposite one another, separated by a cement walk way. Each person had the right over ninety centimetres, the place where a sleeping mat could be laid . . . Clothes hung against the wall. Above, behind and in all sorts of fantastic manner hung swinging planks on ropes where tins, food hoards and God knows what else were buried. Between mattresses hung curtains made from old cloths which separated one family from another.³⁹

‘Eventually’, recalled Mabel Redwood in Stanley, but no doubt speaking for most of the women, ‘we settled down to a life which bore no relation to our previous existence.’⁴⁰

In spite of the unfamiliar and unpleasant physical conditions, when the women entered the prison warders’ accommodation at Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, the overcrowded university campus of Santo Tomas in the Philippines, and the Lunghua Middle School in Shanghai, they found they had re-entered a Western male-dominated space. In all three camps, women were in the minority and, as the previous chapter demonstrates, all the camp executive committees, sub-committees and camp institutions were run by the colonial men. Men published the camp newspapers and did most of the communal cooking, gardening and other hard physical work. The majority of camp records and post-war reports were also written by the men. In these, and similarly organised mixed camps, the space left for the women was an extension of their traditional supportive and domestic roles. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, within these restrictions many women eventually became actively involved in almost all aspects of camp life.

Initially, Peggy Abkhazi in Lunghua had ‘visions of long hours of reading, studying and knitting’. The reality was there was no time for anything:

Even the smallest chore can only be accomplished after a dozen interruptions. The women garden, cook, teach, nurse, clean the dining rooms, clean vegetables, do mending and dole out drinking water for hours, daily, in all weathers.⁴¹

Some of the women in Santo Tomas felt ‘it would be terrible just sitting round doing nothing’.⁴² During the first week:

Each woman took an hour of room duty but later those that worked in the kitchen, the hospital or cleaning vegetables were relieved of other duties . . . The women's morale was high. They accepted the situation in Santo Tomas, they washed and cooked, sewed dresses for themselves and their children, knitted, attended classes and did secretarial work for the various committees.⁴³

The British Women's Group in Stanley camp argued:

Marking time was the wrong attitude to take in view of the fact that there was a great deal to be done in the camp. Above all our object as a women's group is to be ready to undertake any work which is within our scope.⁴⁴

Although that scope proved unexpectedly wide, it remained largely within the boundaries of perceived traditional feminine work, for that time and place.

As far as the administration of the camps were concerned, as mentioned earlier, in Stanley only Dr Annie Sydenham was a member of one of the committees administering the camp. Although other women were allowed to vote, none put themselves forward for main committee positions. When asked about this my interviewees indicated that it had never crossed their minds to put their names forward for nomination and they had nothing but praise for the men who ran the camps. My sources, similar to Kaminski's, also indicate that the diaries of the women in these mixed camps have little comment about the politics of the camps.⁴⁵ Rather these women were happy to fill the subordinate roles most had always held.

In Stanley Camp some of the women were former colonial government secretaries who had been exempted from the 1940 Evacuation Order. There were also a number of women who had worked in the private sector but had, similarly, become exempt after pressure from their employers. The women from this pool of experienced secretaries volunteered to provide essential administrative support to the male-dominated British Community Council (BCC) now running Stanley. (Two of my women interviewees actually found themselves working for their previous bosses.) As a result, some of these women became directly involved in the billeting arrangements and in recording medical, rationing and other statistics used by the camp administrators. Similar secretarial posts were taken by women in Santo Tomas. Although having no official or political positions on any of the executive committees, by re-establishing themselves in these

familiar roles, the women continued to offer corporate support and loyalty to those who did. In spite of their important contribution and unlike the men, their individual names are rarely mentioned in the records. It was a similar story in the other mixed camps.

With many injuries sustained in the battles, and the increase in dysentery and gastroenteritis, due to the breakdown in the infrastructure of the various colonies caused by the bombing, the call on all medical staff was immediate. The deteriorating conditions in camp ensured that the demand remained constant throughout internment. Fortunately for those in the mixed camps there were many male doctors, a few women doctors and several health workers and nurses interned. In Santo Tomas, the missionary Dr Evelyn Whithoff⁴⁶ worked in the camp hospital's daily clinic. Supporting her and the other doctors, initially, were thirty-five civilian nurses. In March 1942 a group of navy nurses, who had previously been working at the Cavite Naval Yard on Luzon, were moved into Santo Tomas. One of their senior nurses took on the post of Director of Nursing in the camp hospital and the remainder of the nurses dominated the hospital nursing staff. The situation changed again in June when the Japanese brought sixty-seven army nurses, who had been caught in the fighting at Bataan and Corregidor, into the camp. Another ten arrived in September. Although all these military nurses felt strongly that they should have been nursing military personnel, they soon settled into Santo Tomas where their skills and hard work were to prove invaluable.⁴⁷

In Stanley, Dr Annie Sydenham took charge of the traditional female area of maternal and child welfare in the camp. Miss Margaret Watson became deputy chairman of the Welfare Committee, under Mr Gimson as chairman. Eventually, the internees had among them one hundred trained nurses; fifty-five lived in cramped conditions over the internees' hospital and the remainder lived in various other parts of the camp. In spite of the poor diet and having to take care of themselves in their own time the nurses worked a traditional shift system in both Stanley and Santo Tomas. Their work was hard, dealing daily with patients suffering from dysentery, diarrhoea, typhoid, tuberculosis, typhus and malaria. The lack of space, drugs and equipment, as well as the poor sanitary conditions, made nursing very difficult, frustrating, distressing and exhausting.

In addition to the qualified nursing staff in Stanley, there were a host of auxiliary nurses. Many of these auxiliaries were wives or daughters of businessmen, government officials and regular service personnel who, motivated by compassion or patriotism, had offered

their services to the war effort. Others had taken this training to avoid evacuation and to remain close to loved ones. Whatever their reasons for training, their support was to prove essential in the primitive conditions in the camp. The serious injuries were particularly distressing for some of these inexperienced auxiliary nurses. Young Peggy McMahon recalls:

Pouring the fluid to wash out the wound of an amputee in this kidney bowl, all this muck came out and I can remember I thought I was going to vomit . . . I just managed to come out of there . . . I was green.

In spite of the unpleasantness of the work, Peggy continued to work with the patients because, 'the men were pleased to have somebody, a young girl looking after their wounds and washing them and things like that'.⁴⁸

Ancillary hospital staff were also needed in the camps. Prior to internment, these posts had traditionally been filled by people from the local Asian community but in the camp, Western women had to step into these roles. Some ran the diet clinics, providing special food for the sick and young children; others, with only limited equipment, cleaned the camp hospitals and did the laundry.

We had no soap and had to clean the floor with wood ash every day . . . I worked in Tweed Bay hospital [in Stanley Camp] two mornings a week. We had very little soap, icy water in winter and scrubbing brushes worn down to the wood. The sheets at times would be beyond description and the mosquito nets were full of bugs.⁴⁹

Peggy Abkhazi worked briefly from '9.15 a.m.–6 p.m. as quartermaster in the hospital kitchen'. Her ironic comment about her role sums up the feelings of many of the women: 'The grandeur of my title conceals the fact that I am a glorified coolie with a bunch of keys, a pencil and scraps of paper.'⁵⁰ When one considers the appalling conditions in the camps, it was fortunate that so many qualified and volunteer nurses, and other unnamed, untrained women were willing to act as 'glorified coolies'. Without their help the doctors' work would have been harder, conditions would have been less hygienic, morale would have been lower and, undoubtedly, the death toll much higher.

In addition to secretarial and medical support, there were other areas where the women were active in these camps. The presence of children created a need for education. Although the education

committees were headed by male academics – in Stanley Camp the Chairman of the Education Committee was Professor Lancelot Forster; in Santo Tomas it was Dr Rene Engle – it was the women who did the lion's share of the teaching, especially among the younger children. Peggy Abkhazi became 'a fully fledged French schoolmarm in Lunghua with nineteen classes weekly, all ages from 7–70'.⁵¹ In Santo Tomas a kindergarten class for forty-six was run by six women. In Stanley Camp Miss Atkinson and Miss K. Anderson were head teachers of the kindergarten and transition classes, where approximately sixty children between five and eight years of age were educated. Other women worked in full- or part-time positions in the lower and upper parts of camp schools. Lack of equipment was always a problem: it was normal for thirty pupils to share four textbooks, and for the children to use the back of cigarette packets when paper ran out. Physical conditions were also difficult. The camp school in Lunghua was an old building where 'windows were badly broken and the carpenter's shop knocked together a few rough benches'. Nevertheless it was 'a great improvement on trying to give classes in the dining rooms and in odd corners of the Assembly Hall or out in the grounds'.⁵²

In Santo Tomas classes initially took place in the open air in front of the annexe. These eventually ceased 'because unfavourable weather conditions made outdoor classes impracticable and suitable sheltered space was unavailable'. The school then moved to one of the old laboratories on the fourth floor of the main building. Discipline was difficult, and Alice Bryant reported: 'On one side of my section there was a class so unruly I had to talk at the top of my voice to enable my pupils to hear.'⁵³ In Stanley Camp, the children shared the social hall with the entertainments committee and the library. There was always a background buzz from other people using the room. The building itself had most of the glass missing from the windows, furniture consisted of seven backless benches, and the younger children sat on straw mats on the floor. We were, wrote the headmistress, 'constantly dogged by lack of time, lack of space and lack of materials'.⁵⁴

After the war, Dr Rene Engel, chairman of the Education Committee in Santo Tomas, wrote that the education of young children in these camps helped:

Normalise living conditions in the camp by keeping children occupied during definite periods of the day as well as enabling them to continue

their studies during their formative years. Thus it helped materially towards the maintenance of order and discipline.⁵⁵

It was the women who dominated the teaching staff in the camp schools. They struggled with the desperate physical conditions and shortage of equipment to enable the children to continue their education. Thus they must be considered a major force behind the normalisation, order and discipline in the camps.

The women who carried out the 'professional' secretarial, nursing and teaching roles were, undoubtedly, valuable members of the camp communities. But there were many other important areas of camp life where the non-professional woman could contribute. Although the men dominated the kitchen in these mixed camps, many women took on the tedious and often unpleasant role of sorting, cleaning and preparing vegetables and rice ready for the men to cook. Often the vegetables were rotten, foul smelling and bug ridden. Emily van Stickle in Santo Tomas recalls sorting mongo beans 'a four-to-six-hour job as the beans crawled with tiny brown bugs that closely matched them in colour'.⁵⁶

As well as kitchen work other domestic skills, particularly in the absence of local labourers, gained in importance and value in camp.

Among the most useful women workers in Santo Tomas, was a busy group who toiled daily at the sewing machines set in the corner of the main building . . . They worked from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon making mosquito nets, mending men's clothing and sewing on buttons all without charge . . . They made hundreds of aprons for the workers in the kitchens and sheets and pillowcases for the hospital.⁵⁷

Similarly, in Stanley it is recorded that a group of women on the welfare committee made ninety pairs of shorts in just twelve days for members of the 250 strong police force who were interned.⁵⁸ These 'coolie' and 'sweat-shop' images conflict with the stereotypical Western colonial woman. Indeed, prior to internment both Western men and women would have considered such work as inappropriate and demeaning. Clearly the women's willingness to put aside any prejudices about 'sweat-shop' work, and adapt their domestic skills to create useful and serviceable garments and linen for other internees was highly valued by the men, many of whom were the main beneficiaries of the work.

The regular community work in the camps had its compensations

for the women. It gave a structure to their day, it offered them a chance to escape from the claustrophobic atmosphere of their crowded rooms, it enabled them to socialise with different women and gave them the opportunity to develop friendships and companionship. Alice Bryant in Santo Tomas wrote: ‘We sat around the table gossiping as each of us rolled rice around in a plate or tray and took out stones, worms, rodents’ excreta and other foreign objects.’⁵⁹ Although in Santo Tomas some women were paid a small sum for their services, the opportunity to utilise their professional and unprofessional skills and expertise also fulfilled their need to be useful, supportive and creative. Being singled out from the crowd of other internees as highly valued members of the camp communities also boosted their morale and confidence.

While these women worked in the public areas of the camps, other individual women adapted their various domestic skills privately. Some women in Santo Tomas helped cook and clean for the grass widowers in their camp shanties. Sometimes they received payment in food or cash for this. For those who were destitute this helped them buy the little extras from the camp canteen. But, as the following quotation from a woman in Stanley Camp indicates, other women adapted their skills in a variety of ways.

My main contribution was sewing for the grass widowers and bachelors and helping and advising other women with their dress making. Margaret [her daughter] was a jack-of-all-trades, she unravelled and re-knitted woollies for mothers with small children, she made shoes for toddlers out of khaki material and achieved fame as a broom maker.⁶⁰

Sewing for grass widowers and advising women with dress-making sounds rather unimportant, but in the camps the remaking of clothes was an essential part of the internees’ lives. Few had taken many clothes into camp with them and even fewer had appropriate clothing for camp living. As the internees lost weight and their clothes rotted and wore out, remaking garments was one of the few ways they could be reasonably dressed. In the early days, when security was lax, some clothing was purchased on the black market or smuggled in by Chinese or Filipino friends and servants. Other garments were donated by the Welfare Department or the Red Cross. One diarist recalls an assignment of ‘khaki shorts, reputedly made for Africans that were a peculiar shape’ arriving in Stanley Camp. Sometimes the clothes came from a more morbid source. When there was a death in the camp the deceased’s clothing was sometimes

redistributed. One diary entry notes: 'Mum's old Jantzen swimming costume is in camp. Mrs Fisher has it. [She] got it from Mrs Greenburg who died.'⁶¹

The creation of new clothes called for skill and ingenuity. Disused flour or rice sacks, it was discovered, could be made into excellent knickers, and men's khaki shorts 'underwent a metamorphosis by re-cutting them with nail scissors while perched on the edge of a bed'.⁶² One correspondent recalls the pleasure of adapting men's under-pants, given her by a priest who was being repatriated. Mabel Redwood, interned in Stanley Camp with her mother and two sisters, still has the two-tone bra she made from two scout ties and a waistcoat made of offcuts of material in camp. Celia Lucas, in Santo Tomas, wrote: 'In 1943 clothes were getting embarrassingly threadbare. The Sewing Department with its usual genius, had resorted to making pants out of chair covers and sheets.'⁶³ Also in Santo Tomas, Elizabeth Vaughan recalls clothing with 'fronts of one colour and backs of another, or yokes of one, sleeves of another, and a body of another'.⁶⁴ A poem written by one internee highlights the situation in Stanley.

There is a lady dressed in gray
 who wanders round the camp each day
 I often wonder if she knows
 that one can see right through her clothes.

I'd dearly like to tell her so
 but don't – because that would be low
 but one day when she's quite alone
 I'll show her where she is unsewn
 and if I do I trust that she
 will one day do the same for me.⁶⁵

Although dress in the camp was, of necessity, basic and simple, the women still valued additional and 'new' clothing which, as William Sewell remarked, helped restore their self-respect.

Mary herself, like most women in the camp, valued specially a gift of material. When the welfare had put into their hands a piece of cloth, together with needles and thread, it did something decisive to restore the self-respect of more than half the camp. In the creation of shorts and sun-tops for the warmer weather many women found a new interest in life.⁶⁶

The shortage of clothes and material, however, brought unexpected advantages to the women. Convenience and comfort now took priority, and they were liberated from the constraints of colonial fastidiousness and the pre-internment demands to ‘overdress’ for the Far Eastern climate. In Hong Kong, where it was hot and humid for much of the year, women’s clothing, of necessity, became scantier. ‘Bare legs and usually bare feet, brief shorts, and for the women a gay sun-top, made us feel that we were not in Stanley but in Arcadia.’⁶⁷ And in Santo Tomas it was reported: ‘Women’s shorts, originally outlawed in camp because of Japanese ideas of female modesty, were allowed because they took less material to make. The one specification was that they be no more than four inches above the knee.’⁶⁸ In contrast, Peggy Abkhazi, in Lunghua, found that the bitterly cold winters in Shanghai ‘where the coldness made it difficult to hold a pencil in even mittened hands’ meant:

All fastidiousness as to washing, undressing at night and such like had best be discarded for the time being . . . I never change my underclothes unless there is a gleam of sunshine lighting up my corner and I wear the same garments day and night.⁶⁹

Self-respect and standards of decorum were not totally ignored, however. Mabel Redwood, in Stanley, remembers a ‘very old lady’ who had brought into camp a good stock of clothes ‘always appeared in the food queue wearing her blue felt hat with a long feather in it’.⁷⁰ Another woman in Stanley felt that the women . . .

. . . tried to keep themselves as nice as possible, keep their hair neat and tidy. We just didn’t let ourselves go to seed. If you had a little lipstick that was fine.⁷¹

And another records how overjoyed she and her sisters were when they were able to shave under their arms. ‘Borrowed Mrs G’s razor, we all shaved under our arms – wonderful after all this time.’⁷² Others recall how, by careful pleating and draping of bits of material, they could add a few inches in the right places and how odd bits of wire found round the camp were used for curling hair. ‘There were many who worked hard to keep themselves glamorous and I am sure that helped morale a lot,’ wrote one correspondent.⁷³ The gallant efforts of the young women in Lunghua are recorded by Peggy Abkhazi.

The Very Young are all titivating for the fortnightly Saturday dance. Such a rushing and twittering and giggling amidst an aura of talcum

powder – rather gallant the show they manage to make under difficulties and the limitations of our surroundings.⁷⁴

These efforts were not wasted. Not only did they raise the morale of the women themselves but, according to John Stericker in Stanley, they had a positive influence on some of the men. 'Had it not been for the presence of the ladies most of the men would, undoubtedly, have left their whiskers to sprout, come what might.'⁷⁵

Further demands on the women's creativity came in the celebration of birthdays and Christmas which were often marked by 'an exchange of presents of touching ingenuity'.⁷⁶ Home-made cards, soft toys for the children, a wallet made from a Red Cross army jerkin, a small cloth, handkerchief or cushion embroidered with friends' names, a bookmark, a bag or a wall tidy and even 'birthday cakes' were made. In Stanley cakes were made using ground rice, a little oil and sugar with banana skin for fruit. They were iced with 'boiled sugar beaten till creamy and coloured with Reckitts blue bag and mercurochrome, very patriotic but vile to taste'.⁷⁷

To celebrate the creative endeavour of the internees in Stanley, a Handicraft Fayre was organized by the Women's Group.

While 'machinery' made by the men was also displayed the ladies in the camp contributed in no small measure. Needle cases and slippers, made from odd bits of material made from army jenkins, buttons made from bamboo and a fashion show demonstrated what could be made out of scraps of material.⁷⁸

The professional and domestic activities of the women discussed so far, although having to be adapted to the camp conditions, remained within the boundaries of perceived women's roles at that time. There were other areas of work, however, that enabled women to weave in and out of male/female work boundaries. In these mixed camps, the men were responsible for the communal gardening that was essential to provide food for the internees. Some families, such as the Sewells, also had small garden plots of their own in which they grew additional food. While the whole family was involved in its maintenance, it was Mrs Sewell who spent most time there.

It was a refuge from the turmoil of the flat and although the work was hard she enjoyed the relief it afforded . . . We all shared in the work but Mary bore the main burden. It was to her that we owed health and possibly life itself for on the bare rations we could hardly have lived.

Once the gardens were established we had vegetables – tomatoes, onions and spinach.⁷⁹

Some of the internees in Lunghua also had small plots but Peggy Abkhazi willingly volunteered to work alongside the men in the communal gardens because it offered a ‘blessed relief after the concentrated and overwhelming femininity of the hut. Gardening with the men can be so restfully silent.’⁸⁰ Although both these women used gardening as a refuge and a relief from the trying conditions of camp life, Mary’s gardening was obviously essential to help feed her starving family and Peggy’s work helped supplement the food for the whole camp. Although both women had now become ‘providers’, because Mary worked privately to feed and nurture her family, and Peggy ‘helped’ rather than organised the gardeners, both women were perceived as endorsing rather than challenging traditional gender roles at that time.

One of the few areas where the names of individual women appear on almost equal terms with the men in the mixed camps was on camp entertainment committees and cast lists for concerts, plays and shows. Particularly prominent in Stanley were the names of pianist Betty Drown and dancer Carole Bateman, both of whom are frequently mentioned by both men and women in the camp. John Stericker wrote:

Betty Drown, an accomplished musician and composer, was deservedly one of the most popular people in the camp and went so far as to neglect her classical capabilities in favour of jazz and popular music. The dances and ballets were produced by the ever capable Carole Bateman who was unfailing in her skilled adaptations and original numbers.⁸¹

All my interviewees from that camp readily remembered these two women and the sense of joy and freedom they brought to their lives. Reminiscing about her attempts at a ballet created by Carole Bateman one interviewee laughingly remarked, ‘We were really like a herd of elephants but we enjoyed it.’

It was this fun and ‘freedom’ about which most of my interviewees spoke of first, and not just because the entertainments, laughter and jokes were the few good things about the camps. Even during these joyous moments fear was not far away. ‘As we might have been machine-gunned down at any time,’ recalled one interviewee, ‘we had the nerve to do things we’d never attempt normally.’⁸² This fear and nervousness surfaced at unexpected times among the women in

other camps. Peggy Abkhazi, in Lunghua, recalled how accidents, and the presence of the Japanese guards, could promote the 'resurrection of 4th form schoolgirl humour' in a women's dormitory.

If someone else's bed leg crashes through the rotten flooring of the hut we all collapse in helpless giggles . . . When the commandant does his official roll call we behave in a manner unbelievable in more or less sophisticated women of ages varying from 25–50.⁸³

The freedom from pressure to behave in a modest and responsible way, to be for a brief moment whatever they wanted, was a memorable, liberating experience for many of these women. This sense of freedom was all the more remarkable emerging as it did in the confines of a prison camp.

My research into the women's lives in the mixed camps was revealing in other unexpected ways. Knowing the cramped conditions, the lack of privacy, the insecurity, the poor medical facilities, the near starvation diet and the fact that the Japanese tried to keep the men and women apart in Santo Tomas, it was a surprise to discover the number of children both conceived and born in the camps. Frederic Stevens in Santo Tomas reported that seventy babies were born during internment, of which thirty-one were obviously conceived prior to internment as they were born during the first six months.⁸⁴ In Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, where there were 920 women (not all of child-bearing age), more than fifty babies were born during internment. Dr N.C. Macleod, Deputy Director of Health Services claimed, in his post-war report on Stanley Camp: 'The birth rate was naturally low as the majority of married women in the camp were wives of prisoners of war in military camps' but, he added sardonically, 'by the nature of our circumstances it should have been lower'.⁸⁵ Some of the babies born in the first year were conceived prior to internment and, as mentioned earlier, some women took young babies into camp with them. Inevitably, opinions vary among those interviewed concerning the wisdom of taking a young child into camp. One woman from Stanley wrote saying; 'I have never forgiven myself for not going to Australia when pregnant. As a result my baby starved for three years eight months.' In contrast another woman from the same camp wrote:

I never regret not leaving Hong Kong. If I had my husband would never have had that one year with his daughter. He was killed during

the fighting and after mum died in the camp, if the baby had not been there I would have just given up.⁸⁶

But what of those who conceived during internment? It is clear that in spite of the conditions, space and privacy were sought and found for sexual intercourse. Newly married couples, particularly, depended on the good will of other internees for privacy. Before newly-weds Alun and Jean Thomas could acquire their own space they lived in separate parts of Stanley Camp. Private time together meant enjoying 'the peace in the Ashton's flat (a tiny room) while the Ashtons went for a walk'.⁸⁷ Peggy McMahon remembers her sister getting married in camp and her parents' comments.

They need a little bit of time to themselves, you know, so just let them have the afternoon off. Just let them know they can have a bit of privacy in your room . . . It was summer and I know they went on the flat roof and slept there.⁸⁸

With space and privacy at such a premium, some couples were forced to resort to unusual, if not macabre, locations. One child in Stanley claims to have been conceived in a newly dug grave. In fact the *Stanley Journal* printed a cartoon illustrating that such activity in the cemetery was common knowledge. The Reverend Sandbach also confirms, in more discreet language, the use of the cemetery: 'There were lovely trees, there was privacy and that's where they got the privacy they needed.'⁸⁹

When Santo Tomas became very overcrowded the Japanese allowed the building of shanties in the campus grounds:

Shanties! They evolved from a faded blanket thrust over the back of a disabled truck, to shacks with cloth sides and makeshift roofs to spacious nipa shacks that could accommodate the whole family . . . Shanties were a heaven-sent relief from the crowded, noisy rooms and the clatter of wooden shoes. There the family would congregate during the day, cook and eat its meals, play games or enjoy a book from the library.⁹⁰

Many married couples, especially those with children, as well as some single people, took advantage of this to resume a reasonable family life. With the building of shanties came an increased number of pregnancies. The number of births, in both camps, angered the Japanese, caused concern among the Western doctors and upset

some of the other internees. In October 1943, the Japanese threatened segregation of the sexes in Stanley Camp if more babies were born, especially if the woman's husband was not in camp. They demanded the woman should declare the name of the father of the child or she would be classified as a prostitute.⁹¹ With conditions deteriorating, by November 1944 the camp doctors, particularly those in Stanley, were advising against further pregnancies and asked Mr Gimson to issue an order banning them.⁹² Some abortions were carried out in the camp hospital, provoking a lengthy debate between medical staff and clergy in the camp.⁹³ In Santo Tomas, the Japanese threatened the camp with loss of privileges if the internees indulged in sexual relations. When more pregnancies occurred the expectant mothers were ordered to a home for unwed mothers outside the camp and the fathers were put in the camp jail to serve thirty days in solitary confinement.⁹⁴ Then, on the orders of the Japanese Commandant who gave as his reason that 'immoral practices' were carried out in them, the first group of shanties was pulled down. Eventually, a compromise was reached and shanties had to be open for inspection, having no sides but only a roof. Nevertheless, they were very popular and shanty 'towns', and also the birth rate, grew.

Without hard evidence, one can only speculate as to what it was that prompted some women to ignore medical advice, risk Japanese discipline, their own lives and that of their newborn child. In her discussion on this issue in Santo Tomas, Kaminski argues that in spite of the criticism from camp authorities and fellow internees some married and unmarried women deliberately planned their pregnancy; the former because it was a natural by-product of marriage, the latter 'as both an expression of love and a desire to tie the father to her permanently as a means of survival'.⁹⁵ These may have been the motivation in one or two cases. Whether or not pregnancies were deliberately planned, they were, as Kaminski admits, a grave health risk for interned women and their babies.

It seems to me, therefore, that there were perhaps other motives for these pregnancies. Obviously, sex drive, the lack of contraceptives, erratic menstruation and a tendency to live for the moment were influential factors. The shock of being taken prisoner and the near-starvation diet caused many women's menstrual cycle to cease particularly during the latter part of internment.⁹⁶ Most of my interviewees claimed that, because of the absence of sanitary towels, the lack of privacy and the unhygienic conditions of the camps, they greeted this with relief. I do not doubt this. But is it possible that the

cessation of this very feminine biological process had a negative psychological effect? Added to the other ‘defeminising’ aspects of the camp did it, perhaps, challenge some women’s sense of their female identity and womanhood? Freddy Bloom, separated from her husband in Changi, wrote in her diary:

Feel exceedingly sorry for one nursing sister who in the heat of the war became careless and is now in her six month. Tough! Wish I could change places with her.⁹⁷

Perhaps a reason underlying the pregnancies can be found in Margaret Macmillan’s work on the British Raj in India.

Children were a sign that the British were established in India, that the community was ‘sound’ . . . The consciousness of the British that they were the ruling caste, that the Raj was going to endure, was somehow demonstrated by the fact that they were propagating themselves.⁹⁸

Pregnancy and childbirth is an overt demonstration and affirmation of womanhood, femininity and fertility. It also confirms a sense of masculinity and virility for the fathers. I am therefore suggesting that the conception, birth and the continued growth of camp babies were public demonstrations of all these and were, therefore, defiant gestures. They defied Japanese attempts to destroy the virility of Western colonial communities and were a public proclamation of the community’s endurance, continuity and future.

Although the women in these mixed camps re-entered a male-dominated world, there were many opportunities for the women actively to fill a variety of roles. These women were conscious of the fragility of their internment existence. They acknowledged how dependent they were on the skills of the men and the need to work in partnership for physical and psychological survival. However, whether they were involved in the professional secretarial, nursing and teaching roles, being sexual partners and mothers, or fulfilling domestic, gardening or ‘servant’ roles, their activities still remained within perceived gender boundaries. Nevertheless, the women’s part in the successful running of the mixed camps should not be underestimated. The web of support offered by the women was highly significant. Through their service the women enhanced the efficiency of the men who were administrating the camps, and their practical skills, hard work, creativity and caring helped all the internees both physically and psychologically. Moreover, by assuming their tradi-

tional feminine roles, they helped restore the sorely damaged masculinity of the men and, at the same time, boosted their own morale.

For the women in segregated camps life was very different. Unlike the women in mixed camps, these segregated camps were not male-dominated spaces. The women themselves were responsible for their own administration, general discipline, organisation and camp maintenance. They managed the care of the old and sick and the education of the young children. Their responsibilities included work 'so different from anything done by Europeans in the East before', such as serving the food, washing up, cleaning the drains, the hospital, the passages, stairs and lavatories and gardening.⁹⁹

The women in Changi Prison were fortunate in some respects. The civilian Western men, interned in the other part of the jail, were responsible for the general sanitation, woodcutting and communal cooking in the prison. The presence of the men also meant that, in emergencies, access to specialist male doctors was possible. The Dutch women caught in the Dutch East Indies were less fortunate. In his Foreword to *The Forgotten Ones*, the author Russell Braddon wrote in 1992:

Few women, in 1942, seemed so ill-equipped to survive the ordeal of Japanese captivity as the Dutch women of Java and Sumatra. Not only had they never toiled or spun, they had never cooked, kept house, changed nappies, bathed children or suffered any of the hardships of war. Though their European homeland had been overrun and occupied by the Third Reich, and their Queen and Princesses forced to flee to London, life had remained unchanged for Dutch women in the East Indies. Putting on one's face, doing one's nails, going to one's hairdresser, lunching and playing bridge, dressing for dinner, being cosseted by servants – that was the life of these women whom the Japanese were about to corral, with their children, in primitive compounds.¹⁰⁰

It was not *just* that these women had, 'never toiled and spun', as Russell Braddon put it, that caused them to suffer so badly in these camps. For the women caught in Java and Sumatra, the totally female internment camp was, for a variety of reasons, a desolate landscape to come to terms with.

The lack of evacuation prior to the Japanese attacks meant that not only were thousands of women captured by the Japanese but also thousands of young children. Unlike the women in the mixed camps, they had no access to trained engineers, carpenters and chemists. The result was that it was impossible to ensure the public

utilities of the camps were maintained at a sanitary level. Having no male doctors and only a few female doctors in their midst, they also had less access to medical care. In a camp of 4,000 women in Java there were only three doctors to attend to the internees.¹⁰¹ In addition, whether sick or not, the Japanese forced these women to carry out hard manual labour. They were also subjected to severe discipline not suffered by the women in the mixed camps, and a relative few were used as ‘comfort’ women to Japanese officers.¹⁰²

Rarely did these women remain in one camp, and the sudden and unexpected moves from camp to camp ‘scared people: the whispers never stopped that the Japanese really just wanted to kill us off’.¹⁰³ The moves also fragmented families, and support groups and often the women’s limited equipment had to be left behind. Internee, Daphne Jackson, recorded:

At about two-thirty we moved out of the prison – a most pitiable collection of humanity, covered with ulcers on arms and legs on which the flies settled, and laden with bits of luggage, tins, buckets, and bags, for by this time we had learned to hang on like grim death to any nail, tin or bit of string.¹⁰⁴

The journeys themselves, either walking or in cramped lorries, trains or boats, aggravated health problems, and sometimes they were fatal. Consequently, these women were in perpetual fear for both their own and their children’s safety and survival.

As with the mixed camps, the organisation and administration of the camps became a priority. Whereas in the mixed camps the women were able to slot into a ready-made, male-dominated administrative hierarchy, the women in *all* the segregated camps faced an administrative vacuum. In the absence of men, who did the women in these camps elect as their leaders?

Historian Catherine Kenny claims the natural leaders in Java were ‘the useful women such as doctors and nurses who could help save lives and nuns and missionaries who gave spiritual support, not the former bastions of refined society’.¹⁰⁵ My research shows that, initially, doctors, teachers and missionaries certainly played an important role in the women’s camps. In Irenelaan women’s camp in Palembang, Sumatra, a camp dominated by Dutch women, British woman Dr Jean McDowell, already camp commandant by consensus, was elected officially as the British representative. She was assisted by Mrs Hinch, the wife of a principal of a Methodist school in Singapore. The Dutch women appointed the Revd Mother

Laurentia as their representative.¹⁰⁶ Dr Marjorie Lyon, a courageous, determined, clear-headed and responsible woman, held a strong position in the camps in Sumatra. Dr Lyon describes her experience on the eve of Singapore's surrender as 'a sort of Ring Master in a Circus, directing the traffic to x-ray, major and minor theatres, resuscitation beds etc'.¹⁰⁷ While escaping from Singapore her boat was bombed and sunk. She describes her escape thus:

Elsie was not a strong swimmer, the island looked to be near and I assured her I could get her there whatever happened . . . While still a good way from land the Japs bombed us again. Something seemed to strike me on the belly, and I thought I was struck in two, but Elsie disappeared into a kind of whirlpool. I was so busy trying to get her up that I forgot all about it . . . I finally got her by the hair . . . She gamely began to swim with her legs, supporting her arms on my shoulders . . .¹⁰⁸

Caught and interned in Sumatra, Dr Lyon moved from camp to camp with a group of British nurses and about 2,000 Dutch women and children. Though never on the administrative committee, she ran the camp hospitals and dealt directly with the Japanese on behalf of the women. Although her forthright and uncompromising contacts with the Japanese guards and camp commandants were very effective, they were often at enormous personal risk.

Among the six female doctors in Changi were Dr Margaret Elinor Hopkins, whose husband was also a doctor interned in the men's section of Changi, Dr Robbie Worth, married to a Malayan Planter and engineer interned in the men's camp, Dr Cicely Williams, a specialist in children's medicine, Dr Patricia Elliot, from the Anglican Mission Hospital, and Margaret Smallwood. While sharing the medical care of the women and children in Changi between them, Drs Hopkins and Williams were the first women commandants. Dr Hopkins had already taken a seemingly unchallenged lead when the women were in Katong. 'Being a doctor she was able to deal with the Japanese regarding the sick, food supplies and sanitary arrangements.' She is described as:

A good looking woman, small and slight and short greyish hair, in her late forties or early fifties. I do not remember seeing her in any clothes but dark blue trousers and shirt. She was very 'English' in voice, manner and outlook to a point, which some internees found extremely irritating. She was slightly aloof and therefore arrogant-seeming perhaps, but also courageous, clear-headed and responsible.

Of her assistant, Dr Robbie Worth, it was said:

She could be very determined (her enemies said pig-headed). She was always dressed in a white linen coat or overall and thus garbed with a bag slung across one shoulder she made her rounds among the patients.

Eventually, Dr Hopkins was succeeded as camp representative by Dr Cicely Williams, a graduate of Somerville College, Oxford – ‘the most brilliant and original of all the women internees’.¹⁰⁹

As Helen Beck, an internee in Changi, wrote, ‘the first few months of internment passed tolerably well’, but attitudes changed when it became obvious that internment was going to continue for some considerable time. The British women in Changi began to accuse the doctors of partiality and autocracy, and in December 1942 there were demands for a ‘general election’ for committee officers and minor appointments. Many of the doctors were voted out of office. In Sumatra. Dr Lyon was also severely criticised by the women in her camp. She wrote that the women complained:

I don’t spend enough time talking to them . . . They also objected to my rule that visitors were not allowed – I said that it was not possible to have visitors because it took our staff all the time to treat the sick and we had no time to chaperone visitors.¹¹⁰

What was it that caused this change in attitudes? In all the camps, to ensure an equal share of food, accommodation, medical care and work load, and comply with Japanese orders, ‘the rules became stricter’. And, as Mary Thomas put it, ‘after a time the internees became tired of even the most good-natured woman and longed for a change, even one for the worse’.¹¹¹ Also, as Helen Beck noted:

A sense of frustration combined with the lack of news, the monotony, the lack of nourishment and the ban on any sort of communication resulted in the general sharpening of temper . . .¹¹²

Of course, the increase in tension and frustration, largely due to the uncertainty of internment and exacerbated by the deteriorating conditions and ill health, created resentment. When fuelled by constant disappointments, the Dutch and British women alike looked for someone to blame. In this situation those in positions of authority and power, as Mary Thomas points out, often become the target for criticism and abuse.

It was remarkable how each person began her public career in a haze of glory and ended it in something like disgrace . . . The members of the executive committee were expected to perform miracles vis à vis the Japanese . . . Failure was likely to provoke resentment.¹¹³

However, tension, short temper, heavy work loads, lack of communication with the outside world and frustration were an integral part of life in *all* the internment camps. In spite of this, there is no evidence to suggest that the women in the mixed camps openly criticised the male administration or the male doctors. In fact, Mr Gimson, the colonial officer in Stanley, claimed that 'the women's domestic duties stopped any morbid introspection and criticism of the administration'.¹¹⁴ The domestic duties of the women in the segregated camps were far more arduous than those of the women in the mixed camps, but this did not stop the women from openly voicing their criticism and reservations of their leaders.

It is possible, of course, that the women leaders were simply inept, or too bossy and undiplomatic. But the image of the women in charge, as constructed by their clothes, skills and demeanour, is professional, 'no-nonsense' and 'unfussy' – almost unfeminine for that time and place. Is it possible that they were seen by some of the other women as honorary men? Was this why, in the early chaos and trauma of internment, many women in these all-female communities felt comfortable with, and readily accepted, the leadership of these 'determined, arrogant-seeming, courageous, clearheaded, responsible' women?

As time progressed, the strict regime, the lack of freedom and being subordinate to authoritative Western women, whether they could save lives or give spiritual support or not, reminded the women, as Helen Beck points out, of their school days. They felt they were being treated like children or servants.

We began to adopt a more critical attitude towards those whom we found in authority over us and while admitting the necessity for running the place like a camp, one naturally revolted at it becoming a cross between a reformatory and a particularly beastly type of boarding school!

While this criticism and rebellion was, to some extent, a reflection of the women's frustration and resentment, it also demonstrated an increasing awareness of their own maturity, personal strengths, experience and skills.

Naturally too, women who had run hospitals or comfortable homes of their own for 15–20 years could not but be irritated by the assumption that the storekeeper could do no wrong, that the entire kitchen staff was beyond reproach and that the committee always knew best!

Therefore, although the resentment, anger and disappointment caused conflict and tensions in the camps, it also, according to Helen Beck, helped to develop ‘a primitive desire to battle for one’s own rights and a less primitive one – to battle for the rights of the whole camp’.¹¹⁵ While conflict, tension and these ‘primitive desires’ continued to a greater or lesser extent throughout internment, the rest of this chapter will demonstrate that this ‘battle for their own rights’ and ‘the rights of the whole camp’ demonstrated the women’s refusal to remain victims. In fact it contributed to the collective energy of the community and indicated a newly emerging personal awareness and individual strength. As the remainder of this chapter will show, that collective energy and individual strength was articulated in a variety of ways in the camps.

Mary Thomas modestly observes that: ‘In contrast to the relatively smooth internal organisation in the men’s camps our internal organisation as a women’s camp was not arrived at without much confusion and bickering and many false starts.’ However, the evidence suggests that the women in the segregated camps organised and administrated themselves very well indeed. Among the papers kept by Dr Margaret Hopkins in Changi are copies of meticulously kept minutes of General Committee Meetings in the women’s section of the camp. These minutes are evidence of the setting-up of a camp constitution and the establishment of a democratic process for running the camp.

Eventually we were established with a Commandant, chosen at elections every three months, an Executive Committee of five who were responsible for twelve others . . . The whole committee met once a week to discuss camp affairs. Once a month there was a General Meeting of the entire camp . . . The Executive Committee consisted of the Commandant and her Deputy, the camp superintendent and her Deputy, and a member of the General Committee. The women of the General Committee were nicknamed ‘floorwalkers’ because each floor of the cells was under the management of two of them. They were elected by members of their respective floors.¹¹⁶

Their Work Organisation Chart of August 1942 records the Executive Committee, the Office staff, Medical and Health Department,

Education, Recreation, Labour and departments dealing with Food, Finance, Red Cross and Crèche. Filling all these posts was not easy as the Fatigue Officers Report in June 1943 indicates. While every woman had to clean her own sleeping accommodation, wash her own clothes and fetch her own food there were 247 other daily camps chores to be done. Of the 398 women in the camp at that time only 146 were available for heavy duty work and 186 for light duty. Allowing for sickness and days off, many women found themselves doing more than one job.

Of course life did not run smoothly, there were obviously a number of areas where the women differed in opinion, and the criticisms and problems of camp life are minuted in detail. However, what comes across clearly is the energy and agency of the women. Through a democratic process they ensured each woman or group of women could voice their concerns, opinions, differences and divisions. It was clear that the women tried, as far as possible, to keep the camp running as fairly and efficiently as possible for everyone's benefit.

While much of the work was unpleasant and demeaning the women were prepared to use it as a vehicle for subversion and resistance. As they cleaned the drains, they would shout and send messages through to the men's section of the camp. It was also not long before the unpleasant job of rubbish collection also became an avenue for illicit means of communication between the men and women. Dustbins were collected on the women's side and Miss Foss (Fossie), the organiser, tried to arrange for different women to carry the dustbins to the fence, where they were collected by the men. In preparation for the dustbin meetings the women tried to make themselves as attractive as possible. 'Everyone who had a bit of lipstick left, or a pretty blouse, would put it on for the occasion.' If things went well, husbands and wives met briefly and could, if the guards were not watching, slip messages or packages to one and other.¹¹⁷ Helen Beck recalls how she smuggled a letter across to her husband in the men's camp . . .

. . . by the simple expedient of putting it into a scarlet toffee tin in a dustbin, getting a secret agent to warn my husband to salvage the tin, and then forming one of the dustbin fatigue that would meet my husband's dustbin fatigue in the main yard!¹¹⁸

At least the women in Changi had the men to chop the wood and do the communal cooking; the women in the Dutch East Indies had

no such support. In addition to running and organising the camps, these necessary chores were a major problem of their daily lives. Sometimes it was the younger boys who were on wood-chopping duties, often the wood was too wet to use or the Japanese would supply them with ‘tree-trunks that had only been felled that day and were running with rubber latex and smothered with green leaves’.¹¹⁹ The kitchen ‘staff’ wrestled to keep the fires going in the basic make-shift kitchen. In Halmaheira camp, Netty Herman recalled: ‘The central kitchen consisted of a few stoke-holes for wood in a row. Over the fire were large iron drums in which the rice and soup were cooked. A group of single or older women made up the vegetable shift.’¹²⁰ In some camps the older fitter boys helped carry and wash the large iron drums.

In addition to cooking and caring for themselves, the Japanese also insisted that the women in the Dutch East Indies did hard physical labour. Much of this work was defeminising and dehumanising for the women. As Betty Jeffrey recorded in her diary:

At last I have decided on my occupation when I get home – I’m going to be a wharfie and move cargo. I now spend the best part of the hottest mornings in the sun working. We unload all the heavy fruit and sacks of hard beans and other goods while natives sit by and watch . . . The latest idea is for us to carry sacks of rice into the camps.¹²¹

Another young woman wrote that she ‘was a horse’ because her work involved pulling ‘big, flat, iron carts in groups of five or six, harnessed like horses to move all types of furniture’.¹²² The women also had to do heavy gardening and digging work with limited tools and often during the hottest part of the day. Netty Herman recalls:

After breakfast we each got a shovel and had to follow a Jap to a plot of farmland that had to be ploughed for planting . . . After days of shovelling, the clods of soil, hard as rocks had to be pulverised with only our hands as tools. We worked until our fingers bled.¹²³

Jessie Simons in one of her camps in Sumatra recalls:

The food situation in Sumatra was becoming acute, we had to cultivate gardens to supply food . . . We were compelled to attack the camp *padang*, now like concrete from the traffic of hundreds of feet. All the digging was done with eleven pound *chunkels*. The work went on from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In spite of this dehumanising treatment the women found subtle ways to defy the Japanese attempts to destroy their humanity, femininity and morale. Jessie Simons remembers:

We groaned in private but hid our real feeling from the Japanese under a laughing military precision, marching off in squads and swinging the heavy hoes in rhythmic unanimity, a burlesque which vastly annoyed the guards.¹²⁴

Many of the women sang all the time while engaged in this work. Netty Herman wrote that 'even humming the melody would bring a smile on our faces'.¹²⁵ Often, much to the annoyance of the guards, they would 'chat brightly and organise a system to make the job easier'.

Other situations in these camps called for different kinds of subversive behaviour. In one camp, where Dr Lyon was working, the Japanese commandant made several attempts to take young girls out of the camp to 'work for Nippon', a euphemism for acting as a prostitute.

This we resisted forcibly and women turned out to fight for the persons of the chosen girls. The fight was interrupted by the Nipponese Military Police, who declared the girls were not to leave the camp.¹²⁶

Other women took a less confrontational approach. A group of Australian nurses in Palembang, Sumatra, were informed they had to entertain the Japanese soldiers in the camp club. Part of the nurses' strategy of resistance was to deliberately defeminise themselves and make themselves as unattractive as possible.

A most unattractive sight as everyone sat round the room . . . Our footwear consisted of sand shoes, football boots, men's shoes and bare-foot. No powder, lipstick, and quaint hair-do's. We had trouble getting Pat ready, the more she plastered her curly hair back the prettier she looked. The rest of us looked awful . . . We must have been a formidable looking crowd . . . After they [the Japanese] recovered from the shock of the sight of us they were reasonably decent.¹²⁷

Many women, however, were not so lucky. Young Dutch women in Java were forcibly removed from camps by Japanese officers towards the end of the war.¹²⁸ In 1944 Jan Ruff O'Herne was one such unfortunate woman. Forced into prostitution, Jan wanted to make herself repulsive in the hope of avoiding further rape in the Japanese brothel.

I was getting desperate. I had tried everything I could to prevent myself being raped . . . There was only one thing left I could make myself so repulsive I would repulse the Japanese . . . I sat in front of the mirror that morning and cut off all my hair. I hacked away at it until I was quite bald . . . I wanted to be bald and ugly.¹²⁹

Whereas the group of Australian nurses managed to avoid sexual abuse, Jan's attempts were, sadly, to prove in vain.

Coupled with the hard physical work and sexual abuse, beatings were commonplace in the segregated camps in the Dutch East Indies for either real or imagined misdemeanours. More often than not, discipline was carried out in a public place with the intention, no doubt, of humiliating the woman concerned. If they had been smuggling over the wire, then it was also to set an example to the others. One of the more distressing forms of punishment for the women was brutal head shaving by the Japanese guards. In Tjideng Camp, Java, 'a camp of unbelievable overcrowding and maltreatment during the last year of the war' women were caught trading with the Indonesians over the camp perimeter wire.¹³⁰ An internee recalls that 'their hair was shaved off with cut-throat razors'.¹³¹ In another case one woman was disciplined in this way for no apparent reason.

Tatsuka now grabbed Zus by her long blond hair and pulled her down onto the grass verge . . . He came towards her with clippers in his hand . . . all her hair was hacked off, none too gently . . . As she lay there she was unrecognisable – her hair was gone.¹³²

Head shaving was calculated to be humiliating, defeminising and long lasting. As historian Joy Damousi, in her work on women convicts in Australia has pointed out, 'head shaving was a lasting sign of punishment'. And holocaust survivor, Sarah Nomberg-Przytyck, records her feelings about head shaving by German guards: 'It did not bother them that we were women and that without our hair we felt totally humiliated.'¹³³ The women in Java felt that 'the worst part of returning to work was having to appear in public without hair', but in the eyes of the other women, these women gained even greater respect and became heroines. 'I felt so proud of them and their bravery' wrote one woman internee. Another said:

They had behaved so marvellously that I felt a lump in my throat. After all the humiliation and the bald heads that would take a year to grow, they did not show their feelings. I had the deepest respect for them.¹³⁴

'One of the girls said, "Right, I have the solution. I will make hats for us all to wear and then no-one will know who doesn't have hair."¹³⁵ Other women secreted a piece of hair from the floor and saved it to put under the front of a head scarf, and fellow internees in a symbolic gesture of resistance, and solidarity, cut some of their own hair to give to the shaven women to put under the front of their scarves. In this way their femininity could, symbolically, be restored. Contrary, then, to the Japanese intentions, rather than being humiliating and divisive, this form of discipline transformed the victims into heroes and created solidarity among the women.

No such punishments happened in Changi. But in the memorable 'Double Tenth' raid, on 10 October 1943 both Cicely Williams and Freddy Bloom, and later Mrs Nixon, were arrested along with fifty-four men from Changi Prison.¹³⁶ The reasons for Freddy and Cicely's inclusion with the mass arrests are not entirely clear. Possible reasons are that Cicely had been camp leader and had once given a medical lecture in the men's camp. It was suspected that she may have had earlier contacts in Singapore. Freddy, on the other hand, had edited the camp newspaper and had worked for press and information services before being interned. Whatever the reasons, when these women were first imprisoned they were separated from each other and, although not *physically* tortured like many of the men, they were, in all other respects, treated much like the men. They were put in tiny cells with groups of men where they all shared one toilet in the corner, and a Japanese guard patrolled in the corridor. Although these women neither demanded or expected special treatment, the Western men, though seriously incapacitated by torture, still offered them protection as Ann Dally records in her biography of Cicely Williams:

She [Cicely] heard a tiny voice behind her from Cyril Jackson, saying, 'Miss Williams would you like to do your toilet?' . . . While she did her toilet the men turned their backs. Sometimes the sentries would take an interest in it but then the men would rise to their feet with unanimity to protect the lady's toilet from the sentries' gaze.¹³⁷

Freddy confirms the men's concern for her wellbeing in a different way:

I was taken back to the cell. The expressions on all the men's faces as their eyes searched my face, my hands, my feet, had a strange intensity. Sometimes faces, hands and feet did not look good. Mine were untouched. The strain went out of their backs and they all relaxed.

When, eventually, both Freddy and Cicely were put into a cell together, their lives were more tolerable. They were able to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences without any pretence.

She [Cicely] had not been tortured either but had witnessed the gradual physical destruction of the men in the cell . . . We talked to each other about these things . . . Both of us had instinctively known that we had to keep up appearances for the sake of the men whose experiences we found unbearable to watch. It was not necessary to keep up a pretence with each other.¹³⁸

The women knew the men were too ill to offer them any real protection. Therefore, this tacit agreement to keep up a pretence and ‘protect’ the men had another purpose. By pretending that they and the men were fine, even though it was ‘unbearable to watch their physical destruction’, Freddy and Cicely eased the men’s sense of vulnerability and impotence.

The hard, dehumanising work, the ill-treatment and the squalor of the segregated camps did not, however, stop the women from finding ways to bring joy, pleasure and femininity into their lives. As in the mixed camps, the remaking of clothes was a major preoccupation. For many of these women, the right clothes for the occasion had been very important; clothes identified their cultural background and their status in the colony. Clothes were also as important in the expression of their feminine identity in the women’s camps as they were in the mixed camps. Mrs Hillen, in Java, when asked why she never wore trousers, answered that ‘she felt more womanly in a dress’.¹³⁹ Freddy Bloom, in Changi, claims: ‘Mrs Rogers [is] still smart though dressed in men’s trousers and shirt. Her reaction when I wore my first frock . . . she positively drooled.’ She also wrote that she ‘changed into a frock in the afternoon or evenings. One looks so pasty faced here that one must spend as much thought as possible on one’s appearance’.¹⁴⁰ Gladys Tompkins, also in Changi, claimed that ‘the fact that people still took the trouble to spruce themselves up for the horrible evening meal certainly helped the morale of the camp, and our self-respect’.¹⁴¹

As with the women in the mixed camps, the remaking of clothes demanded ingenuity. ‘Longs became two pairs of shorts, a man’s shirt made a frock and a dressing gown or tablecloth made whole relays of clothes’.¹⁴² Some of the women in Changi actually found the time to repay the men for their help, and the men regularly benefited from the darning and knitting squad who unpicked old woollen garments and made socks for the men who had to wear ‘rough S. African boots’

when on fatigues. In June 1943 the fatigue officer in the women's section of Changi noted that 'sewing really is a good camp chore and must make for the comfort of the men'.¹⁴³ The Dutch women found that even the wearing and washing of certain clothes could boost their morale and be turned into a subversive act, as Netty Herman observed:

Some of us would wear clothes that showed the three colours of our flag: a blue dress, white belt and red shoes (when we still had shoes) for instance. Or we would hang the laundry on the line, blue next to white next to red. Those things were secret messages to one another of hope and faith which went unnoticed by the Japanese.¹⁴⁴

The women made other attempts to boost their morale through their homemaking. With their domestic space now reduced to their bed space only, the opportunities for these women to express their homemaking skills seemed impossible. But they were undeterred and used whatever means they could to make their space as comfortable as possible. On arrival at Bloemenkamp, in Java, Ernest Hillen's mother 'went out for flowers'.

Wherever we lived there would be flowers, or leafy twigs at least, in cups or jars or bottles. From an old magazine she would cut pictures and let us pin them up; she draped a shawl across two nails already in the door.¹⁴⁵

In Changi, Freddy Bloom recorded:

Being civilised is our strong point. We've put up pictures, have flowers in bowls and use tablecloths. It's darned funny but we get a terrific kick out of this. How the internees have changed the jail – no longer grey and bleak. We planted papayas and shrubs . . .¹⁴⁶

Being civilised and orderly, domesticating the cells, attempting to remain cheerful, look dignified, pretty and feminine showed the women's determination to overcome and defy the dehumanising atmosphere of camp life. This did not go unnoticed by the men in Changi. A male internee, looking at the paintings and drawings that depicted the women's cells when they were sent to the 'craft fayre', wrote:

The water-colours, the colour washes, the ink and pencil sketches were proof of their skill . . . The metamorphoses carried out in bare

cells to make them into quietly satisfying homes with the addition of draperies gave a vivid glimpse of the neat orderly life over there.¹⁴⁷

Even as late as May 1945 Rowland Oakeley, another male internee in Changi, wrote in his diary: ‘How the European women manage to keep so neat and tidy passes the understanding of the mere male.’¹⁴⁸

As with the mixed camps, entertainments were a means of relaxation, group activity and ‘liberation’ for the women. Initially in Changi, Mary Thomas recalls:

There was not much music in the women’s camp because, although we had a piano it was kept in the carpenter’s shop where school drill, singing games, the Sew Sews complete with sewing machines, the daily queue for the library and the washing of clothes [took place].¹⁴⁹

Later, however, when an entertainments committee was elected, regular concerts ‘of astonishingly high standard, considering the amateur status of most of the artists, were instituted. Shakespeare and slapstick, classical music and jazz comedy and even a circus helped us for a few brief moments to forget.’¹⁵⁰ Occasionally the men’s choir and orchestra were allowed to entertain the women. Most of this stopped, however, in October 1943 after the ‘Double Tenth’ (discussed earlier). But as Iris Parfitt noted of the entertainments in Changi:

It must, I think, be granted that the way in which the camp and its entertainers have fought against odds which the outside world can never understand, has been magnificent. We may not have kept fit, but we have laughed and kept sane; we have kept beauty alive in the midst of grimness and sordidness and pleased in spite of our pain.¹⁵¹

Corry Vonk, a Dutch cabaret star, also kept beauty and pleasure alive in the grimness and sordidness of the camps where she was interned in Java. According to Ernest Hillen, a young boy in the camp at the time:

She had magic inside her. Like a naughty clownish puppet with huge blue eyes. She could and did pull her face every which way from grief to delight to shock to innocence. It made people laugh. That’s what she did, she made us laugh.¹⁵²

He said she was the first hero he recognised. With humour and pleasure a rare commodity in the camps, Corry Vonk’s ability for making internees laugh was, indeed, an heroic ‘magical’ skill and experience.

In many of the women's camps in the Dutch East Indies large gatherings were banned, they had no musical instruments and little entertainment. In spite of this, two British women, Margaret Dryburgh and Nora Chambers organised a 'vocal orchestra' consisting of thirty Dutch and British women. Miss Dryburgh, who had 'a marvellous music memory wrote down Beethoven, Chopin, and Debussy, and arranged the music for four-part choral singing'.¹⁵³ Although it was against Japanese regulations a concert was arranged for 27 December 1943 and the whole camp gathered. Just before the concert began:

A Japanese guard rushed out screaming 'HUU, HUU' and waving his bayonet. But Chambers gave the downbeat anyway and the *Largo* from Dvorak's *New World Symphony* filled the air. The guard stopped threatening the women and listened quietly throughout the concert. What the guard's private thoughts were we shall never know but the impact on the internees was enormous. Many wept, they had not expected such beauty amid the hunger, bedbugs, rats and filth that had come to characterise their lives.¹⁵⁴

Although presented as a harmless concert it had a deeper meaning for the women. Against Japanese orders it brought the whole camp together, albeit briefly. By charming and entertaining the guards it circumvented camp regulations and 'helped to renew their sense of dignity, of being stronger than the enemy'.¹⁵⁵

These occasional concerts continued for more than a year, ceasing eventually as nineteen of the thirty-strong orchestra died. The music transcripts were kept by an internee, and as a tribute to these women, the concert was reproduced by the Peninsula Women's Chorus in Australia in 1982. It has also prompted the recent making of a commercial film. Through the conception of the orchestra, the contemporary performances of the music, the later tribute performance, and through the film, the extraordinary story of women making beautiful music in the squalor of a Japanese internment camp has brought the past into the present and the women's experiences to a wider public.¹⁵⁶

Another way in which the women amused each other was through camp newspapers. The differences between the newspapers in the mixed camps and those in the women's camps are marked. As discussed in the previous chapter, the newspapers in the mixed camps were edited by men, were often an arm of the camp administration, and were full of statistics and sports activities and results of matches. Reflecting the low level of their interest, or participation, in such activities or, perhaps, the lack of priority the women gave to these

subjects, the women's camp newspapers gave little space to such matters. Rather, the women's papers have a definite domestic and feminine flavour.

Pow Wow, a newspaper created in Changi by Freddy Bloom, is full of hints on sewing, cooking, health, fashion, 'make do and mend' and entertainments. Regular items include internees' birthdays, bridge and mahjong lessons, crosswords, poetry, humour and stories. Puzzles for children also had a regular place.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, *Camp Chronicle*, typed on a scrounged machine in both Dutch and English and edited by Miss Margaret Dryburgh, was circulated in a women's camp in Irenelaan, Palembang. It was published weekly and ran to about sixteen pages, and the title carried a pen and ink drawing of a barbed wire fence. It had popular cookery and children's sections, a crossword, reports of camp activities and plenty of gossip. In December 1942 a special Christmas issue was produced, written by hand in an old exercise book – 'a pathetic thing by modern printing standards but a real work of art to its producers and readers'.¹⁵⁸ Such items seem irrelevant and flippant in the sparse world of the internment camp where even essentials were hard to find, but within the pages of the domestic, gossipy, feminine papers was a grapevine of news and practical information for survival. There was also humour and interest, and the newspapers were a means through which the women could escape the narrowness of their prison lives.¹⁵⁹

While there were obvious differences in the work, discipline and administration patterns between the women in the mixed and segregated camps, the ways in which many of them recorded their experiences show many similarities. As discussed in the previous chapter, part of the role of the male engineers in the camps was to map and survey the camp. As with any such project the men's plans were meticulous but sparse and lifeless. The women in the mixed and segregated camps, though not trained as surveyors, found other ways to map the camps and record camp life. The paintings and sketches by Mrs M. Dennis and Deirdre Fee in Lunghua are but two examples. Their drawings of the food queues, the cramped accommodation, the kitchens and the women washing at the 'trough' all record the daily drudgery of the internees in lively detail.¹⁶⁰ Mrs Dennis's sketches of the camp compound, though softened and enlivened by washing lines and trees, certainly, *map* the camp. She could possibly be accused of romanticising the picture in her drawings of one of the blocks, 'showing the flowers we had the second year', but, fully aware of Japanese censorship and possible reprisals, she notes that

she 'deliberately excluded the machine guns on the roof'.¹⁶¹ Other women's paintings and drawings depict their cells, huts, rooms or bed space, and record the overcrowding and discomfort of the camps. While capturing their experiences in this lively artistic way the women were able to find an outlet for their frustrated creativity. At the same time, the 'softness' and human detail in the drawings masked the fact that they were, actually, recording evidence of the conditions in the camps.

In Changi, Miss Iris Parfitt's sketches of the women and children are, at first sight, full of ironic humour depicting, as many of them do, the various outfits the women had adapted from their meagre wardrobes.¹⁶² This humour, however, encouraged the women to laugh at themselves, a laughter that helped overcome the embarrassment of their situation. It could be argued, therefore, that underpinning these light-hearted drawings and the cryptic remarks that went with them is a sinister record of internment experience. They show the enforced compromises the women had to make, the lowering of standards, weight loss, poverty, desperation and frustration. At the same time they show the amazing adaptation of the different women in the camp and how they, like the women in the mixed camps, were 'triumphant through all their trials and tribulations'.¹⁶³

The suddenness and the trauma of the Japanese attacks, however, meant many women only had time to pack the bare necessities before they were interned. All the evidence suggests that, unlike many of the men, fewer women took writing material into camp. The lack of writing materials and the need to care for the children and, in some cases, carrying out daily hard physical labour, meant women had little time, energy or the necessary equipment to record their experiences in conventional ways. It is also clear that the Japanese guards, particularly those in Java and Sumatra, felt threatened by the written word so books and papers were confiscated if they were found during their regular searches. Those women brave enough to keep a diary took great pains to keep them hidden, as Betty Jeffrey, an unmarried Australian nurse, explains:

I am writing this spasmodically in a child's exercise book I was able to 'obtain' but it is a tricky business. We are not allowed to have papers or do any writing. Our belongings are searched periodically, without warning, marriage certificates, birth certificates, or any personal papers at all are smartly removed and burnt by the guards. This diary lives in a small pillow at the moment.¹⁶⁴

Faced with these restrictions, the women who were determined to keep a record of their experiences, were forced to find more subtle and, perhaps, devious ways of doing so. Some women recorded the names of their fellow internees by embroidering them and other camp details on tray cloths or tablecloths. One woman in Ash Camp, Shanghai, even managed to embroider the names of some of the liberating forces on to her cloth.¹⁶⁵

Jan Ruff O'Herne, who was forced to act as a prostitute for Japanese soldiers, also found a personal way to record what had happened to her and the other women in the brothel, using the only materials available to her:

She took out the white handkerchief that one of the women had pushed into my hand the day we were taken from Ambarawa Camp . . . I got a pencil and each girl to write her name, then I wrote in the centre 26-2-44, the date we had been forcibly removed from the camp. Afterwards I embroidered over each name in a different colour. I kept this white handkerchief with the seven names on it hidden for fifty years . . . It has been one of my dearest possessions but also my most hidden, the secret evidence of the brutal crimes that had been done to us.¹⁶⁶

I had made pencil sketches of Lies, Gerda, Miep, Els, Betty and Annie. I wanted to remember these girls for always and not only by their names embroidered on the handkerchief.¹⁶⁷

This handkerchief, I believe, had a deeper significance for Jan. To use the secret evidence Jan would have to survive; the handkerchief and its evidence were, therefore, a talisman for her survival. Its connection with loved ones from the camp, its whiteness and feminine delicacy, also made it a constant and symbolic reminder of her previous life, her virginity and her family and friends at Ambarawa.

Jan did survive and eventually gave evidence at the 1992 Tokyo trials.¹⁶⁸ Then, with the help of her daughter, she traced the other women whose names she had recorded. They supported and collaborated her claims against the Japanese. She also published her story, which was made into a television programme. Thus this tiny, private, individual and feminine secret record was both a survival technique at the time, and later became public evidence of the women's experiences and a major source of information to the world.

Other women also used a similar medium to record their experiences. Marjorie Lyon and her group of nurses were determined to keep a record of their internment. Rather than a handkerchief, they

used a large silk panel on which they embroidered their names, the dates, places and buildings in which they were interned. The delicacy of the material and the 'feminine' embroidery drew attention away from the 'hard evidence' of the narrative, and meant the panel could be disguised as a decorative piece of handiwork. Being silk, the panel could, if necessary, be easily hidden and transported. Moreover, in those tropical conditions it was probably more durable than paper. The panel survived the war and remains intact long after the women who created it have died. Today this silk panel could be perceived as a delicate piece of embroidered artwork, but to the interested researcher it is also an unconventional but detailed record of where, when and with whom each of its creators was interned during the Second World War.¹⁶⁹

Particularly innovative in her embroidered recording of camp life was Daisy Sage. Daisy, known as Day, was thirty-six years old and working in the Hong Kong Education Department as a biologist when the Japanese attacked. She had also trained as an auxiliary nurse and during the battle she joined other nurses working in La Salle College, an emergency hospital on the Hong Kong mainland. While in La Salle she started a diary on scraps of paper and also began embroidering a sheet which she claimed:

Was not begun with any purpose consciously in mind, nor was it continued with any after-the-war ideas. It was simply a hand steadying, mind employing, secret thought recorder of my own.¹⁷⁰

Initially the 2 x 2.5m/8 x 7ft sheet contained just the names of the people with whom Day was interned. Eventually it was embroidered with approximately 1,100 names, signs and figures, and the signatures of many men, women and children – 'and of heroic people who will not come home'. Intermingled with the names of fellow internees are seemingly different random words, colours and symbols. Along the two vertical edges are a patchwork of coloured pieces of material, each piece or colour is 'an appliquéd multiple reminder' of someone or something in Day's life. Day herself is represented by a thin piece of muslin with a hole in it cut from her camp nightgown. On the sheet itself, running round three sides is a list of, apparently, random words. These words are, in fact, a coded 365-day calendar. The dates of the calendar, however, are not conventionally inscribed. Commencing on 8 March 1942, Day chose a word from a page in the tiny English dictionary that she owned. Sometimes randomly and

sometimes purposefully she ‘played with the word in her mind and sewed it in the sheet to mark a day’. Rather modestly, she claims:

To say it is a code is making a very simple idea sound far too grand . . . I hoped that what I was doing was not too obvious. To an enemy enquirer I was learning better English!

Against each day is a name or a sign depicting a wide range of subjects from escapes, arrival of Red Cross parcels, Allied air-raids, searches by the guards, executions, her waist measurement, birthdays of friends and family and many more.

A downward-pointing arrow is used for ‘unmentionable sorrows and worries’. A Red Cross and ‘thank-you’ were ‘stitched in heart-breaking gratitude for the first distribution of Red Cross parcels’. Colours, too, played an important role. Red silk is used when she met up with pre-war friends in camp, a gold and red circle denotes her parents’ wedding anniversary and a large gold ‘D’ marks the death of her father. A thickly embroidered ‘N’ in orange marks the day that she and a missionary were allowed out of La Salle by the Japanese to collect things from their homes. Day’s home had been looted but she found a small piece of orange silk thread which she used to record the journey. While nursing in the POW hospital she noted the names of some of the male patients using blue thread for the Navy personnel and green and brown for Army regulars and volunteers.

When not being sewn the sheet was kept beneath the blanket on her bed. If she had to move Day sewed it into her folded brown bed blanket and carried it in her Chinese basket with her few other belongings. Since its conception the sheet has fulfilled a number of functions. During internment it acted as an unconventional diary. Working on it calmed Days nerves and thinking how to record events kept her mind occupied. In the 1970s when Day wanted to write her memoirs it acted as an *aide-mémoire*. Having now outlived its maker, the sheet remains today a beautiful, remarkable, personal and private coded record of the ‘big and little things, simple and important things’ experienced by Day and the other ‘Ordinary People’ interned in Stanley Camp.¹⁷¹

A larger group of women in Changi also used embroidery to record their experiences. In this camp, there were approximately forty women whose husbands were interned in a POW camp a few miles away. No contact was allowed between the camps until Christmas 1942. The belated and, in some cases fatal, evacuation

attempts were a source of real anxiety for both the men and women. Therefore Ethel Mulvaney, the Red Cross representative,¹⁷² suggested the women made patchwork quilts, one each for the Japanese, Australian and British Red Cross, in the hope that they would be taken to the hospital in the POW camp. All interested women were given a 15cm/6in square of rice sack and asked to put 'something of themselves' on to their square. Eventually, three patchwork quilts, each containing sixty-six squares were made, each square being signed by the woman, or women, who had embroidered it. When completed, in September 1942, the quilts were first sent across to a 'craft fayre' organised by the civilian men in their section of the camp. A male diarist at the time wrote:

There is a remarkable display of talent, industry and patience at the camp exhibition . . . Among the contributions from A-Block [the women's block] are three quilts worked for presenting to the Red Cross. Each patch was sewn by a different individual – Most amusing.¹⁷³

The internee newspaper report on the 'fayre' claims:

Among the exhibits sent over by the women were three quilts made up of individual patches combined together. Each patch provided a mirror of wit and humour, tragedy and pathos and the indomitable spirit existing in the women's camp.¹⁷⁴

Reading these quilts today, the 'wit, humour and indomitable spirit' remain clearly expressed in the variety of images and messages that the women embroidered onto the squares.

The construction of these quilts follows the traditional form of the album quilt, with each square made individually and sewn together later, at what the American pioneers called an album party. Indeed many parallels can be drawn between the experiences of the pioneer women and those of the Changi women prisoners. For both groups of women, facing the challenges of an unexpectedly harsh new lifestyle, quilt-making and embroidery fulfilled many similar functions: the need for beauty in a sparse landscape; a therapeutic comfort in times of stress, with an opportunity for delicate creativity within a brutalising environment; and an affirmation of one's existence and endurance.

Many of the icons in the Changi quilts resemble the traditional flower motifs and symbols often found in early Victorian British samplers. This is not surprising when one considers the background of

many of the women prisoners in Changi, who were British, white, middle class and educated, and socialised during the 1920s and 30s, when attitudes regarding femininity and masculinity were clearly defined. Embroidery was an important part of their formal and informal education, and the expectations of these women were to bring colour, beauty, joy, pleasure, comfort and support to their husbands, families and homes. Their ability to do this confirmed their femininity both to themselves and to others, and embroidery was one avenue by which they could express this. Thrown into the alien and brutalising environment of Changi Prison, the choice of a quilt – with its echoes of domesticity, warmth and comfort, and the security of the family bedroom – reflects the continuation of that role. The pretty, fragile, traditional floral symbols in forget-me-not circles, horseshoes and sprays and the stereotypical English crinoline lady motifs, often to be found on domestic linen at that time, also reflect the women's femininity. However, significant differences are created by the distinctive environmental and historical contexts of early America and the Second World War in Singapore, where complex and intense emotions emerged in the war-torn colony.

Though separated from loved ones, home and familiar society, the Changi women did not need the quilting bee or album party to relieve isolation. In fact, in the overcrowded conditions of the prison most women craved space, peace, quiet and privacy where they could sit with their own thoughts. This need, together with the shortage of materials, and the fact that only a few squares show a joint or group effort, suggests that the majority of the Changi squares were made separately and only came together when all the squares were completed. Once sewn together, however, the quilts became greater than their separate parts and demonstrate how the women's apparent conformity to the feminine ideal masked their astute political awareness.

For example, the dedication on the reverse of each quilt expresses an impartial sympathy for the suffering of British, Australian and Japanese soldiers. At first glance, the quilt dedicated to the Japanese soldiers appears passive and appeasing, dominated as it is by floral patches and devoid of the written word. Closer inspection, however, reveals five patches with a strong Japanese flavour: the Banzai in the first square; the Japanese Garden; the Rising Sun and the embroidery representing Mount Fujiyama. The impartiality of the dedications and the choice of symbols in the Japanese quilt were no accident. The

women knew they had to act in an even-handed and conciliatory manner to achieve their aims. Their role in that patriarchal society, which taught them to please and humour without feeling demeaned or undignified, enabled them to do this, even to an enemy they considered inferior. The quilt dedicated to the Japanese soldiers was, therefore, created with astute political calculation.

The paradox of political caution and defiance hidden behind the femininity of embroidery and quilt-making is more noticeable in the quilts dedicated to both the British and Australian Red Cross organisations. Here, the flower motifs are interspersed with squares carrying clear and/or ironic quotes and mottoes as well as those of stark cold, unconventional iconography. Even some of the more fragile designs are juxtaposed, within the same square, with words or symbols indicating strength of character and fighting spirit. Moreover, the stark contrast between these softer, fragile, traditional symbols and the less conventional hard-edged ones accentuates and highlights the latter group and their depictions of the prison camp. These two quilts display an active, harsh and, by definition of that time and place, unfeminine quality.

Within the restrictions of space, materials and possible Japanese censorship the women found innovative ways of indicating where they came from and where they were. They embroidered their past and present landscapes in counterpoint to each other and signposted their conventional and traditional backgrounds. The iconography is peppered with national symbols: maps; thistles and heather for Scotland; daffodils for Wales; shamrocks and harps for Ireland; maple leaves for Canada; Union Jacks for England and a crude outline of Malaya, plotting the route taken by one woman from her home in north Malaya down to Singapore and Changi Prison. Not only were these maps and national symbols identification aids but, as the Japanese banned patriotic gestures in the camp, they were also a device for a defiant display of nationalism, patriotic fervour, cultural unity and encouragement within the embroidered pattern.

The messages indicating the conditions they were facing are among the harshest and most evocative squares in the quilts. One square is subtly and delicately covered with lines of flowers but it only takes a little imagination to see the resemblance to barbed wire. Others are more precise, intermingling their flower or heart motifs with details of cell and block number, and clearly demonstrating the ambiguous mixture of fragile and loving icons and defiant realism. Yet other squares forge an unconventional, starkly aggressive

pathway with crude depictions of the black prison bars, black brick prison wall, a dark cell with a figure cowering in the corner and the words from Robert Palmer's poem, 'How long dear Lord, how long?'.¹⁷⁵ And finally, there is the prison itself with the Japanese flag flying above it. The unconventional nature of these squares, the overt darkness emphasised by the use of black thread, as opposed to the colourful thread of the other squares, indicates a realistic acknowledgement of themselves as prisoners, undisguised by any attempt to prettify the picture, but I think these squares are open to other possible interpretations. Was it just a clear way of saying 'we are captives', or were the women who produced the prison squares so overwhelmed by their situation that they could not see beyond their present dark conditions? Or, did some of the women find in this new environment, in which they were unprotected and unconstrained by the patriarchal colonial society, a mode of expression hitherto denied them? Was there a paradoxical personal freedom of expression within the confinement of the prison camp?

On the other hand, convention and tradition are certainly not challenged by the male figures in the squares. They all depict real or mythological heroes – Sir Francis Drake; St George and the Dragon; the cheerful tommy with his defiant grin and thumbs-up gesture; the hunting, shooting, fishing, skiing British male; the Scottish piper in full regalia. In this case, I believe, the women were conscious that the lost battle, the surrender and the final humiliation of their internment would have seriously undermined wartime perceptions of the masculine ideal. These symbolic heroic figures were a loud and clear ego-boosting message of reassurance and encouragement both for themselves and their menfolk. Equally reassuring, and equally unreal, was the representation of women. The few depictions of the feminine form are either angels or the ultra-feminine crinoline lady. These representations were far from the true picture of the women 'manfully' struggling to overcome the harsh brutalising conditions of the prison. The depictions of mythological male heroes and ultra-feminine women tell an idealistic story which was very far from reality. But it was an ideal the women wanted to cling to and, significantly, wanted the men to believe.

Nostalgia and homesickness are recurrent themes. The English country garden, lambs gambolling in a British landscape, snow-capped New Zealand mountains, the green hills of Ireland, a sitting room with a three-piece suite with the quotation 'thoughts of home'. Home is where they longed to be and their depictions of home, no

matter where that was, are in soft and colourful contrast to the landscape and conditions the women now faced. The dream of flight and freedom from these conditions manifests itself in the birds, butterflies and other winged images in the quilts. Elizabeth Ennis's ship with the salutation 'Homeward Bound' encapsulates the wishes of all the women. Religious motifs are few, which I think is surprising bearing in mind that several of the women were from missionary or church backgrounds. Nationalism and patriotism, it seems, were the religion of the day. The dominant rallying cry, the British Empire, is much in evidence in the mottoes and quotations – 'Wales for Ever', 'It's a long way to Tipperary', 'Bonnie Scotland for Aye', 'There'll always be an England as long as Scotland stands'.¹⁷⁶

If any of these records and messages embroidered by the individual and groups of women in both the mixed and segregated camps had been written and kept in a conventional way they would, undoubtedly, have been confiscated and destroyed, and the women seriously disciplined. But, as Rozsika Parker claims in her book, *The Subversive Stitch*:

Embroidery and a stereotype of femininity have become collapsed into one another, characterised as mindless, decorative and delicate; like the icing on the cake, good to look at, adding taste and status but devoid of significant content.¹⁷⁷

Under the guise, therefore, of a mindless, decorative and delicate feminine activity, all these women, both individually and in groups, were able to obscure the significant and detailed record of their internment experiences. Moreover, it is through this unconventional source material that we are able to 'hear' the women's voices and access the individual and collective agency and energy of some of those women interned in the Far East during the Second World War.

In the mixed camps the presence of the men helped the women maintain their sense of femininity and enabled them to work in partnership to aid their survival. In the segregated camps the absence of men meant that, in addition to the supportive roles, women were forced to assume traditional male roles. Traditional femininity was, therefore, more difficult to maintain and greater adaptation was called for. In these camps the women demonstrated that they were able successfully to combine and bridge the social boundaries of the traditionally perceived 'heroic' male and the weak, passive female world. The women administrated the camps, they were the labour force, the entertainers and the carers. At the same time, they filled the

domestic and maternal roles. They were prepared to use physical force or subtle forms of resistance if they were threatened. When they felt dehumanised or defeminised by discipline or hard work, they found ways to rehumanise and refeminise themselves. When faced with the opportunity to communicate with the men, many deliberately sent messages that would restore the damaged egos and virility. In so doing, in spite of the conditions they faced, the women in the segregated camps subtly endorsed and upheld traditional gender roles of that time and place. All the women, however, in both types of camps demonstrated that femininity and heroism were far from contradictory in the Far Eastern internment camps during the Second World War.

NOTES

- 1 James Young, 1993, Preface, p.viii.
- 2 Hillen, 1994, p. 115.
- 3 Van Velden, 1963.
- 4 Letter dated 21 May 1995, from Elizabeth Ennis to Lynette Ramsey Silver in Australia. I would like to thank Ms Silver for a copy of this correspondence.
- 5 Among these important exceptions is the UK television series 'Tenko', based on several autobiographies of women interned in the Far East during the Second World War.
- 6 In 1995 the Changi museum displayed only one book by a woman internee and one small poster of the Changi quilts made by the women. All other exhibits were by male POWs. However, in 2002 the museum was rebuilt and relocated and the directors commissioned a group of Asian women to replicate the quilts made by the women in Changi. On 1 March 2003 a moving ceremony marked the opening of the 'Women and War' section of the museum and the unveiling of the two quilts made by the Asian women. The museum now also includes many more artefacts made by the civilian internees.
- 7 A common comment from most interviewees. This kind of feminine modesty has a long history. Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter; Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 131, writes: 'The genteel house-keeper never went about her work with fanfare and bustle, but used art to conceal her industry . . . Successful female management was subtle, possibly too subtle for the proper acknowledgement of posterity.'
- 8 Fenton Huie, 1992, Acknowledgements.
- 9 Elizabeth Tonkin, 1992, pp. 94–5. Tonkin claims that 'our sense of identity is bound up in objects'.
- 10 According to available statistics well over two-thirds of the women interned in Stanley, Changi and Santo Tomas were married. The vast majority of these were classed as housewives. The majority of single women were teachers or nurses. According to Jeffries, 1949, pp. 151–2, between 1922 and 1943, the whole of the Colonial Service recruited eighty-three women for educational posts, seventy-two for medical posts and eight for miscellaneous; 2,189 were recruited as nursing sisters. Margaret Strobel, 1991, p. 30, claims that women in the Colonial Health Service still faced discrimination. They were forced to retire earlier than men, they were the first to be fired and last hired in tight financial times and were employed primarily as welfare workers because African and Indian women refused to be examined by men.
- 11 Janice Brownfoot argues: 'The British Empire was a masculine world of power, authority and control in which women played little or no formal part. Their primary roles were wives and mothers in the traditional spheres of home family and social life.' 'Sisters under

- the Skin', in Mangan, 1990, p. 46. This is not to deny the opportunities women had for *informal* activities in various areas involving women and children.
- 12 Strobel, 1991, claims in her introduction: 'European women carved out a space amid the options available to them: options for the most part created by imperialism and limited by male dominance. From the view point of the dominant ideology, they were the inferior sex within the superior race.'
 - 13 Jeffries, 1949, p. 156.
 - 14 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 10.
 - 15 Jeffries, 1949, p. 155.
 - 16 Hilary Callan, Introduction to Callan and Ardener (eds), *The Incorporated Wife* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 2.
 - 17 Emily G. Bradley, *Dearest Priscilla: Letters to the Wife of a Colonial Officer* (London: Parrish, 1950), pp. 125–6, and Beverley Gartrell, 'Colonial wives: Villains or Victims' in Callan and Ardener (eds), 1984, p. 170. Emily Bradley was an experienced official's wife in Uganda and the book was by way of advice to young colonial wives setting out for Africa.
 - 18 Freda Gwilliam in Joan Alexander, *Voices and Echoes Tales from Colonial Women* (London: Quartet Books, 1983), p. 100. Margaret Strobel, 1991, p. 11, also claims: 'A wife who did not act in the manner appropriate to her husband's rank upset the entire community by disrupting the social order upon which European society was based.'
 - 19 Willoughby, 1943, p. 30.
 - 20 Kaminski, 2000, p. 19. She also argues in her discussion on the American women in pre-war Philippines that 'Middle-class American women in the Philippines experienced a life-style virtually unattainable for their counterparts back in the States'.
 - 21 Cogan, 2000, p. 16.
 - 22 Ann Stoler has written various articles on this subject in this area including, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories', in *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 31:1, 1989, pp. 134–61; 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial South East Asia', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34.3, 1992, pp. 515–51; and 'Mixed Bloods and the cultural politics of European identity in Colonial Southeast Asia', in Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bikhu Parekh (eds), *The Decolonisation of the Imagination* (London: Zed Books, 1995), pp. 128–48. Margaret Strobel, 1991, p. 73.
 - 23 Herman, 1992, Preface IX–X.
 - 24 Ruff O'Herne, 1994, p. 10.
 - 25 Christopher Harwich, *Red Dust, Memories of the Uganda Police 1935–1955* (London: Vincent Stuart, 1961), pp. 5–6. In Beverley Gartrell, 'Colonial wives: Villains or Victims', in Callan and Ardener, 1984, pp. 165–85.
 - 26 Jane Haggis, 'White women and colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history', in Clair Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 58.
 - 27 Elizabeth Gale diary, p. 42.
 - 28 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 72.
 - 29 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 13.
 - 30 IWM 90/2/1. Mrs I. Duck was first interned in Yu Yuen Road and then Lunghua Camp, Shanghai.
 - 31 Celia Lucas, 1988, pp. 11–13.
 - 32 Abkhazi, 1995, pp. 51–2.
 - 33 Interview in October 1991 with Peggy McMahon who was sixteen years of age when interned in Stanley Camp with her family.
 - 34 Private diary of female internee from Stanley, p. 21. Copy in possession of the author.
 - 35 Bloom, 1980, p. 8.
 - 36 Bloom, 1980, p. 10.
 - 37 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 51. On display at 'A Patchwork of Internment' exhibition at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, 2001, was an anonymously embroidered tray cloth depicting this walk.
 - 38 Ronny Herman, 1992, p. 117.
 - 39 An Jacobs, *Ontwortleden* (Holland: Uitgeverij W van Hoeve, 1947), pp. 63–6. I am grateful to Elizabeth Macnamara for a copy of her unpublished translation of this book. I am

using the page numbers in the translation copy which do not coincide with those in the original version. A copy of the translated version can be found at the IWM and The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation.

- 40 Private diary by a female internee from Stanley. I am indebted to this internee for sending me a copy of this diary. And Mabel Redwood Memoirs, *It was Like This* (Frinton: Barbara Anslow, 2001), p. 120.
- 41 Abkhazi, 1995, pp. 53 and 62.
- 42 Mrs Baskerville in Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. I, p. 33.
- 43 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 50.
- 44 Hong Kong Public Records office (HKPRO). Phylis Ayrton private papers, H.K.M.S. No. 72 (hereafter, Ayrton papers).
- 45 Kaminski, 2000, p. 57. Cogan's research shows that in Baguio, one of the smaller camps in the Philippines, the women were initially not allowed to vote which caused some tension and conflict. Cogan, 2000, pp. 126–8.
- 46 Dr Whithoff was a missionary doctor on her way to India when war broke out. She was, as far as I can tell, the only woman doctor in Santo Tomas.
- 47 Kaminski, 2000, pp. 98–100. Some of these military nurses later moved to Los Banos. For more information on the army and navy nurses in the Philippines during the Second World War, see Norman, 1999.
- 48 Peggy McMahon, October 1991.
- 49 Interview with Vivienne Lock and correspondent from Stanley Camp, February 1992.
- 50 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 108.
- 51 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 93.
- 52 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 93.
- 53 Source, Alice Franklin Bryant, *The Sun was Darkened* (Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1947), p. 153, cited in Cogan, 2000, p. 236.
- 54 RHL, MSS. Ind. Ocn. s110. K. Anderson, 'Notes on Kindergarten and Transition classes for children in Stanley Internment Camp Hong Kong', p. 4.
- 55 Stevens, 1946, pp. 185–6.
- 56 Kaminski, 2000, p. 88.
- 57 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. I, pp. 32–3.
- 58 Ayrton Papers, Minutes of British Women's Group, 23 October 1942.
- 59 Alice Franklin Bryant, 1947, p. 155, cited in Cogan, 2000, p. 233.
- 60 Redwood, in Emerson papers.
- 61 Unpublished private diary, 3 June 1942 and 8 August 1942. Copy in possession of author.
- 62 Stericker papers, p. 2. Chapter VII, Domestic Affairs.
- 63 Celia Lucas, 1988, p. 102.
- 64 Kaminski, 2000, p. 114.
- 65 A poem composed by P. Cresswell who died in Stanley. This poem was one of many published as a memorial in the camp newspaper, the *Stanley Journal*, summer 1943, p. 6.
- 66 Sewell, 1946, p. 77.
- 67 Sewell, 1946, p. 102.
- 68 Celia Lucas, 1988, p. 103.
- 69 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 97.
- 70 Barbara Anslow, 2001, p. 141.
- 71 Interview with woman from Stanley Camp, 21 February 1992.
- 72 Unpublished private diary, 1 June 1942. Copy in possession of author.
- 73 Correspondence with author from ex-internee, February 1992.
- 74 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 79.
- 75 Stericker papers, p. 17. Chapter VII, Domestic Matters.
- 76 Stericker papers, p. 11. Chapter VII, Domestic Affairs.
- 77 Correspondence with female internee from Stanley, 6 February 1992.
- 78 Ayrton papers.
- 79 Sewell, 1946, p. 113.
- 80 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 66.
- 81 Stericker papers, Chapter VII, Domestic Matters, pp. 11–12.
- 82 Correspondence with the author from ex-internee, February 1992.
- 83 Abkhazi, 1995, p. 57.
- 84 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. I, p. 154. 'Hospital Report for the first six months'. Stevens, 1946,

- 'War Babies' p. 485. According to Stevens thirty-seven babies were born during 1942, fourteen in 1943, fourteen in 1944 and two at the beginning of 1945.
- 85 Dr N.C. Macleod in Dr P.S. Selwyn-Clarke 'Report on Medical and Health Conditions in Hong Kong, Appendix 1' p. 19, 1946, London, HMSO. There is some dispute over the number of births. Statistics compiled by Selwyn-Clarke state fifty-one, but G. Emerson cites forty-six and this is supported by the Revd Sandbach. Emerson 'Stanley Internment Camp', p. 177; IWM. Accession 004784/08 Revd Joseph Sandbach Transcript, p. 70. Records show that of the fifty-one babies born in Stanley twenty-two were born in 1942 (of whom twenty were conceived prior to internment), ten in 1943, thirteen in 1944 and six up to August 1945.
- 86 Correspondence between the author and two separate women internees in February 1992.
- 87 Unpublished diary 1941–43 by Alun Thomas in Stanley, p. 35. I am grateful to Dr Mark Erooga for a copy of this diary.
- 88 Peggy McMahon, October 1991.
- 89 Sandbach, p. 33.
- 90 Stevens, 1946, p. 227.
- 91 Gimson diary, 6 October 1943.
- 92 Gimson diary, 11 November 1944; also HKPRO, HKRS 163/DS1/80, discussions between Gimson and Dr Valentine, Camp Medical Officer, 15 November 1944.
- 93 Gimson diary, 11 November 1944; also HKPRO, HKRS 163/DS1/80. Surgical Board meeting between camp doctors, clergy and Gimson, 24 March 1945.
- 94 Kaminski, 2000, p. 139.
- 95 Kaminski, 2000, pp. 139–40.
- 96 According to Cogan, by the last year of internment in Santo Tomas, 80 per cent of the women had stopped menstruating.
- 97 Bloom, 1980, p. 38.
- 98 Margaret MacMillan, *Women of the Raj* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), p. 125, also in Dina Wardi's fascinating study of children born immediately after the holocaust, *Memorial Candles, Children of the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 26, she argues that the birth of children immediately after the holocaust became a symbol of victory over the Nazis and that, . . . they also became 'symbols of everything that the parents had lost in the course of their lives'.
- 99 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 107.
- 100 Russell Braddon, Foreword to Fenton Huie, 1992.
- 101 Fenton Huie, 1992, p. 32. An Jacobs, 1947, p. 32, records in one of the camps in Sumatra a male doctor was brought to the women's camp because so many were ill but he was not allowed in the camp he had to sit between the barbed wire and the outer fence and women had to walk or be carried to him for him to treat them.
- 102 'Comfort' women was a euphemism for forced prostitution.
- 103 Hillen, 1994, p. 125.
- 104 Daphne Jackson, 1989, p. 67.
- 105 Catherine Kenny, 1986, p. 55.
- 106 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 56.
- 107 Marjorie Lyon's unpublished private diary, p. 1. I am indebted to John Lyon (nephew of Marjorie) for sending me selected pages from Dr Lyon's diary.
- 108 Lyon's diary, p. 4.
- 109 Mary Thomas, 1983, pp. 44–6. Cicely Williams was later awarded the American Medical Association Joseph Golberger Award for outstanding contributions to clinical nutrition. For her biography, see Ann Dally, *Cicely: the Story of a Doctor* (London: Gollancz, 1968).
- 110 Lyon's diary, Friday 11 September.
- 111 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 93.
- 112 AWM PR89/59. Letter, 4 September 1945, from Helen Beck to Colonel Stahle, pp. 4–5.
- 113 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 96.
- 114 Gimson diary, Foreword, p. 5.
- 115 Beck to Stahle, pp. 4–5.
- 116 Mary Thomas, 1983, pp. 95–7.
- 117 Ann Dally, 1968, p. 176.
- 118 Beck to Stahle, 4 September 1945.
- 119 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 91.

- 120 Herman, 1992, pp. 119–20.
- 121 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 54.
- 122 Fenton Huie, 1992, p. 22.
- 123 Herman, 1992, p. 123.
- 124 Jessie Simons, 1954, pp. 73–4.
- 125 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 107 and Herman, 1992, p. 134.
- 126 Lyon's diary, p. 7.
- 127 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 32. According to Kaminski, 2000, p. 145, one woman in Baguio Camp in the Philippines was approached by one of the Japanese officials to provide 'waitresses' at a local hotel. This was always assumed to mean to act as prostitutes. The woman apparently stalled the Japanese by saying the decision would have to go before the men's committee. She then told the younger attractive women to 'work with or near the children all day and to make themselves as unattractive as possible' – a strategy that proved successful and the Japanese dropped his demands.
- 128 For more details of the comfort women used by the Japanese see George Hicks, 1995. Owing to the records being destroyed, the death of many women and the unwillingness of others to come forward, it will probably never be known how many women were used in this way. However, what evidence there is indicates that among the Western women the Dutch women interned in Java were the major victims. A Military Tribunal was held in 1948 in which details of thirty-five Dutch women taken from camps in Semarang and Ambarawa came to light. George Hicks quotes internee Keetje Ruizeveld as claiming at least 100 Dutch women who had been forced to become comfort women were released in a camp in Kota Paris towards the end of the war. In her discussion of the comfort women, Utsumi Aiko claims that a report put together in 1994 by the Dutch government, claims 'between 200–300 women of European origin were made to work in brothels run by the Japanese army', p. 195.
- 129 Ruff O'Herne, 1994, p. 91.
- 130 Fenton Huie, 1992, p. 35.
- 131 Fenton Huie, 1992, pp. 53–4.
- 132 Fenton Huie, 1992, pp. 23–4.
- 133 The 'bodily inscription' of shaving heads as female punishment was, as Joy Damousi shows, by no means new and was not unique to the Japanese. In the nineteenth century African American female slaves had their heads shaved as a punitive act and rebellious convict women in Australia were subject to the same treatment 'as a lasting sign of punishment and an outward sign of moral corruption and weak character', Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 86. In Auschwitz the women not only suffered hair shaving, sometimes all body hair was removed. Sarah Nomberg-Przytyk in Anna Hardman, 'Representations of the Holocaust in Women's Testimony', in Andrew Leak and George Paizis (eds), *The Holocaust and the Text* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), p. 56.
- 134 Fenton Huie, 1992, pp. 53–4.
- 135 Fenton Huie, 1992, p. 24.
- 136 Details of the men in previous chapter. At the beginning, Freddy and Cicely were each imprisoned separately but both shared cells with other men. Later the two women were put together. They were imprisoned for several months and although not subjected to the physical torture, they were questioned, starved and verbally and psychologically abused. For more details of those arrested in the Double Tenth see, among other material, Joseph Kennedy, 1987. Also in Ann Dally, 1968.
- 137 Ann Dally, 1968, pp. 217–18.
- 138 Bloom, 1980, p. 74.
- 139 Hillen, 1994, p. 108.
- 140 Bloom, 1980, pp. 9 and 37.
- 141 Gladys Tompkins, *Three Wasted Years, Women in Changi Prison* (Wellington, NZ: private publication, 1977), p. 81.
- 142 Iris Parfitt, *Jail-Bird Jottings. The Impressions of a Singapore Internee* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaya: No publisher, probably 1947), p. 24.
- 143 IWM. Dr M.E Hopkins papers. Fatigue Officers Report, Thursday, 17 June 1943.
- 144 Herman, 1992, p. 134.

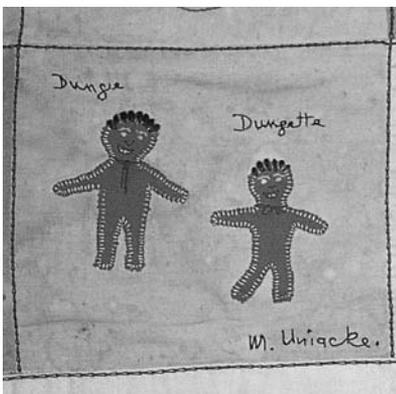
- 145 Hillen, 1994, p. 25.
- 146 Bloom, 1980, 4 April 1943, p. 61.
- 147 *Changi Guardian*, 7 September 1942.
- 148 Rowland Oakeley, 'Internment in Singapore 1942–45'. Mr Oakeley was thirty-three years old, a member of the Malayan Civil Service and was newly married (1940). His wife and twin daughters left Singapore at the end of 1941 just after the initial Japanese attacks. The 'diary' was typed on toilet paper in camp and retyped by him in 1990–1. It 'appears as originally written apart from some additional explanatory notes'. I am grateful to Mr Oakeley for a copy of the account.
- 149 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 112.
- 150 Iris Parfitt, 1947, Preface.
- 151 Iris Parfitt, 1947, Preface.
- 152 Hillen, 1994, pp. 115–16.
- 153 AWM 419/74/27. PR 82/79. Helen Colijn papers. Copies of music and details of concert in camp and later by Peninsula Women's Chorus.
- 154 Helen Colijn papers.
- 155 Helen Colijn in her introduction to the concert given by Peninsula Women's Chorus in February and March 1982. James Scott suggests that 'the political symbolism of most forms of personal domination carries with it the implicit assumption that subordinates gather only when they are authorised to do so'. James C. Scott, 1990, p. 61.
- 156 A film called 'Paradise Road', directed by Australian Bruce Beresford and based on the story of the women's orchestra was premiered in America in April 1997.
- 157 Several copies of *Pow Wow* were typed by Freddy on various pieces of scrap paper and circulated around the women's camp. It ceased on 10 October 1943 when Freddy was arrested by the Japanese secret police. There are a set of papers in the Imperial War Museum in Freddy Bloom papers.
- 158 *Camp Chronicle* was a newspaper typed in Irenelaan Camp with a Dutch and British editorial board. It only lasted a short while. Simons, 1954, pp. 44–7.
- 159 Jean Duncombe in her review of Melanie Tebbut, *Women's Talk? A Social History of 'Gossip' in Working-class Neighbourhoods 1880–1960* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995) in *Oral History*, Spring 1997, p. 83.
- 160 Thirteen of Mrs Dennis's sketches are in the Imperial War Museum in the Civilian Internment in Far East file.
- 161 Caption in Mrs Dennis's own handwriting attached to one of her drawings.
- 162 Many of Iris's drawings appeared in *Pow Wow*, Changi women's camp newspaper and are now compiled in *Jail-Bird Jottings*. The book is dedicated to 'All who died for Malaya and some who stayed – especially – my long-suffering cell mate J. Mc.L.W. and Chownsie'.
- 163 H.B. Cheesman, Foreword to Parfitt, 1947.
- 164 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 37.
- 165 Many of these only came to public attention during 'A Patchwork of Internment' Exhibition held at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol, from September to December 2001. During the run of the exhibition, that was specifically related to civilian internment in the Far East, a number of visiting ex-internees showed staff members embroideries and drawings either made by themselves or their relatives in the camps.
- 166 Ruff O'Herne, 1994, pp. 90–1.
- 167 Ruff O'Herne, 1994, p. 105. There are a number of other embroideries made by the women in the camps in Java and Sumatra. Some are in the AWM in Australia, others in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and in the Museon, the Hague, Holland. For a discussion on patchwork skirts made and worn by Dutch women after the war, see Jolande Withuis, 'Patchwork Politics in the Netherlands, 1946–50. Women, Gender and the World War II Trauma', *Women's History Review*, 33, 1994.
- 168 In December 1992 there was an International Public Hearing in Tokyo, supported by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations and by Tokyo-based human rights citizens groups at which Jan and other 'comfort' women gave evidence.
- 169 This panel is with Dr Lyon's family in Australia.
- 170 IWM. P.324. Mrs Day Joyce, 'Ordinary People: The Sheet'. After the war Daisy Sage went to Norway to recuperate. On her return she worked as a warden at Sheffield University. While in Sheffield she met and married bullion dealer Eric Joyce. In the 1970s, with the aid of her scrap-paper diary and the sheet Mrs Joyce wrote her memoirs, a moving account

of life in Stanley Camp from 1942 to 1945. In 1975 she donated the memoir to the IWM in the hope that it would eventually be published. The sheet itself is also held at the IWM. It is thought that Day died of cancer in the late 1970s and that her husband predeceased her.

- 171 Day Joyce memoirs. 'Ordinary People'. For a more detailed decoding of the sheet see my guide to the sheet lodged at the IWM along with the sheet.
- 172 Mrs Mulvaney's husband was a doctor interned in the POW camp in Changi.
- 173 Diary of Tom Kitching, 6 September 1942. I am grateful to ex-internee Mr Harry Hesp for this information.
- 174 *Changi Guardian* No. 117, 7 September 1942.
- 175 The first two lines of this poem are very relevant to the internees' situation. 'How long, O Lord, how long, before the flood/ Of crimson-welling carnage shall abate?'
- 176 For more details and analysis of the Changi Quilts, see Bernice Archer, 'A Patchwork of Internment,' *History Today* Vol. 47 (7), July 1997.
- 177 Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch* (London: Women's Press, 1984), p. 6. When discussing the important role of middle-class women in running the household in the early/mid 1800s, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall in their book *Family Fortunes* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 387, also found that 'Although written evidence is scarce, one of the great silences about women's lives was undoubtedly filled with needlework . . . The "work" boxes and sewing chests listed in local inventories, and the samplers, quilts and other surviving artefacts speak forcefully for what is seldom said in words'.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO INTERNMENT



*The eve of internment was the last time, I think, that I didn't feel at all grown up.*¹

*We children experienced a wonderful sense of freedom with loads of time to idle away, this sounds somewhat paradoxical as we were all prisoners.*²

*The boundaries of childhood are inconstant and contradictory. Although in any culture or society childhood is ultimately defined in relation to adulthood, what has been seen as appropriate, at what age, for which children, has varied between societies, within them and over time. Even the pace of physical and psychological development has differed. Conventions based on gender difference intersect with those based on age, and both operate within larger socio-political structures, so that much also depends on the specific situation of child and adult.*³

Over 40,000 Western children were interned by the Japanese in the Far East during the Second World War. Of these, 37,145 were interned in the areas covered by this study, 1,500 in China, 315 in Hong Kong, 330 in Singapore and 1,300 in the Philippines. Reflecting the lack of evacuation policy in the Dutch East Indies, there were 4,700 interned in Sumatra and 29,000 in Java.⁴ These statistics include both boys and girls, from babes in arms, or those born in internment, to sixteen-year-olds. In all the camps, the absence of servants, amahs and governesses meant the older children had to assume new responsibilities for their day-to-day lives. However, as the experiences of the children were influenced by age, gender and location, there were significant differences in the level of that responsibility and the subsequent experiences and survival of the children.

This chapter focuses on children interned in the sexually segregated camps of Changi in Singapore, and Bloemenkamp, Tjihapit, Ambarawa, Grogol and Cimahi in Java and Sumatra. The mixed camps covered are Lunghua in Shanghai, Stanley in Hong Kong and Santo Tomas in Manila. The women's section of Changi held approximately 330 children and 1,000 women; Stanley had 300 children to 2,500 adults; in Santo Tomas, there were approximately 400 children and 3,200 adults; and in Lunghua there were approximately 300 children and 1,700 adults. In the camps in Shanghai and Hong Kong the children shared the accommodation with the men and women and, where possible, families were kept together. In Santo Tomas, the men and women had separate dormitories but during the day men,

women and children associated freely with each other. In Changi the women and children were completely segregated from the men. As the statistics show, the children in these camps were greatly outnumbered by the adults. As a result the children were able to continue their education, had their health carefully monitored and were shielded from a great deal of hard work and anxiety.

Thousands of children were interned in Java and Sumatra but the available statistics do not give separate figures for the children and women in each camp. We do know, however, that in these camps the adults did not outnumber the children in the same way as they did in the mixed camps mentioned above. Research also shows that the Japanese expected, and the conditions dictated, that girls and boys from the age of eleven or twelve carried out the hard physical labour alongside the women. Some boys only remained with their mothers until they were eleven, twelve or thirteen years of age (the age differed over time and place).⁵ On reaching the designated age they were sent to men's or boys' camps where they were expected to take care of themselves and work alongside the men. The contrasting experiences between the children in the mixed camps and those in the sexually segregated camps in Java and Sumatra are explored in this chapter.

References to the children are made in official internment reports and other source material but, unlike the adults, the children interned in the Far East did not write official reports or keep camp newspapers and, sadly, few children's diaries or artefacts have survived.⁶ Consequently, the children's voices are rarely heard. To access the children's experiences, this chapter makes extensive use of oral testimonies and recent autobiographies. My research focuses mainly on boys and girls between seven and fourteen years of age when interned. This is an important age group as, unlike the youngest children, these seven- to fourteen year-olds still had strong memories of colonial life, but were less experienced and more impressionable and adaptable than the older children. Significantly, as far as my research was concerned, they were also still considered children at the end of the war.

Although their vividly remembered internment camp experiences are tempered by time they, nevertheless, confirm that internment was a major influence on the lives of these ex-internees and, for many, it remains a reference point today. At best, internment created ambiguity about the role of children; at worst it eroded perceptions of traditional childhood completely. This resulted in conflict and confusion for both adults and children during and after internment. In the post-war world the children complained that their parents: 'Treated us as

they had left us a couple of years before – that was the clash. They just wanted it normal again.⁷ That 'clash' – greater at times, smaller at others – permeates this chapter.

The chapter argues that, as far as the adults were concerned, the children fulfilled four main functions in internment. They were a motivation for survival; they created an air of normality; many gave essential physical support; and all acted as a barometer by which the adults measured their success or failure to retain control and sustain Western values and colonial culture. As far as the children were concerned, internment completely changed their understanding of the world. They tolerated and, at times, reflected certain adult Western values, but when left to their own devices colonial culture and Western values were not reference points for them. Their instinctive, immediate and spontaneous responses reflect how they used a variety of influences to survive the camp environment and how, in turn, the camp environment developed and shaped them. The children's camp experiences undermined received ideas of a dependent, protected and restricted colonial childhood, and their sudden independence and 'freedom' challenged all aspects of the colonial lifestyle. These were changes the adults found difficult to accept, but the children found impossible to ignore.

The chapter is in three sections. First, it outlines the physical and social lifestyle of colonial children prior to internment. Secondly, through their visual snapshots and cameos of the battles, it demonstrates how the reality of war imposed itself on their lives and began to change the boundaries of colonial childhood. Thirdly, the chapter compares the children's experiences in different camps covered by this study. It shows how, and to what extent, internment forced different children to endure variable levels of hardship and overcome a range of difficulties.

PRE-INTERNMENT

Prior to the Japanese attacks and their subsequent victories, the boundaries of the colonial childhood of the children in this study were clearly defined. They were moulded according to the middle-class colonial social mores of that time and place and were, in general, protected and restricted, materially rich, comfortable and, to a greater or lesser extent, spoiled. James Ballard, son of a British cotton mill owner in Shanghai, lived in 'a typical stockbroker's Tudor house with

a very English exterior and American interior, five bathrooms, air conditioning, a squash court sized kitchen and pantry'.⁸ In Hong Kong, the nine-year-old Dorothy Hovey, daughter of the colonial government's Chief Pharmacist, lived a 'typical Far-Eastern lifestyle: a large flat, and servants'. Another young girl 'literally dropped clothes and expected, when we wanted them, they would be in the cupboard – clean . . . I don't think I ever cooked anything, I don't think I ever boiled water'.⁹ In the Philippines, Robin Prising, the son of an American tobacco exporter, recalls his life in Manila as:

Complacent and comfortable, cared for and protected in every way . . . a life of pearl egg-spoons, sterling silver and servants . . . Money was not a problem.¹⁰

Life on a colonial tea plantation in the Dutch East Indies is remembered by young Ernest Hillen:

Everyday before lunch all the white families strolled up to the swimming pool. It was a choice spot on the plantation . . . On weekends we took picnics and spent almost the entire day there.¹¹

Physically comfortable it may have been but colonial childhood was socially constraining, and isolating. 'Like most British children in pre-war Shanghai,' claims James Ballard, 'I had met few adult males other than my father's friends . . . I was always chauffeur-driven in my father's American car and accompanied by a nanny.'¹² Similarly, Robin Prising's companions during his first eight years in Manila were always 'grown-ups: amahs, yayas or governesses'.¹³ Particularly isolated was Mary-June Pettifer, the daughter of a British Intelligence Officer working with the Americans in Manila. Home, to her and her younger brother, was the nursery.

The nursery was where we lived. There was a time when my mother would come and play with us and there would be time with my father which was VERY precious – at weekends when we would all go off on a picnic. We didn't have any kind of normal life as we would know it today. We'd have our meals in the nursery and you'd look down and see the grown-ups. It was a very, very different life.¹⁴

Opportunities for socialising with other children came when the children went to school, but for many colonial children this meant more separation and segregation. School was considered essential,

by the adults, not only for acquiring academic knowledge, but also for the continuity of 'common patterns of behaviour and values'.¹⁵ To this end, many older British children were sent 'home' to England to continue a traditional British education in boarding schools. For all those remaining in the colonies – whether educated at home, in day or boarding school – Western-style education was considered perhaps even more important by the adults, to counteract the Asian influence.¹⁶ School discipline was strict, uniforms were worn, a Western curriculum was followed, and the large majority of schools were sexually segregated. The Cathedral School in Shanghai, where Neil Begley was educated, was 'very proper and very British as were all the students. The teachers were all English and the curriculum was laid down by Cambridge University.'¹⁷ In Chefoo, in China, where David Michell boarded in the 1930s:

Children of missionaries and a few sons and daughters of business people lived and studied together at the Boys' School, and the Girls' School, getting a truly Christian education for body, mind and spirit. And although children from many Western countries attended, most of the teachers were British and the system was predominantly after the English order . . . Many of the teachers were brave single women who had come out as missionaries . . . The teachers didn't give the impression of being sensitive to the struggle to cope without our parents . . . The true-blue British stiff-upper-lip approach tended to come through. For any of us the luxury of a good cry was discouraged as far as I can remember.¹⁸

Although a number of schools in the Philippines were integrated racially, many of the American children in Manila were sent to board at the Episcopalian-run Brent School in Baguio which 'restricted its membership to Caucasians'.¹⁹ Of the Franciscan primary school, in Bodjong, Java, Jan Ruff-O'Herne wrote: 'Subjects, like history and language were taught by the nuns. Religious education, church history and theology were given by the Jesuit priests from the seminary.'

The older children moved on to:

The High School at Semarang [which] was co-educational, a colonial style building with large pillars and wide steps, tall native trees offered plenty of shade in the yard. They were happy days without a care in the world, a sheltered environment.²⁰

While these young children were being socialised with Western cultural values by parents, church and school they were, at the same

time, influenced by local cultures. Much of this came through their close proximity to, dependence on and socialising with servants. Western children were, of course, conscious of the different smells, customs and language of the local population but, in contrast to many of the adults, the children were comfortable and felt at home and more relaxed in the informality of servants' quarters. Neil Begley, in Shanghai, recalls:

My amah smelled like a Chinese, they all smelled the same, not like we 'Foreigners' and, colour apart, I thought that smell was what made them different from us. Taking a nipple in my lips I would suck her warm milk while she ran her fingers through my hair crooning haunting Chinese lullabies. She spoke only Chinese so I was more comfortable with Mandarin than I was with English and quite at home in the servants quarters . . . My mother would have been horrified if she'd seen me.²¹

Jan Ruff-O'Herne, in Java, wrote:

We children loved to spend time with her [our cook] in the kitchen, squatting next to her on the floor, watching her crush and grind the 'bumbu' of chillies, coriander, cumin and other spices. She let us take turns at turning the handle of the mincer and fanning the open charcoal stove. In Imah's domain we licked many saucepans and scooped our fingers into many of her delicious dishes . . .²²

Some children actually envied and coveted the natural lifestyles of their servants. As Ernest Hillen recalled:

Manang, the gardener smelled of different kinds of smoke. He never hurried and I liked being near him: it was restful . . . His large flat feet had spaces between the toes because he didn't have to wear shoes. I had felt the bottom of those feet and they were hard and covered with deep, dry, criss-cross cuts, which he said didn't hurt. I wanted feet like that, his shiny brown skin, and I tried to walk bow-legged like him.²³

Other children were not afraid to reverse the servant/master roles when it suited them:

It was terribly important that Julie and I kowtow to the cook – who else would make us trays of crisp fried potatoes chips or prepare a bowl of hot chestnuts?²⁴

The ease and pleasure with which these children both physically and metaphorically crossed the cultural boundaries added to the variety of native and colonial influences which, undoubtedly, coloured the children's lives prior to internment. The ability to keep a 'colonial stiff upper lip', together with the pleasure they found in the unpretentious, unrestricted, informal lifestyles would also eventually help them to adapt to the hard, primitive lifestyles of the internment camp.

THE BATTLES

The battle for Manila is described by Mary-June Pettifer as 'an extraordinary time in a rather uneventful life'.²⁵ This was a major understatement for some children who found the battles in the Far East an exciting, frightening, chaotic and confusing time. As war raged about them, some children perceived fear as an adult emotion only. Eight-year-old Robin Prising, playing in the garden in Manila as Japanese planes flew overhead, 'was as heedless of danger as bullets shot round me as I was to my mother's shrieks'.²⁶ When Manila fell to the Japanese, and the Americans set fire to the oil tanks, five-year-old Rupert Wilkinson 'didn't feel particularly afraid . . . I was too small to imagine ahead. I remember being fascinated because the oil spread on to the river and made the river look as though it was on fire'.²⁷ As the bombs dropped on Hong Kong, Dorothy Hovey recalled:

I was too young to be really frightened . . . My mother was frightened. She sort of ran to this building run by Catholic priests . . . She was hammering on the door saying 'let me in, let me in' . . . They didn't so we ran to an air-raid shelter.²⁸

For some, however, their childish games became an avenue through which they could safely express their own and their parents' fear. Robin Prising, in Manila, recalls:

The Assumption [convent] was already crowded with women and children and while our mothers waited in hushed anxiety we children uproariously trampled over the flower beds and gardens . . . The delirious rampages of Hide and Seek were not part of an ordinary game, for by our hysterical screams and laughter we were expressing the suppressed, nerve-taut shock of our terrified, whispering parents.²⁹

Others internalised their fear:

The mattresses were nearly touching one another and there was a horrible man who would come and say we were not on any account to leave the room except to use the toilet otherwise we would be taken out and shot . . . I remember sort of turning to water inside and thinking 'this is terrifying'.³⁰

Some, perhaps for the first time, challenged their parents' unrealistic explanations for the chaos and brutality:

Oh it was absolutely awful, we were sleeping on tables and chairs. We were always in corridors and corridors, and one of the kitchen workers was shot and blood was spilling out of him and he collapsed in front of me. My mother said 'Oh it's all right it's only chicken blood'. Of course I wasn't so stupid, so, you know, I was screaming out.

When Hong Kong surrendered, on Christmas Day, it was not the loss of life, Empire or national pride that made this child despair, rather it was that an important childhood myth had been shattered.

I still believed in Santa Claus and hoped he would still bring me some presents. It was a crushing blow to learn of his non-existence over night.³¹

Another crushing blow was the realisation that parents were fallible and powerless. Young Connie Suverkropp was ten years old when the Japanese came to her parents' house in Java:

I had thought my father was more or less a giant and could do everything. He could speak many languages, but I soon recognised he could not speak Japanese . . . Then in June 1942 in the middle of the night my father was taken away by the Kempeitai.³²

Ernest Hillen recalls his father's sudden arrest and his own confusion as the mantle of 'manly' responsibility was thrust upon him and his brother:

On the last day standing on the stone front steps, while the truck holding the other white men waited with the motor running and soldiers stood on guard, the bayonets on their long rifles glittering in the sun, our father had said to us slowly 'Take care of your mother'.

He had shaken Jerry's hand and then mine . . . Well maybe Jerry knew what he meant, but I had no idea. How could a kid take care of his mom? Make her laugh? Bring her tea? It didn't make sense. She was there to take care of me.³³

Eleven-year-old Bert Singelenberg was also forced into adulthood as he and his brother became breadwinners when their father was interned:

My father was interned, my mother didn't have any income so my brother (aged 14) and I start working . . . We tried to earn some money by selling kecap (soya sauce), made from soya beans.³⁴

The Japanese victories between December 1941 and March 1942 clearly ended the 'pearl egg-spoon, sterling silver' comfortable, prolonged, sheltered and restricted life of these children, and swept away many of the myths and conventions that fed into and underpinned colonial childhood. They left in their wake discomfort, disappointment, fear and responsibility. The eventual Western surrenders challenged the children's sense of security and childish ideals, they shifted the perceived boundaries of conventional colonial childhood and, for some children, heralded the sudden onset of premature adulthood. Home comforts ceased as houses were bombed or evacuated. Chauffeurs, amahs and governesses disappeared. Perceptions of powerful, influential and protective parents changed. Fathers lost control and became powerless, and mothers were found to be fearful and fallible. Some children became depended upon, rather than dependent, and childhood beliefs were shattered. The following three-and-a-half years of overcrowding, hunger and deprivation were to prove important and irrevocable influences on these young lives. For many children, 'the eve of internment' was to be 'the last time, I think, that I didn't feel at all grown up'.³⁵

INTERNMENT

Lunghua camp, in Shanghai, where James Ballard was interned, was:

Like the impoverished Chinese families in the Shanghai slums. Rooms and corridors were a jumble of suitcases and trunks, sheets hanging over lines of string soon converted the open dormitories into a maze of tiny cubicles.³⁶

Rosemary Murray recalls her 'home' in Stanley Camp, Hong Kong:

Our rooms were our bedroom, sitting room, dining-room, everything . . . The room had one double bed and three camp beds which you folded up in the day time. Wendy, Jacqueline and I used to sleep in one bed and we had one pillow between us.³⁷

In Bloemenkamp, Java, where Ernest Hillen was first interned:

Darkness came suddenly, there were only candles. The air hung thick, our shadows dragged along the walls, we whispered. For hundreds and hundreds of nights this is how it would be – people, strangers all around us.³⁸

On his arrival in Santo Tomas Camp in Manila, Robin Prising found:

The gym, the largest dormitory in Santo Tomas, resembled an emergency hospital thrown together in the midst of a typhoid epidemic. About three hundred men slept here, the stench in the cavernous gym was heavy and sickly sweet – I gagged when I first was ushered there. Even when I was out of the building the odour still clung to my body.³⁹

Internment, then, was to be a new world. Although alien and at times unpleasant, this new world, paradoxically, offered the children broader horizons, new experiences, challenges, knowledge and understanding. The multifunctional room with limited amenities, the sudden poverty, sickness, hard physical labour, responsibility, unchaperoned outdoor life and close proximity to other Western adults and children – all enabled them to mature in ways not offered by the traditional colonial childhood. How that new world and these challenges were experienced and remembered by the children, however, depended very much on where and with whom they were interned.

The retrospective narratives of those children interned in the mixed camps in Shanghai and Hong Kong construct the camps as a playground. A site of excitement, adventure, fun, comfort and, again paradoxically, freedom. A young girl from Stanley Camp recalls:

We children experienced a wonderful sense of freedom with loads of time to idle away, this sounds somewhat paradoxical as we were all prisoners.⁴⁰

James Ballard said: 'Lunghua was the place where I had been happiest and most at home.'⁴¹ In contrast, the narratives of children interned in the segregated camps in Java and Sumatra construct their camps as places of fear, hard work and adult responsibility. 'You were always afraid of somebody, or something,' recalls twelve-year-old Bert Singelenberg.⁴² Dik de Moor, was twelve when he was interned for three months in Grogol Boys' Camp in Java. He recalls it as, 'Hell! I only recall from that time that the stronger boys were stealing food from the younger ones . . . I recall a lot of bad things'.⁴³ Connie, separated from her parents and looking after her younger sisters in camps in Java, recalls being 'preoccupied with my sisters . . . I always had the idea that I want to bring my sisters through it to give them back to my parents'.⁴⁴

The causes of such major differences in the experiences of these children are explored in the rest of this chapter. I will focus first on the children's experiences in the mixed camps in Shanghai, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

THE MIXED CAMPS

Once the Western adults in the mixed camps had organised food, accommodation and medical care, their minds turned to the children who, in the adults' opinion, were running wild, having too much spare time and were at a loose end. Such wild, unstructured free time was rare for colonial children. It highlighted the abnormal circumstances in which the internees found themselves and was perceived as a threat to parental control and Western values. The children might forget their manners or Western civilising culture – the very things which separated them from the uncivilised Asian masses and gave them their identity. Not only would this undermine the adults' attempts to maintain Western values and cultural practices, but it would also be a constant reminder of their failure to do so. The answer to the problem, as far as the adults were concerned at least, was the civilising influence of Western schooling. School with its Western values, discipline, curriculum and intellectual stimulus would, it was hoped, bring structure, continuity and stability to the children's lives. It would also give the adults a greater measure of control over, and influence on, the children. It was, therefore, shortly after internment in the mixed camps in Shanghai, Hong Kong and the Philippines that, with the approval of the Japanese, camp schools emerged.

In Shanghai's Yang Chow 'C' Camp, two schools were formed 'in true British tradition', one for boys and one for girls, but in Lunghua, Stanley and Santo Tomas the schools were co-educational with classes organised around age and ability. Some camp schools, as in the case of Stanley, were well supplied with teachers, as many school teachers and members of the university staff were interned. In contrast Yangchow's only professional teacher, P.C. Mathews, became headmaster and 'co-opted a staff amongst the wealth of experience in the camp to help him in his project'.⁴⁵ All the camp schools lacked books, paper, pencils, furniture and other teaching aids; nevertheless every effort was made to replicate pre-internment schooling.

All the camp schools offered a basic curriculum with the 'three Rs', religious studies, history, geography and, depending on the expertise of the teachers, foreign languages and science. Normal term times were adhered to but lack of space often meant teaching in shifts, with younger children being taught in the morning and older ones in the afternoon. In a special effort to ensure Western life was not forgotten, in Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, classes were held to tell the children about 'trains, travel, the post office, our villages and our towns'.⁴⁶

Hard as the teachers tried, however, internment camp life seriously challenged their efforts and also the conventional structured form of education which was preferred by the adults. Various factors were blamed for this. 'We became too hungry to go to school after a time,' recalls a young boy in Santo Tomas. Another, in Stanley, remembers that 'it was easy to skip school if you wanted and crawl under the wire and wander round'.⁴⁷ Colonial Secretary Mr Gimson, head of Stanley Camp, was obviously still critical of the adults' rejection of the evacuation plans in Hong Kong and claimed 'the children will have their parents to blame for not evacuating them when ordered'.⁴⁸

Kathleen Anderson, the headmistress of the junior school in Stanley Camp, was more objective.

At the time of coming into camp, after a fortnight of siege warfare and four weeks of nerve wracking confinement, the children were suffering from shock and anxiety . . . The children cannot fail to have been adversely affected by the atmosphere of anxiety, irritation and depression. The children's school work suffered from their discomfort due to lack of clothing in the cold weather. In the rainy season their school attendance suffered because many were without umbrellas and rain-coats. The vocabulary of newly admitted groups deteriorated from year

to year, reflecting ever more exclusively the limited experience of camp life . . . The school was ill-equipped to counteract the deadening influence of out-of-school existence. By July 1945 we realised that, in spite of all our efforts, we had on all fronts been fighting a losing battle and we looked forward with consternation to the future.⁴⁹

Her frustrations at the limitations of the camp school, together with her concern for the children, also highlight very clearly the 'anxiety, irritation, depression and deadening influence' of camp life in general. This negative influence was one that many adults fought against and others tried hard to ignore or deny. It was, however, one that the children's behaviour reflected and which school was meant to counteract. Miss Anderson's consternation, therefore, was not only for the future of the camp children but was also about the detrimental effects of camp life on the colonial community in general which was reflected in, and by, the children.

Camp school did, however, offer unexpected advantages for the children. It demonstrated an act of faith in their future and ensured they were not too far behind non-interned children when they were eventually released. It removed them from the confines of the unhealthy, overcrowded and cramped accommodation, and older children were no longer separated from their parents by being sent away to boarding school. As the schools were open to all camp children, Western children found themselves mixing happily – sometimes for the first time – with other children of similar and different ages, sexes, nationalities and ethnicity. (Eurasian children made up a large proportion of children in Stanley, for example.) Camp school was also informal, entertaining and interesting. It was fun sitting on the floor, writing on cigarette papers because of the shortage of paper, and using and reusing slates for school work. The shortened school day left the children with ample opportunity to follow their own pursuits as well. In fact many children found camp schools a definite improvement on pre-internment education and remember them with affection. Dorothy, in Stanley, recalls:

I enjoyed school there . . . I think it was the informality of it . . . We had a lot of fun with the teachers. I think we weren't quite so frightened of them. Nuns can be very scary and a lot of the children had gone to the convent schools.⁵⁰

Neil Begley, in Yang Chow Camp, Shanghai, remembers the unusual teaching skills and interesting lessons:

Most of the volunteer teachers had to instruct entirely from memory . . . Geography was taught by an ex-mountaineer, there weren't many places in the world he hadn't been. His lessons were embellished with stories of adventure that kept us enthralled. The same was true of Mr Willis who taught us maths. He was a surveyor and to impress us with the importance of trigonometry, he recounted stories of his surveying days in the wilds of Canada . . . Father Thornton had a passion for English literature and seemed to be able to recite from memory . . . How grateful I am to him for the rich memory of those words that have kept me company through seemingly endless nights.⁵¹

And Karen Lewis, looking back at her days in Santo Tomas Internment Camp High School, recalled:

I look back with awe and respect for those amazing teachers, so challenged, so inspired and so brilliant, who, with so little, taught us so much.⁵²

Later evidence shows that in Stanley Camp two sets of matriculation exams were held for submission to the London Matriculation Board, with good results. Ruth Baker, a young girl in Stanley, actually went on to become a lecturer in bio-chemistry at Oxford University. Twelve children from Lunghua obtained the Cambridge Matriculation Exemption, and fifty obtained School Certificate. In Weihsien Camp, the Chefoo School sat three years of Oxford Matriculation Exemption exams which were subsequently accepted and obtained high marks. In Santo Tomas, out of a total of eighty-five High School students, forty completed either their first, second or third year, while twenty finished the fourth year and graduated.

Camp schools also had advantages for the adults. They were, according to James Ballard, a 'blessed relief for the parents', a fact confirmed by William Sewell: 'The children also had school. It was a change from the flat and gave us relief.'⁵³ While the children were at school their parents were, briefly, relieved of responsibility for them and were able to have some time, space and a degree of privacy. In addition, camp schools created an air of normality and continuity in the camp. The school day, week and term gave structure to the lives of all the internees. The education of the children offered employment to interned teachers, academics and other professionals who were able to imbue the next generation with Western education and culture which was being eroded by the camp environment. Although the camp schools achieved a level of academic success, discipline

and control, the efforts of the adults were constantly undermined by the camp conditions which exposed the children to a more open, informal, unconventional and non-colonial school life that was, it seems, much preferred by many of the children.

In spite of the imposition of formal schooling in the mixed camps there were still some complaints about children's behaviour outside school. Even children's birthday parties – one of the few releases from the drudgery of camp life – were censured by some adults. Constance Murray, in Stanley Camp, revealed one such incident:

Timothy White's birthday – 4. Coming up before the beak for rioting in 'Oranges and Lemons' on the village green in the silent hour.

She confided to her diary later that the young boy's mother was 'severely reprimanded on account of Timothy's birthday rioting'.⁵⁴ The adults were obviously still well aware of, and unhappy with, the effect on the children of the continued uncivilised nature of the camp. Consequently, many parents, themselves desperately clinging on to remnants of their own past lives, used family rituals and cultural practices to 'normalise', civilise and educate their children, in the privacy of their own family space. The Sewells in Stanley 'sang grace at every meal'. In Santo Tomas, Robin Prising found that although 'meals took place round a card table propped up outside our cook shed', his parents could not, or would not, relinquish their hold on a past and more civilised way of life.

Before seating herself mother primly placed leaves for napkins in front of Father and me . . . Mother gracefully requested the Lord to bless our repast. Although we ate from old tin cans, and without knives, father insisted on decorum. 'Sit up straight on your box, my boy, I see no reason why your table manners need resemble a baboon's' . . . His determination was 'though we starve on roots and weeds we shall, by God, preserve some link with the civilised past'.⁵⁵

Equally frustrated was Rosemary Murray, in Stanley, who recalled:

Every effort was made to bring us up properly . . . My father would not tolerate rudeness or bullying, he gave out the orders and there was no sort of putting on the young ones to fetch and carry . . . We children kept proper bedtimes, I and Daniel, were always made to come in during the afternoon and rest, we were so thin. I used to absolutely hate this having to lie down for an hour just to rest. There was a lot of control from my parents . . .⁵⁶

Similarly twelve-year-old Anneka Kekwick, in Stanley, recalled: ‘Of course, my father was very strict about who I mixed with. He didn’t want me to mix with people with mixed blood – the Eurasians.’⁵⁷ The camp environment could not, however, be ignored as it eroded parental rules and prejudices. William Sewell admits to having to adapt his religious rituals, and he postponed grace to halfway through, or to the end of a meal, because ‘it is not easy for the ravenous to be controlled when food is placed before them’.⁵⁸ Anneka’s father also had to compromise his racial prejudices as he was stumped when his wife asked who Anneka could play with if not with those of mixed blood.

If adult control was difficult inside school and in the family room, then it was almost impossible outside. ‘Of course they were protective,’ recalls James Ballard of his parents, ‘but I think the important experiences took place outside our family room.’⁵⁹ Hard as parents tried, the multifunctional room, shared with so many others, provided little or no space for play or for socialising with other children. Consequently, whereas in their pre-internment life, ‘outside’ was considered dangerous if ventured into unchaperoned, now it had to be accepted as an essential place for unsupervised play and socialisation for the children. ‘Outside’ dominates many of these children’s internment narratives. ‘Outside’, though surrounded by barbed wire, represented freedom from adult or parental control, constraints and structured time. It was the social and recreational area for the children, the space where relationships and friendships were made, both with other children and with adults. It was where mud, old ammunition and stones replaced traditional toys, and where the imagination could run free as new play materials were discovered and games created. It was outside the school and family room that the children had the greatest opportunity to shape their own internment world; it was also where the internment world shaped them.

Outdoor life in Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, was where children could defy and challenge adult control and authority. Anneka found she could choose her own friends, albeit secretly. ‘We’d be there talking and then someone would say “your father”, so I’d duck behind the piano.’⁶⁰ Dorothy recalls:

[I had] more freedom from my parents than I had before the war, because the children all seemed to get together. It was very much like them and us. We were like a colony on our own . . . The grown-ups were quite removed, they were sort of busy trying to survive . . . They

had a lot of problems. We didn't. We used to play up in the hills at the back . . . We had boys and girls in groups. There were separate boys' and girls' groups . . . There were all sorts of friends, we could chose our own friends rather than sort of have your parents choose your friends for you . . . We had a lot of fun . . . We were not supposed to talk to the guards but we did.⁶¹

Play outside the family room in Stanley Camp offered opportunities for imaginative play and getting into mischief:

The kids used to wander everywhere. They couldn't keep us in. Boys and girls together. Most of us were bilingual. We used to go and talk to the guards . . . crawl under the wire and come back. I remember taking bullets to bits and we would string the cordite together and use a magnifying glass to set off an explosion . . . The kids ran wild.⁶²

It also offered a chance to play safely and with abandon as Rosemary Murray recalls:

There were always gangs and going out. I grew up in an absolutely traffic-free environment, there was no such thing as looking when you crossed the road. You ran, you played, you ran and there was no such thing as 'be careful you might get knocked down' . . . We built a network of roads in the mud in the hills. Someone discovered that they could use a slimy gutter as a chute, it was thick with slime and you shot down bullet-like and one girl wore her pants out.⁶³

But the children's play also reflected the influence of their war experiences:

We could spend a week making mud bombs and come the day we declared war on each other, we would go up in the hills and throw these mud bombs at each other . . .⁶⁴

In Los Banos, in the Philippines, one young mother noted that her 'two children Robin and Larry, no longer played soldier. Now their game was funeral – imitating what their childish eyes saw every day.'⁶⁵ Similarly, but not quite so morbid, Elizabeth Gale records the play of her baby daughter and a young friend in Pootung Camp.

The little girls spend hours playing happily with their dolls house. Today they pile all the furniture into one room because it is bomb day, they say. Last week they took the dolls beds and the bath tubs out and shook them vigorously because it was de-bugging day.⁶⁶

Living in close proximity to adults and mixing with the opposite sex, childhood sexual experiences were not uncommon. Hilary Hamson, from Stanley, recalls many of the children ‘spying on’ adult couples, and boys and girls ‘investigating all the nice parts of each others’ bodies’.⁶⁷ At other times, children defied parents and guards by creeping out of their block and sitting on the roof nattering until it was nearly dawn. ‘It was these sort of things,’ claimed Dorothy cheerfully, ‘that we would never, never have done in normal life.’⁶⁸

The freedom to choose friends, defy moral codes and play unchaperoned were not the only new, influential experiences for the children in the mixed camps. Many of the adults were involved in running the camp activities and institutions. This, together with the inadequate diet, meant they had little time or energy left for menial or domestic tasks. Prior to internment servants filled these roles but now the adults were forced to seek essential physical support from the children. Consequently, washing, gardening, food collection and fuel-gathering became a new, important and dynamic part of the children’s everyday lives. A young boy in Stanley recalls:

It was my job, my only job in life, to run to the cook house and get first in the queue, if possible, so that I got the best bit of meat in the stew. I carried the can back to the family.⁶⁹

Also in Stanley two young girls remember having to wash their own clothes for the first time ever, collect fuel in the hills and share other domestic chores. Anneka Kekwick’s domestic involvement highlights the shift of gender roles in the camp, as she recalls doing the washing with her father. In Santo Tomas children over the age of twelve had regular bathroom monitor duty. Karen Darras, just thirteen years old, recalls her duties included the handing out of carefully rationed toilet paper (five sheets, then three sheets, then two and eventually none) and cleaning the shower floor in the bathroom in the women’s block.⁷⁰ Robin Prising, who shared an annexe with his father and sixty other men and young boys and their fathers, had even greater responsibility. His multiple role of father/son/servant, caused by his father’s age and infirmity, meant:

I did all father’s duties for him, swept beneath our beds, cleaned the passage and corridors when our turn comes up and washed our clothes. He was too ill and old to do such things himself . . . Before the war we had both had pos under our bed which Alfred [the servant] used to empty each morning. Now my turn had come.⁷¹

In addition, the adults' attempts to grow extra food to supplement their meagre rations meant many children became garden labourers in the camps. James Ballard helped his father 'tend a small garden plot, hoisting buckets of excrement from G block septic tanks to fertilise the beds'. The Sewell children also 'shared in the work carrying water or soil'.⁷² Though much of this work was seen as 'helping', by both children and adults alike, it was an essential and valuable contribution to family life and survival. This shift in the children's role in the camps highlighted the difficulty the adults had in protecting the children while at the same time grappling with the vicissitudes of internment. It also emphasised the adults' dependency and their unprecedented need for the support of the children. As far as the children were concerned, however, the work in the camps contributed to their sense of independence and importance.

Even though child labour may have challenged perceptions of colonial childhood, children's work in the camps had a certain legitimacy, even morality. Scavenging and scrounging – a euphemism in the camps for stealing – did not, however, conform to the traditional moral code. Nevertheless, it was a moral code that adults were prepared to compromise if it saved the adults' dignity or effort. 'It was hard,' wrote William Sewell, 'to develop moral standards in a child, especially when Elma Dale [a neighbour] would shout to Ronnie, "Good boy, now go and get me another piece of wood".' A not dissimilar dilemma faced another father who, desperate for tobacco, but eager not to appear undignified, asked his son to scavenge cigarette butts from the gutters 'so my father could mix them with fir cones and smoke a pipe'.⁷³

Questions about the effect that camp life had on the morals of the children did, however, come from an unexpected quarter. Unlike pre-internment days, the groups organising the entertainments in camp encouraged both adults and children to take part. Thus the children found themselves performing publicly along with the adults. Mr Gimson, the Colonial Secretary and head of Stanley Camp, had strong objections to this. He feared that 'appearing on the stage might turn children's heads and give them exaggerated ideas of their own ability'.⁷⁴ It seems that little notice was taken of these objections as surviving camp entertainment programmes name several children participating in plays and concerts, and many interviewees remember the fun of taking part. Hilary Hamson particularly remembers the pleasure of 'getting a great round of applause for singing a solo of *When Irish Eyes are Smiling* in a camp concert'.⁷⁵

While in the previous two chapters it was obvious that the adults were conscious of their own deterioration through their weight loss and changed appearances, no such comments were made by internee children. All interviewees for this chapter complained of hunger, and some of illness; but none made particular reference to body weight and size while in the camp. However, when they left the camps, many were to discover that they were very underweight and some were found to be suffering from tuberculosis. While the children may not have been conscious of their undernourishment, William Sewell points out that the physical deterioration of the children had a marked effect on their parents:

Stanley parents tasted a small part of that crushing anxiety felt by those in so many lands who had helplessly to watch their children starve or suffer because of war or destitution.⁷⁶

A young mother, also in Stanley, wrote:

Feeding Annette drove me mad with worry. She refused to swallow her rice and would spit it down the toilet when I was not looking, or make mud pies with rice and dirt. She weighed 28lbs when we left the camp, she was nearly five years old.⁷⁷

Towards the end of the war parents in Santo Tomas and Los Banos, a smaller camp in the Philippines, were also expressing concern for their children's welfare. They noted that 'the active kids that used to tear around like savages were now little old men and women. Hollowed-eyed, skinny and listless, they sat around and talked about food.'⁷⁸

Obviously the physical condition of the children was distressing and worrying for parents, but it was not solely the distress of watching their children starve that was the cause of the adults' anxiety. The children's welfare represented the welfare of the whole camp. They were the community's continuity and hope for the future, and the physical deterioration of the children threatened this. It also highlighted the failure of the adults to fulfil their perceived parental role and, moreover, mirrored the adults' own deterioration. Consequently, both parents and medical staff in the mixed camps went to great lengths to monitor the children's health and ensure their survival. The children were singled out for extra, or more nutritional, food and medical care. Soya beans were pressed to produce milk and animal bones were crushed to powder to give them extra calcium. Even

under the caring protection of parents and medical staff, it was still impossible to spare the children from hunger and illness. Most of the interviewees openly recall stealing food from gardens or scavenging in dustbins.

It was also impossible for the adults to protect the children from other realities of the camp. Some children spent time in camp hospitals where they were exposed to unexpected and unpleasant sights and sounds of ailing adult internees. Rosemary Murray, brought up in a large family of many sisters, recalls a spell in Tweed Bay Hospital in Stanley where:

To wash, [the women] used to sit on their beds showing all their breast and things like that . . . I never saw anything like that amongst my family, no-one ever dressed immodestly in front of anyone else.⁷⁹

In the Santa Catalina Hospital, adjoining the Santo Tomas Camp grounds, Robin Prising, recovering from a string of illnesses, found himself in a 'clan of cantankerous but affectionate old fogies . . . Day by day I saw their old lives wrenched from them.'⁸⁰

Regardless of the protection of so many adults and in spite of their schooling, domestic rituals and special diets, internment for the children in these mixed camps, resulted in confusing and contradictory messages. Although the camps were confining, internment presented new freedom to the children. Social restrictions were lifted, moral standards shifted and choices could be made. The nursery and the chaperoned adult-dominated social life were replaced by mud and dirt, gangs of boys and girls, freedom and 'street life', and scavenging, like poor native children, for food, fuel and cigarette butts. Where once men and women's bodies were elegantly and modestly covered, the children were now exposed to, and began to accept, unexpected immodesty. In these camps children became important to the well-being of the community in a variety of ways. Their presence added an air of normal family life to the camp; the need to discipline them motivated the adults to provide formal and informal education. Their willing adaptability and flexibility, and the important roles they played in camp life enabled and encouraged them to weave in and out of the servant/adult/child boundaries, and gave them a position of importance they had previously not held. In spite, then, of all the efforts of parents and other adults, internment caused the boundaries of colonial childhood and Western values to change, a fact that the children recognised, remembered and many very much enjoyed.

THE SEGREGATED CAMPS

Although there were some similarities in the experiences of children in the mixed and segregated camps, there were also enormous and significant differences. Changi Prison shared the most similarities. Initially in Changi there were only fifty children, but by March 1945 there were approximately 330, many of whom were Eurasian. In this camp 'the aged, the sick, the infirm, the children and the mothers with families were all exempted from the more exacting camp chores'.⁸¹ Consequently, mothers and other women were able to give the children a great deal of attention. With approval from the Japanese they created a camp school in the dining room with Mrs Betty Milne as headmistress. 'Never,' wrote Mrs Milne, 'had brick-works less straw.'⁸² Planks were balanced on low crates for seats. Textbooks, exercise books, pencils and some paper 'arrived from the outside world'. Daily religious instruction was given by Miss Rank, Mrs Nelson, Miss Robinson and Miss Russel-Davis, and there were five other regular teachers and many temporary ones. There was a small exercise yard where the children could play safely. A welfare committee was also formed, with special responsibility for the children, under the supervision of Dr Cicely Williams, a qualified paediatrician who had experience working with African and Malayan children. 'It was she who had identified the protein deficiency disease called Kwashiorkor, widespread among children in parts of Africa.'⁸³ In addition, they had limited, but important, access to the skills of the Western men interned in the other part of the prison.

In contrast, because of the failure to evacuate the large Western population in the Dutch East Indies, there were many more children interned in the camps in Java and Sumatra. With the Western men interned elsewhere, the women and children, with their limited skills, had to organise the camps themselves. In spite of the fact that there were so many school-age children in these camps, the Japanese banned any formal education. As many of the women and older children were forced to work, the younger children had more free time. They were able to run wild, get into mischief, and were more likely to fall foul of Japanese guards or have accidents. Hence it was harder to maintain discipline and moral standards, so informal control and education became very important. This put an even greater burden on both the women and the older children, who found themselves having to fulfil many roles – mother, father, teacher, carer, sibling and

full-time worker. Consequently, conventional childhood for these older children came to a sudden and abrupt end, as they worked on equal terms with the women and/or became surrogate parents.

In these camps in Java and Sumatra, women shared the childcare of the much younger children. However, the absence of camp schools caused many problems for the numerous mothers who worked all day gardening, cleaning the camp, cooking and nursing. There was also furniture moving. The older children were left to amuse and fend for themselves, as eight-year-old Ernest Hillen, in Bloemenkamp, recalls:

Of course, there was no school of any kind and adults and older children had to work. My mother was a mover, hauling furniture out of houses and, after sorting – chairs, tables, beds, cupboards, even pianos – loading it on to huge wooden carts that had been pulled by buffalo before the war. These she and other ‘furniture ladies’ then pushed to already empty houses for storage for the Japanese: to be used in their quarters or shipped to Japan. She did this all day long in the sun, growing brown and thin. Jerry [an older brother] was put to work in the kitchens where boys of his age [twelve] lifted drums of boiling water or soup or rice from wood fires and toted them around on bamboo poles. I was left alone.⁸⁴

In spite of the difficulties, the evidence suggests that some women and older girls, initially, tried to find ways of giving themselves and the younger children some formal education. In the early days in a camp in Sumowono, Java, many teachers had been interned and they started a school for the younger children in the camp stables. The older children were too busy with their camp chores ‘as fire-wood carriers, kitchen cleaners, camp sweepers, bathroom scrubbers and mothers’ helpers’. The school had only been running for three months, however, when the order came:

No more shows, no more school, no more gym, no more church, no more meetings unless with the guards, no more nothing! Instead we had to work harder.⁸⁵

In Ambarawa Camp, young Bert Singelenberg recalls: ‘The women started some schooling. I had English lessons and some maths . . . It only went on for a month or two because we had to work. We were busy the whole day.’⁸⁶ Connie, caring for her two much younger sisters in Tjihapit Camp and Struiswijk Prison, remembered:

Education was not allowed. So if there was a bit of education we had to do it in secret. I had the Old Testament with me . . . I feared that I would forget how to read so every day I read for half-an-hour. I taught my sister to reckon [add up] and a bit of reading and writing but we had to do it with some wood in the sand. I taught them to sing several songs. I told them fairy stories. It was difficult. My little sister would ask ‘What is a horse?’, ‘What is a sofa?’, ‘What is a father?’ This was so difficult . . . That was the only education we had.

Disciplining her sisters was not a major problem for Connie. The heartbreaking challenge was to adapt the simple and natural ‘wood and sand’ of the camp and combine it with Western literature, games and language, to stimulate these half-starved youngsters.

We could draw in the sand. There was a tree and leaves falling down. They would play with the leaves and their hands – we sat down only. We could play leap-frog but we had no energy so it was oral playing. We would say ‘Now I am jumping’ . . . it was play that you really did with your minds. You could use your minds freely.⁸⁷

Ernest Hillen’s mother, who was ‘stubborn about routine’, focused on family, national and Western cultural rituals to civilise her sons and to survive. Ernest recalls her:

Always saying ‘good morning’ at the start of the day; drinking tea in the afternoon (or hot water if there was no tea); talking in the evening; and celebrating – our birthdays, those of friends in the camp, my father’s, those of family members in Canada and Holland and of the royals of both countries and all feast days of both. ‘It’s fun,’ she told us, ‘this is how we’ll survive.’

Meanwhile her sons employed the skills they had learned from their domestic servants to amuse themselves. Ernest recalls:

Jerry [Ernest’s older brother] who watched the gardener Manang make things, was now going to build me a kite with bits and pieces he found round the camp. It took Jerry two evenings to put together the kite. I sat with him as if he were Manang.⁸⁸

As in the mixed camps, the heat and the cramped conditions forced children to spend much of their time outside their family room in the ‘uncivilised’ camp compound. Even with time spent at school, in Changi, the minutes of the general meetings in the camp regularly

record complaints about the noise the young children made when they played outside, particularly during the quiet hour. Even the men in their side of the camp complained about the noise. Efforts were made to keep the children quiet, including reading to the younger ones in the quiet hour and taking the older boys across to the men's section to play games in the afternoon. But it was noted that it was a very difficult problem to solve in the camp.⁸⁹

In the camps in Java and Sumatra, the absence of a structured school day, poor education, shortage of books and toys, the long hours alone, boredom, hunger and the influence of war was reflected in the boys' increasingly aggressive behaviour. Here also the children found new friends among the mixed race children who were 'often from poorer homes where even the youngest smoked in front of their mothers'. These boys 'loved to fight especially white boys. I hated fighting with these boys but, I have to say, I became friendly with some of them,' recalled Ernest Hillen. The games these boys played give us some insight into the effects the brutal camp conditions and environment had on them.

Kids might gather and set up *tenko* [roll call] with bowing, counting and punishment that could get a bit rough. Or we'd pretend to line up for food and in cupped hands receive measured portions of sand and bits of leaf. Hospital games had groaning, dying patients and guards coming to haul off fakers.⁹⁰

As these gangs of young boys roamed the camps, scavenging and stealing became regular escapades. When Mrs Hillen found young Ernest with a crowd of boys stealing from one of the garages, she had no hesitation in resorting to unfamiliar and 'unfeminine' corporal punishment to instil moral codes into her son.

'We are not thieves and this place is not going to make us thieves,' she warned. With that she smacked my face with her open right hand. I was stunned. It hurt. My father hit, but not my mother.

As with the parents in the mixed camps, Mrs Hillen found the camp environment forced her to behave uncharacteristically, and to lower her own moral standards. Working in the kitchen she 'once, maybe twice, hid a carrot in her clothes and brought it home. It's hard to stay alive, she said but even harder to stay alive and be decent.' Sometimes she lost her temper 'and the swear words would fly'.⁹¹ Such contradictory behaviour and messages were commonplace to

the children in these camps. As she watched the mothers in her camp severely discipline a child and then moments later hug the child saying 'I shall not hit you any more', An Jacobs comments: 'In truth they were not bad mothers.' They were hyper-nervous, underfed, overworked, and were cooped up in the heat in such appalling conditions for so long that they were often at the end of their tether. As a result, some disciplined their children harshly and then were wracked with guilt.⁹²

In these camps the physical help of the children was even more essential than it was in the mixed camps. In some camps the younger children helped collect the domestic water and swept the streets, but *work* – hard physical work – dominates the older children's narratives. Work for the children in Java and Sumatra was very different from the children's work in the mixed camps. Boys and girls in these camps carried and cleaned the heavy cooking pans, lit fires to cook the rice and unloaded the food lorries. It was arduous and time-consuming labour. It could not, under any circumstances, be considered as 'helping', since it was work essential to the running of the camp and it was carried out under the orders of the Japanese. Although some of the children in these camps only worked for a few hours, the work was so hard and the conditions so unpleasant that they spent any spare time they had resting rather than playing. As such, the work they had to do shifted the boundaries of childhood further than anyone could have imagined.

Young girls were, on the orders of the Japanese, eligible for work from the age of eleven. Connie recalled:

Because I was more than ten years old the Japanese insisted I did one-and-a-half hours every day cleaning the streets with other girls of my age . . . Some had to clean the toilets, the drains and the floors. After the morning parade I had to clean and wash the vegetables, clean the big pots they used to cook rice. I would then go to my sisters where my next duty was to catch flies. Everyday we each had to hand in ten dead flies. The Japanese ordered this.⁹³

In Gloegoer, An Jacobs recalls:

The little girls became handy. They cooked and baked and did the wash in the well water. They looked after the small children if the mother was sick and they looked after the sick older people. They knew all about wounds and ulcers and the bearing of pain. They could dig and cut tree bark to fibre. They could knot together flax threads

for spinning. They could also clear away filth and clean up blocked cesspools.⁹⁴

The age at which boys became 'adults' was 'a moveable feast'; it changed with time, place and the state of the war. In January 1943, sixteen-year-old Pans Schomper was moved from Tjihapit women's camp to Banka men's camp. Diewke Bonga in Ambarawa 2, recalls September 1944 when they heard that all the boys of ten had to be removed to a separate camp. Bert Singelenberg remembers being removed from his mother and younger brothers in Ambarawa 6 to Ambarawa 8 when he was fourteen, but he recalls younger boys going with him. Ernest Hillen, in Tjihapit, wrote:

In September 1944 there was an announcement that all boys, twelve years and over had to be at the gate at eight o'clock in the morning. Then we had to walk to another camp. Boys of Jerry's age (thirteen) were a definite danger to the state to be trucked away to no-one-knew-where.

Jan van Dulm was so young when he moved away from his mother in Bloemenkamp that he had to check his age with the Red Cross after the war. The dates they gave him meant he was only ten years of age.⁹⁵ For these boys, the period of internment spent away from their families dominate their narratives and, undoubtedly, had the most influence on them.

For some women, the presence of their offspring was the one thing that kept them going. In October 1942 a woman from Banginang II, Sumatra, wrote:

Today postcards come in from the men's camp. For us, nothing. How can I bear all this? I have no more courage left. What a blessing that I have you my little son.⁹⁶

Consequently, the separations were difficult for both the boys and their mothers. An Jacobs recalls that there were mothers who 'raged with despair and wildly protested against the might that was to tear away the very last person they possessed'.⁹⁷ 'The goodbyes were horrible,' remembers Pans, 'a dreadful event for relatives and friends who stayed behind. The most touching scenes took place: mothers and sisters watching their sons and brothers leave, were crying.'⁹⁸ Other boys recall the dignity and 'manly' stiff upper lip of their mothers. 'My mother didn't like it but she didn't cry,' recalls Bert, and

explaining his own reaction, he smiled ruefully and said, ‘fourteen-year-old boys don’t cry you know’.⁹⁹ Likewise Mrs Hillen’s ‘lips had grown thin on hearing the news . . . She told Jerry it was an adventure, his biggest – and on his own’. Jerry now replicated his father’s earlier farewell to the family and passed the mantle of manhood on to his younger brother like a runner’s baton. “He gripped my hand, looked me in the eyes and, like our father had done when he left said, ‘Take care of mom’”.

Then, like a young soldier off to war preparing himself for the battle and possible death,

Jerry began to write slowly then scrawled his signature fast like our father did and folded the paper twice . . . As if he were an adult in that tone of voice he told our mother that we were forbidden to read it until he was gone . . . Once out Jerry began to march swinging the suitcase, chin up, straight as a soldier . . . From the side streets and lanes small solemn groups with a boy at the centre turned onto the main road and the gate. He was brave like a man almost . . . The soldiers were shouting ‘hurry, hurry’, the boys waved, some crying most not. Jerry stood on his toes eyes searching for us – and he was grinning. Why the hell was he grinning? My mother said this was a huge adventure. For the first time Jerry would be his own boss and that was a great feeling . . . Jerry had written in Dutch: ‘Herewith I Jerry John Hillen bequeath all my personal belongings to my dear mother and my little brother.’¹⁰⁰

Some of the younger boys were rather naïve about moving. An Jacobs remembers some of the boys in the camps with her ‘frolicked and cried cheerily to one another, “With which convoy are you going?”’¹⁰¹ Jan van Dulm recalled being ‘happy’ about moving because he thought ‘it would be more interesting and greener over there’. Fifty years later, he was self-mocking about his naïveté, and his ironic aside to me was ‘I *was* still a *boy*’.¹⁰²

Far from ‘more interesting and greener’, life for the boys in the men’s and boys’ camps was physically hard and emotionally distressing. On 1 February 1945, the diary of a young Dutch boy in Ambarawa 7 records:

Dear Mother, Washed my clothes today. I hate mending my clothes. The thread breaks constantly because I pull too hard. And the thread always gets entangled – how, I don’t know. It took me almost two hours to sew a patch in my shirt. I wash my clothes once every three days.

And on 20 March 1945 he apologises for not writing:

I haven't written for a while. I was sick – malaria again – shivering and shivering. I feel much better now. Will probably go back to my kitchen job. In the beginning when I was here in camp without you, when I woke up in the morning, my first thoughts were for you. One gets such doggone homesick feelings and so I think as little as possible about you. You don't mind, do you?¹⁰³

Even for a sixteen-year-old it was difficult. 'For the first time we were really separated from our parents. Despite my sixteen years it was not easy for me to adapt myself to these new circumstances,' recalled Pans Schomper.¹⁰⁴ In the new camps the huts were made of bamboo and were like 'pigsties'. There could be as many as 800 in bunks three or four high. The lucky ones got the top one, the bed bugs fell on the boys below. Bert recalls the terrible conditions in Ambarawa 8.

It was lousy – bad. Looking after the old sick men. We had to do the dirty work . . . Emptying pots because they were not able to get to the toilets, cleaning them, taking them to a special place when they were dead and putting them in a coffin – sometimes twenty and thirty a day . . . We were cutting wood, unloading trains . . . At the end they put two camps together. Obviously things got worse. We were eight-hundred boys in one barracks close together, all night some people always going to the toilet . . . It was always dirty, other people didn't manage to get to the toilet in time . . . It was terrible, you were never alone . . .¹⁰⁵

Dik, in Grogol Camp, where boys looked after the old sick men, remembers being 'placed in a room where I was washing the dead people'. While in this camp, the Japanese sub-commander was punished by decapitation in front of all the boys. During the last thirteen months of the war, Dik was moved to Tjimahi Camp, Batavia, where he had to live on his wits and become a jack-of-all-trades to survive. 'I did everything . . . I became a barber . . . I filled beds with kapock, sold snails, made buttons.'¹⁰⁶

After about three months Pans Schomper was moved again to what was previously a juvenile detention centre in Bandoeng, where his father and brother were interned. By now he was becoming more self-reliant and when lodged in different barracks from his brother and father, he claims, 'I became more independent and did what I thought best'. After two further moves, Pans and his group from the detention centre were moved to Cimahi Army Camp where:

At first I cut wood and then worked in the kitchen . . . I had grown a lot due to the hard life and work . . . We had to lift and carry heavy mess pans of about 200 kilos. We dragged these pans filled with food through the camp.

Here, young Pans became the provider for and protector of both his older brother and his father. Working in the kitchen he was able to provide extras for them. When his father was admitted to the already overfull hospital with dysentery, it was Pans who risked his life to get special tablets for his father. As their father became weaker and unable to work, both the boys did his share of digging on the railroad in Cicilenka.¹⁰⁷

As with the mixed camps, the children in these segregated camps found that modesty became unimportant and irrelevant and they became more sexually aware. Bathing with a group of boys and comparing the size of penises was a regular occurrence for Pans Schomper in the his camp. Ernest Hillen recalls the times he spent ‘in the cramped backstage where, in a great muddle, women stripped to near nakedness and wrestled with sweating bodies into costumes’. On another occasion he saw a woman ‘come from behind her bedroom curtain in bare feet wearing white, tight, very short pants . . . In shorts she was a whole other lively, lovely, person . . . I dropped out of the tree and moved closer’. Later when banned from bathing with the women, he and his friend went to a hole at the back of the bath hut and ‘stared’.¹⁰⁸

The absence of men in the women’s camps meant women were not just seen as sex objects by the young boys. Role models changed and women became heroes in the eyes of these juveniles. Corry Vonk, dancer and singer, entertained the internees in Tjihapit, where Ernest Hillen recalls: ‘For a short while she held off hunger, fear and pain, squelched misery and scattered amongst us like fireflies sparks of courage and joy.’¹⁰⁹ When Mrs Crone, ‘built like a tree’, stood up to a beating by the Japanese guard, Ernest Hillen recalls: ‘I’d seen worse. I felt no pity, just pride.’

Conversely, men became undignified and a disappointment. On the rare occasions when some Western men came into Ernest’s camp to help mend the fences, they looked so cowed that ‘Mrs Crone called them the bruised ones. I thought they just looked sorry for themselves, not the way men should. After the second day I didn’t bother going to watch them again.’¹¹⁰

With few doctors and nurses in these camps, the medical care was

extremely limited. When Ernest Hillen suffered a cut to his hand that became severely infected, he just lay silently on the bed all day until he was smuggled to hospital where 'it hurt so much . . . what I did was sing as loud as I could so no-one would think I was crying'. Such courage, stoicism and bravery were accepted as the appropriate response to pain and sickness in these camps. When Mrs Hillen was very ill she:

Sat on her mattress, eyes closed, arms around her shins, rocking and rocking, going inside herself . . . I once watched her late at night drag herself out of our room on her hands and knees. I didn't help her because I was sure she'd waited until she thought we were asleep.

By the time Ernest had moved with his mother to Kampung Makasar Camp he had become so hardened that he:

Could walk down our barrack past women and children with broken teeth and bleeding gums, hair growing in tufts and faces and stomachs bloated with hunger oedema and beriberi, boils as big as ping pong balls and oozing tropical ulcers and not let myself *see* them: pain was pain.

Violence, death and severe discipline were less common in the mixed camps, and they are rarely mentioned in the narratives of the children interned in those camps. In contrast, for the children in the segregated camps, violence and death appear to have been commonplace and constantly occur in their narratives. Ernest Hillen 'saw so many women and older children slapped and kicked sometimes until they fell down, that after a while I didn't bother telling my mother about it any more'.¹¹¹ For these children death became an integral part of their everyday life. The boys in Ambarawa Camp carried 'twenty or thirty bodies of the old men a day . . . It was very hot you could not leave them more than twelve hours'. Dik, in Grogol, sighed as he recalled: 'We carried these dead bodies outside the camp, we didn't mind that. So many things were happening. You were so, how do you call it . . . numb.' Connie often watched the 'lorry come in everyday with the vegetables and then take out the dead bodies'.¹¹² In another camp Pans Schomper recalls:

Dozens of corpses were carried out the gate daily. The men died of exhaustion, dysentery, hunger and oedema. The dead were placed on big straw baskets attached to bamboo sticks left and right. Friends or strangers picked up the baskets and carried them out of camp . . . It

was a horrible sight especially from those who died of hunger oedema, water burst through the baskets . . . Every day we saw the same sight. We got used to it.¹¹³

Ernest Hillen found he could ‘think about people dying . . . I could see them dead and it didn’t make me sad: dead was dead’.¹¹⁴

Life may have changed dramatically for the children in the mixed camps but, when the camp gates clanged shut on those children in the segregated camps in Java and Sumatra, young boys and girls were catapulted into misery and adulthood. If the domestic and gardening work for the older children in the mixed camps blurred adult/child boundaries, the hard physical camp work, imposed on some of the children by the Japanese in the segregated camps, obliterated any sense of traditional colonial childhood. The absence of family life, the dirt, disease, soul-destroying and back-breaking work, the pain, death, responsibility and their daily struggle to survive, living on their wits and developing whatever skills they could, ended their childhood altogether. These were formative and indelible experiences that differentiated them from the children in the mixed camps in China, Hong Kong, Manila and the segregated camp in Changi. Many interviewees also consider that they alienated the children from their peers and parents after the war.

CONCLUSION

‘Internment,’ recalls James Ballard – no doubt speaking for all the children in the Far East – was ‘absolutely the reverse of everything that I had ever known’.¹¹⁵ In her end-of-war report, Miss Katherine Anderson, the headmistress of the Junior School in Stanley Camp, suggested that for the 300 children with whom she had been interned, there had been some compensations.

Freedom from the well meant but unintelligent attentions of amahs should have made them self-reliant and saved them from the necessity of unlearning pidgin English. Also, hardships endured and difficulties overcome may in some ways have been a fitter preparation for life in a post-war world than the somewhat pampered and often over-stimulated life of the Hong Kong child.¹¹⁶

Certainly, the pampered, ‘pearl egg-spoon’ colonial world, which had protected, isolated, socially restricted and cosseted Western children

– to the point where they were virtually invisible – had been turned upside-down. Boundaries of childhood had indeed shifted with 'gender, age, socio-political structures and the specific situation of the children'.¹¹⁷ Social restrictions were lifted, chaperones disappeared and comfortable homes were replaced by multipurpose rooms in a block shared with many other families. Isolation was impossible. The children's presence was more evident and prominent in a variety of ways. Children now mixed freely with each other and with adults. As the children fulfilled a variety of roles in the camps, their presence and energy was highly valued and colonial childhood was transformed. As this chapter has shown, however, that transformation was not only experienced in different ways depending on age, gender and location of the camp, but the 'hardships endured and difficulties overcome' did not necessarily, as Miss Anderson claimed, give them 'a fitter preparation for life in a post-war world'.

For both boys and girls in the mixed camps in Shanghai, Hong Kong and the Philippines, the support of parents and so many professional men and women, helped make that transformation a gradual process. Their formal education continued, albeit less formally, their physical health was monitored and they were cared for to the best of the adults' ability, and attempts were made to retain moral standards. In competition with this were the demands of camp life. Parents had no time to chaperone or oversee the children's leisure time, so friends could be freely chosen. With limited inside domestic space, 'outside' now became an acceptable place to play and socialise. Coupled with this new freedom, however, was the introduction to adult responsibilities. Work became a new but integral part of the children's lives. Coexisting, then, with their childhood pursuits, were their obligations to the survival of their families and the wider community. In order to accommodate the children's higher profile, their new-found freedom, independence and supporting roles, boundaries of colonial childhood had to shift. Nevertheless, the protection of the adults, which cushioned the children from any anxiety, gave the children a sense of security. The relaxed discipline, the freedom, the outdoor life, the variety of friends, all added new and exciting dimensions to their lives. Regardless of the loss of luxuries, servants and large cars, and in spite of the hunger, dirt and overcrowding, the secure, freer, more informal childhood contributed to internment being reconstructed as a 'golden age' by many of the children interned in those mixed camps.

In contrast, in the segregated camps in Java and Sumatra, the

boundaries of colonial childhood moved so far, so suddenly and so traumatically that these boys and girls appear to have lost their childhood altogether. In the camps where the Japanese demanded heavy and exhausting work, mothers had little or no time or energy to protect their children either physically or emotionally. With only a few women doctors available and limited medical supplies, the children's health suffered enormously. Schools were banned and formal education ceased shortly after internment. For many boys and girls over the age of ten, leisure and play were replaced by work – heavy adult work – and responsibility. As young girls laboured alongside older women they became young women over night. Young boys, who were wrenched from their mothers, sisters and younger brothers, were catapulted into 'manhood' as they entered the all-male camps.

These boys, who should have been going to school, getting an education, playing soccer and swimming, who should have eaten nourishing meals, were abused, roughly handled as if they were tools and left to stink in the dirt of a camp full of lice, fleas, cockroaches and bedbugs. To think of it made mama and papa sick.¹¹⁸

For these boys and girls, internment was far from a golden age. The dirt and hard work, the pain and suffering, and the separation from families, brought an end to their conventional childhood and their memories of internment are, unsurprisingly, negative and extremely painful.

Listening to, and reading, the powerful images presented by the diverse voices of the children it is clear that their new freedom, visibility, responsibility, independence and the brutality of the camp life changed the lives of *all* of them. Liberation was the catalyst for that change. As these adult-children emerged from the Japanese internment camps, they entered a post-war Western world in which they no longer felt comfortable or at home. Their experiences in internment had altered their perceptions of adults.

My whole life was affected by what happened in the prison camp. I was sixteen when I was thrown in, the age when you start to think about things . . . When the camp finished I knew I couldn't stay in Hong Kong. It would have meant working under people I'd just spent four years with. People who had behaved badly. They were the people I would have to go to for a job, the people I would have to respect.¹¹⁹

Life before the war was very formal and you respected so-and-so because he was whatever he was . . . I went into camp thinking that

anyone who was anybody must be absolutely fearless and a hundred per cent . . . But when you saw these people acting like everyone else you realise that it's not what you are it's who you are, that matters.¹²⁰

I had come to puberty there and developed the beginnings of an adult mind. I had seen adults under stress, a valuable education I would never have received in peacetime Shanghai.¹²¹

It had changed their attitudes to school, discipline and restrictions.

Ironically I felt more of a prisoner there [boarding school] than at any time in Stanley. The rules, the silences, discipline and censorship soon changed my personality. From a spirited youngster I became a withdrawn adolescent, frightened, lonely and always pining to go home. It was a convent I went to – very sheltered, terrible. In fact I suffered dreadfully. It affected me for years. I was terribly traumatised by being without a family. I was homesick. I was so homesick. I used to cry and cry so much. It was the trauma of coming from a big family and then finding yourself in a boarding school. What I could not stand was the silence. We were not allowed to talk at mealtimes. We were read to and you were only allowed to talk when you had your pudding. We used to line up in silence for mass and were not allowed to talk in the dormitory. It was that sudden censorship – all your mail was read so you couldn't write home. I used to sometimes say I was unhappy but all your mail was read and all your incoming mail was read. I found that really difficult.¹²²

'Discipline in boarding school in England was terribly Dickensian stuff after the camp,' one young boy told me in an interview.¹²³ Robin Prising, in the closing pages of his autobiography, writes:

At the age of twelve I was already in revolt. Of one thing I was certain: I did not wish to go to school or ever be treated as a little boy again. The past three years had provided an education far broader than any that was available to me in this period of my precocious youth. I had graduated . . . I had taken a degree of experience from the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas.¹²⁴

Dik recalls: 'I have trouble accepting authority because in the camp I saw the biggest guys stealing the most . . . We were all animals more or less.'¹²⁵

As well as alienating them from adult authority, the children's experiences had also alienated some of them from their peers who had not shared the same camp life:

Because I had had little education for two or three years. I was two or three years older than my other school mates. But in thinking and feeling I was an old woman. I was looking like a girl, but I was thinking like a woman. My class mates were 2–3 years younger in Holland and I thought them very childish.¹²⁶

Sadly, for many of the boys who had been interned in Java and Sumatra, the effects of internment alienated them from their parents. Ernest Hillen recalls:

My father walked through the camp gate one afternoon [at the end of the war] . . . He was not a big man . . . he hugged me and said ‘I am your father’. I answered ‘yes sir’. ‘Jongetje, let your mother and me talk,’ he said in a low tone. But no one called me Jongetje ‘little boy’ any more; *old* little boy maybe. I said nothing and went out.

And, noting the difference that the men’s camps had made to his brother, he writes:

He wasn’t much taller but even more quiet. He had changed and not changed. For about a year and a half he had carried on his own the brunt of our father’s ‘discipline’ yet the two of them seemed to get along fine. Jerry was as gentle and as generous as I remembered, but I noticed one thing, he’d made a teasing habit of our father’s a bit of his own . . . I didn’t like it, nor, I think, did my mother. I wrestled with thoughts about Jerry. Had our father emptied Jerry of himself a little?¹²⁷

Similarly, Bert observed:

I was a small boy in my father’s eyes when he left. When he came back, he started up a cigarette and I said, ‘Can I have one as well?’. He said, ‘You’re smoking. It is not good’. Well I had been looking after my mother and my younger brothers for all these years, and then there was somebody who was going to tell me what to do. It was difficult for him and me.¹²⁸

Jan’s meeting with his parents after the war was a great disappointment:

We were all looking forward to that day and when it came it was disappointing. Don’t forget we were on our own all the time. We were mature in our minds and we came back home and mothers and fathers treat us like babies. They treated us as they had left us a couple of years before. That was the clash.¹²⁹

Using whatever influences were appropriate for the task in hand, these children had adapted to, accepted, evolved with and managed the reality of the camps on their own terms. In so doing they had imposed themselves on and helped shape their camp environment. In turn internment, however pleasant or painful, had changed, shaped, moulded, empowered and raised the visibility of all the interned children. However, in age and physical appearance, they still resembled the children they had been. In fact, because of poor nourishment and loss of weight and illness, many may have seemed younger than their years. But, mentally, emotionally and psychologically, they were no longer innocent children and were much older than their years. While the children had learned to accept this contradiction, the adults found it much harder to deal with this inconsistency.

Although some of this tension could be attributed to a general generation gap that occurs in most families as children grow up, I think there were additional problems for these ex-internees. Part of the reason was that internment had challenged and diminished the power of the Western adults and, in particular, stripped many men of their roles as husbands and fathers. In striving to re-establish their own parental and family identities and roles, they needed and expected the children to show the same respect, constraint and dependence they had prior to internment. Motivated by their own needs, the adults tried to 'fit' the children back into strict and restrictive Western cultural disciplines and institutions. In so doing, they forgot, ignored or denied the fact that the children's ages and physical appearance masked adult experiences. For the children this meant their hard work, responsibility, freedom, independence and pain were being forgotten, ignored or denied.¹³⁰ This is what the children found so hard. That is why the children were disappointed. That was the clash.

NOTES

- 1 Hillen, 1994, p. 28.
- 2 Interview on 3 August 1995 with Rosemary Murray from Stanley Camp.
- 3 Anna Davin, 'What is a Child?', abstract of paper given at The Childhood in Question Conference, Essex University, 1997.
- 4 Van Velden, 1963.
- 5 The age when boys were removed from their mothers was between ten and sixteen. It differed over time and place.
- 6 I have only traced a few diaries kept by children interned in the Far East. Sheila Allen, 1994, is based on a journal written on scraps of paper by a fifteen-year-old Eurasian girl. This is in contrast with young Jewish children in the German concentration camps. One

- group of boys ran a camp newspaper which is now published in Marie Rut Krizkova, Kurt Jiri Kotouc and Zdenek Ornest (eds), *We are Children just the Same. Vedem the secret Magazine by the boys of Terezin* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995). There are also several wartime diaries by Jewish children published in Laurel Holliday (ed.), *Children's Wartime Diaries* (London: Piatkus, 1996). Additionally there are several groups of children's drawings that have survived the Holocaust. Some of these are published alongside children's poems in Hana Volavkova (ed.), *I never saw a butterfly. Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–1944*, expanded edition by the United States Holocaust Museum (New York: Schocken Books, 1993). See also Nicholas Stargardt 'Children's art of the Holocaust', *Past and Present*, No. 161, November 1998, pp. 191–235.
- 7 Interview in Amsterdam, 3 May 1995, with Jan van Dulm, who was initially interned as a young boy with his mother, brother and sister in Bloemenkamp, Java.
 - 8 Interview with J.G. Ballard by Elizabeth Dunn in *The Daily Telegraph Magazine*, 9 November 1991, p. 90.
 - 9 Interview with Dorothy Hovey, England, 12 November 1995 and another young woman in Sydney, 8 October 1995. Both from Stanley Camp.
 - 10 Prising, 1975, p. 12.
 - 11 Hillen, 1994, p. 11.
 - 12 J.G. Ballard, *User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 290, and Dunn interview.
 - 13 Prising, 1975, p. 13.
 - 14 Interview in England on 26 October 1995 with Mary-June Pettifer who had been interned as a young girl in Santo Tomas with her mother and brother.
 - 15 Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), 1993, p. 293.
 - 16 In her chapter on colonial children in India in the nineteenth century, Margaret MacMillan writes: 'Any parents who could possibly manage it sent their children away to boarding schools by the time they were seven years old, partly after the example of the middle-classes at Home, but also because the fears about the effects of India on children took ever more elaborate forms. Children brought up in India were felt, even in this century, to be somehow of inferior quality, a belief which affected the marriage prospects of girls and the careers of boys. Until the end of the Raj both Government and many businesses reserved higher posts for those educated in Britain.' She also reports that some colonial women called British children 'outposts of Empire'. They had to be protected and they had to be trained to shoulder their share of the burden of the Raj. Margaret MacMillan, 1996, pp. 125 and 139.
 - 17 Begley, 1995, p. 35.
 - 18 Michell, 1988, p. 4.
 - 19 Cogan, 2000, p. 18. Also Kaminski quotes ex-internee Alice Bryant. 'Alice Bryant took her eight year old daughter Imogen back to the US not only for safety reasons but because the Bryants believed that an American child who reached a certain age needed to be in America, presumably for educational purposes.' Kaminski, 2000, p. 28.
 - 20 Ruff-O'Herne, 1994, p. 31.
 - 21 Begley, 1995, p. 11.
 - 22 Ruff-O'Herne, 1994, pp. 11–14.
 - 23 Hillen, 1994, p. 3.
 - 24 Angus, 1978, p. 60.
 - 25 Interviewee, Mary-June Pettifer.
 - 26 Prising, 1975, p. 56.
 - 27 Rupert Wilkinson in Trish Marx, *Echoes of the Second World War* (London: Macdonalds Children's Books, 1989), p. 67.
 - 28 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
 - 29 Prising, 1975, p. 62.
 - 30 Interviewee, Mary-June Pettifer.
 - 31 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
 - 32 Interviewee, Connie Suverkropp, Holland, 4 May 1995. Connie had been interned in Java at the age of eleven along with her two young sisters. Her mother spent the war in a Japanese hospital suffering from TB. She died at the end of the war. Connie's father died just after the war ended.

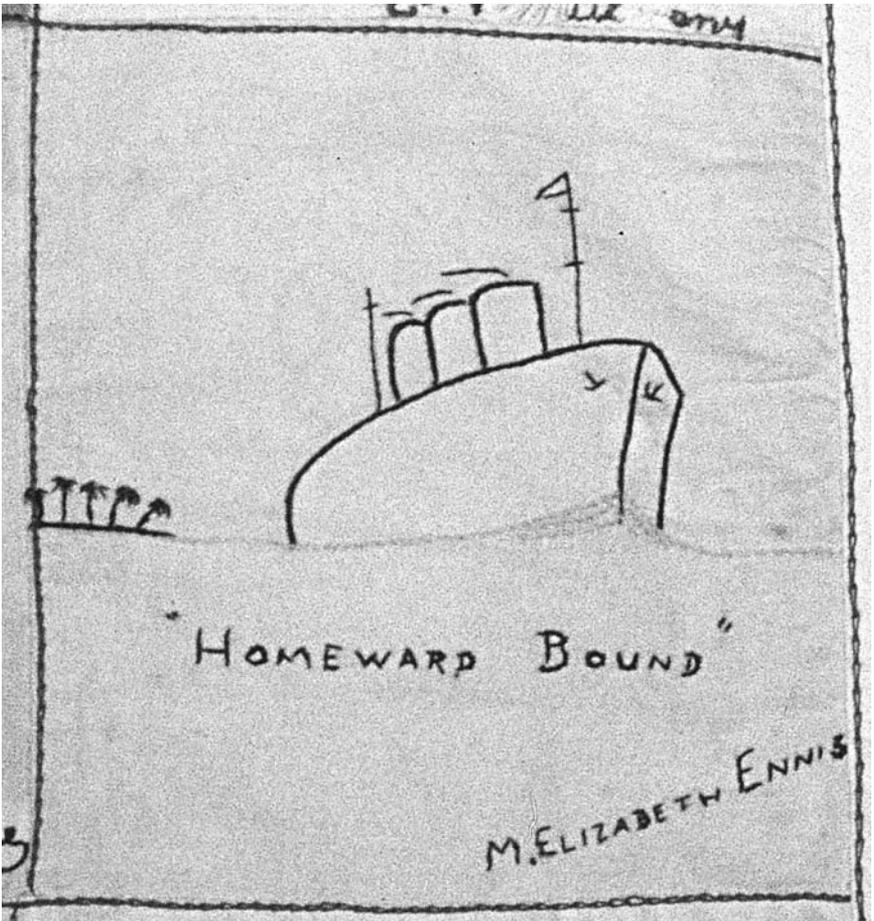
- 33 Hillen, 1994, p. 6.
- 34 Interview with Bert Singelenberg, Holland, 4 May 1995. Bert was about twelve when he was initially interned in Java with his mother and brother. Later he was moved to a boys' camp looking after sick old men.
- 35 Hillen, 1994, p. 28.
- 36 Ballard, 1996, p. 290.
- 37 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
- 38 Hillen, 1994, p. 24.
- 39 Prising, 1975, p. 126.
- 40 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
- 41 Ballard, Dunn interview.
- 42 Bert Singelenberg, 4 May 1995.
- 43 Interviewee, Dik de Moor, Amsterdam, 3 May 1995. Dik contracted polio just before the Dutch East Indies surrendered. He was originally interned with his mother and brother. In 1944 he was moved to Grogol Camp.
- 44 Interviewee, Connie Suverkropp.
- 45 Begley, 1995, p. 108.
- 46 Sewell, 1946, p. 139.
- 47 Interviews with two young male internees, one from Santo Tomas and another from Stanley Camp. Kaminski, 2000, p. 108, claims in November 1944 'the Santo Tomas camp school closed because students and teachers were too weak from hunger to continue'.
- 48 Gimson diary, 3 July 1944.
- 49 RHL, MSS, Ind. Ocn.s110. Anderson Report, 1947. In another report entitled, 'War Years on Schoolchildren in Hong Kong', *Overseas Education*, No. 19, 1948, pp. 692–3, it is noted that: 'The European children who were interned and are now over the age of twelve vary from one to three years behind the general standard of education and in certain subjects – notably science, history and geography – they are even more retarded . . . While progress is being made it seems probable that they will never reach normal standards.' This may have been the case in some instances but not in all.
- 50 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
- 51 Begley, 1995, p. 109.
- 52 Cogan, 2000, p. 237. Cogan quotes from Karen Lewis's autobiography in Lily Nova and Iven Lourie (eds), *Interrupted Lives: Four Women's Stories of Internment during World War II in the Philippines* (Nevada City, CA: Artemis Books, 1995), p. 84.
- 53 Ballard, 1996, p. 291 and Sewell, 1946, p. 97.
- 54 RHL, MSS, Ind. Ocn. s185, Constance B. Murray diary, 24 and 29 January 1945.
- 55 Prising, 1975, p. 151.
- 56 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
- 57 Interview in Sydney, 9 October 1995, with a woman who had been interned as a young girl with her family in Stanley Camp.
- 58 Sewell, 1946, p. 83.
- 59 Ballard, Dunn interview.
- 60 Interview in Sydney, 9 October 1995, with a woman who had been interned as a young girl with her family in Stanley Camp.
- 61 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
- 62 Interview in Sydney, 7 October 1995, with a man who had been interned as a young boy with his family in Stanley Camp. It is possible that he was talking about Chinese guards, or maybe the guards spoke Chinese or English.
- 63 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
- 64 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
- 65 Imogen Carlson in Cogan, 2000, p. 202.
- 66 Elizabeth Gale diary, 3 July 1945.
- 67 Interviewee, Hilary Hamson, England, 29 September 1997. Hilary had been interned as a young girl with her family in Stanley Camp.
- 68 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
- 69 Interview in Sydney, 7 October 1995, with a young man who had been interned as a young boy with his family in Stanley Camp.
- 70 Cogan, 2000, p. 231.
- 71 Prising, 1975, p. 146.

- 72 Ballard, 1996, p. 292 and Sewell, 1946, p. 113.
- 73 Sewell, 1946, p. 117 and interview in Sydney, 7 October 1995, with a young man who had been interned as a young boy with his family in Stanley Camp.
- 74 Gimson diary, 19 June 1943.
- 75 Interviewee, Hilary Hamson.
- 76 Sewell, 1946, p. 163.
- 77 Female correspondent to author, 6 February 1992.
- 78 Tressa Cates in Cogan, 2000, p. 202.
- 79 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
- 80 Prising, 1975, pp. 136–7.
- 81 Mary Thomas, 1983, pp. 105–6.
- 82 *Pow Wow*, 13 January 1943.
- 83 Mary Thomas, 1983, p. 46.
- 84 Hillen, 1994, pp. 27 and 29.
- 85 Bonga, 1996, pp. 65 and 69.
- 86 Interviewee, Bert Singelenberg.
- 87 Interviewee, Connie Suverkropp.
- 88 Hillen, 1994, pp. 41 and 32.
- 89 IWM. Papers of Dr (Mrs) M.E. Hopkins. Minutes of General Meeting, 17 June 1943.
- 90 A nurse in one of the children's blocks in the Auschwitz/Birkenau Concentration Camp remembers some of the bigger boys playing Roll Call. 'They took on the roles of the sick who fainted during roll call and were beaten for it . . .' George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust* (Amhurst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 80–1.
- 91 Hillen, 1994, pp. 33 and 173–4; p. 38; pp. 75 and 41.
- 92 An Jacobs, *Ontwortleden*, 1947, p. 70. In Gloegoer Camp.
- 93 Interviewee, Connie Suverkropp.
- 94 An Jacobs, 1947, p. 66.
- 95 Interviewee, Jan van Dulm, and Bonga, 1996, p. 92; Hillen, 1994, pp. 105–7; and Schomper, 1995, p. 99.
- 96 Van Waterford, 1994, p. 289. Echoing these comments, Elizabeth Gale in Shanghai dedicated her diary to her baby daughter Margaret and fellow internee's daughter Elizabeth, both born in July 1941: 'To Margaret and Elizabeth with our loving thanks for all the joy you brought into our lives during those years of internment. There is always a thread of gold to be found in any situation, no matter how horrible . . . You were our "thread of gold", Margaret, pure shining gold. We could not have managed without you during those four rough years . . .'
- 97 An Jacobs, 1947, p. 43.
- 98 Schomper, 1995, p. 99.
- 99 Interviewee, Bert Singelenberg.
- 100 Hillen, 1994, p. 114.
- 101 An Jacobs, 1947, p. 43.
- 102 Interviewee, Jan van Dulm.
- 103 RvO IC 9002, in Van Waterford, 1994, p. 313.
- 104 Schomper, 1995, p. 100.
- 105 Interviewee, Bert Singelenberg.
- 106 Interviewee, Dik de Moor.
- 107 Schomper, 1995, pp. 145–6.
- 108 Hillen, 1994, p. 121.
- 109 Hillen, 1994, p. 128.
- 110 Hillen, 1994, pp. 129, 139 and 136.
- 111 Hillen, 1994, pp. 44, 50, 131 and 163.
- 112 Interviewees, Dik de Moor and Connie Suverkropp.
- 113 Schomper, 1995, p. 136.
- 114 Hillen, 1994, p. 162.
- 115 Ballard, Dunn interview.
- 116 Miss K. Anderson Report, 1947.
- 117 Davin, 'What is a Child' abstract.
- 118 Bonga, 1996, p. 176.
- 119 Lewis Morley, *Black and White Lies* (Pymble: Angus and Robertson, 1992), p. 20.

- 120 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
- 121 Ballard, 1996, p. 292.
- 122 Interviewee, Rosemary Murray.
- 123 Interview in Sydney, 7 October 1995, with a man who had been interned as a young boy in Stanley Camp with his family.
- 124 Prising, 1975, p. 204.
- 125 Interviewee, Dik de Moor.
- 126 Interviewee, Connie Suverkropp.
- 127 Hillen, 1994, pp. 185–6.
- 128 Interviewee, Bert Singelenberg.
- 129 Interviewee, Jan van Dulm.
- 130 Luisa Passerini discusses the discourse of 'Cancelling', 'Amnesia' and 'Silences' of memory in oral history. 'Ideology,' she wrote, 'replaced memory, not simply by cancelling it, but by trying to impose an artificial and homologizing memory based in an imaginary non-existent Soviet People.' In her introduction to *Memory and Totalitarianism: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, Vol. 1, p. 14.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION



*In the brutal world of powerless suffering it was possible to be an agent – by the small assertions of the will in opposing actions and, afterwards, by telling.*¹

On 3 February 1945 the American 44th Tank Battalion broke through the gates at Santo Tomas and US forces stormed the camp. The Japanese put up some resistance and the eventual release of the internees was not without casualties: six GIs and nineteen internees were killed and many others injured. After 11 February the surviving internees began to leave the camp and the relief of the rest of the civilian and military POWs in the Philippines followed.² The other camps in the Far East had to wait until August 1945, when the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced the Japanese to surrender. By November 1945, all the surviving Far Eastern Western civilian internees had been released.

Some internees returned to America or Europe, others stayed on in the Far East, or returned later, and some made their way to Australia. Many had difficulties resettling after the war, a not unfamiliar story for many men and women in the post-war world, but it was particularly difficult for those who had spent the war in internment camps. Many internees suffered short- and long-term physical and psychological health problems directly resulting from their internment, and some died relatively young as a result. Others have lived to a 'ripe old age'. Some never spoke about their experiences; others, as my research has shown, have openly reflected on theirs.

War stories give precedence to male military exploits. Consequently, public images of internees in the Far East have always been dominated by male military prisoners of war. Media coverage constantly reproduces images of skeletal men wearing tiny 'loin cloths' and emotive headlines such as, 'Devastation and Disease' (the *Guardian*, Monday, 7 August 1995). When women internees are mentioned, references to rape are often made. This reflects Christina Twomey's observations that 'captivity for women is often presented as centrally connected to sex, or at least the threat of violation'.³ While, undoubtedly, these pictures are real, and disease was endemic and rape of Western women took place – albeit relatively rarely: compared with the tens of thousands of Asian women raped by the Japanese, there were probably 500 or so European women who suffered the same fate – the words and images presented by the media are deliberately provocative and evoke sympathy for victims. But as this study has demonstrated, the media stories are not as representative or as

typical of civilian internment in the Far East as they might at first appear.

Further, the historiography on civilian experiences during the Second World War tends to focus on the European ‘home front’ and the roles played by civilian men and women in the factory, office, hospital, farm or doing voluntary work. Children are normally discussed in relation to evacuation. Far Eastern Western civilian internees do not fit comfortably into the polarised battle/home-front categories. Unlike military prisoners of war, these civilians were shadowy figures excluded from that heroic military picture. Unlike home-front civilians, they were not in familiar surroundings or praised for the way they ‘kept the home fires burning’. However, consecutive chapters of this book have demonstrated that even without the heroic status and structures of military prisoners of war, and in unfamiliar surroundings, they created their own social structures, policies, work patterns, child care, and other schemes to overcome the social chaos and material shortages of their own ‘front line’ and the alien environment in which they found themselves.

In chapter one, *The Prelude to War*, I showed how the minds and lives of British colonial officers were shaped by their training and the jingoistic language that spurred them on their way to their posts among the ‘strange agglomeration of willing peoples’. Underpinning this training and language was the imperialist view of the ideal British white man and woman, an ideal that was voiced by the committed imperialist, the Earl of Meath, as:

That virile spirit which makes light of pain and physical discomfort, and rejoices in the consciousness of victory over adverse circumstances and which regards the performance of duty, however difficult and distasteful, as one of the supreme virtues of all true men and women . . . Britons have ruled in the past because they were a virile race, brought up to obey, to suffer hardships cheerfully and to struggle victoriously. The white men and women of the British race would not rule well if they were idle, soft, selfish, hysterical and undisciplined.⁴

Similar comments are made about Empire and the European man and woman by historian Ann Laura Stoler. In her discussion of Foucault, sexuality and European and colonial bourgeois culture, Stoler notes:

Empire provided the fertile terrain on which bourgeois notions of manliness and virility could be honed and put to patriotic test. Passion was unseemly . . . As Hugh Ridley has argued, it was in the colonies that

'indifference to suffering was a sign of national strength, an essential condition of manhood', proving, as the French colonial novelist Henry Daguerrhes writes, 'the strength of my blood and the strength of my race'.⁵

Commenting on the role of women, she adds:

Bourgeois women in the colony and metropole were cast as the custodians of morality, of their vulnerable men, and of the national character. Parenting and motherhood specifically, were a class obligation and a duty of Empire.⁶

The ideal colonial man and woman, then, were stoical with a high regard for duty. They were tough, calm, industrious, disciplined, unselfish, and they rejoiced in victory over adverse circumstances. These white Western ideals and bourgeois sensibilities, underpinned by notions of racial superiority, were part of the baggage that the colonial man and woman took with them to the colonies. This study has shown how these idealised attributes were unpacked and played out in various ways in the internment camps to help the internees to survive.

Chapter one revealed how the various evacuation plans and defence policies planned for Western women and children caused conflict at almost every level. The tensions and concerns over the various evacuation policies highlighted the ambivalent position of Western women in the colonies. On the one hand they were to be protected and evacuated; on the other, it was claimed that the Western women were the only ones who could be trusted to carry out essential administrative work. The planned evacuation of women and children also raised racial questions about prioritising the safety of Western women and children above that of the Asian women and children. This in turn demonstrated the racial prejudices of the Dominion of Australia who refused to accept mixed-race women and children from the Dutch East Indies. It also exposed the hidden disunity within the colonies, between the colonies and the imperial powers and within the different departments of imperial governments. Some of the conflicts over the evacuation were also fuelled by the racially based propaganda about the inferiority of the Japanese fighting force and the supposed superiority of the Western defences. This propaganda was readily believed by many members of the Western colonial communities. It enhanced their already well-established illusions and images of Western white imperial power and lulled many into a

false sense of security. The universal shock of the Japanese attacks and victories showed the negative propaganda for what is was and shattered all the illusions and images of Western supremacy.

The final part of the chapter demonstrated how that sense of shock, degradation and embarrassment grew as the colonial communities were forced to desert the local colonised communities. If the wife of the Civil Surgeon in Manipur, India, in 1936 is to be believed, this was an almost unforgivable act.

There are things worse than war: cowardice, disloyalty, to betray a great trust and to fail in one's duty to people one has undertaken to administer and protect – are all worse than war.⁷

This sense of failure was compounded by the shameful and indignity of being rounded up in front of the local communities. Their subsequent internment divided some, and isolated all, colonial communities. It stripped them of their power, prestige and property. Reduced to the bare necessities of life and without contact with, or support from, 'Home' governments or military might, the men, women and children of the Western colonial communities were severely shaken. In the following chapters, however, I sought to demonstrate that, once in camp, they were determined to show that even if 'down' they were not 'out'.

My exploration of the private diaries indicated that the pre-war Western colonial attitudes concerning race, class and ethnicity were in evidence, particularly in the early days. Gradually, however, the various sources showed that, for most internees, class and ethnicity each became subsumed, perhaps temporarily, to the 'community' who now shared a common enemy and a common struggle. National identity, though important, often fused into a Western identity. Racialism was strongly focused on the Japanese and, along with perceptions of masculinity and femininity, remained an important factor for personal, communal and cultural survival. Thus gender, racialism and, to a much lesser extent, Western and national identity, were the main influences on the structure, analysis and focus of this book.

While the analysis in the remaining chapters revealed the constant struggle to come to terms with the Japanese victories, the dislocation between ideals, social expectations and the reality of the internment camp, the overall picture emerging is one of the internees uniting together. That is not to deny that conflicts between internees existed. Living in close proximity with each other for such long periods, the

lack of privacy, appalling conditions, shortage of food, sickness, insecurity and lack of communication with loved ones, all highlighted and exacerbated a variety of differences which, in turn, created tensions and conflicts. Some of those conflicts have been raised and discussed in this book. But, as Mary Sewell reflected when pondering on her life in camp after liberation:

We sometimes introduced a spirit of conflict and struggle, yet underneath it all there was co-operation. There had to be or we should not have managed.⁸

Important as Mary Sewell's observation is, the unity in the Far Eastern internment camp sprang from more than just mutual co-operation and/or an outside threat. The distress and chaos of the Japanese attacks, their victories and the consequent internment of Western civilians, when families and whole communities were fragmented and dispersed, were immediately followed by a time of disorientation and disillusionment. The Japanese victories and the ensuing internment of the colonial communities threatened to destroy the internees, their values, principles and their traditions. However, the external danger and a shared common enemy gradually created a sense of solidarity and a unified group identity. This helped the internees to overcome the early chaos and their feelings of disorientation. The Western colonial communities in the Far East were heirs to a well-established culture, with its perceived superior Western cultural values, principles and traditions, which was utilised creatively by the internees. The social unity and cooperation of the Western civilians interned in the Far East stemmed from, was translated into and consolidated by, the selective deployment of the dominant values and resources that existed in their imperial culture.

As far as the conflicts in the camps are concerned, I share Chandra Jayawardena's argument that, 'disputes indicate the strength, not the weakness, of the bonds of community'.⁹ The conflicts that arose in the camps were not, therefore, negative or a sign of failure; rather they showed how strong the bonds of unity actually were. That the internees were no longer the dominant power and were prisoners of the Japanese and, therefore, victims is not in question. What this study has shown is that once interned they were able successfully to combine being victims with effective agency for survival.¹⁰

Internment forced the colonial communities to re-evaluate their lives. In so doing they prioritised the structures, traditions and social

mores which were of the most value in the new threatening situation. As a result, many of the pre-internment divisions and differences – though perhaps not privately discarded – became publicly marginalised by the internees' need for solidarity. Gradually, for most internees, the money economy and class differences were peripheralised, for example by the forced distribution of communal food, accommodation and medical care. National identities and patriotism, undoubtedly, remained strong, but the continuing belief in the intellectual, moral and racial supremacy of Western imperial powers often transcended national distinctions. Personal ethnic and racial prejudices did not necessarily disappear but, publicly, they became focused on the common enemy – the Japanese. Beyond the obvious needs for food, shelter and health care, the most important Western social and cultural traditions that assisted survival were the maintenance and stabilisation of 'civilised' and 'dignified' patterns of behaviour expected of Western white men, women and children. These behavioural patterns were illustrated in the three remaining chapters of this book.

In chapter two I focused specifically on the men's response to internment. I argued that, as far as the men were concerned, the surrender of the various Western colonies heralded the demise of Western imperialism. As imperialism was so intrinsically linked with their personal identity, their perceived masculinity and racial superiority, the men felt that these, too, were seriously threatened. Therefore, with their own survival inseparable, in their minds, from that of Western imperialism, and being unable to take part in the military battles or influence the course of the war waging outside the camps, they fought their own 'Western imperial' battle inside the camps. Their sense of failure to behave as and conform to the standards of the ideal Western colonial male is clearly articulated in their accounts. They felt they had failed and let down the Chinese, Malayan, Filipinos, Indians and all other groups colonised by the West. They had also failed to protect their own women and children, and had had to watch helplessly as they had been herded into Japanese internment camps. Finally they saw themselves as 'prisoners and nothing more'.¹¹ As time progressed that sense of failure and victimhood began to fade from their narratives. The records kept by the men show that their formal and informal education, specific training and expertise, underpinned by their perceptions of how dignified and civilised Western colonial men should be, all assisted them in their physical and psychological battles to survive.

In the mixed camps, the presence of women as the 'feminine other' helped the men to retain a measure of their masculine identity. However, the traditional channels through which many men had articulated their perceptions of power and masculinity, were no longer available to them. They could not show progress in business, lord it in the boardroom or court room, they owned no property, and class, status and power had been removed from them. Nevertheless, as they 'surveyed, regulated and sanitised' their camp environment they mirrored their own pre-internment colonial projects.¹² The organisation of and the work in the camps became the vehicle through which many could restore status, power and masculinity. Their sporting activities allowed them to display competitiveness, manliness, team spirit and nationalism. By individually and/or collectively professionalising and masculinising their various camp activities they renegotiated, achieved and asserted new ways of restoring and articulating their perceptions of the ideal man both to themselves and to the Japanese.¹³ This helped the men to survive both physically and psychologically. I would further argue that, within this context, their struggle to survive and to overcome the hunger, disease, demoralisation and disorder in such a civilised way had greater significance.

Before being deported to Formosa, Sir Shenton Thomas thanked the internees in Changi for their support and went on to say:

I have seen a body of men and women with their chins up and their heads up . . . Determined to see the thing through and determined that as soon as we get out you will see to it, as far as you can, that the freedom we have lost shall never be lost again and that the British Empire shall be greater and more honourable and more happy than ever before.¹⁴

While acknowledging that they had temporarily lost their freedom, the men's struggle and survival signified that they had not lost, and the Japanese had not destroyed, all those attributes expected of the white Western male and the Empire which he served. This in turn symbolised to them their 'heroic' part in the much wider struggle being enacted outside the camps by the Allied military forces. The male internees' battle to maintain their dignity and virility, within the constraints and constrictions imposed by the Japanese, were inseparable from the Western Allies' military battle for freedom and empire. Any loss of life, lost dignity and loss of their masculine identity were tantamount to military and Western imperial defeats. This was not just the defeat of one enemy by another in war; these losses had

greater significance. Such losses and defeats would have confirmed Japanese, and therefore non-white, superiority and white Western inferiority. It would have been the end of Western imperialism and the end of the British Empire in the Far East. Consequently, their fight was, in their imaginations, contiguous with that of the Western military forces and served to demonstrate the continued superiority of the Western white races and Western imperialism.

In chapter three I turned my focus on the women internees. Although Western colonial women were not a homogeneous group, they nevertheless had the common experience of living in an imperial male-dominated space and structure. As such, the majority of them shared the same values as their menfolk and represented and contributed to Western imperialism's civilising project in one way or another. In the early stages of the war the women, undoubtedly, shared a similar sense of shock at the Japanese attacks and victories as their menfolk. They were also destabilised and disorientated by the loss of their homes and servants, their social lives and, in many cases, their menfolk. Everything that had previously defined their lives as white colonial women had been taken away from them. In internment the women not only had to face the restrictions inflicted by the Japanese, but they were also subject to the social, educational and training constraints imposed by contemporary perceptions of traditional colonial gender roles. For the women in the mixed camps, this posed few problems. The presence of the 'masculine other' helped them maintain a sense of their own feminine identity. With the men taking on the leading administrative and working roles, the women were left with the familiar roles of assisting and encouraging, parts they had played and expected to play in their pre-internment colonial lives. By bearing, nurturing and educating the children in the camp the women were able to demonstrate their commitment to the future of Empire, and were also able to claim small personal victories over the Japanese. By willingly accepting and fulfilling the subordinate roles in the mixed camps the women continued to express their loyalty not only to the menfolk but also to Western colonial ideals.

For the women in the segregated camps, however, life was less familiar and more difficult. The absence of the 'masculine other' meant they had to work harder to maintain a sense of their own feminine identity. In addition, their lack of skills and training in areas that were traditionally filled by colonial men, forced these women to assume a variety of new and unfamiliar roles. The administration of the camps and the hard physical work demanded by the Japanese

seriously challenged both their traditional roles and their femininity. The treatment many received at the hands of the Japanese meant that they were dehumanised and defeminised. They worked like ‘navvies’ or animals, they were physically and mentally abused and some were forced to work as prostitutes for the Japanese military. This undoubtedly aroused feelings of failure to uphold the white colonial female morality and purity, and may, in turn, have given rise to a sense of disloyalty to Western men and Empire.

By obeying the Japanese and the demands of camp life, the women in the segregated camps (without any choice in the matter) appeared to be at war with, or to challenge, white Western colonial traditions and principles. However, as they simultaneously struggled to retain what they perceived as their femininity, to nurture and discipline the children who remained with them, and to record their experiences in unconventional and ‘feminine’ ways, they proved their support for and complicity in those traditions and principles. As the women battled for survival in the camps they strived to maintain, as far as possible, the gender roles and perceptions of bourgeois femininity and civilised respectability – so important to the white superior ruling powers. In so doing, the women in both the mixed and segregated camps underpinned and supported the male ethos, colonial traditions, the imperial ‘civilising project’ and Western imperialism.

In an interview carried out by the Imperial War Museum, in November 1980, the Revd Joseph Sandbach, a Methodist missionary interned in Stanley Camp, gave the women of Stanley ‘full marks’ for their ability to cope better than the men in internment. Mr Gimson, the Colonial Secretary in Stanley, wrote in his diary: ‘Women endured privation better than men possibly because domestic duties eliminated to some extent the opportunity for morbid introspection and criticism of [the] existing [camp] administration.’ Elizabeth Head Vaughan, interned in the Philippines, also concludes, in her immediate post-war study, that ‘women seemed to adapt themselves to the internment situation more readily than did male internees’.¹⁵ Historian Dr D. Van Velden, researching and writing in the 1960s, also argues that the higher mortality rate among the men was probably due to the fact that ‘women were better able to adapt themselves to changed conditions, remaining more active and keeping up their spirits better’.¹⁶

Persuasive as these arguments may first appear, my research has not revealed sufficient convincing evidence to support them. The reasons for the higher mortality rates among the men are open to debate. For example, in Changi, during the Double Tenth investiga-

tion, fifty-four men were arrested as opposed to three women. The men certainly received much harsher treatment under the Kempeitai than the women. All three women were released and survived long after the war. In contrast fifteen men died subsequent to their arrest – either they were executed or death was caused by their ill-treatment and torture. Other Western civilian men from the camps in Shanghai were badly tortured in Bridge House by the Kempeitai, and some of these men subsequently died. In Stanley Camp, Hong Kong, some of the civilian men were put into prison and were starved and beaten, while others were tortured and executed. In Santo Tomas some men who tried to escape were executed. In addition, in her notes of the meetings with the Japanese commandant of Changi, Dr Margaret Hopkins records that Colonel Okasaki had been ordered ‘to give special consideration to children and expectant mothers’ and the sentries were not to smack the women. Later, in the minutes of the General Committee Meeting, 2 November 1942, Dr Hopkins announced that the Camp Commandant had said that, ‘by the laws of chivalry no Japanese gentleman would ever strike a woman and that it was now established that no woman was to be hit’.¹⁷ Her announcement was met with some amusement indicating the women were, not unreasonably, somewhat sceptical of this. I am not claiming that these events and comments were replicated in all the other camps, and indeed this book has recorded serious abuse of the women in Java and Sumatra. However, I am suggesting that it is probable that Western civilian men, in general, received harsher treatment at the hands of the Japanese than the Western civilian women. If this was, in fact, the case then this would go some way to explain the higher mortality rate among the men.

As far as Head Vaughan’s argument is concerned, it is possible, as she claims, that some married women may have adapted more readily to internment, perhaps because they had been used to adapting throughout their adult lives. They had learned to adapt to their husbands’ jobs and postings and, undoubtedly, the arrival of children changed the women’s lives more than those of the men. Adaptation and flexibility were an essential part of their socialisation both as women and as colonial wives. Equally, some men may have been more disorientated by the loss of their structured professional life and may, therefore, have taken longer to adjust. However, my research, as indicated in the chapter covering the men’s experiences, shows that many men found ways to exploit their skills and organise themselves and the camps in a way that benefited all the internees.

I would suggest, therefore, that the ‘full marks’, given to the women by the Revd Joseph Sandbach and the conclusions and observations of Elizabeth Head Vaughan are, to some extent, shaped and influenced by the expectations surrounding perceptions of masculinity, femininity and gender roles implicit in the values and principles of that time and place. These expectations are expressed by William Sewell again when he claimed: ‘They [the children] and the women among us gave a grace to our living.’¹⁸ Additionally, Hartendorp, in Santo Tomas, wrote:

The presence of women and children, although it added to the responsibility of the camp management, it did much to brighten the camp and the life of the men was certainly much nearer the normal than it would have been without them.¹⁹

The women may have brightened the men’s lives and added grace to internment living, but for men and women at that time, war was men’s business. The ‘war’ being waged in the harshness and squalor of the internment camp, guarded by Japanese and other Asian guards, who were perceived as uncivilised, was considered no place for a white Western woman. Consequently, the very presence of the women as Japanese prisoners added to the men’s sense of responsibility. It was also demoralising for the men who felt they should have protected their women and spared them such indignities. Moreover, the women’s demonstrations of bravery and courage were undermining to men – hence the emotional reaction of the man watching the women march into Changi. In contrast, men were expected not only to cope, but to cope bravely and courageously. The unexpected, positive manner in which many women responded to internment highlighted the equally unexpected, and unwelcome, failure of some men to cope in what was considered an appropriate manner. This unforeseen behavioural pattern challenged contemporary expectations and has led, in my opinion, to some misinterpretation.

Mr Gimson’s suggestion that ‘domestic duties eliminated morbid introspection’ is even more revealing. Although Cogan has demonstrated that a few American women in the Philippines questioned the early undemocratic manner in which their committees were elected, when I asked my interviewees about the subject, they all said ‘it had never occurred to them to criticise the administration or stand for election’.²⁰ For the majority of women the colonial political arena had

always been a male preserve, and so it is not surprising that women in these male-dominated mixed camps acquiesced to, or at least did not challenge, their male administrators. They saw the management of the camps as neither their role nor their prerogative, and they trusted these trained men to run the camps efficiently. Is it possible, then, that Mr Gimson was really saying he felt more comfortable with the women because their attitude was less challenging and, therefore, less threatening than that of the men? Were all these commentators, perhaps, really just praising the women for their traditional uncomplaining and supporting behaviour, and for normalising life without ‘fanfare and bustle’?²¹

Questions about which group of internees ‘coped’ best and why are probably irrelevant and, ultimately, unanswerable. Age, skills, training, location, the size and type of camp, the attitudes of the guards and individual health prior to and during internment are just some of the variables that would have to be considered before any such conclusions could be drawn. That said, the question as to why the treatment of internees differed so much from area to area undoubtedly deserves much greater research and would, I believe, be a major comparative study in itself. The Japanese historian Utsumi Aiko has done some preliminary work on the subject.²² In her study of camps in Java and Sumatra she claims that part of the problem was that junior Japanese officers with little or no knowledge of international law were put in charge of the camps. They were also responsible for training the Indonesian and Korean guards. She further argues that the racial attitudes of the Dutch, whose children called Korean guards ‘little yellow monkeys’, angered and provoked the guards. She suggests that the behaviour and reactions of the Dutch women would have come across as bold and arrogant to Japanese soldiers who were used to compliant Japanese women who did not assert their rights.

Utsumi Aiko is probably correct up to a point, but her study lacks comparisons with camps in other areas where ‘bold and arrogant’ Western women and children, with similar racial attitudes, were interned and where the treatment was less brutal. Consequently, I think there are other issues to be considered. How Japanese soldiers felt about garrison duty is explained by Colonel Tokunda when he was leaving Changi women’s camp.

We came here to fight. When we [soldiers] leave Japan we do not expect to come back. We tell our families. We consider to die in battle the highest honour and [we want] to sacrifice our lives for our country.

We want to kill enemy, we do not expect to live. But we came to Malaya not in time for this battle. We are ordered to work on garrison duty which is very degrading for Japanese soldiers.²³

While the women in Changi were not brutally treated by the guards it must be remembered that there were men on the other side of the camp and it is possible that their presence deterred the guards from treating the women very badly. Changi was also a relatively small camp. In contrast, in Java and Sumatra the women were entirely on their own in the camps. In addition some of the camps held 10,000 internees compared with, say 2,500 in Hong Kong and 4,000 in Manila and Singapore. These larger camps in Java and Sumatra must have created severe containment, feeding, supervisory and disciplinary problems. Constant intimidation of the women and keeping them in a state of fear was one way for the limited numbers of guards to keep some measure of control.

It is also possible, as Betty Jeffrey in Sumatra implies, that those Japanese put in charge of her camp were classed as unfit for battle. She wrote of Captain Seko when he was appointed commander of her camp:

Perhaps because he had one eye while the other was bloodshot, physical attributes that may have accounted for his demotion to looking after women . . . It was a very lonely job and those people, the lowest of the low, were kicked around and they had been brutalised and they were brutal to us . . .²⁴

Perhaps some of these guards in Java and Sumatra found their duties in guarding large numbers of civilian women humiliating and degrading. Their work challenged their perceptions of what a real Japanese soldier should be. The subsequent bullying, intimidation and denigration of Western women may have been a way of expressing their frustration and aggression and, at the same time, attempting to restore some of their perceived masculinity. As one woman, ironically, commented:

We were a nuisance to them from first to last, I think that was our great peril. They wander in and out of our houses all day long with fixed bayonets – no doubt protection from so many women.²⁵

The other consideration to be taken into account is that some of the younger Indonesians helping guard the camps in Java and

Sumatra were nationalists who were only too happy to take out their grievances against their previous Dutch colonialists.

While all this is speculation, what is clear from my research is that the Japanese – supported by their Chinese, Korean, Formosan, Indonesian and Indian guards – were undoubtedly a ubiquitous presence in *all* the camps. Like a chronic debilitating disease, they were insidious and a constant irritation and threat. Guards were posted at various points around the perimeter and at other strategic places within the camps, and they supervised the unloading of food. The Japanese commandants and their officers were accommodated at the main gates or in houses overlooking the camps, reflecting their dominance over the internees. Thus, both physically and metaphorically, their shadow fell over the prisoners. The armed guards, high prison walls, the barbed wire and regular roll calls – all of which restricted the internees' physical movements – were constant and overt evidence of the enemy's power and control. Less public, but more insidious, were the hunger pangs that woke the internees each morning, the humiliating queues for washing and lavatories, the debilitating harsh daily existence, the nightly curfews and, finally, the struggle to settle down each night in their overcrowded and sparsely equipped rooms and cells. The Japanese may not have been wholly repressive in all the camps, but their presence certainly pervaded every aspect of *all* the internees' lives.

The contradictions and dislocation of camp life within the context of colonial culture are highlighted in chapter four where I focused on the interned children. If there were ideals for the adults, there were also expectations of the colonial children. The missionary teachers in Weihsien Camp, China, made it very clear what was expected of the children in their care.

Our Chefoo teachers never watered down the standards of teaching or decorum. There wasn't one set of standards for the outside world and another set for the concentration camp. You could be eating the most awful glop out of a tin can or a soap dish but you were to be as refined as the two princesses who lived in Buckingham Palace . . . Keep your voices down. Don't complain . . . We were God's representatives in this camp.²⁶

As this study has shown, few children, if any, appear to have aspired to such standards. Rather, in contrast to the adults who used colonial culture, traditions and principles as reference points, the children found that the rituals and framework of colonial culture made little sense. The children's responses to internment, particularly when

they were left to their own devices, were more spontaneous. Consequently, their testimonies clearly reflect the confusion caused by the contradictions of adult cultural and social ideals and the children's personal experiences of camp life.

Camp life meant that, probably for the first time, the children were living very near to 'nature and the events of birth, marriage and death'.²⁷ For the children in the mixed camps this meant that colonial social constraints could, on many occasions, be tossed aside. They were, in their own unstructured time, able to run and play freely; they also chose their own friends and ignored rules. On other occasions the adults encouraged them to ignore the constraints and to scavenge for wood and cigarette butts. The children in the segregated camps, however, did not so much toss social constraints aside, rather the camp regimes made it almost impossible to retain them. The boys who were sent off to boys' or men's camps found that their very survival depended on living by their wits, and Western colonial sensibilities held no part in their lives.

It could be argued, therefore, that, as the children in the mixed camps played in the hills, slid down gullies, sat chatting late at night on the rooftops, and scavenged for food, cigarette butts and wood, and the children in the segregated camps learned to live by their wits and became numb to death and disease, both groups created another sub-culture in the camps. This sub-culture and the manner in which the children adapted to, or were forced to accommodate, camp life, constantly challenged and threatened to undermine the dominant colonial cultural values of the adults.

The psychological and emotional effects of camp life on the children are highlighted in the latter part of the chapter. Here they voice their distress, disappointment and confusion as they had to struggle to come to terms with post-war restrictions and expectations inherent in the post-war dominant adult Western culture. The voices and narratives of these ex-internee children are spoken and written by the adults whom they have now become. Many are now parents and grandparents themselves and thus have a greater understanding of the problems that the adults faced. 'Being a child was quite different from being an adult in the camp. I don't think I would like to have been an adult,' reflected Dorothy, now married with grown-up children of her own.²⁸ And Mary Taylor recalled:

The grown-ups in camp knew enough to be afraid. I saw war through the eyes of a child; an endless pyjama party, an endless camp out. I

entrusted my anxieties to my teachers in the belief that they would take care of us.²⁹

In contemplating their parents' and teachers' attitudes, the interviewees acknowledged the fear and anxiety the adults must have felt, but kept hidden. They admit that many children never doubted the next meal would be provided, whereas many parents wondered where the next meal was coming from. Few children thought about the future, whereas the future was a constant worry for the parents who wondered what would happen to them, if and when the Allies arrived. Would they be shot or massacred by the Japanese, or would they even survive until then? Who would look after their children if they died? In their efforts to protect the children, the parents kept these worries to themselves. In the post-colonial world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, these one-time children of the Far Eastern internment camps are writing their autobiographies, giving interviews, meeting in groups and, in some cases, recalling their experiences for children in schools. In so doing they are trying to make sense of their own internment experiences. At the same time, however, they are also attempting to understand what internment meant to their parents. This in turn is helping them to comprehend attitudes and relationships between themselves, their parents and the post-war community at large. 'It is,' as one male interviewee told me, 'a kind of healing.' For many ex-internees that healing has been, and still is, a long time coming.

NOTES

- 1 Samuel Hynes, referring to the Nazi concentration camps, in Samuel Hynes. *The soldiers' tale. Bearing witness to modern war* (London: Allen Lane, 1997), p. 269. In Winter and Sivan, 1999, p.19.
- 2 Most of the accounts of Santo Tomas record this rescue. Of particular interest may be that of Cogan, 2000, Chapter 9, 'Angels and Tanks'.
- 3 Christina Twomey, 'Captive Women and Audiences: Internment in the Asia-Pacific in World War II' in *Meanjin* Vol. 58, No. 1, 1999, pp. 45–57.
- 4 J.A. Mangan, 'The Grit of our Forefathers: Invented traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism', in John M. Mackenzie (ed.), 1987, pp. 113–39. Lord Meath was involved with the Lads' Drills Association; the Duty and Discipline Movement; the Empire Day Movement; the Navy League; General Council of the Legion of Frontiersmen; the League of Empire and was a Commissioner for the Boy Scouts Association.
- 5 Ann Laura Stoler, 'Cultivating Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves', in Catherine Hall, 2000, p. 107.
- 6 Stoler, in Hall, 2000, p. 111. In this quote Stoler refers to Anna Davin, 'Motherhood and Imperialism', *History Workshop* 5, 1978, pp. 9–57.
- 7 Margaret MacMillan, 1996, p. 228.

CONCLUSION

- 8 Sewell, 1946, p. 190.
- 9 Chandra Jayawardena, writing about Tamil plantation labour in the Caribbean, in Scott, 1990, p. 132.
- 10 The question of the cohabitation and the juxtaposition of agency and victimhood are addressed in Winter and Sivan, 1999.
- 11 Hartendorp, 1967, and W.F.N. Churchill and Hobart B. Amstutz.
- 12 Nicholas Thomas, 1994, p. 4.
- 13 Roper and Tosh, 1991, p. 18.
- 14 Report in *Changi Guardian*, 23 July 1942. In spite of Sir Shenton Thomas's hopes, the Second World War actually heralded the demise of the British Empire. India gained independence in 1947. The last British colony, Hong Kong, returned to China in 1997. Other Western empires have also shrunk. It was as early as 17 August 1945 that nationalist leader, Sukarno, declared Indonesia's independence, but it was 1949 before the Dutch finally transferred sovereignty. The Philippines became fully independent in 1946.
- 15 Sandbach transcript, p. 76; Gimson diary, Foreword, p. 5. Vaughan, 1949, p. 145.
- 16 Van Velden, 1963, p. 517.
- 17 IWM. Papers of Dr M.E. Hopkins.
- 18 Sewell, 1946, p. 94.
- 19 Hartendorp, 1967, Vol. I, p. 52.
- 20 Cogan, 2000, pp. 126–8. According to Cogan, Natalie Crouter in Baguio was particularly outspoken about this issue.
- 21 Vickery, 1998, p. 131.
- 22 Utsumi Aiko, 1996, p. 202.
- 23 IWM. Dr M.E. Hopkins notebook, 22 March 1942.
- 24 Betty Jeffrey, 1995, p. 37.
- 25 Kenny, 1986, p. 76.
- 26 Mary Taylor, in David Michell, 1988, p. 82.
- 27 Margaret MacMillan, 1996, pp. 138–9.
- 28 Interviewee, Dorothy Hovey.
- 29 Mary Taylor, in Michell, 1988, p. 82.

EPILOGUE



PRESENTED BY THE WOMEN OF
CHANGI INTERNMENT CAMP 2602.
TO THE WOUNDED NIPPONESE SOLDIERS
WITH OUR SYMPATHY FOR THEIR
SUFFERING

IT IS OUR WISH THAT ON THE CESSATION
OF HOSTILITIES THAT THIS QUILT BE
PRESENTED TO THE JAPANESE RED
CROSS SOCIETY
IT IS ADVISABLE TO DRY CLEAN.
THIS QUILT.

Welcome home. You have suffered a long and bitter ordeal at the hands of a barbarous enemy.

You have never been out of our thoughts and we now know, as we had always expected, that you have borne the ordeal with the spirit of your race.

That experience is now past and freedom is yours again. You may find in your homeland the scars of six years of war but you will not find any lack of goodwill and affection, and I wish you all good fortune in the future and a quick and full recovery to all whose health has suffered from their privations.¹

G.H. Hall, Secretary of State for the Colonies

Due to differences of opinion among the Allies, the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan was not signed until September 1951. However, in 1948 the American War Claims Act authorised the payment of \$60 per month for adult internees and \$25 for children for the time spent in internment. Some also received \$1.00 a day for 'missed meals'. In Britain, between 1952 and 1956, approximately 8,800 adult British internees, who were normally resident in this country, received a sum of £48.50. There were two additional schemes for reimbursement of private chattels lost by civilian internees. No payment was made to those under twenty-one years of age on 8 December 1941. Both the American and British payments were made from the proceeds of Japanese assets that had been frozen since the war.² As far as the Dutch were concerned, Linda Goetz Holmes writes:

The Dutch refused to sign the 1951 Peace Treaty with Japan until a provision was made allowing the Dutch to negotiate a separate compensation agreement with Japan, which would recognise the extraordinary suffering of 120,000 Dutch citizens in Japanese internment camps, and the deaths of 26,000 Dutch men, women and children in Japanese hands. In March 1957 the Yoshida–Stikker agreement (named after the two foreign ministers who negotiated it) was signed.³

Under this agreement the Dutch government negotiated with the Japanese government for \$10,000,000 for damage inflicted during the Second World War. All Dutch internees received \$100 per person from this sum.⁴

Presumably the various governments hoped that these payments would draw a line under the whole matter. Indeed, after the publi-

cation of the draft Peace Treaty between the Allies and Japan in 1951 a British Foreign Office telegram to the Embassy in Tokyo on the situation in the UK stated:

. . . [C]ountry is not so to speak, Japan conscious. The public as a whole may be said to have gone to sleep over Japan since the war ended in 1945 . . . shortage of newsprint, smallness of newspapers and lack of public interest, the press has done little to educate the public . . . possibly people will suddenly wake up and arrive at the conclusion we are being far too nice . . .⁵

As Keith Martin, ex-chairman of the Association of British Internees Far Eastern Region (ABCIFER) commented: ‘How true and how prophetic that last comment was to be.’ The 1990s were to see that prophecy realised.

The rise of Japan as a major player in world markets (or ‘Japan’s post-war Economic Miracle’, as Holmes refers to it),⁶ the increased media coverage of national and international events and the opening up of Second World War files in the Public Records Office, giving access to previously withheld information, have all contributed to waking people up to the fact that the Allies’ handling of the 1951 Peace Treaty with the Japanese cost the ex-internees dear. In April 1990 the Foundation of Japanese Honorary Debts was established in the Hague; it has 35,000 members most of whom are ex-internees and POWs from the camps in the former Dutch East Indies. In October 1992 this foundation was seeking European women to act alongside Asian women as witnesses to rape by Japanese soldiers. Supported by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations and by Tokyo based human rights citizens groups, Dutch woman Jan Ruff-O’Herne (mentioned in this study) and other ‘comfort’ women gave evidence at an International Public Hearing in Tokyo from 9 to 10 December 1992. These proceedings were reported by the Western media, and the women’s distressing testimonies shocked much of the Western world.⁷ In 1994 the Foundation filed a case in the Tokyo District Court seeking compensation and also asking for an apology from the Japanese Prime Minister.

In the same year the surviving British internees founded ABCIFER. In 1995, with the help of British lawyer Martin Day, ABCIFER and the Centre For Internees Rights, Inc. (CFIR), the main American group for civilians, joined forces with groups from Australia and New Zealand to file a law suit against the Japanese government for compensation for the ill-treatment they had received in the camps. Their claim for \$20,000 dollars each is based on compensation paid to

American Japanese interned by the Americans during the Second World War.

The 50th anniversary of the end of the war in the Far East was also in 1995. How this anniversary was to be commemorated in Britain without upsetting the Japanese or the ex-POWs and internees gave rise to a great deal of discussion. Many of the issues raised were reported extensively by the media which drew attention to the plight of the Far Eastern internees. Much of this publicity helped increase the confidence of the surviving ex-internees. Since that time, on 15 August every year, the British civilian survivors have regularly laid a wreath and held a one-minute silence at the Cenotaph in London.

In May 1998 the Japanese Emperor made a state visit to Britain. The visit provoked anger among ex-POWs and internees and, in a public demonstration of disrespect, they deliberately turned their backs on the Emperor and Empress when they were riding with HM the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh back to Buckingham Palace after the formal greeting on Horse Guards Parade. The civilians subsequently demonstrated with banners on other occasions during the visit. Reports of these demonstrations appeared on the radio, television and on the front pages of most of the British national newspapers. *The Economist* suggested that both governments 'renegotiate the miserly settlement of claims reached by their predecessors in the 1950s'. In her report in the ABCIFER newsletter, Muriel Parham thanked the media who 'gave us the coverage that I had only dared to dream of to bring our just case into the public arena'.⁸

Meanwhile the Dutch internees continued to mount their own campaign. In the late 1980s the Dutch government paid a further Dfl7,500 to each wage earner who had been working until the war. In 2002 an initial payment of Dfl 3,000 (Eur 1,361.34) was paid to everyone who was repatriated to Holland in the post-war years in recognition of the 'cold and unkind' treatment they received on their repatriation. In April 2003 the remaining funds were used to make an additional final payment of Dfl 1,015.16 (Eur 460.66). In addition to individual payments, the government has also allocated a sum of Eur 15,882.308 for collective projects.⁹ In addition to this, for the past five years on the second Tuesday of every month, a small group of elderly Dutch men and women has gathered in front of the Japanese Embassy in The Hague. They are part of an estimated 140,000 Dutch military and civilian prisoners of the Japanese camps in Java and Sumatra during the Second World War. Over 20,000 of

these internees died from the effects of forced labour, illness or malnutrition. These survivors show up at the front gate of the Japanese Embassy to participate in a peaceful demonstration to demand an apology and financial compensation. ‘These people,’ claims Ben Bouman, head of the Foundation of Japanese Honorary Debts, ‘are frustrated and wounded inside because 55 years after the war things are still not solved.’¹⁰

In May 2000 the Japanese Emperor and Empress paid an Imperial visit to Holland to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the ties between the two countries. Carrying placards with the slogan ‘pay your debts’, a large group of Dutch ex-internees, joined by others from Australia and Britain, met at the main war memorial in Amsterdam to lay flowers in remembrance of those who had died in the camps. At a state banquet that evening the Japanese Emperor said:

It grieves our hearts to think that so many people were victimised in their respective ways during that war and that there are still those who continue to bear unhealed scars from it . . . We believe that all of us should make unending efforts to foster peace so that such events will never be repeated.¹¹

In her response Queen Beatrix of Holland acknowledged that:

The memories of the suffering endured in the war years do not fade. They return again and again. It is therefore better not to shy away from the confrontation with the past, even though courage is needed to face up to this painful chapter of our shared history.¹²

The Emperor made no apology and neither he nor the Queen made mention of compensation. Nevertheless, these public statements referring to ‘unhealed scars’ and the need to face the ‘painful chapter of our shared history’ were, at least, public acknowledgements of the pain and suffering of the ex-internees.

Meanwhile, however, more significant breakthroughs were being made by Keith Martin and his colleagues at the PRO. Their research revealed correspondence with the British Embassy in Geneva referring to a post-war settlement between Switzerland and Japan in early 1955 which suggested that Swiss civilian victims had received payments forty times greater than their British counterparts. From their perusal of Article 26 of the Peace Treaty, Keith Martin and his colleagues were aware that should Japan make a peace settlement or war claims settlement with any state granting that state greater advantages

than those provided by the present treaty, those same advantages should be extended to the parties to the present treaty. More illuminating was a May 1955 Foreign Office note to the Minister of State, Lord Reading, referring to these larger Swiss payments and a Burma treaty noting that they conferred greater advantages and recognised the matter was of interest to the Far Eastern POWs and the British Legion. The note further argued that in 1951 the Foreign Office had said that 'HMG waived a very large proportion of their just claims against Japan in order to avoid ruining the Japanese economy'. (Most of the other Allies took the same view at that time.) It claimed that this reason was still valid and the UK should not reopen the matter of compensation then or ever and should *not give publicity to that decision*. Lord Reading's argument referred to current unpopularity with the Japanese and added that further pressure 'would be likely to cause the maximum of resentment for the minimum advantage'.¹³ Nearly fifty years later these comments caused a wave of disgust among the ex-internees. Nevertheless, it was clear that these letters, the larger payments made to Burma and Switzerland together with Article 26 were to be the ammunition needed by the ex-internees in their fight for increased compensation. In 1998 they asked the Foreign Office to reopen the compensation issue with Japan or pay the British ex-internees from UK resources.

Later that year the Tokyo lower court rejected the suits filed by the civilian internees and an Appeal was lodged. At about the same time British government departments concluded that it was too late to reopen the compensation issue. The rebuff increased the determination of the civilians for redress.

In December 1998 the Canadian Far East veterans informed their own government of the UK research. After various hearings the Canadian government announced a C\$24,000 (£10,000) *ex gratia* payment from their own resources to its Far Eastern veterans and their widows. This Canadian decision prompted the Royal British Legion to initiate its campaign. Their involvement, together with the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors group, added extra weight to the internees' campaign.

In 1999 the Royal British Legion took up the request for a special gratuity for POWs of the Japanese and met the Prime Minister. Towards the end of 2000, after much lobbying of parliament, the British government decided to take action. In November that year Lewis Moonie, British Defence Minister, told MPs that the surviving Britons who were held captive by the Japanese and the widows of

those who had since died were to receive an *ex gratia* payment of £10,000 each. Moonie claimed that this was a debt of honour owed to civilian, forces and merchant navy captives. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, met with some of the survivors at the National Army Museum in Chelsea and told them:

It's very hard for someone of my generation to understand what suffering people went through. You saw the very worst of human nature and yet I think you showed the very best of human nature. This is for me and my generation and those younger, one small but significant way in which we can thank you for your courage and thank you for what you did.¹⁴

Speaking for his members, Keith Martin, the then chairman of ABCIFER, replied:

I accept Tony Blair's honourable decision to pay that debt. Our members can now look forward with satisfaction that their suffering and losses have finally been recognised.¹⁵

For many, of course, that compensation has come too late. Nevertheless, the battle for an apology and compensation from the Japanese to the British, American and Dutch internees continues. But the private struggle with the 'unhealed scars' remains a daily occurrence for some survivors. The memory of their suffering, as Queen Beatrix stated, 'does not fade away but returns again and again'. The public rehearsal of those memories takes place in the bringing of flowers to the Amsterdam war memorial, the ritualised silent vigil by the small group on a monthly basis in the Hague, the annual visit to the cenotaph and in the more high-profile public occasions like the visits of the Japanese Emperor. These public demonstrations are, among other things, part of the ongoing mourning process. As Paloma Aguilar has noted:

A common feature of the mourning process involves the attribution of responsibility for the tragedy to a well-defined enemy; this helps to externalise the victims' anger and establish a target for present and future action . . . Only then would their wounds be healed.¹⁶

As this book has demonstrated the actions of the internees in the brutal world of the internment camp and their contemporary and post-war narratives resound with agency rather than victimhood. And

indeed, the British and Canadian internee's victory in the long battle for compensation from their governments demonstrates the determination and strength of that agency. However, while its continuation is reflected in the ongoing fight for compensation and an apology from the Japanese, sadly it also highlights the fact 'although the experience is past and freedom is theirs', that many unhealed scars still remain.

NOTES

- 1 Message from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, which was sent to all ex-internees.
- 2 The additional schemes included the Far East Private Chattels Scheme which was open to UK British subjects who had been interned anywhere in the Far East and returned to live in the UK. The sum of £245,000 was paid to 1,190 applicants between 1946 and 1952 for loss of specific chattels. The Extended Far East Private Chattels Scheme was open to UK British subjects who had been interned and had returned with the intention of staying in the UK. It referred to specific British colonies such as Malaya, Hong Kong, North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei. This scheme paid out £1,616,000 to 5,229 applicants. I am grateful to Keith Martin, ex-internee in Shanghai and ex-chairman of ABCIFER, and Gil Hair, ex-internee in Santo Tomas and present Executive Director of the Centre for Internee Rights Inc. (CFIR) for their help on the compensation issue.
- 3 Linda Goetz Holmes, 2001, p. 110, footnote 14.
- 4 The Yoshida–Stikker [agreement] was actually an exchange of letters between Dr Dirk U. Stikker (7 September 1951) and Mr Shigeru Yoshida (8 September 1951) during which Dr Stikker advised that constitutionally The Netherlands could not agree to give away the right of citizens to seek compensation from Japan. The discussion in the letters paved the way for the March 1956 protocol between the two countries resulting in the payment mentioned above.
- 5 PRO FO 371/92551, p. 87.
- 6 Holmes, 2001, p. 144.
- 7 According to the BBC World Service newsroom, February 2002, a private fund backed by the Japanese government had announced that in May 2002 it will end payments to South Korean and Taiwanese women forced into sexual slavery during the Second World War. The Asian Women's Fund was set up in 1995 to give atonement money donated by private companies to some 200,000 women forced to act as comfort women to Japanese soldiers. The latest figure, however, shows that only 188 women have accepted payments. Many have rejected the payment of \$15,000 and demanded state compensation with an official apology.
- 8 *The Economist*, 30 May 1998 and Muriel Parham, 'From Where I Stood' in *Bamboo Wireless* Issue No. 13, June 1998.
- 9 For further details see <http://www.gebaar.nl>.
- 10 Ben Bouman, reported in the *Japan Times*, Tuesday, 16 May 2000.
- 11 Reported by Asako Ishibashi, Nikkei website, 29 May 2000.
- 12 Queen Beatrix, reported by Asako Ishibashi, 29 May 2000.
- 13 PRO FO 371/115281, 25 May 1955.
- 14 Tony Blair, the *Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, 8 November 2000.
- 15 Keith Martin, the *Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, 8 November 2000. It should be noted that there are some ex-internees who have not, as yet, received this payment as they have to prove a blood-line with a British ancestor.
- 16 Aguilar, in Winter and Sivan 1999, p. 99.

APPENDIX

NOTES ON THE ORAL HISTORY: *METHOD,* *INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENTS*

This book owes a debt of gratitude to the testimonies of the ex-internees. The interviewees for this book came through a variety of sources and the personal interviews themselves took place between the period of 1991 and 1996, in England, Holland and Australia. The initial intention was that the interviewees should represent a balanced cross-section of men, women and children of various ages from different camps. This aim was, however, unrealisable for several reasons. I was dealing with an event which happened, at least, fifty years previously and many internees had died, were now too ill and/or too old to be interviewed. Some did not want to discuss their internment experiences because they wanted to leave the past behind them. Others lived in parts of the world that I was unable to visit. I was also dependent on people volunteering or agreeing to be interviewed. Consequently, my choice of interviewees was restricted and I am aware that the interviewees are self-selected and not all-inclusive. They were mainly British, white, middle-class and under forty years of age when they were interned. A few were from racially mixed parentage and one was Chinese but adopted by British parents shortly after birth. The interviewees did not include equal numbers of men, women, boys and girls; neither were there equal numbers from each camp. Nevertheless, I believe the fifty-three interviews I carried out, together with the four correspondents, were sufficiently wide-ranging to produce additional and unique insights into the experiences of internees of different ages, genders and camps. (A breakdown of the interviews can be found at the end of this appendix.)

The earlier interviews were used for my special study, *Stanley*

Internment Camp, Hong Kong 1942–1945, which was submitted in May 1992, in partial fulfilment of my BA (Hons) in Humanities at Bristol Polytechnic (now University of the West of England). Among the many sources used in that study, I interviewed a number of women who had been interned in that camp. Many of the interviews were as the result of a visit to Stanley in December 1991. Not only are some of those interviews used in this book, but some of those interviewees introduced me to other internees both from Stanley and other camps in the Far East. Other interviewees responded to letters requesting volunteers. In 1994 a letter explaining my study and requesting volunteers, was published in the first newsletter of the Association of British Civilian Internees Far Eastern Region (ABCIFER), and in the journal for Overseas Service Pensioners' Association. Ex-internees from all over the world subscribe to these newsletters, hence I received responses from as far apart as England and Australia. The interviews carried out in Holland, however, came from a personal friend who knew of a woman ex-internee who was prepared to talk to me. The others were as a direct result of my contact with a Dutch organisation called Kinderen uit de Japanse Bezetting en de Bersiap 1941–1949. This organisation was especially set up to assist, in whatever way possible, children who had been interned in the Far East during the war. They have many members who meet regularly in groups, and also talk to children in schools about their internment experiences.

When possible, I wrote to each potential interviewee; I explained the reasons for the interview and promised complete confidentiality. Many have now agreed to their names being used in this book. Some have requested that the confidentiality remains. Therefore, some quotes remain unidentified by name but the date and place of the interview appears in the Notes at the end of the chapter. I, alone, visited each interviewee, almost always in their own home, at a date and time as convenient to them as possible. Mostly the interviewee and I were alone; on only a few occasions were others present. Twice this was at the request of the interviewee, at other times it was to save travel and time, and was always with the agreement of, or at the suggestion of, the interviewee. Each interviewee was given the option to refuse the interview being recorded: no one took up that option. Most interviews lasted for about two hours, using between one-and-a-half and two tapes. Each tape was copied and transcribed. Some interviewees requested a copy of the tape and/or the transcript, a request I agreed to and met. Having received the tape or transcript,

no interviewee made any changes other than to correct spellings of names of people or places.

Not everyone contacted could be interviewed. One or two preferred not to be interviewed, or an interview could not be arranged for a variety of different reasons. Some of these wrote to me about their experiences. The letters were, at times, just short notes; others were much longer narratives or even included drafts of unpublished memoirs and photographs. These sources were also used in the book.

My aim was not a quantitative set of interviews, rather it was to be qualitative. Consequently, although I initially formulated a questionnaire, I subsequently decided that it was not appropriate under the circumstances. I did, however, have a list of basic questions and areas I wanted to explore. Moreover, I was mindful of the fact that some of the experiences of my interviewees may have been traumatic and distressing. It was essential, therefore, to approach each interview with care and let each interviewee tell his or her story in their own way. I started each interview by asking where the interviewee was born and about his or her early life. Other specific questions included: Why were you in the Far East at that time? What age were you when you were interned? Where were you interned and with whom? Throughout each interview I interjected to clarify certain points or to encourage the interviewee with his or her story.

By carrying out each interview personally I was able to meet each of the interviewees and note their lifestyles, manner of speaking, their facial expressions and attitude to the interview. This was particularly useful when interviewing men and women who had been children in the camps. The difficulties the Dutch interviewees had in conveying their experiences were not caused by language difficulties – in every case their English was excellent. Rather, the problem was finding the words to express their feelings. For example, one woman had difficulty in telling how her mother was tied to her hospital bed; through her tears, she could only indicate to me by gestures, the straps secured around her mother's wrists. Another woman, attempting to explain her impressions, as a very young child, of the Japanese guards, conveyed the menacing sight and sound of the Japanese sword by hitting her own leg with her arms. An English man, when asked about possible sexual abuse, fell silent and averted his eyes staring down the garden. His body language was somewhat at odds with his vague response. In contrast, when talking to older women from the mixed camps, I found that as the interview progressed the

laughter and pleasure gave the indication that this was some form of celebration of their experiences or, perhaps, an affirmation of their survival. While all these examples were not specifically used in the book, the images they created pervaded my consciousness and helped my understanding and approach to the research.

As I have noted in the text, 'No historian,' claims Elizabeth Tonkin, 'would want to rely only on oral accounts without making use of other human features. Material evidence,' she suggests, 'has all sorts of uses to those who wish to reconstruct the past.'¹ Material evidence was a very important source for my research. As I have mentioned, during my interviews I was shown a variety of mementoes, which were often more revealing than the interviews themselves. The materials were crude and the products basic and at times almost child-like. Tiny notebooks had become 'diaries'; scraps of paper had been used to make home-made birthday cards and drawing books; slippers and sewing kits had been made from remnants of army jerkins; and the names of fellow internees were embroidered on small, worn pillowcases and tablecloths. As well as 'putting reality into their stories',² they also prompted further memories and discussions. Some of this material evidence has been used in this book.

Personal testimonies are rightly labelled subjective and they are, of course, socially influenced and constructed. This has led to extensive debate about the methods and aims of oral history and its use as an historical source.³ In my research at least fifty years had passed between the internment experience and each interview. My interviewees were no longer the young man or woman, young wife and/or mother, teenager or young child back in the fearful atmosphere of a Japanese internment camp in the colonies during the Second World War. Many of the interviewees were now in their sixties, seventies and eighties, living comfortably in the post-colonial world of 1990s' Britain, Holland or Australia. Age, fifty years of life experience, social change and, perhaps to some extent, political correctness in the presence of a slightly younger academic interviewer, undoubtedly influenced their narratives.

Pre-Second World War colonial discourses were constructed around race, class, Western superiority, nationalism, patriotism and clearly defined perceptions of masculinity and femininity. The internment camp discourses remained, unashamedly, nationalistic, imperialistic and patriotic. Such overt nationalism and patriotism tend to become muted in peace time (except perhaps for international sporting events) and, in the present climate, imperialism and empire have

negative connotations. Arguably, privately held attitudes towards race and class may not have significantly changed over the past fifty years, but public comments expressing racial prejudices are no longer considered acceptable or appropriate, and class is a category less clearly defined today.⁴ Public and individual perceptions of femininity and masculinity, and subsequent gender roles, have also changed markedly. These social changes are reflected in the interviews. The values that were so strongly held and felt during the Second World War in the Far East were, in the 1990s, somewhat muted. It is no surprise, therefore, that although a few diaries reflect personal racial, ethnic and class prejudices in the camps, the interviewees rarely did so. Equally, many of the women were now self-mocking about their naïveté, arrogance and belief in the strength of the British Empire and Western imperialism. They did not, however, criticise or question the gendered roles they played in the mixed camps. Although they were aware of the growth of feminism, they and their domestic roles were, apparently, unchanged by it.

Although aware that some of the anecdotal, modest stories differed from the official reports and diary accounts, in which the demoralisation, semi-starvation, appalling overcrowding and distress were tangible, I was conscious that an important factor in the internees' survival was a positive physical and psychological response to the conditions they faced. An excerpt from a First World War poem captures the internees' philosophy:

Fear is a wave
 beating through the air
 and on taut nerves impinging
 till there it wins
 vibrating cords.

All goes well
 so long as you tune the instrument
 to simulate composure.⁵

'Making the best of a bad job' was the unspoken social agreement; those 'out of tune', the pessimists and the complainers were avoided. However, this outward optimism and composure concealed an inner disquiet. A woman in Stanley Camp recorded her inner feelings which were at odds with her outward behaviour. 'I can't imagine being out of here by Christmas despite my bold assertions in public.'⁶ Another diary note from Stanley Camp, explains:

Had we known that we would be prisoners for over three years there would have undoubtedly been many suicides. As it was, the followers of the Ouija board and the readers of the tea cups were unable to find other than cause for optimism . . . Good news was never more than a month ahead.⁷

I was, therefore, sensitive to the possibility of suppressed trauma and that the recollections might have been sanitised or ‘composed’ to make the story and the experience easier to live with.⁸ I did not see it as my role to press too hard or delve too deeply to unearth any possible trauma.

Such considerations were particularly the case with regard to those who had been children in the camps, and whose experiences are related in chapter four of this book. While some of the ex-children of the camps related camp life as a surprisingly secure and relaxed place for a child to be, others clearly suffered from the separations and hard work. Both groups were, however, conscious of the great difficulty they had in fitting into post-war social and family structures. Many are still trying to make sense of it all. The camp experiences, and their own recent past lives as mothers and fathers, have brought them to a greater understanding of what it must have been like to be a parent, as well as a child, in the camps.

NOTE ON DIARIES, MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Where possible precise diary dates have been given. However it must be appreciated that the keeping of a diary in camp was illegal and the shortage of suitable paper meant that many ‘diaries’ were written on odd scraps of paper, hidden during internment, and edited and compiled after liberation. Consequently, the diarist sometimes summarises a period of time rather than records life on a daily basis.

Some correspondence or memoirs in the archives were undated, and it was not always possible to be entirely accurate about the date certain events took place.

INTERVIEWEES AND CORRESPONDENTS

Interviewees	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Adults in camp	4	27	31
Children in camp	11	11	22
Totals	15	38	53

Nationalities

Dutch	4	7	11
British	11	31	42
	–	–	53

Correspondents 4 British women, adults in camp

Grand Total of Interviewees and Correspondents 57

NOTES

- 1 Elizabeth Tonkin, 1992, pp. 95–6.
- 2 Shirley Fenton Huie, 1992, Acknowledgements. Also Mike Roper in his interviews with managers of British industry in 'Product Fetishism and the British Company man 1945–85', in Roper and Tosh 1991, pp. 192–3, claims that, when interviewing managers, 'the currency between me and them was thus objects . . . Products seem to act as landmarks in memory, orienting managers in relation to their career history, and so bringing their past to life for the interviewer'.
- 3 I have discussed the various issues around 'memory' in my introduction. For discussions and debates on the use of oral history, see Luisa Passerini, 1992. Elizabeth Tonkin, 1992. Paul Thompson and Raphael Samuel (eds), *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 1990). Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). For feminist discussions on oral history see Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's Words* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) and Penny Summerfield, 1998. For discussions regarding women's agency in oral history from a post-structuralist perspective, see Joan Scott and Linda Gordon in *Signs*, Summer 1990, 15:4.
- 4 David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2001) discusses the influence of the British class system on the British Empire.
- 5 Poem by Herbert Read in B. Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight* (London: Constable, 1965), p. 74.
- 6 Private diary of woman ex-internee from Stanley Camp. I am grateful to the diarist for sending me a copy of her diary.
- 7 John Stericker, Chapter VII, p. 13.
- 8 I am using the word 'composed' in the same way as the Popular Memory Group and Graham Dawson in *Soldier Heroes*, 1994.

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