

'To make Koreans positively realize the true might of our empire': The use of Allied POWs for propaganda purposes in Korea during World War II

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We East Asians who, in the past, [suffered from] the evil effects of raising up the Americans and British in our thoughts, now, through the brilliant military exploits of our soldiers, saw directly before our eyes British who were made prisoners of war and were deeply moved by the efforts of the imperial army, and our joy in becoming imperial subjects was ever greater.

Maeil Sinbo, September 26, 1942¹

Introduction

In what has been declared to be “one of the greatest disasters in British history,” Singapore fell to the Japanese Empire in February 1942, and as a result, 130,000 British, Australian, and Indian soldiers became prisoners of war.² That these prisoners often suffered brutal treatment at the hands of their captors in Southeast Asia is well remembered, but far less well known is the fact that hundreds of Allied POWs were sent to prison camps in Korea. Remarkably, the soldiers interned at camps in Keijo (Seoul), Jinsen (Inchön), and Konan (Hüngnam) were brought to Korea initially for propaganda purposes. On the one hand, the POW camps in Korea were maintained as “show camps” for the Red Cross in order to convince the world that Japan was treating its prisoners magnanimously, while on the other — and more importantly — the defeated Western soldiers were to

¹ “Sanjön gwa mokkyök’ ago hwanggun noryök e kamsa,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3. All *Maeil sinbo* translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

² Lionel Wigmore, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 1 – Army: Volume IV – The Japanese Thrust* (Adelaide: The Griffin Press, 1957), 381-82.

be displayed before the colonized inhabitants of Chosen to “stamp out respect and admiration of the Korean people for Britain and America.”³

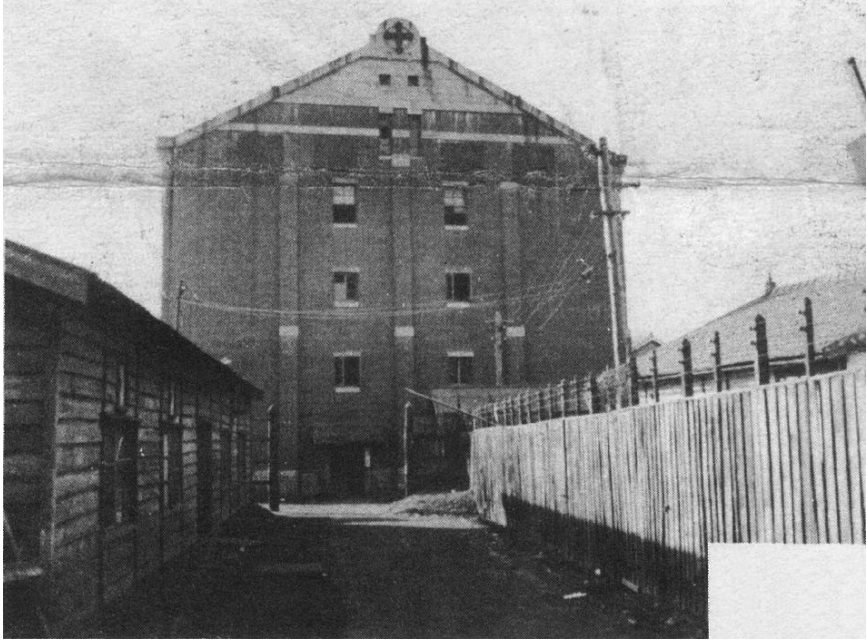


Figure 1. “Keijo Main Camp,” Seoul’s POW camp / *Korea Graphic*, Dec. 2, 1945, courtesy of Jacco Zwetsloot.

Regarding the latter motive, when the prisoners arrived in Korea, numerous articles were published in the *Maeil Sinbo*, a propaganda organ of the Japanese Government General and the only remaining Korean-language newspaper. Though this newspaper never focused on the prisoners so intensely again, these articles highlight the ways in which the prisoners’ arrival was utilized by the Japanese Government General in its attempts to transform the Korean populace into loyal subjects of the emperor and supporters of Japan’s “sacred war” against the Allies. The prisoners’ accounts of their experiences, on the other hand, provide rather different glimpses into wartime Korea. Their observations of and interactions with prison camp guards and Korean civilians capture both the quotidian brutalities visited upon Koreans by Japanese authorities and the kindnesses done to the POWs by Koreans, and, contrary to the

³ Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Knights of Bushido: A Short History of Japanese War Crimes* (London: Cassell, 1956), 60. Chosen (or Chosŏn in Korean) was the Japanese name for Korea.

Government General's claims, reveal the degree to which Japanese attempts to use the prisoners as propaganda instruments failed.

What follows is a brief overview of the prisoners' experiences between their capture in Singapore and their release from captivity, an assessment of Japan's attempts to operate POW camps in Korea as "show camps," and, using the aforementioned *Maeil Sinbo* articles and prisoners' diaries and memoirs, an analysis of the Government General's use of the allied prisoners of war in its campaign to "imperialize" its Korean subjects.

Allied Prisoners of War in Korea

On March 4, 1942, two weeks after the fall of Singapore, the Commander of the Chosen Army, General Seishiro Itagaki, sent the following telegram to the Japanese War Ministry in Tokyo:

As it would be very effective in stamping out the respect and admiration of the Korean people for Britain and America, and also in establishing in them a strong faith in [our] victory, and as the Governor-General and the Army are both strongly desirous of it, we wish you would intern 1,000 British and 1,000 American prisoners of war in Korea. Kindly give this matter special consideration.

A reply was received the following day stating that 1,000 "white prisoners of war" would be sent to Fusan (Pusan).⁴ Months passed before the plan was put into motion, however, and it was not until August 18 that 1,000 British and Australian prisoners (termed "Japan party 'B'") were loaded into the cramped cargo holds of the *Fukkai Maru*, an aging, 3,821-ton cargo ship converted into a troop carrier, which set sail from Singapore. After a two-week pause at Takao Harbor in Formosa (present-day Kaohsiung in Taiwan), where the prisoners unloaded bauxite and were paraded in front of the local population, the *Fukkai Maru* arrived in Pusan September 22. By this point tainted food, cramped conditions, and the loss of on-deck latrine shacks in a typhoon had taken their toll and most of the prisoners were suffering from diarrhea and beri-beri, while more than 20 had contracted dysentery. The latter were quickly taken ashore to hospitals; the rest disembarked at Pusan Harbor on September 24 and were forced, in their weakened state, to march around the center of the city for several

⁴ Ibid.

hours before boarding a passenger train to Seoul.⁵ Upon reaching Yöngdüngpo in southern Seoul, half of the prisoners were sent to Inchön and the rest sent to Seoul, where they arrived at Yongsan Station just after noon the next day. In both Inchön and Seoul the prisoners marched before crowds to the POW camps, and after several days of rest were put to work.⁶

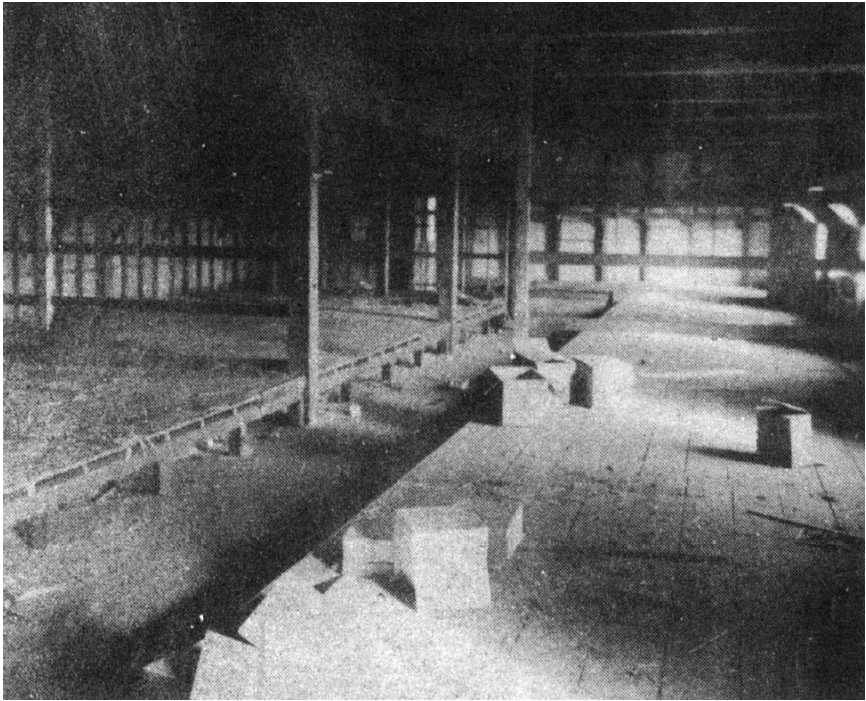


Figure 2. Keijo Main Camp dormitory / *Korea Graphic*, Dec. 2, 1945, courtesy of Jacco Zwetsloot.

In Seoul, prisoners were held in a four-story building that previously housed the Iwamura Silk Reeling Mill, while in Inchön they were held in a former military barracks.⁷ Prisoners in Inchön worked reclaiming land and constructing a new tidal basin in the harbor, moving cargo at the train

⁵ Fran de Groen and Helen Masterman-Smith, “Prisoners on parade: Japan Party ‘B,’” *2002 History Conference - Remembering 1942*. Australian War Museum, accessed Sept. 3, 2010, <https://www.awm.gov.au/events/conference/2002/degroen.asp>.

⁶ “Puro ilbu inch’ön toch’ak; 150,000 pumindül hwanggun jön’gwa e kamgyök,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁷ Sarah Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 124-125.

stations or docks, or working in the salt flats,⁸ while those in Seoul worked to build a railroad bed near the Han River, moved cargo at Seoul Station or Yongsan Station, or worked in the warehouse or other locations such as “the farm” on the Japanese military base at Yongsan.⁹ In September 1943 a branch camp opened in Hŭngnam (in present-day North Korea), which was home to Chosen Chisso, the largest chemical plant outside North America. The prisoners were made to do maintenance and janitorial duties at the Nichitsu Calcium Carbide Plant, and from May 1944 they were ordered to carry out the arduous work of stoking the carbide furnaces.¹⁰ In all cases food rations were slim and medicine was rarely given to sick prisoners. As well, rations were cut for prisoners who did not work. The toughest problem faced by prisoners in Korea was the extreme cold in the winter, which was difficult to endure in an undernourished state. As Eric Harrison, an Australian prisoner, wrote, “[O]ur captors kept us on a diet worked out in calories just sufficient to keep us alive.”¹¹

When the war ended in August 1945, the Hŭngnam camp was the first to be liberated by Soviet troops on August 27,¹² and on August 29 American B-29 bombers dropped relief supplies on all three camps, though one of the planes sent to Hŭngnam was shot down by the Soviets and forced to land at Hamhŭng air base; the crew was temporarily interned at the POW camp.¹³ As for the Seoul and Inchŏn camps, a recovery team visited the camps on September 7, the day before U.S. troops arrived, and prisoners in Inchŏn boarded a hospital ship there on September 8. Prisoners at the Seoul camp followed the next day, and they all left Inchŏn harbor on September 11. As for those at the Hŭngnam camp, despite Soviet assurances they were being evacuated from Vladivostok, it became clear this was not the case, and after nearly ten days of negotiations

⁸ De Groen and Masterman-Smith, “Prisoners on parade”; James Miller, “Escape from Jinsen Chesan P.O.W. Camp, Korea and other memories - Part 1,” *WW2 People’s War*, July 2, 2005, accessed April 9, 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/83/a4331783.shtml>.

⁹ See J. D. Wilkinson, *Sketches of a P.O.W. in Korea* (Melbourne: Wilke and Co. Pty. Ltd., 1945).

¹⁰ Dwight R. Rider, *Hog Wild – 1945: One B-29, One Soviet Conspiracy* (Center for Research – Allied POWs Under the Japanese, 2012), 15; 105-6.

¹¹ Eric Stewart Harrison, *Diary, Secretly written letters whilst in capture, partly written book* (Unpublished memoir), 55. Many thanks to Robin Davies for sharing this with me.

¹² Rider, *Hog Wild*, 116-17.

¹³ “Release of the Allied Prisoners of War,” in *Chuhan Migunsa: HUSAFIK (History of the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea)* (Seoul: Tolbegae, 1988), 345-46.

between American authorities in Seoul and Soviet authorities in Pyongyang, the prisoners left Hŭngnam by train on September 21; further delays on the U.S. side kept them from leaving Inchŏn harbor until September 27.¹⁴

Using Allied POW Camps in Korea as “Show Camps”

One purpose the camps in Seoul and Inchŏn served, beyond that of confining the prisoners, was to play the role of “show camps” for International Red Cross inspections. To be sure, in comparison to the treatment POWs received in other areas, prisoners held in Korea were much better off. Of the 998 prisoners sent to Korea as part of Japan Party ‘B,’ 27 died there, with most deaths occurring within a month of arrival due to the arduous journey on the *Fukkai Maru*.¹⁵ The 2.7% death rate among this group was much less than those held in Fukuoka, which by late 1944 had a death rate of 9.3%, though even this was low compared to the death rate of POWs in Southeast Asia. Prisoners in the Seoul camp had access to Red Cross parcels, better food and accommodation, and even, on occasion, mail delivery. The camps in Inchŏn and Hŭngnam were less favorable, but the latter had better rations, benefitting from access to local fish during the winter.¹⁶ When British prisoner Eric Wallwork noted in his diary that the Japanese had “pointed out again they were treating us as Internees and not as POWs,” he admitted that “this has a bit of truth in it.”¹⁷ Richard Swarbrick, a British prisoner in Inchŏn, wrote that while the first camp commandant was “mad,” the second, Major Okasaki, “was such a good bloke and had treated us so decently that to attempt to escape while he was in office seemed to be a breach of trust.”¹⁸

The Japanese kept extensive photographic and film records of the prisoners in Seoul and their activities, which included tending gardens, raising rabbits and working in the camp. Harrison described how they were arranged in front of photographers, who took photos for propaganda use, which later appeared in various newspapers and even movie theaters:

¹⁴ “Release of the Allied Prisoners of War,” 303-11, 322-325.

¹⁵ De Groen and Masterman-Smith, “Prisoners on parade.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Eric Wallwork, “The War Diary of 3859081 Lance Corporal Eric Wallwork, 2nd Battalion, The Loyal Regiment,” *Bolton Remembers the War*, accessed April 9, 2023, <http://www.boltonswar.org.uk/tr-pow-diary-full.htm#35>.

¹⁸ Dave Swarbrick, “Jinsen Camp - Korea,” *Far Eastern Heroes*, 2003, accessed April 9, 2023, http://www.far-eastern-heroes.org.uk/richard_swarbricks_war/html/jinsen_camp_-_korea.htm.

“We were given various articles such as picks, shovels and rakes and told to strike an attitude of work. Our photos were then taken in various poses. This was then followed by photos of us marching off to our daily jobs.”¹⁹ Prisoners were in fact able to purchase some of these photos from Japanese photographers at the camp.²⁰ On Christmas Day 1942, the prisoners were well-fed and allowed to have a large church service and concert. Describing that day, Wallwork wrote that the “whole service was photographed by civilian photographers,” and as for their concert, “the show was filmed and recorded,” as was the highest-ranking British officer making a speech “thanking the camp authorities and the members of the show.”²¹ As Harrison wrote, it was “apparent that they intended to make full propaganda use of this concert.” He noted that “We heard later that the gazettes of this concert were shown throughout Japan and the occupied territories with much lauding of the Japanese good treatment of the much despised white prisoners of war.”²²

Representatives of the International Red Cross visited the Seoul and Inchön camps on several occasions, though the Japanese knew beforehand when these visits would take place.²³ As Wallwork described it, “we had a day’s holiday on the 18th of December [1942] to clean the camp, as a Japanese General was coming to look round. With him came two Red Cross representatives.”²⁴ These Japanese efforts in Korea were taken note of in newspapers abroad. One stated that “In some Japanese prisoner of war camps, genuine efforts are being made to keep prisoners in good health,” and that these included the “Keijo and Jinsen camps in Korea.”²⁵ This reference to “genuine efforts” in “some camps” came in the aftermath of the escape of American prisoners from Davao Penal Colony in the Philippines, who revealed the truth about the Bataan death march and conditions in Southeast Asian camps, undoing Japan’s attempts to convince the Allies that all of its camps were run like those in Korea.²⁶

¹⁹ Harrison, *Diary*, 44.

²⁰ De Groen and Masterman-Smith, “Prisoners on parade.”

²¹ Wallwork, “War Diary.”

²² Harrison, *Diary*, 41.

²³ Rider, *Hog Wild*, 110.

²⁴ Wallwork, “War Diary.”

²⁵ “P.O.W. Conditions Better at Some Japanese Camps,” *Canberra Times*, Dec. 29, 1944.

²⁶ Rider, *Hog Wild*, 66.

Imperialization and Conscription in Korea

As General Itagaki made clear in his request for Allied prisoners, his main goals were to stamp out “the respect and admiration of the Korean people for Britain and America” and to establish in them “a strong faith in [our] victory.” A reading of the *Maeil Sinbo* articles published upon the prisoners’ arrival, however, reveals other Japanese objectives. The articles repeatedly prescribed that readers should feel not only a firm commitment to winning the war, but also joy in becoming imperial subjects and pride in seeing young Korean men guarding the prisoners.

The need for Korean prison guards grew out of the expansion of Japan’s war in China into a “sacred war” against the Western powers, which made Korean contributions to the war on the frontline necessary due to manpower shortages. The Government General’s long-term process of integrating Koreans culturally into the Japanese polity had sped up once the war in China began, and expanded into a “set of policies and practices collectively known as *kominka* (imperialization), which sought the accelerated transformation of the local population into loyal subjects of the emperor.”²⁷ While Koreans had been allowed to serve in the Japanese military in small numbers through its Korean Special Volunteer Soldier System since 1938, only 7,287 (out of 244,480 applicants) had been enlisted during the system’s first four years.²⁸ On May 9, 1942, the Government General announced that beginning in December 1944, 20-year-old Korean men would enter the Japanese military as conscript soldiers.²⁹

In addition to this, on May 22, 1942, a system allowing Koreans to apply to be prison guards for American and British prisoners of war was announced. Two weeks after the conscription system announcement, the *Maeil Sinbo* reported the “once again glorious news” that “as imperial subjects our brethren from the peninsula will also bear the heavy responsibility of national defense” by guarding prisoners overseas, though some would be employed in Korea.³⁰ Such lofty language appeared a day later when it was reported that “a sublime path to cooperate in building the southern part of the co-prosperity sphere has opened for the youth of

²⁷ Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 356-57.

²⁸ Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan’s War, 1937-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 71.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

³⁰ “K’waesoshik e kamgyök p’okpal - pando ch’öngnyön üi yöngyein miyöngin puro üi kamshi jido,” *Maeil sinbo*, May 23, 1942, 3.

the peninsula who will be employed by the military.”³¹ The reason for the system was made clear: “Six months have passed since the war to destroy the Americans and British was begun last December 8, and already the number of enemy prisoners has reached 340,000.”³² Applicants needed to be between the ages of 20 and 35, to have robust bodies and no diseases, to have completed at least fourth grade in elementary school, and had to be able to carry on everyday conversation in Japanese.³³ The *Maeil Sinbo* spent weeks covering the application, testing, and instruction process of these young Korean men, some of whom would work as guards at POW camps in Korea.

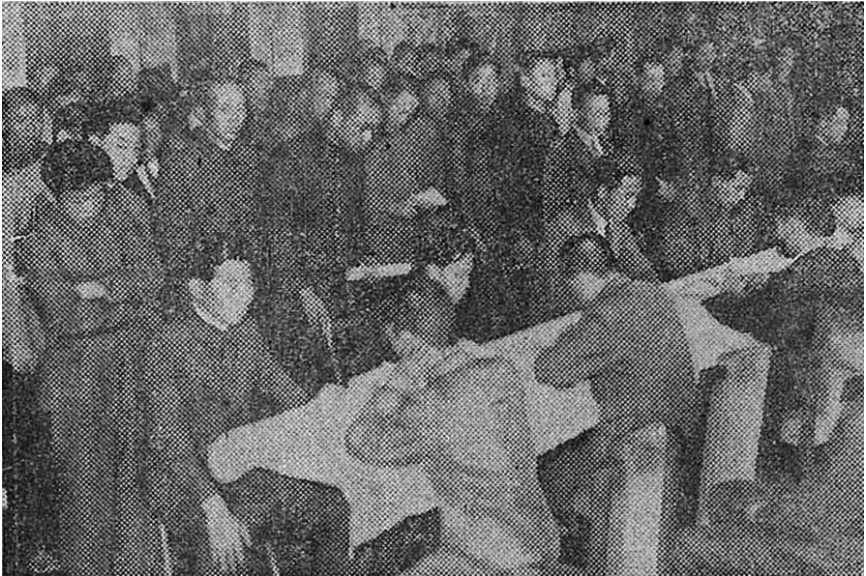


Figure 3. Korean men apply for POW guard positions / *Maeil Sinbo*, May 26, 1942.

The Use of Allied Prisoners in Imperialization and War Support Campaigns

On September 24, 1942, the *Maeil Sinbo* reported that “British POWs who

³¹ “Hwangmin ūi kamgyōk ūl charanghal - nasōra, p’oro kamshiwōn punae kōjuja nūn pusahoegwa sō chōpsu,” *Maeil sinbo*, May 24, 1942, 2.

³² “Pando ch’ōngnyōn ūi kūmil, nambangganūn puro kamshiwōn changhaenghoe,” *Maeil sinbo*, June 10, 1942, 2.

³³ “Ōmgyōk’an shimsahu ch’ae Yong - kyōnggido esō kamshiwōn alsōn ūl hyōbūi,” *Maeil sinbo*, May 26, 1942, 2.

ultimately laid down their weapons and surrendered before the might of the invincible Imperial Army on the Malaya front will arrive in Pusan and be taken under escort to Keijo [Seoul] and Inchön on the afternoon of the 25th.” It also announced that the prisoners would “parade through Pusan’s downtown” on the 24th, and that Army authorities required citizens to “be conscious of the deep thankfulness at having become imperial citizens and ever more firmly hold a belief in victory and strive to bring the sacred war to completion.”³⁴ This mantra of being thankful for becoming imperial subjects and firmly believing in victory was repeated throughout the many articles about the POWs that appeared in the *Maeil Sinbo* on September 26, 1942.

The Allied prisoners of war were well aware of the propaganda purpose their parade served. As Newfoundlander Harry Morris described their arrival in Busan, they were “made to do a march around the city in ‘Roman Triumph’ style.”³⁵ That the “crowds along the roadside were able to see before their own eyes the vanquished state of the prisoners”³⁶ during the six-kilometer march was mostly due to the effects of the voyage on the “hell ship” *Fukkai Maru*. As Eric Harrison described it, “We had been systematically starved on two meagre meals of rice and soup per day, and on reaching land found we were too weak for the slightest physical exertion. Quite a number of men collapsed on the march.”³⁷ Australian Bill Gray described how they were further made to appear defeated: “As prisoners of war, we weren’t supposed to be happy, so we weren’t allowed to whistle or sing or even talk, because we were supposed to be downcast.”³⁸ As Harrison noted,

That the utmost propaganda was to be made of us was soon evident. We found that the day had been declared a holiday for the population to view “White men in captivity.” The streets for the whole route were packed with silent crowds gazing with the utmost interest at us. [...] We were given a short rest at a school en route where some of our officers were plied with questions

³⁴ Kim Chung-wŏn, “Sangnyuk hu shinae haengjin ilban ūn hwangguk shinmindoen kamgyŏk ūl kajira,” *Maeil sinbo*, September 24, 1942, 2.

³⁵ Harry Morris, “Globe-trotting the Hard Way,” *Atlantic Guardian*, May 19, 1946, 44.

³⁶ “P’aejan yŏng puro kyŏngsŏng e toch’ak: soyongsohyanghae tachaengjin,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 2. Translated by Jacco Zwetsloot.

³⁷ Harrison, *Diary*, 22.

³⁸ Bill Gray, “Bill Gray Interview 4 of 10,” *YouTube*, Nov. 26, 2009, accessed May 19, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4SfSX2TT4Q>.

as to their impressions of Korea and the mighty Japanese army.³⁹

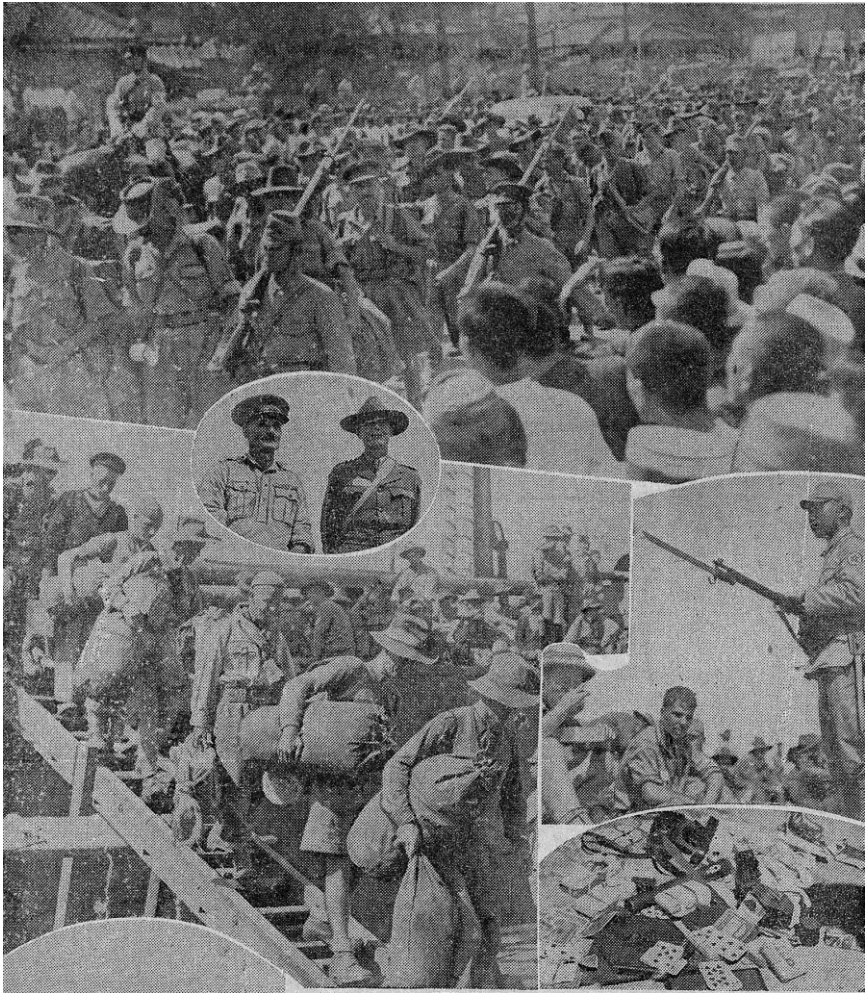


Figure 4. Clockwise from top: POWs march through Pusan; a Korean guards POWs; confiscated items; POWs disembarking; two “enemy officers” / *Maeil Sinbo*, September 26, 1942.

The *Maeil Sinbo* published numerous articles on September 26, 1942 describing the prisoners’ arrival in Pusan, their parade through Pusan, their train ride to Seoul, and their march to and arrival at the Seoul and Inchön

³⁹ Harrison, *Diary*, 22.

POW camps. In addition to this were interviews with some prisoners. Articles written by Japanese military officers, Koreans who had guarded the prisoners, and prominent Koreans also lauded the defeat of the British. The first article began:

After hundreds of years of invasion and brutal crimes of exploitation in East Asia, American and British troops, who are now quaking in their boots, fearful of divine retribution under the swords of the Imperial Army, have already been defeated in the skies and soil of East Asia.⁴⁰

One of the aims of the newspaper articles was to negatively portray the defeated enemy soldiers as decadent, lazy, or rapacious. One article described them as having “poisonous invaders’ fangs,”⁴¹ while another declared that “We couldn’t help but be infuriated by their barbaric behavior which carried out exploitation by means of invasion.”⁴² Major Okuda, in charge of transporting the prisoners from Pusan to Seoul, accused them of “dragging their heels” and being “childish” and “greedy,” complaining that the prisoners “pester us with ‘Give me cigarettes’ or ‘Give me apples and beef.’”⁴³ A Korean guard’s first impression of the prisoners was that they were “truly disorderly” and “show-offs,”⁴⁴ while Second Lieutenant Isagawa Shigeru, who had been in command on the *Fukkai Maru*, wrote that his officers “had to instruct the prisoners in the same way as they would kindergarten students.”⁴⁵ This stood in comparison to Japanese subjects who were expected to “suppress their egotistic individualism and work as one solid unit” and to “work in the spirit of self sacrifice.”⁴⁶ The foreignness and effeminate nature of the British soldiers were also highlighted, such as when two Scottish soldiers were described as “wearing dark blue ‘skirts’ and vivid yellow ‘stockings.’”⁴⁷ As John Dower wrote, “Portraying the Western enemy as

⁴⁰ “P’aejan yōng puro kyōngsōng e toch’ak.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Rev. Takahara, “Tashi kaksōnghaja,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁴³ Major Okuda, “Kkumulgōri nūn te chilsaek - ōrinae ga ch’ijollū nūn kūdūl,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁴⁴ “Ch’aengmu ūi chungdaet’onggam kūdūl ūi mujilsō e nollatta,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁴⁵ Shigeru Isagawa, “Myōngnyōng e chal pokchong kūdūl chungen moksa do itta,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 2.

⁴⁶ Kozo Murayama, “Japanese People Must Renew Resolve to Fight to the Finish,” *Japan Times*, Sept. 22, 1942, 6.

⁴⁷ “Chagil, Pusan e sangnyuk p’yōnghwasūrōn p’unggyōng e tangmok,” *Maeil*

incorrigibly decadent and consumed by egoistic concerns...reinforced the wishful belief that the Americans and British would be unwilling and unable to mount a prolonged military response.”⁴⁸ As a number of commentators put it, it was only natural that the Americans and British had surrendered.

The Japanese authorities delayed the prisoners’ disembarkation by one day for further propaganda reasons: as the *Maeil Sinbo* reported, the prisoners “took their first step on Chosŏn soil on a day of clear weather on the auspicious occasion of the Shuki Koreisai [Japanese autumn festival of the imperial ancestors] as well as Chusŏk [Korean autumn harvest festival].”⁴⁹ Once the prisoners boarded the train to Seoul, all “along the train line residents dressed in clean clothes for the Chusŏk holiday came out to see the train.” Beyond this timing for a major Korean holiday, the news articles also emphasized Korea’s reputation among the prisoners and highlighted the beauty of the countryside. While Major Okuda complained that the prisoners had “no awareness of Asia,”⁵⁰ an interview with British Lt. Col. Cardew in which he was asked “What awareness did you have of Chosŏn before you became a prisoner?” bears the headline “The scenery is very beautiful - Has known of Chosŏn for years.”⁵¹

A number of articles also put words into the prisoners’ mouths highlighting the calm plentitude of Korea. The soldiers “opened their eyes wide in surprise and emotion at the peacefulness and vitality of life here behind the guns, where even the shadow of war has not fallen.”⁵² As well, “their eyes were agape in wonder and they seemed overwhelmed at the peaceful and bountiful scenes” they saw in Pusan,⁵³ which a prisoner was quoted as saying surprised him because “even though the war has been going on for five or six years the stores are full of supplies.” Likewise, they “saw that not only Japanese people, but Koreans as well wore colorful clothes and happy expressions and were full of energy, and also that many boys and girls were playing.” An “interview” with prisoners on the train is summarized with the following: “From what we could generally see, we feel that there is limitless potential in the vigorous way Japan appears

sinbo, Sept. 26, 1942, 2.

⁴⁸ John Dower, *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering: Japan in the Modern World* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 80.

⁴⁹ “Chagil, Pusan e sangnyuk.”

⁵⁰ Major Okuda, “Kkumulgŏri nŭn te chilsaek.”

⁵¹ Kim Chung-wŏn, “Kyŏngch’i ga maeu chot’a – Chosŏn ūn iltchikput’ŏ algo issŏtta chŏkchanggyo wa ilmunitap,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 2.

⁵² “P’aejan yŏng puro kyŏngsŏng e toch’ak.”

⁵³ “Chagil, Pusan e sangnyuk.”

under wartime conditions.”⁵⁴

Describing the train ride to Seoul, Harrison wrote, “It was evident that the whole trip was bolstered for propaganda purposes and our arrival well advertised. At each station along the route to Keijo...our train was stopped to give the population which crowded each station the chance to view prisoners being well treated by the magnanimous Japanese.”⁵⁵ As the *Maeil Sinbo* reported, “on the premises of each station were employees from government offices, members of patriotic associations, elementary school students and ordinary residents who had come out to have a look at the prisoner train,” which they gazed at with their “eyes wide open in wonder.”⁵⁶ It was also declared that “People who worshipped Americans and British in the past would have seen the POW train and revised their former thinking”⁵⁷ which had been warped by “the evil effects of raising up the Americans and British.”⁵⁸

The articles were not always consistent in their negative portrayal of the prisoners, however. “Stepping on land for the first time seeing unfamiliar scenes along the train line, what thoughts are coming and going in their heads?” wondered one article, which also surmised that, “Looking out at the moon floating in the clear, azure sky, they may have been crying as they thought of their wife and children waiting in their hometowns.”⁵⁹ While the latter may have been intended to present them as weak, a Korean audience may well have identified with such an evocative, sad scene. Allowing readers such windows into the prisoners’ subjectivity may have worked to counter the effect of the negativity in other articles. Likewise, though doubt was cast upon it by referring to it as a “false confession,” Lt. Col. Cardew’s assertion that he was “confident that in the end the UK and US will be victorious” was also allowed into print.⁶⁰

Several articles drew attention to the Koreans deployed to guard the prisoners. One described how “in the ten cars of the train, our honorable men from the peninsula who have taken up arms as guards are keeping watch without blinking and with perfect vigilance.”⁶¹ They were

⁵⁴ Kim Chung-wŏn, “Ch’ajunggi kyŏngbusŏn purosusong yŏlch’ajung esŏ,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 2.

⁵⁵ Harrison, *Diary*, 22. Of the train trip he wrote, “the passing scenery was breathtaking... indescribable beauty.”

⁵⁶ Kim, “Ch’ajunggi kyŏngbusŏn purosusong yŏlch’ajung.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “Sanjŏn gwa mokkyŏk’ago hwanggun noryŏk e kamsa.”

⁵⁹ Kim, “Ch’ajunggi kyŏngbusŏn purosusong yŏlch’ajung.”

⁶⁰ Kim, “Kyŏngch’i ga maeu chot’a.”

⁶¹ Kim, “Ch’ajunggi kyŏngbusŏn purosusong yŏlch’ajung.”

described as “wearing field caps with their uniforms and powerfully wielding bayonets” and speaking in “a brave tone.” One guard named Takemura, a middle school graduate from Kunsan, said, while “forcefully grasping a bayonet,” that “along with implementing conscription, youth from the peninsula [being] POW guards is one kind of truly honorable duty. I will strive to fulfill my duty to the best of my ability.”⁶² This focus on the Korean guards emphasized the duty of Koreans to support the war effort and looked forward to a time when conscription would be implemented.

Much as the Japanese pressured prominent Koreans to support conscription and other war aims, the aforementioned *Maeil Sinbo* articles were accompanied by laudatory testimonials by prominent Koreans and Japanese with close ties to Westerners. “I know well the personal lives of British and Americans,” wrote Kyōnggi Middle School Principal Iwamura, who asserted that “I believe we must establish a new path in life” and “thoroughly do away with the thinking that has infiltrated among citizens and places British and Americans on a pedestal.”⁶³ Asahi Medical School Principal Kimiyama Tomio wrote of the prisoners’ parade that “We should not just be deeply moved but should strive even more for the purpose of securing ‘the final victory.’”⁶⁴ Reverend Takahara of Inchōn Methodist Church, said to have “engaged in missionary work for 30 years...and come into contact with American and British missionaries many times,” castigated such missionaries for their “forgetting of sincere religious thought.” He also wrote, “On the pretext of carrying out missionary work throughout Asia, including China, the missionaries sent [by the West] carried out an evil plan of invasion.”⁶⁵ Arguably the most prominent testimonial was that of Shidehara Rakujun, or Paek Nak-jun, who had been dean of Chosen Christian College until 1939, when he came under suspicion by the Japanese authorities, was forced to resign, and then was held under house arrest on campus.⁶⁶ Attributed to him is the following:

Looking from the position of a religious person, I think again about the British and Americans in the past when they came

⁶² “Hwangmindoen kŭngji do kutke pando ch’ulshin kamshiyowōn hwaryak,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁶³ Principal Iwamura, “Kagorŭl saeropke chōkkyōngmyōre maejin,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁶⁴ Kimiyama Tomio, “Kamgyōng muryanghada,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁶⁵ Rev. Takahara, “Tashi kaksōnghaja.”

⁶⁶ James E. Hoare, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Korea* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), 377-378.

masking an overly proud attitude of arrogance and of only pretending to believe in Christianity. Now they have surrendered before the righteous imperial army and the day has come when they must keenly feel the sins of the past. Now when we face the prisoners we will fulfill our duty with a solemn bearing as imperial subjects, and meanwhile we will not become careless and carried away by the feeling of victory, but will further strive to achieve our goal in the Greater East Asian War.⁶⁷

These testimonials, delivered by people described as having intimate knowledge of the enemy, repeated the mantras of pride in imperial subjecthood and the need to secure victory in the “sacred war,” and portrayed Westerners, including missionaries, as inherently untrustworthy.

Beyond this barrage of publicity upon their arrival in Korea, the prisoners’ value as instruments of propaganda continued to be utilized in various ways throughout their internment. While most Japanese POW camps were situated far from population centers, the camp in Seoul was near Seoul Station, a far more central location.⁶⁸ As Harrison put it, “Our propaganda value was exploited to the full and we were marched through the busiest centers to be the venue of staring, curious, Oriental eyes.” Of being sent to Seoul Station on cleaning detail, he wrote, “[O]n our arrival at the station it was soon apparent to us that we were to be used for propaganda purposes, consequently we had been assigned to the lowest and filthiest jobs, always in places where we were conspicuous to the local population.” Describing these experiences as “just another attempt by the Japanese to belittle the white man,” to counter this, “[t]he men did all jobs cheerfully in spite of it all.”⁶⁹

The Chosŏn Military Headquarters made further use of the POWs by editing together footage it had shot of the prisoners and, on March 8, 1943, releasing it as a film titled “The War Prisoners Who Came to Korea” (*Chosŏn e on puro*),⁷⁰ which was, as an ad in the *Maeil Sinbo* made clear,

⁶⁷ Shidehara Rakujun, “Yŏngmi ūi choesang i tashi saenggangnanda,” *Maeil sinbo*, Sept. 26, 1942, 3.

⁶⁸ Sun-u Yi, “Shingminji chosŏnedo nande ōpshi yŏnhapkun p’orosuyongso ga mandŭrŏjin kkadalk ūn?” *Minjok munje yŏn’guso*, Sept. 7, 2018, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://www.minjok.or.kr/archives/100128>.

⁶⁹ Harrison, *Diary*, 42, 50, 53.

⁷⁰ The film was directed by An Sŏk-yŏng, who had directed the 1940 war propaganda film “Volunteer” (*Chiwonbyŏng*). “An Sŏk-yŏng,” *Korean Film Archive*, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://www.kmdb.or.kr/db/per/00008589>.

“recommended by the Government General.” The ad promised “A great sensation!” for “our 24 million compatriots” in Korea, and declared that “The day of joy has come!” Viewers could “Behold the vivid sight of the defeated and shabby-looking American and British barbarians!”⁷¹



Figure 5. “The War Prisoners Who Came to Korea” ad / *Maeil Sinbo*, March 1, 1943.

Korean Responses to Japanese Propaganda

How did Koreans react to official propaganda and to the sight of the prisoners as they marched and worked in the streets? According to Itagaki’s chief of staff, who wrote for Vice-Minister of War Kimura a report about the prisoners paraded through Pusan, “On the whole it seems that the idea was very successful in driving all admiration for the British out of the Koreans’ minds and in driving into them an understanding of the situation.” He also quoted two Koreans in the crowd during the parade

⁷¹ *Chosŏn e on puro* advertisement, *Maeil sinbo*, March 1, 1943, 3.

of prisoners, one of whom said, “When we look at their frail and unsteady appearance, it is no wonder that they lost to the Japanese forces.” Another said, “When I saw young Korean soldiers, members of the Imperial Army, guarding the prisoners, I shed tears of joy.”⁷² While these comments accord with the predictions and aims of the military authorities in Korea far too perfectly to be trustworthy, they do summarize two of the main objectives of the *Maeil Sinbo* articles: the denigration of British and Americans and the highlighting of Korean participation in imperial endeavors. Though the celebratory *Maeil Sinbo* articles and the selected quotations in the above report offer little beyond what the military authorities and Government General wanted to be true, some Koreans did support the war. Yun Ch’iho, for example, responded to the “electrifying news” of Pearl Harbor by writing in his diary, “A new Day has indeed dawned on the Old World! This is a real war of races — the Yellow against the White.”⁷³ Many Koreans did not feel this way, however, hence the perceived need for the POWs to be brought to Korea in the first place. The prisoners’ accounts of their interactions with Koreans shed light on Korean attitudes toward the prisoners.

During the propaganda parade in Pusan that followed disembarkation from the *Fukkai Maru*, the “marshalled Korean inhabitants” of Pusan⁷⁴ were described by Harrison as “silent crowds gazing with the utmost interest at us.”⁷⁵ Other prisoners also noted that the “festively clad Korean population appeared cowed, sullen and apathetic,” in contrast to the Japanese spectators, who tended to jeer at the prisoners.⁷⁶ The authorities had in fact laid out a number of rules in the *Maeil Sinbo* for the Korean spectators to follow:

During the prisoners’ march, do not adopt an insulting or crafty attitude.

Do not talk to prisoners or adopt a kind attitude toward them.

Do not take or give any objects to the prisoners.

If you discover a prisoner who has escaped, immediately report them to authorities, military police, or police.

Do not aid prisoners in escape or hide them.⁷⁷

⁷² Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Knights of Bushido*, 61.

⁷³ Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 184.

⁷⁴ Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Knights of Bushido*, 62.

⁷⁵ Harrison, *Diary*, 22.

⁷⁶ De Groen and Masterman-Smith, “Prisoners on parade.”

⁷⁷ Kim, “Sangnyuk hu shinae haengjin.”

Koreans had many chances to interact with the prisoners during the next three years, and during those interactions they broke most of the above rules.

The Koreans whom the prisoners had the most contact with were those among the prison guards. As an American report put it, “An interesting aspect of the experiences of the prisoners at all the camps was their relations with various Koreans — guards, factory workers, and outsiders — in view of the widespread stories in the U.S. that Korean guards were often more brutal than Japanese.”⁷⁸ In a report on the POW camps for the American occupation forces, Captain George Stengel wrote that the prisoners in Hŭngnam had “contempt for the Korean guards,” but also included this testimony:

Five such guards wrote an interesting paper which was included in Stengel’s report. They claimed that they had tried on many occasions to help the prisoners but were caught and punished by the Japanese, who are supposed to have told them, “You guards need to be guarded more than the PW for your attitude.”⁷⁹

While this could be post facto justification for their behavior, former prisoner Bill Gray’s testimony supported their claims. As he said of a Korean guard he later heard was an American agent, “He used to inform us all the time what was happening, and yet he’d give us a hell of a time at times.”⁸⁰ Clearly, guards wanting to help the prisoners could not afford to appear too friendly to them in front of their Japanese superiors.

There are numerous accounts of Korean guards passing on information to the prisoners. As Harrison put it, “our most important source of information was news given to us by friendly civilians and guards.”⁸¹ Another account describes how “At the Seoul camp, where newspapers were denied the prisoners, a Korean boy of about eighteen brought the prisoners a Japanese language newspaper nearly every day for a period of

⁷⁸ “Release of the Allied Prisoners of War,” 341.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁸⁰ Bill Gray, “Bill Gray Interview.” According to Sergeant J. T. Cattell, he later learned this guard “was in a good job with the Americans as all through the war he had been in the pay of the American Intelligence.” “POW Life In Korea Had Its Moments,” *The Newcastle Sun* (New South Wales), Nov. 23, 1945, 5.

⁸¹ Harrison, *Diary*, 56.

nearly a year. He was very clever at evading the guards.”⁸² POW guards also showed interest in British culture, as prisoner James Miller noted when he described two Korean guards at the Inchön camp “who were anxious to learn English.” To aid in an escape attempt, he and another prisoner kept them distracted: “We kept them very interested telling about the differences between Scotland and England.”⁸³ Harrison also noted that “The native population was forever asking our men to teach them English.”⁸⁴ The most striking solidarity shown by the Korean guards was conveyed by Hŭngnam prisoner Harry Morris, who heard in August 1945 that the Japanese camp commandant planned to kill the prisoners rather than allow them to fall into Soviet hands. “This news was duly relayed to us by two anti-Japanese Koreans of the guard, who offered to provide us with some rifles for a break-out on the night of August 16th.”⁸⁵ As this makes clear, though the volunteer system had been designed to screen out those disloyal to Japan,⁸⁶ some of the prison guards, who also went through a rigorous testing and screening process, either showed an affinity for the soldiers, gave them news, or actively worked against Japanese interests.

Beyond such interactions sanctioned by the camp authorities, most contacts between Koreans and prisoners occurred when the prisoners were outside of the camp on work detail. Though unauthorized contact between Koreans and prisoners was punished, they had many opportunities to converse with Koreans while working outside the POW camps. Harrison’s diary reveals a great deal of knowledge about Seoul’s history and layout, which was “gain[ed] from the Koreans.”⁸⁷ He also described some of the more playful interactions which occurred:

At the military warehouse where we spent many a weary day, we mingled quite a lot with the civilian population. Here were employed many youths and men and a large number of women and girls. [...] The young men of our camp were ever a source

⁸² “Release of the Allied Prisoners of War,” 342.

⁸³ Miller, “Escape from Jinsen.”

⁸⁴ Harrison, *Diary*, 35. “This took many weird forms, and it was quite common to be marching through the streets to work, and to be greeted by a voice from the sidewalk with, ‘Hello, you bastard. I love you. I don’t think!’”

⁸⁵ Morris, “Globe-trotting the Hard Way,” 46.

⁸⁶ Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 256-271.

⁸⁷ Harrison, *Diary*, 29.

of interest to them, the redheads and fair complexioned blue eyed lads especially were regarded with intense curiosity. [...] During the absence of the guards our men would talk to them in pidgeon Japanese, and they would answer readily enough. [...] Jim [Bolger, one of our pals] was a natural humourist and with much facial animation he would start a conversation with a group of these Korean girls and when they answered him, whether he understood them or not he would put on such a look of blank astonishment, that amid sidelong curious glances they would burst into much tittering and laughter.⁸⁸

These exchanges took place even though both sides would have faced severe punishment if caught. Other exchanges were less innocent, from the Japanese point of view. James Miller, interned in Inchön, related the story of a Korean he met while working:

During a labouring job at the Railway Goods Yard I met a Korean labourer who spoke good English. He told me that he had learned it from a Scots Missionary. He made it quite clear that he hated the ‘Nippons’[. ...] I gained his confidence and asked him if he could provide me with a map showing the railway line to the Russian Border. He readily agreed and arranged a place where he would leave it for me to pick up, out of sight of our Guards.⁸⁹

Besides providing maps, Koreans helped with escape attempts in other ways. In July 1945, Major Chester Johnson, an American survivor of the Bataan death march, attempted to escape from the Inchön camp with three others, but ended up running into the center of the city where they went into a restaurant and used gestures to beg for food. Seeing this “pitiful sight,” one employee, Kim Jin-won, quickly hid them in an inner room and gave them something to eat before they fled and were recaptured.⁹⁰

To be sure, not all responses to the prisoners’ woes were as sympathetic. When a British officer working at Seoul Station refused to be searched by a Japanese military police officer of lower rank, he was ordered to remove

⁸⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁸⁹ Miller, “Escape from Jinsen.”

⁹⁰ Chiwŏn Chŏng and Chaeho Yi, “Moshijō k’oriō,” *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, July 19, 1966, 3. This article tells the story of how Johnson, then serving in Korea, had a tearful reunion with Kim. Thanks to Jacco Zwetsloot for sharing this article with me.

his pants in public and was beaten until he complied. Forced to reveal striped pajamas beneath his pants, “His humiliating position was... highly amusing to the crowd of laughing Koreans including a large sprinkling of women and young girls.”⁹¹

Such incidents seemed to be in the minority, however. Providing food to the prisoners was a much-appreciated act carried out by Korean bystanders on many occasions. Richard Swarbuck, a British prisoner in Inchön, reported that one benefit of being part of a working party was that “the Korean civilians, children in particular, came to watch the prisoners at work and regularly passed apples and turnips and cigarettes to the working men.”⁹² In Hŭngnam, Koreans reportedly got food to the prisoners by throwing it over the camp walls late in the evenings or early in the mornings, while Korean doctors smuggled medicines to the prisoners when possible.⁹³ When the war ended and the Soviets removed the Japanese from control of the Hŭngnam Camp, neither the Japanese authorities nor the Soviet Army, which was feeding itself through plunder, ensured the camp was supplied with food. Sgt. Leonard Barsdell, an Australian who accompanied an American POW recovery unit to Hŭngnam in mid-September 1945, described the support they received from the populace:

Many hundreds of Korean and Japanese women in the vicinity helped feed the prisoners after the [Japanese] were thrown out. At first they bartered with the prisoners in a healthy way, the latter paying in Korean yen for eggs, tomatoes, potatoes, and so forth [...] As time went on, however, the women would bring food to the prisoners without seeking anything in return. They said the prisoners were their friends, and the Russians their enemies.⁹⁴

According to Barsdell, the reason for this disposition was, on the one hand, the widespread looting, rape and “terrorism” committed by Soviet troops against Japanese and Korean civilians, and, on the other, the kindnesses done to them by the POWs, particularly the camp’s doctor, Harry Morris,

⁹¹ Harrison, *Diary*, 49.

⁹² Dave Swarbuck, “Jinsen Camp - Korea.”

⁹³ Rider, *Hog Wild*, 110.

⁹⁴ Sgt. Leonard E. Barsdell, “Russian occupation of Northern Korea,” US War Dept. document CM-IN-23404, Sept. 28, 1945, 4. Available at http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/other/Report_on_Russian_Ocupation_of_Northern_Korea_KANKO_KONAN_1945-09-28.pdf.

who treated dozens of Japanese and Korean women and children daily after the armistice, and became well-enough known that “that he had women calling on him from ten miles distant.”⁹⁵

Though the POWs faced many hardships, those working in the railway stations and elsewhere in Seoul noticed they were not alone in this:

It was amazing the pilfering that went on in this country. Everyone seemed to consider that it was their right to take anything that was worth stealing, and often the Koreans and civilian Japanese would join with us in helping ourselves to consignments of food, soap, etc. Everyone seemed so hungry, ragged and generally poverty stricken that circumstances stilled any twinges of conscience that they may have had.⁹⁶

In addition to this illustration of how wartime privation was already causing the social fabric to unravel in 1943, Harrison wrote of seeing, on the way to work, a homeless, starving Korean man grow progressively weaker daily until he died. The POWs also walked by another man’s corpse as it lay by the roadside for days.⁹⁷ Alan Toze, a British soldier, described seeing the “heartrending and shameful scene” at “the farm” of a woman in rags “with blackened hands and a woebegone and tear streaked visage” who “fell into our ranks looking pleadingly at us and wailing ‘America, America.’ [...] I felt rotten but could do nothing about it.”⁹⁸

The POWs also witnessed instances of abuse suffered by Korean civilians at the hands of the Japanese. In one instance, Harrison saw three Korean workers outside the military warehouse tied to poles outdoors in the cold, where they were beaten; in another he saw a topless Korean woman tied up and kneeling on the ground near Seoul Station.⁹⁹ He wrote that the public punishment of Allied prisoners “in front of a crowd of the local population” as an exhibition of power “appeared to receive little support from the onlookers, who no doubt had vivid memories of their own treatment.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ibid, 3-7.

⁹⁶ Harrison, *Diary*, 55.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 53, 57.

⁹⁸ Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire*, 126.

⁹⁹ Harrison, *Diary*, 45, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 50.

Conclusion

General Itagaki explained to Tokyo his rationale for interning Allied prisoners in Korea as follows:

It is our purpose by interning American and British prisoners of war in Korea to make Koreans realize positively the true might of our empire as well as to contribute to psychological propaganda work for stamping out any ideas of the worship of Europe and America which the greater part of Korea still retains deep down.¹⁰¹

Though his aide stated that they had been “very successful” in this, the outcome of attempts by the Japanese authorities to make propagandistic use of the defeated Allied POWs in newspapers, film, and public spaces so as to generate antipathy for the US and UK was clearly not as favorable as the military authorities had initially reported. Rather than fulfilling their “glorious” duty to the empire, a number of Korean POW guards acted against Japanese interests and helped the Allied prisoners, as did Korean civilians who gave the POWs food and even aided in escape attempts. As well, the POWs’ observations that Koreans, both guards and civilians, were “forever asking” prisoners to teach them English revealed that Koreans’ “respect and admiration” for the Anglo-American Allies had not been stamped out. As for attempts to use the POWs to establish “a strong faith in victory” and pride in becoming Japanese subjects, this also failed. Among the official pronouncements known to be false by both Koreans and POWs was the *Maeil Sinbo*’s declaration that life in wartime Korea was “peaceful and bountiful,” since it was obvious the degree to which people were “hungry, ragged and generally poverty stricken.” Ultimately, the pro forma expressions of war support and patriotism required of Koreans during the Pacific War masked far more resistance than those commanding Japan’s most important outpost of empire ever realized.

Nowhere was this seen more clearly than in postwar northern Korea, where, according to Barsdell, people were so “terrified of the Russians” that Soviet depredations did much to bring even Koreans and Japanese together.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Knights of Bushido*, 61-62.

¹⁰² Barsdell, “Russian occupation of Northern Korea,” 3-7.



Figure 6. Released POWs at Seoul Station shoulder Kim Gu-chun, who secretly brought them newspapers for two years, September 9, 1945. / National Archives and Records Administration

Barsdell illustrated just to what degree admiration for the anglophone Allies had not been dampened:

I think the most revealing scene occurred on September 21st when the prisoners were taken in Russian trucks to Kanko

[Hamhŭng] station on the first stage of their journey home. Although under heavy Russian guard...Koreans and [Japanese] lined the roads and waved and cheered. Some wept openly, and many waved American and Korean flags. It was the same at the station. Although the Russians kept the crowd at a distance the locals cheered and clapped as the train pulled out. It was really touching. They regarded the prisoners as their friends.¹⁰³

Unlike three years earlier, when the arriving POWs were forced to march before “silent crowds” of Koreans who had almost certainly been ordered to turn up and watch, the procession that gathered to see them off as they left Hamhŭng was enthusiastic and voluntary. And far from having lost respect for the Allies as the Japanese had hoped, Barsdell noted that “The people, except the few who ardently support the Russians to further their own political ends, are pro American and would like America to take over the whole of Korea.”¹⁰⁴ Though Harrison — who was one of the POWs in the Russian trucks — hoped that liberation would “eventually come to this beautiful country, whose people for years have known nothing but occupation and exploitation,”¹⁰⁵ efforts by both the US and USSR to bring the peninsula under their sway would lead to conflict, and Japan’s methods of imperialization and wartime control would once again be used to mobilize Koreans for a new, as yet unfinished war.

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¹⁰³ Ibid, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 12.

¹⁰⁵ E. S. Harrison, “Korea North of 38 - Some POW Memories,” *The West Australian*, June 28, 1947.