

CHAPTER 11

DISCIPLINE OF INTERNEES

1. The Camp Commandant of each internment camp was responsible to the Military Board for discipline within the camp. He was appointed by the Board under Regulation 6 of National Security (Internment Camp) Regulations, and under Regulation 8 of those Regulations he was placed in charge of the camp and empowered to make such Camp Rules as he considered necessary for the proper management of the camp and for the enforcement of discipline in the camp.

2. Camp Commandants maintained discipline through the following representatives of the internees themselves:-

- (a) The internees' "Representative" usually known as the "Camp Leader" who was selected by the internees for appointment by the Camp Commandant (vide Reg.13) and whose services were used under Internment Camp Order No.10, para 13. The Camp Leader was empowered to appoint internees to assist him, if necessary, in maintaining discipline and to carry out necessary sanitation and hygiene duties in the camp. He was usually required to accompany officers carrying out inspections of the camp and was obliged to attend at the orderly room to present matters for consideration by the Camp Commandant, or to submit complaints by internees and receive instructions.
- (b) The internees' Hut Leaders were also appointed by the Camp Commandant on the selection of internees. These hut leaders were required to co-operate with the staff of the camp in the maintenance of discipline among the occupants of the huts and had control of the internal economy arrangements of the huts. Complaints by internees were made through them to the Camp Leader for submission to the Camp Commandant.

3. The use of this system proved most satisfactory. It was seldom necessary for Camp Commandants to remove Leaders from office, and, in the main, relations between camp staffs and Camp Leaders were excellent. German internees, being more inclined towards regimentation, invariably took internal administration into their own hands. Italians were not so inclined to accept responsibility, but one or two excellent leaders from their ranks performed really good service. The main problem of discipline was met with in Japanese Internment camps, where the unusual psychology of these nationals often made them difficult to handle.

4. By Regulation 41, internees were obliged to comply with the provisions of all regulations, camp orders and camp rules applying to them, and were forced to obey all lawful orders issued to them by officers or soldiers or by any other persons having authority over them by virtue of the regulations, orders and rules. This regulation made it unlawful for an internee to:-

- (a) Treat with disrespect any official Visitor, any officer or soldier, or any other person employed in connection with the internment camp;
- (b) Swear, curse or use any abusive, insolent, indecent, threatening or other improper language;
- (c) Commit any indent act or make any indecent gesture;
- (d) Create unnecessary noise or disturbance;
- (e) Wilfully disfigure or damage any part of the internment camp or any Commonwealth property to which he had access;
- (f) Commit any nuisance;

- (g) Have in his quarters or possessed any article in contravention of the Internment Camp Orders or the Camp Rules;
- (h) Have in his quarters or possession any money other than money which he was permitted to retain in his possession by virtue of the provisions of the Internment Camp Orders or the Camp Rules;
- (i) Use of offer personal violence to any officer or soldier, or any other person employed in connection with the camp, to an Official Visitor, to another internee, or to any other person in the camp;
- (j) Approach within three yards of the boundary fence of the camp or any fence in the camp, except with the permission of an officer or soldier of the guard;
- (k) Interfere in any way with the lights in the huts or with any part of the lighting system of the camp;
- (l) Escape or attempt to escape, or aid any escape or attempted escape from the internment camp; or
- (m) Offend in any way against good order and discipline.

5. Internees charged with contravention of any of the Regulations, Internment Camp Orders or Camp Rules were brought before the Camp Commandant who was responsible to observe the rules relating to procedure and reception of evidence as in the case of a Commanding Officer dealing with a charge against a soldier of the Australian Military Forces, and internees were given the opportunity to defend themselves (vide Reg. 42). Provision was made for the taking of evidence on oath or affirmation at the request of the internees.

6. On admission of guilt or where an internee was proved guilty, the following disciplinary punishment could be imposed:-

- (a) Detention for any period not exceeding twenty-eight days during which period the internee could be confined in a place especially set apart for the purpose.
- (b) Confinement to quarters for any period not exceeding fourteen days, during which period the offender could be required to answer his name at uncertain hours throughout the day, and could be employed on extra fatigue duties.
- (c) Suspension of any privileges.

In the interests of health it was expressly provided in the regulations that the maximum period of twenty-eight days detention would not be exceeded, notwithstanding that there were several acts for which an internee was answerable to discipline, whether such acts were connected or not. Provision was also made for a period of three days to intervene between any two periods of detention (vide Reg. 42).

7. In 1942 it was realised through experience in the administration of internees that no proper regulations had been included to cover adequately the question of money illegally held by internees or found in their quarters. To cope with this, Camp Commandants were authorised by new regulations (Regs, 41A and 42(7)) for the opening of a new account in the name of any internee concerned, for the payment into that account of monies so found, and for the freezing of the account where the internee was found guilty of the charge against him.

8. Conditions under which disciplinary punishments were to be served made adequate provision for proper cleanliness and hygiene, for internees to take reasonable exercise during detention, and for the despatch and receipt by them of letters, but they were not allowed to receive parcels and remittances of money until the expiration of their sentences. These conditions are set out fully in Regulation 43.

9. Special detention cells, with exercise yards, were built at each camp or group of camps and these were subject to regular inspections by personnel of the Army Detention Barracks Service.

10. Regulation 44 was enacted to ensure proper provision for internees accused of offences against any laws of the Commonwealth or of a State or Territory of the Commonwealth, and for prosecution of internees in any court of competent jurisdiction. It will be observed, on examination of this regulation, that the Representative of the appropriate Protecting Power was to be notified before any hearing by civil courts and was given an opportunity to attend the hearing unless it was necessary in the interests of the safety of the Commonwealth that the hearing should be kept secret. This representative was also to be informed of any sentence imposed by the court.

11. In the event of sentence of death being passed on an enemy alien internee, the Protecting Power Representative was to be appropriately informed, unless the internee otherwise requested, and a period of three months was to elapse before execution of the sentence (vide Reg. 44(10)).

12. The above regulations and orders were found fairly comprehensive and, in general, the enforcement of strict discipline was not a difficult problem. Camp Commandants were assisted by the existence of the following: -

- (a) Internment Camp Order No.10, para 12, making provision for regular searches. This matter will be referred to more fully under the heading of "Security", vide Part III Chapter 4.
- (b) Regulations prohibiting drilling or marching in military formation for any purpose other than physical training, fatigues and movement from place to place.
- (c) Internment Camp Order No.10, para 19, enabling recovery from internees of the costs of repairing or replacing damaged property if such damage was found to be due to the wilful act or gross neglect of the internees concerned.