

CHAPTER 19

RATIONS OF INTERNEES

1. The basis of the rations of internees was provided by National Security (Internment Camps) Regulations, regulation 18(1) of which reads : -

“The food ration of adult male internees shall be equivalent in quantity and quality to that of the soldiers at the internment camps, and sufficient drinking water shall be supplied to them”.

2. Practice in the United Kingdom was that internees should not receive more than members of the civil population, it being considered that there was no obligation to apply Article XI of the Prisoners of War Convention of 1929 to civilians. Germany consistently evaded giving information as to whether the ration scales of their Depot Troops was the same as civilians, but it was known almost definitely at the time that the troops received a higher scale than civilians. Prisoners of war held by the Germans received rations on the civilian scale and this was a definite breach of the Convention.

3. The Japanese, in replying to United Kingdom representations concerning application of the Prisoners of War Convention to prisoners held by them, stated that while they were not bound by the Convention they would observe its terms “mutatis mutandis” and that as regards food rations they would “take account of national and racial customs on the basis of reciprocity”.

4. After considerable discussion on the subject, a solution to the complicated problem of ration scales for both prisoners of war and internees was found. Under this the Australian scale of ration (military) was accepted as a basic standard issue of maximum cost. A suitable standard ration scale for each nationality within the commuted ration value of the Australian standard ration was then to be devised under the following procedure: -

- (a) In consultation with camp leaders, quantities of each item were adjusted to suit the requirements of each particular nationality.
- (b) Alternative commodities were then substituted where necessary to suit the nationality of the group concerned.
- (c) In regard to children, scales were devised based on the approved national scale and the scales laid down for hospital duties in M.F.R. & I.

5. Once a standard national scale was fixed by the above process it remained constant unless any commodity in it was unavailable or in short supply, when suitable equivalents were issued through Supply Service.

6. It should be noted that care was taken to apply to internees the civilian ration scales for tea and sugar as it was considered undesirable that any complaints should be made that the internees were receiving better treatment through application of military scales to these items.

7. For information, it is noted that the form of variation in most alterations to standard rations was a reduction in the quantity of meat and the substitution of farinaceous and bulkier foods. As a result the actual quantity received by them was at least the equivalent or exceeded the rations of garrison personnel.

8. In accordance with Regulation 18(2), internees were given facilities to prepare for themselves such additional articles of food as they may possess. They were provided with kitchens in each compound and were employed in their own cooking of rations. The internees showed great interest in this work. They took great pleasure in supplying to military personnel visiting compounds cups of tea and coffee with special cakes, scones etc. No collective disciplinary punishments affecting food were permitted vide Regulation 18(4).

9. While all general instructions concerning rations for internees were issued through the Quarter-Master General's Branch, the Directorate's advice was constantly sought and the policy adopted in making all recommendations was to observe as closely as possible the regulations providing for rations on the same scale as depot troops, while at the same time avoiding possible grounds for complaint by the civilian population.

10. Although ration scales for non-European internees can be drawn up with due regard for their national diets, care should be exercised to ensure that such diet scales do not continue to include commodities which become very scarce as a war progresses.