

RFHG INDIAN POW ANNEXURE

Annexure 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INDIAN ARMY & INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

When looking into the Indian Army, one comes across terms like KCO/ KCIO/ VCO/ ICO/ ECO.

- VCO: till the early 1920s, all officers were British. The senior most rank for Indians was Viceroy Commissioned Officers, senior to warrant officers but below commissioned officers.
- KCO/KCIO: early 1920s, Indians commissioned from Sandhurst (Kings or Kings Indian CO)
- ICO: when graduation training shifted from Sandhurst to India, they were called Indian CO.
- ECO were Emergency CO when WWII started.

There were very few Indian officers in Singapore – I've come across mainly Lieutenant's, some Captains, very few Majors and only 2 Lt Cols.

Besides the Indian Army, there were also units belonging to the princely states, called Indian State Forces, commanded by Indian officers.

- There were 5 such units in Singapore – Hyderabad State Forces (different from Hyderabad Regiment which was Indian Army), Mysore, Bahawalpur, Jind, Kapurthala.
- Many of the people mentioned in the main Indian POW document, like Waheed , Rasheed, Ishaq & Gurbaksh served there.

INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY – early history

In creating their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and “Asia for the Asians”, before the war began, Japan Army HQ reached out to the local political groups in Southeast Asia. This unit was headed by Major Fujiwara and was known as Fujiwara Kikan. They found that there were Indians everywhere and each colony (and Siam) had an Indian Independence League (IIL), a political organization meant to galvanize the local population to support Indian independence in any practical way. Fujiwara went to Bangkok as Siam/Thailand was the only independent country (all the rest were British/French/ Dutch colonies) and met Giani Pritam Singh, the Head of IIL Thailand. The Giani decided to join hands with Fujiwara to expel Britain from India and the 2 headed to Malaya when the invasion began and around Dec 10, 1941, met one of the captured Indian officers Captain Mohan Singh, 1/14 Punjab. He too decided to work with the Japanese and formed the kernel of what was to become the Indian National Army (INA). However, in a few months, both sides wearied of each other & on 21 Dec 1942, Captain Mohan Singh disbanded the INA & he was arrested.

The INA was re-created in early 1943 and received a filip with the arrival of Subhash Chandra Bose in July 1943, resulting in more recruits from Indian POWs, Indian civilians in Malaya/Singapore and the formation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, the 1st unit of women fighters. This, and the limited role they played in the Burma campaign of 1944-5, is a longer story.

Annexure 2 How Many Indian POWs went to New Britain/ New Guinea?

New Guinea:

Chint Singh wrote a 61 page narrative on New Guinea with a lot of detail. His heading is 3000 people. However, on pg 33 & 34, he finds that:

IWP 16 has 1 survivor out of 560 (a more reliable source, Jemader Nand Singh says 547)

IWP 17 has 0 survivors out of 500 (number given by a Japanese guard & probably rounded off)

IWP 18 has 2 survivors out of 565

IWP 26 has 2 survivors out of 309

IWP 19 (his own) has 8 survivors out of 539

Total 13 survivors out of 1,979 men.

There are no figures for IWP 17 (also in NG) and using the average of all the groups c 525, taking total in New Guinea to 2,500.

The Japanese themselves said 2500 were shipped and only 12 seem to have survived.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/188768454?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

This created great controversy. The Japanese said many had deserted. Various articles

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/99184315?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/78776037?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/258043382?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/146850659?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

Chint Singh says on pg34 that he was told 191 men had been rescued before the war ended, though the articles say 190.

On the survivors after the war, Chint Singh says there were 13. However, on pg36 Sepoys Jai Ram & Abraham died on Sep 20, 1945. Later 10 died in a tragic plane crash on the way home, see below, leaving him the only survivor of those rescued after liberation. That means 10+2+1 (him) =13. However, the articles say 12.

So the mystery is, were 190 or 191 rescued before the war, and were there 12 or 13 survivors at liberation?

Air Crash articles

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/91940036?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/44832019?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/250681973?searchTerm=indian%20pow>

For when they sailed to NG, see below.

New Britain (NB):

When the Japanese start shipping Indian POWs in Dec 1942, they were organized into Indian Worker Parties (IWP) of 500-600 men each, headed by an Indian officer. They normally sailed in a convoy of 2-3k men. Based on this, and other pieces of archive information, the voyages and number of men are:

Voyage 1: One group sailing in December 1942 to New Britain (NB) – there are 2 refs to this sailing, and the stated Commander was in NB. This may have been a sole group as it was the start. So, 500 went to NB.

Voyage2: On Jan 5, 2000 men sail to NB – 4 groups
Buyo Maru with Sen's 500 gets torpedoed and he says 1500 are on tanker Pacific Maru
Reaches Feb 19. Records in AWM and US NA.

Voyage 3: On Jan 12, AWM evidence of 1 group (James) sailing for NB. Likely to be 4-5 groups totaling 2-2.5k men.

Voyage 4: On May 1, several groups sail to NB (many refs in AWM). Hibi Maru carried 3k, likely 5-6 groups. Reach Jun 28.

Till now, we have 14-15 groups shipped.

Voyage 5: On May 5, 4 groups of 2.2k men sail to New Guinea (IWP 16-19). Reached May 16. Detailed a/c by Chint Singh in AWM. The 2.2k men figure is based on the NG figure mentioned above.

Voyage 6: On May 5, 2000 men set sail in Thames Maru, 520 get dropped off at Pulau on Jun 8 (IWP 15) and the rest go to NB (IWP 20 + likely IWP 21 & 22). Reach July5. Complete details in AWM.

Voyage 7: Hints from archive

- IWP 26 (309 men) arrives in NG in Jun 43.
- We have yet to a/c for IWP 23-25, c1500 men (would bring NB total to 11k)
- Crasta says there were 5.3k survivors in New Britain & he was off by just 183, there were 5483. He also says 11k went to New Britain.
- Hence possible this voyage had IWP 26 with 309 men to NG, IWP 23-5 of 1.5k men to NB

Voyages 2,4,5 & 6 have clear archival evidence on overall numbers. Voyages 1,3, 7 have archival references, but not clear indication of the numbers. Adding all of the 7 voyages up we have 14k men shipped from Singapore for Pulau/ New Guinea/ New Britain, of whom 550 went to Pulau, 2.5k to New Guinea, 11k to New Britain.

Annexure 3 War Crimes Trials

Tokyo trials was for high-ranking ones like PM Tojo. Besides this US, Australia, UK, China, Holland, Phils conducted over 2000 trials, on atrocities in territories controlled by them.

Courts of inquiry were held as preliminary investigations – were the allegations specific, were witnesses alive, were the accused identified & alive? If so they were interrogated and eventually 100 war crimes trials were held to prosecute the Japanese. A basic tenet of English law is being able to cross-examine a witness. However it was realized that if this was to be followed, then many Japanese could not be tried as their accusers had either died after giving testimony or would have gone home, so a special act was passed that allowed written

evidence to be admitted. For some trials, the accusers were brought back from India, as Chint Singh was.

From the trial records one can see that the Japanese defence was well organized. Japanese officers with legal training formed the defence. The accused seemed well trained on how to answer questions – be brief and to the point. Instead of flatly denying accusations such as having beaten POWs, they would admit having pushed them on the shoulder. Senior officers came to provide evidence in court in support of their juniors. In many cases, defense was by Allied officers & they gave it their best.

The official Japanese view was that the Indians were not POWs but sub-soldiers as they had joined the INA (most of those in PNG had not) and were under Japanese military law where any command must be obeyed, and no one is to complain (the reason they gave for senior Japanese officers not knowing conditions were bad). Besides the conditions for the Japanese was as bad. Many POWs were beheaded, shot or bayoneted to death without trial. The Japanese commander General Imamura took responsibility for it all & offered to stand trial for all cases if his men were released. That offer was not taken. Eventually, 100 trials were held and in 66 of them, all or some of the Japanese were found guilty and sentenced to death or a jail sentence ranging from life down to 2 years.