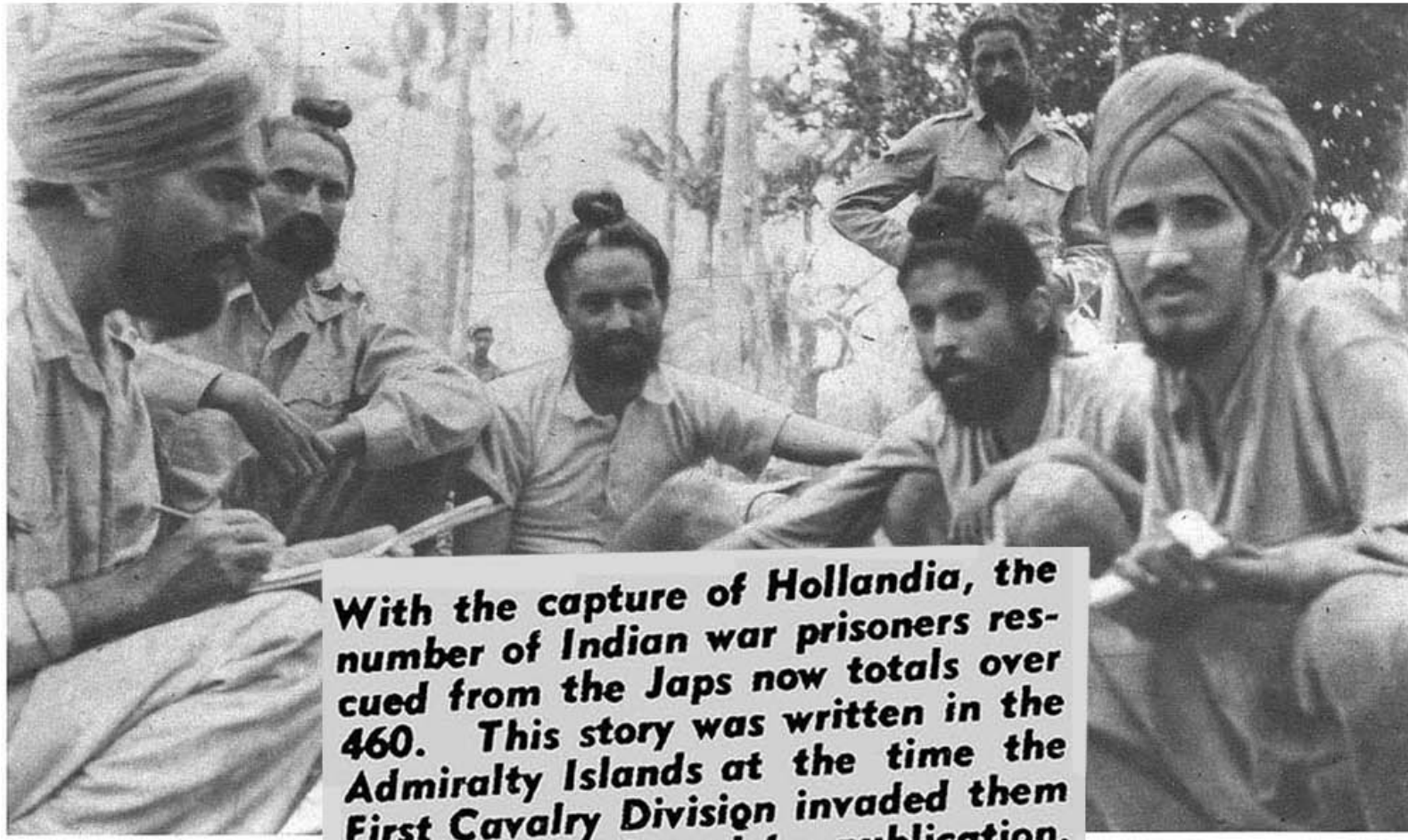


A turbaned Sikh lieutenant makes notes on a pad as he checks some of the 66 freed men on Los Negros Island.



With the capture of Hollandia, the number of Indian war prisoners rescued from the Japs now totals over 460. This story was written in the Admiralty Islands at the time the First Cavalry Division invaded them and is now released for publication.

SIKHS TELL OF CAPTIVITY IN JAP HANDS

By Cpl. RALPH L. BOYCE
YANK Staff Correspondent

LOS NEGROS ISLAND—Captured in the fall of Singapore, 66 soldiers of the 5/11 Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army were freed by our troops. Used as slave laborers since their capture in February 1942, the Indians were building jetties here when they were rescued.

The Sikhs (pronounced Seeks) are often referred to as "the backbone of the Indian Army." Neither Mohammedan nor Hindu, they are, in religion and practice, somewhat a combination of the two. They are a fiercely proud and independent people and make excellent warriors.

Now, weak from malaria and lack of food, the Sikhs still retain their pride as good soldiers. Every Yank that talks with them, regardless of rank, is met with a snappy, British-style open-hand salute, which is held until the often embarrassed GI returns it.

Commanding the little detachment is Subadar (Captain) Gulzara Singh. Like the others, he hails from the Province of Punjab, India. Gulzara Singh speaks English with a precise, Oxford accent, as do several others in the group. Most fluent English speaker is Cpl. Anup Singh, who learned the language in high school back in India.

"I did not go to college," he says.

The name Singh, incidentally, occurs with amazing regularity among the Sikhs. Because they are so independent, they seldom mix or marry with other sects.

Asked how they were treated by the Japs, the Sikhs shake their heads sadly, smile and say, "Not very well."

"They give us only handful of rice a day," one says. "We need wheat and vegetables. We are very weak now."

"And when we don't work hard enough they—they beat us," another puts in.

After their liberation the Indian soldiers were fixed up with a place to stay until they could be evacuated. They have been given all the rations they can use, and a guard placed around their camp to ward off the curious GIs and to enable them to rest. Offered cigarettes, they refuse, very politely. Yes, they like to smoke, they say, but since they are so weak it would be bad for them.



Knotty problem this Indian hair-do, as you can see by the "before and after" pictures.

From the diary kept by Anup Singh in his native language comes the story of their travels. About 400 of them were captured at Singapore and were kept there until May 1943, doing forced labor.

In May they were herded like cattle into the hold of a boat and taken to Java. They eventually reached New Britain in July.

The diary records that the first big bombing of Rabaul was Oct. 12, and the next day the small group of them embarked for the Admiralties. On reaching this island they were told they were to build six wharves in three months and then go back to New Britain. Those wharves, almost completed, are now being put to good use by our troops.

On Jan. 22, Anup Singh records, the bombardment of the Admiralties began, and on Feb. 29 they were told the Americans had landed on the other side of the island (Momote Drome).

"They told us it did not concern us at all," Anup Singh says, "and that it would be all over in a few days. The next day most of the Japanese went into the jungle and left us with only five guards."

Anup Singh closes his notebook and stands up. "And yesterday we were freed." He smiles, straightens his shoulders and adds, "By the Amer-i-cans!"

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