

3. Establishment of a Prisoners of War Information Bureau at Tokyo, Press Statement of January 19, 1942.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs has been informed officially that the Japanese Government, although not a party to the Prisoners of War Convention of 1929, has, in accordance with the provisions of that Convention, set up a Prisoners of War Information Bureau at Tokyo. The Bureau will transmit by telegraph to the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva, lists of members of the British and Canadian forces taken prisoner at Hong Kong and elsewhere. It is expected that these lists, in accordance with the practice followed by the International Red Cross Committee for lists supplied by the German Prisoner of War Information Bureau at Berlin, will be telegraphed by the Committee immediately on receipt at Geneva to the Department of External Affairs at Ottawa and passed at once to the Departments of National Defence concerned. Before any lists are published the next of kin of each prisoner of war and casualty will be notified by the appropriate Department of National Defence. Not until this notification has been made to the next of kin will any information be given to other persons or will lists be given to the press.

As stated several days ago, an attempt was made to arrange for the lists of prisoners taken at Hong Kong to be transmitted direct to Canada by the delegate of the International Red Cross Committee at Tokyo. It was then thought that the transmission might be made through the International Red Cross Delegate at Montreal. If this channel should be used, which, in view of more recent information, appears unlikely, the Delegate of the International Red Cross at Montreal, who is not authorised to give out any information, would relay the lists at once to Ottawa where the departments of National Defence concerned would check them with their lists of members of the Canadian Forces at Hong Kong, and send out notifications to the next of kin before releasing to the press.

In addition to the transmission of lists through Geneva it is expected that they may also be received from the Argentine Embassy at Tokyo, representing the Protecting Power for Canadian Interests in Japan. Should the lists be received first from the Argentine Embassy the procedure followed at Ottawa would be the same as stated above, the next of kin being first notified of any information received.