

Disease and Death

Besides food shortages, healthcare and sanitation continued to worsen during the Japanese Occupation. This caused the death rate to rise.

Between 1942 and 1945, 130,000 deaths were officially recorded. This was more than double the number between 1937 and 1940.

The primary causes of death were beriberi (a disease caused by the lack of vitamin B1), pneumonia (lung infection) and dysentery (intestinal inflammation)

The POWs and civilian prisoners in particular suffered **harsh living conditions**. They faced continual shortages of food and medicine, and acute overcrowding. **For instance**, while the Changi Prison was designed for 600 prisoners, it held up to 5000. Such living conditions led to poor hygiene and the spread of diseases.

The Japanese also used the POWs as **forced labour** to carry out activities such as clearing out war damage, burying the dead and building Japanese memorial shrines.

From May 1942, many POWs were sent to work on the Siam-Burma Railway, also known as the "Death Railway", where about 16000 died under horrific working conditions. The railway connected Burma (present-day Myanmar) and Siam (present-day Thailand)

Relocations

The Japanese government encouraged the locals to aim for self-sufficiency by growing their own food, such as vegetables, tapioca and sweet potatoes, to overcome the problem of food shortages

When this failed to ease the food shortage, the Japanese relocated people from Singapore to increase food production.

A Japanese government official, Mamoru Shinozaki, was tasked to oversee the resettlement projects to rural areas outside of Singapore.

The Chinese were encouraged to move to the **Endau settlement** in Johor.

The soil there was **rich** and the water supply was **ample**, making it suitable for agriculture. The settlement was proclaimed a great success as it was self-sufficient. In addition, the settlement had **various amenities** such as street lights, a hospital, a small chapel, a bank and several coffee shops.

However, it was often attacked by bandits and anti-Japanese guerrillas who tried to disrupt the peace.

A few months after setting up Endau, the Japanese created the Bahau settlement in Negeri Sembilan, another state in Malaya for Eurasians and Chinese Roman Catholics. However, the land was too hilly and the soil was too poor to support agriculture. Some people even resorted to eating rats and maggots, and many of them perished.

Leisure and Entertainment

To maintain the appearance of a harmonious and happy society, the Japanese authorities allowed some leisure activities and entertainment to continue.

They introduced radio programmes consisting of Japanese songs, Malay music, and news in Hokkien and Cantonese; Japanese movies and documentaries at cinemas; and free open-air screenings of propaganda shows

In addition, the Japanese officials encouraged sports and cultural activities to reduce the stress of wartime conditions on the local population. Notices of football, baseball, tennis and badminton matches appeared almost every day in the media. Boxing matches took place at Kim Seng Road, and the police band even performed at the Botanic Gardens.

Having to endure miserable living conditions, the POWs also tried to keep their spirits up by organising and participating in social, religious and sporting activities. These examples included publishing a newspaper, organising theatrical performances and church services, and painting murals at Changi Chapel.

How did the locals respond to the Japanese Rule?

There were varying responses to Japanese rule. The majority tried to avoid being noticed by the Japanese and simply get by from day to day. Some collaborated with the Japanese willingly while others were threatened or forced by circumstances to do so. Another group chose to actively resist.

Collaboration

The Japanese actively sought the support of the Malays in administering Japanese rule. Some of the duties given out to the Malays included policing and being part of neighbourhood associations that would report on suspected hostile activity against the regime.

Other groups were also enlisted to assist the Japanese in establishing their authority. They included some Chinese who became informants for the Kempeitai during Operation Sook Ching, helping to identify anti-Japanese suspects.

Resistance

However, not everyone was willing to cooperate or accept Japanese rule. For example, seven senior officers of the Malay Regiment refused to pledge loyalty to and fight for Japan. They were subsequently executed.

Others responded to the ill-treatment of the locals by taking up arms and joining resistance forces. Two prominent groups were the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and Force 136. Both groups had the common goal of driving the Japanese out of Singapore and worked with the British to do so. Members of the MPAJA would carry out sabotage attacks on the Japanese officers and their men whenever they had the chance. As part of the resistance, they also stirred up anti-Japanese sentiments among the locals by distributing anti-Japanese newspapers and posters.

Force 136, a secret organisation set up by the British, would gather information about the Japanese and also organise sabotage activities.

One notable figure in the resistance was Lim Bo Seng, a local businessman. When the war between Japan and China broke out in the 1930s he organised anti-Japanese activities such as boycott of Japanese goods. After the fall of Singapore, he was recruited as an agent of Force 136 and also linked up with local resistance organisations such as the Malayan Communist Party to fight against the Japanese through guerrilla tactics. Unfortunately, in March 1944, he was captured and tortured for information by the Japanese. Despite this, he did not reveal any information to his captors. Lim eventually died in prison on 29 June 1944.

Another prominent figure was Elizabeth Choy. During the Japanese Occupation, Choy worked as a canteen operator with her husband at the Mental Hospital (present-day Institute of Mental Health) They secretly delivered food, money, medicine and messages to the British POWs. As a result, she was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese at the Kempeitai headquarters on Stamford Road for close to 200 days.. After the war, she did not name her torturers, saying that they had acted that way because of war circumstances. In recognition of her courage, Choy was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and the Order of the Star of Sarawak.

What Problems did the people face immediately after the Japanese surrender?

Date	Name of atomic bomb	Location in Japan
6 August 1945	Little Boy	Hiroshima
9 August 1945	Fat Man	Nagasaki

The Japanese surrendered after two atomic bombs were dropped in Japan by America.
The bombs caused massive damage to both of the cities
The estimated death toll was 214 000

On 15 August 1945, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender to the Allies.
On 2 September 1945, the formal surrender of Japan took place on board an American battleship, the USS Missouri, in Tokyo Bay.

Upon their surrender, the Japanese were stripped of their swords and ranks. As they approached City Hall, huge cheers jeered loudly at them. The returning British, on the other hand, were welcomed with cheers.

With the end of the war, the MPAJA took revenge on those who had actively collaborated with the Japanese. These included the Chinese who served as informants and assisted in Operation Sook Ching and the Malays who served as police for the Japanese. They were rounded up and shot.

The British Military Administration (BMA) was established and took over the administration of Singapore and Malaya from 5 September 1945 to 31 March 1946. The BMA was made up of professional soldiers and former European civil servants who had joined the army during the war. It aimed to maintain law and order and help with reconstruction in the immediate post-war years. However, it faced a host of problems as Singapore was in disarray. For instance, food and water were short in supply and the railway system did not work properly.