

Here they took our particulars, name and number, place of birth, and address of next of kin. One was not allowed to give the name of your Unit. I had given my birthplace as Basutoland.

We were fairly well fed and one thing there seemed to be any amount of was grapes and a fair number of Seville oranges, which have a red colouring in the fruit.

After six days I was summoned to the Commandant's Office and told that I was to be taken to Rome. "What for?" I asked but just shrugged his shoulders. He said his instructions were that I was to be sent to the Cavalry barracks in Rome and further than that he knew no more.

Later, three Italian officers and two other ranks called for me and I was taken to the railway station in a vehicle drawn by two horses. On arrival at the station I was shown into a compartment which was to be occupied by myself and the three officers. My kit, the old overcoat took up no room. Like many of the men in the Bari Camp I was suffering from athlete's foot contracted I should think from some infected person in the shower room. It makes one's feet itch terribly and walking not very pleasant. The three officers, well armed with handy revolvers, sat and watched me. I could not have even attempted to escape if I did get the chance as I had stated my feet were in a bad state.

It was a long tiring night journey during which I tried to sleep but not too well. The Italians took it in turns sleeping.

We, eventually, arrived in Rome and I was escorted to the Cavalry barracks. I was shown into a very nice room with table, chairs and a nice bed.

Later, a waiter turned up and served me with a very fine meal from the Officer's Mess. Well, I thought if this is the sort of treatment and food I was to receive I would very soon get fit. There was a bit of a garden where I could sit and read a rubbishy book they gave me.

Had I been fit I could not have got far as there were far too many guards about.

Every day several horses were taken out and I was told that old Mussolini went riding every morning. I felt after a day or so that these Ites were working up for something, especially as I had noticed written on the wall the following: "I Bulla Singh had the honour of occupying this room from the 2nd to the 21st May 1942. I came here not knowing what "That was all, and why he had not finished, I don't know. It then dawned on me that this was an Interrogation centre, hence the treatment, hoping that they would get some information out of me. They were apparently working on non-Europeans, I guessed, hence the Indian who was here. I thought to myself that when their interrogators came along they were in for a surprise and disappointment. A few days later two civilians came to see me and the first thing they said after wishing me the time of the day was "We have just come from seeing General Klopper" about which I showed not the slightest interest but at once said: "What about giving me some reading matter and a Red Cross parcel."

To this request they said they would attend but why did I want a Red Cross parcel. "Well, I am fairly comfortable and have food from the officers mess but there are items in the parcels that I should like: Cigarettes, English Chocolates, sweets etc". They both spoke English with a foreign accent. I thought it was time I damped their hopes, so said "I should like to point out to you that I am aware that this is an interrogation centre. "They both shook their heads. I then continued: "Of course it is: because of the information given by me that I was born in Basutoland you thought I was a native". "You are mistaken" the one said and so I continued "You have brought others here including an Indian" as I pointed to the writing on the wall "Bulla Singh is an Indian name". They then began talking to each other in Italian.

I said I thought /