



* FOUR young soldiers who were discharged this week after being found guilty of assault claim they were tortured in their early months of training. From left: REDACTED 17; REDACTED 18; REDACTED 17; REDACTED 17.

SACKED SOLDIERS: WE WERE TORTURED

By JACK AYLING
FOUR young soldiers who have been kicked out of the army after being convicted of assault at Balcombe camp say they were victims of brutalisation in their first months of service.

NIGHT OF VIOLENCE AT CAMP

The soldiers were discharged in a bush-bush move this week. They were told they were unsuitable for further training. The soldiers told Truth exclusively that although brutalisation and mistreatment are forbidden at Balcombe they were jumped on, kicked and punished and sent on fruitless errands in their first six months at the camp.

SIGNED

- They described this as physical and mental torture. The youths who got their marching orders while being held in detention at military police headquarters, 51 Kilda Road, Melbourne, are:
 - REDACTED 17, apprentice radio mechanic, of Coleraine, Victoria.
 - REDACTED 17, apprentice radio mechanic, of Angaston, South Australia.
 - REDACTED 17, apprentice electrician, of Murwillumbah, northern NSW.
 - REDACTED 18, apprentice radio mechanic, of Batemans Bay, NSW.
- They had signed up in the army for nine years. They had been at the army apprentice school, Balcombe, 35 miles from Melbourne on the Mornington Peninsula, has about 510

HIT HIM

...a mate who was being discharged the next day. REDACTED said "We had a fair few drinks — it is a wet canvas. I went back to my room. One of the blokes I was feeling pretty upset, and frustrated about this bloke being kicked out. One of the worse blokes in my hut — there were about 17 of us altogether — had tucked up on me at lunch time.

"So I thought '... you' and I went into his room and flew at him. I told him off first and then I hit him on the right side of the jaw with my closed fist.

"I later went back and apologised because I knew I had done the wrong thing." REDACTED said he went into the room of another trainee whom he believed "had dibbed another bloke on."

REDACTED told Truth "I told this bloke what I thought of him. I lost my temper and hit him in the ribs."

REDACTED continued: "REDACTED and I decided to go and get another bloke." REDACTED took up the story: "He was in bed and I woke him up. I could see him although I did not switch the light on.

"He sat up in bed and I told him what I thought of him and I hit him on the side of the face with my closed fist."

DECIDED

REDACTED and REDACTED said they then went into about five other rooms. "We hit about nine of them. We woke them all up."

REDACTED said he then went to bed but REDACTED told Truth he confessed to a sergeant that he had been giving a few of the boys a hard time.

REDACTED was in the sergeant's room. "The sergeant said: 'I wish you'd give a couple of my boys a hard time,'" REDACTED went on.

"He mentioned a bloke's name, so RED and I decided to have a talk to him.

"We went down and woke him up. "We both hit him a couple of times, but I don't know where. It was in the darkness."

The four youths said that next day the company com-

YOU'RE OUT! ARMY AXES 4 SOLDIERS

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commander called 120 trainees from C company to the lecture room.

REDACTED said: "The OC told us that REDACTED had a broken nose and had nearly drowned in his own blood. "I thought I would be charged with manslaughter if REDACTED died and I was so upset I went to the platoon commander and dobed myself in."

"He took me to school headquarters, I made a statement, signed it and was put in a cell in protective custody."

Later all four were taken before a high-ranking officer.

REDACTED went on: "I was on nine charges of striking. REDACTED was on six, RED on one and REDACTED on one."

ALL OUT

"Two days later, we appeared before the commanding officer.

"Six charges were dropped against me and the others were all on one charge. "The CO said we could have a court martial or take his sentence."

"We took his sentence." Later they were taken to the military police headquarters in St. Kilda Road, where they were held for several days.

Then last Thursday, March 22, a Balcombe officer told them they had been discharged.