

D. COOLIES ON THE RAILWAY

a) Prosecution Document numbered 5128, the Affidavit of Major R. CRAWFORD, is now offered for identification, the marked excerpts thereof being produced in evidence. This document states that in June 1943, the witness was appointed Officer commanding "K" Force, a Unit of 230 P/W medical personnel designed to give medical assistance to coolies and P/W employed on the construction of the Burma/Siam Railway.

The witness states that the journey to the working sites involved for many gangs of coolies, marches of indescribable hardship. Conditions in coolie working and hospital camps were disgraceful and a grave danger to the lives of those living therein.

The witness further states that:-

"In these camps, at some periods, there were no or quite inadequate sanitary arrangements, the entire camp area being, consequently, heavily contaminated with feces. In practically no camp was a satisfactory water supply provided, the general source being raw river water even with cholera prevalent. Sleeping accommodation was in many cases quite inadequate or of the most primitive kind. Tents were generally and huts frequently not weather proof; coolies often had to sleep on the ground. Blankets were not provided, an occasional sack being issued as a substitute, and the clothing issue for coolies was at most a flimsy sarong. The food supplied to labourers was frequently 'poor' or 'bad' and quite below the level necessary for the maintenance of good health in individuals doing heavy manual labour.

"The unsatisfactory conditions here described were conducive to widespread disease of many kinds, the principal of which were dysentery, cholera, pneumonia, ulcers and deficiency diseases. Conditions hereinbefore described apply not only to male coolies but



"but also to women and children who were brought by the Japanese to work on the railway.

"Arising from these gravely unsatisfactory living, feeding and working conditions sickness among labourers was over considerable periods enormous, and the indifference of the Japanese, their failure to take steps to combat sickness, their failure to supply suitable and adequate medical supplies constitute criminal neglect. The Japanese were in the vast majority of cases entirely insensible to sickness and hardships suffered by the labourers and their attitude indicated only a determination to complete the railway at all costs with complete indifference to the number of deaths that might and were caused thereby.

"Any efforts that "K" Medical Force might have made to help the labourers were virtually nullified in advance by the conditions under which they had to work and for which the Japanese medical administration at all levels is directly responsible.

- "(a) The Medical Officer and his staff worked under the orders of an ignorant and ill-trained Japanese medical NCO or private.
- (b) The Medical staff of "K" Force were, at the whim of the Japanese medical orderly so restricted in their access to sick coolies that co-ordinated policy and continuous treatment were impossible. The medical force (including Medical Officers) was largely employed on manual labour, and Medical Officers were generally submitted to degrading and insulting treatment such as the performance of manual labour, working in Japanese kitchens and as servants to Japanese.



"(c) There was extreme inadequacy of medical equipment and supplies....."

Examples of the incredible conditions in individual camps are given indicating the similarity in the neglect of the basic humanities and in the evil treatment accorded to the men in all the camps mentioned.

b) Prosecution document numbered 5136, the Affidavit of Captain F. H. WALLACE I.M.S. is offered for identification, the marked excerpts thereof being produced in evidence. This Affidavit confirms the conditions of coolie camps and the treatment of coolies set out in the preceding document No. 5128. The present witness states that when coolies suffering from cholera at Kinsayok were thought by the Japanese medical N.C.O. to be too ill to recover, they were pushed into a small lean-to shelter of attap and left to die. They were given no food or water.

Coolies who were suffering seriously from cholera were often forced into common pit graves and buried alive. Protest from the coolies meant they were beaten down by Japanese orderlies.

In July, 1943, while giving anti-cholera inoculations to coolies, the witness saw them beaten and humiliated. Women were insulted, disinfectant was deliberately sprayed into the eyes of some coolies and the Japanese doctor himself beat them as they were being examined. The doctor explained to the witness that Coolies were sub-human and not worthy of consideration.

c) Prosecution document numbered 5256, being the Affidavit of R. E. PETERSON, is tendered for identification and the marked excerpts therein offered in evidence. The document states that:



"In February 1944, I was in a coolie camp known as CHAYMONGA. On the 14th February 1944, I contacted a Japanese known to me as Arai (Storm Trooper) Hayashi Karneatsu. We were in a coolie camp which was also a hospital.

"Karneatsu proceeded to a coolie camp to interview coolies in the hospital. He had a hypodermic syringe filled with a red unknown fluid. He ordered the coolies down from their beds and asked them if there were any who could not walk, he told them they were going to be moved to a base hospital and those who could not walk would be carried.

"Several staggered forward and were given an injection of the fluid in the big vein in the elbow. All who were inoculated died within a few minutes. When the remainder saw what was happening they said they could walk. When he had finished he proceeded to the dysentery hut.

"He looked through this hut and walked away. Later he returned with a large tin of brown sugar in which was mixed a deadly poison. He gave the coolies this to eat, telling them it was good for them.

"All who ate this poison died during the day..."

d) Prosecution document numbered 5370, the solemn affirmation of THAKIN SA, is now offered for identification and the excerpts marked therein, offered in evidence. The document states that in order to enable the Japanese authorities in Burma to obtain sufficient labour for the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway, they recruited coolies.

When the promises made by the Japanese to the labourers failed to materialize, they press-ganged every available person into the Labour Force, since willing recruits were no longer to be found.



The witness was appointed a Superintendent of Labour at Thanbyuzayat in December, 1942, to look after the interests of the coolies as far as possible. He found that men were only released from the Force when they were used up physically and no longer employable.

".....Living accommodation provided for labourers at the camps was insufficient and insanitary. The area where the work had to be done was very damp and labourers had to live in barracks which could not keep out the wet. Barracks intended for 150 persons had to house as many as 300. Clothing shortage was acute; when the clothes which the labourers brought from home began to fall into rags, gunny bags were supplied to them to do duty both as wearing apparel and as blankets. No change of clothing was available to most of the labourers and none was provided by the Army. The result was that the clothing of almost all labourers was crawling with vermin and most of them were suffering from a virulent type of skin disease. Food supply was not sufficient; and the rice supplied was weevilly.

"Water supply in this area was a carrier of malaria; but steps were not taken to sterilise the water supply, except for a pretence at boiling the water for potable purposes. Medical supply consisted only of quinine and even this was not in sufficient quantities. Cholera broke out soon in the camps and the Japanese sought to combat the spread of this epidemic by cremating the dead and very often persons whom they considered incurable. There were many authentic cases of live cremations.

"Labourers were treated as slaves; whips and sticks were freely used on the labourers; and sickness ordinarily was no excuse.

"There was a total lack of system in allotment of labourers to the various camps. As the labourers



"arrived at Thanbyuzayat, they were either driven up in lorries or taken marching through the camp. Officers in charge of the camps would pick out persons they wanted; families became separated, the husband being retained in one camp and the wife sent to another camp, the parents going to one camp and the children to other camps.....This lack of system and the haphazard manner in which the labourers were taken into different camps made it impossible to trace the labourers later. Many cases had been known of families then separated never coming together again....."

In March, 1943, the Moulmein Civil Administration was ordered to supply 7,000 labourers within 5 days. Intensive press gang methods followed this order. Between April and July 1943, about 30,000 labourers were sent from Rangoon to Thanbyuzayat to join "The Sweat Army".

The Japanese prevented the Burmese Labour officers from taking any active steps to help the coolies and were not even allowed to maintain independent records.

e) Prosecution document numbered 5371, the statement of MAUNG AYE KO is tendered for identification and the excerpts therein offered in evidence. This document confirms the evidence of the last witness in Prosecution document No. 5370. The present witness became a Labour Officer in 1943. He found the ill-clad labourers, fevered and hungry, living in disgusting conditions. A large number of men were malarial; many suffered from jungle sores exposing the bones and the vermin infesting them. Deaths at Kyontaw Camp averaged about ten a day.

Cholera was rife at Kyonkaya. The dead and dying were piled together and, soaked in petrol, burned. Men were beaten savagely and on one occasion the witness found the decomposing bodies of two men who had been left to rot as a warning to P/W and labourers.



In or about October, 1943, six P/W escaped from Kilo 126 Camp. On recapture they were beheaded.

The witness states that he saw so many floggings, beatings and deaths, that it finally left no impression on him.