

White Prisoners Worked to Death On Enemy Railway

London, Dec. 19.—(CP)—The War Office asserted to-day that the Japanese had worked more than 60,000 white captives under such brutal and inhuman conditions that 24,000 of them had died.

The Japanese themselves have erected a memorial to 25,000 men who died in building the Thailand-Burma railway and road, the War Office said. Of the 25,000 men, the War Office reported, fewer than 1,000 were Japanese and the remainder were English, Australians and Dutch.

In an urge for speed, the Japanese disregarded completely "the cost in human life," the War Office said. Sick prisoners were even carried to work on stretchers. Severe beatings were administered to officers and men, the statement said, and there were also cases "of torture and killing."

The statement supplemented an oral report to Commons by Sir James Grigg, War Secretary, who said the Japanese used at least 60,000 white prisoners "regardless of conditions under which the prisoners worked and of the cost in human life."

Offer Protest

"The figure is probably much higher," he added.

Sir James reported conditions improved "somewhat" after completion of the railroad in October, 1943, but he said "I should make it clear to the House these conditions are far below anything which would be regarded as reasonable for our prisoners of war in Europe."

Sir James said the report was confirmed by British troops formerly in Japanese hands who were rescued by the United States Navy from the sea in September after a prison ship was torpedoed.

He told the House of Commons that the protecting power has been asked to make the "strongest possible protest regarding past conditions in Siam and Burma" and said Britain would continue to press the Japanese to allow all prison camps to be inspected regularly by neutral observers and to make arrangements for Red Cross relief supplies.

Drink From Puddles

All the prisoners travelled from Singapore to Thailand in metal cattle trucks so crowded that the men could not lie down for five days and nights, and were forced to sleep leaning against piles of equipment or against one another, the War Office said.

They were forced to march 50 miles through disease-ridden jungles, so thirsty they drank from muddy puddles, the statement said, and so exhausted they fell to the water-logged ground at the end of each march, wrapping their heads in anything they could find as protection against the mosquitoes.

The War Office said the prisoners' rations sometimes included meat, but "the quantities can be judged from the fact that one pig was supposed to provide for 1,200 men."

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