

REGINA SOLDIER SUFFERS TORTURE BEFORE SENTENCE

Manila, Sept. 10.—(CP Cable)—Sgt. R. J. Routledge, of Regina, who was among the Canadians taken prisoner at Hong Kong on Christmas day, 1941, was submitted to torture by Japanese gendarmerie before he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment by a court-martial. He had served two years of his sentence before being liberated.

Although Sgt. Routledge, a signaller, was wounded by bomb shrapnel in the battle of Hong Kong, he is physically intact and looks fine. He now is in an American military hospital here. He credits his condition to the fact that his long prison term was spent in Stanley prison at Hong Kong, and in the Canton jail.

He was transferred from the jail at Canton to Samshuipo about two weeks ago. He said he had received only two Red Cross parcels while in Japanese hands. No mail reached him since December, 1941.

The 25-year-old sergeant was arrested on Dominion day, 1943, some months after he was released from hospital where he had been treated for dysentery and malaria. He had spent time in the hospital previously while leg and arm shrapnel wounds were healing.

Questions Ignored

At the present it is not possible to explain the circumstances under which Sgt. Routledge was summoned from a Dominion day sports meet at Samshuipo and was turned over to the infamous gendarmerie and their Gestapo-like methods, but the full story will be told as soon as possible.

The Regina sergeant was taken to the gendarmes, who have earned the hate and contempt of every prisoner, and was handcuffed, tied and subjected to the water torture because he refused to answer their questions.

This Japanese method of extracting information consisted of putting the bound victim on his back, placing a towel across his face and pouring water on it from a bucket.

Inquisition Repeated

Sgt. Routledge said the Japanese kept putting water on the towel and he was swallowing it against his will until he was on the verge of fainting. Then they'd revive him, ask him if he wanted to change his mind about talking, and repeat the performance.

Four or five Chinese collaborators helped the gendarmes in the third degree questioning and water treatment which lasted about 1½ hours.

When Sgt. Routledge still refused to talk, a board was placed on his stomach and one of the gendarmes jumped up and down on it until Routledge said he felt "everything was going to pop." Between periods of questioning, the gendarmes kept this up until Routledge was on the point of collapse.

Finally the Canadian soldier gave the Japanese information they already knew and in the company of two British prisoners, who also had been tortured and beaten, he was taken to Hong Kong by ferry and locked up in Stanley prison near the civilian internment camp. He was imprisoned with Chinese convicts at first and with Japanese prisoners later.

Taps Out Message

While in a prison cell that adjoined one of his British companions and faced that of the other, Sgt. Routledge communicated with the two Britons by tapping out Morse signals on the cell walls and signalling Morse by flapping the patch of the little opening through which food was passed.

They were led into the court at 1 p.m. and the procedure was translated for them by an interpreter. They were accused of betraying the Japanese and the death penalty was demanded by the prosecutor.

Sentenced to Death

After court adjourned because of an air raid, the prisoners were taken back to the court room and following a lengthy speech by the court president, four officers were sentenced to death while Routledge and a British non-commissioned officer were given 15-year sentences.

They were returned to Stanley prison and made to dress in convicts' clothing and worked in the gardens. Sgt. Routledge was in this prison until June 23 this year when he was taken to Canton and placed in the same prison as Cmdr. Douglas Craven, British navy officer who was imprisoned for possessing a wireless set.

In mid-August, American aircraft flying over Canton dropped instructions to the Japanese to release prisoners and Routledge was taken to the hospital at Kowloon, a couple of miles from Samshuipo. He was released the day after his arrival in the Canadian anti-aircraft cruiser Prince Robert, which was based at Kowloon.

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