WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

Extract from a film called Burma Death Railway

ITN Ref: BP010145207222
Courtesy of ITN/Source, London.

This film does not contain audio

What is this source?

This film was made after the Japanese surrender in Burma.

As far as we know this was never actually used in any broadcasts. This was probably because other footage was available and was used instead.

What's the background to this source?

WW2 broke out in Europe in 1939. In the Far East war broke out on December 7th 1941 when Japanese forces destroyed the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The Japanese quickly followed up this victory with attacks on British held possessions in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. When Singapore fell the Japanese were holding around 110 000 Allied prisoners. Some of these prisoners were held in Singapore. Thousands more were shipped out to Burma to work on a railway for the Japanese forces, as well as other projects.

The death rates in Japanese prison camps were extremely high. Estimates vary from around 30% to 37%. The main causes of death were disease, inadequate food and brutal treatment by Japanese captors.

It's worth knowing that...

The total death toll on the Burma Railway was horrendous. Around 12 600 Allied prisoners of war died building the railway alone. Around 85 400 civilian slave workers from Malaya, Singapore, Java and Burma also died.

The Japanese government has been pressured by veterans to openly admit and apologise for the horrors of the Burma Railway and other projects. Japan believes it has done so but most British veterans do not believe that Japan has properly acknowledged what happened.

How will you use this source?

1. Does the clip give any clues about conditions for allied prisoners of war forced to build the Burma Railway?
2. Does this clip help you to understand why the troops who fought in the Far East feel they were forgotten?
3. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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