

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

785017

ACC

10000/109/1473

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

785017

10000/109/1473

TRAIN DISASTER
MAR., APR. 1944

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED COMING COMMISSION
R.C. & M.C. SECTION
APO 394

Ref/177/21/CA

16 April 1944

SUBJECT: Railway Disaster at Balvano.

TO : R.C. Region II.

Ref. your A/48/5 of 19 March 1944 copy of letter received from Military Railway Service, dated 2 April 1944 in reply to our 177/16/CA of 27 March 1944 is forwarded for your information.

NORMAN E. FISKE
Colonel
Deputy Executive
Commissioner

6448

2/A

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
R.C. & M.G. Section
APO 394

SECRET

20

Ref/177/20/OA.

9 April 1944.

SUBJECT: Report on Railroad accident - BALVANO.

TO : Military Government Section, A.P.H.Q.

1. Copy of the report of the Board on the Railroad accident, together with a covering letter from the Director-General, Military Railway Services, is forwarded as requested.
2. You will see that this has already been sent to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater.

For the CHIEF COMMISSIONER.

ll
NORMAN E. FISKE,
Colonel,
Deputy Executive
Commissioner.

6447

Incl.
As above.

see 17

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
R.C. & M.G. SECTION
APO 394

NEF/NRD
14 March 1944

TO: Brigadier Lush

The gist of the report is that death was due to "insufficiency of oxygen"; that about one hour elapsed between the onset of asphyxiation and death; that it is not possible as yet to determine what gas was responsible for the asphyxiation but chemical tests are in progress and later report will be made. Do you wish this translated?

NORMAN E. FISKE
Colonel, Cavalry

U. S. SECRET
EQUALLY BR LIES SECRET

SECRET

Auth: CG, Hq Mil Serv
Date: 2 April 1944
Initials: *CA Bv 19*

Allied Force
MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE
Office of Director General

S-1250



A. P. O. 400
2 April 1944

Subject: Railway Disaster at Balvano.

To: Executive Commissioner, Allied Control Commission
R.C. & M.G. Section, A.P.O. 394, U.S. Army

1. Acknowledgment is made of your favor of 27 March 1944, on the subject of railway disaster at Balvano which has been delayed in answering by my being absent from Headquarters.

2. As indicated in the official report and in special reports, there have been previous and subsequent instances of difficulties from gasses in the tunnels on this railroad which is one of the most heavily tunneled as well as one of the most steep graded pieces of railroad I have ever seen. As indicated in my forwarding letter with the Board's official report, this particular disaster was occasioned by a combination of natural factors. This railroad should long ago have been electrified by the Italian Government because of the presence of so many tunnels, but it is believed that the reason it was not electrified as other portions of the railroad was because not until military traffic started to move over it was there any great amount of train service regularly run.

3. In America and elsewhere difficulty has been experienced in using coal burning locomotives in mountainous territory where long tunnels are prevalent. There is no opportunity, justification or time to electrify this line. Every reasonable precaution such as the operation of Diesel locomotives to as large an extent as possible supplemented by oil burning American locomotives have been placed in service and it is believed that that precaution together with very close supervision does not continue a hazard there any greater than is the hazard of handling the vast amount of gasoline, ammunition and high explosives which are handled on every freight train and which pass and are passed by passenger trains constantly.

Carl R. Gray, Jr.
CARL R. GRAY, JR.
Brigadier General, USA
Director General

U. S. SECRET
EQUALLY BR LIES SECRET

*Send copy to RC
Regt 1st 14.*

9/4

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785017

RESTRICTED
ACTION COPY

ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
INCOMING MESSAGE

MSG CENTER NO : **M 28/3**

CLASSIFICATION: **RESTRICTED**

PRECEDENCE : **ROUTINE**

FROM : **FREEDOM SIGNED CINC**

TO : **FATIMA**

DATE/TIME REC'D: **APR 03/1321**

DATE/TIME SENT : **APR 03/1050**

REFERENCE NR : **F 26811**

CITE : **FHMG5**

3
CAN FINDINGS OF OFFICIAL ENQUIRY AND RECOMMENDATIONS NOW BE GIVEN. REFERENCE
IS TO OUR 61698 OF 8 MARCH

Major D.W.
L.H.



see 20.

ACC DIST

6445

ACTION COPY
RESTRICTED

ACTION CA ER (2)
INFO DEP CC
FILE
FLOAT

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
R.C. & M.G. Section
APO 394

file
16

Ref/277/ /CA.

27 March 1944.

SUBJECT: Railway Disaster at BALVANO.

TO : Director-General, Allied Military Railway Services.

1. With regard to the recent disaster in the tunnel at BALVANO, it has been drawn to the attention of this H.Q. by the Regional Commissioner, Region II, that there have been other incidents, some of them fatal, of the same nature over the previous few months.
2. For instance, on March 6th a train stalled in a tunnel close to the Railway Station of CAMPOLONGONE, Potenza Province. The train was reversed and backed from the tunnel but the fireman and engineer of the locomotive collapsed from the effect of the fumes and the fireman later died.
3. On March 7th a troop train proceeding from BALESTRO to POTENZA passed through these tunnels without stopping but at a low rate of speed. Three soldiers collapsed from the effects of the gas fumes but were revived.
4. It is also reported that there have been other cases of members of train crews having died during the past few months from the effect of fumes.
5. If these reports are correct it would appear that the BALVANO disaster was not an isolated incident. No doubt this matter is being considered by you from the point of view of danger to military passengers, and it would be much appreciated if an expression of your views on the likelihood of a recurrence of such an incident might be given.

M. S. LUSH,
Brigadier,
Executive Commissioner.

64-44

Copy to: R.C. Region II.

B/4
3/4
Noted
II

Dep. Ex Comm: Ref. attached report
of tunnel accident in Potenza, I think E.C.
should see this.

2. I also think in view of paras 3 to 5
that this should be drawn to the attention of the Unit.
Rly Services Director. If you agree I will draft.

U 25/3.

I agree - Please draft and return
with file. Thanks for E.C. J 25/3

785017

AN "ACT OF GOD"

Natural causes rather than the negligence of man or machine failure caused the railway tunnel catastrophe in which 426 persons died at one a.m., on March 2, in southern Italy. It is officially announced in a report issued by the Director-General of Allied Force Military Railway Services.

Among the causes were the murky atmospheric conditions, lack of any wind velocity preventing complete natural ventilation of the tunnel, wet rails, etc., which ordinarily occur singly, but which in this instance occurred simultaneously, or in rapid succession.

The train stopped because of slippery rails and the engine crew were overcome by gas poisoning before they could move the train out of the tunnel, and

the unauthorized passengers were asphyxiated before they realized it.

"There is every justification for saying that this accident should be properly classified in legal phraseology as an act of God rather than negligence of man or machine failure," the report concludes.

785017

23 MAR 1944

CAB

505

V201017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
REGION II

Ref. A / 48/5

19 Mar 44

Subj. Railroad Accidents.

To: Executive Commissioner, R.C. and M.G. Section,
ACC Headquarters, Naples.

1. Supplementing my verbal report to you on 6 Mar concerning the railroad disaster at Balvano, Potenza Province, on the morning of March 3rd, I am pleased to report that with typical Italian inaccuracy, instead of 503 dead, it was found that only 436 bodies were buried. I am attaching a copy of the interim post mortem report by the civilian authorities. It will be noted that the final report will not be ready for two months.

2. I also wish to call attention to the fact that on Mar 6 another train stalled in a tunnel close to the railroad station of Campomaggiore, Potenza Province. The train was reversed and backed from the tunnel, but the fireman and engineer on one locomotive collapsed from the effect of the fumes and the fireman later died.

3. On March 7, a troop train proceeding from Salerno to Potenza passed through these tunnels without stopping, but at a low rate of speed. Three soldiers collapsed from the effect of the gas fumes, but were revived.

4. The Provincial Police Officer of Potenza states that he has been informed that 8 or 10 train crew members have died during the past few months from similar gas poisoning.

5. In view of the fact that the Balvano disaster was not an isolated incident, it is respectfully requested that serious consideration be given to the possibility of a trainload of troops being caught in one of these tunnels and serious casualties resulting from the combination of narrow, unventilated tunnels, inadequate motor-power and noxious fumes in the coal.

GHM/pjh

See 21
G. H. McCaffrey
G.H. McCaffrey
Lt. Col., Inf.
R.C.

3
REPORT ON DESCRIPTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF CORPSE AND AUTOPSY

On the 5th of March of 1944, at 100hrs, at Balvano, in the local camerety, we, "Cav. Uff." (titles) Dr. Oronzo Citti, "Procuratore del Re" at Potenza, attended by the Undersigned First Secretary;

Since, in the railway accident occurred on the night between the 2nd and the 3rd of this month, in a tunnel near the Balvano Station, in which a great number of people died for asphyxia, it was necessary to make an autopsy on some of the corpses (which lay on the ground of the local cemetery) in order to ascertain all the circumstances causing the death, namely the kind of gas, which caused said asphyxia.

With the presence of the following experts:

1. Dr. Mazzarone Rocco, son of Giuseppe, aged 31, Surgeon from Tricarico, living at Potenza;

2. Dr. Marini Egidio, son of Luigi, aged 42, from Pola, living at Potenza, Professor of chemistry, Director of the Hygiene and Prophylaxis Institute; the operations were executed for the said purpose.

First of all, we notice that in the cemetery and also on the surrounding ground, are laying, various groups of bodies of the victims, that substantially, after microscopical examination, show uniform particulars, which without doubt were caused of asphyxia death.

We also notice, after a brief examination on all the corpses in general, that rigor mortis has almost disappeared; and this symptom

Shows that death had occurred during the night between the 2nd and the 3rd, date of the catastrophe.

We also notice on all the corpses in general, traces of.....
.....and blood coloured faces.

Then, we have one of the corpses brought to the morgue room of the cemetery; it had already been identified by the judicial police, as a certain di Bartolomeo Domenico, son of Antonio and of De Vita Maria Giuseppe 27 years old, from Resina. 6-41

After that, we had the said corpse undressed; his clothes were common working clothes, and khaki overcoat; namely a Military khaki overcoat, grey jacket, black trousers, grey-green sweater, shirt, white shorts, military boots, grey socks.

Then, attended by the said experts, we proceed to external inspection of the corpse, and have noticed the following:

1. Dr. Mazzarone Kocco, son of Giuseppe, aged 31, Surgeon from Tricarico, living at Potenza;
2. Dr. Marini Egidio, son of Luigi, aged 42, from Pola, living at Potenza, Professor of chemistry, Director of the Hygiene and Prophylaxis Institute; the operations were executed for the said purpose.

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After that, we had the said corpse undressed; his clothes were common working clothes, and khaki overcoat; namely a Military khaki overcoat, grey jacket, black trousers, grey-green sweater, shirt, white shorts, military boots, grey socks.

Then, attended by the said experts, we proceed to external inspection of the corpse, and have noticed the following:

Male's Corpse about 1,65 meters long, normal skeleton, normal status of nourishment. No external trace of injuries or diseases. No rigor mortis. Red and shining blood comes out from the nose, which is a bit widened. Closed eyes. Half open mouth. Pale coloured face. Every part of the body can be easily moved, on account of the lack of rigor mortis.....spots, not very strong, on the lower regions and also in other. After this, the experts have started the following operations:

. / .

COPY

AUTOPSY

First of all, chest and stomach are opened.

Chest: the organs have normal shape, size and location. At the opening of the pericardio they find a small quantity of yellow liquid. The heart has normal weight, the shape is spherical (both the diameter across and the longitudinal one are roughly the same: auricle and especially right ventricle have greater size than normal), and it is flaccid - at the opening of the two holes, there is a small quantity of fluid blood of a shining red. This blood was kept in two test-tubes as a sample.

The valves are in good condition. Nothing is remarkable in the great vein, pulmonary artery and coronary arteries.

Lungs: fibrous adhesions of the right diaphragmatic pleura; external colour: pinkish; pressing the bronca, a pinkish liquid comes out together with a little air, and, cutting, they notice on the surface a dark colour, and, pressing, also from there a pinkish liquid comes out together with air. The pulmonary parenchyma has lost its elasticity. They take for test some fragments of pulmonary tissue. The respiratory mucosa is in the first channels, pinkish.

Abdominal cavity: All the viscera have normal shape, size and location. Liver, spleen: Kidneys and intestines are congested. Nothing else to notice. They take fragments of liver, spleen and kidneys for test. They don't think necessary to open the cranium.

CONCLUSION

As we said before, it can be stated that death has been caused by asphyxia, that said asphyxia has developed in an acute form, and therefore, has had the regular results of an acute asphyxia. Probably, between the asphyxia attack and death one hour has passed, although this is not sure.

At present we cannot say what kind of gas caused this asphyxia: therefore, we must wait for the results of laboratory tests, to be done on the blood and on the said fragments of organs.

The term "asphyxia", has been used in its general meaning of "lack of oxygen". the further laboratory examination will show whether the lack of oxygen has been caused by asphyxia stricto sensu or by intoxication?

At present we can state that it is a matter of "asphyxia by intoxication", save to know later on what kind of intoxication.

After this, the expert Dr. Marino, to whom according to his request,

The valves are in good condition. Nothing is remarkable in the Great vein, pulmonary artery and coronary arteries.

Lungs: fibrous adhesions of the right diaphragmatic pleura; external colour: pinkish; pressing the bronchi, a pinkish liquid comes out together with a little air, and, cutting, they notice on the surface a dark colour, and, pressing, also from there a pinkish liquid comes out together with air. The pulmonary parenchyma has lost its elasticity. They take for test some fragments of pulmonary tissue. The respiratory mucosa is in the first channels, pinkish.

Abdominal cavity: All the viscera have normal shape, size and location. Liver, spleen: kidneys and intestines are congested. Nothing else to notice. They take fragments of liver, spleen and kidneys for test. They don't think necessary to open the cranium.

CONCLUSION

As we said before, it can be stated that death has been caused by asphyxia, that said asphyxia has developed in an acute form, and therefore, has had the regular results of an acute asphyxia. Probably, between the asphyxia attack and death one hour has passed, although this is not sure.

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At present we can state that it is a matter of "asphyxia by intoxication", save to know later on what kind of intoxication.

After this, the expert Dr. Marino, to whom according to his request, the two blood test tubes, and two samples of coal have been given asks that, on account of the difficulty in getting the necessary equipment, he be given the term of two months for the delivery of his report to this secretariate.

Also Dr. Mazzarone, who will have the other tests made, asks that, for the same difficulty as above, he be given the term of one month for the delivery of his report.

We "Procuratore del Re", having agreed with the experts' request, give the term of two months to Dr. Marino, and one month to Dr. Mazzarone, starting from today.

The present report has been read, confirmed and undersigned.

(Sgd) Rocco Mazzarone
Egidio Marino

(Sgd) CITTÀ.

The "Procuratore del Re"

6439

785017

A. M. G.
GOVERNO MILITARE ALLEATO
POTENZA PROVINCE

Ref: M/G/36

To Col. Fisk R.C. and M.G. Section A.C.C.
FROM P.P.H.O. Potenza

Subject: Post-mortum report

According to the request of Lt. Col. Mc. Caffrey, the attached post-mortum report on one of the individuals who died in the recent railway catastrophe at Balvano is forwarded. Further chemical tests are being made but the results are not yet available.

8/3/44

R. A. M. C.
Major R.A.M.C.
P.P.H.O. Potenza

6438

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
R.C. & M.G. SECTION
APO 394

NEF/WRD
14 March 1944

TO: Brigadier Lush

The gist of the report is that death was due to "insufficiency of oxygen"; that about one hour elapsed between the onset of asphyxiation and death; that it is not possible as yet to determine what gas was responsible for the asphyxiation but chemical tests are in progress and later report will be made. Do you wish this translated?

NORMAN E. FISKE
Colonel, Cavalry

Original report given to Col. Okie,
727 Railway ^{operator} Co. March 17, '44.

66. Kelly

11/1937

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
REGION 2

177. *C.A.B.*

4473

Ref: A/48/3

8 March 1944

SUBJECT: -- Railway Accidents

TO : - The Vice President R.C. & M.G.
Section A.C.C. APO 394

The recent catastrophe in Potenza Province has brought to light the fact that in the last few months between 8 and 10 Railway employees have lost their lives from asphyxiation in passing through tunnels in Southern Italy. The chief causes appear to be: poor coal, old engines with insufficient power, and poor tunnel ventilation. May the possibility of a similar serious catastrophe to a troop train through these causes please be brought to the notice of the proper military authority.

For the R.C.

E.G. Fricker
E.G. Fricker, Major
Executive Officer
Region 2

6436

111
14 MAR Recd
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
POTENZA PROVINCE

Pr/ww 7

Potenza 3 March 1944

To : HQ, A.C.C., NAPLES
: A.C.C., Provl: HQ, SALERNO
From : Major H.H. NICHOLS - Provincial Commissioner - POTENZA-

SUBJECT = Rail disaster BALVANO.

I enclose list of some of the identified victims of the
Rail disaster at BALVANO on 3 March 1944.

A further list will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

A full list is being sent to the Minister of the Interior.

MAJOR
PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER
POTENZA

ENC.

ve/

6435

6

Exec. Comm.

You spoke re. 1 and 3.

Maj. Brown (L.O. Plumbo) has spoken to Col. Tully, who is Gen. Croys Executive Officer here, and Col. Tully

- (i) is sending to you direct a copy of the findings
- (ii) will send to ACC (attention Brig. Lush) notice of any future accidents involving Italian civilians as soon as they hear of them
- (iii) has already sent copies of the findings on the Potenza disaster to APHA as they were dispatching under that HQ. We must still forward a copy with our comments to HQS as soon as you get your copy.

P.B. 17/3

Seen by Brig. Lush

Brown reminded
20/3 - 81

6434
B.U. 13.12.14.15
20/3
m ✓

785017

HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
R.C. & M.G. SECTION
APO 394

Ref 177/5/CA.

17th March 1944.

Subject:- Major Nichols, Provincial Commissioner, Potenza.

TO :- Regional Commissioner, Region II.

The Chief Commissioner directs that the attached memorandum be forwarded to you for record and for any further comments that you may have to make on Major Nichols services in connection with the railway tragedy.

enc. 1. ~~4~~


NORMAN E. FISKE
COLONEL,
Deputy Executive
Commissioner.

Copy to:- G.1. (S) for information and record.

6433

177 *h*

170 MAR Recd

8 MAR 1944

245 *h*

REAR HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
INTERIOR SUB COMMISSION
APO 394

ACC/23/1/Int

7 March 1944

SUBJECT: Major Nichols, Provincial Commissioner, Potenza

TO : Vice President, Administrative Section

1. In interviewing Signor Reale today, and in conveying to him your approval of the work of the Prefect of Potenza in connection with the rail-road tragedy, he wished to inform you that in the opinion of the Italian Government, Major Nichols, the Provincial Commissioner of Potenza, had been of the greatest possible assistance and that his help contributed in no small measure to the manner in which the Prefect of Potenza had been able to perform his duty.

R. G. B. Spicer

R. G. B. SPICER
Lt Colonel
Director
Interior Sub-commission

Copy to: RC, Region II

2

Exec. Commr.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Minister of the Interior has expressed the appreciation of the Italian Government of the work of Major Nichols, Provincial Commissioner of Potenza in connection with the recent Rail Tragedy at Potenza.

If you think that this matter is worthy of further action you will no doubt obtain further particulars from the Regional Commissioner.

Stansgate

STANS_GATE,
VP Adm Sec.

9 Mar 44.

132

1450
229

0940
8

177
B

4945
C.A. Br. (701 E. Comm)
(2)

ACTION COPY

CONFIDENTIAL
ROUTINE
FREEDOM
FATIMA

M/C NO.....38/08
REF NO.....61698
FILED.....081409
RECD.....1723



CWY
CWY

2.

INFORMATION CONTAINED IN YOUR 1726 OF 6 MARCH HAS BEEN PASSED ON
TO ALL CONCERNED (TO FATIMA FOR LUSH SIGNED CINC CITE FHMGs) •
REQUEST YOU ARRANGE SEND HERE SOONEST FINDINGS OF OFFICIAL ENQUIREY
AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS

ACC DISTRIBUTION:

Action..... C.A. Br. (for Ex Comm)(2)

Info.....File
Float
D.C.C.

6431

ACTION COPY

SECRET

177

2

EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER

SECRET

ROUTINE

FATIMA 1726

MARCH 6 1944

10050 LUSH

FREEDOM (ACTION) HQ ACMF (INFO) FABLE (INFO)

-----AT ZERO TWO ZERO ZERO HOURS MARCH THREE BETWEEN SALERNO AND
POTENZA A GOODS TRAIN FAILED TO MAKE THE GRADE IN BOLVANO TUNNEL PD PAREN TO
FREEDON FOR ACTION RPTD HQ ACMF CMA IBS FOR ACC REGION ONE CMA CAMPBASSO
FOR REGION FIVE PREFETTURA CMA FABLE FOR DUNLOP FROM FATIMA FOR LUSH SIGNED
MCFARLANE PAREN THE TRAIN BELIEVED TO BE CARRYING ABOUT SIX HUNDRED
UNAUTHORIZED PASSENGRS FIVE ZERO NINE OF WHOM WERE ASPHIXIATED PROBABLY BY
CARBON MONOXIDE GAS PD NO QUESTION OF SABOTAGE OR PANIC AND VICTIMS APPARENTLY
DIED INSTANTANEOUSLY PD THEY WERE NOT REPEAT NOT REFUGEES PD PROVINCIAL
AND REGIONAL COMMISSIONER WITH PREFECT WERE SOON ON SPOT AND WERE ABLE SAVE
SEVERAL LIVES AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS BURIAL REMAINERS PD OFFICIAL ENQUIRY INSTI-
TUTED BY MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE ACMF

SECRET

L.T. MONTANT, Jr
2nd Lt. AGD
Adjutant

6430

HK

785017

CIRCULATION SLIP
Please pass file QUICKLY

FROM	OFFICER	TO
	Brig. M.S. Lush	
	Col. N.E. Fiske	
	Lt. Col. T. Farley Smith	
	Major Driffield-White	
	Major Van Dusen	
	Capt. Talbot	
	Capt. Carr	
	Capt. Stewart	
✓	Registry	6429

REMARKS

Initial HERE and FOLIO referred.

Pl see 1

Brig LUSH has seen + 9
believe had ordered a legal
officer to proceed for inquiries
W. PA

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

785017

ACTION COPY

5 MAR Recd

C.H. Br.

4814

V MEDY NR 294 IMMEDIATE

TO FATIMA

FROM HQ ACC REGION

2

FOR VICE PRESIDENT RC AND MG

(Info) Secy Gen

Ush ad

Public Safety SC (Res)

Public Health SC (")

File

Illeg

SECTION 0200 HRS 3 MARCH GOODS TRAIN FORXXXXX FROM NAPLES WITH
600 PASSENGERS STOPPED IN BALVANO TUNNEL MAP SQUARE 0 2020 UNABLE
TAKE GRADIENT ON WET LINES . 501 DEAD FROM ASPHYXIATION . 49 UNDER
TREATMENT . ALL BURIED MANY WITHOUT IDENTIFICATION . REPORT FOLLOWS
THI 1145

RPTNS 294 IMMEDIATE 2 0200 3 600 0 2020 501 49 1145

SENT 2225CALLAM B1

S RECD 2225 CALLAM B1

ACTION COPY

note msg. checked personally
to Dir. G. B. B.

0 1 3 4

