

## WELCOME TO OLYMPIC CITY

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the morning turned into a nightmare swirl of ghastly, even frightening memories. The smell, the final death howl of the dogs, the gentle roar of the blow torch, the dogs faces, the taste of death, the blood, the crunch of the meat cleaver as some are cut up into joints, the sight of a body which only minutes earlier had given a final defiant wag of its tail, being dropped into a pressure cooker, and the blank, uncaring faces of the killers.

Then you had only to walk a few yards and you were back on the main road. You could see the five star hotels, satellites of big American chains. There were all the bunting, flags and banners to celebrate the Olympic games, to sell South Korea to the world. A cynical façade that concealed such savagery.

According to officials, I spoke to, the cat and dog business simply doesn't exist in South Korea and is not only illegal, but was stamped out many years ago. I asked them to let me show them round their own country but they declined with a blizzard of excuses. I offered to take them to the markets and the special restaurants that serve nothing but cat or dog, soups, roasts, pot roast, boiled, barbecued or stewed. Again they declined.

It's easy to say that it doesn't go on if you keep your eyes closed and don't go near the markets. In one morning I visited four different markets and saw hundreds of dogs and cats. It is quite simply an integral part of every market, there's fish, veg, clothes and cats and dogs.

They may operate in the back streets and be primarily family run

### **'I'll never forget the crunch of the meat cleaver'**

businesses, but the Kitchens of Hell are very big business and even bigger money. This is an industry from which the profits are massive. Dog and cat meat are not poor man's food, but a delicacy for the rich, and the prices are surprisingly high, particularly in a country where the average rate of pay is very much lower than in Britain.

At Moran Market, Soungnam, a few miles from the centre of Seoul, the death dealers run their stalls alongside a small river. The prices they charge vary according to size and age. Cats cost from £1.50 to £10 while dogs range from £25 to £85. They are weighed and sold on an apparently standard price per kilo rate.

Several of the dealers and traders I spoke to carried thick bundles of notes of £500 or more. No wonder we were pushed and shoved when we tried to photograph their activities, no wonder they dragged us out of the slaughter rooms as we



**Collapsible cages, some smaller than the average suitcase, are stuffed with eight, or even 10 dogs, in a crazed tangle of legs, paws and whiskers**

tried to expose their cruelty. Westerners pose a threat, a threat to their trade and to the fat profits that they make. Thirty dogs and 10 cats a day gives them a turnover of around £1,500. Big money.

As the rain drags on through the morning there is nothing to protect the animals. They lie there in a shivering heap, half dead with wet and cold and fear. The cats try to sit apart as much as their cramped space will allow, tucking their paws under their bodies for warmth. All of them waiting passively in the queue to die.

Surprisingly, when you go near them, far from either flying at you in anger, or retreating in terror since many of them have clearly been beaten soundly, the dogs perk up and their tails begin to wag. They're hopeful of some attention, beyond what they've experienced for the last few days or weeks, being dragged from one cage to another.

Several I saw were actually brought by children, carrying them or pulling them along behind their bicycles. There were no tearful farewells, they simply watched the dogs being weighed, collected the bundle of notes and left. They seemed oblivious to the bodies being tipped into barrels to be taken off to restaurants to satisfy the gourmet tastes of greedy diners.

When, with the help of an interpreter I asked some of the dealers in death and the men who ran this apparently endless chain of Hell's

Kitchens, why they couldn't use some of their profits to find and use a more humane method of slaughter, they instantly denied they even killed animals. "It is dangerous to talk about it," one of them said. Another simply turned his back and walked off. "We don't kill any cats or dogs here," a voice said. "You must mind your own business."

When I pointed to the bodies and to the man through the door, squatting, chopping with a meat cleaver like someone splitting logs, they slammed the door shut and turned their backs. News that a Westerner was about spread through the cluster of stalls faster than you could run, and the hostility grew around like flames leaping from a fire.

But as long as the South Korean authorities continue to close their eyes, the death dealers are certain to thrive. When I visited the group of restaurants up in the Buk Han San Mountains, they made no pretence of what they served, even advertising cat and dog on the hoardings outside their premises. They proudly showed me the cuts that they had simmering in their large, black, dome-topped cauldrons, which came from the dogs they had slaughtered at the back of their premises. It was quite clear they felt no threat.

"Dog number one food in South Korea," one of the owners told me, which means it's the most popular. "Traditional dish," he added as an afterthought. However,

it's a tradition which really only goes back over the last 100 years or so, in spite of claims to the contrary. But, it's not so much the tradition that's under fire, but their way of going about it.

Whatever noises the South Korean authorities may make to the outside world about the moves they are making to stamp out this trade, they are clearly platitudes and empty gestures. The scenes I witnessed are all too vivid and ghastly to reveal anything other than that here is a trade that is flourishing. There are even more horrific stories of dogs being stripped of their fur and then put into the pressure cookers before they had even died, of cats being thrown into the cauldrons alive.

They are called Kitchens of Hell because there really is no other description for them. They are called Kitchens of Hell because it's

### **The animals lie in shivering heaps**

the nearest you'll ever find to such a place on earth. And all the time it is happening in a country that in a few month's time we'll be congratulating for the way they've staged the Olympic Games.

At present the lone voice against the wicked and barbaric trade, is the International Fund For Animal Welfare. They are the only organisation beating the drum and pleading to be heard. It is a desperate battle against a country that hears no evil and sees no evil.

South Korea is heralded as the miracle country and parades itself proudly as one of the fastest growing economies and industrial nations in the world, in short, it is one of the greatest success stories of the last two decades.

But if they truly want to be accepted as a modern and civilised nation, and part of the 20th century, then they will have to learn to adopt civilised ways. Strangling dogs and cats is not the way that either civilised people behave or that governments of such countries should accept.

When the music on the television heralds the Olympic coverage in a few weeks time, please try to remember some of the scenes revealed here. However loud the music, and however dazzling the fireworks, it will never drown the howl of each dog as it's dragged into Hell's Kitchens.

There have been far too many days of killing in South Korea. If their own government cannot do something about it then it is up to others to pressurise them. Please write to us and we'll present your letters to the South Korean embassy. We need your help to shut down the Kitchens of Hell. There must be no more brutality, there must be no more suffering. This terrible torturing of cats and dogs must end. Not some time in the future, not hidden behind closed doors. It must end. Now. ■

### **YES, WE DO EAT DOGS!**

We put these reports to Mr. Kim, the press attaché at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), and he gave us this response:

"Our position (here in London) is that it does go on. In theory we do not eat dog meat at our tables. It is illegal. But there is an old habit of eating dog meat and different cultures

have different habits. We don't grab domestic pets. You should be tolerant of different cultures. Some Western countries eat horsemeat, after all.

"We are concerned about this and are aware of the sentiment of British people. We have communicated this to the authorities in Korea."