

Latest Information from Europe

(By cable from Geneva)

The American Red Cross representative at SHAEF cabled from Paris on April 5 that assembly camps for liberated British and American prisoners of war had been opened at Namur in Belgium and at Thion and Sedan in France. Each of the three camps can accommodate 5,000 men. An evacuation transit camp, large enough for 75,000 men, has been opened at the French port of Le Havre. Liberated American prisoners are now moving through one of the three assembly camps to Le Havre, whence they are being repatriated direct to the United States. Liberated British prisoners go directly from Le Havre to the United Kingdom. The Red Cross has stocked these assembly camps with release kits and food packages.

The Dulag Luft transit camp for airmen at Wetzlar, overrun early in April, was found to be amply stocked with food, clothing, and comfort articles. Four carloads of supplies shipped by the International Red Cross from Geneva reached Dulag Luft on February 12.

The Belgian and French governments agreed at the end of March to contribute 175 and 300 railroad cars, respectively, to the International Red Cross pool of freight cars for use in getting relief supplies to prisoners of war and deportees. By April 5, 200 of these cars were ready for use. The fleet of Red Cross motor trucks, which now leave Switzerland daily with relief supplies for prisoners of war in Germany, numbered over 200 on April 15. Of these, 50 Swedish trucks purchased in Stockholm have been reserved for use in Northern Germany. As railroad communications deteriorate further, it is planned to build up the number of trucks to 400. These trucks are being furnished by the American, British, Canadian, and other Red Cross societies and also by SHAEF. Ten trucks belonging to War

Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA are also being used.

Supplies are moved from Switzerland in trainload lots and by truck convoys. The trucks then operate on a shuttle service inside Germany—from Moosburg in the south and Lübeck in the north. Additional distribution centers, including one at Stalag III A (Luckenwalde), have been set up. Besides truck convoys and solid trains, 393 loaded freight cars left Switzerland for Germany during March, nearly all of which, the International Red Cross has reported by cable, had reached their destinations by April 5.

While some prisoners from camps in western Germany have been moved to the interior, there has been no wholesale evacuation of camps comparable to that which occurred east of the Oder last January and February, and large numbers of prisoners have been liberated from camps in the west which have been overrun by Allied armies since the crossing of the Rhine.

Most of the prisoners evacuated from camps east of the Oder are still widely scattered in north, central, and south Germany. Now that the Red Cross truck service is in operation, it is expected that increasing amounts of food and medicines are reaching American prisoners. The German medical authorities have held meetings with British and American prisoner of war medical officers from all the principal camps for the purpose of coordinating medical needs and establishing a common program to be worked out between the German and prisoner of war authorities.

In the middle of April the American Red Cross had 10,000,000 standard food packages for prisoners of war in or en route to Europe.

DULAGS AND STALAGS

A Stalag (abbreviation for *Stalager*) is a permanent camp for coms or enlisted men—other Air Forces personnel—or a camp from which labor detachments are sent out.

A Dulag (abbreviation for *Dulag*) is a transit camp to which newly captured prisoners of war are sent for assignment to their permanent camp. A Dulag maintains, however, a small permanent staff camp upkeep and administrative case.

Frequently of late, in the case of American prisoners captured on the western front, the Germans have been using Stalags as Dulags, with separate compounds for handling transit prisoners. For instance, a prisoner might be sent to a recently established Dulag at Stalag XI B, then, after processing, assigned to Stalag XI B as his permanent camp.

In the first quarter of 1945, two of the largest transit camps for American prisoners captured on the western front were Stalag IV B at Mühlberg and Stalag XI B at Fallingb. American strength at IV B on February 28 was reported to be 4,500.

SEAMAN RALPH R. HANSEN

A letter from a prisoner in the East which mentioned the name Ralph Robert Hansen, S1/c from USS *Houston*, went through censorship some months ago, according to reports received by Seaman Hansen's mother. Since Mrs. Hansen has not received any word from her son, she would be very grateful if the recipient of the letter mentioning her name would write her. The address is: C. J. Hansen, 74 Idaho Street, Coln Heights, Tacoma 5, Washing-

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PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN

Published by the American National Red Cross for the Relatives of American Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees

3, NO. 6

WASHINGTON, D. C.

JUNE 1945

Liberated Prisoners of War from Germany

By Col. George F. Herbert, AGD Chief, Casualty Branch

through the Red Cross, to send a message home prior to their departure from overseas, wherever communication facilities permit.

The Journey Home

Aboard ship these men are served the best of meals. When the ship arrives at its destination in the United States the liberated prisoners are immediately debarked and transported to the staging area connected with the port of debarkation. The commander of the port welcomes the men personally on behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen.

George C. Marshall, and shortly thereafter dispatches a safe-arrival message to the next of kin of the men who arrived. A band usually strikes up a military air. At a recent docking, the strains of "God Bless America" brought accompanying words from the men, sung with a fervor and heartfelt emphasis that would be hard to match. After termination of the welcoming ceremonies the men are given a physical screening examination and assigned barracks in which freshly made beds await them.

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Liberated American prisoners, after receiving release kits at an assembly center in France, tell their experiences to a Red Cross worker. Names as given, left to right: Pvt. Wallace Butterfield, Pfc. William M. Smith, Pvt. Blair A. Colby, Pfc. Aubrey Rogers, Pfc. Harry R. Shaw, Jr., and Miss Rosanne Coyle.

Prisoners of War Bulletin

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Naval Personnel Reported Missing in Action

By Capt. Albert C. Jacobs, USNR
Director, Dependents Welfare Division,
Bureau of Naval Personnel

Casualties are the heavy price the nation is paying, and must continue to pay, for victory. As never before, the impact of increasing casualty lists is being felt by the poor and the rich, by the humble and the great. Officers and men representing every section of our country man the mightiest battle fleet the world has ever known. Many of their families have borne with fortitude the news that loved ones are "missing in action." Unfortunately, before final victory is won, many other navy families will have received a "missing in action" telegram.

The fortitude of such families is the more commendable because the great majority of our officers and men now fighting were, not so long ago, civilians following peaceful occupations, with no thought of war. Unexpectedly catapulted into the fray, they have become the most efficient fighters in history. Only a small percentage were trained for war and schooled to the vicissitudes thereof.

Every family to whom the sad word is sent that a husband, a son, a father, or a brother is "missing in action" will naturally want to know what this term means; what the chances are that he will be found alive and well, that he will be a prisoner of war, or that he has lost his life. The family will also be eager to know how soon more information may be expected.

"Missing in action" means simply that the officer or man cannot be accounted for after combat with the enemy. As yet no information is available to indicate his fate. So far as is known, he has not been found. There is no evidence that he has survived or that he has been taken prisoner, nor is there proof that he has given his life for his country.

So far as naval personnel are concerned, the term "missing in action" has distinctive significance. Due to the nature of naval warfare it is oftentimes extremely difficult to determine accurately what has happened to officers and men following an engagement. The oceans swallow up so rapidly all evidence of engagements fought upon them.

"Missing in action," it is easy to see, is a very broad and general term. It includes, unfortunately, many who are probably dead, but concerning whom proof of death is lacking. It also includes personnel unaccounted for after combat, but who happily will prove to be survivors. To illustrate: A ship is lost during the black of a Pacific night—the fate of some of our officers and men is unknown—they must be listed as "missing in action." A submarine on a combat mission is long overdue—what has happened to it is unknown—the officers and men can only be placed in the status of "missing in action." A plane from one of our carriers does not return after a combat mission—the pilot may be safe on some isolated atoll; he may have been captured by the Japanese; he may have crashed and died at sea—there is nothing to do but place him in the status of "missing in action."

A question frequently asked is how long will an officer or man be carried in the "missing" status. The answer is dependent on many factors. In the absence of a report that he is a survivor or a prisoner of war, or of clear evidence that he is dead, he will be carried in such status for at least 12 months. During the year all available evidence concerning his status will be considered to determine whether it definitely establishes his death.

An officer or man will be continued in the status of "missing" beyond the year when the circumstances indicate that he may be an unreported prisoner of war, or alive in some isolated community. Such a decision, which is communicated to the next of kin by the Bureau of Naval Personnel, means that on the basis of all available evidence the Navy still has some doubt as to his status.

Experience has proved that in many cases 12 months are not sufficient to clarify the status of "missing" naval personnel. We have learned to our sorrow that the Japanese have been neither prompt nor accurate in releasing the names of prisoners of war to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The reports concerning approximately 44 percent of the naval prisoners held

by the Japanese have been received more than 12 months after their "missing" status began. Two years, and more have not infrequently elapsed before word has been received that "missing" persons are prisoners of war in the hands of the Japanese. An enlisted man "missing" from the *USS Houston* during the battle of the Java Sea (February to March 1, 1942) was first reported a prisoner of war on February 1, 1945. For nearly three years his family had received no word from him. Some naval personnel have even been rescued and have returned who have never been reported as prisoners of war.

Not only have the Japanese been slow in releasing the names of prisoners of war, but they frequently have failed to report deaths occurring in their camps. Families have been notified that a report has been received that their loved ones are prisoners of war; it has then been the sad duty of the Navy to inform the families of a subsequent report that death occurred many months before the announcement that they were prisoners of war.

The decision that naval personnel be continued as "missing" after 12 months has frequently been based simply on the possibility that they may be unreported prisoners of war of the Japanese. The officers and men of an overdue submarine have often been continued in the "missing" status after 12 months because of the complete lack of data concerning the submarine.

The Germans, on the other hand, have reported prisoners of war with reasonable promptness. Experience has established that naval personnel "missing" as a result of action with the Germans, and concerning whom no word is received for 12 months are in fact dead.

In Guam and the Philippines some navy personnel hid from the enemy and were never captured. They were helped by natives and often organized guerrilla bands. The story of Radio Electrician George R. Tweed, U. S. Navy, is known by the entire country. He had been carried "missing in action" from December

1941, to the summer of 1944.

Presumption of Death

A finding of death is made when a survey of all the available sources indicates beyond doubt that the probability of continuance of life has been overcome. There is no chance of an officer or man being alive in some isolated area. If a finding of death is made, and more pay accounts are closed as of the presumptive date of death, that is, the expiration of the expiration of 12 months' absence, and the Japanese benefits, such as the six months' gratuity, become payable.

A finding of presumptive death concerning an officer or man of the Navy means simply that as of the date thereof he is for the purpose of administration no longer alive. It does not mean that death occurred at or on any other certain date. For purposes other than naval administration, the law does not make such findings binding or conclusive. Commercial insurance companies, almost without exception, accept them as evidence of the fact of death, and have paid insurance on the basis thereof. Their understanding settlement of claims on the deaths of naval personnel has been most praiseworthy.

Through March 31, 1945, 5,867 officers and men of the Navy had been continued in a "missing" status beyond the 12 months' period, while findings of presumptive death had been made in regard to 8,132 officers and men. In 5,867 cases the Navy did not, on the basis of the evidence available, make findings of death and request the payment of benefits.

Findings of presumptive death are made when the "missing" status has not continued for at least 12 months. If a person's status is changed from "missing" to "dead" to the expiration of 12 months, only on the basis of clear and unmistakable evidence of death. However, subsequent to the expiration of the 12 months, cumulative or other evidence establishes beyond doubt that a "missing" person is not alive, a prompt finding of presumptive death will be made. Also, it will be such a finding whenever confirmed by lapse of time without specific information being received.

It has been the policy of the Navy to continue, at the end of the second 12 months, the cases of all personnel continued "missing" at the end of 12

months when no new evidence has been received in the interim.

Because of the peculiar circumstances involved, 4,220 officers and men of the Navy have been continued in a "missing" status beyond 24 months. Most of these were "missing" following the battle of the Java Sea, the loss of Wake, and the loss of the Philippines. Their fate being unknown—they could have been captured, could have escaped, could have died—it has been necessary to continue their "missing" status. On the basis of available information such status could not be terminated.

Dependency Support

During this period of uncertainty—and the Navy fully appreciates the heartaches caused by the "missing" telegrams it must send—when families are suffering deep anguish and sorrow, provision must be made for the support of dependents of "missing" naval personnel. The various benefits contingent on death, such as pensions, insurance, and the death gratuity, cannot be paid during the "missing" status. The law, however, provides that the total pay and allowances of the "missing" person will be credited to his account during the continuance of such status. The law further provides that allotments from his pay made by the "missing" person will continue to be paid therefrom, particularly those for the support of dependents and for the payment of insurance premiums. These allotments may be increased or new ones registered by the director of the Dependents' Welfare Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel upon proof of the need therefor. It is not the practice to allot 100 percent of a "missing" person's pay, because it is deemed advisable to leave some on the books for the officer or man to draw upon his return. Also, family allowance benefits are available for the eligible dependents of "missing" enlisted personnel.

Once a person is placed in a "missing" status, pay and allowances continue to be credited to his account until evidence of death is received in the Navy Department, or until, after an absence of 12 or more months, a finding of presumptive death is made. If his status is changed to deceased, his heirs become entitled to the accumulated pay and allowances.

The Navy's Growth

It is a matter of common knowledge that since the early days of the war our Navy has grown tremend-

ously. Many ships of all sizes are now available for an engagement. For this reason, personnel not actually killed in an action have a much greater chance of rescue than in the days of the Java Sea, the Coral Sea, Midway, or Guadalcanal. Because of the size and strength of our fleet, units can be left behind to search for "missing" personnel even though the action is of a continuing nature. In the early days of the war, our ships had of necessity to leave battle areas without delay in order to utilize to the utmost our slim and diminished naval power and to protect the ships still afloat. Even under such conditions, when our weakened fleet performed miracles against great odds, the rescue operations, implemented by such ingenious inventions as the inflated rubber boat, and so forth, are now a matter of record. In July of 1943, when our fleet was growing stronger, several weeks elapsed before a complete survivor list of the *USS Helena* could be sent from the South Pacific, and during this period 167 officers and men were rescued from two islands under Japanese domination. Outstanding also were the rescues of our aviation personnel shot down in the actions against the Jap stronghold at Truk. In short, the chances of rescue at the outset have become greater, but there is also, unfortunately, an increased likelihood that those not rescued in the early days of an operation have made the supreme sacrifice.

There has again been a definite trend on the part of commanding officers to report personnel as "killed" much oftener than was the case in the early days of the war. If the evidence clearly establishes death, officers and men are so listed in the initial report, even though their bodies may not have been recovered. In other cases, even though originally listed in the initial report as "missing," where the evidence is unmistakable, commanding officers will in amplifying reports change the status to "dead." In this respect commanding officers were often overcautious in the early days of the war; on the basis of experience they now treat such cases more realistically. If no hope for survival remains, the initial report is of death.

It has, furthermore, become the practice to order the commanding officer or the senior surviving officer of a ship that has been lost to the Bureau of Naval Personnel in order

to clarify the casualty status of the ship's company. On the basis of such first-hand factual information the status of many "missing" personnel has been changed to "dead," but only where the evidence is clear.

Aviation Personnel

Changes have taken place also in regard to "missing" aviation personnel. It was factually demonstrated during recent operations in the Philippines that many of our fliers who were shot down, or otherwise forced down, landed in the islands and were befriended by the guerrillas. In many instances they ultimately returned to naval jurisdiction. In other cases reports have been received from guerrilla forces that our fliers were captured or killed by the Japanese after landing. In short, when air action takes place over enemy-occupied territory in which there are also friendly forces, factual information concerning "missing" personnel has been received much more quickly than in the past. Because of this factor the "missing" status has often been clarified within the year.

There have been many instances of "missing" naval personnel returning under the most extraordinary circumstances. The day of miracles is not past. The stories of adventure, of hardship, of ingenuity, of miraculous stamina exhibited by the survivors of sunken ships and plane crashes make fiction pale into insignificance.

Miraculous Escapes

Going through the records, one is surprised to note the number of "missing" officers and men who have been eventually located and returned to safety. From the hundreds of tiny islands and atolls in the Pacific, where natives often rescue them and assist them in the return to their bases, and from the frozen wastes of Greenland and the Aleutians, where our ships carry on a tireless search, "missing" persons have returned under miraculous circumstances. Sometimes, long after reasonable hope has gone, they have found their way back through the jungles of the vast area of the Pacific, or from the treacherous, creviced glaciers of the far north. Unfortunately, however, such miraculous rescues are the exception rather than the rule.

On July 2, 1944, 600 miles from Colombo, Ceylon, the SS *Jean Nicolet* was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. The officers and men, the

(Continued on page 15)



Wounded Americans liberated from a German Lazarett. Names as given, left to right: S/Sgt. Paul O. Bergman, T/Sgt. Don V. Sage, Sgt. John L. Donalson, S/Sgt. John Holzmer, Pvt. Ralph Ford, Sgt. James E. Coalter, and Pvt. George W. Manderson. Note Red Cross cartons stuffed in broken windows.

Letter from France

The following letter from an American prisoner of war from Stalag XII A at Limburg was written from an assembly center for recovered American military personnel in France on April 19 to his wife in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Darling:

I hardly know where to begin, and my mind is spinning with things to tell you. But, first, I'm very safe and quite well and supremely happy to be free again. I'm dying to see you, dearest, and Wendy and all, but it is wisest to follow the Army's orders and take hospitalization until I am in perfect health again.

I hope that you were promptly notified that I was a P.W., and that you did not have to sweat out the "missing in action" telegram long. I worried about that.

Right now, I am in a field hospital with a mild touch of dysentery and malnutrition. It is nothing serious. I am up and about all day, in the best of spirits, and so glad to be back in the arms of the U. S. Army and the Red Cross that tears come to my eyes when I think of it, and how lucky we are. We are getting the best of treatment and food. I'm on a regular diet, so you see my malnutrition isn't too serious.

You'd hardly know me right now. My face is O.K., a little pale, I guess, but still the "laughing gray eyes," etc. My head has been shorn, clipped but

not shaved, because we found some lice eggs in it yesterday. Licel! Licel! Yes, I was quite lousy for awhile we all were. And we tried to keep down as best we could, but it was impossible, sleeping in barns as had been for six weeks. I'm very tired and have lost about 25 or 30 pounds, I guess, chiefly in the arms and legs, but it won't take long to regain most of it here and soon. We lost weight on the march—15 to 20 kilograms a day on very little food—a very nourishing soup for breakfast and a cup of weak "coffee" and a fifth of a loaf of bread with a bit of "butter" or cheese or meat for supper. That diet was varied somewhat, sometimes a bit more, more usually less—for all of my four months of captivity, and, darling, that was a more than some P.W.'s got in other parts of hell's corners, that is graphically called Germany.

For about a total of 8 weeks, however, Red Cross No. 10 food parcels or small portions of them, were available, and they were a Godsend—believe me! I doubt if as many of us would have survived were it not for what little Red Cross the Germans would let us get. They withheld from us, or we were never at proper place for us to receive. When I say "us" I refer chiefly to P.W.'s who were taken in recent months, as I was, for whom the boys

no suitable facilities or time or money to devote the proper care or attention. At the same time, I was lucky to be with a group that got good treatment as I did—which was pretty poor at best—so that I suffered very little as compared to others who were taken at the same time, but who went various and diverse ways. Darling, as for the details of the four months, wait until I can talk—save this letter and we'll cover it and I can give you a full account of P.W. life. For the rest of this letter, I'll try to account for the week with reference to the past, present, and future, so hold on.

One week ago today, at about this time in the afternoon, I had the unique experience of watching the Army spearhead assault a town more than a mile distant from us. We were ordered to march from a small village, where we had been living in a barn for ten days, to another town seven kilometres distant.

We approached the town we could see the German 88's firing from their positions on a ridge some distance to the right. When we were within a few miles of the town (let's call it "W"), the 88's firing stopped. A squadron of USAAF's P-47s came over, so we had to disperse into the fields and lie down in case they strafed. They floated around awhile and finally located the 88's position and they began. First the heavy bombs, then each plane carries—dive-bombing and the ack-ack opened up, but it was meager and way off its mark. In each plane released its rockets and they rained at the targets. After that, they entered the town and, thank God, they were us. When the squadron got through, another repeated the performance. You can't imagine how it felt to have the Yanks so close. When the planes were done, artillery and mortar fire from the ridge across the way landed up on the town and, although we couldn't spot them, we could sure get a good look at their fire—and it was doing. Since the planes were gone, the German noncom in charge of us (a decent guy as Krauts go) turned us around and marched back. We were sweating out the march—hoping they wouldn't fire at us because we were on a ridge overlooking the town—over three hundred P.W.'s must have spotted us for what we were, because they fired at us from a distance of five hundred yards just after our column turned off the road away from the scene of action. I felt like crying when we had

to march away from the Yanks—so near and yet so far. We marched 'til way after dark but didn't cover much ground, because we walked in circles. Some managed to escape, and those that tried and failed had rifle butt bruises to prove it. We were put in a barn that night and were so surprised to find that we could sleep till late in the morning, so we knew something was up. It seems most of the guards had taken off in the night. This was Friday, the 13th, and a day that I'll never forget, although there were lots of older P.W.'s who had dreamed of this day for longer than I. The old German noncom told us that we would be liberated that day—the Yanks were way past us by then—and he and a handful of guards stayed there to maintain order. Sure enough, along about 3 P.M., a lieutenant colonel and a small column that were out looking for us rode into the village and we were free men again.

You'll never know what a kick that was. I didn't think the Colonel would appreciate an embrace, so I kissed his jeep instead. That evening we had our first G. I. food—K rations—and no Christmas dinner ever tasted better.

We were billeted in another German town for the night—the civilians were chased out of their homes—and on the 14th we were taken by quartermaster trucks back to a supply and evacuation base, where I lived until the 17th—when planes carried us back to this camp in France. Believe me, there is nothing so highly organized and so well organized as the good old U. S. Army—that it can evacuate its recaptured personnel at the rate it is doing. The morning of the 18th I was sent to the hospital and tomorrow I move to the convalescent hospital across the road, where I hope to be for just a short time.

That, in a nutshell, is what I've done in the past week. Yesterday, I had my first hot shower since December 6—my birthday—and I hated to get out of it. Today, I got a new clothing issue and a PX ration of cigarettes, gum, fruit juice, etc., plus a Red Cross ditty bag with cigarettes, toilet articles, cards, a book and gum—little stuff that means so much to us now. But the most important item I've spent very little time on—food. That's all a P.W. thinks and talks about—and, for the most part, lives for. He dreams of

it, and discusses it daily and by the hour—varied dishes, and ways of cooking different foods. The chief trouble is that since we've been repatriated we've been fed so well on such good food that it has taken the edge off all our appetites for the food we discussed as P.W.'s. One thing I know, though—I'm never going to be hungry again. In the hospital here, I've eaten more in one meal than I usually eat in three. At the evacuation base, the Red Cross served coffee and doughnuts—nectar and ambrosia. I've had fresh oranges and apples at the airport mess when we arrived in France—and bread pudding—pancakes, French toast and oatmeal this morning, and eggnog. Wonderful steak for dinner. Peanut butter and jelly and white bread galore. I never dreamed a G. I. kitchen could serve so much good food, and I'm afraid I'm gorging myself on it. Also, I'm getting plenty of vitamin pills and paregoric between meals—which speaks for itself.

Well, darling, I'm sure I've written more than anyone wants to censor, but then I haven't imposed that job on anyone for a long time. I'll write tomorrow. It's funny writing to you again—but I hope I won't be writing for long.

LIBERATED AMERICANS TO GUARD GERMAN PRISONERS

It was announced on April 29 that American officers and enlisted men who have been liberated from enemy prison camps will be assigned to guard camps for German prisoners. The announcement stated that these men, "who have experienced captivity and detention by the enemy, are considered to be eminently qualified for these duties."

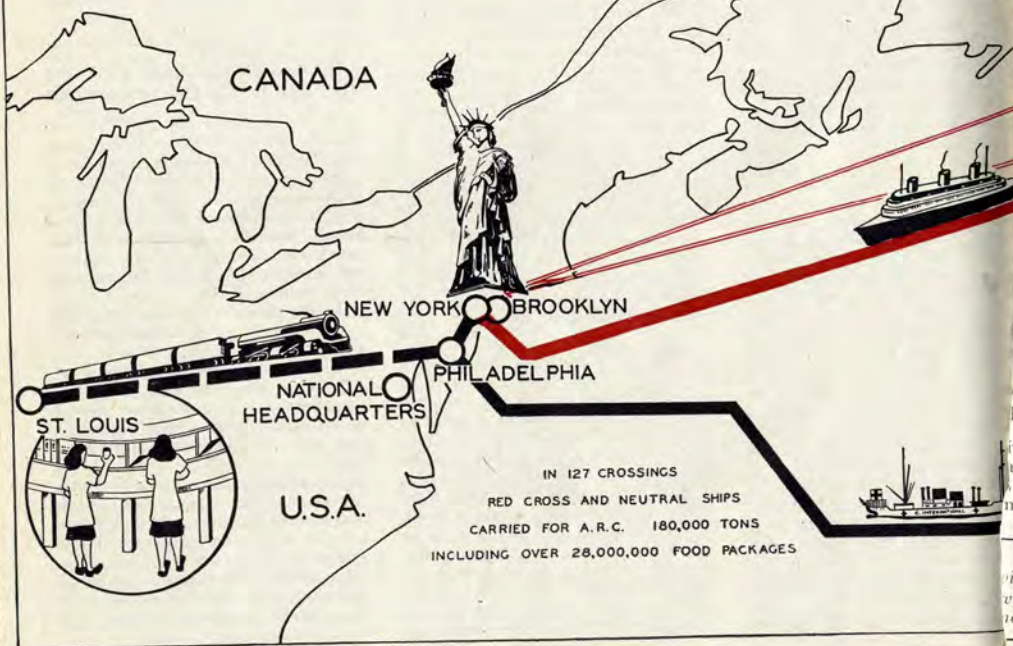
It is planned to use returned Americans both in administrative capacities and as guards.

The announcement was made by Maj. Gen. Thomas A. Terry, commanding general of the Army Second Service Command, whose headquarters are on Governors Island, New York.

For officers, administrative duties would include command of camps and command staff work, such as arranging menus for prisoners, it was stated. Enlisted men would perform office routine, checking prisoners in and out, supervision of prisoners in work camps, preparing job lists, and similar functions.

SERVICE TO PRISONERS OF WAR

- RELIEF SUPPLIES TO PHILADELPHIA
- ROUTES TAKEN BY INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SUPPLY SHIPS TO EUROPE
- SHUTTLE SHIPS - GOTEBOURG TO LUBECK
- SUPPLY TRAINS FROM SWITZERLAND AND LUBECK TO GERMAN CAMPS
- BARGE SHIPMENTS FROM LUBECK TO INTERIOR
- TRUCK ROUTES TO CAMPS AND MARCHING COLUMNS
- ASSEMBLY CENTERS FOR LIBERATED PERSONNEL
- EMBARKATION POINTS
- ==== PLANE ROUTES HOME FROM ENGLAND AND FRANCE
- SHIP ROUTES HOME



AMERICANS LIBERATED AT RANGOON

Early in May the War Department was informed that 73 American prisoners of war had been liberated in the capture of Rangoon, Burma, by British forces. Most of the men had never been reported as prisoners, and were still listed by the War Department as missing in action. The Japanese had never even reported this as a camp where American prisoners were detained, and, therefore, no Red Cross supplies could be sent there.

The War Department stated at the time of the announcement that as soon as a complete list of the names of the liberated prisoners was available their next of kin would be notified.

NOTIFYING FAMILIES OF LIBERATED PRISONERS

An agreement made early in May between the War Department and the American Red Cross provided that the Red Cross may notify families of liberated American prisoners of their liberation, when they request this service. The responsibility of caring for liberated prisoners and arranging transportation home for them, together with many other military duties, made it difficult for the Army to notify next of kin as promptly as they would have liked of the liberation of prisoners.

Enabled and telegraphed lists of names of liberated prisoners are now being sent by Red Cross field directors overseas to national headquarters in Washington. From here they are sent with all dispatch to local chapters, whose representatives personally deliver the news to the next of kin.

In addition to this service the Red Cross will, if the situation warrants, send a cable inquiring about a liberated prisoner's family, when it is apparent that the prisoner expects to be in Europe long enough to receive the reply. A similar service is planned for liberated Allied prisoners of war who have relatives in the United States.

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PACKAGING CENTERS

With stock piles in Europe, on en route thereto, totaling about 10,000,000 American Red Cross standard food packages, production in the Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis, and Brooklyn Packaging Centers was reduced early in April to about 200,000 a week. By the end of May, by which time 28,000,000 packages had been shipped abroad, operations were discontinued.

Besides supplying, throughout April and May, food packages to all American and other Allied prisoners of war who could be reached anywhere in Germany, large numbers were furnished to liberated American prisoners on their homeward journey through assembly centers and evacuation points, in addition to the supplies they received from the U. S. Army. Arrangements were made some time ago whereby, on the cessation of hostilities in Europe, all stock piles of American Red Cross food packages would be placed at the disposal of SHAEF, and these reserves filled a very vital need.

A substantial supply of special Far Eastern packages has been built up and is being held in the United States for possible future shipment to American and other Allied prisoners still in Japanese hands.

The women volunteers who so faithfully manned the packaging center assembly lines since this operation began in March 1943 have made a most important contribution to the national effort. Their readiness at all times and under all sorts of conditions to perform this service has earned the heartfelt gratitude of all prisoners of war who have received packages.

FAR EAST RELIEF SUPPLIES

A Russian ship carrying additional relief supplies for American and Allied prisoners in the Far East left a West Coast port in the latter part of April for Vladivostok.

This latest shipment, consisting of 1,500 tons, included 115,000 American Red Cross food packages, 112,000 Canadian Red Cross food packages, 3,000 Indian food packages packed by the Canadian Red Cross, 184 tons of medical supplies, and 15 tons of YMCA and National Catholic Welfare Conference goods.

At the time of this shipment there were still in Vladivostok about 700 tons of relief supplies, and negotiations were in progress with the Japanese to pick up the supplies for distribution to Allied prisoners and civilian internees in the Far East.

IRCC WHITE BOOK

Mr. Carl J. Burckhardt, President of the International Red Cross Committee, recently announced in Geneva that a white book would soon be published containing correspondence exchanged with the Germans on the matter of atrocities in concentration camps.

Mr. Burckhardt also disclosed that, but for the persistent efforts of the IRCC, the Germans would have denounced the Geneva Convention at the end of 1943. This, he stated, would have left millions of Allied prisoners virtually unprotected.



Swedish trucks leaving Goteborg for Lübeck, Germany. These trucks, plainly marked in German, International Committee of the Red Cross, were used for delivering relief supplies to camps and marching columns in northern Germany.

After Germany's Collapse

All American prisoners of war held by Germany have been liberated and are now home or on their way. Throughout April and May a steady stream of liberated men reached American shores, and the military authorities are returning the men to their homes as expeditiously as the seriously disorganized condition of Europe permits.

Since the American Red Cross began publishing PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN in June 1943, one of our main objectives has been to let our prisoners of war tell their own story of conditions, Red Cross services, and general camp activities through its columns—in letters from the prisoners themselves, in interviews with repatriates, in reproductions from camp newsheets, and in factual reports from neutral inspectors who had visited the camps and talked with the men.

We have had several opportunities recently to talk with returned prisoners, some of whom were frank enough to state that, while in Germany, they had the feeling that their relatives at home were being given a distorted picture of life in German prisoner of war camps, but that when they had carefully read a complete file of PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN after their return they were given their families a fair and balanced picture in words that avoided adding to the heavy load of anxiety which the relatives of the men had borne so patiently. Among 100,000 men there must inevitably be some who will feel that we have erred on the side of giving the families too much comfort and consolation, and perhaps as many others who will consider that we have unnecessarily disturbed their relatives by reporting that conditions in a certain camp were bad at the same time that the men there were writing home "everything here is fine, so don't worry about me."

This will be the last issue of PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN devoted mainly to activities in Europe, but beginning in August, the American Red Cross will publish a bulletin devoted entirely to the Far East, where some 15,000 American prisoners of war and civilian internees are still held by Japan.

All next of kin of prisoners of war

in the Far East, whose names are carried on the rolls of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, will automatically receive copies of the Far Eastern edition as they are published from time to time, just as they have received their copies of PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN. Other readers who are interested in the Far East and who desire to receive the Far Eastern edition are requested to fill out the blank form on page 15 of this issue and return it to the Editor, PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN, American Red Cross, Washington 13, D. C. Their names will then be added to a special Far Eastern mailing list which will be prepared by the Red Cross and will be independent of the next-of-kin list maintained by the Office of the Provost Marshal General.

The American Red Cross staff, and especially those concerned with the publication and distribution of PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN, have regarded it as a high privilege to render this service to the families and friends of our prisoners of war and civilian internees. To the many hundreds who have written us about the help and guidance which the BULLETIN has brought to them in their anxious days of waiting, our sincere thanks are now expressed.

GILBERT REDFERN
Editor

Letter to the Editor

748 Page Street
San Francisco 17, California

Dear Sir:

I have just returned from the Philippines after 1,135 days' internment under the Japs. They took care of us in Camp John Hay and Camp Holmes (Baguio), and also at Bilbid prison in Manila.

It's wonderful to be home again and I wish to express my sincere thanks to the American Red Cross for all you have done for myself and other Americans interned in the Philippines during these past three nightmare years.

One of my most wonderful remembrances is that of December 25, 1943—Christmas Day!—when we in the Baguio camp received the wonderful food packages and medical supplies. Needless to say, it was really a grand Christmas and one I will always remember.

The Red Cross has assisted us immeasurably since our liberation also, and—well—I just can't tell you how thankful I am.

We are all looking forward to the liberation of Americans in other war areas, particularly those in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Many, many thanks again, and you may rest assured that the American Red Cross

Questions and Answers

Q. Do all wounded AAF prisoners repatriated during the war disability discharges from Army?

A. Every effort is made to reassign a repatriated AAF member (noncombatant capacity) unless he specifically indicates his desire for a certificate of disability for discharge.

Q. What becomes of the personal effects of a flier reported missing in action?

A. Before preparing them for shipment, it is customary for a commanding officer in an overseas theater to retain the personal effects of an individual for a "holding period," which may extend over some months after he has been reported missing in action, on the chance that the individual will find his way back to his base. After the "holding period" has elapsed, the effects are made ready for shipping and are brought back to this country when transportation is available, and, in the case of an army flier, delivered to the Effects Quartermaster, Army Effects Bureau, Kansas City Quartermaster Depot, Kansas City, Missouri.

Personal effects of navy fliers are forwarded to next of kin in the Pacific Area from Personal Effects Distribution Center, Utah, and to those in the Atlantic Area from Personal Effects Distribution Center, U. S. Navy Supply Depot, Scotia, New York.

The effects of Marine Corps personnel are handled from the same centers as those of navy personnel.

Coast Guard personnel's effects are distributed from U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Military Morale Division, Washington, D. C.

There is no way of determining the length of time that may elapse between the report of missing in action and the receipt of the next of kin of these effects, but it usually requires at least six months and may take as much as a year.

will always hold a warm spot in my heart.

Most sincerely,

WALTER M. MOORE

April 1945

Missing in Action

(Continued from page 6)

guard crew, and the passengers all safely abandoned ship. The submarine surfaced and compelled all except five to go aboard. Lined up on the deck of the submarine, their hands tied behind with rope or wire, Japanese sailors beat the survivors unmercifully with bayonets, clubs, and iron pipes, causing some to die outright. Late the same night, while some thirty survivors of the SS Jean Nicolet were still on deck, the submarine submerged; they were thrown into the water with their hands tied behind them and without life jackets. For some hours one of the men managed to free his hands and to unthrottle those of the others. Nearly two days later, after having been in the water for hours before life rafts could be dropped by planes, 18 of the group were miraculously rescued.

Throughout the war the Navy has gone to all possible lengths to effect the rescue of "missing" personnel. Whenever the continuance of rescue operations would needlessly imperil the lives of many others are they discontinued. Searches for the pilots and crews of navy planes have been frequent. Experience has proved that aviation personnel are rescued more often than any other.

Rescue Operations

Whenever planes take off from or land on a carrier, destroyers stand by to pick up the personnel from any planes that may crash or that may be forced to make a water landing. Escorting destroyers closely watch all planes taking off or landing, and, in the event of a crash, proceed at once to the scene and attempt to recover personnel as quickly as possible. These destroyers seldom take time to lower a boat for the rescue work;

generally an expert swimmer dives from the side to aid those in the water. In this way many precious lives have been saved.

Whenever a plane is seen to crash making a water landing some distance from the carrier, planes in the vicinity circle the spot and at once report the position of the crash to rescue units. The circling planes drop rafts to those who do not have them. Whenever possible, the planes remain in the area until a rescue ship arrives or until other planes relieve them. The actual rescue from the water is generally made by a destroyer or by a seaplane. Outstanding

heroism has resulted in many such rescues, often within the very range of enemy guns.

One example will illustrate how far the Navy has gone to rescue personnel. In September of last year, the Navy risked scores of costly planes and two PT boats and expended thousands of pounds of bombs and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition during a nine-hour battle in order to save one naval aviator. In one of the most heroic rescues of the entire war, two patrol torpedo boats snaked through Halmahera Island's heavily mined Wasile Bay, while covering planes held back the Japanese and saved the pilot from almost certain capture. The pilot's plane had been caught by a burst of ack-ack fire. Bailing out, his parachute dropped him in the center of Wasile Bay. The pilot in the Japanese front yard climbed on a rubber raft dropped by a Hellcat. Circling Navy planes watched the tiny yellow raft drift toward the shore lined with Japanese PT boats headed for the Bay, planes dropped smoke bombs to hide the pilot; Hellcats circled in relays in spite of heavy ack-ack fire. The PT's, under constant fire, with Avengers laying a smoke screen for them while Hellcats dove on the Japanese guns, finally made the rescue.

The possibilities of rescue are governed by many factors. If the sea is rough, the chances of rescue are reduced because of the difficulty in ascertaining the exact location. Much also depends on the area. For instance, a plane shot down over enemy territory occupied by friendly natives has a better chance of rescue than a plane shot down over areas occupied entirely by the enemy. Experience has proved that a pilot shot down in combat in the Philippines had an

even chance of rescue. Within recent months guerrillas there have saved the lives of many naval personnel.

The type of action being carried on at the time a pilot is shot down also has a direct bearing on his chances of rescue. If a plane crashes during a naval engagement, when enemy submarines are in the vicinity, rescue is more difficult, but it has been effected even under the most trying circumstances. Everything is done so long as it does not needlessly endanger the lives of too many other persons.

Failure of Planes To Return

The most difficult cases involving the rescue of aviation personnel are those in which the planes are not seen to be shot down or to crash but fail to rendezvous after an attack has been completed. In such cases, because it is not known where or under what circumstances the plane was lost, search is difficult. Every possible effort, however, is made. Planes search the area where the plane is estimated to have gone down. Ships and planes within that area are notified. The search may continue for several days. The percentage of rescues in this type of case is, however, much lower.

Some twenty-five planes from one of our carriers which participated in the attack on the Japanese fleet at Guam in June of 1944 failed to return, due mostly to fuel shortage. Practically all of the planes were forced to land in the water. Destroyers and PBY's rescued the crews of all except one plane.

As the fighting draws closer to Japan, the chances of rescue may very well become diminished. Efforts will, of course, be increased. The rescues

Editor, Prisoners of War Bulletin
American Red Cross
17th and D Sts., N. W.
Washington 13, D. C.

Will you please send me the Far Eastern edition of PRISONERS OF WAR BULLETIN. I am not listed as next of kin of an American prisoner of war.

(Name) _____

Please print

(Address) _____

Please print

will be more difficult, more spectacular, but they will still be made.

Chances of Survival

What are the chances that a "missing" person will prove to be a survivor? A general answer is impossible because the circumstances vary in every case. It is unfortunately true that of the naval personnel reported "missing" since Pearl Harbor considerably more have been determined to be dead than have proved to be alive. This is likely to continue. When a man loses his life on land, his sacrifice is usually disclosed rather rapidly by the finding of his body. At sea, however, a man may lose his life and leave no evidence of that fact. Therefore, many naval personnel, in fact dead, must be listed as "missing." Nearly 17,000 officers and men of the Navy carried at one time as "missing" are now listed as "killed."

From the standpoint of percentages it is expected that fewer naval personnel will be placed in the "missing" status than formerly, because of basic factors already discussed.

Machines, the marvels of modern inventive ingenuity, cannot take the place of human beings. In the final analysis, manpower will win the war, and, for victory, precious personnel will continue to be lost. The Navy is keenly aware of the fact that nothing can compensate for the loss of those dear to us. The countless billions the war is costing in materiel seem infinitesimal when we learn of a loved one's death. The American people are facing the sacrifices war entails with bravery and fortitude.



For use on the journey home, Red Cross release kits are distributed to American prisoners.

Release Kits for Liberated Americans

An urgent request for an additional 50,000 release kits came by cable late in April from Henry W. Dunning, the American Red Cross representative at SHAEF. The cable stated that "the kits are filling a great need." They are distributed to liberated American prisoners of war when they reach the assembly centers preparatory to repatriation, or at ports of call on the journey home.

About 100,000 release kits, packed

by women volunteers at the New York Packaging Center, were shipped from the United States in February and March. Of this total, 71,400 were shipped to France, 10,000 to the Soviet Union, 9,500 to Italy and 5,000 to Egypt for American prisoners returning via Russia, and 4,000 to the Philippines. The additional 50,000 requested by cable were put into production immediately.

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