

THE Prisoner of War

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR DEPARTMENT OF THE
RED CROSS AND ST. JOHN WAR ORGANISATION, ST. JAMES'S PALACE, LONDON, S.W.1



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Free to Next of Kin

MAY, 1945

The Editor Writes —

It is just three years since on May 1st, 1942, we launched the first number of *The Prisoner of War*. For most of our readers three long years of strain and toil, of hopes and anxieties. "It is hard," wrote Her Majesty the Queen in a message printed in our first issue, "for those who wait at home to go cheerfully about their daily tasks in the knowledge that someone dear to them is in exile and a prisoner." But their long ordeal is coming to an end, as I write, and indeed for many thousands has already ended. By the time these lines are printed it may well be that all our men in Germany will once again be free.

A Host of Friends

This journal will still appear for a few months so long as there is any useful information to give to ex-prisoners of war and their next-of-kin, but, happily, it will no longer contain news of what is happening in the Stalags and Oflag, for they, I hope, will have become a very bad dream that is now over. From the first I have looked forward to the day when the journal in this form would no longer be needed.

But there is sadness in the thought that I shall be saying good-bye to a host of good friends, personally unknown to me, but brought very close by means of correspondence.

So Many Letters

Never, I am sure, has a journal been so eagerly looked for each month by so many readers. Never has an editor received so many thousands of grateful letters as have reached my colleagues and myself month after month from relatives who were cheered and comforted by the scraps of news we were able to give them, heartened by the knowledge of what the Red Cross and St. John War Organisation was able to do for their men, but, above all, brought closer to their dear ones by the intimate revelations of what other prisoners were doing and thinking.

Fare You Well!

To all our readers and to their men with whom they are once more united, I would say: "Thank you for your

gratitude and your confidence. I wish you a full life and every happiness." But in the general rejoicing let us not forget the relatives of those who will not come back, and especially of those (few in number we believe) who in the last weeks of the war were marched out of the camps to death by hunger or exhaustion. Our hearts go out to them.

News Without Delay

Events are moving so rapidly in these great days of victory that the news of recent developments grows stale from hour to hour. The latest news of the camps is given on another page. The Secretary of State for War announced on May 1st that 43,000 British Commonwealth prisoners had reached this country from North-West Europe. A further 3,436 had been evacuated from Odessa. Many others have doubtless been liberated by the Red Army in the neighbourhood of Berlin and Dresden and by the American Armies on their way to Munich and the Austrian frontier.

Sir James Grigg undertook to give out immediately 338 new information, and next of kin may rest assured that they will be notified without delay of any definite news of their men.

Transfers Cease

The German Government has stated through the Protecting Power that all transfers of prisoners have ceased in areas under German control. The prisoners have been collected, as far as possible, in large Stalags, and the German Government has



Wild scenes of excitement at Stalag 357 as the camp is liberated.

asked the I.R.C.C. and the Protecting Power to send representatives to these camps. When the German military authorities withdrew, these representatives will remain in charge of the camps until the Allies arrive.

The "Master" Race

The unspeakable atrocities perpetrated at the concentration camps are a revelation of the depths of wickedness to which Germans have been brought by leaders who invoked these pagan instincts and barbaric lusts. The victims of these subhuman torturers and murderers were almost entirely Germans, Poles, Jews, and other Europeans enslaved by the "Master" Race. Ordinary prisoner-of-war camps were not exposed to any similar system of torture.

450 Miles Winter March

The treatment of prisoners of war who were moved from camps in Silesia when the Russians approached is evidence, however, of the generally callous cruelty of the German to those in his power. They were marched 450 miles in the depths of winter. The Germans had prevented them from making any preparations for the move, and failed to make adequate provisions for food and accommodation for those who fell ill on the way. They were visited on the march by a representative of the Protecting Power, and a protest was made. The Secretary of State for War, answering questions on this matter, added that the Germans were becoming more and more incapable of looking after things in their own country, and he feared a good deal of hardship was inevitable. Some camps were grossly overcrowded by incoming prisoners from the East.

"The Latest Reprisal"

A petty example of German vindictiveness has come in a report from Oflag VIII and Stalag 357 (now captured), where the British prisoners were deprived of their mattresses, pillows and most of their furniture ostensibly as a reprisal for the alleged ill-treatment of German prisoners in Egypt. The allegations, says Sir James Grigg, were entirely without foundation. An apt comment reached me from a prisoner in Oflag VIII: "Just in case you should get hold of a garbled version of the latest reprisal, . . . our mattresses and go per cent. of our tables and chairs were taken away. As you may imagine, we have improvised and everybody seems quite comfortable."

NEW ADDRESS!

If you have moved, do not forget to notify the Navy, Army, or R.A.F. authorities as well as the Red Cross of the address of your new home. It is MOST IMPORTANT that official news should reach you without delay.

REPATRIATION ARRANGEMENTS

By Major-General Sir Richard Howard-Vyse, K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

(Chairman of the Prisoners of War Department)

THE repatriation of British Commonwealth prisoners of war on the Western Front is the responsibility of SHAEF in conjunction with the War Office; we have been in close consultation with both authorities. The continued resistance of the enemy has necessitated certain modifications in the original plans. Instead of the great majority of the prisoners being freed at the moment of the signing of an armistice, and while still in their original camps, they are now being recovered by degrees. Some, mostly the sick, are found in camps and hospitals, some have escaped and reached the allied lines, but most of them are apparently being overtaken while on the march. This makes it easier as regards the numbers to be dealt with at any one time, but much more difficult from the point of view of making definite plans beforehand.

Strictly speaking, a freed prisoner of war, unless he is sick or wounded, is no longer a concern of the Red Cross; but it is unthinkable that we should immediately lose all interest in him. We have therefore prepared, in numbers sufficient to supply every man, gift bags containing a razor and other toilet requisites, chocolate, cigarettes, and a message of welcome. The message is from all the Dominion and Indian Red Cross Societies, and not only from the War Organizations. Many, but not all, the ex-prisoners will need other articles such as pullovers, pyjamas and socks, and these also we are providing on a liberal scale, as well as invalid diet and medical supplies. To assist in the distribution of these articles, to give as much information as possible to the men while they await transport to this country, and to co-operate with the Army Welfare officials, we have enrolled a number of our own representatives.

Helping in North-West Europe

These plans have already been put into operation at Odessa, and in order to complete the arrangements for North West Europe, not long ago I paid a visit to SHAEF. As the result, 40,000 gift bags with the necessary provision of other supplies have already left this country, and another 60,000 are on order to go.

Eight representatives have also left. The British Commonwealth character of the service is emphasized by the fact that these eight representatives include 3 British (one of whom has knowledge of Indian), a Australian and 1 each Canadian, South African and New Zealander. These have all gone to the zone of our particular Army Group and will be called forward to P.W. Assembly Camps as and when required. Similar

arrangements will have been put into operation in other zones before these words appear in print.

We are, of course, extremely anxious that our Gift Bags, and especially the Message of Welcome, should reach ex-prisoners of war at the earliest possible moment; and I am sure that SHAEF and the various Army authorities concerned will give us every help in this. But some men are sure to miss them, and stocks of Gift Bags are therefore being sent to a port of embarkation in N.W. Europe, and to all countries in the country where Reception Camps are being established. It will therefore be very hard luck if every man does not, at some stage of another, receive our gift. The speed with which repatriation is at present being carried out may make it impossible to issue the more bulky articles such as pullovers. We provided these originally in anticipation of a fairly long wait at staging or transit camps overseas, and no one is likely to grumble if this does not materialise.

Reception Camp Welcome

War Organisation representatives are also present at the Reception Camps in this country, and are ready, in co-operation with Army Welfare, to welcome and help all repatriates. In particular, I hope they will be used to make arrangements for those who wish to be met on their arrival at their home station. Here, again, I would emphasize that the speed with which men are being passed through the various stages of repatriation, though admirable in every other respect, inevitably results in administrative difficulties for the Red Cross.

Reunion

This brings us to the longed-for time of reunion, an event so intimate and so sacred that it seems inappropriate to intrude upon it, even in print. We think, however, that most next of kin will be glad to have advice on the very important question of diet, and with the kind help of the Ministry of Food we are drawing up some hints which we shall be circulating to all next of kin of repatriated prisoners.

As regards the many other problems which may arise, we have also prepared some notes, which we have communicated to Joint Committees and Prisoners of War Representatives in all countries, who are therefore in a position to give advice where it is needed.

N.B.—The article has of necessity been written in the second week in April and week of it may therefore be out of date by the time it appears in print.

Liberation Comes to Stalag IXA

Described by SGT. THERON, of the 1st R.L.I., Union Defence Force, South Africa, who was captured at Tobruk



Otag 79 is liberated, and British E.K.p.o.w.s cook their first meal in freedom.

THERE had been no Red Cross food parcels since the arrival of the British p.o.w.s from Stalag; all of them had walked the grueling 500 miles and most were in a state of utter physical exhaustion. But the German radio announced on the 2nd April, that the American 3rd Army had penetrated deeply over the Rhine at Frankfurt; hopes and morale soared. The pet phrase in the British compound was the "Three P's"—Pardon, Parcels or Peace!

Rumours were rife, but at least hunger was replaced by the excitement of imminent liberation.

Then came the blow. On Wednesday, the 4th April, at a p.m., all senior men were sent for by the German Commandant and told that on Thursday all fit men would move out on foot. The news hit us all very hard, as most of the lads had just completed a previous "hike," and had hardly recovered from its effects.

Mass sick-parades were held; and the ruling of the Senior British Medical Officer was that those who could manage to walk should do so in order to protect the really crippled and weak. The Germans had threatened to force everybody out, and such action would have meant certain disaster to many. We were in three categories—the walking fit; the not-so-sick who were to be transported; and the serious cases who were to remain in Stalag hospitals.

Those Who Remained

At 8 a.m. on Thursday, the 5th April, the marching columns left, and we who remained watched their straggling line disappear into the trees about a mile from the camp. Along the road leading past Stalag IXA there were evident signs of German withdrawals—on foot, by cart and horse, and in trucks hundreds of Germans were streaming back from the front.

In the valley our fighters strafed incessantly. We were told that all men in camp would remain indefinitely—but we couldn't believe that the Germans would

allow us to be retained so simply. It was apparent by 3 o'clock that only a very skeleton guard would remain. Volunteers from among the guards were called for, and eventually at 5 p.m. all who remained were three officers and 26 other ranks. Their attitude was one of complete resignation—the camp was virtually ours.

All afternoon and during the night the battle-sounds came closer, and very few men slept that night. The whole camp seemed "tense" and incessantly quiet. Friday dawned sunny and clear—except for a distant rumble all was quiet. The morning dragged to 11 a.m., and still no sign of Allied tanks. Spotters reported German tanks on the hill behind the camp and we feared a battle might develop in our vicinity. Everybody was ordered to get into barracks and remain quiet. At 11.15 a.m. the German Acting Camp Commandant formally handed the keys of the camp to our senior officer.

At a few minutes after midday a line of tanks was spotted coming towards us from the east. We could scarcely breathe. I grabbed a pair of binoculars from a German officer and in the tense excitement could only see a blur! German or ours? It meant so much. The Germans knew, however, and fell in neatly, ready to hand over to the first American soldier. All this while the camp was quite deserted and incredibly quiet. A shot passed overhead, and shortly afterwards at exactly 12.30 p.m. the first Sherman reached the gates.

At Last!

The p.o.w.s were held in check until the German guards were disarmed, and then as the main American convoy moved up pandemonium broke loose.

Singing, yelling, cheering, prisoners mobbed the liberators—everybody was shaking hands with everybody else. Incoherent babbling and tears were frequent signs of a relieved gladness that is beyond description. All that day Americans poured past, and the starved and smokeless p.o.w.s had mounds of cigarettes and "C Rations" heaped to them. It was a great day.

The next morning trackloads of chocolate, cigarettes and chewing gum rolled into camp. The Yanks were incredibly kind to us and only asked that we re-

(Continued on page 11)



The gates of Stalag XIII open to release the British captives within.



These two shows produced at Stalag XXA, Stalag the Sailer, (Above) and The Wind and the Rain (Right) show the ingenious costumes that can be produced in a prison camp.



YOU have probably all had letters at one time or another from your friends or relations who are P.O.W.s, with the phrase, "We had a jolly good show last night," or "We had a dance last night," with perhaps more details. What lies behind these phrases?

Way back in 1940 about two hundred tired and rather dirty P.O.W.s arrived at Stalag XXA, in Thorn, Poland. After finding somewhere to sleep, someone came into the barracks saying, "There's a show on in such-and-such a barracks in half-an-hour." A show? What kind of a show? Let's go and have a look.

Several hundred men crowded into a sleeping barracks, facing a "stage" made out of table-tops. There they listened to a mouth-organ band with a drummer. Oh, yes, there was a drummer complete with different-sized tin tins in place of drums. Interspersed with monologues, the band played for about an hour, bringing memories and forgetfulness to the weary audience.

The first show was born, and it was the same in every camp. The Germans were amazed at the enthusiasm shown by the men to "dress up" and amuse themselves.

Time passed; Red Cross parcels began to arrive. With the main worry removed, the shows became more elaborate.

Money began to come into the camps from the men who were working. Per-

mission was given to buy instruments. A violin was followed by a piano, then came accordions, trumpets and saxophones, through the Red Cross; until at last dance bands, quartets and even military bands came almost in perfection. The idea of a "show" in those days, was to have the band on the stage; then it would come off for periods to let the concert party give short sketches or perhaps a monologue or song. The whole show was held together by a comper.

This type of show was rather unexciting and depended too much on the comper. Producers became more ambitious and split in two directions. One concentrated on straight shows, such as

"Journey's End," "Dover Road," and "Dr. Clitterhouse," the other on musical comedies.

The musical comedies were usually more popular, but were well balanced by the drama. Many

PRIVATE D. W. GARDNER, liberated by the Russians, from Stalag XXB and now home again was prominent in his camp in helping to produce shows. In this article he takes us—

BEHIND THE SCENES

men found in themselves talent to write these shows, usually "two and a half hours of music and mirth," to quote posters.

These shows brought out the amazing ingenuity of the average P.O.W. Take almost any show based on a cissy street film. The producer asks for a Chinese costume, a girl's evening dress and sailor's costume amongst others. The Chinese costumes are made out of dyed pyjamas with dyed Eastern decorations. Sailor's costumes—Air Force trousers, a blue roll-neck sweater with cardboard anchor stitched on, and a paper hat completes the dress. Ladies' evening dress—a sheet cut and stitched to shape, decorations by coloured paper stitched round hem and neck or on the skirt.

There were a thousand and one "tricks"—wigs and moustaches made from Red Cross string, 18th-century dress, hoop skirts made with wire and crêpe paper, cardboard evening dress collars, paper ties, paper umbrellas, suit of armour from empty tins straightened and "sewn" with wire, blouse from a shirt trimmed with crêpe paper.

These large shows were limited to large camps, but even the smallest camps arranged some sort of show. Perhaps they had a band—an accordion and a drum, or a mouth-organ and a guitar; and they had their little "jam-session" with everyone singing or learning to dance.

Many will look back on those long years with memories of their "first appearance" and the knowledge that they tried to, and did, break the monotony.



A "turn" with the dance band at B.A.B. 20.



BARBED-WIRE UNIVERSITIES

The story of study at Stalag Luft VI is told in an illuminated book*



"THE moments we lose, eternity itself cannot retrieve," run the words of an old proverb. Mindful of this ancient truth, N.C.O.s of the Royal Air Force, imprisoned in Stalag Luft VI (later 357), formed a study circle in preparation for taking examinations and so qualifying themselves for post-war appointments.

The venture became known as the *Barbed-Wire University*.

The British Red Cross and St. John War Organisation sent books and materials and arranged for the despatch and handling of examination papers; no mean undertaking when the courses on the "University's" curriculum included as many as 84 different subjects.

The men behind the drive produced an illuminated prospectus, which told how:

"This unique school was formed to provide educational facilities for flying personnel interned in Germany. The aim of the school is to expel boredom and mental stagnation by providing educational courses which can be profitably put to use in post-war life."

Their Majesties' Good Wishes

Lord Clarendon showed Their Majesties the original manuscript, and later a copy of the prospectus was sent to Buckingham Palace. Its receipt there was acknowledged by Lady Katherine Seymour, Lady-in-Waiting, who wrote: "The King and Queen have seen the illuminated book from Stalag Luft VI N.C.O.'s Education Committee. Their Majesties are both deeply impressed by the beautiful workmanship which has been put into the book, and by the splendid courageous spirit with which it has been completed. I am to say that the Queen hopes the booklet will meet with every success."

The book did meet with great success, 10,000 copies were printed and sold in the United Kingdom. The illuminated prospectus has been reprinted in colour and is now on sale, price 2s., at bookshops and bookstalls.

Studying Under Difficulties

Study and examinations were carried out under incredibly difficult conditions. Five times the "Barbed Wire University" was moved to a different locality; and each move meant a loss of books and a fresh search for suitable accommodation at a new camp.

The Germans allowed no artificial

FOREWORD

BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR FACILITIES

Offered through the channels of the Red Cross Society it has been possible to establish in a Prisoner of War Camp this Educational Organisation, an outline of which is given in the following pages.

To convert this period of enforced military inactivity into one of further training is our final aim. The principal value of the scheme however lies in its power to provide a distraction from boredom and an antidote to mental stagnation."

C. Alderton

This is the Foreword of the book, reproduced in facsimile.

lighting in prisoner of war camps until after 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and as the men had to sit for their examinations between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., this ruling caused considerable inconvenience. The rooms where they worked were unheated, and frequently the temperature there dropped below freezing point. Sometimes there were no tables or chairs, and Red Cross packing cases were utilised as furniture.

In Other Camps

Stalag Luft VI has not, however, been unique in its experiences. Almost every university in other P.O.W. camps has had to contend with similar difficulties. At Oflag VIII the university, which was formed in 1940, was the first of its kind. It had 17 different faculties and a library of 30,000 books. The officers sat for their examinations in a secret room because it was the quietest place. During one examination a bag of pepper in the store burst unexpectedly; somebody kicked a football accidentally

through the window, and as a crowding disturbance pipes held a baggage practice in the immediate vicinity.

The illumination in the room used for study at Luft VI came from "net lamps." These ingenious little lights were made with margarine saved from the candidates' ration, or bought with precious cigarettes from the ration of a friend, and old newspapers used as wicks.

Improving at Stalag IVE, blackboard chalk was concocted from a mixture of toothpaste and plaster of paris baked in an oven.

Equestrian Ingenuity

Men at Stalag 383 wishing to learn horsemanship formed an Equestrian Society and built a dummy horse from an old wooden barrel. Occasionally the German guards were persuaded to loan the society a live cart-horse.

By March 24th this year 20 less than 26,132 applications to take examinations had been received from British P.O.W.s in Germany.

Over long years of captivity men whose minds might have become stagnant in thought and warped in outlook through enforced idleness, have learnt by their attendance at barbed-wire universities and study schools to conquer boredom and fit themselves for post-war work.

LIBRARIES FOR EMPIRE REPATRIATES

SEVEN camp libraries are being given by the War Organisation of the British Red Cross and Order of St. John to reception centres in this country for repatriated prisoners of war of the Dominions Forces. The books are of a type that are scarce to-day but are in great demand. They will include volumes of standard works on travel, biography, arts, science, classics, etc. Books on British country life are particularly popular.

The centres are already well supplied with fiction from their own Dominions.

BOOKS FOR THE VOYAGE

Twenty-four boxes of books and magazines have been sent to Odessa by the British Red Cross and St. John Hospital Library Headquarters to provide reading matter for repatriated prisoners during their voyage home.

* THE ROYAL AIR FORCE SCHOOL FOR PRISONERS OF WAR, STALAG LUFT VI, extracts from booklets and booklets, price 2s. The single distribution is "Prisoners' Study Material" (P.M.S.), Ltd., 11 Old Bailey, London, E.C.4. All post on the sale of the book will go to the Red Cross and St. John Fund for prisoners of war.

FIRST TASTE OF FREEDOM

BRITISH
AND
AMERICAN
PRISONERS
OF WAR
LIBERATED
BY THE
RUSSIAN
ARMY PASS
THROUGH
ISTANBUL
IN
CHEERFUL
MOOD
ON THEIR
WAY
HOME
FROM
ODESSA



A pilot officer on board keeps warm in Russian fur cap and great coat.



THUMBS UP expresses the high spirits of the liberated prisoners of war.

Welcome at Brussels

From The Times Special Correspondent

THERE can have been few episodes more touching in the wartime experience of the Belgian capital than the daily arrival last week of prisoners of war, mostly British, released by the allied armies in Germany, and the manner in which they have been welcomed, refreshed, and given a new start on their way to England.

They came by hundreds—on several days more than 1,000 were registered—and the stream still flows in. To deal with them, all concerned, from Military Headquarters "A" Branch (whose business, primarily, it is) to the Belgian voluntary welfare workers and Belgian boy scouts, have worked all day and half the night. Prominent as always in service of this kind has been the British Red Cross and St. John War Organisation, which concentrated on assisting the liberated prisoners as soon as the first batch reached Brussels last Tuesday.

These came from the advanced collecting centres in transport aircraft which, after landing them at the Brussels airport, filled up with supplies and took off again for the front.

Mingled Joy and Sadness

The men arrived at the Red Cross officers in the Rue de la Loi just as they had left their prison camps, and the spectacle was one of mingled joy and sadness for those who saw them—joy in their new freedom and return to friends, but sadness at the drawn, weakly, subdued look of so many. They told of marches for weeks on end, between camps in Germany, since the beginning of the year, with barely enough food to keep life in them. While on the move they were deprived of the Red Cross parcels without which, in the established Salago, they would have died. Besides those brought by air, a multitude arrived by other kinds of transport, including bicycles, or on foot. These men came on

Reprinted by
courtesy of
The Times

a German fire engine which, they said, they had driven all the way from Hanover.

Every man was given a linen bag containing toilet articles, pyjamas and underwear, writing and smoking materials, handkerchiefs, and a card with the message "best wishes for a happy return home," from the Red Cross organisations of the Empire. Many tired eyes lighted up at the sight of the handkerchiefs. Most men waited first to put into words their gratitude to the Red Cross for all that its care had meant to them in their captivity, and many were in tears as they did so. Several hospitals had been quickly got ready and meals with every sort of delicacy that the men's state of health permitted or demanded were provided by Naaf. The men who came by road all spoke of the wholehearted help that they had received from the troops, British and American, all the way down the line, including the sharing of their rations. They leave Brussels in better heart, cheered and comforted by the efforts of many different people with a common bond of practical sympathy.

BRUSSELS, April 23.



They came home ⁱⁿ Russia

Allied prisoners freed by Soviet troops marching towards Odessa.

By courtesy of
Peterson Press.

IN an Army Reception Camp on the green slopes of a Buckinghamshire wood, 550 liberated prisoners of war, back from Odessa, spent Easter Sunday in England—for many it was the first in five years. They were on their way home on 42 days' leave—with full pay and de luxe rations. No doubt every man agreed heartily with the Camp Commandant's policy of seeing them through the last formalities with the utmost speed and efficiency.

The atmosphere of the camp is informal and friendly and discipline is kept to a minimum. Soon after arrival the ex-prisoners have a square meal. Then follows form-filling concerning arrears of pay, kit, medical claims, and so forth. Each man receives an initial payment to cover immediate expenses. He has a thorough medical examination and visits the radiology department for an X-ray. The Quartermaster completes the gaps in his uniform and equipment. Next is there to provide cigarettes, chocolate, and the ever-popular cup of tea.

Their Problems Solved

To the Welfare Office in the middle of the camp drift those with problems, large and small. Working side by side with the Army welfare officer is a representative of the British Red Cross and St. John War Organisation. The men are obviously reassured by the friendly sight of their uniform, and she in turn is touched by their overwhelming gratitude—not just for any help she is able to give to them in this office, but as the personification of what Red Cross has meant to them in prison camps.

A corporal in a parachute regiment enters the office diffidently. He is not sure whether his problem is in the welfare category. He is anxious to trace his wife, a corporal in the W.A.A.F. The latest address he has of a camp in the Midlands is several months old, and he fears she has been moved or even sent abroad. Within three minutes the Red Cross officer has put a call through to the camp, and in another three minutes the corporal is speaking to his W.A.A.F. wife, excitedly making arrangements for their reunion.

Many problems had arisen through the irregularity of mail in prisoner of war camps in Germany in recent months. Some men in outlying working detachments had received scarcely any letters since D-Day. They wished to verify the addresses of their wives and families. The Welfare Office checked changes of address caused sometimes by bombings, by telephone directly to the local police.

Middle East Welcome

Personal contact with the Red Cross was, however, made before reaching England. Many repatriates spoke warmly of the magnificent reception accorded to them in the Middle East. Red Cross personnel boarded their ships at Port Said as soon as the ships had docked. Once ashore, meals and entertainment were arranged, and on the second day an impromptu dance was organised at very short notice. It was not known how many ex-prisoners would wish to go, but over 1,000 attended and the evening was an outstanding success. The ladies of the party consisted of 45 Red Cross and St. John welfare workers, some 30 Wrens and 45 British women residents. A cabaret show, an excellent band and plentiful refreshments were put on.

Many men told the Red Cross Middle East Commissioner that this party did more to restore them to normality than anything else that could have been planned for their entertainment. At the end of the evening O.C. Troops of one of the transports called for three cheers for the Red Cross, and 1,000 men roared their appreciation before singing "God Save The King."

Their Adventures

Interrogation by the Army Intelligence Corps is a very important part of the machinery of a reception camp. Repatriates are eager to collaborate, hoping to help their less fortunate comrades.

Typical of the experience of many prisoners was that of Private Perkins, who went to India with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in 1942. After service in Iraq, Palestine and Egypt, he was eventually captured at Tobruk, and

after thirteen months in an Italian prison camp he arrived at Staling Vojta. He became one of a small working party at a benzine factory situated in a part of Germany which during the last weeks he was there had thirty visits from "our friends the Yanks . . . complete with their headsets," as he described the raids.

Towards the end of 1944, the demarcation of the guards became noticeably gloomier, and by a contrary process the spirits of the prisoners rose. Finally, on January 23rd, the Germans evacuated the major part of the camp westwards, and Private Perkins, the outlying working party was "one of the lucky ones" who escaped.

With Polish and French ex-prisoners he hid in the woods for four days. They broke into a German magazine for food, sledges were hastily improvised, and piled high with tinned meat, sugar and coffee. The Russian army took this area in an exciting movement, and the prisoners finally contacted the Russians 10 kilometres behind their lines.

Precious possessions collected for years in a prison camp had for the most part to be left behind. But in a few cases P.O.W.s had clung tenaciously to some favorite object. One man was playing his guitar in the reception camp. It had been sent out to his prison camp by the Red Cross; he had learned to play it there, and managed to bring it all the way home. Another man had arrived in England complete with typewriter.

Private Ruggitt, captured in Crete and a P.O.W. for four years, was in a grave (coal mine) attached to the same camp. When the Germans evacuated in a hurry he hid in the roof of the latrine and escaped detection. Red Cross parcels kept him going and later, according to a peacemaking plan, he sheltered in a nearby Polish house. Many of his companions were hidden by the Poles in spite of frequent German searches.

When the Germans had finally left the village, the prisoners, who had been a week or more in hiding, declared themselves to the newly arrived Russians. After much hospitality and kindness, the P.O.W.s made their way to Cracow, Lublin, Warsaw and other cities to which they were directed by the Russian armies, until they were all gathered together at Odessa. And there, daily, more trainloads arrive, to be shipped via the Middle East, to a Buckinghamshire reception camp and then home. B. C. S.



OFLAG VIII.
When this camp was visited in February general health was reported to be good.

Report on conditions during the forced march of British Prisoners of War from Stalag Luft III, Sagan and Stalag Luft VII, Bankau, to Stalag IIIA, Luckenwalde, due to the advance of the Russian armies.

STALAG LUFT VII, BANKAU

On January 17 the Camp Leader was told that the prisoners would have to be ready to evacuate on foot in an hour's time.

On leaving, each prisoner was issued with 2½ days' marching rations. To start with no transport was provided for any sick who might fall out of the column, and the only medical equipment available was that which could be carried by the medical officer and three orderlies.

On reaching Kiebrube, the prisoners were accommodated in an old brick factory, and two field kitchens were provided to cook for 1,350. When they left Kiebrube, a small horse-drawn wagon was provided to transport the sick. Tribute was paid to the assistance, both moral and physical, of the accompanying British medical officer and the two podres.

At Schonfeld, some biscuits and a little coffee were issued. The column was marching again by 5 a.m. and reached Janowitz, where they were issued with a succulent fat meat and some pea soup.

On January 24 and 26 they rested. On January 29 they arrived at Peterwitz in an exhausted condition.

On February 2 they left Peterwitz and marched to Franziska, where they remained until February 5.

Before leaving they were issued with bread, margarine and meat. They marched to Goldberg, where they were put into cattle trucks—as average of 55 men to each truck. The train journey to Luckenwalde lasted three days; the men had no water on the train for two days.

As a result of this march and the deplorable conditions under which it was undertaken the morale of the men on arrival at Luckenwalde was extremely low. There were numerous cases of

frost-bite, malnutrition, dysentery and other illnesses.

Prisoners of other nationalities also marched under much the same conditions and arrived at Luckenwalde in an exhausted condition.

STALAG LUFT III, SAGAN

On January 27, 1,000 prisoners from the East Compound were marched out of the camp. Each man collected one Red Cross parcel to carry with him.

The move was to be made on foot and no transport whatever was available for the march, which lasted eight days. No preliminary preparations were made by the detaining power, and the prisoners were forbidden to make any preparations in anticipation of the event. Small sledges manufactured by the prisoners out of Red Cross material were confiscated, and improvised ruck sacks and kit bags were forbidden.

No provision was made for the care of those who might fall sick on the march or for the carriage of their equipment, and throughout the whole journey the only transport available to the column consisted of two horse-drawn wagons which were reserved for the carriage of German equipment.

The march was made in stages of about 25 kilometres per day. On the way a number of men from Belafis and other Camps joined the column, bringing the number to 1,425.

The daily rations throughout the march consisted of one half-keel of bread per man and one issue of barley soup. The provision of water was entirely haphazard and on many days the only water available was such as could be begged or bought for cigarettes on the way.

The prisoners were kept for many hours in the open after a hard march in severe weather conditions until accom-

Official Report

modation could be arranged, the only shelter provided on each occasion being reed cover.

The marching conditions of prisoners from other compounds of this camp were similar to the above.

STALAG IIIA, LUCKENWALDE

This report deals solely with those prisoners of war who have been evacuated from other camps.

The layout of the camp is in no way changed. There are prisoners of many nationalities, each nationality being segregated. The British prisoners who recently arrived are also separated from those who were there before.

British officers from Stalag Luft III are in a compound known as "Oflag IIIA," where there are 1,357 British and 461 American prisoners of war. All the compounds are overcrowded. Triple-tier beds have been provided, but in many cases the wooden boards are lacking. About 20 men sleep on the floor.

In the Oflag these conditions are somewhat better, but even here some officers have to sleep on the floor.

All the barracks need repairs. Wood-cutting parties bring wood in daily to heat the barracks. There is a great shortage of eating utensils in all the quarters. Washing facilities are totally inadequate.

Medical officers are doing everything possible to help the sick, but they are very much hampered as there are practically no medications or drugs.

Most of the prisoners of war have only the clothing which they stand up in. There is no laundry, and the prisoners are unable to wash their only sets of garments. Religious services are held regularly.

(Visited February, 1945.)



These men were still prisoners, but hopeful when this picture was taken at

Reports from the Camps

In every case where the conditions call for remedy, the Protecting Power makes representations to the detaining Power. Where there is any reason to doubt whether the Protecting Power has acted it is at once requested to do so. When it is reported that food or clothing is required, the necessary action is taken through the International Red Cross Committee.

At Other Camps—

HOSPITAL AT BILIN

This has always been a good hospital and at the time of the visit contained 62 British patients. Treatment is given by a German doctor and two Serbian assistants. Dental treatment is given by a French dentist. The British patients would appreciate the appointment of a British doctor to this hospital.

(Visited January, 1945.)

HOSPITAL AT SANDBOSTEL

Five American and one British patient in this hospital have very high praise for two Serbian surgeons and the treatment they receive from the Germans. This hospital appears to be one of the best.

(Visited January, 1945.)

OFLAG VIIIB, BEICHSTATT

There has been no change in the general layout of the camp since the last visit, except that two new huts are now nearly completed. At present there are 1,846 officers and other ranks, but more officers are expected, in which case facilities for bathing, washing, cooking, etc., will be inadequate. At present hot showers are available twice a month.

The scale of rations has recently been cut and is now the same as that of non-working German civilians and not that of German depot troops.

Four British medical officers are in charge of the camp hospital. The general health is reported to be still good. No improvement has been made in the lighting conditions, and the prisoners' eyesight is suffering in consequence.

Mail has taken longer of late and many letters arriving by airmail were posted at dates varying between July and November. During January, the Germans issued orders that all prisoners of war should be deprived of their mattresses. Almost all tables, chairs and benches were removed, and all public rooms were closed, ex-

THE SHOW AND THE ORCHESTRA.

The professional touch characterizes this scene at Stalag XVII.



cept the Catholic chapel. The excuse given for this action was alleged bad conditions at a German prisoner of war camp in Egypt. Similar reprisals were put into force at Stalag 357. Strong protests have been made to the German authorities by His Majesty's Government.

(Visited February, 1945.)

STALAG IVA, HOHNSTEIN

At the time of the visit there were 4,753 prisoners of war in the area of Stalag IVA. Most of these were distributed in 66 British Work Detachments. There has been no change in the general layout of the camp. At the time of the visit the stock of Red Cross parcels was very low. The medical officer stated that a fair supply of drugs was obtainable from the German authorities and that there was a supply of British drugs. He was allowed to visit work detachments in the immediate neighbourhood and stated that the co-operation of the German medical officers was the best he had experienced. It was unfortunate, however, that there was no British dentist in the whole Stalag. The clothing situation on the whole was fairly good, each prisoner of war having two complete outfits. There was one British chaplain in the camp and he was allowed to visit work detachments as often as he wished.

Work Detachments.—Five work detachments in the Hoyerswerda district were visited.

No. 322, Grube Briggitz.—There has been no change in this camp since the last visit. There were no military targets in the immediate vicinity and the camp was provided with covered slit trench air-raid shelters. The 120 British prisoners of war were employed on loading and unloading wagons or repairing rails for the Grube Briggitz. They work about ten hours a day and every second Sunday is free. The medical officer in charge gave a good report on the in-

firmary where a new room is under construction.

No. 331, Grube Outfeld.—This camp also has good covered air-raid shelters. 90 British prisoners of war are employed in workshops and on security. They work 7-10 hours daily and every third Sunday is free. Living quarters are not very attractive, but a new barrack is nearly finished and should bring about a change for the better. Twice a week a sick parade is held by a civilian doctor and serious cases are sent to the hospital at Koenigsbrunn. The V.M.C.A. chaplain pays visits from time to time.

No. 308, Grube Erika.—293 British prisoners of war work on the mine railway. The nearest military targets are about three miles away from the camp and the men are able to seek protection in the slit air-raid trenches. Living accommodation is entirely satisfactory, as also are heating and lighting facilities. The supply of drugs and medicaments was reported to be fairly good. A daily sick parade is held by two Polish doctors and twice a week by a civilian doctor. Recreation facilities are well organized. This is reported to be a good camp.

No. 341, Grube Heye III.—There were no serious complaints from this camp, where 45 British prisoners of war are employed on railway and surface work in the mines. Good air-raid shelters are provided, although there are no military targets in the immediate neighbourhood.

BAUTZEN DISTRICT

Five detachments were visited in this area.

At No. 1274.—70 British prisoners of war are employed on timber work. The camp has lately been transferred to a new barrack and there have been considerable improvements. The prisoners of war are building air-raid shelters for themselves which are not yet finished.

At No. 1184, Kropfzine Kirschow,

awaiting liberation, stag 19C.

the camp strength has lately been increased to 97 British prisoners of war who load and unload wagons. The prisoners of war have hot showers and washing facilities in the factory, and there is no running water in the camp. There were no serious complaints. Mail from England is said to take about one month to arrive.

No. 1091 is situated in the small village of Neukirch. There are only 100 British prisoners of war, who work in a box factory. Saturday afternoons and Sundays are free.

At No. 1007, Leebach, 204 British prisoners of war work in a sugar factory. During the sugar season only every third Sunday is free. The camp was slightly overcrowded, but at the end of the season at least 80 men would be transferred, when conditions would again be satisfactory.

There are no complaints from No. 953, Leoben.

Several camps were visited in the Dresden district. A new camp, No. 1523, has been opened at Radebeul. The prisoners of war live in two barracks in a small compound. They have covered air-raid shelters. There are no complaints.

Work Detachments Nos. 1308, 1311, 1320 contain American prisoners of war. (Visited January, 1945.)

STALAG IVB, MÜHLBERG

There were nearly 7,000 British prisoners of war and 3,000 Americans in the camp at the time of the visit. This has caused considerable overcrowding in the barracks, and for some time two men shared one bunk and many prisoners of war slept on the floor, benches and tables. Bathing facilities are good, but their use is somewhat limited by the numbers in the camp.

Cooking for British and American prisoners of war is done in one kitchen, staffed by 52 British.

During the recent overcrowding, when several thousand American prisoners of war were in transit through the camp, there were several cases of contagious diseases, particularly dysentery and malaria. Supplies of drugs and dressings have not been very good and the medical improvement by the Germans in this respect did not materialize. In the camp hospital there is also a shortage of drugs and dressings and surgical equipment. The dental station is in the care of British and American dental officers, and fillings and extractions are done satisfactorily. Stocks of materials are adequate and an average of two new dentures a week are furnished by the authorities. Clothing stocks have rapidly diminished owing to prisoners of



Football team at Stalag IVA. Most of the P.O.W.s in this camp were distributed among 60 work detachments when the camp was visited in January.

war from the Western Front needing complete new outfits.

There are two Church of England, one Presbyterian and one Roman Catholic chaplains on duty and services are regularly held for all groups.

There is a new German commandant in charge of the camp, and satisfactory relations exist between the authorities and the British and American prisoners of war. Great difficulty, however, is experienced in obtaining any material improvements to the camp under present conditions. (Visited February, 1945.)

STALAG IVC, WISTRITZ

At the time of the visit there were approximately 7,000 British prisoners of war and 800 Americans in the camp. Most of these were distributed in the 53 work detachments. The general conditions of all work detachments is fairly good. There is an American and a British camp leader. At the main camp the British staff is allowed to shelter in a cellar. Red Cross parcels are kept in a storeroom in the town. Two British prisoners of war work there all day long.

Work Detachment 22A, Brux.—This visit was made very soon after aerial attacks on targets in this vicinity on December 23th, when 6 British prisoners were killed and 11 wounded. Six barracks were completely destroyed and four others were damaged. Some of those which were destroyed were completely burned out, destroying a quantity of clothing and personal articles. In the event of air attacks, prisoners of war are allowed to leave the camp or go to a cellar about ten minutes' walk away, where they can remain until the "all-clear." During the air attack on December 23th these prisoners of war who were killed and injured in the camp. The barracks are being rebuilt and should be in use by the end of Febru-

ary. The 2,210 British prisoners of war at this camp work in nearby villages and in factories. For the majority working hours are from 7.30 until 5. Most of the men now have civilian clothes and carry their own money.

The medical staff consists of one medical officer and eight orderlies. The general state of health of the camp is good, though there are a number of men who should be removed to a camp where the work is lighter.

Work Detachment No. 51, Brux.—The strength of this camp is 1,775 British prisoners of war. The majority of them work in the Columbus mine. So far there have been no casualties from air attack, but prisoners of war are allowed to go outside the camp during an alert or to the shelters in the compound.

There were no complaints about material conditions.

Work Camp Tschasch III, Brux.—659 British prisoners of war live in five huts and work in the Tschasch mine. The health of the men at the camp has so far been very satisfactory. There were no serious complaints. During air raids prisoners of war are allowed to use the covered slit trenches in the compound, but many prefer to go down the mines.

Work Camp No. 238, Nümes.—57 British prisoners of war work here in a wood factory. There were no serious complaints from this camp. Covered air-raid trenches are available near the camp compound.

Work Camp 23A, Deutsch Pankraz.—50 British prisoners of war are digging trenches for the laying of gas pipes. There were no complaints. A daily slit parade is held in a circle.

Work Detachment Dux III.—32 British prisoners of war work at a porcelain factory. Living quarters are not at all good though treatment of the prisoners of war appears to be quite satisfactory. The question of quarters was discussed with the Stalag authorities.

Work Detachment 292A, Tschasch III.—64 British prisoners of war are lodged in an old inn. There are no military targets near the camp. This was reported to be a good camp.

Work Detachment No. 32, Wurms.—This is a new camp containing 100 British prisoners of war captured on the Western Front. The men live in buildings attached to an old coalmine consisting of a stone building in a small compound in an old inn. There are no military targets near the camp. Washing and bathing facilities are satisfactory. Heating and lighting is in order. Medical attention in the camp is given by a British doctor.

(Visited January, 1945.)

Relief by Road and Rail

IMMEDIATELY conditions in Germany began to deteriorate, and transport became difficult, the British Red Cross and St. John War Organisation asked the International Red Cross in Geneva to do everything possible, and to spend whatever was necessary, to solve the urgent problem of supplying relief to British prisoners of war.

The prisoners had in many cases been moved from organized camps and were being sent far away to unknown destinations. These conditions made it impossible to get Red Cross parcels to the men in the usual way, and over a period of weeks practically nothing got through to them on the move.

Then early in March the I.R.C.C. was able to send about 500 tons of food and medical supplies across Switzerland to the small eastern frontier station of Basle, where 50 German railway wagons arrived to collect them. On March 10th the convoy left for Moosburg, 30 miles north-east of Munich; and here P.O.W.s unloaded the wagons.

Moosburg was for a time used as a distributing centre from which parcels could be sent by lorry on to camps in South Germany, Austria and part of Northern Czechoslovakia. It has now been overrun by the Allies, alternative distributing centres have been set up at Ravensburg and Markt Pongau.

Further trainloads of supplies left during the last few weeks.

Leery Convoys Tour Reich

Early in March, Canadian and American lorries were moved from Toulon to Geneva, and on March 19th the first "flying column" of 25 left Switzerland, via Constance, with 130 tons of food and medical supplies. The drivers were Swiss nationals accompanied by German guards.

At the frontier the convoy split up. Six trucks carrying petrol, oil, and some medical supplies crossed Germany to the

port of Lubeck. Of the remaining 10 lorries, 15 reached the Carlsbad and Marienbad area, and the supplies they carried were distributed among 18,000 British and American prisoners, some of them at Prague and Eger. Stalag VIIIB received the contents of the last lorry, which broke down en route.

After delivering their loads the empty lorries proceeded to the distributing depots. It was planned to run a shuttle service between Moosburg, Ravensburg, and Markt Pongau and outlying camps.

177 Tons of Food

Four special convoys, each consisting of 12 lorries, accompanied by a car or motor cycle to act as "scout," left Switzerland between March 14th-18th. These vehicles were driven by Canadian prisoners of war and between them carried about 177 tons of food, medical supplies, soap and boot-repairing material. They headed for Southern and Central Germany with the object of contacting prisoners on the move.

Further convoys left Geneva on April 6th, 7th and 8th bound for Leipzig and Torgau, and others left on April 13th, 14th and 15th for Central Germany.

To obtain the earliest possible information of the whereabouts of P.O.W.s in transit on I.R.C.C. delegate travelled a day ahead of the first convoy, whilst scout vehicles explored secondary roads, along which it was apparently the practice of the Germans to move prisoners on foot.

The provision of lorries, petrol, lubricants and spare parts is co-ordinated by S.H.A.E.F., and further lorries, in addition to those already in operation, are available with the I.R.C.C. for use as and when an opportunity arises.

The I.R.C.C. has been able to get some food supplies to prisoners on the march in Northern Germany, and in the area around Berlin, as well as to others farther south.

UNITED NATIONS' WARNING

THE Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on behalf of all the United Nations at war with Germany, hereby issue a solemn warning to all commanders and guards in charge of Allied prisoners of war, internees, or deported citizens of the United Nations in Germany and German-occupied territory and members of the Gestapo and all other persons of whatsoever service or rank in whose charge Allied prisoners of war, internees or deported citizens have been placed, whether in the battle zones, on the lines of communication or in rear areas.

Individually Responsible

They declare that they will hold all such persons, no less than the German High Command and the competent German military, naval and air authorities, individually responsible for the safety and welfare of all Allied prisoners of war, internees or deported citizens in their charge.

Any person guilty of mistreating or allowing any Allied prisoner of war, internee or deported citizen to be mistreated, whether in the battle zone, on the lines of communication, in a camp, hospital, prison or elsewhere, will be ruthlessly pursued and brought to punishment.

They give notice that they will regard this responsibility as binding in all circumstances and are which cannot be transferred to any other, authorities or individuals whatsoever.

W. S. Churchill.
H. S. Truman.
J. V. Stalin.

Liberation Comes to Stalag IXA

(Continued from page 5)

main in camp and under control. Camp foodstuffs were checked, guards appointed to prevent looting and uncontrolled movement. The camp offices became orderly rooms, and in a short time the p.o.w. cage settled down to wait until transport could be provided to take the men home.

German rations were considerably increased and augmented by the American "C Ration." The kitchen staff worked more often. Men who had been on the borderline of starvation were filling up.

We got fresh meat, too, through a Frenchman, Jean D., who came to the orderly room with a request to be allowed out of camp to collect five cows which

were wandering round without an owner. (And this was in Germany where every egg was counted!) He got an official permit and an hour later the main gateways looked like a farmyard. Jean said, "Ze sheep say do not want to leave ze cows."

Our own details were sent to take over the bakeries, and all German military food-dumps were confiscated and brought into camp. At last the starved, hungry men seemed to brighten up physically—there was a great change.

A Brazilian American captain hastened into the orderly room. Nearly 300 Hungarian women, ill-clad and exhausted, were marching up the road near the

camp. Could we do anything to help?

When we found the women they were far from being hysterical or weepy, and marched conspicuously a further 8 miles to a small village where all were billeted in houses. Their guards had fled and they had had no food for two days. Can you imagine a British p.o.w. speaking German to a Pole, who could speak a little Hungarian? That was how we talked. These experiences formed only a part of all that we saw in the days which followed.

Now we are free and safe, and it is almost too good to believe; but still we feel there is something missing. Out there in Germany are many of our comrades—maybe they are still marching. We hope and pray for their speedy release.

A CONSTANT stream of generous gifts to the Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross and St. John Fund for the work of maintaining vital services to prisoners of war is contributed by large organisations and individual subscribers in the Dominions, the Colonies and Allied and neutral countries throughout the world. It is only possible here to mention briefly some of the ways and means by which money has been raised abroad.

A mining town in Northern Rhodesia recently sent £250, a portion of which was the result of a concert given by the Niamea pupils of the Broken Hill Convent, one of whom has a father a prisoner of war in Germany. The sum of £11,012 from the total resulting from "Target Month" inaugurated by the Governor of Northern Rhodesia was set aside for the benefit of prisoners of war, while another £3,456 13s. 6d. came from the 1944 Rhodes' Founders' Special War Effort. From Ceylon has come a third donation of £100 given by the Colombo Rowing Club, members of which take a keen interest in the welfare of prisoners of war, and expressed the wish that this money should provide sports equipment.

Many donations have come from Persia, among them the sum of £1,000 from the wives of the British staff in the oilfields area; and a gift of £50 from New Zealand was inspired by the arrival from a friend in England of the guide to the Prisoners of War Exhibition which was held in London last May.

Portuguese friends in Louanda, Portuguese West Africa, sent a sum of nearly £600, which they asked might be devoted to a special gift for British prisoners of war, and £300 of it was used towards replacing the library at Staling V.M.B. which had been destroyed by fire. The people of Kenya never fail to remember the needs of British and Dominion prisoners, and a large proportion of their gifts has been earmarked for parcels, one special appeal organised for those in the Far East resulting in £3,000 being remitted. In Nakuru a fund was organised by a small mixed community of Europeans, Africans and Asians, which realised £3,718 23s. 21d.

The performance of the opera *H.M.S. Pinafore* and a sale of work for which the United Nations Junior Group in Cuba was responsible raised £250. From the Cyprus Soldiers' Aid Society as a token of appreciation of the work of the Educational Booklet Section and the

Indoor Recreations Section for Cypriot prisoners and internees £100 was received. £7, also from Cyprus, was given from the collection taken at the harvest festival service held for the patients and staff of a military hospital, while £200, to which the British, Indian and Arab communities had contributed, arrived from Adala Alaska.

A generous gesture in the form of £555 towards parcels for their less fortunate comrades in appreciation of the help rendered to them by the British Red Cross was made by prisoners of war who had escaped to Switzerland and were interned there.

The sympathy and understanding which prompts men serving overseas to

a fine receiver and had come to be regarded as a donation box, was taken over and was with the regiment during a bad incident in which some of the officers were left without clothing. Their predicament caused some sweating, which reminded them of the box, for which search was made, and it was recovered, although the top had been cut off by a piece of shrapnel. The box was later presented to the Red Cross with a further donation.

An endowment by No. 54 Sahi District (Boer), B.N.A.F., "to make Durkist Afrika resemble Merrie England" with an old English fair on St. George's Day was instrumental in raising £1,300. All the familiar attractions of the show-

ground were there—swings, teacups, coconut shies, hoopla, fortune-tellers, and even a maypole under the palm trees! "The British soldier, having bought a bottle of beer from a flower-girl specially selected from her dates at the nearest military hospital, was able to take his choice of travel on an old-fashioned railway, driven by a chimney-pot-batted driver, in an old-fashioned carriage where a charming etiolated girl would ride with him, omnipotently of improvisation!—be lifted soft, from the ground as the end of a 20-ton crane and given a bird's-eye view of the fair as the crane swung round."

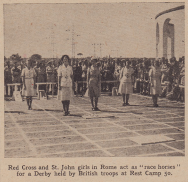
A Light A.A. regiment which had a rest centre in Holland started a fund to entertain 70 children in the town on Holland's Santa Claus Day. The response was so good that there was a surplus of £62 after the party was over, half of which was given for p.o.w.s.

The headquarters of the 54th Field Regiment, R.A., showed great enterprise in their special Red Cross Week, in which they collected 2017. The R.S.M. had to pay to inspect the men's

inlets, the Signals Section suddenly charged a fee on all telephone calls. The Quartermaster added purchase tax to articles drawn from stores on a certain day, and officers were charged a fee on entering the office.

Several men gave their rations, from which an Italian civilian made a cake for a competition, and another man produced and sold an illustrated magazine for the cause. One runner sportingly volunteered to have his much-criticised moustache shaved off by the higher bidder (all bids being forfeited), and this was done at a public printing by the winner who had to hand over 35s.

How They Help Abroad



Red Cross and St. John girls in Rome act as "race horses" for a Derby held by British troops at Rest Camp 30.

send donations is demonstrated by the sum of £17 15s. for their fellows in captivity which was sent by a Free Church chaplain to "help your great work of bringing cheer and joy to those who are always in our thoughts," and by men using a recreation list in Iceland who have sent several donations from their collecting box.

An R.A.F. station in West Africa donated £250 3s., half the result of their "Charity Week," of which one of the major attractions was a football match between representative R.A.F. and United Services teams.

The "sewer box" of one Dominion regiment which had served its purpose as

Show for People in England

Stalag 357. 4-10-44.
I WISH to bring to your notice the general outline of a scheme which, though not of an educational nature, I am sure will be of interest to you.

There have been several exhibitions in England appertaining to prisoner of war life but, to our knowledge, the Stalag Theatre has not as yet made its debut. The entertainment side of prisoner of war life is extremely important and, indeed, essential to the well-being of any camp. Great progress has been made in this field, and it is felt that the history of the theatre will be of interest to people in England.

With this in mind the entertainments committee of Stalag Luft 6 have put before the Air Ministry proposals for the staging of a show on our return. It is hoped that the Royal Air Force will sponsor it and that the proceeds will go to the Red Cross Society.

Sir Richard Howard Vyse has been informed of the plans, and although we are awaiting a reply from the Air Ministry, the organization of the show is being carried out in readiness.

Full details are not available, but if you can imagine the P.O.W. Exhibition at Clarence House being staged with a prisoner of war entertainment background, you will be able to realize what is being attempted—in short, prisoner of war life in all its aspects to be brought to the stage. This is one "post-war plan" in which we are the senders instead of the receivers.

Mixed Train at Leipzig

Stalag JVF. 14-1-45.

I'VE been out three times this week, twice to the hospital (once for a funeral, unfortunately) and yesterday.

I visited two small camps a long way from here. We got there at night, but the return journey came to grief rather badly, as our first train was late and we missed our connection at Leipzig. The next train only went to a place about 15 miles from our destination, as we were deposited there at one o'clock in the morning, and set out on a two-hour walk to the next station in the hope of getting another train.

We succeeded in this, after waiting from 3.15 till 4.45 a.m., and we finally got to the camp at 7 o'clock this morning! The stars were glorious, and the frost was very hard, but the ice-bound road made going bad. Such expeditions certainly relieve the monotony of life!



The Letters They Write Home

My companion is always a German interpreter.
—From an Army Padre.

Can Manage at a Pinch

Stalag XVIII A. 7-3-45.

I HAVE received three N.O.K. parcels and eight cigarette parcels from you, so far. Am sorry to say that parcels and letters are rather slow these days. We are hoping that this situation will not last for long, and anyway we can manage at a pinch. Received the snags, and think they are grand.

I am studying English just now; one of my chief ambitions is to write a book when I get home. I am "chief cook-and-bottle-washer" of a combine of five men—two Australians, one Tasmanian, my pal from Birmingham and myself.

Will give you a tip or two on cooking when I get home. We are getting lots of snare, and it is a white, lovely world—to look at; the mountains are a marvelous sight.

By Train Through Germany

Stalag JVD. 10-2-45.

IT is some time since we had any Red Cross parcels, and there does not seem to be much hope of any more. Still, the war must end some day!

This past week we have travelled

SEND US YOUR STORIES

The Editor will be glad to consider for publication brief first-hand stories of humorous incidents or of incidents illustrating the ingenuity, courage or high morals of British prisoners of war in prison camps or during repatriation and homecoming.

Any interesting action photographs (not groups or individual portraits) will also be welcome and will in due course be returned.

Address: Editor, "The Prisoner of War," St. James's Palace, London, S.W.1.

about 250 kilos, in all to and from work. I think I do more travelling in one week than I did all my life before the war—that is by train. Be a P.O.W. and see the world, or at any rate some of it; joke, I don't think!

Special Week on Railway

Stalag JVD. 4-2-45.

THANKS for letter dated 8/12/44, the first one since Christmas. It must be good to see the old streets lit up again.

We have still got bags of work on the railway. There's more to do every day. We've been getting up at 3 o'clock and

catching the train at 4 a.m.; returning to camp at about 8 or 9 at night, so you see we haven't much spare time. I am thankful to have to-day off (Sunday).

No personal parcels or fags have arrived for us since before Christmas. Two Red Cross parcels between three for a fortnight.

We've been out on a special job, and it is a good thing we can get a sleep in the train.

I hope you've received some of my mail; ours is coming in dribs and drabs.

"Roll On the Boat"

JVF. 25-12-44.

WELL, it's nearly over now, and it hasn't been too bad.

We had a concert last night; I did the stage—a big boat cutting through the waves, and underneath "Roll on the Boat." The show was good for hours of it. My effort was cartooning to music.

Ten Days Solid Knitting

Ofaf 79. 1-1-45.

I MADE everyone in my room a Christmas present of sorts. These included pillow cases, serviettes, etc. I also made, or rather knitted, a woollen blanket out of unpicked socks and old pullovers, which I raffled in this company for the Red Cross. I made 1,007. The blanket took ten days' solid knitting.

Disgustingly Insolent

Stalag 383. 21-1-45.

PROSPECTS are brighter than they have been for some time just now, not only because of the news, but because two trunks of Red Cross invalid parcels have arrived. We have been mired with one between three.

There is little news to tell you—but for skating in the mornings and hibernating till the German lesson in the evening, my life at the moment is disgustingly insistent.

*Groups from the
Camps*



STALAG IVA



STALAG 385



STALAG 385



STALAG IVF



STALAG XIIA



STALAG XVIIA



STALAG 398



OFLAG VA

REPATRIATES' NEWS

Free Telegrams

REPATRIATED British prisoners of war from Germany immediately on reaching this country, whatever the hour of the day or night, will be able to send a free telegram to their home address in the United Kingdom announcing their safe arrival. This facility is being granted by the General Post Office.

Repatriates' Rations

It has been officially announced that British P.O.W.s and Dominion and Allied P.O.W.s on recuperative leave in this country will receive double civilian rations for a period of six weeks. Men who have a medical certificate will receive an allowance of 24 pints of milk and three eggs a week.

Ex-P.O.W.'s Votes

Ex-prisoners, who wish to use their vote at the forthcoming General Election (or at a by-election) can get their names included in a Service Register by signing an electoral declaration not later than four days before nomination day.

Musicians and Artists

Repatriated P.O.W.s who are professional musicians or artists may be interested to know that the Induse Recreation Section of the British Red Cross and St. John War Organisation has certain limited stocks for free issue. The goods available include:—

Instrumental.—Ukuleles, guitars, violins and batmans. A few clarinets, fluted and piano accordions may be available in the near future.

Sheet Music.—Scores for practically all types of instruments. Choral music,

vocal scores of operettas, miniature scores, popular sheet music and instruction books.

Artists' Materials.—Small boxes each containing drawing paper, box of water-colour paints, coloured crayons, brushes, rubber, ruler, pencil and pen.

Applications for any of these goods will be accepted only from repatriated P.O.W.s who are either professional artists or musicians, or who have been studying art or music whilst in camp. Applicants must give their full name and present address, as well as their P.O.W. number and prison camp address, and apply in writing to: The Induse Recreation Section, Prisoners of War Department, St. James's Palace, London, S.W.1.

Study for Study

The Educational Books Section will continue to advise and supply books to repatriated P.O.W.s who wish to complete a course already begun under the auspices of the Section. Only books now in stock will be available, as no new purchases can be made for this purpose.

South African Red Cross

The London Committee of the South African Red Cross which has functioned in England for the past five years acts as liaison between their headquarters in South Africa and the British and Dominion Red Cross in the United Kingdom.

Three-quarters of the Committee's work is connected with thousands of Springboks who were captured by the Italians in North Africa, and later, when Italy collapsed, were transferred by the

enemy to P.O.W. camps inside Germany.

Hundreds of these men have now been freed by the Allied armies advancing from the west, and they are arriving almost daily in England on their way back to South Africa.

If any relatives or friends in this country wish to get into touch with South African ex-prisoners, they should write or telephone to:—

The South African Red Cross,
Grand Buildings (Second Floor),
Trafalgar Square,
Whitehall 5348. London, W.C.

or:—

The South African Red Cross Bureau,
77, The Drive,
Hove.

Hove 7595. Sussex.

They Won Tug-of-War

British ex-prisoners returning from Odeasa competed in a tug-of-war contest on board the ship which was bringing them back to the United Kingdom. Their opponents were men of the Army, Navy and R.A.F., homeward bound on leave from the Middle East.

In spite of all hardships endured during captivity, the ex-prisoners won.

Their prizes were vouchers to be spent in the Barber's shop, but the winners asked that they might receive cash instead if they wished to present it to Red Cross and St. John in appreciation of the help the Organisation had given them while they were prisoners.

Back to Civvy Street

Voluntary camps for repatriated prisoners of war, discharged or released from the Service, are being set up all over the country by the Army. They are to be known as Civilian Resettlement Units, will be run like leave camps and will help to put men in touch once again with civil life from which they have so long been estranged.

Finding a Wife

A British P.O.W. asked Red Cross headquarters in Brussels to find him wife, a Dutchwoman, known to be missing with a British Army Civil Affairs detachment in Holland. Within a few hours she was located and sent to Brussels, where husband and wife met at Red Cross headquarters.

All Escaped P.O.W.s Home

All escaped P.O.W.s who have reached a neutral country have been repatriated except a few in Switzerland who are either unfit to travel or have volunteered for temporary war work.

Thanks to General Ike

"Our gratitude for all that has been done by our American Allies for our prisoners released is being conveyed to General Eisenhower"—Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons.

Examination Successes

W/O. ALAN SAXTON, who obtained first place in the Intermediate Examination of the Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute last year, has repeated this success in the Final, passing with First Class Honours and being placed first of merit of all candidates both at home and in prisoner-of-war camps.

At the examination of the Law Society recently held in an officers' camp, all three candidates for the Final Examination were successful. Capt. J. M. Wallace being awarded Distinction, and another candidate, Capt. J. A. Hogg, passed the Special Intermediate Examination with First Class Honours.

Lt. H. D. H. Deifield has passed the Final Examination of the Building Societies' Institute, and has been awarded the "Sir Enoch Hill" prize of £8 8s. for the best candidate.

Capt. F. V. Corfield has completed the Bar Final Examination and has been awarded a prize of £50 by the Middle Temple on the result of his examination.

In the examination of the Co-operative Union, Cpl. A. S. Chambers obtained Distinction and Cpl. H. Wheeler, Bfr. S. Trelease, Cpl. F. M. Scutcliffe and Sgt. J. E. Kreef obtained First Class in the paper on Window Display.

During the last month over 300 examination results have been announced, the proportion of total successes being 78 per cent.

Pass Lists Still Available

Copies of pass lists for July to December, 1943, and January to June, 1944, are available on application to the Educational Books Section, The New Bodleian, Oxford. 3d. in stamps should be sent for each pass list.

Camp Transfers and Liberation

—Following is the latest official information—

April 24

Onlag VA was evacuated by train on March 31st, and the destination was stated to be Onlag VIIIb, Eichstätt, but the prisoners did not arrive there and it appears that they were taken to another camp.

Onlag XIII has been moved to Wehrkreis VII in Bavaria.

Stalag XVIIIa was evacuated on April 1st, and the destination was stated to be Braunau on the Austro-German frontier.

Onlag IVC has been overrun and the prisoners liberated, except for certain selected officers who had been transferred before the arrival of the Allied Forces.

Onlag 79 was reached by Allied Forces on April 12th. Close upon 2,000 officers and 400 other ranks, most of them from the British Commonwealth, were released.

April 26

Stalag 344 was evacuated by the Germans when the Red Army approached Lamsdorf in January and the prisoners were forced to march westward. About 450 of the prisoners managed to escape to the Russian lines and have now been repatriated from Odessa, but the great majority were transferred to various camps in Central Germany. It is known that men from this camp were moved to Stalags IXA, Zeigheim; IXB, Bad Oeb; XII, Mühlhausen; XIIIc, Harnburg; and XIII, Naumburg, from which camps a number of them were recently recovered.

April 30

Stalag VB, Villingen—50 recovered.

Stalag VIIIb, Memmingen—774 recovered.

Stalag 383, Hohenfels—1,570 recovered.

Work detachments of **Stalag IVD** have been liberated at Eidenborn, Odenrobbing, Etzleri and Teutschental. At these four places there have been recovered respectively 16, 32, 315 and 182 British prisoners of war.

May 1

Stalag and Onlag Nord, Westerland, was liberated on May 1st, but a reliable report has been received that the bulk of service personnel previously held there has moved on April 10th toward Lübeck.

Stalag 357. The majority of prisoners were evacuated before it was liberated by British forces.

Camps in Wehrkreis IV, and **Stalag IIIA**. With the exception of **Onlag IVC**, which was liberated, it is not known whether the men in these camps have been liberated or whether they were

moved further south before the link-up between the Russian and American Armies.

Onlag VIIIb. Except for those in hospital this camp was evacuated on April 15th for a destination near Munich.

Stalag XVIIIa was evacuated westwards and was expected to arrive at Braunau, near the Austro-German border, about April 19th.

Stalag XVIIIa. Prisoners were marched towards Markt Pongau and Landeck.

It has been reported that large batches of prisoners of war have been for some time marching south and south-west towards Bavaria. Some of these must be from camps originally in Eastern Germany and Poland which were evacuated previously, and some also from Wehrkreis IV. Some of these men have already arrived in camps in Bavaria, and where this is known their next of kin have been informed.

It is, of course, also possible that there may be considerable numbers of prisoners still in German hands in the district of Northern Germany between the British and Russian Armies, as it is known that some of the men from camps in Poland were marching in this direction earlier in the Spring.

Next of kin are assured that directly any definite information about their particular prisoner is known in this country, they will be notified by the Service Department concerned. Repatriated prisoners are able to send a telegram to their families immediately upon arrival in this country.

Camps Containing British Commonwealth Prisoners of War Still Held by the Germans on May 1st, 1945.

Onlags

IVB Koenigsstein-Elbe

XC

Lubek

Stalags

IIIc Schwerin

IVA Hohentain

IVC Wietzitz bei

Teritz

XIA Altengra-

bow

317 Markt

Pongau

396 Papping

XVIIIa Wolfs-

berg

Luft 1 Born-

horung

Luft IV Wob-

bein bei

Ludwigslust

New Camp Markt

Pongau

New Camp Braun-

au or Nea-

kirchen

Hospitals

Ukermunde

Luitwaffen Lazarett

41 XI Wismar

Blitz

Schwesing

Hasel Löss

Waldberg

Spittal/Dran

Salsburg

Infirmary Koenigs-

berg

Hags

Liebkow, St. Tet-

burg Rues-

burg

Wulsdorf

Louden

Spittal

Detention Camp

Stralsund-alt-

Fuehrer

NEXT OF KIN PARCELS

Suspension and Return

CONDITIONS in Germany no longer allow of the transport and delivery of next of kin parcels. So it has been decided, in agreement with the War Office and the General Post Office, that next of kin parcels which have been collected by the Post Office from the Next of Kin Parcels Centres at Finsbury Circus and Glasgow shall be handed back to these Centres for return to the senders. The parcels will not be reopened by the Red Cross, but will be returned exactly as received from the General Post Office. This work is bound to take a considerable time, and the parcels cannot be dealt with in the order in which they were originally despatched. The Red Cross will write to the sender of each parcel when it is ready to be returned.

No enquiries should be sent to the Parcels Centre before this letter is received, as no information will be available about parcels not already dealt with.

Later on, parcels which have already left this country, but which have not reached Germany will, so far as possible, be returned to the sender by the Red Cross, and then forwarded to the senders.

HELP FROM WALES

Saundersfoot and neighbouring villages in Pembrokeshire recently raised 1956 for the Red Cross through a bazaar and other entertainments.

COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Please note the following change:
DORMESTRESS: Miss E. M. Williams, Wimbore Red Cross Office, 22, East Street, Wimbore, Dorset.

PLEASE NOTE

As there may be news of interest to repatriated men in *The Prisoner of War*, copies of the journal will be sent to next of kin for three months after the return of their ex-prisoners to this country.

FREE TO NEXT OF KIN

THIS journal is sent free of charge to those registered with the Prisoners of War Dept. as next of kin. In view of the paper shortage no copies are for sale, and it is hoped that next of kin will share their copy with relatives and others interested.

NUMBER, PLEASE!

PLEASE be sure to mention your Red Cross reference number whenever you write to us. Otherwise delay and trouble are caused in finding previous correspondence.