

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

Prepared by MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE WAR DEPARTMENT 15 July 1944

CAMP CONDITIONS - GENERAL

Germany holds 28,867* American prisoners of war in these categories:

	OFFICERS	ENLISTED MEN	TOTAL
AIR FORCE	8447	8146	16593
GROUND FORCE	704	11570	12274

While American are held in 57 scattered permanent camps, transit camps and hospitals, the great majority are confined in 8 main camps. Of these, 4 hold airmen and are operated by the Luftwaffe; 3 hold Ground Forces and are run by the Wehrmacht and the 8th, holding airforce NCO's, is operated jointly by Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht. This separate custody reportedly reflects the desire of Goering to provide favored treatment for Allied airmen in order to obtain preferential treatment for Luftwaffe personnel captured by the Allies. Whether Luftwaffe or Wehrmacht, all permanent camps for Americans (and British) are situated in Eastern Germany, apparently as a deterrent to escapes through France.

TREATMENT: An arbitrary answer to the question "How does Germany treat American Prisoners of war?" is difficult. Compared with Japan's treatment, Germany's is excellent. Compared with U.S. treatment of German Ps/W, Germany's treatment of U.S. Ps/W is poor. Measured against the precise terms of the Geneva convention, Germany's behavior could most accurately be described as fair. Germany's adherence to the spirit of the convention has been generally correct. Her compliance with the letter of the convention has been limited by some factors which, it must be admitted, are not altogether within her control. These would include food and clothing rations, segregation of prisoners according to nationalities and removal of prisoners from danger zones. Food and clothing are severely rationed in Germany. Proper segregation of Germany's 6 million Ps/W becomes increasingly difficult with the deterioration of her transportation facilities. Establishment of prison camps in areas immune to Allied bombing becomes difficult with intensification of the air war. Nevertheless, after making full allowance for those provisions of the convention that Germany, however willing, is unable to observe, there remain numerous wilful violations ranging in degree from technical circumventions to full-scale atrocities. (See individual camp reports, for details on treatment and welfare.)

FOOD: Germany has not supplied Ps/W with rations equivalent either in quantity or quality to those issued garrison troops. After examining an official camp menu submitted through the Swiss, a U.S. Quartermaster dietitian stated the food was insufficient to maintain life in a normally active person. Heretofore, Ps/W have been living on the Red Cross food parcels granted them weekly. Erratic receipt of these parcels, however, has complicated a situation that may grow critical before the end of July. On 5 May Stalag 17B exhausted its stock of Red Cross food. The German Commandant who had halved German-issue rations in January, "as a consequence of the rich supply of Red Cross food," stated that he would again start issuing "normal" rations on 5 June. Thus, for 1 month the sole food available to Americans may have been 1/2 the meager German "normal" ration. Stalag Luft 6 also had used up its supply of Red Cross food by 10 May. At Stalag 3B, where the stocks have been so plentiful that Americans smuggled quantities of food to Russians, Germans have confiscated "surplus" food held by individual Ps/W and cut the German ration. Lack of food parcels has given rise to a camp rumor that armed German civilians looted Red Cross freight cars en route to camp and made off with the food. Many men complain of hunger. At Stalag Luft 3, Ps/W have collectively been denied Red Cross food for reasons of German discipline.

*Figure is based on official PMG lists, State Dept. & International Red Cross figures & secret reports. It includes an estimated 1,500 airmen captured in June but not yet reported & an estimated 3,000 ground force prisoners taken in Normandy.

The shortage at 17B may have been alleviated by this time with the arrival of 42,264 parcels dispatched in May from Geneva. Whether other camps may have been similarly relieved is not known, for Geneva has failed to furnish the American Red Cross with food distribution lists more recent than March. In any event the picture of the future is forbidding since the shipment of Red Cross food parcels to Marseilles for trans-shipment by rail to Geneva has been ended by the Wehrmacht with no explanation. Presumably railroad conditions in Southern France are responsible. The International Red Cross is studying alternatives which include use of the Swiss free port of Genoa and shipment direct to a Baltic port in Germany. Meanwhile, shipments to Lisbon and Barcelona are being continued with a view toward establishing reserves for quick shipment when traffic is re-opened.

HEALTH Health of Ps/W has been generally good. Except for minor outbreaks of skin infections occasioned by infrequent bathing & unbalanced diet, sickness has been rare.

German medical treatment of wounded Ps/W is prompt and efficient at capture. In transit, however, many are neglected. They have been arriving in permanent camps with dressings & bandages 2 weeks old. Once in the camps, Ps/W receive the best treatment available from either German or American doctors. Serious cases are transferred to well-equipped German hospitals. Less serious cases are treated by American doctors in the camp infirmaries, which are uniformly over-crowded and under-equipped. Most camps also lack American dental officers and dental equipment.

Americans in all major permanent camps have been x-rayed for tuberculosis, with which an astonishingly large percentage of long-time British Ps/W have become afflicted, but few Americans have incurred the disease.

CLOTHING Germany has equipped American Ps/W with almost no clothing. In isolated cases where Ps/W lacked any uniforms of their own, they were provided with "booty" uniforms of English, French or Italian origin, or with German fatigue suits. In transit camps such as Dulag Luft and Stalag 7A, Ps/W draw from Red Cross clothing stocks, and after their arrival at permanent camps it is the Red Cross alone which furnishes them with all garments from underwear, shoes & uniforms to overcoats.

MORALE Morale is high but it has frequently dipped as a result of 2 major causes. Failure to receive mail & news of strikes in the United States. The news of strikes in this country reached the Ps/W in German newspapers & radio broadcasts where, of course, it was featured. Prisoners were enraged by such news and many were doubtful that the spirit of the American people was high enough to win.

In Oflag 64, Ps/W have complained bitterly over delays in New York Censorship, and Col. Thomas Drake, SAO, has written a letter on this score to the U.S. State Dept. Men in other camps complain of the slowness of German censorship.

Although Ps/W are extremely grateful to the Red Cross for supplying them with food and clothing, they resent brochures which depict their life as one of ease & indolence instead of monotony and hardship.

Annoyed by an approved visit of a German camera unit which filmed American Ps/W in Oflag 64, Col. Drake wrote Norman Davis, Pres. of the American Red Cross, suggesting that in the future the Red Cross send clothing instead of cameramen.

The guilt psychosis which has afflicted other Ps/W has also manifested itself among Americans. They are concerned about the attitude toward Ps/W in the United States. Some have written bitterly that they could not avoid capture. A few have raged over rumored receipt of white feathers in camp, and many have ranted against Dorothy Thompson's reported implication that Ps/W are cowards.

Reports of infidelity among wives & sweethearts also lowers morale. However, while Ps/W have suffered from occasional depression they have never approached despair. In all camps, American discipline and organization has been excellent. Repatriates believe news of the invasion, long awaited by all Ps/W, will keep morale on a high level for many months to come.

WORK Camp commandants have adhered to the Geneva Convention provision which specifies that only privates can be compelled to work. Officers & NCO's are allowed to work in supervisory capacity if they desire.

Working detachments, or "kommandos", vary in size. The largest employs 568 men in

construction of a power plant. Usually, however, a kommando consists of 30 Ps/W doing farm labor. Life on such a kommando is well described by Pvt. Charles W/ Ronald, recently repatriated. He was in a group of 29 Americans taken under guard to a huge farm 6kms from Stolp, where 12 French Ps/W were already working without guards. Americans were billeted in a section of a large brick-floored barn. Adjoining sections were occupied by pigs, cows, & grain. Ps/W slept on double-decker bunks under 2 blankets. The French had a small building of their own. Guards lived in a small room opening onto Ps/W quarters.

Each weekday the men rose at 0600 and breakfasted on Red Cross food and on milk-soup, bread & hot water (for coffee) which they drew from the farm kitchen. At 0630 they washed their spoons & enamelled bowls and cleaned their "barracks". They shaved & washed themselves in 3 large washpans filled from a single spigot which gave only cold water. The outdoor latrine was a three-seater.

At 0700, they rode out to the potato fields in horse-drawn wagons driven by coldly hostile German farmhands, who would welcome the opportunity to shoot a "kriegie". Under the eyes of a watchful, armed guard they dug potatoes until 1130, when they rode back to the farm for the noon meal. This consisted of Red Cross food supplemented by German vegetable soup. Boarding the wagons at 1300, Ps/W worked until 1630. The evening meal at 1700 consisted of Red Cross food and the farmer's issue of milk-soup, potatoes, & gravy. After this meal they could sit outdoors in their fenced-in pen (30'x8') until 1830. Then the guard locked them in their section for the night.

On Sundays the guard permitted Ps/W to lounge or walk back and forth in the "yard" all day, but they spent a good deal of their time scrubbing their "barracks" and washing their clothing. Sunday dinner from the farmer usually included a meat pudding & cheese.

Once a month each P/W received a large Red Cross food box containing 4 regulation Red Cross parcels. These were transmitted to distant kommandos by rail and to nearby units by army trucks. Parcels were stored in the guards' room until issued. Source says no kommando was more than 100kms away from its base camp. Average tour of duty on a farm kommando lasts indefinitely. On other work detachments, it lasts until the specific project has been completed.

PAY Working Ps/W receive 70 pfennigs a day in "lagergeld" - a paper money which is next to useless since camp canteens are so poorly stocked there is almost nothing to buy. Until recently, non-working enlisted men received no pay whatsoever, and to alleviate their plight, officers collected purses which were sent to MOC's for disbursement. Recent reports indicate that Germany has instituted a policy of crediting enlisted men with 7.50 marks monthly. Ps/W repatriated in May received no actual sum while in camp, but upon their departure got "receipts" for 22.50 reichmarks (3 months' pay) to be collected from Germany by the USA after the war.

Officers are paid on a sliding scale according to rank, with Lts at Oflag 64 starting at 60 marks a month. From this 22 marks are deducted for food and 10 marks for orderly fees. An officer drawing 80 marks monthly at Stalag Luft 3 has to pay 40 marks for similar "living expenses."

Chief complaint of Ps/W is that upon capture no receipts were issued for money taken from them. A few men have since obtained receipts, but in most instances verification of details is so difficult that receipts will never be provided nor money restored.

MAIL Generally, German authorities have been "orrect" in the issue of writing forms. As a rule, officers have been allowed to send 3 letters and 4 cards monthly; enlisted men, 3 letters & 4 cards; medical personnel & camp seniors double this number. The allotment varies slightly in individual camps.

In Feb., March and April issue of forms was irregular, resulting in a total lack in some camps & a shortage in others. Camp authorities attributed the shortage to Allied bombing of government printing presses.

All mail to airmen, regardless of what camp they are in, is censored at Stalag Luft 3 and therefore takes somewhat longer in transit than does mail to ground force camps, which have their own censor staffs. Surface mail takes 2 to 3 months to reach the USA. Airmail takes from 1 month to 3. Airmail from the USA reaches camp in 5 weeks; surface mail, in 3 months. Parcels from next-of-kin arrive in camp 3 months after mailing. An increasing number are being pilfered.

INTERROGATION German interrogation of American Ps/W follows a consistent pattern: All airmen, wherever captured, are taken to Dulag Luft near Frankfurt-on-Main; all Ground Force officers are questioned in Luckenwalde, an interrogation center 50 kilometers Southwest of Berlin; and Ground Force enlisted men, except for an occasional tactical interrogation immediately after capture, are not questioned. Treatment during interrogation has frequently been incorrect and is steadily becoming harsher. (See Dulag Luft and Luckenwalde--descriptions for details.)

If not seriously wounded, officers Ps/W usually leave these interrogation-transit camps within 2 weeks for their permanent camps. Except for those captured in France whose movements are not yet known, Ground Force enlisted men move through a succession of transit camps in Italy & Southern Germany to their permanent camps. Here the German assignment of Ps/W to permanent camps is consistent and the system well defined: Ground Force officers go to Oflag 64, Ground Force enlisted men to Stalags 2B or 3B, Air Force officers to Stalag Lufts 1 or 3 and Air Force enlisted men to Stalag Lufts 4 and 6 or Stalag 17B. It is not yet known whether Stalag Luft 7, recently opened, holds Air Force officers or enlisted men.

REPATRIATION One hundred and fourteen prisoners of war have returned to this country in 3 exchanges of sick and wounded with Germany. Sites, dates and numbers were: Goteburg, 20 Oct. 1943, 14; Lisbon, 15 Feb. 1944, 35; Barcelona, 17 May 1944, 65.

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INTRODUCTION Conditions in German prisoners of war camps holding Americans varied to such an extent that only by examination of individual camps can a clear picture be drawn. This report contains summaries of 12 typical German installations, ranging from Stalag Luft 3, a well organized camp for Air Force officers, through 2B, an average Ground Force enlisted men's camp, to chaotic Stalag 9B, established for enlisted men captured during the Von Rundstedt offensive of Dec. 1944.

Germany held a total of 92,965 (1 Nov. 45 Records) American prisoners of war in these categories: Air Force - 32, 730; Ground Forces - 60,235.

In contrast to the number of Ground Force officers who formed only some 10% of the Ground Force prisoners of war, almost 50% of the Air Force personnel falling into hands were officers. Figures for both branches soared during the 10 months after 6 June 1944 when totals were: Air Force - 15,093; Ground Forces - 9,274; Total - 24,367.

For army prisoners of war, Germany had 3 principal types of camp. OFLAG, a contraction of Offizier Lager (officers' camp), as its title denotes held officers. Stalag, a contraction of Stamm Lager (main camp) held enlisted men. DULAG, a contraction of Durchgangs Lager (entrance camp) was a transit camp but in the minds of airmen became synonymous with interrogation center. LUFT (air) appended to a name indicated that the camp held flying personnel. Generally, camps housing airmen were under the jurisdiction of the Luftwaffe, and camps housing ground troops under the jurisdiction of the Wehrmacht.

Prisoners of war (PW) formed camps within camps and had their own organizations. In officers' camps they were headed by the Senior American Officer (SAO) who was just what his name implied. In enlisted men's stalags, the Man of Confidence (MOC) was usually an NCO elected by his fellow PW, but sometimes he was appointed by the Germans.

Source material for this report consisted of interrogations of former prisoners of war made by CPM Branch, Military Intelligence Service, and reports of the Protecting Power and International Red Cross received by the State Department (Special War Problems Division).