

The following is a Press Story left with me by Wright Bryan which will be of interest I'm sure to all.

It was dated Feb. 22, 1945

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POST OFLAG '64 ITEM
John F. Slack
Editor

A23WX (BRYAN)
(ADVANCE FOR PMS OF THURSDAY, FEB. 22)
PMS BUDGET (1400)
PRISONERS

EDITORS: The following may be used with the Prison Camp story by Wright Bryan:

(Wright Bryan, Associate Editor of the Atlanta Journal, was captured by the Germans near Chaumont, France last Sept. 12, after being wounded in the leg while serving as a war correspondent for his paper and the National Broadcasting Company. He was freed by the Red Army from a Nazi Prison Camp, Oflag 54, at Szubin, Poland on Jan. 22. Bryan, tall and lean flew with the first paratroopers over France on D-Day. His story, which follows, was taken from Szubin, Poland, to Moscow by a soviet officer who delivered it to Associated Press Correspondent Eddy Gilmore. The dispatch was made available to Associated Press members by courtesy of the Atlanta Journal.)

-DASH-

By Wright Bryan
Associate Editor of the Atlanta Journal
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(WX) Szubin, Poland, Feb. 20-(Delayed)-Liberation for at least one group of American War Prisoners who had been held here by the Germans came within eight days after the Red Army had launched its swift, powerful offensive.

Although the number of Prisoners released here was relatively few, there is hope that any others of all allied forces may be close to freedom if they have not already achieved it. Several of the largest War Prison Camps were located in this region and German efforts to remove them at the last minute may have been thwarted by the speed of the Russian advance.

In this little Polish corridor town, a half hour's train ride Southwest of Bromberg, was a camp where most of the American ground force officers captured in Africa, Sicily, Italy and Western Europe were living behind barbed wire, waiting impatiently for the end of the war or for an opportunity to escape.

A little more than a week ago they learned from a German communique of the Russians attack, beginning more than 100 miles eastward.

On Saturday, Jan. 20, the German Garrison warned the American Prisoners to prepare for evacuation of the camp on foot at anytime without further notice. Prisoners certified by German doctors as unfit to march were told to ready themselves to leave immediately when transportation became available.

All that day a continuous stream of civilian refugees moved in wagon carts, bicycles and afoot along the highway passing the camp. Sunday morning the American War Prisoners held their last formation under German supervision on the camp assembly area and the men marched out the gate in a column of threes, escorted by German guards.

Transportation being unavailable for hospital patients and others unable to walk they remained behind. This group, including a few Doctors and orderlies to care for them, numbered ninety-one. I was one of the group because of a slight bullet wound in the left leg which still was not entirely healed.

Until the last minute we did not know whether guards would be left with us or whether transport might yet be obtained to take us back into the German interior. But when our marching friends moved out of sight down the highway, they were followed in a little automobile by the last German officers and soldiers in Szubin.

As they left, the German Officers handed the keys of the camp to Chaplain Stanley Brach of Newark, N.J., and we were once more under full command of American officers.

Quickly we painted large Red Cross Flags to hang on all sides and the roof of the hospital, not knowing whether any Germans were left in the vicinity or where the approaching Russians might be. Rumor placed the Russians about 50 miles away but we had no way of confirming this.

Father Brach, captured in Africa, had been a Prisoner since November, 1942 and had been through this once before. In Italy he had been in a camp abandoned by Italian Guards on the surrender of their Government but had been retaken by the Germans before allied Prisoners could be evacuated. He said Mass Sunday in the hospital ward and told us to be confident, this time we would be free, and to pray for our friends and comrades marching through snow and subfreezing temperatures.

The senior American Officer remaining in camp assured us we had adequate food and fuel supplies for several weeks and "The Russians will be here either tomorrow or the next day or next week, or next month--We don't know when--But they will be here."

All that day we watched through barbed wire festooned with snow icicles--barbed wire no longer covered on all sides by vigilant German machine guns. Barbed wire which no longer held us in but which now kept unfriendly intruders outside the camp. All day wagons some open, some covered, plodded along the highway outside the camp. And all night we could hear a few muffled explosions in the distance.

Monday morning we looked out to the deserted highway and wondered. Then someone saw two American built six by six Military trucks and a light tank go by. They did not pause but spirits in our camp lifted.

Just after 10 O'clock a vehicle stopped, between two principal German barracks across the street from the hospital and heavily armed men scattered to search the premises. From hospital windows we could not tell by their snow covered winter uniforms whether they were German rearguards or Russian advance units. When the vehicle turned we recognized it as an American built three quarter ton reconnaissance car and when officers came to our gate we saw they were Russians.

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An artillery Captain was the first Russian Officer into our camp. He was first of three groups of Russian Officers who visited us during the day and evening. Like every Russian who has been here, they were alert and soldierly, demanding proper proof of our status but once it was established extending all possible courtesy and help.

They told us that Russian spearheads were pushing eastward on either side of Szubin, that Berlin was their goal and that things were moving so swiftly our friends in the marching column might be overtaken and liberated. At this writing we still have no definite news about that column but we are constantly hoping.

Russian units that pushed through Monday were armed spearheads and reconnaissance Force. They moved with swift precision and had no time to tarry.

Tuesday Russian soldiers came through in large numbers, riding tanks, trucks, jeeps and motorcycles and in the afternoon the infantrymen came, marching through the snow. All day we heard the reassuring "Beep, Beep" of American horns on the highway and all day we received visits from Russian Officers and soldiers and from Polish Townspeople who brought us fresh bread and helped repair the water and electric services of the camp.

The Russians have much lend-lease equipment from America and they like it. Equipment of their own manufacture is abundant and first rate. They are eager to meet Americans. They salute and shake hands and speak of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill and everyone has his eye on the road to Berlin.

We told one of them we wanted to go to Moscow. He misunderstood, thinking we asked him if he was going to Moscow. Quickly he insisted "Not Moscow, No. I'm Going to Berlin."

It is all moving with the same speed that the allies pushed across France after breakin out of the Normandy Beachhead--The same hasty retreat of the Germans with some armored spear heads forking out over the country, by-passing German strongpoints--The same truckloads of soldiers and supplies following--The same mopping up by infantry and artillery of hard fighting German Rearguards.

Meantime, we sit here flying American Flag beside those of Russia and Great Britain.

We are free to walk out the barbed wire gate if we have business in Szubin. By now we are confident this area is firmly in Russian hands and we know we will be evacuated soon.

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