

**The Last Dirty Secret  
Of  
World War Two  
By  
James Bacque**



**By  
James Bacque**

## Foreword

### The "Slow-Death Camps" Are A Fact

By  
John Fraser

**FIFTY YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, CANADA** — along with Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and France — declared war on Nazi Germany. The terrible confrontation took six years to reach its conclusion and claimed the lives of perhaps 50-million people, combatants and civilians alike.

Unlike the "Great War" of 1914-18, the Second World War was imbued from the start with an air of righteousness that still strikes us as apt half a century later. Indeed this sense of a just war has been buttressed by post-war accounting, particularly as it brought home the reality of the German concentration camps where — notoriously — more than 6-million Jews were murdered in circumstances that will always cry out for remembrance and atonement.

Postwar historians have properly complicated our understanding of how the war started. (The spinelessness of the Western democracies, for example, has long been seen as almost as crucial as the endemic German ills that gave rise to and sustained Nazism.) Nevertheless, ordinary people have never been in much doubt about the basics. It was Hitler's Germany that caused the war. In the terrible struggle to defeat the Nazis, most people could agree with Winston Churchill's famous witticism that even the devil would merit a favourable reference if he sided with the Allies.

Time, though, plays perverse tricks. With this issue, and only coincidentally to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the war's outbreak, Saturday Night is publishing an oddity: an account of events born in the ashes of the Third Reich that no-one wants to publish — including ourselves. The reason is straightforward. The central revelation in James Bacque's report, which is adapted from his onerously researched new book entitled *Other Losses*, concerns the fate of German prisoners of war in the American camps in Europe in 1945 and 1946. The book itself implicates the French camps as well. By even the most conservative statistical reckoning, nearly a million prisoners died of starvation, exposure, and neglect at the hands of two of the victorious Allies. In the case of the Americans, this was accomplished; it needs to be stated very clearly, as a result of orders, issued from the highest levels of command that deliberately contravened the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs.

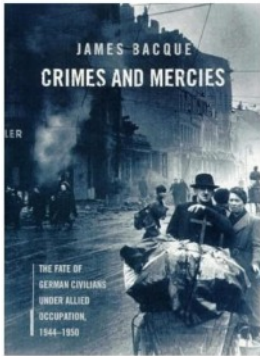


**The fate of a million German POWs has remained shrouded from scrutiny through a combination of self-deception and actuarial cover-up.**

Forty years later, a rather quixotic and intense Canadian novelist with a knack for figures stumbled on the truth. His subsequent quest is detailed in a companion article commissioned from John Gault. *Saturday Night* was in on the latter part of Bacque's travails as he sought to find publishers for his astonishing story.

We were interested, but found it as hard as anyone else to accept the notion that such a catastrophe could have been hidden either at the time or later. In undertaking to publish a distillation of Bacque's findings, we worked with the eventual publisher of *Other Losses*, Stoddart Publishing, to ensure that his facts were independently verified and his manuscript

scrutinized by relevant historical specialists. Some of Bacque's conclusions may be disputed — the precise significance of Eisenhower's name and initials on cables, for example, or the extent of premeditated orchestration behind the startling anomalies in POW statistics. But the cables and the anomalies themselves exist, and cannot be wished or argued away. Nor can the essential chronicle Bacque has pieced together of systematic and widespread deprivation of German prisoners in U.S. hands. The "slow-death camps" and the passive slaughter of probably a million Germans over the course of a few months are facts. To cavil at interpretations is to go on assisting in a camouflage.



In his book, Bacque has some pointed things to say about how, in the aftermath of the war, the Western media abdicated their responsibility to search out and publicize the truth. From inside the contemporary media world, we could tell a tale or two of our own: laziness, credulity, and a preference for avoiding complicated and unpopular controversies often contribute as much to successful cover-ups as all the theories of conspiracy put together. As things turned out, it was not so difficult to come upon evidence of what went on inside the American and French death camps. What took hard work and perseverance to the point of obsession was untangling the sequence of events, investigating the political, military, and historical context, nailing down the culpability, and, of course, putting together the numbers — from a partial and edited record.

Not even a magazine that enjoys flirting with controversy from time to time is looking forward to the expected repercussions.

It was always understood that Bacque's revelations could and probably would be exploited by noxious elements in West Germany and elsewhere seeking to cancel guilt for the Holocaust and the war itself. Far stronger than this fear, however, was the sense of dismay that such a tale could have remained hidden for so long, and a sense of obligation to history.

One other thing needs to be said. Nothing in the revelations printed in Saturday Night mitigates in any way the historic culpability of the Nazi regime for its own crimes. The only possible way Bacque's story could do that would be if, in attempting to dismiss its significance, we were to cite the evil of the Nazis' policy of genocide as justification for the evil of maltreating prisoners of war. A summary paragraph in Other Losses underlines the essential point:

"Among all these people thought to be of good will and decent principles, there was almost no-one to protect the men in whose starved flesh was our deadly hypocrisy. As we celebrated the victory of our virtue in public, we began to lose it in secret."

# Introduction

## A Story He Didn't Want To Know

By

### John Gault

**James Bacque was researching the saga of a French Resistance hero when he stumbled on evidence of the Allied death camps. It took three years for him to believe it.**

**H**E WAS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING HERR GOERTZ, or, for that matter, even setting foot on German soil. His father had been gassed, not fatally, at Ypres during the Great War, and that was probably the beginning of Jim Bacque's hatred of all things German — a hatred reconfirmed as he grew from child to young adult during

World War II. As a liberal intellectual of fifty-some years, he knew that this hatred was irrational, but he could have kept on living with his flaw. And would have, had sheer professionalism not driven him to meet Hans Goertz in his suburban Bonn town house in March, 1986.

Just a month before, Bacque, an acclaimed Toronto novelist (*Big Lonely, The Queen Comes to Minnicog, A Man of tallent!* ), had set up shop (so to speak) in a small town in the Bordeaux region of France. His intention was to produce his first "big international book" on the wartime resistance exploits of a man named Raoul Laporterie, who had single-handedly saved more than 1,500 French Jews. Bacque was accompanied by his research assistant, Jessica Daniel, daughter of his wife's first cousin and a (then) out-of-work young filmmaker. Daniel spoke perfect French, and could manage in German. They rented a villa in Grenade-sur-l'Adour, a town next door to Laporterie's and home of his personal archives. It was in those archives that they came across letters from Hans Goertz, about half a dozen in all, part of a large correspondence from people Laporterie had saved. But Goertz was not a Jew. Goertz was — or had been — a foot soldier in the *Wehrmacht*.

They conscientiously contacted Goertz, and he agreed to see them. Speaking in French, with Daniel translating, Goertz told the story of how he had been captured by the Americans near Bonn, in the spring of 1945, and handed over to the French — shipped first to Rennes, a notorious (as Bacque and Daniel would discover) camp in Brittany, and then south to Buglose, in the Bordeaux region. Then he told of how Laporterie plucked him and another prisoner out of Buglose in the spring of 1946 and put them to work in his tailoring operation. The French, in the process of rebuilding their ravaged nation, were encouraged to use defeated German troops any way they saw fit; the camps, then, were set up as slave-labour pools — just as the infamous German camps had been. But Laporterie was not shopping for slaves. "As soon as I saw that man's face," Goertz said, "I knew I was saved." Bacque thought Goertz was exaggerating. But after the tape recorder was turned off and the white wine was poured, Goertz leaned forward anxiously.

"Monsieur Laporterie is my friend," he said. "I am saying that because he saved my life."



**Left: Jewish Allied soldiers shoot surrendering Germans.**

**THAT'S ALL THEY REALLY NEEDED TO SUPPRESS: THE SCALE OF ATROCITY, THE TOTAL OF DEATHS, THE BIG NUMBER"**

"What did he save you from?" asked Bacque, imagining a near-drowning or something similar.

"Twenty-five per cent of the men in that camp died in one month," Goertz replied.

"What did they die of Daniel asked, and Goertz answered, "Starvation, dysentery, and disease." Bacque automatically translated the percentage: at that rate, every prisoner in Buglose would have been dead in four months.

Goertz's words had conjured an indelible image in Bacque's mind — sick, hopeless men slumped on benches behind barbed wire — though surely, Bacque thought, it pertained only to one small camp in one small French village. Within weeks of the interview, however, Bacque had begun to think of the camp story as a possible chapter in his Laporterie book. His motives were not entirely pure: he'd been a publisher before becoming a novelist, he knew that "scandalous revelations" sold books.

As soon as Bacque started to ask questions, he started to get ugly answers. A Buglose man named Jean Marc, for example, a boy when the camps were established, recalled prisoners

tumbling dead out of boxcars when a train brought them from another camp, and others dropping and dying on the two-kilometre march between train station and barbed-wire enclosure. Buglose, then, had not been the only French camp where prisoners were maltreated. Spreading his net wider, Bacque collected more eyewitness accounts, from villagers, former camp guards, and any survivors he could trace.

Bacque always pressed his informants for the numbers: "The thing the Western mind loves, and uses to pull things together, is statistics." Under his cross-examination, survivors (some from burial crews) and guards would estimate how many men had been in a given camp, and how many died there over, say, a month. Out came Bacque's calculator. Uncannily, the annual death rate kept falling within a few points of thirty per cent. But harder statistics seemed impossible to come by. Despite intensive local searches, Bacque couldn't discover how many prisoners Buglose — or any of the other five camps in the area — had officially held, or how many actual deaths had been reported. Files that should have held camp records were empty.



### **Captured German soldiers on their way to the Dietersheim camps.**

In April, Bacque and Daniel spent three days in the French Military Archives at Vincennes, a Paris suburb. They still had no luck in finding prisoner tallies but they did come upon some contemporary descriptions by horrified French officers and civilian leaders. The most shocking — "like Buchenwald," "peopled with living skeletons" — concerned not camps in the Bordeaux region, or anywhere else in France, but a group clustered around Dietersheim, in West Germany, that in late July of 1945 had only just been turned over to the French. Before that, and from their inception, the Dietersheim camps, like 200 other camps in Germany, had been run by the Americans.

As it turned out, there had been reports in the Paris press (which Bacque eventually tracked down) about the desperate state of prisoners handed over to the French by the Americans. Ironically, Bacque first learned of these in a denial — a message from General Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the Allied forces — that he came across in May at the **West German National Archives (Bundesarchiv) at Koblenz**. He and Daniel also discovered here that most oldie "official story" of what took place in occupied Germany immediately after the surrender had been written for the Germans by the American military. When they asked for prisoner-of-war material, they were given photocopies of army documents sent over from Washington. "There was," Bacque remarks, "a great deal to show what bastards the French were."

Then Daniel came across a series of histories, commissioned in the 1960's by the West German government, that chronicled the fortunes of German prisoners in the two world wars. Four volumes dealt with Second World War prisoners and, from what she could decipher, said specifically of those taken by the western Allies that conditions were often difficult, but that the death rate was under two per cent — not much greater than that of the average town in peacetime. "My heart fell," Bacque says. "I looked at these books, all done with Teutonic thoroughness, and I said to myself, you've been wasting your time."

But because his German was nonexistent and Daniel's merely adequate, and because the mortality rate flew in the face of his own findings, Bacque photocopied the relevant sections and sent them off to a friend in Frankfurt who was truly German-English bilingual. A few weeks later, when he got the translations, his suspicions were confirmed. According to Bacque, the author, Kurt W. Bohme, "quite plainly described, in anecdote and in narrative, all the conditions of an atrocity." But then he stated boldly that no mass deaths had occurred, and supplied — unsupported by statistics — a death rate of under two per cent. Bohme had got his stories, of course, in pretty much the same way Bacque was getting his — by asking the people who'd been



there. But where had he got his number? The answer to that came a few weeks later in Paris, when Daniel went out and made "one of our most important discoveries," a typed report on the French handling of prisoners written by a French general named Buisson. As Bacque pored over the photocopy two things became obvious: first, Buisson's manuscript had been Bohme's source for the death rate; and second, the manuscript, which was apparently an internal government document, was not only self-serving but riddled with inconsistencies and worse.

From this point on, Bacque was convinced that there had been a deliberate cover-up, achieved in part by manipulation of the statistics so that no-one could put together a coherent picture of total deaths in relation to total POW populations. The scale of the die-off in the camps: "That's the only thing they needed to suppress," he points out. In fact, until he shifted his investigations to archives and libraries in the United States, half a year after the Goertz revelation, Bacque was not even sure how many camps had been created in the French and American zones of Germany, plus France itself: the answer was about 1,800. Nor was he sure how many German prisoners had been rounded up: he was astounded to learn that the Western Allies had captured more than 9- million, of whom 5.25- million had been taken by the Americans in north-western Europe. It was later still that he came upon another fact: about 1.7-million German soldiers were never accounted for after the war. In the West, it had been convenient to blame the Russians. (The Iron Curtain foreclosed on any particular need to furnish proof.) But by the time he discovered the number, Bacque was already certain of a different fate for at least a million of the missing men.

As August switched into September of 1986, Bacque and Daniel (her final appearance in the drama) drove down to Washington on what Bacque thought of as a fool's errand: perhaps he could find American confirmation of the atrocity he still thought of as mainly French. On the very first day of research in Washington, Bacque discovered "other losses."



**At the United States National Archives on Pennsylvania Avenue,** Bacque opened a file of reports titled HEAD-QUARTERS / UNITED STATES FORCES/EUROPEAN THEATRE / GI DIVISION which proved to be the U.S.

Army's official weekly Prisoner of War and Disarmed Enemy Forces (DEF) ledgers for a short period in the autumn of 1945. They laid out, by military district, the number of prisoners on hand at the start of the week, the number acquired or transferred, the number discharged, and — before giving the closing balance — the number in one other category: OTHER LOSSES. Bacque had seen a similar expression in French documents: "*Perdus pour Raisons Diverses*." There wasn't much doubt in his mind that both phrases meant deaths. And the death rates? "I could do the numbers in my head. Roughly 5,000 POWs (OTHER LOSSES) in a week, that's about a quarter- million a year, and you look over to the other side (PREVIOUS ON HAND) and you see there were about 700,000 on hand so life expectancy was under three years." Or an annual death rate of over thirty-three per cent. "And the line of totals above, the DEF's: 13,000 'other losses' in a week. The 370,000 guys in those camps would all be dead in less than eight months."

Bacque had accumulated evidence against the U.S. camps along the way, but had neglected it on the assumption that no scandal could possibly have been concealed, and that his evidence would be explained away somewhere in the record. With the discovery of OTHER LOSSES, however, his suspicions shifted and refocused on the Americans. The phrase itself became the title of his book.

Back in Toronto, Bacque started on the Laporterie manuscript (today completed and awaiting publication). At the same time, though, he began to follow through on an idea that had come to him in Washington. He had made a list of American officers who had been involved with post-war German prisoners. Now he began to write letters, sixty, eighty, a hundred letters. He

shipped them in bundles to the U.S. Army's locator service. They brought only a handful of replies, but two would turn out to be of inestimable significance. The first led Bacque by a roundabout route to Colonel Ernest Fisher, a former senior historian at the United States Army Center for Military History who, as a young lieutenant, had served under the supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, General Dwight Eisenhower. Bacque and Fisher first met in February of 1987, and, once presented with Bacque's evidence, the historian admitted that he wasn't surprised: no, he had never witnessed atrocities in the post-war camps, but he had always harboured suspicions. Calling up all his expertise, Fisher plunged into the project.



**Bacque assumed not only that the U.S. Army had behaved well in victory but that the Geneva Convention protected all Wehrmacht troops who surrendered**

It was Fisher's research, in fact, that first began to implicate Eisenhower himself: a discovery of Eisenhower's initials on a cable dated March 10, 1945, proving he had probably drafted — certainly had full knowledge of — the proposal to re-designate German prisoners of war (protected by the Geneva Convention) as "disarmed enemy forces" (not protected). From this point, Bacque and Fisher found more and more evidence — initialed memoranda, cablegrams, minutes of meetings — that put the supreme commander (who openly despised Germans) in a position of knowing responsibility for the camps.

The second vital response to Bacque's inquiry letters arrived in Toronto while he was in Washington connecting with Fisher. It came from a retired colonel, Philip S. Lauben, who had actually been chief of the German Affairs Branch for SHAH' — Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force - in charge of repatriation of prisoners and transfers to the French. In March, Bacque met Lauben and unfurled his documents. "What does 'other losses' mean?" bacque asked as they reached that subheading. It was a crucial question. The ledgers were hard evidence — but only if his assumption could be verified.

"It means deaths and escapes," Lauben said.

"How many escapes? Bacque. asked.

Very, very minor," replied. Less than one in 1,000 Basque would eventually learn.

Lauben went on to confirm as much of Bacque's research as he had direct knowledge of, and that was a great deal. At the end of the day, he said wearily, "The shit is really going to hit the fan now"

In fact, though, the quest was not over. A challenge from a doubting historian whose imprimatur Bacque had sought forced him to Admit that he needed more than a single "smoking gun." And he found one.

In a of depot the National Archives in Suitland, Maryland, in a room so packed that his shoulders brushed shelves on each side as he eased down the aisles, Bacque found two tables reprinted from a medical survey of 80,583 German prisoners held in US camps along along the Rhine in the period May June 1945 One table, incomplete and lacking a total, ranked the chief causes of death from disease, by actual fatalities in the camps; the other extrapolated an annual death rate from all causes for the camps population as a whole. Something was wrong: the medical survey had been done over a six-week period, but this second table, too, gave no actual total of deaths for the six weeks — just the projection for the year in each category. The projection for deaths from disease, for example, was 2,754. Overall, the table yielded a death rate in the 3.5-percent-per annum range.

That night, and for at least a fortnight thereafter, Bacque puzzled and pored over his photocopy of the report, suspecting the numbers had been fiddled to lower the death rate, but not certain how to prove it. His inspiration, when it came, was to subject the projected annual deaths to the most obvious form of backtracking: divide by fifty-two and multiply by six, to arrive at the number the doctors must originally have reported, that is, the actual deaths in the six-week period. He discovered, quite simply, that in no category could an authentic — whole — number have been the basis for the projection. How could the doctors have reported, for example, .317,76923 actual deaths from disease: The annual projection of 2,754 seemed to have been pulled out of the air.

15 1106

HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES FORCES  
SUBURBAN DISTRICT  
G-1 Division

Date: 21 September 1945

WEEKLY DEF & POW REPORT  
AS OF: 08 SEP 1945

	PREVIOUS PERIOD	DEATHS	DISCHARGED DURING PERIOD	DISCHARGED TOTAL	TRANSFERRED DURING PERIOD	TRANSFERRED TOTAL	OTHER DEATHS	TOTAL DEATHS
EUROPEAN MIL. DISTRICT	963,583	18,717	13,300	1,514,207	1,619	17,261	6,532	250,943
AFRICAN MIL. DISTRICT	77,752	28,825	1,564	744,243	- - -	51,691	6,519	115,691 (1)
ASIAN (Excl. Korea & Okinawa)	2,253	10,858	927	2,495	18,066	127,590	- - -	2,118
TOTAL	1,043,588	58,399	15,791	1,761,350	19,685	194,542	13,051	370,555
POW	692,895	2,096	- - -	331,707	11,407	751,996	5,543	478,647

(1) Figures include:  
Military labor service units - 22,954  
Hospital cases - 41,387

\* - 40,745 discharged by 12 ADP formerly included, deducted from total previous report

Distribution:  
General Evans  
Col. Leuber  
Col. Magallon G-3  
Major [unclear] (1st Lt)  
Major [unclear] G-1 USMC (Rear)  
OTCOT TRIST (Rear) APO #837

Information Control Division, USMIL (Main)  
SOS, Staff Section, USMIL (Main)  
G-3 War Room, USMIL (Main)  
G-4 War Room, USMIL (Main)  
Medical Administration, USMIL (Main)  
OTCOT TRIST (Main) APO #757

Capt. [unclear] Adj. G-4 Div. USMIL  
Theater Provost Marshal, HQ USMIL,  
APO SCF, U.S. Army  
Att. Chief of JW Div.  
File.

**Official DEF/POW balance sheet for the week ending September 8, 1945, shows the DEFs totalled by military district, the POWs appended as a separate tally**

In fact, it hadn't been. Racque and Fisher later found a complete version of the first table: there had been 2,754 deaths from disease in the six weeks of the original survey. The proper projection for the year should have been just under 24,000 deaths — among just over 80,000 prisoners.

Bacque's quest took three years of his life and something like \$100,000 of his own money, besides costing him the old luxury of hating Germans — and some other illusions. Even though he scaled down his indictment of Eisenhower after Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose spent two-and-a-half days on a critique of his manuscript, the war hero and popular president still comes off badly. Which, Bacque believes, is the major reason why there has been no American sale of *Other Losses*. At this writing, *Other Losses* has only two publishers, one German and one Canadian.

As for Hans Goertz: when he learned that the story he told on that late winter night in 1986 had become more than an anecdote in the life of his friend, Raoul Laporterie, Goertz steadfastly refused to have anything more to say. Bacque's letters went unanswered, his telephone calls were refused. One March night, drinking white wine with Jim Bacque and Jessica Daniel and thinking back forty years, Goertz had called up his ugliest memory. For whatever reasons, he would not do so again.





# The Last Dirty Secret Of World War Two

By

**James Bacque**



*James Bacque is a Canadian author and historian, who has written five books on WW2. Two of his books dealt with the allied death camps, and the treatment of civilian Germans from 1945- 1950. Publishers, and libraries, made sure that both works quickly reached obscurity, but now the Internet has revived these classics.*

**Call it callousness, call it reprisal, call it a policy of hostile neglect: a million Germans taken prisoner by Eisenhower's armies died in captivity after the surrender**

**I**N THE SPRING OF 1945, ADOLF HITLER's Third Reich was on the brink of collapse, ground between the Red Army, advancing westward towards Berlin, and the American, British, and Canadian armies, under the overall command of General Dwight Eisenhower, moving eastward over the Rhine. Since the D-Day landings in Normandy the previous June, the western Allies had won back France and the Low Countries, and some Wehrmacht commanders were already trying to negotiate local surrenders. Other units, though, continued to obey Hitler's orders to fight to the last man. Most systems, including transport, had broken down, and civilians in panic flight from the advancing Russians roamed at large.

“Hungry and frightened, lying in grain fields within fifty feet us, awaiting the appropriate time to jump up with their hands in the air”: that's how Captain H. F. McCullough of the 2nd Anti-Tank Regiment of the 2nd Canadian Division described the chaos of the German surrender at the end of the Second World War. In a day and a half, according to Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, 500,000 Germans surrendered to his 21st Army Group in northern Germany. Soon after V-E Day — May 8, 1945 — the British-Canadian catch totalled more than 2-million. Virtually nothing about their treatment survives in the archives in Ottawa or London, but some skimpy evidence from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the armies concerned, and the prisoners themselves indicates that almost all continued in fair health. In any case, most were quickly released and sent home, or else transferred to the French to help in the post-war work of reconstruction. (The French army had itself taken fewer than 300,000 prisoners.)

Like the British and Canadians, the Americans suddenly faced astounding numbers of surrendering German troops: the final tally of prisoners taken by the U.S. army in Europe (excluding Italy and North Africa) was 5.25-million. But the Americans responded very differently.

Among the early U.S. captives was one Corporal Helmut Liebich, who had been working in an anti-aircraft experimental group at Peenemunde on the Baltic. Liebich was captured by the Americans on April 17, near Gotha in central Germany. Forty-two years later, he recalled vividly that there were no tents in the Gotha camp, just barbed-wire fences around a field soon churned to mud. The prisoners received a small ration of food on the first day but it was then cut in half. In order to get it, they were forced to run a gauntlet. Hunched over, they ran between lines of American guards who hit them with sticks as they scurried towards their food. On April 27, they were transferred to the U.S. camp at Heidesheim farther west, where there was no food at all for days, then very little. Exposed, starved, and thirsty, the men started to die. Liebich saw between ten and thirty bodies a day being dragged out of his section, B, which at first held around 5,200 men. He saw one prisoner beat another to death to get his little piece of bread. One night, when it rained, Liebich saw the sides of the holes in which they were sheltered, dug in soft sandy earth, collapse on men who were too weak to struggle out. They smothered before anyone could get to them. Liebich sat down and wept..“I could hardly believe men could be so cruel to each other.”

Typhus broke out in Heidesheim about the beginning of May. Five days after V-E Day, on May 13, Liebich was transferred to another U.S. POW camp, at Bingen Rudesheim in the Rhineland

near Bad Kreuznach, where he was told that the prisoners numbered somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000, all without shelter, food, water, medicine, or sufficient space.

Soon he fell sick with dysentery and typhus. He was moved again, semiconscious and delirious, in an open-topped railway car with about sixty other prisoners: northwest down the Rhine, with a detour through Holland, where the Dutch stood on bridges to smash stones down on the heads of the prisoners. Sometimes the American guards fired warning shots near the Dutch to keep them off. Sometimes not. After three nights, his fellow prisoners helped him stagger into the huge camp at Rheinberg, near the border with the Netherlands, again without shelter or food.



**A German newspaper, Rhein-Zoltung, has identified this uncaptioned U.S. Army photograph of German POWs as: camp at Sinzig-Remagen, spring, 1945**

When a little food finally did arrive, it was rotten. In none of the four camps had Liebich seen any shelter for the prisoners. The death rate in the U.S. Rhineland camps at this point, according to surviving data from a medical survey, was about thirty per cent per year. A

normal death rate for a civilian population in 1945 was between one and two per cent.

One day in June, through the hallucinations of his fever, Liebich saw "the Tommies" coming into the camp. The British had taken over Rheinberg, and that probably saved his life. At this point, Liebich, who is five-foot-ten, weighed 96.8 pounds.

#### **EISENHOWER HIMSELF SIGNED THE REQUEST TO CREATE A PRISONER CATEGORY NOT COVERED BY THE GENEVA CONVENTION**

According to stories told to this day by other ex-prisoners of Rheinberg, the last act of the Americans before the British took over the camp was to bulldoze one section level while there were still living men in their holes in the ground.

Under the Geneva Convention, three important rights are guaranteed prisoners of war: that they will be fed and sheltered to the same standard as base or depot troops of the Capturing Power; that they can send and receive mail; and that they will be visited by delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who will report in secret on their treatment to a Protecting Power. (In the case of Germany, as the government disintegrated in the closing stages of the war, Switzerland had been designated the protecting power.)

In fact, German prisoners taken by the U.S. Army at the end of the Second World War were denied these and most other rights by a series of specific decisions and directives stemming mainly from U.S. Army headquarters at SHAEF — Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force. General Dwight Eisenhower was both supreme commander of SHAEF — all the Allied armies in north-western Europe — and the commanding general of the U.S. forces in the European theatre. He was subject to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) of Britain and the U.S., to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff ( JCS), and to the policy of the U.S. government, but in the absence of explicit directives — to the contrary or otherwise — ultimate responsibility for the treatment of the German prisoners in American hands lies with him.

**God, I hate the Germans,"** Eisenhower wrote to his wife, Mamie, in September, 1944. Earlier, in front of the British ambassador to Washington, he had said that all the 3,500 or so officers of the German General Staff should be "exterminated."

In March, 1945, a message to the Combined Chiefs of Staff signed and initialed by Eisenhower recommended, creating a new class of prisoners — Disarmed Enemy Forces, or DEF's — who, unlike Geneva-defined prisoners of war, would not be fed by the army after the surrender of Germany. This would be a direct breach of the Geneva Convention. The message, dated March 10, argues in part: "The additional maintenance commitment entailed by declaring the German Armed Forces prisoners [sic] of war which would necessitate the provision of rations on a scale equal to that of base troops would prove far beyond the capacity of the Allies even if all German sources were tapped." It ends: "Your approval is requested. Existing plans have been prepared upon this basis."



On April 26, 1945, the Combined Chiefs approved the DEF status for prisoners of war in American hands only: the British members had refused to adopt the American plan for their own prisoners. The Combined Chiefs stipulated that the status of disarmed German troops be kept secret.

By that time, Eisenhower's quartermaster general at SHAEF, General Robert Littlejohn, had already twice reduced rations to prisoners and a SHAEF message signed "Eisenhower" had reported to General George Marshall, the U.S. Army chief of staff, that the prisoner pens would provide "no shelter or other comforts. . . ."

The problem was not supplies. There was more than enough materiel stockpiled in Europe to construct prison-camp facilities. Eisenhower's special assistant, General Everett Hughes, had visited the huge supply dumps at Naples and Marseille and reported: "More stocks than we can ever use. Stretch as far as eye can see." Food should not have been a problem, either. In the U.S., wheat and corn surpluses were higher than they had ever been, and there was a record crop of potatoes. The army itself had so much food in reserve that when a whole ware houseful was dropped from the supply lists by accident in England it was not noticed for three months. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross had over 100,000 tons of food in storage in Switzerland. When it tried to send two trainloads of this to the American sector of Germany, U.S. Army officers turned the trains hack, saying their warehouses were already overflowing with ICRC food which they had never distributed.

Nonetheless it was through the supply side that the policy of deprivation was carried out. Water, food, tents, space, medicine — everything necessary for the prisoners was kept fatally scarce. Camp Rheinberg, where Corporal Liebich would fetch up in mid-May, shivering with dysentery and typhus, had no food at all when it was opened on April 17. As in the other big "Rhine meadow" camp, , opened by the Americans in mid-April, there were no guard towers, tents, buildings, cooking facilities, water, latrines, or food.

George Weiss, a tank repairman who now lives in Toronto, recalls of his camp on the Rhine: "All night we had to sit up jammed against each other. But the lack of water was the worst thing of all. For three and a half days, we had no water at all. We would drink our own urine. . . ."

Private Heinz T. (his surname is withheld at his request) had just turned eighteen in hospital when the Americans walked into his ward on April 18. He and all his fellow patients were taken out to the camp at Bad Kreuznach in the Rhineland, which already held several hundred thousand prisoners. Heinz was wearing only a pair of shorts, shoes, and a shirt.

Heinz was far from the youngest in the camp, which also held thousands of displaced German civilians. There were children as young as six among the prisoners, as well as pregnant women, and men over sixty. At the beginning, when trees still grew in the camp, some men managed to cut off limbs to build a fire. The guards ordered the fire put out. In many of the enclosures, it

was forbidden to dig holes in the ground for shelter. "All we had to eat was grass," Heinz remembers.

Charles von Luttichau was convalescing at home when he decided to surrender voluntarily to U.S. troops about to occupy his house. He was taken to Camp Kripp, on the Rhine near Remagen.

"We were kept in crowded barbed-wire cages in the open with scarcely any food."

**The POW camps clustered all along the Rhine mark the final successful Allied thrust into Germany. The U.S. Army officially took 5.25-million prisoners he recalled recently. (See map on page 17.)**

"More than half the days we had no food at all. On the rest, we got a little K ration. I could see from the package that they were giving us one-tenth of the rations that they issued to their own men. . . . I complained to the American camp commander that he was breaking the Geneva Convention, but he just said, 'Forget the Convention. You haven't any rights.'

### **WORK CREWS REMOVED DOG TAGS, STRIPPED THE BODIES, AND STACKED THEM IN LAYERS INTERBEDDED WITH QUICKLIME**



"The latrines were just logs flung over ditches next to the barbed-wire fences. Because of illness, the men had to defecate on the ground. Soon, many of us were too weak to take off our trousers first. So our clothing was infected, and so was the mud where we had to walk and sit and lie down. In these conditions, our men very soon started to die. Within a few days, some of the men who had gone healthy into the camp were dead. I saw our men dragging many bodies to the gate of the camp, where they were thrown loose on top of each other onto trucks, which took them away."

Von Luttichau's mother was American and he later emigrated to Washington, D.C., where he became a historian and wrote a military history for the U.S. Army. He was in the Kripp camp for about three months.

Wolfgang Iff, who was imprisoned at Rheinberg and still lives in Germany, reports that, in his subsection of perhaps 10,000 prisoners, thirty to forty bodies were dragged out every day. A member of the burial work party, Iff says he helped haul the dead from his cage out to the gate of the camp, where the bodies were carried by wheelbarrow to several big steel garages. There Iff and his team stripped the corpses of clothing, snapped off half of each aluminium dog tag, spread the bodies in layers of fifteen to twenty, with ten shovelfuls of quicklime over each layer till they were stacked a metre high, placed the personal effects in a bag for the Americans, then left. Some of the corpses were dead of gangrene following frostbite. (It was an unusually wet, cold spring.) A dozen or more others had grown too weak to cling to the log flung across the ditch for a latrine, and had fallen off and drowned.

The conditions in the American camps along the Rhine in late April were observed by two colonels in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, James Mason and Charles Beasley, who described them in a paper published in 1950: "Huddled close together for warmth, behind the barbed wire was a most awesome sight — nearly 100,000 haggard, apathetic, dirty, gaunt, blank-staring men clad in dirty field grey uniforms, and standing ankle-deep in mud. . . . The German Division Commander reported that the men had not eaten for at least two days, and the provision of water was a major problem — yet only 200 yards away was the River Rhine running bankfull."

On May 4, 1945, the first German prisoners of war in U.S. hands were transferred to DEF status. The same day, the U.S. War Department banned mail to or from the prisoners. (When the

International Committee of the Red Cross suggested a plan for restoring mail in July, it was rejected.)

On May 8, V-E Day, the German government was abolished and, simultaneously, the U.S. State Department dismissed Switzerland as the protecting power for the German prisoners. (Prime Minister Mackenzie King of Canada protested to the Foreign Office in London the parallel removal of the Swiss as protecting power in British-Canadian camps, but was squelched. With this done, the State Department informed the International Committee of the Red Cross that, since there was no protecting power to report to, there was no longer any point in visiting the camps.

From then on, prisoners held by the U.S. Army had no access to any impartial observer, nor could they receive food parcels, clothing, or medicines from any relief agency, or letters from their kin.



General George Patton's U.S. Third Army was the only army in the whole European theatre to free significant numbers of captives during May, saving many of them from probable death. Both Omar Bradley and General J.C. H. Lee, Commander Communications Zone (Coin Z) Europe, ordered a release of prisoners within a week of the war's end, but a SHAD' order signed "Eisenhower" countermanded them on May 15.

That same day, according to a minute of their meeting, General Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill talked about reducing prisoner rations. Churchill asked for an agreement on the scale of rations for prisoners, because he would soon have to announce cuts in the British meat ration and wanted to make sure that the prisoners "as far as possible . . . should be fed on those supplies which we could best spare." Eisenhower replied that he had already "given the matter considerable attention," but was planning to re-examine the whole thing to see "whether or not a further reduction was possible." He told Churchill that POWs had been getting 2,200 calories a day. (The U.S. Army Medical Corps considered 2,150 an absolute minimum subsistence level for sedentary adults living under shelter: U.S. troops were issued 4,000 calories a day.) What he did not tell Churchill was that the army was not feeding the DEF's at all, or was feeding them far less than those who still enjoyed prisoner-of-war status.

Rations were reduced again soon after this: a direct cut was recorded in the Quartermaster Reports. But indirect cuts were taking place as well. One was the effect of extraordinary gaps between prisoner strength as given on the ration lists and official "on hand" counts, and between the on-hand counts and the actual number of prisoners in the camps.

The meticulous General Lee grew so worried about the discrepancies that he fired off a challenging cable from his headquarters in Paris to SHAEF headquarters in Frankfurt:

"This Headquarters is having considerable difficulty in establishing adequate basis for requisitioning rations for prisoners of war currently held in Theatre. . . In response to inquiries from this Headquarters ... several varying statements of number of prisoners held in Theater have been published by SHAEF."

He then cites the latest SHAEF statement:

"Cable . . . dated 31 May states 1,890,000 prisoners of war and 1,200,000 disarmed German forces on hand. Best available figures at this Headquarters show prisoners of war in Com Z 910,980, in Com Z transient enclosures 1,002,422 and in Twelfth Army GP 965,135, making a total of 2,878,537 and an additional 1,000,000 disarmed German forces Germany and Austria."



The situation was astounding: Lee was reporting a million more men in the U.S. Army camps in Europe than SHAEF said it had on its books. But he was wrestling with the wind: he had to base his issue of food on the number of prisoners on hand supplied to him by SHAEF G-3 (Operations).

Given the general turmoil, fluctuating and inaccurate tallies were probably inevitable, but more than 1-million captives can actually be seen disappearing between two reports of the Theatre Provost Marshal, issued on the same day, June 2. The last in a series of daily reports from the TPM logs 2,870,400 POWs on hand at June 2. The first report of the new weekly series, dated the same day, says that there are only 1,836,000 on hand. At one point in the middle of June, the prisoner strength on the ration list was shown as 1,421,559, while on Lee's and other evidence there were probably almost three times that number.



**It was U.S. Army policy to provide "no shelter or other comforts" In the prisoner enclosures: the men lived In holes In the earth which they dug themselves.**

Spreading the rations thinner was one way to guarantee starvation. Another was accomplished by some strange army bookkeeping during June and July. A million prisoners who had been receiving at least some food because of their nominal POW status lost their rights and their food when they were secretly transferred to the DEF status. The shift was made deliberately over many weeks, with careful attention

paid to maintaining plausible balances in SHAEF's weekly POW and DEL; reports. (The discrepancy between those —shifter from POW status during the period from June 2 to July 28 and those "received" in the DEF status is only 0.43 per cent.) The reclassification to DEF did not require any transfer of men to new camps, or involve any new organization to get German civilian supplies to them. The men stayed where they were. All that happened was that, by the clatter of a typewriter, their skimpy bit of U.S. Army food was stopped.

The effect of a policy arranged through accountancy and conveyed by winks and nods — without written orders — was first to mystify, then to frustrate, then to exhaust the middle-rank officers who were responsible for POWs. A colonel in the Quartermaster Section of the advance U.S. fighting units wrote a personal plea to Quartermaster General Robert Littlejohn as early as April 27: "Aside from the 750 tons received from Fifteenth Army, no subsistence has been received nor do I expect any. What desirable Class II and IV [rations] we have received has been entirely at the sufferance of the Armies, upon personal appeal and has been insignificant in relation to the demands which are being put upon us by the influx of prisoners of war."

Rumours of conditions in the camps ran through the U.S. army. "Boy, those camps were bad news," said Benedict K. Zobrist, a technical sergeant in the Medical Corps. "We were warned to stay as far away as we could." In May and early June of 1945, a team of U.S. Army Medical Corps doctors did survey some of the Rhineland camps, holding just over 80,000 German POWs. Its report is missing from the appropriate section of the National Archives in Washington, but two secondary sources reproduce some of the findings. The three main killers were diarrhoea and dysentery (treated as one category), cardiac disease, and pneumonia. But, straining medical terminology, the doctors also recorded deaths from "emaciation" and "exhaustion." And their data revealed death rates eighty times as high as any peacetime norm.

Only 9.7 per cent to fifteen percent of the prisoners had died of causes clearly associated with lack of food, such as emaciation and dehydration, and "exhaustion." -But the other diseases, directly attributable to exposure, overcrowding, filth, and lack of sanitation, were undoubtedly exacerbated by starvation. As the report noted, "Exposure, overcrowding of pens and lack of

food and sanitary facilities all contributed to these excessive [death) rates." The data, it must be remembered, were taken from the POW camps, not from the DEF camps.

By the end of May, 1945, more people had already died in the U.S. camps than would die in the atomic blast at Hiroshima.

On June 4, 1945, a cable signed "Eisenhower" told Washington that it was "urgently necessary to reduce the number of prisoners at earliest opportunity by discharging all classes of prisoners not likely to be required by Allies." It is hard to understand what prompted this cable. No reason for it is evident in the massive cable traffic that survives the period in the archives in London, Washington, and Abilene, Kansas. And far from ordering Eisenhower to take or hold on to prisoners, the Combined Chiefs' message of April 26 had urged him not to take in any more after V-E Day, even for labour. Nonetheless more than 2-million DEFs were impounded after May 8.

During June, Germany was partitioned into zones of occupation and in July, 1945, SHAEF was disbanded. Eisenhower, reverting to his single role as U.S. commanding general in Europe, became military governor of the U.S. zone. He continued to keep out Red Cross representatives, and the U.S. Army also informed American relief teams that the zone was closed to them. It was closed to all relief shipments as well — until December, 1945, when a slight relaxation came into effect.

Also starting in July, the Americans turned over between 600,000 and 700,000 German captives to the French to help repair damages done to their country during the war. Many of the transferees were in five U.S. camps clustered around Dietersheim, near Mainz, in the section of Germany that had just come under French control. (Most of the rest were in U.S. camps in France.)



**Left: Dietersheim Church.** On July 10, a French army unit took over Dietersheim and seventeen days later a Captain Julien arrived to assume command. His report survives as part of an army inquiry into a dispute between Julien and his predecessor. In the first camp he entered, he testified to finding muddy ground "peopled with living skeletons," some of whom died as he watched. Others huddled under bits of cardboard which they clutched although the July day was hot. Women lying in holes in the ground stared up at him with hunger oedema bulging their bellies in gross parody of pregnancy; old men with long grey hair watched him feebly; children of six or seven with the raccoon rings of starvation looked at him from lifeless eyes. Two German doctors in the "hospital" were trying to care for the dying on the ground under the hot sky, between the marks of the tent that the Americans had taken with them. Julien, who had fought against the Germans with his regiment, the 3eme Regiment de Tirailleurs Algeriens, found himself thinking in horror: "This is just like the photographs of Buchenwald and Dachau."

There were 103,500 people in the five camps round Dietersheim and among them Julien's officers counted 32,640 who could do no work at all. These were released immediately. In all, two-thirds of the prisoners taken over by the French that summer from American camps in Germany and in France were useless for reparations labour. In the camp at Sainte-Marthe, 615 of 700 captives were reported to be unable to work. At Erbiseul near Mons, Belgium, according to a written complaint, twenty-five per cent of the men received by the French were "dechets," or garbage.

In July and August, as U.S. Quartermaster Littlejohn signalled to Eisenhower in due course, the Army food reserves in Europe grew by thirty-nine percent.

On August 4, a one-sentence order signed "Eisenhower" condemned prisoners of war still on hand in the U.S. camps to DEE status: "Effective immediately all members of the German forces held in U.S. custody in the American zone of occupation in GERMANY will be considered as disarmed enemy forces and not as having the status of prisoner of war." No reason was given. Surviving weekly tallies suggest the dual classification was preserved, but, for the POWs now being treated as DEFs, the death rate quadrupled within a few weeks, from .2 per cent per week to .8 percent.

Long time DEFs were dying at nearly five times that rate. The official "Weekly PW & DEF Report" for the week ending September 8, 1945, still exists in the U.S. National Archives in Washington. It shows an aggregate of 1,056,482 prisoners being held by the U.S. Army in the European theatre, of whom about two-thirds are identified as POWs. The other third — 363,587 men — are DEFs. During that one week, 13,051 of them died.

In November, 1945, General Eisenhower succeeded George Marshall as U.S. Army chief of staff and returned to the U.S. In January, 1946, the camps still held significant numbers of captives but the U.S. had wound down its prisoner holdings almost to zero by the end of 1946. The French continued holding hundreds of thousands through 1946, but gradually reduced the number to nothing by about 1949. During the 1950's, most non-record material relating to the U.S. prison camps was destroyed by the Army.

Eisenhower had deplored the Germans' useless defence of the Reich in the last months of the war because of the waste of life. At least ten times as many Germans — undoubtedly 800,000, almost certainly more than 900,000, and quite probably over 1-million — died in the French and American camps as were killed in all the combat on the Western Front in northwest Europe from America's entry into the war in 1941 through to April, 1945



**Battle of "The Bulge"**



**German Surrender in  
Austria**





**MAIN ALLIED CAMPS  
IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM**

- |                    |                         |                         |                      |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Barlin           | 13 Montreuil-Bellay     | 25 Gurs                 | 37 Vitry-le-François |
| 2 Dieppe           | 14 Amboise              | 26 Les Sables-Portet    | 38 Ste.-Menehould    |
| 3 Attichy          | 15 Bourges              | 27 Castres              | 39 Mutzig            |
| 4 Cherbourg        | 16 Soulac               | 28 Le Vernet d'Ariège   | 40 Brumath           |
| 5 Delta Base       | 17 St.-Médard-en-Jalles | 29 Rivesaltes           | 41 Sarrebourg        |
| 6 Alençon          | 18 Germignan            | 30 Marseille            | 42 Sarralbe          |
| 7 Rennes           | 19 Andernog             | 31 Aubagne              | 43 Overijsche        |
| 8 Evron            | 20 Dagnague             | 32 Mulhouse & St.-Louis | 44 Metz              |
| 9 Champagné        | 21 Pissos               | 33 Colmar               | 45 Stenay            |
| 10 Orléans         | 22 Labouheyre           | 34 Langres              | 46 Erbiſeul          |
| 11 Thorée-les-Pins | 23 Buglose              | 35 Brienne-le-Château   | 47 Mons              |
| 12 Mulsanne        | 24 Bayonne-Beyris       | 36 Mailly-le-Camp       | 48 Ostend            |

**MAIN ALLIED CAMPS  
IN GERMANY**

- |                         |                  |                |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 Buderich              | 13 Hechtsheim    | 25 Landshut    |
| 2 Rheinberg             | 14 Biebesheim    | 26 Planegg     |
| 3 Wickrathburg          | 15 Bad Kreuznach | 27 Babenhausen |
| 4 Köln                  | 16 Mannheim      | 28 Bad Aibling |
| 5 Remagen               | 17 Würzburg      | 29 Gotha       |
| 6 Sinzig                | 18 Heilbronn     | 30 Münster     |
| 7 Bretzenheim           | 19 Neu Ulm       | 31 Bremen      |
| 8 Andernach             | 20 Burgau        | 32 Aurich      |
| 9 Budesheim             | 21 Ingolstadt    |                |
| 10 Siershahn            | 22 Regensburg    |                |
| 11 Bingen & Dietersheim | 23 Augsburg      |                |
| 12 Ingelheim            | 24 Dachau        |                |

— Saturday Night/SEPTEMBER 1988

This map refers to information on page 12

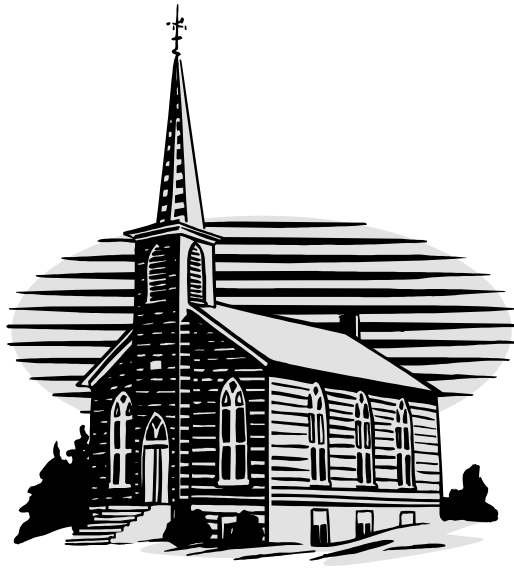
# **THE NEW CHRISTIAN CRUSADE CHURCH**

**CALLING THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN**

**At last the bible makes sense!**

**At last we know its meaning.**

**Its the book of the RACE**



**"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the  
Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"  
(Isaiah 2:3)."**