

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR

RELATIVES' ASSOCIATION

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COMMON PROBLEM

BRITISH prisoners of war, from home and all parts of the Overseas Empire, now number nearly 400,000. That figure, given recently in the House of Commons by Mr. Churchill in the course of a survey of war casualties, is a telling reminder to the general public that prisoner of war problems are wide enough to be a matter of considerable moment to the community as well as to that section of it bound by blood and affection to the men who, in captivity, are at once so utterly out of the war and so pressingly in it. It is a reminder, too, that the restoration of the prisoner of war to normal life must be considered generally as an integral part of that reshaping of the world around us which is the post-war responsibility of all.

Relatives' Part.

As is natural and to be expected, the main driving power behind past and present activities on the prisoner of war's behalf has come from his relatives. They have provided, in their letters, his main personal link with normal life. They have, in the case of men shut off in that Far East which is living up, unfortunately, to its reputation for inscrutability, striven to the last ounce of their energy to achieve contact—and are still striving. They have sent personal parcels, with the individual needs which mean so much, to camps in Germany and, earlier in the war, to Italy too, and have contributed, by money and work, to the immense

activities of the Red Cross in succouring prisoners. Among themselves relatives have got together and have endeavoured, by discussion and the exchange of views, to picture the world of the prisoner and enter into his thoughts. They have co-operated to help the families of prisoners in cases where need arose. That solidarity of the relatives will, when the story comes to be told, be one of the outstanding examples of how suffering

fighting men, has secured a dramatic hold on the public mind. The surge of Allied armies on to German soil from East and West makes this irresistible. As liberation draws near, it throws into bold outline the drama of those long years of captivity. It makes the modern prisoner of war one with the age-long wanderer and exile who comes back to a world he scarcely knows and which scarcely knows him. This is one of the oldest of human dramas, persistent from Homer's *Odyssey* to Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, and that it should thus be revived in the persons of this war's prisoners is for the most part a good thing. To see our present and personal problems in the magnifying glass of general human history is beneficial if it clarifies them.

A Danger.

There has, however, been evidence of late a serious danger arising out of this—the danger of the prisoner of war being regarded as a "problem" upon whose solution will be let loose an army of psychologists and other high-gear experts all on the lookout for symptoms of abnormality or strain in him. There has already been a tendency to impress this upon relatives, to explain to them in advance that all sorts of difficulties and mal-adjustments are likely to confront them when their men come home. This has at times reached the extent of a certain amount of scare-mongering, and something like a "bogey" is being created in various directions.

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can draw people together and bring out the best in them as well as enabling them to aid to the utmost of their power their prisoner of war sons and husbands and brothers.

The Future.

As regards the wider issue of the future of the prisoner of war, there is evidence that the community in general, as well as the relatives, is giving considerable and steadily growing thought to this problem. At the present moment the return of the prisoner, as distinct from that of the

At times the talk and discussion resembles that which a few years ago seethed round the so-called "problem child" who, we were told, must be allowed to set the drawing-room curtains on fire if he felt like it and who was encouraged to get rid of his inhibitions by riding round town all day in a taxi if he felt an inclination that way. So easy is it to be swept along to absurdities like this that a clear vision of the prisoner of war must be kept in mind by those at home if the difficulties of family reunions are to be met fairly and squarely.

Voice of the Prisoner.

For this purpose we publish in this issue a forceful and reasoned letter on the subject written by a medical man who has been a prisoner of war since the Greek evacuation of 1941 and who has been attending prisoners professionally as well as living as one of them in Stalag IX B. His refutation of the idea of any general "problem" among prisoners of war is emphatic and categorical. He deserves to be listened to. Equally conclusive are the letters from camps, a cross-section of which we publish monthly as a means of giving in some ways a more just and balanced picture of the prisoner's life and thoughts than can individual correspondence. Most of these letters tell of that inexhaustible, inspiring human miracle of adjustment to alien surroundings; of humour and balance preserved; studies proceeded with, careers prepared for. Among men who have been repatriated the same spirit prevails. The Far East is not an exception; remember Gunner Wilson, selected by the B.M.C. to broadcast his experiences and recalling, among other lighter touches, how our men "had some fun" with the roll-call—"The Japanese couldn't understand English in the beginning, and when they gave us the order to 'number' it went something like: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, Ace."

Prisoner's Point of View.

But the problem of the prisoner is not wholly resolved by the reminder that normality has not left him. If we imagine this is so, we are taking too self-centred a point of view. What is his attitude to us going to be? What will he think about the world to which he returns?

"All the world's a queer except me and thee, and even thee's a little queer," is a saying which voices a truth from which only the wisest and mentally most honest of us are

immune. The plain fact is that to returned prisoners this world of ours will seem very queer indeed, and in many ways unpleasantly so. Thousands of prisoners of war know nothing of rationing of any sort. They are unaware of the revolution wrought in the home by the servant problem, the disappearance of the car, the shortage of fuel, the inability to repair and renew household goods. They have no knowledge of the mental and emotional upheaval caused by long evacuation, by the damaging of one house in three all over Britain by enemy raids. They do not know how five years have broken ties and changed friendships and destroyed settled habits and created new ways of daily life.

A Bleak Life.

Looking back on memories of pre-war existence they will no doubt find our present life narrow and bleak in many ways, lacking in graciousness and cordiality. Strain, overwork, lack of leisure have taken their toll of us gradually though in everyday life we are unaware of them. To men who return to us after years such things will stand out a mile. It is we who will in many ways be the problem, not they. It is ourselves we should be considering and our own adjustment to the future which should give us thought. That is the real lesson we can learn from the thoughts of the return of the prisoner.

Balanced View.

It may be that we shall consider some of the changes in ourselves beneficial. We may applaud the end of hypocrisy and invidious class distinctions and hail the creation of a more equitable world. In that event we can recall that prisoners, too, have written, in their solitude, that their enforced withdrawal from the world has had a beneficial effect on them, has cleared away cobwebs from their minds and made their purpose in life clearer. We can, accordingly, prepare to move hand in hand with them out of the chaos into the future. There is no doubt that returned prisoners will welcome this, for no man of worth wishes to be regarded as a prisoner or to be set aside from his fellows for longer than is called for by the mere mechanics of getting back into normal life. Having served his country he wants to share its future along with those at home who, in the hard conditions of modern war, share with him in body and mind the scars of the conflict regardless of their age, occupation and station.

P.O.W.R.A. CONFERENCE

In London in March

THE BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR RELATIVES' ASSOCIATION will hold a CONFERENCE at the CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, on SATURDAY, MARCH 17th, 1945.

This Meeting will be open to all Individual Members of the Association, Members of Affiliated Associations and Societies and their friends.

The President, Lord Vansittart, has promised to address the gathering, and other speakers will include senior officers of National Organisations which have the welfare of Ex-Service Men and their rehabilitation as their special concern.

An Informal Session will be held in the morning, commencing at 11.30, when the Officers of the Association will be available to deal with individual enquiries concerning Prisoners of War. During the Afternoon Session, commencing at 2 p.m., ample opportunity will be afforded to relatives to put forward their views on the future policy of the Association. Formal Resolutions will not be put to the vote on this occasion, as the Conference is not confined to representative members. It is requested that all those who wish to speak will confine their remarks to matters of general interest to those who attend the meeting, and will be brief and to the point.

Thailand Relatives Meeting Arranged

Owing to many requests we are arranging an Informal Meeting at ALLIANCE HALL, CAXTON STREET, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, S.W.1, on Saturday, March 10th, at 3 p.m., for the relatives of P.O.W. and Civilian Internees in Thailand only.

This will be mainly in the nature of an experiment to sound the opinion of these relatives as to whether they would support future similar meetings in London for the purpose of exchanging views and information on matters relating to Thailand.

We suggest that any attending should pin a ticket on the coat indicating the camp in which the respective Prisoner or Civilian is interned.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Membership of the B.P.O.W.R.A., which includes the News Sheet, is 12s. per annum. In cases of limited means, reduced rates are considered.

FAR EAST PRISONERS WRITE HOME

What Their Letters Say

How are we at home to form a true picture of the Far East camps where 20,000 of our own people from Korea and the Dominions and of the Allied nations are in captivity? Life in that dim world of the Pacific, spread over hundreds of thousands of square miles, is unbelievably hard for those who have never been there to imagine, and the effort is made ten times harder by Japanese obstructiveness over allowing communications to be set up.

Glimpses of light come from the stories of men who have been repatriated, from radio messages that trickle through, from the erratic flow of correspondence. When, just before Christmas, 60,000 letters and cards arrived from prisoners of war and civilian internees in Japanese hands, this record mail did more than any other single happening to shed light on the Far East.

Singly, these communications brought comfort to relatives, who, in many cases, had never had word from near and dear ones in captivity in the Far East. Together, and aided by the comments and notes of the recipients, they are of even greater value. To help to fill out the picture, other information has come from other parts of the world to P.O.W.R.A.

A friend in Melbourne, for instance, sends a very helpful letter.

"I am," she writes, "a member of an Auxiliary in Melbourne, the personnel of which is composed entirely of N.A.K. of prisoners of war in Japanese hands.

"Recently I have been lucky in receiving what is a comparatively large amount of news from my husband. Two letters arrived in the large distribution of mail weeks ago. Two radio messages have come since then, and last week I had another letter written on May 15th of this year. In the first radio message (which was only picked up in the U.S.A.) my husband said: 'I am working on a farm and studying Eastern History.' I have good reason to believe that he was at Laragotto last year and I imagine he is now in Camp No. 4, though, of course, I have no proof of this. The letter received last week stated: 'The second lot of Red Cross parcels have arrived.' The first lot arrived in April, '43, and was enough meat and sugar apparently to last for four months. I don't suppose they realize that what they have had is a lot more than many of the camps. A great many of the details of camps in Malaya and Thailand are now known owing to the evidence of the prisoners who have recently been rescued by the Americans and who arrived here a couple of weeks ago. The evidence is indeed grim and often distressing but be grateful when one's husband is in a camp further north.

"The letter which arrived last week had German cross marks on it, which was rather puzzling. Probably some of these letters have not been sent. There were only forty-two in the whole lot for Australia, so we do consider ourselves

extremely favoured. There was no other actual news in this letter. It was written in cursive on heavy lined paper. There were exactly ten words on every line and exactly a hundred words in the whole message. Both the papers and the envelope (inside and out) was streaked with blue and orange paint which is, I am told, the German method of testing for secret writing."

From Bristol comes a lighter touch in the story of how a Bristol corporal, sending one of the formal printed cards from No. 2 Camp, Thailand, beat the Japanese censor with a touch of humour.

Having suddenly declared in sold print that his health was normal, that he was



A prisoner's view from Singapore.

working for pay and so forth, he delighted his master by writing on the two lines provided after the printed "My best regards to—" "yourself, all the family, Giles, Bill Brewer, Jim Stever, Peter Garney, Peter Beever, Dan Wilder, Uncle Tom Cobley."

Elsewhere, scattered bits of news throw light here and there. The aunt of an artillery officer in No. 4 Camp, Thailand, received on December 22nd last a postcard dated January 25th, 1944, saying that an mail had arrived but the writer was in "usual" health and working for a monthly salary. On January 2nd, 1945, she received another postcard dated June 10th, 1944, announcing that mail had been received and health was still as "usual."

Another gunner, in a Burma camp, sent five undated postcards to his wife, who received them all during the recent Christmas holidays.

"They are all in my husband's writing," she explains, P.O.W.R.A., "except one, which is printed, and he has filled in the blanks. He says he is interested in Sandakan, and is working for pay. Also that health, climate and spirits are excellent and that we must not worry. He sounds quite cheerful. Unfortunately he has received no letters yet."

Other letters from prisoners speak for themselves. Here is a selection recently received:—

HAKODATE.

Undated.

"Excellent health and spirits still. Hope this applies to you. Have just enjoyed gift of American Red Cross parcel and clothing. We shall soon be reunited—God bless you all.

2/5/44.

"My seventh card saying all is well, no mail yet, but some expected soon. Keep writing and send photographs. Just received more —, Red Cross food, boots, and toilet kit, love to you all.

16/5/44.

"This is to say I am still safe and well, and receiving good treatment. Hope you are all well. Am receiving Red Cross supplies fairly frequently now, and am expecting mail soon. Needless to say, I am always thinking of home and hope we shall soon be reunited. Keep writing meanwhile."

24/7/44.

"In excellent health and spirits. Delighted to receive twenty-three more letters, and an air card only three months old. Keep it up, we have local news please. We write monthly. Please send photographs. Hope you like mine. Have received no personal parcels yet, but still hoping. Sincerely pray Hugh is safe and well. What stitches we shall be able to exchange when reunited. G. and G. safe when last seen, October, 1942. Love to everyone. Chins up. Reunited soon.

24/8/44.

"Am still in good health and spirits. Glad to receive another letter and air card, dated May, 1944. My thoughts always with you all, especially Hugh, whom I pray is still safe. Am receiving excellent treatment still, but parcels and photographs would be most acceptable. Please send more local news when you write. Am no longer with my original friends, but D.F. was well when last seen March, 1943. Am longing to see you all again, and feel that the time is not long now."

7/9/44.

"Am still well. Hope you are all right. I've just Hugh is still safe and well. Am confident that we shall meet again before long. Am still receiving excellent treatment, but needless to say shall be glad to

see Suffolk again. I expect harvesting is now in full swing. Hope it is a good one. My best wishes to all my friends. Am looking forward to more mail. My best wishes for Christmas and peace in the New Year.

CHOSEN (KOREA) DETACHED No. 1.

10/8/44.

Delighted to send eighth card—two days ago overjoyed to receive fourteen from you, two from Hilda, and one etc.

I hope your arthritis improves and you are in good health so I can. Rest and take care of yourself, Mam. Remember my money is yours. I shall be very glad if I find you have "readily wasted" it all. Am pleased you are able to go about occasionally.

Glad to hear family well with exception of Harry. I hope he improves quickly. Those at home will seem changed when I return, but I always think of you as you were when I last saw you. I have a photo of you and my dear Father, which I treasure above all else. You express a desire for a stone for my dear Dad's grave. I wish it also and we can do that when I return.

Fred B.—is a friend of mine here and is O.K. You met his wife at a Red Cross meeting. The R.C.S. is doing good work and would do more if it were not so restricted. In one year we have had one American parcel, a very good one too. Summer is beginning and today is sunny and warm. It is Sunday and my rest day. We have every other Sunday off work. I have had my hair cut today by an Aussie. You would laugh, it is only half an inch long on top. Still it is healthy.

We have a garden which we hope will help fill our stomachs and we have eight pigs. They are funny ones, have profuse long black hair and are so small. No one seems to know what they eat besides fish-bones. We have footballs, etc., and they look good on a show-case.

The Pope goes to 50 sea, very kind ——— (have quite four or five inches blacked out).

Very best wishes to all family and neighbours and tell my rivers not to grow too much or I shall feel an old man.

In anticipation of a day not far distant, for which we must pray.

FUKUOKA CAMP No. 2, KIUSHU, JAPAN.

Undated.

This is my fourth letter, not heard from you yet. Am fit and well, treatment is O.K. Pray you are all the same. Remember me to all friends and relatives. Patience, all my love.

CAMP No. 4, TAIWAN.

8/7/44.

Most letters to July '40 received, one December. Glad you wrote so many long ones—how rare and how valuable! Thank you, Anthea. Bob lovely letters. Pictures jolly good—given well above my head. Am well, cheerful. Also read Pinar; hearing Germans, cheerless. Hesse, soon.

8/8/44.

Have I answered some of your letters? Our rabbit's white, Anthea with pink eyes! I've not tried sketching—so paints—but will write a little more and, for magazine, music articles. I read mainly philosophical, scientific, and historical novels and best-sellers. Now enjoying Shakespeare. Also poetry means much more. Faith stronger. Think much of you and children and future. (Army—certainly anti-Church!) Doanman. In Politics? Has several permanent friends. Bless you all.

TAIWAN.

27/3/44. (Received December 20th, 1944.)

I have just received your letters of June, August, November, 1942, and April, 1943. Wonderful atmosphere in the news of your and everyone's doings, but almost painful in its revival of memories grown dull. Nevertheless, the same mixture in future letters, please.

I am still well and our treatment is everything you can imagine. The Y.M.C.A. has been our best friend, recently sending us books, a medicine ball, a gramophone and records and some musical instruments. We are all very content and at each one the officers do a sketch which would make the Crosby Club very bright.

Although we have no news our spirits are high and my fellow-rankers think the war will end next month. I hope they're not too right, so please don't worry about me.

28/3/44. (Received December 26th, 1944.)

Since my last letter to you I have received yours of July 20th, 1943—our latest I've had but full of interesting news.

Great excitement here as we have each received into the Gripsholm, I presented a 20 lb. food parcel from the American Red Cross. After a year without these, such things as Kilm, butter, cheese, chocolate, coffee and spam represent the wildest luxuries. We also received such odd comforts as soap, shaving soap, toothpaste, tobacco, razor blades, etc., and our doctors received a wonderful selection of drugs.

What with this and increased facilities for sport, life is getting more cheerful. Quite different conditions. I'm becoming quite a baseball addict. Both the Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross have sent quite a lot of books, and I've got quite enough extra literature to go on with.

Don't worry about me as I'm very well.

28/7/44. (Received January 1st, 1945.)

Since last writing to you I have received fifty letters, all between June '42 and July '44, and two annual postcards of March 27th and April 10th, '44. All letters, photos are worth their weight in gold.

Don't worry about my wearing caps—a minor point. Anyway, I have to surrender shavings. I still don't smoke and have a smaller appetite than most. I am still wearing books to read, and enough to eat. We amuse ourselves with football of a sort in the evenings and an occasional concert.

28/5/44.

Am quite well. Hoping you are all fit. Received to mail yet. Am working for pay. His Maurice has called up yet. Is Fred married, if so, give him my congrats. Give my love to Sylvia and Fred. Keep smiling. Findest love.

28/4/44.

Hope you and all at home are well. I am well and working. Received no mail yet. Give my regards to everyone. Tell them I still remember them. Give my love to all at home. Your Maurice and Fred. Keep your chin up and keep on smiling.

28/5/44.

Received to mail yet. Hope you are all well and healthy. I have received a Red Cross parcel. Give my fondest love to Sylvia. Remember me to all at home. Your Maurice and Fred. I hope things are happening. Findest love.

28/6/44.

I was delighted to receive eight letters dated up to July, 1942. Glad to hear you are all O.K. I would like some snaps very much. Give my love to everyone. Keep your chin up. Ever your loving son.

28/8/44.

Hoping you are all well and cheerful. I am receiving mail. Very surprised at change of address a business. I have received one letter from Maurice, very much more pencilled. Give my love to all. Keep your chin up.

No. 4, THAILAND.

15/1/44.

Mail received with thanks. My health is good. I am working. Best regards.

10/9/44.

Your mail received with thanks. My health is good. I am not working. My best regards to family and all friends.

ZENTSUJI CAMP No. 1.

28/5/44.

Since I wrote the first letter I have received letters and postcards from you. The first batch of letters, of which I received two, and two postcards, arrived on April 15th, 1944. The date of your letters were May 25th, 1943, to June 24th, 1943. Earlier letters from you arrived a little later here, because they were addressed to Malaya.

I am quite well, and am labouring in the open air. I have often wondered if Aunt Emily had visited the district. She will, no doubt, have given you an idea, too, of the type of food we get. It is not what we are used to, of course, but occasionally we get bread instead of rice.

The postcard you wrote the day before my twenty-second birthday arrived the day before my twenty-third, so your wish of many happy returns came just right for that date.

All the boys here are now longing for a parcel from home. We still get the Red Cross gifts of food, toilet requisites, boots and clothing. The Red Cross really do a marvellous job for us.

The camp entertainments here include games of football and table tennis. We have a gramophone with English and American records.

10/9/44.

Once again permission to write you has arrived. Your letters, I am pleased to write, are getting here after about six months.

Prisoners and Parliament Many Questions Answered

Total numbers of prisoners of war in all ranks of British Commonwealth and Empire Forces were given in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister on January 10th, 1945.

Including Service internees, the totals are as follows:—

United Kingdom (including men from overseas serving in these Forces)	141,620
Canada	5,124
Australia	25,597
New Zealand	7,153
South Africa	16,583
India (including 22,840 officers and other ranks training but presumed to be prisoners of war)	76,821
Colonies	6,332
	234,438

Prisoners of war in Stalag IV C are working twelve hours a day, seven days a week, with one Sunday off a month, stated Mr. T. Deberg, M.P., in the House of Commons, when he asked the Secretary of State for War if he would make appropriate representations through the Protecting Power.

Sir James Grigg said in reply that he was well aware of this and other matters in connection with Stalag IV C, and that repeated representations had been made, so far without success. They would continue to be made so long as there was the slightest hope of their achieving any result.

The dissatisfaction of relatives with the arrangements made for repatriated prisoners of war suffering from tuberculosis was voiced by Miss Irene Ward, M.P., when she asked Sir James Grigg if in view of this he would consider an alteration of the present policy.

In reply, the Secretary for War stated that according to Army regulations soldiers

suffering from tuberculosis were discharged as soon as possible, so that they could if necessary enter civil sanatoria near their homes. They became the charge of the Ministry of Health. Repatriated prisoners of war were given special consideration, and as there was sometimes delay in their entering sanatoria through lack of accommodation the Minister of Health had set aside a number of beds in E.M.S. hospitals specially for service patients awaiting transfer to sanatoria.

In reply to a further question by Miss Ward, Sir James Grigg promised to pass on to the Minister of Health the information that his arrangements were regarded as unsatisfactory and that improvements were needed in future.

Information was sought by Mr. Collingridge on the subject of promised canteens from prisoners of war in Japanese hands. Mr. George Hall, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, replied that no canteens had yet been received from prisoners of war or civilian internees in Japanese hands, under the scheme sponsored by the I.R.C.C.

Miss Ward asked the Secretary of State for War for an assurance that pay and allowances to prisoners of war in the Far East about whom no authentic information was available were being continued for the next twelve months. Sir James Grigg said in reply that so long as a man was recorded as a prisoner of war, in the Far East or elsewhere, his pay and any allowances admissible for his dependants continued.

Major Peto asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether any escaped British prisoners of war were imprisoned in Spanish prisons at the present time. The answer was "No."

CAMP VISITS BY Y.M.C.A.

Special Needs Satisfied

Charcoal-driven automobiles are used by seven Swiss and Swedish "Y" secretaries who constantly visit our men in German prison camps. These cars are carefully equipped for the needs of the particular camps each worker serves. For example, the car used for visits to the surgical-orthopedic hospital in Germany, and the special camp for prisoners who have suffered eye injuries, is loaded with short-wave apparatus, a special motor for diathermy, transformer bulbs, and modern Swedish instruments for the blind. All other available space within the car is crowded with hospital games, handcraft materials, beetle books, mossier books, pipes, pens, and soap, and a hundred miscellaneous items. On the roof, ten sacks of charcoal provide an ever-present filling station!

A total of 1750 such personal visits were made by representatives of War Prisoners' Aid of the Y.M.C.A. from February, 1942, to December, 1943, in order to promote and establish religious, educational and recreational activities for our men in German prison camps. During 1944 visits have been increased.

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR RELATIVES ASSOCIATION.

Council of Management, 1944-1945.

The Vice-presidents, Barclay Baron, Esq., O.B.E., Lady Brocken, L. E. Davis, Esq., Violet, Countess of Ellesmere, Mrs. Ferguson, Mrs. Fitton, Major-Gen. H. W. Goldrey, O.B.E., M.C., R. H. Hyde-Thomson, Esq. (Hon. Treasurer), Mrs. Constance Gold, Sir Leonard Lyde, Bt., M.P., Humphrey H. King, Esq., Mrs. Minchall, Mrs. Harold Palmer, Colonel T. C. Sinclair, C.B.E., J. E. Sixsmith, Esq., Miss Irene Ward, C.B.E., M.P., Brigadier H. Willan, D.S.O., M.C.

LONG TERM PRISONERS OF WAR.

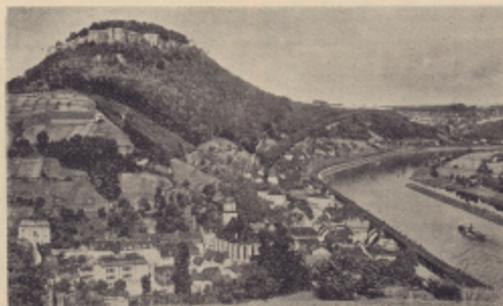
Sir Leonard Lyde, M.P., who has been urging the repatriation of long-term prisoners of war in the hands of the Germans as well as of the Japanese, has received a letter from Mr. Eden, the Foreign Secretary, in which he writes:—

"Up to the present time, and in spite of frequent pressure from the Swiss, no reply has been received to the proposals which we put forward to the German Government in April last regarding able-bodied long-term prisoners of war."

We are, therefore, now considering whether there is any alternative proposal which we can put forward, and which might have a better chance of acceptance by the Germans. If one is found, you may be sure that it will be forwarded at once through the Protecting Power.

It is only just that it should be made clear to the relatives, and other inquirers, that the fault is with the Germans, and that without their co-operation no progress can be made.

With regard to prisoners in the Far East, the Japanese Government have, up to the present, refused to repatriate even the sick and wounded."



Kontagstein, once a popular tourist resort, where Stalag 383 is situated.

PRISON CAMPS AS SCHOOLS OF CITIZENSHIP

Doctor Denies Fellow P.O.W.s are Problem Cases

Next-of-Kin Parcels

Points to Watch

There may be an acute danger of too much being made of the "problem" of the returned prisoner of war. Even if due to an excess of zeal and devotion on the part of his people at home, this can be psychologically harmful as well as the cause of much needless friction in personal and business life. As a considered statement of how the real facts of the case present themselves to a Liverpool ophthalmic surgeon who allowed himself to be captured in the Greek Campaign of 1941, and who has since declined two opportunities to be repatriated, we reproduce, by courtesy of the Editor of "The British Medical Journal," the following letter which appeared in the issue of January 8, 1945.

The writer, Major Charles, is a prisoner of war in Stalag IX B.

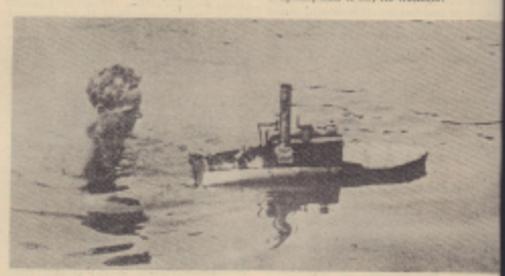
Sir,

Because there is delay in the arrival here of my Journals I have only recently read the correspondence on the prisoner of war mentality. I am amazed to find in Dr. Harkness's letter of April 22nd, 1944, the statement that "the very large majority of our returned prisoners of war will be problems for their lifetime." It has been my privilege for the last three and a half years to administer the medical affairs of large groups of wounded and disabled prisoners. These groups consisted of some of the worst of our "grands blessés"—the totally blind, the double or single amputated, the extensively burned, the paralysed, and the major orthopaedic cases. Nearly all of these patients had known several years of captivity; nearly all of them had suffered hard disappointment when the first attempt at repatriation broke down in Rome in October, 1943, and they returned to the prison camps instead of going home.

No one realises more acutely than I do the pressing psychological problems which in certain cases have resulted from years of enforced idleness, of monotony, and of physical suffering and disablement. If any group of prisoners of war was likely to present psychological problems it was the kind of group with which I had to deal. Nevertheless I most emphatically deny that anything approaching a majority of prisoners will be "problems for their lifetime." Rather would I say that the majority of these men have gained in tolerance, understanding, patience, forbearance and courage. They have acquired a larger concept of comradeship and of community life. They have more fully recognised the need for the individual to pull his weight in the interest of the group. If a man was disabled it became a matter of pride to him to be one of the "muckers"—the men who were ready to "muck in" to lend a hand, and accept his responsibilities. The average prisoner has demonstrated a high standard of individual ability, and will do so again when he returns home to a post-war world. He will be out of touch in much the same way as any normal man who has been abroad during the changes of the last few years. He will need time to pick up the threads of his life again, but he will not have a peculiar mentality. I have shown Dr. Harkness's letter to several of the men here—cheerful, average, level-headed individuals. They expressed themselves as follows: "Mind, he doesn't altogether know what he is talking about: a few special cases, yes! but not the very large majority."

By all means let us arrange for physical and mental rehabilitation where it is needed. By all means let us make acc-

allowances for the fact that the average prisoner of war is not adjusted to the change of the last five years. But do not let us discuss the majority so if they were psychological problems. Above all, let us avoid discussing their "mentality" in the lay press. If Dr. Harkness's statement were



Making the best of it: an R.A.F. prisoner in Stalag IX B steels the steamboat he has made from scrap metal from Red Cross parcels.

true, and if we were to follow his recommendation for wide publicity, "the powerful voice of the press" would hardly be sound psychological treatment for the prisoner; nor would it encourage employers to select him as a worker. It is my belief that the responsible Departments of the Government will make a true assessment of the problem, and will provide adequate means of rehabilitation. It will not be difficult for them to obtain accurate information based on actual observation by medical officers and by laymen, who have both with the prisoners over long periods and under changing circumstances.

I have lived with prisoners of war of all ranks, of all the services, from all European fronts. On their behalf I resent any implication that they are below average in the qualities of "balance," "steadiness," "patience," "perseverance," "tenacity," or "good humour." The average prisoner is not a "problem" in himself, his companions or his future employer. Surely Dr. Harkness takes a very pessimistic view of the mental and moral stamina of our race.

I am, etc.,

D. L. CAMBERS,
Major, R.A.M.C.

Major of Stalag IX B, P.O.W. No. 23011.

With reference to the instructions issued by the Red Cross in December regarding next-of-kin parcels, it should be noted that the allowance of 20 extra coupons (not extra chocolate and soap) made to compensate for 1944 issues missed owing to suspension of despatches, can only be made up to the end of February, and only by next-of-kin who still hold a 1944 B label or earlier 1944 issues) with 20 coupons.

The extra allowances cannot, in any circumstances, be made with a 1944/4, or an 1944, label.

Applications should state clearly whether the next-of-kin holds an issue of label or coupons, and if so, its number.

It is important that next-of-kin who apply for the extra coupons for use with a label already in their possession, do not despatch a parcel with this label before they receive the extra coupons, because these will be accounted for at the same time or the issue above held.

In cases in which the parcel is sent to and the extra coupons are not accounted for at the same time, they will have to be sent back to the Packing Centre for clearance, before any subsequent label can be issued.

In consequence of the very great number of parcels received since the beginning of December and the difficulty of obtaining extra labour, the despatches from Edinburgh, Cardiff and Glasgow are about one month in arrears.

The issue of labels and coupons is also consequently delayed.

All possible steps are being taken to overcome the difficulties, and next-of-kin are asked to help by not making enquiries about the despatch of their parcel and the issue of their next label and coupons until at least two months have elapsed since they posted their parcel.

International Red Cross Visit to Far East Camps

Re-assuring Features of Daily Life

(Translated from *Revue Internationaliste de la Croix Rouge*)

On the 10th and 11th of September Mr. H. Angst visited the main Hokodetsu camp, in which are housed more than 200 British prisoners of whom are 100 British, 40 Americans, 40 Netherlands, and 20 Austrians, Canadians and Estonians.

The camp consists of thirteen wooden longhouses (with plank floors) ten of which are of recent construction. The lighting and ventilating systems are adequate; fire-preventive measures have been installed and anti-aerial trench shelters have been constructed. The washing and bath facilities (in the Japanese style) are adequate. The food is the same as that of the camp guards. This is the best means, but the prisoners would like to receive more Red Cross parcels. The kitchen contains fire conditions, stove covers, an icebox and two store-rooms for provisions. And there is a store in which vegetables can be kept. Nine prisoners of war cooks, one of whom is a professional, do the cooking, but the kitchen occupies nine rooms capable of accommodating 60 patients, and the isolation quarters, which consist of three wards, can accommodate a further 20. The dental equipment is, apparently, complete, save for a lack of the material necessary for manufacturing artificial dentures. The camp has, moreover, a group of specially chosen laundrymen, but soap is scarce.

The camp commandant allows to each man a task suitable to his wishes, and qualifications, in electrical works, or other factories, the work including such things as carpentry, portage, etc. Prisoners of war constitution are occupied in the camp itself, where also there is a carpenter's shop. More than 200 prisoners are employed in labour detachments. All workers have a quarter of an hour's break for rest during the morning, and another in the afternoon, as well as an hour in which to take their mid-day meal; every Sunday is a free day.

These men are not insured, but the national laws in regard to employment apply to them and, in case of being the victims of an accident, they receive the same relief as that to which ordinary workers are entitled by law. The prisoners keep cows, pigs, chickens and rabbits, and

cultivate an area of 2070 square metres. Weekly walks are allowed; indoor and outdoor games such as volleyball, chess and billiards are organised. In the summer the men may bathe in the sea every day. They have a library, consisting of books donated by the Y.M.C.A., and they also have some musical instruments.

Religious services can be held at will. The prisoners hold these themselves in English and Dutch.

The commandant had no complaints to make. He stated that discipline was good and that the morale of the men was satisfactory, but he confirmed the need of the prisoners for warm clothing and especially for footwear.

Mr. Angst also visited a branch camp which depends on Hakodetsu main camp, and which accommodates more than 100 British (of whom four are civilian internees) and some Americans, these latter all being medical staff.

This camp is situated beside the sea; it comprises five wooden longhouses of recent construction. The latrines and baths are installed in the Japanese style. The food rations are the same as those in the main camp, but prisoners who do heavy work receive some extras. The kitchen possesses three fire conditions and two store-rooms; a bread oven is in process of construction; five military cooks prepare the meals.

The infirmary can take in two patients; prisoners who are seriously ill are taken to the infirmary of the main camp.

These prisoners hold their own religious services.

One hundred men work in a cement factory; the others are engaged in camp maintenance. The prisoners have a sports ground, as well as a piece of ground, measuring 1200 square metres, where they cultivate vegetables; some pigs and rabbits are raised in this camp too.

The commandant of the camp had no complaints to make in regard to the prisoners, but is posed on to the delegate of the International Red Cross Committee the requests of the prisoners, which were numerous, the man being particularly anxious to receive some warm clothing, some footwear and some food parcels.

New Light on Rescued Thailand Prisoners:

Certain questions arising out of the recent rescue of torpedoesd Thaiand prisoners of war by an American ship and their subsequent return to this country have been answered as a result of correspondence which has passed between Miss Irene Ward, M.P., and the Foreign Office.

In answer to the query as to whether there were any officers on board the sunk transport, it was stated by the Foreign Office that the names of all officers were known and that their next-of-kin had all been informed.

As rumours were current to the effect that everyone was being moved from Thailand camp to Japan, information was sought by Miss Ward on this point. There, it is stated, a tendency to remove prisoners even to the New Guinea area, including Japan, and this was happening in the case of the torpedoesd

transport. But a large number of prisoners remain in Thailand. Their relatives should continue to write to the Thaiand camp, the Japanese Government having provided an assurance that correspondence for transferred prisoners of war will be redirected to their new address.

Broadcast messages from Japanese stations, including broadcasts by prisoners and messages from them, have been the subject of some discussion. Every word spoken over the enemy radio is monitored in the British Empire, some in Australia, some in India, some in London. Messages by or relating to prisoners of war are passed on to next-of-kin as soon as possible.

Efforts were made by Australia to establish a system of broadcast messages to and from prisoners of war, but to this the Japanese Government refused to agree. The New Delhi station has proved unsuccess-

Future of Prisoners of War

ABERDEEN LOOKS AHEAD

Measures to safeguard the future of men who have spent several years in prisoner of war camps have recently been discussed by the Returned Prisoners of War Association (Aberdeen Area).

The Committee of this Association has been considering the Government's White Paper on the reallocation of men prisoner because of the defeat of Germany and that of Japan.

This resolution was agreed to unanimously at a special meeting—

"That the Committee, having studied the Government's proposed Demobilisation Plan, notes that on their repatriation, men who have spent long years of captivity in Germany will be retained in the Army and required to assist their fare for demobilisation according to their release group number. That the Committee, without wishing to suggest that returned Prisoners of War should receive priority over other services men, feels that there are reasons why those who have spent a number of years in captivity should not be retained in the Forces longer than is absolutely necessary. That the Committee is of the opinion that those who have spent more than two years as a Prisoner of War should not again be sent, except voluntarily, on overseas service. That in the event of any priority in demobilisation being given to men who have had overseas service, then the Committee is of the opinion that Prisoners of War should receive at least as favourable treatment."

GERMAN CAMP MAP ON SALE.

The new coloured Red Cross map showing the principal camps for British and Dominion prisoners of war in Germany can be supplied on application to B.P.O.W.R.A. Headquarters, 364 St. James's Street, London, S.W.1. The price is: small size 6d. (by post 8d.); large size 1/- (by post 1/2). Remittance should be sent with order. The map is correct according to information available up to June 30th, 1944.

Miss I. Ward, M.P., obtains facts

factory for various reasons, including the lack of assurance from the Japanese that messages to prisoners would be handled on.

Relatives of prisoners of war in Thailand have expressed the desire that representatives of Government Departments should attend a meeting of the Thailand Fellowship to answer questions and provide information. It is explained by the Foreign Office that this would be difficult in view of the great numbers of available information entered are working, both on behalf of relatives and with the direct purpose of alleviating the conditions of prisoners in the Far East. It is suggested, however, that the Thailand Fellowship could serve a very good purpose by keeping records of and disseminating available information, referring questions when necessary to the Prisoners of War (Far East) Enquiry Centre, Curzon Street House, Curzon Street, London, E.1.

Red Cross Parcels and German Camps:

DETAILED
REPORT

PART PLAYED BY EMPIRE

News of parcels for prisoners of war in Germany is included in information handed by the Red Cross and St. John War Organisation.

During October the International Red Cross Committee is reported by the Red Cross to have despatched to the camps in Europe for British prisoners of war 58,808 British Red Cross, 13,000 Canadian and 3,354 Indian food parcels. In addition, food in bulk from Argentina was sent to the equivalent of 20,714 parcels, and 285 kilos of bulk food was sent from Brazil. Other despatches during the same month were 10,415 medical and 1,204 tobacco parcels.

Acknowledgments received from the camps by the I.R.C.C. during October were of 37,241 British Red Cross, 11,530 Canadian, 10,370 Indian and 15,900 New Zealand food parcels. Food in bulk from Argentina equalled 38,700 food parcels and 400 kilos of bulk food was received from Brazil. Acknowledgments were also received of 38,470 medical and 9,138 tobacco parcels, in addition to forty-four cases of cigarettes and tobacco, of which thirty-nine were from New Zealand.

During December the staff of the Shipping Section of the States Department of the Red Cross worked at high pressure, dealing with the many consignments arriving from overseas of supplies for prisoners of war and British Red Cross Commission activities. The Section received, unpacked and distributed 121 consignments of gifts during the month. These included 28 from the American Red Cross and in all there were 7,600 cases and packages, including 1,000 boxes of eggs from Argentina, dried bananas, cigarettes, bottled sweets from South Africa, hospital supplies, clothing, blankets and eighty bags of raw cotton.

Two shipments of supplies for prisoners of war were assembled, packed and despatched. They amounted to 20,130 packages, weighing more than 1,100 tons, and their total value exceeded £250,000. The first contained Army clothing and toilet requisites. The second consisted of coffee, sugar, equipment, musical instruments, next-of-kin parcels, books, artists' materials, clothing, towels, boot polish and cigarettes and tobacco.

G.P.O. and Far East: New Instructions

It should be noted that considerable differences in the procedure for sending communications to prisoners of war and civilians in Japan and Japanese occupied territories are announced in the Post Office Leaflet (P.222 B), now being supplied to signposts. The substance of these changes may not at first be clear, because the new leaflet bears the same number as the earlier one, but the date is December, 1944.



The Sick Bay at Stalag 364

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

News from American P.O.W.R.A.

Cordial New Year greetings have been received from the American P.O.W. Relatives' Association, whose officers send a message of good cheer to all the British relatives, wishing them a speedy reunion with their kindred.

The American Association was formed in Buffalo in 1941 by Miss Helen Wade Jackson, now Organising Secretary, for the purpose of assisting British prisoners of war and especially men of the Rifle Brigade, on whose behalf appeals had been made. The National Chairman of the Association, Mrs. John Knight Waters, provides a strong link with the European Theatre of War, because she is a daughter of General Patton. Her husband, Lieut. Col. Waters, is second in command at Offiz 64, Living in Washington. Mrs. Waters has done valuable work by keeping the American P.O.W.R.A. in close touch with the War Department and the National Red Cross Headquarters.

At the start of its career, the American organisation sent parcels to men of the Rifle Brigade and to other British prisoners of war. This work was stopped when parcels were restricted to those with next-of-kin permits, but regular supplies of Canadian cigarettes are still sent, and books are provided in response to specific demands. In addition, packing centres have been set up where next-of-kin can be advised on the best items to send and the most desirable foods, and assisted to obtain them. If any family cannot afford to send a really good box, the Association offers to pay for it.

"Cousin Helen."

"In hundreds of men in prison camps Miss Jackson has become known as "Cousin Helen," so close is her interest in their well-being. She has also by hundreds of letters of thanks from British relatives, expressing gratitude for her gifts to prisoners of war from America. She now asks us to convey her thanks in these letters, which it is unfortunate impossible for her to answer personally but which have been profusely appreciated by all those who have taken part in the work.

"I shall always feel I have many good friends in England," writes Miss Jackson "and am looking forward to the time the war is over and I can hope to come over and meet some of them. The unshakable spirit of the British people at home is fitting match to the magnificent attitude of their men who have spent long years shut away from the world, enduring hardships and privation so levels."

Recently a number of repatriated officers have spoken at branch meetings of the American P.O.W.R.A., whose members have found their understanding of prisoners of war problems greatly widened as a result of this. As in this country, interest is centred strongly on what can be done for prisoners of war on their return home. "As you probably realize," concludes Miss Jackson, "the return of prisoners of war is always a new experience for this country and I think we should profit by what we see people have to offer in the way of plans and suggestions."

FAR EAST CAMP PROBLEMS REVIEWED IN FULL WHAT AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS HAS DONE

Below we reproduce the second half of the Address given by Dr. J. Newman Morris, C.M.G., Chairman, National Executive, Australian Red Cross Society, at a conference called at Melbourne on May 12th, 1943, by the Australian Red Cross Society for the purpose of exchanging information about prisoners of war in Japanese hands. The first half of the Address appeared in our January issue, and we are indebted to the Australian Red Cross for permission to reprint this comprehensive survey of the situation. Particular attention should be paid to dates.

Over a period of many months, the Japanese have taken the position that they would not discuss any relief matter until every reported incident of aerial attack on Japanese hospital ships has been fully clarified.

Since the storm of public opinion raised by the publication of maltratement of prisoners the Japanese are apparently more active in helping to effect the prompt distribution of goods sent by exchange ships. There are indications that these goods are actually reaching the prisoners in practically all points.

Red Cross Co-operation.

As it has been said, co-operation between National Red Cross Societies has grown steadily in the face of the common problems and culminated in a conference in Washington in the latter part of last year, and confined entirely to consideration of prisoners in Japanese hands.

We gave full authority to the British delegates to act, and there has been constant interchange of information and consultation between Governments over this problem, but it was not until the final session of the Washington conference that Government representatives and Red Cross representatives met around one table.

It would be informative and perhaps helpful to include here the full text of some of the cables that passed between Washington and Geneva arising out of this conference.

Cable sent to Geneva from Washington Conference on October 13th, 1943:—

"Necessity of increasingly great co-ordination over humanitarian situation of prisoners of war in Japanese hands and over failure to date to secure to them protection and relief which would be in accordance with principles of Prisoner of War Convention. American has convened conference of Red Cross Societies of British Empire. This Conference to meet in session and united action in form of conference machinery and otherwise as may be proper will continue so long as there is hope of solution being found to prevent impasse. Representatives of Red Cross Societies here attending have full power to deal with situation as above specifically described.

It is necessary to recapitulate the individual representatives which have been addressed to you over the last two years by the Red Cross Societies concerned and to the Protecting Power by the respective governments. You are cognizant of all these and interchange of information which has been continuous throughout and has now been further consolidated has established that views of all Red Cross Societies are wholly in accord as regards vital importance of problem. We recognize unanimously also that we are dependent upon good

*Associate Red Cross Society.

co-operation of I.R.C.C.† to secure conventional solution; that difficulties in your way have been mainly great owing to position of Japanese authorities vis-a-vis the convention and their general attitude towards humanitarian issues involved.

Nevertheless failure to secure adequate solution conventional or otherwise is intolerable and if such failure is perpetuated it is bound to have prejudicial effect upon future reputation and potency of national Red Cross societies and indeed whole Red Cross structure. It is even more difficult to obtain public opinion in our countries that sufficient effort has been made and this difficulty will constantly increase. We know well that food, blankets, and shelter within foregoing aspects of matter on which we feel so strongly and which you know and we hope to receive a very early reply to enable us to decide upon next step to be taken in collaboration as suggested with you.—NORMAN DAVIS, Associate*.

It seems possible to us that current developments might provide timely strengthened realization of requests to Japanese authorities for compliance in all material respects with principles of convention regarding communications between prisoners and the Red Cross and the securing to them of traditional Red Cross relief of material kind and specifically regarding the appointment of I.R.C.C. representatives in sufficient numbers in all areas in which prisoners are detained with freedom to inspect and report on welfare of prisoners.

We attach highest importance to this latter safeguard. Japan's recent request for Red Cross reciprocity may further be interpreted as offering hope of willingness to approach conditions more in the spirit which other belligerents have displayed, and which combined with admirable arrangements by I.R.C.C. has resulted in favourable conditions to prisoners in Europe.

We earnestly request therefore that you will review very urgently in the light of the above the previous representations you have received from the individual Red Crosses on the subject, the most recent representations in particular, and will inform us by cable fully on the following points:

1. What action have you felt able to take vis-a-vis the Japanese authorities on the representations already received and what response has been made by the Japanese authorities of a kind on which you feel entitled to hold hope? A full and definite answer covering this would be of great value to present deliberations.
2. How would you view a proposal that we should send you an expression of the protest and redoubled request for relief facilities for (aerial transmission to Japanese Red Cross or other Japanese authorities), such communication having been expressed representing unanimous views and wishes of Red Cross societies here in conference. Would such a communication which—
*International Red Cross Committee.

amongst other things would be designed to bring world opinion to bear on subject be likely to make impression on Japanese authorities? Would it in your opinion be liable to prejudice any effort that you may have already in hand and (more which you have some present reason to hope for progressive good result? A full and frank statement of your views on these special issues would be greatly appreciated.

3. Have you any fresh suggestion of your own to make which we could usefully consider here? We are naturally of course very sympathetic in the views we hold and the objective we aim at, we feel we need not apologise for the force with which we now direct this representation. It is with the full and unreserved concurrence of the American, and British, Canadian and other Red Cross societies of the British Empire, and we hope to receive a very early reply to enable us to decide upon next step to be taken in collaboration as suggested with you.—NORMAN DAVIS, Associate*.

The following cable was despatched to Geneva on October 24th, 1943:—
"We are extremely grateful your cable of October 14th and wish to express our appreciation of the efforts which have been made by you and the International Red Cross Committee to alleviate the conditions of prisoners of war and civilian internees in the Far East. We continue to be hopeful that your further diligent and patient efforts will eventually result in the creation of forms of transportation and communication which will result in a continuous flow of relief goods and mail in both directions between east and west. After thoughtful consideration we have decided to do so and to transmit the following joint appeal to the Japanese Red Cross:—

"The American, Canadian, and British Red Cross Societies, the British and Irish Red Cross Society representing all other Red Cross Societies of the British Commonwealth, have met in Washington in a conference convened by the American Red Cross to consider the situation of American, British Commonwealth, and Netherlands prisoners of war and internees held by Japan, and the means of securing to them the full measure of Red Cross protection and relief to which they are entitled under Geneva Conventions and usage hitherto universally recognised. The conference has studied carefully the whole series of representations previously already made addressed to the Japanese Red Cross by the American and British Red Cross societies acting individually, and has examined every aspect of the present position which causes so grave concern.

It is abundantly clear that the high humanitarian representation presented by the Red Cross societies of the world, which in the present war have been observed by other belligerents, has been a genuine and selfless offer by Japan in the two following respects:

1. Facilities have not been given for shipments of humanitarian supplies—medicines, food, medicines, and comforts from abroad;

2. The International Red Cross Committee and its delegates have not been given full scope at all points to exercise their traditional functions of safeguarding the legitimate interests of all prisoners of war alike.

The conference of the Red Cross Societies assembled in Washington feels it its duty to present this view with grave emphasis to the Japanese Government, bearing in mind the solemn adherence to Red Cross principles and practice for which the Japanese Red Cross has stood, notably in the International Red Cross Conference held in Tokyo in 1914, and again in its perseverance on the humane treatment of prisoners of war published in its bulletin of March 1942. It is common fundamental ground that however fully a detaining power may be prepared to provide by its own means for the welfare of prisoners, the prisoners themselves are entitled to the special humanitarian services rendered by the National Red Cross Societies through the International Red Cross Committee, and the relatives of the prisoners are correspondingly entitled to the comfort and assistance which the close intervention of this neutral and independent agency alone can give.

In response to requests from the Japanese Red Cross, the American and British Red Cross Societies have already guaranteed through I.R.C.C. that Japanese prisoners within their jurisdiction will receive Red Cross services in the fullest measure. What is now required of the Japanese Red Cross is reciprocity in the practical form which the circumstances of the case necessitate. The most urgent problem of present confronting the American and British Commonwealth Red Cross Societies is that of the means of forwarding to the prisoners the relief supplies which have been sent to Vladivostok for the prisoners, the Japanese authorities having suggested this stage in the movement of Red Cross relief.

The Red Cross Societies are prepared to cooperate in any practical way. The Japanese Red Cross Society has here a great opportunity of Red Cross service to humanity and it is earnestly requested that the Japanese Red Cross will offer constructive advice and suggestions as regards the means of onward transportation to be provided, replying as soon as possible.—**AMCROSS.**

The Japanese attitude is indicated by a cable sent on February 28, 1942, from International Red Cross, Geneva.—

"Intercross has been informed by its delegate in Japan that after delegate's repeated efforts to obtain satisfactory solution problem Vladivostok shipments, delegate was informed by Japanese Official Information Bureau that question was being studied by Japanese Naval Authorities and Japanese Foreign Office that interfering events render persistence this problem rather inopportune at present moment. At same time Intercross has received message from Japanese Red Cross replying to various communications sent them from Intercross through Interross concerning supplies Vladivostok stating that upon receipt of each cable Japanese Red Cross had taken up with proper authorities question of acceptance and distribution relief and requested further the subject be taken into consideration. Japanese Red Cross itself prepared give every facility when relief arrives in Japan. In spite remarks mentioned first by cable Interross following this subject."

Memorandum from Washington.

There is a permanent British and British Commonwealth Red Cross representative in Washington representing us and continuing to work in consultation and co-operation with American Red Cross. From him we received yesterday the following memorandum on the present situation in regard to Far Eastern relief:

"In the memorandum issued by this Mission on February 21st to Red Cross Societies of the British Commonwealth, the position in regard to relief for the prisoners of war and civilian internees in the Far East was summarized up to date. No further memo has been issued since, but mainly because there have been no concrete results to report.

This, however, does not imply that no action has been taken. The effect of the atrocity disclosures on public opinion in America was strong, and considerable pressure was exerted in February on the United States Government and on the American Red Cross to make further endeavours to open up the supply routes. This resulted in the formulation of proposals put forward by the American Red Cross and the approval of the State Department, toward the end of February, for another approach to the Japanese through the International Red Cross. This proposal, which involved the use of neutral shipping to convey supplies to a point in Far Eastern waters where the ships would be taken over by Japanese crews, was considered jointly by the Red Cross Societies and Governmental Departments in London and Washington in the first week in March. It was agreed that, although there were some defects in the proposals, they should go forward to Geneva, with the request that they should be sent on to Tokyo, and that the International Red Cross whether neutral shipping would in fact be available if required.

It is now learned that this enquiry has been answered in the affirmative, and that the proposals have been sent on to the International Red Cross delegate in Tokyo.

It is not possible to predict what will be the reactions of the Japanese to these proposals. Their general attitude since the atrocity disclosures has been that when they are given preference in regard to the bombing of hospital ships, etc. have been cleared up they will be ready to consider moving supplies forward from Vladivostok. This is an improvement, if only slight, on their attitude last autumn, and it is possible that they have been affected by world opinion sufficiently to make them more disposed to listen to suggestions and the opening up of the supply routes. It must, however, be emphasized that there is as yet no evidence to show that this is the case.

Such reports as are received come solely from the northern camps in Japan, Formosa and northern China. These show that conditions, if not good, are tolerable. But the bulk of Commonwealth prisoners are in the camps in Burma, Siam, Malaya and Java, about which we have no official, and very little unofficial, information. It is to be feared that conditions in these camps are bad.

Enclosed with this report is a statement showing the information which has reached this Mission regarding the distribution of supplies sent by the American, Canadian, British and Australian Red Cross Societies on the American exchange ship *Griffiths*.

These supplies appear to have been distributed to the camps round about Christmas

time, except for those which were sent to Yokohama, some of which are still lying there."

RELIEF SUPPLIES CARRIED ON SECOND AMERICAN-JAPANESE EXCHANGE SHIPS

AUGUST, 1941

Supplies sent to Far East:	
American Red Cross:	
Cases of Food, Clothing, Medical Supplies and Toilet Articles	44,424
Canadian Red Cross:	
Cases of Food, Medical Supplies, etc.	3,177
British Red Cross:	
Cases of Medical Supplies	80
Y.M.C.A.:	
Cases of Recreational Supplies	225
National Catholic Welfare:	
Cases of Religious Supplies	40
	48,727
1. Distribution of Supplies Reported:	
Malay P.O.W. Camps	887
Malay C.I. Camp and C.I. Thailand P.O.W. Camps	164
Camps	2,200
Sematra P.O.W. and C.I. Camps	748
Java P.O.W. and C.I. Camps	274
Borneo P.O.W. and C.I. Camps	207
	3,480
Philippines P.O.W. and C.I. Camps	21,624

2. Off-loading of Supplies Reported:	
Yokohama for Japan, Korea, Manchuria and Formosa	18,200
Of these 8,200 cases have been sent to camps in Japan and Korea	
Yokohama for Hong Kong (Not yet shipped to Hong-kong)	1,921
Shanghai	4,488
*Actual distribution to camps not yet reported	19,028
Total	48,895

Cash Relief.

While it is satisfactory that a certain amount of success has been attained in forwarding cash, it cannot be considered a real substitute for relief goods.

Money has been sent to the United States from Australia and from other countries, both from the United States and from other countries.

Up to the end of 1941, 300,000 dollars had been supplied by American Red Cross for local relief to be spent in Shanghai, Hong-kong, the Philippine Islands and Japan itself. Where there are recognized International Red Cross Delegates, the spending of this money is entrusted to them for the purchase of supplementary food and clothing, and it is estimated that it is necessary to spend 150,000 dollars per month in those areas.

Early in 1942 Australian Red Cross received a message from the International Red Cross Committee requesting reimbursement to them of the sum of 20,000 Swiss francs, or 41,462 Australian, which had been made available to a number of our imprisoned units in Malaya. This sum had been sent for the general relief of our prisoners of war in that area. In refunding this sum to Geneva in February, 1943, we asked if arrangements could be made for forwarding further funds to our unit in Malaya for this purpose.

Later we forwarded 81,000 Swiss francs, or 45,921 Australian, in April, 1943. Recently we received a copy of a preliminary

note signed by Mr. Campbell Green in Malaya concerns this. It reveals that from March, 1943, there has apparently been available some money for local purchases of comforts and medical supplies for those of our men being held in Malaya.

Since that time, and in order to co-ordinate our joint Red Cross efforts, we have forwarded contributions through British Red Cross, which acts for us in the regard with International Red Cross. By the end of last year approximately £26,000 had been placed at the disposal of the Swiss Consul at Bangkok for the purchase of medical clothing and toilet supplies for the benefit of prisoners of war in Siam. This Swiss Consul has purchased and transmitted to the prisoners of war certain supplies for which he has received receipts, which indicate that some supplies have reached their destination. In fact, we have recently received news that some of the medical supplies thus purchased have succeeded in saving the lives of some of the British prisoners.

The Swiss Consul at Bangkok has been authorized to send money to the camps for local purchase of food and for this purpose £12,000 Australian per month, as being available by the British Red Cross War Organisation. Australian Red Cross certifies its proportion of this amount.

To Internees.

In Malaya and Singapore International Red Cross has been able to arrange for a Swiss citizen, Mr. Schweitzer, to act as its agent, and through him to purchase local limited relief supplies. The greatest proportion of this relief has been given to the civilian internees in Changi Camp, but has been also being given to the prisoners of war. It was through this Mr. Schweitzer that funds were sent to our unit in Malaya early last year. We have no details of the use to which the money has been put, but we have the greatest confidence that if any freedom of action has been allowed to our Commissioner, he will spend the money to the best advantage.

Advice from Geneva dated 18th January, 1944, stated that Schweitzer had been able in December last to distribute approximately 97,000 dollars monthly, as before stated, to internees. He had hoped to cable a complete summary of the loans and purchases for the prisoners of war from September 1st to December 31st, 1943.

Communications to Prisoners of War and Internees.

During my visit to Washington, Ottawa and London I became fully aware of the constant pressure being brought by all the Governments on to the Japanese Government on the important matter of the notification of lists of prisoners and the forwarding of mail to them. I saw copies of all the correspondence passing between Governments in this regard. I was also shown their communications to the Japanese Government in this regard. It is a pity that the complete failure of the Japanese Government to adhere to the terms of the International Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war. One can only fully realize the deprivation imposed by the Japanese on our prisoners of war by the knowledge of the relevant articles of this Prisoners of War Code. I should like to place in full in order to refresh your memory:

ARTICLE 36 of the Convention lays down that each of the belligerents shall fix periodically the lists of its officers and non-combatants which prisoners of war . . . shall be permitted to send per month, and shall notify that number to the other belligerent.

These letters and cards shall be sent by post by the airmail route. They may not be delayed or withheld for disciplinary motives.

Not later than one week after his arrival, or similarly in case of sickness, each prisoner shall be enabled to send a postcard to his family notifying them of his capture, and the state of his health. The said postcard shall be forwarded as quickly as possible, and shall not be delayed in any manner.

ARTICLE 37 states that prisoners of war shall be authorized to receive individually postal articles containing medicine and other articles intended for consumption, or clothing. The parcels shall be delivered to the addressees and receipts given.

ARTICLE 39 states that prisoners of war shall be permitted to receive individually, consignments of books which may be subject to censorship. This same article also permits daily recognised and authorised associations to send works and collections of books to the libraries of prisoners' camps. The transmission of such consignments to libraries may not be delayed under pretext of difficulties of censorship. Finally, part of ARTICLE 40 states that any prohibition of correspondence ordered by the belligerent for military or political reasons shall be only of a temporary character, and shall be for as brief a time as possible.

Lists of Names.

With regard to the notification of names, it has always been very apparent that the persistent and typical evasion of the Japanese character of the organization. They in effect wanted a one-way traffic. You are all probably fully aware, only too well aware of the gaps in the lists of names. As reliance was placed entirely on official Japanese notification, we would have a very small amount of comfort.

All sorts of excuses have been put up by the Japanese and by the Japanese, some no doubt authentic, but International Red Cross early in 1942 informed us that a Prisoner of War Bureau would be set up in Tokyo that would exchange information about prisoners of war and civilian internees.

Three months later the first list comprising a few hundred names came from Tokyo through I.R.C.C. This included the names of some of our men in Singapore, but mostly correct names in other areas. It was not until November, 1942, that the first list of men captured in Malaya reached Great Britain. From then on names began to come in greater volume. As we all know, there is still a large number of whom nothing has been heard officially or unofficially. It is not the purpose of this report to deal with statistics, but it is well always to remember in considering the problem, that there are upwards of 300,000 internees of war and civilian internees in the Far East.

Now relief resources are a *jeux* enterprise everything that gets in the way for the common good—such for all and all alike. Although Australia is probably on a par capita basis more deeply involved in the grave problem that we are studying than any other of the United Nations, it is not possible to arrange differential treatment. The Japanese make some distinction as between civilian internees and prisoners of war in favour of the civilians, but maintain the same evasive cynical attitude to all national protests and suggestions. While referring to this point, we should quote the words of Sir Ernest Burden in summing up his impressions of the Washington Conference:

"Our consciences can now be clear, and we were glad to have the world that the Allies Red Cross really did take every possible step and try their utmost to get relief to those in the hands of the Japanese. Nothing as yet had been achieved with the Japanese, but at any rate new ways and means of pressure had been devised, and should the Japanese open the door wider the joint Red Cross machinery can now take place the action it was desired to take by all." This joint consultation by all the Red Cross bodies concerned can now take place in Washington and the fullest advantage be taken of any opportunity to reach our men in Japanese hands.

Mail communications, while not a Red Cross responsibility in any way, have been the subject of many negotiations, and, of course, considerable anxiety. It has been a great comfort that some letters have been received by some of the men. As you all know, for a long time we were completely in the dark as to whether the Japanese would deliver any letters sent from Australia. The route for transmission of letters via Krasia has always been available, but we knew that letters sent by this route would take months to reach their destination.

Send Correspondence Direct.

The latest communication we have with regard to mails is the following cable from Geneva dated 28th January:

"Japanese Red Cross asks us communitarian following message. Considerable correspondence addressed to internees, prisoners of war under Japanese authority has reached us from various countries by the last exchange boat. The Japanese Government has already demonstrated its intention to obtain the names of internees, prisoners of war. Therefore we should like them herewith to send correspondence addressed to these internees, prisoners of war directly to their camps and to send us the rest."

You will see by that again another illustration of the tendency to put all the blame on us, naturally enough, perhaps, but it would appear obvious that the Japanese Government has misled the Japanese Red Cross because in so many cases the camp addresses announced to prisoners of war have not been communicated.

[Here follow comments affecting Australian mails only, which owing to lack of space we omit.]

Broadcasting Policy.

The policy with regard to this means of communication is a Governmental matter. You are all familiar with the history of Japanese action and propaganda in Singapore. There is no doubt they have given a very great deal of information not otherwise available, and have provided a considerable amount of propaganda. Despite the apparent progress behind the Japanese action in this regard.

Owing mainly to the necessity of first ensuring that regular mail communications are established and preliminary to Government pressure of work on short-wave stations, the German-Swedish Government has not given approval for the broadcasting of messages from Australia to prisoners of war and internees in Japanese hands.

(Continued on page 12.)

LETTERS FROM GERMAN CAMPS

WINTER DAYS AND FUTURE PLANS

MARLAG O.

A Bright Idea.

Welcome Cigarettes.

31/10/44.

Two cigarette parcels have arrived from the Worcester P.O.W. S.A. Branch. Would you acknowledge them (then for me)? Three weeks since your last letter arrived, dated September 16th. Many of your letters are missing, it seems. I've had only two July ones, and no August ones as yet. Are any letters getting through? I went out for a walk to-day. Although the weather was misty and damp it was pleasant to get out for a bit.

5/11/44.

My model yacht is nearly finished. Am having great difficulty cutting a decent set of sails. My powers of "beamstring" are not great and material is limited to the remains of an old shirt.

OFLAG VII B.

Coal Short.

10/11/44.

We have had snow for the past two days and are all preparing to hibernate for the winter! Coal is very short—much less than last year, which was less than the previous year. We are still on half rations of Red Cross parcels, but a number of private parcels have come in recently. The new conductor of the orchestra now holds weekly tonemake concerts and I very much enjoyed the first one last weekend, as I also did a show given by our orchestra and a choral and orchestral concert. We have just had another number of our Camp Magazine *Tonemake* in which there is an able article on land nationalizations. No, I have not had any more parole walks or cinema visits. These were stopped by higher authority in the autumn and for the main body of the camp have not been re-started. Recently I have been reading translations of Virgil, Horace and Aristophanes, etc. Only wish I could read the originals.

Half Parcels.

30/11/44.

I am afraid I have not written you a Christmas letter this year. In fact I completely forgot until it was too late, so I now wish you all New Year greetings and hope you have had as good a wartime Christmas as possible. The postcards we are sending for Christmas greetings have not yet materialized.

I was interested to hear that both John S. and Angus P. are on the Continent. I was most pleased to hear that you are to have extra rations—a very good sign. As you know, we have been on half rations for over two months, and stocks in the camp will last at this rate until the New Year so we do not look like having anything special for Christmas. A small Handicrafts Exhibition was held last week-end—as good as usual. A new Dance Band Show starts tonight, which I will see on Monday, and on Saturday I go to hear the orchestra playing a programme of ballet music. There is going to be no pantomime this year—ideas have run out after producing *See!*

31/10/44.

A good week for mail. Mum's of August 20th and September 16th and 24th, and Pop's of July 18th, August 25th and September 19th. I've also had the envelopes you sent. They are fine glasses, but you need something better than them to see the sun these days! As a matter of fact the weather hasn't been too bad, but it is getting colder now and I have only had one game of hockey since I wrote. I'm still having fun with the gearbox—it's a lot easier to have a bright idea than to get it to work out, even on paper. In the flesh I expect it would burst or melt or something. There hasn't been anything very exciting in the theatre—an orchestra concert and some orchestra stuff.

Extracts from letters from prisoners of war and civilian internees in Germany and the Far East are welcomed for reproduction in these pages. They should deal with subjects of general interest, such as camp life and conditions. Copies of letters only should be sent and should be written on one side of the paper, with the prisoner's camp number, address and date of writing clearly marked. Interesting camp photographs are also cordially accepted, and will be returned with care.

Welcome Gramophone Records.

30/11/44.

I am very well—only one letter this week, Mum's of July 2nd. A slip for some more records has arrived but I haven't had them yet. It's getting awfully cold here—we've had a good old blizzard the last two days and we're only getting a third of the coal this year to what we had last! That and half parcels makes this winter look most uninviting to say the least of it. Yes, I've been thinking pretty

hard on what to do after we get home. I've definitely decided against getting a regular commission and this means which won't turn up was going to be a stop towards getting a job. I've taught myself quite a bit here, but the snag is I've no real experience and am getting a bit odd for an office boy. Anyhow, one of the first things I shall do is to run round and find what sort of vacancies, if any, there are with big firms like G.E.C. and get some experience with them if I can.

30/11/44.

Two of your letters this week: Mum's of July 16th and 30th, also 11's of June 24th. Thank you very much also for two records. They are *Le Tzarina* and two short sides of symphonies. They always arrive intact and undamaged, much better than anything else. I've had a most energetic day. I am on a small party that goes out to collect fire cones. We do a week at a time and go out for about four hours in the afternoon with haversacks and a hand-cart. Every now and then we get a horse and cart, so you collect like hell and then bring back what you can, leaving the remainder for when the horse and cart comes out. I don't think I've worked so hard for ages, and of course it had to pour with rain just as we were starting back! Heigh-ho, anyway. French without Tears has opened and is a great success.

Fir Cone Collection.

30/11/44.

No mail this week. I have finished the cone collecting and am feeling much better for the fresh air and exercise, although I was pretty weary by the end of the week. We are losing the Canadian who has been messing with us and hope to get a friend of V.W.'s into the room, so we shall still have a four. Our crossword has appeared in the camp magazine, *Tonemake*, and I've already been accepted and told how difficult it is! Anyway someone has tried to do it. French without Tears is over and we have a Dance Band show starting the end of this week. The Dance Band is definitely better than I've heard of before, although some of the turns between tunes are not up to scratch. Victor plays a trombone in both dance and symphony orchestras and has got a good arrangement by his side of *Sweety Side Up* in this new show.



In Oflag VII B. Back row: Charles Wall, Richard Clark, Peter Hanbury, Des Cuswelling, Ian Gerritt Ouse, Peter Fraser, Brian McInnes. Front: John Cook, Andrew Craig Harvey, Jocelyn Abel Smith, Graeme Paxton, Brian Wilson.

OFLAG IX A/H.

Birthday in Captivity.

15/10/44.

Well, once more we come round to my birthday. You will need no telling that it is my fourth in captivity and my third in this camp.

I see that in my letter of October 30th, 1943, I wrote: "I should think it is practically certain that my next birthday will be spent in England." However, the fates have decided otherwise and that is that. We can only carry forward the slogan another year with definitely better grounds. If the war is not over soon all long-term prisoners will be feeling that something ought to be done (as happened in the last war) for us to be sent to a neutral country or even repatriated.

OFLAG IX A/Z.

Hard Winter.

23/11/44.

I was pleased to receive two letters from you yesterday; the dates were August 23rd and September 27th. The weather has got very cold lately. I think we are in for a hard winter, which is not what I am looking forward to, especially as the food situation is not the same as it was last year. Anyhow we shall get through O.K., and I can look forward to getting home next year.

OFLAG 79.

Good Scheme.

12/10/44.

I was delighted to get your letter dated September 17th this morning—very quick. I have had almost no August nor other September letters at all. We are all growing very impatient to be back and it looks doubtful now whether we shall make Christmas or not. Life has been quieter here lately, but the repatriated people could tell you something about the state of our nerves a month ago. They have recovered a bit, fortunately, and mine have not suffered as much as mine. I have read the Government's proposed demobilisation scheme and think it fairly good.

STALAG IV A.

News from London.

13/11/44.

I've had some cigarettes lately, and tobacco from you, so an O.K. for smokes for a bit, but hope a supply of parcels comes soon as we are nearly out of them. We have had some more chaps here, including some who were in London at the end of September, so have some idea of things with you after such a long break.

STALAG IV B.

25/10/44.

Note new address (not out yet). Received your letter from Bedford, September 26th. Parcels are almost finished but will manage O.K. Went to an excellent Schubert Symphony concert at the Empire this week. The orchestra was made up from British, Dutch, and French musicians. Some of the bandstand boys have gone out on "kommandos" but more arrived today. They had a pretty tough time in Holland,

but were praised by Jerry. Those longer evenings make us think of the home fire burning. See you soon.

New Arrivals.

9/11/44.

I went for a walk the other week to the ———. It is a quiet little place and very quiet these days. However, it is a change to get out of the cage for a spell. I shall probably go again this Friday, as we can go over every week. This only applies to the hospital staff, so there are about twenty or so each week. It has been very wet lately and it gets cold at night, but it will not be long before the spring comes. We have had a lot of new arrivals lately, including a fellow who was repatriated way back in early 1943 from Camp 53. I have been trying to get a French Grammar Book for quite a while but without success. If possible could you have a Heath's French Grammar sent? My transport books have not arrived yet, unfortunately.

Pay Problems.

17/11/44.

I had a letter on Monday—years of October 7th. I had another letter from the Paymaster which was as clear as mud, at the same time it makes me mad that after suffering being a prisoner of war you get further complications added. It has been fairly cold here of late but nothing



"Music Hahn Charva" for his happy 18th at Stalag IV A.

to worry about. I generally get to bed about 8 p.m. and read till 9.30 p.m. I still do not like sleeping in blankets, but of course I would not be without them. Two have been carried all the way from Italy to here. There is another week gone by, but it is one never before. I guess I have just lived for that day, whenever it may be. It's a long time since I saw you.

A Recored Mail.

3/11/44.

In the last ten days I have received over 90 letters, dated from April to September, from all the usual sources. Sorry you have been unlucky, but I would just tell you that the ration is only two letters per month and four cards. All goes well here and I am still fairly busy. Parcels have just run out but more are expected.

I have just seen a demonstration of hypnotism. Amazing but true. I will write more about it anon.

3/10/44.

The age of miracles is not yet passed! I have just received three letters and a parcel of 500 cigarettes, dispatched by Dad on May 25th. Sincerely, Thanks are



This Christmas Card was sent home to relatives by one of Oflag IX A/H.

more useful than ever now that the issue of Red Cross parcels is cut down to half owing to difficulty of supplies. The letters were from Dad (May 26 and 28) and G.C. (August). Nice work.

Have you heard about the National Further Education Scheme? In brief it says that a cash grant will be made to University students who leave their studies for the duration, sufficient to pay both tuition fees and also the cost of living. Just think of it: my final year at College with all expenses paid! I am itching to get back and get stuck in. What do you think about it? The immediate future is certainly taking shape fast. I haven't any room for news. No matter, there isn't any, anyhow. Do you see I am in a cheerful mood? Must go now—there's a train to catch.

Post-war Planning.

2/9/44.

I have had no mail or parcels for many weeks now, but that is only a minor detail and no explanations are necessary. I don't think you will receive this, but here goes. In case my earlier letters have not arrived I will briefly outline one of my post-war plans. If one of us co-venturers are contemplating opening up a building venture — to wit Dad, Bill (P.A.A. pilot) and yours truly, Sol is a master builder, and the working part of the firm, while Bill and I intend to watch from a safe distance. I will tell you more shortly, but for the present I wonder if Dad would kindly mind making a few crafty enquiries at the Ministry of Works and Buildings re the forming of new companies, etc., and also the allocation of contracts for house damage repairs? Sol has been in the business all his life and certainly knows his onions. If there are restrictions on the forming of new companies, by virtue of our position as prisoners of long standing we shall do our best to obtain special concessions. What do you think of the scheme? I think it should be a good scheme, particularly as no work is required on my part! I may say that we have thought out this idea very carefully. More anon.

STALAG VII A

Camp Newspaper.

16/10/44.

I have started a camp newspaper in conjunction with another officer and our first bi-weekly number appears to-morrow. I have just received your first letter, dated August 20th, though from its contents I gather that it is not the first you have written. From all accounts my letters arrive quicker than yours.

STALAG XVIII A.

Paid in German Marks.

8/10/44.

You are certainly very optimistic about the finish of the war, and I hope among your flags you have a Greek one. (The writer was captured in Corie—1942) Religion seems to interest you quite a lot by the trend of your letters. You should read some modern books such as *The Age of Reason*. We are now paid in German marks instead of camp money—twenty-one marks a month. Quite a change of policy. We are now allowed more than thirty marks. Personal parcels are starting again next week for all of us.

Exciting Times.

22/10/44.

Nothing this week except six parcels. To-day more Red Cross parcels, and during November we are to receive one a fortnight. We have plenty of excitement now-days, and spend quite a bit of time in the evenings with no lights.

1/10/44.

What are the chances of getting the car on the road when I return? Your views are wanted on this subject. Just fancy the old bus has been laid up five years yesterday.

STALAG XX A (3).

Together in Thought.

12/11/44.

My 20th birthday has passed me by most uneventfully. Maybe, after five years behind the wire, this birthday, and the approaching Christmas, will be really the last I shall spend in captivity, but who can say?

However in spite of minor setbacks—no mail from you for several weeks, no permit cigarettes for a very long time, no personal parcels later than last January's, and a very elusive, curtailed Red Cross food ration—I manage to keep cheerful and happy. How could I be anything else, when you are always with me so I'd extra heart to this long wait in isolation?

We tend to become such hardened fatalists, living this unnatural life, that any thought of good news to come—as come it undoubtedly will—seems unable to pierce the hard armour, fashioned in five long years away from all one loves and holds most dear. We just arrive "the day"—but after so many disappointments, dare not imagine when that day will be. This must not in any way convey I am "down in the mouth" but the whole thing—I can still count my blessings on both hands.

I think this letter should arrive in time to send you every possible loving greeting for a happy Christmas Day. If the parcels arrive on time, we shall make the camp as usual, and manage

ATHLETICS IN GERMAN CAMP
Some Fine Achievements

A warm tribute to the "grand sporting spirit" of our prisoners overseas was paid recently by Percy Read in the *New Chronicle*. In the second of two articles he writes—

A week last Saturday I told the story of the swimming activities of British prisoners of war in a German camp, Stalag 381, where two Londoners, Cpl. G. Stacey and Sgt. W. Cole, had been acting as instructors and organisers.

Stacey's father has now sent me a photograph of these two which he has just received from his son and which is reproduced in the adjoining column.

It is a magnificent example of what swimming can do on the score of physical fitness, even for prisoners of war, and of how much we are indebted to the Red Cross for its practical encouragement among our men in the German camps.

Since writing that article I have received details of an athletic meeting held on August Bank Holiday of last year at another German camp, Stalag 344, which typifies the grand sporting spirit of our prisoners overseas.

To create the illusion of home, the competing teams bore such famous names as Polytechnic Harriers, Herne Hill Harriers, Achilles Club and Maccartians.

Everything was done in the manner of a big meeting in this country. There was a match-post of the competitors, headed by the camp pipe band, the salute being taken by Lt. Col. D. M. Crawford, R.A.M.C.

All the track events included in the Camp Championship were team or relay races and Killman Wood, a pre-war member of Poly. Harriers, who set one time trained with Syd Wooderson, was first in two of these. Wood is unbeaten in camp distance races and on this occasion he won the 1,000 yards team event in 4 min. 9.50 sec. and the 3,000 yards in 10 m. 20.10-14.

In the hand race competitors had to play

(Continued from previous column.)

to do so anyway, even if the parcels are delayed, as we have been warned to expect.

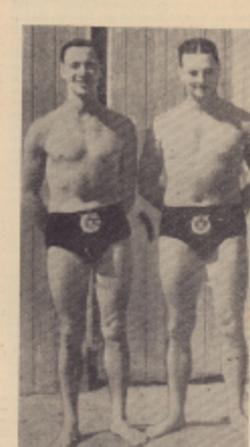
I am quite fit again following my recent operation, and the three weeks in hospital was a real rest. This new camp of wooden huts is well situated, and healthy. I am keeping house with two other lads, one an Australian. As they both work in the cook-house you can imagine I am getting well cooked meals. They have made me O.M. so I try to make rations with an iron hand, as I can only afford one Red Cross food parcel per man each fortnight.

STALAG 344.

Fourteen Ovens.

12/11/44.

This past week has seen our first fall of snow, and I think the winter has started now. The outlook for Christmas is not too cheerful; we are on a half parcel per week now and I believe that finishes this month. Still we are considering ourselves very well thought that this is definitely the last winter. How grand it will be to home! Next week we are making an oven for cooking in the barracks. It is a bit of a fuss, practically every combine in the barracks is making itself a small stove.



Camp Near Munich
Cpl. Stacey, Sgt. Cole.

instruments as they ran, but these of them preferred to walk behind the runners, desirously playing "Colonel Bogey."

Shirts, given as prizes, were made by craftsmen in the camp—the medallions carved and burnished from waste metal.

By the time they are all finished there will be some fourteen or fifteen fires in the barracks. Still it will keep us warm this winter. I went to a variety concert to-night which I enjoyed.

STALAG 383.

At a Rest Camp.

1/11/45.

Still at the Rest Camp in Bavaria—nearly seven weeks now since we arrived, and my mental and physical condition is greatly restored. Mentally I am much calmer and able to concentrate. I must admit that before, like many others, I had become very nervous.

With the long walks and long views my limbs and eyes had a good stretching, so now I can wait in greater peace of spirit for us to go as proves necessary.

I can rejoice in spirit with some of my friends. I hope you can write and possibly help—These families gave us the finest help and affection. We had five months of the greatest hospitality that could not have been better had they been our own families. We should like you all to help them, for they will probably have been in great need of it. Some of them lost their husbands and brothers in the evacuation of Greece. I hope the country will remember this.

ACTIVITIES IN THE PROVINCES

PARTIES AND MONEY-RAISING PROJECTS

Preparing for
P.O.W.'s Return

Bradlington.

Well over a hundred children enjoyed a tea and party given in the Christ Church Parish Hall, under the auspices of the local P.O.W.R.A. The young guests were the children of prisoners of war. The Mayoresa (Mrs. Newby) presented a large cake which augmented a fine display of good things. A big Christmas tree was provided by the Corporation Gardens Superintendent. Every child received a toy, an apple, a bag of sweets, and Father Christmas distributed sixty-two pieces. Entertainment was provided by the "Tiny Tots" from Platenho and Mr. E. L. Maples, conjurer.

Brighouse.

A very enjoyable afternoon was spent by relatives at a meeting attended by the Mayor of Brighouse (Mr. F. Bottomley), who accepted the invitation of the club to be its president. Mrs. M. M. Middleton was in the chair.

Bristol.

Two hundred and fifty children, close relations of prisoners of war, came to Bristol Cathedral for toys from a Christmas-tree provided for them. Each child received one large toy, one or more small ones, a book, money and a bag of sweets, and the event was a great success. The association reached its parents fund target of £10,000 on December 31st, 1944. This is passed to the Red Cross to cover the cost of Bristol Prisoners' Food Parcels.

Burley.

Competitions held at meetings have raised substantial sums of money for the association, and gifts of sweets contributed to the success of the children's Christmas party, which was attended by about 180 children. The Mayor of Burley was present.

Members took an active part in preparing the petition, with 4,200 signatures, which was recently sent to the Borough Member, Mr. W. A. Burke, urging more interest in the welfare of prisoners in the Far East on the part of the Government. A reply was subsequently received, giving assurance of unremitting pressure on the Japanese to improve the treatment of prisoners of war.

As parcels cannot be sent to the Far East, money is being set aside as gifts for the men when they return.

Caterham and District.

Many activities were carried out in 1944, starting with the second birthday meeting and annual children's party. In early spring meetings were transferred to the afternoons owing to rains, and although crowded meetings took place in May and June, activities had to be suspended for the next three months owing to rains and evacuation. Crowded meetings were held again in October and November, when an ex-prisoner, now stationed in the district, brought his band to entertain the men and received a very warm welcome. During

this month the Hon. Secretary opened a gift shop for a week, which raised nearly £200 for the special Far East Fund. The aim of this fund is to give every Far East prisoner a substantial money present on his return to make up for the lack of parcels during captivity.

At the December meeting a local saint, rescued from the Japanese, was the guest of honour and received the branch's usual welcome home present. Christmas week saw a tea party for the relatives of the seventy local people in the hands of the Japanese. Private Wiles, the local returned prisoner, had an individual chat with each relative. On January 1st, 1945, the third birthday party was held.

During the three years over 300,000 cigarettes have been sent to prisoners of war in Europe. The Hon. Secretary has kept in touch with the relatives of over 200 prisoners on the branch's books.

Cilthorpe and District.

The fourth Christmas party was held on December 16th at the Conservative Club, when fifty children of prisoners of war were entertained. The room was festively decorated with a huge illuminated Christmas tree loaded with toys presented by local people. The Mayor and Mayoresa (Councilor and Mrs. J. Wilkinson) were guests of the party and presented gifts. Father Christmas, assisted by the Mayoresa, distributed toys and a money gift from an anonymous donor. On leaving each child was given a new two-shilling-piece, an apple and sweets. Tea, ices and music from a barrel organ contributed to the fun.

Durham and District.

A "Bring and Buy" Sale was held in the Town Hall in December in aid of the Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross Fund, to be used for prisoners of war in the Far East. The Mayoresa, Mrs. Bell, opened the sale, which resulted in a cheque for £26 being sent to the Red Cross.

Grimby and Cleethorpes.

Details of what is being done for prisoners of war were given by Mrs. P. M. Stewart, Organising Secretary of B.P.O.W.R.A., at a meeting held recently. The Murve of Cleethorpes presided, supported by the Mayoresa and many other well-known people, including representatives of the Far East and with the need for considering whether the Association should continue to exist after the war for the purpose of assisting prisoners to settle down in ordinary life again.

NEW AFFILIATED BODY

Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire,
Honorary Secretary: A. A. Nicholson, Esq., 67, Eardon Place, Stratford-on-Avon.

Congratulations on the work of the association were extended by Miss Elise Spratt of the B.P.O.W.R.A. thanks to Mrs. Stewart, the Mayor and Mayoresa and others were proposed by Mrs. Mellor, Mrs. Frank Robinson and Mrs. Hazelgrove. Musical items were rendered by Mrs. Frank Bannister's trio.

Hungerford and District.

A dance was held in the Church House to raise money for prisoners of war on their return to civil life, and the net proceeds amounted to £28 4s. 6d. A Far and Feather Whist Drive was held in December, the prizes being donated by various people in the district. As a result £16 10s. 0d. was raised as a further contribution towards helping returned prisoners.

Kendal.

The second Christmas party for all Kendal children whose fathers are prisoners of war was held in the Y.W.C.A. Hall on January 3rd, when the Rev. E. H. E. Bowers presided and some fifty children enjoyed the tea provided by the Association and friends. The Mayor of Kendal, Councilor W. F. Pennington, attended and congratulated the Association on the happy, healthy appearance of the children. A conjuring display was given by Fred Fox of Morecombe, and games were organised by Miss Deighton. A Punch and Judy show followed, and before leaving each child was given a present from the Christmas tree.

Newbury.

A largely attended meeting held on December 14th listened with great interest to Mr. S. G. King, of the Far Eastern Section of the British Red Cross, who described the latest developments in the prisoner of war situation in the Orient.

He told of the efforts being made continuously to ship further Red Cross supplies and of the cash remittances made to neutral representatives to enable them to purchase necessities for our men. He dealt also with the latest reports from the camps, the delays in the transmission of mail and hopes of the eventual commencement of a cable service.

Mr. P. B. Brown, the Chairman, announced that the Association had made a donation of £260 to British Red Cross, half this sum being earmarked for the Food Parcel Fund and half for Far Eastern relief. The Y. H. P.O.W.R.A., Joint Fair held recently had realized a net profit of about £750.

The dispatch of cigarette parcels to prisoners of war from Newbury now in German Camps had been resumed.

North-East Cheshire.

The North-East Cheshire Branch of the Prisoners of War Relatives' Association held its Christmas party on Saturday, January 6th, at their headquarters, Unity

Hall, Greek Street, Southport. Eighty-five members and children of prisoners of war attended.

A very beautiful tea was enjoyed and games were conducted by Mr. W. Stephen in which the children and many of the parents joined.

Father Christmas (Mr. Titton) visited the party and gave each child oranges, apples and sweets, and a small gift.

At the conclusion of the afternoon Mr. H. C. Threlley, treasurer, presented each child with Savings Stamps to the value of 2s. 6d.

Oldham.

During the past year the number of prisoners has increased from 23 to 818. 408 in Europe and 210 in the Far East. Forty-nine men have escaped or been repatriated since the beginning of the war, and 14 have died in camp, the majority of the latter being in the Far East.

The Committee still attend every Friday afternoon at 112a Lees Road, to give advice and help with the next-of-kin parcels. Nearly 800 parcels were packed during 1944 and £2,122 was expended on food parcels sent from London.

The Association meets twice monthly, one of the meetings being for the Far East and one for Europe.

The Committee have fourteen adopted prisoners.

Meetings have been held regularly and donations have been received from many sources.

Far East Problems Reviewed

(Continued from page 11.)

Red Cross Messages.

The Red Cross Message Service may be mentioned here. It began to operate from Japan and Siam as early as the end of February, 1942, giving the first news of the welfare of certain individual British nationals.

Thousands of Red Cross messages have been sent from Australia to the Far East, and where Red Cross is well organised, as in Shanghai, a large number of replies to messages have been received.

The position as regards messages to and from Malaya and Java is obscure, but we will hope the Japanese Government will make an announcement on this aspect in an early date.

I have presented a short, probably incomplete statement of the history of negotiations and the results obtained by Red Cross efforts in co-operating with Governmental action. You will, I trust, see that the position has in no sense of the word become static; that there is in continuous session machinery for co-ordinated United Nations Red Cross effort.

However pessimistic the Government attitude may be, we feel justified within the Red Cross movement in maintaining the attitude of constant pressure in spite of the heavy clouds of doubt and frustration. There does seem to be a little rift in the clouds at the present moment. We trust it will be widened at a very early date.

The future programme concerns the obligations placed on us by opportunities

Reading and District.

A performance of Christmas Carols held in the Town Hall, Reading, realised the sum of £43, to be used for the Reading Prisoners of War (Welcome Home) Fund. The carols were sung by the Reading Temperance Choral Society and the Reading Musical Choir, the soloists being Doris Coles and Geoffrey Triatram and the conductor Frederick Drew. The district's first repatriated prisoner, Cpl. Norman Bennett, has been appointed to the Committee, and Captain A. Henson has been made an additional Trustee.

At the monthly meeting of the Reading branch of the Association last week, Capt. A. Henson being in the chair, it was announced that the Mayor had accepted a vice-presidency of the association, and he had said he would do all he could to help. The secretary said the Prisoners of War Welcome Home Fund stood at £3,806, and the proceeds of the November and December efforts to provide for a re-union and reception of local prisoners of war as soon as practicable after their return had realised £218 18s. 6d.

The Christmas sale of books realised 444 10s. 3d. and the Christmas competition 447 11s. 11d.

Spyn Valley.

A seasonal address was given at a Christmas meeting by the club's pastor, Rev. T. Abell, and carols were sung. Meetings were extended to all by the chairman, Mr. A. Hellowell.

which map, and we trust will arise for service even while our men are in captivity, and seriously the prosecution of preparations for relief on the release and repatriation of the prisoners and civilians concerned.

Firstly, a new Prisoner of War Department has been created, concerned solely with the organisation of service to prisoners of war and internees, both now and during the process of repatriation. This brings us into line with the practice of the British Red Cross Society and other Empire Red Cross Societies.

Secondly, the maintenance at its full efficiency of the Bureau for Missing, Wounded and Prisoners of War in relation to Searcher Service and communications. We feel that the day is approaching when the doors will open on the prison gates of our fellow citizens and relations, and we see close consultation with the Government Departments in the preparation of plans. We have allotted the leader of the Commission, whom it is hoped will accompany the liberating forces. His job is to select the remainder of his team, who will undertake concentrated training for the work ahead of them. Our Stores Department, Medical Department, Library Services and Information Department and others are already involved in the preparation of the special contributions they can make to the service.

Complete lists of names are being prepared by the Central Bureau, so that every effort will be made to get in touch with the men whose names are on those lists, and so that our Searcher Service will be completely equipped to fill in the gaps in the information relating to each individual member of the forces.

(Continued at foot of next column.)

LATE NEWS

P.O.W. Military Mission in Moscow.

We are informed that a British Military Mission is now established in Moscow for the purpose of assuming responsibility for British Prisoners of War in the event of their being released by the advancing Russian armies.

Japanese Statement on Far East Parcels.

Reader reports Tokyo wireless statement that Japanese Government will send a ship to Singapore, Sumatra and Java with Red Cross parcels and gifts to prisoners of war. Date and route will be published later.

Food Parcels in German Camps.

"A German order came out yesterday saying that we must consume all the food in the camp by January 14th," states a letter just received from Oflag VII B and written on December 20th. "The Germans," it continues, "say that after January 14th parcels will come in once a week and must be consumed as they arrive."

Broadcast by Returned Thaiand Prisoner of War.

For information of those who did not hear the broadcast by Gunner Wilson on Christmas Eve and January 10th, the script was published in the *Liberator* of January 4th, 1945.

Repatriated Prisoners of War.

Names of sick and wounded repatriated prisoners of war brought home on hospital ships *Leilia* and *francis Castle* were stated *The Times* of February 1st commencing in advance to next-of-kin from lists compiled in Switzerland. Nearly 1,400 men have returned to this country, and 370 will shortly sail from Marseilles to their homes in India, South Africa and New Zealand.

FAR EAST MAP OUT OF PRINT

The Far East map is out of print and no orders can be taken meantime. A new, more detailed map is being prepared and an announcement will be made as soon as it is available.

ERRATUM.

January Newsletter, page 16, col. 3.

Far East Exchange of Prisoners of War and Internees.

The last paragraph under this heading should be deleted. It should read "It is learned that this situation is not confined to civilian internees in Hongkong." It is incorrect to assume that this applies to Prisoners of War.

(Continued from previous column.)

Finally, we consider we are acting fairly as an Official Auxiliary of the Government in this matter, but that our services will be always carried out as the agency of the people in this country for relief work in this regard. We will see and expect the mutual co-operation of the special interests represented here to-day.