

STATEMENT OF REPORT OF INTERVIEW OF RECOVERED PERSONNEL

January 19, 1945.

The Germans had informed us that we would be moved back to Germany because of the Russian situation. Most of the Americans that were in this Camp had just arrived from the Battle of the Bulge and were in very bad condition. Most of them had no socks, overcoats, gloves or underwear.

I was able to bribe the German Interpreter with cigarettes and a promise of protection if overtaken by the Russians. This was done with Col. Fullers' permission. Because of this bribe we received extra clothing, shoes, underwear, matches, etc., out of a German Supply Room which had to be broken into. I also insisted that during the march I wanted hot meals whenever possible and hot milk. Also that at anytime that we stopped for the night I wanted the Americans quartered in a cow barn rather than a hay or horse barn.

During this march, through the efforts of the German I had bribed, we did get two hot meals (soup) and one cup of hot milk each. We were also quartered in cow barns twice where we were able to get fresh milk by milking the cows ourselves. It was also much more comfortable because of the additional warmth.

Our rations otherwise consisted of German black bread and an occasional piece of cheese which was frozen solid. During the eight days that we marched the temperature stayed at 10 to 15 degrees below zero. Most of the Americans were suffering from dysentery and frost bite.

During this march fourteen of the Americans managed to escape.

Throughout the march sounds of battle could be clearly heard to the rear and to our flanks. At times Russian reconnaissance groups were in front of us which caused much delay and confusion in the refugee column that we were with. At no time were we fired upon either by Russian Troops or their planes which were over our column several times.

I also tried bribing the German Captain with the column. I wanted him to abandon the Americans in an evacuated village. He would have willingly accepted, but was afraid of the Senior German Captain whom he had approached once on the subject and was almost shot for his pains.

We arrived at the town of Wurgarten on the night of January 28. We were quartered in a Nazi Hall but were later moved to the School House.

The German Interpreter and I walked to a house and with two bars of soap I got enough ersatz coffee to give all of the Americans about a quart each. I made the coffee in a shed behind the school which had a large vat in it. At midnight I also got two bushels of boiled potatoes.

At 5:30AM the morning of the 29th the Senior German Captain came into the School House and woke me up. (At this time I was being used as an interpreter,

being the only one left that could speak German). He told me that we were now free because Russian Tanks had broken through on both flanks. He gave me a note stating that we were American Prisoners of War who had been abandoned by the Germans and told me to present it to any other Germans that came through. I awakened Colonel Fuller and explained the situation to him. He immediately got in touch with the Italian General Geloso and set up an allied Headquarters. (I also acted as Italian Interpreter). We contacted the Russians on the morning of the 30th and they gave us control of the town.

From then on I took over the feeding and supplying of eighty (80) Americans, sixty-five (65) French, thirty-eight (38) Canadians, and twelve (12) Yugoslavs. The one hundred and ninety-nine (199) Italians set up their own kitchen and supply room. We ordered the German Civilians, through their Burgemeister, to supply us with one pound of bread, one pound of potatoes, one pound of meat, milk, and other items every day, for each person then under our control. This was supplied to us in bulk. Colonel Fuller and I supplemented these rations by killing several deer in the near by woods. I broke down the rations for these people and had them distributed with the help of several American Officers. I personally cooked for the Americans for the entire five (5) weeks that we remained in this town.

I had charge of all weapons and ammunition that we had picked up. They consisted of about fifty (50) German Rifles and some Tommy Guns.

The Americans and Canadians patrolled the town and near by woods.. I took one German Prisoner in the School House and turned him over to Headquarters.

When the Russians finally moved us to Odessa I did not have very much to do. In Odessa I took over the kitchen again and with the help of Russian Cooks and Women turned out meals for approximately one hundred (100) Americans and about thirty-five (35) English Officers and a few English Civilians. Our rations were greatly improved by adding to them from the stores of an American Supply Ship that was in the Harbor. At this time we came under the control of the American Military Mission in Moscow.

We stayed there for approximately seven (7) days. When we boarded an English Boat headed for Naples my duties ended.

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