

# REDS FREE YANKS

Many Prisoners of War Flee as Nazis March Them Westward Before Drive.

## HITCH-HIKE TO MOSCOW

Story of Escape Is Told by Vanguard of Americans Arriving From Front.

Sick and Wounded Left Behind by Germans Now Are in Safe Hands.

BY EDDY GILMORE AND DANIEL DE LUCE.

Moscow, Feb. 19.(AP)—

Many American prisoners of the Germans have been liberated by the Russian offensive despite frantic Nazi efforts to march them westward.

Their numbers have not yet been estimated, but the fact of their freedom was reported today by three escaped American officers who hitch-hiked across Poland and part of Russia as the adventurous vanguard of the others heading home by more conventional means.

The three are Capt. Ernest M. Gruenberg, 29, of New York, a doctor in the 101st air-borne division; Lieut. Frank H. Colley, 29, of Washington, Ga., a member of the 17th field artillery, and Lieut. John N. Demling, jr., 30, of Winston Salem, N. C., a member of the 30th infantry.

### In a Polish Camp.

These men along with numerous others are from the German prison camp Oflag 64 at Szubin, Poland, between Poznan and Bydgoszcz.

Gruenberg was captured in Normandy, Colley in Tunisia and Demling on the Anzio beachhead.

Measures for the repatriation of the Americans now are being taken in co-operation with the Soviet government, Maj. Gen. J. Russell Deane announced today.

Deane, chief of the United States military mission in Moscow, said he had ordered an army detachment, including a medical officer, to proceed to Lublin where some of the American prisoners have already assembled. Other groups of prisoners are known to be sheltered in Praga, suburb of Warsaw, and farther west.

Two hundred to 400 officers are among the Americans now being cared for by the Poles and Russians.

Under terms of the Allied agreement for repatriation of war prisoners, United States transportation, principally aircraft, will enter Poland to bring out the liberated Americans.

### Receive Little Food.

All the prisoners reaching here confirmed the old charge that the Germans provided a starvation diet for Allied officers and men alike. Without Red Cross parcels there would have been a situation tantamount to mass murder, they said.

The Germans drew no distinction between American Jews and non-Jews, except to forbid Jewish medical officers to treat any patients.

Under the Geneva convention the German army is obligated to provide the normal army ration to prisoners. However, those confined in Poland received what civilian Poles received without an opportunity to supplement it by black market purchases.

Two-thirds of a pound of bread daily was the principal item of food. Meat amounted to a theoretical one-fifth of a pound weekly, but the actual total was hardly sufficient to flavor the soup for one meal.

On January 21, 1945, the Germans herded the American officers who were able to walk out of the camp and started them west just ahead of the drive by Marshal G. K. Zhukov's First White Russian army group.

The sick and wounded were left behind, but they now are in safe hands.

"We got out as best we could," said Gruenberg, who was an interne in St. Elizabeth's hospital, Washington, before the war.

"Some of us built little sleds but

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most of us had to carry our stuff on our backs."

The officers said for several days before they hurried off they saw the road which passes the camp choked full of German civilians fleeing westward. There were also many Poles among them, apparently being forceably taken to Germany.

## On a Secondary Road.

"We strung in with them—us and our German guard," said Colley. "It was some scene and mind you, this wasn't a main road, but a secondary road."

This strange column of frightened, fat German housewives, perspiring male civilians, minor members of the Nazi party, Polish slaves and several hundred U. S. officers in uniform slowed down near a manor estate on which had recently been living one Baron Von Rosen from the Baltic country. The Germans had taken the estate from a Pole and installed the baron in charge.

"Our guards shoved us in the baron's barn," said Demling, "and with lots of other American soldiers we slept there for a night—a night which turned out to be our last in captivity."

## Zhukov Rolls Ahead.

While the American prisoners and German guards were resting at the manor, Marshal Zhukov's tanks were rolling westward rapidly.

"We heard all kinds of stories that the Russians were anywhere from a day to three days away," said Gruenberg.

Anyway, they were too close for the German guards and as the tanks rumbled nearer, the guards disappeared.

The Americans made contact with the Poles during the morning and were sitting in the estate's banquet

hall, bolting down food and drink brought them by Poles.

"Off in the distance, we heard a lot of yelling," said Gruneberg. "This was followed by the unmistakable sound of tanks. We rushed to the window and looked out and there they were—the Red army rolling up in Sherman tanks."

The officers described this as the most beautiful sight they had ever seen in their lives.

"The Poles went into ecstasy when they saw the tanks," Colley said. "They heaped their joy on us because the Russians were so busy rolling after the Germans that they didn't halt."

"Before long some Red army officers came to see us," said Gruenberg.

"They shook hands with us all around and we toasted one another, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Then the Russians told us how wonderful were American tanks, trucks, jeeps and food. It was some party."

#### The Stream Rolls On.

Colley said Zhukov's great stream kept up for hour after hour—tank after tank piled high with Russian infantrymen heading westward.

The officers said that while they were at the manor house, they heard that a big column of British non-commissioned officers also had been freed by the Red army.

"They were some distance from us in our general area. There also were reports of some Indians and Italian prisoners who had gotten away, but we didn't see them," the Americans said.

The next day, a large group of Americans went to the town of Exin and, while they were waiting for transportation Gruenberg and two other American doctors, a Captain Van Gorder and a Captain Radda, both of the 101st air-borne division, set up a hospital with German medical supplies they found in a church.

The doctors worked alone until the Russians came in and set up a regular hospital with a woman major in charge. The Americans and the Russian doctors worked side by side until the Americans left for Moscow.

The woman major gave one of the American doctors a piece of paper on which she scrawled that he had treated Russian wounded and this document served as the Americans' pass all the way across Poland and into Moscow.

Among the Americans liberated by the onrush of the Red army was Wright Bryan, war correspondent, managing editor of the Atlanta Journal, who was captured in France shortly after the invasion.

Colley, a fellow Georgian, said Bryan had a minor foot injury but that it was not serious. He added that the last time he saw him, Bryan was in friendly Polish hands and

making his way with American officers toward the Soviet Union. 5 years old, she