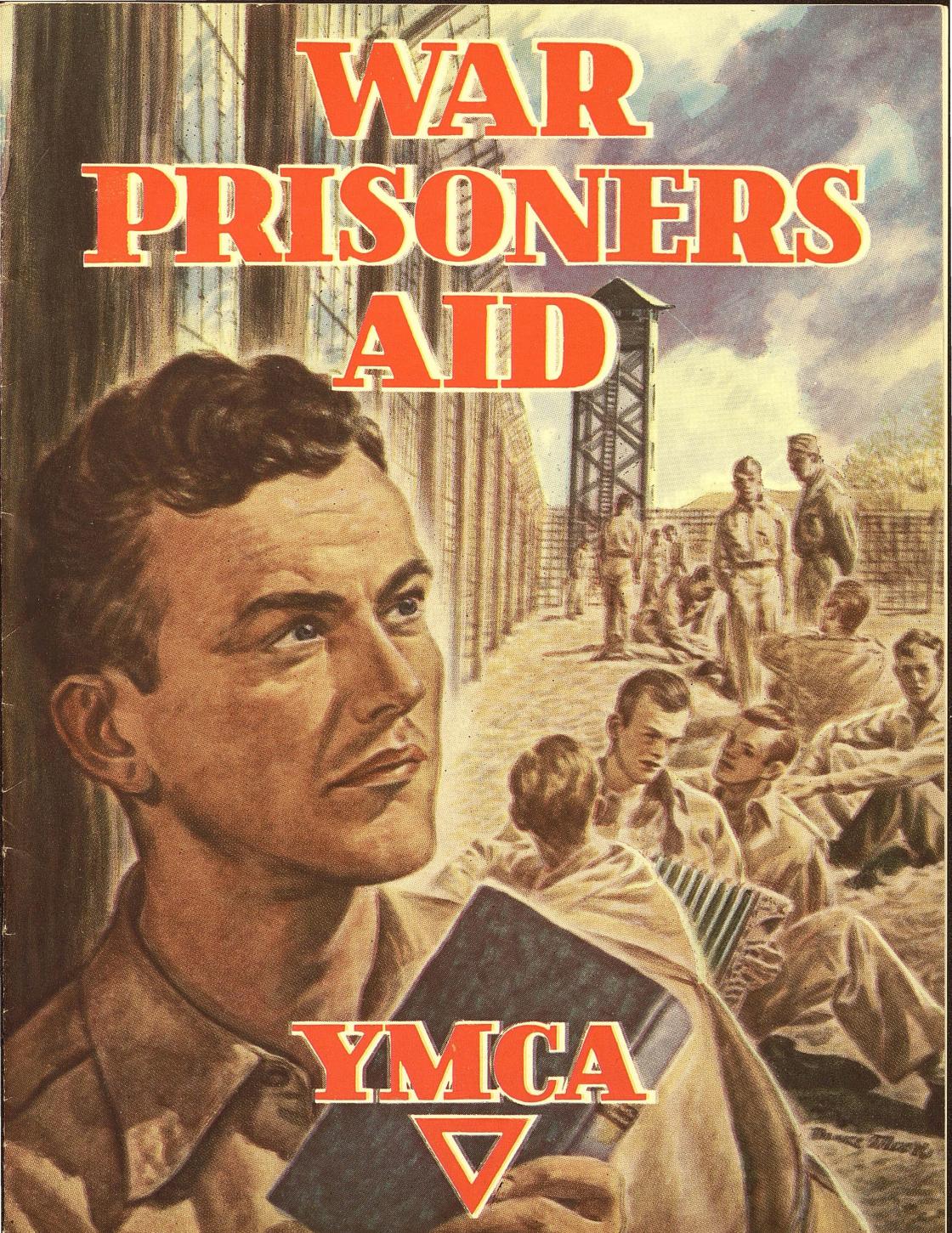


WAR PRISONERS AID

An illustration of a war prisoner camp. In the foreground, a man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a brown military uniform, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He is holding a blue book or folder. In the background, a long, narrow camp with wooden barracks and a tall wooden guard tower is visible. Several other prisoners in military uniforms are scattered throughout the camp, some sitting on the ground and others standing. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall style is that of a mid-20th-century propaganda poster.

YMCA
▽

Information for Next of Kin



YOUR boy is not forgotten when he becomes a prisoner of war. His rights and privileges are protected by a special treaty, and he is cared for by two world-wide organizations, the International Red Cross and War Prisoners Aid of the World's Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations. The treaty is known as the Geneva Convention of 1929. It was signed by forty-seven nations, including all the countries now at war except Russia, and provides for the humane treatment of prisoners of war. Standards of food, clothing, shelter, sanitation, medical care, labor and other important factors, together with freedom of worship and the encouragement of constructive leisure time activities are stipulated by the Convention. The Protecting Powers, neutral nations representing interests of belligerents during a war, insure observance of the treaty. Switzerland is the Protecting Power for the United States. While there have been exceptions, and there may be others, the nations which signed the Convention by and large are adhering to its provisions.

Supplementary food and clothing for war prisoners is distributed under the supervision of the International Red Cross. The Red Cross also compiles lists of prisoners and notifies prisoners' governments of their capture, facilitates correspondence between prisoners and their families, and inspects camps from the standpoint of the prisoners' well being. The various national Red Cross societies, and especially the American Red Cross, bring to prisoners of war benefits of their long years of service to unfortunate mankind. The American Red Cross and War Prisoners Aid of

the Young Men's Christian Associations are in complete accord, cooperating fully in their distinct and traditional tasks.

Prisoners of war generally are reasonably well treated, and when confined in permanent camps are comparatively safe and comfortable. But even when adequately fed and clothed, they face endless hours of stagnant idleness unless enabled to keep their hands and minds busy. It is the job of War Prisoners Aid of the Young Men's Christian Associations to provide for the educational, recreational, and religious needs of the men behind barbed wire. The Y.M.C.A. does this because from the time it was founded a century ago it has championed the cause of young men everywhere, whatever their needs. From a modest beginning during the American Civil War, its work among prisoners expanded to include six million captives in twenty-eight countries in the first World War. When the present war broke out in 1939, the Association again went to the aid of the "barbed wire legion," serving all prisoners of war regardless of their nationality, race or creed.

Y.M.C.A. WORKERS VISIT CAMPS

Representatives of the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A., an international, neutral organization with headquarters in Switzerland, make regular visits to prison camps. In most camps they are able to talk freely with leading prisoners and officials to obtain first hand information concerning the educational, recreational and religious needs of the men. These representatives are able to stimulate a wide variety of leisure time activities and learn what materials are needed for them.

Americans taken prisoner usually find these services already established in permanent camps when they arrive there, for in many of them leisure time programs have been in operation since the war began. Americans make use of on-going activities until it is possible to organize their own. Within the camps are talented prisoners: scientists, athletes, clergymen, school teachers, engineers, doctors and other professional men and artisans. It is they who conduct the classes, direct the sports and lead the religious services.

AMERICANS GIVEN BOOKS

Shortly after he is captured, each American in Germany or Italy is sent an English-German or English-Italian dictionary to help him get along in his new surroundings, and a book of light reading to fill his first camp hours. A letter explains the educational courses available, and he is given registration blanks for them. He is provided cards to designate the books he would like to receive.

Americans also will receive a special recreational kit containing a combination diary and photograph album, note books, pocket Testament, sports clothes, tennis shoes or sneakers, athletic equipment, pencils, colored crayons, checkers or chess, a mouth organ and other recreational items. The kit is contained in a box designed to serve as a suitcase to contain the men's personal effects.

Studies Keep Minds Alert

SO THAT American prisoners of war can make constructive use of their enforced idleness, War Prisoners Aid enables them to continue their educations at prison camp "universities." In these unusual schools, where classes are taught by prisoners, text books and other necessary educational supplies are provided by War Prisoners Aid of the Young Men's Christian Associations.

Subjects include almost any to be found in an American high school or college. There are history, mathematics, grammar, physics, fine arts, accounting, philosophy, Bible study, engineering, languages and many others. Particularly popular with Americans are shorthand and German. It is hoped that arrangements can be made whereby the prisoner-students will be able to obtain high school and college credit for certain subjects.

In addition to the regular studies, Americans will be able to take advantage of courses offered by the United States Armed Forces Institute. The courses of the Institute are designed especially for service men, covering a wide range of practical as well as academic subjects.



"Trade schools" also operate as part of the prison camps' educational opportunities. At these schools, prisoners may learn new trades to be better fitted to earn a living when the war ends. These are taught by prisoners who were welders, carpenters, mechanics or other artisans in civilian life. Post-war guidance bureaus have been organized in some camps so prisoners can prepare for the type of peace-time work best suited for them. Vocational rehabilitation is provided for men whose war injuries make it impossible for them to return to their former occupations.

PRISON CAMP LIBRARIES

For informal education as well as just "recreational" reading, tons of books are sent for prison camp libraries. Included are fiction, plays and essays as well as text books, histories and biographies. "This is our third year of captivity, far from our homes and loved ones. Let me in a few words say how much you have eased our stay here; how you have transformed long monotonous evenings into ones of reading and study thanks to your shipment of books," reads a letter from Germany.

Because prisoners have as varied reading tastes as civilians, they must be sent a bit of everything. Each case of books contains a balanced reading diet. The cases are built to serve as book shelves after they have arrived at the camps.

Other organizations cooperate with War Prisoners Aid in gathering books. The Victory Book Campaign selects thousands of books not objectionable to censors and sends them to our prisoners through War Prisoners Aid. Similarly, many textbooks intended especially for college and university men in enemy camps, are contributed by the World Student Service Fund. Bibles and New Testaments are provided by the American Bible Society. Relatives can send prisoners only new books which must be ordered through and shipped by book sellers or publishers.



Music Brings a Touch of Home

THE SOLACE that music brings to troubled men is not denied prisoners of war. To meet the varied musical tastes of prisoners, War Prisoners Aid sends them instruments for swing bands as well as symphony orchestras. Talented musicians give concerts and serve as instructors for music classes. Frequently groups of musicians are taken from the camps to play for work detachments in the country.

You can well imagine what it means to an American interned in a camp thousands of miles from home to be able to hear the music he has learned to love. Attendance at prison camp concerts often crowds the halls so far beyond capacity that a "rationing" system of tickets must be set up.

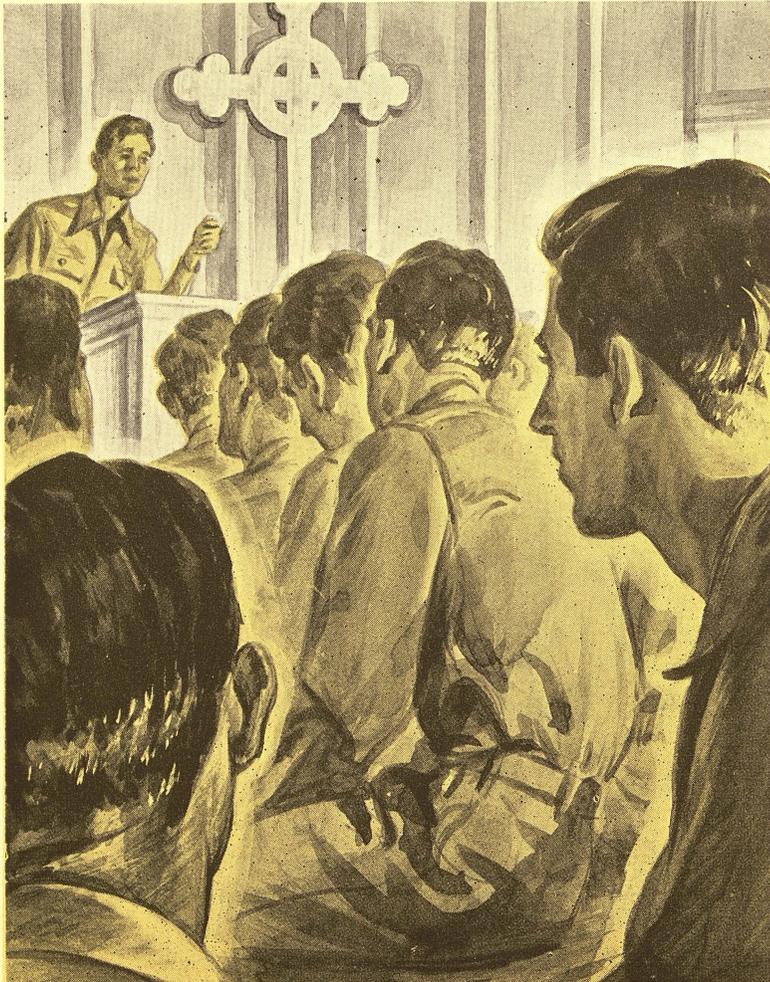
Prisoners who love music, but have little artistic ability, are provided large quantities of such simple instruments as ocarinas and mouth organs. Phonographs receive such hard use that they must be equipped with extra springs for the motors. For community singing, thousands of song books are sent to the camps. Glee club music is supplied for smaller groups. There are barber shop quartets in prison camps as well as along Main Street!

Hobbies Chase the Blues

HOURS behind barbed wire pass more quickly when a man can lose his thoughts in a hobby. To prisoners of war, hobbies and handicrafts are doubly valuable for they provide an activity that keeps hands and minds busy. Recently a War Prisoners Aid worker visiting a prison camp in Germany saw an unusual exhibition of handicraft work by the prisoners. Among the exhibits was a perfect model of a 24-gun frigate, whose guns moved out automatically when the ports were opened. But perhaps the most striking example of ingenuity was a clock made of tin cans and varying only two minutes a day from correct time!

Of course, not every person has great artistic or mechanical ability, but even the most inexpert can find an outlet for his personality through a hobby. Prisoners who never before worked with their hands develop amazing skills dur-

ing their long hours of enforced idleness. Because there are nearly as many different hobbies as prisoners, the Y.M.C.A. endeavors to provide as personal a service as possible, filling individual orders as requested by prisoners. Many of the men make use of their hobbies to provide entertainment for their fellow prisoners. Magicians' outfits and ventriloquists' dummies have been sent to the prison camps along with tools, paints, canvas, sculpturing supplies, model building outfits, and other hobby and handicraft materials. Gardening enthusiasts are furnished seeds and implements.



Religion Gives Men Courage

"I HAVE rediscovered my faith in Christianity."

That statement from a prisoner of war sums up the experience of many men confined behind barbed wire. "You can't kid yourself here," is the way one tough American top sergeant put it. Religion is one of the powerful, basic interests of prisoners of war. Many who gave but passing thought to it during the years of peace, find unexpected hope and comfort in religion in their captivity. War Prisoners Aid makes it possible for each man to worship according to his particular desire, by supplying the religious articles of all faiths.

Nearly every camp has one or more chapels where the men can worship. Many chapels have been decorated with great care by the prisoners so that they may have services in appropriate surroundings. Services generally are conducted by prisoners, among whom are priests and pastors, although clergymen from churches near the camps sometimes are permitted to officiate. Barriers of creed and communion are likely to be ignored. Occasionally clergymen of one faith lead the services of another, and make common use of such religious articles as are available.

"The Cardinal appreciates very much the excellent work accomplished by your organization, which he considers of great value since it gives religious opportunities to these prisoners," a Roman Catholic priest wrote to War Prisoners Aid. "I believe the religious work of the Y.M.C.A. in prison camps will continue to exert a profound influence on the men when they return home," a Jewish leader stated.

War Prisoners Aid works closely with the Jewish Welfare Board and with the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War which has headquarters in Geneva and representatives in New York. The Commission has distributed Easter and Christmas messages very widely in the prisoners' own languages; makes available textbooks for theological students who wish to continue their studies; and on occasion sends clergymen from neutral countries to visit the camps. The Commission brings to prisoners a religious message not limited by race or nationality.

Baseball Behind Barbed Wire

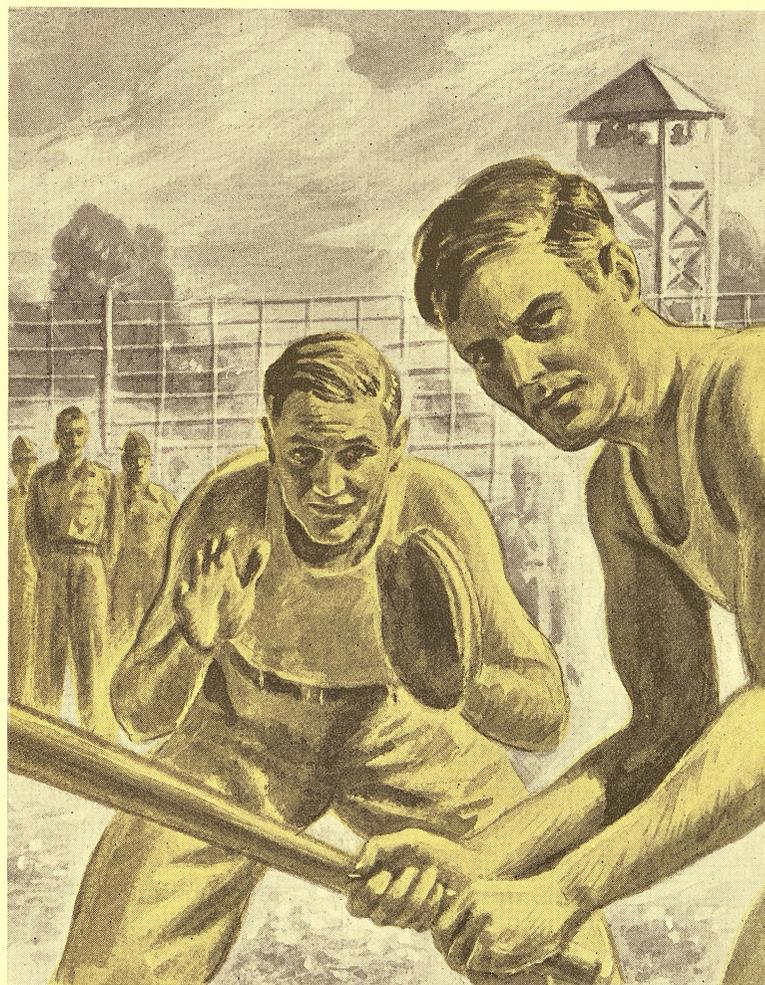
TAKEN suddenly from the active, exciting lives of soldiers, prisoners find in athletics an outlet for their energies and a safety valve for their pent-up emotions. Not only do sports provide healthful exercise, but the competition between teams gives the men something to talk about. For that reason War Prisoners Aid enables American prisoners to enjoy the same games they played back home. With Americans the most popular sport is baseball, whether the boys are gathered on a corner lot or behind the barbed wire of a prison camp.

Football, basketball, soccer, tennis, golf, badminton, fencing, ping-pong, boxing, volleyball and other sports also are sent to Americans. "I am deeply touched by your shipment of baseballs, basketballs and other sports articles and rule books," said an American prisoner in a letter to the "Y". "All of my comrades in this Stalag join me in thanking you with a full heart."

Prisoners of other nationalities also are supplied the games played in their homelands. The British are provided cricket, Canadians hockey and baseball, Italians a form of bowling, Germans their version of handball, French their association football, and the Japanese their native games. The many requests for athletic equipment received from American prisoners attests to the fair treatment being accorded them. It stands to reason that if the men have the energy and desire to play such strenuous sports as football, basketball and baseball, they must be reasonably well fed and not forced to perform exhausting labor for long periods.

Plays and Movies Help Pass the Time

THEATRICALS and musical comedies, as well as motion pictures, are highlights in the lives of Americans in prison camps. In every camp are talented actors, musicians, stage designers and others who work together to entertain their comrades. To help them, War Prisoners Aid supplies



make-up kits, costumes, scripts, music and stage materials. Films and projectors also are furnished the camps.

"I am writing to thank you for the cinema apparatus, which functions wonderfully. The films from your office arrive regularly," writes a movie fan, while a prison dramatic leader says: "The theatrical reviews which we have received from you have given great pleasure. We are inspired to put on plays in our own little theater."

In some prison camps, the men have erected stages and built properties that are of a professional quality. Stalag

Luft III, a prison camp in Germany where American, Canadian and British airmen are interned, has an orchestra pit that can be raised and lowered like those in American movie palaces.

"Last night and tonight we are putting on a show in the navy part of the camp. My part is that of a pre-repeal beer baron. I used several of the gags Bill and Tom and I used in the act we put on for high school graduation. They are still good," writes an American sailor from Germany.

Prisoners in Far East Get Garden Seeds and Tools

BECAUSE it has been impossible so far to establish regular channels of shipping and communications to the Far East, the Y.M.C.A. has not been able to extend its full program to prisoners of war there. However, service of a limited nature has been provided, and while this does not come anywhere near meeting the problem, it is a step in the right direction.

Neutral representatives of War Prisoners Aid have been able to purchase large quantities of books, seeds, gardening and carpentry tools, athletic equipment, musical instruments and other such goods as are obtainable in the Far East, and distribute them to war prisoners in Japan and Japanese occupied territories. The amount of materials purchased and distributed is considerable and ample funds have been made available for additional purchases.

With the seeds and gardening tools, prisoners are able to raise fresh vegetables to bolster their prison diets. Carpentry tools will permit them to repair their quarters. The books have been divided into traveling libraries which visit the different camps. The musical instruments and athletic equipment will bring some measure of entertainment to the men.

Efforts to establish full war prisoner service to the Far East are continuing, and it is hoped that soon the men there will be as well served as those in other parts of the world. The Y.M.C.A. has been assured it will be able to send full equipment when channels are open.

Special Attention, Please

IT TAKES up to six months for parcels to reach prisoners in Europe when they are shipped from the United States. You can speed up by several months the delivery of educational, recreational and religious materials to European prisoners if you will tell them in your letters to write directly to headquarters of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. and state their needs. The address is:

War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A.
37 Quai Wilson
Geneva, Switzerland

Large stockpiles have been accumulated in Geneva for this very purpose. Prisoners also may list their needs with their camp leader, who will turn it over to the Y.M.C.A. workers when they visit his camp. While of necessity a large part of War Prisoners Aid work must be accomplished through bulk shipments to camps, it is our desire to render as much individual service as possible.

WHAT THE "Y" CANNOT DO

There are certain things the Y.M.C.A. cannot do for prisoners or relatives, either because they are the proper function of other agencies, or are prohibited by regulations. The Y.M.C.A. cannot send food or clothing packages to men in prison camps, nor locate men listed as "missing" or those known to be prisoners but for whom an address has not yet been received. Full information concerning the sending of mail, food and clothing to prisoners can be obtained from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau, Office of the Provost Marshal General, War Department, Washington, D. C., or from your local Red Cross chapter.

Because of circumstances beyond control, there no doubt are some camps in which War Prisoners Aid cannot make its full range of activities available to the men. It also should be borne in mind that all prisoners do not have the same leisure time opportunities.

BOTH ALLIED AND AXIS PRISONERS SERVED

War Prisoners Aid serves prisoners of war or interned aliens regardless of nationality, race or creed. Service to prisoners of war is reciprocal. The Y.M.C.A. is allowed to work for American and Allied prisoners only because a similar service is given to the prisoners of the Axis powers. This work is carried on in Australia, Bermuda, Bonaire, Canada, China, Dutch Guiana, England, Egypt, Finland, Formosa, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, North Africa, Occupied China, Palestine, South Africa, Switzerland, Trinidad, and the United States.

KEEP 'EM SMILING!

When you learn that your boy has become a prisoner of war, try not to give in to despair. The chances are good that he is well and safe. Believe the best, not the worst. Above all, keep your letters to your boy bright and cheerful. Tell him about that funny movie you saw, how the garden is growing, about the neighbors, or baby's new words or achievements. Do not tell him about that big dinner you just ate, or the terrible time you're having with your teeth, tonsils or appendix, or the accident to the car, or anything else that will worry or depress him. You *must not* tell him war news of any kind, as this is against censorship regulations.

Write short letters frequently. One typewritten page once a week is about right. Typewriting has the best chance of getting past the censors. Letters in handwriting sometimes are held up because the censors cannot decipher them. Prisoners generally can write about two letters and four post cards a month, but may be under more rigid restrictions. It takes time for mail to cross borders and oceans in war time, so allow months, not days or weeks, for an exchange of letters. Do not wait for your boy to write to you. As soon as you have his address write to him, and keep on writing even if you do not hear from him. He may be getting your letters, even if you do not get his. Remember — keep 'em smiling!

The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations

347 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

HARPER W. SIBLEY, *Chairman*

EUGENE E. BARNETT, *General Secretary*

War Prisoners Aid Committee

JOHN R. MOTT, *Chairman*

JOHN E. MANLEY
Executive Director

ARTHUR N. COTTON
Associate Director

This Committee, working under the International Committee, is responsible for securing such funds as are given in the United States for the support of this service.

The services to Prisoners of War are conducted by the World's Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, of Geneva, Switzerland, an international, neutral organization, representing the national Y.M.C.A. movements of more than fifty countries.

Officers of the World's Committee

JOHN R. MOTT
Chairman

TRACY STRONG
General Secretary

DARIUS A. DAVIS

HENRI JOHANNOT

Associate General Secretaries

All inquiries should be sent to
WAR PRISONERS AID OF THE Y.M.C.A.
347 Madison Avenue
New York 17, N. Y.

A PARTICIPATING SERVICE OF THE NATIONAL WAR FUND