



ARMY SERVICE FORCES
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



SPMGG

April, 1945

To the Next of Kin
of American Prisoners of War
in the Hands of the Enemy

Dear Next of Kin:

Every available means of transportation is being utilized by the International Red Cross to provide American prisoners of war in Germany with necessary food, medicine, clothing and blankets. Fifteen German trucks and two 20-ton German lorries have been hired by them; 50 trucks each have been donated by the American, Canadian, and British Red Cross; and 100 U. S. Army trucks have been put at their disposal by our Army in France. Another 100 trucks are being shipped for their use from the United States. In addition, barges and railroad trains are being utilized to the maximum available by the International Red Cross inside Germany.

Approximately 8,000,000 American food parcels are either in Germany or outside its immediate perimeter awaiting shipment. The big problem is one of transportation within Germany and that problem will not be lessened, as the Allied Armies close in on the heart of the Reich. However, no effort will be spared by the Red Cross and the Army to overcome all obstacles. Constant and insistent demands are being made on Germany by our State Department for full compliance with the terms of the Geneva Convention; and every effort is being made to make sure that Germany has no excuse for failing to comply.

Food is the principal item being sent to the various prison camps, but the packages include clothing, medicine and blankets.

There are two main routes of sending the parcels. Swedish ships chartered by the International Red Cross unload at ports in Southern France and in Gothenburg, Sweden. Supplies in France are transported to Switzerland. From there they are taken by truck on train to railheads, one of which is at Moosburg, near Munich, for further distribution.

Trucks fan out from these railheads to the various prisoner of war camps. Recently, Belgium and France donated 300 freight cars to the International Red Cross to establish block trains. These trains are under Swiss control at all times.

SPMGG

The supplies which arrive in Gothenburg are transported by small ships to Lubeck, Germany, German naval vessels clearing the way through mine fields. From Lubeck, where a reserve of about 1,000,000 packages is steadily maintained, the supplies are sent to the various prison camps by train, barge or truck.

Five foot Red Cross and Swiss flags are painted on the tops of the trucks for protection from air attack and Swiss flags are painted on the sides. All are accompanied for protection by German military escorts. Gasoline, lubricating oil, spare tires and accessories are shipped from this country.

In allowing these supplies to reach American prisoners of war, the Germans are acting pursuant to the terms of the Geneva Convention. With the uncertain conditions within Germany at the present time, the War Department cautions next of kin that definite information concerning the location of individual prisoners, camps, and conditions there may be hard to get in the future. All information will be supplied immediately upon receipt by The Provost Marshal General's Office. The important thing, however, is that food and medicine are near at hand and the American Red Cross is continuing to ship large quantities.

A typical food parcel, the "A-1", which is a new parcel, contains: two 3-3/4 oz. tins of Army Spread; one 7 oz. carton of biscuits; one 8 oz. tin of cheese; 2 chewing gum; one 2 1/4 oz. envelope of chicken noodle soup; two 4 oz. chocolate bars; four packs of cigarettes; one 2 oz. tin of coffee; one 12 oz. tin of corned beef; 1 2 1/2 oz. tin of eggs, spray-dried, whole; one 6 oz. tin of jam; one package of multivitamin tablets (16 per package); one 16 oz. tin of milk; one 12 oz. tin of pork luncheon meat; one 8 oz. tin of salmon; one 1 oz. package of salt and pepper; two 2 oz. bars of soap; one 8 oz. carton of sugar.

The American Red Cross also provides an "invalid food package" for those suffering from stomach ailments. This nutritious package contains roast beef, tuna fish, cheese, butter spread, multivitamin tablets, peach jam, dates, oat cereal, milk powder (whole), dried whole egg powder, vanilla tablets, edible starch, soluble coffee, chocolate powder, salt and pepper, biscuits, white sugar, cigarettes and a pamphlet of recipes.

It is hardly necessary to explain to next of kin of American prisoners of war held by the Germans what an outstanding job The Red Cross is doing in getting food and medicine to our people. In a recent public statement, Mr. Maurice Pate of The American Red Cross said:

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"The greatest single factor which gives us strength in getting relief and maintaining regular communication with our prisoner kin is the scrupulous attitude of the American Army in fulfilling the Treaty of Geneva toward enemy prisoners. Some have lightly called this policy of our Army "mollycoddling." The truth is that the Army has maintained the highest discipline in handling enemy prisoners. It treats these men strictly but fairly and has obtained from them millions of valuable man-work hours."

I just read a story by Chicago Tribune Press Service from Herbronn, Germany, dated March 30th, which described the capture of a German hospital at which Allied prisoners of war and German wounded were treated. It stated:

"The Americans reported food was terrible, but that they received the same care and rations as the German wounded."

For an accurate statement of the handling of enemy prisoners of war in this country, I invite your attention to the inclosed extract from The Congressional Record of March 6, 1945.

Sincerely yours,



ARCHER L. LERCH
Major General, USA
The Provost Marshal General