



An Examination of U. S. Policy Toward POW/MIAs

**By the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign
Relations Republican Staff**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

PROLOGUE TO PART I	<i>i</i>
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	<i>1-1</i>
THE AEF AND WORLD WAR I	<i>2-1</i>
WORLD WAR II	<i>3-1</i>
THE KOREAN WAR	<i>4-1</i>
THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR	<i>5-1</i>

PART II

PROLOGUE TO PART II	<i>i</i>
LIVE SIGHTINGS	<i>6-1</i>
"BLACK" OPERATIONS	<i>7-1</i>
ACCOUNTIBILITY	<i>8-1</i>
THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE	<i>9-1</i>
EPILOGUE	<i>10-1</i>

PROLOGUE TO PART I

Throughout this century, the United States, as a nation, has anguished over the plight of American prisoners of war, both known and missing. The emotional ordeal of the families, the debt which the nation owes to those who have put their lives on the line for their countries, and the human dignity of each and every single soldier, or sailor, or airman ought to have an incalculable bearing on our national policies and our honor.

On the record, the U.S. government has professed to give these concerns "the highest national priority." Off the record, this priority vanishes. Instead, other considerations emerge: Grand visions of a foreign policy of peace and reconciliation; desire for a new economic order of trade and investment; ideological imperatives to downplay the hostility of antagonistic systems; and the natural tendency of the bureaucracy to eliminate its workload by filing cases marked "closed" instead of finding the people.

Last October, the Minority Staff published an Interim Report based on hundreds of interviews and reviews of raw intelligence data in DOD files. The Interim Report suggested that DOD was more interested in manipulating and managing the issue than in finding living POWs listed as missing. But as the investigation proceeded, the weight of evidence of failure--a failure of the U.S. Government to meet its sacred trust--became overpowering.

Was it really possible that officials in the Executive Branch charged with the solution of POW/MIA issues could have failed so miserably to respond to the needs of the American people? Was it simply that the emotions of the POW/MIA-concerned community were making an objective appraisal of DOD's work impossible?

The resignation of the director of DOD Special Office for POW/MIA Matters, Col. Millard A. Peck, submitted on February 12, but made public only last month, offered unexpected and extraordinary support for the findings of the Interim Report. (Col. Peck's resignation will be treated in detail later in this report.) But the question remained: Was it credible that such a failure could occur? To answer that question, it was necessary to turn to history.

THE GULF WAR

The Gulf War is not yet history, but the brief span of fighting provided several examples of the inability of the U.S. Government to cope with the problems of accounting for the missing--examples which are still fresh from the newspapers.

Inaccurate battle casualty reporting resulted in the next-of-kin of Daniel J. Stomaris and Troy A. Dunlap being officially notified by DOD that the soldiers had been Killed in Action (KIA); in fact, these men were slightly wounded or taken prisoner by the enemy. Several other soldiers--Major Rhonda Wetzel, for example--were taken prisoner by the enemy but were not listed as POW or MIA or KIA; their subsequent release by the Iraqis came as a surprise to the American public and the national media.

But the most bizarre case was that of SPC Melissa Rathbun-Nealy. SPC Rathbun-Nealy and SPC David Lockett were co-drivers of a HET (Heavy Equipment Transport), captured by Iraqi soldiers after their HET and another one became separated from a convoy. As the two vehicles proceeded north, they came under enemy fire. The second vehicle managed to escape, but Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett were surrounded and captured.

After her capture by Iraqi forces, Rathbun-Nealy's duty status was initially listed as "unknown," then changed to "missing." However, she was never listed as "missing in action" (MIA) or "prisoner of war" (POW). It should be noted that "missing," under U.S. Army regulations, is quite distinct from MIA. "Missing" is reserved for personnel unaccounted for in non-combat operations. From the Army's point of view, the convoy was a non-combat operation, even though it was under heavy enemy fire. Therefore, Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett were never listed as MIA or POW, even though the Army had information that they had been captured under fire. This distinction is an important illustration of how DOD uses technical distinctions to avoid a finding of POW/MIA.

In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Leo Rathbun, Lt. Colonel J. G. Cole, Chief POW/MIA Affairs, demonstrates how DOD, even in real-time cases, fails to follow up obvious leads or to ask obvious questions. In the narrative that follows, it should be kept in mind that Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett must have been an astonishing pair of prisoners to the Iraqi mindset because Rathbun-Nealy is a white Caucasian female, and Lockett is an African-American male. Since Major Wetzel was the only other U.S. female prisoner, it should not have been hard in Iraq to seek out a pair of prisoners fitting the description of a white female and a black male.

Colonel Cole wrote:

At approximately 3 pm, (January 30, 1991) just north of Khafji, the convoy drove by a Saudi M-60 tank that had recently received extensive battle damage and was partially blocking the road. The occupants of the second HET then heard two explosions and the sound of debris striking their vehicle, observed what they perceived to be enemy troops ahead near the archway into town, and immediately initiated a U-turn along the road. At this time they estimated that they were 100-150 meters behind the lead vehicle, which was continuing north. After completing the turn, the crew looked back and saw that the other HET [driven by Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett] had tried to turn about, but had become stuck. Melissa and SPC Lockett were observed to be still in their vehicle as the enemy troops approached. There was no indication that they attempted to return fire or flee.

Last seen being surrounded by enemy troops, Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett were listed as "missing." But DOD had more information as well. Colonel Cole wrote further:

There were no signs of fighting or blood, but personal gear had been scattered around the area, and weapons were missing. As the Marines were searching around the vehicle shouting for the soldiers, they were confronted by several Iraqi foot soldiers at the HET and an armored personnel carrier approximately 50 meters north, headed in their direction. No shots were exchanged by the Marines who departed the area and called in attack helicopter support which destroyed the APC within 30 meters of the HET....The Marines returned to the area the following morning where they collected some of the personal equipment and found the vehicle running but found no trace of Melissa or SPC Lockett....During the battle in and around Khafji several Iraqi soldiers were captured.

One would assume that the capture of Iraqi soldiers in the area would have given the opportunity to find out positively whether or not the pair had been captured. And indeed the Iraqi soldiers gave such information:

Following interrogation of the enemy prisoners of war by Saudi forces, two reports were received. One concerned information provided by an Iraqi lieutenant who said he had witnessed the capture of an American male and female. He further stated that both had been injured and that the white female had sustained an injury to her arm. The second report received from Saudi forces concerned two other Iraqi prisoners of war from a captured patrol who indicated they had seen a white female and a black male near the city of Bashrah, Kuwait [not far from the site of the abandoned HET].

To the lay observer, this sounds like a good "live-sighting" report, based on circumstances that almost exactly dovetail with the circumstances of the missing soldiers. But when Mr. Leo Rathbun asked Colonel Cole why his daughter was not listed as MIA, Cole replied that the Iraqi officer could not make "a positive identification"--as though there were hundreds of pairs of white female and black male soldiers captured in the area.

Colonel Cole explained further that the U.S. interrogators had no current picture of SPC Rathbun-Nealy to show the Iraqi officer (although of course her picture was appearing in every newspaper in the Western world.) Had they thought of it, no doubt DOD would have demanded that the Iraqi witnesses produce the fingerprints of the captured pair before accepting the live-sighting report as genuine.

Because there was no "positive identification" Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett could not be listed as POW/MIA. Had there been an extended war and extended negotiations to secure the return of prisoners, the name of neither one would have appeared on any list of POW/MIAs being sought. They were listed only as "missing," that is, unaccounted for but not known to be in enemy hands. Had a difficult negotiation been required to secure a return of listed POW/MIAs, Iraq need never have returned Rathbun-Nealy and Lockett because they were not on the list. Fortunately, the war was so brief and so powerful that all prisoners were returned without question.

The case of SPC Rathbun-Nealy and SPC Lockett is a vivid illustration to keep in mind when considering the bureaucratic mindset that refuses to go outside of artificial restrictions in order to find real people. If the case had been prolonged, if the report had come months or even years later, if the vivid memories of the event had gathered dust in DOD files, the same facts would have true.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

U.S. POWs IN COMMUNIST CUSTODY

The war that Americans call the Vietnam War is really, from the standpoint of history, the Second Indochina War. The French have the dubious distinction of having fought the First Indochina War--a most important fact to know in order to understand that the Communist Vietnamese act out of an acquired experience of warfare with Western countries. Moreover, the Vietnamese, as Communists, have had the additional benefit of the experience of other Communist regimes in dealing with the United States and European powers. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that the problems which the United States has had in dealing with prisoners of war and the missing in action are not the result of chance, but of historic Communist policy.

Indeed, history reveals that policy. In the years after World Wars I and II, the Soviet regime, and later their North Korean cohorts, held American soldiers and citizens captive in the aftermath of these wars. A 1954 *New York Times* article gives some insight into Communist attitudes towards POWs. In January, 1954, three Americans, two held by the Soviets and one by the Chinese Communists, were repatriated. *The New York Times* reported:

All three confirm that the Soviet bloc and the Chinese Communists are holding in their jails and slave camps many foreigners, including soldiers, and civilians, women and children...according to State Department figures, the total number of Americans held by the Soviets and their European satellites exceeds 5,000...Many of these Americans, like many Europeans, were residents in the iron curtain countries caught by the Communist tide; others were deported from German war prisoner camps; some, like Cox were simply kidnapped.¹

The fact is that Soviet and Asian Communist regimes view POW/MIAs, living or dead, not as a problem of humanitarian concern but as leverage for political bargaining, as an involuntary source of technical assistance, and as forced labor. There is, therefore, no compelling reason in Communist logic to return POWs, or their remains, so long as political and economic goals have not been met. The logic of the Vietnamese position requires them to conceal, to dissimulate, to titillate, and to dole out actual information grudgingly, piece by piece, but always in return for very practical results.

This perverse thinking is shocking to Americans who are straightforward and honest in interpersonal dealings. Yet we should instead be surprised if this were not the case. Indeed, the policy began with Lenin. From the time of the Bolshevik treatment of POWs from the American

¹"The Other Russians," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1954.

Expeditionary Force in World War I, to the Soviet treatment of POWs in World War II, to the North Korean actions in the Korean War, and finally in the First and Second Indochina Wars--POWs, including MIAs, were used by Communist regimes as cynical bargaining tools in contravention of international law.

In 1973, the Vietnamese used POWs in an attempt to blackmail the United States into providing nearly \$5 billion in so-called "reparations." Both the United States and Vietnam asserted in that year that "OPERATION HOMECOMING" was bringing home all known prisoners. The Vietnamese believed that they had a deal--a dirty deal, to be sure, in which prisoners would be exchanged for cold cash. It was a deal brokered by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger via a secret hand-carried letter. It would be perfectly consistent with the historical Communist policy to hold back prisoners against their will, and even the remains of the dead, to exchange for dollars at a later date. The evidence of this investigation, therefore, must be weighed against the probabilities of the historical background.

Most of this information is not well-known by the American public; however, all of it is based on open-source material, including official U.S. Government documents that have been declassified and collected from official agencies through Freedom of Information Act requests and through research from the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

THE AEF AND WORLD WAR I

U.S. problems in accounting for POW/MIAs did not suddenly emerge in the Second Indochina War; in fact, the basic Communist tactics were already evident at the birth of the Soviet Union in the Bolshevik Revolution.

Today, most Americans have forgotten that there were two main fronts during World War I--the Western Front, which was the center of Allied attention, and which today still receives the most focus; and the Eastern Front, which occurred when the Bolshevik Regime signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans and withdrew Russian forces from participation with the Allies. Thereupon, the Allies grew apprehensive about the German threat to the ports of Murmansk and Archangel, and sent the Allied Expeditionary Force to Siberia to protect the rear.

As a result of the fighting against Soviet Bolshevik forces around Archangel in 1918-1919, there were many casualties, and eyewitness accounts of hundreds of U.S. and British and French personnel who disappeared. Nevertheless, official cables from the U.S. military attache at Archangel cited much lower numbers than the eyewitness reports of missing personnel. The U.S. government policy concerning these and others in the two categories of missing in action (MIA) and killed in action, body not recovered (KIA-BNR) from the American Expeditionary Force in Russia, as detailed in a November, 1930 memorandum from the U.S. Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, stated the following:

An administrative determination has been placed on each of their records that they were killed in action on the date they were reported as missing.¹

In other words, all of the men who were MIA were determined to be KIA-BNR on the date they were reported as missing.

Public outcry over this practice resulted in the formation of the 1929 VFW/U.S. Graves Registration Expedition, which was able to identify or account for 86 sets of remains. Many others were never identified. However, given the technical and scientific limitations of forensics in 1929, the amount of time elapsed and the number of nationalities involved, some of the remains may have been misidentified.

¹ Memorandum "To: Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Subject: Alleged confinement of American Officers and Soldiers in Russian prisons," November 12, 1930.

In 1921, the *New York Times* reported that:

the American prisoners held by the Soviet Government of Russia have been told by the Bolsheviks that they are held because the United States government has not made vigorous demands for their release....²

It was widely known that the Bolsheviks held many American POWs and other U.S. citizens against their will. In fact, the new Soviet Government attempted to barter U.S. POWs held in their prisons for U.S. diplomatic recognition and trade relations with their regime. The United States refused, even though the Soviets had at one time threatened "...that Americans held by the Soviet government would be put to death...."³

President Harding's Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, in response to the Soviets demand for recognition and trade relations in return for U.S. prisoners, said that:

the United States will not consider any suggestions of any character from that government until the Americans now held as prisoners are permitted to leave the country.⁴

But several months later the United States concluded the Riga Agreement with the Soviet government to provide humanitarian aid to starving Russian children. The Riga Agreement had specific requirements that the Soviet authorities must release all Americans detained in Russia, and to facilitate their departure. The U.S. Government was expecting 20 prisoners to be released; but U.S. authorities were surprised when 100 Americans were released.⁵

In fact, not all American prisoners held by the Soviets were released. The Soviets held some back, presumably for leverage in any future negotiations with the United States. However, in 1933 when Franklin Delano Roosevelt recognized the Soviet government, these prisoners were not released, and other than the apparent recovery of 19 sets of remains, no satisfactory accounting of the MIA/POWs that were held by the Soviets was made by the United States.

Since an administrative determination had been placed on each of their records that they were killed in action on the date they were reported as missing, as far as the United States government and laws of the United States were concerned, these men were legally dead. Other than to a small number of U.S. government officials with access to the intelligence about these men in Soviet concentration camps and prisons, these men were legally, and otherwise generally considered, to be no longer alive. One such intelligence document dated November 20, 1930 cites an affidavit taken by the U.S. Justice Department of Alexander Grube, a Latvian-American, who was identified

² "Captives' Release Repeatedly Sought," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1921.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Herbert Hoover, Herbert Hoover, An American Epic, Volume III, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), pp.427-433.

as a "Russian seaman." He had been imprisoned in the Soviet gulag, including in the infamous Lubianka Prison, where he states he saw four American Army officers and 15 American soldiers, and was then transferred to Solovetz Island Prison where he met "many" American soldiers and civilians. Grube further warned the U.S. government that any inquiry made to Soviet officials of specific individuals will result in their immediate execution.

This episode in the history of World War I illustrates succinctly the major problems which still affect attempts to account for and ensure the repatriation of U.S. military personnel captured by Communist regimes in the aftermath of World War II, the Korean War, and the Second Indo-China War: 1) The bureaucratic and legal assertion by the U.S. Government that the men who were MIA were killed in action on the date they were reported as missing or sometime thereafter; 2) the attempts by the Communist regime to use prisoners as barter for economic and diplomatic benefits; 3) the dissimulation and lies of the Communist regime about the existence and location of prisoners; 4) the on-again, off-again return of remains; and 5) where there is no clear military victory over the Communist enemy, the vulnerability of U.S. POW/MIAs who are at the mercy of the reluctance of the enemy and U.S. government to pursue a clear, open policy for their repatriation.

The American Expeditionary Force and the Eastern Front

During World War I (1914-1918), military personnel captured by Germany and the Central Powers on the Western Front were returned home when the U.S., British, or Western European allies liberated the POW camps, or after the capitulation of Germany and its allies in November, 1918. An accurate, detailed accounting of these POWs in Europe was possible because the United States, as a member of the Allied Forces, was the victor. Victory afforded American officials complete access to the German records of American POWs and the territory in which they were imprisoned.

However, Russian prisoners who were still held in Central Powers prison camps presented a problem for the Allies after their victory. At the beginning of the war, Russian forces fought with the Allies. But after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks withdrew Russian troops from the fighting after signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers in March, 1918. Some of the Russians held in German camps had Bolshevik sympathies, while others did not. The Allies hoped to sort out the Bolshevik soldiers, and recruit the anti-Bolsheviks to fight against the new regime in Russia. According to a War Department cable:

It is believed that a period of one or two months would suffice to discover which of the soldiers could be used for the work in question and which ones would be too thoroughly imbued with bolshevist [sic] ideas to be trusted. The former could then be sent to the Ukraine and the latter left in concentration camps.⁶

However, once defeated, the Germans could no longer manage the camps, and attempted to turn the Russian POWs loose, letting them head east for the Russian border. But the

⁶ December 17, 1918 War Department cable No. 1272, Military Intelligence, Subject: RUSSIAN PRISONERS ARRIVING IN FRANCE FROM GERMANY.

Allied Commissioners were still afraid of turning them loose for fear that the Russians would join the Red Army, and in February, 1919, the Allies took control of these German camps.⁷

France, in particular, did not want any liberated Russian POWs from Germany "to go into the interior of France, possibly on account of the Bolshevist [sic] danger."⁸ In fact, when the Germans released the Russian prisoners of war, 50,000 of them:

found their way to France. They expected a warm welcome from their former allies; they were interned without delay.⁹

The Allies also were apparently concerned about American, British, and French POW/MIAs who might still be held prisoner as a result of combat with the Bolshevist Red Army in northern Russia, and may have wanted the Russian prisoners for bargaining leverage.

After Brest-Litovsk took the Bolshevik forces out of the war, German and Austro-Hungarian forces were free to move into the Ukraine and Baltic states. The German action was perceived by Allied forces as a threat to the northern Russian ports of Murmansk and Archangel, where tons of Allied war material were still stored. Further, the U.S. government wanted to provide for the safe evacuation of Czechoslovak forces who had been fighting with Russia against the Central Powers.

The group of soldiers numbered over 5,000 volunteers and draftees, mostly from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The troops were placed under British command, and, in violation of their stated mission, were used in combat operations in support of the British and French plans to secure that part of Russia from the Germans and the Red Army.

A report from Colonel J.A. Ruggles, the U.S. military attache in Archangel, dated November 25, 1918, lists casualties divided into categories such as Killed In Action (KIA), Missing In Action (MIA), etc.¹⁰ These were casualties from the 339th U.S. Infantry Regiment which had been sent to Archangel in the late summer and early fall of 1918 to serve under British command.

During the winter of 1918, after a series of poorly planned and executed Allied military operations, the Red Army finally prevailed on the field over the heavily outnumbered Allied forces. There were a few spring and early summer victories for the Allies, but in the summer of 1919 Allied forces began to withdraw from Archangel. The 339th Regiment returned to the United States via

⁷ See report of the YMCA, Service with Fighting Men, William Howard Taft, et. al. eds. Associated Press, N.Y. 1922, pp.320-322. "It was exceedingly difficult for these Allied authorities to decide just what should be done with these men. There were a menace to Germany as they were; if they were returned to Russia, they might join the Red forces."

⁸ War Department cable No. 1272, December 17, 1918.

⁹ Service With Fighting Men, pp.320-322.

¹⁰ See telegram to the War Department, Military Intelligence Branch, No. 2045-221, November 26, 1919.

Europe in the summer of 1919. By the spring of 1920, all U.S. and allied troops were out of Soviet territory. During their withdrawal, British forces seized a number of Russian Bolsheviks as hostages to trade for British POWs and MIAs who were still held by the Bolsheviks, and made room for about 5,000 White Russian emigrants who wanted to leave their homeland before the Red Army overran the territory. When Archangel was finally taken by the Bolshevik forces, 30,000 citizens¹¹ were executed by the Cheka¹² forces.

"HUNDREDS WERE MISSING FROM OUR RANKS"

It is difficult to accept the official U.S. accounting of U.S. casualties of the 1918-1919 Northern Russia Expedition, particularly because all men who were MIA were officially determined to be KIA-BNR on the date they were reported as missing. According to several accounts, several hundred U.S., French, and British soldiers were left unaccounted for during the fighting in Northern Russia. Indeed, the official history of the Expedition states there were "hundreds missing from our ranks."¹³ However, official cables from the U.S. military attache at Archangel cited approximately 70 MIAs, excluding French and British missing personnel.

Negotiations with the Bolsheviks for the repatriation of the missing failed. Col. Ruggles stated:

Negotiations for the exchange of prisoners have been terminated by orders from General Pershing, after having been delayed, although under discussion from both sides, through failure of the Bolshevik commander to obtain authority from Moscow.¹⁴

In fact, the Bolsheviks wanted diplomatic recognition in return for the release of Allied POWs; at the suggestion of the U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. Secretary of War reminded the U.S. Military Attache at Archangel of this fact in a May 12, 1919 letter: "the United States has not recognized the Bolshevik regime as a government either de facto or de jure."¹⁵ The negotiations never resumed."

¹¹ Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin, George Kennan, (Boston: Little and Brown and Company, 1960).

¹² The Cheka was the all-Russian Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage, the Bolshevik's secret police; it was the forerunner of the GPU, the State Political Directorate, which in turn preceded the NKVD, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, which became the KGB, the Committee for State Security.

¹³ Two Company I officers, 1st Lieutenants Dwight Fistler and Albert May, met with Bolshevik officers in an attempt to secure the release of captured Allied servicemen. They recorded the meeting: "We had 500 Russian prisoners. They had seven of ours. We were worried about hundreds of missing from our ranks and arranged a truce to effect an exchange....Negotiation was difficult. Interpreters were not very efficient. But the Reds learned what we were up for, and haggled. The end was, they traded us two of the seven Americans for the 500 Russian soldiers, and we had to toss in a round of cigarettes to seal the bargain. We never did learn what had become of the missing."

¹⁴ Telegram No. 221, "To: Military Intelligence, From: Archangel, U.S. War Department," April 14, 1919.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1919, 3,315 replacements were sent to Siberia to rotate out many of the original U.S. troops.¹⁶ The 1919 and 1921 reports of the Secretary of War records the casualties for the Archangel fighting and the Siberian expedition as follows:

Killed in Action.....	137 (including 28 presumed killed)
Died of wounds.....	43
Died of disease.....	122
Died of accidental causes.	46
Suicide.....	5
Total deaths.....	353

The totals listed above from the combined 1919 and 1921 official annual reports of the Secretary of War conceal the fact that out of the 144 combat deaths of American soldiers officially reported in 1919 in Northern Russia, 127 of those deaths, or 88% of those official combat death figures were made up of some 70 MIAs declared dead, and another 57 soldiers who were declared KIA-BNR.¹⁷ One historian makes note that ten U.S. POWs from the Archangel Expedition were repatriated through Finland and Sweden but does not provide any figures on total POWs, MIA, or KIA-BNR from the fighting in Northern Russia.¹⁸

This fact was left out of the official Secretary of War report on U.S. casualty figures from combat in Northern Russia. The vast majority of these missing men never received a proper accounting. Further, the practice of the Secretary of War of lumping the MIA and the KIA-BNR figures together as those killed in action necessarily calls into question the general credibility of these official figures.

LUBLANKA PRISON

In fact, there is evidence that some of these men were actually alive and held in prisons and concentration camps in Russia by the Communists. A November 12, 1930 memorandum which detailed an affidavit taken by the U.S. Justice Department from a "Russian seaman" stated:

¹⁵ See a May 12, 1919 letter in the files of the Committee to the Acting Secretary of State, Frank L. Polk, from the U.S. Secretary of War: "I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter ("NE-M"), dated April 28, 1919, regarding the negotiations with the Bolshevik government in Russia for the exchange of Allied prisoners, referred to in cablegram No. 230 from the Military Attache, Archangel, Russia. In accordance with your suggestion, a cablegram was sent to the Military Attache on May 1, reminding him that the United States has not recognized the Bolshevik regime as a government either de facto or de jure."

¹⁶ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1919, Office of the Chief Military History, Washington, p. 25.

¹⁷ Telegram No. 2045-297 "From: Archangel, To: Military Intelligence," February 4, 1919.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 74.

He arrived March 1, 1927 in Lubianka Prison at Moscow where he saw four (4) American Army Officers and fifteen (15) American soldiers who had been there since 1919...that he subsequently was transferred to Solovetz island Prison where he met many American soldiers and civilians, and names two of them as Mr. Martin or Marten and Mr. G. Heinainkruk, both of whom he thinks are American Army Officers sent to the Island from Vladivostok. He also mentions one Roy Molner whom he states had been a sergeant in the U.S. Army at Archangel from which place he had been sent as a prisoner.¹⁹

An internal U.S. government letter which evaluates the information provided by the Russian seaman states:

I have looked into this question and find that at least one case that has an important bearing on it, namely the case of William J. Martin, Company A, 339th Infantry, which regiment served in Archangel or North Russian Expedition. Under date of Feb. 3, 1919 a report from Archangel showed Martin missing in action. Under date of March 14, 1921 we made a determination showing: 'Was killed in action January 19, 1919. This determination was no doubt predicated on the unexplained absence of the soldier for about two years [until the KIA-BNR determination was made].' I also found another case which may possibly be involved, it is that of Lindsay Retherford, up in my mind because of the mention by the Russian sailor of Alfred Lindsay. Lindsay Retherford was reported missing and a similar determination [KIA-BNR] was made in his case.²⁰

"THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT IS HOLDING AMERICANS"

Three years later, in 1933, the United States recognized the Bolshevik government. In 1934, 19 sets of remains were reported as "identified" by the U.S. Graves Registration. In the separate 1929 VFW/Graves Expedition 86 remains of the 127 missing or KIA-BNR from battles fought by the American Expeditionary Force at Archangel were claimed to have been identified. This left 41 unaccounted for from the Archangel post. Further, it is likely that of the 86 remains "identified," a number of these "identifications" stretched the capacity of forensic science at that time.

Refugees from Russia fleeing into Europe during the late 1920s continued to report that a number of Americans were still held by the Soviet government in forced labor camps. It is noteworthy that some of the U.S. troops sent to Archangel were themselves U.S. immigrants from Eastern Europe, or the sons of U.S. immigrants from Eastern Europe who had been drafted into the American Army. It has been speculated that the Soviets kept them because of their national origins, or the national origins of their families.²¹

¹⁹War Department memorandum, "To: Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Subject Alleged confinement of American Officers and Soldiers in Russian prisoners," November 12, 1930.

²⁰See U.S. government letter, "To: Mr. Huckleberry evaluating the affidavit taken by the U.S. Justice Department," November 8, 1930.

²¹See Benjamin D. Rhodes, The Anglo-American Winter War with Russia, 1918-1919.

The U.S. Government did not publicly admit that U.S. military personnel remained in the custody of the Red Army in Russia upon the return of the American Expeditionary Force in Russia. However, on April 18, 1921, the *New York Times* reported:

It has been demonstrated that the Soviet government is holding Americans in the hope that the United States will agree to recognize the Soviet [government] or enter into trade relations with it or release communists from prison in this country....²²

Three months later, President Harding responded to an appeal from Moscow for "bread and medicine" for the "children and the sick." He instructed a member of his staff, Herbert Hoover, to cable a reply to Moscow that the American Relief Administration would

undertake relief for one million Russian children and provide some medical supplies for their hospitals--but subject to certain conditions.²³

August 20, 1921, a formal agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States, the "Riga Agreement," was concluded. Among the conditions for U.S. aid to the Soviets was the following:

The Soviet Authorities having previously agreed as the absolute sine qua non of any assistance on the part of the American people to release all Americans detained in Russia and to facilitate the departure from Russia of all Americans so desiring, the A.R.A. [American Relief Administration] reserves the right to suspend temporarily or terminate all of its relief work in Russia in case of failure on the part of the Soviet Authorities to fully comply with this primary condition....[emphasis added].²⁴

The United States government expected the repatriation of approximately 20 U.S. citizens; but, in fact, more than 100 Americans were repatriated as a result of this agreement.

As Herbert Hoover wrote in his autobiography:

The provision for release of American prisoners was suggested by Secretary Hughes, who informed me the Department knew that there were about twenty of them. More than a hundred American prisoners in Russian dungeons were released on September 1, [1921].²⁵

²² "Captives Release Repeatedly Sought," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1921.

²³ Herbert Hoover, p. 428.

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 433.

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 433.

Even so, reports continued to be received by the Department of State that more Americans were still held in Russia. The discrepancy between the official information in the hands of the U.S. government--20 Americans held, and the actual number of more than one hundred released--gave the U.S. Government its first taste of negotiating for Americans held against their will by Communists.

WORLD WAR II

World War II was a great military victory for the United States Armed Forces. In both the European and the Pacific theaters, the enemy unconditionally surrendered. However, despite the total victory in Europe by Allied forces, thousands and thousands of U.S. soldiers--perhaps as many as 20,000--were never repatriated from prisoner of war (POW) camps, prisons and forced labor and concentration camps.

These American soldiers were being held in Nazi prison camps, along with other Allied POWs and some Nazi captives, when they were overrun by the Red Army. Thus, hundreds of thousands of Allied POWs who had been held by the Nazis, as well as millions of Western European citizens, or Displaced Persons, came under Red Army control. Indeed, this number increased because General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, decided to stop the U.S. and British drive eastward into Germany, in order to wait for Soviet forces driving West, so that U.S. and Soviet forces could meet in Berlin.

"CREDITS" FOR REPATRIATION

One such American GI was Martin Siegel, who was held prisoner in Stalag IV-B, Muhlberg (a Nazi POW camp in eastern Germany overrun by a Red Army tank battalion).¹ Siegel was the U.S. POWs' intermediary and translator with Major Vasilli Vershenko, the officer in command of the Red Army tank battalion that overran the camp.

The first question the Siegel asked Major Vershenko was, "When were the U.S. POWs to be repatriated?" Vershenko said he was primarily concerned with the "Russian prisoners held in a separate compound at Stalag IV-B" as "they had to be interviewed individually since they felt that there were many 'cowards, traitors and deserters among them and they had to be dealt with expeditiously.'"² Secondly, with regard to the repatriation of U.S. and Allied POWs now under Red Army control, the Soviet Major stated "the Russians and the Americans had agreed to a pact wherein the Russians would receive 'credits' for each American POW returned," and that repatriation of U.S. POWs was a "complex logistical matter."

The Russian Major's view of the repatriation process for U.S. and Allied POWs under Red

¹ Private letter from Martin Siegel, detailing his experiences in a German POW camp overrun by the Red Army, May 17, 1990.

² *ibid.*

Army control for financial or economic 'credits' probably accurately reflected of Soviet repatriation policy. In fact, the Russian Major's view paralleled the assessment of the Soviet's repatriation policy by U.S. Major General R.W. Barker. Barker was the Allied Chief Negotiator for the repatriation of Allied POWs under Red Army control. Barker wrote in a report to the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Allied Headquarters that after more than four hours of discussions with his Red Army counterparts

the SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters of the Allied European Forces] representatives came to the firm conviction that British and American prisoners of war were, in effect, being held hostage by the Russians until deemed expedient by them to permit their release. This latter point was further borne out by subsequent events.³

Meanwhile, Siegel, the American GI still held in Stalag IV-B (who is still alive) decided that as a result of

the callousness of his [Major Vershenko's] response and the officious tone in which this information [about repatriation] was given, [It] gave me real pause... That night, my bunkmate, Cpl. William Smith of the 9th Division shared our mutual concerns and [we] decided to take off on our own. The next evening, we 'liberated' two Russian bicycles, got thru a gap in the wire where a Russian tank was parked and took off West to where we thought the American Army would be.⁴

They made it safely to American lines, but only after a "two week adventure" that included making another escape after "being captured by a band of fanatical Hitler Youth"⁵ still at large in Soviet occupied Germany.

Siegel and his partner made a wise decision to escape. A cable from the Ninth United States Army to the Supreme Allied Headquarters dated May 17, 1945 describes the deteriorating conditions in Stalag IV-B Muhlberg camp after the two GIs escaped:

Reports received that 7,000 United States and British ex-PWs formerly in MULBURG [Stalag IV-B] and NOE REISA 8715-E need medical supplies, additional medical attention and food. Many have left because of conditions. Reports indicate camp leader doing all in his power to enforce stay-put order. Russians alleged to have threatened to use force to prevent escape. [emphasis added]⁶

Thus, through completely different personal experiences, a GI and a General came to essentially the same conclusion about Soviet repatriation policy. The GI risked escape rather than trust the Soviets to repatriate him. The General concluded and reported to Supreme Allied

³ Memorandum by Major General R. W. Barker on Report on Conference with Russian Officials Relative to Repatriation of Prisoners of War and Displaced Persons, dated May 23, 1945.

⁴ Siegel, as cited.

⁵ Siegel, as cited.

⁶ Cable, "From: CG Ninth United States Army, To: For Action: CG SHAEF FORWARD ATTENTION G-1 PWX, REF NO: KX-21617," May 17, 1945.

Headquarters that

British and American prisoners of war were, in effect, being held hostage by the Russians until deemed expedient by them to permit their release.⁷

After Siegel--the intrepid GI--and his partner escaped to Allied controlled territory, Siegel found that his

concerns for other prisoners left behind at 1V-B were treated with initial skepticism, then annoyance at my persistence, and finally with reassurances that the matter 'would be investigated.'⁸

It should be noted that Major Vershenko's comments about economic 'credits' were not wholly inaccurate. Weeks before V-E day (Victory in Europe) Soviets had requested a \$6 billion credit line from the United States, the equivalent of \$59.8 billion⁹ in 1991 dollars, or slightly more than the U.S. costs for the Gulf War. 'Credits' from the United States, were, in fact, an active Soviet consideration throughout the repatriation period. Instead, the Secretary of State, prior to a mid-April 1945 meeting with his Soviet counterpart, Commissar Molotov, received a pre-meeting briefing memorandum, one of the points of which was the Soviet request for \$6 billion.¹⁰

"MAKE THEM WORK"

The Soviet rationale for not repatriating Allied soldiers and citizens, however, was motivated by more complex and more repugnant reasons than credits alone. In the memoirs of former Secretary of State under President Truman, James F. Byrnes, there appears an illuminating conversation the Secretary had with Molotov, the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs. In September, 1945, several weeks after Japan's surrender, Byrnes recounted that while in London:

Mr. Molotov came to see me, on instructions from Moscow...[Molotov] wanted to complain of the way in which the surrender terms [with Japan] were being carried out. He complained particularly about the way the Japanese Army was being demobilized. It was dangerous, he said, merely to disarm the Japanese and send them home; they should be held as prisoners of war. We should do what the Red Army was doing with the Japanese it had taken in Manchuria--make them work....No one can say accurately how many Japanese prisoners have been taken to the Soviet Union. In mid-1947, the best guess was that approximately 500,000 were still there.¹¹

⁷ Memorandum, "From: Major General R. W. Barker on Report on Conference with Russian Officials Relative to Repatriation of Prisoners of War and Displaced Persons," May 23, 1945.

⁸ Siegel, as cited.

⁹ Computed by the Congressional Research Service according to Price Index of the Office of Budget Management, in FY 1992 U.S. Government Budget, p. 17, Historical Tables.

¹⁰ State Department memorandum, "To: the U.S. Secretary of State, regarding an upcoming meeting with Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar Molotov," April 19, 1945. The memorandum contains a list of nine points with a brief description of U.S. policy on each point.

¹¹ James F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers,), pp. 213-214.

The problem of accounting for POW/MIAs was complicated by the fact that the Soviets were just as uncooperative in the repatriation of the millions of displaced civilians. In Europe, as well as in the Far East, the Soviets guarded a sea of prisoners--human capital and slave labor in their view--who were not only Allied and Axis POWs, but also hundreds of thousands of displaced Western European citizens, as well as Eastern European citizens, who desperately wanted to flee from Red Army occupied territory. Nationalities of smaller countries of Western Europe, like the Dutch, and Belgians, as well as formerly occupied countries like France, tragically, had little military, political or diplomatic leverage with the Soviet government to secure the repatriation of their citizens at the end of the War. As a result, tens of thousands of Dutch and Belgians, and hundreds of thousands of French were never repatriated by the Soviets.

The French in particular bore the brunt the Soviet "make them work" policy. This policy was implemented by the Soviets not only with regard to the Japanese POWs captured in the Pacific theater, but also with regard to hundreds of thousands of French, Dutch, Belgian, and other Western Europeans who were caught in Soviet occupied territory in Europe.

A window through which a glimpse of the fate of these citizens--in this particular case, French POWs--can be seen is the following cable from the Allied Command's Mission in France, to the Supreme Allied Headquarters for all of Europe. Sent May 30, 1945 (Victory in Europe, VE day was May 7, 1945) the cable read:

Accordance your telephone request, cable from Fifteenth Army French Detachment to General CHERRIERE MMFA Hotel CONTINENTAL PARIS of 25 May is paraphrased for your information.

Report of Lt D HAVERNAS according to confirmed reports, Russians still do not release thousands of French ex-PW's and civilians, forcing them to work. Many transferred eastwards to unknown destination. Please inform high authority. 700 ex-PW's are evacuated daily from this area to UDINE. Civilians held under difficult food and accommodation conditions. [emphasis added]¹²

"DISCREPANCY OF OVER 1,000,000 WESTERN EUROPEANS"

The next day, a cable detailing the magnitude of the masses of Allied prisoners of war and displaced citizens held in Soviet territory was sent from Supreme Allied Headquarters signed by Eisenhower, to the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow. Eisenhower wanted an explanation from the Soviets for the slow pace of repatriation of these citizens. The "discrepancies" between the Allies' most up-to-date figures of various displaced Western European citizens and prisoners of war known to be in Soviet occupied territory, and the number actually repatriated by the Soviets, were outlined by Eisenhower.

Latest available displaced persons and prisoners of war figures show almost 1,600,000 Western European (French, Belgian, Dutch and Luxembourgeois) either repatriated from or at

¹² Cable classified Secret Routine, "To: SHAEF FORWARD, From: SHAEF MISSION FRANCE, to SHAEF FORWARD G-5," REF NO: MF-14427, May 30, 1945.

present held in SHAEF area. Soviet delegates at LEIPZIG conference stated only 300,000 Western Europeans in their area. Combined working party on European food supplies, composed of representatives from UNRRA, SHAEF, USSR, UK, and USA, including Soviet delegate LIUSHENKO, estimated approximately 3,000,000 displaced Western Europeans in enemy-held territory at beginning 1944. This discrepancy of over 1,000,000 Western Europeans is causing the Dutch and French Governments considerable anxiety.¹³

More than two weeks later, Eisenhower sent another cable to the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow with more detailed numbers of "discrepancies". Again, Eisenhower requested a detailed Soviet response to his concerns over these unrepatriated prisoners of war and other Allied citizens in Red Army occupied territory. The cable, dated June 19, 1945, stated:

2. A further approach to the Soviets regarding numbers of western Europeans in Soviet occupied area of Eastern Europe is urgently necessary. About 1,200,000 French have been repatriated. Less than 100,000 remain in SHAEF-occupied area. French insist total POW and displaced persons is 2,300,000. Even allowing for several hundred thousand unaccounted trekkers, discrepancy is still very great. About 170,000 Dutch have been repatriated, with less than 25,000 in the SHAEF area. Total Dutch estimate of deportees is 340,000.¹⁴

"OF PERSONS FROM WESTERN EUROPE..[I]...CAN NOT SAY MUCH ABOUT THEM"

In response to Eisenhower's cable, the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow sent the Soviet government a letter dated June 20, 1945, parts of which are quoted below:

Dear General Golubev:

We have been requested by General Eisenhower to make an urgent appeal to you for an estimate of the number of displaced Western Europeans who are now in Soviet-occupied areas of Eastern Europe.

Thus far, about 1,200,000 French have been repatriated. Less than 100,000 French remain in German areas occupied by British-American forces. This makes a total of 1,300,000 French accounted for, exclusive of those who still remain in Soviet-controlled territory. French authorities insist that the total number of prisoners of war and displaced persons amount to 2,300,000. Even allowing for several hundred thousand unaccounted individuals, there still remains a great discrepancy.

About 170,000 Dutch have been repatriated. Less than 25,000 Dutch still remain in Germany under control of British-American forces. However, the Dutch authorities estimate that there were originally 340,000 Dutch nationals deported, thus leaving a great discrepancy.

¹³ Cable, "TO: US MILITARY MISSION MOSCOW FOR DEANE, FROM: SHAEF MAIN SIGNED SCARF (Eisenhower), REF NO: S-89942," May 31, 1945.

¹⁴ Cable, classified Secret Routine, "TO: US MILITARY MISSION MOSCOW for DEANE FROM: SHAEF MAIN signed SCARF, S-91662," June 19, 1945.

The Belgian authorities also reported a discrepancy but it is comparatively smaller than those of the French and Dutch....¹⁵

In the French and Dutch cases, the "discrepancy" figures are astonishing. Even assuming that a quarter of a million French citizens were "trekkers"--a seemingly exaggerated estimate--heading West to Allied lines, 850,000 French citizens still were not repatriated from Red Army occupied territory.

With regard to the Dutch citizens, assuming one quarter of the total Dutch "discrepancy" number were "trekkers," then some 116,250 Dutch citizens still were not repatriated from Soviet occupied Europe. It is understandable, as Eisenhower stated in an earlier cable to the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow, that these figures were "causing the Dutch and French governments considerable anxiety."

In late June, the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow sent Eisenhower a cable with the Soviet reply. The Soviet reply was not encouraging. The cable read:

Upon receipt of S-91662 dated 19 June, we presented the queries contained therein to [Lieutenant General] GOLUBEV [Soviet Assistant Administrator for Repatriation] and have received the following reply [from the Soviets]:

In answer to your letter of 20 June:

1. I do not have the exact data on the moving around of persons from Western EUROPE and therefore cannot say much about them.

2. I know that there have been freed by the Red Army:

French: About 250,000 of which 202,456 persons have already been sent home and about 50,000 who are getting ready to be sent home.

Belgians: 27,980 persons freed of which 25,920 have been sent home, the remainder in the process of being turned over.¹⁶

The discrepancy between the Soviet numbers for both the French and the Dutch and SHAEF's numbers is unsettling, as is the Soviets' claim that they "cannot say much about" the hundreds of thousands of Western European soldiers and citizens who apparently disappeared in Red Army occupied territory.

¹⁵ See letter, "To Lieutenant General K. D. Golubev, Red Army, Soviet Assistant Administrator for Reparation, From: Major General John R. Deane, Commanding General U.S. Military Mission, Moscow," June 20, 1945.

¹⁶ Cable, "To: SHAEF MAIN FOR EISENHOWER, FROM: US MILITARY MISSION MOSCOW FROM GAMMELL AND DEANE, REF NO: M-24784," June 25, 1945.

"NOT EVEN VERBAL ASSURANCES WERE TO BE HAD"

However, even before Eisenhower had received his reply, the Soviets had informed U.S. military officials at a separate meeting in Halle, Germany, that "all political prisoners held in German concentration camps overrun by the Red Army had been released." Furthermore, Allied officials reported to the Secretary of State with respect to the "category of displaced persons, not even verbal assurances were to be had."

The results of the Allied-Soviet meeting in Halle, Germany, were detailed in a memo sent to the U.S. Secretary of State and is quoted below. The meeting produced an agreement on a plan for repatriation,

agreed to by representatives of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, and Supreme Command Red Army, at Halle, Germany, May 22, 1945, for the most expeditious overland delivery of Allied and Soviet ex-prisoners of war and displaced persons liberated by the Allied Expeditionary Force and the Red Army. The two delegations were headed Lieutenant General K.D. Golubev, Red Army, Soviet Assistant Administrator for Repatriation, and Major General R.W. Barker, U.S.A., Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, SHAEF.¹⁷

This meeting, more than any other, determined the fate of hundreds of thousands of people trapped in the Red Army occupied territory of Eastern Europe. This memorandum, which was sent June 1, 1945 to the U.S. Secretary of State, explains that at the Halle, Germany, meeting the Red Army refused to permit the Allies

to fly transport aircraft into Soviet-occupied territory... Although General Golubev would not agree to the incorporation of a paragraph providing first priority delivery of U.S. and U.K. ex-prisoners of war, he gave his most solemn personal assurances that all U.S. and U.K. ex-prisoners of war would, in fact, be given preferential treatment. A request for second priority for Western European ex-political deportees, in accordance with the desires of the Western European governments that such persons be repatriated before their respective ex-prisoners of war and other displaced persons, was countered by the flat assertion that all political prisoners held in German concentration camps overrun by the Red Army had been released and that there were, accordingly, no more political prisoners in Soviet-occupied territory. With respect to this category of displaced persons, not even verbal assurances were to be had.¹⁸

Thus, as far as former political prisoners were concerned, the official Soviet position was that all political prisoners had been released. With regard to the repatriation of displaced persons who found themselves in Red Army occupied territory at the end of the War, "not even verbal assurances were to be had."

¹⁷ Memorandum, classified SECRET, "To: Secretary of State, From: Heath, Deputy to Robert Murphy, Subject: Overland Exchange of Ex-Prisoners of War and Displaced Persons Liberated by all Allied Expeditionary Force and the Red Army," June 1, 1945.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

"HOUSED NOT IN HUTS BUT IN DUG-OUTS"

The following U.S. intelligence report from OSS-CIG files, dated April-May 1945, may provide some insight into the fate of the hundreds of thousands of French, Dutch, and Belgians of whom the Soviets would not even give "verbal assurances":

1. Informant, a Pole forced to serve in the German Army, was taken prisoner by the Russians in 1944. He was kept for a time in the Transit Camp in KAUNAS, then NINSK until he was deported across SIBERIA to the SEVINSKAYA camp near VLADIVOSTOK. At the end of 1945 - April, he escaped and tried to get to Europe. He was, however, arrested by the NKVD after he had got beyond MOSCOW, and placed in the P.O.W. and Internee Camp in TAMBOV, which was occupied by Germans, French, Americans, British, Dutch, Belgians... The prisoners numbered, in the informants [sic] estimation, well over 20,000; they were both military and civilian, most likely overrun by the Russians during the offensive.

2. All prisoners were forced to work, and the food they were given was very bad and monotonous. They were housed not in huts but in dug-outs.

3. The monotonous food caused some strange disease which made the legs and arms swell... After a time men afflicted with this disease died. Informant was told that more than 23,000 Italians, more than 2,500 French and approximately 10,000 Roumanian [sic] and Hungarian prisoners had died in this manner. There were also many casualties among Poles and other nationalities.

4. Prisoners in this camp included men of very high culture and learning and great experts in many fields of science. Informant observed that German engineers were employed on a special task - the drawing up of blue-prints for a four engined aircraft, which would carry about 500 men and achieve a speed - it was alleged - of 1,000 kilometers per hour. The Russians were extremely interested in these blue-prints, and men working on the invention were granted all possible facilities both in work and the conditions of life in the camp....

5. ...there were also some Belgians and Dutch, and others, including some English men and several score Americans, the presence of whom in this camp is probably unknown to the British and U.S.A. authorities. When he was leaving, these Englishmen and Americans asked him urgently (as did the French officers and men) to notify the Allied authorities of their plight. Informant succeeded in reaching France with a convoy of Allied nationals.¹⁹

"HUNDREDS OF OUR PRISONERS WANDERING ABOUT POLAND"

In anticipation of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers and citizens who would have to be repatriated in the wake of the Western allies and Red Army victory over the Nazi forces, the Western Allies and the Soviets agreed February 11, 1945, at the Yalta Conference to provisions which would expedite their repatriation. These provisions allowed their respective military officers into Allied and Soviet controlled territory at various collection points in each country throughout

¹⁹ Document classified Secret, Office of Strategic Services - Central Intelligence Group, report number 49584, titled "U.S.S.R. P.O.W. and Internee Camp near TAMBOV," April- May 1945."

Europe, in order to process, arrange for transportation and otherwise oversee the registration and the care and feeding of the soldiers who were to be repatriated. The locations where these repatriation officers were to be sent was agreed to, as well as that these officers would be assigned liaison officers to assist them in the repatriation process.

Less than a month after the signing of the Yalta agreement, in an U R G E N T TOP SECRET Personal Message to the President, U.S. Ambassador W. Averell Harriman cabled from Moscow:

Since the Yalta Conference General Deane and I have been making constant efforts to get the Soviets to carry out this agreement in full. We have been baffled by promises which have not been fulfilled....²⁰

Specifically, Harriman stated in the same cable "I am outraged" that

the Soviet Government has declined to carry out the agreement signed at Yalta in its other aspects, namely, that our contact officers be permitted to go immediately to points where our prisoners are first collected, to evaluate our prisoners, particularly the sick, in our own airplanes, or to send our supplies to points other than Odessa, which is 1,000 miles from point of liberation, where they are urgently needed.²¹

Furthermore, Harriman in the same cable stated:

For the past ten days the Soviets have made the same statement that Stalin has made to you, [FDR] namely, that all prisoners are in Odessa or entrained thereto, whereas I have now positive proof that this was not repeat not true on February 26, the date on which the statement was first made. This supports my belief that Stalin's statement to you is inaccurate.²²

In fact, Harriman in the same cable wrote:

there appear to be hundreds of our prisoners wandering about Poland trying to locate American contact officers for protection. I am told that our men don't like the idea of getting into a Russian camp. The Polish people and the Polish Red Cross are being extremely hospitable, whereas food and living conditions in Russian camps are poor. In addition we have reports that there are a number of sick or wounded who are too ill to move. These Stalin does not mention in his cable. Only a small percentage of those reported sick or wounded arrive at Odessa.²³

Odessa was a Black Sea port in the Ukraine, through which some 2,900 U.S. soldiers were processed and repatriated. It is the only camp in the entire Soviet occupied zone in Europe in which

²⁰ Cable classified, U R G E N T, TOP SECRET, "A Personal Message for the President, From U. S. Ambassador to Russia, W. Averell Harriman," March 8, 1945.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

U.S. contact personnel were allowed--the Yalta agreement notwithstanding--and was the source of much of Harriman's outrage.

"GREAT DIFFICULTIES...IN REGARD TO THE CARE AND REPATRIATION OF OUR LIBERATED POWs"

Six days later Ambassador Harriman sent another cable to Washington, this time to the Secretary of State, Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. It deserves to be quoted at some length:

I assume the Department has been informed by the War Department of the great difficulties General Deane [head of the U.S. Military Mission to Moscow] and I have been having with the Soviet Government in regard to the care and repatriation of our liberated prisoners of war. In the beginning it appeared that the Soviet authorities were going to interpret our agreement substantially as we did, namely that we be allowed to send our contact officers to several points within Poland to which our prisoners first find their way, to fly in emergency supplies and to evacuate our wounded on the returning trips of the planes, although in Soviet planes rather than United States planes. We obtained authority for one contact team of an officer and doctor to go to Lublin with one plane load of supplies and they have done extremely useful work there. No other teams or supplies have since been permitted and authority for the Lublin team to remain has recently been withdrawn. The Soviets have now contended that Odessa is the only present 'camps and points of concentration' referred to in the [Yalta] agreement to which our contact officers are to be permitted.

...Our prisoners have suffered serious hardships from lack of food, clothing, medical attention, et cetera, in finding their way to concentration points in Poland and on the long rail trip to Odessa because we have been stopped from sending in our contact teams and emergency supplies. A considerable number of sick and wounded are still hospitalized in Olan. I have been urging for the last two weeks General Deane be permitted to survey the situation with a Red Army officer. This was first approved in writing with the qualification that arrangements must be made with Polish authorities. An officer of our military mission informally approached the Polish Embassy here and was advised that no Polish authorization was necessary as it was entirely with the competence of the Red Army. We have been unable, however, to get authorization for Deane's trip.

It seems clear that the Soviets have changed their point of view during the last several weeks and are now rigidly determined that none of our officers shall be permitted in Poland.

I saw Molotov again today about the situation. He maintained that the Soviet Government was fulfilling its obligation under the agreement and both the Red Army authorities and the Polish Provisional Government objected to the presence of our officers in Poland. When I pressed him on what valid objection the Red Army could possibly have, he pointed out that we had no agreement with the Polish Provisional Government. In spite of my contention that this was a Soviet responsibility he kept reverting to the above fact. I then directly asked him if he was implying that we should make such an arrangement with Poles and if so, whether the Red Army would remove its objections. He did not answer this question directly but left me with the impression that he wished me to draw that deduction.

I am satisfied that the objection comes from [the] Soviet Government and not the Provisional Polish Government as our military mission had been in informal contact with the Polish Embassy here who have been extremely cooperative as have all Polish authorities including the Polish Red Cross to our prisoners in Poland.

I feel that the Soviet Government is trying to use our liberated prisoners of war as a club to induce us to give increased prestige to the Provisional Polish Government by dealing with it in this connection as the Soviet are doing in other cases. General Deane and I have not (repeat not) been able to find a way to force the Soviet authorities to live up to our interpretation of our agreement. Unless some steps be taken to bring direct pressure on the Soviets, our liberated prisoners will continue to suffer hardships, particularly the wounded and the sick.

...It is the opinion of General Deane and myself that no arguments will induce the Soviets to live up to our interpretation of the [Yalta] agreement except retaliatory measures which affect their interests unless another direct appeal from the President should prove effective. We therefore recommend that the first step be a second request from the President to Marshal Stalin...In the meantime, however, we recommend further that the [State] Department and War Department come to an agreement on what retaliatory measures we can immediately apply in the event an unfavorable answer is received by the President from Marshal Stalin.

Consideration might be given to such actions as, or combination thereof: (One) That General Eisenhower issue orders to restrict the movements of Soviet contact officers in France to several camps or points of concentration of their citizens far removed from the points of liberation, comparable to Lwow and Odessa; (Two) That Lend-Lease refuse to consider requests of Soviet Government additional to our fourth protocol commitments for such items as sugar, industrial equipment or other items that are not immediately essential for the Red Army and the Russian war effort; (Three) That consideration be given to allowing our prisoners of war en route to Naples to give stories to the newspapers of the hardships they have been subjected to between point of liberation and arrival at Odessa and that in answer to questions of correspondents, the War Department explain the provisions of our agreement and the Soviet Government's failure to carry out the provisions of our agreement according to any reasonable interpretation.

I request urgent consideration of this question and the Department's preliminary reaction. General Deane requests that this cable be shown to General Marshall [Eisenhower's second in Command, a British officer at Supreme Allied Headquarters].

HARRIMAN²⁴

President Roosevelt sent the following PERSONAL and SECRET cable for Marshal Stalin on March 18, 1945:

In the matter of evacuation of American ex-prisoners of war from Poland I have been informed that the approval for General Deane to survey the United States prisoners of war situation in Poland has been withdrawn. You stated in your last message to me that there was no need to accede to my request that American aircraft be allowed to carry supplies to Poland and to evacuate the sick. I have information that I consider positive and reliable that there are still a considerable number of sick and injured Americans in hospitals in Poland and also that there have been, certainly up to the last few days and possibly still are, large numbers of other liberated American prisoners either at Soviet assembly points or wandering about in small groups not in contact with Soviet authorities looking for American contact officers.

I cannot, in all frankness, understand your reluctance to permit American contact officers, with the necessary means, to assist their own people in this matter. This Government has done

²⁴ Cable, "To: Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., U.S. Secretary of State, From: Ambassador Harriman in Moscow, No. PH-1449," March 14, 1945.

everything to meet each of your requests. I now request you to meet mine in this particular matter. Please call Ambassador Harriman to explain to you in detail my desires.²⁵

March 22, 1945, President Roosevelt received Marshal Stalin's reply:

I am in receipt of your message about the evacuation of former U.S. prisoners of war from Poland.

With regard to your information about allegedly large numbers of sick and injured Americans in Poland or awaiting evacuation to Odessa, or who have not contacted the Soviet authorities, I must say that the information is inaccurate. Actually, apart from a certain number who are on their way to Polish soil as of March 16, I have today received a report which says that the 17 men will be flown to Odessa in a few days.

With reference to the request contained in your message I must say that if it concerned me personally I would be ready to give way even to the detriment of my own interests. But in the given instance the matter concerns the interest of Soviet armies at the front and of Soviet commanders who do not want to have around odd officers who, while having no relation to the military operations, need looking after, want all kinds of meetings and contacts, protection against possible acts of sabotage by German agents not yet ferreted out, and other things that divert the attention of the commanders and their subordinates from their direct duties. Our commanders bear full responsibility for the state of affairs at the front and in the immediate rear, and I do not see how I can restrict their rights to any extent.

I must also say that U.S. ex-prisoners of war liberated by the Red Army have been treated to good conditions in Soviet camps--better conditions than those afforded Soviet ex-prisoners of war in U.S. camps, where some of them were lodged with German war prisoners and were subjected to unfair treatment and unlawful persecutions, including beating, as has been communicated to the U.S. Government on more than one occasion.²⁶

President Roosevelt apparently accepted Marshal Stalin's explanation. Ambassador Harriman's and General Deane's suggestion to allow

...our prisoners of war en route to Naples to give stories to the newspapers of the hardships they have been subjected to between point of liberation and arrival at Odessa and that in answer to questions of correspondents, the War Department explain the provisions of our agreement and the Soviet Government's failure to carry out the provisions of our agreement according to any reasonable interpretation...²⁷

was rejected. In fact, four days after Marshal Stalin's reply, General George C. Marshall, the U.S. Chief of Staff, issued an order on a "revised policy" to the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow and other Allied European Commands which read:

²⁵ Cable, "From: President Roosevelt, To: Marshal Stalin," March 18, 1945.

²⁶ Cable, classified Personal and Secret, "From: Premier J. V. Stalin, To: President Roosevelt," March 22, 1945.

²⁷ Cable, "From: Ambassador Harriman in Moscow, No. PH-1449," March 14, 1945.

Superseding WARK-54401 to Deane and Giles is revised policy publicity liberated prisoners: Individual interviews authorized provided personnel briefed beforehand against disclosure camp intelligence activities, evasion and escape briefings equipment. Censor all stories. Delete criticism Russian treatment....²⁸

This new policy effectively ensured the public perception that the Soviet Union was a stout ally of the United States. In fact, there was good reason to order the censorship of all stories criticizing Soviet treatment of U.S. POWs that the Red Army had "liberated" from Nazi control. A SECRET OSS report dated June 18, 1945, detailed an

informal interview with Lt. Col. William F. Fenell...who recently returned from Russia where he was stationed at...Odessa, since early this year, mainly as a contact man with the Russians on problems connected with repatriation of American prisoners of war freed by the Russians. Toward the end of his stay he apparently became persona non grata with the Russians for he was suddenly ordered to leave by the American command and take the first boat out of Odessa, regardless of where it was going.²⁹

Under the subtitle of "Treatment of American PWs" the OSS report read:

American PWs freed by the Red Army were in the main treated very shabbily and came to hate the Russians. Many of them were robbed of watches, rings, and other personal possessions which they had managed to retain even after extended periods of captivity under the Germans. Their food at Odessa was very poor, consisting mainly of soup with cucumbers in it and sour black bread. The Russians generally tended to throw obstacles in the way of repatriation, frequently calling off shipments at the last minute and insisting always upon clearance from Moscow for every prisoner released. American PWs at Odessa were guarded by Russian soldiers carrying loaded rifles with fixed bayonets, and Russian security was more stringent there than German security had been in the various Stalags and Oflags. A number of American officers who went to Poland at various times to coordinate the hunt for liberated PWs were ordered out very quickly at Russian insistence.³⁰

Despite the fact that Moscow was clearing the release of every U.S. prisoner held in Red Army territory--literally releasing them one at a time--U.S. forces were ordered:

that no repeat no retaliatory action will be taken by US forces at this time for Soviet refusal to meet our desires with regard to American contact teams and aid for American personnel liberated by Russian forces.³¹

²⁸ Order, "From: Allied Supreme Command, U. S. Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, To: the Military Mission in Moscow, and other European commands," March 26, 1945, No. WARX-58751.

²⁹ Office of Strategic Services, Report No. EES/18645/1/22 - USSR - General.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ See copy of orders, "To: Commanding General of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations Allied Force Headquarters Casseta, Italy, From: Headquarters Communication Zone European Theater of Operations US Army Paris, France, signed Major General J. E. Hull," April 20, 1945.

"SOME INCLINATION TO BLACKMAIL US"

The Soviets also refused the British contact teams access to their prisoners in Red Army controlled territory who came under Soviet control when the Red Army overran Nazi prison camps. A British government cable dated April 20, 1945, from the Acting Secretary of State, Sir Orme Sargent, to Lord Halifax, then the British Ambassador to the United States reads

It is clear that Soviet Government will not allow our contact teams into Poland. The Russians deny the existence of any British prisoners of war in Poland but we have evidence that there are prisoners of war concentrated at Cracow and Czestochow and in hospitals. This is a clear breach of the Yalta agreement.... We have therefore turned to the Red Cross channel....³²

The same day that Lord Halifax received the above telegram, Sargent, sent Lord Halifax a telegram which concluded that the Soviets have

some inclination to blackmail us into dealing with Warsaw authorities.³³

In other words, the Soviets were attempting to force the British to give de facto recognition to the Soviet puppet Polish Provisional government, the same demand that Ambassador Harriman believed was being pressed by the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Molotov, in order to end the "serious hardships from lack of food, clothing, medical attention, et cetera,"³⁴ of U.S. soldiers, about which Ambassador Harriman cabled the U.S. Secretary of State.

The U.S. and British forces, meanwhile, were living up to the Yalta agreement. Soviet liaison officers were infused into the Allied command structure, and these Soviet officers went about their business of assisting Allied forces to repatriate, forcibly or otherwise, Soviet and Eastern European citizens and soldiers who were in Allied controlled territory. As cable a from Eisenhower's Deputy Commander, a British Marshal, states

that we now have 153 Soviet Liaison Officers working under the direction of Major General Dragun who is charged with the responsibility of assisting us in the problem of repatriation.

2. That each Army Group has an organization to handle repatriation matters, and in these organizations we have woven Soviet Liaison Officers who are doing valuable work.³⁵

³² Telegram, "From: Acting Secretary of State, To: Lord Halifax," No. 3936, April 20, 1945.

³³ Telegram, "From: Acting Secretary of State, To: Lord Halifax," No. 3923," April 20, 1945.

³⁴ Cable, "To: Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., U. S. Secretary of State, From: Ambassador Harriman in Moscow," No. PH-1449, March 14, 1945.

³⁵ Cable, "To: AGWAR, From: SHAEF MAIN, SIGNED TEDDER (Eisenhower's Deputy Commander British Marshal Tedder)," REF NO. S-94080, June 29, 1945.

Soviet liaison officers assisting with repatriations of Soviets in Allied control, were taken to one camp, set up--in accordance with the Yalta agreement--for Soviet citizens and soldiers, in Bari, Italy where, as reported to the U.S. Secretary of State in a TOP SECRET cable:

Russians were permitted and encouraged to set up their own camp administration. Russians of all categories are accepted at Florence camp, outfitted with clothing, PX supplies and same facilities as for United States personnel. After minimum processing they are flown to Bari to await shipment to Russia. When Soviet military missions representatives were taken to inspect both camps, they [Soviet liaison officers] expressed pleasure and said treatment was 'too good.'³⁶

"THEY BEGGED TO BE SHOT....NINE MEN HANGED THEMSELVES"

Less than a week after the Secretary of State received the above cited cable, he received a pre-meeting briefing memorandum to prepare for his meeting with the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs. With regard to the repatriation issue, the Secretary of State was advised to assure Mr. Molotov,

that we have no intention of holding Soviet citizens after the collapse of Germany regardless of whether they desire to return to the Soviet Union or not.³⁷

In other words, the United States was fully committed to the policy of forcible repatriation. The Yalta agreement included the principle of "forced repatriation" of all Soviet citizens, meaning, any Soviet citizen, regardless of whether they wanted to return to the Soviet Union, were forcibly sent back to life under Stalin. This agreement, the Allies initially believed, would result in the repatriation of all of their soldiers and citizens. This provision of the Yalta agreement, in large part, the Allies abided by, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of those forcibly repatriated to Soviet control were either shot or sent to forced labor camps.

In fact, when Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, Commander, First U.S. Army inquired of Eisenhower's staff at Supreme Allied Headquarters,

as to how much force an Army Commander should use in the control of displaced Russians... Talking with Judge McCloy today, he agreed that of course an Army Commander could use any force necessary to insure the success of his operations.³⁸

³⁶ Telegram, "To: Secretary of State," Department of State, No. ASB 1304 April 13, 1945.

³⁷ State Department memorandum to the U. S. Secretary of State, regarding an upcoming meeting with Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar Molotov. April 19, 1945. The memorandum contains a list on nine points and a brief description of U.S. policy on each point.

³⁸ RESTRICTED letter, "To: Lieutenant General Hodges, Commanding, First U.S. Army, From: John C. H. Lee, a Major General on Eisenhower's Supreme Allied Headquarters staff," April 13, 1945.

Many Soviet citizens did not want to return to Soviet occupied territory, since those Soviets captured by the Germans, and recovered by Allied forces, were often recovered in German work camp uniforms. These Soviets captured by the Germans had been given the option of starving or joining a labor battalion. Most joined German labor battalions. Once repatriated to the Soviet Union, many of these Soviets were imprisoned immediately in slave labor camps. However, the Soviets sent to slave labor camps were considered lucky, since the others were often shot.

As a result, Soviet citizens and soldiers in Allied control were extremely reluctant to be repatriated. The following description is of an attempt by Allied soldiers to repatriate 399 former Russian soldiers by train to the Soviet Union:

All of these men refused to entrain. They begged to be shot. They resisted entrainment by taking off their clothing and refusing to leave their quarters. It was necessary to use tear gas and some force to drive them out. Tear gas forced them out of the building into the snow where those who had cut themselves fell exhausted and bleeding in the snow. Nine men hanged themselves and one had stabbed himself to death and one other who had stabbed himself subsequently died; while 20 others are in the hospital for self-inflicted wounds. The entrainment was finally effected of 368 men who were sent off accompanied by a Russian liaison officer on a train carrying American guards. Six men escaped enroute. A number of men in the group claimed they were not Russians....³⁹

SOVIETS DENY ACCESS TO CAMPS IN PACIFIC THEATRE

In the Pacific theater, even though the Soviets were late-comers in the war effort against Japan, they managed to take control of territory just across the Soviet Union's contiguous borders with Manchuria, China--as well as the northern islands of Japan. In doing so, the Soviets were able to seize some Japanese POW camps holding Allied prisoners.

In 1945, during the closing days of the war with Japan, U.S. military intelligence "Mercy Teams" were sent into China and Manchuria to arrange for the well-being of the Allied POWs in Japanese camps. Generally, Japanese troop commanders cooperated with the Mercy Teams, but the Soviets (as in Europe) and Chinese Communists denied Mercy Teams access to camps in areas under their control.

A cable from the Secretary of State to the United States Political Adviser for Germany states that the State Department "has been anxious in handling" the return of Soviet citizens and soldiers from Western Europe "to avoid giving the Soviet authorities any pretext for delaying the return of American POW's of Japanese now in Soviet occupied zone, particularly Manchuria."⁴⁰

³⁹ Memorandum, "To: the United States Political Advisor for Germany (Murphy), From: Mr. Parker W. Buhrman, Munich," January 28, 1946.

⁴⁰ Telegram, "To: the United States Political Advisor for Germany (Murphy) at Berlin, From: Secretary of State, No. 740.62114/8-2745," August 29, 1945.

The Soviets even sent a delegation to Hanoi to forcibly repatriate any French Foreign Legionnaires POWs in custody of the Japanese who were identified as citizens of the Soviet Union, or as citizens of any of the east bloc nations, were surrendered by the Allies to the Soviets.⁴¹

"76,000 AMERICAN POWs STILL...WITHIN RUSSIAN ZONE"

Five days after victory was announced in Europe (V-E day) the Associated Press, from Allied Advance Headquarters in Reims, France reported that

Nearly half of the estimated 200,000 British and 76,000 American prisoners of war still in Germany are believed to be within the Russian zone of occupation and Supreme Headquarters has twice requested a meeting or an agreement to arrange their return.⁴²

Ten days later, a meeting between the Soviet and Allied command took place. The meeting, at Halle, Germany, on May 22, 1945, was

for the purpose of conferring with representatives of the Russian High Command on the matter of repatriation of prisoners of war and displaced persons.⁴³

Lieutenant General K.D. Golubev, Red Army, Soviet Assistant Administrator for Repatriation, led the Soviet delegation, and Major General R.W. Barker, U.S.A., Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, SHAEF led the Allied delegation.

One of the points of discussion at this meeting was the failure of the Soviets to provide U.S. and British liaison officers permission to visit their fellow soldiers who were formerly POWs held by the Germans and who were now being held in camps in Red Army occupied territory. In a cable from Eisenhower's Deputy Commander, British Marshall Tedder, to various Allied Command officials and U.S. diplomats, Marshall Tedder describes Soviet duplicity and policy on this matter:

Before the HALLE Conference we had made numerous attempts to visit PW Camps in the Russian Zone and always met a firm refusal. After the HALLE Conference General GOLEBEV asked to visit Camps where Russians were being kept. We agreed and asked him for permission to visit Camps in the Russian Zone. He agreed to allow 1 of our Officers to visit 5 Camps. One of my

⁴¹ Archimedes L. A. Patti, Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross, pp. 4, 141-147, and 178-179 on the deliberate shooting of U. S. Army Captain John Birch, the head of a Mercy Team, by Chinese Communist troops denying him access to a POW camp under their control.

⁴² "SHAEF Asks Russians About Freed PW's," Associated Press dispatch, ADVANCE HEADQUARTERS, Reims, France, May 12, 1945.

⁴³ Report, "From: Major General R.W. Barker, Subject: Report on Conference with Russian Officials Relative to the Repatriation of Prisoners of War and Displaced Persons, To: The Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, AEF (Allied European Forces)," May 23, 1945.

representatives started on the trip accompanied by a Russian Major who stated he had the necessary orders. After visiting the first and nearest Camp the Russian Officer produced orders signed by General GOLUBEV restricting our Officers visit to the one Camp. This is the only instance of Soviet authorities permitting US or British Officers to visit Camps in their area, which is in sharp contrast to the liberal policy pursued by us.⁴⁴

"AMERICAN POWs WERE, IN EFFECT, BEING HELD HOSTAGE"

From the beginning of the six day conference in Halle, Germany, it was for the Allies, a difficult meeting. In his post meeting report, Barker wrote:

When the Russian Mission was finally assembled it numbered some forty officers and forty to fifty enlisted men. Among the Russian officers were one Lieutenant General and six Major Generals. The Russian party arrived in requisitioned German vehicles of all makes, and American type armored car, fully equipped [armed], and a radio truck, which was in operation most of the time. All Russian male personnel were heavily armed with pistols, sub-machine guns and rifles.⁴⁵

The meeting began with the Soviets refusing to allow repatriation of Allied soldiers by air transport, which made the entire repatriation process much more cumbersome and logistically difficult. As Barker described:

After opening statements...I proposed the immediate initiation of steps looking toward prompt release and return to Allied control of all British and American prisoners of war then in Russian custody, using air and motor transport. This proposal was firmly resisted by General GOLUBEV, who cited all manner of local administrative difficulties which precluded the operation. He stated that serviceable airfields did not exist, which was known by myself to be not the case and I so informed him. The Russian position was very clear that neither now, nor at any time in the future, would they permit Allied airplanes to be used for the movement into or out of their territory of prisoners of war or displaced persons, except 'Distinguished persons, sick and wounded.'⁴⁶

After the initial meetings with the Soviets, lower level discussions were held by the parties in an attempt to work out mutually acceptable arrangements. However, as Barker wrote, these meetings "having proven futile," the decision was made that all discussions were to be

carried on directly between the heads of the Missions, with certain members of their respective parties in attendance. On the Russian side, those present numbered normally from twenty to twenty-five, including several general officers. The SHAEF representatives in attendance normally were myself, General MICKELSEN, Brigadier VENABLES and two to four representatives of the technical services.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Cable, classified Secret, "To: AGWAR FOR WARCOS, From: SHAEF MAIN, SIGNED TEDDER, REF. NO: S-94080," June 29, 1945 describing camp visit incident in late May, 1945.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

Barker wrote that it was after the first four-hour session of the meeting in Halle, Germany that

the SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters of the Allied European Forces] representatives came to the firm conviction that British and American prisoners of war were, in effect, being held hostage by the Russians until deemed expedient by them to permit their release.⁴⁸

This is the first high level report that openly suggested that the Soviets may not repatriate all of the Allied POWs in Red Army occupied territory. In fact, after six days of meetings with the Soviets, Barker concluded that

There is every indication that the Russians intend to make a big show of rapid repatriation of our men, although I am of the opinion that we may find a reluctance to return them all, for an appreciable time to come, since those men constitute a valuable bargaining point. It will be necessary for us, therefore, to arrange for constant liaison and visits of inspection to 'uncover' our men.⁴⁹

"ONLY SMALL NUMBERS OF U.S. POWs STILL REMAIN IN RUSSIAN HANDS"

On May 19, four days before the start of the Halle meeting, a cable signed by Eisenhower at the Allies Supreme Headquarters, stated that:

Numbers of US prisoners estimated in Russian control 25,000.⁵⁰

After the Halle meeting, given Barker's conclusion that British and American prisoners of war were, in effect, being held hostage by the Russians and that the Soviets were reluctant to return them all, for an appreciable time to come, since those men constitute a valuable bargaining point," the return of all US and British POWs held in Red Army occupied territory appeared to be in serious doubt.

Furthermore, a TOP SECRET May 31, 1945 letter from Major General John R. Deane, the U.S. Army Commanding General of the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow to Lt. General Slavin, the Assistant Chief of the Red Army in Moscow indicated that the Soviets were still holding over 15,500 U.S. "liberated" POWs. Deane's letter stated:

I have had a cable from General Marshall in which he states he has received information which indicates that 15,597 United States liberated prisoners of war are now under control of Marshal Tolbukhin.⁵¹

⁴⁸ ibid.

⁴⁹ ibid.

⁵⁰ Cable, classified Secret Priority, "To: AGWAR, From: SHAEF MAIN SIGNED EISENHOWER, REF. NO: S-88613," May 19, 1945.

⁵¹ Letter, Top Secret, "To: Lt. General Slavin, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Red Army, People's Commissariat for Defense, Moscow, U.S.S.R., From: Major General John R. Deane, U.S. Army, Commanding General, U.S. Military Mission, Moscow, No. 1009," May 31, 1945.

The day before Major General Deane sent his letter to Lt. General Slavin, General Kenner, Eisenhower's Surgeon General at SHAEF Headquarters, received a memorandum on the subject "Displaced Persons, Allied ex-PW and German PW."⁵² The following accounting from the Kenner memorandum detailed the number of Allied ex PW and Displaced Persons Allied Supreme Command reported were being held captive in territory occupied by the Red Army on May 30, 1945:

2. Russian Sphere.

	<u>PW</u>	<u>DP</u>
Belgian	50,000	115,000
Dutch	4,000	140,000
British	20,000	
U.S.	20,000	
French	250,000	850,000

The Kenner memorandum, dated May 30, 1945, stated 20,000 Americans remained under Red Army control. Major General Deane requested information from the Assistant Chief of the Red Army in Moscow about over 15,500 Americans the Soviets were believed to be holding in a letter dated May 31, 1945. Therefore, it is difficult to reconcile these facts with a cable signed by Eisenhower on June 1, 1945, which read:

C. It is now estimated that only small numbers of U.S. prisoners of war still remain in Russian hands. These no doubt are scattered singly and in small groups as no information is available of any large numbers in specific camps. They are being received now only in small dribbles and being reported as received.

Everything possible is being done to recover U.S. personnel and to render accurate and prompt reports thereon to the War Department.⁵³

The claim of the second Eisenhower cable that "only small numbers of U.S. prisoners of war still remain in Russian hands" and that these "no doubt are scattered singly and in small groups as no information is available of any large numbers in specific camps," directly contradicts the information in the Kenner memorandum which states, a mere 48 hours earlier, that 20,000 U.S. POWs were still being held by the Red Army. Furthermore, it directly contradicts the information in General Deane's letter dated the day before that "information which indicates that 15,597 United States liberated prisoners of war are now under control of Marshal Tolbukhin." Given the contents

⁵² Memorandum, "To: General Kenner, Eisenhower's Surgeon General at SHAEF Headquarters, Subject: Displaced Persons, Allied ex-PW and German PW, No. SHAEF 383.6-2 MED," May 30, 1945.

⁵³ Cable, "To: AGWAR, From: SHAEF FORWARD, SIGNED EISENHOWER, REF. No. FWD-23059," June 1, 1945.

of Major General Dean's TOP SECRET letter, and given the contents of the Kenner memorandum, the Eisenhower cable of June 1 appears to be an attempt to gloss over a serious problem.

At any rate, the Eisenhower cable was merely following the official news propaganda line. On the same day as the cable stating "only small numbers of U.S. prisoners of war still remain in Russian hands," *The New York Times* reported the War Department had announced that

'substantially all' of the American soldiers taken prisoner in Europe are accounted for, Under-Secretary Robert P. Patterson said. 'This means that it is not expected that many of those who are still being carried as missing in action will appear later as having been prisoners of war.'³⁴

In other words, on June 1, 1945, the U.S. government's public position was that most American GIs taken prisoner have come home and been repatriated, even though the classified cable traffic for the previous fortnight was reporting between 15,000 and 20,000 still held.

"ITEMS 'POWs (Current Status)'... ARE STILL LARGE"

On June 5, 1945, Allied command, from its headquarters in Paris, France, announced that 25,000 of some 90,000 men who had returned from German POW camps after the Allied military victory were men who had been listed as Missing in Action (MIA).³⁵ Given that 90,000 U.S. soldiers had returned at the time of the announcement, and that the U.S. War Department, for the European Theater had records of 77,500 U.S. "Prisoners Taken," 102,500 Americans should have returned from Europe, not 90,000.³⁶

In other words, the sum of 77,500 known POWs and 25,000 returned MIAs equals 102,500 American soldiers; however, only some 90,000 were repatriated. These numbers may be summarized in tabular form:

<u>Total Prisoners</u>	+	<u>Repatriated</u>	=	<u>Total To Be</u>
<u>Taken</u>		<u>MIAs</u>		<u>Repatriated</u>

77,500	+	25,000	=	102,500
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However, the total number of men who were repatriated in June, 1945, were only 90,000. The net number not repatriated, therefore, is as follows:

³⁴ "10,000 Ex-Captives Coming by Week-End; Army Sees All in Europe Accounted For," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1945.

³⁵ "25,000 Missing U.S. Soldiers Turn Up Alive," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 6, 1945.

³⁶ See chart "CAPTURED OR INTERNED UNITED STATES ARMY PERSONNEL," December 7, 1941 - October 31, 1945, compiled by the Statistical Branch, Department of Defense, January 7, 1946.

Total To Be - Actual = Total Not
Repatriated Repatriated Repatriated

102,500 - 90,000 = 12,500

The conclusion is that even a rudimentary assessment of the Allies' own figures suggests that some 12,500 Americans were never repatriated from Red Army controlled territory.

However, the 12,500 figure is significantly lower than the 20,000 POWs known to be in Soviet control as detailed in the Kenner memorandum, which was written 48 hours before the War Department's announcement that "it is not expected that many of those who are still being carried as missing in action will appear."⁵⁷

Was the figure of 20,000 U.S. POWs still held in Red Army occupied territory cited in the SHAEF memorandum to General Kenner correct? Was the real figure closer to 12,500 Americans kept as slave laborers and hostages by the Red Army, as indicated by the Allies own public figures announced by Lt. Colonel Schweitzer? Or, was the correct number of American soldiers not repatriated by the Soviets the figure cited by Major General Deane, in his May 31, 1945 letter to the Soviets, that "indicated" 15,597 American soldiers were under the control of Marshal Tolbukhin?

On February 25, 1946, some eight months later, the Chief of the Strength Accounting Office, in the War Department's Chief of Staff Office, transmitted to the National Headquarters of the Red Cross in Washington, D.C., a "chart showing Missing in Action (including captured) U.S. Army personnel for the period 7 December 1941, through 31 December 1945."⁵⁸

In his letter Ballard stated:

It will be noted that the items "Prisoners of War (Current Status)" and Missing in Action (Current Status)" are still large. The reason of course is that as of 31 December 1945 these categories reflected latest definite reports available for statistical compilation, and the situation to date has not materially changed. You will appreciate that for statistical purposes these casualties cannot be moved to other categories until detailed disposition records have been processed. In many cases, final disposition must await a legal determination of death under PL 490 which may take up to next September, even though investigation to date leaves little logical doubt that a given man is permanently lost....

The foregoing data was classified "Restricted", but has been approved for release to you."

⁵⁷ See "10,000 Ex-Captives Coming By Week-End; Army Sees All in Europe Accounted For," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1945.

⁵⁸ Letter, To: Maurice Fate, Esq., Director, Relief to Prisoners of War, National Headquarters, American Red Cross, Washington, D.C., From: L.L. Ballard, Jr., Lt. Col., Chief, Strength and Accounting and Statistical Office, OCS (Office of the Chief of Staff)," February 26, 1946.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The chart enclosed with Ballard's letter revealed the following statement, as of December 31, 1945, for the German theaters:

<u>Captured</u>		<u>Other Missing in Action⁴⁰</u>	
<u>Returned to</u>	<u>P.O.W.</u>	<u>MIA</u>	
<u>Mil. Control</u>	<u>(Curr. Stat)</u>	<u>Declared</u>	<u>(Current Status)</u>
		<u>Dead</u>	
90,937	5,414	11,753	2,997

"LITTLE LOGICAL DOUBT THAT A GIVEN MAN IS PERMANENTLY LOST"

According to the cable above, as of December 31, 1945, 5,414 men were still listed as "P.O.W. (Current Status)". Figures for "Prisoners Not Returned to Military Control," essentially the same category as "P.O.W. (Current Status)" list 6,595 men in that category as of October 31, 1945.⁴¹ Two months later, the number decreased from 6,595 to the number listed above, 5,414.

Because the number of U.S. prisoners repatriated between October 31, 1945, and December 31, 1945, totalled only 435, (stragglers, no doubt) the decrease in the number of prisoners listed in the P.O.W. (Current Status) category from 6,595 to 5,414 cannot be explained merely by the repatriation of 435 POWs still returning from Red Army occupied territory. This still leaves a decrease of 646 men from P.O.W (Current Status) unexplained. (Roughly only 1,000 POWs were repatriated in the last half of 1945.)

The remaining decrease in the number of men still listed as POWs (646) can, however, be explained by the War Department issuing Presumed Findings of Death for these individuals. In fact the numbers in the category of known POWs not returned in June, 1945 were likely close to or slightly greater than 12,500.

This number would not include MIAs, but only known POWs.

By the end of October, the War Department was likely able to make legal Presumed Findings of Death in some 5,900 cases, leaving the number of "Prisoners Not Returned to Military Control" not 12,500, but 6,595.

⁴⁰ Chart, "MISSING IN ACTION U.S. ARMY PERSONNEL," German and Japanese Theaters, December 7, 1941 - December 31, 1945, Source: "Battle Casualties of the Army" January 1, 1946, from the Strength Accounting and Statistics Office, February 25, 1946.

⁴¹ See chart "CAPTURED OR INTERNED UNITED STATES ARMY PERSONNEL," dated December 7, 1941 - October 31, 1945, compiled by the Statistical Branch, Department of Defense, January 7, 1946.

Thus, the figure of 11,753 Declared Dead under the category Other Missing in Action, in the chart of casualty figures for December 31, 1945, actually represent Presumed Findings of Death (PFDs), as authorized by U.S. law. These PFDs were made from both the MIA (Current Status) list and the P.O.W. (Current Status) list, decreasing the numbers in those categories and increasing the number in the Declared Dead category.

As a result, Lt. Col. Ballard felt obligated to explain to the Director of the Relief to Prisoners of War of the Red Cross that for "statistical purposes" the numbers in the Prisoner of War (Current Status) and the Missing in Action (Current Status) were "still large." Ballard explained to the Red Cross that "these casualties cannot be moved to other categories" until each man can be found, legally, to be dead. This finding of death occurs, as Lt. Col. Ballard points out, after an "investigation to date leaves little logical doubt that a given man is permanently lost."²

The most striking aspect of these documents is the revelation that the War Department's Chief of the Strength Accounting and Statistic Office, in the Office of the Chief of Staff of the War Department, main function was to resolve each outstanding case by determining--as soon as enough time elapsed to make it legally possible--that each man is "permanently lost," and therefore, dead.

The thrust of the War Department's efforts were not in the direction that most Americans would expect their government to proceed; that is, to make a thorough effort to determine the fate of each man. Given the obvious and observed policy by the Soviet government to hold citizens and soldiers from Western countries, known to senior U.S. officials, Lt. Col. Ballard's efforts should have been concentrated on determining where the Soviets were holding these men, and not merely to "await a legal determination of death under PL 490 which may take up to next September."

Thus, the bureaucratic precedents created in World War I in the cases of "presumed dead" among these missing from the American Expeditionary force were once again followed. Thousands of U.S. personnel who were known to be POWs held by the Germans in World War II, but, were not repatriated once the territory they were being held in was occupied by Red Army, and were legally determined to be dead.

"NO INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE OF ANY LARGE NUMBERS"

Where were these thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Europeans? Nearly a month after the Eisenhower cable claimed that "only small numbers of U.S. prisoners of war still remain in Russian hands" and that these "no doubt are scattered singly and in small groups as no information is available of any large numbers in specific camps," Eisenhower sent a SECRET PRIORITY cable to General Deane in Moscow which read

² Letter, To: Maurice Fate, Esq., Director, Relief to Prisoners of War, National Headquarters, American Red Cross, Washington D.C., From: L.L. Ballard Jr., Lt. Col., Chief, Strength and Accounting and Statistical Office, OCS (Office of the Chief of Staff), February 26, 1946.

Possibility that several hundred American prisoners of war liberated from Stalag Luft 1, Berth, are now confined by the Russian Army in the Rostock area pending identification as Americans is reported by an American who recently returned from such confinement.

S/Sgt. Anthony Sherg was one of 1000 air force officers and non-commissioned officers who left Stalag Luft 1 immediately prior to assumption of control in Barth by the Red Army in order to obtain rumored air transport from Wismar. The group of ten in which Sgt Sherg travelled was arrested by Russian soldiers and held in jails in Bad Dorberan, then Rostock. Ten other Americans were soon under similar circumstances in Rostock.

Russian authorities demanded identification papers, which no prisoner possessed, and refused to consider dog tags proof of the Americans' status. The Americans were well fed and well treated but Sherg complains there was no disposition to speed identification and evacuation. After 25 days he escaped from jail and made his way to British Forces.

From his own observations and conversations with other former prisoners he believes several hundred Americans may be held in like circumstances in the Wismar-Bad Doberan-Rostock Area.⁴³

"LAGER CONFINES WILL NEVER BE REPATRIATED"

In fact, there continued to be many reports of Americans being held by the Soviets. For example, the catalogue of the National Archives lists a memorandum from the State Department Special Projects Division, date February 6, 1946, regarding a conversation between Colonel Kavanaugh, from War Department and Captain George, and Mr. Bailly, regarding Doolittle fliers interned by the Soviet Union.⁴⁴

Again, a letter to the leader of France's National Constituent Assembly dated August 17, 1946 from the Deputy of the Bas-Rhin stated:

I have brought to the attention of the Minister for ex-Prisoners of War the testimony of Mr. Joseph Bogenschutz, 55 Grand Rue, at Mulhouse (Haut Rhin), who was repatriated on last July 7 from Russia, from Camp 199-6 at Inskaya, which is 70 kilometers from Novosibirsk[...]Bogenschutz states that he wrote at least three cards a month through the Red Cross (Red Crescent) since September 1944 and that none of these cards ever arrived. Bogenschutz, in addition thereto, alleges that there still remain American, British, Belgian, Polish, Rumanian Luxemburg, etc. nationals in the Camp.⁴⁵

⁴³ Cable, "To: DEANE MOSCOW, HQ 21st ARMY GROUP cite SHGAP signed SCARF (Eisenhower), From SHAEF MAIN, No. 6590," June 25, 1945.

⁴⁴ Listed in the catalog of the National Archives as Memo No. FW 740.00114 PW. However, the actual document is missing. The Doolittle flyers were crew members of the daring surprise "Doolittle raid" on Tokyo, a one-way bombing mission in April, 1942 by 16 B-24 bombers, from the aircraft carrier USS Hornet.

⁴⁵ Copy of translation of a letter written on Republic of France's National Constituent Assembly stationery, Paris, dated August 17, 1946, signed Henri Meck, Deputy of the Bas-Rhin.

Another example is a report from the Headquarters of the United States Forces in Austria, to the Director of Intelligence, the General Staff of the U.S. Army, dated June 15, 1946 which stated:

SUBJECT: USSR - American Army Personnel in Confinement

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

The following information was obtained from a former forced laborer who claimed to have been confined in an unregistered lager with Subject personnel. Informant claimed to have been released through an error committed by the commandant of the Moscow hospital where she was transferred because of infantile paralysis.

Approximately 60 km from Moscow, in the direction of Kaline, there is an unregistered labor camp. The confinees, 150 men and 50 women, work in coal mines in the vicinity of the camp. Among those confined are 3 American Air Force soldiers who were captured by the German Wehrmacht, Czechoslovakia, during, April 1945. These men are:

Charlie, 21 years, 170 cm, blond, blue eyes, has paralyzed right shoulder.

Joe...165 cm, dark blond, dark eyes, has stomach wound and is confined in lager infirmary.

Albert, 27 years, 170 cm, black hair, brown eyes, has stiff left hip and burn scar on left side of face, is from Texas.

The lager confinees will never be repatriated and are not permitted to write letters."

The reasons that the Soviets kept U.S. POWs and other Western European citizens and POWs are difficult for the citizens of free countries to fathom. However, one may speculate on at least five explanations:

First, for economic concessions, or as Major Vershenko stated, for 'credits.'

Second, to satisfy the Soviet view--as described by Molotov--that it "was dangerous" merely to disarm an adversary (or in the case of the U.S., an ally who may be a future adversary) but it was also necessary to "make them work."

Third, as a source of slave labor to rebuild their industrial base.

Fourth, as the British cable stated, to satisfy the Soviet "inclination to blackmail us into dealing with Warsaw authorities" and for other political concessions.

Fifth, to ensure that the Allies forcibly repatriated Russian and other eastern European citizens who did not wish to return to their countries under Soviet control.

"Memorandum, classified Confidential, "To: Director of Intelligence, General Staff, U.S. Army, Washington D.C. From: C. P. Eikel, Colonel GSC, Director of Intelligence for the Headquarters, United States Forces in Austria," July 13, 1948.

The daughter of one such U.S. Army officer, Major Wirt Thompson, was never told that in 1955 a German repatriate from the Soviet concentration camp system reported to the United States government that while he was in prison, he met Major Thompson. The German repatriate told American officials that Thompson told him that he had been imprisoned at Budenskaya prison near Moscow, and also in the Tayshet labor camp after World War II. Not only was Thompson's daughter "overwhelmed" when she found out early in 1991 that this information existed, but she wondered how her family could have been told by the United States government in 1944 that Major Thompson had been killed in action, body not recovered.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See "Men Who Never Returned," Editorial, *The Washington Times*, March 13, 1991.