

considered 2,150 an absolute minimum subsistence level for sedentary adults living under shelter. US troops were issued 4,000 calories a day.) What he did not tell Churchill was that the army was not feeding the DEFs at all, or was feeding them far less than those who still enjoyed prisoner-of-war status.

Rations were reduced again soon after this: a direct cut was recorded in the Quartermaster Reports. But indirect cuts were taking place as well. One was the effect of extraordinary gaps between prisoner strength as given on the ration lists and official "on hand" accounts, and between the on-hand counts, and between the on-hand count and the actual number of prisoners in the camps.

The meticulous General Lee grew so worried about the discrepancies that he fired off a challenging cable from his headquarters in Paris to SHAEF headquarters in Frankfurt:

"This Headquarters is having considerable difficulty in establishing adequate basis for requisitioning rations for prisoners of war currently held in Theatre ... In response to inquiries from this Headquarters ... several varying statements of number of prisoners held in theatre have been published by SHAEF."

He then cites the latest SHAEF statement:

"Cable ... dated 31 May states 1,890,000 prisoners of war and 1,200,000 disarmed German forces on hand. Best available figures at this Headquarters show prisoners of war in ComZ 910,980, in ComZ transient enclosures 1,002,422 and in Twelfth Army GP 965,125, making a total of 2,878,537 and an additional 1,000,000 disarmed German forces Germany and Austria."

The situation was astounding: Lee was reporting a million or more men in the US Army camps in Europe than SHAEF said it had on its books. But he was wrestling with the wind: he had to his issue of food on the number of prisoners on hand supplied to him by SHAEF G-3 (Operations).

Given the general turmoil, fluctuating and inaccurate tallies were probably inevitable, but more than 1 million captives can actually be seen disappearing between two reports of the Theatre Provost Marshal, issued on the same day, June 2. The last in a series of daily reports from the TPM logs 2,870,400 POWs on hand at June 2. The first report of the new weekly series, dated the same day, says that there are only 1,836,000 on hand. At one point in the middle of June, the prisoner strength on the ration list was shown as 1,421,559, while on Lee's and other evidence there were probably almost three times that number.

Spreading the rations thinner was one way to guarantee starvation. Another was accomplished by some strange army bookkeeping during June and July. A million prisoners who had been receiving at least some food because of their nominal POW status lost their rights and their food when they were secretly transferred to the DEF status. The shift was made deliberately over many weeks, with careful attention paid to maintaining plausible balances in SHAEF's weekly POW and DEF reports. (The discrepancy between those "shifted" from POW status during the period from June 2 to July 28 and those "received" in the DEF status is only 0.43 per cent.) The reclassification to DEF did not require any transfer of men to new camps, or involve any new organisation to get German civilians supplies to them. The men stayed where they were. All that happened was that, by the clatter of a typewriter, their skimpy bit of US Army food was stopped.

The effect of a policy arranged through accountancy and conveyed by winks and nods - without written orders - was first to mystify, then to frustrate, then to exhaust the middle-rank officers who were responsible for POWs. A colonel in the Quartermaster Section of the advance US fighting units wrote a personal plea to Quartermaster General Robert Littlejohn as early as April 27: "Aside



It was U.S. Army policy to provide "no shelter or other comforts". In the prisoner enclosures: the men lived in holes in the earth which they dug themselves

from the 750 tons received from Fifteenth Army, no subsistence has been received nor do I expect any. What desirable Class II and IV (rations) we have received has been entirely at the sufferance of the Armies, upon personal appeal and has been insignificant in relation to the demands which are being put upon us by the influx of prisoners of war."

Rumours of conditions in the camps ran through the US Army. "Boy, those camps were bad news," said Benedict K. Zobrist, a technical sergeant in the Medical Corps. "We were warned to stay as far away as we could." In May and early June of 1945, a team of US Medical Corps doctors did survey some of the Rhineland camps, holding just over 80,000 German POWs. Its report is missing from the appropriate section of the National Archives in Washington, but two secondary sources reproduce some of the findings. The three main killers were diarrhoea and dysentery (treated as one category), cardiac disease, and pneumonia. But, straining medical terminology, the doctors also recorded deaths from "emaciation" and "exhaustion." And their data revealed death rates eighty times as high as any peacetime norm.

Only 9.7 percent to fifteen percent of the prisoners had died of causes clearly associated with lack of food, such as emaciation and dehydration, and "exhaustion." But the other diseases, directly attributable to exposure, overcrowding, filth, and lack of sanitation, were undoubtedly exacerbated by starvation. As the report noted, "Exposure, overcrowding of pens and lack of food and sanitary facilities all contributed to these excessive (death) rates." The data, it must be remembered, were taken from the POW camps, not from the DEF camps.

By the end of May, 1945, more people had already died in the US camps than would die in the atomic blast at Hiroshima.

On June 4, 1945, a cable signed "Eisenhower" told Washington that it was "urgently necessary to reduce the number of prisoners at earliest opportunity by discharging all classes of prisoners not likely to be required by Allies." It is hard to understand what prompted this cable. No reason for it is evident in the massive cable traffic that survives the period in the archives in London, Washington, and Abilene, Kansas. And far from ordering Eisenhower to take or hold on to prisoners, the Combined Chiefs' message of April 26 had urged him not to take in any more after V-E Day, even for labour. Nonetheless more than 2 million DEFs were impounded after May 8.

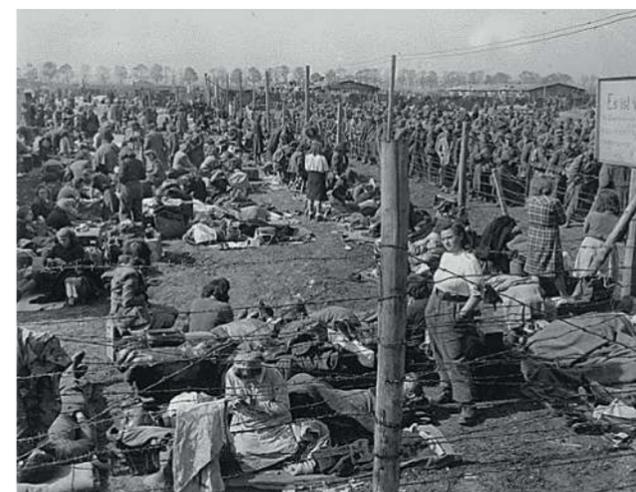
During June, Germany was partitioned into zones of occupation and in July, 1945, SHAEF was disbanded. Eisenhower, reverting to his single role as

US commanding general in Europe, becoming military governor of the US zone. He continued to keep out Red Cross representatives, and the US Army also informed American relief teams that the zone was closed to them. It was closed to all relief shipments as well - until December, 1945, when a slight relaxation came in to effect.

Also starting in July, the Americans turned over between 600,000 and 700,000 German captives to the French to help repair damages done to their country during the war. Many of the transferees were in five US camps clustered around Dietersheim, near Mainz, in the section of Germany that had just come under French control. (most of the rest were in US camps in France.)

On July 10, a French unit took over Dietersheim and seventeen days later a Captain Julien arrived to assume command. His report survives as part of an army inquiry into a dispute between Julien and his predecessor. In the first camp he entered, he testified to finding muddy ground "people living skeletons," some of whom died as he watched. Others huddled under bits of cardboard which they clutched although the July day was hot. Women lying in holes in the ground stared up at him with hunger oedema bulging their bellies in gross parody of pregnancy; old men with long grey hair watched him feebly; children of six or seven with the racoon rings of starvation looked at him from lifeless eyes. Two German doctors in the "hospital" were trying to care for the dying on the ground under the hot sky, between, the marks of the tent that the Americans had taken with them. Julien, who had fought against the Germans with his regiment, the 3erme Regiment de Tirailleure Algeriens, found himself thinking in horror: "This is just like the photographs of Buchenwald and Dachau."

There were 103,500 people in the five camps round Dietersheim and amongst them Julien's officers counted 32,640 who could do no work at all. These were released immediately. In all, two-thirds of the prisoners taken over by the French that summer from American camps in Germany and in France were useless for reparations labour. In the camp at Sainte-Marthe, 615 of 700 captives were reported to be unable to work. At Erbiseul near



Female members of the German military in a prisoner of war camp for women at Regensburg, Germany, 8 May 1945

An article dated April 24, 1945 in a U.S. newspaper admits the U.S. Army has killed 992,578 German POWs after capture over just 21 days from April 1-22, 1945.