

tomorrow or at Heilbronn. Guess there'll be a fight of some sort as positions are dug in forest. General Hoffman is here. Guess we'll hear the result of conference any minute now.

Coffee and prunes for tea and my stomach is twirling. Enormous filthy meal for lunch. I couldn't eat much. Guess I'm too old for this tense situation. Never have I spent such a dreadful week. Oh for peace! Damn these bloody fools for fighting now. D. Dale came back from Regensburg last night and now he will have to go back. Says everyone on the booze down there, same as here.

ONE WEEK LATER – MOOSBURG

The worst gathering of men in a so-called camp. Number 20,000* they say. Thousands coming in, mostly walking as far as 806 kms. Many have been on road 10 weeks and not here yet. We seem to be the only ones to run gauntlet by rail. Spent four days en route bombing behind and in front. Every junction completely wrecked. Fighters over all day. T'was a picnic trip, a complete mystery, no travelling after 7am when sirens blew. Our train was marked POW and British flag, otherwise we'd have got it. Some days we only made 20 or 30 kms.

Terrific flap loading and shuffling and wasting time over last few days at Weinsberg. Whole outfit obviously awaiting recapture but our troops didn't come fast enough. We could hear the guns advancing and tactical aircraft overhead. Fighters strafed our train on eve of departure. We went to bed assured of no move and were of course pulled out at 11pm and were on our way at 2.30am. No search, which was supposed to take days. Whole camp moved on one train and not two. Billiard tables, women, food, fuel, utensils all over heavy baggage. Hundreds of tons. All the guards plus 200 V.S. Poor decrepit buggers dragged from their homes. 46 in our truck. Hell of a jam. Did 20 kms only first night and pulled out of Halle on sirens, parked on bridge, hell of a scone getting off. Real picnic, fellows all over the country. No escapes by order.

Next night made Krutschein, sirens again so we parked all day in a quarry. Very exhausted with mental strain, and no sleep for a week. Next day stopped in open country, wet and cold. Had plenty food and drinks and washed in streams; fellows caught fish. Ten escaped previous night. Next night travelled fast through Arnsbach where Yanks had supposedly cut line. Seems we travelled parallel with advance for many kms. Passed our destination Eichstaett (7B) they are walking here. We came on through Augsburg to Munich. Sirens went and we stuck. Saw Yank working parties.

Moosburg, 25 kms out from Munich. Full of all nations, cripples, colours, Russians, Serbs, Nigs, Yanks, Officer SORs. Put into three filthy stables 400 to each, and then to shower and to present quarters. 300 to each hut, some have beds, most on floor. Terrible jam and admin balls-up. Never know what food is coming in. Had one parcel so far but hear are to go on halves again. Many sick, flu and tummy. I've had it. Lavs dreadful. One tap for 300 men, place feet deep in dirt,

*It was estimated that up to 120,000 men were in the Moosburg camp at the time it was liberated.



The POW camp Stalag VII A was established north of Moosburg in 1939. It housed up to 120,000 Allied soldiers at the end of World War II. Between 1945 and 1948 it was an internment camp. After 1948, most barracks were rebuilt as private houses or workshops by German refugees.

fleas, bugs, lice; am well bitten. Have to cook own grub over little fires. Odd wood comes over wire. No washing facilities.

ORs look awful, ragged and half mad. They yell and bay and don't give a damn for themselves or anyone else. Yank airmen next door walked from Sagan. Sorry later. ORs are being kicked out to make room for officers. They take a parcel and a blanket and just walk in circles round the country. What a finish.

No idea of date, except it's Thursday. Time now is no object. Spent last few days recovering, but have a heavy chesty cough. Eating well however and after much ordering and counter-ordering and rumouring we are at moment on full parcels – American and quite original. There are fireplaces and blower stufas all along the walls. Incredible sight. Eating goes on in this room from daylight till lights out. Nominal roll call this morning. Long-winded farce. Lavatories here foul. Only three machines to clear whole camp. One cookhouse providing for 11,000 and doing a good job, though rations come in at strange times.

Some hundreds marched in from Lamsdorf today, including Doc Wheeler. We gave them cigarettes through the wire; they were like mad dogs and half silly. Walked 700 kms in 13 weeks. Hundreds march out daily, don't know where to. Terrific job feeding this moving population.

RAF bashing junctions all round us and fighters fly low. Air full of them. War going well, advancing everywhere. What will happen here, things are going to move. Hear we are to shift compounds. Even our own guards are amazed at conditions. Clothing and food fly over wire all day. Black market in full swing, bread etc. Amazing to see thousands of men living close to the ground. No news

of Limburg camp or 7B; thousands still on road. Fleas bad here. They don't mark me however. Had haircut today, what a haircut.

Administration a shambles here. Roll call changes each day – it's amusing and bloody annoying. What a jam in here. 200 men, gear everywhere, talk, talk, eat eat, cutting tins, some reading. Washed a few clothes, basins short and only one tap, so wet to knees most of time and always dirty. We get along however, have good billies, and eat on beds or sit on ground. Heard of Sagan killing and plenty else too. What a reckoning. Workers in and out all day, shambling, heads down muttering a dozen languages; cripples, all nationalities, just biding their time.

Lamsdorf boys on train last few days just pulled out of junction before it was demolished by RAF. Griff and dope coming in all the time, too much to remember. Man scratching his bare bum in front of me, men eating in shirts only. Black market list up, fresh eggs, six cigarettes, macaroni, wheat, bread, bully, cheese, up to 30 cigs. Cigs short here. In Lamsdorf, 2oz tea was worth hundreds. In Weinsberg, biscuits were worth hundreds and a tin of klim* was worth 1000 cigarettes. We'll never be flush here. Gefangen always on bones of arse. Lot of speculation as to our fate. To hell with the future anyway, our daily troubles are enough.

Friday, 13 April: Just had news and communiqué, taken with plenty of salt, though judging by the tone t'would seem this country will prove tough to crack as there's plenty of fight yet. Our casualties are high, thousands of litres of blood received for the wounded daily. Terrible reprisals offered by Party if each town and village not defended. Heilbronn is centre of fighting at present. We saw the positions being dug in the forest. Negroes were supposed to have taken it a week ago. So much for rumour.

Just written home to Mother; hope it gets through. She will be relieved to hear where I am. Busy day washing and hanging round and brewing drinks. The black market here is amazing: flour, bread, food, wood, clothes all fly over the wire, pitched 20 yards. Rows of fellows screaming at each other bargaining.

18 April: American ORs opposite us have moved out. Great dealing went on for two days across wire. Blowers, wheat, food, cigs, kits of tools, even a pistol offered. Some 7B officers here. Their column was machine-gunned as they left camp; 10 killed, 40 wounded. They had to turn back. Nuremburg ORs have come in, also RAF and American officers from same place. We are still in this



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*During World War II, KLIM (a brand of powdered milk under the Nestlé stable) was initially adopted as part of the US Army Jungle ration. As one officer noted, "That quite dense milk powder kept safely for years if its stout can was unopened, and for at least a week in jungle heat if taken out and kept in a waterproof bag." KLIM was later issued by the Red Cross to prisoners of war, particularly those held in German prison camps, in order to increase caloric intake. In the book *Under The Wire*, William Ash (pilot) and Brendan Foley tell how WWII prisoners of war removed the bottoms from the tins and hooked them together to form airtight pipes to provide air while digging escape tunnels.

WEINSBERG TO MOOSBURG AND LIBERATION



Images from the Moosburg Camp (Stalag VIIA). Top: main street of the camp and prisoner barracks. Row two: US Air Force officers in the overcrowded camp in April 1945 (Bruce Robertson experienced similar conditions at the same time), main watchtower, POW with a stove. Row three: camp scenes. Row four: *The Living Dead* drawing by J Bertrand, camp liberation. Courtesy of Moosburg Online (www.stalag.moosburg.org).

compound, no change. Parole walks have been resumed.

Received Xmas parcel today – magnificent. RAF very busy here bombing all round us. News terrific though some hard fighting in Holland, Ruhr and Magdeburg, also in south. Rumour that armoured cars are close to Regensburg. Expect we'll be moved at short notice. Probably go south, east or west. Who knows? Am having new pack made, in case; will have to travel light. Fellows still busy making tables and stools and fires etc. Waste of time, but keeps them occupied. Weather clear and hot, so we're in shorts.

News of Roosevelt's death received two days ago. The *Last Post* was blown by our buglers here. Very little trading going on. No working parties go past here now. A little bread comes in however. Yanks have opened wire from next compound and come in for yarns. All swapping waterproofs and battle jackets for battledress and bush shirts. Only one tap here, long queues all day – damned nuisance. Bales of clothes going past for new arrivals who have practically nothing, not even boots. Have handed over my spare gear.

Filthy rations here: rotten potatoes, kraut, plus occasional soup and odd cheese – very odd. Russians underway again at Küstrin. T'would seem both forces will penetrate Berlin together. Won't do us much good though. Fleas bad here, bite like hell. Had inspection for lice yesterday – nix. It's up to us however to keep clean.

Diarrhoea clearing up – probably due to diet and too much fried food. We seem to eat better by having our own parcels, but cooking and cleaning up a business. I've no interest in cooking under primitive conditions. Duck for sale here for 200 cigarettes. Datter demolition mob roving past on roadway all day. All manner of hats and clothes. Yanks very neat in well cut serge pants and shirts, good belts. Very dirty though.

Large pack of bombers going over – 60-plus fighters. Been going for 1½ hours.



Moosburg prisoners observing an air raid shortly before liberation. 'Prisoners of Germany'

What madness this is. Fighters by dozens everywhere; the whole sky drumming with sound. A Jerry jet-propelled machine dives over us regularly. Just like a shell.

21 April: Still here, but expect to move any day. Rumour is that we go soon and Yank spearheads supposed to be at Landshut, probably bunkum. Planes very active here; bombed aerodrome nearly and bomb dropped outside camp last night. Some 7B fellows here. We're now open so Yanks in here all day. Must be 7000 or 8000 of we officers. Lots of ORs too. Spoke to Doc Wheeler yesterday. Fleas in millions here and I have diarrhoea today. Gloom, gloom. Wish this war would finish, as feel generally lousy and burnt out. Story is 7B shot up again, SBO killed and 23 others. Fighters mistake columns for Volkssturm. Bombers been hammering Munich. One crowd marching was bombed on bridge across Danube, many killed. I've had cooking meals. Particularly brassed off at present and very unsociable.

24 April: Large flap last evening as we expected to move. Must be 12,000 or 14,000 officers here now. 7B have marched in. Have seen Garry E-S [Garry Evers-Swindell] looking splendid. In fact they all do. Have presumably wintered much more comfortably than we have. Our room has 70 extra blokes in. Terrific shambles and only one tap, which is off more than on.

Afraid I'll have to leave this diary, can't carry it. A pity. My notes also. Been cold and overcast and wet. Cold in bed. I've given away two blankets so sleep with more clothes on. Fleas are diabolical, trembling, rolling and biting. The war draws to a close, but not for us yet, unless by good chance a flying column surrounds us. No much chance however. They may pick us up on the road if we walk. Will travel very light. Garry gave me cigs – very welcome.

News flash straight from the canary: "British, American and Russian governments have reached agreement with Reich government that prisoners of war will not be moved in face of advancing forces."

A great roar of approval greeted this as we expected to leave for south-east and Salzburg last night or tonight. Meanwhile war news is marvellous and Patton* is due west of us and close. Demobilisations have been going on in area. We'll be out this week or less. If everything goes as it now should, we've had it. Liberation – impossible to realise!

27 April: We remembered Anzac Day with a simple service and quite a stirring sermon was given by an old Gallipoli padre who was with the Anzacs. Our



*George Smith Patton, Jr. (1885–1945) was a United States Army officer best known for his leadership while commanding corps and armies as a general during World War II. He was also well-known for his controversial outspokenness. On March 26, 1945, Patton sent Task Force Baum to liberate his son-in-law from a POW camp OFLAG XIII-B, 50 miles behind the German lines near Hammelburg. He later reported it was the only mistake he made during WWII.

situation meanwhile seems rather vague as, apart from one further report that POWs are to be left in camps, nothing concrete from local camp authorities has been forthcoming. I feel with usual gefangen complex of course, that some crazy authority may attempt to molest us. There may be fighting round here as though we are a village and in flat country, we are on the highway leading to Munich, down which Patton will come.

Heavy vehicular movement past here at night though things have been strangely quiet for two days. Not much aerial activity, but Munich was battered with land mines two nights ago. I could hear the artillery at 12.30 this morning, just a few guns. The Yanks are over the Danube in force, have been for two days and it's only 40 miles north of us. Columns may bypass us judging by reports. Rumours galore, such as Himmler's death and the report that Hitler is still in HQ in Berlin. Two planes came and had a look at us yesterday; report also that 2000 POWs due in, including many NZers. Must be Lamsdorf boys. There must be 20,000 in here now. Half a mile square, mostly air force.

Arrangements underway for control and discipline to be maintained here. Sheafs of orders drawn up by an RAF Group Commander. Many duties on stores and dumps, precautions against breakouts and rape and looting. Anticipate however everyone will remain calm. Munich too far away and in any case t'will be flat. Many ORs working and laging there have to be fed from here. A story of one camp marching here, vanguard crossed Danube then bridges blown, balance will be recaptured. One can't judge of fighting whether it's continuous or against pockets. I cannot visualise the end. Maybe quiet, maybe noisy. German rations down – 10 men to loaf, so means about two slices each, $\frac{3}{4}$ mug of soup, kraut, cheese, we'll have no bread soon. It comes from Landshut, which is being attacked.

Sleeping badly at present, fleas mostly. They're dreadful. We are not short of wood, as parties still collect on parole walks, including eggs, fish and a little bread. We are out of black market as have few smokes. Yanks controlling purchasing and paying fantastic prices. The jam here incredible, queue for water, lavatory, food. Our alley is a mass of crouching figures cooking over little stoves – all manner of clothes and hats. We are noticeably neat and tidy and clean, compared with the Americans. Situation changing hourly here. We are ready to take over Moosburg. Just heard of link-up of Russians and Allies. Third Army only 25 miles from Munich. We hear spasmodic artillery from here. A few rounds crashed out just now, from somewhere. Had large meal this evening – double mashed potatoes, bully and a whole margarine issue.

28 April: 'Tis said we are rationing 176,000 prisoners from this camp. They are bivvyed all round us in the bush and villages and Munich. Food won't last long at this rate. Meanwhile we still wait. Wet today so have been brewing in rain. All inside, 260 to one room. The guns are going all round, much closer today. Bavaria (Metz) is suing for separate peace and is rising against Nazis. American tanks are rushing to help and are 30 kms from Munich, Augsburg side I should

say. Goering has resigned 'tis said and Hitler is at HQ in Berlin, which should fall today or tomorrow.

We are eating well. American parcels. Not enough bulk though. Only chosen few can get black market grub and the prices are fantastic. Trying to get me to sing here, open air – what a hope. Squeezebox and guitar playing in here. Still some goon guards on, though we are handling camp admin. 'Tis said we will be moved quickly from here in transport planes. Nuremburg: 14,000 removed in three days. Will take us sometime. Should take Englishmen first; many are Dunkirk men and what are a few days to us? Uncanny situation – we will all be relieved to see our tanks, I should say today or tomorrow. They're bloody slow catching up with Oflag 5A.

Everyone flapping mildly this evening. I have to go on guard at 11. A farce, and it's wet and cold. Place full of rumours; people seeing gun flashes etc. We can definitely hear the guns to the west and south-west. Tomorrow is the day. All the German guards have left.

29 April: Still we wait. Planes have had a look at us again this morning. BBC says we are to use smoke signals and ground strips if SS attempts to move us. Good way of giving them the idea. Heavy detonations to west and south and also north. T'would sound as if we are being folded into a pocket. Artillery sounds large calibre, very hard to tell of course. Truman says Himmler's request for armistice is absolutely false. So much for Reuter. Guess the SS will fight to a finish. Will be some weeks before end. Something should happen here today. Morale of course splendid, clean boots, Sam Browne,* etc. Infantry battle on round camp right now – machine guns, rifles, tommy guns. Fighting like mad dogs.

1 hour later: 'Tis over; firing has disappeared beyond village. Two bullets landed in our bungalow. One man wounded by burst up main roadway. Mortars and artillery fired overhead. MGs and rifle fire was heavy. SS tanks dug in on river bank. Six Yankee tanks seen coming over hill. Firing in and round camp and station sounded as if t'would last quite a time, but mortars broke resistance. Several shots fired at village church tower and close fighting heard round our Red Cross dump and village. Bloody Nazi swine. Everyone rather subdued during fighting, but brewing and walking round as usual, spectators up on dumpty and fences. Our flag flying outside now. Still spasmodic shooting. American major in camp captured some days ago gave Yanks details of aerial evacuation.



*The **Sam Browne belt** takes its name from Sir Samuel James Browne VC GCB KCSI (1824–1901) a British Indian Army cavalry officer in India and the Afghanistan, who lost his arm and began to wear the belt which bears his name as compensation for the difficulty caused with wearing his officer's sword. It is a wide usually leather belt, supported by a strap going diagonally over the right shoulder and was particularly useful for heavy pistols. It was a standard part of the US Army uniform between World War I and World War II. It is most often seen as part of a military or police uniform and featured prominently in many uniforms used by the Nazi Party in Germany, again in imitation of earlier European uniforms.

The American flag raised at Moosburg on liberation day. USAF Academy Library



No American tanks in here yet. They may be at main gate.

At 3am our commander left camp in car to contact Allies. They met SS general en route and he proposed they tell Americans to wait till he evacuated village and camp. We refused the free zone as Allies would thus be denied village. Allies eventually contacted and American general said only surrender of German general and troops would be considered. Time was allowed for our people to tell this to Germans on way back to camp. Battle therefore started at 9am. Still heavy detonations; maybe fight isn't finished. There are heavy coppices to

north-east of camp. Perhaps there are Germans still there. Railways seem to be clear. Reports say resistance was slight, but vast numbers of Germans moving back. Americans are advancing in force. Eating etc. going on as usual. There was a war correspondent writing his story on the chimney. Ignominiously told to come down. Resistance still to north-east of camp. Just like these swine to fight round us, and even counter-attack.

A large American flag has gone up in German barracks. The crowd went mad. They are all over the roofs. There will be terrific enthusiasm when someone comes into camp.

So this is the end and I am free

Roars of cheering as vast Sherman tank and two jeeps drove in at 2pm. They were crowded with prisoners. A great reception. And so this is the end and I am free. Feelings mixed, afraid senses are dulled somewhat. In the main most have accepted our release stoically and quietly.

I was washing sox in the bathroom during the fighting this morning. Now that it is all over I can't help feeling for the fellows who carry on still fighting in front of us. Theirs is an unenviable job which they will carry on enthusiastically till all resistance has ceased. Munich is still to fall. How futile to think of the useless coming slaughter when the war is already won. Damn to perdition these madmen for all time.

An SS officer came to the gate this morning and demanded that our German staff join the battle; he had a panzerfaust.* The staff refused, the faust was discharged. Three killed, three wounded. Bloody madman. Overhead our fighters are diving and rolling.

Evening, and nothing new of local situation. Still spasmodic heavy artillery fire round us but moving on. Psychological shooting. The two heavy infantry



*The **Panzerfaust** (lit. "armour fist" or "tank fist") was an inexpensive, recoilless German anti-tank weapon of World War II. It consisted of a small, disposable preloaded launch tube firing a high explosive anti-tank warhead, operated by a single soldier.

divisions in support of armour have arrived. Several vehicles in camp. Can't get near for Yanks. Naturally. And so to bed and goodly full of bully beef.

News of morning battle. SS fired into camp, wounded four POWs and killed two guards deliberately. When captured the Yanks killed the SS. Negro battalion took Moosburg. Disarmed SS and beat them up. Roads littered with SS dead. 7th Army in Munich tonight and our release has been announced.

30 April: Battle still going on to north-east and east and south. Yanks having difficulty crossing river as bridges are blown. Expect repatriation will start tomorrow – 27,000 of us here. We have more food than we can cope with, but no bread or spuds. Lamsdorf column came in in order on bicycles, led by Aussie on horse. Hosts of Yanks about, they say. Many vehicles have come in, including some American nurses. Story of 143 Jews murdered by retiring SS. Yanks turned out complete village for proper burial. Thirteen armoured divisions in Munich. 'Tis said opposition here is stiffest since Rhine. What a picnic these boys are having then; 17,000 prisoners taken yesterday.

Hitler reported dead etc. and Mussolini hanged. Yanks beating up SS. We are to be flown out. Aerodrome being built 500 yards from here. Evacuation starts tomorrow at 5000 per day. Battery just behind us – 155s making hell of noise. There's a pocket over Eser opposite us. Mortars have been at them all day and spotter planes directing operations flying 100 feet above camp. One of our lads went to woods and saw battalion waiting to go over and attack and sappers ready to bridge river. Guess there will be a noise before nightfall.

Dachau concentration camp and host of prisoners recaptured, including 43 truckloads of bodies, whipping posts, crematorium and torture chamber. Three hundred SS guards taken. They've had it. There'll be a swash out tonight over the river. The boys will fix the SS.

Eating furiously here and now have some new spuds. No bread issue of course. There goes the battery on gunfire. The attack goes in 6.50pm. Guess in 10 mins they'll be off. Good luck to them.

1 May: Story has it that t'will be seven to nine days before we leave here. Guns were noisy last night they say, but attack seems to have moved on. Did I say this army has averaged 20 casualties per day since the Rhine? Much looting going on, but not among the officers. Though despite orders, the camp is gradually being disintegrated; so much for discipline and all the useless guard duties. The loud shouting territorial element is enjoying itself, issuing sheaves of rubbish and holding an early check parade. The place is becoming a shambles; so much for the doctors. Hope we get bread from army. Our diet is ridiculous at present – rich, crude and unbalanced.

Patton was in today. His remarked: "Is that all the food you boys get for a week?" (referring to a parcel). He probably was not aware that we lived on half that quantity for six months. However, food to burn now. American bread (white) coming in: flour, biscuits, cheese, pea meal, spuds, live pigs, large cheeses (the

latter two are loot). Trading is brisk on wire – looted chocolate, sugar etc. Am on guard again in morning – a farce. Pigs being killed all over camp, fowls tethered up. Looting is terrific and no one cares a damn. They're quite prepared to bleed Germany white. Yanks beating up prisoners. Russian to be hung for rape. Some bloke called a darkie black trash, and was shot. Radio full of atrocity stories; they're rubbing it in. Churchill says Germany will capitulate. War has gone on from here. Story has it evacuation starts soon. 110,000 of us here to be moved. Kitchens have colossal task. Today I've had raisins and klim and coffee for breakfast. Tea and biscuits morning tea, two lots of soup, cheese, meat and potatoes, chocolates, and tea. We have heaps of food, except bread. Snowing, raining and cold. The camp is a filthy slushy shambles.

A doughnut unit has arrived, also 1500 tons of bread. There are French and Czech prisoners here mad with their freedom. They have been bastinadoed by the SS. Fed on potato water and a crust of bread. Camp commandants and their staff are in the main being hung on the evidence of one or two witnesses.

2 May: Still snowing – over an inch everywhere – wet and miserable. I went on guard at main at 6am. Waste of time. Hosts of prisoners coming in from village loaded with loot and live fowls. Time the Yank police took charge. Lot of rape going on, including 12 Yank officers, all in gaol. Some will swing. Foreign workers are of course the worst offenders and should be shot. We will be held up here for some time, due to weather. Still fighting six miles away. Fleas kept me awake till 2am. Bloody hell. Caught two and mangled hell out of them as reprisal. We're off – this afternoon or tomorrow morn – carrying practically nothing.

5 May: Six days we've been free men and still we are hanging round waiting. There is much complaining as they promised to have us away in 48 hours. They were not counting on 110,000 men in the area or regarding the terrible weather. For 10 days it's been wet and cold and snowy. Absolute mud pie here. I went through wire yesterday to village and river and got soaked with rain. Had hot shower yesterday. Mobile Yank unit. We've been standing to for days packed. First group left two days ago and is still at Landshut in billets. Some are in England. We will not be there for armistice. A million surrendered in north and 900,000 in Italy. Kiwis at Trieste. Only a portion of Czechoslovakia and part of Austria holding out.

Food question tricky here – we don't know what we'll get from day to day. Sometimes soup, rice, flour and yesterday a large Argentine back issue. We are eating vastly, but unbalanced. Many are sick and have diarrhoea! Russians and foreign workers have looted village. There are men everywhere, and guts and feathers and equipment. All living like pigs in slush. I have heavy cold. Given all my clothes away so will come out very untidy.

Four SS caught in car outside camp last night. They shot a Yank soldier so were promptly dispatched. Bullets whistled over our bungalow. Some sniping still going on. A counter-attack came within 2000 yards of camp three nights ago. Two German armies surrendered south of Munich last evening. There will still be some

fighting in Austria and Czecho. Patton beyond Innsbruck. Only 500 POWs flown out so far. Some belly-aching here as we have dumped our clothes and latest bull is vague as we will not go for a while. The war comes first. Trucks ready to move us, but no planes to spare. Doughnut factory here, also cinema. Courts martial for anyone leaving camp. Meanwhile hundreds are outside wire foraging. Many have left. Undisciplined rabble and many dumb officers contemplate scooting in civvy cars. They won't get far into Corp HQ.

400,000 Germans still in Norway. They shelled Copenhagen today after it had surrendered. Orders from the madman Dönitz.* Fellows shooting deer and pigs in forest. What a picnic. Wood party was sniped recently. There must be hosts of SS pockets still about. Big gun was firing nearby last evening. A sniper was heard reloading by our chaps in a house close by. We are priority nil alright. No effort has been made to notify our NOK [next of kin] yet.

6 May: American admin taken over here. We are now drawing rations from them. German cheese from aeroplane factory, kraut, bad spuds etc. Rumour has it that 17,000 move tomorrow. Weather looks better. Cinema has arrived.

8 May: 'Tis Victory day they tell me. Am sitting on Landshut 'drome among thousands of RGFs. Air full of sound as transports come in. It's 10am and there are 60 on ground already. Today we will be in England.

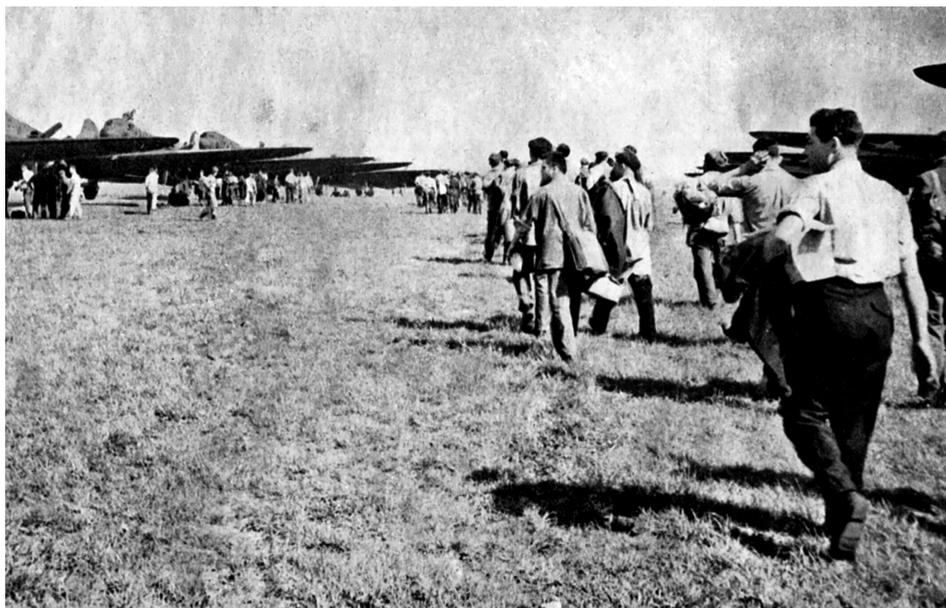
Left Moosburg yesterday morn. Up at 3.30 and thousands of us came on trucks. Waited here all day yesterday but only 70-odd planes came and removed previous arrivals. There are planes all round horizon. Ground org good as planes come in like line of birds one behind the other. Two runways today; only one yesterday. Undoubtedly the weather has been responsible for holdup. 'Tis gloriously warm today.

Slept in barn last night. A loft shared with pigeons and above stalls of 30-odd cows – big, docile, bewildered beasts which are milked all day and night by prisoners. Had milk and coffee and toast for breakfast. Prisoners swarming here. Party, including NZers in our quarters, marched 1000 kms since Jan. Many permanently broken and quite mad. Living well now on eggs, milk, fish, meat, fowl, bread, all taken from goons. Village controlled now by an American Jew.

Boys have sad tales of Poles being marched by thousands naked into crematoriums, of shootings and mass murder of Poles and Jews, of their own hardships on raw meat and veg, no water and beatings. Muir, my corporal, in here. Much frost bite and disease among them. Many killed in Regensburg bridge episode. Tons of hidden food and drink being found and taken. These Huns will



***Karl Dönitz** : (1891-1980) was a German admiral and the third and last president of the German Reich. On 29 April 1945, Hitler surprisingly named him his successor as head of state, and Josef Goebbels as Chancellor of Germany. Dönitz assumed the office of president of Nazi Germany's Flensburg government and held this position for about 20 days, until the final surrender to the Allies. After the war he was convicted of war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials and served 10 years in prison.



Homeward bound: POWs boarding a fleet of US Air Force Dakotas for the flight to England. 'Prisoners of Germany'

starve. Looting now controlled and curfew in force. However 35 transports on ground already and first plane loaded and away and the next. Everyone lying round eating and drinking. We haven't done so well for a long time.

I had tub last night and this morning in ice cold water from pump in cattle stalls. Rows of heads mooing and eagerly munching hay and oat concentrate fed in troughs by woman foreign worker. Men stood shaving among beasts and swallows sat on eaves, while pigeons walked round our feet picking grain. Outside was a vast muck heap, steaming and aromatic. We slept warm in the straw above the beasts with stomachs full of bully, while London went mad with the coming Victory announcement. Two wee frauleins with long fair plaits playing with an ex-prisoner nearby – little do they understand that their country has disintegrated. The terrifying bombing and shelling which has flattened Landshut has left little visible impression on them.

Glorious country, Bavaria. Villages each with tall church as far as eye can see in this valley. All red tiles and white. Wonderful in the spring and fruit trees in flower. Sixteen planes in bunch coming in.

We got away after a false start; plane bogged down. One accident taking off; plane bumped hole and hit six others, three were burnt and one man killed. Flew to Reims over old and new battlefields. Smoothish trip, but I felt ill for a while. Landed outside Yank transport camp, brand new. We were quickly fed: potatoes mashed, rissoles, bread, butter, jam, cake and coffee. Slept on stretchers and new blankets. Bath was a false start, thousands trying to go through 12 showers, a long way from camp. Old battlefield here.

Next day spent on 'dr ome beyond Reims which we passed through, cheered by enthusiastic French. A lovely city. Spent all day on 'drome in heat and no food.

Rose at 3.30am so was exhausted. We missed by 12 planes. An admin shambles. No one in control and ladder men all flown off. Jammed on 100 to a truck. Late in evening returned through Reims to original camp, which was unable to take us as it had a host of new arrivals. Planes coming in all night like taxis, full of prisoners. We went off a further 40 miles south to another camp and were fed vastly and bedded down for three hours rest. Breakfast at 5 and off back to 'drome, about 60 miles. Tired and worn out. Heard plane had crashed yesterday – over 30 killed.

Tedder* shook up admin effort so we got away quickly and landed in England at Westcott,† a beautiful 'drome, at 12.30am.



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*Air Chief Vice Marshall **Arthur Tedder**, former Air Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Allied Air Forces. In the last year of the war, Tedder was sent to Russia to seek assistance as the Western Front came under pressure during the Battle of the Bulge. When the unconditional surrender of the Germans came in May 1945 Tedder signed on behalf of General Eisenhower.



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†RAF Westcott was a World War II Royal Air Force station in Buckinghamshire. It opened in September 1942 with crews using Wellington bombers for training. Many of these crews saw active service in Lancaster bombers in the fierce aerial campaign waged by RAF Bomber Command over occupied Europe.

