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The Atlantic and Mail March 9-1991

Fate of German POWs

Starvation was not the main cause of death among German prisoners of war in U.S. hands after the Second World War (The Other POWs — March 9). The U.S. Army survey of 2,868 cadavers in June, 1945, showed that the main cause of death was diseases associated with exposure and the unsanitary conditions. Professor Stephen Ambrose seeks to exculpate General Dwight D. Eisenhower by saying there was a world food shortage in 1945, yet Prof. Ambrose himself told me in a letter, "If the world food shortage was a myth, and you have convinced me that it was...."

He also says that study of prisoners in foreign countries remains to be done. I'm happy to describe the results of work in this field. The French enslaved over a million Germans. Certainly more than 167,000, possibly more than 314,000 died of starvation and disease. The Americans under General Mark Clark in Italy took almost 500,000

POWs. No mass atrocity has ever been alleged against either army, although some hundreds of prisoners died of starvation in a British camp in Belgium during a month in the winter of 1945-6. The British themselves quickly rectified the situation, restoring food supplies within a week. The Red Cross, The Times and the House of commons all commented critically on the maladministration. The situation did not recur.

Freedom of the press, respect for international law, and parliamentary democracy were all at work in Britain then. Winston Churchill has told us why. When he heard Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin plotting atrocities against surrendered Germans, he raged out of the room, saying, "I would rather be taken out in the garden here and now to be shot myself than sully my own and my country's honour by such infamy."

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