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CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

25 January 1947

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GERMAN P.O.W.s

Sir

May I point out that, in my opinion, the problem of entertaining German prisoners in British homes is not as simple as the correspondence between Dr Rutherford and her critics suggests. The principal point at issue appears to me consideration of the mentality of the people one is dealing with. According to my experience, most Germans (except those one has got to know and like personally) will completely misunderstand it when treated with kindness, friendliness and equality in English homes. They will probably take it for patronising, condescending and showing off, perhaps even hypocritical on the part of the British, and may even see in it a confession of guilt on their side. It will certainly not encourage them to work up in themselves a conviction of guilt and need for repentance. I think the most urgent problem between the two world wards was to convince the Germans of their war guilt. If it had been done it might have prevented the second world war.

Yours –

“ONE WHO HAS LIVED AMONGST THEM FOR MANY YEARS.”

Sir

In connection with the recent correspondence; while I appreciate the views expressed by both sides, I would suggest that if active public opinion were directed to the release of the P.O.W.s, it would be more practicable and appreciated.

Yours –

R. Parker
41 Arncliffe Road
Harrogate

Sir

Many opinions have been expressed recently in the "Advertiser! Regarding our attitude towards the German people. Millions of people hold an opinion which, so far as I am aware, has not yet been expressed in this controversy; the opinion that to hate Nazism and the foul deeds arising from it, is good, but to preach or practice racial hatred, is bad.

- 10 To hate a vile creed without hating the race in whose country it was adopted was a difficult task during the war, but, early in 1942, when the Russians were suffering one defeat after another, Stalin said: "It would be ridiculous to identify Hitler's clique with the German people. The experience of history shows that Hitlers come and go but the German people remain."

While doing all we can to help those who united with us to destroy the Nazi war machine, we must also do what we can to develop within Germany a healthy democratic movement.

Yours –

J. Wright

- 20 2 Greenwood Avenue
Pateley Bridge

Sir

I agree so far with Dr Rutherford in that it is a Christian principle to forgive our enemies, but how far can we carry this principle into war and its aftermath?

Frankly, to do so we should not have gone to war at all – "Thou shalt not kill." No-one can possibly imagine Our Lord leading His people into battle, piloting a plane to destroy cities, or sending children to collect salvage for munitions. It is unthinkable.

- 30 But we do so. To allow prisoners of war to kick their heels in our streets is a lesser evil. We need not hate them. Forgive, if you can; but we need not, I think associate with them.

The Germans are in a different class from one's personal enemies – they have been the enemies of God and man, of Christ and His religion, of our entire civilisation. They are unrepentant. They would do the same again. You cannot change the Nazi outlook by a demonstration of our way of life.

If Dr Rutherford witnessed a band of gangsters murder a child or old person in cold blood, would she consider it her Christian duty to ask them into her home, give them tea and a wash, and help them to escape? I think not.

Then can she forget the children, the infirm, and the aged sent to the gas chambers in Germany? Is it justice to fraternise with evildoers, unbelievers, murderers?

Every German represents the Nazi creed. They deserve more retribution than they have received – they are defiled. Why “baby” them? Anyhow, leave them to their consciences.

Yours –

10 JUSTICIA

Sir

I fail to see the reason for this sudden affection for the German P.O.W.s. I have not yet seen the opinion of an ex-Serviceman expressed. Therefore, as an ex-soldier, I do feel at least qualified to add a humble word to this controversy.

One of your correspondents states that our returned soldiers are the first to approval of a more friendly attitude towards the Germans. This is not true. Admittedly, some of our men received kindnesses at the hands of the German people, but it was only after the Germans had realised their defeat and then only for what material gain it could be to them.

20 Yet another correspondent expounds the theory that “two blacks don’t make a white – therefore we should entertain them and converse with them.” In exploding this theory I would say that we made a grave mistake in bringing Goering and his satellites to justice. Perhaps they should have been helped to recuperate after their ordeals at the Nuremberg trial – even to the extent of entertaining them at our own delightful spa!

It is not a comforting thought after giving six or seven years to the country’s cause to find the very ones one has been at war with being entertained in our own homes.

30 We all tend to feel rather more generous on festive occasions and in order to express our generosity to its best advantage, let us extend our invitations to those men folk of our own who came back – as invalids – some maimed for life, or perhaps to those children whose fathers did not come back at all. We would be executing an equally, if not greater, Christian-like action.

Yours

”EX-SOLDIER”

CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

1 February 1947

GERMAN P.O.W.s

Sir

10 “We were confined for three days and nights in a hut 9ft x 47ft – it was hell! Then we came to this place, Buchenwald ... never believe a word about German honesty; they are the biggest thieves, liars, bullies and cowards I have ever met; in addition they delight in torturing people and gloat over it. Men die like flies here. For God’s sake see to it that our people never let themselves be softened towards the German people, or there will be another war in 15 years time and all our lives will have been in vain. I leave it to you and others”

The above is an extract from a letter smuggled out of a German prison camp during the second world war. I also had a brother who was a prisoner in Germany (5th Batt. West Yorks.) during the first world war. Christian principles are beyond reproach or argument, but let us not be fools. German prisoners should be treated as prisoners and kept off the streets in order that their “pathetic” faces may not lure honourable British subjects to sympathetic tendencies.

20 Yours –

PENSIONER, R.F.A 1916

Sir

One of your correspondents displays an undue concern over the suffering brought upon the German people by the last war.

I suppose it is playing the game if we ignore our own suffering or the suffering brought to the Russians and the peoples of Europe whose countries were devastated by the Nazi armies. Or could it be that in our midst there are persons holding a deep admiration for the Nazi creed? These persons cannot openly spread their enthusiasms, so they dress them up in clean, respectable Christian
30 phraseology.

By all means let German P.O.W.s have further contact with British citizens. Many are still in need of disinfection of foul racialist ideas. We can help in their democratisation.

Lest we forget, let us cast our thoughts back to those days when there was death and destruction in our cities. Let us remember the horrors of Belson and

Buchenwald, the mass killings in gas chambers, those thousands of helpless innocent people thrust alive into human incinerators. Can we afford to forget how diabolically the Nazis used their scientific skill and knowledge to devise new ways of mass murder?

Those millions of dead and mutilated, our loved ones, countrymen and allies, all victims of Fascism – can we afford to forget them?

Yours –

EX-SERVICEMAN

Sir

10 Having followed the voluminous correspondence in your columns in connection with the citizens' attitude to German prisoners of war, I would like to make a few comments.

Any P.O.W., no matter what his nationality, is an object of pity. He is a citizen without citizenship, a man deprived of the full status of manhood, a human being robbed of natural freedom, self-expression and the opportunity of leading a useful and constructive life in society.

20 The majority of these German boys are still in their twenties, and even younger, which means that these early and formative years were lived under iron dictatorship and the influence of war propaganda and perverted truth. What opportunity could they have had, therefore, of knowing anything of liberty, equality and fraternity?

To suggest that these lads are partially responsible for the failure to overthrow Hitlerism is ludicrous, absurd and grossly unfair.

Let us blame the high-ups, the politicians and financial magnates by all means, but let us not be so blinded by mass emotionalism as to vent spite on young victims who had to choose between service or death.

If the late war was fought for a higher conception of life and the spirit of goodwill in international affairs, let us be big enough to show it now – or have the millions died in vain?

30 German people do not lack goodwill and are not naturally debased, degraded and brutalised in greater degree than any other people. All nations have dark blots in their history books, and one remembers Ireland and south Africa.

Is it not better that the P.O.W.s return home with some respect and affection for us? I say it is good politics, good morality, and it will be good humanism and a Christian approach to the problem.

These young men are citizens of a future, and let us hope, a better and more human and enlightened age. Towards this end let us work if we will make an effort to avoid a final cataclysm and an end of European culture and all that means in civilisation.

A noticeable feature, incidentally, of the correspondence on this subject has been the silence of the churches, from whence one might have expected some sort of lead.

Yours –

C.T.O

[This correspondence is now closed. – Editor]

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NEWS ITEM

P.O.W.s LIBERTY

Unescorted Walks Up to Five Miles

Many residents in Knaresborough who have seen the German prisoners of war from Scriven Camp enjoying liberty in the town since the recent relaxation of the non-fraternisation rules, may have wondered exactly what the position of these men is, and to what restrictions they are still subject. For their information, we publish the following instructions received by the Commandant of the camp 9Lieut-Col. B. C. Wilkinson) concerning prisoners “who are not considered politically biased.”

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(a) They may take unescorted walks within a radius of five miles of their respective camps/hostels.

(b) They may converse with members of the public, but anything of an amorous nature is strictly forbidden.

(c) They may accept invitations to private houses, subject to the permission of the Camp Commandant, but they are not permitted to enter licensed premises, dance halls, restaurants, shops or cinemas, or attend public meetings, but may enter buildings of public interest if accompanied by a member of the public.

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(d) public transport may not be used, but they are allowed to be transported by private cars to and from private houses.

(e) All P.O.W.s will be in their respective camps/hostels, unless at work by lighting up time.

(f) They are not allowed to be in possession of sterling currency under any circumstances.

Note – P.O.W. of Category C+ are not included in the above privileges.

CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

15 February 1947

GERMAN PRISONER

Sir

10 I was in Knaresborough this week. Whilst our lads were manfully engaged in the backbreaking task of shovelling at slabs of frozen snow from the streets, scores of hefty German prisoners could be seen idly promenading the town, chatting with girls and women (nothing fundamentally wrong with that). It may have been these men's time off, to which they are entitled, but the point that struck me was, if in present conditions, they cannot be fully and usefully employed here, wouldn't it be better for all concerned for them to be returned to their own country and save us the cost of maintaining them here.

Yours –

J. H. Hill

3 Hyde Park Road

Harrogate

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P.O.W.s ON HOUSING

10 May 1947

If Harrogate Town Council confirms a minute of the Housing committee at its meeting on Monday, the Borough Engineer (Mr L. H. Clarke) will be authorised to arrange for the employment of prisoners of war on housing on the Knaresborough Road Estate, and on the conversion of requisitioned property.

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CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

31 May 1947

A PROTEST

Sir

I am astonished at the increasing number of girls who, every evening parade outside the German P.O.W. camp at Harlow Grange, endeavouring with only mixed success to try and strike up more than just a nodding acquaintance with the Germans.

10 This unpleasant sight forcibly reminds me of an equally repugnant parade I used to witness outside a barracks in Hong Kong when I was stationed there at this time last year. Those girls had yellow skins, but from a visible point of view that would appear to be the only difference. The commanding officer of the barracks, in an effort to prevent the "weaker" members of his regiment making fools of themselves with these unfortunate women, ordered the patrols to clear them away.

I thought at first it would be a good thing if this line of action could be carried out here, to stop the girls making such an exhibition of themselves, but having had a closer look at the ladies in question I am inclined to think it is the Germans who need the guidance.

Yours –

20 T. E. Crawford Porter

8 Plantation Avenue

Harlow Hill, Harrogate

GERMAN'S EVIDENCE AT INQUEST

5 July 1947

At the resumed inquest in Harrogate on Monday on Mr Tom Henry Appleyard, 65, farm labourer, of Home Farm, Kirk Hammerton, who died there on Sunday of last week, important evidence was given by a German prisoner of war.

30 A verdict of "Accidental Death" was returned by the York District Coroner (Mr E. T. Heap).

The German, Wilhelm Iris, said he was working with Appleyard who was loading potatoes from a dray on to a lorry at Home Farm. While in the act of stepping off, Appleyard either slipped or lost his balance, and fell to the ground.

23 August 1947

HARLOW GRANGE TO HOUSE E.V.W.s

Labour Pool for Local Farmers

Harlow Grange, disused since the German P.O.W.s left six weeks ago, will become a hostel again on September 5th, when 87 European Volunteer Workers will take possession.

During these six weeks many alterations and improvements have been made to the premises, and an official of the West Riding War Agricultural Executive Committee admitted this week that they had one great fear – that “squatters” will try to take possession of some of the huts.

10 “The place is ideal as a hostel,” he said, “and when it is occupied it will be quite full, so we do not want any ‘visitors’.”

He added that alterations were now nearly completed, and because of the possible temptations to “squatters”, a number of P.O.W.s and their guards who were still in occupation for tidying up purposes, were there to see that nobody tried to enter.

Rumour Scotched

At the Grange on Thursday evening, a “Harrogate Advertiser” reporter was told there was no truth in the story that a family was seen unloading furniture the previous night.

During a brief conducted tour, an official of the committee said the European Volunteer Workers, who, he believed, were Ukrainians, were coming from camps near York and Hull.

20 They would, he said, be talking up farm work similar to that now being done by the Lithuanians at Pannal Tall. These two hostels would complete the “pool” upon which farmers within a ten mile radius would be able to draw.

“I should like to emphasise,” he said, “that these men are definitely replacing the Germans who are being gradually withdrawn and who will eventually be sent home. If these workers are not utilised by the farmers, they will have to be paid at public expense to do nothing. Ultimately, they might be directed into other industries, leaving the farmer to find helps as best he may.”

ALL-NIGHT SEARCH FOR BOY'S BODY

30 August 1947

30 After a search of many hours by policemen, fireman and German prisoners of war, the body of seven-year-old John Yates, of Lingerfield, was recovered from a disused gravel quarry pond, at Lingerfield, near Knaresborough, last Monday.

The boy had been missing from Sunday afternoon when he went paddling with his elder brother. Pumping and dragging operations went on throughout Sunday night with the aid of light from floodlamps, and the N.F.S. pumped as much as 800,000 gallons of water from the pond before the body was discovered.

John, the son of Mr & Mrs R. Yates, had been going to the quarry regularly during the hot spell with his brother, Keith, aged 15, who attends Harrogate Technical Institute. The boys went to the quarry on Sunday afternoon, and while John was paddling at one end, Keith went sailing in a rubber dinghy at the other. When Keith returned, there was no sign of his brother.

- 10 The police were informed, and called in the help of the N.F.S. who sent engines from Knaresborough, Harrogate and Leeds to pump water from the quarry into a nearby beck. Seventeen N.F.S. men, under Column Officer M. Bailey, of Harrogate, worked in shifts during the night, using 50 lengths of hose, nearly 5,000 feet in all. By 10 o'clock on Monday morning the water level had been lowered by about four feet. The depth of water in the quarry, which is at the junction of the Knaresborough, Scotton and Farnham roads, close to Lingerfield School, varies from a few feet to 15-20 feet.

At the inquest in Knaresborough on Tuesday, the York District Coroner (Mr E. T. Heap) returned a verdict of "Accidental Death."

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CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

27 September 1947

MEAT FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Sir

It is being bruited in the town that the Displaced Persons in Harrogate are each receiving a ration of 3s. 9d per week in meat, with a corresponding portion of butter and fats amounting to 75 per cent of the above.

- 30 In the public interest it will be appreciated if the Editor can confirm or correct this rumour –

Yours-

"MERE HOUSEWIFE"

[Displaced Persons, or as they are now known, European Volunteer Workers, receive ordinary rations unless they are working in certain types of heavy industrial trades, when they receive additional rations. For instance, those in hostels for agricultural workers get more, but the rate of increase on a normal ration varies with each different type of foodstuff. E.V.W.s in agricultural hostels receive threepennyworth of meat for each main meal, and with two main meals a day, the weekly meat ration works out at 3s. 6d. – Editor]

P.O.W.s Sentenced for Theft of Poultry

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20 December 1947

The arrest of three German prisoners in a lane near Scriven Camp, just as two boxes of stolen poultry were about to be handed over to a van-driver, was described at a special court at Knaresborough on Monday when the men were sentenced to two months imprisonment each.

20 Two of the prisoners, Heinz Viebranz and Herbert Trimer, pleaded guilty to stealing 24 fowls, valued at £27, belong to Robt. A. Hawking, Marton-cum-Grafton, and the third, Heinz Baur, pleaded not guilty to being an accessory before the fact, stating that when he found a buyer in Harrogate for the poultry, he did not know the birds were stolen.

Viebranz was said to be due for repatriation in January.

Prosecuting, Mr R. C. Linney, of the County Solicitor's Department said Viebranz and Triemer made statements admitting the theft, the former stating that he wanted to send something to his mother in Germany.

Mr R. Holmes, who presided, said the magistrates regarded the case as a bad one. An order was made for the restitution of the poultry, which was produced in court.

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