

NEW ZEALANDERS BACK FROM GERMANY

VARIED EXPERIENCES

Aucklander Travels Far Over Europe

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The apparent acceptance of the Germans that Germany is losing the war, their willingness to do "almost anything" for cigarettes and soap and the growing disinterest in newspaper and radio news—these are some of the opinions formed of the Germans by the few New Zealanders who were repatriated to Britain from Germany. They declared that the Red Cross parcels saved their lives. They were Captain I. Macphail, Company-Sergeant-Major H. Strickland, Wellington, and Privates D. Chalmers, Auckland, and J. Collett, Wellington, also F. Mabee, J. Corrie and Flight-Sergeant C. Howard.

They are spending a brief period in camp receiving kit and pay before going on leave—and how they are looking forward to it. Mr. W. J. Jordan, High Commissioner, welcomed them back to England, and I heard from some of them about their experiences.

Captured in Crete

Company-Sergeant-Major Strickland was captured in Crete after being wounded in the ribs at Maleme aerodrome. He spent five days at a dressing station and was then flown to Piraeus on a troop carrier, and stayed there for three months. Then he went to Salonika in a cargo ship. He spent eight days in a cattle truck going to Landsdorf and then to Stalag VIII B, where he remained for over two years.

"I had a better time than I expected, although the conditions were not too good at the start, and we were reprimanded for the slightest offence," he said. "Gradually, however, the Germans got short of men and discipline relaxed. We could get all sorts of small favours by giving the Germans soap—they were always asking for soap."

Private Chalmers, of Auckland, one of the medical staff who stayed behind to care for the wounded on Crete, had the highest admiration for Lieutenant Ballantyne. "He did a tremendous job of work, once operating on wounded for a day and a night," he said. "The Jerries at one period considered shooting us orderlies on account of considerable sniping which was going on, but fortunately they changed their mind."

"They tried to make us work on Maleme aerodrome, but we refused. We were allowed to continue as orderlies, looking after our wounded—and many of them returned from Sparkia in a terrible condition. Many were badly wounded. Some had no boots. We worked such long hours on poor food I eventually went down with anaemia and was sent to Salonika by boat."

"I eventually arrived at Stalag XVIII A at Wolfsberg, Southern Austria. I was there until we went to Rouen, when repatriation was first proposed. We had a marvellous train journey through the Austrian Tyrol in cattle trucks. I remember our German guard, who only had

dry bread for his meals and was glad to share some of our Red Cross parcels. We were naturally bitterly disappointed when repatriation was abortive, but the chaps refused to let the Germans see they were downhearted. They were quiet for a while, then all began singing, which amazed the Germans.

Journey to Poland

"The hardest part of the anti-climax was when we were taken to Gratz in Poland. It was a wild, bleak camp, where 1000 men were herded in a bog of brick buildings. We later went to Schildberg in Poland and stayed there until last June, when we were sent to what we called the 'propaganda camp,' for the Germans welcomed us and said they hoped we would forget our previous discomforts.

"We travelled in more cattle trucks when we were finally evacuated to Sassnitz, on the island of Rugen, at the entrance of the Kattegat.

"We can't praise the Swedes enough for the wonderful welcome they gave us. They were very efficient. Looking back, the thing that sticks in my mind is our chaps' wonderful spirit right through. It contrasted with that of the Germans, who we found towards the end were not bothering about newspapers or radio, declaring it was propaganda—particularly those who served on the Russian front.

Russians Badly Treated

"We noticed that the British probably received the best treatment of all the prisoners. The Russians, for instance, were very badly treated. They received only half of the food we were given, and we could not have lived without the Red Cross parcels."

Private Collett was also a medical orderly, and was captured in Crete. He said: "I had to help to unload German aircraft on Maleme aerodrome, after which I worked for nine months in Crete, mostly caring for our own wounded. Some grand work was done by Lieutenant-Colonel Bull and Major de Clive Lowe. It was a bad time in Crete, for food was very short. We spent a month in Salonika, where food was so scarce we had no hesitation in catching cats and stewing dandylion."

Flight-Sergeant Howard, whose fiancée is in the W.A.A.F. in Scotland, commented on the heavy bomb damage he had seen at Anklam.

PRISONERS OF WAR

Nearly 400 New Zealanders Leave Spain For Egypt

SICK AND WOUNDED TROOPS

LONDON, Oct. 29.

The ships Cuba and Tauria, carrying 479 British Empire sick and wounded prisoners of war and 604 protected personnel, sailed yesterday from Barcelona for Port Said.

There are 383 New Zealanders among the prisoners. Australians number 512, and there are eight men from the United Kingdom and one from South Africa. The remainder are Indians, most of them being merchant seamen.

The deputy-Prime Minister, Mr. Nash, said that information had come to hand from the High Commissioner in London, Mr. Jordan, that a few New Zealand prisoners of war had been repatriated via Gothenberg, and had now arrived in the United Kingdom, states a Press Association message from Wellington. Telegrams already had been sent to the next-of-kin. The majority of the New Zealand prisoners of war who have been repatriated are proceeding via Barcelona. Immediately lists of names are received in New Zealand notification will be sent to the next-of-kin.

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