

We were marched down the hill into a nearby wood in which the transport trucks were parked. We eventually embussed and set off in the dark. After about ten miles we stopped near a railway station and you should have seen the mess. Great big engines smashed and some standing up on end. Well, we travelled on and eventually stopped at a little village of Lola where there was a small munitions factory. There were a couple of small sheds into which we were shown and on the cement floor straw was spread on which we slept. We dossed down close together and I was fortunate in being near the door and some fresh air for the place got very stuffy. Around the sheds they had strung up some barbed wire. However, no one wanted to get away at this time as we were safer staying put. A short distance away there was another shed in which we dined. The second in command German was quite a decent chap and when he came on his Recce had very thoughtfully loaded his truck with a few hundred Red Cross parcels.

The S.S. arrived and tried to get us moved but the Commandant pointed out that there was no transport and it would be impossible for some of the older officers to march any distance, so they moved on. As our troops got nearer the Germans asked us to mark out on the ground for our air force to see 'P.O.s' and they supplied a mast on which we were asked to fly the Union Jack that we had with us. This was one we made in Italy at a time when they had a machinist sewing red tabs on our uniforms. It was great fun, for as fast as he sewed them on they were pulled off and the chaps lined up again. He however refused to sew up our Union Jack but offered the use of the machine. The Americans eventually arrived and we were free. As soon as the commandant knew that the Americans were within a few miles, he paraded us and then his guards and handed over to the S.B.O. his revolver and the guards put down their arms they were now our prisoners and we placed them within the wire fence and had only two men on guard for we knew they would not attempt to escape.

Prior to this there were our planes flying about and each time they approached the siren would sound the alarm and all were supposed to take cover. There was a very large coal slag heap which they tunneled and into this very large tunnel we were herded.

The first chap to contact us was an American Sergeant. Our cooks then made large drums of tea and this was dished out to all and sundry, local German Civilians as well.

Our cooks had kept their eyes on a very large pig which as soon as we were free they slaughtered and we had a very fine feed of pork.

Our German guards were collected and sent off to some camp. The Commandant and his second in command, Capt Paulis, as I have mentioned quite a decent type, were offered seats in a car and the nasty little security bloke was annoyed because he was told to walk.

An American Officer went round the village asking at each house how many they could accommodate. My friend, Dan Raterson, and I were shown into a room with what we took to be a mattress on the bed but turned out to be one of their very heavy down quilts. We still had Red Cross parcels and so we were able to give our old couple tea, coffee, sugar etc. and oh boy! were they thrilled. Next day the Americans brought in some of their rations and so we had a good feed before being transported away to a nearby transit camp some miles away where we were to wait a day or two before being flown to England.

Before going on I would like to mention a few items of interest. As I have mentioned, Lola was a small munitions factory in which the Germans had a few young Russian girls working. Girls who had been brought from their homes in Russia as young girls of sixteen. When our planes came over an alarm was sounded and these girls left the factory and went out into the fields. One day there seemed to be no ceasefire and so the girls stopped out. A big Herman foreman - real gestapo type - got cross at this and told the girls to come in. They refused because our planes were still hovering about so he went out and manhandled them very roughly, using his fists on these poor young things who dare not retaliate for fear of being killed.