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prisoner made plans for escape. The guards knew this, and were always making searches for secret material—compasses, food, maps, and so on. They would come in suddenly in the middle of the night and examine unheard-of places for contraband. But if the forbidden article was left lying in an obvious place—a hat, a boot, or a kit bag—they would probably overlook it. And one of our searchers-in-chief was a Professor of Astronomy!"

No Signs of Starvation

None of the men we spoke to would agree that the Germans were starving, or even ill-fed. "I saw no difference in them," one man said, "in nearly three years. They had enough to eat, were not well-clothed certainly, their uniforms being often old and patched, but their morale remained unshaken. If there was a change, it began with the war in Russia, but it was not an obvious change. A little less confidence, perhaps, and a more marked desire to make a good impression. When I was first taken in, they were on the top of the world, and arrogant. That mood certainly passed. I actually heard more growling about their cigarette ration—three a day—than about the shortage of food; and it is a fact that we could always exchange cigarettes for food—even good food like eggs."

One man who had been a prisoner in Austria said that although the Austrians did not like the Nazis, they seemed to have faith in Hitler. "We delude ourselves if we think that the Fuehrer has lost his prestige. Mussolini, the guards would explain, had built up an army which became a rabble. Hitler's army had conquered Europe and would hold it."

Bomb Damage Kept Hidden

One noticeable feature of the journey from prison-camp to the exchange port (Barcelona), was the complete absence all the way—a week's travelling in some cases—of signs of bomb-damage. "If we had not ourselves known better, we might have supposed that no bomb had ever been dropped on German soil. We travelled in a magnificent hospital train—the best I have ever seen—and were free to watch the country side as we rushed along. But we saw neither a wrecked building nor a bomb-crater the whole way. The Germans are thorough."

// "ACTION" //

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