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# POWs in the Piney Woods: German Prisoners of War in the Southern Lumber Industry, 1943–1945

By JAMES E. FICKLE and DONALD W. ELLIS

THE INCARCERATION OF GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE UNITED States during World War II has attracted the attention of numerous scholars. Most of their works have concentrated on the prisoner of war camps and the employment of prisoners outside the camps as contract laborers.<sup>1</sup> This study is an examination of the use of German prisoners as laborers in the southern lumber industry. It addresses several fundamental issues that have not been adequately considered by earlier works. First, were the POWs employed in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention? Second, how productive and valuable was the prisoners' work as contract laborers, and what was their impact on the lumber industry? Third, how fair was their compensation? Fourth, were their training and supervision adequate? And finally, how did the language barrier affect the prisoners' performance?

Large numbers of Axis prisoners of war began arriving in the United States early in 1943 following British and American military successes in North Africa. Because the U. S. War Department had to secure and administer suitable facilities to house the captives, sections of many large inland military reservations were converted into prison camps and new camps were constructed across the nation. By the middle of 1943 the army had rushed seventy-two camps into operation, and a year later the number had doubled. By the end of the war there were "more than 400,000 enemy captives in 511 camps across the" United States, and of these, more than 371,000 were German POWs. Most of the German prison camps were in the South and the Southwest, and many were within range of southern lumber operations. As the number of prisoners grew concurrently

<sup>1</sup> See the appended essay on related literature at the end of this article.

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with the development of civilian labor shortages, U. S. officials considered employing POWs as contract laborers, which was permitted by the Geneva Convention under certain conditions. However, not until late 1944 were more prisoners employed under civilian contracts than on routine camp maintenance for the army.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the fundamental American policies regarding prisoner of war labor had been formulated by August 1943, with the nonmilitary aspects of the policies largely delegated to the War Manpower Commission. When a private employer asked to hire prisoners as workers, the commission investigated and, if it found civilian labor to be unavailable, certified that the applicant needed prisoners. The commission also established the general conditions and terms of employment. Matters relating to interpretation of the Geneva Convention and security were handled by the War Department. Supposedly, prisoners were available only where there was a dearth of civilian workers.<sup>3</sup>

In certain parts of the country strong labor unions vigorously opposed the use of POWs as laborers. In lumbering, prisoners were more extensively utilized in the Southeast and in Maine than on the Pacific Coast, where there were fairly effective labor organizations. In the South, civilian employees of companies that used POWs welcomed their presence, since they helped to provide a sufficient labor force to keep companies operating and providing jobs.<sup>4</sup>

The procedure for obtaining POW laborers required an employer to agree not to discriminate against the prisoners, to pay them the

<sup>2</sup> George G. Lewis and John Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army, 1776-1945*, Department of Army Pamphlet 20-213 (Washington, 1955), 83-86, 90-91; United States, Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph: Prisoner of War Operations Division, Provost Marshal General's Office," 1, 84-86, 111-12, Library of Congress Microfilm No. 51437, reel 1. This typescript was prepared in 1945 and 1946, carries the story to August 31, 1945, and is hereinafter cited as Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph"; Arnold P. Krammer, "When the *Afrika Korps* Came to Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXX (January 1977), 248 (quotation); Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 2; *House Reports*, 78 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 1992: *Report of the Committee on Military Affairs: Investigations of the National War Effort* (Serial 10849), 4.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Ulio, Major General, The Adjutant General, War Department, to Commanding Generals, First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Service Commands, August 23, 1943. Copy with attachments in Records of Regional Offices, 1942-45 (Region IX), Record Group 211, Records of the War Manpower Commission (National Archives, Kansas City Regional Archives; hereinafter cited as RG 211); and Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 102-4.

<sup>4</sup> Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower* (Washington, 1959), 191-93; Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 104-7, 123; J. H. Kurth, Jr., to O. N. Cloud, March 13, 1944; Kurth to S. R. Stevens, March 22, 1944; O. N. Cloud to E. J. Bailes, March 31, 1944; Kurth to Cloud, April 6, 1944; War Manpower Commission to Tom Connally, May 4, 1944; all in Folder "War Prisoners," Kurth Papers (Forest History Collections, Stephen F. Austin State University Library, Nacogdoches, Texas).

prevailing wage, and to provide suitable working conditions. After a prospective employer's need for POW labor had been certified, he could enter into a contract with the War Department. Contracts were limited to three months, and employers had to submit letters of guaranty that covered an amount equal to the estimated wages for thirty days' work.<sup>5</sup>

Camp commanders controlled the arrangements for utilizing POWs in private businesses, and they negotiated contracts with the employers. In the case of the lumber industry, if a camp was not located within one hour's truck drive of a company's woods or mill operations, the firm could obtain POWs only by constructing auxiliary camps with facilities suitable for use by U. S. troops. The commanding officer of the main prison camp defined the specific requirements, but in general these included provisions for approximately 250 men, good roads, electric lights, and adequate sanitation, conditions that some union representatives claimed were superior to those traditionally provided for American workers in the lumber camps.<sup>6</sup>

Despite a great deal of talk by the industry and the government about being able to meet the nation's wartime needs, southern pine lumber output actually fell during World War II. By late 1943 production was 17 percent behind the same period in 1942, and there had been a 10 percent decline during 1942. Diminished inventories and unfilled orders reflected a serious fall in production. A mid-1943 survey of about three hundred producers representing approximately 30 percent of southern pine production revealed that 93 percent of the lumbermen reported that the cause of decreased production was labor shortages.<sup>7</sup>

The difficulty stemmed from the induction of men into the military and the drift of laborers away from lumbering and toward the higher-paying defense construction and defense industries, among them the shipyards of the Gulf and South Atlantic coasts and the military cantonments of the South. To deal with the labor problem the lumber industry took several extraordinary measures that began in 1942 and

<sup>5</sup> Joseph T. Butler, Jr., "Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana: 1943-1944," *Louisiana History*, XIV (Summer 1973), 291-92; T. S. Sligh, Jr., 1st Lt., Prisoner of War Contract Officer, Army Service Forces, Prisoner Camp, Huntsville, Texas, to O. N. Cloud, May 25, 1944, Newton County Lumber Company Records in Folder W, Kurth Papers. Sample copies of the contract forms and instructional materials may be found in Records of Region IX, RG 211 (National Archives, Kansas City Regional Archives).

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York, 1979), 106; and H. C. Berckes to Members of the Southern Pine Industry, January 29, 1944, Box 79b, Southern Pine Association Records (Louisiana State University Archives, Baton Rouge, La.; hereinafter cited as SPA Records).

<sup>7</sup> "Statement Filed by Southern Pine Industry Committee on Behalf of Southern Pine Industry before Industry Committee No. 64 for Logging, Lumber and Timber and Related Products . . . August 30, 1943," pp. 4, 7, 28, Box 90a, SPA Records.

continued through the end of the war. It requested draft deferments for key employees and employed physically handicapped men ordinarily not considered suitable for sawmill labor. Lumber manufacturers also employed women in jobs that had traditionally been open only to men.<sup>8</sup>

By the latter part of 1942 the industry's labor problems had attracted government attention; in September the War Manpower Commission classified the major forest industries as "essential." The commission issued a "freeze order" or employment stabilization plan that prohibited workers in logging and lumbering from seeking employment in other industries. Later in the year the Selective Service Board made workers in forestry, logging, and lumbering eligible for draft deferments, and the War Labor Board approved sizable wage increases.<sup>9</sup> In 1943 the Lumber and Lumber Products Division of the War Production Board created the Timber Production War Project in cooperation with the U. S. Forest Service to provide assistance and advice to small lumber operators in certain areas east of the Great Plains.<sup>10</sup>

The first official southern lumber industry contact with the prisoner of war system came in June 1943, when a representative of the Southern Pine War Committee called on the Eighth Service Command Headquarters in Dallas to determine the availability of prisoners for employment. He found that the only prisoners within the command who were then near enough to the southern pine belt to be employed were in camps at Huntsville and Sherman, Texas, and Fort Smith, Arkansas. However, there was a possibility that camps at Leesville and Ruston, Louisiana, would soon be occupied by prisoners. While he conferred with Eighth Service Command Headquarters, another representative talked with officials of the Fourth Corps Area Service Command in Atlanta. By early June their efforts were successful in securing approximately fifty war prisoners for employment by

<sup>8</sup> "Proceedings of Clinic Held under the Auspices of Southern Pine War Committee . . . June 3, 1942," pp. 46-47, Box 68a, SPA Records; Ralph W. Hidy, Frank Ernest Hill, and Allan Nevins, *Timber and Men: The Weyerhaeuser Story* (New York and London, 1963), 460-61; "Proceedings of Joint Industry-Wide Conference of the Southern Pine War Committee and Southern Hardwood Industry War Committee . . . February 19, 1943," p. 67, Box 68a, SPA Records; and "Women Workers in South's Lumber Industry: Report of a Survey of Lumber Manufacturing Plants in Portions of Seven States—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas. Conducted by Southern Pine War Committee, New Orleans, La.," Box 82a, *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Ruth A. Allen, *East Texas Lumber Workers: An Economic and Social Picture, 1870-1950* (Austin, Texas, 1961), 83; Hidy, Hill, and Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 461 (quotations); and Paul V. McNutt to All Loggers and Workers in Sawmills, Planing Mills, and Veneer and Plywood Plants, September 15, 1942, Southern Pine War Committee, "War Bulletin," XLVII (September 16, 1942), LXXIV (February 28, 1943), Southern Pine War Committee to Southern Pine Manufacturers, March 1, 1943, all in Box 75a, SPA Records.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Hopkins, "The Timber Production War Project," *Journal of Forestry*, XLII (November 11, 1944), 790.

southern pine manufacturers in Georgia. By the latter part of July one Texas company was using seventeen prisoners from the Huntsville Internment Camp.<sup>11</sup>

Later in the summer of 1943 Southern Pine War Committee field representatives visited numerous manufacturers and conferred with camp commanders and government officials regarding the use of prisoners. They found all three groups well disposed toward the idea. Of the lumber operators who gave a definite response, an overwhelming ratio of approximately fifteen to one indicated that they would be willing to hire POWs.<sup>12</sup> A representative who interviewed POW camp commanders in Mississippi reported that they favored using the prisoners as laborers because "they all feel from a psychological effect that they want to contract out as many as possible as they believe the prisoners will be better satisfied in having something to occupy their time and at the same time, be remunerated [*sic*] for their work and have money to spend at the compound canteens."<sup>13</sup>

As late as January 1944 only 40 to 60 percent of the available POW labor in the United States was employed, with most of those prisoners simply performing routine camp maintenance. However, at a February meeting of Service Commands in Dallas, Lieutenant General Brehon Somervell produced orders to maximize POW labor utilization, and by May the figure had risen to nearly 73 percent. By April 1945 the utilization of prisoners was over 91 percent. POW labor under contract to private employers produced 852,000 man/months between June 1944 and August 1945. During 1945 one-third of all pulpwood in the South and in Appalachia was cut by POWs. The pulpwood and lumber industries used a total of 165,743 man/months of POW labor from June 1944 to August 1945, and yet the lumbermen apparently had difficulty obtaining as many prisoners as they wanted from the government. The shortage persisted despite the fact that the War Manpower Commission gave the lumber industry a high priority in its allocation of prisoners. Many operators wanted to employ the prisoners and resented the prisoners being taken from them for other work.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "Daily Report, C. N. Gould, June 11, 1943," Box 52a, SPA Records; Southern Pine War Committee to Abrams Brothers Lumber Company, June 12, 1943, Box 87a, *ibid.*; "Daily Report, C. N. Gould, July 31, 1943," Box 52a, *ibid.* On August 2, 1943, Gould visited the plant of the Hall Bros. Lumber Company in Huntsville, Texas, which was using seventeen prisoners of war, and reported that after three weeks of working the prisoners, the proprietors of the firm were "quite pleased with the results." "Daily Report, C. N. Gould, August 2, 1943," *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Reports of these field visits are in Box 52a, SPA Records.

<sup>13</sup> "Report of O. D. Larre, July 8, 1943," *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Lewis and Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization*, 115-18, 125-26, 134; Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 110; H. C. Berckes to C. C. Shepard, April 12, 1944, Box 91a, SPA Records; Prisoner of War Operations Division,

The German POWs were supposedly employed in accordance with the 1929 Geneva Prisoner of War Convention, which the United States had agreed to honor. The convention provided that rank-and-file prisoners could be required to work at jobs that were not dangerous, unhealthful, humiliating, or of direct military applicability. Noncommissioned officers could be employed only in supervisory capacities, and officers could not be required to work, although they could do so voluntarily. The Geneva Convention also required that prisoners "coming from temperate regions, shall be transported, as soon as possible, to a more favorable climate."<sup>15</sup> In the southern lumber industry the provisions concerning danger and direct military applicability were sometimes disregarded, as was the stricture regarding climate.

The dangers of logging and sawmilling are well documented. In 1952 the U. S. Bureau of Labor statistics reported that "the 'average lumber workman's chance of sustaining an injury on the job'" was "seven times as great as that of a workman in all manufacturing industries." A study of the sources of industrial hazards undertaken in the 1930s by the U. S. Children's Bureau found "the first three industries in frequency of disabling injuries were logging, coal mining, and sawmilling." Logging, coal mining, and fertilizer manufacturing were the only industries that exceeded sawmilling in the severity of injuries and the number of fatalities.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth L. Smith, in his book on sawmilling in Arkansas, described the job-related dangers of the lumber industry:

An injured finger . . . wasn't really getting hurt; worse things happened . . . . A sawyer at Graysonia decided to ride the log carriage, lost his balance, and was thrown into the band saw. A laborer at Rosboro was feeding slabs into the hog (the fuel grinder) when a snag on a slab caught his overalls and jerked him in headfirst. A log hauler at Mauldin fell from his wagon and was injured internally . . . . Workers were also hurt or killed by tumbling logs, falling trees, runaway trains and trucks, whirling saws and pulleys.

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"Historical Monograph," 118, has slightly different figures. Jack K. Collins, Director, Bureau of Placement, War Manpower Commission to All Regional Manpower Directors, July 13, 1945. Copy in Records of Region IX, RG 211 (National Archives, Kansas City Regional Archives); and "Southern Pine War Committee, New Orleans, Louisiana, Report on Operating Conditions in Southern Pine Industry: Analysis of Questionnaire Released by Southern Pine War Committee, January 29, 1945 . . .," pp. 1, 2, 9, Box 76a, SPA Records.

<sup>15</sup> Erich Maschke, ed., *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkrieges*. Vol. X, Part 1: Hermann Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in Amerikanischer Hand—U.S.A.* (München, 1972), 157 (hereinafter cited as Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*); Lewis and Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization*, 75; Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 100–101; "Multilateral Convention—War Prisoners, July 27, 1929," in *The Statutes at Large of the United States*, XLVII, Part 2, pp. 2033 (quotation), 2040–41; and Gerald H. Davis, "Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century Economies," *Journal of Contemporary History*, XII (1977), 626.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, *East Texas Lumber Workers*, 107 (first and second quotations), 111 (third quotation).

While most lumber companies gave at least lip service to safety . . . it was hard to get either workers or supervisors to pay attention, even though logging and sawmilling were filled with dangers.<sup>17</sup>

Other authors note that millowners “paid little attention to plant safety. They argued that it was the workers’ responsibility to stay out of the way of saws and other dangers; workers knew sawmills were dangerous places when they took their jobs, and if they failed to stay on guard it was their own fault.”<sup>18</sup>

Objections were raised to the utilization of POWs in logging and lumbering because of the danger. As late as August 1943 the Southern Pine War Committee informed manufacturers that “certain jobs allied with logging and lumbering should be construed as ‘hazardous’” and therefore precluded the employment of prisoners. However, the next month officials decided that cutting smaller pulpwood trees was not dangerous if done under close supervision. In fact, prisoners were used not only in pulpwood production but in a variety of other capacities in both lumbering and sawmilling.<sup>19</sup>

The decision to place prisoners at work in the lumber industry was made with a full awareness of the issues involved. Lewis and Mewha in their *History of Prisoner of War Utilization* note that “dangerous or unhealthful work was construed from three aspects: (1) the inherent nature of the job; (2) the particular conditions under which the job was to be performed; and (3) the individual capacity of the prisoner of war.” They also observe that the specifics of the individual situation rather than the “overall complexion” of the industry were considered. Based on consideration of these three factors “the War Department directed appropriate American officers at the using level to determine the suitability of the task . . . .”<sup>20</sup>

Obviously the key words here are “American officers at the using level,” and at that level in the lumber industry the interpretation was loose. Nonetheless, lumbermen were well aware of the sensitivity of the matter and were warned by the Southern Pine War Committee that “prisoner safety must be well provided for, as compliance with the terms of the Geneva Convention will be checked by official Swiss observers whose reports are flashed directly to Germany.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth L. Smith, *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* (Fayetteville, Ark., 1986), 136–37.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. Cox, Robert S. Maxwell, Phillip Drennon Thomas, and Joseph J. Malone, *This Well-Wooded Land: Americans and Their Forests from Colonial Times to the Present* (Lincoln, Neb., and London, 1985), 170–71.

<sup>19</sup> Southern Pine War Committee to J. R. Bemis, August 4, 1943, Box 49a, SPA Records; and Lewis and Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization*, 132.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis and Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization*, 112 (first and second quotations), 113 (third quotation).

<sup>21</sup> Southern Pine War Committee to Members of the Southern Pine Industry, January



The War Department's "Prisoner of War Circular No. 1," issued on January 1, 1944, listed the types of lumbering work the POWs could not do. These included handling or using explosives; high climbing, rigging, and working with an aerial cable; swamp logging, or other occupations in which drowning was a hazard; top felling or felling from platforms more than two feet high; felling and bucking on excessively steep slopes; power skidding and loading; and operating power machines, including feeding saws, planes, and other machines in mills. Prisoners were, in fact, utilized in some of these capacities. A writer in *Deutsche Insel*, the newspaper of Camp Clinton, Mississippi, noted that the 250 POWs used in the Brookhaven, Mississippi, lumber industry "became treefellers and tenders of saw mills, loaders of wood, debarkers, etc."<sup>22</sup>

The prisoners themselves often viewed their occupations as unpleasant, onerous, and dangerous. In a July 1945 article, "Von unser Arbeit," published in *Der Aufbruch* at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the writer noted that "when we Germans hear the word 'Forest' we think of the beauty of our homeland. . . . This is a forest of a different color. A thicket of thorns blocks the way to the trees. You have to hack your way in just to get to the trees. The thorns cut your hands. You're in a hurry since there's a lot of wood in a cord. When you fell the tree it doesn't always fall as you had hoped. You hack and saw . . . the saw sticks. You put in a wedge . . . you oil the saw but these ameliorate the work only for the shortest time."<sup>23</sup> A writer in *Wille und Weg* from Fort Benning, Georgia, described other "pleasures" of the southern forests: "Oh you, woodcutters, you men collecting the resin off the pine trees join me in singing the elegy [*sic*] of the 'Red Pocks' [chiggers]. Who does not know these little red stiches [*sic*] looking like herpes, itching and biting like hundreds of ants. . . . There is no medicine, no herbs.

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29, 1944, Box 79b, SPA Records. In his study of POW camp administration and operation Edward Pluth points out that there was a good deal of confusion about lines of authority and decision making, as well as a certain amount of apathy and incompetence, among the officials directing the POW programs during the early years of the war. Edward J. Pluth, "The Administration and Operation of German Prisoner of War Camps in the United States During World War II" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ball State University, 1970), 25-29.

<sup>22</sup> "Prisoner of War Circular No. 1, January 1, 1944," in Box 79a, SPA Records; and translation from *Deutsche Insel* (Clinton, Mississippi), May 1, 1945, German Prisoner of War Camp Newspapers, 1943-1946, Library of Congress Microfilm No. 10779. All of the camp newspapers cited are on this microfilm. The camp newspapers were censored by the camp commanders and were not to disseminate propaganda or be distributed outside the camp; see Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 144. The fifteen reels in this collection are indexed in Karl John Richard Arndt, ed., "Microfilm Guide and Index to the Library of Congress Collection of German Prisoner of War Camp Papers Published in the United States of North America from 1943 to 1946" (1965). This typescript is available from the Library of Congress.

<sup>23</sup> Translated from *Der Aufbruch* (Fort Bragg, North Carolina), July 8, 1945.

. . . There seems to be no medicine against the bite of a spider like a point of a needle.”<sup>24</sup>

While there is no evidence that the German prisoners were exposed to more danger than their American civilian counterparts were, this must have been small consolation to the captive workers. Camp newspapers and Red Cross inspection reports reflect the perils of the POWs' lives and work. An obituary in *Der Aufbruch* in July 1945 demonstrates the ever-present danger of work in the woods and mills of the southern pine belt: “On the 20th of June at 3:00 P.M. an accident took place which proved fatal. Sergeant Willi Schaefer of the 6th company was struck by a falling limb in the process of debranching. He was killed instantly and thus no help could be rendered.” The September 29, 1945, issue of *Will and Way* ran the obituary of Heinz Biggemann, who was “killed by a falling tree while cutting pulpwood.” A September 1944 Red Cross inspection report on the Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, branch camp of Camp Forrest noted that “the state of health [of the prisoners] would be good, if the accidents resulting from work were not so numerous.” It went on to say that prisoners splitting tree trunks used steel wedges, which often made “steel splinters fly off and wound the worker in the leg.” However, the inspector also observed that “too often in this camp the accidents are caused by the unwillingness of the prisoners to be careful and lack of concern for their own protection.”<sup>25</sup>

The Provost Marshal General's “Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration” also noted that “it has been somewhat difficult to train prisoners to take adequate safety precautions” and went on to explain that while safety instructions and protective devices were provided for the prisoners, the POWs tended to reject both “possibly because of a ‘he-man’ complex.” The manual attributed the relatively low accident rate among prisoners to the “relatively good physical condition of the prisoners who are permitted to work on heavy jobs . . . .”<sup>26</sup>

In addition to working on crews felling and trimming trees in the woods, the POWs performed a variety of tasks in the mills. One

<sup>24</sup> *Wille und Weg* (Fort Benning, Georgia), September 1, 1945. Despite the German title of this issue, the entire run of the newspaper was printed in English. The title was sometimes in German and sometimes in English.

<sup>25</sup> Translated from *Der Aufbruch* (Fort Bragg, North Carolina), July 8, 1945; *Will and Way* (Fort Benning, Georgia), September 29, 1945; Inspection Report, Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, Subordinate to Camp Forrest. Visited by Mr. G. Metraux, September 16, 1944, Box 2661, Records Relating to Prisoners of War, 1941-56, Record Group 389, Records of the Provost Marshal General (National Archives, Washington, D. C.; hereinafter cited as RG 389).

<sup>26</sup> “Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration,” Provost Marshal Generals School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, 134 (first quotation), 135 (second and third quotations), in Library of Congress Microfilm No. 51437, reel 3.

Southern Pine War Committee official, describing his visit to a mill, reported that "they have them loading lumber for the planer, one is driving a truck, taking this lumber to the planer; others are trucking the lumber away from the machines . . . ." He noted that "one of the prisoners speaks English and acts as interpreter for the group and does not work himself. They give each man ten minutes off each hour, using two extra men for this relief work."<sup>27</sup>

In 1945 the *Echo* of Camp Maxey, Texas, ran a series of articles under the general title "We Visit Komrads at Work." One article in the series (printed in both German and stilted English) described a work day for prisoners employed in a southern lumber mill:

Exactly at 8 o'clock work started. Four men climbed into the wagon in which were about 600-800 trees. . . . At once things started rolling pell-mell. The trees clapped into the water. . . . Another comrade put the trees with a pointed perch to the transport-belt which is in the water-basin. But three times woe if he falls into this stinking pool . . . . The conveyor-belt brings the trees up to the circular saw where they are cut to 6-7 planks of 1 inch according to the tree's circumference. The labor near this machine is very dangerous, for trees which are not taken in the right manner by the machine bounce up and down or jump back. The stay in this factory is not very agreeable, the air is ill-smelling, the machines cause a horrible noise, there is a terrible narrowness, there are electrical wires and cables hanging around, driving-belts are buzzing dangerously close to you and every few minutes a tractor hurries through the area bringing an empty cart and carrying away a loaded one. The daily task is to load at least 40 carts with 100 planks each. That means that one man has to load at least 4000 wet and heavy planks every day! There is a short pause at 10 o'clock during which they strengthen themselves with dry slices of bread and some ice-water. After the pause work is started again, because the task must be fulfilled and the "venomous fang" of time is sneaking around, observing and pitiless. The carts, loaded by the comrades are brought by a tractor to the emporium where PWs bathed in perspiration in the burning sun staple the planks. . . . He whose head isn't hard as steel and who hasn't equally strong muscles will unresistingly break down. . . . Colored men are the greater part of the factory-crew and it was told to me that the labor which now is performed by prisoners of war formerly had been made for the greatest part by colored men. . . .<sup>28</sup>

Clearly the POWs were used in a variety of capacities with little or no regard for the provisions of the Geneva Convention concerning dangerous situations, even though the prisoners were supplied by American officials with German-language copies of the Geneva Convention. A question-and-answer column in *Der Drahtberichter*, the camp newspaper at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in April 1945 reflected

<sup>27</sup> "Daily Report, C. N. Gould, August 2, 1943," Box 52a, SPA Records.

<sup>28</sup> *Echo* (Camp Maxey, Texas), August 7, 1945.

the POWs' knowledge of the convention:

*Question.* I have been ordered to do forestry work here but feel that I am too weak for this sort of work. As a bureaucrat I never had to do as much work as this. In addition, if I do not meet the quota I only receive half pay and have to work longer. . . . *Answer.* Your problems bear on article 29 of the Geneva Convention . . . which states that no POW has to do work for which he is not physically suited. Go to the camp doctor with a request for the proper certificate. In a report of the inspectorate of 14.9.44 it says: "The quantity (one cord of wood per man per day) can be accomplished in many camps in a shorter time than 8 hours. The reports of our inspectors from Germany say that there (Germany) punishment is dealt out in somewhat the same way for nonfulfillment of the quotas."<sup>29</sup>

The Prisoner of War Operations Division's "Historical Monograph," prepared at the end of the war, reported that "almost invariably, German prisoners of war were acutely aware of their rights and privileges under the Convention, and objections frequently were voiced by them relative to the type of work they were required to perform. The most common cause for complaint was their assignment to work believed by them to be directly connected with the conduct of the war."<sup>30</sup> A Mississippi lumber manufacturer in a 1980 interview remembered that the German POWs would work only in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Convention. He said that "any time that you would ask them to do anything that was a departure from it whatsoever they would balk and wouldn't move a peg." However, later in the war "another group of Germans came up, older men, and they didn't care anything about the war. They liked to do anything." The Mississippian remembered that the commanding officer told him he could use the prisoners anywhere he wanted to, and so the POWs were employed on milling machines that were making shell boxes and "by the end they were even loading shell boxes in the boxcars for shipment." Questioned about this assignment, the commanding officer said, "That's all right, that's the way they are working our prisoners."<sup>31</sup>

Obviously American officials in the field generally interpreted the Geneva Convention stipulations regarding war-related work loosely. On the other hand, there were cases where a more stringent standard was applied. For example, in 1943 the Eighth Service Command in Dallas denied applications for the use of prisoners by companies who wanted them to cut pulpwood. The reasoning was that pulp

<sup>29</sup> Translated from *Der Drahtberichter* (later *Der Aufbruch*) (Fort Bragg, North Carolina), April 1, 1945.

<sup>30</sup> Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 113.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with L. O. Crosby, Jr., 1980, Volume 155, The Mississippi Oral History Program (University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Miss.).

was used in making munitions, and this use of POW labor would therefore be contrary to the Geneva Convention.<sup>32</sup>

One can reasonably argue that American officials and lumbermen routinely violated the Geneva Convention by assigning German POWs to dangerous, sometimes war-related work in an intemperate climate. However, it also seems that the German prisoners became less concerned or vocal about violations of the convention as the war went on. This change in attitude probably reflected the different military status of the imprisoned men. The earliest prisoners were from elite German military units, such as the Afrika Corps, and were strongly ideological; those who came later were older men who had been conscripted and were simply hoping to survive. The contents of camp newspapers reflect this shift. At first the papers were highly ideological, but later they covered English lessons and other mundane subjects. In the early newspapers Nazi symbolism abounded, while it is almost totally absent from the later issues.<sup>33</sup>

Evaluating the productivity of the prisoners is, if anything, more difficult than determining the suitability of their employment with regard to the Geneva Convention. In order to get a reasonable perspective on their work performance, it is necessary to compare their efforts to those of their American civilian counterparts. Lumbering, sawmilling, and other related activities were historically labor intensive. The degree of mechanization and the level of technological sophistication were lower than in most other industries of similar scope or importance. Labor productivity was restricted by the relatively low level of mechanization. The 1939 census report reflects the large proportion of the total production costs devoted to wages in the lumber industry. "The estimated proportion for all manufacturing industries was 16 per cent," ranging from a low of 5.1 percent for tobacco "to 27.6 per cent in timber."<sup>34</sup>

However, there were variations within the industry, and as a rough general rule the level of mechanization was higher in the large-scale enterprises than among small operations. While the West and South had the largest concentrations of large-scale firms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the time of World War II many of the big operations in the South had closed down, and the

<sup>32</sup> "Reports of Field Men . . . Daily Report, C. N. Gould, August 3, 1943," Box 52a, SPA Records.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the frontispiece of the November 12, 1944, issue of *Mississippi Post: Rundschau des deutschen Kriegsgefangenen Lagers Camp Shelby, Mississippi* is a picture of the Führerbau Memorial to the fallen "heroes" of the Nazi Putsch of 1923 in Munich, and the paper has a truculent tone with much of the space devoted to news of German victories in the European war. In contrast, the issue of a year later, November 11, 1945, has a completely different spirit.

<sup>34</sup> Allen, *East Texas Lumber Workers*, 17-18 (quotations on p. 18).

southern industry was characterized by a large number of small companies and “peckerwood” mills that cut and processed timber in areas that had not been attractive to the large operations or harvested undersized second-growth timber that had sprung up in the cutover regions. The movement of large timber products companies back into the South had not yet occurred. Whereas in 1919 only 37 percent of southern pine production had come from small mills with an average production of fewer than five million feet per year, by 1941, 56 percent of the industry’s production came from the small operations.<sup>35</sup>

These small operators often employed unskilled laborers who moved back and forth between farming and lumbering according to the dictates of the season and the availability of jobs. Many of the lumber workers in the South were black, and they worked under difficult conditions without much technological assistance for very little money. Their employers, who were often on shaky economic ground, did not expect the workers to be very efficient or productive, and they survived by keeping wages low. A southern lumberman, describing the labor system of his section in the late 1930s, said, “We have . . . permitted a lax or a slow operation, a great deal of freedom of the men to come and go, or stop and rest, and that was not in any way counted out of their time. In fact, particularly . . . where our colored friends are operating, you have got to let them rest when they want to rest. Some of them like to rest an awful lot. . . . A great deal more could be produced with the same man-hours if we had a different situation . . . .”<sup>36</sup>

Southern lumber manufacturers regarded their labor situation as unique. Testifying before a National Recovery Administration official in 1935, one of the industry’s most prominent leaders observed that “because of climatic conditions in the South, the operations are and must be more leisurely than in other sections of the country and much less productive than in those regions where the industry is highly mechanized. In our section, manual labor is predominant and the climatic conditions will not permit of high speed practices.” He argued further that “economic units suitable to Southern timber do not lend themselves to further labor saving machinery, with the

<sup>35</sup> “Statement Filed by Southern Pine War Committee . . . Before the Select Committee to Conduct a Study and Investigation of the National Defense Program . . . House of Representatives . . . November 29 and 30, 1943,” Box 75a, SPA Records; and Vernon H. Jensen, *Lumber and Labor* (New York and Toronto, 1945), 13–18.

<sup>36</sup> “Proceedings of Joint Fall Meeting of Lumber Manufacturers, Oct. 6–7, 1938,” Box 68a, SPA Records (quotation). For descriptions of job functions in the lumber industry see Jensen, *Lumber and Labor*, 12–15; Robert S. Maxwell and Robert D. Baker, *Sawdust Empire: The Texas Lumber Industry, 1830–1940* (College Station, Texas, 1983), 55–58, 60–62, 73–78; and Archer H. Mayor, *Southern Timberman: The Legacy of William Buchanan* (Athens, Ga., and London, 1988), 38–41, 46–48.

result that a larger number of men relatively are necessarily employed than is the case in some other regions."<sup>37</sup>

Racism permeated the manufacturers' evaluation of their labor force. In a 1937 Southern Pine Industry Committee attack upon the proposed Black-Connery Wage and Hour Bill, an industry pamphlet noted that the South contained some 70 percent of the nation's black population and that this fact had been "a retardant to large-scale mechanization." The pamphlet argued that "the introduction of intensified machine power in the South would lead to serious technological unemployment and the displacement of a large percentage of the Negro labor." The writer concluded that the displaced blacks would be forced to migrate northward and that their "native background and inherent disability for intensified machine performance would introduce racial and labor problems of serious consequence to the North. Born to the soil, the Southern Negro would not readily embrace the complicated life and action of crowded urban centers." "In the South he is at home," said the pamphlet, "and his life and habits and the environment blend with his nature. He is contented and has no fault to find with his native environment and the opportunities it affords him to live as he biologically wishes to live."<sup>38</sup>

U. S. Department of Labor statistics reflect the relative inefficiency of labor in the southern lumber industry. The man-hours of labor required for the production of a thousand board feet of lumber totaled "13.6 for Southern hardwoods, 9.9 for Southern pine, and 4.9 for Douglas fir" in the logging operations; and "16.3 for Southern hardwoods, 13.0 for Southern pine and 10.5 for Douglas fir" in manufacturing.<sup>39</sup> Another survey of Pacific Coast and southern sawmills from 1926 to 1935 reported that man-hours per thousand board feet of production ranged from 8.34 to 7.76 among the western mills and from 18.42 to 15.38 among those in the South.<sup>40</sup>

As noted earlier, the advent of war drew experienced workers away from the industry, and manufacturers were forced to employ workers who previously would not have been considered suitable for labor in the woods and mills. A 1945 industry survey of the leaders of 525 firms showed that none of them considered the wartime labor force to be as efficient as prewar workers, with the largest percentage

<sup>37</sup> "Economic Conditions in Southern Pine Industry . . . February 2, 1935," Box 7, SPA Records.

<sup>38</sup> "Effects of Black-Connery Wage and Hour Bill . . . Southern Pine Industry Committee . . .," pamphlet in Box 137b, SPA Records.

<sup>39</sup> Stanley F. Horn, *This Fascinating Lumber Business* (Indianapolis and New York, 1943), 206.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred J. Van Tassel, *Mechanization in the Lumber Industry: A Study of Technology in Relation to Resources and Employment Opportunity*. Works Progress Administration, Report No. M-5 (Philadelphia, 1940), 130, cited in Allen, *East Texas Lumber Workers*, 136.

of manufacturers (33.5 percent) reporting that they considered the current labor force to be from 60 to 64 percent as efficient as prewar workers. One manufacturer observed that "taking all of our best men to the army or the camps . . . left us with the inefficient . . . ." Another noted that "what labor we have left is a very poor class of labor." A third said that "what new men we have got are just plain 'hats.' They do not know anything, don't want to know anything and don't care except for the whistle and payday." A fourth observed that "the Army takes all the good men and leaves the loafers for us . . . ." <sup>41</sup>

A 1942 industry report noted that "some mills report that labor inefficiency is causing a marked decline in their man-hour production, and that it is taking two men in some cases to produce little more than one man did formerly." <sup>42</sup> A 1945 Southern Pine War Committee report to the director of the Lumber and Lumber Products Division of the War Production Board noted the industry's chronic labor shortage but went on to say that "we are even more concerned with what these figures *do not reveal* than what they bring to light. . . . Ninety-five percent of the Southern Pine operations reporting estimate the efficiency of the workers remaining in the industry at less than 80% of pre-war performance, and 52.5% of the 95% estimate it at less than 65%." <sup>43</sup> However, even though they were less productive than their prewar counterparts, like the POWs the wartime civilian labor force at least helped to keep the forest products companies operating and producing. <sup>44</sup>

Unlike their civilian counterparts, the POWs generally worked under a task system. If they completed the assigned task ahead of schedule they were allowed to return to their camps before the end of a workday. Prisoners were punished for continued failure to complete an assigned task. Punishment usually consisted of keeping the prisoners at work until the task was completed (up to a maximum of twelve hours) or reducing their pay proportionally to the reduction of work. <sup>45</sup>

The work routine at a camp near Hammond, Louisiana, was probably typical. The prisoners cut pulpwood for eight hours a day and were transported to and from their work sites in "black, canvas-top, civilian trucks, similar to military trucks with high-stake bodies. On a platform which extended about two and one-half feet from the

<sup>41</sup> All quoted in H. C. Berckes to C. C. Sheppard, January 18, 1943, Box 57a, SPA Records.

<sup>42</sup> "Southern Pine and Its Production, Statement by H. C. Berckes . . . Before Special Senate Committee to Investigate the National-Defense Program . . . November 24, 1942," Box 90a, *ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> "Special Committee of the Southern Pine War Industry to J. Philip Boyd, March 7, 1945," Box 75a, *ibid*.

<sup>44</sup> "Operating Conditions in Southern Pine Industry, February 8, 1945," Box 76a, *ibid*.

<sup>45</sup> "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration," 150; and Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 116-17.



rear of the truck on the driver's side rode a helmeted guard armed with a rifle." The trucks were driven by civilian employees who were also responsible for seeing that the prisoners achieved their work quotas. One driver recalled that "they [the prisoners] treated us real good and we were good to them. Some of the men could speak English, but sometimes we had to use interpreters. . . . Each driver was responsible for checking his crew to make sure they had cut the right amount of wood. Sometimes Gaylord Container would send some men to check after us, and if they [the prisoners] didn't have the right amount of wood they would lay off the driver."<sup>46</sup>

A determination of the reasonableness of the quotas and an evaluation of the prisoners' work performance are central to any assessment of German POW labor. Prisoners working as loggers in the Arkansas pulpwood industry were "required to cut . . . considerably less than an experienced civilian worker," according to Merrill R. Pritchett and William L. Shea in their article on POWs in that state.<sup>47</sup> However, the International Red Cross reports and POW depositions of the Commission for German POW History in the German Federal Military Archives, as well as materials in the National Archives in Washington, reflect considerable differences in performance among prisoners and in expectations among employers.

A Red Cross report on a branch camp at Alto, Texas, in 1945 notes, "Workday is 8 hours in addition to two hours in transit . . . the quota per/man is 1 1/4 cords of wood. Some difficulties arose at the first since the Germans were inexperienced in Forestry but these have been worked out."<sup>48</sup> The German Federal Military Archives contain the deposition of a POW in Alabama who described cutting pulpwood. He said that the prisoners felled and stripped the trees, cut them to length, and stacked the logs. The POW remembered that "there was, in general, no difficulty in fulfilling the quota save in the cutting of pulpwood which took the efforts of two strong

<sup>46</sup> Angela M. Elliott, "Branch Camp No. 10: The Hammond Prisoner of War Experience, 1944-1946," *Southeast Louisiana Historical Association Papers*, III (1976), 53 (first quotation), 52-53 (second quotation).

<sup>47</sup> Pritchett and Shea, "The Afrika Korps in Arkansas, 1943-1946," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XXXVII (Spring 1978), 19 (quotation). There were several definitions of a cord in the southern lumber and pulpwood industries. A standard cord consisted of logs four feet long, stacked four feet high and eight feet long, containing 128 cubic feet. A short cord was cut to four-and-one-half-foot lengths and contained 144 cubic feet. A long cord was cut to five-foot lengths and contained 160 cubic feet. This was also sometimes called a "unit." See "Instructions, Tables, Cutting Rules and Specifications for the Cutting and Selling of Pulpwood, Prepared by U. S. Forest Service and the Mississippi Agricultural Extension Service, March, 1938," p. 18, Box 11, Johns-Manville Timberland Records (Louisiana State University Archives, Baton Rouge, La.; hereinafter cited as Johns-Manville Records).

<sup>48</sup> Translated from International Commission of the Red Cross Inspection Report [1945], quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 191. Civilian workers were sometimes paid for time spent traveling to and from the job, but there was no consistent pattern in the industry.

men who worked well together. Under these circumstances they could meet the quota in seven to eight hours time. With people not physically suited to the job there could be difficulty. I should also mention that for us, unaccustomed to the climate, it was really hard to work.”<sup>49</sup> A Red Cross report on Camp Wilmington, North Carolina, noted that “200 POWs are detailed to Pulpwood felling and cutting. . . . As in other camps the quota is 160 cu. ft. per man per day. The spokesman (from the POWs) complained that increasingly they can’t make the quota because they have to cut their way into the trees before cutting the required wood and because of the well-nigh intolerable heat and humidity.”<sup>50</sup>

From Camp Greenville, Alabama, the Red Cross reported that “all these (POWs) work with American civilian workers. They demand from POWs one third the output of a civilian worker. . . . The POWs do not always achieve that.”<sup>51</sup> A Red Cross report on the Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, branch camp of Camp Forrest noted that “the men working in the woods must cut a cord of wood a day. In the region civilian workers cut two cords a day.”<sup>52</sup> The Provost Marshal General’s report on the Murfreesboro, Arkansas, branch camp of Camp Joseph T. Robinson indicated that POWs cutting pulpwood “finished their task of 4 pens by from 1300 to 1400 [hours]. It is recommended that the task be 5 pens per day, even though it is thought that the 4 pens being cut average one Unit (160 cubic feet) of pulpwood.” Two days later the commander of the branch camp reported that “while prisoners are presently obtaining the 160 cubic feet required by current directives as a day’s task, they are not employed to the maximum of their ability, therefore, 25% above the standard is now being required.”<sup>53</sup>

The Prisoner of War Operations Division’s “Historical Monograph” reported that under the daily work/task system in Georgia “prisoners

<sup>49</sup> Translated from deposition of former POW for the Commission for the History of German POWs in Custody of the United States, German Federal Military Archives, quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 193.

<sup>50</sup> Translated from International Commission of the Red Cross Inspection Report, June 13, 1945, quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 194.

<sup>51</sup> Translated from International Commission of the Red Cross Inspection Report, June 3, 1944, quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 193.

<sup>52</sup> Inspection Report, Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, Subordinate to Camp Forrest, visited by Mr. G. Metraux, September 16, 1944, Box 2661, RG 389.

<sup>53</sup> “Report of Inspection of Prisoner of War Camp, Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Ark., and Branch Camps. 12–24 May 1945,” and Glenn C. Rutledge, Lt. Col. Inf. Commanding to Commanding Officer, Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas, May 26, 1945, both in Box 2670, RG 389. On cutting operations a “pen” was often the unit used to pay cutters. A pen consisted of four-and-one-half or five-foot lengths of wood piled in layers to form a hollow crib. Each layer consisted of two sticks laid crosswise on the preceding layer somewhat like a log cabin. A pen included sufficient layers to reach a height of six feet. Five pens made up a cord or unit. “Instructions . . . for the Cutting and Selling of Pulpwood . . .,” 4, Box 11, Johns-Manville Records.

had been producing but one-third of a standard cord per man per day. When it was determined that prisoners would be required to cut a full cord per day, there was considerable resistance . . . but the prompt application of the 'no work, no eat' policy brought about the desired adjustment and production was immediately increased to meet the task requirement." The "Historical Monograph" also said that when the task/quota system was introduced in the South, there was "a steady increase in pulp wood cutting from an average of .3 cords per day to .9 cords per day in all areas where POW labor was used."<sup>54</sup> The deposition, now in the German Federal Military Archives, of a prisoner from Camp Sutton, North Carolina, notes that "the most difficult thing to overcome was the continual raising of the quota. To be honest about it this was as much our fault as the Americans'. We were doing the job diligently and took some pride in the accomplishment of the task. The overseer took advantage of this and raised the quota. At the end two man teams were cutting 70-80 trees per day of an average of 12-13 cm. diameter. They had to fell them and cut and stack the wood. Sometimes it happened that one of the teams did not make the quota and in such a case the rest of us had to wait until that team finished to go back to camp."<sup>55</sup>

While work in the woods and mills was strange and new to the German prisoners, the expectations of their captors and employers were much below what was required of civilian American workers. It does not appear that the output demanded of the German prisoners was excessive, and they often failed to meet even these low standards. At the same time, one can reasonably argue that their failure to be more productive was due in part to the rigors of the southern climate, which arguably they should not have been required to endure under the terms of the Geneva Convention, and to poor supervision and training.

The Provost Marshal General's "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration" offered four other possible explanations for low productivity. First, it noted that unlike civilian laborers, "the prisoner knows that he will have enough food, shelter and clothing whether he works or not." Second, given their low pay (in the form of scrip) and the rule against their acquiring expensive items that were subject to production controls and thus not available to the American public, "this lack of monetary incentive has resulted in the early satisfaction of most of the prisoner's wants—those for cigarettes, soft drinks, beer and candy." Third, it suggested that "con-

<sup>54</sup> Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 110, 116-17.

<sup>55</sup> Translated from deposition of former POW for the Commission for the History of German POWs in Custody of Great Britain, German Federal Military Archives, quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 194.

tributing to lack of incentive is the Nazi ideology . . . . To them the United States is enemy territory and any work performed by them for the enemy is a contribution to him in defeating their own country. . . . By removing from positions of responsibility and the direction of labor details, those more rabid Nazis, (usually NCO's) it has been possible to hold to a minimum the obstruction of work from this cause." Finally, it reported that "when engaged with civilian workers, prisoners approximate the amount of work of these employees."<sup>56</sup>

There was a close relationship between the prisoners' production quotas and their compensation. With the exception of work performed in their own behalf, prisoners were paid for their labor. The government established eighty cents as the pay for a normal day's work. In order to encourage the prisoners to meet their work quotas, an incentive pay plan was later put into effect. Under this plan, hard workers received more money while laggards received less. When a POW exceeded the requirements of the quota he received eighty cents in scrip plus added pay for anything over the required amount. The Southern Pine War Committee warned manufacturers that "prisoner labor under the contract terms should permit the operator to come out even, but this is not a source of cheap labor. Exploitation of prisoners is guarded against, and the Commanding Officer will be the judge as to whether or not requirements are being met."<sup>57</sup>

While officials in some cases insisted that POW labor contracts for lumbering should be based on a flat hourly rate, most lumber operators favored a piecework system. Noting the prisoners' failure to achieve their production quotas, one Texas manufacturer stated, "The prisoners . . . will not work, and they [the manufacturers] can only get by because they are on a piece basis."<sup>58</sup> The system sometimes worked for, sometimes against, the prisoners. From Fort Gordon, Georgia, in July 1944, the Red Cross reported that the "men . . . in the forest felling trees for pulp wood . . . are paid according to their output . . . 80 cents for a cord per day. They all are able to accomplish that now and some even do it in 4 1/2-5 hours." On the other hand, from Camp Turner Field, Georgia, the Red Cross reported that "those who work in the woods get 80 cents per day for a cord of wood, but to present no one has succeeded in making

<sup>56</sup> "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration," 149-51 (first and second quotations on p. 149; third quotation on p. 150; fourth quotation on p. 151).

<sup>57</sup> Lewis and Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization*, 75-76; Butler, "Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana," 292; "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration," 151; Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 99-100, 116-17; and Southern Pine War Committee to Members of the Southern Pine Industry, January 29, 1944, Box 79b, SPA Records.

<sup>58</sup> J. H. Kurth to O. N. Cloud, March 23, 1944; and Denis P. Utterback to Newton County Lumber Company, July 28, 1944 (quotation), both in Folder "War Prisoners," Kurth Papers.

the quota and often have worked a day for as little as 15 cents.”<sup>59</sup>

In order to have a perspective on the eighty-cent wage system it is useful to look at civilian wages for American workers in the lumber industry at the time. Sawmilling and logging, especially in the South, were notoriously low-paying occupations. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, the minimum hourly wage in the lumber industry was originally set at twenty-five cents. In other words, for an eight-hour day, a civilian worker earned two dollars. However, at the time the law was promulgated, 43 percent of the common laborers in southern sawmills earned less than that, and many operations closed rather than comply with the law. In 1943 the average hourly wage in southern lumber mills was forty-eight cents, less than half the rate earned by western mill workers. By 1945 the minimum civilian wage was forty cents per hour, and a high percentage of workers in the southern lumber industry were working at or slightly above the minimum level. American civilians paid for their own maintenance, while the prisoners did not.<sup>60</sup> When maintenance is figured in with the prisoners' earnings they come out only a little below the civilian workers.

A Mississippi lumberman in a 1980 oral history interview noted that his company “paid the prisoners the full wage we paid all of our men . . . .” He went on to explain the details of the arrangement: “That is they [the companies] would pay . . . the government and the government gave them, I think it was a dollar a day allowance to pay for the commissary . . . in the war camp. The rest of it was held for the prisoner’s account until the end of the war.”<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Translation from International Commission of the Red Cross Inspection Report, July 8, 1944, quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 193. The most efficient German workers actually caused something of a problem for U. S. officials. The Prisoner of War Operations Division’s “Historical Monograph” reports that “it was necessary to exercise considerable care and judgment in establishing the daily task. The task had to be possible of accomplishment within the hours of the normal work day. However, if the task was set too low, it resulted in the completion of the work quota at the end of perhaps five hours of diligent work. This resulted in complaints from civilian laborers who felt that prisoners should be required to work longer hours” (p. 117); translation from International Commission of the Red Cross Inspection Report, June 25, 1945, quoted in Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 194.

<sup>60</sup> James E. Fickle, *The New South and the “New Competition”: Trade Association Development in the Southern Pine Industry* (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1980), 304–5, 321; Allen, *East Texas Lumber Workers*, 82, 93; and Southern Pine Industry Committee to Southern Pine Manufacturers, August 18, 1945, Box 70a, SPA Records. In Louisiana, the “Gaylord Container Corporation was allowed \$2.00 a day for caring for each prisoner” under its contract. Elliott, “Branch Camp No. 10,” p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with L. O. Crosby, Jr., 1980. In accordance with the Geneva Convention the money in the prisoners’ trust accounts was to be remitted at the end of the war, but as of August 31, 1945, no remittance channels had been opened for the German POWs. Prisoner of War Operations Division, “Historical Monograph,” 137. The regulations governing the prisoners’ accounts are outlined in “Prisoner of War Circular No. 7,” which was issued by the War Department on November 9, 1943. It is on reel 2 of Library of Congress

The “fairness” of the prisoners’ compensation can also be judged in terms of their purchasing power. Under the Geneva Convention canteens were to “be installed in all camps” so that prisoners could “obtain, at the local market price, food products and ordinary objects.” Prices were established by the camp commanders and varied from camp to camp. Any profits were paid into a fund used for camp cultural, educational, and athletic activities.<sup>62</sup>

One POW remembered the canteen at Fort Robinson, Arkansas, as a place where “you could buy chocolate, beer . . . at 10 cents a bottle, Lucky Strike or Chesterfield cigarettes at \$1.30 a carton, Pall Mall at \$1.10. Things like hair tonic and soap were there.”<sup>63</sup> A prisoner who was housed at a camp in Memphis reminisced, “We earned eighty cents per day in wages plus another ten cents per day issued to us by the United States government. We made \$25 to \$26 a month which was enough for all our needs. . . . The money we received was in the form of a special scrip good only at the prison canteen. The prices at the canteen were extremely low: a pack of cigarettes was thirteen cents, a bottle of Goldcrest beer was ten cents, a bar of Lux soap was ten cents, a piece of apple pie or a bottle of milk was ten cents, and so on. The most important and beautiful feeling was being able to buy what you wanted.”<sup>64</sup> In fact, the canteen prices were slightly above those in the civilian market. The local newspapers in Memphis reveal that in December 1944 one could buy three bars of Lux soap for \$.20, a fifth of Hiram Walker whiskey for \$3.39, and Alka Seltzer for \$.49. Other consumer items were priced accordingly.<sup>65</sup>

While there is no evidence of a systematic policy of exploitation either in production quotas or compensation, there obviously was a great deal of variation in the skill and sensitivity of those responsible for the training and supervision of the German prisoners.<sup>66</sup> The accounts of training and supervision vary, and there is a dichotomy between official statements and the perceptions of people in the field. In the field, training was a major component of supervision and foremanship.

Good training procedures were important because of the language

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Microfilm No. 51437. For a detailed examination of the settlement of the prisoners’ accounts following repatriation see Walter Rundell, Jr., “Paying the POW in World War II,” *Military Affairs*, XXII (Fall 1958), 121–34.

<sup>62</sup> “Multilateral Convention—War Prisoners, July 27, 1929 [Geneva Convention],” *Statutes at Large*, XLVII, 2035; Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 71–72; and Prisoner of War Operations Division, “Historical Monograph,” 94–95.

<sup>63</sup> Jung, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 63.

<sup>64</sup> William L. Shea, ed., “A German Prisoner of War in the South: The Memoir of Edwin Pelz,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XLIV (Spring 1985), 47–48.

<sup>65</sup> Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, December 2, 1944.

<sup>66</sup> This, at least, is the conclusion of Hermann Jung in *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen*, 191, on the matter of exploitation.

barrier and the German POWs' unfamiliarity with lumbering and sawmill work. A manual used by military personnel who studied prisoner of war administration at the Provost Marshal Generals (PMG) school stated, "Prisoners are selected for their work, wherever possible, with due regard for their civilian occupation and special skills." However, the manual noted that it was often impossible to match the prisoners with jobs that utilized their skills and observed that "it is usually necessary to conduct some pre-job or on-the-job training . . . ." In the case of forestry, "German prisoners are particularly well-suited for employment . . . because of physical characteristics and liking for outdoor work."<sup>67</sup>

The War Department specified that prisoners employed in pulpwood, logging, and lumbering "will receive, both before and during such employment, necessary training in the use of tools and equipment and in safety measures . . . ." <sup>68</sup> The Timber Production War Project prepared a handbook for manufacturers who used POW contract labor, and the handbook noted, "Pulpwood and sawmill operators . . . ordinarily do not have personnel experienced in logging who can talk the prisoners' language fluently. The prisoners were largely farmers, clerks, salesmen, etc., prior to entering the Army and, therefore, woods work is entirely foreign to them. . . . The job of training inexperienced labor rapidly in woods work is difficult enough with English-speaking labor without the added problem of using a foreign language."<sup>69</sup>

The PMG school manual pointed out that "most training of prisoners is done on the job by the American supervisor. This is true not only of Army work, but of private contract labor." In the case of contract laborers, the manual said that "the user . . . must assume responsibility for the training . . . ." However, it also reported that "in this work the War Department and the employers have had the cooperation of the United States Forestry Service . . . . Special mimeographed material with illustrations have been prepared in German . . . and considerable use has been made of a booklet prepared in English and German by the Canadian Pulpwood Association." The manual concluded that "most of the prisoners have been quite cooperative in the training program . . . . The using agencies have reported quite uniformly that prisoners are extremely thorough in all of their work,

<sup>67</sup> "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration," 133-34 (first two quotations on p. 133), 148 (third quotation). The PMG schools (there were two locations) did not open until October 1944, too late to be of much assistance during the war. Pluth, "Administration and Operation of German Prisoner of War Camps," 118.

<sup>68</sup> "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration," n.p.

<sup>69</sup> "Handbook of Timber Production War Project," 1, Box 143a, SPA Records.

but that they lack the speed and aggressiveness of civilian labor.”<sup>70</sup>

At the end of the war the Prisoner of War Operations Division’s “Historical Monograph” concluded that if the prisoners were thoroughly trained and instructed and knew what was expected of them, “good results were obtained . . . . In both military and private contract work . . . .”<sup>71</sup> In July 1945 the Headquarters Army Service Forces issued a handbook that addressed the problem of POW work supervision. The handbook was designed not only to “enable the *work* supervisor to recognize the psychological differences that exist between the thinking of the German prisoner of war and free labor” so that “maximum utilization of **German workmen** will be achieved” but also with an eye toward future German–United States relations. The handbook warned work supervisors to avoid “careless talk about the uncertainty of the future, our racial problems, our national leaders . . . , our relations with the rest of the Allied Nations and even the mild complaining most of us do naturally . . . .”<sup>72</sup>

The handbook dispensed commonplace, commonsense advice and reiterated policies and attitudes toward the prisoners that were well established by 1945. It recognized the language problem, noting that “ordinarily you should instruct him [the POW] through the use of an interpreter . . . . If you have to instruct him yourself, and he does not understand English, you may have to depend more on **SHOWING** than on **TELLING**.” It also said that “the PWs will not volunteer . . . that any of them can speak English” but went on to recommend using “all the English speaking PWs” as instructors and interpreters. In a great burst of sensitivity it also told work supervisors, “**Don’t refer to them as ‘Krauts’ or ‘Heinies’ in their presence.**”<sup>73</sup> The PMG school manual said that in the case of contract laborers “the user . . . must assume responsibility for . . . providing adequate supervision on the job. Indeed, supervision is so important that if the user does not provide proper supervision, the commanding officer of the prisoners may remove them and cancel the contract.”<sup>74</sup> There is no evidence in any of the sources examined for this article that contracts were ever actually cancelled for inadequate supervision.

Southern lumbermen recognized the importance of effective supervision. The Southern Pine War Committee (SPWC) advised those

<sup>70</sup> “Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration,” 133 (first quotation), 145 (second quotation), 134 (third and fourth quotations).

<sup>71</sup> Prisoner of War Operations Division, “Historical Monograph,” 115–16.

<sup>72</sup> “Handbook for Work Supervisors of Prisoner of War Labor, Army Service Forces Manual M 811,” iii (first quotation), 1 (second quotation), in Library of Congress Microfilm No. 51437, reel 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 (first, second, and third quotations), 16 (fourth quotation).

<sup>74</sup> “Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration,” 145.



seeking maximum utilization of the POWs that "active and enlightened" foremanship was essential. The SPWC recommended that the foremen work through designated prisoners, preferably noncommissioned officers, noting, "This is essential, not only because of the language barrier, but also in order to satisfy guard requirements and to maintain proper relationships with the prisoners." The committee said that the prisoners were strong and willing to work but that they did not perform well without instructions. The committee stressed the importance of prisoner morale and concluded that "they have often demonstrated their ability and willingness to turn out a full day's production." It also noted that "low production has been observed. More often than not, this is due to a combination of inadequate training supervision and a lack of consideration of the human element . . . these men respond to evidence that interest is taken in their personal welfare the same as is true of any other group."<sup>75</sup>

The Prisoner of War Operations Division's "Historical Monograph" also concluded that properly trained and qualified supervisors were "the best guarantee of efficient work performance . . ." The "Historical Monograph" reported that in most cases where there had been complaints of the prisoners' inefficiency, "investigation revealed that either no supervision had been provided, or the prisoners had found that the supervisor knew nothing about the job to be done."<sup>76</sup> Certainly lumbermen did not underestimate the difficulties of utilizing the German prisoners efficiently, and obviously the language barrier presented additional difficulties in POW management. It is striking that the companies that contracted for the use of prisoner of war labor were left entirely on their own in supervising the work processes. Apparently no formal training except on-the-job instruction, mostly by English-speaking employees, was provided for the prisoners. For the most part they were simply taught by example. Despite the report in the PMG school manual that German-speaking Forest Service personnel and instructional manuals in German were provided for the prisoners and the later claim of the director of the Timber Production War Project (TPWP) that his personnel had trained "a total of 30,000 of these prisoners," the TPWP's own handbook bemoaned the lack of German-speaking instructors or supervisors and noted that the Forest Service could supply a "few but probably not enough to go around." There is no evidence that government training materials in German were widely utilized in the southern lumber industry.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Southern Pine War Committee (H. C. Berckes) to Members of the Southern Pine Industry, January 29, 1944, Box 79b, SPA Records.

<sup>76</sup> Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 115-16.

<sup>77</sup> Howard Hopkins, "Accomplishments of the Timber Production War Project," *Jour-*

The Prisoner of War Operations Division's "Historical Monograph" argues that "it was found by experience that language difficulty reduced work efficiency . . . only in a minor degree for the reason that a large number of prisoners . . . had some knowledge of the English language, and could gain some understanding of the instructions given them by the work supervisor." The monograph terms the language situation only a "slight disadvantage."<sup>78</sup> It is unlikely that many prisoners spoke or understood English. The commander of a branch camp in the piney woods near Hammond, Louisiana, noted that only 5 percent of the prisoners in his camp spoke English and were used as interpreters.<sup>79</sup> Since this camp was typical the official dismissal of the importance of the language barrier seems unrealistic.

Lumber industry leaders had strikingly divergent perceptions of the German POWs as contract laborers. A Texas manufacturer's comment reflected a widespread industry assessment of the prisoners' performances: "The first month they seemed good, but inexperienced; the last month they were impossible." Another manufacturer concluded that "war prisoners are only about 50% efficient compared to our pre-war workers." On the other hand, a Huntsville, Texas, producer said that he "wouldn't take a thousand dollars for what we have done with these prisoners . . . ."<sup>80</sup>

In contrast to the mixed assessments of southern lumbermen, government officials seemed well satisfied with the work program. The Prisoner of War Operations Division's "Historical Monograph" concludes, "In general . . . if the German prisoner of war was to be compared with the average, unskilled, free laborer available for common labor during war-time, his labor is at least of equal value . . . . In many instances, it was proved that prisoner of war labor was of much greater value . . . . Any such generalizations must take into account

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*nal of Forestry*, XLIV (May 1946), 331 (first quotation); and "Handbook of Timber Production War Project," 1 (second quotation). Lewis and Mewha describe the training of prisoners to work in the pulpwood industry of upper Michigan under the auspices of the Timber Production War Project, and their description seems fairly close to the procedures outlined in the various government manuals and reports. However, there is nothing in the records examined here to indicate that any sort of extensive training, especially in German, was actually utilized in the South. Lewis and Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization*, 132-33. Edward J. Pluth notes that there was a shortage of "capable interpreters," because the "better interpreters were needed overseas . . . [and] the service commands generally received the least qualified individuals." Pluth, "The Administration and Operation of German Prisoner of War Camps," 111-12.

<sup>78</sup> Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 115.

<sup>79</sup> Elliott, "Branch Camp No. 10," p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> "Southern Pine War Committee, New Orleans, Louisiana, Report on Operating Conditions in Southern Pine Industry: Analysis of Questionnaire Released by Southern Pine War Committee, January 29, 1945 . . ." (first quotation); "Report on Operating Conditions in Southern Pine Industry, January 29, 1945" (second quotation), both in Box 76a, SPA Records; and "Daily Report, C. N. Gould, August 2, 1943," Box 52a, *ibid.* (third quotation).

not only the quantity of work performed, but the quality of work as well. Many employers indicated that . . . work was performed in a much more thorough and satisfactory manner."<sup>81</sup> The Provost Marshal General's "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration" concluded that "in general, it can be said that prisoners are from 66 percent to 130 percent as efficient as the labor now available for unskilled jobs. They are from 75 percent to 120 percent as efficient on semi-skilled and skilled jobs. Almost universally . . . prisoners, particularly Germans, are thorough to a fault."<sup>82</sup>

Testifying in 1945 before the House Committee on Military Affairs, Brigadier General R. W. Berry of the War Department General Staff read a prepared statement that said, "We feel that in addition to its manpower and production values, the prisoner-of-war work program has had an important effect in helping to get across to the prisoners a sense of the potency as well as the justice of the American way and American principles, and that our policy . . . has resulted in an excellent over-all record of both output and discipline."<sup>83</sup>

Contemporary sources are ambiguous in their assessments of the POW contract labor program. As previously noted, lumber manufacturers both praised and condemned the prisoners' performance. However, southern lumbermen clamored for the POWs' services—obviously the Germans would not have been employed had their labor not been considered valuable. And by June 1945 contractors had paid the federal government approximately \$22 million for POW labor.<sup>84</sup> One Arkansas firm was typical of many southern companies that employed the prisoners. This manufacturer concluded that "without prison labor it [the plant] would not have been able to operate . . . at full capacity."<sup>85</sup> Even if the prisoners were less productive than their civilian counterparts (which was not always the case), their labor helped to keep the mills and woods crews operating. Government officials were more uniformly laudatory in their assessments of the prisoners' record because they had a stake in putting the best possible interpretation on the programs they had directed.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 114–15.

<sup>82</sup> "Reference Manual on Prisoner of War Administration," 149.

<sup>83</sup> *House Report*, 79 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 728: *Report of the Committee on Military Affairs: Investigation of National War Effort*, June 12, 1945 (serial 10933), 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. Gerald S. Davis argues that "in the United States, where prisoner labour was probably most efficient—and most expensive—their earnings during the second world war did not begin to cover the costs of their maintenance." Davis, "Prisoners of War," 630. Prisoner of War Operations Division, "Historical Monograph," 118–19, gives slightly different figures.

<sup>85</sup> "Crossett Lumber Company Raw Materials Division Annual Report, 1944," Vol. 58, Crossett Company Records (Louisiana State University Archives).

<sup>86</sup> Edward J. Pluth points out that the quality of prisoner of war administrative personnel was a matter of controversy throughout the war. Pluth, "The Administration and Oper-

Obviously the hours that many German POWs spent daily as contract laborers were an important part of their experience in the United States and must be considered if a satisfactory account of their story is to be written. The case of POW labor in the southern lumber industry is a significant chapter of that story, and findings discussed here are not entirely consistent with those of earlier scholars. For example, in his study of the administration and operation of German prisoner of war camps in the United States, Edward J. Pluth argues that "the United States adhered to the Geneva Convention with unusual perseverance." Jake W. Spidle says that the United States government "made a commendable record in abiding by" the provisions of the convention. He concludes that "German POWs reporting after the war, various inspecting agencies, and German historians have unanimously affirmed the good faith of the American authorities in following the Geneva Convention standards."<sup>87</sup> While this examination reveals that German prisoners in the lumber industry were not exploited or treated unfairly, their labor was not utilized in strict conformity with the Geneva Convention provisions concerning climate, danger, or war-related work. The prisoners did in fact complain about various aspects of their work in the southern lumber industry. To say, as several authors, including Pluth and Spidle, do, that the United States adhered more closely to the convention than other countries did is one thing, but to say that we exercised "unusual perseverance" or "good faith" is quite another.

The POW production record in lumbering has been variously reported and interpreted. Pritchett and Shea in their article on Arkansas indicate that the prisoners produced "a little over four cords of wood per day, considerably less than an experienced civilian worker could produce in the same time."<sup>88</sup> All of the contemporary materials consulted and quoted in this article put the production figure closer to one cord per day. Pritchett and Shea also say that "the use of prisoners-of-war in forestry . . . was not permitted until 1944."<sup>89</sup> As has been shown, the German POWs were already at work in the southern lumber and pulpwood industry during 1943. Their production record was mixed but probably could have been improved if not for the language barrier and if there had been better training and supervision. The contradictory testimony of both the lumbermen and the prisoners concerning the POWs' work experiences and production record is closer to reality than the universally roseate assessments of contemporary government officials and reports.

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tion of German Prisoner of War Camps," 106-10.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 415-16; and Jake W. Spidle, "Axis Invasion of the American West: POWs in New Mexico, 1942-1946," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XLIX (April 1974), 99.

<sup>88</sup> Pritchett and Shea, "The Afrika Korps in Arkansas," 19.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

In conclusion, this survey of German prisoner of war labor in the southern lumber industry reveals, first, that the United States did not strictly adhere to the Geneva Convention. Prisoners were clearly used at times to produce war-related materials, and they often labored in dangerous circumstances that certainly violated the convention's requirement that they not be utilized in dangerous or unhealthful conditions. It should be remembered, however, that before and after the war American civilians, white and black, performed these exact tasks, and it may well never have occurred to the U. S. labor supervisors that such jobs were too hard or dangerous for captured enemy to perform. Had U. S. supervisors known more about the conditions of American POWs in Germany—much less the conditions in the concentration camps—then German POWs might well have received far harsher treatment. The historian must keep in mind both the local and international context while evaluating the use of German prisoners of war in the South. Second, even at best, the Germans usually produced somewhat below the level of prewar civilian workers. However, their labor was critical and valuable, for it allowed many companies to operate during the latter part of the war. Third, the prisoners were fairly compensated, at least by the standards of the southern lumber industry, which was admittedly a notoriously low-paying industry. Fourth, the effectiveness and productivity of the prisoners was directly related to the competence of their American supervisors and to the adequacy of their training. Unfortunately the records in both of these areas were not particularly good. Finally, despite the claims of some American officials, the problems associated with effectively utilizing the prisoners were compounded by the language barrier.

#### ESSAY ON RELATED LITERATURE

These studies are primarily examinations of the administration and operation of POW camps and of life in the camps based on research in the records of such U. S. agencies as the War Manpower Commission, the War Production Board, the Provost Marshal General's Office, and the files of state agricultural extension directors. Despite occasional references to German perceptions and sources, such as interviews with former prisoners, the perspective is essentially American. Sources that provide a German perspective are, however, readily available. There is, for example, a twenty-two-volume series edited by Erich Maschke entitled *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Kriegesgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (München, 1972), two volumes of which deal exclusively with POW experiences in the United States and under U. S. supervision in Europe. The series was produced by the Commis-

sion for German POW History, which collected over three thousand written reports of former POWs as well as recorded interviews on tape and other published and documentary sources. Erich Maschke, the general editor of the twenty-two-volume series, was a professor emeritus at the University of Heidelberg and had been a German prisoner of war in Russia. He headed a team of scholars employed by the Commission for German POW History, which was created in 1957 with the help of the German Federal Republic to prepare a comprehensive study of German POWs during World War II, and was a subsidiary to the locator service of the German Red Cross. In 1972, upon completion of the series, the commission was dissolved, and its materials were eventually turned over to the Federal German Military Archive in Freiburg/Breisgau. These records include Red Cross camp inspection reports and depositions taken from the returnees, which are used in the publication without citing the names of the ex-POWs. All of the commission materials, with the exception of the depositions, are available for study at the Military Archive under the general call number B-205. There are card files and lists in the collection, but it has no general index. The commission materials are discussed in Jake W. Spidle, "Axis Prisoners of War in the United States, 1942-1946: A Bibliographical Essay," *Military Affairs*, XXXIX (April 1975), 61-66; and Federal German Military Archive to Donald W. Ellis, August 6, 1987 (Letter in possession of the authors). Camp newspapers produced by the prisoners, usually in their own language, also provide fascinating vistas into life and work in the camps. By the end of the war almost every major camp had a newspaper, and these are in the Library of Congress and available on microfilm. The title of the fifteen-reel series is "German Prisoner of War Camp Newspapers, 1943-1946." One of the standard sources for the history of German POWs in the United States is George G. Lewis and John Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army, 1776-1945*, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-213 (Washington, 1955). The World War II section of this book is based on U. S. government records. Another government publication, Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman, *The Army and Industrial Manpower* (Washington, 1959), utilizes only English-language sources. Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag: U.S.A.: The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America* (New York, 1977) is a popular work based on English-language sources. Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York, 1979), utilizes some German sources but relies primarily on American materials. Krammer has also written "When the *Afrika Korps* Came to Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXX (January 1977), 247-82, which includes only two references to German sources; and "German Prisoners of War in the United States," *Military Affairs*, XL (April 1976), 68-73, which uses no German sources. There are numerous other scholarly articles that are extensively documented but cite no German sources. These include Edward J. Pluth, "Prisoner of War Employment in Minnesota During World War II," *Minnesota History*, XLIV (Winter 1975), 290-303; George T. Mazuzan and Nancy Walker, "Restricted Areas: German Prisoner-of-War

Camps in Western New York, 1944–1946,” *New York History*, LIX (January 1978), 54–72; Richard S. Warner, “Barbed Wire and Nazilagers: PW Camps in Oklahoma,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, LXIV (Spring 1986), 36–67; Joseph T. Butler, Jr., “Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana: 1943–1944,” *Louisiana History*, XIV (Summer 1973), 283–96; Ralph A. Busco and Douglas D. Alder, “German and Italian Prisoners of War in Utah and Idaho,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXXIX (Winter 1971), 55–72; Angela M. Elliott, “Branch Camp No. 10: The Hammond Prisoner of War Experience, 1944–1946,” *Southeast Louisiana Historical Association Papers*, III (1976), 49–64; and John Hammond Moore, “Hitler’s Wehrmacht in Virginia, 1943–1946,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXV (July 1977), 259–73. Other authors cite a large preponderance of sources in English and either do not translate and quote from the few German sources they do list or simply describe the broad characteristics or findings of the German materials. These include Robert D. Billinger, Jr., “With the Wehrmacht in Florida: The German POW Facility at Camp Blanding, 1942–1946,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LVIII (October 1979), 160–73; W. Stanley Hoole, “Alabama’s World War II Prisoner of War Camps,” *Alabama Review*, XX (April 1967), 83–114; and Allen W. Paschal, “The Enemy in Colorado: German Prisoners of War, 1943–46,” *Colorado Magazine*, LVI (Summer 1979), 119–42. Lloyd Clark, “Faustball Tunnel: An American Saga Wrought by Germans,” *Arizona History*, IX (Winter 1978–79), 48–54, is an undocumented account. Lowell A. Bangerter, “German Prisoners of War in Wyoming,” *Journal of German-American Studies*, XIV, No. 2 (1979), 65–123, includes brief descriptions of the Wyoming camps and translations of poems and essays by the prisoners that were published in camp newspapers. “A German POW at Camp Grant: The Reminiscences of Heinz Richter,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, LXXVI (Spring 1983), 61–70, is translated and edited by his son Anton H. Richter. Three works by Merrill R. Pritchett and William L. Shea share similar formats and characteristics. They have very few citations to German sources and extremely limited translations from the materials they cite. Shea and Pritchett’s articles include “The Afrika Korps in Arkansas, 1943–1946,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XXXVII (Spring 1978), 3–22; “The Enemy in Mississippi (1943–1946),” *Journal of Mississippi History*, XL (November 1979), 351–71; and “The Wehrmacht in Louisiana,” *Louisiana History*, XXIII (Spring 1982), 5–19. The most thorough and effective use of German sources is found in the work of Jake W. Spidle: “Axis Prisoners of War in the United States,” cited above in this essay; and “Axis Invasion of the American West: POWs in New Mexico, 1942–1946,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, XLIX (April 1974), 93–122. Unlike most of the authors mentioned earlier, Spidle actually has translated and relied heavily upon these materials in the preparation of his articles. His work is the exception to the general rule among historians of the German POW experience in America.