

WAR DEPARTMENT
Bureau of Public Relations
PRESS BRANCH
Tel. - RE 6700
Brs. 3425 and 4860

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE OF
GENERAL OF THE ARMY DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER,
SUPREME COMMANDER ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE,
IN AUDITORIUM OF THE PENTAGON
3:50 P.M., EWT, MONDAY, JUNE 18, 1945

GENERAL SURLS:

Any introduction is superfluous. The War Department, the press and radio are honored.

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I came over here and found that the press conference we had in Paris shortly before I left was covered in an unusual way. I saw where they had questions and answers and everything. I don't know whether I have very much news to say, but there are a few things in which I think you might be interested.

The first is this: At least in generality I have talked about the GI in this war. I am going to tell just one or two little incidents on which I base my opinion of the American as a fighting man and how he has been trained and prepared for battle.

One of them was in the Battle of the Bulge last winter. I was out on a trip and we were preparing a bridge over the Muerthe for defense, using Engineers for SOS in the event that any flying columns of the Germans broke through. We didn't want them to get a cheap crossing and get into our vital supplies.

These Engineers were working hard so I stopped to chat with a group of them. We had a little talk and I turned to leave and the sergeant in charge said, "General, just one question." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Don't let those 'Doughs' up in front get all those fellows. Let a few Krauts get back to us. We want at them."

There was a sergeant who was with me in this war and one day I was making a flight under conditions that were not classed as good, and I told him I didn't want him to go along; I wanted him to stay and do something else. He was quite worried and I said, "Well, what is the matter?" He said, "My mother told me that if you don't come back from this war, I am not going to come back."

It is incidents like that--I could multiply them for you a thousand times. You encountered them day by day with the American soldier. He doesn't like war; he never will like it, but he is in there pitching and he is doing his duty and he does it with a cheerfulness under conditions of unbelievable hardships.

In the Battle of the Bulge, the snow and frost and the cold were so bitter that men's clothes would get absolutely stiff and frozen and they were carrying on like it was normal spring weather. About that time our Infantry replacements were not coming through rapidly enough to keep some of our divisions up and we called on the other services to fill up these Infantry units. You always get your losses in Infantry platoons, so among other things, we put a certain quota on the Air Forces--enormous Air Forces. The first quota, as I recall, was 10,000. Every single one of them was a volunteer and a great proportion had to give up high ranking non-commissioned grades. Twenty-six hundred Negroes volunteered and went up and fought. That is America at war!

Another thing in which you might be interested is this current German problem. It is very, very tough. Germany is destroyed. At least its cities. Its cities are destroyed way beyond any other thing I have seen in this war. When we first went to London and saw the gaping spaces around St. Paul's Cathedral we wondered how they took it. Frankfurt, Cologne, Kassel, Berlin are London at its worst multiplied by 100,000. They are destroyed!

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In the dislocation of her transport system, breaking up of their agricultural system, mining--mining is almost ceased--they are facing a problem of starvation; I mean real starvation.

That is the first and the emergency problem in Germany. What are we going to do just to prevent on our own part having a Buchenwald of our own, not in this case from intent, but because we wouldn't be able to help it? We have to do something and the second and long-range problem goes into a field above mine. That belongs to the heads of States and long-range policies. I am the executor and not a policy-maker.

Now, within the sections in which my troops are situated, the first problem is to get localities started by putting responsibility, so far as you can, on some Germans where your Secret Service organization screens them, and do your best to get people that were anti-Nazi; failing in that you try to get them at least where they seem to be neutral. You get them responsible for such things as local police and traffic and making sure that the labor that you need for certain projects is turned out. You give them the responsibility of turning the urban population out on the farms so as to raise more fresh vegetables if you can't raise grain. So it's strictly for the moment an emergency problem in Germany. But the long-range problem is one for governments to solve, me being merely an executor.

The displaced persons problem is terrible. We have passed back, as I recall to the Russians 820,000; political prisoners, 1,257,000; we have retaken I think it is about 96,000 of our own prisoners of war, cleared back to the United States 70,000. We have gotten out about 160,000 British prisoners of war, and evacuated them. It was a terrible job to get the organization set up to take the people out. When you talk about persons in that number, their feeding and their housing for the night at way-stations and so on, you have got a real task. They have done it beautifully and the process of getting them out has been working most efficiently.

One thing I think I have a right to speak about since the war in Europe is done is to refer briefly to the Japanese war. The reason I would like to put in a boost in pulling for maximum effort against Japan is based strictly upon my own experience. When you apply maximum effort, your losses are minimized. If you put one regiment to attack a well-defended battalion you are going to have serious losses, but when you apply overwhelming force, overwhelming artillery, overwhelming air power, to that thing you have no losses. They are negligible, at least. No one arm, no service, no two can do the job alone. If we have proved anything in Europe, we have proved that in the integration of the fighting services and supply comes efficiency, rapidity in operations and a minimum in losses, and I am certain that we now as citizens--because in looking at that war I have no part in it officially, I am just another citizen--looking at it I believe that everyone of us that studies this business of war and believes he understands it in the slightest bit should pump and pull for maximum effort to get the thing done with and save lives.

My usual custom in press conferences--of course, I haven't been in the rough hands of the Washington press--is to speak for a few minutes and then turn them loose and do the best I can in defending myself. If there are any questions, I shall be glad to attempt to answer them.

PRESS:

Will you describe your visit with General Pershing before you start?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

It was a very personal thing, and I, myself, should not like to make any remark other than this; General Pershing was the commander of the first A.E.F. I commanded the sons of his men, and I felt that my men would like me to go out and pay my respects to General Pershing. That is all.

PRESS:

Could you describe the ribbons you are wearing?

Well, this is one the President gave me just an hour ago. This is a second oak leaf cluster to my Distinguished Service Medal. The top ones are all American, and I think you know them all. The next one is the Order of Merit of the British Empire. The next one is the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath --British Empire. The next one is the Russian Order of Victory. The next one is a ribbon given by the King of England for having commanded two of his armies. He gave it to me personally. That was in Africa before we went into Europe. The next one is Russian. The next one is the French Cross of the Legion of Honor; French Cross of Liberation; the French Croix de Guerre; and two Polish ribbons, the Virtuti Militari and the Order of Polonia Restituta.

Captain Butcher reminds me that there are certain privileges that go with certain Russian decorations, among them, free train rides; you can commandeer taxis, free rides on the subway, and certain other privileges that you can do just as long as they don't take them away from you.

PRESS:

Did you receive any orders today about your future assignment?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

None.

PRESS:

When do you return to Europe?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

It is indeterminate. I am going to stay home a little while if I can. I have been away a long time.

PRESS:

Will Mrs. Eisenhower go back with you?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I don't see how it can be done just now. The problem of the people going over there is one that is very close to my heart. I think the people that are going to stay indefinitely sooner or later we should, if possible, take their families over. But Germany today is destroyed as a country; it is a hostile country, and we are short of quarters, of food, of everything else, and until it is possible to establish policies by which any GI as well as myself can take advantage of, it would seem to be out of character, at least for me, to seek a favored position.

PRESS:

When is General Devers coming back?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

The twenty-second or twenty-third, he said.

PRESS:

Who will be in charge then?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

General Bradley.

PRESS:

How do you like the reception here today?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, I will say this: It is the most remarkable thing I have experienced in my life. Its effect on the emotions of a rather simple person is a piling up thing that I am afraid is going to reach a breaking point. It was a glorious reception.

PRESS:

How long do you think the occupation of Germany will last?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I wouldn't attempt to guess.

PRESS:

Can you tell us what the work of the First Airborne Army demonstrated in the place of airborne operations in modern war?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

In my opinion, the use of airborne troops in this war has just scratched the surface. I think there will be equipment coming along that will not only take special divisions, but the full equipment of the division and land. They will be self-sustaining and mobile as any other division. We have only started.

PRESS:

Would you like to make a statement regarding the work of the medical officers in this war?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, the medical officer as an individual I can't say much about. I can talk about the medical service. I think the best way to measure it is the percentage of fatalities that came out of your wounded, and it has been cut more than half, less than 50 per cent, what it was in the other World War. I think for a long time we were running 33 per cent, but it has been brought about I think largely, first, by better organization of the medical service, and second, by the addition of the sulfa drugs and penicillin and use of blood plasma and whole blood.

If I could reach all America there is one thing I would like to do--thank them for blood plasma and whole blood. It has been a tremendous thing. These are the things, I believe, that and one other factor--air evacuation. We have evacuated almost everyone from our forward hospitals by air, and it has unquestionably saved hundreds of lives--thousands of lives.

PRESS:

Are you going to Boston?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

No, I think not.

PRESS:

Do you think Hitler is dead? Are you convinced Hitler is dead?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, to tell you the truth, I wasn't. I was at first. I thought the evidence was quite clear. But when I actually got to talk to my Russian friends I found they weren't convinced, and I found that it had been erroneously reported from Berlin. I don't know. The only thing I am sure of is what I said in my Paris conference--if he is not dead he must be leading a terrible life for a man

that was the arrogant dictator of 250,000,000 people to be hunted like a criminal and afraid of the next touch on his shoulder. He must be suffering the agonies of the damned if he is alive.

PRESS:

What units are going to Berlin? The 2nd or 82nd Airborne, or both?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I didn't get the question.

PRESS:

Will it be more than one division?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

It will be the approximate strength of one division, but I have forgotten for the moment what unit we did set up. We changed it two or three times.

PRESS:

It was first the 2nd then the 82nd Airborne.

What can you tell us about the effectiveness of the German plans for werewolf, underground, and sabotage?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, I tell you I think they delayed a little bit too long. You must remember this: The German was completely surprised and mystified all the way through the late campaign. He never believed the things were going to happen to him that did happen. For example, we captured a salt mine near Godes where all the treasure was. I forget the date. We got it, let's say it was April 3 or 4. As late as March 17 he was putting gold in the place. He was constantly astonished and surprised at the speed, of the power, and so he didn't have a chance to organize many of those things, because he just didn't believe the old story "it can't happen here". But it happened to him.

PRESS:

You may have seen something about food shortages in this country. Could you say that food was a tangible factor in winning the war--American food, I mean?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, I knew this: From the time we went into Normandy we had to help the French and we had to help everybody we came in contact with. If we had not helped the French and the Belgians with food there is no question but that we couldn't have prevented riots, we couldn't have prevented disorder in our rear areas, and we couldn't have kept our lines of communication working because the trains are run by natives--I mean the native folks, French and Belgian. We had to feed them. And they have been fed well.

PRESS:

Does SHEAF still exist?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

SHEAF still exists, yes. The exact date of its termination will be fixed, of course, by my bosses, the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It is, after all, a British-American organization, and when they give the date for its dissolution it will dissolve.

PRESS:

Were landings other than those actually made considered in Western Europe?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

In the prior planning, of course, we examined every single point from the Ba of Biscay clear on around to Bremen. Every single foot of that coast was studied and examined from every standpoint of air cover, tide, existence of beach obstacles--every possible thing. And the one we took was considered to have the best chances of success. Now, thereafter one part of our cover plan was to keep the German believing we were going to attack Calais, which was very heavily defended, and the success of that deception was apparent, because the 15th German Army was held up for a long time in front of the Pas de Calais and couldn't come down. It was the people responsible for that, with all of their methods of using radio, nets, and everything else. It was very well done.

PRESS:

During the Battle of the Ardennes, were you ever worried about the outcome?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

You bet. Three weeks later when I got the American papers.



PRESS:

Can you say what the set-up will be over there in Europe? It is now, as I understand it, two Armies with Patton and Haislip commanding. Who will be the group commander?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

We will have group commanders for awhile, but when we have finally settled down, group command will disappear. There will be no need for that, and the Army commander will report. He will be also a district commander. He will report directly to the theater commander.

PRESS:

That is the set-up? That will be Patton and Haislip--in the Seventh? The others will come along sooner or later?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

That is right.

PRESS:

How long do you think you will have to maintain that?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Of course, my convictions on such things are personal. I don't know the German people well. I have tried to study their soldiers. I have tried to search the minds of their leaders that I know. I have used every facility that was available to me. But I honestly believe this: That non-fraternization with adults must continue until our people can assure us that we have gotten out the last elements of Nazism, and I mean anyone who is a potential source of infection. You must get them out before you can afford to try to use the methods of example, education, or any other scheme that might be workable. You must get those people out.

PRESS:

What do you think will be done with the German General Staff?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

The General Staff itself must be utterly destroyed. These wars of Germany's have been, from the standpoint of the General Staff, merely campaigns--

merely incidents. They started back in 1806 under Napoleon, and they have determined to rule Europe, and, in my opinion, they have used these political leaders that have come along in order to implement their own ideas and planning. If they found a Hitler-like leader with his tremendous ability of mob psychology, who could get the whole German nation behind him, he was useful. It happened he got so powerful he dominated them. Now, how are you going to destroy that German General Staff is something else again, because many of them have the excuse they did their duty as honorable soldiers. But my own opinion is that it should be made utterly impossible for them ever to function again. I would like to come back to this one question: I didn't mean to be facetious and I didn't mean to get such a tremendous reaction, but I will say this: In the Battle of the Ardennes it had all been calculated very carefully before. There was some surprise in the ability of the Volksturm to maneuver forward and to hold the flanks rather firmly, but there was never any fright in the high command at any time that that attack was going to push through. We captured their General Orders on the first day. We never had the slightest thought of any such a thing.

PRESS:

Did our feint toward Calais explain why the Germans did not make a stronger effort to throw us off the beaches?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, we thought they made a pretty strong effort. He did bring down what armor he had, which were the German Panzer divisions and Panzer Grenadier divisions and his paratroopers. He did bring them down, but he did keep some very good divisions up near Calais. Yes, it explained his slowness in bringing them down.

PRESS:

What is Alex Patch's new assignment?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

You will have to ask the War Department. I don't know. He is not with me. He has been sent back for some assignment.

PRESS:

Would you care to discuss your meeting with General Zhukov?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, all these Russian generals that I have run into are unquestionably capable soldiers. They have taken the measure of the German. They know what he can do. They know what they have to put together to whip him. They attack when they have a tremendous amount of reserves ready, and they don't make these little nibbling tactical advances, which are always so expensive. When they attack they mean to break through and crush, and they do. They have a soldier that fights hard and well, and they have been well led. They are not equipped in the same way as ours, but for certain types of terrain in which they operate, particularly in the Spring and in the Winter, their own type of equipment is probably better. The horse and the man carrying the stuff on his back is probably better in those conditions than is the truck.

PRESS:

We didn't hear very much about Russian air. Was that used to any great extent?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

The Russian air is, of course, not organized like ours. We have tremendous formations of heavy big bombers. The Russian air has been developed more specifically for use always right on the front line. Yes, they have some good

fighting machines. We have seen them. We saw their performance and we know they are good, and they are good flyers.

PRESS:

How much damage did the German V weapons do to our actual military plans?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

The only place that the V weapons hurt our plans was some damage around Antwerp. I think if there had been four months difference it would have been very bad. They were just coming into production, and, of course, we couldn't conceal the facts in England. They tried to rush and they probably started using them before they were quite ready, but we captured great stockpiles of those things they were just getting ready to use.

PRESS:

In your previous press conference you said the November landing in North Africa was the most worried night. What was your second most worried night?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

As a matter of fact, I just guessed on that one. They put that question to me, and it was one I had never thought about. It is pretty hard to go back over three years of a good many worried nights. Malta was pretty bad.

What happened was that usually the Navy figures that you cannot land successfully with more than what they call a "force 4 wind", and about one o'clock in the afternoon we finally had to make a decision whether the attack was to go the next morning, and as the decision was made we thought it would be all right, but the wind kept piling up and piling up. It got to force 7. That was a very worried night, because we didn't know what was to happen on the U. S. beaches. The British beaches, by good fortune, were on the eastern protected coastline, but the southern attack was pretty bad. Admiral Cunningham told me that was the greatest piece of seamanship he saw in fifty years--the landing of the American forces by the American Navy on the south coast of Sicily. We got there with almost no casualties from the storm.

PRESS:

General, had you expected the war to end in Europe when it did?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

No, for once in my life I am going to defend myself. On October 30, 1943, I made a bet that the war in Europe would terminate in 1944. Well, I have been jeered at a little bit because I missed it four months. But I just want to ask you this: Under the conditions, if you will go back to October, 1943, how many people believed that we were going to be able to invade Europe successfully and rush forward like we did? What I was expressing was a tremendous confidence in our ability to go across the Channel and whip the German. I thought we could do it in the next year. Well, I was wrong by four months.

PRESS:

What about the question of when it did end, General? Had you expected it to end about that time, that is to say, May?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

After March 27 you couldn't tell when it was going to end, because the enemy was crazy. He was whipped and knew he was whipped. As a matter of fact, we have all sorts of evidence that their soldiers knew they were whipped by the 1st of January, when they got nothing but defeat out of the Ardennes. They knew they were through, but desperately hoped they could get the Allies separated. That was their only excuse for fighting. They took a pounding and destruction that was senseless, except in that one meager hope they could get the Allies fighting among themselves.

PRESS:

With tens of thousands of your men going across the country to the Pacific in the next few months, have you any tip you would like to give the home folks about what we can give them?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

The only thing is for ~~God's~~ sake don't psychoanalyze them. They are perfectly normal human beings. They have been through a lot and very naturally they want a pat on the back and they want to be told they are pretty good fellows and they are. But they want to be treated just like they were treated when they went away.

PRESS:

We understand that those Negro volunteers went into mixed units last November. Based upon this experience, how good an organization do you think can be developed when these men have been selected, trained, and assigned as a part of an integrated Army?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I don't know exactly what you mean. I formed platoons of them, and I took platoons and gave them trained noncommissioned officers and trained officers and they operated as platoons wherever there was a division that was short. I have formed from my experience no general conclusions that I would certainly be ready to express now as a type of organization for the future. Under those conditions they fought well. They were volunteers and they did good work.

PRESS:

General, have you had from the Russians any expression on this idea of destroying the German General Staff that you could give us?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

It would be on their part exactly as on mine. One of their generals agreed with me. He said for one thing what we have got to get rid of is the German General Staff. But I am not going to quote him by name, because I don't know what their customs are.

PRESS:

When you say "destroyed", does that mean segregate them in any way?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

To my mind you not only have to get them and eliminate all their archives, but you have to get every man, certainly, that is a trained general staff officer and I see no way of doing it except segregation in some way, where he simply can't get back to his job; and, moreover, others that you may have missed you have to watch all over Germany for them.

PRESS:

How effective were our shortwave broadcasts to the continent?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I could never make my radio pick up shortwave, but I know that lots of them were picked up, and I have heard that prisoners of war, particularly our returned prisoners of war, displayed unbelievable ingenuity in making and getting radios through some secret organization. They would get in little pieces one at a time and make up a little radio. They told me about the shortwave radio reception they had both from England and from the United States, and the stories of making those radios are really remarkable.

PRESS:

General, this business of fraternization, would you estimate that that would require years to meet those conditions?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

No, I shouldn't think so. I should think sooner or later we have got to find some answer through education and example. In my opinion you can't build peace on hate and with a club. There has got to be some way. But you must find these criminals and people that are responsible, and if there is one thing that I would oppose with every bit of energy that I could, that is letting a single criminal or anyone to whom you could trace any atom of guilt escape. He must be punished. It is our only hope of showing these people that crime doesn't pay.

PRESS:

General, would that be after all these people have been processed?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I think in these local areas our people have to get such a dossier on every man that they can tell about what his record was and what kind of person he was.

PRESS:

Is there anything to this report that the engineers over there are doing a lot of napping?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I don't know about it, but those fellows are always napping. But I would see no reason for it inside our own lines, and I know we are not flying outside our own lines.

PRESS:

When the Council is set up in Berlin will American reporters be allowed in there with free access to information?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Certainly in the American zone, and in the rest of it I don't know.

PRESS:

That is in Berlin, when you have an American administrator?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Then you will have an American zone in Berlin. All right. Certainly the American reporter is going to be welcome at my headquarters if I have a headquarters there.

PRESS:

Where will your headquarters be? Just how will it divide between Berlin and Frankfurt?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Always Frankfurt, but in Berlin, say we are allotted an area in which we can put our administrative facilities that have to meet with those of the other nations to formulate methods, that will apply to the nation as a whole.

PRESS:

And you say that the reporters will be allowed there and when you are head of the Council will be allowed generally in Berlin?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I can really speak only for myself, and it is a question that hadn't occurred to me, so I couldn't give you a concrete definite answer. I can say only that in the area I control accredited correspondents always are free to go as they please.

PRESS:

Will Germany be more and more administered as a unit or will it continue to be administered in three air-tight compartments as time goes on?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Well, I am sure that certainly you are going to have to administer the transportation, communications, and many other things, health regulations and so on, things which must be administered as units if it is going to be done successfully.

PRESS:

Can you tell us about this wide publication of atrocity stories? Do you think the publication of them is going to be very useful?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I think I was largely responsible for it, so I must have thought it was useful. When I found the first camp like that I think I never was so angry in my life. The bestiality displayed there was not merely piled up bodies of people that had starved to death, but to follow out the road and see where they tried to evacuate them so they could still work, you could see where they sprawled on the road. You could go to their burial pits and see horrors that really I wouldn't even want to begin to describe. I think people ought to know about such things. It explains something of my attitude toward the German war criminal. I believe he must be punished, and I will hold out for that forever. I think it did good. I think the people at home ought to know what they are fighting for and the kind of person they are fighting. Yes, it did good.

PRESS:

How widespread was it? Was it general?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

It's a thing that we have been trying very desperately to find out, whether or not the German population as a whole knew about that. I can't say. It does appear, from all the evidence we can find, that they were isolated areas, and this one piece of evidence of the mayor being shown the thing and going home and hanging himself would indicate he didn't know about it. On the other hand, what makes the story so thin with me is when we find these very high ranking Nazis denying knowledge of it. If they didn't, they deliberately closed their eyes, that is all. As far as I am concerned, those people are just as guilty as anybody else--those high ranking Nazis--but I think it would be impossible to say, however, the German nation knew it as a whole. But a lot of them know it, because I made them go out and give them a decent burial. We made a film an hour long and we have made many Germans look at it, and it is not pretty.

PRESS:

Where was the toughest fighting between VE-Day and D-Day, or rather I should say between D-Day and VE-Day? Was the toughest fighting in the Ardennes or was there a serious battle....

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

Oh, no. We wouldn't classify Ardennes as the toughest. I'd say the fiercest battling was along toward the end of June in getting our positions from which to make the great breakout and several of the battles on breaking through particular portions of the Siegfried Line in order to get an advantage you could begin to exploit. That was really the fiercest battle where we took our largest losses. Except for the captures in the 106th Division, our losses in the Ardennes battle were not very great. I mean not unusually great. Our losses had been running about 21,000 a week. In the week after the attack, December 16, they got up as high as 27,000, and they then fell right off, and the German losses in that attack, starting December 16 and ending about January 13, their losses in personnel were about two and a half times ours, and in materiel certainly three times.

PRESS:

How did it feel today to have a neighbor from Missouri win that medal on you?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I'll tell you. For once a general was caught in the unforgivable crime—he was surprised. It was a very gracious thing for the President to do, and I am very proud of it.

PRESS:

There have been reports that very large numbers of Nazis and SS men, Gestapo, succeeded in filtering through into prisoner of war camps by changing their uniforms and, of course, you are processing those prisoners of war both in Germany and outside. Could you tell us anything about the success they are having in discovering these people?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

The total captures and incarcerations we have run about 15,000, and that is gotten from all sources; people that we definitely believe or suspect of being closely connected or having war guilt of some kind.

PRESS:

Would it run very much higher than that?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

I can't tell how high it will run.

PRESS:

Are you going to have any relaxation or actual furlough?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

If I don't have a few days there is going to be a rebellion around here.

PRESS:

Do you consider the ordinary SS trooper a war criminal?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

This is what I'd say: The SS trooper, up until it began to be desperate, or somewhere in September of 1944, I'd say anyone that was an SS trooper up until that time would be a war criminal. At least the full burden of proof would be on him. After that, because the SS framework of command was the most effective thing they had, they would put any healthy man in it they could get a hold of. He couldn't help himself. And you might have to move a little more carefully with,

let's say, the lower noncommissioned privates in the SS after they became really desperate. Except for the 12th SS, I think that the American Army as a unit will handle the 12th SS, every man they can get a hold of. They are the men that killed our people in cold blood.

PRESS:

To what extent, General, were the American prisoners deliberately starved? Was that a general practice or isolated?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

There is unquestionably plenty of evidence that the conditions in some prisoner of war camps were deplorable. Again, they can at least make an excuse, which is that their transportation system had been so badly destroyed that they were getting in such desperate straits themselves that it may have been impossible for them to do more, and that was when we notified them they were to leave our prisoners where they were when we came up and let them alone, and in return for that we would send that prisoner out of the theater of operations. And up until unconditional surrender came about, we faithfully observed that. We would not use them again in the combat zone. There was plenty of evidence of most deplorable conditions and some of them were neglect.

PRESS:

The 12th SS was a division, wasn't it?

GENERAL EISENHOWER:

That's right. I am talking there, as you understand, only as far as our feelings are concerned. We hate everybody that ever wore a 12th SS uniform.

PRESS:

Thank you, General.

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END

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