

AS THIS STATEMENT REVEALS METHODS EMPLOYED IN ESCAPING, IT IS
NECESSARY TO GIVE THIS PAPER THE FOLLOWING SECURITY CLASSIFI-
CATION

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STATEMENT REFERENCE ESCAPES AND MALTREATMENT OF

F/L H BROOKS

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WHILST POW

1 I was captured at OLDENBURG, Germany on 9 April 1942. From OLDENBURG, I was taken to the main police station in HAMBURG and handed over to the LUFTWAFFE authorities. On 11 or 12 April 1942, together with my fellow crew members, I was transferred to DULAG LUFT (OBERRUSSEL).

2 During the interrogation phase at DULAG LUFT, I spent close to five days in solitary confinement, before being released to the main POW camp. At DULAG LUFT, I was given POW #24803. Around 20 April 1942, I was transferred from DULAG LUFT to STALAG VIII B (LAMS DORF), arriving at the latter camp around 24 April 1942.

3 Around the 29 May 1942, I exchanged identity with an army private, named FREDERICK COLE, POW #23193, of the New Zealand Army.

4 Around the 1st June 1942, I departed from STALAG VIII B, accompanied by a sergeant of the Polish Air Force who had also exchanged identity with an army private, for a working party at BEUTHEN SILESIA (JOHANNA COAL MINES). On arrival at the working party, my colleague was identified as a Polish airman and was returned to the Air Force Compound at STALAG VIII B. The German Camp Commander, fearing that some of the new arrivals may attempt to escape, ordered German guards to search all newcomers. In the search, all can goods from Red Cross parcels were opened and emptied into a bowl and presented to the prisoner in this fashion.

5 Around 8 June 1942, I escaped from the BEUTHEN working party and I was recaptured around 19 June 1942, on the outskirts of CRACOW, Poland. When I was questioned by the local authorities as to my nationality, I informed them that I was a French worker employed on a farm in the vicinity of CRACOW. While the Germans were checking the surrounding French labour camps, I was escorted to a civilian prison in CRACOW. Here, I spent the night in a cell already occupied by several Poles arrested on charges of drunkenness. The following morning, I was further interrogated and searched by a German officer and two German NCO's. During the search, the Germans discovered my POW identification discs. Perturbed by the false information which I had given them the previous night, I was kicked, slapped and ~~searched~~ ^{interrogated} by the Germans. In the afternoon, I was escorted to the GESTAPO HEADQUARTERS in CRACOW. Here I underwent a three to four hour interrogation. After the interrogation, I was

sent to a newly constructed Russian POW camp, west of CRACOW. At this camp I received my first meal after being in custody for nearly twenty-four hours. I remained at this camp for four days until the arrival of escort guards from STALAG VIII B. While I was in the Russian camp, I was denied medical attention for severe blisters which had formed on my feet during my escape.

6 Around 25 June 1942, I was re-interrogated at STALAG VIII B and sentenced by camp officials to fourteen days solitary confinement for attempting to escape. During the fourteen days in solitary confinement, I was given bread and water for ten days. The other four days, I received camp rations which consisted of two very small potatoes, two thin slices of black bread and a ladle of tasteless soup.

7 Upon completing my sentence of solitary confinement, I was required to enter LAMSDORF's hospital for an operation. This operation consisted in the removal of an infected gland from my left groin. Camp doctors attributed the infection to the lack of medical care rendered to my blistered feet while I was detained at the Russian POW camp previously mentioned in para 5 above.

8 Around 26 August 1942, I left STALAG VIII B for a working party near ZWITTAU SUDETANLAND, (this party was near the CZECHOSLOVAKIAN border). Around 10 September 1942, accompanied by an army sergeant, I escaped from this working party and was recaptured on the outskirts of VIENNA, Austria, around the 18 - 19 September 1942, by the BAHNSCHULTZ POLIZEI. The railway police handed my colleague and I over to a detachment of SS troops. We remained in their custody until the following day. Around 20 September 1942, the "SS" received orders to escort us to a POW camp south of VIENNA, in the vicinity of WIENER NEUSTADT. This camp held French and Serb POW's. ~~A period of approximately 30 hours elapsed before rations were made available to us.~~

9 Arriving at this POW camp, we were confined to a "STRAFLAGER". This STRAFLAGER, which resembled a dugout, was situated at a distance of approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the main camp. During the fourth night at the STRAFLAGER, a German guard discovered us attempting to escape through a barred window. Upon being discovered, we were immediately confronted by the guard NCO and several guards. The NCO informed us: "Attempting to escape.....this will be a lesson to both of you....." We were then ~~beaten~~^{struck} with rifle butts and kicked by the guards. The NCO, who was carrying a stick in his hands, used it effectively on our bodies. This beating lasted for nearly 10 for 15 minutes, however, to us it seemed like hours.

10 On the 8th day, escort guards from STALAG VIII B arrived and we were escorted back to LAMSDORF.

11 Around 29 September 1942, I was trialed by camp officials for attempting to escape, and was sentenced to fourteen days of solitary confinement. The only food I received for ten days was bread and water. The other four days, I received the ordinary camp rations as outlined in para 6 above.

12 In November 1942, I was permitted to proceed to another working party at TOST SILESIA (E478). Around the end of November 1942, German NCO in charge of the working party passed the following remarks to me:

"I know that you and other Englishmen want to escape.....
.....if I catch you escaping, I'll shoot you."

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-3-

13 On 10 May 1943, accompanied by Sgt DUNCAN, I escaped from this working party and reached friendly hands in Poland.

14 For the next twenty-one months, I was engaged in active guerrilla warfare, against the German Army of Occupation, in southern Poland.

15 When the Polish underground was disbanded in the latter part of January 1945, Sgt DUNCAN and myself, declared ourselves to the advancing Russian Ground Forces as recent escapees from a German POW camp. We were compelled to march from GRABIE to MYSLENICE, a distance of nearly thirty miles. At MYSLENICE, we were handed over to NKVD officers attached to the Company Headquarters. The same night, this unit received orders to take up a position on the front line at BIELSKO. Arriving at BIELSKO, we were turned over to NKVD officers of the Battalion Headquarters, who, suspecting us as possible Germans, confined us to a guarded building which already housed approximately twenty captured Germans. We spent approximately four days under Russian surveillance before our nationalities were confirmed by higher officials. A week later, we were once again compelled to walk from BIELSKO to NOWY SACZ, Poland, a distance of over 100 miles.

16 We remained in NOWY SACZ for 2½ weeks before being transported to LWOW - KIEV - ODESSA, arriving at the latter around 26 February 1945.

17 In ODESSA, we were confined in a repatriation camp for approximately two weeks before returning to the UK.

18 I arrived in the UK around 19 March 1945, and was repatriated to Canada in May 1945.

19 While I was in the UK, I was informed by RCAF officials that my father died in May 1944. Upon returning to Canada I was informed by my mother that they had received news which suggested that I may have been shot while attempting to escape. In the latter part of March or early May 1944, my father, received a telephone call from the MONTREAL Red Cross Branch, requesting my father to visit their office for a confidential talk. My father, apparently, never discussed the subject of this conversation with anyone, and died of a heart attack a short time later.

20 It is believed that the heart attack was brought on by his being told that his son was presumed to have been killed.

(H. Brooks) P/L