Using the Living as Proxies in the Politics of the Dead: U.S. Grave Exhumation in the Soviet Zone of Germany, 1945-1953.

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Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

April 2020

“A war is only over when the last soldier is buried”
Russian General Alexander Suvovov (1799)

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IN MEMORIUM

This thesis is dedicated to Technical Sergeant Benjamin H. Stedman and all those who remain missing in former East Germany.
May they rest in peace wherever they may be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is almost impossible to properly acknowledge the process, the embedded self-growth, and the perpetual emotional and mental marathon this thesis required. From a spark of inspiration in fall 2017 during one lecture in Professor Emily Greble's "Muslims in Modern Europe" course to now, I am incredibly grateful for all the support I have received from mentors, colleagues, friends, and family.

I am deeply thankful for the Vanderbilt History Department in awarding me a Casebier Grant for research in Germany, which supported me on a two-week journey in February 2019 that changed my life. During my trip, I met with local historians, including Norbert Wagner, a neighborhood photographer, Johann Karl, and a DeutschlandFunk journalist, Julia Tieke. I rode with Maik Lamolla, the curator of the Garnison Museum, to the Zehrensdorf Cemetery. I am also grateful for his patience in sitting with me in the closed museum during the off-season so I could spend hours in the freezing kitchen archives. Most importantly, I thank my host, Brigit Kolkmann, for her hospitality and community connections during my ten-day stay in Wünsdorf/Zossen.

The journey did not stop there. Upon reflecting on my research trip, I shifted focus and am grateful for my communications with historian Seumas Spark and RAF historian Stuart Hadaway, the two lone British scholars to ever mention British exhumation in the Soviet Zone of Germany. I am indebted to Hadaway as he sent me crucial primary documents from the U.K. National Archives and British Royal Air Force Archives by post.

During my time back at Vanderbilt, I am thankful for my essential correspondence with Professor Jochen Hellbeck at Rutgers University and Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author, Rick Atkinson. This project would not have been possible without their advice and archival connections, especially at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I must also mention the incredible work of Vanderbilt's Central Library staff, namely Inter-Library Loan. Thank you, Jim Toplon and Rachel Adams, in particular.

At the National Archives II at College Park, Maryland, I am thankful for the Textual Records Division, especially Timothy Nenninger and his crew, for decoding my antiquated microfilm footnotes. Without them, the Baltic DPs would never have been given their due credit for U.S. exhumation. I am also thankful for fate by sitting me next to Professor John Moremon, a New Zealand WWII exhumation scholar in the reading rooms. I am incredibly grateful for our email correspondence and his copies of NARA documents.

Above all, I am indebted to my thesis advisors, Professors Helmut Smith, and Joel Harrington. After countless office hour visits, email correspondence, phone calls, and Zoom chats, they made me produce my best work. Research that would have certainly made my twelve-year-old self, one who wore "Rosie the Riveter" t-shirts and collected military insignias from flea markets and sand from each D-Day beach, proud. Thank you.

Death's Birth: The End's Beginning

"The nation which forgets its defenders will itself be forgotten"
-Calvin Coolidge, 1920[1]

The former Woodstock Community Hospital janitor from McHenry County, Illinois climbed aboard the British Avro Lancaster bomber right before 17:50 on Thursday, January 20, 1944. Born in 1915, Technical Sergeant Benjamin Howell Stedman had enlisted in the army a month prior to the January mission, and was posted to the British No 97 Squadron in Cambridgeshire, England at the Royal Airforce (RAF) Bourn base.[2] As the only American attached to the bomber, Stedman joined six British men as the rear gunner for the day bombing campaign over Germany.[3] After completing ten successful missions, the bomber, operated by recently married pilot Cyril Wakley from London, had orders to conduct its first night bombing over Berlin.[4]

Directed toward Berlin, the Lancaster bomber crossed the English Channel carrying a payload of 14,000 pounds on the night of January 20. Upon reaching German skies, however, the crew lost contact with the command headquarters. Shot down by flak, the burning Lancaster bomber crashed into a field next to the town of Zossen, approximately thirty kilometers south of Berlin. Three men successfully bailed out, surviving to become prisoners-

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1 Bill Warnock, *The Dead of Winter: How Battlefield Investigators, WWII Veterans, and Forensic Scientists Solved the Mystery of the Bulge's Lost Soldiers* (New York: Chamberlain Bros., 2005), 2.
2 "Archive Report: Allied Forces: 20/21.01.1944 No 97 Squadron Avro Lancaster III ND367 OF-K P/O Cyril Arthur Wakley," Aircrewremembered.org, accessed January 23, 2020, http://aircrewremembered.com/wakley-cyril.html.
3 "Service Overview, Ben H Stedman," HonorStates.org, accessed January 22, 2020, https://www.honorstates.org/index.php?id=332266; Ibid.
4 Martin Bowman, *Bomber Command Reflections of War: Battleground Berlin, July 1943-March 1944* (United Kingdom: Pen and Sword, 2012), Chapter One, Unmarked Page.

of-war at the Stalag Luft IVB- Mühlberg camp near Dresden.[5] The remaining four men, including Stedman who hung on a tree, his parachute aflame, died.[6]

Two days after the failed mission, local Germans from the surrounding area buried the three British men and Stedman in the local cemetery, the "Hero Cemetery at Zehrensdorf," as it had been dubbed in a 1925 local newspaper.[7] By 1944, "Hero Cemetery," located near the secret telecommunications underground bunkers for all operational fronts in Nazi Germany, hosted a wide array of dead.[8]

The Zehrensdorf cemetery was originally the final resting place for villagers in the 19th century and later became the burial grounds for POWs from two special camps during the First World War.[9] The two camps were propaganda outposts, hosting thousands of prisoners from the colonies of the Russian, British, and French empires to convert them into fighting Jihad for the Ottoman Empire. Over 400 Russian Tatar, 262 Arabs and West Africans, 205 Hindus, and a small number of Belgian, French, and British soldiers died in interment and were buried in the cemetery.[10]

By the end of the Second World War, Technical Sergeant Stedman rested not only near Germans from the previous century, prisoners from the since-destroyed POWs camps from the last war, but German Jews who travelled back from the former German territories after the Treaty of Versailles and SS officers who had operated the secret telecommunications

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[5] "Archive Report: Allied Forces: 20/21.01.1944 No 97 Squadron Avro Lancaster III ND367 OF-K P/O Cyril Arthur Wakley," Aircrewremembered.org; Unnamed Military Document, pg. 38, Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf/Zossen, Germany.
[6] "Case #8- Deferred Search Roster Map Sheet N-53, Stedman, Ben H. T/Sgt. 10601625 (TDY to RAF)," Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Soviet Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf, Germany.
[7] Ibid; Article: "Der Heldenfriedhof von Zehrensdorf," Tempelhof, 1925, Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf/Zossen, Germany.
[8] François de Beaulieu, *Mein Vater, Hitler und ich (*Donat Verlag: Bremen, 2013), 87- 88.
[9] "Gutbezirk Zehrensdorf," Information over the history of Zehrensdorf, Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf/Zossen, Germany; Gerhard Höpp, *Muslime in der Mark. Als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen, 1914-1924* (Berlin, Verlag Das Arabische Buch: Zentrum Moderner Orient Geistewissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V., 1997).
[10] Gerhard Höpp, "Friedhof der Völker: Zehrensdorf in Deutschland einzigartig," Heimatgeschichte, Undated, Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf/Zossen, Germany.

in the forest.[11] After the war, the Russian Red Army occupied Zossen. The troops converted the extensive telecommunications bunkers into their new base dubbed "Little Moscow," settling in an upwards of 50,000 troops for an essential outpost in the Berlin area of the Soviet Zone of Germany.[12]

Stedman's burial in the German "Hero Cemetery" could not be his permanent resting place however. According to the U.S. government, the proud parents of the Ben Stedman, Thomas and Kathyrn Stedman, two immigrants who settled in Illinois, deserved not only further information on their only child, who was MIA, but a proper and honorable burial either in a U.S. military cemetery abroad or at home.[13] Directly after the war, the U.S. War Department, responsible for all Armed Services dead, decreed that leaving any U.S. dead in a former enemy country would be a sign of severe disrespect to the families who had sacrificed their loved ones for the conflict.[14] All U.S. dead, regardless of burial location, needed to be found, exhumed, and reinterred in U.S. cemeteries to receive proper honors.[15]

This thesis examines the search operations of U.S. government and American Grave Registration Command (AGRC) officers in both Allied and Soviet areas of occupation. Using an extensive collection of U.S. government documents and AGRC official reports, the thesis is one of the first attempts to explain how the AGRC recovered bodies after the Second World

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[11] Ibid; "Der mohammedanische Friedhof,"Hinter verschlossenen Türen: Zehrensdorf-ein vergessenenes Dorf?" Die Waldstadt Promotional Brochure, Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf/Zossen, Germany.

[12] Ciarán Fahey, "The Forbidden City: inside the abandoned Soviet camp of Wünsdorf," The Guardian, January 11, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/11/forbidden-city-inside-abandoned-soviet-camp-wunsdorf-east-germany.

[13] "1940 United States Federal Census for Ben Stedman," Ancestry.com, accessed January 22, 2020, https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2442/M-T0627-00840-00553/143003456?backurl=https%3a%2f%2fwww.ancestry.com%2f1940-census%2fusa%2fIllinois%2fBen-Stedman_4zv6xq&ssrc=&backlabel=Return.

[14] Edward Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Quartermaster General. Historical Section, 1951), 216.

[15] War Department Summary Sheet, Subject: Current Plan For Return of American Dead and Establishment of Overseas and United States Cemeteries, 8 September 1945, in: Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad., (Washington D.C.: War Department, 1945).

War, and is the first attempt ever to give an in-depth analysis of operations in the Soviet Zone. It further argues that the government used various people as proxies in obtaining the U.S. dead. As families were of the utmost importance to the U.S. government, oftentimes the government also compromised preexisting foreign policy to retrieve the bodies of the fallen. Yet the government never elaborated on using people as negotiation pawns or policy compromises to the public. Instead, it propagated the belief that the U.S. government alone recovered remains in a morally pure manner as restitution for the families' sacrifices during the war.

The thesis proceeds in three distinct sections. Chapter One explores AGRC operations in France, highlighting the use of local people by AGRC officers to undergo their search and exhumation activities. Chapter Two details how the AGRC gained access entry into the Soviet Zone of Germany, underscoring the necessity of the U.S. to negotiate with the Soviet Union to recover the dead. Chapter Three describes the efforts to find the remaining U.S. dead following the establishment of the two German states, particularly how the U.S. AGRC relied on the help of British and German workers to continue the search. Although the postwar was the first time the U.S. government systematically used foreign proxies in retrieving the dead, the government's obligation to find the remains of all U.S. servicemen far predates the Second World War.

Background to National Duty

The U.S. government's responsibility for the proper burials for its deceased servicemen began in the American Civil War. Early in that war, local Southern and Northern families had travelled to the aftermath of battles, combing the fields for their dead to bring them home. Private embalming companies also made considerable profit in finding requested

bodies.[16] The politics of death was intimately individualized, families and widows desperately searching for their loved ones in the chaos of combat.

With the introduction during the Civil War of photographs and journalistic sketches depicting the reality of the front, people all across the fragmented country, not just locals nearby, viewed shocking pictures of actual death. The visual information created not just a unified community of suffering, but the narrative that citizenship was "predicated on the willingness of men to lay down their lives."[17] The image of an anonymous dead soldier became one of "America's dear boys," a sacrificial lamb of the fighting cause who needed a proper military burial.[18] Instead of a family organizing the burial of the soldier, now the country would provide the service to help enforce a national narrative.

To streamline a national burial procedure, the government passed a few Federal Orders over standardizing cemeteries to ensure that all fallen servicemen were treated equitably in the mourning process. Union soldiers dug trenches, placing their causalities in rows, moving the Confederate dead into separate mass graves. Following the end of the war, the War Department established official cemeteries at major battlefields, setting granite stones at the head of both identified and unknown remains.[19] As the public now expected the government to provide mourning spaces, national cemeteries became gathering places for a country that had lost an entire generation to the war, empowering families to mourn the dead in community gatherings. American society began to associate womanhood and families with war mourning and sacrifice.

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[16] Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (United Kingdom: Vintage Books, 2009), 92-96.
[17] Jan Finseth, *The Civil War Dead and American Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 104-113.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Meg Groeling, *The Aftermath of Battle: The Burial of the Civil War Dead* (El Dorado Hills: Savas Beatie, 2015), 11-18.

With a coupling of familial loss to war, the U.S. government in the decades after the Civil War shifted its rationale for seeing the rescue of the dead as a sacred duty. Instead of burying out of obligation to the sacrificial soldier, the government cared for the dead in appreciation for the families, in particular the mothers and widows, who gave up their loved ones for the war. Managing the details of death was kind of a courtesy "thank you" from the government. A military death became essentially a transaction: a family sacrificed their son to receive a badge of honor, including a proper burial adorned with patriotic symbolism. If a family held their end of the bargain, then the U.S. government would too.

By the time of the First World War, the U.S. government added further benefits for families in return for their husbands and sons. In late 1917, the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense argued that women should not mourn in wartime by wearing black, but rather wear a gold star to "show a higher appreciation of what death in the country's good cause really is—an honor even more than a misfortune."[20] President Wilson endorsed this suggestion, founding the Gold Star tradition. Women who lost loved ones now adorned their living room windows with a gold star banner and wore a gold star armband, a public display of sacrifice.[21] A Gold Star enforced not "private grief" but the glory of a "patriotic citizen," a measure proving one's elite standing in the social hierarchy of a wartime country .[22]

At the same time, the U.S. government introduced a new burial policy giving more agency to families in the decision of where to bury their war dead. In 1919, the War Department sent questionnaires to the approximately 80,000 families (next of kin) who had lost a loved one to ask their preference as to the disposition of the body. Families had the option to either bury the body at Arlington National Cemetery, return the body to the home

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[20] "Mourning is Harmful in Wartime," *New York Times*, November 14, 1917.
[21] Lisa Burdeau, "The Politics of Remembrance: The Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimage and America's Fading Memory of the Great War", *The Journal of Military History* 72, No.2, April 2008, 384.
[22] "Mourning is Harmful in Wartime," *New York Times.*

address for a private burial, return the body to a national cemetery in the U.S., or allow the body to remain in Europe for burial in a permanent U.S. cemetery.[23] As later espoused in a 1920 War Department announcement, adhering to next of kin wishes had become a top priority to the government: "the department wishes to repeat and emphasize the fact that it is pledged to return to America all those bodies which the nearest of kin desire brought back. It is pledged likewise to care fittingly and tenderly for those whose relatives desire them to rest in the Fields of Honor."[24]

The War Department now provided and paid for the return of the majority of dead soldiers to families. Approximately 70% of families requested their dead to return to the U.S., a total expense that cost nearly thirty million dollars (approximately 433 million dollars in today's terms).[25] For the families that chose to leave their loved ones in Europe, the U.S. government paid for personal pilgrimage trips (Gold Star Pilgrimages) for widows and mothers, allocating $860 to each attendee. Beginning in 1930, Army officers accompanied over 11,000 women beginning in 1930 in crossing the Atlantic Ocean in first-class steamship liners to France. After receiving two sight-seeing days in Paris, they rode to the permanent cemeteries to see their interred loved ones.[26] The permanent cemeteries, eight in total (one in the U.K., one in Belgium, six in France), cost the government three million to construct by 1927, or $1.50 per soldier.[27]

Upon the United States' entry in the Second World War on December 7, 1941, the War Department was woefully unprepared for the collection of the dead on a global scale. Previous policies, established in 1917 when the department founded the Graves Registration

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[23] Burdeau, "The Politics of Remembrance," 376-377.
[24] United States, War Department, *A Report to the Secretary of War on American Military Dead Overseas* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 11.
[25] Burdeau, "The Politics of Remembrance," 380.
[26]" Pilgrimage of Mothers to Europe's War Graves, Five Thousand Who Wear Gold Stars Will Go Overseas in the Summer as the Guests of the Government-Army Officers to Attend Them," *New York Times*, February 23,1930; John Graham, *The Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages of the 1930s: Overseas Grave Visitations by Mothers and Widows of Fallen U.S. World War I Soldiers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 114.
[27] Ibid; Burdeau, "The Politics of Remembrance," 382.

Service (GRS), were obsolete given the relative concentrated duty in Western Europe.[28] For many months, the War Department had no plan: combat units needed to bury their own dead in temporary graves. Lacking clear organization, the Army complained of the hasty and inadequate job units were doing in honoring the dead.[29] Additionally, grave work took a psychological toll on the soldiers' morale.[30] As a result, the War Department assigned the Quartermaster General, a reserve army group, to formulate grave registration units to accompany combat divisions in 1942.[31] In battle, the Grave Registration Companies were non-combat officers, who brought all dead to central points before interring the dead in temporary cemeteries across all campaign fields. In Tunisia, for example, the companies organized eleven temporary cemeteries for the 4,600 dead in the North African campaign.[32]

By the end of the war, the Grave Registration Units had interred 191,000 total dead in 209 temporary cemeteries around the world. However, their efforts were far from complete. With the War Department's postwar estimate of 300,000 total dead, the U.S. government had an enormous responsibility to find, exhume, and bury the missing dead in the designated temporary cemeteries. In the European Theater alone, the War Department estimated a total of 44,243 unrecovered dead in late April 1945.[33]

Similar to the promise to families set in the First World War, the U.S. government claimed a moral obligation to recover all dead and bury them in the location requested by the next of kin, a task that the War Department estimated would cost $657.00 per body.[34] However, the War Department did not send inquiries to families "next of kin polling"

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[28] Ibid., 375.
[29] Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II*., 53.
[30] Ibid., 58.
[31] Ibid., 57-58.
[32] Ibid., 59-60.
[33] United States, War Dept., *Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad* (Washington D.C.: War Department, 1945), 1-4.

[34] Joseph James Shomon, *Crosses in the Wind: The Unheralded Sage of the Men in the American Graves Registration Service in World War II* (Crosses in the Wind Foundation: Margarten, 1991), 137.

immediately after the war. With so many outstanding unrecovered dead, the War Department had limited accurate information over missing cases. It was therefore impractical and inconsiderate to give mourning families preemptive information, given that other families were still unsure if their loved ones were alive.

Prior to sending polling inquiries, the War Department focused on resolving missing cases and recovering all dead directly after the war. Transitioning the wartime Grave Registration Service for postwar operations, the War Department founded the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) on July 1, 1945.[35] As part of all campaigns, the AGRC maintained a duty to find all missing dead, exhume, and reinter the bodies in the temporary U.S. cemeteries before the government honored family burial requests in the following years. For the European campaign, the AGRC established three field commands in late 1945 to carry out search and exhumation operations, a total of 7,000 personnel.[36]

As closure for families was of the utmost importance, the AGRC went to extreme measures to find the missing bodies. In France, AGRC officers recruited anti-mine personnel to detonate fields before they scanned the area for the dead.[37] In the U.S. Zone of Germany, the units used heavy engineering equipment to locate plane crashes in lakes.[38] Deep-sea divers surveyed dams in the Netherlands for bodies that may have fallen into the water when bridges collapsed.[39] The AGRC additionally recruited FBI forensic experts from New York to assist in the identification of bodies.[40]

The AGRC, sponsored by the State and War Departments, also made delicate negotiations to enter countries that were otherwise unfriendly to the U.S. In summer 1946, the

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[35] Report of Operations-Period: 1 October-31 December 1945, SH-XO-29, Forward, Narrative, 97-AGRC-0.3: Box 1, RG 407, NARA.
[36] Ibid., Field Service Division: Field Commands, 7-8, Narrative, 97-AGRC-0.3: Box 1, RG 407, NARA.
[37] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, 136, Narrative, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[38] Ibid., Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, 147, Narrative, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[39] Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II*, 208.
[40] Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1946, 2, Narrative, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

U.S. Embassy in Madrid successfully negotiated with Franco's Spanish government to lift the ban on disinterring remains. Later that summer, an AGRC unit crossed the Spanish border through the Pyrenees Mountains to find the eighty-seven U.S. bodies in the peninsula.[41] In late 1947, the AGRC negotiated with the Soviet-satellite Polish government to begin exhumation operations of the 108 bodies in Poland.[42] After storing the remains in the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw, the AGRC later had an official ceremony with Polish military officials to honor the dead.[43]

Despite such diligent negotiations and work, the AGRC struggled to acquire Stedman and 3,000 other U.S. remains in the Soviet Zone of Germany, the sore spot in all AGRC operations.[44] With an increase in Cold War tensions immediately after the war, the U.S. faced considerable difficulty in obtaining permission to enter the territory to search for the missing. Yet with families such as Thomas and Kathyrn Stedman awaiting the remains of their loved ones, the AGRC had no option but to find the bodies.

Preexisting Scholarship

Although the Second World War is arguably the most-studied conflict in U.S. history, exhumation in the postwar is largely an unexplored topic. Scholars have recently focused on military burials in the American Civil War and the First World War, but existing scholarship remains severely limited on not only U.S. exhumation in the Soviet Zone of Germany, but on AGRC efforts in general. The most comprehensive study on AGRC history is from Edward Steere, a former War Department historian, who wrote a stenographic report in 1957 on the

[41] Ibid., Report of Operations, 1 July-30 September 1946, Subject: Negotiations with Spanish Government for Removal of American War Dead from Spain, to: Secretary of State, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[42] Report of Operations, 1 July-30 September 1947, Narrative, Vol. I, 149, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[43] Ibid., 109.
[44] Subject: Graves Registration Operations in Soviet Occupied Zone in Germany, to: General Lucius Clay, OMGUS, Berlin, 15 March 1947, Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1947, Narrative, Vol. I, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

topic.[45] More recent literature focuses primarily on the construction and horticultural care of permanent U.S. cemeteries in France, such as Historian Kate Lemay with her book, *Triumph of the Dead: American World War II Cemeteries, Monuments, and Diplomacy in France.* Chris Dickon is the singular contemporary U.S. scholar to exclusively focus on gathering U.S. dead from foreign conflicts. In his book, *The Foreign Burial of American War Dead: A History,* Dickson primarily depicts, however, the exhumation processes in wars prior to the Second World War.[46] In his section on World War II, he discusses only operations in the Netherlands, giving a limited analysis of the multifaceted nature of exhumation across the European continent.

Search and exhumation after the Second World War for the former Allies is also an understudied topic in British scholarship. Seumas Spark's dissertation, "The Treatment of the British Military War Dead of the Second World War," cursorily discusses the progression of exhumation operations in the British Army and Royal Airforce. Seumas Spark allocates approximately two pages to British operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany, providing only a timeline recount of a failed mission.[47] In his book *Missing Believed Killed: The Royal Air Force and the Search for Missing Aircrew 1939-1952*, RAF historian Stuart Hadaway provides a similar narrative, failing to give an in-depth analysis on *how* exhumation operations occurred, especially in the impenetrable Soviet Zone.[48]

It is unclear as to why exhumation has received only a superficial treatment. Maybe it is because the public has romanticized the fallen as immortal heroes, "the greatest

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[45] For further information, please see Edward Steere's *The Graves Registration Service in World War II* (Washington D.C., 1957). Consequently, this thesis consults this text given the relative dearth of information otherwise.

[46] For further information, please see Kate Clarke Lemay's *Triumph of the Dead: American World War II Cemeteries, Monuments, and Diplomacy in France* (Tuscaloosa, 2018), and Chris Dickon's *The Foreign Burial of American War Dead: A History* (Jefferson, NC, 2011).

[47] Seumas Spark, "The Treatment of the British Military War Dead of the Second World War," PhD diss., (The University of Edinburgh, 2009).

[48] Stuart Hadaway, *Missing Believed Killed: The Royal Air Force and the Search for Missing Aircrew 1939-1952* (Barnsley, U.K.: Pen and Sword, 2008).

generation," making exhumation studies taboo for exposing weakness. Maybe the U.S.'s inability to recover all dead runs contradictory to a victory narrative. Maybe it is because scholarship in the immediate postwar focuses on Cold War politics, abandoning the fallen from a bygone conflict. Whatever the reason, U.S. search and exhumation in the immediate postwar period allows historians to bridge the Second World War with the Cold War. In the case of East Germany, it also highlights the necessity to negotiate with the Soviet Union for entry into the Russian zone despite rising tensions. The U.S. government maintained a moral obligation to recover the dead, transcending the desire to make enemies with the Soviet Union.

As Ben Stedman rested next to his British RAF peers, local Germans, Hindus, and Russian Tatars, Americans overseas planned for his return. AGRC officials, supported by the War Department, gathered search information as to where he may be. Saddened widows sat around dinner tables, sharing stories of their fallen while savoring seasonal desserts. A whole country mourned, waiting to be reunited with their dead.

Chapter One: Our Dead are Temporarily Yours
Using the French People's Memory to Gather U.S. War Dead

Leave them here
Do not take from us the sweetness and the supreme pride
To watch over their noble remains
-Simone Renaud, "Mother of Normandy"[49]

On July 13, 1946, twenty-four year old war widow Mrs. Edward H. Jordan travelled from her New York apartment to Poughkeepsie, New York to meet Eleanor Roosevelt, a new member of the Gold Star Wives club.[50] Greeted with a supper that included seasonal blueberries topped with whipped cream, Mrs. Jordan later described to the six widows in attendance that evening her recent trip to visit her husband's grave in Europe.[51] The Former First Lady was so clearly impressed with the young Mrs. Jordan, who a year prior had founded the 210,000 member, seventy-three city strong Gold Star Wives club out of her apartment, noting in her diary that, Mrs. Jordan's testimony "left them [other war widows] with a great sense of confidence, for she told them of the interest which the men in charge had shown, of the thoroughness with which the work was being done, and of the kindness of all those concerned."[52] In her concluding thoughts, Mrs. Roosevelt, who had joined the Gold Star Wives club after the death of her husband, noted that "it is a comfort to know that these graves are well cared for and not forgotten, and that, in the Pacific as well as in Europe, this care is assured by our own Government."[53] Yet despite Mrs. Roosevelt's sole accreditation of grave upkeep to the U.S. government, oftentimes locals in liberated countries, such as France,

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[49] Kate Clarke Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead: American World War II Cemeteries, Monuments, and Diplomacy in France* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2018), 39.
[50] Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day, July 13, 1946," The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition (2017), accessed February 24, 2020, https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydocedits.cfm?_y=1946&_f=md000390.
[51] "War Widows Lobby for Better Benefits," The Oklahoman, May 26, 2007, https://oklahoman.com/article/3059030/war-widows-lobby-for-better-benefits.
[52] Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day, July 13, 1946."
[53] Ibid.

Denmark, and the Netherlands, provided diligent care in commemorating the U.S. dead abroad.

In a later letter sent to retired Lt. Colonel Joseph Shomon, once commander of the 611th Quartermaster Grave Command (and supervisor of the construction of the only U.S. permanent cemetery in the Netherlands at Margraten), Mrs. Jordan emphasized the locals' grave assistance during her Memorial Day 1946 trip. Upon seeing for the first time the burial site of her husband, she described that "his grave was covered with flowers brought there by the Dutch burgomaster [mayor] and his wife," highlighting that "it was good to see that someone was remembering him."[54] Mrs. Jordan was overcome with emotion by the local crowd of 40,000 in Margraten commemorating Memorial Day. To her, the local's' prayers, flowers, and tributes made "the grave of your son or husband buried overseas…more than 'just another white cross.'"[55] Finishing the letter, she stated as if she was pleading to all widows that "some Dutch family, some French or Belgian girl or boy, is honoring your loved one with flowers and a prayer. They are taking a personal interest in the soldier who is buried in their holy soil—just as you would be doing if that particular grave and cross was near you."[56] Two years later, Jordan would go on to testify in Congressional Committees advocating for greater pensions for war widows and their children, bringing her four-year old son to her speeches. [57]

Prior to fall 1947, the U.S. government focused on the searching and exhumation of all unfound war dead before repatriating them back to the United States or reinterring them in permanent cemeteries abroad. Thousands of Army officers in the AGRC after the war searched thousands of square miles to find the yet unrecovered remains of American

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[54] Shomon, *Crosses in the Wind*, Letter in Forward.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Hearing Before a Subcommittee on Education, Training, and Rehabilitation of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, 80th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947) 28.

servicemen. However, this was not an insulated effort. With thousands of U.S. dead surrounding the fields, American Graves Registration units used local citizens as assistants in undergoing the burial process, especially in France.

AGRC Activity: France

Commemorating Allied dead was not unique to the postwar, but was a common phenomenon among the liberated populations during the war. Thankful for their release from Nazi tyranny, locals prioritized honoring the liberators as a form of respect, incorporating helping find dead soldiers and later visiting their graves in cemeteries into their daily, and often inconsistent, schedules.[58]

Many French locals honored the soldiers who fell in the process as selfless sacrifices for their freedom during the war. One French man, a Monsieur Morin, summarized this position after witnessing the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944, "these young soldiers have come from distinct American lands where they could have very well lived in peace. By hundreds' and thousands they have lost and continue to lose their lives in the name of freedom."[59] Moved by such selflessness, the liberated peoples revered U.S. dead as heroes and considered their grave plots as sacred spaces.

After the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, local residents treated U.S. dead with utmost respect. A French local, Monsieur Le Bourg, and his son frequently travelled to the front lines during the Normandy campaign to salute U.S. soldiers who "have already died for us."[60] Recognizing that French reverence for U.S. dead would equate to effective work in constructing graves, the wartime American Graves Registration Service hired Normans to

[58] 90% of French population applauded the Liberation in August 1944, Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 19.
[59] Ibid.,19.
[60] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 39-41.

bury and mark the 30,995 U.S. dead killed in the Normandy campaign in nine temporary cemeteries in the summer months of 1944.[61]

As a demonstration of gratitude, many French civilians worked diligently to maintain the upkeep of temporary U.S. graves. Local school girls and women often tended to the beautification of the cemetery plots, laying flowers and wreaths which had a "wide ribbon, on which was written, 'In honor of the liberators of our villages."[62] One housewife, Madeleine Valognes of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, stenciled all the fallen names on the temporary wooden grave markers. Another local, a nineteen-year old teenager, ravaged through the flooded fields after the Germans had clogged the flood plains' irrigation systems, searching for U.S. dead. He described the gruesome process further, "when the water went away, we found the bodies…we bagged them. A couple hundred of them. We got used to it, doing it every day."[63] Likely the most recognizable French woman to U.S. audiences during the war, Simone Renaud became famous for her care of the grave of Theodore Roosevelt Jr., son of President Roosevelt and Medal of Honor recipient, when featured by *Life* magazine in October 1944.

Within a few months of the circulation, Mrs. Renaud received more than one thousand letters from U.S. families, asking her to look after their graves. She would go on to respond to every letter, maintaining close correspondence with eight to ten families a day for over forty years. By the end of the war, Normans identified and buried alone 70 percent of U.S. dead in northern France.[64]

Postwar Commemoration

With a free country, France finally had the opportunity to mourn their own war dead, some half a million in total. In Normandy alone, 20,000 civilians died, mostly from aerial

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[61] Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 27, 29.
[62] Ibid., 29.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 37-38.

bombardments.[65] Yet with such an intense appreciation for their liberation, French people continued using Allied cemeteries as their own outlet for mourning the war, a place to express their sorrow.[66] The grave plots symbolized the acclaimed liberation, serving as testimonies to a former democratic period among the chaos both in war and postwar France. The U.S. cemeteries were the consistent centers of a turbulent French society in the early postwar years.

As the French people derived deep personal meaning when visiting the U.S. temporary cemeteries, AGRC operatives in the postwar built their entire exhumation protocol around using the local people. Recognizing that the locals would be generously willing to support the AGRC mission in properly burying and honoring the dead, AGRC officials consistently used local labor to expedite their exhumation work, temporary leasing U.S. dead for memorialization and mourning purposes to the local population to be as successful as possible in gathering the dead. However, despite relying heavily on locals, the U.S. government publicly never gave full credit to the deserving local populations.

AGRC Protocol: Cultivating the Local Liberated Culture

After the AGRC First Field Command successfully disinterred all known U.S. dead out of German cemeteries by the end of 1945, the AGRC expanded its operation to the Low Countries. [67] In January 1946, the Second Field Command, comprising of 1,143 total officers, began training for the systematic searching of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, and later Northern France.[68] Divided into four separate types of teams, the officers, former Army reserve soldiers, took crash courses tailored to their future work before starting. The

[65] Ibid., 12.
[66] Ibid.

[68] Edward Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead, 1945-51*, (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1957), 195; 97-AGRC-0.3, Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, Operational Order #18 8 November 1946, Areas of Operation, Appendix #22, NARA RG 407.

first teams to operate, the propaganda and investigating teams, primarily learned how to best integrate themselves into local communities with courses over the "identification, history, psychology of natives," guiding principles in evoking the sympathy of the local people.[69]

Upon entering a community for the first time, propaganda teams travelled in packs of Jeeps, disseminating information over the local memorialization value of AGRC activity. First the officers hung bilingual posters in public squares or took out advertisements in the local newspapers, requiring locals to report knowledge of U.S. dead to their local mayors as a civic duty.[70] The teams also visited local radio stations, paying for commercial airtime to advertise AGRC activity. In one 1946 radio broadcast to the town of Etampes, a suburb of Paris, the AGRC propaganda teams emphasized the sentimental value of the dead to suffering U.S. families in hopes of stimulating local sympathy, "Unfortunately, there are still many [U.S. dead] missing. Over there in the United States a mother cries for her son, a wife anxiously awaits the return of her husband, children call for their daddy." While this propaganda tactic is compelling, the radio broadcast instead highlighted more importantly the French people's connection to the U.S. dead to garner information. By labeling the dead as "the heroes who fell for the liberation of your Soil," the AGRC speakers over the airwaves reminded the local people that to find and commemorate the U.S. dead was giving back for their selfless efforts. The radio message recruited the French people to work with the AGRC, "French people, we are fully aware that when Duty calls, we can rely on you," giving the locals the opportunity to mourn the war, while serving the interests of the U.S. operation.[71]

Once locals reported their knowledge over grave locations to the mayors, the second AGRC team, the investigating team, received the tip and opened an investigation. Combining the tip with official records such as Casualty Clearance Plan Forms, Missing Aircraft Reports

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[69] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 199.
[70] Ibid., 186.
[71] Appendix 56, Second Zone AGRC, Text of Radio Broadcast to French People, 1946, Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

and German POW records from the AGRC headquarters, the investigation team surmised the identity of the dead from the civilian's report, in hopes of linking his grave location to other missing soldiers.[72] After building a plausible information web, the investigating team travelled into the local community asking for further information before searching. Comprised of three men, a leader, driver, and interpreter, the investigating teams knocked at locals' doors, introducing themselves while simultaneously questioning them over their knowledge of burial sites.[73] As noted in the AGRC 1947 handbook, the investigating teams needed "to establish a friendly attitude and avoid creating antagonisms," as well as being "tenacious, analytical and inquiring" when approaching the doorstep of a local. If the person gave an incomplete or negative answer to their report, the investigating team needed to find another method to arrive at an affirmative answer, as an AGRC investigator is "trained not to take "no" for an answer."[74]

After talking with townspeople, next the investigating teams communicated with prominent members of the community such as the local physician, innkeeper, cemetery caretaker, and parish priest, all of whom might have advanced knowledge of U.S. burials during the war. Often the investigating teams befriended priests in an effort to build the AGRC's creditability with the local population, encouraging clerics to give sermons over the value of the AGRC activity to the locals, namely that once the AGRC found a body, locals could properly mourn the soldier in a formal U.S. cemetery.[75] Overtime, these propaganda methods proved very effective in not only integrating the AGRC officers well within the community, but inspiring the local people to champion the search work themselves. As a

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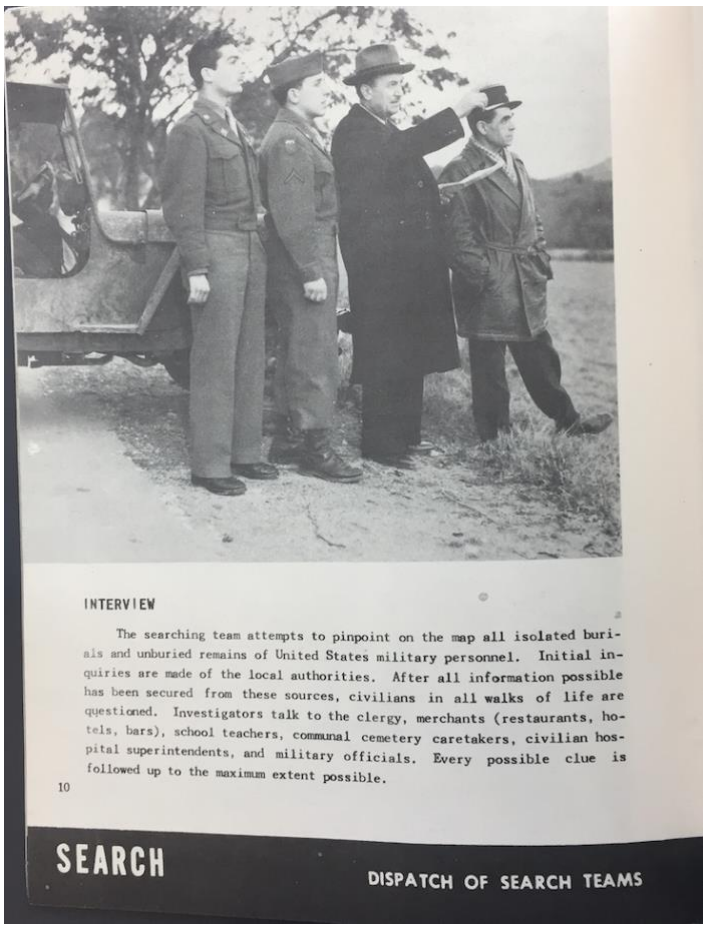
[72] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 186.
[73] Ibid., 179.
[74] „Interview: Dispatch of Search Teams," Postwar Graves Registration Activities in an Oversea Theater, Quartermaster Corps Manual, QMC 16-2, August 1947, Vol. I, 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS T2-3 202, 322 GRS, NARA.

[75] Chapter IV: Plans, Operations and Training, 81, Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1946, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

result, locals began a systematic "spontaneous word of mouth" campaign, conversing with neighbors over the whereabouts of rouge U.S. graves found hidden in fields, forests, or local cemeteries to give further details to AGRC investigation teams.[76]

Once the search teams gathered enough information over the whereabouts of missing dead soldiers, they travelled to the specific locations, marking the spots for the exhumation team for their future disinterring work on maps in sectional headquarters.[77]

[76] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead,* 200.
[77] Interview: Dispatch of Search Teams," Postwar Graves Registration Activities in an Oversea Theater, Quartermaster Corps Manual, 12-14, , QMC 16-2, August 1947, Vol. I, 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS T2-3 202, 322 GRS, NARA.



INTERVIEW

The searching team attempts to pinpoint on the map all isolated burials and unburied remains of United States military personnel. Initial inquiries are made of the local authorities. After all information possible has been secured from these sources, civilians in all walks of life are questioned. Investigators talk to the clergy, merchants (restaurants, hotels, bars), school teachers, communal cemetery caretakers, civilian hospital superintendents, and military officials. Every possible clue is followed up to the maximum extent possible.

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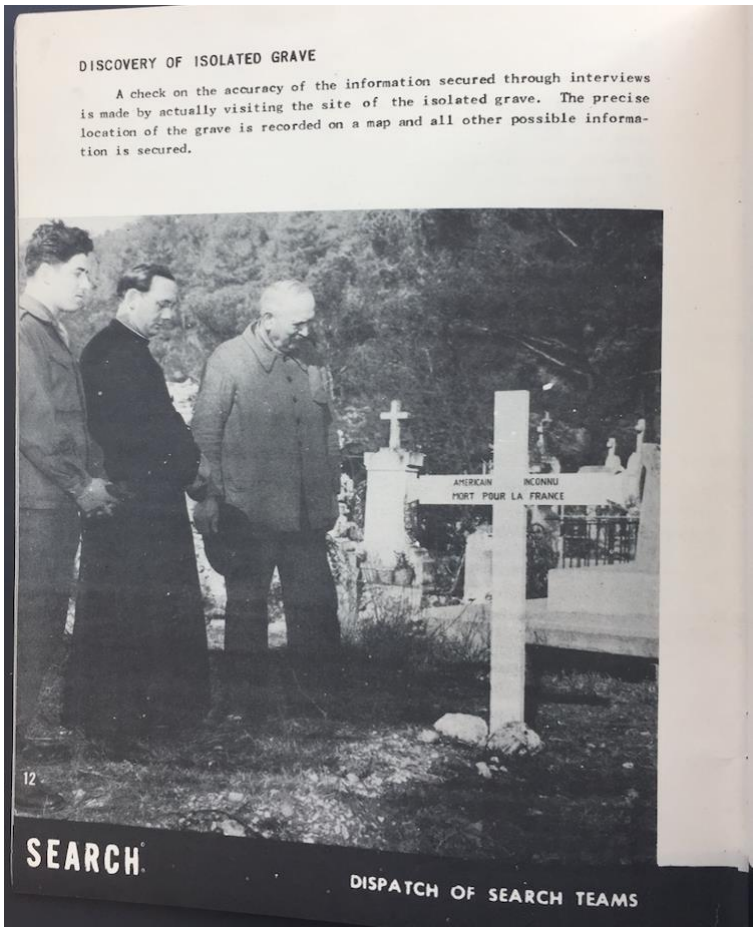
SEARCH DISPATCH OF SEARCH TEAMS

AGRC Search Teams interviewing a mayor in France

Source: *Postwar Graves Registration Activities in an Oversea Theater Manual* by War Department, Office of the Quartermaster General, (August 1947), Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS 322 (GRS) Grave Registration Service, NARA, 10.



DISCOVERY OF ISOLATED GRAVE

A check on the accuracy of the information secured through interviews is made by actually visiting the site of the isolated grave. The precise location of the grave is recorded on a map and all other possible information is secured.

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SEARCH DISPATCH OF SEARCH TEAMS

Discovery of grave with local priest in France

Source: *Postwar Graves Registration Activities in an Oversea Theater Manual* by War Department, Office of the Quartermaster General, (August 1947), Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS 322 (GRS) Grave Registration Service, NARA, 12.

Local French girls laying flowers on temporary U.S. Graves, 1944

Source: *Mother of Normandy: The Story of Simone Renaud*, by Jeff Stoffer (Los Angeles: Iron Mike Entertainment, 2010), 47.

Whereas search and investigation teams took pre-operation coursework on the psyche and history of the locals for propaganda purposes, the exhumation teams learned tactics on identifying bodies using features such as marked insignias on uniforms.[78] Yet these courses were not only for U.S. officers, but rather for "indigenous" civilians, who worked alongside exhumation teams in the fields. In the Netherlands, civilians made up a sizable section of the exhumation force: 68 civilians out of the roughly 500 total operators, a number not even indicative of the total strength of civilians for the entire AGRC force in Europe. By January 1, 1947, AGRC operated with a total of 5,353 personnel, of these, 1,904 were military, whereas 3,449 were civilian, a combined figure of War Department and indigenous labor.[79]

As civilian labor was so integral to the gruesome exhumation work, which included digging the bodies from the ground and separating them to avoid contamination, they were payed accordingly. All mobile civilian units received three meals per day of the same ration type of other continental allied soldiers, a compensation that symbolized their equality with U.S. military allies and also suggests the importance of civilian labor to AGRC work.[80] With many civilians hungry and poor directly after the war, the prospect of three stable meals was incredibly enticing to many local men, who valued nevertheless the recovery and proper memorialization of U.S. soldiers.

Additionally, AGRC civilian labor earned competitive wages in comparison to local jobs, further encouraging men to work for the grave units. After there was a temporary drop in wages in 1946, the U.S. government demanded that European governments raise the "low ceiling on American wages to indigenous workers," because of the prominence of the work.

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[78] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead,* 199.
[79] Chapter III: Administration of Personnel 24, Report of Operations, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[80] Class I Supplies, A. Prior to Closing of Supply Service Installations in Liberated Areas, 2, Report of Operations, History of Personnel Division for Period1 January-31 March 1946, Narrative, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

After negotiations, AGRC work became one of the more lucrative means of income in the local townships.[81]

Enforcing exhumation operations, AGRC officials hired civilian police to ensure safe handling of remains from the disinterring location to the Central Identification Point (CIP) headquarters. French authorities, for example, were in frequent communication with AGRC command bases, assisting in the transportation of the bodies.[82] Additionally, civilian police held security raids in personnel barracks in an effort to stop black market activity. In a few rare incidences, civilians and attached German POW workers to AGRC exhumation teams stole truck spare parts, cars, firearms, or soldier jewelry and dog tags, important items for either operations or identification purposes.[83] While these crimes indicate a marked level of desperation and poverty among the locals, it also notes the willingness of local police authorities to legitimatize AGRC efforts to properly memorialize the dead.

Enhanced by arduous civilian labor, Second Field Command operatives were quickly successful. Between January and March 1946, AGRC search teams covered 19,120 square miles in the Low Countries, recovering 683 bodies. In comparison, the First Field Command assigned to Germany and without an abundance of civilian labor, only covered 12,587 square miles in a similar three month period.[84] After the productive three months in Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands, the Second Field Command started operations in the upper valley of the Seine River in Northern France in April. [85] Subsequently, by the end of May, operatives covered a total of 37, 632 square miles.[86]

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[81] RPL: 518.1, Subject: Tentative Operation Schedules for the Return of World War II Dead Program, to: The Quartermaster General, Washington 25, D.C., 26 November 1946, Appendix, Report of Operations, 1 April-30 June 1947, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[82] Casualty Clearance, 2, Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1946, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.; Ibid., 70-72, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[83] Ibid., Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1946, 72, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA; Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1947, 37, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[84] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 201.
[85] Ibid., 203.
[86] Ibid., 204.

Nearing the end of summer, the Second Field Command slowly transitioned from a proactive search phase to a residual phase given a significant reduction in reported isolated burials. By July 31, there were only 301 reported isolated burials and unburied remains in northern France, prompting the Second Field Command search and exhumation units to disband.[87] As a result, AGRC operatives began the second phase of recovery operations in France and the Low Countries: training and preparation for the mass repatriation of remains back to the U.S.

Before the dead were repatriated to American families, AGRC officials had to ensure that they had properly identified the bodies using advanced scientific analysis. Therefore, as a pilot center for the entire identification process in Western Europe, the AGRC founded in August 1946 the research center, Central Identification Point (CIP). Located in the convenient central location of Strasbourg, France, AGRC officials hoped to conduct secondary identification examinations before the repatriation of remains. The CIP was a keystone to the entire process and an improved measure from the previous identification protocol in the war.[88]

Prior to the founding of the CIP, AGRC officers used primitive identification strategies from World War I. In the fields, men relied exclusively on dog tags or other clothing markers that might suggest the body's rank, division, and name given their limited knowledge of anatomy. Oftentimes these procedures led to misidentification, a grave misstep when informing a family of their finally found soldier. [89]

Astonished by the use of traditional identification methods by exhumation units, Chairman and Curator of Physical Anthropology of the American Museum of Natural History

[87] Ibid., 205.

[88] Ibid., 614-616. Prior to the construction of the CIP, after an exhumation officer had positively confirmed the identity of a remain, AGRC transport staff members would transport the remains to the nearest temporary cemetery, proper protocol from the war. Most transport members were either displaced persons (DPs), German POWs, or locals, who drove transport trucks.

[89] Ibid., 614.

in New York City, Dr. Harry Shapiro, demanded that more modern and accurate identification tactics be used during his visit to AGRC bases in France in summer 1946. To Dr. Shapiro, the use of dog tags to identify bodies was improper given the utmost importance in properly identifying recovered remains to U.S. families at home. Before the AGRC reinterred found bodies into temporary graves, he suggested that all bodies travel to a Central Identification Point (CIP) to undergo more sophisticated and scientific tests.

Accuracy was the most valuable aspect of the AGRC. According to Lt. Colonel Comm in the fields, "[the] feeling of certainty about our identification processes that is so essential to the success of the whole program," persuaded the AGRC to agree with Dr.Shaprio's proposals and initiate better scientific processes.[90] The CIP became the most important part in the entirety of AGRC operations in the postwar.

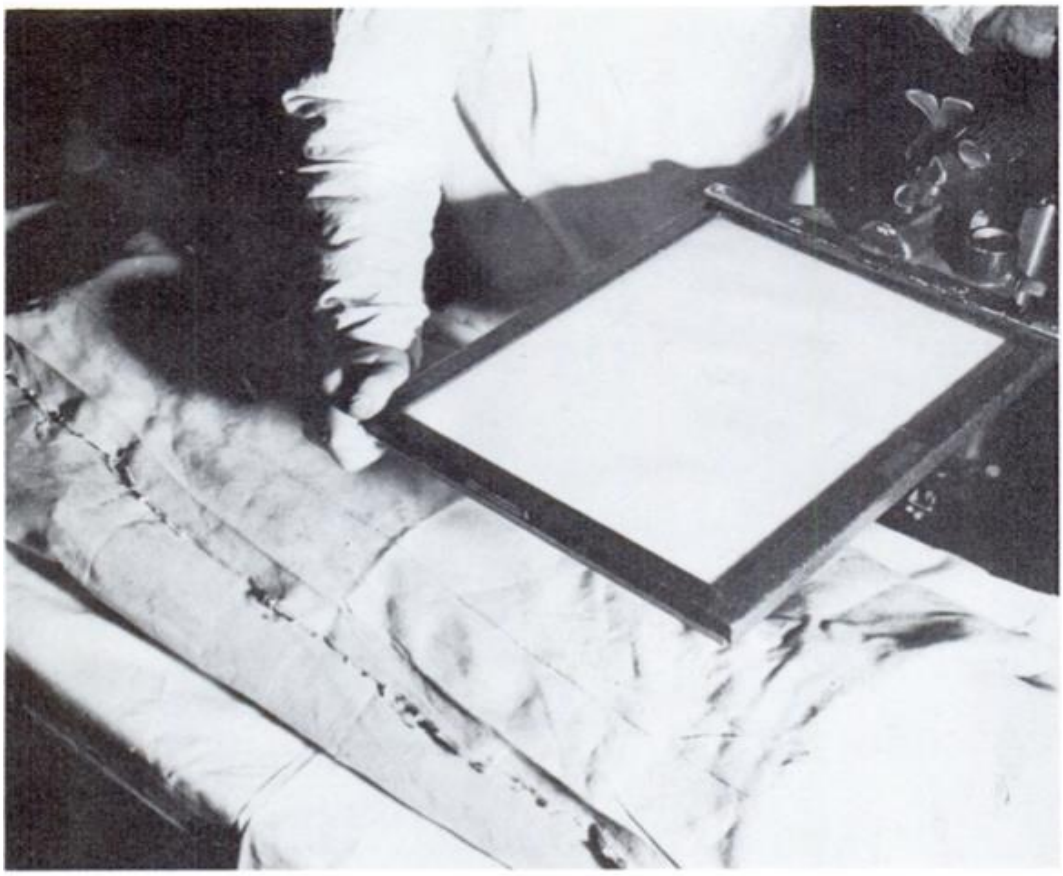
Recruiting local labor for transportation services, AGRC officers sent all bodies to the CIP to undergo confirmative identification tests before being interred in temporary cemeteries. Arriving either by cargo truck, rail or air, the bodies first underwent laboratory tests by a team of four men, who closely examined the body for anatomical clues. The team reconstructed the skeleton, noticing abnormalities while making a tooth chart and taking fingerprints, if possible. Next the team removed all clothing, looking carefully for manufacturer marks, laundry marks, and faded markings that could help determine the soldier's rank and unit. Finally, the unit brought the remains to a fluoroscope room for examination. Using fluoroscopic processes, sometimes the mortuary units discovered identification tags, bracelets, and other metallic objects embedded within the body, objects hidden from normal eyesight.[91]

Using modern technology rather than just spontaneous search-and-find identification methods proved very effective for advanced AGRC efforts. In one compelling example, forty

[90] Ibid., 647.
[91] Ibid., 617-618.

unidentified bodies from a local French cemetery travelled to the CIP in October 1946 to undergo secondary identification tests before being interred into a temporary U.S. cemetery. After the various levels of tests, the mortuary unit positively identified eight of the forty originally unidentified bodies and found significant clues to the identity of twenty others.[92] With such success, AGRC units sent en mass bodies to Strasbourg. After only a few months of the CIP, AGRC operatives had shipped 8,574 bodies from Germany and Eastern Europe by air or rail to undergo further identification examination.[93]

[92] Ibid., 619.
[93] Summary of Isolated Burials, 150, Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.



Using modern technology such as X-Ray to detect any hidden matter in the body for identification purposes at the CIP Center
Source: *Final disposition of World War II dead, 1945-51* by Edward Steere (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1957), 620.

By January 1, 1947, AGRC finished major search operations in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Spain, and other minor countries, each with a few bodies.[94] The organization also began finishing preliminary sweeps in the Low Countries and the French, U.S., and British Zones of Germany.[95] With an inundation of remains from the completed areas, this period marked the peak operational point for the CIP.[96] In the early spring, the AGRC founded a 'Boards of Review' to finalize the identification of remains, as well as relieve the mortuary units from the abundance of cases. The Boards of Review conclusively determined the identity of remains after reviewing the prior mortuary work done.

Before transporting the remains to a temporary U.S. cemetery, the Boards of Review marked the caskets based on the level of positive identification. If the Boards of Review could positively confirm the identity of the remain, they would tack an identification marker, a dog tag, to the casket. If they could not positively confirm the identity, then they would mark an "X" with an assigned number to the unknown body. Regardless of positive identification, all caskets received a draped U.S. flag before laying in the shipment room of the CIP center, a symbolic step in the process.[97]

While the bodies stayed in the shipment room at the CIP, the Boards of Review passed along their findings to an official board, the Memorial Division, Quartermaster General in the War Department, to undergo administrative approval. Once the board confirmed the positive identification, Quartermaster General representatives notified the dead's next of kin on the discovery of the former MIA soldier.[98] In one 1946 letter sent to a North Carolina father of a fallen Private, the Quartermaster General sympathetically informed his family of the exact location of the Private's temporary grave, indicating that the War Department is "most

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[94] Search and Recovery Operations, 102, Report of Operations, 1 April-30 June 1947, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[95] Ibid., 103.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 618-625.
[98] Ibid., 626.

desirous" to tell them that the grave is "under the constant care and supervision of United States military personnel."[99] The anxiety of grieving families was at its highest since the war's end in the summer of 1946. At this point, the War Department received over 400 letters a day requesting further knowledge on U.S. remains, an increase from just fifty letters months prior.[100] Demanding clearer information, families at home hoped the U.S. government took extreme care of their dead.

Despite the previous numerous steps the AGRC undertook to find, properly identify, and notify the families at home of their missing dead, until October 26, 1947, the bodies remained buried in temporary cemeteries in Europe, unable to be repatriated given logistical and governmental budget constraints.[101]

Temporary Cemeteries, Community Caretakers

After the war, the AGRC used thirty-six temporary cemeteries as the interring location for all U.S. dead found in post-war AGRC search operations.[102] Originally constructed during the war, the temporary U.S. cemeteries (twenty-four in France, four in Belgium, three in the Netherlands, two in the U.K., one in Ireland, Luxembourg, and Switzerland) held the 140,000 war dead found prior to Nazi Germany's capitulation in May 1945.[103] Designed in strategic, heavy-combat areas, the temporary cemeteries symbolized major battles in the late European campaign. For example, one cemetery in France, St. Laurent, contained all the fallen in the initial landings of D-Day at Omaha Beach. The cemetery in Cambridge, England held

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[99] "War Department Letter: July 15, 1946," CFM 1999.019.0048
New Hanover County Cape Fear Museum of History and Science Collection, Smithsonian Affiliate, Wilmington, NC, https://www.capefearmuseum.com/collections/war-department-letter-july-15-1946/.

[100] Carrier Sheet, AGRC Form #30, 9 March 1946, Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1945, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

[101] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1947, 5, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.; Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 666.

[102] Ibid., 307.

[103] Map, Sector Organization, Annex 1-d, Report of Operations, 1 October-December 1945, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

causalities from the Eighth Airforce, a prominent division for bombing operations during the war. Margraten, the cemetery containing the husband of Mrs. Jordan, the founder of the Gold Star Wives club, was the resting place for soldiers who fell in the final liberation of Germany.[104]

Without immediate Congressional funding for building permanent cemeteries given that thousands of U.S. dead remained unfound directly after the war, AGRC operators reinterred all U.S. dead in the temporary cemeteries before Congress and the War Department approved of repatriation plans and permanent cemeteries two years later.

Knowing that locals had an intense mourning connection to the U.S. cemeteries during the war, AGRC officials living near the cemeteries attempted to further strengthen the locals' connections to the cemeteries to assist in the postwar reinterring work. AGRC officials assigned to a temporary cemetery often lived in local homes, establishing a personal relationship with the town.[105] The AGRC cemetery units became familiar faces to the local people, especially as their work was decisive in remembering the proclaimed liberators.

As the AGRC officers became the trusted neighbors of local communities, the local people worked diligently to maintain the temporary cemeteries in the postwar. Similar to the wartime, local children placed flowers on the wooden crosses. Adults helped with the horticultural care, the upkeep of gravel drives and paths, and the stenciling and repainting of crosses.[106] Women maintained even more intense communication with U.S. families, by providing updates to their loved ones abroad.[107]

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[104] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 307-308.

[105] Report of Operations, 1 October-December 1945, 68, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA. AGRC cemetery units also competed against local basketball teams sponsored by the French Ministry of Education, travelling around the area to play games with other nearby villages. Additionally, AGRC officers collected charity funds to help support local causes during the winter holidays, such as providing for French orphans; Vol. I-Narrative, Appendices #1-50, 66, Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1947, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA; Christmas Fund for French Orphans, Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1948, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

[106] Report of Operations, 1 July-30 September 1946, 146, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

U.S. families formulated many personal relationships with local women who had their loved ones in the cemeteries. A Ohio mother praised a woman from Normandy for "talking to him [her son] and praying with him, as I would do. God bless you." [108] Knowing that the local would benefit from seeing a photo of her son, she sent a picture of him in the mail. A grieving father from Seattle described a local as a "most gracious lady," and told her, "you are probably closer to us than any other person in the world because you are so near, physically and spiritually, to our son." [109] Another mother from West Virginia thanked the local for "the card with real flowers," a "precious part of Jim's [her son's] resting place."[110]

Over time locals nurtured the graves as their own fallen. In one letter to a French mayor, a widow from Minnesota described the phenomenon as "the people of your town have "adopted" the graves of Americans buried there…and pray at the graves for them." Continuing, she stated that "knowing that [adoption] is such a comfort to those of us who have loved ones there; and we can never thank the kind people of France enough for this expression of love and compassion."[111] Local women kept journals to keep track of their grave maintenance, symbolizing that the upkeep was part of their daily routines. Mourning the U.S. dead became the local culture in the immediate postwar period.

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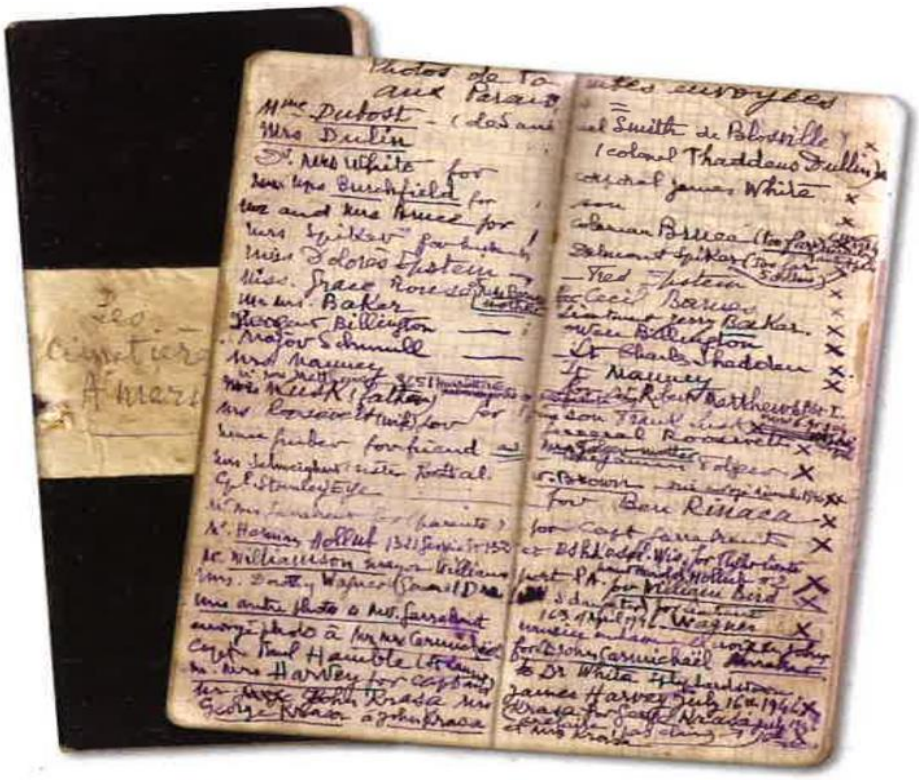
[108] Jeff Stoffer, *Mother of Normandy: The Story of Simone Renaud* (Los Angeles: Iron Mike Entertainment, 2010), 80-81.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 32.

Local French children dressed as U.S. Army soldiers for a parade in June 1945
Source: *Mother of Normandy: The Story of Simone Renaud*, by Jeff Stoffer (Los Angeles: Iron Mike Entertainment, 2010), 84.



Grave memo records for a local French woman
Source*: Mother of Normandy*, 87.

A Change in Strategy: Movement toward Repatriation

However celebratory U.S. families were that local people maintained the grave plots, the U.S. government never acknowledged local efforts. Instead, the government tried to publicly take credit for the work often committed by locals, POWs, or DPs to prove to the people that the government took the utmost care in honoring their sacrifices. In one 1946 letter to a family, the War Department stated that they are "most desirous" to tell them that the grave is "under the constant care and supervision of United States military personnel," leaving little room for acknowledging local support.[112] The U.S. government additionally tried to convince U.S. families of their extreme care through personalized reply letters. Instead of responding to inquiries from families through a standard, form letter, the War Department hired skilled writers and typists to personalize the reply in the most empathic way possible. [113]

From the end of the war to 1947, the U.S. government had no problem in using local labor to undergo the emotional duty to bury the war dead, as long as the U.S. public had limited knowledge of their work. Not only was local labor more convenient and cost-effective, especially as the AGRC faced staff reduction, but building a local culture of mourning U.S. dead enforced U.S. dominance in foreign affairs.[114] Thousands of wooden crosses lining the countryside served as a tangible reminder of the sacrifices for democracy abroad. However, by 1947, their stance changed in France.

In early 1947, U.S. media outlets began to highlight the efforts of the French in tending U.S. graves abroad given the increasing anxiousness for American families to have

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[112]"War Department Letter: July 15, 1946," CFM 1999.019.0048
New Hanover County Cape Fear Museum of History and Science Collection, Smithsonian Affiliate, Wilmington, NC, https://www.capefearmuseum.com/collections/war-department-letter-july-15-1946/.

[113] Carrier Sheet, AGRC Form #30, March 9, 1946, Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1945, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

[114] No.7259, Subject: French Agreement for the Entry into France of Labor Service Companies for Work with the American Graves Registration Command, to: Secretary of State, Washington, 16 January 1947, Report of Repatriation of WWII Dead, HQ.-AGRC, European Theater Area, 1 May 1947, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

further information over the planned repatriation program. One *Los Angeles Times* article of January 26, 1947 by the wife of General Patton described the locals as "both grownups and children, putting flowers on the graves of the men they call "our liberators.""[115] She argued that a fallen soldier should remain in a cemetery abroad not only because of the diligent upkeep of the cemeteries by the locals, but because "what will come home to you isn't what you remember and love," namely a "box or an urn."[116] Concluding, Mrs. Patton poignantly stated, "our dead have earned the right to rest in peace."[117]

The U.S. media also began to depict French initiatives in encouraging U.S. tourists to come see the Normandy cemeteries and battlegrounds. Titled the "pilgrimage tour," French guides would take American tourists to the most important battle sites by travelling on newly-paved roads, "the Highway of Liberty," which connected battlefields, beaches, and the temporary cemeteries together.[118] Although these tours sparked U.S. public and French governmental interests, they were problematic for AGRC officials.

From the perspective of U.S. government officials, however, the increase in media coverage of locals tending graves and promoting pilgrimage tours, reminiscent of Gold Star Pilgrimages after the First World War, was very dangerous. In their view, the depiction of locals demonstrated that the U.S. government was selling out the symbolic work of honoring the war dead for second-rate unprofessional labor. Not only would such a notion undermine the entirety of AGRC's work in the field, but cause outrage from mourning U.S. families.

Apparent misrepresentation of grave care became such an issue for AGRC officials that they recruited the help of higher U.S. military officials in Germany (USFET) to condemn the scandalous writing in publications. When editors of the *Stars & Stripes* published an

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115 Mrs. George S. Patton Jr., "Let the War Dead Rest," *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1947.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 "France to Open Battlefields to Tourist Trade: Four in Normandy Chosen as Historic Sites in Plan to Honor Allied War Dead," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 12, 1947; Henry Ginger, "Normandy Battle Area Tours, *New York Times*," February 2, 1947.

article titled "Cemetery Uncared for" in 1946, the Public Relations Division of the USFET contacted the publication and demanded them to write a corrective release due to the "delicate nature of AGRC matters."[119] During this period, the War Department doubled-checked all letters to the next of kin to make sure that the writers avoided any errors or insensitivities, similar to the *Stars & Stripes* article that "demanded considerable investigating and handling."[120] Even articles published by the British Graves Registration Service received criticism from U.S. officials. When the *Washington Evening Star* republished an article titled, "RAF Experts Combing Europe for Remains of Missing Flyers," War Department officials were concerned about the accuracy and message to U.S. families and requested a rewrite edition to be widely published instead.[121]

The increase in pro-local, anti-repatriation sentiments in mass U.S. media caused the American public to doubt the justifications for bringing the remains back to the U.S. In religious centers, especially in the Catholic Church, people decried the planned repatriation service as unethical. The supposed relocating bodies from grave to grave, especially as people who travelled overseas wrote reports declaring that "their boys" are resting in "present beauty," was completely unacceptable for people who believed in permanent rest.[122]

With a spike in public dissent over future repatriation policies, the U.S. government began to seriously discuss polling next of kin and implementing the return of remains. During the House of Representatives Appropriations Hearing Committee for the War Department's operations a year prior, Representative Norrell (D-AK) asked Colonel Harbold of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps about the desires of U.S. families over repatriation. Harbold, a major figure in negotiating congressional budget allotments for national cemeteries in both

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119 Report of Operations, 1 July 1946-30 September 1946, 120, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
120 Ibid.
121 Appendix #2, Letter to Brigadier General Horkan, Memorial Division, Office of the Quartermaster General, War Department, 4 April 1947, Report of Operations, 1 April-30 June 1947, Volume I Narrative, War Department, 4 April 1947, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
122 Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 27.

World Wars, declared that the War Department has received "65,000 letters from next of kin and nearly all have requested the return of the bodies of the son or the father or the husband, as the case may be." Responding, Norrell summarized the colonel's understanding of the high volume of requests, "practically all, and surely more than 90 percent, will want their relatives' bodies returned to this country."[123] Given that U.S. government did not want to lose the previous high number of families with the sudden anti-repatriation rhetoric in the media, Congress acted quickly to pass the budget for 1947. [124]

However, the government's motivation for discussion did not arise exclusively from the desire to convince the U.S. public that the government took the utmost care in their dead. In fact, two forms of lobbyist groups also dictated the sudden proactiveness of the repatriation and permanent cemetery program in spring 1947.

Coupled with President Truman, many Congressmen believed that the construction of permanent, white marble, cemeteries would enforce local European sentiment against Communism. With a rise in the popularity of Communism in Western Europe, especially in France, diplomats believed that cemetery symbols would suggest the power of Christianity and Capitalism to remind citizens of "the way" to freedom. Despite the fact that temporary cemeteries had a profound effect on local populations in stimulating war memory, wooden headstones did nothing to perpetuate U.S. objectives for a free Europe. Through the construction of white headstones, the United States would display a sanitized victory, removing any reminder of the horrors from the conflict. [125] By early 1947, containment officials believed that using permanent cemeteries would effectively halt communist inroads

123 Robert E. Williams, War Department Civil Functions Appropriation Bill for 1947, Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Seventy-ninth Congress, Second Session, on the War Department Civil Functions Appropriation Bill for 1947 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 20-21.
124 Ibid.
125 Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 67.

into Western Europe and pushed to begin the next of kin polling to determine how many bodies would stay in Europe.[126]

At the same time, the U.S. government faced pressure from major funeral lobbyist groups in the U.S. who adamantly wanted the repatriation of remains. Monument producing companies, undertakers, and casket manufacturers actively pushed lawmakers in Washington to begin the repatriation program, given the millions of dollars of potential revenue. Through their efforts, the United States purchased 250,000 specifically made coffins by 1947 for the eventual overseas repatriation, caskets that needed to be airtight sealed with steel to survive the travel.[127] As a result, steel output reached postwar highs due to the casket industry. The casket industry was so valuable in the postwar that when steel workers went on strike, their wages were increased to continue the casket production for repatriation.[128]

With mounting political pressure, the War Department finally initiated its repatriation program. In March 1947, the Quartermaster General sent its first series of next of kin inquiry letters, some 20,000 in total to families, to begin the predicted five-year repatriation process.[129] Families had the choice whether to leave their dead overseas, repatriate their remains in a local U.S. cemetery, or a national military cemetery stateside.[130] Once families decided, they sent their response to the nearest county service officer of any veteran organization.[131] In anticipation of the results, the AGRC began exhuming the U.S. remains from the thirty-six temporary cemeteries, stacking the caskets on top of each other in black tarps. The U.S. government kept this process classified until 1960.[132]

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126 Ibid., 26.
127 "War Dead Coffins on Way to Europe," *New York Times*, May 15, 1947.
128 Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 26; Report of Operations, 1 April-30 June 1946, 2, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
129 "Kin to Elect War Burials," *New York Times*, March 7, 1947.
130 Shomon, *Crosses in the* Wind, 139-143.
131 "Return of Overseas Dead," *Miami Daily News*, January 2, 1947.
132 Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 28-29.

While the exhumation process was hidden to the U.S. public, local people saw with much disappointment and horror the disinterring of the remains. As the townspeople championed the search, recovery, and reinterring of remains into the temporary cemetery as a part of their own war mourning, the people protested this sudden change, writing letters to military officials. As a result, AGRC officials explained the importance of the repatriation program through the press and radio to the locals, offering limited sympathy.[133] Locals who once "adopted" graves now had no son to mourn. Others who walked to the temporary cemetery every day to remind them of the liberation only found black tarps. Locals never forgot the temporary cemeteries. As late as 2003, a local Normandy newspaper published an article titled, "Do you Remember? The Saint-Juan Temporary American Cemetery, September 1944-December 1949." The loss of temporary cemeteries was devastating to the local people, who so actively supported their preservation to help with the processing of their own trauma and memory.[134]

Although the local people protested, the U.S. government cared more about the U.S. families and interest groups to consider the emotional attachment of locals to the temporary grave plots in their repatriation decision. When the locals worked for the AGRC in the war and postwar period, the U.S. government supported the locals' connection to U.S. dead, if the American public believed that the AGRC led the majority efforts. Yet when next of kin polling commenced, the U.S. government deemed them unimportant to the process. The locals were pawns to exhumation efforts, not the deciding factor in repatriation policy.

After the first mailing of next of kin polling letters in March, U.S. government officials quickly activated other repatriation processes. On April 8, AGRC officials had its first meeting with the War Department in Washington to discuss blueprints of permanent

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133 Appendix #2, Letter to Brigadier General Horkan, Memorial Division Report of Operations, 1 April-30 June 1947, Volume I Narrative, Office of the Quartermaster General, War Department, 4 April 1947, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
134 Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 28, 33, 36, 39.

cemeteries, as well as possible private construction contractors. Yet however productive this meeting was to future planning, the AGRC had one major issue. Approximately 2,000 bodies remained unrecovered, lying in the immensely impenetrable Soviet Zone of Germany.[135] AGRC officials in Berlin, unable to work, remained discouraged at their future work prospects. Technical Sergeant Ben Stedman, still unfound, continued to rest in the "Hero Cemetery" at Zehrensdorf.

Addendum: Other Liberated Countries in Western Europe

The story of the AGRC using local people for grave operations is not exclusive to France. Many locals in Western Europe passionately searched, exhumed, and provided maintenance care for the U.S. temporary cemeteries in the war and postwar periods. Building similar connections to the bodies as the French did, locals in other countries considered the U.S. dead as their sons, providing the locals an invaluable outlet to mourn loss during the conflict.

Given the local adoption of graves, the U.S. media presented similar stories over Dutch efforts to the public as seen in France. In 1947, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an article titled "Visit to a U.S. Military Cemetery" to depict a mourning father's visit to Margraten in the Netherlands. Overcome by local hospitality, the father wrote "always there is some person or persons from Maestricht, Margraten, Heerlen or some other near-by town bringing tribute of flowers…In every kind of weather, and on every day, some one stands for Holland's gratitude to America's homes." Concluding his thoughts, he pleaded that the U.S. government should drop any repatriation plans, because "the people in the midst of whom our sons lie buried are kindly, thoughtful, appreciative people, conscious that it is an honor to pay tribute to the young warrior dead."[136] Another article from the *Tribune* of

[135] Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1946, Volume II, Exhibit #69, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[136] "Visit to a U.S. Military Cemetery," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 20, 1947.

February 11, 1947, described that a private Dutch firm donated more than 200,00 flower bulbs to decorate the graves in U.S. temporary cemeteries, hoping that "they will be in full bloom by May 30, Memorial Day."[137] With such articles, it appeared that the local Dutch population provided more funding and upkeep for the graves than the AGRC units did.

Not only in the Netherlands, but in Luxembourg, people provided diligent care to the U.S. dead. After General Patton's death in December 1945, locals lined the streets to see his casket before his interment in the Hamm Cemetery, the temporary U.S. cemetery outside Luxembourg City. Over time, locals in the surrounding area maintained a close relationship to the cemetery, being hired for upkeep work for the approximately 8,000 U.S. graves.[138]

With local grave adoptions, media outlets presented to the U.S. public stories detailing the diligence of local Luxembourger efforts, often to the dismay of AGRC officials. Lee Shippey of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote on March 3, 1947 that one LA mother took a trip to the Hamm Cemetery to see the burial site of her son. The mother, so struck by the cemetery's idyllic beauty, noted "I believe the boys would rather be lying there" as "the cemetery is so calm, so clean, so beautifully kept by the Luxembourgers and so majestic in its dignity that one can never forget it."[139] Other mothers reading the article would certainly feel similar empathy to leave their sons abroad in such good hands. The published articles were factors in speeding up repatriation in 1947, as AGRC officials feared it would undermine the entirety of their work in the field. In one 1947 AGRC report, officials lamented the apparent miscrediting of grave care at the temporary cemetery at Hamm in a *Stars & Stripes* article. Noting that the article "specifically credited the people of Luxembourg with much of the work

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137 "200,000 Bulbs Donated for U.S. Graves in Europe: Dutch Firm's Gift is Largest of Many for Cemeteries," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 11, 1947.
138 "General Patton's Funeral and Burial Site," Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial, accessed March 20, 2020, http://pattonhq.com/funeral.html.
139 Lee Shippey, "Leeside o' L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1947.

done" and discussed "grave adoptions," the officials feared that people at home would think that the U.S. government did not care about their deceased loved ones.[140]

Additionally, not only did the French object to removing the U.S. dead from temporary cemeteries, but Danish individuals who felt a strong connection to their liberators. Between 1946-1947, Danish locals protested AGRC reinterring work, believing that the U.S. dead on their soil were local heroes, who needed to be properly honored by townspeople who adopted the graves.[141] Removing the U.S. bodies would be removing the proof of conflict, a matter of importance that the Minister of Denmark championed. Only after a year of negotiations, the U.S. Ambassador to Denmark persuaded the Danish government to allow AGRC officials to reinter the country and undergo their exhumation work.[142]

Similar to the French, officially the U.S. government never acknowledged the local efforts of other European civilians for the exhumation and grave work. These individuals, despite having an intense mourning connection to the cemetery plots, became mere work pawns in the overall AGRC process in Western Europe.

[140] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, Narrative Appendices 1-74, 119, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[141] Report of Operations, 1 April-30 June 1946, 104, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[142] Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1947, 5, 97.AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

Chapter Two: "DPs-- cannon fodder for American Imperialists"[143]
AGRC Operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany, 1945-1949

"It is against American tradition for us to compel these persons, who are now under our authority to return against their will"
-Secretary of State George C. Marshall, July 16, 1947[144]

Weeks prior to the strategic War Department meeting in Washington on April 8, 1947, Major General Keating, future Governor of the U.S. Zone of Germany, wrote a desperate letter to Marshal Sokolovsky, head of the Soviet administration in Germany. In the March 17 letter, he pleaded for a relaxation in AGRC travel restrictions as "the delays encountered in locating or recovering bodies of deceased American soldiers grieve thousands of American families who are awaiting final news of their loved ones, and these citizens of the United States expect me to expedite our War Department's undertaking [in] this matter."[145] With the start of the next of kin polling and the "Return of the World War II Dead Program" in spring 1947, the AGRC Berlin Unit faced considerable pressure from the War Department to hurry exhumation operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany.

While many families received standard next of kin polling letters from the War Department in early 1947, a form of final closure with their war loss, approximately 2,445 American families still remained unsure of their dead in the Soviet Zone. Unable to systematically search and exhume graves in the zone, AGRC officers in the 95th Battalion had limited information to give to families in regard to the location, status, and processing of their dead. [146] Although AGRC experts believed that all operations in the U.S., French, and British

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[143] "A covering letter of political department of Estonian SSR to the article of "DPs—cannon fodder for American imperialists"," April 10, 1950, ERA.R-1789.1.99, The National Archives of Estonia, 12. Translated from Estonian to English from The National Archives of Estonia, 2014, http://www.archiv.org.lv/baltic_dp_germany/index.php?id=203&lang=en.

[144] Secretary of State George C. Marshall speaking during the Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, , 80th Cong., 1st sess., 1947, 504-505, The George C. Marshall Foundation, 16 July, 1947.

[145] Ibid., Letter to Marshal Sokolovsky, Marshal of the Soviet Union V.D. Sokolovsky, Commander in Chief of the Soviet Forces of Occupation in Germany, Soviet Military Administration in Germany, from: Major General Frank A. Keating, U.S. Army Deputy Military Governor, 17 March 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS 322 (GRS) Grave Registration Service, NARA.

[146] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, 150, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

Zones could end by January 1, 1948, an essential date for the future construction of permanent cemeteries, this deadline was an impossibility for the Berlin Unit. [147] With so many outstanding cases left in 1947, Soviet Zone exhumations were the furthest behind in the entirety of AGRC operations.[148]

Increasing Cold War tensions, however, had little effect on the demands of U.S. families for exhumation information in the Soviet Zone. Although 63% of Americans in March 1947 did not trust the Soviet Union to cooperate with the U.S. in foreign affairs, the War Department continued to be inundated with letters reminding the government of its obligation to recover all war dead.[149] Writing second or third follow-up requests, U.S. families expected to receive prompt notification of their loved ones' remains in the Soviet Zone.[150] It did not matter that the U.S. signed the Truman Doctrine in March, symbolizing a future U.S.-Soviet Union standoff in the Mediterranean or that the U.S. had condemned the movement of Soviet troops in Iran months prior.[151] To the American public, the AGRC needed to recover the bodies in the Soviet Zone as soon as possible, regardless of the possible adverse consequences to foreign policy.

At the same time, the Berlin Unit had severely limited options in alleviating such unresolved inquiries. In a March 20 telegram, Brigadier General Horkan at the War Department received a request by the Berlin Unit to grant an exception: stop forwarding letters to the unit given their almost non-existent exhumation progress. As the "Soviet

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147 Ibid., 138.
148 Ibid., 150.
149 National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, Attitudes Toward Greece, 47T49.R02. (March, 1947), distributed by Cornell University, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

150 Letter First Field Command to Brigadier General Horkan, Office of the Quartermaster General, War Department, 20 March 1947, Report of Operations 1 April-30 June 1947, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
151 "United States Relations with Russia: The Cold War, 1945-1949," Office of the Historian, Washington, DC, U.S. Department of State Archive, accessed March 16, 2020, https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/85895.htm.

authorities have slowed our [AGRC] recovery operations down to the lowest volume in about a year," the post suggested to the War Department that once the unit "replied that a certain remain is in the Soviet controlled area, no further enquiry is made about the case."[152] The Berlin Unit wanted to give up. As the AGRC had exhausted all prior negotiation channels, the Berlin Unit believed that abandoning efforts was the only viable option remaining.

For almost two years, the Berlin Unit had tried to gain comprehensive access into the Soviet Zone via normal negotiation methods but were largely unsuccessful. After receiving pressure from the War Department, coupled with the commencement of the next of kin polling and an increase in family inquiry letters in spring 1947, the U.S. government entered into a devil's deal with Soviet authorities. In order to gain exhumation access, the U.S. government forwent protecting Baltic DPs against Soviet repatriation, a long-held policy, allowing Soviet officers to coerce the DPs to travel to the east, where they ultimately faced imprisonment in Siberian gulags. Despite this policy change, the U.S. government continued to maintain a façade to the American public that they protected Baltic DPs against forced repatriation, underscoring the nature of the U.S. Government to use people as pawns in AGRC operations, while concealing the real laborers for U.S. postwar exhumation.

Wasted Time: November 1945-April 1947

At the time of the request on March 20, 1947, the Berlin Unit had been attempting to negotiate with Soviet authorities in gaining systematic entry into the Soviet Zone for a year and a half.[153] During the first round of negotiations, subordinate AGRC officials met with Soviet authorities to agree on preliminary conditions. In December 1945, months after other AGRC operations had started, Soviet officials agreed to allow three search teams, nine men total, to enter the Soviet Zone. Despite this encouraging beginning, problems quickly arose.

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[152] Letter First Field Command to Brigadier General Horkan, Office of the Quartermaster General, War Department, 20 March 1947, Report of Operations 1 April-30 June 1947, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

[153] Report of Operations Period 1 January-31 March 1946, 10, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

First, these teams were only allowed to search, not disinter, a major obstacle for repatriation purposes, as the Soviet authorities refused to remove any dead from their zone. Second, the teams had to submit all travel plans in advance to Soviet generals for their approval, a measure that affected the mobility of the teams considerably. Finally, AGRC search teams could not communicate with locals to garner further information on burial plots in the fields. Oftentimes teams would discover new leads over the location of graves during the trips, yet with a rigid travel plan, the teams had to keep with the set itinerary.[154]

Despite the relative comradery the nine men had with Soviet border officials, who enjoyed "being treated like a Russian officer" and "given the best the Russians can offer in the way of quarters and messing facilities," the search teams proved inadequate, given the staggering number of bodies. [155] By March 1946, the search teams had only found forty-eight bodies, a pathetic fraction of the approximately 3,000 left in the zone. [156] With such limited success, AGRC field operatives persuaded their superiors, such as Major General Robert M. Littlejohn who oversaw the 7,000 AGRC personnel, to use his political leverage to negotiate for more advantageous conditions with his Soviet cohorts.[157]

Hoping that his superior rank would constitute successful negotiation progress, Littlejohn initiated new tactics to guarantee sweeping operations in the zone.[158] Meeting with Soviet officials in early 1946, Littlejohn tried using his rank to "emphatically" demand for an expansion of fifty search and fifty disinterring teams by May 1 to compensate for the large

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154 Ibid., 81; Report of Operations (Narrative)-First Field Command-Hq, 13; Ibid., Chapter VIII: Operations in Areas Outside U.S., French and British Zones of Germany, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
155 Exhibit #76 B, Subject: Weekly Report, from First Field Command, Fulda, Germany APO 65 to Major General Robert M. Littlejohn, Commanding General, American Graves Registration Command, European Theater Area, APO 887, U.S. Army, 26 January 1946, Report of Operations Period 1 January-31 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
156 Ibid.; Appendix, Report from W.D. Hooton, Major FA Asst. Operations Officer: No. 8 Berlin, Report of Operations Period 1 January-31 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
157 Field Services Division, Field Commands, Sectors, 8, Report of Operations 1 October 1945-December 1945, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
158 Ibid., Exhibit #76 D, Subject: Weekly Report, from First Field Command, Fulda, Germany APO 65 to Major General Robert M. Littlejohn, Commanding General, American Graves Registration Command, European Theater Area, APO 887, U.S. Army, 9 February 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

volume of reported dead. However, his efforts proved futile, leaving the Berlin-based operation to continue with only nine men into May 1946.[159]

Frustrated, Littlejohn approached even higher officials to conduct negotiations with Soviet authorities given the importance of exhumation and the War Department pressure to deliver. He succeeded in motivating both General Clay, U.S. Military Governor of Germany, and Brigadier General Mickelson, Chief of the Displaced Persons Branch, to champion the cause of greater AGRC access into the Soviet Zone.[160] Additionally Littlejohn appointed an AGRC advisor, Major George E. Cilley to the OMGUS [Office of the Military Government, United States] communications board. This move enabled Littlejohn to better share pressing information to the highest U.S. military officials in occupied Germany.[161] After weeks of discussion, he sent a rough draft negotiation memorandum to OMGUS in hopes that with his political leverage, General Clay could succeed in obtaining a long-term license for AGRC entry.[162]

As a form of desperation, the proposed plan was completely one-sided in favor of the Soviet officials. The outline consisted of six logistical options, labeled A-E, to be as flexible and enticing for Soviet approval as possible. Each plan differed on the starting date and strength of troops in the Zone. For example, Plan A designated eighty-four total teams to cover the 42,000 square miles in a two-month period whereas Plan C only determined forty-two teams for that time. Plan E, the least advantageous, had a completion date of July 1, 1947,

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159 Ibid., 151; Exhibit #76 Subject: Weekly Report, from First Field Command, Fulda, Germany APO 65 to Major General Robert M. Littlejohn, Commanding General, American Graves Registration Command, European Theater Area, APO 887, U.S. Army, 16 February 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
160 References, Graves Registration Operations in Soviet Occupied Zone in Germany, to: General Lucius D. Clay, Office of the Military Government, Berlin, thru: G-4, United States Forces, European Theater, APO 757, by Colonel Alfred B. Denniston, QMC Chief of Staff, Basic Plan A, 15 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
161 Appendix #91, Headquarters American Graves Registration Command European Theater Area, AGRPL, APO 887, Subject: Graves Registration Operation in Soviet Controlled Territory, To: Office of Military Government, U.S. Berlin, 21 February 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
162 AGRFL, Subject: Graves Registration Activities in the Soviet Zone of Germany, C/S Chief Planning Branch P&O Division, Major George E. Cilley, 6 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

which would delay any larger AGRC efforts for next of kin repatriation.[163] Yet as the exhumation of remains in the Soviet Zone was essential to American public's perception of AGRC operations, General Clay wanted to have as many tenable options as possible to give to Soviet authorities.

With a plan that gave the Soviet officials the upper-hand, General Clay messaged General Sokolovsky, the deputy commander-in-chief of the Soviet Forces in Germany, desiring a personal meeting to discuss the hopeful new conditions. Days later, General Sokolovsky replied that it would be awkward to grant the U.S. greater access when he could not give the British counterparts, the Army Graves Registration and Royal Air Force's Missing Research and Exhumation Units (M.R.E.U.), the same access, as required by his Soviet superiors. In the follow-up report, however, Clay noted that Sokolovsky "promised me that he will make a strong recommendation to Moscow to comply at least part way with our request for additional teams."[164] While the hopeful response underscored Clay's friendly relationship to Sokolovsky, it also illustrated the fact that even General Clay and OMGUS could not alone negotiate for better exhumation conditions. OMGUS, Clay, and AGRC needed the help of the State Department.

Subsequently, the Chargé de Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow tried to negotiate with Soviet officials given General Clay's unsuccess. After the Army Service Forces sent the Chargé de Affaires a cable, detailing the former botched plan, the Embassy attempted to negotiate with the Foreign Office of the U.S.S.R. for greater entry into the Soviet Zone of Germany.[165] However hopeful AGRC and OMGUS representatives were for the State

[163] Ibid., Plan A-E, 15 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[164] Lucius Clay, *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay, Germany 1945-1949,* Vol. I (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 185.
[165] Subject: Negotiations for AGRC Activities in the Soviet-Occupied Zone of Germany, Colonel Alfred B. Denniston to Colonel Odell, 22 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.; Ibid., Subject: Telephone Conversation with Major Cilley 25 March 1946, A.A. Leadbeater, 1st Lieutenant QMC Planning Branch, 25 March 1946, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

Department to intervene, General Clay noted his skepticism for success, declaring that he "would be surprised…to learn that the Charge d'Affairs in Moscow anticipates success on that level." [166] General Clay was correct. The State Department failed to secure Soviet approval of the March AGRC operational plan.

In the following months, AGRC officers assigned to Berlin only achieved meager results.[167] Subject to fickle Soviet border regulations, some months saw incredible success, whereas in others the Berlin Unit's work was at a standstill. During summer 1946, the Soviet authorities granted the disinterment of U.S. dead and increased the number of men allowed into the zone to five officers, thirty-nine enlisted men and five U.S. War Department civilians for administrative duties.[168] This group of men served in the 95th Quartermaster Battalion. In this period, the Berlin Unit tried to quickly exhume all backlog cases, some 300 that the search teams had found in previous months. Soviet officials even permitted AGRC search teams to talk with mayors of local towns for information on isolated burial plots. In light of such positive developments, the AGRC headquarters installed the Central Identification Point (CIP) in Strasbourg as it was closer to Berlin for the entirety of AGRC European operations, illustrating the importance of exhumation in the Soviet Zone. [169]

However, after a relatively successful summer, Soviet authorities enacted new time restrictions and border rules. For the six total teams operating in the Berlin Unit, Soviet authorities only approved forty operating days combined for the teams in October. In November they only permitted thirteen. [170] Again, 95th Commanding Officers tried to negotiate for improved relations, but by December, exhumation operations were frustratingly

166 Report of Operations Period 1 April-30 June 1946, 2, 20, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., 81; Report of Operations (Narrative)-First Field Command-Hq, 27, 29-30, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
169 Ibid., 3.
170 This figure might be confusing, but I believe the report is saying that 6 teams should have 31 days, or 186 days of work.

slow.[171] During the last month of operation in 1946, the 95th unit uncovered only 204 bodies, a number placing them way behind schedule.

After a "heart-breakingly slow" end to exhumation efforts at the end of 1946, the new year proved no different for the U.S. 95th Quartermaster Battalion assigned to Berlin.[172] Between January and February 1947, Soviet authorities sanctioned one trip to Mecklenburg, two for Magdeburg, and one for Halle-Merseburg for a total of four trips in two months. In March, Soviet authorities only approved of one trip, the lowest point for the battalion since its deployment to Berlin in July 1946.[173]

When the Berlin Unit sent Brigadier General Horkan at the War Department its defeatist March 20th telegram, declaring that the Unit would prefer to receive no further inquiries or personal letters, the Berlin Unit was at its lowest point. However dire the situation was in Berlin, the War Department was unmoved by the pleas to abandon exhumation efforts in the Soviet Zone. Casket manufactures and lobbyists, local U.S. cemetery operators, and most importantly, 2,445 families depended on AGRC operations in the seemingly impenetrable Soviet Zone.[174] With the start of the comprehensive repatriation program in March 1947, the War Department needed to find another method to win long-term access, one that did not depend on normal chain-of-command negotiations.

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171 Report of Operations Period 1 October-31 December 1946, 136, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA; Ibid., 146-147; Ibid., 81; Report of Operations (Narrative)-First Field Command-Hq, 23, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

172 Volume I-Narrative with Appendices #1-50, Chapter III: Administration of Personnel, 24, Report of Operations, 1 January-31 March 1947, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3,, RG 407, NARA.; 1, Subject: Operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany, to: Commander in Chief, European, Frankfurt, APO 757, U.S. Army Attn: Major General C.R. Huebner, from: Colonel J.C. Odell QMC Commanding, 24 March 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS 322 (GRS) Grave Registration Service, NARA.

173 *A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series, 1947-1948* (Historical Division European Command, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1948), Microfilm, US Army Heritage and Education Center Archives, 339-340.

174 Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1946, 150, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

A Devil's Deal: DPs as Negotiation Pawns (April 1947-March 1949)

While the War Department searched for alternative negotiation tactics, Major General Keating, former Deputy Military Governor of the U.S. Zone, attempted one final time to convince Soviet authorities to allow increased entry. On March 31, Keating tried to emotionally evoke General Dratvin, Lieutenant General of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany, to understand the AGRC's value to families at home. Declaring the need for "a more cooperative spirit" in recovering bodies, Keating hoped that Dratvin would emphasize with the efforts to give closure to U.S. families. In the letter, Keating noted he bore all the responsibility, "whose families expect me [Keating] to furnish final news of their loved ones, can be hastened to completion," Keating pleaded to Dratvin to support AGRC efforts in Soviet territory. [175] With such emotional language, Keating did not view AGRC negotiations as mere geopolitical transactions, but with the War Department's desperation, he viewed the matter of grave recovery as an unalienable right for families regardless of their nationality. By evoking a sense of urgency, Keating alluded to the wartime during which both sides collectively lost soldiers for the same goal. Therefore, despite increased tensions among the two former Allies, Keating argued that the dead were from the wartime when they were allies and carried no future political baggage.

However sympathetic and persuasive Keating's rhetoric was to U.S. families at home, it was unconvincing to Soviet officials. General Dratvin never replied to Keating's March 31 request for greater access. Driven to unforeseen desperation, U.S. governmental officials abandoned normal negotiation measures and began to think about the possibility of trading U.S. dead for Baltic displaced persons (DPs). Using DPs as negotiation pawns was not a new tactic; in October 1946 the British had agreed to allow Soviet repatriation officers to enter the British Zone of Germany to survey and encourage the Baltic peoples' repatriation to the

[175] Letter for General Dratvin from Major General Keating, 31 March 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff, SGS 322 (GRS) Grave Registration Service, NARA.

Soviet Union.[176] As a result, the British received entry into the Soviet Zone to conduct their exhumation operations via the Royal Air Force's Missing Research and Exhumation Operations (M.R.E.U.) for the first time.[177]

Although U.S. officials certainly knew of the British negotiation, for almost two years the U.S. government rejected succumbing to Soviet repatriation requests, supporting the Baltic peoples' refusal to repatriate to the Soviet Union. To the U.S. government, the Baltic peoples served as symbols of freedom, defiant against Soviet oppression. U.S. officials strived to protect the Baltic peoples' liberties while they lived in DP camps in Germany. Yet with exhumation efforts hitting rock bottom and increased pressure from the War Department to begin repatriation efforts of remains, U.S. officials secretly sacrificed Baltic DPs for U.S. dead in the Soviet Zone.

The new strategy represented a major deviation from previous policy. Prior to the reciprocal negotiations, the U.S. disdained the Soviet repatriation policy of Baltic peoples, whom the U.S. considered not to be Soviet citizens. Despite the USSR's annexation of the Baltic States in 1940, the United States had not formally recognized any territorial changes from the war. Therefore, according to the U.S., people who had their homes east of the 1939 USSR demarcation line, the Cuzon Line, did not have to forcibly repatriate. [178] Yet to the Soviet Union, the Baltic peoples were Soviet citizens and therefore had to repatriate. The contention over the repatriation of Baltic peoples became one of the most important issues between the former Allies.

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[176] Tomas Balkelis, "Living in the Displaced Persons Camp," in *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands*, 1945-1950, ed. P. Gatrell, N. Baron (New York, NY: Springer, 2009), 28.

[177] TNA, PRO AIR 20/9305, DS 1505/1, AIR MINISTRY Report on Royal Air Force and Dominions Air Forces Missing Research and Enquiry Service 1944-1949, No.3 M.R.E.U. and No.4 M.R.E.U.-British Zone of Germany, Russian Zone and Poland, 23.

[178] "Matthews Minutes, Poland," 6 February 1945, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, Historical Documents, Document 354, Office of the Historian, State Department, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d354.

At the Yalta Agreement in February 1945, all Allied powers agreed over the basic conditions for repatriation in the postwar period. Under the agreement, liberated Soviet citizens were not considered prisoners-of-war but rather were regarded as civilians who were then placed into displaced persons camps. These camps, according to the treaty, would have attached Soviet liaison officers whose responsibility it was to expedite the repatriation process. Even though Allied parties agreed in the conference to allow repatriation representatives on both sides to enter each other's territory, difficulties immediately arose over the interpretation of the vague term "all Soviet citizens" set in the Yalta Agreement.[179] To the United States, according to a Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum on April 5, 1945, "all Soviet citizens" meant to include:

> All Soviet prisoners of war liberated from German prisoner-of-war camps, all liberated civilians or displaced persons, and all Soviet citizens captured in German uniform other than those who refused to resign their status as prisoners of war under the terms of the Geneva Convention. [180]

After Leipzig Agreement in mid-May 1945, an addendum to the Yalta Conference, Soviet military representatives and other Allied authorities with the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) agreed to a multitude of exchange points and the transportation of displaced persons along army road lines. As a result, 1,390,000 Soviet citizens were repatriated back to the USSR by July 1 (300,000 U.S. and Western European nationalities repatriated from Soviet control in the same period). By September 1, only 20,000 Soviet citizens remained in charge of U.S. forces; by October 1, 4,000 DPs remained in the American Zone, who according to U.S. authorities, resisted repatriation to the Soviet Union.[181]

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[179] "Agreement Relating to Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Forces Operating Under Soviet Command and Forces Operating Under United States of America Command," 11 February 1945, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, Historical Documents, Document 504, Office of the Historian, State Department, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Malta/d504.

[180] *A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series*, 256-264.

[181] Ibid.

These last remaining DPs were mostly individuals from the Baltic states and Poland who refused to repatriate to the Soviet Union. In an effort to remain in the DP camps, away from the pressing Soviet liaison officers, the Baltic peoples recruited the help of U.S. military officials to protect their repatriation status. In one letter to President Truman, the archbishops of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania pleaded for greater support to "give our small nations under the protection of your great State," referencing the remaining fate of the Baltic DPs.[182] The U.S. Military Government in Germany received a similar letter from the leaders of the Baltic Camp Administration in the DP camp Kempten/Allgaü in hopes of defending the Baltic peoples from Soviet coercion. After experiencing a situation where Soviet officers shot Soviet citizens, including mothers who tried throwing their children into the Baltic side of the DP camp, the letter stated that "many of our [Baltic] people are near to nervous break-down and therefore we beg most sincerely: to give us on hand a written statement that we must not be forced to repatriate."[183] Convinced of the inhumane aspects of forced repatriation through these rebuttal letters, the U.S. took a sharper stance against Baltic repatriation than with the Yalta agreement.

In September 1945, the U.S. suspended the use of physical force to repatriate DPs.[184] Suddenly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff also became very adamant about the freedom of the Baltic peoples and even dictated that efforts should be made to recover control of any persons of these nationalities who had already been turned over to the Soviet authorities by mistake.[185] Culminating on December 20, 1945, Washington altered its April 5 memorandum to provide greater protection to the Baltic peoples against forcible repatriation, a measure which

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[182] A testimony of three representatives of Lutheran churches in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the president of the United States of America in August 1945, Camps in Germany (1944-1951) for refugees from Baltic Countries, ERA.1608.2.496. National Archive of Estonia.
[183] A petition of the leaders of Baltic Camp Administration in Kempten to the Military Government of USA. August 14, 1945, Camps in Germany (1944-1951) for refugees from Baltic Countries, ERA.1608.2.496, National Archive of Estonia.
[184] Mark Elliot, *Soviet Refugees and America's Role in Their Repatriation: Pawns of Yalta* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 122.
[185] *A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series*, 256-264.

completely surprised the British given its sudden break with the Yalta agreement.[186] In the last alteration of U.S. repatriation policy, the civilian repatriation exemption is at the forefront:

> Soviet citizens who were actually within the Soviet Union on 1 September 1939 would be repatriated "without regard to their wishes and by force if necessary," provided they belonged to one of the following classes: first, those captured in German uniform; secondly, those who were members of the Soviet armed forces on or after 22 June 1941 and who were not subsequently discharged therefrom; and, thirdly, those who were charged by the Soviet authorities with rendering aid and comfort to the enemy; if the charges were stated in a reasonably exact manner.[187]

Civilian displaced persons without association to Germany could not be repatriated against their will to the Soviet Union. Instead of repatriating, the remaining Baltic DPs stayed in the camps, serving as symbolic defiant patriots against a looming Soviet regime to the U.S. public.

In public, U.S. propaganda continued to champion the cause of the Baltic peoples, illustrating them as industrious, educated, and independent individuals fearing oppressive repatriation and thriving in the context of the camps. In one U.S.-sponsored United Nations Refugee and Repatriation Administration (UNRRA) newsletter, a picture of eighteen-year-old Dr.Helmi Niggol, a female "leading dentist in her native Estonia," is depicted alongside Pharmacist Norkus, a former "Chief Instructor of the School of Pharmacy," who handled more than one hundred prescriptions a day.[188] In an issue just two months before negotiations for the reciprocal mission bases, the UNRRA newsletter featured two full pages of pictures showing only Baltic DP engineering students and former professors engaging in instruction at a German technical school. One photo displayed the school's oldest instructor, going on to

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[186] Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 113, 122.
[187] "Memorandum by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to the Secretary of State," 21 December 1945, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/12-2145, Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, Europe, Volume V, Historical Documents, Document 858, Office of the Historian, Department of State, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v05/d858.
[188] UNRRA Team News, DP Operations Germany, Vol.1 No.2 November 1945, 8., Museum Victoria Collections, Australia.

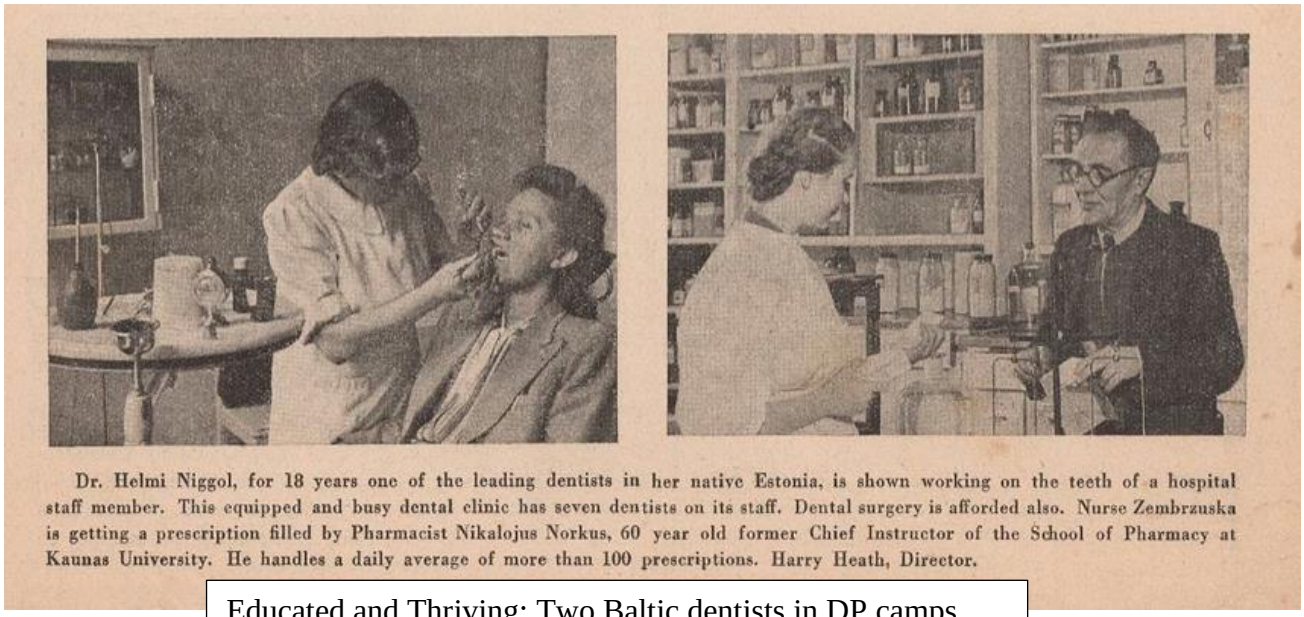
describe that this Estonian professor is "typical of the highly experienced instructors who have been gathered together at the school."[189] U.S. officials tried to disentangle the Baltic narrative with the Soviet one, defining the Baltic education and moral aptitude to be closely related to U.S. values.

U.S. newspapers presented the controversial repatriation of Baltic peoples in both an emotional and respectful way. In one 1946 article titled "No Baltic Displacees Going to Red Areas," the United Press noted that the State Department "has no plans to deport any Baltic displaced persons to Soviet-occupied lands."[190] Similarly, a *New York Herald Tribune* article, entitled "Displaced Balts Rally at Hanau," detailed how the Baltic displaced persons created a makeshift community of their own and "are proud to show off their camp as evidence that they can make good citizens."[191]

[189] UNRRA Team News, DP Operations Germany, Vol.2 No.2 February 8 1947, 4-5, United Nations Archives, https://search.archives.un.org/uploads/r/united-nations-archives/8/3/0/830870085eb6af09a69a08ca9768446f0dd8a2862a89dcddeb13740287fd1ced/S-1253-0000-0417-00001.PDF

[190] "No Baltic Displacees Going to Red Areas," *Des Moines Sunday Register*, February 24, 1946.

[191] William Attwood, "Displaced Balts Rally at Hanau," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 1, 1947.



Dr. Helmi Niggol, for 18 years one of the leading dentists in her native Estonia, is shown working on the teeth of a hospital staff member. This equipped and busy dental clinic has seven dentists on its staff. Dental surgery is afforded also. Nurse Zembrzuska is getting a prescription filled by Pharmacist Nikalojus Norkus, 60 year old former Chief Instructor of the School of Pharmacy at Kaunas University. He handles a daily average of more than 100 prescriptions. Harry Heath, Director.

Educated and Thriving: Two Baltic dentists in DP camps
Source: UNRRA Team News, DP Operations Germany, *Baltic DPs as Dentists*, (Vol.1 No.2 November 1945), 8.

ion & Engineering School In Flensburg

Students learn how to use various types of marine engines in the basement of the DP navigation school.

Johann Lasberg of Tallin, 73, the school's oldest instructor, gives DP students practical instruction in forging and welding. Lasberg, who has been at sea as a first engineer most of his life, is typical of the highly experienced instructors who have been gathered together at the school.

Karls Zirulis of Tukum, who has been at sea as a stoker for seven years, explains details of a model scotch boiler to his classmate Paul Tomins from Limbagi. Both are members of the primary seamanship class.

Instructor Adolfus Jurjonas of Klaipeda, a former sea captain with 15 years of experience in the Lithuanian Mercantile Marine, gives instruction in the principles of latitude and longitude in the frst Lithuanian navigators class at the school.

Training for the Future: Latvians at engineering school
Source: UNRRA Team News, DP Operations Germany, *DPs Study at Former German Navigation & Engineering School in Flensburg*, (Vol.2 No.2 February 8 1947), 4-5.

Prior to April 1947, both U.S. officials and the public openly supported the displaced Baltic peoples, championing their resilience and resistance to Soviet repatriation tactics. Yet with such poor results of exhumation operations in the Soviet Zone, U.S. officials changed their position, suddenly abandoning their open protection of the Baltic peoples to use them as negotiation pawns for better AGRC operations, a matter of greatest importance to U.S. families. This change was covert, as military and government officials continued to facilitate a façade to the U.S. public that they supported the Baltic DP resistance.

The basis for this policy reversal has long been a mystery until now. Historians have often wondered why there was U.S. support of forced repatriation well into 1947, given an increase in the collapse of the "East-West alliance" and prior U.S. limitations to repatriation.[192] To them, mysteriously, "repatriation seemed to take on a momentum and existence apart from the forces that had called it into being in the first place."[193] These historians have written off the mystery of forced repatriation as part of the days when "orders were orders" from military superiors, without providing a real reason for the covert policy.[194] One reason was the U.S. dead buried in the Soviet Zone. The repatriation of remains meant everything to the U.S. government.

In accordance with this new understanding, the U.S. military division cleaned out a compound spanning 6-12 Essenneckstraße in Frankfurt am Main in fall 1946 for the future occupancy of Soviet liaison repatriation officers.[195] Many officials doubted the space would ever be used, and on February 26, 1947, Assistant Chief of Staff, Major General Magruder,

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[192] Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 131.
[193] Ibid., 125. Historians who inaccurately describe the U.S.'s Soviet repatriation policy as anti-coercive are numerous, such as former Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith in *My Three Years in Moscow* (Philadelphia, 1950), Mark Clark's *Calculated Risk* (New York, 1950), and Robert Divine in *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven, Conn., 1957). Although these are old publications, even Mark Elliot in his seminal work, *Pawns of Yalta*, mistakes the reason for a continuous pro-Soviet repatriation policy, even after the Berlin Airlift.
[194] Ibid., 126.
[195] To: Hq. Command USFET, from: Major General Carter B. Magruder, Assistant Chief of Staff, GSC, G-4, 28 February 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

even noted the impossibility for the Russians to use the building, as there was no need for the Russians to come to Frankfurt.[196] The office area sat vacant among surrounding U.S. governmental buildings.

With the slow progress of exhumation in the Soviet Zone, however, the empty space suddenly became useful to U.S. military authorities in their new negotiation tactics. Desiring a U.S. headquarter at Potsdam in the Soviet Zone to assist in grave operations, U.S. military authorities submitted an agreement for mutual privileges to Soviet commanders on March 22, pending as the "Activation of Military Liaison Mission to USSR (Potsdam)," for a reciprocal Soviet mission to Frankfurt am Main.[197] After deliberations, the Soviet authorities agreed to the plan, and on April 4, both stations at Potsdam and Frankfurt activated for liaison officer use. These stations mutually benefited both parties either in the want for more grave exhumation or in the repatriation of Baltic DPs.[198]

The headquarter stations were unique in many ways. As specified in the agreement, the stations had extra-territorial status, a separate radio station for communication with its headquarters, and couriers that had the same immunity as diplomats for communication purposes between the mission and the headquarters of their commanders-in-chief. Each mission also had reciprocal freedom-of-movement privileges besides off-limits military

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196 Ibid.; Agreement set in the European Advisory Commission in London on November 14, 1944, *A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series*, 289.
197 Proposed Directive, Subject: U.S. Military Liaison Mission to the Commanding-in-Chief, Soviet Occupied Zone, to: Brigadier General Walter W. Hesse, Jr. O-3650, USA. Chief, U.S. Military Liaison Mission, 1 April 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA. Memorandum for Record, Col. Bromley, Executive Officer OPOT, 31 March 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
198 Proposed Directive, Subject: U.S. Military Liaison Mission to the Commanding-in-Chief, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA; Subject: Operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany, Memorandum for: Deputy Commander-in-Chief, European Command, Frankfurt, from: Brigadier General Charles K. Gailey, GSC Chief of Staff, 4 April 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

facilities that were under the control of the other power and needed further permission for entry. The missions were safe bastions for the perusal of contentious policy.[199]

The Soviet liaison headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, near the headquarters of the U.S. Military in Germany, wasted little time in April 1947 in beginning more active and pressing repatriation campaigns in remaining DP camps. During the Council of Foreign Ministers conference in Moscow three weeks after the signing of the reciprocal missions agreement, the repatriation mission received even greater freedom in coercing hesitant displaced persons from the Baltic states to accept their travel to the Soviet Union. The Four Power Agreement, signed on April 23, 1947, greatly bolstered the repatriation policies in the Yalta agreement by allowing "accredited representatives of interested nations to distribute newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets" for propaganda purposes, and even more drastically by declaring that "the voluntary repatriation of Displaced Persons who are now in Germany will be accelerated."[200] By the acceleration, U.S. officials desired a future closing of the remaining DP camps and therefore a relaxation in controlling the work of Soviet liaison officials. Per the words of a Mannheim DP camp director, the U.S. supported the Soviet campaign for total repatriation "to be rid of all…guests."[201]

The U.S. military not only approved of repatriation, but promoted it. In a UNRRA DP newsletter of April 24, 1947, General Clay's speech of early April outlined that the U.S. government "offers a 60-day supply of food to each displaced person accepting voluntary repatriation," an operation dubbed as "Operation Carrot."[202] Coupling with this significant incentive given the people's hunger, the U.S. Zone UNRRA director , Paul Edwards, declared

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[199] *A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series,* 291.
[200] Four Power Agreement, Council of Foreign Ministers, 23 April 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[201] An Unnamed Mannheim DP camp direct as cited in Mark Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 157.
[202] 60-day supply of food went into effect April 15, 1947, UNRRA Team News, DP Operations Germany, Vol.2 No.2, 24 April 1947, 5, United Nations Archives, https://search.archives.un.org/uploads/r/united-nations-archives/8/3/0/830870085eb6af09a69a08ca9768446f0dd8a2862a89dcddeb13740287fd1ced/S-1253-0000-0417-00001.PDF; Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 156.

that "the staff of UNRRA in the U.S. zone recommends that you [Baltic DPs] go home because your future seems to hold more promise in the lands where you are truly welcome and needed."[203] U.S. repatriation politics complimented Soviet policy.

Desperate for grave exhumation, the U.S. military relaxed their policies on Soviet officers. The U.S. military command even eventually approved of a further twenty repatriation Soviet officers in the following two months, essentially ignoring the pre-set number agreed upon in the reciprocal mission in April, to assist with the Soviet repatriation mission.[204] Additionally, U.S. officials strictly enforced the repatriation policy that prohibited refugees from "encouraging [other] refugees not to return to their country of origin," as set in the Four Power Agreement. Incredibly, after one DP published an article titled "Anticommunist," U.S. authorities arrested the DP, giving him a court trial and ultimately a fiscal penalty.[205] During this time, the U.S. authorities also entitled Soviet liaison "free unescorted travel," giving them full range, and most profoundly, trust, for their operations.[206] U.S. military authorities complied with Soviet repatriation and as a result, successful grave exhumations increased in the same period.

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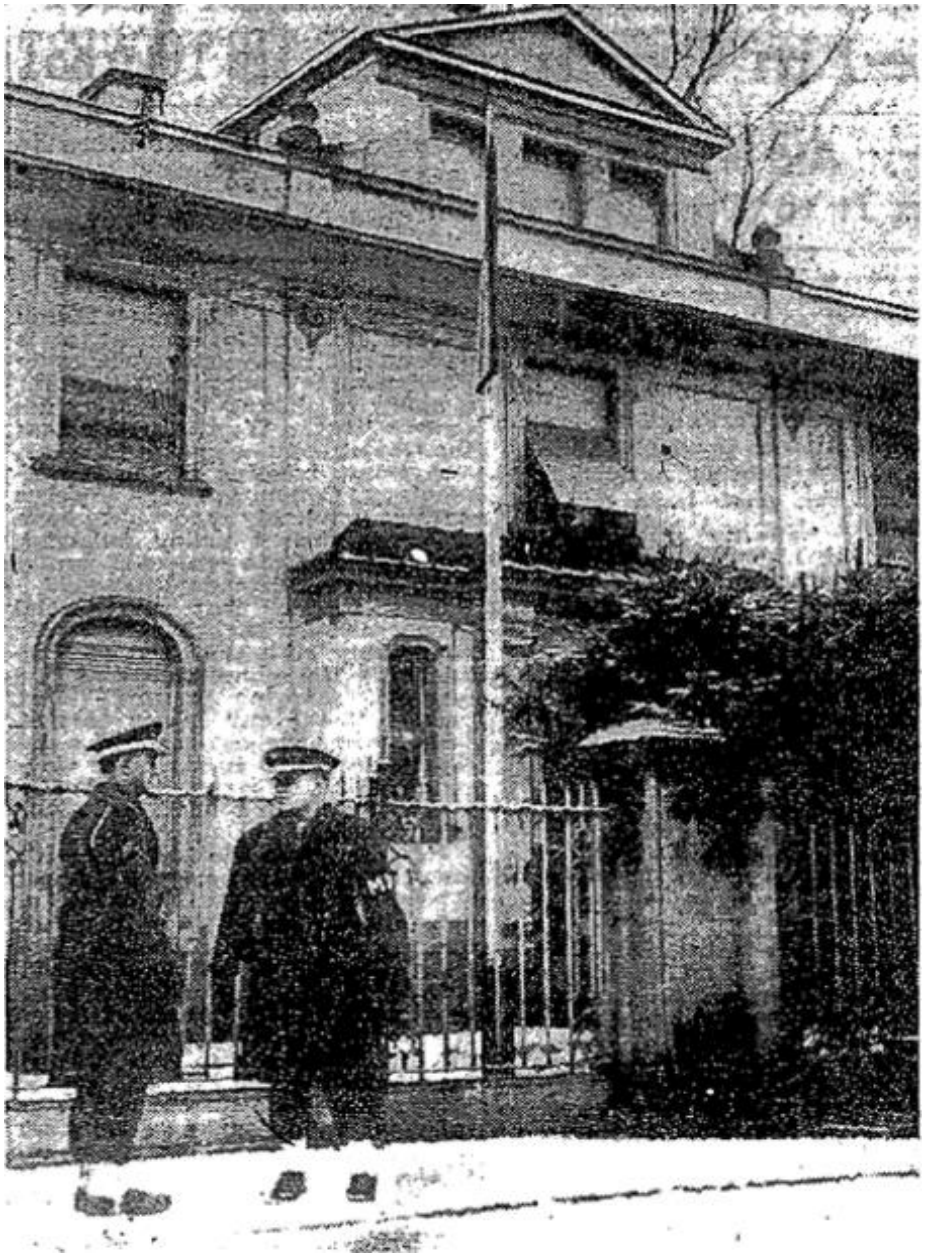
[203] Ibid.

[204] Letter from General Huebner to General Dratvin, 29 August 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

[205] Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 157.

[206] Routine Message, HQS European Command SGD Huebner to US Constabulary; USAFE; OMGUS, 29 April 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.



Soviet Liaison Headquarter, Frankfurt am Main, 1949
Source: New York Times, *Russian Mission Blockaded in Frankfort*, (March 3, 1949), 6.

Although U.S. officials agreed to Soviet repatriation measures to undergo more expansive exhumation operations for the sake of U.S. families, they kept their policy change hidden from the public view. When providing public statements, U.S. military officials continuously spoke about how the U.S. commits to protecting DPs against involuntary repatriation to demonstrate their steadfast protection of these peoples against Soviet 'aggression.' In July 1947, Lieutenant Colonel Jerry M. Sage, attached to European Command Headquarters (EUCOM) and involved with DP camp administration, testified to a Congressional committee that "it has not been and is not the policy of the United States government to force displaced persons to return to the area from which they came." [207] Another official, Major General Hilldring, director of SHAEF's Civil Affairs Division, publicly announced in June 1947 that the U.S. "steadfastly refuse[s] to force them [DPs] back." [208] Finally, former ambassador to Moscow, General Walter Beadles Smith, praised the "traditional American attitude toward giving sanctuary to political refugees."[209]

Simultaneously, the U.S. public during this period began to be inundated with news of Baltic peoples being sent to Soviet gulag camps after repatriation. In fall 1947, former Russian interpreter for General McArthur in the war, Walter Dushnyck, published a book, *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia*, which reached broad outlets in the U.S. Exposing the influx of prisoners from the Baltic states, the public heard about the mistreatment of former Baltic DPs in gulag camps, or in what some news outlets considered, "slave labor camps."[210] In one later 1948 *New York Times* article, the U.S. public read about the fate of repatriated children, who

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[207] Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Sage as cited in Mark Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 120-121.
[208] Major General Hilldring as cited in Mark Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 120-121.
[209] General Walter Beadles Smith as cited in Mark Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 120-121.
[210] Walter Dushnyck, a native Ukrainian, was a prominent advocate against Soviet gulags, becoming secretary for The Genocide Convention, a Congressional Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Expanded International Information and Education Program: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-first Congress, Second Session, on S. Res. 243, a Resolution Favoring an Expanded International Information and Education Program by the United States (Washington D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 392; Walter Dushnyck, "Soviet Russia in Chains," *America*, September 6, 1947.

faced hunger upon return back to the Baltic states as so many adults were deported to camps.[211] As Americans empathized with the Baltic DP cause, U.S. officials gave lip service to the public while promoting the repatriation of Baltic DPs to the Soviet Union.

By leaving the repatriation approval in secrecy, U.S. officials could maintain public support for defending U.S. values and bolster anti-Soviet sentiments for foreign policy purposes while receiving the dead from the Soviet Zone, an operation for U.S. families. In essence, the U.S. government preserved their image in both repatriation operations to ensure the U.S. public that not only was the U.S. morally victorious, but heroically defied Soviet aggression to get the bodies back for the sacrifices families made during the war. The U.S. could do no wrong.

Finally, Exhumation Progress

A graduate of the same West Point class as Dwight Eisenhower, Brigadier General Walter W. Hess received notice that his restful postwar field artillery post at Fort Bragg, North Carolina was abruptly ending in late 1946. Although three years prior he had commanded the Artillery of the 36th Division during the Allied landings at Salerno and the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy, by the start of 1947 he arrived in Germany to become the Chief of the new U.S. Military Liaison Mission at Potsdam.[212]

Hess met in the office of General Huebner on April 2, 1947, just days prior to the official published Soviet-U.S. reciprocal agreement to discuss the responsibilities of the U.S. officers in Potsdam.[213] The two agreed to the reciprocal mission's Proposed Directive, a draft version of a General Order officially specifying the role of a governmental body. In the

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[211] Christopher Emmet Walter, "Repatriating Children: Opposition is Expressed to Recent Communication Asking Their Return," *New York Times*, September 15, 1948.
[212] "Hess, Walter Wood Jr.,Brigadier-General," The Generals of WWII, Generals from USA, Generals.dk, accessed January 24, 2020, http://www.generals.dk/general/Hess/Walter_Wood_Jr./USA.html.
[213]Memo to Colonel Hill from General Huebner, 2 April 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

published circulated directive, not only is there a background paragraph of previous U.S.-Soviet agreements, plausibly written to position the liaison mission within the historical framework of friendly relations, but a rule stating that the headquarters will assist in the "repatriation of Soviet citizens," a gesture to Soviet wishes.[214] In doing so, the U.S. military authorities hoped that Soviet officials in Berlin would be more willing to help secure travel passes and entry into the Soviet Zone for grave operations, which was the first in the list of seventeen responsibilities in both versions of the Proposed Directive, highlighting the invaluable nature of grave operations to the U.S.[215]

According to the official quarterly American Graves report of April-June 1947, this period marked a "gratifying" change and "definite improvement" in exhumation operations in the Soviet Zone.[216] After a productive conference between Major Pelenoff and Colonel Yevseyer, the directors of the Soviet Repatriation Department, and Lt. Colonel Schmitt on May 27, the Soviet department overseeing authorization of travel passes for grave officers agreed to simplify the procedure.[217] Additionally, the directors permitted a fourth investigating team for the first time which helped alleviate the sheer number of unsolved cases, especially as the team found 109 bodies during the quarter.[218] By the end of June 1947, the 95th Battalion worked at full operational capacity, the first time since September 1946, investigating a total of 222 localities for a combined seventy-six days in the field.[219] In this period, the Soviet authorities also approved of a fifth grave investigating team, enabling the 95th to uncover 665 bodies during the summer months.[220] As a result, the teams disinterred a total of 309 bodies, which not only reduced their remaining estimated "unrecovered" number

[214] Ibid., Proposed Directive, Subject: U.S. Military Liaison Mission to the Commanding-in-Chief, Soviet Occupied Zone, To: Brigadier General Walter W. Hesse, 1 April 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Report of Operations 1 April-30 June 1947, 208, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[217] Ibid., 205.
[218] Ibid., 134.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Report of Operations 1 July-30 September 1947, 92, 97-AGRC-FC (1)-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

to 490, but realigned the 95th's operation on schedule with exhumation efforts in all Germany's zones with a completion date of January 1, 1948.[221] The 95th could not be more pleased with their sudden success.

With U.S. approval, thirty-four Soviet repatriation officers now championed the cause of convincing the approximately 130,000 remaining displaced persons of returning to the USSR.[222] Carrying in posters that "dwell[ed] on homeland appeals," the liaison officers entered DP camps and hosted small group meetings, song groups featuring classic national hymns, and showed Soviet films to instill a sense of Soviet "national pride and longing" in the Baltic peoples.[223] In one acclaimed success story, a liaison officer with the help of a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) worker convinced a Baltic boxer to go home with the aid of a Soviet sports film.[224]

During the spring quarter, Soviet General Dratvin praised the fantastic operation of the Soviet repatriation mission. In April-June 1947, he noted that during "each month hundreds of Soviet citizens return to the Soviet Union," from the 150 remaining displaced camps in the U.S. Zone.[225] Although U.S. officials contested the Soviet number of repatriated peoples during this period by declaring the total to be only 142, U.S. officials recognized the Soviet success and refrained from commenting on the fact that liaison officers were attempting to more persuasively convince Baltic peoples to repatriate to protect exhumation interests.[226] Serving essentially as a liaison model, Major General White from the General Chief of Staff stated that all other repatriation missions, whether Czechoslovakian, Romanian, or Hungarian,

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221 Ibid., 103.
222 This number is highly contested and this is the Soviet estimation. The U.S. estimated only approximately 3,000 remaining Soviet DPs left in the American Zone in Germany, but this does not count the Baltic peoples which the Soviet number considers.
223 Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 156-157.
224 Ibid.
225 Letter, General Dratvin to General Keating, 5 July 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
226 Letter, General Huebner to General Dratvin, 29 August 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

should be "taken with respect to them [Soviet Union]."[227] U.S. certainly did not actively condemn Soviet repatriation measures once grave exhumations increased.

On June 30, 1947, however, all the celebrated progress came to a halt. Suddenly, the UNRRA dissolved and in its place the United Nations' reassigned the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to continue to assist the remaining repatriation officers in the DP camps. Outraged at this sporadic change, the Soviet liaison mission and administrators in Berlin called the adjustment a "grave breach" of the agreement reached at the Conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and accused the IRO of taking it upon itself "the responsibility for the administration of the displaced persons." [228] Therefore, with the "fate of many thousands of Displaced Persons," the "Soviet Military Administration c[ould] not agree to such a one-sided solution."[229] Despite that the beginning of the letter appears to allude to little U.S. interference, further General Dratvin stated that the displaced persons had been "arbitrarily transferred by the American Military Government from the jurisdiction of UNRRA to the jurisdiction of IRO," declaring furthermore that "no reorganization of the system of administering Displaced Person camps can lift the American Military Government the responsibility of carrying out the decisions agreed upon at the conference."[230] In the eyes of Soviet officials, the U.S. military government was to blame. Exhumation operations were in trouble.

As a countermeasure, Soviet officials requested a greater number of liaison officers to the Frankfurt headquarters. In one poignant example, General Dratvin wrote another protest letter on July 5, five days after the introduction of IRO, to demand an additional ten officers

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[227] Memorandum, M.G. White to Colonel Mickelson, Civil Affairs Division, and Colonel Biddle, Allied Contact Section, May 6, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[228] Letter to General Huebner from General Dratvin, August 12, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.

given the supposed remaining 138,000 displaced persons.[231] Although he pleaded for an increase in men to "considerably increase the tempo of repatriation," the agreed decision of the Council of Foreign Ministers in April, the U.S. officials took one month to formally respond to his note.[232] After ignoring his request through the chain-of-command, General Clay turned the Soviet appeal on its head: instead of approving of General Dratvin's ten more officers, General Clay demanded that the Soviet repatriation mission relinquish thirty officers, leaving only four left in the field. In a follow-up report, General Huebner confirmed the U.S.'s sudden desire for Soviet curtailment, not only were "many liaison personnel…in excess of requirements," but because "the International Refugee Organization (IRO) has now assumed major responsibility for the administration of Displaced Persons."[233] Seemingly, U.S. officials used the excuse of an international body to relieve the Soviet mission.

However legitimate this excuse appeared to U.S. officials, the international body was only a cover. The main reason was that U.S. intelligence reports increasingly began to declare that the Soviet liaison officers could be spies in the U.S. Zone and instill uneasiness among the DPs. By August 1947, both Intelligence and State Department reports warned against an increase in Soviet repatriation officers, given their potential to instill not only illegal repatriation, but to influence displaced persons to commit uprisings in the U.S. Zone.[234] Two officers, Lt. Col. Oreshkin and Major Libert were arrested after disseminating information to displaced persons to "bring about a mass dissatisfaction" with the U.S. authorities.[235] The two

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[231] Letter to General Keating from General Dratvin, July 5, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[232] Letter to General Clay from General Huebner, July 25, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA. Memo for Record: Colonel Biddle to Commander-in-Chief, 22 July 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[233] Letter to Colonel Bantsirev from General Huebner, 5 August 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[234] Routine to OMGUS and USFA, EUCOM from War (Department) from Civil Affairs Division, August 15, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[235] *A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series*, 279.

officers were accused of "alleged black marketing, alleged illegal repatriation, and spreading of anti-American propaganda through the distribution of newspapers and pamphlets in DP camps," violations that were "inimical to the interests of this [Soviet Repatriation Office] headquarters, and beyond the scope for which had been accredited."[236] Both General Lukyanchenko and Lt. Colonel Bantsyrev denied these allegations, noting that the informational materials spoke nothing of anti-British or anti-American propaganda. Yet the officers were expelled from the American Zone by way of escort to the borderline.[237]

In many instances, Soviet repatriation officers caused unrest in displaced camps, such as when a fight broke out when people threw rocks at a Soviet officer in a DP camp in Aschaffenburg.[238] Another incident occurred when a liaison officer shot a DP for non-compliance.[239] When Soviet officers tried to distribute Soviet newspapers through the window of one barrack, the DPs tore them up, setting fire to the leaflets. Often hostile catcalls greeted visiting repatriation officers, instilling agitation.[240] As a countermeasure, U.S. EUCOM intelligence agencies recruited displaced persons as espionage agents to report on Soviet liaison activity in the summer of 1947.[241] With these many cases, U.S. military officials began to consider if the U.S. should abrogate the Yalta Agreement and as a result, close the reciprocal missions due to the high security risk.

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[236]Subject: Release of Two Soviet Repatriation Officers: Lt. Col. Oreshkin and Major Libert, to: Secretary General Staff, from: Colonel Anthony Biddle, Chief, Allied Contact Section, Headquarters European Command, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

[237]Staff Message Control, Outgoing Message, to for action: First Military District, Attention G-2 Division, From: Headquarters European Command SGD Huebner, Ref-No: S-4639, Authentication: Col Anthony Biddle, GSC, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

[238]*A Survey of Soviet Aims, Policies, and Tactics, Occupation Forces in Europe Series*, 278.

[239] Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 144.

[240] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Motherland Calls: "Soft" Repatriation of Soviet Citizens from Europe, 1945–1953," *The Journal of Modern History* 90, no. 2 (June 2018), 323-350.

[241]Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 307.

Officials in the Army, State, and War Departments proposed the U.S. should declare that their obligations under the Yalta Agreement had been fulfilled.[242] To them, Yalta "ha[d] always had one-sided effect in favor of Soviets and been a source of constant irritation," especially as liaison officers used it as a cover to gather crucial intelligence information.[243] The Soviet Repatriation Commission operated under the Soviet Main Administration of Counterintelligence (GURK). In one liaison officer memoir, the officer noted that personnel "travelled freely about the western zones…without even being accompanied by allied representatives, and collected a mass of useful information about the location and strength of allied troops."[244]

Yet however problematic the intelligence reports declared the liaison officers to be, U.S. officials continued to uphold the contentious Yalta Agreement to maintain healthy grave operations in the Soviet Zone. General Clay actively supported maintaining the U.S.'s commitment to the Yalta Agreement, noting his position in September 1947 with the explanation:

> We are endeavoring now to bring about a reduction in the number of Soviet repatriation personnel although we have hesitated to press this reduction too far because of possible effect on American Graves Registration Command work in Soviet Zone of Germany. [245]

Finishing his letter, he wrote a sympathetic plea to the War Department to convince negotiators in Washington to continue to uphold the Yalta agreement:

> It is pointed out that we have permitted the retention of the unduly large number of personnel in the Soviet repatriation mission in our zone only to facilitate our own effort to recover American dead buried in the Soviet Zone. This work is still incomplete and any direct action on our part to return the Soviet repatriation mission is almost certain to lead to interference with or possible cessation of this important work

[242] Message to War, EUCOM, USFA from CINCEUR SGD Clay, September 2, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Account of ex-SMERSH officer is in Romanov, Nights, 171 as cited by Mark Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*,139-140.
[245] USFA from CINCEUR SGD Clay, September 2, 1947, Subject: Liaison with Russia, file no. 322 USSR, Vol 1, 43 11072, 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1947, Office of the Chief of Staff (SGS), 322, NARA.

of the Army Graves Registration Command. This should be considered in making final decisions. [246]

Continuing the debate into winter 1947, other officials in the War Department began to believe that because grave operations were so far behind schedule, rescinding the Yalta Agreement would make little difference to the success of the exhumation mission. At this point the estimated completion date for operations in the Soviet Zone increased back to December 31, 1948, although six months earlier the estimated was on July 1, in line with the other zones in Germany.[247] Additionally, the 95th Unit had only three remaining commanding officers and thirteen normal soldiers.[248]

Countering General Clay's determination to keep grave operations open via the Yalta Agreement, the Pentagon, and Office of the Chief of Staff favored abandoning the entire Yalta Agreement. On November 20, in a report titled "Graves Registration Activities-Soviet Zone," Pentagon officials noted that "GR [Graves Registration] Activities are conducted at the whim of the Soviets and unpredictable." [249] Given the woeful deadline of December 1948, the Pentagon hesitated to continue allowing the "exploitation of our desires to recover our dead by the Soviets to maintain accreditation for their agents in U.S. Zones of Occupation in Germany."[250] To the Pentagon and Office of the Chief of Staff, the Yalta Agreement was obsolete.

Along with the Pentagon and Chief of Staff, the Army also came to believe in abandoning the Yalta Agreement. In a January 8, 1948 letter from the Under Secretary of the Army, William Draper, to the Assistant Secretary of State, Charles Saltzman, Draper provided the State Department the Army's position over the matter. Despite noting that "the

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[246] Ibid., 2.
[247] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1947, Volume 1 Narrative, Part IV: Recommendations, Comments and Problems, Section I: Operations, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[248] Ibid., Unit Strength Status as of 31 December 1947, 17, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[249] Graves Registration Activities-Soviet Zone, Policy and Government Branch, CAD, WDSCA 383.7, 20 November 1947, EN NM84 BX 364, RG 165, NARA.
[250] Ibid.

Department of the Army considers that the only possible disadvantage with respect to Army activities that might result from such a declaration would be that concerning its Graves Registration Service," Draper declared that "in view of the intransigence of the Russians, the benefits obtained under this agreement appear negligible."[251]

Despite that major elements of the U.S. government were in favor of rescinding the Yalta Agreement given security concerns, the U.S. never discarded the agreement.[252] The Yalta Agreement preserved remaining grave operations in the Soviet Zone, a mission of greatest value. At this point, the repatriation of remains program was in full operation; the first repatriated dead was delivered on October 26, 1947, in New York harbor, receiving an elaborate ceremony in Central Park.[253] The dead in the Soviet Zone deserved a repatriation ceremony, too.

[251] Coordination & Record Section, Office of the Chief of Staff, 3-D-916 the Pentagon, Letter, William Draper, Jr. to Charles Saltzman, 8 January 1948, EN NM84 BX 364, RG 165, NARA.
[252] Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 121.
[253] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead*, 666.

Memorial Services in Central Park, October 26, 1947: Honoring the first repatriated American dead from Europe

Source: *Final disposition of World War II dead, 1945-51* by Edward Steere (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1957), 667.

The Survival of the Soviet Repatriation Mission (1948-1949)

Although General Clay ordered a reduction in the number Soviet liaison officers from thirty-four to four in August 1947, by March 1948 the Soviets had seventeen working officers in the U.S. Zone.[254] Simultaneously, AGRC operations saw continued success. Between September 1947 to January 1948, the 95th Unit expanded, hosting now five officers and twenty-nine soldiers.[255] In the first quarter of 1948, the three disinterring teams recovered 120 bodies and the three active investigating teams travelled to seventy-six localities.[256] The 95th also reported a positive relationship to the high level Soviet officials during this time.[257] A part of such exhumation prosperity, AGRC and U.S. military officials hosted a special conference in the spring to discuss the possibility of a Soviet Repatriation and Graves Registration Mission entering the U.S. Zone.[258] The first quarter of 1948 marked incredible success for the AGRC given the amenable relationship between the two sides.

However, on June 24, the situation severely worsened for the Berlin Unit. With the start of the Berlin Airlift, the AGRC men faced unforeseen difficulties to their work. First, the AGRC men could not use trucks to evacuate the recovered remains from the zone to West Germany anymore, but rather had to airlift the remains to the CIP center in Strasbourg, providing an extra transportation barrier.[259] Second, Soviet officials banned search teams from entering any area previously travelled.[260] Finally, AGRC officers were not allowed to talk to locals or mayors for additional information over grave locations.[261]

Given these new restrictions, the AGRC mission considerably faltered in summer 1948. In a period of three months, the Berlin Unit only worked for a total of thirty-eight

254 Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 145.
255 Report of Operations 1 January-31 March 1948, Narrative, 19, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
256 Ibid., Appendix II.
257 Report of Operations 1April-30 June 1948, Narrative 147, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
258 Ibid., 107.
259 Report of Operations, 1 July-30 September 1948, 250, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
260 Report of Operations 1April-30 June 1948, 107, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
261 Ibid., 154.

days.[262] With the inability to travel freely around the Soviet Zone, the AGRC had no option but to abandon the search for cases that had no exact place of burial.[263]

With an increase in tensions, U.S. military officials began to restrict Soviet repatriation officers in their work. General Huebner forbade the introduction and distribution of Soviet newspapers, books, and magazines in DP camps. In September 1948, U.S. military authorities tried to interrupt Soviet officers from conversing with DPs to persuade them to repatriate.[264] By the end of October, U.S. military officials reduced the allowed number of Soviet repatriation officers to only eight.[265] In retaliation, in November, Soviet authorities restricted AGRC activity to only five personnel, who had to be qualified to investigate, interrogate, interpret, translate, disinter, identify and drive the vehicle while in the field and undergo prior special screening. No specialized worker was permitted.[266]

Yet despite clear hostility, the U.S. and Soviet's respective repatriation missions continued given their value to each country. While the remaining eight Soviet liaison officers repatriated 670 individuals (151 Soviet citizens, 65 Estonians, 297 Latvians, 157 Lithuanians) in later 1948, the five remaining AGRC case workers investigated a total of 128 potential grave plots, recovering in total thirteen bodies.[267] As the repatriation of contested Soviet citizens was so important to the Soviet Union's image as a welcoming society and the U.S. dead so important for the U.S. government's image to the public, for a period of time the

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[262] Ibid., 162.
[263] Ibid., 250.
[264] The Record of the Week, U.S. Requests Withdrawal of Soviet Repatriation From American Zone in Germany, Exchange of Notes Between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., Note from the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs, No.12, February 24, 1949, United States. Department of State. (1939-1989). The Department of State bulletin (Washington: Office of Media Services, Bureau of Public Affairs; US Government, 1948), 320.

[265] Ibid., 307-308.
[266] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1948, 160, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[267] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1948, Appendix #31, Tabulation of Field Operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA; United States. Department of State. (1939-1989). The Department of State bulletin (Washington: Office of Media Services, Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Government, 1948), 308.

operations did not prescribe to the surrounding Cold War tensions. Both states were willing to make an exception to gain credibility and status.

Into 1949 both missions carried on their work in the respective zones despite the height of the Berlin Airlift (June 1948-May 1949). In both January and February, Soviet officials permitted one search team each with a week's hiatus to remember the death of Lenin in late January, but men were limited to searching the regions Brandenburg and Sachsen-Anhalt. Soviet authorities rejected any request for entry into Thüringen to avoid the exhumations teams from entering the former Nazi concentration camps, Buchenwald and Ravensbruck, and areas associated with Soviet political activity or military maneuvers.[268]

Despite the possibility for a continuation, by late February, U.S. Army Headquarters officials deemed the Soviet repatriation mission too risky for national security with the surrounding airlift tensions. To U.S. officials, finishing the AGRC mission in the Soviet Zone was an impossibility, especially as experts predicted that it would take at least until June 1 to finish preliminary searches.[269] With pressure from above, on February 16 General Clay requested to terminate the Soviet repatriation mission and headquarters in Frankfurt by March 1st.[270] Noting that "voluntary repatriation of displaced persons who are Soviet citizens has virtually ceased," General Clay concluded that "it is apparent that sufficient time has elapsed since the surrender of Germany for voluntary repatriation to be completed."[271]

Astonished by the sudden change, General Sokolovsky defied the order. Not only was the termination against the Yalta Agreement, but it was also in contradiction of the treaty as set in the in the Council of Foreign Ministers on April 23, 1947. To Soviet officials, 116,000

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[268] American Graves Registration Command, Operations History October 1945-December 1949, 165, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 338, NARA.
[269] Report of Operations, 1 October-31 December 1948, Chapter I: Operations During the Quarter, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[270] Jack Raymond, "Clay Orders Out Soviet DP Mission: Says Repatriation Unit Has Had Enough Time to Get Volunteers to Return," *New York Times*, February 17, 1949.
[271] Ibid.

Soviet citizens remained waiting for repatriation by February 24. The Soviet repatriation officers stayed in the Frankfurt headquarters, ignoring the removal order set by General Clay and continued their repatriation work.[272]

Unmoved by the Soviet refusal, on March 1, General Clay ordered U.S. officers to cut the gas, water, electricity, and telephone service to the repatriation offices on Essenneckstraße in Frankfurt.[273] If General Clay could not decree their departure, he would try to physically evict them. Military Police surrounded the building in a "little blockade," threatening to arrest any Russian officers trying to flee. For three days, the eight Soviet officers and their families held out in the headquarters, especially as the German cook continued to maintain her work.[274]

With tension building, General Sokolovsky on March 4 ordered for the abandonment of the mission and the departure of the officers back to Berlin. Lowering the Soviet flag in the courtyard, the officers boarded six convoy vehicles and left the U.S. Zone, ending their repatriation mission in the area.[275] In retaliation, Soviet officials abolished any further AGRC operations on March 3, marking the final point for AGRC activity in the Soviet Zone.[276]

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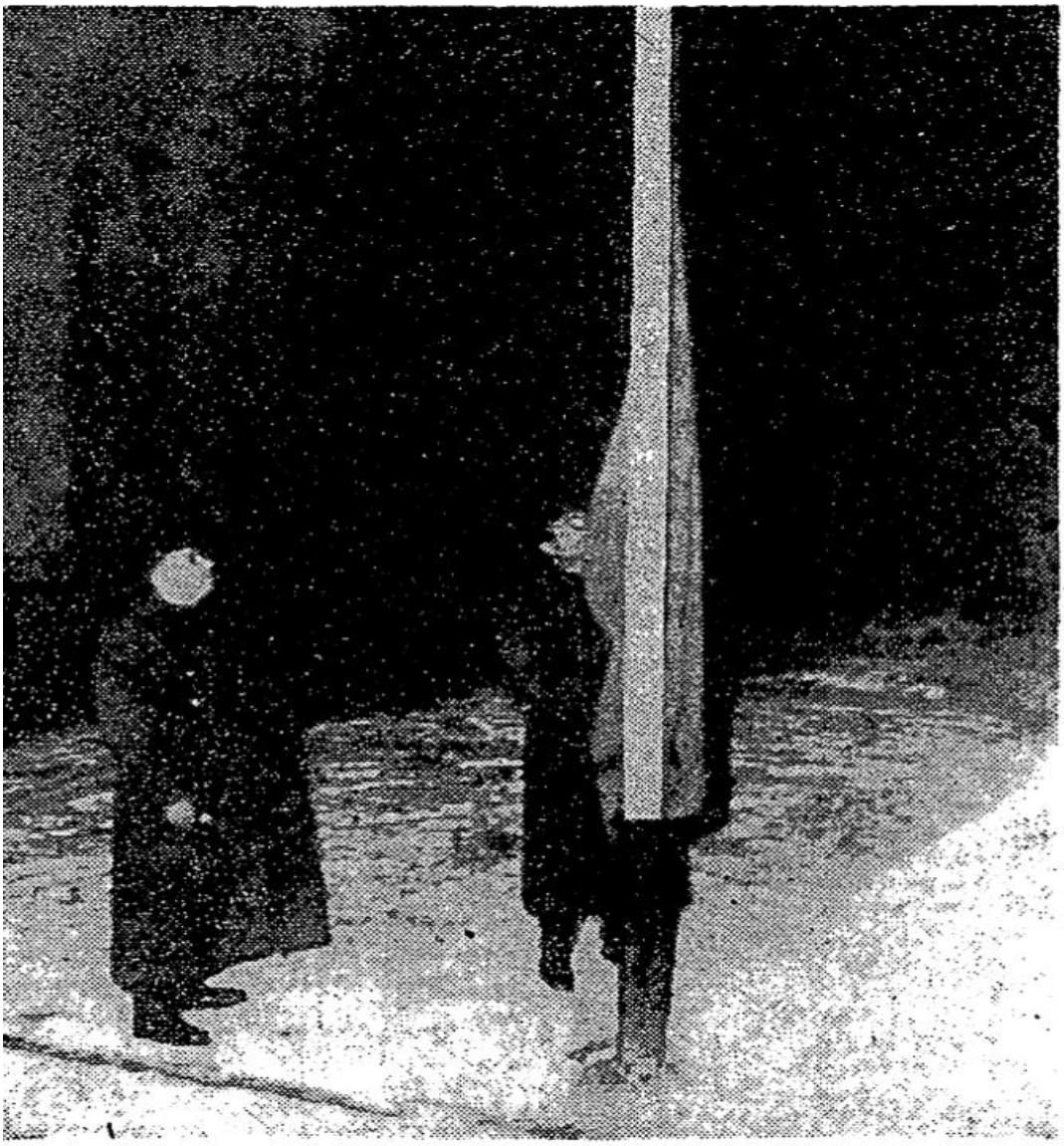
272 United States. Department of State. (1939-1989),The Department of State Bulletin (Washington: Office of Media Services, Bureau of Public Affairs, US Government, 1948), 320.
273 "U.S. Cuts Utilities at Soviet Mission: Besieged Russians Later Ask for Water After Army Bars Access to Frankfort House," *New York Times*, March 3, 1949.
274 Elliot, *Pawns of Yalta*, 145.
275 "As the Russian Mission was Forced to Leave Frankfort," *New York Times*, March 5, 1949.
276 American Graves Registration Command, Operations History October 1945-December 1949, 165, RG 338, NARA.



Russian repatriation officers lowering the Soviet flag, 1949

Source: New York Times, “Russian soldiers lowering the Soviet flag in front of the repatriation mission yesterday when the members and their families left the building under American orders,” (March 5, 1949), 3.

Moving Forward

Out of desperation, the U.S. government sacrificed their protection of Baltic DPs against forced repatriation to salvage their exhumation operations in the Soviet Zone. The DPs became negotiation pawns in the process, worth less than the remaining U.S. dead in the fields. The U.S. public, individuals who held the greatest importance in governmental strategy, were never aware of the change in DP policy to get their dead back. When the U.S. and Soviet Union agreed to open reciprocal repatriation missions in April 1947, the media described the offices only as bastions for "complete freedom of travel" without specifying the particular duties of both missions.[277] The American public had little idea that the success of the exhumation operation was so greatly intertwined with the Soviet Union's ability to coerce Baltic DPs to repatriate to the Soviet Union, or that those Baltic individuals often faced imprisonment in Gulags in Siberia.[278]

Maintaining the public's delusion, U.S. government officials continuously defended the U.S.'s record of protecting Baltic DPs, even when practice was otherwise. Military officials testified in Congress about the valiant efforts of preserving the liberties of Baltic DPs simultaneously while General Clay encouraged the hungry DPs to go to the Soviet Union to receive sixty days' worth of rations. The U.S. media also enforced this untruthful perception. In articles such as "Estonian Wife Tells of Eluding Russians," published in 1948, the *New York Times* described that an Estonian woman was "saved by United States military policemen from forcible repatriation by the Russians," because she had refused to go.[279]

The U.S. public had the ability to simultaneously preserve the viewpoint that the U.S. government protected the Baltic DPs from forced repatriation, bolstering the moral legitimacy

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277 "U.S. and Russia in Liaison Pact for Germany: It Means that 14 Americans Will Have Full Freedom to Travel in Soviet Zone," *New York Tribune*, April 9,1947.
278 Fitzpatrick, "The Motherland Calls," 343; Steven Anthony Barnes, *Death and Redemption: the Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 189-190.
279 "Estonian Wife Tells of Eluding Russians," *New York Times*, February 11, 1948.

of the U.S. in the midst of increasing Cold War differences, while believing that the U.S. found and exhumed the war heroes without receiving help from any third party. The Baltic DPs, just like the locals in the Low Countries and France, received no credit for their influencing factor in the exhumation process. Deception and unacknowledged work made the difference in uncovering the U.S. dead.

Despite the termination of the Berlin Unit and an increase in Cold War tensions, the exhumation efforts did not end. The AGRC still had 836 cases remaining in the Soviet Zone, of which one of them was Technical Sergeant Stedman.[280] Recruiting the help of the British's Berlin Detachment, a small sub-unit of the British Missing Research Graves Exhumation (M.R.E.U.), the U.S. continued their exhumation work on behalf of American families.[281]

[280] Organizational & Operations History, January, February, June 1948; October 1948-June 1949, 89, RG 338, NARA.
[281] American Graves Registration Command, Operations History October 1945-December 1949, 165, RG 338, NARA; Organizational and Operations History, December 1948-1949, First Field Command, 39, RG 338, NARA.

Chapter Three:
Using the French, British, and Germans for Exhumation Operations in East Germany, 1949-1953

"I live and you all should live too"
-Inscription in Kagenow Cemetery
Constructed April 30, 1945[282]

In late 1949, a young English man wrote on behalf of his mother to the West German grave organization, the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, to describe his family's upkeep of the local German graves in Bishop Stortford. Noting that every few weeks his mother and he travelled twenty-five miles to the local cemetery to adorn the graves with flowers and during Christmas with candles, the young man emphasized the community's involvement. Locals, including people from the working class, came to admire the serenity of the cemetery. When one grave marker fell, the young Englishman wrote to the British grave unit, requesting a maintenance service, and after some time, the British cemetery commission fixed the fallen marker, leaving the cemetery in perfect condition. Despite the Stortford cemetery being a place for the former enemy to rest, the British locals four years after the war considered the graves a part of their rural society.[283]

While the U.S. had removed any possibility of a collective war memory with Germany, especially as the AGRC's first mission was to remove all U.S. dead from Germany by 1946, the British continuously tried to build a unified war narrative with the former enemy.[284] The British, unlike any other Allied country, left their war dead in Germany. Not only was it cheaper, but it served as a tangible reminder of a collective sacrifice in defeating

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[282] "*Ich lebe und ihr sollt auch leben"* Epigraph Inscription in the Kagenow Cemetery, Norbert Buske, *Das Kreuz auf dem Golm: Kriegsgräberfürsorge im Schatten der DDR* (Schwerin: Thomas Helms Verlag Schwerin, 1995), 20.
[283] "Menschliches Verstehen überwindet Grenzen," in *Kriegsgräberfürsorge: Mitteilungen und Berichte vom Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.*, Nr. 4, December 1949, Volksbund Archiv, accessed March 10, 2020.
[284] Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II*, 216.

fascism.[285] The British graves enforced the history of the war while simultaneously strengthening the legitimacy of democracy in Western Germany against the threat posed by Soviet occupation in the East.

After Soviet authorities barred the AGRC from entry on March 3, 1949, there was an estimated 836 U.S. bodies remaining in the Soviet Zone.[286] However, the U.S. did not forgo their efforts. Instead, the AGRC requested the British exhumation unit, Missing Research and Exhumation Unit (M.R.E.U.), to assume the search for the remaining cases in the Soviet Zone.[287]

Unlike the U.S., which abandoned their reciprocal liaison mission with Soviet authorities, the British continued to allow their repatriation officers into their area. As a result, the Soviet authorities still permitted British exhumation officers to enter their Zone.[288] For another month, the British exhumation teams from the Berlin Detachment continued to travel into the Soviet Zone to uncover British bodies, while also exhuming the remaining U.S. missing on behalf of the United States. [289]

When it became impossible for the British to enter themselves into the Soviet Zone, the Berlin Detachment subcontracted all British and U.S. future grave operations to a West German organization, The German Board for Registration of War Causalities, [das Amt für die Erfassung der Kriegsopfer] (AEK), which maintained access into the Soviet Zone.[290] The reasons for this change are multi-fold and indicative of the close relationship the British had

[285] Spark, "The Treatment of the British Military War Dead of the Second World War," 113-116.
[286] Organizational & Operations History, 89, January, February, June 1948; October 1948-June 1949, RG 338, NARA.
[287] American Graves Registration Command, Operations History October 1945-December 1949, 165, RG 338, NARA, Organizational and Operations History, December 1948-1949, First Field Command, 39, RG 338, NARA.
[288] Footnote 48, "The Soviet Repatriation Campaign," as cited in Mark Elliot, *Pawns of* Yalta, 161.
[289] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10346, 3794610, D.D.P.S.(2) through Head of S. 14 Cas., R.A.F. Graves Service—Final Report, 28.10.1950.
[290] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10345 3794608, 30.1.1950.

to Germans. The British constantly supported German war cemeteries, often burying their own war dead inside.[291]

The chapter discusses the reasons that the West German grave organization was able to enter the Soviet Zone, even with increasing Cold War tensions between West and East Germany after 1949. East Germans continued to hold an inherent mourning connection to West Germany, maintaining relationships with West German grave organizations.

British Exhumation Units in the Soviet Zone

After compromising their protection of Baltic DPs against forced repatriation in October 1946, the British M.R.E.U. gained access entry into the Soviet Zone. Similar to the AGRC, the M.R.E.U. unit assigned to Berlin had to write weekly reports to Soviet officials, asking for special permission in order to enter certain areas. For trips that the officials approved, the unit had to be escorted by a Russian officer or soldier. The unit could not interrogate civilians and faced expulsion if they violated the procedure. In one example, a British exhumation officer spoke to a civilian and was permanently banned from entering the Zone. Although faced with such difficulties, the M.R.E.U. recovered several thousand causalities, reinterring their remains into the British Commonwealth cemetery in Berlin (Spandau).[292]

By 1947, the M.R.E.U. determined it would be best for the purpose of negotiations to downsize their Berlin operations to a smaller unit, the Berlin Detachment.[293] Continuing their exhumation success, the small band uncovered many more dead. In October 1947, however, Soviet authorities arrested two detachment leaders for not having proper identification papers

[291] As an example, please see "Friedhof Ohlsdorf," Landesverband Hamburg, accessed November 7, 2019, https://www.volksbund.de/hamburg/kriegsgraeberstaetten-in-hamburg/friedhof-ohlsdorf.html.
[292] TNA, PRO AIR 20/9305, DS 1505/1, Report on Royal Air Force and Dominions Air Forces Missing Research and Enquiry Service 1944-1949, March 1949, No.3 M.R.E.U. and No.4 M.R.E.U.-British Zone of Germany, Russian Zone and Poland, 23.
[293] TNA, PRO AIR 20/9305, DS 1505/1 Chapter No.4 M.R.E.U., Russian Zone, Poland, 24.

during their search for an RAF bomber in Wohlgarten. They were let go after four hours of interrogations.[294]

Despite the start of the Berlin Blockade in June 1948, the Berlin Detachment's operations progressed smoothly. During this period, the British operatives even received permission to talk to local mayors over grave locations, proving to be of great value for one mission in Warmemunde. [295] For almost an entire year, the Berlin Detachment operated in the Soviet Zone because the British continued to allow Soviet repatriation missions in their zone.

On April 4, 1949, the situation changed. After signing the North Atlantic Treaty and making plans for the formulation of the Federal Republic of Germany, the British Berlin Detachment suddenly could not enter the Soviet Zone themselves. [296] Looking for a solution, the Berlin Detachment contacted a West German grave organization to further find Allied remains.

Origins of the WASt

Ironically, the organization that recovered U.S. bodies after British attempts was almost destroyed by U.S. authorities years prior. Founded in 1939, the WASt was a wartime bureau that held all military records regarding the German Wehrmacht. This collection included records on foreigners who fought in the army, and prisoners of war. Yet with increased aerial attacks over Berlin in 1944, the WASt, consisting of 1,000 workers, relocated from its Berlin headquarters to Saalfeld and Meiningen in Thürigen to avoid ruin.[297] This move proved very contentious in the direct postwar years.

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[294] Subject: Arrest by Russians in Russian Sector of Berlin, S/Ldr. Rideal, 22.10.1947, RAFM B3294, Royal Air Force Archives.
[295] Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 223; TNA, PRO Air 20/9305, DS 1505/1 Case No. 2, 130.
[296] Klaus Larres, "Britain and the GDR: Political and Economic Relations, 1949-1989," *Uneasy Allies: British-German Relations and European Integration since 1945* (New York, Oxford University Press: 2000), 53-67.
[297] Annett Märtz, *Deutsche Dienststelle für die Benachrichtigung der Nächsten Angehörigen von Gefallenen der Ehemaligen Deutschen Wehrmacht, 75 Jahre im Namen des Völkerrechts, Arbeitsbericht 2011, 2012, 2013* (Berlin: Deutsche Dienststelle, 2015), 19.

In April 1945, U.S. forces liberated Saalfeld and Meiningen enabling the American Military Control Commission to confiscate the WASt collection for processing. The records were vitally important for prosecution purposes, particularly in its documentation of potential sympathetic foreigners who fought with the Germans. Yet after only a few months of U.S. administration in Thürigen, the Soviet Union took over the occupation of the area, prompting the U.S. control commission to quickly move essential WASt collections to the American Zone in Fürstenhagen for safe keeping. [298] The collection was too important to U.S. officials to fall into Soviet hands.

Following a successful transition into the U.S. Zone, the WASt collection moved once more in January 1946 to its original wartime location, Berlin-Tempelhof, to be near the US-Office of Military Government for Germany-Ministerial Collecting Center to process the documents. The bureau separated the documents based into categories such as German missing, records on patients and military hospitals, and German grave commands during the war. They additionally sent information over enemy missing soldiers to the International Red Cross in accordance to the Geneva Convention. With the need to write over one million military death certificates to German families, the US office promptly began processing records. On average, the office wrote 11,000 deceased notifications daily, often to answer the question "where is my son?" from concerned German mothers.[299]

At first, operations went smoothly. Yet with sudden paranoia, U.S. officials in Berlin decided to burn the entire collection of documents in fear that the Germans would use the expansive military records to quickly form another standing army or resistance band against the Allied occupation forces. Immediately following the announcement to destroy the collection, operation officer Major Henry E. Sternweiler, a German immigrant who fought

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[298] Ibid., 20-21.

[299] Christian Taske, "Ich habe gedacht, die spinnen doch, Archivar der Wehrmachtsgeschichte," *Spiegel Online*, December 4, 2009. Personal interview with Henry Sternweiler. In 2009, Henry Sternweiler received the German Service Cross for his action to save the records even when defying military orders.

with the US Army in the Intelligence Division, objected to the order. In a later interview with Sternweiler, he noted that he thought the order was a joke and ran to alert his colleague, French officer Armand Klein, to the situation. As a result, French Occupation General Pierre König intervened and convinced General Clay to stall the destruction of the documents until further notice.[300] The French Control Council objected to the destruction for strategic reasons, and assumed control of the collection.[301]

Now under French supervision, the WASt underwent efforts to use the documents to their advantage. The French Control Council were greatly interested in the content of the WASt papers in order to find French Nazi sympathizers who joined the Wehrmacht or Waffen SS, either Luxemburg civilians from the Alsace region or independent French arm bands.[302] The council also desired further information over missing French citizens for repatriation purposes.[303]

In an attempt to gather further information about Nazi sympathizers, the French-controlled WASt took over numerous document collections from other German organizations. Ten public record offices such as Airforce War Loss [Verluste, Verlustlisten der Luftwaffe] or the Information Bureau on the Regular Police [Auskunftstelle der Ordnungspolizei] were separate from each other, resulting in the complete disjunction of vital public records for both mourning Germans and occupying powers, who wanted to know who served. Over time, the West German government, supported by the Allied commands, was unable to financially support the multitude of former wartime record organizations. The French strategically assumed most residual collections to reduce the financial burden on the West Germans.

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[300] Ibid.
[301] Märtz, *Deutsche Dienststelle*, 22. Translated from "Die Unterlagen der ehemaligen Wehrmachtauskunftstelle sind vollständig der französischen Gruppe des Kontrollrats überwiesen zur Abwicklung der noch nicht erledigten Arbeiten dieser Dienststelle," aus dem Beschluss des Koordinierungs-Kommitees des Allierten Kontrollrates vom 14. 05. 1946—CORC/M (46), 22.
[302] Ibid., 23.
[303] Ibid., 22.

Referenced today by Germans as a 'hero' for saving the WASt and with it a piece of their war memory, French Captain Armand E. Klein led the acquisition efforts. Upon hearing that the British planned to destroy the records of the Marine Personal Documentations Center (MPDZ) [Marine-Personal-Dokumentations-Zentrale] in spring 1948, Captain Klein travelled to Hamburg to negotiate for the documents, some 400 tons of documents on over 850,000 people. After reaching a deal, the French assumed command of the MPDZ on June 1, 1948, but were unable to bring the documents immediately to their WASt headquarters in Berlin due to the Berlin Blockade. Finally eleven months later the MPDZ collection arrived in Berlin after transport by ship, joining the other acquired collections such as police records [Auskunftstelle der Ordnungs]. In November 1949, the WASt acquired more conscription records totaling over one million books. At the end of their acquisition spree by late 1949, the French-controlled WASt had assumed all wartime archival bureaus except one. [304] To French dismay, the remaining outstanding office catered toward British needs for a service both countries desired: exhumation in East Germany.

Established in 1945 after a rebranding of the Nazi Center for Documentation of War Missing and War Graves [Zentralnachweiseamt für Kriegerverluste und Kriegergräber] (ZAK), the German Board for Registration of War Causalities, [das Amt für die Erfassung der Kriegsopfer] (AEK), operated in the Berlin area. The AEK registered all local cemeteries, collecting information on victims of concentration camps, and distributing estate property from the deceased. As their mission involved both West and East Berlin cemeteries, the AEK could travel into East Germany, providing a perfect channel for the British Berlin Detachment to continue their exhumation work.[305]

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[304] Rüdiger Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg (Beiträge zur Militargeschichte)* (Berlin: De Gruyter Verlag, 2004), 120-121.
[305] Ibid., 123; TNA, PRO AIR 2/10346, 28 October 1950.

Per one official British report, the AEK was a "striking development," and a timely solution to the British's sudden border crossing issue. As the British government did not officially recognize East German sovereignty, it had become almost impossible for British soldiers themselves to enter East German territory. Additionally, the British already had multiple preexisting relationships to other German grave organizations such as the Volksbund, who regularly featured English efforts to preserve German graves in England in their monthly newsletter.[306] The Volksbund also actively promoted British tourists and children to join West Germans in volunteer grave preservation work on the European continent.[307] Although these promotions indicate a level of Cold War desire to link a German narrative with the West, it also details a special relationship the British had to German grave organizations. Frequently, the British used grave organizations to bury their own war dead in local German cemeteries, serving as a poignant example of a similar mourning narrative.

With having such a dynamic connection to other grave organizations, the British signed an agreement with the AEK in April 1949 to conduct exhumation work on their behalf.[308] The AEK would now travel into East Germany for the Berlin Detachment, which still operated under the command of British Flight Lieutenant Hughes. He would supervise the AEK organization of the missions and finance all the trips. Not only did the AEK recover British RAF bodies during their operations, but also causalities from British Navy and U.S. airmen as well. According to an official report, "the War Office, the Admiralty, American Graves Registration Command know all about our activities in Berlin and are naturally

306 "Menschliches Verstehen überwindet Grenzen," *Kriegsgräberfürsorge* Nr. 4, December 1949.
307 "Jugendliche aus verschiedenen Ländern arbeiten an Soldatengräbern," *Kriegsgräberfürsorge: Mitteilungen und Berichte vom Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.*, Nr. 4, April 1950, Volksbund Archiv, accessed March 10, 2020.
308 TNA, AIR 2/10346 3794610, D.D.P.S. (2) through Head of S. 14 Cas., R.A.F. Graves Service—Final Report, 28.10.1950.

grateful for our part in recovering their bodies," demonstrating the collective approach to discover the Allied missing.[309]

The AEK was not the only West German unit to enter East Germany, however. The influential and conservative Consortium for Cemeteries and Memorials [AFD],[310] founded in West Germany in 1951, had a working relationship with East German churches. By 1953, the AFD began organizing walking tours through East German cemeteries so West Germans could find their war dead. East German pastors attended AFD hosted conferences as late as 1955, travelling across the border.[311] Due to the perpetual longing between East and West Germans to unite in their war mourning, West German grave organizations had a strong and cordial relationship to their East German neighbors. This dynamic would prove crucial to AEK operations especially when officers got into trouble with authorities.

"Underground" Partners: AEK Relations with East Germany

During the two-year span of subcontracting British grave work to the AEK, the commission disinterred more than 200 bodies.[312] In the summer of 1949, the AEK maintained a productive relationship with border officers, entering the areas of Döbeln, Flöha, Glautschau, and Stolberg. [313] Between June and September 1950, the AEK committed nine search and eleven exhumation trips on behalf of the Berlin Detachment, bringing a total of sixty-three bodies back to the West. Of those, forty-five were Royal Air Force, fifteen soldiers from the Royal Army and three from the United States' Army Air Force (U.S.A.A.F.).[314]

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309 TNA, PRO AIR 2/10345, 30.01.1950.
310 Arbeitsgemeinschaft Friedhof und Denkmal, AFD
311 Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 214-215.
312 TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, Officer Commanding: Berlin Detachment, Search and Exhumation Trips-Progress, 20.10.1951.
313 TNA, PRO AIR 29/1598, Operation Records Book, Secret, 20.6.49.
314 TNA, PRO AIR 2/10346, 28 October 1950.

Why were the exhumation efforts so successful under the West German AEK even when political tensions were so great? This answer lies in that even though Soviet officers were hostile to West German exhumation teams such as by placing restrictions for entry times and paperwork controls, civilians and local public authorities of the GDR were generally lenient in following set guidelines. The reason for such relaxation and general support of West German grave endeavors by East Germans was due to the irremovable nature of a collective war identity. Interactions to West Germans, although a rarity, gave East Germans the opportunity to mourn, by assisting other Germans in their work to properly commemorate the dead.

In one poignant example, there is a distinguishable difference between local East Germans and official authorities toward AEK operatives. During one routine trip in September 1950, Bernhard Senf, a German soldier from the AEK who worked for the British exhumation team, crossed the border near Parchim in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Upon entry into East Germany, however, police officers stopped Senf, explaining to him that only if he had his certificates, he could continue his work and meet with the cemetery caretaker to begin search and exhumation. Despite this initial setback, Senf showed his legitimate AEK documents, beginning his work.

On the first day of exhumation, Senf met the cemetery caretaker and his foreman in town and travelled with them to the cemetery. Inside the cemetery, however, Senf realized he was not alone, "we realized in the last moment, that two Russian officers, one sergeant and the soldier were looking at the open graves."[315] Instead of creating a tense situation, the two Russian "officers saluted me," and "supposed me [Senf] of being a doctor," a sign of respect.[316] Although the respect is quite surprising given the surrounding political context, the

[315] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, Berhard Senf, Report on trip to Parchim during the dates 25th September-21 October 1950, 27.10.1950.
[316] Ibid.

official surveillance while in the cemetery underscores the separation of official tensions and the friendly practice of local authorities such as the cemetery caretaker.

Ignoring the suspicious authorities, Senf arranged for the transportation of the ten found bodies with the cemetery caretaker. Most interestingly, the boxes for transport would be from an East German firm in Parchim.[317] Albeit a very small economic transaction, the British-financed AEK purchase of East German caskets is surprising. The sale predates the first unofficial trade delegation to East Berlin from the British government (1952) and the first private major trade agreement with the GDR (1953).[318]

The transaction of the particular good, boxes, and moratory services, is also quite astonishing given the West German prohibition over West Germans using East German funeral services after the currency reform (1948). As East German coffins were significantly cheaper, many West German companies were going out of business. To protect their interests, in 1949 West Berlin undertakers (funeral directors) formed the Berlin Burial Guild [Bestatter-Innung von Groß-Berlin] to protect their businesses from cheaper East German competitors and products, such as the East German cheap coffin model [Socialsärge]. The problem became so severe that in May 1950, the West Berlin Magistrate outlawed illicit trade of East Berlin headstones and coffins to the West.[319] The fact that the casket transaction in Parchim occurred demonstrated the 'exceptional' state of exhumation teams who were able to bend rules and garner support from East German locals.

However, Senf's success was short-lived. After the Soviet commandant "got to know about it [Senf's work]," Senf travelled to the police station, where he was asked to hand over all his documents. The commandant realized Senf was not a doctor and became more hostile, demanding that Senf could not transfer the exhumed bodies back to West Germany. The

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317 Ibid.
318 Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 71-72.
319 Black, *Death in Berlin*, 232-233.

disjunction between official policy and subordinate soldier sympathies is at the forefront of Senf's short imprisonment in Parchim. The local East German chief of police defended Senf's work, declaring "several times that it was ok, and everything [was] correct." [320] Yet the Russian commandant was not convinced and phoned the Ministry in Berlin.

The Soviet Ministry declared Senf's work "illegal," ordering his placement in a short-term jail. For six days, Senf stayed in a cell with a guard dog in front of the door. Despite the Soviet aggression, local police were extremely cordial to Senf during his interment. After two days in the cell, the local detective police interrogated Bernhard Senf. Instead of threatening him with accusations and charges, the interrogators told Senf that he "could expect [his] release every hour." [321] The East Germans were so certain that Senf would be released, that they "rang up the petrol point for [him], to make enquiries about the petrol price" to ensure Senf had enough fuel for his return trip. [322]

Although Senf was interned for a few days later, Senf expressed in his later testimony that during one evening interrogation the local public prosecutor came to the prison,

> One evening the public prosecutor accompanied by another man and the military law official of the station came to my cell and made enquiries, for how long I was in prison, what I was on charge for and how often I was interrogated. I told the public prosecutor my whole story and he stated, that this case was very interesting to him, as this had never happened before, but he could not help me very much, as he was under the control of the secret state police and did not have much influence there.[323]

There is a clear distinction between the Russian official forces and the local public prosecutor. The prosecutor sympathetically wished he could help Senf out of the situation, but was unable due to higher pressure. Continuing the same interrogation session, the prosecutor asked if Senf had looked at the airfield located near the cemetery to commit espionage. After Senf told him that observing the airfield "was strictly forbidden by [his] office" and that he "would not

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[320] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, Berhard Senf, Report on trip to Parchim during the dates 25th September-21 October 1950, 27.10.1950.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.

give my head for such work,"[324] the prosecutor "shook his head full of pity and said, this is a very silly occasion." Arguably, the public prosecutor and assistants were sympathetic to Senf in his efforts to reinter former Allied soldiers back to the West. Both sides recognized the moral importance of respectfully burying their own soldiers and providing information to their loved ones at home.

When Senf was released from jail a few days later, the senior commissioner explained that the ten bodies of British background "were already reinterred in the town cemetery," demonstrating the astonishing collective duty shared by the supposed political enemies. As Senf's mission was not to rebury the soldiers in an East German cemetery, he petitioned this action and was notified that "if [he] could bring a statement from the Ministry in Berlin, [he] could transfer the bodies immediately" back to West Germany.[325] Shrouded in political hostilities, tensions between Senf and the authorities in the prison seem to have been guided by Cold War strife, but upon closer inspection there was sympathy toward Senf from East German officials who recognized the moralistic value in returning missing soldiers home.

By late October 1950, the AEK continued uncovering missing bodies at a rate that was "surprising."[326] Flight Lieutenant B. Aptroot, an officer at the Berlin Detachment, summarized the incredible progress made by AEK officers in comparison to the prior work done by the M.R.E.U. Aptroot noted that he would "even venture to suggest that this little band of eight (later seven) officers did as much real work in a year as a full-strength Missing Research and Enquiry Unit [M.R.E.U.], with its 41 search and other officers." [327] The West German AEK achieved considerable success given their strategic connection to East Germans.

[324] I believe this means that he would not commit to this work as it is either morally wrong or corrupt.
[325] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, Berhard Senf, 3.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid.

Although the AEK provided great service to the British Berlin Detachment between July 1949 and February 1951, the AEK as an organization itself struggled to preserve its original wartime capacity after the war. The Berlin Magistrate and later the Berlin Senate funded AEK operations, but had little ability to continue to support the AEK's extensive work around the Berlin area. As a result, the AEK disbanded and dissolved its collection in January 1951 into the French WASt. Finally, the French had control over every German war collection, including the British and U.S.'s lifeline into East Germany.[328]

Compromise: British Berlin Detachment Lives On

After the West Germans forced the local Berlin-funded AEK to integrate into the French-supported WASt on January 9, 1951, the Berlin Detachment suddenly had no further option to continue their grave operations in East Germany. To accommodate for the major influx of documents, the WASt permanently moved its location to Eichborndamm Street in the French sector of Berlin, Berlin-Reinickendorf. With its move, the organization was permanently under French control.[329] The AEK's disbandment along with the WASt's new location put a sudden end to the Berlin Detachment's operations, leaving the small seven-man unit led by Flight Lieutenant J.R. Hughes closed for a short period.

Although unable to functionally operate the unit, Ft./Lt. Hughes remained in contact with the former AEK members who now worked under the WASt. These AEK members, more loyal to the British Berlin Detachment than to the WASt, suggested to Ft. Lt. Hughes to "approach the WASt and maybe they would allow Herr Friedrich [the former AEK head officer to the British Detachment] to carry on with his work for us [British Detachment]."[330]

Influenced by this suggestion, Ft./Lt. Hughes initiated conversations with the WASt. With still a high volume of Allied missing in East Germany, Hughes hoped to receive a small

328 Overmans, *Deutsche militärische* Verluste, 120-121.
329 Märtz, *Deutsche Dienststelle*, 24.
330 TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, Letters from F/Lt. J.R. Hughes, 9.2.1952.

team to continue work for the Berlin Detachment.[331] In an official report by Hughes to the War Ministry, he specified his troubling preliminary conversations with the French. Colonel Chodzko, who supervised the WASt after Armand Klein left his post, was "very much against the continuation of our [Berlin Detachment] work, he pointed out that the French Graves Service were still working in the Russian Zone & he did not want to jeopardize their position."[332] A separate search team for the British would be illegal work, a risk Col. Chodzko did not want to take. The fact that the French Graves Service continued to operate in East Germany when U.S. and British missions ended is surprising given its unstable origins. In spring 1946, Soviet authorities rejected any French exhumation efforts, declaring that the French would need to receive permission by U.S. authorities to accompany their unit. After internal AGRS debates, Commanding General Littlejohn agreed to French stipulations, but made sure to note that "our teams cannot afford to be held up by the activities of the attached French personnel."[333] Now the French dictated the fate of both British and American exhumation efforts, however. Ft./Lt. Hughes needed to further press French authorities to continue operations on American and British behalf.

After several conferences, Ft./Lt. Hughes convinced Colonel Chodzko to allow West German grave operatives to work for the Berlin Detachment. In an interesting compromise, the French-supported WASt allocated four officers to the British for a period of six months. Yet, the men could not affiliate themselves with the WASt or have their base in the French sector. The small group, led by Herr Friedrich, would have to pretend that they were part of the former AEK, under a fake assignment to clean out their former bureau for final integration into the WASt. Building their cover, the men needed a temporary office in

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331 Ibid.
332 Ibid.; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 327.
333 Appendix 89, Plan for Operations in Soviet Controlled Territory, Memo from Col. Chief of Staff Alfred B. Denniston to Colonel Duncan, 15 February 1946, American Graves Registration Command, Report of Operations: 1 January 1946-31 March 1946, *Army Service Forces, War Department*, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.

the British sector to further legitimatize their covert work. Furthermore, the British would pay for the office and all expenses, but the Berlin Magistrate would give the men their salaries, forming a logical separation between the British and men. [334] Hopefully this cover would convince Soviet authorities of normal operations without jeopardizing the French mission.

For six months, the covert operation continued their work. Yet in October 1951, the Berlin Magistrate recalled the four men as their contract was finished. Hughes pleaded for an extension to the end of the year, prompting the Berlin Magistrate to agree under the condition that Herr Friedrich would either quit or rejoin the WASt by February 1, 1952. In February, Herr Friedrich went back to the WASt and the Air Ministry recalled Hughes back to London. It appeared that exhumations in East Germany were finally over.[335]

Despite this major interference, the operations continued. Herr Friedrich, convinced that he had enough personal contacts in East Germany to effectively do the work on his own, offered to independently operate out of his personal home in Charlottenburg. This suggestion was the last possible option, as if it failed, the Air Ministry would "have to abandon all hope of any further recoveries." [336]

Excited by the continuation, Hughes wished to travel back to Berlin to negotiate the new deal, reigniting the entire program. Yet to keep the mission separate from any British influence, the Air Ministry denied his request, secretly signing a contract with Herr Friedrich to begin work. With an increase in Cold War tensions, the Air Ministry knew that if the Soviet officials knew Herr Friedrich operated for the British, they would "stop any possibility of further recoveries."[337]

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[334] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, 9.2. 1952.

[335] Ibid.

[336] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148, S. 14 Cas., 14.2. 1952.

[337] Ibid.

Between February 1952 and July 1953, Herr Friedrich crossed into East Germany as a private contractor for the British. He searched the area for both U.S. and British remains, using his personal connections to find unrecovered bodies. Friedrich, a Berliner, was the last man to find former Allied remains in East Germany, a mission that at its peak had hundreds of American and British officers scanning the fields. In July, Herr Friedrich's operations ended, one month after the start of the East German Uprising.[338] With such an increase in Cold War tensions at this point, the War Office and Imperial War Graves Commission forced the Air Ministry to terminate Friedrich's secret contract. Search and exhumation finally concluded. [339]

Limited Recognition, Unending Commitment

Just like locals in the Low Countries and France and Baltic DPs, West Germans and their supporters in East Germany never received credit for their complex role to recover U.S. dead. The U.S. public never knew that the AGRC used British operatives to continue search and exhumation work on their behalf in the Soviet Zone once their own mission finished. When the Soviet repatriation mission ended in March 1949, American news over AGRC exhumation in the Soviet Zone completely disappeared.[340] The public additionally never knew that the British subcontracted their grave operations to a West Berlin organization after the foundation of the West German state. The Germans, the former enemy, were still suspicious in the eyes of the American public. They were not invited to build a unified

[338] "The East German Uprising, 1953," Milestones: 1953-1960, *Office of the Historian: Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State*, accessed April 14, 2020, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/east-german-uprising.
[339] TNA, PRO AIR 2/10148 3.7.1953.

[340] The last U.S. media article to discuss AGRC operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany was in Jack Raymond, "Soviet Yields on DP Mission But Ejects U.S. Graves Unit," *New York Times*, March 4, 1949.

narrative with the U.S. either. U.S. officials went so far as to hire German POWs to disinter German dead from all U.S. cemeteries, avoiding any mourning connection.[341]

It is no doubt ironic that even after all AGRC operations formally ended on December 31, 1951, officially terminating the "Return of the World War II Dead Program," the U.S. still received their remains via West Germans, who faced imprisonment from Soviet authorities but sympathy from local East Germans. [342] At this point, the AGRC had shipped 170,783 dead back to the United States and buried 110,000 bodies in fourteen permanent cemeteries by the American Battle Monuments Commission. [343] In total, the U.S. government had spent 157 million dollars on the repatriation and burial of the dead, an average of $564.50 per body (1.681 billion dollars or $6,045.89 per remain in today's terms).[344] By 1950, the U.S. had already entered another conflict, the Korean War, captivating the energy and attention of the U.S. media and public. This war brought a fresh collection of dead, restarting the repatriation process for the U.S. government, which created new pain and mourning for families at home.

Yet the remaining unrecovered were not forgotten. The U.S., maintaining their commitment to return all servicemen to families, commenced their residual exhumation operation by the U.S. Army Mortuary System in areas assessible to U.S. forces. The British, negotiating with the French, continued to contract a covert West German band of four men to enter East Germany to find British and U.S. bodies. As the dead were so important to the British and U.S. governments, an impenetrable border could not stop their efforts. The use of proxies was the last remaining method to continue the unending search for Technical Sergeant

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[341] Chapter III: Administration of Personnel, 24, AGRC Report of Operations 1 Jan-31 March 1947, 97-AGRC-0.3, RG 407, NARA.
[342] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead,* 651.
[343] Ibid., 687; "Cemeteries and Memorials: World War II," American Battle Monuments Commission, Abmc.gov, accessed March 29, 2020, https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials. ; "History," American Battle Monuments Commission, Abmc.gov, accessed March 31, 2020, https://www.abmc.gov/about-us/history.
[344] Steere, *Final Disposition of World War II Dead,* 690.

Stedman and the hundreds of other unrecovered remains in the former Soviet Zone of Germany.

The End's Eternity: Perpetual Mourning

"The past is never over. It's never even really the past"
-William Faulkner[345]

In 1959, Kathyrn Stedman, the mother of Technical Sergeant Ben Stedman, died without knowing further information about her son.[346] Stedman, not included in the 280,994 U.S. dead recovered by the end of normal AGRC operations in 1951, was also not one of the 200 discovered by the residual U.S. Army Mortuary operation in later years.[347] After the West German grave unit finished operations in East Germany in July 1953, the U.S. had limited options left to find and recover Stedman's remains, despite multiple attempts by both AGRC and British M.R.E.U. units during subsequent years. In both 1955 and 1956, the U.S. Army Mortuary system attempted one final time to search the Zehrensdorf "Hero Cemetery" for Stedman's remains, based on further British information. Contacting the Chief of Staff, Group of Soviet Forces in Germany leader General Tarasov, the group tried to gain entry into the area. However, General Tarasov denied the request both times, asserting that the Zehrensdorf and Zossen areas were Soviet military bases.[348] The Zehrensdorf cemetery, in particular, was part of the artillery practice fields for the Soviet troops stationed in the region.[349]

Never again did the U.S. residual exhumation unit attempt to find Stedman, his remains likely in row one, grave thirteen of the "Hero Cemetery" at Zehrensdorf.[350] Yet, Stedman was not forgotten. Etched in the Tablet of the Missing memorial at the U.S.

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345 Marianna Torgovnick, *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 39.
346 "Kathyrn Stedman,McHenry County Memorial Park," PeopleLegacy Illinois, accessed March 29, 2020, https://peoplelegacy.com/kathryn_stedman-6V1z2V.
347 The U.S. Army Mortuary system as a residual search operation, an organization who based their work on civilian informational tips and leads. However, this work was far from as large as the AGRC efforts were in the immediate postwar. Between 1951-1976, the organization only recovered 200 bodies. "World War II Accounting, History," Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.dpaa.mil/Our-Missing/World-War-II/.
348 Letter over Ben Stedman, from: J.A. Hey, to: Commonwealth War Graves Commission, in: Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf, Germany.
349 "Case #8- Deferred Search Roster Map Sheet N-53, Stedman, Ben H. T/Sgt. 10601625 (TDY to RAF)," in Binder: Zehrensdorf Cemetery, Garnison Museum, Wünsdorf, Germany.
350 Ibid.

cemetery in Margraten, Netherlands, his name permanently remains in Europe. Stedman, a former resident of Woodstock, Illinois, is also honored by the regional Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). In 2008, the VFW commemorated him and the other WWII veterans with a "Twenty-One Tractor Salute" at the McHenry County Fair, reading his name aloud.[351] Most poignantly, Stedman is remembered by his surviving RAF peers. After the war, former Navigational Sargent Edward Lowe, attached to the same Lancaster bomber as Stedman, visited the widow of Pilot Cyril Wakley. While paying his respects, Lowe and the widow fell in love; they soon married, and moved to Nova Scotia to open an upholstery business. Throughout Lowe's entire life, he commemorated his fellow bomber pilots, displaying a rice paper map that survived the crash in his home. Today his son has the map hung up in his living room, near his fireplace.[352]

Although an etching in the Margraten Tablet of the Missing memorial, a tractor salute, and a map in Nova Scotia certainly leave Stedman's existence remembered, they do nothing to recognize the painstaking efforts the U.S. government underwent to try to recover Stedman and the 3,000 other dead servicemen in the former Soviet Zone. It also does not disclose that the search and exhumation for the bodies was akin to a multifaceted war, forcing the government to pit groups of people against the dead.

Holding the dead in highest regard out of moral obligation to families, in every circumstance the government chose the dead over the living, who the U.S. officials used as proxies in obtaining the fallen. In France and the Low Countries, the AGRC officers recruited locals to assist in operations, playing into the civilian infatuation of honoring the liberators to gain often unpaid volunteer labor. Once the "Return of the World War II Dead Program"

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[351] Woodstock VFW Post 5040 and Auxiliary, *Woodstock VFW News* 54, no. 3 (2008): 6, http://www.vfw5040.org/uploads/Documents/2008-09.pdf.

[352] "Archive Report: Allied Forces: 20/21.01.1944 No 97 Squadron Avro Lancaster III ND367 OF-K P/O Cyril Arthur Wakley," Aircrewremembered.org, accessed January 23, 2020, http://aircrewremembered.com/wakley-cyril.html.

commenced in 1947, however, the AGRC pulled the bodies out of the temporary cemeteries in preparation for their interment in permanent cemeteries at home or abroad. As a result, locals were unable to commemorate the fallen soldiers, which had an influential role in the mourning process directly after the war. For operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany, U.S. officials bargained using a devil's deal to gain access entry after many failed normal negotiation attempts. Compromising their prior protection of Baltic DPs against forced Soviet repatriation, the U.S. agreed to forgo their repatriation policy to conduct successful search and exhumation operations in the zone. Using the Baltic DPs as negotiation chips, who often faced deportation to Siberian gulags upon repatriation, the AGRC obtained hundreds of U.S. remains. After the foundation of the two German states, the U.S., unable to enter former East Germany themselves, recruited British and West German grave units to enter the territory on their behalf. In a residual operation, the West German independent grave unit continued to find U.S. bodies, while reconnecting with their East German brethren.

Today there is still an unknown number of unrecovered in former East Germany. Despite such manipulative and extensive measures, they count as many as 20,000 remaining U.S. WWII servicemembers on the European continent. Yet efforts to find the fallen are not finished. In 2019, Congress passed an annual 160-million-dollar budget for the contemporary recovery agency, Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency (DPAA), to discover unfound remains. The 600-person organization finds approximately 250 bodies each year because the director of the DPAA stated that the country maintains a "a moral obligation [to recover fallen troops]" so they will "never be forgotten."[353] Occasionally, media outlets report on DPAA findings. In 2006, the DPAA partnered with the Association for the

[353] Corey Dickstein, "The agency that recovers and IDs remains of missing troops needs more money, partner organizations say," *Stars &* Stripes, November 19, 2019, https://www.stripes.com/news/us/the-agency-that-recovers-and-ids-remains-of-missing-troops-needs-more-money-partner-organizations-say-1.607919.

Recovery of the Fallen in Eastern Europe (VBGO), a consortium of European "grave hunters," to find the remains of Private Burkett, returning his body to his three children.[354]

As an alternative to federal endeavors, individuals have funded private search operations to find the unrecovered remains of loved ones. In one example, the daughter of Missing-in-Action Sgt. Leist, a rear gunner who died after his B-17 bomber crashed in the Netherlands, attempted for many years to find the remains of her father. After trips to the Netherlands in 2003, during which she met with local people, she organized Dutch divers to locate the body. Unfortunately, his body was never recovered. [355] Instead, his name remains on the Tablet of the Missing memorial in Margraten, his picture displayed in the "Faces of Margraten" exhibition.[356]

Other private attempts were more successful. In 2018, The *Washington Post* reported that, after extensive hours of research at the National Archives and hiring a historian from the Defense Department, the nephew of Private John Cummings located his remains in Germany. Cummings, who was "Missing-in-Action" for seventy-four years, was reburied in his local hometown next to his parents. His mother had tried for years to locate his remains, even writing to the War Department in 1947 to ask if she could offer Germans a reward for further information. Yet with a need to show the public that the U.S. government received little help

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[354] The Association for the Recovery of the Fallen or Verein zur Bergung Gefallener in Osteuropa e.V. (VBGO) finds primarily Russian, Polish, German, and U.S. remains. Established in 1992, "Einzelschicksale," Verein zur Bergung Gefallener in Osteuropa e.V., Vbgo.de, accessed March 29, 2020, http://www.vbgo.de/index.php?cccpage=schicksale&set_z_schicksal=999; Jennifer H. Svan, "Europeans join US in search for remains of missing American soldiers," *Stars & Stripes*, December 27, 2015, https://www.stripes.com/news/europeans-join-us-in-search-for-remains-of-missing-american-soldiers-1.386060.

[355] "Family MIA dedicated to find 1944 wreck of Air Force bomber, Six crew members never found," Godutch.com, accessed March 29, 2020, http://www.godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=775; American WWII Orphans Network, *American World War II Orphans Network* (Nashville: Turner Publishing Company, 2005), 40.

[356] Joshua Keeran, "Faces of Margraten: Dutch seek US War heroes' photos," LimaOhio.com, April 17, 2016, https://www.limaohio.com/news/176968/faces-of-margraten-dutch-seek-us-war-heroes-photos.

from local populations, the War Department rejected her request. Only in 2018 did the family receive the closure they deserved.[357]

With such intense efforts, maybe Ben Stedman and the hundreds of unrecovered dead in the former Soviet Zone of Germany will one day all be found. Maybe Stedman will be unearthed from the "Hero Cemetery," which now carries the name "Zehrensdorf Indian Cemetery" from its World War I past.[358] Maybe he will finally return to rest next to his mother at the McHenry County Memorial Park in Illinois.

Maybe Stedman will be found. As Russian General Alexander Suvovov famously stated, "a war is only over when the last soldier is buried."[359] But does it matter where he lies if he is buried? To the U.S. government, Stedman should only rest in a national cemetery at home or abroad because it preserves a patriotic narrative that the government will provide a restitutive burial for the ultimate sacrifice that these families paid. Yet to have such stipulations, spending millions of dollars on residual search operations is a privilege.

The hundreds of Russian Tatars and Hindus lying next to Stedman never received any exhumation operation. Their governments never used other people as negotiation proxies to gain access entry into the "Hero Cemetery" at Zehrensdorf, creating a sort of warfare between the living and dead. They never had an official agency continue to search for their remains, allocating millions of dollars to the quest. They remain in the "Hero Cemetery," not forgotten, but remembered in the profoundly multi-nationalist, multi-confessional cemetery in Brandenburg, Germany.

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357 Michael E. Ruane, "An empty foxhole, an anonymous grave, and a World War II mystery solved after 74 years," *Washington Post*, November 12, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2018/11/12/an-empty-foxhole-an-anonymous-grave-world-war-ii-mystery-solved-after-years/.

358 The cemetery is now under the auspices of the British Commonwealth War Graves Commission, "Zehrensdorf Indian Cemetery," Germany, Brandenburg, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, accessed February 20, 2020, https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/34721/ZEHRENSDORF%20INDIAN%20CEMETERY.

359 "*Ein Krieg ist erst dann vorbei, wenn der letzte Soldat beerdigt ist,"* Nina Janz, „Deutsche Soldatengräber des Zweiten Weltkrieges zwischen Heldenverherrlichung und Zeichen der Versöhnung," PhD Diss. (Universität Hamburg, 2018), 1.

Despite exhaustive efforts by the U.S. government, Stedman's remains are equal to his cemetery neighbors. He has received no silver-lined casket, no U.S. flag, no honorific military ceremony in a U.S. cemetery abroad or in his home state. His remains serve as a reminder of the supreme agency of death.

Contrary to the American myth that Cold War politics stymied any reconciliation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the U.S. successfully negotiated with the enemy to try to control the meaning and symbolism placed on death itself. Yet the U.S., even with the help of the Soviet Union, could not dictate Stedman's reburial. He remains, just like the others at the "Hero Cemetery," under the command of the greatest equalizer, death.

Memento Mori.

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360 There is a bit of a discrepancy of RG for the 322 Office of the Chief of Staff Documents, SGS (Soviet Liaison and Grave Exhumation Folders). For the sake of clarity, they most likely fall under Collection RG 59, Department of State documents.

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