

A Train Near Magdeburg



Photographs and commentary by Dr.
(Sgt.) George C. Gross, except where noted.



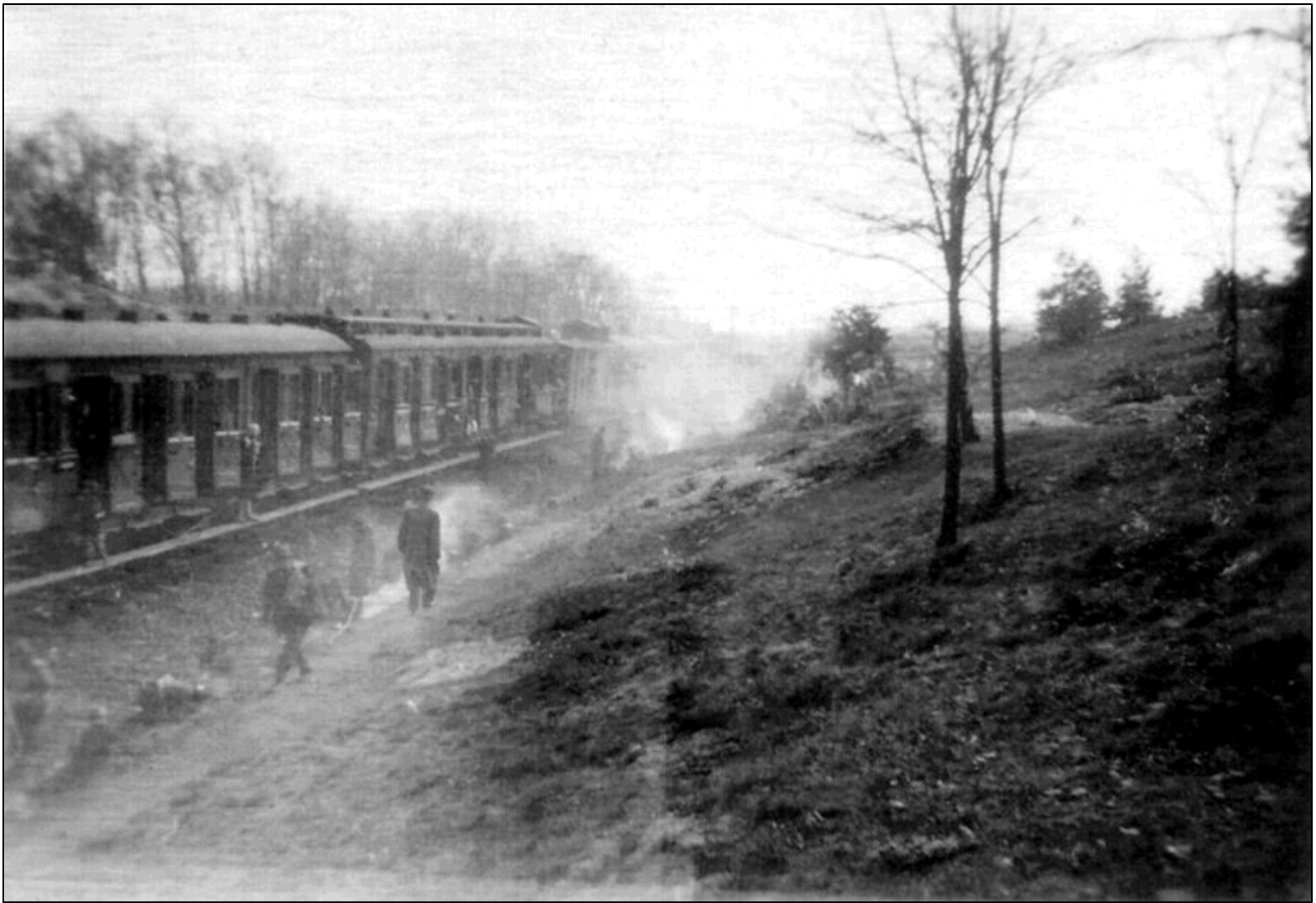
I. This marvelous picture was taken by Major Clarence L. Benjamin at the instant a few of the train people saw our tanks and first realized they had been liberated. Many of those close to the train are not yet aware of their liberation. My tank is just behind the camera.



2. This is a view of the train from the rear, showing boxcars like those in picture 1. On the hill to the left are people resting--some forever. Some sixteen died of starvation before food could be brought to the train.



3. This is a closer view of the scene in the previous picture. Note how quickly the starved people have regained their sense of purpose and are scrounging about for berries and other food.



4. This view shows compartment cars. Most of the train was made up of boxcars. It looks as though one man at lower left is praying; others are sitting or lying on the ground.



5 .(Mother and Son) I find this picture very moving: mothers love to show off their youngsters, no matter what the situation. The little fellow was pleased at having his picture taken. Note the thin legs and brave smile.



6 . This is a shot of others on the train. The women and children in this and the following picture demonstrate the error in "A View from the Turret's" statement that the train contained only Finnish men. I am moved still by all those smiles, particularly the one on the thin little girl in front at the left.



7 . This picture has some moving contrasts. Note the laughing children at the left, and then look up to top center where a living skeleton sits and, I think, waves for the camera.



8 .(Gina) This is Gina Rappaport, who spoke very good English and spent a couple hours telling me her story. She was in the Warsaw ghetto under terrible conditions, and then was sent to Bergen-Belsen. She said that the people on the train had been hurriedly jammed into cars and sent on a meandering journey back and forth across central Germany to escape the British, American, and Russian troops. The attempt was evidently to get them to a camp where they could be eliminated before they could be liberated.



9. (Starvation) This one, too, is very moving. My original note says, "The little girl in the middle is so weak from starvation she can hardly stand--yet she has a smile for her 'liberators.'" One might say exactly the same of the two children on either side.



10. (German Prisoner) This picture of an SS soldier was not taken near the train. I include it to show the type of elite Aryan soldier courageous enough to herd women, children, and starved men onto trains and into death camps. This young man was one of the fighting SS troops who were really fanatic soldiers. I do him a slight wrong, for it was another branch of the SS who handled the death camps. But they were all monsters.



11. (George Gross and Red Walsh) This is a picture of two comrades who depended upon each other in the war and still correspond regularly. I am the one on the viewer's left; on the right is Judge Carrol S. Walsh, who was with me at the train and at most of our memorable experiences in combat.