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POW's for Ike

For the 417,034 Axis prisoners of war in this country the War Department last week had word that repatriation was in sight. The 362,170 Germans and 49,784 Italians definitely would be home by early spring; the 5,080 Japanese, as soon as General of the Army MacArthur was ready to receive them.

The Provost Marshal General's office was able to step up the schedule of departures because of the Japanese surrender and the easing of the home-front labor shortage through our own veterans' demobilization. Already, since V-E Day, it had shipped back 11,554 Germans and 1,087 Italians, chiefly sick and wounded. Now it hoped to ship 18,000 POW's in September, double that number in October, and 40,000 a month thereafter until all have been cleared out. Italian service units will be first to be repatriated because they were the "most cooperative" POW's, "cooperative" Germans will be next, and "non-cooperative" Germans last.

The voyage home for Italians and Germans will be on vessels bound for Europe to pick up returning GI's—luxury liners as well as converted Liberty and Victory ships. Expenses of repatriation, initially paid by the American Government, are expected to be repaid through reparations. Where the POW's would go once they hit Europe—whether to their homes or just be dumped inside their own borders—Washington professed not to know. The War Department would say only that the prisoners would be "turned over to Eisenhower."

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