Newsweek

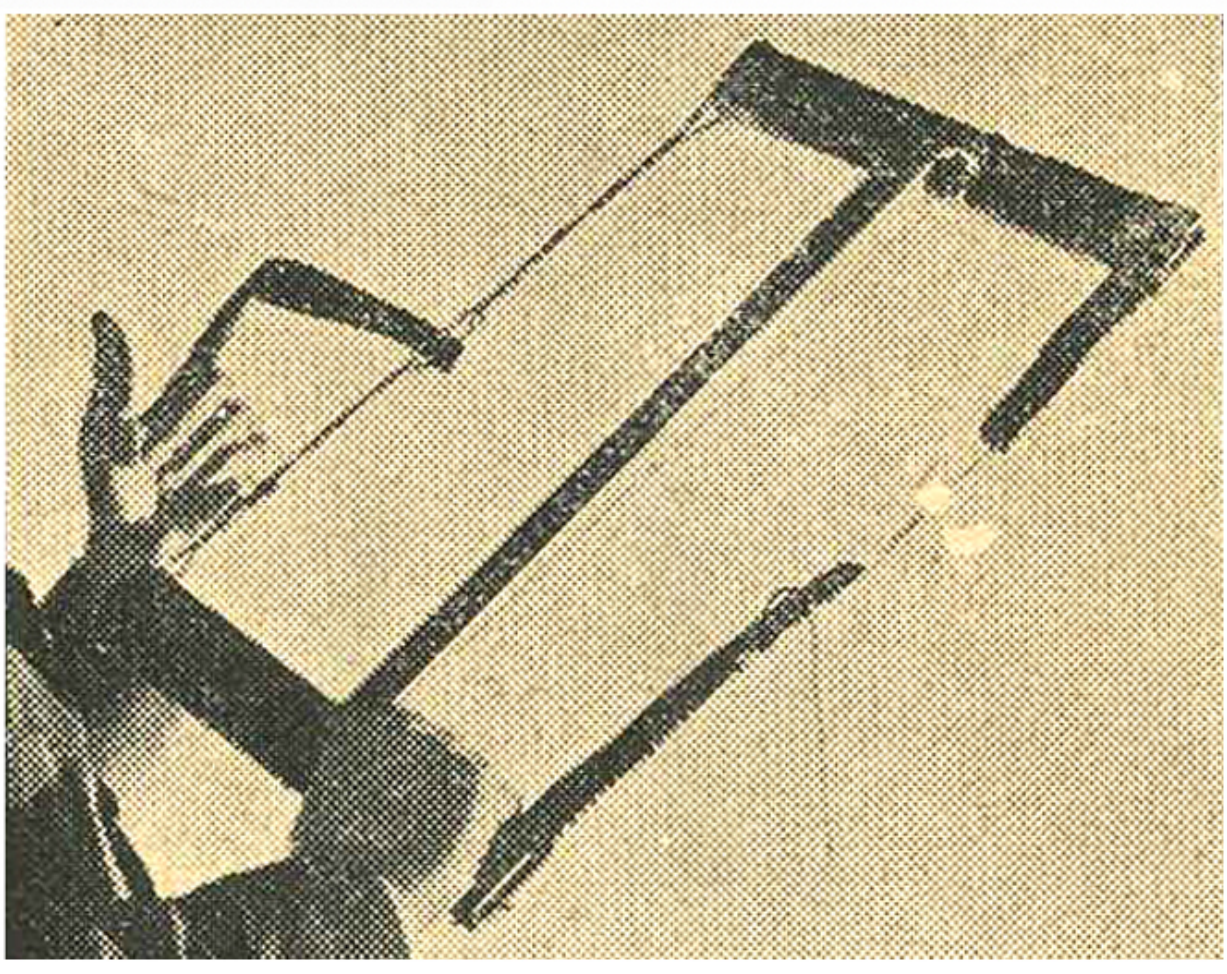
May 18, 1942: p. 36

Slippery Nazis

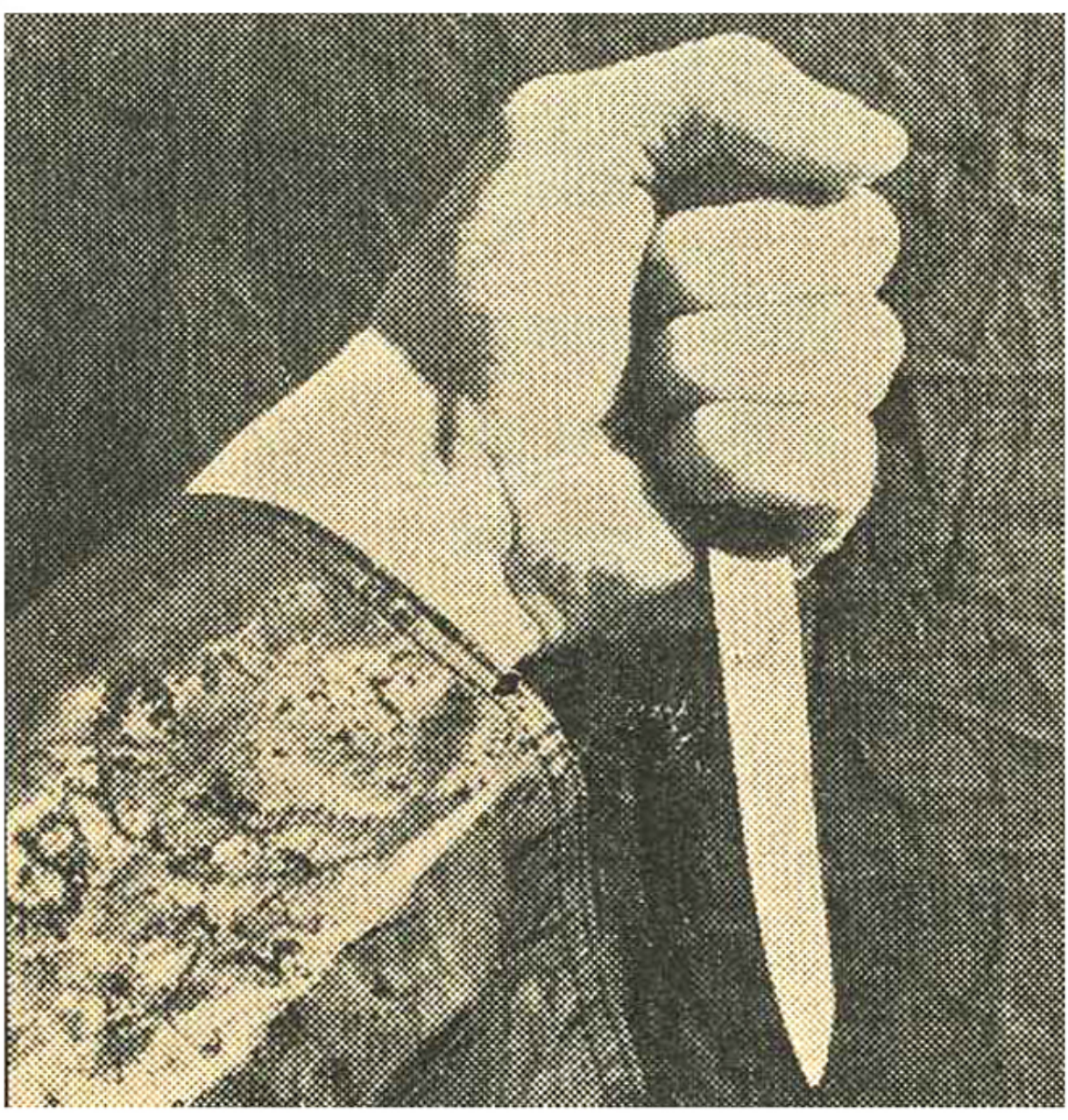


The Germans are frisked when they first come in, but they show great ingenuity in effecting their epidemics of escapes by improvising weapons . . .

Along with hundreds of other arrogant, Heil-Hitlering young huskies, *Leutnants* Ernst Wagner and Reinhardt Pfundter, late of the Luftwaffe, were locked up in the Canadian camp at Bowmanville on Lake Ontario, east of Toronto. Somehow last week they escaped and swiped a plane from Toronto's Barker Field but crashed soon afterward without injury. Three days later, an Ottawa waitress named Elsie Ryan spotted them and tipped off the police.



. . . like this crude saw . . .



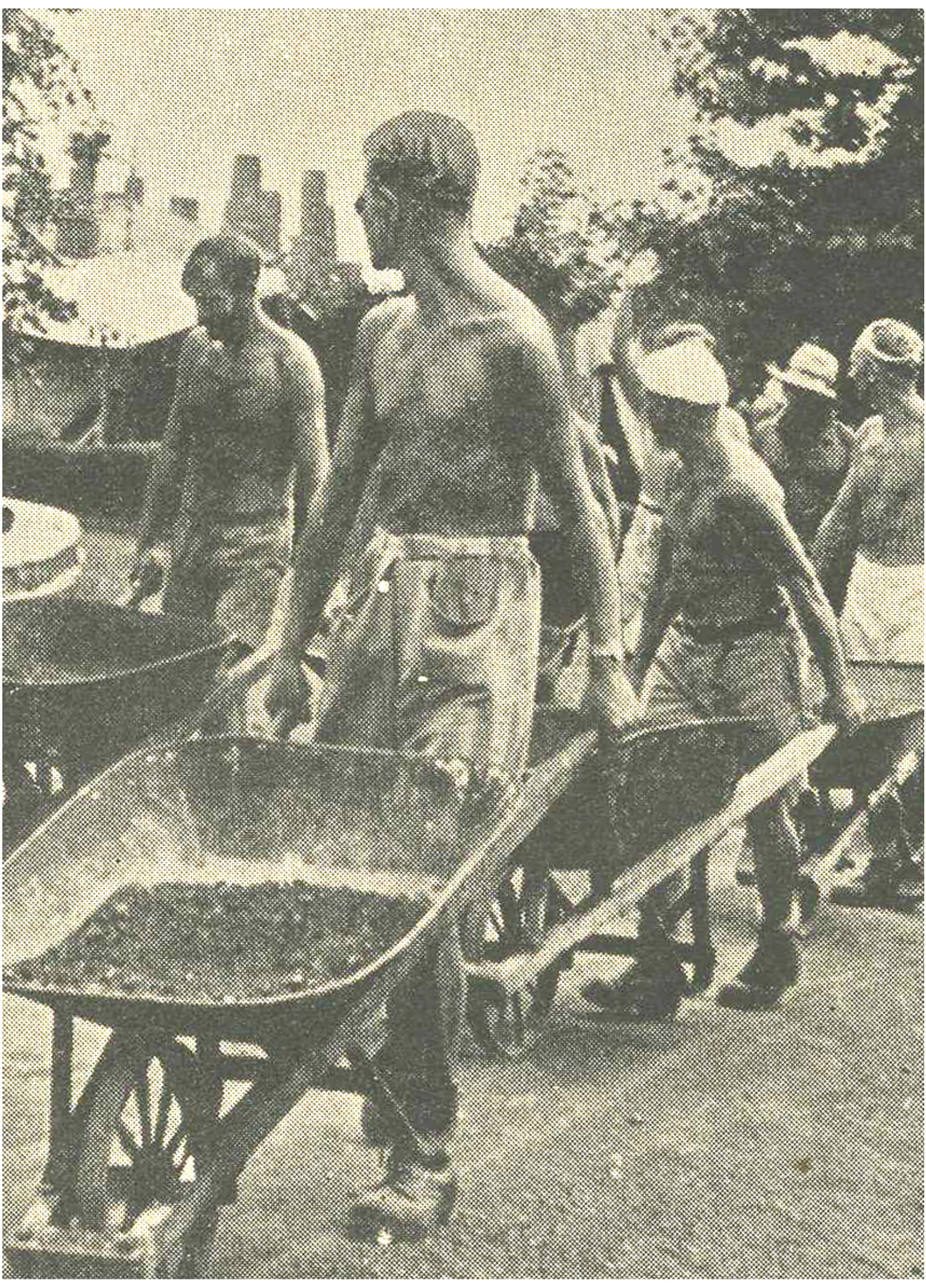
. . . and this kitchen knife

With Wagner and Pfundter the total of war prisoners escaped from Canadian camps reached 80. All but one were recaptured or killed—the exception being the ace Baron Franz von Werra who got back to the Reich via the United States and South America, only to die on the eastern front. Nonetheless the escapes have given the Dominion such concern that Defense Minister Col. James L. Ralston last week announced the appointment of a special committee to deal with them. Many of the breaks have been from Bowmanville, which has had four commanding officers.

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Slippery Nazis



Prisoners work and they are paid for their efforts

The number of war prisoners in Canada is a military secret. But the fact that between 7,000 and 8,000 men, veterans of the last war, are assigned to guard them indicates a formidable total. The camps are closed to all visitors except inspectors for the International Red Cross and neutral observers checking conditions on behalf of the Reich. In any case Canada's guests for the duration clearly are tough customers, for Britain weeded them out as too dangerous to be kept at home in event of invasion.

The Canadians have already concluded that the art of escape is part of the regular curriculum of the well-trained Nazi soldier, sailor, and airman. Even as prisoners the Germans hold their own escape classes and specialize in devising ingenious tools out of anything available. In one camp a workable radio was made from a typewriter. Most of the prisoners have escaped by tunneling to some point outside the compound, but this is discouraged now by dynamite charges buried around the camps.

Against all this Canada can do no more than take the customary precautions. The 1929 Geneva convention regulating treatment of war prisoners prevents brutality—in most cases the only thing Nazis know and respect. So they swagger and insult their guards. They can't be forced to work but are paid if they do. They wear their uniforms till they fall to pieces. And they eat as well as Canadian soldiers. When not plotting escapes they hold classes in any subject permitted. One batch of prisoners wanted to study advanced chemistry. For obvious reasons, the idea was politely but firmly squelched.

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