

REPATRIATION

Only a small number of Canadian prisoners of war had been repatriated up to February 29, 1944. They include six officers and 46 other ranks in the army, four officers and seven other ranks in the navy, and 12 merchant seamen.

Repatriation is recommended by a medical board consisting of two doctors from a neutral country and one from the detaining power. One of the neutral doctors is chairman of the board, and decisions are by a majority vote. Prisoners may directly request an examination by the board, or they may be suggested by their camp leaders or by the authorities at home. Only men disabled and unfit for further combatant duty are recommended for repatriation, although it is not necessary for them to have received their injuries in battle. Men seriously injured in work camps attached to the prison camps are also eligible.

Repatriates are sent to a neutral port, where they are exchanged for enemy repatriates and are sent home. Once they arrive back in Canada, they come under the ordinary regulations of the service to which they belong. They may be given further medical care, an honorable discharge, or may remain on strength in a non-combatant job. They are eligible for all rehabilitation benefits arranged by the Department of Pensions and National Health.

Under the Red Cross Convention, protected personnel (doctors, dentists, medical orderlies, chaplains, stretcher bearers) are not to be regarded as prisoners of war, and are entitled to be returned to their own country. As such personnel render a very valuable service to their comrades in prisoner of war camps, it was considered desirable that some, at least, should remain. By a supplementary agreement with the German government, it has been decided that on each side 10 protected personnel (two doctors, one dentist, one chaplain, and six medical orderlies) for every 1,000 prisoners of war should be retained, and the rest repatriated. The repatriation of surplus protected personnel has been combined with the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war.