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[Article by Vadim Birshteyn, Washington-New York:
''Where Did 20,000 Americans Disappear to? The Red
Army Freed them from Nazi Imprisonment. Since Then
They Have Been Listed Among the Missing in Action'']

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Scenes from American history are depicted on the walls of the Capitol Rotunda and statues of U.S. statesmen are frozen between them. The figure of George Washington is on the arch of the cupola. Just one detail disrupts the ostentatiousness of the scene: the black flag alongside the statue of Abraham Lincoln. The white silhouette of a bowed male head is in the center of the flag and the contour of a prison camp tower is behind it. Surrounding it are the letters: **POW/MIA**. **POW** means Prisoners of War, **MIA** means Missing in Action. American families are missing up to 30,000 fathers and sons who did not **return** home after the Second World War and the wars in Indochina. Members of **POW/MIA** associations spend all of their free time and enormous sums of money attempting to compel the U.S. Government to provide information about the fate of their loved ones. One of the groups-the National Union of Families-is located in Seattle. Dolores Alford heads it and her brother was a military pilot who disappeared without a trace in Indochina 24 years ago.

..TEXT:

The problem arose at the end of 1944 when Soviet troops liberated many Nazi camps for internees which were located on the territories of Poland and Germany. Hundreds of thousands of citizens of Western European countries, the United States, and Canada found themselves in the zone that was occupied by the Soviet Army. In accordance with the Yalta Agreement signed by Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill on February 4, 1945, the Western allies were obliged to deport from Europe tens of thousands of Russian emigrants and **relocated** persons, including those liberated from Nazi camps. In exchange, Stalin promised to **send** home citizens of the allied countries who wound up under Soviet control.

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However, the Soviet authorities did not hurry to carry out their promises. Six days after the victory, it was reported from France: nearly half of the 200,000 British and 76,000 American prisoners of war who were still present in Germany are obviously in the Russian zone of occupation. From reports: ''American prisoners of war who were liberated by the Red Army were often treated poorly and they began to hate the Russians. Many were robbed, their watches, rings, and other items, which they still had even after prolonged confinement in Germany, were taken from them....

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''American prisoners of war in Odessa (a filtering camp-V.B.) were guarded by Russian soldiers who had loaded rifles and fixed bayonets and the Russian camp secret security service was stricter than the German.''

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On May 19, 1945, General Eisenhower telegraphed the allied main headquarters: ''The number of American prisoners of war under Soviet control is exactly 25,000.''

At the end of May, information about 20,000 American prisoners of war arrived at Eisenhower's headquarters. Contrary to the facts, on July 1, 1945, Eisenhower made an official statement that "only a small number of American prisoners of war still remain in Russian hands." As a result, thousands of American families are still waiting for their relatives who did not **return** after the Second World War. On the whole, Americans are missing 20,000 of these servicemen.

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Twenty thousand is a large number. Where were they kept? This is what a former prisoner reported about one of the camps for internees that was located near Tambov:

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"At the end of 1945, there were Germans, French, Americans, British, Dutch, and Belgiques-more than 20,000-military and civilian personnel. They forced all of the prisoners to work, the food was very bad and monotonous. They did not house them in barracks but in dugouts."

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A strange disease, during which the arms and legs collapse, was the consequence of the monotonous food. After some time, those who came down with this disease died. More than 23,000 Italian, more than 2,500 French, and nearly 10,000 Rumanian and Hungarian prisoners died. Several Poles and representatives of other nationalities also died from this disease.

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This camp's contingent consisted of people of very high culture and knowledge and splendid experts in various fields of science. German engineers were used for special work-they drew designs of an aircraft that could accommodate nearly 500 passengers and attain speeds of nearly 1,000 kilometers per hour. The Russians were especially interested in these projects and the people who worked on this invention enjoyed various relaxations of discipline in the camp's working and living conditions.

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Now it is widely known about French prisoners of the Tambov camp. A book was even published about them in France. But what about the Americans?....

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Separate information about Americans in various camps glimmers in the recollections of people who survived the GULAG [Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps] during the postwar years: In Vorkuta, Inta, Dzhezkazgan, Magadan, and others. Cases are known when not only prisoners of war but also workers from the American Embassy in Moscow ended up in the camps. However, no one has encountered the thousands of American prisoners. Lists of missing Americans in the United States are still secret. So, where are they?

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For the Americans, the problem of servicemen who did not **return** after the wars in Korea and Vietnam is no less acute. According to official statistics, 1,000 servicemen were not repatriated from Korea and 8,000 are listed as missing. According to available information, a portion of these people were transferred to camps located in China, Manchuria, and the USSR. This is how it occurred during the winter of 1951-spring of 1952:

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"The railroad station was divided into two sections with paths along both sides. Chinese soldiers escorted American prisoners

of war from the Chinese side. The prisoners of war passed through the gates that divided the platform to the train which the Russian team serviced. The Russians wore railroad worker uniforms but they were military men dressed as railroad workers....''

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On May 5, 1954, the U.S. Embassy **sent** a note to the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a query about the fate of American prisoners of war. In response, on May 12, 1954 the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted: ``...there are no such people and there never have been such people in the Soviet Union.''

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The families of the **POW/MIA's** think that up to 2,000 Americans were **sent** from Korea to the USSR.

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On January 27, 1973, a peace treaty was signed in Paris by representatives of the governments of the United States, North and South Vietnam and the Interim Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam that specifically provided for the bilateral exchange of prisoners of war. Contrary to this agreement, the United States has still not received a complete list of American prisoners of war who were held in camps in North Vietnam and in neighboring Laos. On March 26, 1973, Vietnam solemnly announced that the last American soldier would be repatriated on March 27. The U.S. secretary of defense seconded it: ``There are no more prisoners of war in **Southeast Asia**, they have all died.''

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According to the information of **POW/MIA** families, 591 prisoners of war were repatriated from Vietnam which is just 12 percent of the total number of 5,000 American prisoners of war who were alive in 1973.

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``While it is an acceptable situation for American citizens to be prisoners abroad, the freedom of all Americans is in danger.''

This sentence is from a leaflet published by relatives of the pilots of an RB-89 that was conducting an ordinary reconnaissance flight over neutral waters and was shot down by the Soviet PVO [Air Defense] service over the Sea of Japan on June 13, 1952. It goes on to say: ``The crew of 12 men was obviously picked up by a Soviet Naval vessel that was located there at the time of the incident. It is possible that the crewmembers are still alive and are imprisoned in the Soviet Union. Their names are listed: Major S.R. Bush; First Lieutenants J.A. Scally, S.D. Service, and R.J. MacDonnell; Master Sergeants W.B. Hommer and D.L. Moore; Staff Sergeants W.A. Blizzard, M.V. Monserat, E.R. Berg, L.E. Bonnira, and V.J. Becker; and, Private D.N. Pillburn.

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There are quite a few of these cases in the history of the Cold War. Normally the American government made one or two queries about the fates of the crews. However, only the relatives, who believe that their dear ones are still alive, are concerned about further explanations.

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Naturally, the American administration's reluctance to admit that it did little or did not make any effort to save its citizens-is a matter of the interrelationships of the American voters and the government elected by them. Right now a stormy debate is occurring in the U.S. Senate: Do they create or not create a special commission on the

POW/MIA issue? It seems that it will be formed.

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But there is another aspect of the problem. Information about all foreign prisoners of war who ended up on the territory of the USSR during the war and until the end of the 1950's is in the USSR Central State Archives in the fund of materials of the USSR MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] Main Administration on Prisoner of War and Internee Issues-in that very one which contains the lists of those Polish officers shot in the Katyn Forest and information about Japanese and German prisoners of war which is now being **sent** to those countries. So, the names of the 20,000 Americans and their fates may be easily explained in Moscow. However, it is difficult to gain access to these archives: the special authorization of two departments-USSR MVD and KGB-is required and they, as we all know, find it difficult to part with their secrets.

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We can much more rapidly establish a mutual understanding among those who share a similar fate: among the relatives of those U.S. citizens who are missing in the USSR and the relatives of Soviet prisoners of war who ended up prisoners in Afghanistan. The American **POW/MIA** families want to and can assist Soviet relatives of those who ended up Afghan veterans.

..TEXT:

The American National Alliance of Families is awaiting any news about their relatives. Contact between people can and must be established.

..TEXT:

Washington-New York

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