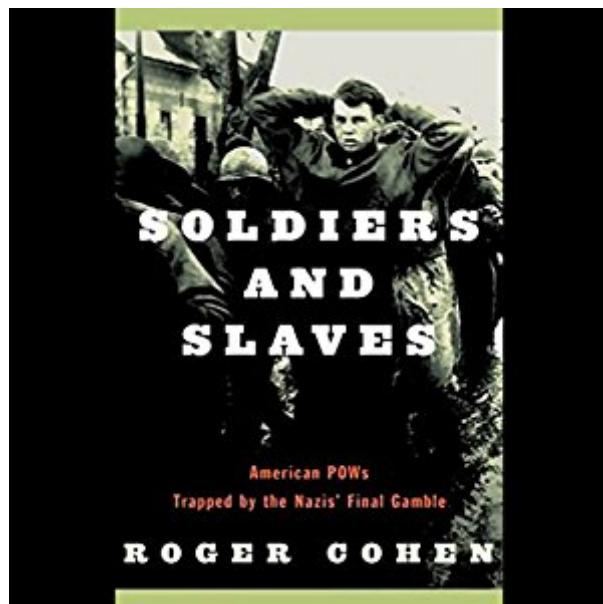


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# **Soldiers And Slaves: American POWs Trapped By The Nazis' Final Gamble**



## Synopsis

In February 1945, 350 American POWs captured earlier at the Battle of the Bulge or elsewhere in Europe were singled out by the Nazis because they were Jews or were thought to resemble Jews. They were transported in cattle cars to Berga, a concentration camp in eastern Germany, and put to work as slave laborers, mining tunnels for a planned underground synthetic-fuel factory. This was the only incident of its kind during World War II. Starved and brutalized, the GIs were denied their rights as prisoners of war, their ordeal culminating in a death march that was halted by liberation near the Czech border. Twenty percent of these soldiers—more than seventy of them—perished. After the war, Berga was virtually forgotten, partly because it fell under Soviet domination and partly because America's Cold War priorities quickly changed, and the experiences of these Americans were buried. Now, for the first time, their story is told in all its blistering detail. This is the story of hell in a small place over a period of nine weeks, at a time when Hitler's Reich was crumbling but its killing machine still churned. It is a tale of madness and heroism, and of the failure to deliver justice for what the Nazis did to these Americans. Among those involved: William Shapiro, a young medic from the Bronx, hardened in Normandy battles but, as a prisoner, unable to help the Nazis' wasted slaves, whose bodies became as insubstantial as ghosts; Hans Kasten, a defiant German-American who enraged his Nazi captors by demanding, in vain, that his fellow U.S. prisoners be treated with humanity, thus committing the unpardonable sin of betraying his German roots; Morton Goldstein, a garrulous GI from New Jersey, shot dead by the Nazi in charge of the American prisoners in an incident that would spark intense debate at a postwar trial; and Mordecai Hauer, the orphaned Hungarian Jew who, after surviving Auschwitz, stumbled on the GIs in the midst of the Holocaust at Berga and despaired at the sight of liberators become slaves. Roger Cohen uncovers exactly why the U.S. government did not aggressively prosecute the commandants of Berga, why there was no particular recognition for the POWs and their harsh treatment in the postwar years, and why it took decades for them to receive proper compensation. *Soldiers and Slaves* is an intimate, intensely dramatic story of war and of a largely forgotten chapter of the Holocaust. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I urge everyone to read this compelling work that tells of the disaster that befell our American GI's during WWII. So close to the day of the Allied Victory in Europe, but so unreachable for the men enslaved at Berga in the final months of the war. The Nazis made slaves of our POW's, with absolute disregard of anything remotely similar to the Geneva Conventions. These men were of many faiths, yet the Jewish boys were the most sought after target of these Barbarians. This story might never have been told, but I'm grateful that it was, even though it was many years afterward. They worked them to death, starved them to death, and, yes, they shot them to death. I had the privilege of attending a recent Veteran's Day showing of a documentary about these men, and even got to be with Tony Acevedo, the Mexican-American Medic who was imprisoned at Berga. He kept a diary that became the basis of the documentary. This book has so much detail about the horror of the Berga Death Camp.

Found the book in a new book section of the library and was amazed to find my name in it. Very good research. It was very helpful to my memories. I buried the seven soldiers who died at Grosslattengrun. Never knew the name of the village. At the time I was more interested in surviving. Two more soldiers died while we were burying the seven. We were supposed to catch up with the others and we convinced our guard to take a wrong fork in the woods and came to a village where we found out the Americans were only 30 kilometers away. Our guard put his rifle in a corner and said, "All is Kaput". The villagers put up nine of us until the GI's came. .

This is a powerful and exquisitely written book about a subject that is an essential, if hard to deal with emotionally, lesson in history. I pursued it, after first reading an excerpt from it published in the New York Times, because my brother was a prisoner of war captured by the Germans at Bastogne

on January 4, 1945, and he died in that captivity. From 1945 until 2013, we were never able to get an account of the treatment he suffered as a POW, but then a comrade who had undergone the same starvation, malnutrition and slavery, but survived, reached out and found me. Unfortunately, that comrade was himself on his deathbed when his son traced me and called. Second hand, through the comrade's family, I learned something about how the Nazis used their POWs as slave laborers to be beaten, starved and sickened until they were able to work no longer, then let die. This book, about a group of POWs captured nearby in the same battle provided insights and details I could not get directly, because the comrade died soon after our contact was made. It is not an easy book. But it embodies many lessons for those of us who want to learn what inhumanity looks like so we can defend against it whenever it rears its head.

An important book, that deals with an aspect of World War II few of us are aware of. It especially hit home for me because my father was a Jewish POW in Germany towards the end of the war. He told us that the Germans attempted to separate the Jews from the general population in Stalag 4 where he was held, but the GI's resisted and they were all able to stay together. I recommend this book as a way to understand how different the Jewish GI's were treated and how that difference had an impact on people like my father.

A very moving book, a part of history that has been kept quiet for too long.

This was a great book. It is shameful that these men were told by their country not to divulge the torture that they went through. This is a book that should be read in all history classes.

Wasn't aware of this piece of history. Enlightening and well written

My great uncle, Norm Fellman, is interviewed for this book. Accurate

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