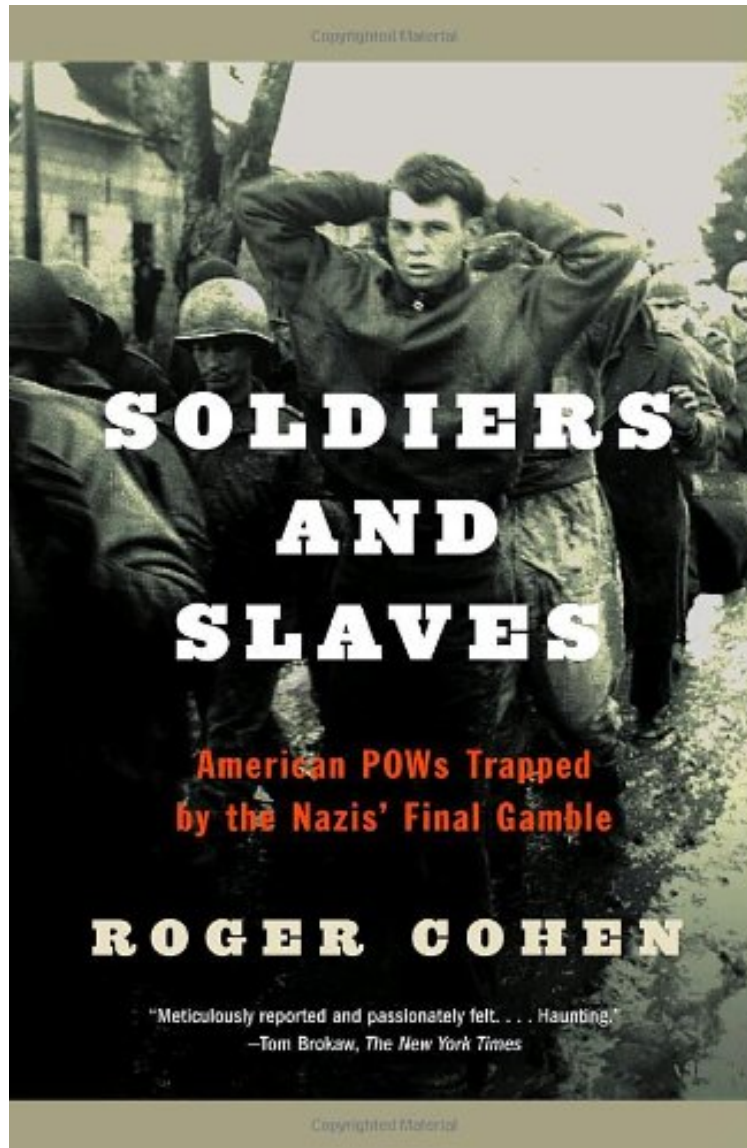


# Soldiers and Slaves: American POWs Trapped by the Nazis' Final Gamble

Roger Cohen

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**Roger Cohen : Soldiers and Slaves: American POWs Trapped by the Nazis' Final Gamble** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soldiers and Slaves: American POWs Trapped by the Nazis' Final Gamble:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Must For Everyone Who Wants to Know the Truth About WWII's

Secrets and the SS. By Kay Ross 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. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Brought back memories I was there as a prisoner. By William Cartwright 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. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five stars does not mean 'I love it' but that it is an important work. By Norman G. Rudman 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.

In February of 1945, 350 American POWs, selected because they were Jews, thought to resemble Jews or simply by malicious caprice, were transported by cattle car to Berga, a concentration camp in eastern Germany. Here, the soldiers were worked to death, starved and brutalized; more than twenty percent died from this horrific treatment. This is one of the last untold stories of World War II, and Roger Cohen re-creates it in all its blistering detail. Ground down by the crumbling Nazi war machine, the men prayed for salvation from the Allied troops, yet even after their liberation, their story was nearly forgotten. There was no aggressive prosecution of the commandants of the camp and the POWs received no particular recognition for their sacrifices. Cohen tells their story at last, in a stirring tale of bravery and depredation that is essential for any reader of World War II history.

From Publishers Weekly A former Balkans bureau chief for the New York Times, Cohen last explored atrocity in *Hearts Grown Brutal: Sagas of Sarajevo*; he now steps back 60 years and moves a few hundred kilometers west to recount the fate of 550 American POWs shipped into eastern Germany during the winter of 1944-1945. Most were Jewish--or appeared Jewish enough to satisfy Nazi officials, who needed to meet labor quotas the dying concentration camp inmates were no longer fit to handle. Cohen's interviews with survivors show that the POWs met nearly as dire a fate, as they dug underground to build a synthetic fuel plant, with 20% of them dying and others being crippled for life by rock falls, dust, starvation and by the brutal treatment from the guards. Postwar, the camp fell within what became East Germany, where the investigation into the Holocaust was less rigorously pursued than in the West. The guards got off lightly; the commandant was sentenced to only eight years. Following Germany's reunification, exploration into the methods and motives of the Third Reich has been losing support, Cohen shows; his outrage is plain when he encounters a German environmentalist who wants the surviving caves turned into a bird sanctuary. The book is well organized, but the writing style is not always smooth; it's Cohen's level of detail that makes this journalistic history come alive. 75,000-copy first printing. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From *The New Yorker* Less than a hundred days before Hitler killed himself, three hundred and fifty American P.O.W.s most of whom the Germans had identified as, or suspected of being, Jews were moved from Stalag IX-B to Berga, where, alongside Jews from Auschwitz, they were starved, beaten, and forced to work in appalling conditions before being sent on a death march. Cohen gives a powerful account of a chapter of the war that was long suppressed in part, he argues, because American authorities didn't recognize that their own soldiers had been caught in a "little outpost of the Holocaust." Cohen is particularly good at conveying the otherworldly encounters between Americans and European Jews in the camp, as when shock spreads over the face of a G.I. who realizes, after an

exchange in broken Yiddish, that the crowd of wraithlike figures he sees is made up of Jews like him. Copyright 2005 The New YorkerFrom BooklistIn late 1944, the Germans, in an effort to offset the effects of Allied destruction of their fuel facilities, began construction of several underground facilities to produce and store synthetic fuel. These facilities were to be built largely by slave laborers, many of them diverted from neighboring concentration camps. In February 1945, these workers were joined by several hundred American POWs captured during the Battle of the Bulge. They had been singled out because they were Jewish or looked Jewish, or perhaps even because of random caprice. At a facility in eastern Germany, these Americans would experience the Holocaust as full-fledged victims rather than as liberators of the death camps, with sadistic guards, starvation rations, and consistent dehumanization of inmates. The death rate for POWs at that place was extremely high; it was exacerbated when they had to endure a forced march as the Nazi regime collapsed. Cohen, a foreign correspondent and writer-at-large for the New York Times, uses survivors' accounts to effectively convey the initial bewilderment and then horror experienced by these Americans. Jay FreemanCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved