BARBED WIRE DIPLOMACY

Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War 1939–1945

Neville Wylie



OXFORD

BARBED WIRE DIPLOMACY

This page intentionally left blank

Barbed Wire Diplomacy

Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939–1945

NEVILLE WYLIE

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© Neville Wylie 2010

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by Laserwords Private Limited, Chennai, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
MPG Biddles Ltd, King's Lynn, Norfolk

ISBN 978–0–19–954759–3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Para Heloisa

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of Terms and Abbreviations viii
Acknowledgements xi

Introduction 1

1. Explaining Coordination and Cooperation in Anglo–German Relations, 1939–1945 13
2. Building the Interwar POW Regime 38
3. POWs and Anglo–German Relations, 1939–1941 63
4. The Amateurs Try their Hand: The Provision of Relief Parcels, 1940–1941 92
5. The POW Regime, October 1941–December 1942: From 'Cooperation' to 'Coordination' 122
6. The Shadow of the Shackling Crisis, 1943 155
7. The Role of the Dominions in British POW Policy 186
8. The Limits of Attraction: British POW Policy and the 'Great Escape', 1944 213
9. Avoiding Götterdämmerung, 1945 237

Conclusion 265

Bibliography 275
Index 299

List of Terms and Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Ministry)
ADAP	*Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945* (Serie E: 1941–1945)
Adty.	Admiralty, British
AM	Air Ministry (British)
ARCS	American Red Cross Society
BA Lichtefelde	Bundesarchiv Lichtefelde, Berlin
BA-MA	Bundesarchiv Militärchiv, Freiburg
BRCA	British Red Cross Archive
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
Büro RAM	Personal bureau of Reichsauβenminister Joachim von Ribbentrop
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIC	Commander in Chief
COS	Chiefs of Staff Committee
CRCS	Canadian Red Cross Society
DCER	*Documents in Canadian External Relations*
DEA	Department of External Affairs, Ottawa
DGFP	*Documents on German Foreign Policy*
DO	Dominions Office, London
DPW	Directorate of POW, WO
DRK	Deutsches Rote Kruez (German Red Cross Society)
Dulag	Transit POW camp
Führerhauptquartier (FHQ)	Führer Headquarters
FO	Foreign Office, London
FPD	Federal Political Department, Berne (Swiss Foreign Ministry)
Gestapo	Geheime Staastpolizei (Secret State Police)
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich
ILA	International Law Association
Ilag	Civilian internment camp

IPOWC	Imperial POW Committee, London
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
JCH	*Journal of Contemporary History*
JIC	Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee of the British COS
JSM	British Joint Staff Mission, Washington
JWO	Joint War Organization of the BRCS and Order of St. John
LAC	Library and Archive of Canada
MGM	*Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*
MI9	Military Intelligence 9 (responsible for the escape and evasion of POWs)
MoC	Man of Confidence (POW representative in Stalags)
MP	Member of Parliament
NARA	National Archive and Records Administration, Washington
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
Oflag	POW camp for officers
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKL	Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (Airforce High Command)
OKM	Oberkommando der Marine (Navy High Command)
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Wehrmacht)
OKW Kgf	OKW POW department (Kriegsgefangenenwesen)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US secret service)
PA-AA	Politisches Archiv Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin
POW	Prisoner of War
POWRA	POW relatives association
PWD	POW Department, FO
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAM	Reichsaussenminister (German Foreign Minister)
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Head Office)
SAARF	Special Allied Airborne Reconnaissance Force (Allied POW recovery teams)

SBA	Schweizerisches Bundesrachiv
SBO	Senior British Officer (British POW representative in Oflags)
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (General Eisenhower's headquarters)
SKL	*Seekriegsleitung* (German naval command)
SOE	Special Operations Executive, British
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service, British
SS	Schutzstaffeln
Stalag	POW camp for NCOs and other enlisted ranks
Stalag Luft	POW camp for Air Force prisoners
TNA	The National Archive, London
Tsy.	Treasury
US	United States
WCT	W. Coombe Tennant papers (National Library of Wales)
Wehrkreis	Military District, Germany
Wehrmacht	German Armed Forces
WFSt	Wehrmachtsführungstab OKW Operations Staff
WO	War Office, London
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Acknowledgements

My first thanks are to the British Academy (BA PDF and LRG 35388), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/E00055X/1) and the Swiss National Science Foundation for providing the funds and research leave without which this book could simply not have been written. I am also grateful for the time, patience, and assistance of the staff at the many archives and libraries consulted in the course of the research: the Library and Archive of Canada; Bundesarchiv, Lichtefelde; Bundesarchiv Militärchiv Freiburg; Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin; Deutsche Rotes Kreuz Archiv, Berlin; Achiv für Zeitgeschichte, Zurich; International Committee of the Red Cross Archive, Geneva; Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Berne; Universitätsbibliothek, Basel; Bodelian Library, University of Oxford; British Red Cross Archive, London; Churchill College Archive Centre, University of Cambridge; Post Office Heritage Centre, London; Hampshire Record Office, Winchester; Imperial War Museum, London; Liddel Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London; The National Archive, Kew; The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; the People's History Museum, Manchester; and the National Archive and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. It is a particular pleasure to be able to express my gratitude to Daniel Bourgeois, former archivist at the Swiss Federal Archive, and Fabrizio Benzi, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross Archive, who invariably ensure that my research trips to Switzerland are as enjoyable as they are productive.

A host of people—alas, too numerous to mention all by name—have helped me along the way, guiding my research, fielding enquiries, offering advice, and helping with translations. Particular thanks, though, are due to Andreas Bieler, Barbara Hately-Broad, Heather Jones, and Matthew Rendall who all took the time to comment on parts of this manuscript, and to Rüdiger Overmans, Martin Thomas, Matthew Jones, Richard Aldrich, Zara Steiner, and Peter Jackson who have been exacting sounding-boards for my ideas over the years. I am especially grateful to Kent Fedorowich and Bob Moore, the two historians who have done more than anyone else to develop the study of POWs in the United Kingdom. They have not only read large chunks of the book but also kept me liberally supplied with ideas, articles, and archival material over the years.

I am indebted to the British International History Group, Exeter University's Centre for War, State and Society, Glasgow University's Scottish Centre for War Studies, the Transatlantic Studies Association, the Oxford Leverhulme Programme on the Changing Character of War, and the British International Studies Association for giving me the opportunity to explore with them some of the arguments developed in this book.

It has once again been a privilege to have a book brought out by Oxford University Press. The support and assistance I have received from the staff at the Press has been faultless. I am particularly grateful to Rupert Cousins, who initially commissioned the work, Seth Cayley, who steered it to completion, and the Press's three anonymous readers, who offered some excellent insights and constructive criticism over the course of the project. Needless to say, all errors, faults, and omissions in the book are entirely mine.

Finally, thanks are due to my long-suffering family, who have borne my distractions and absences with patience and forbearance. Olivia, Isabella, and Otto learnt at an early stage that there was more about imprisonment in the book than just its title, and have been wonderfully encouraging, in their own way. The largest burden has, however, fallen on Heloisa, and it is only right therefore that it is to her that I dedicate this book.

This page intentionally left blank



Source: Based on S.P. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth. British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xvi-xvii, and American National Red Cross, 'Location of German Camps and Hospitals Where American Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees Are Held (Based on information received to December 31, 1944)'.


BALTIC SEA
Heydekrug, VI
REICHSKOMMISSARIAT
OSTLAND
EAST PRUSSIA
Danzig
Marienburg, XXB
Gross Tychow, IV
Bialystok
Thorn, XXA
Schubin, XXIB
Vistula
Posen, XXID
Warsaw
REICHSKOMMISSARIAT
UKRAINE
GENERAL
GOVERNMENT
OF POLAND
Bankau, VII
Lamsdorf, VIIIB/344
Lemberg
Mährisch Trübau, VIIIF
MORAVIA
SLOVAKIA
Tri Duby
Vienna
RUMANIA
Budapest
HUNGARY
Danube
CROATIA
Airmen's Camps Stalag Luft system
Officers' Camps Oflags
Other Ranks' Camps Stalags
(Stalag 319, Cholm, not shown)
Boundary of Germany, 1937
Other 1937 boundaries
Boundary of 'Greater Germany', 1942
Other 1942 boundaries
0 100 200 miles
0 100 200 300 km

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

If I wrote you whenever I thought of you, I should be doing nothing else from the time I wake, till I go to bed, and often in night my thoughts are never far from you, dearest boy. [. . .] You must be conscious that two people here are thinking of you and praying for you all the time—in a sense all the time—and v[ery] definitely three times a day. In the mornings when we pay our daily visit to the Grosvenor Chapel [. . .] on our way to our work; during the minute before the nine o'clock news when we hear Big Ben strike the hour, and before we go to sleep. If prayers can bring peace of mind and comfort, you must have both. When nine o'clock chimes to you each evening [. . .] let your thoughts and prayers meet ours for a minute each day. They will meet easily—those thoughts and prayers from you and us, and no barriers can intercept them. I shall never forget something you wrote to Mum from Athens very soon after you were wounded when you said 'My love goes to you on the clouds travelling West': East bound clouds can also carry love.[1]

In the course of researching this book, I have come across many touching letters between parents and their imprisoned sons, serving out the war in POW camps in Germany, but few quite as poignant as this one, penned by Vincent Massey on a wet, overcast Sunday afternoon in early November 1942. Massey's son, Captain Lionel Massey, was adjutant in the King's Royal Rifles, and took part in Britain's ill-fated defence of Greece in April 1941. Although Lionel had done his best to ease his parents' anxieties—'don't forget', he told them the previous autumn, 'that an Adjutant's job is the safest in the battalion'—a Stuka dive-bomber brought his war to an abrupt end on 17 April, breaking his leg, making 'rather a mess' of his left thigh, and embedding so much battledress inside his wounds that by the time it had all been removed, he claimed to have enough material for a new pair of trousers. All he needed, he told his mother, were some new buttons. Evacuated to Athens, he was too ill to join British forces when they left the city on 25 April.[2] Instead he spent the next forty months

[1] Vincent Massey (Canada House, London) to Capt. Lionel V. Massey (Oflag VIIB, Eichstätt, Germany), 1 Nov. 1942. Library and Archive of Canada, Ottawa (hereafter LAC). Papers of Vincent Massey, MG32 A1. vol. 33. Reel C9230.

[2] For the evacuation, see F. A. E. Crew, *The Army Medical Services. Campaigns. vol. i* (London: H.M.S.O., 1956), pp. 494–505, and for the effect of Lionel's captivity on the Masseys: Claude Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 111–14.

in German captivity, surviving no fewer than nine operations, and was only repatriated home, as an invalid, in May 1944.[3]

The anguish conveyed in Vincent Massey's letter is a striking testament to the distress felt by the parents of some 365,000 British servicemen who fell into enemy hands over the course of the Second World War.[4] The lives of those servicemen left behind, their wives, fathers, siblings, and sweethearts, has not gone unnoticed by historians, even if the families of prisoners of war (POW) have only recently received the attention they deserve.[5] Nevertheless, what makes this letter stand out for me is the fact that Vincent Massey, as Canada's high commissioner in London, was intimately involved in British policy-making on POWs over the war. When Massey talked to the Red Cross about the provision of relief parcels, or pressed the general post office to accelerate the delivery of POW mail, he was dealing with issues that touched his kith and kin in a direct and profound manner. The date of Massey's letter, 1 November 1942, is also central to my concerns: Massey wrote his letter in the midst of the so called 'shackling crisis'; the most serious and prolonged dispute to affect Anglo–German POW relations during the war, which saw thousands of Commonwealth and German POWs bound for periods each day. The high commissioner was so virulently opposed to the policy pursued by the British war cabinet that he repeatedly urged Ottawa to break ranks and negotiate its own way out of the crisis.[6]

Massey's letter provides a rare insight into what James Joll famously dubbed the 'unspoken assumptions' that lurk behind the making of foreign policy.[7] Though out of sight, prisoners were clearly not out of mind. Massey's preoccupations were not unique. The lives of the Master of Elphinstone, of Earl Haig, the only son of the late Field Marshal, of Viscount Lascelles, son of the Princess Royal, and the Earl of Hopetoun, son of the Viceroy of India, all hung on the Führer's whim. Other members of this select group, known by their captors as the *Prominente*, included John Winant, the son of the United States ambassador in London, and Lt. Michael Alexander, who the Germans took to be a relative of Field Marshall Alexander. Lt. Alexander was captured during a behind-the-lines raid in Libya in

[3] L. V. Massey to 'Dad & Mum', circa 12 Nov. 1940; L. V. Massey to 'Dad, Mum and Buzz', 6 May 1941. Alice Massey to Jones Paterson n.d. LAC. Papers of Vincent Massey, MG32 A1. vol. 33. Reels C9217 and 9230. Reel 9217.

[4] There is no agreement on the number of British POWs. For a useful discussion, see John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Germany, 1944–1945* (London: Viking, 2002), pp. 416–20.

[5] Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940–1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991). Barbara Hately-Broad, 'Prisoner of War Families and the British Government during the Second World War', University of Sheffield PhD, 2002.

[6] For Massey's pre-occupation with Lionel at this time, see Hume Wrong: memo, 'Incidental Experience in London, 24 Oct–27 Nov 1942', n.d., LAC. Hume Wrong Papers, MG30 E101 vol. 4. File 23.

[7] James Joll, '1914: The Unspoken Assumptions', in H. W. Koch (ed.), *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 307–28.

August 1942 and lived the next two and a half years under the threat of execution for donning a German uniform to avoid capture. Winston Churchill's family were also affected. Giles Romilly, Churchill's nephew, unwittingly followed the footsteps of his illustrious relative when he was captured in Narvik in April 1940 while covering the war as a correspondent for the *Daily Express*.[8]

Britain's high society had good reason to fear victimization. In 1915, Berlin had deliberately penalized prisoners of high social standing in reprisal against the segregation of U Boat crew in British camps. One British prisoner reputedly endured months of solitary confinement on account of Berlin's mistaken belief that he was a peer: the luckless man's father, a Bloomsbury solicitor with lofty ambitions for his family, had rashly given him the name of 'Baron'.[9] The special treatment meted out to the *Prominente* suggests that these fears were not unfounded. Hitler himself proclaimed that 'the great thing is to capture as many "honourables" as possible. [. . . The] hanging of half a dozen British Generals would shake British society to its very foundations'.[10] If Vincent Massey did allow personal emotions to shape his professional judgement, he was surely not alone.[11] The terse diary entry of the conservative MP Irene Ward on 19 January 1942—'Leonard prisoner of War'—explains much of the tenacity with which she championed the interests of POWs in and outside parliament. In Ward's eyes, her brother's wellbeing depended, in a very real sense, on her success in raising POW issues in Whitehall.[12] The most direct intervention on behalf of imprisoned relatives belongs to General George Patton, for whom the capture of his son-in-law, Col. Johnny Waters, in early 1943, brought such torment that in the course of a conference shortly afterwards, he 'damned the Germans so violently and emotionally that tears came to his eyes'. Two years later, Patton thought nothing of risking his reputation, not to say the lives of 300 of his men, by dispatching an armoured column forty miles behind enemy lines in a reckless, and ultimately futile, attempt to liberate Waters and his fellow prisoners.[13]

The 'elite' were not, of course, the only section of society to agonize over the fate of their loved ones. With the nation in uniform, few families were left untouched by the war, or free from the nagging fear of what news the morning's post might bring. Imprisonment, like death, was not selective, even if the fortunes

[8] For Churchill's captivity in Boer hands, see Randolph Churchill, *Winston C. Churchill, vol. i. Youth* (London: Heinemann, 1966), pp. 459–506; Giles Romilly and Michael Alexander, *The Privileged Nightmare* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954).

[9] Sir Alan Lascelles to John Martin (Downing Street) 4 Jan. 1945. The National Archive, London (hereafter TNA). PREM3/364/12.

[10] Hugh Trevor-Roper (ed.), *Hitler's Table Talk: Hitler's Conversations Recorded by Martin Bormann* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 696–97 (6 Sep. 1942).

[11] Bernard Bellush, *He Walked Alone: A Biography of John Gilbert Winant* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 191, 212–13.

[12] Diary of Irene Ward. Bodelian Library, University of Oxford. Dame Irene Ward, MP. Baroness of North Tyneside. MSS Eng.d.3475 1942.

[13] Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 273.

of battle meant that the burden of imprisonment fell on some communities more than others. Unlike death, the impact of imprisonment did not diminish over time. Daniel McCarthy, an American physician who had toured POW camps in Europe during the first years of the Great War, put the position rather well:

> A soldier who had been killed in action was mourned as a sacrifice on the altar of patriotism. Time, the great healer of such sorrow, eventually led the relatives from a condition of mourning to one of pride in their offering. The prisoner of war, on the other hand, while in the hands of the heartless and brutal enemy remained for months and even years a matter of continuing solicitude and worry on the part of all the relatives, and an increasing rather than decreasing circle of friends.[14]

Throughout the war POW families supported their loved ones as best they could; composing letters, assembling next-of-kin parcels and, when necessary, mobilizing opinion to hold the government to account for its actions.[15]

The government's reaction to these efforts is one of the recurrent themes in this study. How officials viewed the plight of prisoners was influenced by the anomalous position these men occupied in Britain's war effort: 'like chessmen removed from the board', as S. P. Mackenzie memorably puts it, 'still in one piece but out of the game'.[16] Since official policy was, ostensibly, governed by Britain's obligations under the 1929 POW convention, the prisoners' supporters, and to a lesser degree the prisoners themselves, assumed that POW issues could be discussed without reference to the normal restrictions governing public debate in the war. In contesting government policy, the families benefited from the fact that the government and its agencies did not hold a monopoly over the information about its men in enemy captivity. Prisoners' letters, though slow in arriving and heavily redacted by the censors' red pencil, provided snapshots of POW life that could be used to challenge official statements. The government's position was further eroded by Germany's broadcasting of the names of recently captured servicemen over the radio. Why wait weeks or months for news from the War Office, when anxious parents could tune in to German propaganda stations to learn the fate of their loved ones?[17] The widespread belief that questions over the treatment of British POWs were a matter for legitimate public concern

[14] Daniel J. McCarthy, *The Prisoners of War in Germany* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co, 1918), p. 10.

[15] See, in general, Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), esp. pp. 47–79.

[16] S. P. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 292.

[17] The policy, begun in March 1940, was designed to encourage Britons to tune in to German broadcasts. See OKM to OKW Kgf etc. 4 Mar. 1940; Bundesarchiv Militärchiv Freiburg (hereafter BA-MA). RW48/13. It took the WO over two months to confirm Pte L. Curtis' capture at Arnhem in September 1944; his wife learnt via the German radio within three weeks of the battle. Mrs Curtis to Mrs L. Stevens, 22 Nov. 1944. Imperial War Museum, London (hereafter IWM). Dept. of Docus. Misc. 94 Item 1434. For US concerns over German tactics, see W. O'Meara for Donovan, head of OSS, 7 Apr. 1943; National Archive and Records Administration, Maryland (hereafter NARA). RG226 M1642. Reel 98 folio 349.

and debate, explains why, despite being central to Britain's external relations during the war, policy-making on POW issues was exposed to such singular and intensive public scrutiny.

The involvement of Vincent Massey in British deliberations over the treatment of POWs leads to another aspect of the subject that gives it its particular character, and to the historian its unique appeal. When Britain entered the war on 3 September 1939, it did so at the head of an Empire that stretched to every corner of the globe. The excitement at seeing Britons rallying behind the flag inclined some officials in London to ignore Eire's last-minute retreat into neutrality, or the strides made in Dominion self-government, and to assume, instead, that the far-flung sons of the Empire could be treated like 'unpaid Hessians'.[18] Although the Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, and South African governments came to the United Kingdom's aid, their commitment to London's leadership was never unconditional. POW policy was one issue where the Dominions were prepared to flex their muscle. Their experience of captivity differed from that of the British, so too the kind of pressures that this captivity generated at home. Moreover, from mid-1940 the Dominions began detaining Britain's Axis prisoners, and as independent signatories to the 1929 POW convention, became individually accountable for their treatment of enemy POWs. More importantly, however, Canada, and to a slightly lesser extent Australia, came to hold an increasingly proprietary view over POW policy-making, partly on account of their misgivings over Whitehall's handling of POW matters, and partly out of a desire to develop their own distinctive humanitarian agenda. Ottawa used humanitarian diplomacy to help secure Canada's credentials with its British and American partners, and cement its position as spokesman for the junior members of the United Nations.[19] As Arieh Kochavi has recently shown, Britain's dealings with the United States over POWs were equally shaped by the differences in their respective liabilities, resources, and interests and from the differing positions occupied by humanitarian considerations in their foreign policy programmes.[20]

While a study of British policy towards its prisoners promises to shed important new light on Britain's relations with its partners abroad and the functioning of

[18] Lester Pearson quoted in C. P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies, vol. ii, 1921–1948. The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 282.

[19] See Jonathan Vance, *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War through the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press: 1994), pp. 249–51; Neville Wylie, 'Prisoner of War Relief and Humanitarianism in Canadian External Policy During the Second World War', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 3/2 (2005), pp. 239–58.

[20] Arieh J. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity. Britain and the United States and their POWs in Nazi Germany* (London and Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For a similar situation with Italians: Bob Moore, 'Italienische Kriegsgefangene in britischen und amerikanischem Gewahrsam, 1941 bis 1947', in Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (eds.), *Kriegsgefangene des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Gefangennahme, Lagerleben, Rückkehr* (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 2005), pp. 287–302.

democratic politics at home, the principal focus of this book lies in what we might call Britain's diplomatic or political relations with Germany. At first sight, this might seem rather bizarre. What 'relations' could London have with Berlin after both had, to paraphrase Churchill, swapped 'jaw-jaw' for 'war-war'? True, a dialogue of sorts was maintained across the airwaves, with each side projecting an image of itself, its war aims, and its visions for the future, *in response to* the claims of its adversary.[21] One could equally depict peace feelers as a form of dialogue, although these noticeably tailed off after 1941.[22] Neither, however, amount to what is commonly understood as a political relationship. Yet, this is precisely what emerges from the bilateral discussions relating to the treatment of POWs. As Rüdiger Overmans observes, 'the belligerents' foreign political relations largely boiled down to negotiations over POW matters'.[23] Both sides approached the POWs with an eye to how their actions would be interpreted by their adversary. They may have been engaged in an uncompromising and brutal war, but they shared a common desire to protect the wellbeing, honour, and interests of their servicemen in enemy hands. And this could only be achieved through the cooperation of their respective enemies.

In studying, therefore, Britain's efforts to influence German behaviour, whether through pressure or persuasion, through the threat of retaliation or by appealing to their adversary's sense of humanity or commitment to solemn legal covenants, we are essentially dealing with Britain's ability to build and sustain a relationship with the Nazi regime. This has two implications. Firstly, British 'policy' has to be seen as a multidimensional process. What German officials thought about British policy is just as important as the hopes and intentions of policy-makers in London. Secondly, questions on POW matters must be seen within the context of the changing fortunes of war. Obstacles to cooperation were more easily surmounted during the 'twilight war' than they were two years later, when the war had become more 'total'. We ought nonetheless to be wary of seeing the treatment of POWs as merely a reflection of the military balance, and overlook the manner in which Anglo–German POW relations developed along their own distinct trajectory, and were sustained by forces that had their own rationale. By examining the interplay between the British and German governments over

[21] Studies have thus far tended to examine this dialogue from one side only: Michael Stenton, *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare, 1939–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in Britain, vol. iii, The War of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn., 1995); and Robert Cole, *Britain and the War of Words in Neutral Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

[22] This theme is explored in Ulrich Schlie, *Kein Friede mit Deutschland: die geheimen Gespräche im Zweiten Weltkrieg, 1939–1941* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1994), and Klemens von Klemperer, *German Resistance against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad, 1938–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[23] Rüdiger Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1939 bis 1945', in Jörg Echternkamp (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 9/2, Die Deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945* (Munich: Deutsche-Verlags-Anstalt, 2005), p. 732.

the issue of POWs, and exploring how each side reacted to their responsibilities under the POW convention, this study offers an insight into the dynamics of Anglo–German wartime relations that has been largely ignored in the literature of the Second World War. It shows how the dialogue between the two governments was not eclipsed by the advent of war but continued throughout the course of five years of intense fighting.

The final aspect of POW relations considered in this study relates to the nature, rather than the substance, of this relationship. The absence of formal diplomatic contacts between the two belligerents meant that the means of communication available to them were distinctly limited. Public statements were always liable to be hijacked for propaganda purposes and end up enflaming the anxieties of the prisoners and their relatives and supporters at home. Self-help measures, such as reprisals, were likewise a double-edged weapon. Some willingness to resort to reprisals was necessary to hold Berlin to its obligations and ensure 'reciprocity' continued to function. But, as Britain found to its cost in the Great War, unilateral action against prisoners could easily escalate into a vicious cycle of tit-for-tat reprisals. Thus, for most issues, most of the time, governments found it convenient to communicate their views through third parties, in particular, their 'protecting powers'. The concept of a protecting power was by no means new to the modern era, but their functions were radically extended over the course of the Great War, when belligerents came to rely on neutral diplomats to oversee their residual interests in enemy territory and, as the war progressed, to scrutinize the enemy's treatment of prisoners of war.[24] These lessons were duly acknowledged in the POW convention of 1929. For the first time, protecting powers were placed on a legal footing, and recognized as the primary agencies responsible for supervising the convention and ensuring that policy remained governed by humanitarian, and not military or political considerations. The Great War also saw a growth of non- or quasi-governmental organizations with their fingers in the humanitarian pie: national Red Cross societies, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Vatican and, most importantly, the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The latter proved so successful in promoting humanitarian norms during the war, and subsequently defending its position within the Red Cross movement, that it was the only organization, other than the officially accredited protecting powers, to be accorded specific duties under the POW convention.[25]

[24] See W. M. Franklin, *Protection of Foreign Interests: A Study of Diplomatic and Consular Practice* (New York, 1969/1947); Charles Henn, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Idea of Protecting Powers', PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1986; Neville Wylie, 'Protecting Powers in a Changing World', *Politorbis*, 40/1 (2006), pp. 6–13; and Richard B. Speed III, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity* (New York: Greenwood, 1990), pp. 15–30.

[25] See Matthew Stibbe, 'The Internment of Civilians by Belligerent States during the First World War and the Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross', *Journal of*

The ICRC and protecting powers were therefore integral to the working of the POW convention, whether through the inspection of detention facilities, the distribution of relief parcels or interceding on prisoners' behalf with the official authorities. While these functions were predominantly of a technical nature, external intervention invariably threw up questions of a political character. At its most prosaic, their participation affected the dynamics of what was, at base, a bilateral relationship. The impact of a protest note could, for instance, hinge on the speed of the protecting power's cipher service, the skill of its translators, and the tenor of any oral remarks made by its diplomats in delivering the note to the relevant authorities. It might depend too on the standing of the neutral legation with the enemy government, and the personal qualities and contacts of its diplomats. Thus, even if the United States embassy in Berlin scrupulously avoided associating itself with the contents of Britain's missives, German officials could scarcely be unmoved by the fact that any brusque dismissal of Britain's protests might tarnish German standing in American eyes. Neutral involvement in POW diplomacy was also likely to influence the practical operation of the POW convention. A belligerent might conceivably decide that its interests were served in ignoring the convention's injunctions or, *in extremis*, jettisoning the convention altogether. But since an intermediary's *locus standi* arose wholly from the provisions of the convention, it had a vested interest in defending the integrity of the convention whatever the circumstances. This could, of course, lead intermediaries into minimizing the gravity of any infringements of the convention, or colour their reporting of unpalatable facts. Consider, for example, the position of Walter Preiswerk, the Swiss diplomat responsible for German interests in London, who had to put aside his own feelings of outrage and indignation at the horrific murder of fifty British escapers from Stalag Luft III in early 1944, and counsel his hosts against retaliating against German prisoners in their hands.[26] Finally, it should not be forgotten that an intermediary's motives are rarely entirely altruistic. In fulfilling their duties, intermediaries had their own institutional or national interests at heart. Care had to be taken to protect their impartiality and ensure that the messenger was not mistaken for his message. For the Swiss and the ICRC in particular, POW diplomacy was key to their own national and institutional interests, and central to Swiss efforts to promote a benevolent attitude towards Swiss

Contemporary History (hereafter *JCH*), 41/1 (2006), pp. 5–19; Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la grande guerre. Humanitaire et culture de guerre. Populations occupées, deportés civils, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris, 1998), pp. 163–266; Uta Hinz, 'Humanität im Krieg? Internationales Rotes Kreuz und Kriegsgefangenenhilfe im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Jochen Oltmer (ed.), *Kriegsgefangene im Europa des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), pp. 216–36; André Durand, *History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, vol. ii. From Sarajevo to Hiroshima* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1984), pp. 31–96; and John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), pp. 279–319.

[26] W. Preiswerk, Swiss legation, London, to Mjr. R. Iselin, Federal Political Department, Berne, 16 Aug. 1944. Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Berne (hereafter SBA). E2001 02 20 vol. 1.

neutrality within the belligerent capitals.[27] The humanitarian intermediaries thus played a vital part in POW diplomacy, acting not merely as message-carriers but as independent actors in their own right, shaping belligerent behaviour and expectations and using their privileged position to further their own interests.

This is not the first study to consider the foreign political aspects of Britain's policy towards prisoners during the Second World War. The Foreign Office (FO), War Office (WO), and the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) all commissioned reports on their involvement in POW affairs, and although the cabinet office decided against including a study on POWs in the 'official history' series, a volume on the subject appeared in the 'Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War'.[28] The official studies, while dry and distinctly self-serving, provide useful insights into how officials reflected upon their experiences, and are important historical sources in their own right. Sir Harold Satow's report for the FO was eventually published in 1950;[29] Col. N. J. Phillimore's study of the work of the WO Directorate of POWs, though completed in May 1949 and initially slated to appear in the official history series, remained in manuscript form and never made it into print.[30] The BRCS report is an altogether more intriguing document. Written as a 'confidential supplement' to the society's 'official history', published in 1949, the report offers an unvarnished account of the difficulties it faced over the war, a good many of which arose out of its activities on behalf of POWs. Only thirty copies were ever produced and, though it was apparently distributed to interested parties, only one copy has survived in the BRCS archive.[31]

Studies on Britain's involvement in POW issues, of both a popular and more scholarly nature, have already shed considerable light on the dynamics of Britain's wartime POW diplomacy. Attention has, quite naturally, been focused on how individual soldiers, sailors, and airmen responded to the challenge of captivity. The diaries kept by British POWs, and the wave of memoirs that appeared after

[27] They were not to be disappointed: see Neville Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 320–31.

[28] W. Wynne Mason, *Prisoners of War: Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–1945* (Wellington: War Historical Branch, 1954).

[29] Sir Harold Satow and M. J. Sée, *The Work of the Prisoners of War Department during the Second World War* (London: Foreign Office, 1950).

[30] Col. N. J. Phillimore, 'The Second World War 1939–1945. Army. Prisoners of War', WO, May 1949 TNA. WO366/26. Though the FO, to whom the draft text was sent, was critical of its accuracy, pressure grew to have the manuscript published in the early 1960s. Phillimore, by now a high court judge, had neither the time nor the inclination to revisit the task. See TNA. WO32/18756.

[31] *Red Cross and St. John War History, 1939–1947. Confidential Supplement, 2 vols*. No date is given; however, it was produced after P. G. Cambray and G. G. Briggs' official history, *Red Cross and St. John: The Official Record of the Humanitarian Services of the War Organisation of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John of Jerusalem, 1939–1947* (London: Sumfield and Day, 1949).

the war offer unique insights into the experience of wartime captivity for British servicemen in Germany, and have enabled historians to give voice to what had been a largely marginalized group of historical actors, and integrate the lives of 'ordinary' prisoners into a narrative of POW history that had, for so long, been dominated by the heroic exploits of those who tried their hands at escaping.[32] The recent upsurge in the academic study of POW history has transformed the study of military history and helped incorporate the experience of imprisonment into the broader historical picture.[33] In a recent landmark study, Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich have shown how London sought to extract political, and above all economic, advantage from its large haul of Italian prisoners.[34] Their research illuminates the differences that marked British attitudes towards German and Italian prisoners, and shows how Britain's shortage of manpower and resources ensured that the task of detaining Axis prisoners became a matter of concern for the entire British Empire, and not just the United Kingdom government. The historian who has done most to explore Dominion sensitivity towards the fate of British prisoners, however, is Jonathan Vance, and his publications on various aspects of the subject provide the point of departure for the current study.[35] The domestic context for London's deliberations on POW matters has also attracted attention; Whitehall's conduct has been heavily criticized by David Rolf, while Barbara Hately-Broad has shown how official indifference towards the needs of POW families led to considerable economic and social hardship.[36]

[32] See *inter alia* S. P. Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*; David Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich: Germany's Captives, 1939–1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988): Adrian Gilbert, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe, 1939–1945* (London: John Murray, 2006); John Nicol and Tony Rennell, *Home Run: Escape from Nazi Europe* (London: Viking, 2007); *idem*, *The Last Escape*; and Charles Rollings, *Prisoner of War: Voices from Captivity during the Second World War* (London: Ebury, 2007); *idem*, *Wire and Worse: RAF Prisoners of War in Laufen, Bibarach, Lubeck and Warburg 1940–1942* (London: Ian Allan, 2004); *idem*, *Wire and Walls: RAF Prisoners of War in Itzehoe, Spangenberg and Thorn 1939–1942* (London: Ian Allan, 2003); and Bob Moore and Barbara Hately-Broad, 'Living on Hope and Onions: The Everyday Life of British Servicemen in Axis Captivity', *Everyone's War*, 8 (2003), pp. 39–45. For the Italian angle, Roger Absalom, *Strange Alliance: Aspects of Escape and Survival in Italy, 1943–1945* (Florence: Olschki, 1991).

[33] Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2002). Historians have been more successful in situating POWs within the history of post-war societies: see Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), and Bob Moore and Barbara Hately-Broad (eds.), *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

[34] Bob Moore, and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940–1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

[35] Vance, *Objects of Concern*; *idem*, 'Men in Manacles: The Shackling of Prisoners of War, 1942–1943', *Journal of Military History*, 59 (1995), pp. 483–504, and 'The Trouble with Allies: Canada and the Negotiation of Prisoner of War Exchanges', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich (eds.), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 69–85.

[36] David Rolf, 'Blind Bureaucracy': The British Government and POWs in German Captivity, 1939–45', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors*, pp. 47–67. Barbara Hately-Broad, ' "Nobody would tell you anything": The War and Foreign Offices and British Prisoner of War Families during World War II', *Journal of Family History*, 27/4 (Oct. 2002),

The works that come closest to our concern are those of S. P. Mackenzie and Arieh Kochavi. Mackenzie explored the international dynamics of POW politics during the war in a groundbreaking article in 1994, and examined the process in greater depth the following year in a case study of the 'shackling crisis'.[37] Kochavi's comparison of British and US attitudes towards their prisoners in German captivity, though relying solely on British and American documents, provides an important narrative of how the two governments dealt with some of the key policy issues during the war: the provision of relief parcels, the repatriation of prisoners, during and after the war, and the question of reprisals.[38] Fears over the availability of German records, long considered a handicap to serious scholarship in this area, have been partially allayed by Mackenzie's work, and that of Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, whose doctoral research uncovered a wealth of material in the German High Command papers detailing German detention policies towards its western prisoners.[39] These documents, supplemented by material drawn from other German and foreign archives, and the recently edited diaries of Hitler's propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels, provide insights into German thinking at most of the critical junctures in Anglo–German POW relations during the war, and are central to the analysis offered in this book.[40]

Despite the important contributions made by these and other scholars, certain fundamental questions relating to Britain's policy-making process, the nature of POW diplomacy, and the political dynamics of Anglo–German POW relations remain unanswered. How exactly did the British and German governments respond to the existence of a clearly articulated and widely acknowledged set of principles and norms governing state responsibilities towards POWs, based primarily, though not exclusively, on the 1929 POW convention? How did the two countries' changing strategic and political circumstances affect their attitude towards the POW 'regime' and the wellbeing of British prisoners in Germany? What, in short, was the interplay between political imperatives and humanitarian and ethical principles in shaping official attitudes towards POWs and the POW convention during one of the most intensely fought conflicts of the modern era? Policy-making on POW matters was clearly influenced by domestic constraints—an attentive and well-informed POW lobby in the parliament, press, and society at large—and by the pressures of working as part

pp. 459–77, and 'Coping in Britain and France: A Comparison of Family Issues Affecting the Homecoming of Prisoners of War following World War II', in Moore and Hately-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace*, pp. 141–50.

[37] S. P. Mackenzie, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II', *Journal of Modern History,* 66 (Sept. 1994), pp. 487–520, and 'The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy in the Second World War', *International History Review*, XVII, I (Feb. 1995), pp. 78–98.

[38] Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, passim.

[39] Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command: The British and American Experience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

[40] Elke Frölich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels*, 15 vols. (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1995–96).

of an imperial and wartime alliance; but how was this pressure brought to bear, and when, and in what circumstances, was it likely to change, rather than merely reinforce, official thinking on these issues? Finally, how did the nature of POW diplomacy—conducted *between* belligerents but *through* intermediaries—affect the outcome of British policy?

Common to all these questions is the issue of cooperation: cooperation, moreover, between two states that are committed to the physical destruction of their adversary. Before addressing these questions then, it is worth pausing to consider how scholars have come to explain the phenomenon of international cooperation. As we shall see, our inquiry into Anglo–German dealings over POWs will to a greater or lesser extent be shaped by some of the underlying assumptions we hold about the nature of international politics and the role of international law.

1

Explaining Coordination and Cooperation in Anglo–German Relations, 1939–1945

This book is principally concerned with exploring how the British government tried to influence the behaviour of its adversary in one of the most bitterly fought wars of the modern age. It is therefore a study of two rather unlikely bedfellows. On the one hand it addresses a perennial theme of historical inquiry, war and international conflict. On the other hand, its central concern is the way in which warring states seek to contain their conflict in order to sustain a level of cooperation, necessary for the fulfilment of certain mutually beneficial objectives. Historians have rarely given much consideration to the interplay between these two processes. The dawning of the era of total war by the turn of the 20th century is generally assumed to have stifled those conditions which had, only decades before, allowed warfare to be depicted as merely a continuation of politics through other means. For the belligerents, war remained a political activity, but the increasingly total nature of their war aims, the quest for the unconditional surrender of their enemies, leading, in some cases, to the physical eradication or enslavement of entire societies or ethnic and religious groups meant that the 'politics of war' became, as one recent study has put it, the 'politics of destruction'.[1] The tenor of new research on the wars of the first half the 20th century has underscored the brutality of these conflicts, and emphasized how the pursuit of total victory legitimized the use of extreme violence against enemy combatants, civilians and, in certain instances, members of a state's own armed forces.[2] When historians talk about 'cooperation' in warfare, they refer, in the main, to the often fraught relations between members of wartime alliances. The possibility of inter-state cooperation under conditions of anarchy has, by contrast, been one of the abiding interests for scholars involved in the study of

[1] Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, Bernd Greiner (eds.), *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, 'Are We There Yet? World War II and the Theory of Total War', pp. 1–16.

[2] The literature on these themes is vast; see *inter alia*, Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), and Omar Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide and Modern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and in general George Kassimeris (ed.), *The Barbarisation of Warfare* (London: Hurst, 2006).

international relations. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to consider some of the insights generated by political scientists in explaining patterns of inter-state cooperation and assess their applicability to the study of Anglo–German POW diplomacy during the Second World War.[3]

It ought to be said at the outset that historians have tended to shy away from anything quite as murky as 'theory'. Theorists are generally held with suspicion, and charged with treating history like the Soviets did under Brezhnev, using only those parts that give credence to the latest fad. Theorists' interest in enduring, or recurrent, processes and their preference for 'parsimonious' explanatory models based on 'stylized facts' contrasts with the historian's fascination for the historically unique, and penchant for richly textured, complex analysis. Historians are likewise generally wary of any preconception—theoretical or otherwise—that might detract from an objective reading of the source material. To do otherwise, they argue, risks writing history that is both anachronistic and lacks the sense of temporal context that is the hallmark of the historian's trade. Such concerns, while comprehensible, are faulty on two counts. Firstly, as Geoffrey Roberts has recently reminded us, the very methodology adopted by international historians, with its fine-grained analysis of textual sources, its commitment to the narrative mode, and its concern for the political and the essence of decision-making, constitute a particular view of international relations. The narrative form and the attention given to the presentation of events within a chronological framework lend themselves to a discussion that privileges the role of chance and contingency, and, most importantly of all, emphasizes the influence of human agency and individual action in shaping events and historical phenomena.[4] Whether this amounts to a 'theory' of international relations might be debated, but we ought, at least, to be conscious of the way in which the tools of the historians' trade lead to an 'image' of the past that has its own characteristics and distinctions.[5]

Secondly, those who claim that history is essentially an a-theoretical space overlook the extent to which 'home-grown' theories, to use Marc Trachtenberg's phrase, i.e. the historians' implicit understandings about the nature of their subject, generate the series of questions that drive any historical research.[6] It also ignores how professional historians have drawn on the methods and theoretical concepts employed in cognate disciplines. Though rather slow off the mark,

[3] For integrating 'subaltern' voices into the study of International Relations, see Christopher Hill, 'Where Are We Going? International Relations and the Voice from Below', *Review of International Studies*, 25/1 (1999), pp. 107–22; David J. Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942–1945* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

[4] Geoffrey Roberts, 'Narrative History as a Way of Life', *JCH*, 31 (1996), pp. 221–28, and *idem* (ed.), *The History and Narrative Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[5] Geoffrey Roberts, 'History, Theory and the Narrative Turn in IR', *Review of International Studies*, 32/4 (2006), pp. 703–14.

[6] Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), esp. pp. 30–38.

international historians have embraced this process, integrating such issues as culture, identity, memory, and gender into a field which, until not all that long ago, was routinely decried as 'the most arid and sterile' of all history's sub-fields.[7] This process has not been unproblematic.[8] It has tended to blur that sense of distinctiveness that earlier generations of historians—and International Relations scholars for that matter—imputed to the 'international' as a realm of political activity.[9] Moreover, uncritical borrowing from across the disciplinary divide can result in little more than recasting well-known problems in a new, and invariably impenetrable, language, without necessarily adding any heuristic value to the enterprise.[10] Nevertheless, recent explorations in cross-discipline learning, particularly with International Relations, have yielded positive results. Some scholars, notably J. L. Gaddis, Paul Kennedy, and Paul W. Schroeder, have brought their unrivalled historical knowledge to bear and challenged existing theoretical positions on such fundamental issues as the structure of the international system, the nature of international society, and so forth.[11] The majority engage in inter-disciplinary dialogue at the level of cross-border raiding rather than outright occupation or colonization, although the results are no less beneficial for all that.[12] Historians have fruitfully drawn on International Relations theory to offer different perspectives on their subject and enrich their research agendas.[13] It is precisely this approach that has informed my own research into Anglo–German POW relations after 1939. What follows then, is an attempt to make explicit some of the central theoretical and conceptual approaches that underpin my analysis of POW politics. The point here is not to construct a theoretical 'model' to be 'tested' or 'validated' through the course of a 'case study' but rather to introduce some general propositions about how

[7] Arthur Marwick cited in David Reynolds, 'Culture, Discourse, and Policy: Perspectives on the New International History', in David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 331–51.

[8] For difficulties thrown up by post-modernism see Patrick Finney, 'Still Marking Time? Text, Discourse and Truth in International History', *Review of International Studies*, 27/1 (2001), pp. 291–308.

[9] Ian Clark, 'International Relations: Divided by a Common Language', *Government and Opposition*, 37/1 (2002), pp. 271–78.

[10] See Sally Marks, 'Review Article: Postwar and Prewar', *Contemporary European History*, 17/2 (2008), pp. 263–73.

[11] See Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (London: Random House, 1987); J. L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Enquiries into the History of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Charles W. Kegley (ed.), *The Long Postwar Peace: Contending Explanations and Projections* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990).

[12] See the essays collected in issue 22/1 of *International Security* (1997), and Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (eds.), *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

[13] See *inter alia* Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Ngaire Woods (ed.), *Explaining International Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

states cooperate at the international level, and to offer a few preliminary remarks about how these propositions map on to our study of British POW policy after 1939.[14]

THE POW 'REGIME': POWER, POLITICS, AND THE TREATMENT OF POWS

The history of Britain's efforts to protect its prisoners in Germany during the Second World War speaks to issues that lie at the core of International Relations research. Why do states, recognizing no superior legal authority, cooperate with one another in an environment that is essentially anarchic? Why do neither the internal calculations of self-interest within states, nor the balance of power between them, dictate policy decisions in every instance? Such questions are all the more intriguing when we turn, as we do here, to consider states which have either severed diplomatic relations, or are at war with one another. The fact that cooperation takes place within a specific issue area—the treatment of POWs—suggests that the British and German authorities felt some advantage in isolating this area of activity from the broader conflict.[15] International Relations scholars frequently refer to such issue areas as 'regimes' or 'institutions'. Opinion, as we shall see, is divided over the extent to which regimes can influence state behaviour, but most agree that their presence helps shape the way states interact at the international level.

Regimes are, to use the description popularized by Stephen Krasner, sets of 'implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge'. Krasner defines principles as 'beliefs of fact, causation and rectitude', norms as 'standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations', and rules as 'specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action'. Decision-making procedures are defined as 'prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice'.[16] There is, it must be said, a 'discomforting degree of vagueness' associated with various elements of this definition.[17] Not all scholars are willing to accept every aspect of Krasner's

[14] Joan Beaumont rightly observes 'prisoners-of-war literature, as a genre, has tended to be methodologically and theoretically unadventurous': 'Review Article: Prisoners of War in the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42/3 (2007), pp. 535–44 (536). For writing POW history, see Rosalind Hearder, 'Memory, Methodology and Myth: Some of the Challenges of Writing Australian Prisoners of War History', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 40 (2007).

[15] For a similar argument on trading relations, see Katherine Barbieri and Jack S. Levy, 'Sleeping with the Enemy: The Impact of War on Trade', *Journal of Peace Research*, 36/4 (1999), pp. 463–79.

[16] Stephen D. Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables', in Stephen D. Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 2.

[17] Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer, and Volker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 11. Peter M. Haas, 'Choosing to Comply: Theorizing from International Relations and Comparative Politics', in Dinah Selton (ed.), *Commitment*

complex definition, preferring instead to emphasize some criteria over others. Nevertheless, in what follows, it will become apparent that the operation of the POW convention during the Second World War reflected, in part at least, all of the components offered in Krasner's definition, and so it is worth building our discussion of regimes around this central proposition.

The nature and attributes of the 'POW regime' operative during the war are fairly clear. At the most obvious level, the principles, norms, and rules embodied in the regime were those codified in the 1929 POW convention, which provided policy-makers with a set of beliefs and standards, and prescribed certain procedures to follow in deciding on the correct treatment of POWs in their hands.[18] There is, in addition, a second element to the regime: the decision-making procedures developed within the states and responsible for translating the convention's principles, norms, and rules into concrete policies. For an International Relations scholar then, the issue at stake in Anglo–German 'POW relations' essentially boils down to a question of how each side responded to the existence of the POW regime. How committed was Britain to upholding this regime? How was it able to ensure that its adversary faithfully applied the provisions of the POW convention in its treatment of British prisoners? Crucially, why did the authorities in Berlin agree to abide by the regime with respect to its western prisoners, while simultaneously denying its benefits from the vast majority of prisoners incarcerated by Germany over the course of the Second World War?

In approaching these questions, International Relations theorists would point to the POW regime's *effectiveness* and *resilience*. The *effectiveness* relates to the success with which the convention was able to meet its objectives, and ensured the humane treatment of POWs on both sides. Its *resilience*, or robustness, deals with the convention's capacity to persist in the face of changing circumstances: notably the shifting fortunes of war, and the changing status of factions, individuals, and institutions within the warring states. One's interpretation of the functioning of international regimes depends very much on one's intuitive reading of how states operate on the international stage. For some scholars, a regime's effectiveness and resilience cannot be divorced from what they view as the bedrock of international politics: the distribution of power across the international system. From this 'realist' perspective, regimes are little more than a reflection of the interests of those powers who promote them. Regimes embody the great powers' beliefs when first created, and though they may take on an institutional form—such as 'collective security' and 'national self-determination' through the League of Nations—they rarely

and Compliance: The Role of Non-Binding Norms in the International Legal System (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 43–64.

[18] For the evolution of the 'POW regime', see Joan Beaumont, 'Protecting Prisoners of War, 1939–1945', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors*, pp. 277–97.

outlive the demise of the great power constellation that gave them birth. As states only feel bound by rules to which they have consented, it is ultimately individual governments who must decide whether to comply with a regime, or whether their behaviour accords to its rules. Clearly those regimes which do not encroach on the core interests of states, and whose demands can be easily fulfilled, are likely to achieve widespread acceptance. They may be resilient, but will not be particularly effective. Those that set the bar higher, and demand more from their members, may be more effective in achieving their objectives, but state compliance is likely to wane as circumstances change. Given the centrality of state autonomy to the realist perspective, scholars from this 'camp' would generally assume that only unambitious regimes, that work from the lowest common denominator, are likely to remain in existence for very long.

In assessing the strength of state compliance to a particular regime, those scholars who depict regimes as simply 'power politics translated into a different idiom' tend to give prominence to the importance of *relative* gains and losses in the functioning of the regime.[19] In an anarchic environment, in which states compete with their neighbours for resources, influence, and power, it is relative gains rather than absolute gains that ultimately affect a state's place in the pecking order and its capacity to defend itself and its citizens. This inevitably affects the way states appraise any form of cooperative arrangement, whether as members of an alliance or parties to issue-specific regimes. Excessive anxiety about the gains of their adversary in some areas may come to eclipse the importance of those collective benefits enjoyed by all members of the regime. In these circumstances, the strength of the regime's 'compliance pull', in fulfilling state needs in other areas, is unlikely to be sufficiently strong to convince parties to remain in the regime.[20]

The natural inclination to assume the worst of one's enemies, does not, however, preclude the possibility of meaningful dialogue over issues of common concern. Even those scholars who stress the competitive nature of regimes, acknowledge the capacity of states to coordinate their activities within a given issue area. The key concept here is reciprocity, for it is through a close adherence to reciprocity that parties can guard against the problem of relative gains and guarantee that the benefits of the regime will be distributed equitably. Reciprocity, as we shall see, is a rather more slippery term than many historians assume. Nevertheless, at its most basic level, reciprocity requires parties to coordinate their behaviour so that actions from one party are balanced by

[19] Andrew Hurrell, 'International Society and the Study of Regimes: A Reflective Approach', in Volker Rittberger (ed.), *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 51.

[20] Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes*, p. 125. Joseph M. Grieco, 'Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism', *International Organization*, 42/3 (1988), pp. 485–507.

actions from the other. Behaviour is therefore *contingent* on the actions of others. In rewarding—or, for that matter, penalizing—prior actions, parties look to meet like with like. Rough equivalence is an essential component of any genuinely reciprocal relationship. It is important to note that in using reciprocity to explain international behaviour, 'realists' tend to draw on so-called 'specific reciprocity'.[21] In this form of reciprocal arrangement, 'equivalence' is narrowly drawn: states trade 'an eye for an eye', not an 'eye' for an 'ear'. Since reciprocal behaviour is strategic—one's reaction being contingent on the earlier action of one's adversary—the ordering of events tends to be sequential. Actors nevertheless tend to reciprocate behaviour within a short space of time so as to restore equilibrium within the relationship and, within regimes at least, ensure the equitable distribution of benefits. Specific reciprocity thus functions without the need for any sense of obligation to facilitate the exchange of equivalents. This is then, a minimalist principle that helps states 'coordinate' their behaviour to achieve a common good, without necessarily requiring them to engage in active 'cooperation' with all the social obligations this might entail.

Realism has not been without its critics. Its anaemic conception of what constitutes 'politics', its refusal to admit to any fundamental change—far less improvement—in state behaviour, and its fixation with security concerns, have frequently been held as limiting its utility as an explanatory tool in international relations. Yet it is precisely those axioms of the realist tradition that seem to make it appropriate for the study of POW politics. We are, after all, dealing with states at war with each other. Whatever officials' individual commitment to humanitarian ideals, the temptation to extract political, military, or psychological advantage from the prisoners in their hands is frequently difficult to resist. Even the more limited engagements of our own times have shown how POWs can take on immense symbolic importance. The media attention given to US army private Jessica Lynch, captured during the Gulf War of 2003, but rescued ten days later, transformed the nineteen-year-old all-American girl into the physical embodiment of the military campaign: her detention epitomizing the difficulties American forces faced in mid-March during the bitter fighting around Nasiriyah. Ft. Lts. John Peters and John Nichol occupied a similarly uncomfortable position for Britain in the 1991 Gulf War, when their capture and subsequent exposure on international television symbolized the failure of the RAF's low-level bombing strategy at that time.[22] Even outside formal wars, as Tehran's audacious kidnapping of British naval personnel in March 2007 shows, the spectacle of 'enemy combatants', showing contrition for their own and their government's

[21] Robert Keohane, 'Reciprocity in International Relations', *International Organization,* 40/1 (1986), p. 8. For the 'live and let live' system during the Great War, see Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 73–87.

[22] See Günter Bischof, 'Kriegsgefangenschaft als internationales Forschungsthema', in Bischof, Karner, and Stelzl-Marx, *Kriegsgefangene des Zweiten Weltkrieg*, pp. 24–27; John Peters and John Nichol, *Tornado Down* (London: Michael Joseph, 1992).

misdeeds, can humiliate and embarrass even powerful states. How much greater the scope is for utilitarian considerations to enter POW policy-making in periods of total war, such as during the Second World War, especially once concerns over the possibility of retaliation or retribution no longer held sway.[23] Note, for instance, the cavalier attitude taken towards Italian prisoners in Allied hands after Badoglio's armistice in September 1943 effectively removed Italy's capacity to bargain over the fate of its captured servicemen, or the scandalous treatment of German prisoners at the war's end, re-categorized as 'surrendered enemy personnel' and denied POW status on the specious grounds that the prisoners' own government had ceased to exist.[24] Throughout the Second World War, British and German officials were adept players of the numbers game and alert to any changes in what scholars have dubbed the 'mutual hostage' factor.[25] Official correspondence from both sides likewise reveals the sensitivity shown towards the problem of *relative* gains, with certain provisions of the POW convention, notably those dealing with the exchange and repatriation of prisoners, being especially prone to this kind of zero-sum thinking.[26]

In the era of total war, prisoners were too much the physical embodiment of a nation's military fortunes for their fate to be wholly governed by the lofty humanitarian sentiments enshrined in the international codes. As Niall Ferguson has recently pointed out, wars are generally won not through killing one's opponents but by capturing them; hence the penchant shown for the regular parading of one's captives (in clear contravention of article 13) and the attention routinely devoted to the tally of prisoners in evaluating a campaign's military success.[27] Moreover, as 'other rank' prisoners could be employed on non-war related tasks, governments of all shades came to rely on prisoners as a pool of more or less quiescent labour. Germany's addiction to foreign labour was

[23] Mackenzie, 'Treatment of Prisoners of War', pp. 487–520 (esp. p. 503).

[24] Richard D. Wiggers, 'The United States and the Denial of Prisoner of War (POW) Status at the End of the Second World War', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen* (hereafter *MGM*), 52 (1993), pp. 91–94. Bob Moore, 'Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War', *JCH,* 32/1 (1997), pp. 117–36, and Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 226.

[25] Patricia Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Lino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

[26] On repatriation see, Rüdiger Overmans, 'The Repatriation of Prisoners of War Once Hostilities Are Over: A Matter of Course?', in Moore and Hately-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace*, pp. 11–22.

[27] Niall Ferguson, 'Prisoner Taking and Prisoner Killing in the Age of Total War: Towards a Political Economy of Military Defeat', *War in History*, XI (2004), pp. 148–92. He goes further in *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (London: Penguin, 2002), suggesting that 'surrender was the key to the outcome of the First World War' (p. 367). For the German collapse of 1918 as an 'ordered surrender', see Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 215–31.

already firmly established by the time Polish prisoners began arriving in 1939. By early 1942, labour shortages prompted Berlin to reverse its earlier policy of exterminating Soviet prisoners, and instead drafted them into the industrial work force.[28] Britain too came to rely on POW labour; first the 'quiescent' Italians, but, by 1943, German prisoners as well. In July 1944, Moscow conjured up some precise figures on the monetary 'value' of POW labour: the detention of five million German prisoners for ten years after the war amounted to between $35m and $40m. By the end of the war states on both sides of the Iron Curtain based their reconstruction programmes on a plentiful supply of German prisoners.[29]

Finally, the act of capturing lent itself to a crude cost–benefit analysis. Every prisoner came with a price tag, calculated in terms of the men and material expended in the process of his capture, or the cost to the enemy in training up a replacement. Captures of aircrew and submariners were particularly prized, but soldiers could just as easily be subjected to the same kind of intuitive book-keeping, even if judgements of their intrinsic 'value' were coloured by national or racial stereotyping.[30] War Office views on the merits of exchanging POWs with Rome, in early 1941, were shaped by the belief that a soldier of the 8th army was worth three of his Italian counterparts.[31] Officials were particularly attuned to the cost of POW captures in America's costly island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific though similar calculations were made in the European theatre. In early 1945, for instance, the United States chiefs' of staff (COS) urged London to reject a proposal for the repatriation of 25,000 German POWs for a similar number of Britons, on the grounds that American forces had lost 3,000 soldiers killed, 12,000 wounded, and another 2,000 'missing' for every 25,000 Germans captured since the start of the D-Day campaign. The chiefs would be hard pressed to justify the return of German POWs to the American public.[32] Though arguments of this kind could be applied selectively—the chiefs explored the possibility of exchanging 23,000–25,000 Japanese troops, stranded in the central

[28] See in general Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge* (Munich: Beck, 2001), pp. 130–89, and Mark Spoerer, 'Die soziale Differenzierung der ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangenen und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reichinge im Deutschen Reich', in Echternkamp, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 9/2*, pp. 485–576.

[29] Gerald H. Davis, 'Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economics', *JCH*, 12 (1977), pp. 623–34. J. Billig, 'Le rôle des prisonniers de guerre dans l'économie du IIIe Reich', *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, 37 (1960), pp. 53–76 ; and Rüdiger Overmans, 'Das Schicksal der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkrieges', in Jörg Echternkamp, Andreas Kunz, Wilfried Loth, Rolf-Dieter Müller, Rüdiger Overmans, and Michael Schwartz (eds.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 10/2, Die Folgen des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Deutsche-Verlags-Anstalt, 2008), p. 430.

[30] London's reluctance to repatriate civilian merchant seamen was based on the fear that they would be retrained as submariners.

[31] JIC (41) 80, 23 Feb. 1941. TNA. FO371/28966.

[32] Memo by the US COS, 24 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB122/690 Field Marshall Wilson, JSM to AMSSO (Personal for COS) 23 Mar. 1945. CAB120/222.

Pacific, for an equal number of American POWs in mid-1944—but, once deployed, it was difficult to refute the logic of such calculations.[33]

THE FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE: RESILIENCE AND AUTONOMY IN INTERNATIONAL REGIMES

Officials could, then, hardly ignore questions of power, prestige, and comparative advantage when thinking about POWs. But admitting to the influence of such 'realist' assumptions does not necessarily simplify the task of historical analysis. Categories employed to give precision to later investigations look distinctly less appropriate when considered in the context of their time. Specific reciprocity may indeed have some merit as a guiding principle, but as a working concept it can be alarmingly opaque.[34] All too often, the application of the rule of reciprocity boiled down to a subjective political judgement. As any action by one side must be *contingent* on the actions of the other, a state's ability to judge whether or not reciprocity should apply in a given case depends on the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of the information upon which the decision is made. This was by no means simple when news of infractions of the convention came via neutral inspection reports or POW letters, which invariably took weeks and months to come through. Moreover, reciprocity depends on each side treating their captives in a roughly equivalent fashion: how one chooses to define *rough equivalence* is, of course, open to debate. Governments naturally tend to evaluate 'equivalence' using criteria that suit their own purposes. In judging conditions of detention, German officials were much more sensitive to issues of status and honour than their counterparts in London and Washington, and frequently instigated reprisal measures when they found that their men, especially their officers, had not been treated in a chivalrous fashion. Even with the best will in the world, it is often difficult to draw accurate comparisons between divergent cases.[35] Even if we accept, then, the minimalist approach to cooperation advanced by realists, we are still left with considerable scope for allowing politics to enter the frame and colour official judgements over the treatment of POWs.

The majority of regime theorists depict regimes as significantly broader and more autonomous institutions than realists are inclined to admit. In doing so, they question realism's positivist, mechanistic explanation of

[33] See Kent Fedorowich, 'Doomed from the Outset? Internment and Civilian Exchange in the Far East. The British Failure over Hong Kong, 1941–1945', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 25/1 (1997), pp. 130–31.

[34] On 'reciprocity' see *inter alia* Keohane, 'Reciprocity', pp. 1–27; Cecilia Albin, *Justice and Fairness in International Negotiations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 39–41; and Michael Byers, *Custom, Power and the Power of Rules: International Relations and Customary International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 88–105.

[35] Keohane, 'Reciprocity', p. 10.

regimes and individual preferences. Neo-liberal or functionalist understanding of regimes—while accepting states as rational, self-interested actors who seek to maximize their individual utility—diverges from realism in the weight placed on absolute rather than relative gains, the belief that political life is not necessarily 'zero-sum' and the insistence that a state's interests cannot be simply, or wholly, equated with the issue of 'power'. These assumptions have profound implications for the way regimes operate. In contrast to realists, neo-liberal theorists see regimes fulfilling a number of discrete functions, which collectively reduce the level of uncertainty, hampering state attempts to pursue mutually beneficial policies. In short, they make cooperation feasible by minimizing the risk of states being exploited or caught out by the actions of others.

How is this achieved? First of all, the monitoring arrangements frequently associated with regimes help limit the risk of parties either free-riding—enjoying the benefits of the regime without paying the associated costs—or defecting from the regime altogether. Secondly, the rules laid out in regimes help states achieve their objectives by providing mechanisms for the effective communication of information, knowledge, and experience. Thirdly, over time, regimes promote stability by allowing states to develop patterns of compliance within specific issue areas and forge a reputation for good behaviour that make them attractive partners for other mutually beneficial regimes in the future. They become, in short, trustworthy.[36] For some theorists, this reputational effect of regimes is sufficient in itself to explain state compliance. Finally, and of particular interest to our study, there is the question of linkage. Regimes by their nature relate to specific issue-areas—in our case the care of POWs—and not the totality of international relations. But, inasmuch as regimes might reflect general political, social, or ethical beliefs, they may find themselves ' "nested" within larger, more encompassing frameworks of international principles and norms'. Compliance or non-compliance in one regime thus spills over to affect the state's reputation in other issue-areas: 'violating a particular agreement [. . .] has consequences beyond the particular issue and may [thus] affect the ability to achieve one's goals elsewhere'.[37]

In emphasizing the functional performance of regimes, and highlighting the way regimes reduce the transactions costs of cooperating under anarchical conditions, neo-liberal theory allows for a greatly expanded role for regimes in international politics, without departing from some of the central tenets of the realist tradition. However problematic their power relations or divergent their political values, states conclude rules, agreements, and conventions without recourse to any overarching authority, because they see mutual benefit in

[36] Trust here is defined as a belief in the relative likelihood that a partner would prefer to reciprocate cooperation. Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 9.

[37] Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes*, p. 34.

increasing predictability, and reducing the cost of uncertainty and insecurity normally associated with cooperation in the international arena. Such regimes may also prove more resilient than realists assume, for not only do they satisfy states' real interests but they also promote changes within states that reinforce their 'compliance pull'. Faced with the need to follow a set of rules on the international level, states naturally adapt their institutions, decision-making procedures and reward structures to reflect these demands. Domestic political values may also evolve to align themselves with the prevailing norms within international regimes.[38] In both instances, internal state institutions may develop a vested interest in maintaining the regime, irrespective of changes in the external environment. Given the structure of political life inside Nazi Germany, we are unlikely to see any significant political alignment with the POW regime in Berlin. But in Britain, the existence of a coalition government after May 1940 did not preclude the possibility of such alignment. As we shall see, Labour backbenchers tried—unsuccessfully—to persuade their colleagues in the cabinet to challenge government policy over the provision of relief parcels in 1941 and the shackling crisis in 1942. Sir Stafford Cripps' intervention in POW matters in early 1942 likewise set alarm bells ringing with the prime minister. Nevertheless, in the main, the POW issue never evolved into a partisan political issue. In Britain and Germany, however, compliance with the POW regime was facilitated—even encouraged—by the creation of new institutions and the adaptation of old ones to help the authorities meet their obligations under the 1929 convention. Whether these structures provided sufficient momentum behind the POW convention to counteract the increasing radicalization of war fighting is a key question addressed in the following pages.

It should be noted that functional linkage between regimes can have a positive, as well as negative effect on cooperation. Officials on both sides were conscious of how the decline in the conduct of fighting might upset the delicate balance achieved in the treatment of POWs. If the enemy was prepared to violate other humanitarian or legal norms, why would they cease from flouting their obligations under the POW convention? This concern focused principally on the performance of the POW convention's twin code, the 1929 'Red Cross' convention for 'the amelioration of the condition of the wounded and sick in armies in the field', but the general laws of war, codified in the various Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907, were equally liable to encroach on the treatment of POWs. Attacks on hospital ships were particularly prone to this kind of slippage, and officials, almost instinctively, took their adversary's treatment of these vessels as a litmus test for their attitude towards the Geneva conventions.[39]

[38] Harald Müller, 'The Internalization of Principles, Norms and Rules by Governments: The Case of Security Regimes', in Rittberger (ed.), *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 361–88.

[39] In 1916, Russia suspended camp visits by German and Austrian nurses after Berlin refused to apologize for sinking a hospital ship. Gerald H. Davis, 'National Red Cross Societies and

It was small wonder that the British FO looked aghast at the Admiralty's plan to seize Italian hospital ships in the Mediterranean in early 1941, or that Field Marshall Sir H. M. Wilson was reluctant to intern German soldiers seized when the Royal Navy intercepted two German hospital ships, the *Gradisca* and *Tübingen*, in the Adriatic in October 1944. In both cases concern was raised over the impact such action would have on the treatment of British prisoners.[40] By the final years of the war, the danger of linkage was particularly acute, not least after the Allies announced their intention to prosecute their adversaries for war crimes and German civilians were actively encouraged to retaliate against the indiscriminate bombing of their cities by lynching any *Terrorflieger* or *Luftguerrila* who came their way.

REGIMES AS NORMATIVE CONSTRUCTS: BELIEF SYSTEMS, CULTURE, AND TRUST

The difficulty for both neo-liberals and realists is that neither give much thought to how concepts of 'interests' or 'power' are derived or defined. Indeed, it is the simplicity of these concepts that give these approaches their appeal. But for 'cognitive' theorists it is the very process by which states form their foreign political identities and define their external interests that requires attention. Instead of taking interests as given, 'cognitivists' focus on the role of 'prevailing forms of reason by which actors identify their preferences', and 'treat actors as reflective organisms, rather than as inert matter which obeys universal and unchanging mechanical laws'.[41] The range of theoretical positions that fall under the 'cognitivist' umbrella is large, but there are a number that speak directly to our concerns. The majority enrich, rather than substitute, neo-liberal and realist explanations of international cooperation, by refining our understanding of how governments and their agencies conceptualize the external world.[42] Instead of seeing identities and interests as exogenously given, 'cognitivists' argue that both are the product of normative and causal beliefs that decision-makers hold about the world, and their place in it.

Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–18', *JCH,* 28 (1993), pp. 31–52 (esp. pp. 44–45). For a similar episode in 1944, see P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan during the Second World War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987), p. 108–09.

[40] Field Marshall F. M. Wilson (Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean) to Adjutant General, WO, 31 Oct. 1944. TNA. CAB120/560.

[41] Peter M. Haas, 'Epistemic Communities and the Dynamics of International Environmental Co-Operation', in Volker Rittberger (ed.), *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 168–201 (170).

[42] Christer Jönsson, 'Cognitive Factors in Explaining Regime Dynamics', in Rittberger, *Regime Theory and International Relations*, pp. 202–22 (203).

A key concept here is the role of 'principled beliefs': beliefs that provide a normative image of what international politics *ought* to be.[43] Under the influence of such beliefs, states adhere to international regimes out of a conviction that the principles and norms embodied in the regime resonate with their own value system and identity. Thus, while Britain's support for the POW convention might be explicable in terms of Britain's national interest or its fear of reprisals, it is equally clear that for most people the humanitarian sentiments enshrined in the convention were both morally and ethically correct, and consonant with the philosophical and religious convictions held by the majority of the British public. The way Britain fought the war mattered almost as much as the reasons it entered the war in the first place.[44] Winston Churchill, who of all British policy-makers was the least inclined to sentimentalize about the POW convention, touched on this issue when he tried to prevent the Yugoslav partisans executing German soldiers captured in the course of joint operations with the Royal Navy in April 1944. 'We have always adhered most strictly to the Geneva Convention', he explained to Marshall Tito, 'not only because the Germans have 120,000 British prisoners in their hands, but also on the *grounds of principle*'.[45]

Just as a state's identity can be constructed on the basis of individual or collective belief systems, so too can the perception of its policy preferences, priorities, and options in any given situation. The scope of political action is constrained by the values and beliefs of those responsible for formulating and executing policy. Again, in our case, it is clear that, while officials and statesmen were happy to talk tough, most viewed the abuse or maltreatment of prisoners with considerable distaste, even if their willingness to override such sentiments varied over time. None of the suggestions for threatening the collective lives, liberty, or privileges of German prisoners in Allied hands, came close to securing general agreement within Britain's policy-making elite. Similar constraints affected Britain's capacity to respond to evidence of the wilful ill-treatment or abuse of British prisoners. As one member of the war cabinet put it, 'in the auction of atrocities, G[ermany is] bound to win', as Britain could not possibly match German brutality.[46] A similar argument can be made for the role of principled beliefs on the German side. For those who bought in to Nazism's

[43] For 'principled beliefs' see Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, 'Theories of International Regimes', *International Organization*, 41/3 (1987), p. 493. 'IR' scholars tend to focus on how beliefs affect the way individuals process information. Steve Smith, 'Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations', in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds.), *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 11–26.

[44] In general see Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 100–14; Theo Farrell, *The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2005), pp. 1–64. For 'clean' war fighting: Bruno Coppieters and Nick Fotion (eds.), *Moral Constraints on War: Principles and Case*s (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2002), esp. 129–58.

[45] W. S. Churchill to Marshal Tito, 10 May 1944. *Author's emphasis*. TNA. CAB120/557.

[46] Remark by Brendan Bracken, 139th war cabinet meeting, 12 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1.

warped racial logic—and not every official we encounter in this study did—there was nothing inconsistent in applying the POW convention to Anglo-American POWs while withholding it from others. Goebbels' claim that the war was being fought for the defence of European civilization had just enough credence to convince many of the need to differentiate between Germany's enemies. Until very late in the war, senior Nazi officials, from Hitler downwards, viewed Britain as a 'worthy' opponent, whose servicemen were deserving of honourable treatment.

We have seen how identification with a regime can affect institutional development and decision-making procedures at home, which, in turn, may work to promote regime compliance in the future. A similar argument can be made from a cognitive perspective. If the regime survives for sufficiently long, and its compliance pull remains sufficiently strong, its principles and norms may become embedded within the state's institutional structures. Research suggests that, once established, these beliefs can be highly resistant to change, and exercise a powerful effect on individual preferences, operating procedures, and coalition-building opportunities within institutions.[47] 'The individual within the collective is never, or hardly ever, conscious of the prevailing thought style which almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force upon his thinking and with which it is not possible to be at variance'.[48] A good example of this is British thinking over strategic air policy during the 1930s and 1940s. As Dockrill and Paskins note, 'one of the most striking general features' of internal debates within the Air Ministry and RAF was the 'very great unselfconsciousness' of those involved. 'Secure in their sense of having a job to do, no one appears to have questioned the relation between the carrying out of that job and the moral and political world-order in which the job was created'.[49] It was the particular culture within these institutions which allowed for the adoption of a strategy of strategic bombing that was routinely condemned as 'revolting and un-English' by other departments in Whitehall.[50]

Such cultural influences and 'accepted wisdom' can be unusually marked in long-established organizations, or those, like military institutions, where the sense of group identity and deference to authority is particularly strong and where the use of standard operating procedures especially pervasive. Elizabeth Kier's

[47] See *inter alia*, Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, 'Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework', in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds.), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Policy Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 3–30.

[48] Ludwig Fleck, cited in Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 13.

[49] Barrie Paskins and Michael Dockrill, *The Ethics of War* (London: Duckworth, 1979), p. 246. For an extended treatment see, Stephen A. Garrett, *Ethics and Airpower in World War II: The British Bombing of German Cities* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993).

[50] Admiralty memo (Apr. 1932) quoted in Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914–1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 103.

examination of interwar military doctrine and Jeffrey Legro's investigation of attitudes towards chemical warfare, unrestricted submarine warfare, and strategic air bombardment during the Second World War, highlight the preponderance of 'organizational culture' in explaining policy choices.[51] In both studies the response to even radical changes in the strategic environment was largely predetermined by earlier decisions, policy choices, and conventional thinking on the subject. In this sense, Kier and Legro's research echoes the findings of scholars working on institutional change, and historical institutionalism, who stress the importance of institutional learning and path-dependency in policy-making.[52]

Two words of caution are necessary at this point. First of all, since responsibility for POW policy in London was spread across a number of organizations, inside and outside Whitehall, the preferences of individual institutions, based on their particular 'cultural' traits, may have less influence on the policy-making process than in those cases investigated by Legro, where decisions largely fell within the remit of a single agency. In such circumstances, we might predict that policy will be affected by the tugging and pulling commonly associated with behaviour in a competitive bureaucratic environment.[53] This caveat is perhaps most relevant for the German case where traditional bureaucratic 'cultures' had been deliberately undermined by Hitler's policy of *Gleichschaltung* or co-option, and where the primary agency responsible for POW policy, the German High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, OKW), was only created in 1938. Other institutions with their fingers in the POW pie, such as the Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*, AA), were progressively marginalized from key decisions and their role subsumed by foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop's personal bureau (Büro RAM). Many of the decisive policy-decisions were taken in the Führer's headquarters, with little input from the established bureaucracy. These developments did not entirely suffocate traditional mores, in either the established bureaucracy or the German military, but the ability of cultural predispositions to influence policy-making was severely limited by the fiercely competitive environment that characterized all aspects of governmental action during the Third Reich's turbulent history.[54]

[51] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 21–38. Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo–German Restraint during World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), esp. pp. 1–34, 217–35.

[52] Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (eds.), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 1–32. Kathleen Thelen, 'How Institutions Evolve. Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis', in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 208–40; and B. Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalisms'* (London: Pinter, 2002).

[53] See Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), chap. 4.

[54] See Zachary Shore, *What Hitler Knew: The Battle for Information in Nazi Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 68–84, and Michael Geyer, 'National Socialist

Secondly, although Britain's traditional association with the principles of international humanitarian law may have affected institutional procedures (in neo-liberal terms) and cultural preferences (in cognitivist terms), we should be wary, with Dockrill and Paskins' work in mind, of assuming that the 'liberal' impulse will necessarily prevail in all circumstances. During the Second World War, officials clearly felt comfortable viewing POW policy as an extension of British belligerency; not simply out of a belief that, as Britain was at war, they were duty-bound to challenge Britain's enemies whenever and wherever they were found, but from the fact that, however regrettable the prisoner's lot, he was still a member of the armed forces with an allegiance to the Crown and a responsibility to put up with his fate with patience and fortitude. Such an outlook was all the more explicable when we recall that for long periods, especially during the Blitz of London over the winter and spring of 1941, the lives of Whitehall's desk-bound warriors were probably more at risk than their unfortunate compatriots languishing in German prison camps in East Prussia. Christopher Browning's arresting research on how the 'Inland' section of the German foreign ministry came to terms with the part it was to play in the extermination of European Jews shows how 'new' thinking can take hold in this most conservative of institutions.[55] Explaining how officials in the OKW were able to compartmentalize their actions—signing off the lives of Soviet prisoners one minute, defending the lives of western POWs the next—might then need to be seen in terms of how new ideas could take hold and affect bureaucratic routines and procedures.

There is another perspective offered by cognitive theorists capable of providing additional sophistication to the neo-liberal and realist explanations for regime. This concerns what Peter Haas, in rather different circumstances, has termed 'epistemic communities', but in our case relates to those individuals holding similar beliefs about POW affairs and who were in a position to affect the formation or execution of policy in their respective states. Research on 'epistemic communities' has focused on the involvement of the trans-national scientific community in shaping elite decision-making. These communities, according to Haas, operate in various prescribed ways to channel knowledge from society to decision-makers, and, importantly, from state to state.[56] Not all features normally attributed to epistemic communities are applicable to our case, but the two key criteria for our purposes are the existence of a shared 'knowledge' over POW matters, and a capacity of those involved to operate trans-nationally through the

Germany: The Politics of Information', in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessments before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 310–46.

[55] Christopher Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office: A Study of Referat D III of Abteilung Deutschland, 1940–43* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978).

[56] See Peter M. Haas (ed.), 'Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination', special issue of *International Organization,* 46/1 (1992).

creation of (very) loose, informal 'coalitions' that helped facilitate the realization of a common humanitarian agenda.

The extent and effectiveness of such informal coalitions should not be exaggerated. The absence of any face-to-face contact between the two sides naturally hampered the development of a sense of common purpose. It is evident, for instance, that, in negotiating two Anglo–German agreements over POW issues in 1917 and 1918, British officials came to see their interlocutors as humane individuals, who were, as one British delegate put it, 'in their hearts, [. . .] prepared to do what they [could] to ensure that prisoners [were] properly treated'.[57] Nevertheless, for a time at least, personal ties did exist between some of the key decision-makers after 1939. George Warner, a participant in the 1918 negotiations, who became head of the FO POW department in early 1940, and his opposite number in Berlin, Erich Albrecht, head of the *Auswärtiges Amt* (AA) legal department, knew each other from the 1929 Geneva conference. Their involvement in the conference might have given them something of a shared personal stake in the success of the POW convention after 1939. This personal connection withered after Warner's retirement in April 1941, but did not prevent London from developing a strategy that explicitly rested on the belief that certain influential factions inside Germany could be relied upon to safeguard British prisoners in German hands, and promote humanitarian standards in the conduct of their day-to-day work. This group included Albrecht—the only departmental head in the AA not to be a member of the Nazi party—and his boss until 31 March 1943, state secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker, as well as most—though not all—of the military officers in the OKW and POW camps administrations, who would, as Churchill once put it, 'do their best to restrain' Hitler and his acolytes.[58] Members of the group subscribed to a view of their role and responsibilities that was shaped by humanitarian principles and, in the case of the military, an intuitive allegiance to a chivalric, warrior code that forbade the ill-treatment of 'honourable' opponents. While British officials frequently exaggerated the scope and significance of these sentiments, there is little doubt that individual German officials did dilute, and occasionally sabotage, directives that did not fit with their expectations of how prisoners ought to be treated.

While functionalist explanations stress the importance of reputation in encouraging compliance to regimes, particularly those involving a recurrent exchange of

[57] Lt. Gen H. Belfield, 'Diary of Conference at the Hague, June and July 1918', entry for 15 July 1918. IWM. 91/44/1 HEB1/3. Belfield's remarks concerned his counterparts in the War Ministry, not their colleagues in other departments.

[58] War Cabinet (42) 145th Meeting, 26 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1. Albrecht's application to join the party in 1939, 1941, and 1943 were turned down: see Hans-Jürgen Döscher, *Das Auswärtiges Amt im Dritten Reich. Diplomatie im Schatten der 'Endlösung'* (Berlin: Siedler, 1987), p. 194, note 14; Walter Buβmann, 'Das Auswärtiges Amt unter der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur', in Manfred Funke et al. (eds.), *Demokratie und Diktatur. Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa* (Bonn: Droste, 1987).

equivalents, the cognitivist perspective provides the opportunity for considering the role played by 'trust'. Informal coalition building across battle lines fosters a sense of trust that helps promote mutual confidence about the possibilities of future action, based not so much on prior evidence, indicative of this kind of behaviour, but rather on the absence of evidence to the contrary. Trust thus enables parties to enter into dependent positions, to increase their vulnerability to others, whose behaviour is beyond their control, confident that this position will not be abused.[59] Trust also affects the workings of reciprocity. Neo-liberal theorists see a wider role for reciprocity than the 'specific reciprocity' accepted by realists. 'Diffuse reciprocity' is much more relaxed in its rules, and operates far more effectively in multilateral systems than strict reciprocity, whose tight restrictions are naturally difficult to replicate outside bilateral arrangements. Under diffuse reciprocity, exchanges can be based on a wider range of equivalent concessions than is permissible under specific reciprocity; the strict sequential ordering of events is less stringently enforced, and parties are expected, even obliged, to conform to generally accepted standards of behaviour. Diffuse reciprocity is thus akin to bargaining between a group of close friends, rather than negotiations over, say, the price of a house, where 'strict reciprocity' is more applicable. Trust helps facilitate transactions under conditions of diffuse reciprocity, and may assist negotiators in moving their relations from a position of specific ('tit-for-tat') reciprocity to one of diffuse reciprocity.[60]

THE POW REGIME AND 'INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY'

The final cognitive approach which we ought to consider is derived from the work of the scholars in the so-called 'English school', whose principal interest lies in exploring the influence of societal forces operating within the international community.[61] Far from portraying the international sphere as a realm devoid of any normative content, the 'English school' highlights the way in which core understandings, rules, norms, and mutual expectations emerge within international communities, notwithstanding the anarchic nature of international politics and absence of a formalized normative structure. These values are open to change over time: the emphasis on 'civilization' as the criterion for international recognition in the 19th century gave way to standards of national self-determination over the course of the 20th century.[62] As societal views on

[59] Christer Jönsson, 'Cognitive Factors in Explaining Regime Dynamics', p. 206.

[60] Keohane, 'Reciprocity', pp. 4, 19–24.

[61] See Andrew Linklater, 'The English School', in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, and Jacqui True (eds.), *Theories of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 3rd edn., 2005), pp. 84–109.

[62] See in general Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

what constitute the normative fabric of the international community evolve, so too do the agreed notions of such issues as diplomatic practice, international law, or the institution of sovereignty, and the basic normative judgements about how states *ought* to behave in the international arena.

'English school' theorists tend to play down the originality and singular significance of international regimes. Far from being unique phenomena, regimes are representative of the broader normative structures of the international society. It is these normative structures, rather than the more narrowly drawn principles, norms, and rules enshrined in the regime, that are ultimately key to understanding cooperation at the international level. Of course, as Andrew Hurrell observes,

> where no sense of community exists and where one side is convinced that the other has no moral status (or a heavily unequal one), then formal and informal cooperation is unlikely to emerge. The pursuit of holy wars [. . .] the barbarous behaviour of imperialist powers in their treatment of indigenous peoples, and the savagery of the fighting on the Eastern Front in the Second World War provide striking examples of where the absence of any shared sense of community has worked to undermine cooperative limitations on conflict based on reciprocity and self-interest.[63]

We need therefore to be wary of automatically assuming that Hitler's arrival in 1933 severed Germany's connections with Europe's social, philosophical, and political heritage that had spawned the POW regime over the last quarter of the 19th century. Obviously the political radicalism of the 1930s was incompatible with many of those principles that the drafters of the 1929 POW convention had taken as axiomatic. Nevertheless, a residual sense of that shared and historically grounded understanding of what war entailed appears to have survived within the rarefied confines of Anglo–German relations after 1939. Indeed, according to Rüdiger Overmans, the 'decisive factor' in German policy towards POWs was not Nazi racial ideology or the pressure on Germany's labour supply but rather the principle of reciprocity and Germany's 'national conservative value system', which predated Hitler's ascension to power in 1933.[64] This broader normative context needs to be borne in mind when considering the evolution of Anglo–German POW relations over the course of the war. Its clearest enunciation, on the German side at least, was provided in a memorandum by the OKW's Operations Staff (*Wehrmachtsführungstab*) in early 1945, which spoke of 'a body of customary international law [. . . grounded] on the basis of state practice in war over the last 100 years, [which] embrace[d] the last principles of humane warfare . . . Its observance', the memorandum solemnly recorded, 'is

[63] Hurrell, 'International Society and the Study of Regimes', p. 59.

[64] Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', p. 871. Neville Wylie, 'Captured by the Nazis: Reciprocity and National Conservatism in German Policy towards British POWs, 1939–1945', in C. C. W. Szejnmann (ed.), *Rethinking History, Dictatorships and War: Essays in Honour of Richard Overy* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 107–24.

considered a prerequisite for membership of the international community of states'.[65]

Cognitive approaches to international relations are particularly helpful in explaining cooperation in areas that lie outside the core domains of state activity, where assumptions about the self-evident importance of distinct, pre-existing material interests, such as those commonly associated with security or economics, are harder to maintain. Instances of cooperation over the treatment of POWs fall into that category of cases which are 'difficult to accommodate within a statist, rational-choice framework, as [they] are driven in large measure by normative, not material impulses'.[66] It will be clear that 'English school' theorists are, at least outwardly, the most comfortable in dealing with the existence of international law, which they see as manifesting the values espoused by an international society. Before closing, therefore, we need to consider whether the POW regime, as a legally constituted set of rules, is likely to differ from other types of regimes whose rules are not legally binding. Does the fact that we are dealing with a regime that is enshrined in international law make a difference?

THE POWER OF 'RULES': THE POW REGIME AS INTERNATIONAL LAW

As might be expected, 'realist' scholars who view politics as essentially 'power politics', ascribe little significance to international law. In the absence of any supra-national force capable of sanctioning wrongdoers, right is invariably forced to yield before might. International law tends to reflect the wishes of the great powers, for it is they who enjoy the greatest coercive power, who possess the greatest legal resources, and whose global commitments give them the greatest stake in the shape of the international legal system. Such scepticism is to be found in every age, but was particularly prevalent amongst those who observed, first hand, the painful demise of international legalism under the League of Nations over the 1930s. From this perspective, the best one could expect is that law might 'soften' the application of power in international politics. As Georg Schwarzberger put it, 'the primary function of law is to assist in maintaining the supremacy of force and the hierarchies established on the basis of power, and to give to this overriding system the respectability and sanctity law confers'.[67] There is no reason then, to expect legally constituted regimes to differ significantly from the functioning of other international regimes.

[65] WFSt Ausland. 20 Feb. 1945 'Kündigung völkerrechtlicher Abkommen', Institut für Zeitgeschichte (hereafter IfZ). Microfilm MA240 folios 5519329–32. For naval and diplomatic consent: Teilnahme des ObdM an der Führerlage am 20 Feb. 1945. BA-MA. RM7/192.

[66] Christian Reus-Smit, 'The Politics of International Law', in Christian Reus-Smit, (ed.), *The Politics of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 21.

[67] Georg Schwarzenberger, *Power Politics* (London: Stevens, 1964), p. 199.

Yet, the very fact that states—great and small—are prepared to enter legal arrangements implies that legal regimes have advantages over other types of regimes.[68] As Louis Henkin famously observed, 'almost all nations observe almost all principles of international law almost all of the time'.[69] One reason for this is the superior 'compliance pull' of legal regimes. International codes such as the 1929 Geneva conventions embodied decades of customary state practice.[70] As most states perceive themselves as law-abiding members of the international community, there are strong emotive reasons for remaining bound by legal provisions even when short-term calculations of self-interest might point the other way. Even avowedly revolutionary states frequently seek to legitimize their actions through reference to timeless or customary, principles, norms, and standards.[71] The power of customary rules is, furthermore, enhanced by the perception of legitimacy they enjoy in the eyes of the international community, through their regularized practice, the clarity of their intent, and their coherence with the body of existing legal norms.[72] States intent on violating customary rules run much greater risks to their reputation than those infringing rules of regimes of a non-legal character.

We have already seen how regimes can be strengthened through a process of internalization; enmeshed in state bureaucracies and embedded by way of individual socialization. Legal regimes may additionally benefit from being incorporated within states' own legal systems. Compliance in these circumstances becomes less a matter of voluntary accepting restraints on one's action, in the hope of securing advantages further down the line, than of avoiding behaviour that is contrary to the state's own domestic law. Both Britain and Germany 'internalized' the provisions of the two Geneva conventions by entering them into their field regulations, manuals of military law, and even domestic legal codes.[73] Individuals who infringed the conventions thus laid themselves open to

[68] See Byers, *Custom, Power and the Power of Rules*, pp. 147–65, and Markus Burgstaller, *Theories of Compliance with International Law* (Leiden: Nijhoff, 2005).

[69] Louis Henkin, *How Nations Behave: Law and Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 47.

[70] See Jean-Marie Henckaerts and Louise Doswald-Beck, *Customary International Humanitarian Law, vol. i, Rules* (Geneva and Cambridge: ICRC and Cambridge University Press, 2005), xxviii–xxx, and on POWs, pp. 384–95.

[71] J. D. Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 199–243.

[72] Thomas M. Franck, *The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 16–24. Legality does not, in itself, bestow legitimacy, but is one of a number of norms contributing to the principle. Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 207–16. Fairness might also be imputed to agreements founded on customary principles.

[73] A US study concluded that except for those areas affected by Nazi ideology, such as prisoners' relations with women, German domestic law raised 'no questionable issues. It all depends on the administration of the law'. Special Legal Unit. German and Austria SHAEF G5 Ops, 'Report on Laws Concerning POWs in Germany', 18 July 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73. See also Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, pp. 25–29.

litigation on the basis of their own national law. German soldiers were convicted of war crimes under German domestic law in the so-called Leipzig trials in 1921, and prison guards on both sides were punished for maltreating POWs in their care after 1939. The most publicized case in Britain after 1939 was that of Brigadier Drake-Brockman, a decorated officer from the Great War, who was court-martialled and dismissed in November 1940 for assaulting German prisoners of war.[74] Evidence for the influence of law on behaviour at institutional level is rather harder to come by, though should not be discounted.[75]

Legal regimes can also be 'internalized' as a form of discursive medium. This is not unique to legally constituted regimes, but the clarity and transparency of legal rules makes their discursive power particularly compelling. States may, of course, adopt a form of argumentation for purely utilitarian reasons. Martin Bormann's suggestion that the Nazi *Gauleiters* familiarize themselves with the Hague regulations in the summer of 1944, to help them avoid the fate that befell Soviet commissars in German captivity three years before, is a case in point.[76] There may have been, as Geoffrey Best observes, 'an irreducible element of humbug in Nazi propaganda's appeals to the laws of war', which no amount of selective observance could disguise.[77] But by entering into a particular debate and accepting particular principles, states inevitably restrict the sorts of arguments they can employ in the future. It also shapes the way they understand and define their interests. The legal system created a realm in which the politics of power and interests have become 'subordinated to the politics of norm-referential argument'. Even when international law is indeterminate, or confronted with situations not anticipated when the rules were drawn up, law can serve as a 'discursive medium in which states are able to make, address and assess claims'.[78] Thus, in the case of the shackling crisis of late 1942, seen by both Hitler and Churchill as a trial of strength, their actions may well have been constrained by the need to express their positions in legal terms. Whatever the power-political considerations at stake, the point at dispute was a question of 'legal personality': was

[74] *The Times*, 5 Mar. 1942. Intriguingly, a note of this decision was kept in the OKW: BA-MA. RW5/319 Kgf u. Internierte, Aug. 1939–May 1943.

[75] See Harold H. Koh, 'Why Do Nations Obey International Law?', *Yale Law Journal*, 106 (1997), pp. 2598–659, and Judith L. Goldstein, Miles Kahler, Robert O. Keohane, and Anne-Marie Slaughter (eds.), *The Legalization of World Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), passim. The US supreme court ruling against the detention of foreign nationals at Guantanamo Bay shows how national legal systems may enforce domestic compliance to international norms, despite the wishes of the incumbent government. It is this additional character of international legal regimes that makes compliance with legal rules qualitatively different from compliance with other sorts of rules or standards.

[76] Rundschreiben 123/44 'Einsatz der Partei im Invasionsfall', 31 May 1944. BA Berlin Lichtefelde, NS6/350.

[77] Geoffrey Best, *Churchill and War* (London: Hambledon, 2005), p. 289. Manfred Messerschmidt, 'Kriesgtechnologie und humanitäres Völkerrecht in der Zeit der Weltkriege', *MGM*, 41 (1987), pp. 63–110.

[78] Reus-Smit, *Politics of International Law*, p. 5

a combatant entitled to the protection of the POW convention from the moment of capture (the German view), or did the provisions only come into force as and when they could realistically be applied (the British view). Neither side could ignore the legal framework within which debates over the treatment of POWs took place.[79]

Finally, law frequently acts as a type of normative register, indicating what behaviour is legitimate and appropriate in the international arena. By signing up to laws, states voluntarily acknowledge their responsibility to apply these standards as a matter of national policy. Compliance is not the sole criterion for judging law's effectiveness, for while law is frequently 'recognized more in the breach than the observance' its role as a normative benchmark remains valid, even if state behaviour occasionally falls short of these standards. In this sense, law can affect the behaviour of states in the same way that speed limits influence the conduct of car drivers. Though motorists might break the law by exceeding the speed limit, they seek to keep their speed within what they consider 'acceptable' boundaries: 40 mph in 30 mph zones, 70 mph in 60 mph zones, etc. It is not so much fear of prosecution that makes drivers apply their breaks, as knowledge that their actions contravene the legitimate expectations of society. The point to note is that violation of the law does not necessarily invalidate it, or, indeed, mean that it is entirely without effect.

It is in the nature of theories that in illuminating one feature of their subject they tend to cast other areas into shadow. Fortunately, historians can take an eclectic approach to issue, benefiting from theoretical insights, while avoiding some of their more obvious limitations. The above survey has highlighted some of the approaches historians could profitably adopt in interrogating the historical record. Theorizing the behaviour of the Third Reich is, of course, an inherently problematic exercise. Hitler's Germany was in many respects an aberration, responsible for liquidating whole categories of its population and inflicting a level of brutality on Europe unmatched in modern history. It was led by a man who reviled the professional ethos of the German military cast, treated the civil service with contempt, and wilfully subjected the German nation to the horrors of war, in the hope of forging the *Volksgemeinschaft* of Nazi dreams. Little wonder that he thought nothing of ordering the shooting of the 'great escapers' in March 1944. And yet the racism that gave rise to such appalling excesses after 1939 nevertheless allowed for the *possibility* of waging a war with the western powers that conformed to traditional war conventions. This did not make such a war inevitable, especially after the invasion of Soviet Russia in July 1941, but it did

[79] The dispute did not turn on whether the soldier was entitled to POW status, as was the case with the German view of British commandos from Oct. 1942. Manfred Messerschmidt, 'Kommandobefehl und NS- Völkerrechtsdenken', *Revue de droit pénal militaire et de droit de la guerre*, 11 (1972), pp. 109–34.

make it conceivable. With this in mind, the question that needs to be addressed when analysing Anglo–German relations is not why the German and British authorities bent the rules when they could but rather why they elected to adhere to them for so long? How could Britain hold Berlin to its obligations under the POW convention, in a war that would ultimately lead to Germany's destruction, occupation, and division?

Historians have tended to explain these events in 'realist' terms, judging policy decisions as rational responses to the balance of military fortunes, prisoner numbers, and the perceived threat of retaliation.[80] Yet, as our brief foray into the theoretical literature has shown, power-political explanations may fail to capture the essence of international behaviour, and obscure those features of cooperation, or coordination, which draw their logic from sources that are more subjective or normative in their criteria. While an awareness of the wider strategic and political landscape can scarcely be ignored, the treatment of POWs needs to be seen as the working-out of an international regime, to which both sides felt, at different times and to different degrees, committed. This is not to say that Hitler's Germany, in common with other members of the international community in the 1930s, embraced all those cultural and philosophical beliefs that had moulded the modern POW regime. But, as will be shown, there was sufficient residual commitment to the POW regime for it to exercise an influence over Germany's war in the west. British policy-makers could therefore construct a defence for their prisoners on the basis of a regime whose very existence shaped government perceptions, affected priorities, and defined the parameters of state action. Policy was not simply made in response to the actions of Britain's adversary but flowed from the interaction of the internal institutional structures of the two parties, and the external principles and norms underlying the POW regime. How this regime came about, and what part Britain played in its development, will be addressed in the next chapter.

[80] See Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity.*

2

Building the Interwar POW Regime

Regimes governing the treatment of POWs have been in existence ever since man took up arms against fellow man. Rules, formal and informal, have influenced the way captives have been treated in Europe for over two and a half millennia, with each era creating its own set of norms, customs, professional codes, religious and philosophical principles that shaped the way society judged military conduct.[1] Though attitudes have changed over time, a distinction was traditionally drawn between the treatment accorded to non-Europeans—whether 'barbarians', 'infidels', 'savages', or 'sub-humans', who, with one or two rare exceptions, have been routinely put to the sword—and those captured from states recognized as being a part of the 'civilized' ('Hellenic', 'Christian', or 'European') world. In the case of the latter, various elaborate formulae helped decide which prisoners deserved protection, such as knights and, more recently, officers—who might be ransomed or paroled—and those who did not; usually foot soldiers, for whom the only alternative to swift execution was often either perpetual enslavement or summary enlistment into their enemy's armies.[2]

Such norms reflected prevailing social or spiritual values, and frequently performed an important additional function in upholding the dominant political, economic, or religious structures of the time. In encouraging the ransoming of captured knights, for example, the medieval code of chivalry inevitably helped insulate Europe's aristocracy from the impact of the endemic warfare of the age.[3] Developments in the early-modern period, from the mid-15th to mid-17th century, served a similar function. As international relations became steadily de-confessionalized, armies and war fighting more professional, and the objectives of warfare more limited, the possibility of treating prisoners strategically, and therefore more generously, greatly expanded. From the mid-16th century prisoner treatment begun to be influenced by considerations of

[1] Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust War: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 3rd edn., 2000), p. 44.

[2] For the claim that such discrimination remains see Frédéric Mégret, 'From "Savages" to "Unlawful Combatants": A Post-Colonial Look at International Humanitarian Law's "Other"', in Anne Orford (ed.), *International Law and its Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 265–317.

[3] See in general Maurice H. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984) and *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965/1993).

reciprocity, and traditional chivalric conventions, hitherto applied only to the elite, were extended to include non-aristocratic elements of the armed forces. These arrangements were, moreover, regulated by state authorities themselves rather than dependent on private deals struck between individual warriors or their retinues.[4]

These advances support Geoffrey Parker's assertion that 'most actions outlawed today [. . .] have been condemned in the West for at least four centuries'. Yet, to suggest, as he does, that 'only the degree and the extent of enforcement have changed over time', underplays the importance of developments made in the 19th and early 20th centuries that distinguish the modern POW 'regime' from its predecessors.[5] Of these, perhaps the most significant has been the 'civilianization' of the war conventions; a process that mirrored changes in the organization of war fighting itself, through the introduction of conscription by the mid-19th century, but drew its force from the bourgeois aversion to violence, the senseless brutality of war, and the lamentable state of the military's prevailing welfare and medical provisions. The Red Cross movement, which made its appearance in the 1860s, epitomized this process, but by the end of the 19th century a panoply of national red cross societies, relief agencies, and charities had come into being, all benefiting from the idealism, energy, and legal expertise of the newly enfranchised and self-assertive European *bourgeoisie*.[6] What went on in war was no longer the exclusive preserve of the military class: humanitarianism had broken with its exclusive foundations and become a matter of public debate.

The focus of humanitarian concern had also undergone a subtle change. Renaissance Europe might well have viewed the infraction of accepted norms with as much abhorrence as we do today, but while earlier war conventions primarily sought to protect prisoners from arbitrary acts of violence, the modern conventions have been required to strike a balance between humanitarian ideals and an increasingly sophisticated and expansive definition of military exigency. This shift was partly a reflection of the humanitarians' success in extending the writ of international law. The flurry of codification that began in the mid-19th

[4] John R. Hale, *Renaissance War Studies* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1983/1998), pp. 37–45, for treatment of POWs, pp. 116–17, and civilian non-combatants, pp. 179–208.

[5] Geoffrey Parker, 'Early Modern Europe', in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Shulman (eds.), *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 41, 57, 58. Daniel Hohrath, ' "In Cartellen wird der Wert eines Gefangenen bestimmt". Kriegsgefangenschaft als Teil der Kriegspraxis des Ancien Régime', in Rüdiger Overmans (ed.), *In der Hand des Feindes. Kriegsgefangenschaft von der Antike bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Cologne, Vienna, Weimar: Böhlau, 1999), pp. 141–70. Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980/1983), pp. 128–215.

[6] Best, *Humanity*, p. 144. Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870–1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1984/1998), pp. 143–45. Martin J. Wiener, 'The Victorian's Criminalisation of Men', in Peter Spierenberg (ed.), *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998), pp. 197–212.

century gave rise to an international legal system that was, by the 1920s, sufficiently complete for lawyers to adjudicate any dispute that came before them.[7] Few areas of organized warfare lay beyond the reach of the jurist's pen.

The military elite was not, however, passive in the face of these developments. The 'democratization' and industrialization of warfare, in particular the increased reliance on large conscript armies over the last half of the 19th century, forced the military to consider their own position, and redefine some of the doctrinal positions they had hitherto taken for granted. Thus, while the 1864 Geneva Convention had been content to state the humanitarian case and leave it at that, by the turn of the century the humanitarians were forced to accommodate a set of ideas, centred on the concept of 'military necessity', that helped preserve military privileges and belligerent rights. The codes of the early 20th century all felt it necessary to include the caveat 'so far as military conditions permit', whenever humanitarian ideals ran up against states' legitimate security interests.

Yet, if the codes of the early 20th century had been forced to genuflect to the demands of military exigency, they nevertheless confirmed the legal status which POWs had come to enjoy as a distinct category of war victim, and ended the tradition of exclusivity that had marked the earlier war conventions.[8] This process had commenced forty years before, when the 'Lieber Code', adopted by Lincoln's Union army in 1863, and its European counterpart, the 'Brussels Code' of 1874, had first defined POWs as 'lawful and disarmed enemies' deserving of respect and compassion.[9] The speed with which this norm took hold was due to the distinction POWs shared with those other subjects privileged by international agreement at this time; namely, that once a combatant became *hors de combat*—whether through wounds, sickness, or capture—he ought to be treated with dignity and care. It also reflected the widespread, almost intuitive belief that, in the age of citizen armies, conscript soldiers, once disarmed and in the power of their captors, should be treated not as enemies but as fellow human beings.

At a philosophical level, few would begrudge the prisoner such privileges. Problems, however, lay ahead at a practical level. For some military observers, the prisoner's accumulation of rights had simply gone too far. J. M. Spaight, reflecting on the 1907 Hague convention and the experiences of the Russo–Japanese and Boer Wars, where the treatment of prisoners was generally held to

[7] Vaughan Lowe, 'The Politics of Law-Making: Are the Method and Character of Norm Creation Changing?', in Michael Byers (ed.), *The Role of Law in International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 211. Lorna Lloyd, *Peace through Law: Britain and the International Court in the 1920s* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 1997).

[8] Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 117–18.

[9] Best, *Humanity*, pp. 155–57. Richard Shelley Hartigan, *Lieber's Code & the Laws of War* (Chicago, IL: Precedent, 1983).

have been of a high order, chided international lawyers for making the prisoner into 'a spoilt darling', whose wants and feelings were treated with a solicitude that 'bordered on sentimentalism'. The danger, in Spaight's eyes, was that if captivity became 'a halcyon time, [. . .] a kind of inexpensive rest-cure after the wearisome turmoil of fighting', soldiers' morale and military discipline would deteriorate.[10] As one observer at the Brussels conference put it, the 'comforts and indulgences' promised to prisoners might tempt 'cowardly or effeminate soldiers to escape the dangers and hardships of war by surrendering themselves to the enemy'.[11]

The second problem lay in the increasingly 'total' nature of warfare and the changing political context within which wars took place. Since the successful prosecution of warfare depended on an ever more thorough mobilization of a state's productive resources, prisoners came to be seen not as pawns to be ransomed or innocent victims to be exchanged but as valuable commodities, whose brains and brawn could be exploited for the good of the country's war effort. Over the course of the 20th century it was states' economic demands as much as their military needs that corroded the status of the POW conventions.[12] Furthermore, in galvanizing the nation for war, politicians were increasingly tempted down the road of popular nationalism, a course that was to lead, in due course, to the extremism, xenophobia, and 'super-heated belligerent collectivism' that had left so much of the humanitarian project in tatters by 1945. The inculcation of martial values within European societies over the latter half of the 19th century naturally clashed with the budding humanitarian movement. Some compromise was possible: by the end of the 19th century most national red cross societies had been more or less willingly co-opted by the state and formed as semi-autonomous service providers for the state's military authorities.[13] But in sharpening the distinction between states and their peoples, nationalism inevitably undermined the sense of common humanity, proportionality, and restraint upon which all humanitarian codes were founded. Prisoners were no

[10] J. M. Spaight, *War Rights on Land* (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 58. The Hague conventions were more generous towards POWs than earlier legislation. See William I. Hull, *The Two Hague Conferences and their contributions to International Law* (Boston, MA: Ginn & Co., 1908), pp. 222–32; Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, pp. 67–86. POW treatment during the Russo–Japanese War and the early stages of the Boer War was generally good, but state practice was not as benign as Spaight claimed. See Christoph Marx, ' "Die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht" Kriegsgefangene im Burenkrieg 1899–1902', in Overmans (ed.), *In der Hand des Feindes*, pp. 255–76; Philip A. Towle, 'Japanese Treatment of Prisoners in 1904–1905—Foreign Officers' Reports', *Military Affairs*, 39/3 (Oct. 1975), pp. 115–17; Reid Mitchell, ' "Our Prison System, Supposing We Had Any": The Confederate and Union Prison Systems'; and Manfred Botzenhart, 'French Prisoners of War in Germany, 1870–71', in Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler (eds.), *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification 1861–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 565–86 and 587–96.

[11] Austrian emperor (1874) cited in Best, *Humanity*, p. 157.

[12] See *inter alia* Davis, 'Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economics', pp. 623–34, and Mackenzie, 'Treatment of Prisoners of War', pp. 487–520.

[13] Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*, pp. 105–276.

longer identified as objects of pity but as the physical embodiment of an alien people, race, state, or ideology.

CAPTIVITY IN THE GREAT WAR, 1914–1918

Spaight's condescending remarks about POWs may well have typified the views of desk-bound civil servants in Edwardian England, but the disdain for the progress made to 'humanize hell' is nevertheless surprising for a man who was to become Britain's leading publicist on the law of armed conflict, and who helped define Britain's negotiating position on POWs before the 1929 Geneva conference. His asinine assumptions about imprisonment and the robustness of the pre-war POW regime were cruelly exposed by the scale, duration, and nature of captivity encountered after 1914.[14] In terms of numbers alone, imprisonment was very far from an inconsequential, even harmless, by-product of war. Some 8½ million servicemen fell into the hands of their enemies, including no less than eleven per cent of Austro–Hungary's adult male population. Prisoners' experience naturally varied, depending on the location and date of their capture. Prisoners suffered appallingly in Russia and elsewhere from the failure of governments to cope with influx of POWs.[15] Even in western Europe—where mortality rates among POWs were low—the duration of captivity, coupled with the poor living conditions, sanitation, and food prisoners endured, ensured that few of those imprisoned during the war were left unchanged by their ordeal.

In comparison with their continental neighbours, the conditions under which the majority of British prisoners were held were *relatively* benign. The least fortunate were those captured by the Turks in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, whose maltreatment and neglect, particularly in the early stages of captivity, resulted in exceptionally high death rates: half of Kut's impoverished garrison, forced into a humiliating surrender in April 1916, failed to survive the war. The majority of Britons captured during the war fell into German hands (7,335 officers and 174,491 men). Of these, about half were taken during the German spring offensive of 1918, and while there was still much to criticize about their treatment, especially the working conditions in labour battalions behind German lines and the lack of food in the final months of the war, standards of care and detention were generally adequate.[16]

[14] Ferguson, *Pity of War*, Table 42, p. 369.

[15] Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, esp. pp. 87–125. Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, pp. 63–122. For a darker assessment, see Peter Pastor, 'Introduction', in Samuel Williamson and Peter Pastor (eds.), *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War* (Boulder, CO: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 113–17. Alan Kramer, 'Prisoners in the First World War', in Sibylle Scheipers (ed.), *Prisons in War: Norms, Military Cultures and Reciprocity in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 75–90.

[16] Heather Jones, 'The Final Logic of Sacrifice? Violence in German Prisoner of War Labor Companies in 1918', *The Historian,* 68/4 (winter 2006), pp. 770–91. Robert Jackson, *The*

Yet if, in retrospect, British prisoners fared well, this was not the image that prevailed in Britain at the time. Accustomed, from the first days of the war, to lurid tales of German atrocities, public concern about British prisoners in Germany rapidly swelled as ingrained assumptions about German depravity were authenticated by stories brought home by escaped prisoners, or prisoners repatriated on health grounds to Switzerland and the Netherlands from the summer of 1916. Early evidence appeared to reveal, in the words of the prime minister, H. H. Asquith, a 'horrible record of calculated cruelty and crime'. In September 1915 the government set up a committee under Lord Justice Robert Younger to 'collect, verify and record' instances of enemy maltreatment of British POWs.[17] The existence of Younger's committee was taken by many as official endorsement of the reports of German ill-treatment. By the time the war came to an end, camps such as those at Gardelegen and Wittenberg, which saw outbreaks of typhus, and the civilian internment camp at Ruhleben had become bywords for German inhumanity.

The job of meeting the needs of British servicemen in enemy hands, while satiating the demands of their anxious relatives and supporters at home, ultimately exhausted the mental and administrative capacity of the British government. By the end of 1915, conflicting opinions on how to deal with the problem effectively led to a breakdown in relations between the various departments concerned. An attempt in February 1916 to improve coordination through a standing inter-departmental committee failed to resolve the problem, and by October that year, the Foreign Office, exhausted by the ceaseless bickering, abruptly withdrew from further discussions. In desperation the war cabinet sanctioned an independent 'Prisoner of War Department' under Lord Newton to pick up the Foreign Office's mandate, but this body could make little headway against the established departments, and by the following spring meetings of the inter-departmental committee had once more petered out.[18] Public confidence was not helped by the confusion over which department was responsible for answering questions on POW matters in parliament and the government's duties regarding the provision of relief parcels. In fact, it was not until 25 September 1918, two months before the armistice, that order was finally established through the appointment of a cabinet minister, the home secretary Lord Cave, as chair of the inter-departmental committee. For London the capture of large numbers of its soldiers thus created as many administrative and public relations problems as it did foreign political ones. Public disquiet over the government's resolve in

Prisoners, 1914–1918 (London: Routledge, 1989). Mark Spoerer suggests that British death rates were comparatively high: 'The Mortality of Allied Prisoners of War and Belgian Civilian Deportees in German Custody during World War I: A Reappraisal of the Effects of Forced Labour', *Population Studies*, 60/2 (2006), pp. 121–36.

[17] *Parliamentary Debates House of Commons* (hereafter *Parl. Debs. Commons*), *1915 vol. lxxi*, 27 Apr. 1915, folio 664.

[18] See Newton's memoirs: *Retrospection* (London: John Murray, 1941), pp. 214–64.

standing up to German barbarity, especially its reluctance to resort to reprisals in defence of its men, naturally overshadowed Britain's successes in curbing enemy excesses and negotiating improvements for its prisoners in German and Turkish hands in the summer of 1917 and 1918.

THE ROAD TO GENEVA, 1918–1929

Memories of Britain's inept handling of POW matters during the Great War inevitably sensitized public opinion to any hint of official neglect or indifference towards British prisoners after 1939. But the experiences of the Great War also had a more immediate impact on the way officials and senior officers approached the task of updating the POW regime—the 1906 Geneva Convention and the 4th Hague regulations of 1907—after the return of peace in 1918. The significance of Britain's contribution to this process and its influence on the resulting convention will be discussed below, but it is worth remembering that the creation of a separate POW convention was by no means a foregone conclusion, regardless of the widespread sympathy evoked by the return of prisoners after the war. There was considerable unease in official and scholarly circles at tampering with the existing laws of war, lest any move in this direction undermine the steps taken by the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of International Justice to make international armed conflict a thing of the past. The two conventions concluded in Geneva in July 1929—the 'Red Cross' code, for the treatment of sick and wounded on the battlefield, and the POW code—were the *only* initiatives taken in the field after 1919, apart from two protocols regulating the use of weapons unknown to the pre-war world: the 1925 Geneva gas protocol and the London submarine protocol of 1936.[19]

The success in updating the POW regime in 1929 is usually explained in terms of the dedication and commitment shown by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC had first proposed a separate POW convention in February 1918, and presented a comprehensive 'statement of principles' for a future code to the 10th international Red Cross conference in the spring of 1921. A full draft convention was ready for the next conference in 1923, and by early 1925 a finalized text, drafted, in the main, by the ICRC's legal expert, Paul Des Gouttes, was passed to the Swiss federal government for onward transmission to national governments. The federal government officially convened the Geneva conference in 1929, but it was the ICRC who had dealt with the substantive preparatory work, and it was they who were responsible for

[19] Dietrich Schindler and Jiri Toman (eds.), *The Laws of Armed Conflict: A Collection of Conventions, Resolutions and Other Documents* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 4th edn., 2004), pp. v–vi. Air power was noticeably absent from this list. D. C. Watt, 'Restraints on War in the Air before 1945', in Michael Howard (ed.), *Restraints on War: Studies in the Limitation of Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 57–77.

the 'brilliant piece of surgery' that de-coupled POWs from the law of armed conflict—Hague law—and integrated them into the humanitarian tradition embodied in the earlier Geneva conventions of 1864 and 1906. It was this that justified precluding the use of reprisals against POWs, despite the importance of reprisals in holding belligerents to their various obligations under Hague law.[20]

Key though the ICRC undoubtedly was in steering the convention to completion, other agencies had an important part to play. British involvement in the process is especially noteworthy, not just in the shape of the resultant POW convention but also for what it indicates about Britain's commitment to the POW regime after 1939. Britain's position in 1929 arose from two distinct, though interwoven, processes. The first was the government's own internal deliberations, which built on the work carried out by Lord Younger's wartime committee on the enemy's treatment of British POWs. By the time the committee concluded its work in late 1921, many of the assumptions about the depravity of German conduct had been replaced by a more sober appreciation of the prisoners' conditions of captivity and employment in German hands.[21] The original intention in creating Younger's committee—of bringing Germany to account—was only partially realized in the Leipzig 'war crimes' trials in early 1921, where three of the six men put forward for trial by the British government were accused of maltreating POWs.[22] The lenient sentences handed down—between six and ten months for the three prison guards—provoked widespread consternation in Britain: even those such as Lord Cave who recognized the symbolic importance of the judgements found the experience 'far from encouraging'.[23] At the close of the trial, the government drew a line under the proceedings, wisely decided against publishing Younger's final report, and instead fed its findings into a committee chaired by the retired diplomat Sir Rennell Dodd, which was charged with distilling the various lessons learnt over the war to help guide future discussions.[24] Official thinking in London on POW matters was then already well

[20] Frits Kalshoven, *Belligerent Reprisals* (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1971), pp. 71–72.

[21] See remarks by Sir Reginald Acland, ILA, *Report on the Twenty-Ninth Conference, Portsmouth, May 27th–31st, 1920* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1920), p. 292, and similar comments in 1922, *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 8 (1922), pp. xxxiv–vi, and Arthur Ponsonby MP, *Falsehood in Wartime: Containing an Assortment of Lies Circulated throughout the Nations during the Great War* (London: George Allen, 1928).

[22] Alan Kramer, 'The First Wave of International War Crimes Trials: Istanbul and Leipzig', *European Review*, 14/4 (2006), pp. 441–55. Gerd Hankel, *Die Leipziger Prozesse* (Hamburg: Hamburg Edition, 2003). James F. Willis, *Prologue to Nuremberg: The Politics and Diplomacy of Punishing War Criminals of the First World War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982): and Claud Mullins, *The Leipzig Trials: An Account of the War Criminals' Trials and a Study of German Mentality* (London: H. R. and F. Witherby, 1921).

[23] Lord Cave, 'War Crimes and their Punishment', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 8 (1922), p. xxix. Anther two defendants received two years, and a third was acquitted. The case advanced by Belgium was dismissed, and the six by France resulted in a single conviction and two year custodial sentence.

[24] The government disingenuously claimed that Younger's findings were for 'departmental use and reference in the event of any future emergency'. *Parl. Debs. Commons, 1921, vol. 138*,

advanced before the ICRC circulated its draft convention to interested parties in early 1925.

The second element to influence Britain's approach to the POW regime was provided by the country's legal community. Barely six months after the signing of the armistice two distinguished international lawyers, G. G. Phillimore and H. H. L. Bellot, reflected on the wartime advances made on the 4th Hague regulations in a paper presented to the august Grotius society.[25] Phillimore and Bellot's paper stimulated sufficient excitement to convince Phillimore to prepare a draft POW code for the society's next meeting in March 1920, and for the annual International Law Association (ILA) conference scheduled for that May.[26] The resultant code, of fifteen articles, closely followed the texts of the two POW agreements Britain had concluded with Germany in the summer of 1917 and 1918. The importance of Phillimore's code lay not so much in what it said, however, as in the encouragement it gave to the ILA to take the matter forward. At the close of the conference the ILA elected to establish an international committee, chaired by none other than Lord Younger, to draw up a full POW convention.

We will deal with some of the features of Younger's ILA proposal shortly, but beforehand we need to consider the broader significance of his and Phillimore's work on the development of the POW regime. While these initiatives began life within the rarefied reaches of academe, their ideas quickly percolated into official thinking. This was entirely deliberate. 'No obligation should be imposed', Younger cautioned in introducing Phillimore's draft to the ILA, 'whose fulfilment is likely to be objected to, even by an inflamed public opinion, or by the fears and apprehensions of the High Command concerned'.[27] He went out of his way to secure official support for his endeavours, recruiting Dame Adelaide Livingston and other members of his wartime committee, and co-opting, at an early stage, the assistance of Lord Newton, and the adjutant general of the army, Lt. Gen. Sir George Macdonogh. The latter's influence on the resulting draft convention was to be particularly pronounced. Mjr.-Gen. Sir Herbert Belfield, wartime head of the War Office's POW directorate, also contributed to Younger's deliberations, and it is probable that Lord Robert Cecil, responsible for drafting the government's response to the ICRC's draft convention in 1925, and Sir Cecil

3 Mar. 1921, folio 2032. Sir John Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1902–1919, vol. iii* (London: Edward Arnold, 1925) and his entry in L. G. Wickham Legg and E. T. Williams (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography, 1941–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 731–33.

[25] G. G. Phillimore and H. H. L. Bellot, 'Treatment of Prisoners of War', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 5 (1919), pp. 47–63.

[26] George G. Phillimore, 'Some Suggestions for a Draft Code for The Treatment of Prisoners of War', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 6 (1920), pp. 25–34. ILA, *Twenty-Ninth Conference*, pp. 259–78. The ILA also received a copy of the original Phillimore/Bellot paper of 1919.

[27] ILA, *Twenty-Ninth Conference*, p. 257.

Hurst, who briefed the British delegation before it set off for Geneva in 1929, offered their views.[28] Hurst was a member of the Grotius society, founding editor of the *British Year Book of International Law*, and, ever since joining the Foreign Office as legal adviser in 1918, had sought to develop an integrated and authoritative literature on international law by fostering dialogue between the Foreign Office's legal team and the wider legal community.[29] It is hardly surprising then, that the similarities between Younger's proposals to the ILA in 1921 and Britain's official position in 1929 are close. While the delegation took its orders from the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), the arguments it presented were scarcely distinguishable from those advanced in the academic debates earlier in the decade. Britain's case in Geneva was not bomb-proof, but it was refined, thoughtful, and grounded on a thorough understanding of the complexities of the issues at hand.

The second point to note is that by going through the ILA, Britain not only publicized its views on the shape of any future POW convention but also helped influence ICRC thinking on the issue in Britain's favour, well before delegates assembled in Geneva. Though the majority of Younger's twelve-strong committee were British, it included representatives from Sweden, Spain, and Portugal. The ILA was, moreover, strongly supportive of Younger's endeavours. Its chairman, Lord Phillimore, knew something of the problem, having had a son detained in Germany for most of the last war, and its two general secretaries, G. G. Phillimore and H. H. L. Bellot, were obviously thoroughly conversant with the issue and happy to serve on Younger's committee.[30] While aspects of Younger's proposed code provoked debate at the ILA's conference in September 1921, there were no objections raised to the ILA officially adopting Younger's twenty-four article convention at the conference's close.[31] This stamp of approval made the text the foremost statement on POW matters in existence, and it was only to be expected that the ICRC's 'diplomatic committee', responsible for producing the draft POW code for the 11th international Red Cross conference in 1923, drew heavily on the ideas it contained. As a result, although the views of the ICRC differed on a number of key points, its discussions were indelibly marked by the earlier deliberations of Britain's legal scholars. The ICRC's draft convention disseminated to national governments in early 1925 was sufficiently recognizable for British officials to accept it as the basis for negotiations with little ado.[32]

[28] Cecil had been responsible for POW matters as under-secretary of state at the FO in 1915–1916.

[29] See his entry in E. T. Williams and C. S. Nicholls (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography 1961–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[30] Godfrey Walter Phillimore, *Recollections of a Prisoner of War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1930).

[31] ILA, *Report on the Thirtieth Conference, The Hague, 30 August–3 September 1921* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1922), p. 207.

[32] The US delegation tried, without success, to have the conference adopt its own draft.

BRITAIN AND THE NEGOTIATION OF THE POW CONVENTION, JULY 1929

What then, were the characteristics of Britain's approach to the new POW regime in 1929? Although ten years had passed since the end of the war, memories of what British prisoners had endured in enemy captivity were still too fresh for officials to give way to romanticism or sentimentality. The government had taken a robust attitude towards the POW regime before 1918, and had shown little compunction in departing from the letter and spirit of the Hague rules when circumstances required. One of the recurrent problems London had faced in meeting its obligations, however, was the difficulty of applying a uniform policy across an empire that stretched 'from Canada to Hong Kong and from Scotland to Tasmania'.[33] This naturally affected Britain's outlook on the kind of provisions to be included in a POW code. For the ICRC, the more comprehensive the provisions the better: 'it is the details that matter', Des Gouttes once remarked, 'in the monotonous daily life of the prisoners of war'.[34] For the British, any arrangements had to be sufficiently flexible to take account of local conditions. Britain's objective in Geneva was then for an agreement that protected prisoners 'against elementary neglects and cruelties in matters of first principle', and not one that met their every need.[35] All issues of secondary importance were better left for future discussion, when due regard could be given to the practical circumstances of the time.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the war concerned the way in which the convention should be policed. On this subject, the lessons of the war were unambiguous. It was only the emergence of a third party inspection regime over the course of 1915 that had arrested the precipitous decline in confidence in the Hague regulations between the belligerents. A number of different agencies had been involved in this process—the ICRC, Vatican, national Red Cross Societies, and neutral governments—but it was the officially accredited 'protecting powers' who assumed the leading role; dispatching diplomats to tour POW camps, furnishing reports on their findings, and hosting meetings between the belligerents to resolve outstanding disputes. As one authoritative study after the war put it, 'by no other process, [could] inhumane treatment in any form on the part of a captor be so readily detected, or so fairly estimated' than through the inspection of POW camps by neutral diplomats.[36]

[33] Lt.-Gen. Sir Herbert E. Belfield, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 9 (1923), pp. 131–47.

[34] Cited in André Durand, *From Sarajevo to Hiroshima: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, vol. ii* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1984), p. 255.

[35] Minute by Lt. Col. E. E. B. Holt-Wilson (WO), 22 Aug. 1929. TNA. WO32/5337.

[36] Charles C. Hyde, *International Law: Chiefly as Interpreted and Applied by the United States, vol. ii* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1922), p. 340. Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, pp. 15–30.

British commentators showed, even at this early stage, a strong preference in favour of 'protecting powers', over the claims of other would-be intermediaries. G. G. Phillimore acknowledged the ICRC's humanitarian role in his proposed regulations in early 1921, but this element was dropped from the draft he presented to the ILA, and all subsequent British codes restricted supervisory activities to officially accredited protecting powers. The omission may have been prompted by the ICRC's ill-judged offer to investigate alleged violations of international law by the belligerents, continuing a tradition of whistle-blowing which had already caused some embarrassment to London during the war.

Beyond these general provisions, Britain's experiences with captivity led the government towards laying particular emphasis on the humanitarian aspects of the POW code. Such generosity was a luxury that grew out of Britain's particular geographical situation. Many of the continental powers, including France, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, worried by the scale of resources needed to guard prisoners securely, were anxious to strengthen the hands of the detaining power in deterring escape attempts, and penalizing those who engaged in such activities. They were also alive to the security risks of allowing prisoners to communicate too freely, or too frequently, with their loved ones at home. The newly minted states in eastern and south-eastern Europe had additional concerns. Suspicion over the political loyalty of their new compatriots in Transylvania prompted the Romanians to recommend that the conference prohibit the distribution of propaganda material inside POW camps.

None of these issues were of prime concern to the British government. With the exception of the Irish, the allegiance of Britain's forces could largely be relied upon. 'Those voting against propaganda', the head of the British delegation to Geneva pompously remarked, 'were nations whose forces might perhaps be susceptible to subversion by persuasion based upon enlightened arguments'.[37] If he had a view on how 'enlightened arguments' might go down with Britain's colonial subjects he choose not to record them. With the Channel standing between Britain and any potential foe, it did not really matter if Britain's camp perimeter fences were dilapidated, or its sentries, as one former camp adjutant put it, were of 'Chelsea Pensioner type', whose 'spirits were willing enough' but whose 'flesh was woefully weak'.[38] Only one German managed to escape from Britain's shores during the Great War, and his extraordinary feat was never to be repeated.[39] Britain could then take a much more relaxed view of many aspects of the POW regime: applauding the courage, ingenuity, and spirit of those who made a bid for freedom, in the full knowledge that it would avoid the disciplinary consequences in its own camps. 'We may have considerable difficulty in getting

[37] Rumbold to Henderson, 31 July 1929. TNA. FO372/2550 T9201.

[38] Capt. J. M. Maclennan, 'A Prisoner of War Camp', *Army Quarterly*, 13 (1926–27), pp. 368–75.

[39] Gunther Plüschow, *Escape From England* (New York: Rockbury, 2004).

our theories accepted', the CID candidly acknowledged before the start of the conference, but if the British delegation was forced to yield ground, it was expressly forbidden to subscribe to any of the 'vindictive punishments' favoured by some of Britain's continental neighbours.[40]

The most controversial feature of Britain's position in 1929 was its attitude towards the use of POWs in reprisals. The right of belligerents to resort to reprisals was one which was ultimately designed to *prevent* war becoming barbarous, by breaking the chain of wrongdoing.[41] Nevertheless, permitting acts which in normal circumstances would be considered objectionable was always going to be contentious, and this was certainly the case when Younger proposed that states retain the right to use reprisals in 1921. Memories of the heated public debate over whether Britain should use reprisals against Germany in 1918 no doubt sharpened his opinions, but a post-war study by the War Office also tellingly concluded with the remark that, notwithstanding the moral and material difficulties in adopting reprisals, 'in certain cases, when the circumstances promised good results, reprisals were taken. In others, the mere threat of reprisals [. . .] produced the desired results'.[42] It was, moreover, precisely over Germany's treatment of POWs, that British reprisals, or the threat of reprisals, were felt to have proved their worth.[43] Not surprisingly the CID followed Lord Younger's lead, and challenged the ICRC's proposal for a blanket prohibition on the use of reprisals against POWs.

Britain's willingness to admit to the compelling force of reprisals in a new POW convention rested on two assumptions. The first was pragmatic: as Younger put it, 'no army could reasonably be expected to renounce in war so effective and powerful a weapon for the redress or cessation of supposed intolerable wrong upon its own nationals'.[44] Some observers were clearly reluctant to retreat before the doctrine of military necessity, but in this case, there were powerful grounds for accepting the War Office's advice. Though abhorrent from an ethical point of view, holding prisoners to ransom through the threat of reprisals might ultimately be more effective in securing the objectives of the convention than an outright ban.[45] Better, then, to deprecate the use of reprisals than prohibit them entirely.

The second assumption concerned the desirability of belligerents resolving their differences through direct negotiations. This was by no means a forgone conclusion. The two British–German agreements of 1917 and 1918 had provoked a storm of criticism in the British press and parliament: the first had largely

[40] CID Paper 946-B. 22 June 1929. TNA. CAB4/18.

[41] See Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p. 207.

[42] Mjr.-Gen. Sir Herbert E. Belfield, 'Report on Directorate of Prisoners of War', Sep. 1920. TNA. FO369/1450 K15026.

[43] FO memo by G. Warner, 30 May 1918. Hampshire Record Office (hereafter HRO). Papers of Sir George Warner. 5M79 A7.

[44] ILA, *Thirtieth Conference*, p. 191.

[45] CID Paper 946–B. 22 June 1929. TNA. CAB4/18.

failed to rectify the problems facing British POWs, while the second remained untested by the time the war came to a close. Nevertheless, for Younger, who helped negotiate the first agreement in 1917, admitting to the value of face-to-face talks was essential if he was to secure agreement on the belligerents' right to reprisals. 'The real solution for the reprisal question is to be found in meetings between the belligerents while the war is going on . . . ', he explained. '[W]hen the question had to be dealt with as an existing difficulty, of course the belligerents were prepared to come to a far more elaborate arrangement than you could ever have committed them to in advance.'[46] Few were ready to follow Phillimore's recommendation that governments be obliged to convene a meeting within the first year of any war, but most had sufficient faith in human nature to acknowledge that belligerents of whatever hue would recognize the benefits of direct talks, and respond favourably to any initiative towards this end.

The care and attention shown to crafting Britain's negotiating position before 1929 paid off handsomely when delegates assembled in Geneva in July 1929.[47] Britain's delegation was led by one of its most senior diplomats, its ambassador in Berlin, Sir Horace Rumbold.[48] As minister to Switzerland between 1914 to 1917, Rumbold had first-hand experience of POW affairs, a background he shared with his deputy, George Warner, who had worked in Newton's POW department. Though Rumbold resented being dragged away to a 'shoddy red cross conference', he secured for himself the chairmanship of the sub-committee responsible for drawing up the POW convention, and used the position to steer discussion in Britain's direction.[49] The presence of a Dominions Office official, C. G. L. Syers, helped ensure that the natural, if at times rather exasperating, desire of the Dominion delegates to use the conference to advertise their countries' new-found autonomy did not stop the imperial delegates voting *en bloc* when required.[50] The participation of so many delegates from smaller powers, though unavoidable, clearly irked, but Britain's delegates showed themselves masters in crafting coalitions before the key votes.[51] Though Britain was willing in principle

[46] ILA, *Thirtieth Conference*, pp. 232, 241–42. For the wartime agreements see Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, pp. 32–42; Durand, *History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, vol. ii*, pp. 66–80.

[47] For the 1929 conference, see Neville Wylie, 'The 1929 POW Convention and the Building of the Inter-War POW Regime', in Sybille Scheipers (ed.), *Prisoners in War: Norms, Military Cultures and Reciprocity in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 91–108.

[48] Ronald C. Lindsey (FO) to Rumbold (UK embassy, Berlin), 22 June 1929. Bodelian Library, University of Oxford. MS Rumbold dep 37 Correspondence, Apr. 1929–May 1930.

[49] Harold Nicolson (27 June 1929), cited in Martin Gilbert, *Sir Horace Rumbold: Portrait of a Diplomat 1869–1941* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 325.

[50] See Syers to C. W. Dixon (DO), 6, 13 July and 2 Aug. 1929. TNA. FO373/2550, FO373/2551. For pre-conference coordination: Dominions Office to Department of External Affairs (hereafter DEA), Ottawa, 7 Mar. 1929. LAC. RG25 Series A 2 vol. 192.

[51] See Syers to C. W. Dixon (DO), 6 July 1920, and Warner to Sir Hubert Montgomery (FO), 27 July 1929. TNA. FO373/2550 T8399, T8958. Only the Canadian, Lt. Col. G. P. Vanier, was held in regard.

to acknowledge legal equality with the smaller powers, it remained reluctant to accept this in practice.[52] As a result, the principal thrust of British diplomacy during the conference remained directed towards securing agreement with its major allies and enemies of the last war, and ensuring that any differences that might emerge were not allowed to threaten Great Power unity on the major issues.

The result was a conference in which the British delegation achieved all but one of its objectives. Despite expectations, 'no serious difference of opinion on any questions of importance' arose to disturb the prevailing spirit of cooperation and harmony.[53] Perhaps the biggest success was in gaining agreement on the position of protecting powers, with their responsibilities itemized in no fewer than eleven articles. This was no mean feat. Although most delegates happily acknowledged the benefits protecting powers brought to the POW regime, questions remained over their remit. The Japanese and Balkan delegations objected to neutral diplomats visiting POW camps, irrespective of their location, and conducting private interviews with the prisoners' representatives. These important rights were passed by a single vote, and made the subject of reservations by several delegations at the signing ceremony.[54] The British also joined the Americans in limiting the powers conferred on the ICRC. The danger of confusion and a duplication of effort remained, but the protecting power had emerged as the primary organ of control, and calls for the compulsory adjudication of disputes arising out of the convention were firmly rebuffed.

The one issue upon which the British view did not prevail was the question of reprisals. This had been the key difference between Britain's position and that of the ICRC. It is doubtful whether the ICRC's efforts to secure a complete ban on reprisals were as critical to the success of the POW regime as some legal scholars have suggested, given Britain's willingness to update the POW regulations whilst simultaneously retaining the belligerents' traditional right of reprisal.[55] In British eyes at least, there was nothing incompatible between the two objectives. Nevertheless, the ICRC played its cards well and 'one delegation after another rose to condemn measures of reprisals', as Rumbold later recalled, 'which they described as a step backwards in civilization'. The conference's *procès-verbaux* do not indicate whether, in the face of such united opposition, Rumbold faltered in presenting Britain's case, but when only the Turks and Japanese were found to support the British amendment, Rumbold decided against pressing the matter.[56] Given Britain's own experience in dealing with wilful adversaries, it is doubtful

[52] See Gerry Simpson, *Great Power and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 147–64.

[53] Rumbold to Henderson, 31 July 1929. TNA. FO372/2551 T9202.

[54] See *Actes de la Conférence Diplomatique de Genève de 1929* (Geneva: Journal de Genève, 1930), pp. 512–21.

[55] Kalshoven, *Belligerent Reprisals*, pp. 79–80.

[56] Rumbold to Henderson, 31 July 1929. TNA. FO372/2551 T9201.

whether officials in London were convinced by the pious statements of those present, or felt entirely bound by article 2's prohibition on the use of reprisals if circumstances demanded. They could, though, gain some comfort from the fact that future enemies would find it difficult to subvert individual provisions of the convention without infringing on its core principles, and that the newly empowered protecting powers would ensure that any gross violations would not escape notice for long.

The British government might, then, be criticized for failing to predict the savagery prisoners were to face after 1941, but it can hardly be accused of succumbing to the starry-eyed idealism that punctuated so much of the political debate in the 1920s. Many of the convention's ninety-seven articles were inspired by Britain's wartime agreements with Germany: its ambitions were anchored in the practical experiences of the Great War. That the cause of humanitarianism was advanced by the convention is not in doubt, but the romantic ideas trumpeted by some of the minor delegations had been quietly ditched, and most of the detailed proscriptions, liable to distract from the code's fundamental principles and complicate its future application, were erased from the final text. Britain had advanced its humanitarian agenda but pegged it to a strict reading of its national interest.[57] Finally, the issue that had bedevilled Anglo–German relations during the war—the repatriation of sick or wounded prisoners—was sensibly left in belligerent hands. Seriously ill or wounded prisoners, once certified by a mixed medical commission, were deemed eligible for repatriation; but the decision over whether they should return home, or sit out the war in neutral sanatoria, was left for the belligerents to determine through direct negotiations. A 'model draft agreement', appended to the convention, to guide such discussions was lifted directly from the 1918 British–German agreement, and all discussion of the issue was based on the British draft rather than the Red Cross text.[58]

BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS POWS, 1919–1939

Little remains in the official record to indicate how much the collapse of international stability after 1929 sapped British confidence in the POW regime. Parliament ratified the convention with little ado in 1931, other members of the Commonwealth following suit later that year, with only Canada delaying ratification until 1933, perhaps to keep in step with the United States, which ratified it in 1932. Officials appear to have shared the views of *The Times* correspondent who, in surveying the advances made since 1907, suggested that while nothing could be done to protect prisoners from the malice of individual

[57] See Rumbold to Henderson, 31 July 1929. TNA. FO372/2551 T9201.

[58] E. Wadsworth to State Department, 1 Aug. 1929. NARA. RG59 Decimal Series 514/2A12 Box 5447.

guards, the 'more comprehensive convention of 1929 [would] do much to alleviate the normal and inevitable hardships of captivity'.[59] When, in mid-1932, George Warner came to review a commentary on the POW convention, written by one of the Danish delegates, he tellingly chose not to dispute the guarded optimism which ran through the study.[60] By the time war returned to Europe in 1939, the provisions of the convention were faithfully reproduced in all military manuals in force across the British Empire and Commonwealth.[61]

For all the success achieved by Rumbold and his colleagues in Geneva, and for all the attention given to drafting a robust POW code over the 1920s, we should be wary of assuming that London's commitment to the POW convention was unbounded. Its general approach was one which bore the firm mark of the Foreign Office. The two most authoritative voices in the delegation to Geneva, Rumbold and Warner, were Foreign Office men, and every one of the committees convened over the course of the 1920s to examine POW affairs had Foreign Office mandarins at the helm.[62] The Foreign Office's great critic on POW matters during the last war, the War Office, was, of course, integral to the entire process. The adjutant general had taken time off to assist Lord Younger's committee, and two War Office officials had joined Rumbold's six-man party in Geneva. But whether the War Office felt anything like the same sense of ownership over the convention as the Foreign Office is questionable. The first time the War Office's financial branch (F2) learnt of discussions over the POW convention was in August 1929, a month after the close of the conference. For a department which had spent the best part of the last war wrestling with prisoners' financial difficulties, it is hardly surprising that officials resented being left out of the loop. The conclusion reached by the branch head, 'that [. . .] the conventions in their present form will prove unworkable, just as they did in their old form in the war, and will have to be scrapped before the war has run a fortnight . . . ', may have exaggerated the point, but the sentiments behind it were no doubt sincere.[63] This lapse was all the more significant since it was the War Office's financial secretary who was to field questions on POW matters in the House of Commons in the first years of the Second World War. The episode speaks volumes for the seriousness with which the War Office approached the drafting process. Its attitude mirrored that found in the armed services. Safe behind its island defences, and committed, until the year of the Geneva conference, to a defence policy based on the 'ten-year rule', Britain's army busied itself with 'scraping

[59] *The Times*, 3 Mar. 1931. Rumbold to Warner, 12 Mar. 1931. HRO. 5M79 C9.

[60] Review by Warner of Gustav Rasmussen, *Code de prisonniers de guerre. Commentaire de la Convention du 27 juillet 1929, relative au traitement des prisonniers de guerre* (Geneva: ICRC, 1931) in *British Yearbook of International Law*, 13 (1932), p. 213.

[61] *Regulations Governing the Maintenance of Discipline Among Prisoners of War* (London: HMSO, 1939).

[62] Sir John Rennell Rodd, Lord Robert Cecil, and Sir Cecil Hurst.

[63] Minute by R. Paterson (WO, finance branch), 29 Aug. 1929. TNA. WO32/5337.

off the reality of war and burnishing up the war-tarnished conventionalities of peace'.[64] The rash of smouldering insurgencies—in Ireland, Mesopotamia, and the Middle East—left the services with little time to dwell on the lessons of continental war fighting with conscript armies. Little space was given over to POW matters in the Staff College curricula or in the pages of the various service journals. The only essay to address the issue in the *Army Quarterly* provocatively dismissed war 'conventions' as 'well-meaning but utterly ineffectual'.[65]

The POW convention was at heart a statement on the duties of the detaining power. Remarkably little was said about the responsibilities of the prisoners' own government towards their upkeep, other than that they were to conclude agreements with the detaining power over financial and logistical matters. Besides facilitating the work of those agencies permitted to intercede on the prisoners' behalf, it was assumed, but never explicitly stated, that governments would do their bit by faithfully applying the convention to the prisoners in their own hands. The possibility of states defying the logic of reciprocity and abandoning their prisoners to an uncertain fate was not foreseen by the drafters of the convention or the jurists who preceded them.[66] Clearly there was no question, in Britain's case, of the government purposely ignoring the interests of their men: even when confronting opponents in the 'uncivilized' world, Britain sought, where possible, to influence the way their men were treated, through a policy of calculated kindness, or the threat of retaliation. But naturally, there was always a sense in which the government's commitment to protecting the interests of its captured servicemen was likely to be influenced by the prevailing assumptions about the behaviour of its men under enemy fire. Should, in short, the government assume a duty of care for men whose conduct may have fallen below the standard expected of them? On this issue, as we will see, opinions, though still divided, had come a long way.

The armed forces were historically sensitive to the danger of what was euphemistically termed 'premature surrender', a phenomenon which, to the purist, covered everything from wilful desertion to abandoning a fight in order to avoid needless loss of life. The large number of surrenders seen in the British 1st Army, which crumpled before the German offensive in March 1918, showed the potential extent of the problem. For most of the Great War, recognition of medals, pension rights, and time in service were all withheld until prisoners had proved that their capture had not been due to any dereliction of duty. An officer captured 'in full possession of his physical powers' was guilty, in the opinion of the army council, 'if not [of] a military crime, [of] a lapse from the high

[64] J. F. C. Fuller cited in Brian Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 36.

[65] Dr J. Fitzgerald Lee 'Prisoners of War', *Army Journal*, 3 (1921–1922), pp. 348–57.

[66] Giovanna Procacci argues that Rome viewed its prisoners in Austro–Hungarian hands as deserters and refused, as a result, to arrange for food parcels to be sent to them: *Soldati e Prigionieri Italiani nella Grande Guerra, con una Raccolta di Lettere Inedite* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000).

standard of the past which has enabled the British army to assist in building up the Empire. [Any attempt] to influence the nation to look upon prisoners of war indiscriminately as objects of sympathy and indeed almost as heroes, will . . . go far towards undermining the fighting discipline of the Army'.[67] The shining example of Lt. Col. Graham Seton Hutchinson, who was reputed to have shot thirty-eight of his own men for attempting to surrender 'prematurely', was no doubt the kind of fighting discipline the council had in mind.[68]

This 'old army view', as it was known, did not go unchallenged. Attitudes softened during the German spring offensives of 1918 when the War Office came to acknowledge the bravery of those who volunteered to cover the retreat of their comrades, despite risking death or capture. A post-war study on the granting of awards noted the difficulties in delaying recommendations until after prisoners had been cleared of blame, as the necessary evidence required to decide on the issue was invariably unavailable by the time a court of inquiry could be convened. The only prisoners denied campaign medals were those who had been subjected to courts martial hearings in the field. In 'clear-cut' cases, the study concluded, awards ought to be granted at once. By the time the matter was raised in 1940, both the Air Ministry and the Admiralty were strongly in favour of following the study's advice: aircrew shot out of the sky, or sailors pulled out of the sea were scarcely culpable for the circumstances of their capture. Only the War Office hesitated, though the fate of the British Expeditionary Force, caught with its back to the sea, leaving 40,000 men with little option other than to accept surrender, gradually silenced most of the critics.[69] That the prisoners were, to many, the blameless victims of the government's failed policy of appeasement naturally helped their cause. 'My son', wrote one of Winston Churchill's constituents, 'went away like many others in glorious health and high spirits anxious to fight for England and with very few weapons to do it and Bren [machine-] guns to fight tanks'.[70] Others, captured at the time, felt similarly aggrieved.[71] The groundswell of public support in favour of Britain's prisoners that developed over the second half of 1940 had a noticeably chastening effect on official attitudes. 'There is no disgrace *per se* attaching to capture', noted the permanent under-secretary at the War Office in 1944. Ninety-nine point nine per cent of prisoners had acted entirely honourably, and mounting numbers of

[67] Army Council memorandum by Lord Milner (no date). HRO. 5M79 A8.

[68] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 177. Another example might have been Sgt. Donald D. Farmer, whose bravery before his capture by the Boers at Nooitgedacht in December 1900 earned him the Victoria Cross. Max Arthur, *Symbol of Courage: The Men behind the Medal* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2004), p. 173.

[69] Committee on the Granting of Honours, Decorations and Medals in Time of War 1939–1940, 18 July 1940. TNA. T301/7.

[70] Daisy Pledger to Churchill, 12 June 1942. Churchill College Archive Centre (hereafter CCAC) CHAR7/88/50.

[71] See Sean Longden, *Dunkirk: The Men They Left Behind* (London: Constable, 2008), pp. 13–188.

those who escaped captivity were honoured with gallantry awards. 'In very rare cases the circumstances of surrender may be disgraceful [but] it is for Authority to prove the disgrace, not of the prisoner of war to disprove it'.[72]

Nevertheless, suspicions lingered over whether POWs had indeed fought to the last bullet, made best the opportunity to escape, or were equally deserving of praise as their compatriots at liberty. The fall of 'impregnable' Singapore in January 1942, and the loss of Tobruk to inferior forces that June prompted some to question the mettle of the men responsible for their defence. Alfred Duff Cooper captured the mood in mid-July 1942 when he asked whether it was 'desirable to proceed on the assumption that the [captured] soldier must necessarily be guiltless . . . '. 'Headlines today', he reminded the cabinet, 'tell us of fierce fighting in the streets of Veronezh [in the Ukraine]. There was no street fighting reported in Singapore and Tobruk.'[73] The defenders of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaya duly received their campaign medals, but only after it became clear that Ottawa and Canberra would take a dim view of their men being denied awards that were routinely given out to men taken in the European theatre. A proposal to send campaign ribbons to prisoners in Germany in mid-1944 prompted the Admiralty to question whether the 'universal decoration of men who have fallen into the enemy's hands' was not 'liable to be misunderstood both by our enemies and by our allies'.[74] Though the War Office overrode the Admiralty's objections, the adjutant general encountered strikingly similar views when he tried to set up civil resettlement units to help reintegrate former POWs into society at the end of the war. Many senior officers clearly felt POWs were either intrinsically unworthy of special consideration, or undeserving of such privileges.[75]

Despite persistent uneasiness over the position of POWs after 1939, it is clear that attitudes towards prisoners had clearly moved on from the 'old army view' of the pre-1914 era. Former prisoners were partially responsible for this transformation. MPs, who had rushed to the colours in 1914, only to be captured and detained in Germany until the end of the war, returned to their seats in 1918 and used the opportunity to lambaste the War Office for failing to meet the needs of Britain's prisoners.[76] In contrast with their counterparts elsewhere

[72] Sir Frederick Bovenschen (WO) to Sir Robert Knox (Tsy.) 8 June 1944. TNA. T300/44. In 1941, 100 additional gallantry awards were allocated for POW escapers and special forces: by Oct. 1942, 28 escapers had received honours.

[73] War Cabinet Memo WP (42) 305, 20 July 1942. TNA. CAB66/26. Interestingly, British POWs had been detained at Veronezh during the Crimean War; see David Ingelsant (ed.), *The Prisoners of Voronesh: The Diary of Sergeant George Newman* (Woking: Unwin, 1977).

[74] Vice Admiral Sir G. Arbuthnot (Adty.) to Sir Robert Knox (Tsy.) 10 May 1944. TNA. T300/44. Similar views were taken over the awarding of campaign stars to FEPOWs.

[75] Jeremy A. Crang, *The British Army and the People's War 1939–1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 104–05.

[76] See the interventions by former POWs in the debate on 29 Oct. 1918: *Parl. Debs. Commons,* 5th Series, 1918. vol. 110, folio 1333.

in Europe, Britain's former-POWs did not establish their own lobby-group or mobilize behind a common agenda.[77] The reasons for this need not detain us here, but the fact that former-POWs lacked a distinctive voice was important. On the one hand, as a group, the interests of POWs failed to attract the attention, or sympathy, they arguably deserved. The government refused to entertain POWs' claims against the German government for the injuries they had suffered in captivity, even though similar claims from civilian internees were recognized.[78] On the other hand, by subsuming the prisoners' experience within the broader account of the war, a version of the POW life was allowed to emerge which, though a distortion of reality, helped integrate a positive image of POWs into the dominant narrative of the war. The spate of POW memoirs, written for the most part by officer POWs, dwelt mostly on the heroic antics of escapers and depicted camp life as akin to that found in some of Britain's more austere public schools.[79] Themes such as prisoner mistreatment, or the drudgery of camp life were noticeably absent from these works. In common with other aspects of the 'trench-literature' genre, interest in POW memoirs tailed off over the 1920s, but the early 1930s saw a recrudescence of escape-stories. M. C. C. Harrison and H. A. Cartwright's account of their multiple escape attempts, *Within Four Walls* (1930), hit the crest of the wave, going through two reprints within five months, and making the authors celebrities in their own right. Many other books, some now carrying the experiences of ordinary soldiers, also captured the public mood.[80] As a result, the image of prisoners to take hold after the war was not one of cowardly or effeminate slackers, or even innocent victims of German, or Turkish, abuse, but rather of 'wily Brits', continuing the war in the only way they could, and outwitting the 'dastardly Hun' at every turn.[81]

[77] See Heather Jones, 'The Enemy Disarmed: POWs and the Victims of Wartime: Britain, France and Germany, 1914–1920', PhD Thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2006, chapter 7, and Graham Wootton, *The Politics of Influence: British Ex-Servicemen, Cabinet Decisions and Cultural Change, 1917–1957* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 77–170. Rainer Pöppinghege, '"Kriegsteilnehmer zweiter Klasse"? Die Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener 1919–1933', *Militärgeschichtlichte Zeitschrift* 64 (2005), pp. 391–423.

[78] In Canada, where the POW lobby was more vocal, prisoners were only marginally more successful in having their interests recognized. See Vance, *Objects of Concern*, pp. 89–98.

[79] See *inter alia* H. G. Durnford, *The Tunnellers of Holzminden (with a side issue)* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1920); Mjr. E. W. C. Sandes, *In Kut and Captivity with the 6th Division* (London: John Murray, 1919); Lt. E. H. Jones, *The Road to En-Dor* (London: John Lane, 1920); and H. C. W. Bishop, *A Kut Prisoner* (London: John Lane, 1920).

[80] M. C. C. Harrison and H. A. Cartwright, *Within Four Walls* (London: Edward Arnold, 1930). Cartwright was sent to Berne as military attaché in 1940 to help facilitate POW escapes. See also *inter alia* H. G. Durnford et al., *Escapers All: Being the Personal Narratives of Fifteen Escapers from War-Time Prison Camps, 1914–1918* (London: John Lane, 1932), and P. Walter Long, *The Other Ranks of Kut* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1938). Cartwright to W. S. Churchill (First Lord), 21 Sep. 1939. CCAC. CHAR19/1/10.

[81] S. P. Mackenzie, 'The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War', *War in History*, 15/1 (2008), pp. 1–16. For the impact of escape literature on MI9, see Rollings, *Wire and Walls*, p. 39.

Perceptions of the state's responsibilities towards its prisoners in enemy hands were also affected by broader changes in political and social attitudes between the wars. The MP General Sir Ivor Philipps anticipated this development when, in late October 1918, he challenged the government's record in providing for its servicemen. 'You made a contract with the soldier that you would feed, clothe and pay him, and you have done none of these things. You have left him to charity'.[82] The 1929 POW convention did nothing to change this situation. The provision of welfare remained the duty of relief societies, and the role of governments was left obscure. As we shall see, the government's reluctance to shoulder responsibility for meeting the physical needs of its prisoners after mid-1940 cost it dear. Nevertheless the way officials came to view their responsibility at this time, suggests that attitudes had changed since Philipps' speech, as a result of the state's deepening involvement in social welfare issues over the intervening decades. This development was by no means uniform, nor was it entirely confined to the interwar years, but the arrival of full manhood suffrage in February 1918 proved decisive in extending the boundaries of state responsibility, by ending the situation in which governments, and their civil servants, could blithely exclude whole swathes of the adult male population from their policy deliberations.[83] Since governments were accountable to the entire adult male population, it was incumbent upon them to take account of all sections of society, irrespective of the economic status or social standing.

Over the course of the 1930s, the state made substantial inroads into the social fabric of the country, and assumed an increasingly central role in meeting the basic employment and welfare needs of the population.[84] The working class entered the Second World War with access to a level of state-funded assistance that was unimaginable to their forebears a quarter of a century before.[85] Historians strike a cautionary note over whether these developments were genuinely influenced by social-reformist ideas. Officials were slow in jettisoning *laissez-faire* policies, and the Treasury's pervasive influence over all aspects of government policy over the 1930s ensured that retrenchment and public expenditure cuts were routinely employed in the face of economic difficulties. Those reforms that were introduced, aimed at alleviating the symptoms, rather than the cause, of working class distress, and were invariably justified on grounds which had little to do with the new thinking on social responsibility. There was, in the words of one scholar,

[82] *Parl. Debs. Commons, vol. 110, 1918*, 29 Oct. 1918, fol. 1312.

[83] See J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London: Macmillan, 1985), esp. pp. 103–245.

[84] By 1934, the year the government assumed responsibility for unemployment issues, some thirty-seven per cent of all income generated by registered charities was derived from state sources. Justin Davis Smith, 'The Voluntary Tradition: Philanthropy and Self-Help in Britain, 1500–1945', in Justin Davis Smith, Colin Rochester, and Rodney Hedley, *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 26.

[85] Anne Crowther, *British Social Policy 1914–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 73.

a 'strong streak of hostility' towards treating the unemployed and impoverished kindly lest any display of generosity discouraged people from seeking work.[86]

But the patchy record on social reform should not imply that government departments and their officials were either immune to social-welfare concerns, or resistant to adopting fresh approaches to the problems at hand. Although government measures were not always successful in meeting the objectives for which they were designed, their very existence lent weight to the argument that the state's assumption of new social responsibilities was politically and ethically correct. The Board of Trade was particularly receptive to external stimuli and actively promoted a culture of innovation within its various departments.[87] Elsewhere reformist thinking took longer to take root. The Treasury, for instance, was still reluctant, in March 1940, to establish arrangements to meet prisoners' financial needs or formulate any policy based on the 'assumption that the British Army habitually throws away its arms'.[88] Similar views held sway in that bastion of social exclusivity and conservatism, the War Office.[89] The botched demobilization at the end of the Great War, coupled with the need to 'neutralize' the political ambitions of some of the more radical veterans' organizations, led to the instigation of a series of social welfare and pension reforms for servicemen and their families in the early 1920s.[90] The scope of these measures was, however, limited. The issue of dependents' allowances, for instance, vital for the wellbeing of prisoners' families, was completely ignored until the last years of peace, despite the efforts of charitable organizations to have the matter addressed.[91] Yet, hidebound and complacent though the War Office undoubtedly was, by the late 1930s, unmistakable changes were afoot. Leslie Hore-Belisha's tenure as secretary of state (1937–1940) saw the introduction of new blood into the higher staff officer positions and improvements in recruitment, promotions, service pay and conditions of a distinctly reformist character.[92]

It was not until the summer of 1940 that the War Office had to give serious thought to the problem of POWs, and another year would pass before the tentative developments in pre-war thinking were to have a noticeable impact

[86] Keith Laybourn, *The Evolution of British Social Policy and the Welfare State* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), p. 205.

[87] See Roger Davidson and Rodney Lowe, 'Bureaucracy and Innovation in British Welfare Policy, 1870–1945', in W. J. Mommsen (ed.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London: Croom Helm and German Historical Institute, 1981), pp. 263–95.

[88] Humphrys-Davies (Tsy.) 7 Mar. 1940, cited in Hately-Broad, 'Prisoner of War Families', chap. 5.

[89] Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 38–44.

[90] See Keith Jeffrey, 'The Post-War Army', in I. F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 211–234, and Stephen R. Ward, 'Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost', in Stephen R. Ward (ed.), *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War* (Port Washington, NY and London: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 10–37.

[91] Hately-Broad, 'Prisoner of War Families', chap. 1.

[92] Crang, *British Army and the People's War*, p. 1.

on POW policy-making. The arrival of Lt. Gen. Sir Ronald Adam as adjutant general in early June 1941 proved pivotal in translating these ideas into practice. Adam had been one of Hore-Belisha's 'young' reformers: possessing a 'good and objective mind' but being, in the war minister's words, 'of better metal than most of those who fall in the academic category'. Under Hore-Belisha's patronage, Adam rose rapidly, from commandant at the staff college in 1937 to deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and commander of 3rd Corps in France and Belgium.[93] The string of catastrophic defeats suffered by British arms from 1940 clearly helped Adam's reformist agenda, but his drive to make the army appear rational, modern, and above all, democratic, probably had its roots in his understanding of the social reformist thinking of the 1930s. He was, for instance, prepared to explain Britain's military setbacks in terms of poor morale: a 'psychological problem' which, 'like sex', Adam admitted, 'the Britisher is [. . .] almost ashamed to talk about'.[94] If such thinking brought only indirect comfort to the servicemen languishing in enemy hands, it certainly helped dilute some of the army's instinctive prejudice against those suspected of 'premature surrender'. His willingness to recognize how the rigid discipline, monotonous regularity, and unfamiliar surroundings of service life affected individual soldiers sensitized him to the potential impact of 'barbed-wire disease' on Britain's prisoners and the need for civil resettlement units to help former POWs adjust to 'normal' life.[95] It is difficult to imagine other adjutant generals consulting the army psychiatrist for an insight into Germany's obstinate actions during the shackling crisis in October 1942.

By 1939 the context within which officials considered the problem of wartime captivity had developed a long way from the rigid environment which had coloured official thinking after 1914. Prisoners were naturally touchy about how they were viewed at home. The choice of Bing Crosby's latest hit, 'Lay that pistol down Ma, lay that pistol down', to accompany the arrival of a ship carrying repatriated POWs into Belfast harbour in May 1944 provoked a chorus of complaints from those on board.[96] But government officials could scarcely fail to be influenced by the high level of public interest in the fate of POWs,

[93] Bond, *British Military Policy*, pp. 71, 332. Hore-Belisha (23 Nov. 1937) cited in R. J. Minning, *The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 70.

[94] Paper on morale, 23 Feb. 1942, cited in Hately-Broad, 'Prisoner of War Families', chap. 2.

[95] 'Large numbers' of depot troops recruited before 1941 had 'broken down' by 1943. Ben Shephard, 'Risk Factors and PTSD: A Historian's Perspective', in G. M. Rosen (ed.), *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Issues and Controversies* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 2004), pp. 39–61 (44), and *idem*, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), pp. 313–38. Peter Reese, *Homecoming Heroes: An Account of the Re-Assimilation of British Military Personnel into Civilian Life* (London: Pen & Sword, 1992), pp. 146–48.

[96] Arthur F. Gibbs, Ms. Diary, 'Kriegie', entry of 27 May 1944. IWM. Depart. of Docus., 92/4/1. For similar incidents in 1945, see J. Roberts, *A Terrier Goes to War* (London: Minerva, 1998), pp. 151–52.

or ignore the importance of being seen to treat prisoners' needs with due care and attention. The popular refrain after 1914, that the War Office was no more interested in prisoners than butchers in meatless days, was simply no longer tenable.[97] Such assumptions were strengthened by the fact that the international regime governing the treatment of POWs bore a heavy British imprint. The 1929 POW convention not only built on the harsh lessons of the Great War but reflected a peculiarly British understanding of the compromises required to balance the competing priorities of humanity, state sovereignty, and military necessity. Upholding the POW regime after 1939 was, then, not simply a matter of political pragmatism, or even humanitarian idealism, but rather a question of preserving a particular set of rules and norms that embodied Britain's political interests and ethical beliefs.

[97] The phrase is attributed to Lord Newton. See *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 Aug. 1942.

3

POWs and Anglo–German Relations, 1939–1941

The events of 1940–41 revolutionized the nature of European warfare. Nine months of almost surreal 'phoney war' came to an abrupt end when German tanks overran French lines in the Ardennes and sent Allied troops on a headlong retreat that only stopped when the remnants of Britain's army were hastily evacuated from Dunkirk, and French government sued for an armistice. Overnight, pre-war fears of a return to the senseless deadlock of trench warfare were replaced by the chilling realization that western forces had been utterly overwhelmed by the German *Blitzkrieg*. Morale in Britain and amongst its handful of bruised European allies was temporarily buoyed by victories against the Italians in the western desert over the winter of 1940 but sunk again when German troops prevailed over British and Dominion forces in Greece and Crete the following spring. Britain had lost prisoners to continental foes before, but never had the numerical balance been so disproportionate—ten-to-one—in favour of its adversary. The onset of Hitler's 'war of annihilation' against Soviet Russia in July 1941 heaped further strains on the POW regime. Reports reaching London spoke of a level of barbarity not seen in Europe since the middle ages. How this would affect behaviour in the west was not clear, but a question mark inevitably hung over Berlin's continued commitment to the POW convention at a time when the bulk of its forces were engaged in a war that bore little resemblance to the kind of conflict envisaged in 1929. Berlin's brusque rejection of Moscow's offer to apply the 1907 Hague provisions in their treatment of prisoners and refusal to allow Swedish diplomats to perform their duties as protecting power—as it had done with the Poles the previous year—hardly augured well for British prisoners languishing in German camps.

At the start of the war, with these problems still lying in the future, British officials could only judge Germany on the basis of its past record. The propensity for violence in German military culture had already been evident in official pronouncements and publications before the Great War. The General Staff's *War Book* of 1902 openly decried the 'sentimentality and flabby emotion' of those who sought to 'influence the development of the usages of war in a way which was in fundamental contradiction with the nature of war and its

object'.[1] Germany's conduct in Belgium in 1914 showed that such views were not mere rhetorical flourishes. British prisoners were by and large treated in accordance with the Hague regulations, but the final years of the war witnessed an alarming increase in the number and intensity of violent attacks against British servicemen.[2]

For all the advances made in the war's wake to expand and strengthen the POW regime none of the conflicts which took place after 1929—in Manchuria and China, Spain, and Abyssinia—gave reason to believe that state behaviour had radically improved. Italy's execution of emperor Haile Selassie's son-in-law, General Ras Desta, in February 1937—'shot in cold blood by a firing squad after having been taken prisoner in battle'—was, in the eyes of some British commentators, 'a further step in a so-called civilized nation's regression into barbarism'.[3] The brutality inflicted on Germany's own population by the Nazi regime naturally fuelled British concerns over German conduct in a future war. Official publications of the German military reflected pre-1914 values. A *Wehrmacht* report into the organizational problems of modern war in 1938 bluntly concluded that 'necessity knows no law'. Attitudes towards prisoners were equally uncompromising, and bore little resemblance to the humanitarian ideals of either the Hague regulations or their Geneva successors. A study of POW detention during the Great War, published by the German High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, OKW) in late 1939, focused almost exclusively on the threat posed by enemy prisoners to German security: scarcely a word was said about Germany's duties as detaining power.[4] Not surprisingly, British observers viewed the prospect of British servicemen falling into German hands with some alarm. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), tasked with tracking German observance to international law from the start of the war, caught the general mood when, in late September 1939, it warned of the 'probability' of Germany fighting 'on no rules whatsoever', and of camps run by the Gestapo on a regime of 'sheer brutality'. 'It appears very probable', it grimly warned, 'that our

[1] *The German War Book* (London: 1915, German original 1902). Best, *Humanity in Warfare*, pp. 172–79.

[2] For Belgium, see John Horne and Mark Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 89–174, and violence against western POWs, Heather Jones, 'The German Spring Reprisals of 1917: Prisoners of War and the Violence of the Western Front', *German History,* 26/3 (2008), pp. 335–56.

[3] *The Economist*, 6 Mar. 1937, p. 520.

[4] OKW, *Kriegsgefangene 1914–1918. Auf Grund der Kriegsakten bearbeitet beim OKW* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1939). The POW convention was published as OKW, *Vorschrift für das Kriegsgefangenenwesen, Teil 2: I Abkommen über die Behandlung der Kriegsgefangenen vom 27. Juli 1929* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1939). See Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, pp. 25–29; Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, and Hans Umbreit (eds.), *Germany in the Second World War, vol. 5/ii, Organisation and Mobilization in the German Sphere of Power: Wartime Administration, Economy, and Manpower Resources 1942–1944/5* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 37 and 300.

conceptions of the treatment of prisoners of war will have to be entirely revised'.[5]

Such gloomy predictions overlooked, however, some of the more positive aspects of Germany's record. Despite the menacing signs, there were grounds for guarded optimism. Imperial Germany had not been alone in violating pre-war norms. The French held several hundred German POWs in Morocco during the Great War, despite the evident danger to their health, to impress the local population. And for all the unpalatable militarism displayed by the German army defence lawyers at the Leipzig 'war crimes' trials in 1921, it was a noticeably compassionate agenda that Germany brought to the conference table in Geneva eight years later.[6] Berlin tabled no fewer than twenty-two amendments to the ICRC's draft code—covering everything from the thickness of bedding to the monthly allocation of soap—which would have saddled detaining powers with far greater responsibilities for POW welfare than was ultimately the case.[7] The British delegates found to their evident surprise that their German counterparts were 'efficient and reasonable'. 'Next to our Allies in the last war', Sir Horace Rumbold reported at the conference's close, 'our opponents lent specially favourable support to [. . .] our proposals', and were often 'the first to propose the adoption of the British text or amendment'.[8] By 1939, things had moved a long way since 1929, but some heart could be taken from the fact that it was Hitler's government that had taken responsibility for ratifying the POW convention in March 1934, and entering its provisions into German domestic law and service regulations.[9] Whether this was simply window-dressing for the benefit of Germany's neighbours, or represented a genuine attempt to accommodate humanitarian norms into Germany's field regulations, remained an open question which few in London were confident to pronounce upon in the first weeks of the war.

BENIGN NEGLECT: BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS POWS DURING THE PHONEY WAR

The obvious interest Britain had shown in updating the POW regime after 1918, and the no less obvious doubts surrounding Germany's attitude to the process, might lead one to expect that London would seek to strengthen the regime after

[5] JIC report, 29 Sep. 1939 cited in Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 280.

[6] See Alfred de Zayas, *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 1939–1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 3–10; Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, pp. 374–79.

[7] See *Propositions et observations des gouvernements sur l'avant-projet de convention internationale relative au traitement des prisonniers de guerre* (Geneva: ICRC, 1929).

[8] Sir Horace Rumbold, Geneva, to Sir Arthur Henderson (foreign secretary), 31 July 1929. TNA. FO372/2550. Rumbold to Henderson, 31 July 1929. TNA. WO32/3653.

[9] For German ratification, Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 729–31.

war broke out in September 1939. Britain had, as in 1914, given a 'continental commitment' to defend its French ally, and while the war quickly assumed the form of a *Sitzkrieg*, RAF 'leaflet' raids over western Germany and the presence of marauding German battle cruisers on the high seas ensured that the issue of wartime captivity could scarcely be avoided: indeed, the war was only a day old when Britain lost its first serviceman to German captivity.[10] At one level, Britain's actions before May 1940 fully accorded with its obligations under the convention. The United States was appointed protecting power to look after Britain's residual interests in Germany, and in London a POW information bureau was opened to handle individual inquiries. Swiss diplomats were allowed to set up an office in the newly vacated German embassy to help it meet the needs of German residents in British territory. In October, Britain agreed to apply article 68 of the POW convention—allowing for the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs—and dutifully exchanged lists of POWs already in its custody. Progress was even made in extending a level of protection to civilians, with agreement reached in February 1940 on the principle of repatriating women, children, and men of non-military age.

This outward show of compliance masked, however, a more complex attitude towards the POW regime which did not always sit comfortably with the humanitarian spirit underpinning the convention. Britain's detention of the 250 German military personnel held by the end of 1939 was correct, but elsewhere officials were happy to extract political advantage from prisoners whenever the opportunity arose. The Admiralty's treatment of the captain and crew of the *Altmark*, whose cargo of British prisoners were sprung from captivity by the Royal Navy in February 1940, is a case in point. Although officials knew full well that the prisoners had been well treated, they did nothing to correct the acerbic comments which appeared in the press about the German captain and his 'hell ship'. Similar sentiments coloured the response to Belgium's Yuletide offer to release fourteen German and nineteen British and French soldiers who had stumbled across the frontier since the start of the war. Interest in the idea quickly faded when it became apparent that the Germans were deserters: officials clearly felt it more important to encourage desertion from the German army than secure the release of their own men.[11]

The dominant characteristic of Britain's policy towards POWs before mid-1940 was not, though, one of steely realism but rather of benign neglect. The administrative arrangements put in place to manage POWs in 1939 both reflected and encouraged this outlook. Neither the Air Ministry nor the Admiralty felt the matter sufficiently important to warrant diverting resources to deal with POW

[10] Oliver Clutton-Brock, *Footprints on the Sands of Time: RAF Bomber Command Prisoners-of-War in Germany 1939–1945* (London: Grub Street, 2003), p. 1. Rollings, *Wire and Walls*, pp. 43–45.

[11] Correspondence in TNA. FO371/23941 W19081. Martin A Doherty, 'The Attack on the Altmark: A Case Study in Wartime Propaganda', *JCH*, 38/2 (2003), pp. 187–200.

issues. Responsibility fell, by default, to the WO. Here, though, the existence of no fewer than four departments, each with its finger in the POW pie, meant that policy-making was, at best, incoherent.[12] It took the imminent collapse of Allied resistance in France to finally persuade the WO to create a unified Directorate of POW (DPW), replicating the arrangements trialled during the Great War, but its director, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Alan Hunter, was not appointed until the second week of June, and policy-making remained dependent on the good will of the financial and casualty departments which retained their residual interest in POW matters. Decisions on key issues continued to be made on the hoof, with little or no thought given to past experience: General Belfield's detailed 'lessons learnt' study of the last war was allowed to languish, undisturbed, in the WO library 'until a comparatively late stage'.[13] Matters were scarcely better in the FO, where authority was again dispersed across a number of departments, and policy-making marked by 'endless paper-chasing and muddle'.[14] The arrival, in April 1940, of Sir George Warner, one time delegate to the 1929 conference and former minister to Berne, led to a more thoughtful and systematic approach to policy. But Warner could do little to elevate the status of POW matters within the FO or improve the quality of inter-departmental cooperation.[15] The latter was a particularly serious deficiency as questions relating to POW affairs frequently required the input of an array of different agencies, few of whom were sufficiently attuned to humanitarian issues to give POW matters the kind of sustained and sympathetic consideration they required.[16]

The confusion that beset policy-making in Whitehall ensured that decision-making remained a slow, cumbersome business, even before the governments in India, the colonies and the Dominions added their views. The problem was particularly evident to US diplomats in Berlin, who were charged by their government to build bridges between the two sides over POW issues in order to support Washington's peace-brokering activities during the first months of the war. British procrastination, even over routine inquiries, gave US diplomats serious cause for concern. 'In times of hostility', the State Department warned the FO in late October, 'nations are quick to see reason for reprisals, and it is in the best interests of the British in Germany, prisoners of war and civilians,

[12] Memo by Sir George Warner (PWD) for D. Scott (FO), 14 Mar. 1940, and minute, Warner, 2 May 1940. HRO. 5M79. A24. The departments were casualties, finance, military intelligence liaison, and a POW section under the Adjutant General's Director of Personnel, known as A.G.3 (b).

[13] 'Its utility [. . .] would have been considerable if more copies had been available and its existence had been known earlier to the officers of the [PW] Directorate'. Phillimore, 'Prisoners of War', pp. 7–8. Mjr.-Gen. Sir Herbert E. Belfield, 'Report on Directorate of Prisoners of War', Sep., 1920. TNA. FO369/1450 K15026.

[14] The consular, war, treaty and League of Nations departments.

[15] Minute, Hooper (FO) 8 Jan. 1940. TNA. FO371/23940 W18530. Memo by Sir F. M. Shepherd (FO), 16 Feb. 1940. TNA. FO916/14.

[16] Warner (PWD) to Miss E. M. Wilson (10 Downing Street), 17 Oct. 1940. HRO. 5M79. A24.

that no pretext be accorded for reprisal. Delay may well complicate and render more difficult the task of the American embassy in Berlin of according adequate protection.'[17] This was no idle musing. By Christmas, Berlin had no fewer than three reprisal measures in force, imposed in retaliation to Britain's internment of German males in India and Tanganyika, the arrest of prominent members of the German communities in Iraq and Egypt and the use of Holloway gaol as a temporary detention centre for female civilians in London.[18] German willingness to consider technical improvements in the convention—negotiating reciprocal agreements over the rates of POW pay, designation of ranks, provision of tobacco, and system of censorship and correspondence—was clearly a good sign, as was its support for extending some of the prisoners' privileges to civilian internees. Nevertheless, before May 1940, notwithstanding American encouragement, neither side had sufficient stake in the POW regime to warrant investing much time or political capital in bolstering its provisions. It was, perhaps, an inevitable result of the surreal conditions of the phoney war, but it was an oversight the British would soon come to regret.

THE INVASION 'EPOCH': THE IMPACT OF DUNKIRK ON BRITISH POW POLICY

By the time the remnants of Britain's expeditionary force had been rounded up and escorted to their prison camps in Germany, some 44,800 British servicemen had been lost to German captivity, including over 1,500 army officers, 291 pilots and 436 aircrew. The sheer scale of the calamity ultimately transformed British thinking on POW issues, but the process was neither swift nor was it entirely uniform in its effects. It required, first and foremost, a change of outlook—a psychological shift in attitudes towards prisoners—that could hardly be accomplished overnight. Caring for the flotsam of past defeats had, naturally, little appeal for a country engrossed in the struggle for national survival. The number of staff employed in the FO's POW department (PWD) actually reduced over the second half of the year, forcing Warner to operate at levels well 'below the margin of safety'.[19] It also required a radical change in strategy. Such was Germany's superiority in POW numbers that there was some doubt over whether the principle of reciprocity, so fundamental to the functioning of the POW regime, would have any bearing on German attitudes. With the *Wehrmacht* routing British arms whenever they met, it was hardly credible for

[17] State Department to US embassy, London, 21 Oct. 1939 NARA. Decimal File, 1930–1939 Box 1678, 362.4115/48A. The embassy reiterated the points to the FO. Kirk (US embassy, London) to FO, 19 Oct. 1939. TNA. FO371/23939 W15090.

[18] See memo by the Special Interests Division, Swiss Legation, London, 16 Jan. 1940. TNA. FO369/2561 K1586.

[19] Warner (PWD) to D. Scott (FO) 20 Dec. 1940. HRO. 5M79. A24.

London to try to intimidate Berlin through reprisals or the threat of post-war retribution.

In the circumstances, there were only two options open to British policy-makers: both aimed at promoting an environment that encouraged German compliance to the POW regime. The first sought to strengthen the status of the convention by ensuring that, whenever Britain articulated its own interests, it did so using the language and principles of the convention. So long as discussions remained at the level of international law, Berlin might be dissuaded from resorting to power politics. The convention would, in short, provide a discursive medium that would help shape—and necessarily limit—German expectations over the treatment of POWs. The second approach entailed leading by example, ensuring that the treatment of German prisoners in British custody was beyond reproach. Any obvious departure from the letter of the law might, it was felt, merely encourage Germany to abandon those elements of the convention it found inconvenient. Colonel N. Coates, General Hunter's deputy at the DPW, captured the essence of the strategy in March 1941 when he insisted 'on the necessity of strict observance of the convention, in order that there should be no questions of reprisals, and to ensure the right to claim proper treatment for our prisoners in Germany'. '[W]hile the Germans had little intention of exercising their full rights', he noted, 'they were insistent on the establishment of those rights, [. . . and] might take advantage of the slightest infraction to impose restrictions on our men'.[20] Most of Coates' colleagues happily accepted the logic of his argument. But whether the welfare of British prisoners might also hinge on the strict observance of Britain's other legal obligations—most notably in the conduct of actual fighting—was a point upon which, as we shall see, opinion remained sharply divided.

In the immediate aftermath of France's defeat, there was little British officials could do but sit tight and await news of the fate of their men. German broadcasts trumpeted the *Wehrmacht's* chivalrous treatment of enemy prisoners, but snippets of information reaching London of summary executions behind the battle lines,[21] and the inadequate facilities provided for the columns of exhausted and demoralized soldiers, force-marched across northern France, painted a rather more sombre picture. It was only when prisoners reached their permanent camps that US diplomats could furnish accurate reports on their status and conditions of captivity. Those too ill to be moved remained out of reach, in hospitals in France and Belgium, until November.[22] The onset of winter

[20] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, WO, 4 Mar. 1941. TNA. FO916/45.

[21] The incidents at Le Paradis (26 May) and Wormhoudt (28 May) saw ninety-seven and eighty men killed. For German atrocities based on racial grounds, see Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[22] Jefferson Paterson (US embassy, Berlin) to Dr Bourwieg (WASt, German Armed Forces Inquiry Office) BA-MA. RW48/13. See Longden, *Dunkirk*, pp. 55–187.

brought little respite. As we shall see in the next chapter, attempts to arrange for the supply of relief parcels to the camps continually floundered and gave rise to increasingly vocal criticism of official policy. In Germany, meanwhile, the repeated use of firearms to quell the rowdy behaviour of officer prisoners at Oflag VII C/H, Laufen, led to the wounding of one subaltern in December and the death of another in January. The following month reprisals were imposed on British POWs in retaliation for the delay in transmitting POW mail across the Atlantic and the alleged maltreatment of German prisoners in Canada. In April, meanwhile, defeats in Greece and Crete sent another 25,000 British and Commonwealth servicemen into German captivity.[23] Concern over the condition of these men was aggravated by delays in getting neutral inspectors and supplies to the temporary camps in Corinth and Salonica. It was not until the late summer that the majority of prisoners were transferred to Germany—after a gruelling train journey through Yugoslavia—and a proper control could be established over their wellbeing and conditions of internment.[24]

Confronted by such a confused and disturbing situation, official opinion in London oscillated between a sense of dejection and irritation at the powerlessness of Britain's position. Thrown together just as the crisis erupted, the WO's DPW was quickly overwhelmed by its tasks, especially the need to transfer Britain's Axis prisoners to Canada and out of harm's way. Mlle Lucie Odier, a long-standing member of the ICRC, who visited London in August 1940, was struck by the fatalism and despondency she found. 'At the moment the British authorities are interested almost exclusively in the practical matters of relief, the transmission of news and prisoner lists, the dispatch of provisions and clothes, etc. [. . .] Theoretical or diplomatic issues, arising out of the conventions, appear to them of secondary importance, and [. . .] they have lost all confidence in the effective application of the conventions by their adversaries'.[25] Increasingly desperate attempts to regain a measure of control over events only went to show the extent of Britain's predicament. In July, for instance, efforts were made to distil some of the lessons learnt over the summer on how soldiers could evade enemy capture, for new recruits. The best the WO could come up with was to urge its men to adopt the demeanour of the French peasantry: donning berets (a 'very effective disguise'), slinging haversacks over one shoulder (not both), walking with 'a tired slouch', and avoiding that peculiarly British affectation of using a cane as a walking stick.[26]

[23] This offset British victories over the Italians during the winter. I. S. O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and the Middle East, vol. ii, The Germans Come to the Help of their Ally* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 147.

[24] See in general Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, pp. 64–92, Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, pp. 27–48.

[25] 'Rapport de Mlle Odier sur son voyage à Londres, 17 juillet–9 août 1940', ICRC. G3/22 LO/MGB. Carton 80.

[26] 'Experience of British POW', in Army Training Memo No 34. July 1940. TNA. WO165/39.

Problems also remained at an administrative level, where a lack of resources, oversight, and inter-departmental coordination continued to blight policy-making until late 1941. In April, Warner left the PWD, worn out by the pressure of work and disillusioned by the lack of support received from his superiors. His successor, Sir Harold Satow, who had retired from the Levant Service in 1937, soon submerged beneath a weight of papers. Had he not been a man of 'immense vitality and vigour' and well versed in the consular aspects of POW work, it is likely that the PWD would have failed to cope.[27] Difficulties at an inter-departmental and inter-governmental level continued to dog decision-making in London and hamper the work of American diplomats in Berlin. '[W]hat hurt most during my sixteen months in Germany', Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Britain's former ambassador to the Hague, reported after his repatriation home, 'was to hear despairing [American] remarks [. . .] about their complete inability to get from London either clear or at times even any replies to their telegrams'.[28]

It was psychological barriers, however, and not administrative shortcomings that created the most intractable problems for British planners. Those officials outside the DPW and PWD, not intimately connected with POWs matters, were simply too distracted to make the intellectual adjustment required to understand, far less appreciate, the needs of Britain's men in German hands. The problem is no better illustrated than the attitude encountered by the JIC when it tried to garner support for an exchange of sick and wounded POWs over the winter. Such an operation promised to return home several thousand incapacitated British soldiers, against a loss of a mere fifteen men—one naval officer, one army officer, and thirteen aircraft personnel—to Germany, plus a further five to neutral internment. Yet, when the JIC raised the matter in late 1940, it ran into resistance in the Home Office and Security Service both of whom were fearful lest knowledge of British interrogation techniques or internment procedures reached enemy ears.[29] Equally significant was the pervasive 'attritional' mindset found in the services ministries. 'I am not at all satisfied', wrote one senior Air Ministry official, 'that we should be doing anything more than slightly prolonging the war if we were to arrange an exchange, because we should be putting ourselves in a position similar to people playing snooker billiards, who go on taking the balls out of the pockets so that the game is prolonged indefinitely'.[30] A paper prepared by the Directorate of POWs in early 1941 took it as axiomatic that any proposal for repatriating POWs would 'be looked at rather in the light of a method of

[27] Sir H. Satow (PWD) to Sir G. Warner 7 Apr. 1941. HRO. 5M79. D5. The war gave Satow a second wind: he enjoyed an active life after retiring in 1947 and died aged ninety-three. *The Times*, 19 July 1969, p. 10c.

[28] Sir L. Oliphant to Sir G. Warner, 24 Oct. 1941. HRO. 5M79. D5. Oliphant does not dwell on this matter in his memoir, *An Ambassador in Bonds* (London: Putnam, 1947).

[29] Admiralty to FO, 15 Oct. 1940. TNA. FO916/2573.

[30] Minute, Philip Babington for Admiral Sir Charles Little, 2nd Sea Lord, 24 Dec. 1940. Little concurred; minute of 7 Jan. 1943. TNA. ADM1/11116. For air ministry intransigence see minute, Cavendish-Bentinck (chair, JIC), 16 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2573.

raising dissension between Italy and Germany than as a real effort to make an exchange'.[31] It was only in the late spring, with the ebbing of the invasion scare, that opposition to an Anglo–German exchange gradually eased, but a mixture of apathy and hostility was still evident in the early summer when the FO tried to hammer out arrangements for an exchange later that year.[32]

If, in the end, the services were prepared to agree to an exchange of POWs, they were much less amenable when prisoners' interests appeared to stand in the way of Britain's war effort. The objection here was not simply that national survival had to take precedence over the wellbeing of British prisoners. What principally concerned officials was the fear that any implicit linkage between Britain's prosecution of the war and the fate of British prisoners in Germany would merely encourage Berlin to look upon its captives as hostages. The task of striking a balance between Britain's military needs and the interests of its prisoners was obviously eased by the palpable ineffectiveness of British belligerency before the summer of 1942: Berlin scarcely had any reason to vent its displeasure against British prisoners. Britain's much vaunted strategic bombardment of Germany, though provoking moral indignation among a handful of MPs, was so obviously ineffectual that by the end of 1941 Bomber Command was forced to suspend the campaign and return to the drawing board. In Germany the media deliberately played down attacks on Germany for fear of denting civilian morale.[33] On the ground, the two sides traded accusations over alleged atrocities, especially during the campaigns in Greece and Crete, but infringements of customary standards of behaviour were generally rare, helped, no doubt, by the fact that the sparsely populated wastes of the western desert was particularly conducive to the conduct of a 'clean' war. Prisoners on both sides were occasionally shot out of hand, employed on war-related tasks, or ill-treated, but both sides recognized these incidents as exceptions, violations of accepted norms, rather than setting a new standard for the conduct of military operations.[34]

That warfare between the two sides before mid-1942 remained bounded by traditional standards and expectations did not, however, mean that there were not problems on the way. On a number of occasions, Britain's pursuit of military objectives undermined the very principles upon which the POW regime was based. The FO's success in preventing this happening was limited. In May 1941, the foreign secretary was rebuked for questioning instructions, issued at the premier's behest, for the seizure and holding of Italian hospital ships until such

[31] JIC (41) 80, 23 Feb. 1941. TNA. FO371/28966.

[32] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, 25 June 1941. TNA. FO916/47.

[33] Memo by R. Allen (FO), 5 Nov. 1941. TNA. FO371/28887 W13650. For muted parliamentary criticism at this date, see Garrett, *Ethics and Airpower*, p. 117.

[34] Hew Strachan, 'Total War: The Conduct of War, 1939–1945', in Chickering, Förster, Greiner, *A World at Total War*, p. 41. For appalling treatment of the local Arab population, see Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa 1942–1943* (London: Abacus, 2004), pp. 460–62.

time as the Axis agreed to stop its air attacks on British hospital ships. Determined to energize British belligerency at every turn, Churchill brushed aside Eden's anxieties about the possibility of Germany retaliating against British prisoners.[35] The premier took a similarly uncompromising line in April, when recommending the transfer of Italian prisoners to de Gaulle as 'working capital', to prevent the Axis from following through on their threat to execute Free French soldiers as rebels. That the policy needed careful consideration—'in view of the fact that the Huns have 50,000 of our men in their hands, and of the great importance of not starting a massacre of prisoners'—did not ultimately deter Churchill from pressing for the measure. Fortunately on this occasion, the premier was overruled by Chiefs of Staff (COS) on the grounds that, since London could hardly avoid being associated with French action, the lives of British servicemen would almost certainly be put at risk.[36] In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that those officials tasked with defending the interest of POWs were anxious to keep control of policy-making and avoid exciting the interest of the prime minister.[37]

It is a measure of the difficulty London faced in juggling the needs of its prisoners with the country's broader strategic interests that the greatest problem to affect Anglo–German POW relations over the first year of the war stemmed, not from the behaviour of the German authorities, but from the decision to transfer Axis POWs to Canada in June 1940. Responsibility for this decision lay with the Home Defence (Security) Executive, an emergency committee set up in May to combat the threat of foreign subversion.[38] In the frenetic atmosphere of the time, it was only natural for the committee to back any plan that rid the country of its haul of prisoners, especially those from the *Kriegsmarine*, whose faith in Nazism had been diminished by neither depth-charges nor the attention of Neptune's jellyfish.[39] Since the FO was not party to the committee's deliberations, little thought was given to how the measure might rebound on British prisoners in German hands. All subsequent attempts to overturn the committee's decision, or limit its repercussions—by informing Berlin of the routes taken by the transport ships to minimize the unnecessary loss of life—met with little success, and as a result some 1,794 German POWs were shipped across the Atlantic in unmarked vessels during June and July 1940. The only concession won by the FO was

[35] See minute, A. Eden, 30 May 1941. TNA. DO35/998/3.

[36] Personal minute, D142/1, W. S. Churchill, 28 Apr. 1941. TNA. PREM3/363/1. Martin Thomas, 'Captives of their Countrymen: Free French and Vichy French POWs in Africa and the Middle East, 1940–3', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors*, pp. 87–118. Overmans, 'Das Schicksal der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen', pp. 383–88.

[37] See Moore, 'Turning Liabilities into Assets', pp. 117–136 (p. 121).

[38] On the committee see John D. Cantwell, *The Second World War: A Guide to Documents in the Public Record Office* (London: Public Record Office, 1993), p. 7; Peter and Leni Gillman, *Collar the Lot!: How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books, 1980); A. W. Brian Simpson, *In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention without Trial in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), esp. pp. 115–45, 258–73.

[39] Coded messages found in letters sent by German POWs indicated that plans were afoot to effect their release: MI9 War Diary, entry for 10 June 1940. TNA. WO165/39.

the suspension of shipments to Newfoundland, when it became clear that the prisoners would need to remain in tented accommodation until the following spring. The thought of Germany retaliating by interning British prisoners under similar conditions in the windswept wastes of Poland was sufficiently sobering to justify directing all prisoners to camps in Ontario.[40]

Left to justify the measure to world opinion, the FO disingenuously claimed that the evacuation was to prisoners' benefit, since it spared them from the danger of death or injury at the hands of the Luftwaffe: a distinctly specious reading of Britain's obligations under the convention given the obvious perils facing British vessels plying across the North Atlantic at this time.[41] The absurdity of the argument was laid bare on 2 July 1940 when the *Arandora Star* fell victim to a U-boat torpedo with the loss of 143 German and 470 Italian lives. Unbeknown to Berlin, there were no POWs on board when the ship went down. Apart from a handful of merchant seamen, all were Axis civilians who had sought sanctuary in Britain before the start of the war. It could scarcely be denied, however, that German prisoners' lives were endangered by British action. The day the *Arandora Star* went down, 1,348 German prisoners were boarded onto the *Ettrick* and began a transatlantic voyage that only ended, to the relief of all those concerned, when the ship docked in Canada ten days later.

Fortunately for the British government, the 'inevitable but unpredictable' retaliation expected from Berlin and Rome failed to materialize. When news of Britain's intention to ship POWs across the Atlantic reached Berlin, US diplomats were summoned to the AA and warned of the dire consequences if London's plans were put into effect.[42] Opinions were, however, divided over how to respond, even after the *Arandora Star*'s fate became known. The AA's legal department was in favour of lodging a formal protest, but both the OKW and the German naval command (*Seekriegsleitung*, SKL) were inclined to let the matter rest. Any public complaint would, they felt, merely allow London to reiterate its well-known objections to German naval tactics, and so long as neutral opinions on the legality of the U-boat campaign remained undecided, 'the results of such a protest in terms of propaganda were likely to be doubtful'.[43] Protests were made about the conditions on board the transport vessels, but Britain's right to ship POWs through the U-boat-infested waters of the Atlantic or elsewhere was left unchallenged. Seaborne evacuation of prisoners thus became

[40] G. P. Bassler, *Sanctuary Denied: Refugees from the Third Reich and Newfoundland Immigration Policy, 1906–1949* (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland Press 1992), pp. 165–68. For German captivity in Canada, see John Melady, *Escape from Canada: The Untold Story of German POWs in Canada, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), and David J. Carter, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire: Alien, Refugee and POW Camps in Canada, 1914–1946* (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980).

[41] Berlin was to use precisely the same argument in justifying POW evacuation from Poland in early 1945.

[42] US Embassy to FO, 28 June 1940. TNA. FO916/2580.

[43] Amt Ausl. OKW to Chef AWA 16 July 1940. BA-MA. RW5/319.

the norm, with Axis prisoners routinely evacuated from the theatre of operations and sent to permanent camps in India and the other Dominions from the spring of 1941.[44]

The dispersal of Axis prisoners to the four corners of the British Empire threw up problems that were never adequately resolved. For one thing, the danger of further loss of life, following the *Arandora Star* incident, was never far away: 1,350 Italians POWs died when the *Laconia* was torpedoed in August 1942, but British prisoners also succumbed to 'friendly fire' in the Mediterranean and Pacific.[45] Even when such tragedies were avoided, the draconian security measures imposed on prisoners during seaborne voyages—lest they attempt to wrest control of the ship from its crew—inevitably created friction between the guards and prisoners. Again, the difficulties were not unique to the British—British prisoners were convicted of an attempted 'mutiny' in March 1941—but rough treatment of German prisoners frequently gave rise to protests by the German government and, as we shall see in Chapter 5, on one occasion lead to reprisals against British prisoners.[46] Retaliatory measures were also imposed in February 1941 in response to delays in transporting mail and parcels to German prisoners in Allied hands; a process that was inevitably prone to disruption on account of inclement weather conditions, the dearth of suitable shipping space, and the depredations of Admiral Dönitz's U-boats.[47] Finally, Britain's efforts to maintain a uniform level of treatment for its Axis POWs, irrespective of where they were detained, was repeatedly hampered by the difficulty of ensuring adequate control, and the need to coordinate policy with those on the ground who were ultimately responsible for applying the provisions of the POW convention.[48]

In fact, within a matter of months, the decision to evacuate German prisoners to Canada threatened to derail Britain's attempt to promote German compliance with the POW regime. Signs of incipient trouble emerged almost as soon as the first ships docked in Canada. The protest of Colonel Friemel, the senior German officer on board the *Ettrick*, spoke of the 'systematic offence' to German honour in sharing his ship with 'Jews, emigrants, communists, [and] traitors to their country', but it was his description of the plundering of prisoners' belongings

[44] See Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, pp. 19–23.

[45] Joan Beaumont, 'Victims of War: The Allies and the Transport of Prisoners-of-War by Sea, 1939–1945', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 2 (1983), pp. 1–7. For the loss of the *Laconia* and *Lisbon Maru*, sunk with 600 Allied prisoners in Sep. 1942, see Tony Bridgland, *Waves of Hate: Naval Atrocities of the Second World War* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2002), pp. 63–90, 195–211. 1,477 Dutch prisoners and 4,200 slave labourers died when *Junya Maru* was sunk in September. 1944.

[46] For the Portland incident in March 1941, see papers in TNA. WO32/18491.

[47] Berlin claimed that the four to five months taken for letters to reach Canada was due to the double censorship, in London and Ottawa. R. Marti (ICRC delegate, Berlin) to ICRC, 26 Feb. 1941. ICRC. G14.

[48] See Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, *passim*.

that proved the most damning aspect of his report.[49] Over the autumn and winter, information reaching London from POW and civilian internment camps in Canada revealed that, far from being isolated incidents, the looting of Axis nationals had been pervasive and widely condoned by those in authority.[50] Inquires begun by the Home Office but later taken over by Scotland Yard uncovered a trial of exploitation that incriminated camp authorities—the commandant of Ascot civilian internment camp, Major Braybrook, was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment in March 1941 for extorting money and jewellery from his charges—and eventually led to the door of the DPW itself. Alarmed by the directorate's evasive replies, investigations continued into 1941 and reached a climax in the second week in September when the director, General Hunter, and his deputy, Col. Coates, were summarily removed from their posts. Subsequent inquires revealed that Coates had hidden official documents at his home, and misappropriated funds destined for German merchant seamen totalling over £1,000.[51] The errant colonel was sentenced to several years in gaol. Though no formal charges were brought against General Hunter, the humiliation ultimately proved too much for him to bear and in early March 1942 the disgraced general took his own life.[52]

Fortunately for British prisoners in Germany, the news blackout imposed on the affair held up well. Coates' court martial in April 1942 was held *in camera*, and the newspaper obituary writers were prevented from elaborating on the circumstances of Hunter's suicide. In the WO, the stolen funds were quickly made good.[53] The Swiss minister, Walter Thurnheer, and ICRC delegate in London, Rudolphe Haccius, were taken into British confidence and agreed to keep the matter quiet.[54] Both had good reason to be 'extremely nervous about the whole case'.[55] As the funds had originally been provided by the ICRC and Swiss legation, both agencies were liable to claims of negligence and of undermining the system of neutral supervision upon which the POW regime relied. Had news of the affair reached Goebbels the damage to the reputation of the ICRC and the Swiss government, let alone the wellbeing of British prisoners, would have been considerable.

[49] Memo by Col. G. Friemel. n.d. TNA. FO916/2581. Warner (PWD) noted this was 'not a good start for the internment of PW in Canada' and likely to 'react on our prisoners'. Minute, 13 Aug. 1940.

[50] See W. R. D. Robertson (Military Liaison Officer) to DPW, WO, 13 Mar. 1941. A. Paterson (Department of Internment Affairs, Ottawa) to Sir John Moylan (Home Office) 11 Dec. 1940. TNA. HO215/210.

[51] See papers in TNA. FO916/298.

[52] George Ignatieff, *The Making of a Peacemonger* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 60–61.

[53] *The Times*, 7 Mar. 1942, p. 7c.

[54] For Swiss assistance in early 1943 for the discrete removal of 'sensitive' documents from the Duke of Windsor's residence in Antibes, see Folder 'Duc de Windsor, 1943': SBA. E2809 vol. 4.

[55] Minute, P. Dean (FO legal adviser), 23 Feb. 1942. TNA. FO916/298.

The ongoing investigations into the affair, lasting the best part of a year, inevitably impaired the functioning of the DPW, dented the directorate's standing in Whitehall and distracted attention at a time when London desperately needed to focus its energies on shoring up the POW regime. If the cloud had a silver lining, it lay in the introduction of fresh faces and fresh ideas into the management of POW affairs. Hunter's successor was the sixty-two year old Mjr.-Gen. Sir Cyril Gepp, who had developed the reputation as a 'first-class administrator' while working under the new adjutant general, Lt. Gen. Sir Ronald Adam, at northern command.[56] Son of a clergyman, Gepp had a distinguished war record (DSO in 1916, bar in 1917, and six times mentioned in despatches) and had held a series of staff appointments in India, an experience he shared with most of the senior leadership at the British Red Cross Society.[57] Gepp's principal contribution to POW affairs probably lay in translating Adam's reforming zeal into the work of the DPW, and fostering a culture in which prisoners were treated as individuals, deserving of sympathy and support.

If German officials remained ignorant of problems inside the DPW, they were highly attentive to the conditions of detention in British POW camps, and reacted swiftly whenever these fell short of what they deemed appropriate. The facilities at Fort Henry, Ontario, were the first to attract unwelcome comment. To a nation which esteemed the value of 'strength through joy' and whose propaganda films routinely depicted Hitler Youth sing-songs around the campfire, there was something rather contrived about Berlin's complaint about the use of the former scout camp. The Swiss consul, however, who inspected the camp in August and November 1940, was of a different mind, and the spontaneous protest of German prisoners confirmed his suspicion that the camp was little more than a *Strafanstalt*.[58] The root of the problem, however, had little to do with the prisoners' material conditions. As Field Marshall Keitel, the head of the OKW, explained to an American diplomat, what Berlin objected to was the guards' use of truncheons and the lack of respect they showed to the German servicemen—an attitude born, he suggested, from the dearth of a 'military tradition' in Canada and other nations of the New World.[59] Germany's response was not slow in being felt. In the last week of February, 284 British officers

[56] Unpublished memoirs, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Ronald F. Adam, Adjutant General to the Forces (1941–1945), chap. 9. Liddel Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), King's College London. ADAM 3/13.

[57] See *The Times*, 29 Feb. 1964, p. 10c. Minute, W. G. Head (DO), 30 Sep. 1941. TNA. DO35/998/1.

[58] Swiss consul, Toronto, 'Besichtigung des Lagers F', 22 Nov. 1940. BA-MA. RW5/319.

[59] One Canadian diplomat remarked, 'presumably [Keitel] would be quite content if [guards] carried rifles and bayonets [not truncheons]. The distinction is possibly not one which a citizen of a country without "military tradition" can appreciate as easily as one where such a tradition has found an outlet in so many attractive forms over the years'. Pearson to N. A. Robertson (DEA, Ottawa). 26 Apr. 1941. LAC. RG24 Reel 5069.

from Oflag IX A/H, Spangenburg, and another 500 from Laufen were loaded onto trains and dispatched to Stalag XX A, Thorn, and Stalag XX D, Posen, in Poland, two particularly insalubrious camps which had begun life as forts, and resembled, in the words of Brigadier Somerset, Thorn's senior British officer (SBO), 'the worst type of ancient prison which in all civilized countries would be condemned as such'. At Posen, US diplomats found 'great overcrowding, with resultant unsanitary conditions including widely spread vermin . . . inadequate latrines' and only four pumps for drinking water which though 'claimed pure by camp authorities, [were] not so considered by officers in view of impregnation with iron and proximity to latrines'.[60] The experience was an unpleasant one for all concerned—even though the OKW stipulated that the British officers could enjoy the services of other rank orderlies, as they did in other Oflags. The prisoners languished there until June 1941, when news came through of Fort Henry's closure.[61]

What made this, and other more minor incidents, galling to officials in London was that they were largely self-inflicted. Intoxicated with the scent of victory, the German authorities were clearly awkward partners to deal with, but the fact remained that the greatest obstacles to British hopes of buttressing the POW regime after June 1940 stemmed from British actions as much as those of the Germans. Officials in the DPW and PWD frequently failed to anticipate German reaction and, throughout the second half of 1940 and first half of 1941, they found their efforts continually compromised by the antiquated outlook held in other quarters of Whitehall, the premier's dogged pursuit of military victory, and the dim-witted behaviour of British camp authorities. The decision, for instance, to transfer diehard Nazis, captured in North Africa, to Latrun camp in Palestine, and abandon them to the care of Polish guards, could scarcely be construed as falling within the spirit of the convention. Not surprisingly, those involved in the thankless task of propping up the POW regime became progressively more dispirited: George Warner candidly admitted, shortly before retiring in early 1941, that it was difficult to avoid becoming 'sick and tired of the whole thing'.[62]

Amid such gloom, it is easy to overlook the fact that substantial progress was made in strengthening the POW regime and fostering a sense of common commitment towards upholding the provisions of the POW convention. Despite the obvious setbacks, by the second half of 1941, the POW regime in the west was looking increasingly stable.[63] Conditions within the camps, while not ideal in every respect, were generally held to be satisfactory. The gradual improvement

[60] US embassy, London, to WO, 25 Mar. 1943. TNA. PREM4/98/1. Report by Brig. N. F. Somerset SBO Thorn, 18 Mar. 1941. TNA. AIR2/6366.

[61] Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, pp. 243–44. Rollings, *Wire and Walls*, pp. 138–56.

[62] Lady C. Oliphant to W. S. Churchill, 20 Feb. 1941. CCAC. CHAR20/28/60.

[63] Overmans overstates the extent to which British belligerency influenced its thinking towards POWs: 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 790–91.

of transport links over the early part of 1941, allowing for a regular flow of relief and next-of-kin parcels to the camps, certainly helped, but inspection reports suggested that camp life had settled down to a dull, monotonous, but nevertheless bearable kind of normalcy. 'An interminable weekend', as one inmate of Oflag XIIB, Hadamar, put it, 'an endless Saturday and Sunday that never succeeds on getting round to Monday'.[64] Berlin's approach to POW welfare, working conditions, and detention facilities fell 'within the realm of the international conventions', and there were some signs that it was willing to resolve obvious tensions and inequities in certain camps.[65] The replacement of Laufen's elderly commandant in May 1941 with an officer sent, in his own words, 'to correct certain abuses [. . .] and see that the POW convention was properly carried out', inescapably led to this conclusion.[66] 'While here and there we have had occasion to make complaints to the Germans', the FO noted in mid-August, 'it must be admitted that once the prisoners are established in permanent camps their treatment has not given ground for serious criticism'. The Stalag Luft camps run by the German air force had already developed a good reputation with British officials.[67]

Other areas of the POW regime showed equally promising signs. A study of the communications received from Berlin in the first nine months of 1941 suggested that most British complaints about the treatment of its men had been dealt with appropriately. True, confronting Berlin with a *fait accompli* rarely achieved anything and merely resulted in 'putting their backs up'; energetic protests, meanwhile, though satisfying the demand for action at home, invariably produced 'indignant denials, coupled [. . .] with counter-accusations'.[68] Moreover, barely a third of the instances involving POW abuse, neglect or ill-treatment could be brought forward for want of suitable evidence, though London automatically lodged protests whenever it detected a substantive breach of the convention. Elsewhere, however, the system appeared to be functioning well. The US embassy staff became accustomed to using 'no uncertain language', as one POW put it, in their dealings with the German camp authorities, and rarely failed to get their message across to government officials in Berlin.[69] Indeed, of the thirty-one protest notes delivered to the AA since the start of 1941, twenty had elicited replies considered by London to be 'satisfactory'; in only five cases was Germany's response deemed inadequate. These results were, by any measure,

[64] Mjr. M. Fraser, cited in Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, p. 88.

[65] Memo by R. A. Butler (FO), 7 Apr. 1941. TNA. FO916/14.

[66] B. Gulfer, US embassy, Berlin, Inspection report, May 1941. TNA. 916/38.

[67] Minute, W. St. C. Roberts (FO), 15 Aug. 1941. TNA. FO916/60; W. N. Hanna (Adty) to Roberts (FO), 6 Oct. 1941. FO916/57.

[68] Minute, Roberts (FO), 17 Oct. 1941. TNA. FO916/214. Satow (PWD) to Phillimore (DPW), 13 Sep. 1941. TNA. FO916/15.

[69] Mjr. E. Booth, 'Diary of a Prisoner of War', 29 Nov. 1941. IWM. Docus, P370. For the embassy's reprimand of German action over the killing of Lt. Dees in early 1941: US legation, Berlin, to AA, 18 Feb. 1941. TNA. FO916/38.

'surprisingly good', and showed that, twenty months into the war, for all its failings, the procedures of control provided by the POW convention were operating remarkably effectively.[70]

GERMAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POW REGIME, 1940–1941

How did Britain's efforts to strengthen the POW regime appear to those sitting in Berlin? Reconstructing German attitudes on this subject is by no means easy. The destruction of German archives has left historians with, at best, a fragmented picture of German thinking over the course of the war.[71] What material we do have suggests that over 1940–41, the British were pushing against an open door. Inevitably, the picture is a complex one. Both Keitel, and the chief of the General War Office (*Allgemeines Wehrmachtamt*, AWA), Generalleutnant Hermann Reinecke—under whose auspices POW affairs fell—were convinced Nazis, and had little time for the humanitarian sentiments of the Geneva conventions. Reinecke's Nazi credentials were so impressive that he was appointed to lead the OKW's 'National Socialist Guidance Staff' in late 1943. The heads of the POW department (*Kriegsgefangenenwesens*), Oberst Hans-Joachim Breyer, and his successor in early 1942, Hans von Graevenitz, both shared the regime's ideological vision.[72] Yet, whether applying the Nazi's 'new' racial criteria, or the older standards of 'national' worth, British soldiers remained privileged combatants in German eyes. In this sense, the *Weltanschuungen* of the national socialists and national conservatives pointed in the same direction. So long as fighting was confined to Europe, officials viewed the war in traditional terms—as the latest chapter in Europe's ongoing 'civil war'—and applied the traditional mindset of the German military. Indeed, in contrast to the Great War, when 'Tommie' prisoners were accused of meddling in a conflict that was not their own, few Germans questioned Britain's right to intervene in 1939. There was no reason to either deny the existence of traditional war norms in fighting in the west, or withhold from British soldiers—and, by

[70] Satow to Mjr. L. C. Walton (DPW), 23 Dec. 1941, and J. R. Bingham (DPW) 6 Nov. 1941. TNA. FO916/15. R. E. A. Elwes (DPW) to G. Ignatieff (Canada House, London), 7 June 1943. TNA. WO32/9889.

[71] In general, see Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, passim.

[72] For German POW policy-making, see Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Stuttgart: Delitsche Verlag, 1978), pp. 67–76; Alfred Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im 'Fall Barbarossa'* (Heidelberg: Juristischer Verlag, 1981), pp. 5–15. For Breyer's role in the 'commissar order', see *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremburg* (hereafter TMWC) ii, 14 Nov. 1945–30 Nov. 1945 (Nuremburg: IMT, 1947), p. 453. Mjr.-Gen. Lahousen testimony.

implication, German servicemen—the right of protection under the POW convention.[73]

The place of the humanitarian codes in Berlin's understanding of the war in 1940–41 is perhaps best illustrated in the steps taken to realign the international legal system in accordance with Germany's political, economic, and strategic interests. Initiated by Keitel in August 1940, the process came to fruition in December with a report by Admiral Walter Gladisch, *Reichskommissar* of the Prize Court. Gladisch's study envisaged a root-and-branch reform of international law, erasing many of the advantages hitherto enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxon powers and replacing it with a system that reflected the needs of the new hegemonic power in Europe. Tellingly, however, while Gladisch recommended the wholesale dismantling of the Hague rules of war, he left Geneva's two humanitarian codes in tact: there was clearly, in his eyes, nothing incompatible with the Geneva conventions and Germany's 'new world order'.[74]

The OKW's attitude towards the POW regime after the summer of 1940 had, therefore, a distinctly traditional air to it. Officials expected prisoner treatment to reflect traditional martial values, and not the humanitarian-inspired codes 'drawn up by a lot of old women and not by soldiers'.[75] For most in the Wehrmacht, the rigid formulations and lofty idealism of international law was something that 'existed only in newspapers'.[76] As early as June 1940, neutral observers were struck by Breyer's dogmatic reading of the POW convention; his ability to recite the convention chapter and verse, while remaining wholly unmoved by its underlying sentiments.[77] Over the following months, Breyer and his colleagues were almost completely absorbed in managing the influx of western, mainly French, POWs, in numbers that dwarfed the OKW's pre-war plans. Thoughts could occasionally be distracted by the prospects of peace, and the job of repatriating German prisoners from the far-flung reaches of the British Empire, but by the autumn, with Britain unbowed and Christmas looming, attitudes became more sober, and attention shifted towards ensuring that Germany's imprisoned airmen and submariners received the gifts, parcels,

[73] H. Wolff, *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in britischer Hand: Ein Überblick* (Munich: Gieseking, 1974).

[74] Admiral W. Gladisch, 'Arbeitsplan für einen Ausschuss zur Fortbildung des Kriegsrechts', 3 Dec. 1940. Keitel (14 Aug. 1940) cited in Gladisch to Keitel, 3 Dec. 1940. IfZ. MA 206 folio 794409. de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 122–24. Gladisch was no Nazi. Sacked from the Prize Court in 1943 he narrowly escaped execution in July 1944 on account of his links with the German resistance.

[75] Attributed to the commandant of Stalag VII C/A, June 1940, cited in Michael Duncan, *Underground from Posen* (London: William Kimber, 1954), p. 56.

[76] General Friedrich Christiansen, Germany's commander in chief in the Netherlands, cited in Helmuth J. von Moltke to Freya von Moltke, 5 June 1943, printed in Beate Ruhm von Oppen (ed.), *Helmuth James von Moltke: Letters to Freya 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1991), p. 308.

[77] For Breyer, see Marcel Junod, *Warrior without Weapons* (Geneva: ICRC, 1982), pp. 170, 221.

and accessories that befitted their status as elite members of the German forces.[78] Failure to accord these men the status they deserved, as in the case of the Fort Henry incident, led to swift counter-measures and reprisals against British POWs.

The outbreak of fighting in Russia had little appreciable impact, at least in the short term, on the treatment of British POWs. The decision to retain Russian prisoners in theatre, under the control of the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH), rather than transfer them to the OKW's zone of responsibility in the rear, meant that Soviet POWs were initially segregated from their western counterparts. More significantly, the denial of full POW status to Russian prisoners, and the erasing of all references to the POW convention in official directives, was justified on the grounds that the humanitarian principles were only applicable, as Keitel put it, to 'the soldierly concept of chivalrous warfare'.[79] There was, it is true, an uncomfortably close correlation between the Wehrmacht's ambitions for the war against the Soviet Union, and Hitler's policies of racial extermination; but the war of annihilation did not overturn established norms for the treatment of POWs, it merely created a parallel set of norms, applicable to the conflict in the east.[80] There was nothing incongruous, then, at a time when mortality among Soviet prisoners were running at over sixty per cent, for officials in the OKW to feel fully bound by the POW convention in their dealings with British prisoners.[81] For onlookers in London, who nervously charted German advances in the east and kept themselves informed of the scale and severity of German actions, there was as yet no reason to suggest that the war was eroding German compliance with its international obligations in the west, though the use of the term 'action according to the usage of war' in German radio traffic, to denote German anti-Jewish measures, no doubt gave British intelligence analysts pause for thought.[82] Stalin's refusal to welcome an ICRC delegation to Moscow, though regrettable, was not considered damaging to the committee's activities elsewhere. There may not have been therefore 'a snowball's chance in hell' of either Moscow or Berlin permitting the ICRC into their camps, but British

[78] Aktennotiz by Ausl. Abt, 16 Aug. 1940. 'Rückführung deutscher Kgf und ZI aus Kanada und Argentinien-Uruguay'. BA-MA. RW5/319.

[79] Quoted in Alfred Streim, 'International Law and Soviet Prisoners of War', in Bernd Wegner (ed.), *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939–1941* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1997), pp. 293–308 (p. 298).

[80] See W. G. Hartmann (head of DRK external relations), 'Rotkreuzdienst über dern Erdball', *Jahrbuch des deutschen Rotes Kreuz 1942* (Berlin: Verlag des DRK, 1942), pp. 24–32. For this issue, see Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, pp. 76–82; *idem*, 'Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht', in Hannes Heer, Klaus Naumann, and Roy Shelton (eds.), *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941–1944* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), pp. 80–91; Klaus Jochen Arnold, *Die Wehrmacht und die Besatzungspolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002), pp. 326–412.

[81] Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener*, pp. 25–32.

[82] Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 98.

confidence in the state of the POW regime in the west meant that no one showed much concern at the Kremlin's repeated cold-shouldering of the ICRC's advances.[83]

The Geneva conventions thus retained a place in Germany's political and ideological 'map', even if, over time, their applicability was restricted to an increasingly narrow range of circumstances. The extent of Germany's engagement with the POW regime over 1941 can be charted in a number of different areas, but one of the most instructive is the way in which institutional structures and practices were changed to help Berlin meet its obligations under the convention. Six months *after* the start of the German-Soviet war, for instance, the OKW commissioned a fresh commentary on the laws of war and instructed camp commandants to familiarize themselves with its contents. Agreement was also reached for copies of the POW convention to be distributed to the main camps and work detachments holding French and British POWs.[84] In September 1943, the OKW reminded its staff that the Swiss members of the mixed medical commission, who were responsible for selecting POWs for repatriation, 'exercised their activities—at considerable inconvenience and pecuniary cost to themselves—in fulfilment of the Geneva convention'. As 'guests' of the German government they were to be 'treated with courtesy . . . [and] greeted by all German officers and officials in a friendly manner'.[85]

These were not isolated cases. Earlier in the year, in the aftermath of the Fort Henry incident, Berlin agreed not to detain British POWs in fortresses or former penal establishments so as to prevent similar problems arising in the future.[86] The incident clearly created considerable embarrassment amongst officials in the AA and OKW. When American diplomats visited Posen and Thorn in mid-March 1941, officials were at pains to draw a distinction between 'reprisals' and the measures in force in the two camps which, they claimed, 'represented merely a desire to equalize conditions'. So anxious was the AA to diffuse the crisis that it acquiesced to all American requests for improvements in the camp conditions without waiting for the embassy to put them down in writing.[87] Similar sentiments were found in reaches of the OKW. The foreign relations department was particularly exasperated by the course of events, and

[83] Harry Hopkins (May 1942) cited in Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 558–59. See minute, D. L. Stewart, 30 Mar. 1943. TNA. FO371/36544 W4869. For the ICRC's efforts in Moscow, C. J. Burckhardt (ICRC) to I. Maisky (Soviet ambassador, London), 2 Dec. 1941. ICRC G3/43 carton 200, and *Report of the ICRC on its Activities during the Second World War (September 1, 1939–June 30, 1947), vol. i, General Activities* (Geneva: ICRC, 1948), pp. 408–24.

[84] Alfons Waltzog, *Recht der Landeskriegsführung* (Berlin: Franz Vahlen, 1942). OKW, 'Befehlsammlung Nr. 11', 11 Mar. 1942. BA-MA. RH49/30. FO to UK legation, Berne, 14 Dec. 1941. TNA. FO916/15.

[85] OKW, 'Befehlsammlung Nr. 28', 6 Sep. 1943 BA-MA. RH49/30.

[86] For a list of Anglo–German 'supplementary agreements' see TNA. FO916/271 and DEA memo, 1 July 1943. LAC. RG24 Reel 5330.

[87] US embassy, London, to WO, 25 Mar. 1943. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

roundly criticized Breyer for initiating reprisals without prior consultation, and for doing so in such a way as to foreclose any chance of resolving the dispute through diplomatic channels. Within a fortnight of the crisis breaking, the foreign relations department had secured agreement for a new set of procedures which forbade the application of reprisals against British prisoners without the department's express permission.[88] The reform was clearly not without effect: almost a year would elapse before reprisals were once again imposed on British POWs. Breyer himself appears to have been chastened by the experience, and became noticeably more restrained in his views over subsequent months. In November, he was even moved to comment favourably on the leniency of British detention practices at Latrun camp, where a German officer was sentenced to three months in prison for striking a guard, an act which in Germany, Breyer admitted, 'would be punishable by death, or at least a very long prison sentence'.[89]

Perhaps the most important indicator of the convergence of Anglo–German attitudes on POW questions by mid-1941 lay in the readiness of the two sides to enter into direct talks, and consider repatriating sick and wounded POWs, in line with the provisions of the POW convention. In both cases, officials made faster progress than their predecessors during the Great War. The gross imbalance in numbers naturally coloured respective attitudes towards the process, but the fact that such discussions took place at all is testament to the willingness of officials to adhere to the norms—even the spirit—of the convention. The idea of an Anglo–German conference was first mooted in London over the winter of 1940, in the hope of ironing out some of the difficulties hampering the flow of relief parcels into Germany. Interest waned over the spring, as arrangements put in place in December began to have an effect, but resurfaced in the early summer when direct contact seemed necessary to overcome an impasse in the repatriation negotiations. The director of POWs, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Alan Hunter, was particularly keen on the idea. 'Nothing but good could arise from such a conference', he wrote in mid-July, as there were no fewer than thirteen outstanding issues which could be 'doubtless cleared up' through face-to-face talks. The real benefit of a meeting, Hunter noted, lay in 'clear[ing] the way to a better understanding of difficult problems, and there may be many, arising in the future'.[90]

FO officials were rather more sanguine. Some felt Hunter was deluding himself in thinking that Berlin would do anything other than exploit the conference for its own purposes. The two British–German conferences in 1917 and 1918 had failed to live up to their billing, not least since their principal interlocutors

[88] Ausl. VIa K.T.B. 10 Mar. 1941. Breyer (OKW Kgf.) to AA, 25 Feb. 1941. BA-MA. RW5/319.

[89] Breyer (OKW Kgf.) to AFSt Abt L, 11 Nov. 1941. BA-MA. RW5/319.

[90] Minute, Mjr.-Gen. Hunter (DPW), 24 July 1941, and letter to Roberts (PWD) 25 July 1941. TNA. WO32/9891 and FO916/15; E. D. Sandys MP (WO) to Richard K. Law MP (FO), 13 Aug. 1941. TNA. FO916/60.

in the War Ministry were unable to hold the German army to the agreements reached. On this score at least, things had improved. The centralization of decision-making authority within the OKW offered the possibility that deals struck at the diplomatic level would be applied by the camp commandants or regional authorities.[91] Most senior staff in the FO, including the foreign secretary, were prepared, therefore, to give Hunter the benefit of the doubt, and hesitated vetoing the initiative 'simply on the ground that the Germans are bound to be unreasonable and [. . .] we are bound to be mugs'.[92]

TRUST UNDERMINED: THE REPATRIATION OF SICK AND WOUNDED POWS, OCTOBER 1941

Plans for a conference were, however, overtaken by developments in the repatriation talks which, by mid-September, had gathered sufficient momentum on their own to lead to a satisfactory conclusion.[93] That negotiations for the repatriation of POWs had come this far was no small achievement. No other issue better captured the humanitarian aspiration of the POW convention than the provisions governing the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs. Instead of basing the arrangements on strict reciprocity—providing for the 'head-for-head' exchange of equal numbers—article 68 called for the repatriation of prisoners by categories, irrespective of the numbers on either side. All those judged by the mixed medical commissions to fall into category A (severely injured) were, together with any surplus medical orderlies and doctors, eligible for immediate repatriation, while those in category B (partially incapacitated) were to be interned in neutral countries for the remainder of the war.[94] Reluctant to expose its men to the corrosive influences of life under a neutral flag, Berlin offered to merge the two categories and allow for their immediate repatriation. The two sides therefore signed up to arrangements that were more generous than those envisaged in 1929, and had little to do with the concept of reciprocity—whether 'strict' or 'diffuse'—that governed most aspects of the POW regime. The side that had most to gain from this arrangement was, of course, the British. Berlin's patent disinterest over the fate of the 130,000 Italian prisoners in British hands meant there was little chance of London restoring any equilibrium in POW relations before the repatriation talks reached fruition in the late summer.

[91] Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 738–42, esp. 741. Wilhelm Deist, 'The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht', in Wilhelm Deist, Manfred Messerschmidt, Hans-Erich Volkmann and Wolfram Wette (eds.), *Germany and the Second World War, vol. i, The Build-Up of German Aggression* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 513–20.

[92] Minutes, Sir R. Makins (FO), 18 Aug., Sir O. Sargent, 19 Aug., and Sir A. Eden, 22 Aug. 1941. TNA. FO916/60.

[93] R. Ingram (WO) to G. W. Harrison (FO), 15 Sep. 1941. TNA. FO916/60.

[94] The Red Cross convention permitted the repatriation of 'protected personnel': doctors, medical orderlies, and padres. Diplomats were also considered eligible for exchange.

A detailed account of these long and tortuous discussions need not detain us here.[95] Talks began fitfully in mid-1940, after the ICRC offered to provide vessels to ferry the wounded POWs between the two sides, but with the skies over southern England darkened by the weight of German bombers, and Britain's coastal defences alert to the arrival of Hitler's invasion barges, none of the various schemes put forward were found to be practical. Alternatives to a cross-Channel exchange, by using Portugal, Ireland or Sweden, likewise failed to catch on, and so it was not until the danger of invasion receded, with Germany shifting its attention to the Balkans and the Soviet Union, that the issue re-emerged as a serious proposition. The operation, scheduled for 4 October 1941, but postponed until 7 October, began well. The night before the exchange was to take place, 44 wounded German prisoners, 38 medical personnel, and a party of 60 civilians—the latter hastily assembled at the last minute—were embarked on two hospital ships at Newhaven; their British counterparts, numbering 1,200, meanwhile made ready to move from Rouen to Dieppe, once news of the ships arrival had been confirmed. This however, was the closest most of these men would get to their homes for over two years. A statement, broadcast over British radio at 18.00 hrs on 6 October, giving details of the imminent operation, met with a reply, four hours later, which contradicted the British statement, and insisted that the exchange would be pursued on a head-for-head basis, with additional groups exchanged only after further negotiation. Sensing foul play, London suspended the operation and disembarked the German wounded from their vessels. The following day the secretary of state for war, David Margesson, addressed the House of Commons with a statement that was to become the first of a series of public denunciations traded between the two sides over the following weeks.[96]

The litany of objections raised by Berlin throughout the talks, culminating in the operation being first postponed and later suspended altogether, appeared to confirm the views of those who had long harboured doubts over German sincerity in fulfilling the terms of the convention. 'Their opposition', wrote Sir Harold Satow in mid-August, 'has been pressed so far that we suspect an ulterior reason'.[97] Efforts to neutralize the most likely 'ulterior reason'—the disparity in numbers—by offering to act on the Anglo–German agreement of February 1940 and repatriate eligible civilians, or scraping together medical staff and pilots interned in Ireland to boost the final numbers, evidently failed to have the desired effect. Berlin's offer to renew negotiations, which reached London in late November, not only insisted on numerical equality but also linked the exchange

[95] See Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 105–12; Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, pp. 46–51.

[96] *Parl. Debs. Commons*, vol. 374, 7 Oct. 1941, folios 849–51. 14 Oct., folios 1225–26. The WO's press department was alone in seeing the German reply as merely a 'propaganda taunt at the B.B.C.'. Memo by Heywood (WO) 10 Oct. 1941. TNA. WO258/22.

[97] Satow (PWD) to Sir John Moylan (Home Office), 11 Aug. 1941. TNA. FO916/48.

of those legally entitled to repatriation under the conventions (wounded POWs and medical staff) to the exchange of civilians—women, children, *and* men of military age (whose parole would be given before exchange)—and insisted on the return of Germans who had been interned by the British authorities in Persia.[98] There appeared then, to be good reasons for questioning Berlin's commitment to this aspect of the POW convention. Was this another area (like food, discussed in the following chapter) where Berlin judged the convention incompatible with existing circumstances?

Internal discussions within the German government suggest that such suspicions, though not without foundation, fail to reflect German thinking over the course of 1941. In fact, despite the gross disparity in numbers and the obvious temptation to include German civilian internees into the bargain, interdepartmental discussions over the autumn of 1940 suggest that Berlin was, on the whole, prepared to follow the terms of the convention. The return of POWs was, however, always seen as the first of a series of exchanges that would ultimately include incapacitated civilians, women and children, and possibly men of military age too.[99] Sadly, the extant papers say nothing about the thrust of thinking over the summer, although in conversation with the ICRC delegate in mid-June, OKW officials were upbeat about the prospects of clinching a deal.[100] In the second week of August, officials expressed themselves 'more and more desirous of repatriating the prisoners', and, by September, the OKW and German Red Cross (*Deutsches Rote Kruez*, DRK) both gave the proposal their backing, on the grounds that it would free up hospital beds for German soldiers injured on the eastern front. Efforts were made to improve the numbers by asking Britain to include a handful of airmen held in Ireland, six wounded prisoners from Canada, and half a dozen crewmen from the *Graf Spee*, interned in Uruguay, plus eligible civilians, detained on the Isle of Man.[101] But as late as the last week in September, the German authorities 'had no intention of making repatriation of wounded prisoners conditional upon the repatriation of civilian internees', as the US embassy in Berlin put it. Pressure was being applied merely to soften Britain's position for future negotiations over the repatriation of civilian internees.[102] This might have smacked of brinkmanship, but it was still a sign that Berlin was ready to conclude a deal.

[98] Aide-memoire, AA, for US embassy, Berlin, 8 Nov. 1941. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin (hereafter PA-AA.) R40786.

[99] See Notiz, 27 July 1940. BA-MA. RW5/63. Aufzeichnung, 15 Nov. 1940. RW5/319.

[100] Notes of meeting with the Reichluftfahrt-Ministerium and OKW, 20 June 1941, by R. Marti (ICRC). Minutes of meeting between ICRC and Rotenhan (OKW), Geneva, 23 June 1941. ICRC. G14 carton 413; G23 carton 604.

[101] Note by Albrecht for Ribbentrop, 22 Sep. 1941. Ribbentrop gave his approval two days later. PA-AA. R40786. Minutes of the ICRC, 28 Aug. 1941. ICRC. C2. 'Rapport de M. E. de Haller', 19 Aug. 1941. G3/39 Carton 192.

[102] US embassy, London, to FO, 20 Sep. 1941. incl. telegram from US embassy, Berlin, 17 Sep. 1941. TNA. FO916/48.

Why then, after London had to accommodate Berlin's last-minute demands, did the operation ultimately collapse? The answer lies with entry of the Führer into the discussions late in the evening of 30 September. It is likely that Hitler had been updated on the progress of the negotiations over the course of the summer, and that his foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, had gained his approval, before giving his own consent to the exchange on 24 September. The issue that prompted Hitler's change of heart was the detention of German civilians in Persia for alleged involvement in subversive activities. Berlin had threatened retaliation against British nationals in the Channel Islands, but the matter came to a head, for Hitler at least, in late September, when London categorically refused to back down and release their detainees.[103] The Führer was not prepared to relinquish Britain's sick and wounded men when London obdurately refused to compromise over the detention of German civilians in Persia. 'The relatives of the English repatriation party are expecting their return', he confided to Keitel on 30 September; 'they will be very disappointed and will raise objections with the English government when the exchange does not come off. In this way, the English government will feel obliged to comply with our wishes over the return of the Iranian Germans.'[104]

The reaction of German officials to Hitler's intervention is instructive. Hitler's demand posed them with a dilemma. On the one hand, suspending the operation, or insisting that it went ahead on a reciprocal basis, could hardly be recommended since they failed to satisfy the OKW's desiderata of freeing up space in military hospitals. On the other hand, the AA was reluctant to admit publicly to Germany's rejection of article 68; nor was it willing to undermine the convention by insisting on its parity with the February 1940 agreement on civilian internees. In the circumstances, the only way forward appeared to lie in delaying the operation, and working on London in the hope that it would voluntarily include as many civilians in the operation as possible. If, in the end, the numbers still made a head-for-head exchange unattractive to the OKW, or unacceptable to the Führer, the AA proposed offering a one-off exchange, swapping the Iranian Germans for the 430 British nationals currently residing in Finland, of whom about 200 were women and 150 men of military age. Such contorted arrangements only go to show how much the Führer's belated demands disrupted German planning, and stymied any real possibility of the operation coming off. With such conflicting objectives, it was hardly surprising that the mood in Berlin over the first week of October was profoundly pessimistic. That the German authorities agreed to an operation on 7–8 October, instead of waiting for the return of favourable tides later in the month, suggests that they had convinced themselves that, if

[103] Swiss legation, London to FPD, Berne, 16 Sep. 1941. SBA. 2001 (D) 3/98 B24.A.20.

[104] Note by Albrecht on conversation with Gen. Reinecke (OKW AWA), 1 Oct. 1941. PA-AA. R40786.

a head-for-head arrangement was to go ahead at all, Britain would have to be bounced into it at the eleventh hour.[105]

The collapse of the exchange operation in October 1941 was a huge disappointment to those responsible for the care and wellbeing of Britain's prisoners in German hands. Months of exhaustive negotiations, during which officials had repeatedly to call on the patience and forbearance of the POWs, their relatives and allies in parliament, had come to nought. It was also a bruising event for the British government. In the postmortem that followed, it became clear that in their eagerness to clinch a deal officials had gone beyond prudent limits. Churchill was flabbergasted to learn that messages had been sent directly to the enemy via radio broadcasts on the day of the exchange, and immediately initiated a formal enquiry into how this situation had come about. The fact that the information exchanged was limited to technical details, such as shipping movements and lists of prisoners, brought little comfort, and left the foreign secretary with some awkward questions to answer in his meetings with the Soviet ambassador over subsequent weeks.[106] With suspicions already aroused by Rudolf Hess' arrival earlier in the year, the Soviets were naturally hypersensitive to the slightest hint of any collaboration between the two sides. Even if the content of the communications was as benign as the British claimed, London's apparent vulnerability to German pressure over POWs alarmed the Soviet authorities, not least as the POWs' most vocal supporter in the House, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Alfred Knox MP, was well known for his anti-Soviet views.[107] The very success achieved in elevating prisoners' interests in London, and building a consensus with Berlin on POW matters since the start of the war, thus threatened to upset Britain's relations with the Soviet regime. In the circumstances, it was only natural for Eden to rein in his officials, forbid any further direct communication with the enemy, either by radio or face-to-face talks, and commit the government to conducting any further negotiations through neutral channels.

The episode also, inevitably, eroded British confidence in Germany's commitment to the POW regime. Hitler's *coup de main* politicized what had hitherto been largely a humanitarian space, and threatened to undo the progress made since June 1940 in promoting German compliance with the provisions of the POW convention. He had, moreover, drawn an explicit connection between the POW regime and the treatment of civilian internees—a connection which both sides had been happy to leave to one side in the past—and, potentially at least,

[105] Notes by Albrecht for Ribbentrop, 1 and 3 Oct. 1941. PA-AA. R40786. Report by R. Marti (ICRC), 14 Oct. 1941. ICRC. G14 Carton 413.

[106] Minute, W. S. Churchill, 16 Oct. 1941. TNA. CAB120/222. Sir. A. Eden to Sir S. Cripps (Moscow), 13 Oct. 1941. FO916/38. Minute, A. Eden, 20 Oct. 1941. PREM4/98/1.

[107] Knox had led Britain's military mission to Russia during the Great War: Sir Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914–1917* (London: Hutchinson, 1921). For a later manifestation, see minute, F. K. Roberts (FO), 18 Oct. 1942. FO916/268.

transformed the basis of Anglo–German relations from one governed by a sense of 'diffuse' reciprocity to one in which reciprocal exchanges would be based on a much stricter definition of 'equivalents'. The new, narrower, ground rules were encapsulated in the remarks of Mjr.-Gen. Cyril Gepp, who, on mulling over the possibility of resuscitating the repatriation talks, noted that negotiations would have to be strictly confined to the question at hand. 'I do not think it advisable to raise other points, as [. . .] originally suggested, because if we do, they will probably become counters with which to bargain.'[108] Ribbentrop's proposals for re-launching the talks—which even US diplomats dismissed 'as of doubtful sincerity and probably made only for political and propaganda purposes'—only went to confirm these impressions.[109] In the circumstances, it was only to be expected that support for direct talks quickly faded and a consensus emerged over the decision to confine all future proposals for repatriation 'very strictly to the terms of the international convention'.[110]

Did the fact that POW matters had fallen prey to the Führer's machinations necessarily mean that 'higher considerations'—be they political, strategic, or ideological—were destined henceforth to dominate German policy towards British POWs? Now that Hitler's eye had alighted on Britain's prisoners, there was no saying when he would return to the issue. Officials in the OKW and AA could scarcely ignore the Führer's edicts, or those of his entourage—Ribbentrop, Keitel, and the head of the *Wehrmachtsführungstab* General Alfred Jodl—who hovered around and sought to translate his Delphic utterances into practical policies.[111] In this sense, the events of October 1941 introduced a new, and destabilizing dynamic into Anglo–German POW relations. Nevertheless, the episode also cast into sharp relief the breadth of common ground that had developed between the two sides since the start of the war. In the OKW and AA there was a palpable sense of irritation and embarrassment at the way the affair had been mishandled. Naturally, little of this found its way into official German documents, but officials clearly found it difficult to hide their disappointment. 'We are convinced', wrote a member of the US embassy in Berlin, 'that the German officials, both of the Foreign Office and the Military High Command, with whom [we] had direct contact, acted in good faith, and in the belief that the highest authorities of their government were behind them in this matter. . . [We have] previously dealt with and continue to deal with [these] persons . . . on other matters and [find] them to be generally reasonable and understanding.'[112]

[108] Minute, Mjr.-Gen. C. Gepp, 10 Oct. 1941. TNA. WO32/9891.

[109] Memo by P. Laufhuff (US embassy, Berlin) 12 Nov. 1941. SBA. E2001 (D) 16 vol. 6. B24.A.2 (4)2 A-04.

[110] WO to FO, 22 Dec. 1941. TNA. FO916/63. F. K. Roberts (FO) to M. Huber (President, ICRC) 6 Dec. 1941. ICRC. G85/039.

[111] Note by von Rintelen (Büro RAM) for Gaus (AA), 14 Nov. 1941. PA-AA. R40786.

[112] Minute, Roberts (FO), 15 Dec. 1941, citing memo from the US embassy, Berlin. TNA. FO916/48.

The ICRC delegate in Berlin, Roland Marti, who enjoyed excellent relations with the German authorities, shared these views. In discussing the debacle with officials from the OKW and AA he could find no one who had a bad word to say about Britain's conduct during the affair.[113] Crafting a policy capable of assisting the lives of British prisoners in German hands had never been easy and Hitler's intervention in early October had made it a great deal harder. The question that confronted British officials after this date was therefore a simple one: could the British government create a policy that was sufficiently subtle and a means of execution that was sufficiently effective to meet its objectives without exciting the interest of the Führer and his acolytes?

[113] R. Marti to ICRC, 17 Oct. 1941. ICRC. G14 Carton 413.

4

The Amateurs Try their Hand: The Provision of Relief Parcels, 1940–1941

In the previous chapter we saw how events over the spring and summer of 1940 compelled British officials to reassess their policy and attitudes towards POWs. The loss of nearly 45,000 men to German captivity meant that the wellbeing of British prisoners, hitherto a marginal issue to British policy-makers, suddenly assumed a major importance in British thinking. At the same time, the events forced the government to change its view of the POW regime. As the health of British POWs hinged, to a large degree, on the robustness of the POW convention and its associated norms, it was vital for London to cultivate German observance of the convention and avoid, as best it could, any action likely to undermine the safety of their men in Germany. The process was by no means smooth, but by the eve of the abortive cross-Channel exchange operation in October 1941, London had come a long way in developing a level of cooperation with Berlin sufficient to satisfy their common interests.

This success was not matched, however, with equal progress in other areas. Most particularly, the summer's events called into question London's ability to supply its men with relief and next-of-kin parcels. It was the difficulties in meeting the prisoners' material needs that proved the most intractable problem for the British government over the second half of 1940 and into 1941. The so-called 'parcels crisis' ushered in important changes in official thinking which in turn transformed the policy-making environment in London and exercised a profound influence over the shape of future policy. Crucially, it legitimized the emergence of important external 'stakeholders'—most notably the next-of-kin community—and generated a wave of public interest in POW matters that acted as a powerful constraint on government freedom in this area.

THE 'PARCEL CRISIS' AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE POW 'LOBBY', JULY 1940–MAY 1941

The officials and politicians who bore the brunt of public criticism during the 'parcels crisis', claimed, with some justification, that they were being unfairly maligned for a problem that was essentially of Germany's making. The 1929

POW convention had envisaged relief parcels as a luxury not a necessity. It was the detaining power, and not the prisoners' own government, who was responsible for meeting the men's dietary needs. The Geneva conference had resisted setting a specific calorific standard for POW rations, but instead required prisoners' diets to be commensurate with the nature of their employment, and, as a basic minimum, to be equal to that received by the detaining power's own 'depot' troops (article 11). The issue of food was, however, a contentious one. Some delegates questioned whether western POWs should be expected to subsist on the same rations as their non-western captors; others, at least privately, doubted article 11's applicability in the event of an economic blockade. Lord Younger, architect of the ILA's influential code in 1922, echoed the view held by most German commentators in arguing that it was unreasonable to expect detaining powers to feed prisoners better than their civilian population.[1] This was certainly the position taken in Berlin after 1939. Although the authorities claimed that British prisoners were kept on the same rations as their guards, it soon became clear that Berlin had no intention of filling the plates of British POWs when German civilians were forced to survive on more meagre fare. Cuts in the civilian ration in December 1940 and June 1941 saw immediate reductions in the quantity of food reaching the camp kitchens. In December 1941, the authorities justified slashing POW rations by a third on the grounds that prisoners received ample food in their Red Cross parcels. Repeated attempts to draw Berlin on the issue proved fruitless. Of the five British protests lodged in Berlin over the course of 1941 which remained unanswered by the time US diplomats withdrew at the end of the year four related to the question of food and POW rations. 'Although no official statement has ever been made by the Foreign Ministry or the OKW', the US embassy reported in November 1941, 'it would appear that the German government does not intend, for political reasons, to feed its prisoners better than its own civilian population, particularly in view of [Britain's] use of food as a ''weapon'' in this war'.[2] This was clearly one obligation the German government was simply not prepared to honour.[3]

Post-war studies suggested that on average British prisoners in Germany received barely two-thirds of the calories they required, and even less in the way of vitamins.[4] British POWs were spared the appalling deprivations suffered by

[1] ILA, *Thirtieth Conference*, p. 225.

[2] US embassy, Berlin, to US embassy, London, 15 Nov. 1941. Memo (personal) by Paterson (US embassy, Berlin), enclosed in Achilles (US embassy, London) to Sir G. Warner (PWD), 18 and 29 Mar. 1941. TNA FO916/45. Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, pp. 55–58.

[3] For German rationing, see Gustavo Corni and Horst Gies, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen. Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), pp. 555–82.

[4] Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, p. 156. J. Douglas Hermann, *Report to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs of a Study on Canadians who were Prisoners of War in Europe during World War II* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974).

Germany's other prisoners, but hunger remained a staple feature of POW life, and food, an all-consuming topic of conversation.[5] 'The truth is', admitted one officer POW in late 1940, on noticing how frequently the issue featured in his diary, 'that when you haven't enough to eat, the subject is always cropping up in one form or another'.[6] The subject was only eclipsed by that other great absence in prisoners' lives—sex—when the arrival of relief parcels brought a momentary respite from the pangs of hunger. Apart from the final months of the war, when Britain's prisoners suffered terribly from the absence of food, for most prisoners it was the first months of captivity that proved the most testing. With bodies enfeebled by weeks of fighting and minds traumatized by the experience of capture, newly minted prisoners were invariably 'filthy, scruffy, and as hungry as hell'.[7] The majority faced a long, gruelling journey before they reached their permanent camp, and most found that their weight only stabilized after they had acclimatized to their new surroundings and recovered from the psychological and physical ordeal of their capture, a process that could take anything up to several months.

This needs to be borne in mind when we consider the plight of those captured in the fateful summer of 1940. Some officials in Whitehall clearly took the prisoners' incessant grumbling about the paucity of their rations, or the slow arrival of relief parcels, with a pinch of salt. While the WO was generally sympathetic, and quick to lodge protests at the slightest hint of foul play, FO officials were less easily moved. 'The W.O. are apt to forget', wrote Sir Harold Satow in early 1941, '(a) that we are dealing with Germans, (b) that Germany is under a blockade which we hope is proving effective, and (c) that even in England today the civilians may not be getting the full basic ration . . . '.[8] With everyone tightening their belts for the good of the war effort, it was easy to dismiss the complaints of men who, for all their earlier heroism and devotion to duty, were now effectively sitting out the war, with little else to do than vent their disgruntlement and frustration in letters home. The evident food shortage in Germany was, of course, welcome news for British intelligence, but the fact that most of the complaints came from officer POWs inevitably tempered officials' sympathy.[9] It was, surely, only to be expected, noted the WO's director of POWs, that those accustomed to the indulgencies of regimental mess life would feel an 'acute sense of insufficiency' with the catering arrangements found in most Oflags.[10]

[5] Corni and Gies, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen*, pp. 450–66.

[6] E. Booth, 'The Diary of a Prisoner of War', IWM Docus P370. Entry for 11 Dec. 1940.

[7] 2nd Lt. Headsman cited in Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, p. 27.

[8] Minute, H. Satow (FO), 27 Mar. 1941. TNA. FO916/14.

[9] R. Makins (FO) to Mjr.-Gen. F. G. Beaumont Nesbitt (JIC), 14 Oct. 1940. TNA. FO916/2579.

[10] Mjr.-Gen. Sir Alan Hunter (DPW) to Mrs. W. Coombe Tennant, 18 Jan. 1941. TNA. FO916/38.

There is little doubt, though, that the 'class of 1940'—those rounded up from the dunes at Dunkirk or the shell-pocked remains of St Valéry or Calais—had a particularly torrid time. The unexpectedly rapid collapse of organized Allied resistance created a POW 'problem' that quickly overwhelmed the OKW's rudimentary contingency plans.[11] Food, accommodation, and transport were all in short supply, and as a consequence, most prisoners began their captivity with a 400 kilometre march on intermittent and inadequate rations. Those who made the journey in airless cattle-trucks, deprived of toilet facilities and fed on a diet of black bread and thin potato soup, hardly counted themselves more fortunate. Officers, segregated from their men on capture, generally fared better, but the bitterness of defeat bore heavily on this generation of army officers, and the knowledge that unless Britain sued for peace, their period of captivity was likely to be a long one, only compounded the sense of torment and loss of self-respect. The Spartan conditions awaiting them in Germany simply prolonged the misery. Most of the 1,500 officer POWs were housed in Oflag VII C/H, a former palace of the Archbishop of Salzburg at Laufen which could comfortably hold less than 500.[12] NCOs and other ranks also suffered from cramped, overcrowded quarters and a lack of basic sports and recreational facilities. The worst off were those interned at Stalag XX A, Thorn, and Stalag XXI D, Posen; the dank, dimly-lit subterranean forts opened in retaliation for Britain's use of Fort Henry in Ontario. The discovery of macabre graffiti from the Great War—one inscription in Posen's latrines read 'Beware who sit upon this seat for Posen crabs can jump ten feet'—brought the new residents a 'curious comfort', but most were relieved to be allocated to working parties and turn their backs on the squalid conditions for periods of each day.[13]

For enlisted men, employment outside the camp, though strenuous, at least offered the possibility of purchasing food from their co-workers or receiving handouts from the local population. Such options were not available to officers, who were prohibited from working under the convention, and had to subsist on what their captors saw fit to provide. Whatever food Laufen's canteen initially offered in return for the prisoners' *Lagergeld* soon disappeared. Empty stomachs made the watery beer sufficiently potent to lighten the mood, but mild inebriation only went to fuel the bouts of 'goon baiting' that became a feature of Laufen camp life over the autumn and winter months, and did little to improve the prisoners' discipline, their relations with the camp authorities or, ultimately, the nutritional value of their diet.[14] The twin problems of dietary deficiencies and

[11] For pre-war planning: Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 738–42.

[12] See Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, pp. 45, 96–7, Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, pp. 30–33, 58–9; Longden, *Dunkirk*, passim.

[13] R. A. Wilson, 'Five Years Easy', IWM. Docus. 83/41/1. Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, pp. 54–55.

[14] US embassy, Berlin, inspection report, 31 Mar. 1941. TNA. FO916/38.

overcrowding became recurrent themes in camp inspection reports. A three-week tour of camps in September by Darius A. Davis, associate general secretary of the YMCA, found that rations were of 'satisfactory quality' but 'barely sufficient' in terms of their quantity.[15] The ICRC concurred, reporting that the food situation was 'en général juste suffisante'.[16] American diplomats visiting Laufen gained a similar impression. Food preparation had improved since the prisoners took charge of the kitchen, but the calorific intake still hovered between 1,500 and 2,000 calories a day and several men were found to be suffering from the effects of malnutrition.[17] Conditions at Laufen's overflow camp at Oflag VII D, Tittmoning, were little better. 'Any exercise was exhausting', recalled one inmate. 'Climbing stairs was an effort; you took two or three steps and then stopped to get your breath back. I found that if I stood up too quickly I felt faint and some of us had legs swollen from famine oedema.'[18]

With stocks rapidly diminishing and no obvious sign of an improvement on the horizon, prisoners naturally fell back on their own devices. Their efforts over the late summer and autumn of 1940 to alert family and friends to their predicament were, in retrospect, astoundingly successful, not so much in resolving their parcel shortages in a timely fashion—it was not until early 1941 that a steady flow of parcels began reaching the camps—as in raising the subject in London. In a very real sense, it was the prisoners themselves who set the agenda in POW affairs over the second half of 1940. By mid-July, letters began reaching the prisoners' next-of-kin in the United Kingdom, but letters were also received by banks, firms, hotels, and private individuals in neutral countries, and Britain's diplomatic outposts abroad. By mid-August, over 200 letters had reached the consul-general in Geneva, with similar numbers turning up on the doormats of British diplomats in Berne, Lisbon, Stockholm, and the countries of south-eastern Europe.[19]

The fascinating process by which the prisoners' letters reached their recipients and subsequently entered public conscience and informed the political debate is worthy of a full-length study in itself. Here we must limit ourselves to noting that the prisoners' plight gave rise to one of the most successful public campaigns of the war. At first, information was circulated between the next-of-kin principally as a means of passing on news about individual camps, the state of the prisoners' health, or the conditions under which they were held. Regimental associations frequently provided an initial point of contact, but networks also

[15] H. Livingston (UK consul-general, Geneva) to FO, 17 Oct. 1940. TNA. FO916/2577. This telegram was later shown to the king, who discussed it with the JWO's Lord Chetwode on 23 October.

[16] J. Chenevière (ICRC) to FO, 12 Sep. 1940. ICRC. G85/038.

[17] Memo US embassy, Berlin, received by US embassy, London, 4 Oct. 1940. TNA. FO916/2577. See Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 15–17.

[18] J. M. Green, *From Colditz in Code* (London: Hale, 1971), p. 54.

[19] A. King (UK consulate, Lisbon) to A. B. Hutcheon (FO), 16 Aug. 1940; Livingston (UK consul-general, Geneva) to FO, 21 Aug. 1940. TNA. FO916/2569.

evolved organically through word of mouth, or through the actions of particular individuals, whose letters in the national or regional newspapers helped raise the issue's profile and encourage others to share their news or experiences. The speed with which these groups formed naturally varied between different localities. The next-of-kin in Barnsley were particularly well served, as a 'POW Fund' had been in existence since 1918 and merely expanded its activities after 1939. The capture of men from the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Norway led to the creation of a POW committee in Huddersfield in June 1940, although in Leeds, another Yorkshire town, it would take another year before a 'POW club' was formally set up.[20] In Scotland, groups appear to have formed at a relatively early date, building on pre-existing social, regimental, and regional networks. The encirclement of the 51st Division at St Valéry meant that nearly one in four prisoners captured over the summer hailed from Scotland. As the 51st was predominantly a 'highland' division, a sizeable proportion of the 9,447 Scots registered as POWs by early 1941 came from the Seaforth, Cameron, and Gordon Highlander regiments. Apart from the large conurbations of Glasgow (with 1,209 prisoners) and Edinburgh (812), the brunt of the loss was felt in Aberdeen (643) and its neighbouring counties—Aberdeenshire (642), Ross and Cromarty (527) and Inverness-shire (522).[21] Here, as elsewhere across the Highlands, regimental bonds were strong, and dissemination of the prisoners' news benefited from the existence of well-established regimental associations and tight-knit rural communities.[22]

The most active correspondents were the officer POWs in Oflag VII C/H. It was they who were most reliant on food parcels to supplement the camp rations and who possessed the necessary contacts to put their letter-writing campaign into effect. The parents of officer POWs were, likewise, well placed to make their voices heard. The speed with which the Huddersfield POW committee sprung into life, for instance, was largely due to the fact that one of the town's earliest POWs happened to be the son of the town's one-time mayor.[23] The prisoners' most energetic campaigner during the first year of the war, Mrs Winifred Coombe Tennant of Abergavenny, had the distinction of being the first woman delegate to the League of Nations, a member of the Privy Council and governor of the University of Swansea: not someone easily deflected from her task, or likely to shrink from a fight when the interests of her kith and kin—her son in this case—were at stake. The prisoners were also well served by the sympathy their plight generated in society at large. 'The welfare of the British Prisoners of War', noted Lord Salisbury, 'touches the heart, and rightly touches the heart,

[20] Hately-Broad, 'Prisoner of War Families', chap. 6.

[21] George Pratt Nish, *The War-Time History of the Scottish Branch of the British Red Cross Society* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1952), pp. 85–87.

[22] See David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army and the British People, c.1870–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 240–43.

[23] Hately-Broad, 'Prisoner of War Families', chap. 6.

of a vast public opinion by no means confined to the relatives of the prisoners themselves'.[24] Some 180,000 Britons had experienced captivity during the Great War and were determined that the 1940 generation were spared from the kind of official indifference that had blighted their lives before 1918. One of the first MPs to take up the prisoners cause was Squadron Leader E. H. Keeling, a former prisoner from the Great War.[25] Another supporter was the Lord Lieutenant of Kirkcudbrightshire, the 12th Earl of Galloway, who had been caught up in the reprisals following Churchill's inopportune segregation of U-boat prisoners in 1915.[26] The prisoners could count, therefore, on a large and receptive audience in Britain which extended well beyond their immediate next-of-kin.

Over the course of the late summer and early autumn, the various informal networks of relatives began to coalesce into organized associations. An Edinburgh based 'POW relatives association' chaired by a Mr Thorne assumed the lead role in representing the Scottish next-of-kin. In London, a 'national' POW relatives association (POWRA) was formed under the chairmanship of Mrs P. M. Stewart. By November, the POWRA had secured funding from the British Red Cross Society, acquired office space at the society's headquarters at St James Palace, and begun establishing links with outlying associations.[27] As with all the next-of-kin networks at this time, Mrs Stewart's POWRA initially saw itself as a source of information. Its monthly *News Sheet* comprised, for the most part, of excerpts of prisoners' letters provided by its burgeoning list of subscribers.[28] It was only in early 1941 that the POWRA took on a more pro-active stance and began lobbying directly with the government.

It was, however, in Britain's expatriate communities, scattered across neutral Europe, where the prisoners' pleas for assistance had their most immediate practical effect. As in Britain, the response to the prisoners' letters was initially piecemeal. On receiving a letter, recipients would simply buy items in the local shops—usually amounting to about fifteen shillings—parcel them up and post them to the officer or soldier concerned, using the POW camp number as an address. When it became clear that the flow of letters was unlikely to abate, efforts were made to place arrangements onto a firmer footing. In Switzerland, the British Legion's office in Geneva assumed responsibility for coordinating parcel packing operations.[29] A rather different system emerged in the Balkans,

[24] Lord Salisbury to Brendan Bracken, MP, 4 Dec. 1940. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

[25] See Keeling to Hore-Belisha (minister for war) and R. A. Butler (FO), 20 Oct. 1939. TNA. FO371/23939. For Keeling's later work for the JWO, see BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, vol. i,* pp. 291–96.

[26] 12th Earl of Galloway to Sir O. Sargent (FO) 26 Sep., 9 and 19 Oct. 1940. TNA. FO914/2578, FO916/2569.

[27] Little is known about Mrs Stewart. Craig Harvey succeeded her as chairman in April, but she remained 'organizing secretary' and 'founding chair' until the association was disbanded in 1945.

[28] BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 249–51.

[29] Livingston (UK consul-general, Geneva) to FO, 10 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570.

where the wife of the British ambassador to Hungary, Mrs Owen O'Malley, took the lead, organizing the work of the small British community in Budapest and visiting Ankara, Istanbul, Sofia, and Belgrade to 'ginger up' the parcel packing efforts there.[30] O'Malley's counterpart in Lisbon was Mrs Ian Campbell, who created a 'British POW Comforts Fund' in mid-August to provide parcels for her husband and his fellow officer prisoners in Laufen. Accurate statistics on the quantity of material processed by these groups is unavailable. The British Legion and ICRC, in Geneva, provided the majority of parcels at this time—by the end of November, the former was dispatching approximately 600 parcels a week—but Mrs O'Malley and Mrs Campbell were generating about 300 kg (60 parcels) and 200 kgs (40 parcels) of parcels respectively, and similar quantities were contributed by the other 'ex-pat' communities in the Balkans and south-east Europe.

The significance of these activities, however, goes beyond the volume of parcels produced. Both Mrs O'Malley and Mrs Campbell were able, in different ways, to influence official thinking in Whitehall. As the wife of an ambassador, O'Malley had contacts where it counted. Her husband, no less his counterparts in Cairo, Ankara, Sophia, Bucharest, and Belgrade, harangued the FO to sanction the expenditure of the local organizations and press the Red Cross to establish a permanent presence in the region of its own.[31] Mrs Campbell's credentials were equally impressive. Although her husband was a mere captain, he happened to be the son of the Duke of Argyll, and heir to one of the largest dukedoms in Scotland. Curiously, this fact appears to have passed Whitehall officials by, but in Scotland it guaranteed that her appeals for support did not go unheeded. As an American citizen, she was also well positioned to tap funds and resources in the US. The influential British War Relief Society soon made her cause their own and gave her appeals their full backing.[32] Assistance was also forthcoming from the US minister in Lisbon, Herbert Pell, who helped iron out difficulties with some of the more Anglophobic elements in the Spanish administration.[33] Pell even allowed his adventurous son to drive a truckload of parcels across the peninsula and southern France to Geneva—an exercise which dispelled the myth that transport difficulties made bulk deliveries impossible. By early October 1940, Mrs Campbell had assumed an almost mystical status amongst the next-of-kin. The 'energetic woman in Lisbon', as one appreciative admirer dubbed her, had

[30] Cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 308.

[31] See *inter alia*, Sir G. Rendal (UK minister, Romania) to FO, 29 Nov. 1940; O'Malley to FO, 25 Nov. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570.

[32] Mrs Campbell claimed to be in receipt of $4,560 (about £1,000) a month from the BWRS by late 1942. BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 312 footnote *. The BCRS appealed for funds for Mrs Campbell in Apr. 1941. Ibid., p. 304.

[33] For Campbell's standing with the Swiss, see H. Martin (Swiss minister, Lisbon) to C. J. Burckhardt (ICRC) 23 Nov. 1942. ICRC. G25/23 Carton 658 Dossier 2.2.

succeeded, almost single-handedly, where the combined might of the British government and the Red Cross had failed.[34]

For all their success, though, there were obvious limits to the voluntary packaging operations, and no less obvious difficulties. The task of providing weekly parcels for some 45,000 men was always going to tax the capacity of Britain's expatriate communities. O'Malley's circle in Budapest was able to service barely 300 men, and even this stretched the resources of the legation and colony. Expatriates in Belgrade catered for a similar number.[35] Such arrangements could only be, at best, a panacea, rather than a solution to the problem. Moreover, the fact that parcels were dispatched to individuals—to avoid the danger of them being misappropriated—inevitably resulted in a system that was highly selective in its effects: officers fared better than NCOs and other ranks; Mrs Campbell's efforts were directed, at least initially, to the men of her husband's division, and those prisoners who were well travelled, well connected, and well resourced inevitably coped better than those from less privileged backgrounds. 'The most ingenious [prisoners]', remarked one of Laufen's inmates in early November, 'are doing very well on the parcel racket, getting perhaps one weekly parcel from Switzerland and another from Yugoslavia, with occasional extras from Greece and Turkey'. Not surprisingly, he noted, 'the less fortunate ones feel sometimes a little jealous'.[36] The actions of Madame Paravicini, wife of Switzerland's pre-war minister in London, illustrate the situation very well. Anxious to assist her old friends, Paravicini set herself up as a postbox, receiving letters from prisoners and sending them on to London, courtesy of the Swiss diplomatic bag. Naturally, the men who benefited from her benevolence tended to be the sons of those she had met on London's cocktail circuit. Of the nineteen letters which arrived at the Swiss legation in London in late December 1940, for instance, one was destined for a viscount, while another two were addressed to duchesses, three to countesses, two to ladies, and one to a lord: hardly a representative sample of British society or its imprisoned servicemen at the time.[37]

To their credit, officials in Whitehall, the majority of who were, themselves, from privileged backgrounds, clearly felt uncomfortable at such inequitable treatment, but the major drawback of the amateur schemes was the danger they posed to Britain's wider financial and economic interests. The outflow of money from Britain to pay for the parcel packaging—whether sent by the next-of-kin or drawn from the prisoners' own bank accounts—inevitably undermined Britain's

[34] See *The Times*, 2 Oct. 1940. Handwritten addition to memo by W. Coombe Tennant, 3 Oct. 1940. Mam O Nedd Collection. W. Coombe Tennant JP (hereafter WCT). National Library of Wales.

[35] O'Malley to FO, 25 Nov. 1940. Minute, R. A. Butler (FO) 6 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570.

[36] Booth, 'Diary of a Prisoner of War' pp. 80–81, entry for 7 Nov. 1940. IWM. Docus. P370.

[37] De Jenner (Swiss legation, London) to R. Dunbar (FO), 27 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2579. For FO criticisms of Paravicini, FO minute, 6 Nov. 1940. TNA. FO916/2579.

system of exchange control.[38] Estimates put the loss of sterling at between £20,000 and £30,000 per annum. While the FO was prepared to countenance the expenditure, in the Treasury officials' anxieties grew when it became apparent that donors in the United States were sending their gifts direct to Geneva or Lisbon. The problem here was twofold. On the one hand, any expansion of the volume of dollars circulating in Europe inevitably increased the danger of Germany laying its hands on foreign exchange, and compromised Britain's financial blockade. On the other, if London acquiesced to the transfer of gifts to prisoners in Germany, it would be difficult to resist calls from the 'relief lobby', centred around the former president Herbert Hoover, to allow food to reach the civilian populations of occupied Europe or the so-called 'invasion epoch' prisoners—soldiers from Britain's erstwhile allies—who were now effectively working on behalf of their new German masters.[39] 'If we do anything to countenance assistance from the United States to our prisoners', wrote the head of the Trading with the Enemy Branch in early November, 'certain interests in the United States will press harder than ever in their campaign to assist the inhabitants of the occupied countries and even the Germans and Italians themselves'.[40]

With few parcels leaving Britain, it was clearly impossible for the authorities to call a halt to the volunteer activities in neutral Europe. In August, the Treasury reluctantly agreed to allow Mrs Campbell to cash £50 worth of cheques to cover her weekly needs; elsewhere ministers and their staff were urged to act as prudently as possible. In London, the government did its best to curtail the flow of money sent by the next-of-kin by simply failing to publicize the facilities made available for this purpose. The ruse only came unstuck in early October, when Mrs Coombe Tennant advertised the scheme in a letter to *The Times*.[41] Negotiations on a general system of remittances ran aground in the late autumn when it transpired that the rate of exchange offered by the Deutsche Bank would result in the loss to the enemy of fifty per cent of any money paid over.[42] Finally, after repeated postponements, the government bit the bullet and, on the last day in November, issued instructions to Britain's legations to cease cashing sterling cheques, suspend all work on individual parcels, and instead

[38] See Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *British Policy towards Enemy Property during and after the Second World War* (London: F.C.O., 1998), pp. 10–13.

[39] W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade, vol. i* (London: HMSO, 1959), pp. 549–57. Joan Beaumont, 'Starving for Democracy: Britain's Blockade of and Relief for Occupied Europe, 1939–1945', *War and Society*, 8/2 (1990), pp. 57–82. J. H. George, 'Herbert Hoover and World War II Relief', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 16/3 (1992), pp. 389–407.

[40] E. F. Q. Henriques (TWEB) to Warner (PWD), 5 Nov. 1940, and Col. Roseway (WO) 11 Nov. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570, and FO916/2569.

[41] Henriques (TWEB) to Rose-Dutton (Tsy.), 21 Sep. 1940. GPO Archive, London. POST56/90. Letter to the Editor by Mrs Coombe Tennant, *The Times*, 11 Oct. 1940.

[42] A. P. Waterfield (Tsy.) to G. D. Roseway (WO), 30 Oct. 1940. GPO POST56/90.

dispatch only bulk shipments, addressed to the senior British officer, or NCO in the camps concerned. The amateurs could continue their work, but it had to be under centralized authority and directed towards the needs of the camps as a whole rather than individual prisoners.[43] The facilities which had allowed relatives to send £2 to their loved ones each month were likewise withdrawn at the end of January.[44]

THE JOINT WAR ORGANIZATION (JWO)

In justifying the decision to curtail the amateur parcel operations, the FO confidently noted that 'sufficient parcels of food and clothing will be reaching camps in Germany from various Red Cross sources' by the end of November. Based on what officials actually knew about the flow of the parcels leaving Britain, this claim was disingenuous to say the least. The traffic of parcels from Britain, completely suspended over the summer months, had only resumed in mid-July, but failed to reach anything like the required capacity.[45] Once the consignments dispatched before France's collapse had been exhausted, prisoners had, in effect, to rely on parcels originating from outside the United Kingdom. That a regular system to meet the POWs needs was not in place by November can be seen in the Red Cross's admission, ten days after the new policy came into force, that its efforts to get bulk shipments moving by sea out of Lisbon had only just begun, while the overland route across Spain was so erratic that the number of parcels missing and unaccounted for had reached over 100,000.[46] By the end of January 1941, only 155,400 parcels had arrived in Geneva out of the 494,721 that had left Britain between 27 July and 28 December.[47] The decision, then, to rein in the amateur operations, though explicable in terms of Britain's currency and blockade needs, was thus a surprising one. The government action threatened to sap the amateur operations of their 'emotional steam' at a time when the 'official' parcel system had yet to splutter into life.[48]

To understand London's decision, we need to take a step back and consider the government's role in the provision of relief parcels since the start of the war. The drafters of the 1929 POW convention, who were naturally anxious to tap the spirit that had spawned the Red Cross tradition in the first place,

[43] FO to Berne, Lisbon, Budapest, and Madrid, 22 Nov. 1940. Inter-departmental meeting, Tsy, 7 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570. This did not put an end to such activities: see A. B. Thurso (TWEB), to R. A. B. Mynors (Tsy.) 7 Jan. 1943. TNA. T231/105.

[44] *Parl. Debs. Commons*, vol. 368, 30 Jan. 1941, folios 714–15.

[45] See GPO report, Feb. 1941, cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp 353–55, and minutes, inter-departmental meeting, WO, 21 Nov. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570.

[46] Miss J. Jackson to Lord Chetwode, 10 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570.

[47] ICRC to Mr Morris (US consulate-general, Berlin), 19 Feb. 1941. ICRC. SG4 Carton 1175.

[48] O'Malley to FO, 10 Dec. 1940. Minute, Sir H. Satow, 30 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2570.

were happy to leave it to 'recognized and authorized relief societies' to satisfy the prisoners' need for books, games, and relief parcels. Governments were encouraged to offer 'all facilities for the efficacious performance of the [societies'] humane task, within the limits imposed by military exigencies' (article 78), but the precise division of responsibilities was left for each government to decide. In Britain, agreement was quickly reached at the start of the Great War whereby uniforms and boots could be drawn from government stocks, but non-military items—undergarments, books, games, sports equipment, and non-perishable food—were supplied by the voluntary sector. Events soon revealed, however, that if voluntary societies were left unsupervised, needless duplication and wasted effort invariably ensued. In the autumn of 1916, therefore, the government gave the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) overarching authority to oversee parcel production.[49] The arrangement was not to everyone's liking and questions were asked in the press and parliament over Red Cross managerial competence, but by the war's close, the Red Cross had largely redeemed its reputation and justified the confidence placed in it by the government.[50] As a result no serious objections were raised in late October 1939 when the Joint War Organization (JWO)—a wartime amalgamation of the BRCS and the Order of St John of Jerusalem—was named as the lead organization for the production of POW relief parcels.[51]

In its confidential account of the war the Red Cross frequently complained that critics of the parcel operations erred in directing their venom at the 'Red Cross' rather than the JWO. In truth, though, such was the society's dominance of the JWO's POW committee and kindred bodies that the confusion, though unfortunate, was not entirely misplaced. By 1939, the BRCS was the most prestigious voluntary organization in the British Empire and one of the leading voices in the international Red Cross movement. Its impressive reputation for providing healthcare and humanitarian assistance in peacetime—creating the first blood transfusion service in 1921 for instance—was not, though, matched by its wartime accomplishments. Here, the organization's close ties with the 'establishment', the regular army, and aristocratic society seemed strangely out of place in a war effort built, ostensibly, on the principle of equality. It also, inevitably, helped create in the public mind an image of an organization out of touch with the rest of society. To claim that its members after 1939 were not driven by a genuine sense of civic responsibility would be to ignore the spirit that energized the movement. Many were enormously capable men and women with wide experience in the humanitarianism field. The JWO's chairman, Field Marshall Lord Chetwode, was an articulate, widely read man who did not suffer

[49] *The Times* (28 Dec. 1916) cited in Wootton, *The Politics of Influence*, p. 16.

[50] *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem on voluntary aid rendered to the sick and wounded at home and abroad and to British prisoners of war, 1914–1919* (London: HMSO, 1921).

[51] *Parl. Debs. Commons,* vol. 352, 25 Oct. 1939, folio 1378.

fools gladly: his parting address before retiring from the army in 1934 is judged to be the 'most devastating indictment of the military profession by a high-ranking officer' of the entire inter-war period.[52] Nevertheless, with a leadership dominated by retired army officers, whose only collective qualification for the job appeared to be their ability to put down rebellious tribesmen on the north-west frontier, it was all too easy for critics to cast the society as a refuge for the army's 'Colonel Blimp'.[53]

The problem with Britain's parcel operations after June 1940, however, lay not with the quality of the JWO's leadership but with the dislocation of Europe's transport networks. With western Europe's roads and railways clogged up with the detritus of war, the most obvious route to the camps appeared to lie in the south, through Portugal, Spain, and unoccupied France. The list of problems that had to be overcome was, however, worryingly long. The scarcity of shipping space to ferry the parcels to Portugal, coupled with the lack of handling capacity in Lisbon, was only the start of it. The possibilities for onward shipment were limited: Spain's railway system had barely begun to recover from the effects of the civil war; heavy rains and flooding in the winter only added to the problems; and the European-wide dearth of rolling-stock naturally made the Portuguese wary of seeing their wagons cross the frontier without firm guarantees for their safe return. Connections with Switzerland also remained fraught. On 3 September 1940, German special forces sabotaged the one railway line linking Switzerland with unoccupied France, forcing all traffic to either pass through the German customs cordon outside Geneva or make the journey by road.[54] To make matters—and planning—worse, throughout the autumn and winter of 1940, serious doubts remained over whether Spain, Portugal, or even Switzerland, would remain neutral or avoid a German occupation.[55] Not surprisingly, therefore, the 'southern route', opened in late July 1940, failed to bring the improvement that many had hoped for.

Regrettably, a host of alternative routes—through Sweden, Finland, or Ireland, or shuttle runs across the Channel—failed to materialize. Exploratory discussions on these possibilities dragged on into the spring and early summer of 1941, but officials were repeatedly forced back to the southern route as the only plausible option for channelling parcels into Germany.[56] It was only in December 1940 that a partial solution to the myriad of problems afflicting the southern route

[52] Bond, *British Military Policy*, 67.

[53] See Isobel Cripps to Sir James Grigg (WO), 11 June 1942. TNA. WO32/14423.

[54] Klaus Urner, *Let's Swallow Switzerland: Hitler's Plans against the Swiss Confederation* (New York: Lexingdon 2001), pp. 86–87.

[55] See Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and the Strategy of Survival: British Policy and Franco's Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Glyn Stone, *The Oldest Ally: Britain and the Portuguese Connection, 1936–1941* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1994); and Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland and the Second World War*, pp. 169–76.

[56] For a summary of these negotiations, see BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 357–59.

seemed to present itself. Instead of relying on the fickle Spanish railway system, the parcels would be transferred in Lisbon onto smaller vessels run by the ICRC, who would then carry them on to Marseilles before unloading them and completing the journey to Geneva by road. Initially seen as little more than a temporary expedient, by April 1941 the huge backlog of parcels in Lisbon had been cleared, and the ICRC's delegates in Germany were able to deliver a sufficient volume of parcels to the camps to provide the prisoners with the parcel-a-week standard desired by the government and Red Cross.[57] Numerous problems were to beset the flow of parcels over the following years, but the initial crisis created by the collapse of France had, to all intents, been resolved by this date. It was only in the final months of the war that parcel provision re-emerged as a pressing issue.

COLLAPSE OF BRITISH PARCEL PRODUCTION SYSTEM

The transport difficulties were, then, of a sufficient order of magnitude to have taxed the wit of any government or organization. In Britain's case, however, there is little doubt that the administration of the parcel system suffered from major shortcomings. From the very start, there was considerable confusion over who was ultimately responsible. Most commentators, and a good many government officials, assumed that primary responsibility lay with the 'Red Cross', i.e. the JWO. In talks with the government at the start of the war, the JWO agreed to arrange for the 'collection, packing, and distribution' of POW parcels.[58] In reality, however, the JWO limited its involvement to producing and packing the parcels, and left it up to the General Post Office (GPO) to arrange for their delivery to the ICRC in Geneva. As a result, although the public looked to the JWO to resolve the transport difficulties after the fall of France, the task was actually the duty of the government and the GPO. Attempts to clarify the situation only resulted in further confusion. In answer to a question in the House in early November, the prime minister spoke of the JWO's 'responsibility' for the 'despatch' of POW parcels.[59] Matters were not helped by the fact that the JWO was, itself, uneasy about the division of labour. Frustrated by criticism for a situation not of their own making, JWO staff found it difficult to resist the temptation to step in and deal with the problem on their own terms. The organization was also highly sensitive over its relations with the ICRC and fumed whenever it discovered the government negotiating directly with Geneva. It left the ICRC

[57] For the ICRC's negotiations over shipping, see Junod: *Warrior Without Weapons*, pp. 175–80.

[58] Minutes of JWO Emergency Committee, 8 Nov. 1939. British Red Cross Archive (hereafter BRCA). JWO/1/1/2.

[59] *Parl. Debs. Commons,* vol. 365, 5 Nov. 1940, folio 1186. Ibid., vol. 366, 26 Nov. 1940, folio 67.

in no doubt as to what it saw as the 'frightful risks' in routing discussions outside Red Cross channels.[60] As a result, far from educating the public and government officials on the limits of its responsibilities, the JWO increasingly allowed itself to be drawn into transport matters.[61] Miss Judith Jackson, the head of its Foreign Relations Department, was sent to Lisbon in early November to work alongside the ICRC's representative, Col. Iselin, and hammer out arrangements with the local authorities. Publicity over Miss Jackson's activities only sparked further criticism over why she had not gone earlier, or why the JWO hesitated establishing a similar presence in the Balkans. A representative, Mr Hogg, was only sent out in August 1941; four months after the region had succumbed to Axis forces. Although the JWO's intervention into the transport discussions was driven by entirely laudable aims, its belated involvement merely strengthened the widespread belief that the JWO was to blame for the crisis in the first place.

Regrettably, matters were not helped by the government's reluctance to acknowledge its own stake in the process. The reason for this lies partly in the view that a system run entirely by the voluntary sector was less likely to fall victim to political gerrymandering by the enemy. As Churchill explained in early November, the organization's 'influence and usefulness are largely due to its independence of Government control and its relationship with the International Red Cross at Geneva'.[62] Of growing significance in government thinking, however, particularly in the WO, was a desire to avoid associating itself too closely with schemes which, in effect if not intent, relieved Berlin of its responsibilities under the convention.[63] Similar sentiments underpinned the government's attitude towards financing the JWO's activities and its determination that the JWO should foot the bill for shipping the parcels to Lisbon, and limiting the government's contribution to seventy-five per cent of the total costs involved.[64]

There was only so far, however, that the government could go in distancing itself from the parcel system. Although the GPO proved remarkably proficient in avoiding public censure, the government was never entirely able to duck its responsibilities for the collapse of transport arrangements. Efforts by the Postmaster General to field questions in the House in August and September ultimately did more harm than good. Why, MPs asked, were issues of this

[60] 'Rapport de M. Carl J. Burckhardt sur sa mission à Londres, Oct–Dec. 1941'. ICRC. G3/43 Carton 200. The ICRC actively sought to strengthen its official contacts. See report by M. Junod on his trip to London, 5 May. 1941. ICRC. G3/30 Carton 166.

[61] See Sir John Kennedy (JWO) to Sir Frederick Bovenschen (WO), 10 May 1941, and examples of the JWO's confused public messages: BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 209, 327–28.

[62] For the drafting of this statement, see minute, Warner (PWD), 1 Nov. 1940, and Warner to Sir F. Bovenschen (WO) 4 Nov. 1940. HRO. 5M79 A23.

[63] See correspondence and discussions between the WO and JWO in Oct. 1941 and May 1942: BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 211–12, 216–18.

[64] These issues are dealt with in full in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 202–11.

gravity being dealt with by a junior minister when responsibility for protecting British prisoners was meant to reside with the WO? Treating the problem as an administrative matter, falling within the ambit of a minor department, thus backfired and merely provided ammunition to those who accused the government of complacency.

By October, the growing tide of public alarm forced the WO to stand up to the mark. But who should be responsible for the issue in the WO and what were the limits of this responsibility? As a technical issue, the matter was initially handed to the financial secretary, Duncan Sandys MP. But the problems inevitably touched upon the work of the casualty department, the DPW, and the press department, all of whom had very different views on the subject. The department's senior staff—the secretary of state, Anthony Eden, permanent under-secretary, Sir P. James Grigg, parliamentary secretary, Sir Edward Grigg, and Duncan Sandys—were clearly anxious to limit the WO's involvement and shift responsibility to the JWO by judiciously supporting its activities and talking up its successes. Sir James Grigg was particularly keen to see the JWO prosper and assist its chairman, Lord Chetwode, an old friend from his days as financial secretary to the government of India, when Chetwode had commanded the Indian Army. Matters looked rather different in the DPW, however, where the director, Gen. Hunter, felt that more drastic measures were required to remedy the situation. In late August, Hunter let it be known that the DPW was prepared to take over the packing of next-of-kin parcels, a job which had hitherto been undertaken by the JWO but which had been suspended since May in order to concentrate resources on the dispatch of food parcels. The proposal sent alarm bells ringing in the JWO, where Chetwode suspected the military of wanting to use the next-of-kin parcels to smuggle illicit material into the camps. 'If there is any suspicion of this sort of thing going on', he warned Sir James Grigg, 'Germany will immediately refuse to handle the parcels at all'.[65] In fact, Hunter's intervention was prompted by nothing more sinister than his anger at the JWO's desultory record and dismay at the lack of urgency shown by his WO superiors. 'The whole matter is boiling up as a major issue', he pointedly warned on 25 September: 'the British Red Cross' may be 'the responsible organization' but its failure to meet the prisoners' needs meant that the WO's reluctance to address the issue would 'satisfy neither the public nor the next of kin'.[66] Undeterred by the government's refusal to entertain his proposal, Hunter kept a wary eye on the JWO's activities over subsequent months, even going so far as to suggest, in mid-November, that the WO vet JWO press communiqués to

[65] Lord Chetwode (JWO) to Sir James Grigg (permanent under-secretary, WO), 29 Sep. 1940. TNA. WO258/14. When the JWO re-assumed responsibility for the next-of-kin parcels, it routinely had to remove ten per cent of the articles, as they were found to be prohibited.

[66] Minute, Mjr.-Gen. Hunter, n.d. TNA. WO258/14. Memo, Gen. Hunter (DPW), 25 Sep. 1940 cited in full in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 331.

prevent what he saw as mendacious and misleading information entering the public domain.[67]

Chetwode's frustration at the situation was not entirely misplaced. The effectiveness of the JWO's system of parcel production ultimately depended on it receiving accurate information on the number of men lost to German captivity. In mid-July, its POW department assumed there would be 'between 20 and 30,000 prisoners before the end of the present year', and worked towards producing enough parcels to meet this number.[68] The estimate was, of course, some 15 to 25,000 short of the true figure. Regrettably, the WO was unable to enlighten the JWO as its casualty department had 'crashed badly', as Chetwode put it, under the pressure of the summer's events. The department's relocation to Liverpool had compounded its difficulties and it was not until its 'timely' return to London in the autumn that relations between it, the DPW, and the various voluntary bodies began to improve. In the meantime, 'a third' of all the JWO POW department's problems were felt to lie in the 'inaccurate and often quite nonsensical information' received from the WO's casualty department. It was not until the first week in November that the JWO finally learnt that there were upwards of 40,000 men awaiting their parcels. Little wonder that Chetwode felt aggrieved, and grumbled to his friend Sir James Grigg, 'so far we have got all the blame in the Press over Prisoners of War, and it is nothing to do with us'.[69]

The JWO was not, however, as blameless as Chetwode made out. From the summer of 1940 until the spring of 1941 the organization suffered a series of crises which, if not of its own making, were exacerbated by its failings. The first concerned the packaging of POW parcels. Over the late summer, a concerted effort was made to expand capacity and, by mid-August, nine new packaging centres had either been opened or were earmarked for further expansion. The whole system was, however, thrown into disarray by problems in the stores department, which had proved incapable of either keeping up with the demand of the packaging centres or overcoming the litany of problems—from transport bottlenecks to the loss and disruption of supplies by enemy air action—hampering its work. The situation was only brought to Chetwode's attention in mid-October, by which time some of the packaging centres were already standing idle for want of supplies. Indeed, the problem had become so acute that when the head of the POW department, Lord Clarendon, investigated the matter, he reached the depressing conclusion that food parcel production

[67] Gen. Hunter (DPW) to G. W. Lambert (WO) n.d. Lord Chetwode (JWO) to Sir James Grigg (WO) 13 Nov. 1940. TNA. WO258/14. See BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 319–20.

[68] Minutes, JWO Emergency Committee, 19 June 1940. BRCA. JWO/1/1/2. Memo, Capt. R. Gordon Munro (Deputy Director, POW Department, JWO), 12 July 1940. TNA. FO916/2569.

[69] Lord Chetwode (JWO) to Sir James Grigg (WO) 13 Nov. 1940. TNA. WO258/14. Lord Clarendon (JWO POW Department) cited in E. H. Keeling MP to W. S. Churchill, 5 Nov. 1940. PREM4/98/1. 'History of Branch Cas. P/W', 1 Apr. 1949. p. 3. WO32/14357.

ought to be discontinued. This 'absolutely astonishing' proposal, in Chetwode's words, would have seen the JWO abandoning one of its core wartime activities, and condemn its POW department, which accounted for nearly sixty per cent of the JWO's entire budget in 1940–41, to providing prisoners with little more than invalid comforts, clothing, tobacco, and cigarettes.[70] Fortunately, further investigations revealed that the situation was not quite as disastrous as Clarendon had feared, but the crisis forced the JWO into recognizing the importance of enlisting outside help. An appeal to the Canadian Red Cross to provide parcels met with a positive response, and from early 1941, parcels began rolling off the Canadian conveyor belts at the rate of one every seventeen seconds. Chetwode also approached London's upmarket department stores, Harrods, Selfridges, and Lyons, and had them agree to produce 320,000 parcels to help tide the JWO over the spring of 1941 and build up a 'suitable' reserve by the early summer.[71]

It was not only in the production of parcels, though, that the JWO was found wanting. No sooner had problems in the stores department come to light than difficulties emerged in the running of the POW department, where the handling of correspondence had fallen so far in arrears that an employee of the newsagents W. H. Smiths, Mr Whitwell, had to be called in to overhaul the entire clerical system.[72] The situation had only come to light during an informal inspection of the department by a bank director, who had offered to look into the affair for a group of anxious next-of-kin. The POW department found his inquiry 'kindly and constructive', but his description of an agency staffed by 'nothing but lovely ladies, who expect at least 2 hours off for luncheon at Quagliano's', did little to redress the organization's reputation.[73] Other individuals came away with a depressingly similar conclusion. One woman, who visited a packing centre in north London in search of a label for her next-of-kin parcel, found she had to pick her way through

> acres of clothing oozing from hundreds of parcels over the floor. A few porters were stacking in one corner and a few women scratching among more clothing on a long trestle table. A few small tables were scattered around piled with letters, and at one sat an elegant young lady joking with a man. At another I found a girl sitting by a typewriter and explained my needs. She regretted that, despite the fact that I had travelled from

[70] BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 276–77. Minute, Major Abrahams (JWO) 11 Aug. 1941. BRCA. JWO/1/1/9.

[71] Minutes, JWO Emergency Committee, 9 Oct. 1940, 12 Feb., and 14 May 1941. BRCA. JWO/1/1/2. Canadian Red Cross Society, *History: Toronto Branch. 1914–1948* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1949), p. 48. Mackenzie Porter, *To All Men. The History of the Canadian Red Cross* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1960) pp. 88–90. P. H. Gordon, *Fifty Years in the Canadian Red Cross* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969), pp. 68–73. BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 285–91.

[72] Minutes, Joint War Emergency Committee, 13 Nov. 1940. BRCA. JWO/1/1/2.

[73] Anonymous, undated report circulated by W. Coombe Tennant, 8 Nov. 1940, and 'Extract from a letter written in October by Major Morland . . .'. WCT, folios 3542, 3543.

7.30 am till 11.30 to fetch it, I could not be given a label as they were being sent out in alphabetical order, and she had not yet got to 'D'. Probably within two weeks it would arrive. Three weeks later it came. Then a second one.[74]

Such experiences only went to confirm doubts over the JWO's lack of professionalism. 'For some inscrutable reason', concluded one visitor in early November, 'they have a prejudice against the employment of a well-paid and properly trained staff'.[75] Many of these criticisms were unfair. A third of the POW department's staff, for instance, was salaried.[76] But there is little doubt that the JWO struggled to shake off the image of a well-intentioned but basically antiquated organization, staffed by stalwart members of London's genteel society who viewed their involvement as little more than a convenient and socially acceptable pastime. An organization, then, that was institutionally and culturally ill-suited to accomplish the tasks it faced.

BELATED OFFICIAL INTERVENTION TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS

One of the striking features of the government's efforts to grapple with the parcel problem was its inability to contain public dissatisfaction and prevent internal policy discussions from being driven by external political considerations. It was in the second half of August that the prisoners' relatives, working on the snippets of news culled from POW letters or information gleaned from the press, began to grasp the scale of the parcel problem and the impact it was having on their loved ones. At this stage, the relatives' complaints principally revolved around the lack of guidance on how to arrange for next-of-kin parcels or transfer money to the prisoners or their bank accounts in neutral countries. Complaints centred, then, around the basic lack of information about how they, themselves, could help alleviate their loved ones' plight. By mid-September, however, the focus of attention shifted onto a set of issues which bore directly on the government's stake in the affair, and it was these criticisms that Gen. Hunter had in mind when he warned his colleagues of the 'avalanche of protests' that would arrive if matters did not improve.[77]

The first issue concerned the palpable failure of the Red Cross to establish a reliable system for transporting parcels from the United Kingdom, and the government's hesitation in helping those, like Mrs Campbell, who were actually

[74] Cited in memo by W. Coombe Tennant, 3 Dec. 1940. WCT, folio 3540. See also Marie J. Douglas to the Editor, *Sunday Express*, 24 Nov. 1940.

[75] Professor Zimmern (Balliol College, Oxford) to W. Coombe Tennant, 4 Nov. 1940. WCT, folio 3543.

[76] See flattering remarks in an otherwise hostile article: *Sunday Express*, 8 Dec. 1940.

[77] Minute, Mjr.-Gen. Hunter, n.d. TNA. WO258/14.

in a position to do some good. By the middle of October, Mrs Campbell was well known in the next-of-kin community, and an increasing number of relatives began transferring money to Lisbon to fund her activities. The apparent ease with which Mrs Campbell's parcels reached the prisoners—the average time in transit was about ten days—only went to underscore the shortcomings of the 'official' arrangements in the United Kingdom, where, despite repeated claims to the contrary, the flow of parcels remained woefully slow throughout the autumn and winter months. The fact that a large proportion of the parcels provided by the ICRC was paid for from JWO funds was not widely recognized, either by the prisoners or their supporters at home. Not surprisingly, therefore, the 'petty' restrictions placed on Mrs Campbell's activities in Lisbon, particularly the Byzantine regulations governing the transfer of funds abroad, provoked incredulity and anger amongst the relatives, who lost little time in taking Campbell's complaints to the FO or raising them with their MPs.[78] Efforts by the government and JWO to calm public fears were continually frustrated, partly because the optimistic announcements frequently contradicted the more sombre news given in the prisoners' letters and partly because there was, in truth, little real progress to speak of before the spring of 1941.

It was not long before frustration at the lack of progress in resolving the parcel issue spilled over into overt criticism of the Red Cross. The JWO was, as we have seen, an easy target. Its failure to respond to routine requests for information and provide receipts for money sent in by relatives won it few friends, but it was its association with the floundering transport arrangements—a problem which it appeared singularly ill-equipped to cope with—that generated the most alarm in the relatives' ranks. At first, criticisms were of a general nature, but as knowledge and understanding of the issues grew, complaints at the Red Cross's handling of the situation became more focused, and, by early November, calls for a public inquiry into the workings of the JWO's POW department began to be heard.[79] Administrative problems within the department, which came to light at this time, inevitably strengthened the belief that the organization was not fit for purpose, and the artful statements made by government ministers in defence of the JWO suggested that such doubts were not limited to the next-of-kin.[80] Even government officials, who were more aware of the JWO's predicament, became increasingly irritated at its working practices.[81] At this stage, however, the government was not prepared to sanction a full inquiry, and requests to this end by MPs were carefully batted away by government spokesmen, starting with

[78] See Mjr. Sir R. W. Brooke to Lord Halifax (foreign secretary) 13 Oct. 1940. TNA. FO916/2569.

[79] E. H. Keeling to W. S. Churchill, 5 Nov. 1940. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

[80] See the half-hearted testimonial by Sir Edward Grigg. *Parl. Debs. Commons*, vol. 365, 22 Oct., folio 948 and 5 Nov., folio 1185.

[81] Minute, G. W. Harrison (FO), 31 Oct. 1940. HRO. 5M79 A24. 'The Red Cross will find it difficult to rebut accusations of lack of imagination and initiative.'

the prime minister himself, on 5 November. The government was still reluctant to avoid associating itself with the parcel operations, particularly in their current parlous state. As there was no other organization capable of taking up the work, there seemed little point in denting morale in the JWO or losing the confidence of its senior leadership.

Though the Red Cross bore the brunt of the relatives' criticism, the government was not immune from public censure. Again, public opinions were coloured by memories of the Great War when the authorities were widely held to have mismanaged the POW issue. The government's inept handling of questions in the House, and the absence of any clear sense of which department—and which minister—was ultimately responsible for POW matters, inevitably fanned concerns that the government was not giving the 'burning issue', as Churchill put it, the attention it deserved. Indeed, from the outset, Mrs Coombe Tennant, the relatives' most effective campaigner over the autumn, urged MPs to insist on a more coherent and accountable system of control.[82] Ideas varied from creating a watching committee of MPs to keep an eye on POW matters, establishing a standing inter-departmental committee, chaired by a cabinet minister, to improve liaison between different government departments, to a full-blown POW department, as had briefly existed under Lord Newton during the Great War. All of these suggestions had their own merits and drawbacks. A committee of MPs, although initially favoured by Chetwode, would, it was feared, 'easily turn itself into an instrument for playing off the Red Cross and the Government'.[83] A standing inter-departmental committee had failed to mediate between the competing interests during the Great War and had quickly fallen into disuse. Likewise, positioning a cabinet minister to adjudicate disputes between departments did not relieve departmental ministers of their responsibility to parliament.[84] Naturally neither this, nor the more ambitious proposal for an independent POW department, found much favour in the WO, where officials jealously guarded their prerogatives over POW matters.

Criticism of the Red Cross and government's handling of the parcel situation continued over the winter of 1940–41 and only began to abate in the latter half of 1941. A critical juncture in the proceedings, however, was reached in December 1940, when the prime minister effectively gave a green light for his ministers to engage more actively in tackling the practical difficulties affecting the parcel traffic and the political difficulties thrown up in their wake. The reasons for Churchill's intervention at this juncture help explain how the next-of-kin's agitation was able to influence policy choices at the heart of the British government. Two factors

[82] W. Coombe Tennant to Sir William Davison MP, 10 Sep. 1940, cited in 'Note to Accompany Documents re. Prisoners of War . . .', 3 Mar. 1941. WCT, folio 3528.

[83] Sir James Grigg to Lord Chetwode, 24 Apr. 1941, cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 224–25.

[84] Sir Norman Brook (Privy Council Office) to Sir James Grigg (WO), 2 Nov. 1940. HRO. 5M79 A24.

in particular appear to have prompted the prime minister's change of heart. The first was the government's growing difficulties in parliament. The parliamentary campaign had effectively got under way in mid-October when Sir Alfred Knox began asking a series of probing questions about the flow of parcels reaching the camps. By November, the matter was being raised almost twice a week and ministers were clearly finding it difficult to give convincing performances at the despatch box in the face of such insistent and well-informed inquiries. Although the issue initially attracted the attention of Conservative MPs, its appeal quickly became bipartisan. The Parliamentary Labour Party begun raising the issue over the winter and became a vocal critic of the government's record the following spring.[85] Nevertheless, so far as Churchill was concerned, the tipping point appears to have been reached in late 1940, when the House of Lords' cross-party 'Watching Committee', under the chair of Lord Salisbury, urged the government to be more pro-active on the issue.

The second factor to have worked on the premier's thinking was the agitators' success in targeting their campaign at the senior decision-makers. There were, of course, a great number of people involved in the campaign but the official papers leave little doubt that the decisive player over the second half of 1940 was Winifred Coombe Tennant. Coombe Tennant had entered the fray early. Her first intervention—a letter to her MP, Sir William Davison—occurred on 10 September, but by early October, she was already bombarding MPs and other interested parties with detailed and impassioned memoranda, a style of campaigning that was to become her trademark over the coming months. When the issue began featuring in parliament, she scrutinized the verbatim reports in *Hansard*, and wrote commentaries on the proceedings, exposing the weaknesses of the government's case and casting doubt on the veracity of its claims. By early the following spring, she had sent out over a score of memoranda, about sixty to seventy copies of each, plus copies of correspondence from various dignitaries and edited synopses of prisoners' letters provided by other next-of-kin. From the outset, Coombe Tennant focused her effort towards changing attitudes within the government itself, rather than merely circulating news for the benefit of other anxious next-of-kin. The distribution list of her memoranda reflected this objective, and included newspaper editors, MPs—twelve of whom she counted as 'tried friends'—most of the senior staff in the JWO, and a host of well-placed individuals, such as the wife of Field Marshal Sir Maitland Wilson, financiers, and academics.[86]

Her forceful views did not meet with everyone's approval, nor did her choice of tactics. Chetwode and Clarendon both thought she was deranged, and officials

[85] See remarks by Mjr. Milner, chair, Services Committee, Parliamentary Labour Party. *Parl. Debs. Commons,* vol. 369, 6 Mar. 1941, folios 1086–93.

[86] 'List of people closely connected with my work . . .', by W. Coombe Tennant, n.d. 1941. WCT, folio 3556.

in Whitehall, especially the WO, routinely disparaged her views and questioned her motives. 'Bombarding people all over England with implications that the Red Cross is not doing its best for the prisoners really spreads alarm and despondency, saps morale and does no good', wrote Eden's personal private secretary at the WO. But Coombe Tennant was a 'doughty opponent' and her long experience in public life had taught her how to navigate the official labyrinth. In the end, she proved herself every bit the equal of her opponents. The fact that she was warned, on more than one occasion, that she was 'heading for trouble' and might find herself liable to prosecution under the wartime emergency measures merely strengthened her resolve.[87] By October, her agitation was clearly influencing the way the JWO and government responded to the crisis. Signs of dissent within the WO—in particular Gen. Hunter's robust attack on the JWO—rang alarm bells precisely because of his apparent connections with the maverick campaigner.[88] Her influence over proceedings in parliament was even more pronounced. On no fewer than eleven occasions between early November 1940 and mid-February 1941, MPs based their cross-examination of government spokesmen on the information provided by Coombe Tennant. She thus not merely fuelled the debate over POWs in Westminster and Whitehall but helped shape it. So passionate was her commitment and so articulate her views that few people outside the government were left untouched by her campaign. Clementine Churchill, who began receiving her weekly missives in late November, was one such person. 'She merely behaves like a widow and the unjust judge', Mrs Churchill wrote on reading some derogatory remarks by cabinet office staff, 'and in my opinion the more she pesters and the more everyone else does, the sooner things will be improved'.[89]

The premier's intervention into the affair in early December did not transform policy overnight. Alarmed by the trouble brewing in the Lords and no doubt tired of having his ear bent by his wife, Churchill urged Anthony Eden, and his successor as secretary of state for war, Captain David Margesson, to give the matter their personal attention.[90] Eden had, in fact, already assumed a more prominent role in discussions over the previous month, when he had started fielding questions in the House and exploring alternative ways to route parcels to the camps.[91] A robust defence of government policy, which outlined the steps taken to turn things around, was sufficient to persuade Churchill to withhold action on an inquiry into the workings of the JWO, or consider a shake-up of

[87] 'Note to Accompany Documents re. Prisoners of War . . .', 3 Mar. 1941. p. 3. WCT, folio 3528. Sir John Cecil-Williams to the Editor, *The Times*, 21 Sep. 1956, p. 13b.

[88] Sir James Grigg (WO) to Lord Chetwode ('My dear Philip'), 31 Oct. 1940. TNA. WO258/14.

[89] Minute, W. S. Churchill, 3 Jan. 1941. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

[90] Minute, Churchill, for war minister, 23 Dec. 1940. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

[91] See *Parl. Debs. Commons*, vol. 366, 26 Nov. 1940, folios 61–67; vol. 367, 10 Dec. 1940, folios 771–77. Minutes, WO meetings, 21 and 27 Nov. 1940. Minute, Eden, 12 Dec. 1940. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

the Whitehall machinery.[92] But with both the new foreign secretary and the war minister alive to the premier's wishes on the matter, there was little chance of the government remaining inert in the face of continued agitation in the New Year.

The first outward sign of the 'new thinking' appeared on 4 February, when Margesson informed the House that Lord Chetwode had 'secured the services' of Mr Stanley Adams as 'managing director of the Parcels Department of the British Red Cross'. Adams, director of the travel company Thomas Cook and Son, was not only 'a most experienced administrator' but possessed, in Margesson's words, an 'unrivalled knowledge of European transport problems'.[93] Needless to say, there was more to Margesson's perfunctory statement than met the eye. Far from being Chetwode's appointee, Adams was hoisted on the JWO by the WO. It was Sir Edward Grigg who had first approached Adams in mid-January with the suggestion that he joined the JWO, and it was Margesson himself who 'procured' the appointment from Chetwode, and ensured that Adams was given the title of 'managing director' rather than 'deputy-chairman', as initially favoured by the JWO. Though Adams' arrival at St James Palace was outwardly welcomed by Chetwode and Lord Clarendon, Adams' putative boss, the manner of his appointment represented a flagrant violation of the JWO's autonomy and independence. It was also a clear indication of Margesson's determination to appease the government's critics in parliament and placate the next-of-kin. Despite Chetwode's rather lame attempt to remind Margesson of the limits of the JWO's responsibilities, Adams' appointment merely confirmed the widely held view that it was the JWO, and not the government, that was responsible for parcel transport arrangements and was consequently to blame for the ongoing debacle.[94]

Adams' appointment was, then, at least in the short term, a deft piece of political manoeuvring by the new war minister, and a shrewd public relations ploy. The news was greeted with the 'liveliest satisfaction' by the next-of-kin, most of whom viewed it, in POWRA's words, as 'a step . . . long overdue', and vindication of the public criticism of the JWO over the past four months.[95] Since the seaborne shuttle service between Lisbon and Marseilles, opened as a stopgap measure in December, paved the way for a more permanent arrangement over the following spring, the first months of Adams' appointment saw a slow, but steady increase in the flow of parcels reaching the camps, and this naturally reflected well on the new 'director-general' and his champions in Whitehall. Adams

[92] V. G. V. Bovenizer (WO) to E. Seal (10 Downing Street) 18 Dec. 1940 TNA. PREM4/98/1.

[93] *Parl. Debs. Commons,* vol. 368, 4 Feb. 1941, folio 779.

[94] For Adams' appointment, see BRCS, *Confidential Supplement*, *i*, pp. 233–37. Sir S. Adams, 'Report to the Rt. Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps', 10 Mar. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423. Lord Clarendon (JWO) to Sir G. Warner (PWD), 25 Feb. 1941. TNA. FO916/117.

[95] POWRA, *News Sheet*, Feb. 1941, cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 250, 251. Circular by W. Coombe Tennant, 5 Feb. 1941. WCT, folio 3554.

also proved an adroit operator.[96] Within weeks of taking up his job, he met Coombe Tennant, POWRA's leading figures—the London-based chairman, Mr Craig Harvey, the leaders of the two most active regional associations, Dr W. G. Macdonald from Glasgow and Mr Thorne from Edinburgh—and held interviews with the key MPs—Sir Alfred Knox, Sir William Davison, and the Labour MP, Mjr. Milner—to appeal for their patience and forbearance. His approach was not crowned with immediate success but it helped clear the air and give the JWO some valuable breathing space. Over the latter half of 1941 there was a noticeable decline in the volume of invective directed at the JWO, both in and outside the House of Commons.[97]

The government's efforts to resist calls for a reorganization of POW matters inside Whitehall met with less success, not least since criticism over the government's lacklustre performance during the parcels crisis reflected more general disquiet over its handling of POW issues. Coombe Tennant had long argued for a single minister to take responsibility for POW affairs, and an all-party committee of MPs to scrutinize government policy in this area. Her views—which had been aired in parliamentary debates since mid-October—were given a boost in February 1941 when the next-of-kin groups began mobilizing in support of the issue. On the 9th, 'almost 1,000' relatives gathered in Glasgow to form a 'Glasgow and District POW association' and demand 'an authoritative body of MPs who would pass on complaints and suggestions to one responsible Government authority'. Within a week, the association had been inundated by inquiries from relatives who were anxious to add their weight to the call for reform.[98] The national POWRA also embraced a more combative approach at this time. With an estimated 6,000 individual subscribers to its monthly *News Sheet*, and a strong regional footprint, POWRA emerged as a formidable voice-piece for the next-of-kin. Its failure to entice Coombe Tennant into its fold was offset by the recruitment of Dame Adelaide Livingstone, a veteran POW campaigner from the Great War who had sat on Lord Younger's committee and participated in the Anglo–German talks in the Hague during the summer of 1918. Livingstone brought the POWRA a wealth of experience, and a tenacity no less impressive than that of the redoubtable Coombe Tennant: Lord Chetwode admitted to being left in a state 'bordering on dementia' after one meeting.[99] It was probably Livingstone's influence that prompted POWRA to take up the cause of institutional reform in early 1941. She willingly accepted POWRA's mandate to negotiate with the authorities on the issue, and spent the best part of the year

[96] Memo, W. G. Weightman (GPO) 10 June 1942. GPO Archive. POST122/647.

[97] Sir S. Adams, 'Report to the Rt. Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps', 10 Mar. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423. For criticism of Adams and the POWRA, see 'Special memo of meeting of Inner Cabinet', 28 Aug. and 2 Sep. 1941. BRCA. JWO1/1/9, BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 225–30, 248–60.

[98] *Glasgow Herald*, 10 Feb. 1941, p. 9c; 18 Feb. 1941, p. 3c.

[99] Lord Chetwode to Sir J. Grigg (WO), 1 May 1941, cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 226.

working to this end garnering support, in parliament, Whitehall, and the JWO, for POWRA's claim to a stake in POW matters.

Doubts over the effectiveness of Whitehall's POW machine continued to linger throughout the war, as did calls for a separate department for POW affairs. The relative harmony that existed between the various government departments responsible for POW matters was probably critical in enabling the government to weather the storm: it had been divisions between the War and Foreign Offices that had led to the creation of Lord Newton's POW department in 1916.[100] After 1940, the POW department in the FO was naturally wary of openly siding with the WO's critics, or encouraging discussion on any structure that encroached on the war minister's authority. Nevertheless the rising tempo of criticism in the first quarter of 1941, aggravated in part by the further loss of men in Greece, encouraged the WO to consider ways of tinkering with current arrangements. The solution, hastily arrived at in the last week of April, was the creation of an Imperial POW committee (IPOWC), with representatives from the major stakeholder departments in London, plus the Dominion high commissions. Is existence was announced by the Dominions secretary, Lord Cranborne, in the House of Lords—where members of Lord Salisbury's watching committee had been particularly outspoken on the issue—on 30 April 1941. The IPOWC was in many ways little more than a reconfiguration of the earlier *ad hoc* arrangements, followed whenever Dominions' input was required, but it did, at least momentarily, demonstrate the government's willingness to streamline the policy-making process and make decisions more accountable to the wishes of the wider community.[101]

LONG TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE 'PARCELS CRISIS'

The 'parcels crisis' gradually subsided over the early summer of 1941. The 174,000 parcels which had accumulated in Lisbon by the winter were finally cleared in early April, while in southern England, a comfortable reserve of some 300,000 parcels was built up in packaging depots by the end of May.[102] Transport arrangements to Geneva and for onward distribution to the camps were also firmly established by this date: according to the ICRC, Oflag VII C/H was so awash with parcels that there was difficulty storing them all.[103] For the prisoners,

[100] For a defence of the *status quo*, see Warner (PWD) to Miss E. M. Watson (Cabinet Office) 17 Oct. 1940. HRO. 5M79 A24.

[101] The connection between the IPOWC and agitation at home is overlooked by Phillimore, 'Prisoners of War', p. 23, and Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, pp. 167–68.

[102] V. G. F. Bovenizer (WO) to J. H. Peck (Cabinet Office), 2 Apr. 1941. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

[103] C. J. Burckhardt, ICRC, to Freiherr von Rotenhan, AA, 1 May 1941. ICRC. SG4 Carton 1175. For problems in Geneva in early 1941, see H. L. Setchell (commercial attaché, Berne) to Warner (PWD) 17 Jan. 1941. HRO. 5M79 A24.

and their relatives at home, the importance of these developments could scarcely be exaggerated. According to the US inspection teams, the supplementary food provided from home was one of the principal reasons for the absence of any signs of malnutrition amongst British prisoners by the end of the year.[104] Their psychological impact was no less significant. They provided, in the words of one prisoner (who received his first parcel after nine months in captivity) a 'ray of sunshine out of the gloom'. To be able to touch articles 'handled by [his] parents and packed with loving care' was, he recalled, an 'almost indescribable feeling'. 'No class of Mixed Infants can ever have shown the ecstasy and unashamed pleasure', recalled another prisoner, 'as treasure after treasure was revealed, drooled over, fondled and sampled'.[105] The transportation arrangements were by no means bombproof—there was a six-month delay to next-of-kin parcels in mid-1942—but, by and large, the system held up well, and adequate supplies of parcels continued to reach British prisoners until the summer of 1944.

The events of 1940–41 were, nevertheless, a wake-up call for all those responsible for fulfilling that 'duty of care' which the government, and the country as a whole, held towards its servicemen in enemy hands. This need not have been so. The WO report into the activities of the DPW during the Great War left little doubt as to the intensity of public, press, and parliamentary interest in POW affairs, and the government's 'extreme difficulty' in maintaining 'a consistent and well-considered line of policy in the face of this popular clamour'.[106] A similar 'parcel crisis' had dented the reputation of the government and Red Cross after 1914. Coombe Tennant may have exaggerated the point when claiming that 'nothing comparable has occurred since Florence Nightingale exposed the scandal of Scutari,' but she, along with countless other next-of-kin, clearly felt outraged that the men who, as the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow, put it, absorbed 'the full shock of the enemy's onslaught in England's darkest hour' could be treated with such disregard. The fact that Lord Linlithgow's son was counted amongst these men naturally gave his views an added poignancy. The more the parcel issue came under public discussion, Lord Salisbury rightly warned the cabinet at the end of the year, 'the acuter [. . .] the public sentiment' became.[107]

The episode taught officials several important and timely lessons. The most obvious was the danger of provoking public interest in an issue where the government was so singularly ill-equipped to control the flow of information

[104] US embassy, Berlin, to US embassy, London, 15 Nov. 1941. TNA. FO916/45.

[105] Elvet Williams, *Arbeitskommando* (London: Gollancz, 1975), p. 43. R. P. Evans, 'My Life Story', p. 36. IWM Docus. 9/18/1. Suspended in May, next-of-kin parcels were only resumed in Oct. 1940.

[106] Mjr.-Gen. Belfield, 'Report on Directorate of Prisoners of War', Sep. 1920. p. 8. TNA. FO369/1450 K15026.

[107] W. Coombe Tennant to J. Roper-Bingham (private secretary to war minister), 28 Jan. 1941. WCT, folio 3556. Lord Salisbury to Brendan Bracken, MP, 20 Nov. 1940. Lord Linlithgow to secretary of state for India, 28 Dec. 1940. TNA. PREM4/98/1.

entering the public domain. Details of the prisoners' living conditions, rations, and treatment were constantly finding their way into the hands of the next-of-kin, and thence to the press and parliament. By the end of 1940, officials had grown accustomed to reading letters of irate relatives, or reports on POW matters from newspaper correspondents. Still, the appearance in *The Times* of a letter from the Senior British Officer at Laufen, Brigadier Nicholson, on Christmas Eve, giving details of the number of parcels that had reached the camp since September, raised the level of transparency to a new, and for government officials unwelcome, level. The *Sunday Express* and *Evening Standard* regularly championed the prisoners' plight, publishing letters from the next-of-kin and branding the *Daily Telegraph* as the 'apologist-in-chief for war muddles' for daring to carry the JWO's denials.[108] The prisoners' letters often provided information that contradicted the government's own sources of information.[109] Moreover, POW welfare was an issue over which passions were easily enflamed, and memories quickly rekindled: the next-of-kin showed that they would not shrink from using the information at their disposal to embarrass the government if they felt the interests of their loved ones were being overlooked by officials or their counterparts in the JWO.

In the face of such a challenge, the government's 'public relations' effort was distinctly amateurish. Though most ministries had established 'press' departments since the last war, officials were clearly unnerved by the upsurge of public displeasure. The emergency regulations could help restrain public debate, but it was difficult to claim that newspaper comments on POW matters raised questions of security and therefore contravened the wartime legislation.[110] More especially, any article, however contentious, could be picked up in the House of Commons, where freedom of expression was protected by the members' parliamentary privileges. Over the second half of 1940, officials regularly grumbled about the mendacious reporting, inaccurate information, or imbalanced commentaries that appeared in the national and regional press; but they ultimately did little to contest the issue in the public sphere. The JWO's attempts to confront its critics had little appreciable impact, and even the more adroit manoeuvring of Stanley Adams came unstuck when his optimistic statements on the state of the parcel traffic were found to be 'complete eyewash'.[111] Government ministers and their officials failed to appreciate that their measured replies to questions in the House failed to reach a wider audience, and only went to strengthen the perception of an inept government, out of touch with the interests of the

[108] *Sunday Express*, 15 Dec. 1940, 'An attempt to hush up the Red Cross muddle'.

[109] See comments on the *Daily Telegraph*'s report on the 'reprisal camp' at Posen (15 Mar. 1941) and the closure of Oflag VII C/H (4 Oct. 1941): Sir H. Satow to Mr C. Harvey (POWRA) 6 Nov. 1941. TNA. FO916/38; Minute, Gen Hunter (DPW) 15 Mar. 1941. PREM4/98/1.

[110] See discussion prompted by the *Sunday Pictorial* reporting, 23 Mar. 1941. TNA. WO32/9906.

[111] Setchell (Berne) to Warner (PWD) 19 Feb. 1941. *The Times*, 6 Feb. 1941. HRO. 5M79 A24.

population.[112] It was only in April 1941 that the WO press department began briefing journalists and providing weekly bulletins on POW affairs.[113] But these efforts were largely directed towards preventing the publication of reports likely to derail the negotiations for the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs, rather than rebuild public confidence in the government or the JWO.

The implications of the government's failure to manage public dissatisfaction during the parcel crisis extended beyond the specific issue at hand. Not only did the fiasco call into question the suitability of administrative arrangements in Whitehall but it also cast doubt on the government's handling of other issues relating to the health and wellbeing of British prisoners. Responsibility for the dilatory state of the repatriation negotiations was routinely placed at the governments' door. Any attempt to pander to the public gallery threatened to upset London's delicately poised talks with Berlin and politicize an issue that was best treated as a purely technical matter. At the same time, failure to keep the public on side could generate further resentment. More accomplished in the art of dealing with awkward questions than their WO colleagues, FO officials decided, in mid-June 1941, to take Dame Livingstone into their confidence and provide details on the state of the repatriation talks.[114] The effectiveness of this strategy can be gauged from the more temperate attitude adopted by POWRA in the early autumn. The practice of briefing POWRA continued even after Livingstone's departure from the organization in January 1942. On balance, though, the heated public discussion on POW matters must ultimately be judged as detrimental to Britain's political relations with the German government. It was the public's obvious sensitivity to the fate of Britain's prisoners that encouraged Hitler's mischievous intervention into the repatriation talks in October, and his insistence on making the return of Britain's sick and wounded prisoners conditional on the release of German detainees in Iran.

By the summer of 1941, British officials had become habituated into viewing POW issues through the prism of domestic politics. Policy towards POWs, both in its objectives and execution, was crafted with an eye to meeting the government's political requirements at home, as much as satisfying its diplomatic and humanitarian objectives in Berlin. The two principal issues on the government's agenda in mid-1941—bringing the repatriation talks to a speedy conclusion and maintaining the flow of parcels to the camps—were both pregnant with domestic political implications. Discussion on the parcels issue was particularly prone to such considerations. Opening an inter-departmental meeting in mid-June, Richard Law, the WO's financial secretary, tellingly warned his colleagues that 'a breakdown in the present parcels route would confront

[112] The *Daily Mail*, 29 Nov. 1940, gave the impression that the entire operation was run by the ICRC.

[113] Minute, Evelan-Smith, 2 Apr. 1941 TNA. WO32/9906; Memo. PWD, 19 Nov. 1940. FO916/15.

[114] Minute, W. St. C. Roberts (PWD) 16 June 1941. TNA. FO916/47.

us with a still greater and more bitter agitation on the part of relatives and the public than that with which we were faced last year'.[115] The problem was explicitly framed as a political issue, not a diplomatic or humanitarian one. The humiliating collapse of the cross-Channel repatriation operation in October naturally encouraged this outlook. Why jeopardize the government's standing at home for the good of negotiations in Berlin if the prisoners were to be continually denied the benefits of such negotiations? 'I have always felt that the idea behind "making energetic representations" ', one official candidly acknowledged after the exchange debacle, 'is to protect H.M.G. against a possible charge in the House of Commons of doing nothing', rather than to challenge or change behaviour in Berlin.[116]

Yet if the government's sensitivity to the public interest in POWs was heightened by the events over 1940–41, its actions during the crisis suggest that there were limits to its willingness to bow to public pressure. It took the best part of six months before ministers were prepared to craft a solution to the crisis. In the meantime, officials and ministers alike blatantly sought to evade responsibility and thrust the JWO into the limelight to bear the brunt of public dissatisfaction. Protestations of support for Chetwode and his colleagues were principally designed to distance ministers from an intractable problem and help them avoid the political repercussions of Britain's failure to maintain an adequate supply of parcels for its prisoners. The government's determination to take a back seat in the affair was, moreover, based on the assumption that the issue had little direct bearing on the state of Anglo–German relations with Berlin: it spoke to the prisoners' comfort and wellbeing, not Britain's political or strategic interests. So long as this remained the case, officials were happy to leave it to the amateurs, and allow matters to take their course. But this would last only so long as both sides remained committed to applying humanitarian principles to the treatment of their respective prisoners. As we shall see in the next chapter, when broader political or military considerations encroached on the treatment of POWs, the cabinet showed little hesitation in defying public opinion and embarking on a set of policies that placed British prisoners directly in harm's way.

[115] Minutes of a meeting, WO, 25 June 1941. TNA. FO916/47.
[116] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 17 Oct. 1941. TNA. FO916/214.

5

The POW Regime, October 1941–December 1942: From 'Cooperation' to 'Coordination'

The inevitable postmortems that followed in the wake of the abortive Anglo–German repatriation operation in early October 1941 were rudely cut short by the outbreak of fighting in the Far East. On the face of it, Japan's attack on British, American, and Dutch territory ushered in a new phase in British policy towards POWs. In a matter of weeks, the scale, severity, and complexity of the task facing officials in London changed beyond recognition. Japanese forces netted nearly 140,000 British, Indian, and Commonwealth servicemen by the time their initial advances had run their course—nearly double the number of British prisoners held by Germany by that date.[1] The obstacles confronting British officials in providing for these men's physical and spiritual needs were only matched by the difficulties in negotiating with a government which lacked the will, cultural reference points, or resources to meet British expectations. The policy-making process was also transformed, as was the context within which it took place. Whitehall could no longer assume responsibility for major policy decisions, but had instead to consult with the American, Dutch, and the increasingly anxious Dominion governments. Pressure at home also grew, with the families of Far East POWs swelling the ranks of prisoners' next-of-kin, and voicing increasing concern over the fate of their loved ones in enemy hands.

Yet, if the Japanese assault changed the operating environment, it was not clear how far, and how fast, events in the Far East would affect Britain's relations with Germany. Berlin had so far studiously avoided any responsibility for its allies' prisoners, and there was no immediate indication to suggest that Japan's interests would be treated any differently. America's entry into the war naturally robbed London of Washington's protecting power services, and swung the American economy behind the POW relief effort, but it was to be another year before American forces fell into German hands in appreciable numbers, and in the meantime, Washington's involvement in British POW policy towards Germany remained slight. The core components of Anglo–German relations thus remained

[1] German records suggest Berlin held 67,643 British POWs (including 3,430 officers) by late 1941. Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, p. 35. A. J. Sweeting, 'Prisoners of the Japanese', in Lionel Wigmore (ed.), *Australian in the War of 1939–1945, Series 1 vol. vi. The Japanese Thrust* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), pp. 511–645.

largely unaffected by the unfolding of events in the Far East. Whether London could replicate its earlier successes and coordinate a relationship with Berlin that was capable of providing for the interests of its men, while operating within an increasingly complex and politicized environment at home, remained to be seen.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF POLICY-MAKING IN LONDON, 1942

Fortunately, the departure of US diplomats from Berlin was less detrimental to the wellbeing of British prisoners in Germany than many had feared. The close contacts that had evolved between the JWO and the numerous charitable aid organizations in North America meant that the US's contribution to the POW relief effort shifted from a peacetime to wartime footing without undue difficulty. Discrete discussions on who should succeed Washington as Britain's protecting power in Berlin began in early 1941, and quickly revealed a strong preference in favour of the Swiss. Confidential soundings in Berne revealed that the federal government was happy to assume the burden, and the detailed planning which followed ensured that the handover was accomplished with little disruption.[2] The fact that London had liaised with the Swiss over the protection of German interests in British territory since the start of the war naturally helped, though Washington's decision to enlist Berne's services for their own protective needs obviously facilitated a smooth transition.

Though lacking Washington's political clout, Berne proved itself a good choice as protecting power. As Swiss consulates in western Europe remained open, Berne was able to assist the 22,000 British civilians—the majority in France—who had been forced to fend for themselves since the closure of US consulates in July 1941. In Berne, meanwhile, the Swiss government elevated its protecting power duties to become one of the central pillars of its increasingly assertive policy of 'active neutrality'. Over the spring of 1942, federal influence was extended over the philanthropic and humanitarian agencies based in Switzerland, and decision-making authority channelled through the hands of the federal foreign minister, Marcel Pilet-Golaz. Though Walter Preiswerk and P. A. Feldscher, who headed Switzerland's foreign interest sections in London and Berlin, frequently grumbled at being left in the dark, Pilet-Golaz ultimately succeeded in capitalizing on Berne's position of representing both sides of the conflict, and assuming an unusually constructive, even creative role for Swiss diplomacy; tailoring initiatives to complement the interests and expectations of each side, offering advice, and shaping the style and even the substance of Anglo–German relations. This took the protecting power into uncharted waters, and, as we shall see, relied on the

[2] See correspondence in TNA. FO371/28836; SBA. E2001 (D) 3/98. B24.A.20.

willingness of the two belligerents to accept Swiss guidance over issues that bore directly on their prisoners' wellbeing and their political relations.[3]

We will have cause to discuss Berne's diplomatic activities shortly; here, we need only note that the immediate impact of American belligerency on British policy towards its prisoners in German hands was slight. The only substantive development to affect British prisoners in Europe was Washington's concern for European prisoners captured during the 'invasion epoch' of 1939 and 1940. That the majority of these men had, since their capture, been conscripted into the German workforce was, in Britain's eyes, reason enough to deprive them of overseas assistance.[4] This niggardly attitude was partially obscured by the difficulties of providing relief supplies for Britain's own men after June 1940 but London adamantly rejected any responsibility for providing for the 'invasion epoch' prisoners and only reluctantly agreed to release limited quantities of food, funds, and resources for the prisoners of its junior European allies—the Dutch, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Norwegians, French, Belgians, and Poles—who had reconstituted themselves as 'exiled governments' in London. By 1942, with transportation difficulties largely unresolved, British intransigence towards the needs of its former allies was harder to explain away. ICRC reports suggesting that dock workers in Marseilles might retaliate by refusing to unload shipments destined for British prisoners concentrated the mind, but a more compelling reason for moderating Britain's position came from the upsurge of criticism in America, where Britain's blockade policy, especially its denial of food imports into Europe, had never been popular.[5] Over the course of the year, the Foreign Office became increasingly worried about how the issue might affect Washington's willingness to service British POWs' needs in Europe, or cooperate over future relief shipments to the Far East. A series of paltry concessions were extracted from the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Economic Warfare over the provision of food, clothing, and comfort parcels for European POWs, but the transparent inequalities in Britain's relief effort to Europe continued to worry FO officials into the New Year.[6]

In many respects American championing of the rights of Britain's European allies, new and old, epitomized the growing complexity of the POW agenda by

[3] See Dominque Frey, 'Zwischen Briefträger und Vermittler. Die Schweizer Schutzmachttätigkeit für Grossbritannien und Deutschland im Zweiten Weltkrieg', Lizentiatsarbeit, University of Berne, 2004; Paul Widmer, *Die Schweizer Gesandschaft in Berlin. Geschichte eines schwierigen diplomatischen Postens* (Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1998), p. 269; Neville Wylie, 'Pilet-Golaz and the Making of Swiss Foreign Policy: Some Remarks', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 47/4 (1997), pp. 608–20; and Matthias Inhelder, 'Die Schweiz als Schutzmacht Grossbritanniens und Deutschlands im Zweiten Weltkrieg', Lizentiatsarbeit, University of Zurich, 1989.

[4] Mark Spoerer, 'Die soziale Differenzierung der ausländischen Zivilarbeiter', pp. 502–09.

[5] Medlicott, *Economic Blockade, vol. i*, pp. 549–57.

[6] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, 22 Jan. 1943. TNA. WO32/10707. For relief concessions, see H. Dalton (President, Board of Trade) to Sir A. Eden (FO), 8 June and 21 Dec. 1942. FO371/32242, FO371/32243.

the third year of the war, and the inherent difficulties of holding Germany to account for its treatment of British prisoners, with so many different nationalities serving under the British crown. Thus far, the interests of the two belligerents had developed in parallel. In London, officials had tacitly acknowledged British responsibility for Axis prisoners dispersed across the empire or amongst its fighting allies. In Berlin, meanwhile, a common standard of treatment was imposed on all British POWs, irrespective of their origin, ethnicity, or religious persuasion. The capture of several hundred Free French soldiers at Bir Hakeim in the second week in June nevertheless forced Whitehall to return to the question, last aired in April 1941, of Britain's duty of care towards foreign nationals captured fighting alongside, or inside, British units. A sense of moral obligation towards the reconstituted European armies clearly writ large in the FO, but elsewhere there was what one official called an 'almost callous lack of official interest' in such matters.[7] The service ministries, especially the Air Ministry, where confidence in Luftwaffe munificence remained strong,[8] were unimpressed by the evidence of German victimization, and determined to avoid aggravating Britain's already fraught relations with Berlin over POW matters. In this, they found ample support from the exiled governments themselves. So long as incidents of maltreatment remained isolated, the exiled governments were content to 'let sleeping dogs lie', as any publicity would only depress morale at home and exhibit the Allies' impotency in the face of German brutality. More significantly, none of the governments wished to forego the chance of claiming exclusive control over German prisoners who fell into their forces' hands in the future, for the short-term benefit of accepting British 'patronage' for their luckless nationals in German captivity.[9] The discussions over the fate of Britain's alliance partners thus served to expose a steeliness in official attitudes which, to the FO at least, brought nothing but discredit to those involved. At this stage of the war however, the matter remained largely academic. Although Hitler wanted the Free French troops, captured at Bir Hakeim, to be shot as mercenaries, his order was rescinded, and subsequent instructions from the OKW's POW department indicated that Free French prisoners were to be treated in accordance with the norms established for British POWs. A similar approach was taken to Czechs who had left the Protectorate to fight against Germany and could, theoretically, be considered traitors. In both cases, pragmatic considerations—anxiety over the treatment of German prisoners in British hands, and a desire to avoid according political recognition

[7] Minute, J. G. Ward (FO), 4 Mar. 1942. TNA. FO371/32242 W2708. See Bob Moore, 'Unruly Allies: British Problems with the French Treatment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1943–1945', *War in History*, 7/4 (2000), pp. 180–98.

[8] Minute, P. Dean (FO), 23 May 1942. TNA. FO371/32232 W7164. The AM was 'absolutely certain the Goering and the Luftwaffe [. . .] would not allow [RAF POWs] to be maltreated'.

[9] J. G. Ward (FO) to Col. R. E. A. Elwes (DPW WO) 26 Nov. 1942. TNA. FO371/32243. Minute, Elwes (WO), 7 Sep. 1942. WO32/10707.

to the reconstituted governments—governed German attitudes towards 'Allied' prisoners.[10]

Washington's championing of the interests of European prisoners struck a chord in Ottawa, where interest in the possibility of asserting a distinctively 'Canadian' approach to POW matters gathered momentum over 1942 as officials became increasingly alarmed at Canada's marginalization in Anglo-American decision-making. Though humanitarian considerations were not absent from Canadian thinking, officials and politicians were clearly sensitive to the needs of Canada's large European, especially French, minority, and by 1943 saw 'POW policy' as an area in which Ottawa might be able to assume a leading role, especially in light of the interest shown in the issue by other junior members of the wartime alliance.[11] 1942 also saw a profound shift in Australian and New Zealand thinking on POW matters in Europe, with attitudes increasingly framed by the need to avoid any policy that might rebound on the safety of their nationals in Japanese hands. Officials in London had grown accustomed to genuflecting before Dominion autonomy and accepting delays in decision-making as the inevitable price for imperial solidarity. But the expansion of the war into the Far East forced the problem of POW captivity up the Dominions' political agenda, and gave rise to a divergence in thinking on POW issues. No longer could Whitehall automatically assume the same level of support for its actions as before.

If events over the winter of 1941–42 made POW policy-making more crowded and complex, it also made it more politicized. The upsurge of public interest in prisoners following the loss of Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore, and the military setbacks in North Africa, was only to be expected. But the intensity of public criticism clearly took officials by surprise, not least since, apart from a brief hiatus in the summer, parcel distribution to German camps had held up well, and Germany's treatment of British prisoners remained, more or less, within the limits set by the POW convention. The government's public relations problem over 1942 was, however, largely self-inflicted, and grew out of the furore following the resignation of Sir Stanley Adams from the JWO in early February. The reasons for Adams' action are less significant than the alarm it spread amongst the prisoners' relatives and their supporters. Since arriving at the JWO twelve months earlier, Adams had developed an aura of energy and efficiency, and his departure, coinciding as it did with the arrival of Japanese forces in the outskirts of Singapore, inevitably dented public confidence in the JWO and gave rise to calls for his reinstatement. The matter quickly spilled

[10] Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 768–69, but see Besprechung Ausl VI mit Abt Kgf July 1942. BA-MA. RW5/314. On the Czechs, Keitel (OKW) to Reichskriegsgericht, 13 Feb. 1942, cited in OKW Kgf to AA, 28 June 1944. PA-AA. R40796. Yves Durand, *Les prisonniers de guerre dans les stalags, les oflags et les kommandos, 1939–1945* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1994).

[11] See chap. 7 and DEA to DO 5 Jan. 1942. TNA. DO35/998/4.

over into the House of Commons where questions were raised about the JWO's handling of the affair, and its ability to meet the needs of British prisoners in the Far East.[12]

Although it was the WO that had foisted Adams on the JWO in the first place, the government's response to his departure—in particular the offer by Sir Stafford Cripps, as Leader of the House, to 'look into the matter personally'—aimed at pacifying backbench opinion in the House, rather than responding to public concerns or scrutinizing the work of the JWO's POW department.[13] Cripps' ploy badly misfired, although blame for the resulting fiasco was by no means his alone. Cripps clearly erred, though, in failing to clarify the objectives of his proposed inquiry before departing for India on 14 March and handing the matter over to the paymaster general, Sir William Jowitt.[14] To Irene Ward MP, who led the campaign in the House, Cripps' offer entailed investigating not just the current state of the JWO's relief operations but also its handling of Adams' resignation, *and* reporting back his findings to 'all parties to the enquiry', i.e. the House, the WO, and the JWO.[15] It was on the strength of this that Ward thrice held back from demanding a full debate on the matter in the House.[16] The JWO, for its part, while grudgingly prepared to assist Cripps' investigations, was not willing to subject itself to a public inquiry, as anything of this nature was—conveniently—incompatible with its independent status. On learning of Cripps' intentions, Lord Chetwode, JWO's chairman, immediately set to work on the new secretary of state for war, Sir James Grigg—an old India hand like himself—and the financial secretary, Duncan Sandys, to limit the scope of the inquiry.[17] Grigg needed no encouragement, and clearly resented having his department scrutinized by Sir William Jowitt, a junior minister, who had 'no responsibility, direct or indirect, for the affairs of the War Office'.[18] His humour was hardly improved by POWRA's revival in March of its campaign to have POW matters removed from the WO and placed into the hands of an inter-departmental committee. The renewed interest in this topic sprung in part from an awareness of the difficulties facing any relief effort for POWs in the Far East. But relatives' anxieties were also fanned by the stories which began to circulate over the lack of fighting spirit shown by the defenders of Singapore. Doubts over the conduct of these men before their capture might, it was feared,

[12] BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 233–49. Rolf, 'Blind bureaucracy', pp. 51–53. Sir S. Adams, 'Report to the Rt. Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps', 20 pages, 10 Mar. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423.

[13] *Parl. Debs. Commons* vol. 378, 5 Mar. 1942, folio 806.

[14] See Robin James Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India, 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 77–113.

[15] Sir S. Cripps to Sir J. Grigg (war minister) 25 Apr. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423.

[16] Sir S. Cripps to Miss I. Ward, MP, 4 Mar. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423.

[17] Lord Chetwode (JWO) to D. Sandys MP (WO), 13 Mar. 1942. For the success of this ploy, see Lord Chetwode to Sir J. Grigg, 17 Apr. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423.

[18] Sir J. Gigg to Sir S. Cripps, 29 Apr. 1942. TNA. WO32/14423.

have a corrosive effect on the WO's willingness to battle on their behalf with the Japanese authorities.[19]

To its dismay, instead of standing above the conflict, as it had hoped, the WO quickly found itself drawn into the maelstrom. When Grigg buried Jowitt's inquiry—passing its conclusions to Chetwode but refusing to present them to the House—and then defended the JWO's record by denigrating Adams' contribution to the relief programme, Ward and her allies immediately accused him of putting his friendship with Chetwode before his responsibilities to the House and the POWs.[20] Tension grew over the summer as Ward publicized her grievances amongst MPs, and POWRA's criticism of government and JWO actions reached such a pitch that its mild-mannered president, Lord Ebbisham—himself a member of the JWO—felt it necessary to publicly disassociate himself from some of the statements. His resignation in September underlined how much the association had become radicalized since the departure of the veteran POW campaigner Dame Adelaide Livingstone from its ranks at the start of the year.[21] The barrage of letters arriving in the WO—Grigg received over twenty from Ward alone—only added to the sense of crisis, but what ultimately transformed the affair into a matter of serious political concern was its timing, coinciding, as it did, with fresh delays in the arrival of next-of-kin parcels, the loss of Tobruk in June—where 33,000 British troops capitulated to a smaller attacking force—and the subsequent vote of no confidence in the House in early July.[22] In the circumstances, neither Churchill nor his ministers were prepared to put up with further barracking from the POWRA or their allies, especially those, like Ward, who claimed the affair called into question the government's 'integrity'. As the redoubtable POW campaigner Winifrid Coombe Tennant was informed by a WO official in early July, 'the PM would not hesitate to throw anybody to the wolves, & might in some instances be glad of the opportunity of doing so, as he was not in a position to face further unpopularity'.[23] Churchill's determination to quash Ward's movement was only strengthened by the sympathy her case engendered in Sir Stafford Cripps, a man tipped as a potential successor to the premier if the summer's difficulties proved

[19] French, *Military Identities*, pp. 257–58.

[20] BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, pp. 248–49. I. Ward MP to Sir J. Anderson (home secretary) 21 and 30 May 1942; I. Ward, 'Meeting at the War Office on Friday, June 5th'. TNA. WO32/14423.

[21] Lord Ebbisham, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 6 Aug. 1942, p. 5(e). *The Times,* 31 July 1942. p. 2(f). BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 229, and footnote .

[22] I. S. O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. iii, Sep. 1941–Sep. 1942: British Fortunes Reach their Lowest Ebb* (London: HMSO, 1960), p. 274. Over the summer of 1942, next-of-kin parcels were delayed by up to six months: memo by W. H. Weightman (GPO) 10 June 1942. GPO Archive. POST122/647.

[23] 'Note on Interview I had with a High-Up in a Government Department, on July 2 1942', W. Coombe Tennant, 3 July 1942. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Dame Irene Ward, MP. Baroness of North Tyneside papers. MS.Eng.c.6969. *The Times*, 31 July 1942, p. 2(f).

his undoing.[24] Adroit delaying tactics by the government meant that Ward's adjournment was delayed until 5 August, by which time many of the complaints about the government's handling of the affair had become academic.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE REPATRIATION OF POWS, NOVEMBER 1941–SEPTEMBER 1942

With such invective ricocheting through Whitehall and Westminster, officials could be forgiven for overlooking the fact that the real enemy lay in Berlin. Here, as we saw in Chapter 3, matters had taken a turn for the worst. Hitler's foray into the exchange negotiations had thwarted Britain's hopes of securing the repatriation of its injured prisoners, and inadvertently politicized an area of policy over which officials in the OKW and AA had, hitherto, enjoyed considerable discretion in crafting mutually beneficial arrangements with their opposite numbers in London. The full implications of Hitler's waxing interest in POW matters would only become apparent in early September 1942, but well before then, officials in Berlin became accustomed to passing decisions over to their superiors in the Führer's headquarters before committing themselves to any course of action.

The issue most obviously affected by these new constraints was the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs. Here, naturally, both sides had to tread warily. In London, the sense of anger and bewilderment which followed the collapse of the exchange operation in October 1941 was gradually replaced by a determination to avoid falling foul of Hitler's machinations again. But how could Britain progress negotiations, when their fate hinged on the Führer's decision, and when there remained such marked disparity in the numbers available for repatriation on both sides? The solution officials eventually came to essentially boiled down to a two-pronged strategy. The first element concerned the nature of the negotiating process. The recent success in exchanging diplomatic personnel, where the parties had been delivered into Spanish and Portuguese hands before the exchange took place, convinced many in London of the benefits of using neutral governments as 'stakeholders'.[25] This would reduce the possibility of Berlin reneging on earlier agreements and expose the Germans to the kind of moral pressure that might discourage them from acting in blatant defiance of the convention.[26] Swiss enthusiasm for brokering a deal certainly augured well, and, with little common ground to be found in the two sides' stated positions, London happily agreed to

[24] For Cripps' leadership bid see Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), esp. pp. 257–75, 330–35.

[25] For the exchange of diplomats, see minute, W. St. C. Roberts (PWD), 23 June 42 TNA. FO916/262.

[26] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 10 Oct. 1941. TNA. FO916/48. Berlin also acknowledged the neutrals' contribution: Note, E. Albrecht, 19 Aug. 1942. PA-AA. R40788.

relinquish the initiative and allow Pilet-Golaz to pursue the matter through his own channels.[27]

The second element related to the question of numbers. This had been the great sticking point the previous autumn: so long as London insisted on the right to repatriate by categories, rather than on a 'head-for-head' basis, there was little chance of discussions progressing very far. British successes in North Africa in the winter of 1941 swelled the number of German prisoners eligible for repatriation, even if Rommel's counter-offensive in the summer ended any chance of Britain achieving numerical parity in the near future. By the middle of 1942 however, British commitment to a rigid application of the convention had softened. Pilet-Golaz's complicated *avant-projet*, to which London gave its assent in June, required that London concede its legal rights, by beginning repatriation on the basis of numerical equality, and only reverting to the terms of the convention in subsequent operations.[28] The *avant-projet* also obliged London to relinquish its veto on the repatriation of civilians of military age. Ottawa had long pressed for this concession, but the decision was only made possible by a change of heart in the Security Service and Home Office over the 'threat' posed by German civilians. The release of 'clergymen, decayed professors and others of low medical category', as the Canadians put it, was thought vital if the *avant-projet* was to have any chance of success in Berlin.[29]

A measure of the distance British officials were prepared to go by the third year of the war to secure the release of their sick and injured men can be seen in the variety of schemes raised over the latter half of the year, as London waited—forlornly—for Berlin to respond to the Swiss proposals. By September, consideration was given to the possibility of interning German POWs and civilians in Portugal, or even permitting their direct repatriation to Germany, in return for Berlin allowing its British prisoners to sit out the war in Switzerland.[30] While these suggestions were ultimately turned down, the willingness of officials to even discuss them is remarkable, especially given Eden's anxiety about Moscow's likely reaction to any sign of British 'weakness' over the issue of POWs. It reveals, moreover, officials' growing appreciation of the need to tailor British policies to the changing environment in Berlin. 'Even between friends', wrote an FO official in mid-June,

> it is hard to reach a cooperative agreement; it is much more difficult with enemies, especially with Germans. It is most improbable that any agreement will be reached or carried out unless it can be presented to Hitler in a favourable light. It is the duty of the

[27] D. V. Kelly (UK minister, Berne) to FO 12 Jan. 1942. TNA. FO916/262.

[28] See minutes, Sir A. Cadogan, C. E. Steel, and A. Eden, 16 and 17 July 1942. TNA. FO916/262.

[29] Minute, Ft. Lt. E. Eaglesham (AM) 8 July 1942. TNA. AIR2/4668. Technicians, merchant seamen and those whose release was considered a risk to security were deliberately excluded.

[30] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 26 Sep. 1942. TNA. FO916/262. The proposal originated in the WO.

FO to try to make this possible. Others must not, therefore, be surprised if from time to time we make suggestions which, when looked at strictly from the British point of view appear to be quite unnecessary. Our objectives are, first, to secure the carrying out of the Convention, and second, to recover as many civilians as possible. For the German Government what matters most is equality of value received.[31]

Historians have tended to echo contemporary British attitudes and question German commitment to repatriating POWs at this stage of the war.[32] Such scepticism, however, overlooks the fact that Germany had good reasons to welcome an exchange, especially one under the conditions suggested by the Swiss. Over the spring, the army, diplomats, and Red Cross all spoke in favour of exchanging prisoners, especially while German servicemen, captured the previous winter, remained in Egypt and within easy reach.[33] In Berlin, officials felt a grudging respect for London's decision to conclude a deal with Rome in April which saw seven Italians sent home for every Briton received in return. True, Pilet-Golaz's principal interlocutor, the German minister in Berne, Otto Köcher, had little standing in Berlin and his initiative fell foul of Hitler's refusal to consider any exchange other than on a strictly numerical basis.[34] The Führer's injunction remained in force throughout the year, and was regularly reinforced by statements made by Ribbentrop and Keitel, neither of whom dared challenge the Führer's wishes.[35] But this did not mean that either Köcher or his backers were duplicitous in their dealings with the Swiss, as the British later assumed. The AA and OKW repeatedly raised the matter with Ribbentrop and the Führer's headquarters staff and justified their negotiations with the Swiss on the imaginative grounds that the Führer's veto only applied to a military exchange, and not one which envisaged an exchange of POWs *and* civilian internees. This 'creativity' was to become the hallmark of the AA's dealings with the Führer's headquarters.

The arrival of Pilet-Golaz's *avant-projet* did indeed break the deadlock in Berlin.[36] By the middle of August, Ribbentrop had been brought round to the idea of repatriating POWs: his only demand was that officials checked the fine print to ensure that the numbers exchanged were indeed as generous as the AA predicted. When Keitel gave his blessing in the last week of September, OKW officials pronounced themselves 'delighted' at the progress made, and a comprehensive report on the proposal was dispatched to von Ribbentrop on

[31] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 20 June 1942. TNA. FO916/262. For doubts over the FO's tactics; minute, Ft. Lt. E. Eaglesham (AM), 2 Aug. 1942. AIR2/4669.

[32] See Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 112–14.

[33] Franz von Papen (German ambassador, Ankara) to AA, 23 Apr. 1942. PA-AA. R40787.

[34] Von Rintelen (Büro RAM) to E. Albrecht (AA), 22 May 1942. PA-AA. R40787.

[35] John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918–1945* (London: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 429–30. Michael Bloch, *Ribbentrop* (London: Bantam, 1994), pp. 352, 362–68.

[36] See note, Ritter (Büro RAM), 5 Aug. 1942, and note, Albrecht, 20 July 1942. PA-AA. R40787.

1 October for final authorization.[37] Whether Hitler would have consented to an exchange must remain a matter of conjecture. The two hundred German doctors and medical personnel eligible for repatriation under the proposed scheme were welcomed, given the high casualties suffered since the start of Germany's offensive in southern Russia in early May. Had other issues not encroached on German thinking at this time, there is every possibility that an exchange of prisoners, protected personnel, and civilians would have taken place, probably in Lisbon and Smyrna, over the winter of 1942.[38] But by the time Ribbentrop came to examine the AA's report, Hitler had already decided upon a course of action that made any exchange of POWs impossible, and, for a time at least, threw into doubt the continued survival of the POW regime in the west.

THE 'EQUALIZATION' OF ANGLO–GERMAN POW RELATIONS

Before examining the descent into the 'shackling crisis', it is worth reminding ourselves of the changing context within which discussion of POW issues took place at this time. By the autumn of 1942, Britain's capacity to conduct offensive operations against Germany had dramatically improved. The arrival of heavy bombers, in large numbers, over western Germany in the first months of 1942 confirmed that Britain was back in business, a point driven home by the devastating 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne in late May.[39] Britain's land forces were also, belatedly, making their presence felt; not just in North Africa—where fortunes remained mixed—but also in western Europe, where commandos and resistance movements began harassing German occupation forces. The mounting intensity of the conflict was reflected in the ferocity of the fighting on both sides. At sea, Britain's determination to prosecute its campaign against the U-boats, lest any let-up delay or prevent America's deployment of troops in Europe, led in September to the decision to press home air attacks against German submarines involved in rescuing survivors, mostly Italian POWs, of the stricken *SS Laconia*.[40] While the North African campaign remained largely free from incidents of senseless brutality, attacks on British field dressing stations and hospital ships prompted the WO to warn commanders of the 'probability' of

[37] Note, von Rintelen (Büro RAM), 19 Aug. 1942, and Albrecht's reply, 1 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R40788. Note, A. de Pury (FID, Berne) for Pilet-Golaz, 26 Sep. 1942 relaying message from T. Kordt (German legation, Berne). SBA. E2001 (D) 16 vol. 6. B24.A.2.(4)2.A-4 A. Von Weizsäcker was unaware that Germany had yet to reply to the *avant-projet* in mid-October. Swiss legation, Berlin to A. de Pury (FID, Berne), 22 Oct. 1942. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 30 B52 Gbr (1) 2 A.

[38] E. Sethe (AA) to T. Kordt (German legation, Berne), 17 Aug. 1942. PA-AA. Gesandschaft Bern, Schutzmachtabteilung 3972.

[39] See Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt, *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book 1939–1945* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 271–73.

[40] K. Dönitz, *Memoirs: Ten Years and Twenty Days* (New York: Da Capo, 1997), pp. 255–64.

German forces disregarding Red Cross immunity and committing atrocities 'if there [was] advantage to be gained by so doing'.[41] Elsewhere, especially on the eastern front and in occupied Europe, the taking and execution of civilian hostages had become routine. By late 1942, the gruesome implications of Hitler's 'final solution' for European Jewry fuelled calls for the creation of a UN war crimes commission and even prompted the timorous ICRC to consider breaking with tradition and making a public appeal in defence of human rights.[42]

Although it was Britain's commando raids that ignited Hitler's renewed interest in POW issues in the autumn, for most Germans it was the indiscriminate bombing of German cities that epitomized the increasing savagery of the war in the west. It was this that von Weizsäcker had in mind when he complained to P. A. Feldscher, the Swiss diplomat in charge of British interests in Berlin, of the deterioration in relations with Britain in mid-October.[43] For von Weizsäcker, and more especially his colleagues in the law department—Erich Albrecht, Eduard Sethe, and Albert Hendler—and those OKW officials responsible for the care of German POWs in western hands, notably section head, Major Clemens, what mattered was whether, in the light of the radicalization of British belligerency, London remained committed to treating German prisoners in a humane or chivalrous fashion. It was a theme raised repeatedly in German discussions with Walter Preiswerk, Feldscher's counterpart in London, when he returned to Berne for consultations in late May 1942.[44]

It is likely that German anxiety over a change in British attitudes towards POWs was driven in part by the fear that any hardening of British policy would compromise their attempt to circumvent the Führer's veto over the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs. Preiswerk's heartening remarks might have assuaged their immediate fears, but anxieties resurfaced over the summer as a series of incidents involving the treatment of German prisoners in British custody appeared to cast doubt over London's willingness to abide by the rules. The most innocuous involved the delays in postal services between Germany and Canada, where most of Germany's POWs were detained. More serious were the events that took place on board the *Pasteur*, en route from Port Suez to Durban, South Africa, in March 1942, which saw German officer POWs, including two generals, maltreated and denied access to their personal belongings.[45] News

[41] Minute, Broadley (AM), 21 Jan. 1943. TNA. AIR2/8452.

[42] Arieh J. Kochavi, *Prelude to Nuremburg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 27–53, Jean-Claude Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 83–89.

[43] P. A. Feldscher (Swiss legation, Berlin) to FID, Berne, 22 Oct. 1942. SBA E2001 (D) 16 vol. 6.

[44] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 17 June 1942. TNA. FO916/262. Preiswerk could offer 'no reason for this question having been put to him'. For German views: note, E. Sethe (AA), 22 June 1942. PA-AA. R40787.

[45] Bob Moore, 'The Last Phase of the Gentleman's War: British Handling of German Prisoners of War on Board HMT Pasteur, March 1942', *War & Society*, 17/1 (1999), pp. 41–55.

from the Middle East was particularly unsettling. The detention of prisoners at Latrun camp in Palestine, under conditions which seemed designed to create maximum friction between the soldiers, their Polish guards, and the local Jewish population, raised temperatures in Berlin, as did the discovery of orders, after the battle of Gazala in mid-June, which talked of ways to 'soften up' German prisoners before their interrogation.[46] In all these cases, fault invariably lay with the overzealous or irresponsible actions of the men on the spot rather than officials in Whitehall, a fact that the OKW as good as admitted in its statement on the *Pasteur* episode.[47] But the spate of incidents nevertheless appeared to indicate a more permissive attitude towards detention practices, especially in the Middle East, than had been the case hitherto. The binding of prisoners' hands during the commando raids on Dieppe, on 19 August, and the island of Sark, on 3 October—which we will deal with shortly—only went to confirm German suspicions about Britain's cavalier approach towards the prisoners in its care.[48] 'In spite of assurances [. . .] that [Britain] would stick to the convention, both in spirit and letter', Preiswerk was warned when he spoke with German diplomats in March 1943, 'the British authorities had not apparently seen to it that this policy was carried out effectively'. The OKW had therefore laid down, he was told, 'that there should be [. . .] an ''equalization of treatment'', i.e. an eye for an eye'.[49]

That the OKW's policy of 'equalization' was already well advanced *before* the shackling crisis erupted in early October is clear from the series of reprisals imposed in response to the incidents described above.[50] On 1 August, the delivery of mail to Oflag IX A/H, Spangenberg, ceased, and remained suspended until the first week of October, when London agreed to speed up mail services to Canada.[51] Seventeen days later, dissatisfied with British explanations for the train of events at Latrun, 203 British NCOs, including 133 identified as Jewish, were transferred from Stalag VIIIB, Lamsdorf, and incarcerated in Stalag 319 at Cholm, Poland, a camp that met only the barest standards expected under the POW convention. They remained in these squalid conditions for nearly ten months before being returned to regular POW camps.[52] On 2 September, the OKW announced

[46] The orders stated, 'no food, sleep, drink, civility or comfort of any kind may be allowed to POW'. Germany withheld food and drink from British prisoners in retaliation. See B. H. Liddell Hart (ed.), *The Rommel Papers* (London: Collins, 1953), p. 212–13. For earlier suspicions of this practice; Tagesmeldung Panzer Armee Afrika, 31 May 1942. BA-MA. RW5 333.

[47] Graevenitz (OKW Kgf) to AA, 28 Sep. 1942. BA-MA. RW5 319.

[48] See Albrecht remarks recorded in P. Feldscher to A. de Pury, 14 Oct. 1942. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14.

[49] G. Ignatieff (Canada House, London) to M. Scott (DEA) 20 July 1943. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 20. Feldscher to FID, Berne, 14 Oct. 1942. SBA E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14.

[50] Reprisals were also imposed against British civilians at Ilag Leibenau for the poor detention facilities in Jamaica.

[51] See 'Einshrankung im Postverkehr'. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14 bis.

[52] Yoav Gelber, 'Palestinian POWs in German captivity', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 14 (1981), pp. 114–16.

that 2,000 prisoners picked up after the raid on Dieppe on 19 August would be placed in chains and remain bound until London gave assurances that its commandos would no longer use hand-ties on the battlefield. Only Britain's swift response, bowing to German demands, prevented the reprisal measures from being put into force. Similar agility had been required in June to avert German retaliation against the 'illegal' interrogation techniques employed by British forces in Libya.[53] Efforts to diffuse the *Pasteur* incident were less successful. When news of the maltreatment of German officers eventually reached Berlin in late September, officer POWs at Oflag IX A/H, Spangenberg, were immediately subjected to reprisal measures: held at parade for nine hours while their guards moved through the barracks removing razors, combs, and other personal items. Needless to say, within a matter of days the measure began to have its desired effect, as the officers' dishevelled appearance came to resemble the state of their German counterparts when they had disembarked from the *Pasteur* in Durban.[54]

That Berlin resorted to reprisals in the late summer of 1942 is significant, given the absence of any serious incidents of this nature since Hitler's sabotage of the repatriation operation the previous winter. But the manner in which the reprisals were applied is equally noteworthy. In the case of Latrun, the measures contravened the OKW's internal procedures, agreed in the wake of the Fort Henry episode the previous spring in being set in motion *before* the AA had a chance to negotiate a solution through third parties.[55] Berlin's reaction to the *Pasteur* incident was equally uncompromising. Though it was later claimed that General Reinecke, head of the OKW AWA, had delayed the reprisal measures—against the Führer's express wishes—to give the diplomats time to get to work, the fact remains that the Swiss were deliberately kept in the dark and prevented from mediating a solution to the crisis.[56] Disregarding the POW code (article 42), the OKW blatantly held up the prisoners' letter notifying the Swiss of their plight for a full seven weeks before passing it on to the Swiss legation. Indeed, Berne only discovered the situation through a chance visit to Spangenberg by members of the mixed medical commission, and London only learnt of the reprisals through information gleaned from prisoners' letters home. In fact, by the time Feldscher was able to raise the matter officially in early December, he discovered, to his evident embarrassment, that the matter had already been cleared up, thanks to a suitably penitent statement by Sir James Grigg in the House nine days before.[57]

[53] CIC Middle East to WO, 6 June 1942. TNA. CAB121/512.

[54] For the 1942 reprisals, see Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, pp. 245–49.

[55] See Sethe (AA) to OKW Kgf, 24 Aug. 1942, and Graevenitz (OKW Kgf) to AA, 12 Sep. 1942. BA-MA. RW5 319. For Sethe's efforts to distance the AA from the reprisals; R. Marti (ICRC, Berlin) to ICRC, Geneva, 1 Oct. 1942. ICRC. G25/23 carton 658.

[56] 'Eidesstattliche Erklärung' by Adolf Westhoff, 15 Jan. 1966 IfZ. ZS425 vol. 3. The Swiss legation were also unaware of the suspension of mail to POWs at Spangenberg.

[57] *Parl. Debs. Commons* vol. 385, 24 Nov. 1942, folios 653–55. Mjr.-Gen. V. Fortune (SBO, Spangenberg) to Swiss legation, Berlin, 2, 17, 20, 29 Oct., and 17 Nov. 1942. P. A. Feldscher to FID, Berne, 2 Dec. 1942. A. de Pury (FID, Berne) to Feldscher, 22 Dec. 1942. SBA. 2001 (D) 15

There was, then, a malicious twist to German reprisal policy over the late summer of 1942, which suggests that Berlin's aims went beyond merely seeking redress for perceived wrongs, or even humbling the British government over incidents where Britain's guilt was proven. The principle of reciprocity, which until this time had generally worked to strengthen the POW regime—by late 1942 the two governments had negotiated amendments to a dozen articles of the POW convention on the basis of reciprocity—had begun to corrode the foundations on which this regime was based.[58] 'Equalization' may have benefited German prisoners in British hands but its principal objective lay outside the humanitarian sphere and was directed, instead, towards forcing Britain's hand and demonstrating German moral and political superiority after three years of fighting.

THE SHACKLING CRISIS, OCTOBER 1942–DECEMBER 1942

While Hitler's direct involvement in the reprisals cannot be precisely charted, the extant record leaves little doubt over his growing interest in POW matters over the summer months, and the way in which the growing intensification of the Anglo–German conflict affected his attitude towards the treatment of British POWs. The clearest insight into his thinking is given in comments recorded on 6 September, four days after London had bowed to the OKW's threats over the shackling of the Dieppe prisoners. 'It is essential that we should give the British as good as we get, eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth . . .', he claimed.

> [F]rom now on pilots descending by parachute will be fired on, [and . . .] submarines will shell survivors from torpedoed ships [. . .]. Within a month those cads over there will have realised that they hold the muddy end of the stick, and will act accordingly. I make no secret of the fact that in my eyes [. . .] a single German is worth more than [. . .] twenty Britishers, and in this respect we hold the advantage. We hold infinitely more prisoners-of-war than they do, and the great thing is to capture as many 'honourables' as possible. The handcuffing of a hundred and thirty officers after the Dieppe raid had a splendid effect. They are completely indifferent to the fate of the ordinary soldier, but the hanging of half a dozen British Generals would shake British society to its very foundations. [. . .] The British are realists, devoid of any scruple and cold as ice; but as soon as we show our teeth, they become propitiatory and almost friendly![59]

While this was not the first time Hitler had talked in such a vein, subsequent events suggest that his remarks contained the kernel of a policy that he was

Classeur 32 Vol II. POWs caught wind of German tactics: see Mjr. A. T. Casdagli, diary entry for 15 Dec. 1942. IWM. Dept. of Docus. P463.

[58] 'Report on Special Agreements with Germany and Italy on the Geneva Convention and Sick and Wounded Convention' (Draft) 16 Dec. 1942. FO 916/271.

[59] *Hitler's Table-Talk*, pp. 696–97 (6 Sep. 1942).

to pursue, with increasing vigour, over the coming months.[60] The desire, for instance, to radicalize Germany's war in the west clearly reflected a concern over the impact of commando raids in Norway and France which the successful defence of Dieppe on 19 August had done nothing to dispel. In early September, Hitler even went so far as to withdraw elements of the strategic reserve, some of which had already been committed to the offensive in southern Russia, to deal with the British 'threat' in the west.[61] The infamous 'commando order', which called for the liquidation of any British soldier captured while engaged in commando or sabotage operations, was part of this process, and deliberately aimed at undermining the morale of Britain's raiding parties.[62]

The commando order, whose existence was alluded to in an OKW communiqué on 7 October and whose gruesome repercussions were felt in London in late November and December, needs to be borne in mind when considering Britain's appraisal of German intentions towards British prisoners during this period.[63] The savagery shown to British commandos reflected, however, a broader strategy, designed to unnerve Churchill's government and spread unease in British ranks over the reception they could expect if they fell into German hands. Whether Hitler genuinely believed that maltreating senior officers and aristocrats would shatter British morale is questionable, but his growing fascination in the drift of British domestic politics at this time is unmistakable. Over August and September—possibly in response to Churchill's difficulties after the fall of Tobruk, or the evident public disquiet over the government's record on POWs—Hitler repeatedly returned to what he saw as the fragility of the political consensus in London. His actions over the late summer indicate a desire to capitalize on Germany's superiority over prisoners and engineer a fresh crisis in Anglo–German relations.[64] Barely five days after expounding on the 'splendid effect' of threatening reprisals against the Dieppe prisoners, the Führer requested information on the status of POWs held by each side. Intriguingly, he not only demanded a breakdown of British POWs by origin—i.e. whether British, Dominion, Indian, or 'imperial'—but also asked for details on the holdings of Germany's allies. If Hitler was inclined to cause trouble over POWs, the report must have encouraged him in this direction. Against some 18,000 German servicemen thought to be in British hands, there were 74,318 British prisoners in German captivity, plus a further 81,956 reportedly held by the Italians and

[60] For similar opinions voiced in January 1942, see Bridgland, *Waves of Hate*, p. 230.

[61] Operations Staff war diary, 3, 4, 9 Sep. 1942, cited in General Walter Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939–1945* (Novaro, CA: Presidio, 1964), pp. 247 and 253, note 16.

[62] See Messerschmidt, 'Kommandobefehl und NS-Völkerrechtsdenken', pp. 109–34, and Szymon Datner, *Crimes Against POWs: Responsibility of the Wehrmacht* (Warsaw: Zachodnia Agencja, 1964), pp. 139–78.

[63] OKW communiqués, 27 Nov., 10 and 23 Dec. Lord L. Mountbatten (chief combined operations) to COS, 16 Mar. 1943. TNA. CAB121/293, FO371/36544 W5390.

[64] *Hitler's Table-Talk*, pp. 680, 684, (1 and 2 Sep. 1942).

135,800 by Japan.[65] All signs suggest then that, by late September, Hitler was preparing for a showdown over POWs, actively seeking a confrontation in the hope of inflicting further humiliation on the British military and political leadership.

Hitler did not need to wait long before putting his plan into effect. As we have seen, on the night of 3 October, a British raiding party on the island of Sark was compromised when its five captives tried to slip free and raise the alarm. In the ensuing confusion, the commandos shot and killed four of their prisoners before beating a hasty retreat to their boats. When the bullet-riddled bodies were discovered the next morning, the men were found to have had their hands tied behind their backs. The use of restraints might have been eminently sensible from an operational point of view—preventing the prisoners from destroying sensitive documents—but since only four weeks had elapsed since London's public renunciation of the battlefield use of hand-ties, following the Dieppe operation, the Sark incident naturally took on a significance out of all proportion to the seriousness of the events themselves. When news of the incident reached Berlin, the OKW had little hesitation in repeating its earlier complaints about British operational practices and threatening to shackle the Dieppe prisoners if London did not take immediate steps to prevent such actions occurring in the future.

The details of the resulting shackling crisis have been more exhaustively studied by historians than any other episode in Anglo–German POW relations, and for good reason.[66] Not only was the crisis the most protracted dispute to affect relations between the two governments, but the rich archival material that has survived on the affair provides unparalleled insights into the attitudes and assumptions of the various parties involved.[67] The basic events are well known. In contrast to the Britain's compliant response to German allegations after Dieppe, the war cabinet reacted to the OKW's communiqué on 7 October with defiance. German claims of ill-treatment were rejected out of hand, the existence of orders permitting the shackling of prisoners on the battlefield was denied, and Berlin given notice that Britain would retaliate against any measures taken against its men. Britain's announcement triggered a series of tit-for-tat reprisals that soon left several thousand prisoners chained on both sides. By the end of the month, saner, and sounder counsels began to be heard in London. Under pressure from Ottawa, the cabinet stepped back from matching German

[65] V. O. Ausland bei WFSt. 12 Sep. 1942, OKM to OKW Ausl. 15 Sep. 1942. Japanese figures as of mid-June. BA-MA. RW5 vol. 333. German figure: note, K. Ritter, 9 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490.

[66] Mackenzie, 'The Shackling Crisis', pp. 78–98; Vance, 'Men in Manacles', pp. 483–504. Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland and the Second World War*, pp. 324–27. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 40–53.

[67] The verbatim notes on cabinet discussions (CAB195) add greatly to the 'official' minutes (CAB65).

action and trebling the number of prisoners in chains and instead trod water in the belief that Berlin would seek a negotiated end to the crisis. The arrival of another aggressive German note in late November dashed British hopes. In early December the cabinet agreed to ask the Swiss to appeal for a suspension of reprisal measures over Christmas. The Swiss move enabled London to release German prisoners from their chains, but regrettably in Germany, after two brief periods of respite over Christmas and the New Year, shackles were returned to British prisoners and remained in place until Berlin finally withdrew its reprisal order in early November 1943, some thirteen months after it had been initially introduced.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE SHACKLING CRISIS

Far from being an isolated incident, the shackling crisis was, as we have seen, the latest in a series of disputes to affect Anglo–German relations. It emerged, moreover, from a deliberate German policy, designed to test and expose British resolve over the question of POWs. Yet what ultimately distinguished the episode was London's decision to stand up to German blandishments. It has been this aspect of the affair, and the humiliating repercussions it gave rise to, that has prompted historians to question the wisdom of British policy. Arieh Kochavi criticizes Churchill for 'investing the matter with a significance that extended far beyond the issue at hand'.[68] David Rolf goes even further, accusing Britain of 'digging a deep hole for itself, from which extrication [proved . . .] formidably difficult', and blaming the premier for 'embarking on a policy that could never attain the single objective for which it was fashioned—the breaking of Hitler's will and his consequent submission over the issue of maltreating POWs'.[69] Even those officials partly responsible for the policy acknowledged that Britain's reprisal measures were 'fruitless'.[70]

One of the most obvious question posed by the affair is why London chose to initiate reprisals when it had studiously avoided being drawn into similar disputes in the past, and when distaste at penalizing defenceless prisoners and doubts over the wisdom of competing with Hitler in a campaign of brutality were so widespread. For Lt.-Gen. Sir Ronald Adam, the adjutant general, who briefed the cabinet on the matter on 8 October, German action left Britain with little choice. Britain could scarcely comply with German demands before the deadline expired at twelve noon, nor could it 'prove' that any order countermanding earlier instructions on the use of shackles had sufficient authority, except in the light of further experience. The logic of this argument, to match German actions, was

[68] Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 42. [69] Rolf, 'Blind Bureaucracy', p. 57.
[70] Minute, Sir M. Palairet (FO), 22 July 1943. TNA FO916/560. Gepp thought the reprisals 'quite useless'. Minute, 11 Nov. 1942. WO32/10719.

clearly not one which Adam welcomed.[71] To Churchill, however, the prospect of locking horns with the Führer was greeted with relish. His intuitive reading of Hitler's intentions and the OKW's two communiqués on 7 October—the one dealing with shackles, the other with the treatment of commandos—was correct. Sark was indeed the thin edge of the wedge. Berlin's litany of complaints over British conduct on the battlefield, in Libya and at Dieppe, and the threat to treat British commandos as bandits, merely proved that Hitler was intent on using prisoners to force Britain into scaling down its military activities. The issue struck at the heart of Britain's war effort. 'If we are defeated on this', he told his cabinet colleagues on 12 October, 'ill-treatment of prisoners, will be used as black-mailing tactics'.[72]

Given Churchill's behaviour during the crisis, and the subsequent criticism it provoked, it is worth pausing to consider the premier's record on reprisals and prisoners of war up until this time. As the only cabinet minister with first-hand experience in the rigours of captivity, one might have expected Churchill to have been sensitive to the humanitarian needs of Britain's prisoners. His article, 'I was a prisoner once', was serialized in the Red Cross' *Prisoner of War* magazine, which first appeared in May 1942, and his celebrated depiction of the drudgery of life under Boer captivity was frequently cited by MPs and prisoners alike. But the battle-hardened war leader of the 1940s—and 1910s for that matter—was a very different man to the doe-eyed war correspondent searching for a scoop in the Transvaal.[73] Internal correspondence suggests that he consistently put Britain's military or political interests before the interests of British prisoners abroad, and took a distinctly cavalier attitude towards any form of restraint, whether legal, moral, or ethical, on the exercise of British belligerency. In 1915, as First Lord of the Admiralty, he had precipitated reprisals against British prisoners by segregating German U-boat crew from their fellow prisoners. The episode was only brought to an end after he had left the Admiralty. Though widely criticized at the time, Churchill, and a good many others, felt that Britain had caved in too early.[74] Churchill's behaviour after 1939 showed little sign that his views had softened in the intervening period. Indeed, the dramatic freeing of 300 prisoners from the *Altmark* in February 1940 showed him to be every bit as determined to extract political value from POWs: basking in the Royal Navy's reflected glory, but declining to intervene to stop the press vilifying the 'hell ship's' captain, despite knowing full well that the sensational reporting bore little semblance of

[71] Brief for CIGS by AG, 8 Oct. 1942. TNA. WO32/10719. 'Memoir' by Sir R. Adam, chap. ix. LHCMA. ADAM 3/13.

[72] WM (42) 139, 12 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1. On the connection between the 'commando' and 'shackling' orders, see minute, Lt.-Gen. Adam, 11 Oct. 1942. TNA. WO32/10719; and WM (42) 141, 14 Oct. 1942.

[73] Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930), pp. 273–312 (esp. 273). Flying Officer Harold J. Dothie, 'A wartime log'. LAC. MG30 E398.

[74] Minute, W. St. C. Roberts (PWD), 10 Oct. 1942. TNA. FO916/272.

reality.[75] As premier, Churchill repeatedly argued in favour of policies likely to rebound on the wellbeing of British prisoners in German hands, and had no compunction in embarking on reprisals if they served Britain's wider ends. A fine instance of this occurred in July 1942, three months before the shackling crisis, when he badgered the cabinet to agree to the levelling of a few German villages, in retaliation for the German obliteration of the Czech town of Lidice the previous month. Only the unanimous opposition of his cabinet colleagues forced him to back down.[76]

If Churchill advanced into the crisis with the assuredness of a sleepwalker, other members of the war cabinet were left bewildered by the rapid unfolding of events. Some hoped that a show of defiance would 'bring Germany to their senses' or at least push the German army into 'putting a stop to [the] nonsense'. Others, conscious of Britain's experiences with reprisals during the Great War, were more sanguine and alive to the importance, once committed, of staying the course.[77] When, on 9 October, it was learnt that Berlin had not been cowed by Britain's reaction, but had shackled the 2,000 Dieppe prisoners and was intent on trebling the number if Britain refused to back down, ministers scrambled to put a positive gloss on the turn of events. In this they were ably assisted by officials from Foreign and War Offices and Joint Intelligence Committee, who put their own doubts over the wisdom of Churchill's actions to one side and served up a variety of explanations to justify the government's position. The argument that struck a chord with the cabinet relied on the fact that, as Britain's well-fed prisoners were 'among the best workers' in the Reich, Berlin could ill-afford to keep them chained for long.[78] 'Provided that the question is kept on the basis of chains, and not transferred to food parcels or other issues', wrote an official from the FO's POW department, 'we [. . .] really, though not in appearance, have a smaller risk than Germany on this issue . . . [I]t is the Germans who will be forced to compromise.'[79] That British prisoners represented barely a fraction of the German workforce at this time apparently passed officials and ministers by, as did the fact that the majority of those shackled were officers, who were not permitted to work under the convention; there is no evidence to suggest that this matter was ever raised in Berlin.[80] Both the prime minister and the secretary of state for war confidently predicted that, if the trebling of prisoners placed in chains continued, Germany would 'be at the end of their tether after the third

[75] See Doherty, 'Attack on the Altmark', pp. 187–200.

[76] War Cabinet Minutes, 15 June 1942. TNA. CAB195/1. Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), pp. 50–51.

[77] See comments by Adam for the former, and Sir A. Sinclair (air minister) for the latter: WM (42) 137, 9 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1.

[78] Minute, Mjr.-Gen. Gepp (DirPW), 10 Oct. 1942. TNA WO32/10719; see also minutes, F. K. Roberts, A. Eden, and V. Cavendish-Bentinck (chair, JIC), 11/12 Oct. 1942. FO916/272.

[79] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 10 Oct. 1942. TNA. FO916/272.

[80] According to the OKW (BA-MA. RW6/534) 51,013 out of 76,619 British POWs were employed in work detachments by Nov. 1942, out of a total of 3.8 million POW labourers.

round, with no prisoners left'.[81] Such flights of fancy merely exhibited the air of unreality that surrounded cabinet discussions at the time and the extent to which Hitler's gambit had boxed London into an unsustainable position. Yet, this was clearly not how the majority of ministers viewed matters at the time. When the cabinet convened on 12 October to prepare a public statement for the House of Commons the next day, the mood, though hardly bullish, was quietly confident. True, opinion at home and in the Dominions had already shown itself critical, and both houses of parliament were proving restless, but ministers nevertheless saw advantages of playing the long game and, as Sir Stafford Cripps put it, going on 'till both sides are bored'.[82] Churchill's statement to the House on 13 October, passed the same day to Berne for onward transmission to Berlin, set out Britain's position, offered to withdraw the reprisal measures if Germany did likewise, but effectively knocked the ball into Germany's court and left it at that.[83]

It was to be another seven weeks before the cabinet finally threw in the towel and agreed to seek a solution to the crisis through Swiss channels. In the intervening period, pressure to alter its policy became intense. The task of pacifying the government's critics was clearly not helped by the general lack of confidence in official handling of POW issues by this time. The refusal, for instance, to say anything about the negotiations over the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs, save for an anodyne statement in the House in late September, was taken by many as a sign of government complacency.[84] The crisis, moreover, gave credence to the long-held view that insufficient attention was paid in Whitehall to the interests and welfare of Britain's prisoners. The next-of-kin found it difficult to comprehend why the government felt justified in endangering the lives and wellbeing of 80,000 British servicemen in German captivity, provoking, in the process, Hitler's possible renunciation of the POW convention, merely to secure the right of British commandos to carry handcuffs with them into battle. For many, however, the crisis exposed the absurdity of government priorities and its failure to defend the values for which British troops daily gave their lives. By mimicking German measures, Britain had committed the cardinal sin of deserting the moral high ground. It was a view championed by the archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, but was echoed in Lord Chetwode's rebuke that Britain would 'never again be able to say to [Berlin] ''you break the law, and we don't!'' '.[85]

[81] WM (42) 139, 12 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1. The cabinet was equally deluded in thinking that Berlin would be moved by Britain's shackling of Italian POWs.

[82] Sir S. Cripps. WM (42) 139, 12 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1.

[83] WM (42) 139, 12 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB195/1. *Parl. Debs. Commons* vol. 383, 13 Oct. 1942, folios 1500–1502. FO to UK legation, Berne, 13 Oct. 1942. TNA. FO916/272.

[84] *Parl. Debs. Commons* vol. 382, 30 Sep. 1942. Mrs Stewart (POWRA) to Roberts (PWD), 5 Jan. 1943. TNA. FO916/550.

[85] Lord Chetwode to A. Eden, 30 Oct. 1942. cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 202.

Letters expressing doubts, frustration, anger, or outrage over the direction of official policy began landing on ministers' desks within days of the crisis breaking, and continued to arrive, unabated, until the government announced its abandonment of reprisals in early December. To those letters which received a reply, and to the MPs and members of the House of Lords who regularly harangued ministers over the issue, a stock answer was given: Britain had put its case to the Swiss and expressed its willingness to resolve the matter amicably. Any unilateral actions, whether on behalf of the government, or other agencies, however well meaning, would merely be taken by Hitler as a sign of weakness and aggravate the prisoners' plight rather than alleviating it. The difficulty with this argument was that there was no reason to assume that Berlin would feel obliged or compelled to take the next move. There was, in short, no obvious end to the crisis, and as a consequence, the longer the crisis continued without any obvious sign of improvement, the louder the clamour grew for the government to break the deadlock and regain the moral high ground.

For all the vitriol levelled against the government, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the public's impact on government policy was slight. Ministers and officials were not unmoved by the public outcry. A significant part of the cabinet's time was spent assessing how best to present the government's case to the parliament and country. Public opinion would clearly have constrained the scope of any further retaliatory measures had the cabinet felt compelled to consider them. By the second week in November Eden believed that an effort ought to be made to break the deadlock 'owing to opinion in Parliament and in Canada'.[86] Yet internal government correspondence suggests that public opinion was influential only in so far as it reflected, and lent weight to, the arguments put forward by the Dominion governments and their representatives in London. Indeed, the government showed great resourcefulness in working through newspaper editors to moderate the public reaction, and ducking public criticism by co-opting some of its staunchest critics, such as the archbishop of Canterbury and the JWO, into toeing the official line with their supporters, regional branches, and the public at large. 'We will, as you request, do nothing until we hear further from you', wrote a resentful Chetwode in late October, after offering to take up the matter through Red Cross channels, 'but it has been rather difficult, because we keep getting resolutions passed all over England, all to the same effect, that we must protest. It is very difficult for us to explain to people.'[87]

[86] Minute, Sir D. Scott (FO), 7 Nov. 1942. TNA. FO916/273.

[87] Chetwode to Eden 30 Oct. 1942, cited in BRCS, *Confidential Supplement, i*, p. 202. S. J. Warner (JWO) to W. St. C. Roberts (PWD), 23 Oct. and Sir H. Satow (PWD) 27 Oct. 1942; Eden to Chetwode (JWO) 29 Oct. 1942. TNA. FO916/272. For the archbishop's calming influence see F. A. Iremonger, *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury: His Life and Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 564. W. S. Churchill to William Temple, 4 Nov. 1942. CCAC. CHAR20/54B/196. *The Times* refused to publish an 'inflammatory' letter by POWRA. Note, W. Preiswerk, 5 Nov. 1942. SBA. E2200 London 55 Band 14.

In the end, it was the opinions of the Dominion governments, and not the British public, that proved decisive in shaping British decision-making over the course of the crisis. In some respects, Dominion attitudes reflected the growing interest shown in POW matters since the spring of 1941. London's refusal to consult, or even forewarn, the Dominions before committing them to a policy of reprisals clearly irked, but it was the impact of the measure on the Dominions' own national interests that ultimately made the issue so divisive for Britain's imperial relations. The Canadians felt particularly aggrieved by London's brusque behaviour. Not only was it Canada's soldiers who had been captured at Dieppe and were the first, as a result, to feel the effects of German reprisal measures but, since the majority of Britain's haul of German prisoners were detained in Canada, responsibility for implementing the unpopular reprisal measures fell on the Canadian authorities, and not those in Britain. Ottawa's sensitivity to public criticism—which was no less vociferous than in Britain—was heightened by recent accusations over the alleged ill-treatment of Japanese civilians in western Canada, and by the recurrent jibes in German propaganda at Canada's ignorance of traditional martial values, a deficiency it shared, according to Berlin, with Britain's other non-European allies. The Canadian premier, W. L. Mackenzie King, was naturally anxious to avoid playing into German hands and exacerbating inter-Allied relations. But over the course of the crisis he came under increasing pressure to stand up to London and recognize the crisis as 'a legitimate and unique opportunity' to demonstrate Canadian autonomy on the international stage.[88] Though scarcely one to trumpet Canadian nationalism, the Anglophile high commissioner in London, Vincent Massey, was particularly alarmed by the direction of British policy and repeatedly pressed Mackenzie King to precipitate an end to the crisis by forcing London's hand.

Canadian efforts to defuse the crisis were, however, confounded by a number of problems which Mackenzie King was never fully able to resolve. Massey's preferred solution—to invoke Swiss assistance as 'independent witnesses' or mediators—met with enormous resistance in London: 'For us to invite at German dictation a neutral state to examine the conduct of our troops', spluttered Churchill when he caught wind of Massey's intentions, '. . . would be to accept humiliation which I am certain would arouse the deepest anger in Britain and also in Russia. Any such process is only a step to mediate about peace.'[89] Canadian attempts to bring the Swiss into play were also complicated by the absence of direct communications with Berne, after the failure, earlier in the year, to have the federal authorities accept an accredited Canadian representation in Berne. Ottawa's best hope lay in Massey's talks in London with Walter Preiswerk and the Swiss minister, Walter Thurnheer. But while both

[88] C. Vining (Wartime Information Board) to Mackenzie King, 30 Nov. 1942. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 20.

[89] W. S. Churchill to C. R. Attlee, 11 Oct. 1942. TNA. PREM3/363/2.

diplomats were unquestionably sympathetic to Canadian designs—Thurnheer had been consul-general in Montreal before the war—their ability to advise the Canadians was limited by Pilet-Golaz's reluctance to divulge information about his intentions in his dispatches to London.[90] In these conditions it was difficult for Massey to come up with a proposal capable of satisfying Swiss and British desiderata.[91]

In some respects, Canada's difficulties in influencing British thinking stemmed from Mackenzie King's refusal, at the start of the war, to permit Canadian representation on the British cabinet, for fear of compromising Canadian sovereignty and undermining its freedom of action. This had major repercussions for Massey's standing in London, for while Jan Smuts, the South African premier, and Massey's Australian colleague, S. M. Bruce, could present their objections directly to the war cabinet, Massey was obliged to resort to more oblique methods and rely on his personal contacts with the Dominions Secretary, Clement Attlee, and other government ministers. Massey's astute reporting on the tenor of British public opinion was not, therefore, matched by his grasp of official thinking on the issue. All too often he failed to appreciate the strength of cabinet support for the policy, seeing it instead as a typical example of Churchillian bravado. As a result, Ottawa was occasionally taken aback by evidence of cabinet consensus, and found itself, against its instincts, deferring to London's views and reluctantly agreeing to postpone the unilateral action urged upon it by its agitated representative in London.[92] Massey's exclusion from the cabinet also denied him access to the kind of secret intelligence used to justify the war cabinet's choice of policies. It was, for instance, hard for Ottawa to share Churchill's conviction that British action had succeeded in sowing discord between the Führer, his generals, and bureaucrats.[93] Thus, by the fifth week of the crisis, as Canadian exasperation pushed the government towards contemplating unilateral action, in London, the cabinet was coming to believe that its firm stand had given Britain, in the short term at least, a significant political warfare victory.[94]

Notwithstanding these problems, it is clear that Canada was not only a constraining influence on British policy-making but a complicating one as well. Ottawa's refusal to countenance any extension of the reprisal order put paid

[90] See memo, A. Rive for H. Wrong (DEA), 3 Dec. 1942. LAC. RG25 Series G2 vol. 2942. For Swiss role, see Dominque Frey, 'Kleine Schritte, langer Atem. Handlungsspielräume und Strategien der Schutzmachttätigkeit im Zweiten Weltkrieg am Beispiel der "Fesselungsaffäre" ', *Politorbis*, 40/1 2006, pp. 33–43.

[91] For Massey's forlorn efforts to draw the Swiss; note, Preiswerk, 26 Oct. 1942. SBA. E2200 London 55 Band 14.

[92] 'Memo on a talk with Sir Stafford Cripps', by H. Wrong (DEA), 10 Nov. 1942. LAC. MG30 E101 vol. 4. Memo, N. A. Robertson (DEA), 11 Nov. 1942. RG2 Series B2 vol. 20.

[93] W. S. Churchill to W. L. Mackenzie King, 28 Oct. 1942, printed in John F. Hilliker (ed.), *Documents in Canadian External Relations, vol. 9. 1942–1943* (hereafter *DCER*) (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1980), p. 494, Docu. No. 444.

[94] Minutes of COS (42) 314, 11 Nov. 1942. TNA. CAB79/24.

to the cabinet's initial determination to match anything that Berlin threw at them. Even avoiding an outright break over the issue, Canadian action could compromise Britain's negotiating position. The rioting that broke out when shackles were introduced to the 'big blond Nazi boys' at Bowmanville camp, as an appallingly indiscreet article in *Time* described them, so dispirited the Canadian authorities that the measure was eventually only imposed on a fraction of the number of prisoners required if Britain was to match Germany's initial reprisal, let alone its subsequent 'rounds'.[95] Fear of this situation becoming known in Berlin obliged London to obstruct the Swiss delegates' activities, and refuse them the kind of information needed if Pilet-Golaz was to progress in his discussions with the German authorities.[96] When, in the second week of November, London halved the length of time German prisoners were chained, in the hope of initiating a reduction in the reprisal measures on both sides, the plan was thrown into jeopardy by events in Canada where, according to Preiswerk, the reprisal regime was so slack that it made Britain's 'concession' all but meaningless.[97] The arrival of a defiant German note, dated 24 November, but which reached London on 27 November, finally showed up the limits of Britain's policy of prevarication, but it was Ottawa's insistence that the matter be brought to a definitive conclusion that ultimately tipped the argument in London against the reprisal measures and prompted the cabinet's rapid retreat.

THE VIEW FROM BERLIN

The obvious distaste shown for the shackling measure at home and amongst Britain's allies should not obscure the fact that in 'sitting tight' British policy stirred up considerable problems in Berlin. Hitler had provoked his crisis and caught the British red-handed, but London's refusal to capitulate before German sabre-rattling posed him with a dilemma. In particular, London's refusal to prohibit the battlefield use of shackles meant that its operational freedom remained unimpaired. As early as 10 October, Hitler was forced to admit that, with Britain's commando raids likely to increase in the future, 'the English had become much stronger than we through these measures and counter-measures'.[98] Despite some initial wavering, the cabinet maintained its position and rejected Berlin's contention that restraining POWs was either unlawful, or, indeed, inhumane, especially if the alternative to shackling prisoners was to shoot them. It was a line of argument which provoked considerable sympathy amongst the

[95] 'Prisoners: Battle of Bowmanville', *Time*, 26 Oct. 1942.

[96] Note, Preiswerk, 21 Oct. 1942. SBA. E2200 London 55 Band 14. Minute, Gepp (DPW), 20 Oct. 1942. TNA. WO32/10719.

[97] Minute, Gepp (DPW), 22 Nov. 1942. TNA WO32/10719.

[98] Memo, Ritter, 12 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490.

German military. Furthermore, in leaving open the possibility of making up numbers by including Italian prisoners in the reprisal regime, the war cabinet opened up a new front in the controversy which ultimately worked to Britain's advantage.[99]

This is not, though, how the situation initially looked in Berlin. As we have seen, Hitler's knowledge of Japanese and Italian POW holdings suggest that he probably welcomed extending the crisis to Germany's Axis partners. Von Ribbentrop was certainly of this mind. In a speech delivered a fortnight before the crisis erupted, the foreign minister expounded upon the virtues of the tripartite pact. It was a theme taken up repeatedly by the Japanese ambassador to Berlin, Oshima Hiroshi, who shared Ribbentrop's belief in the need to strengthen political ties in order to compensate for the governments' failure to build on their military successes by tightening coordination at a strategic level.[100]

Ribbentrop's diplomatic offensive on POWs commenced within hours of Britain's rebuttal reaching Berlin. The German ambassador in Tokyo, General Eugen Ott, was instructed to secure Japanese public support for Germany's position and, if possible, their agreement to enforce similar reprisal measures against British prisoners in their custody.[101] Bringing the Italians on side was always likely to be difficult given Rome's inferiority in POW numbers, but the situation looked more promising in Tokyo, where the government was known to be deciding over a suitable punishment for the eight US 'Doolittle raiders', who had bombed residential areas of Tokyo before being forced down over Japanese-occupied territory in China. As predicted, Rome was vehemently opposed to any joint action, and did its best to restrain its partner. To Ribbentrop's dismay, initial soundings in Tokyo found the Japanese to be indifferent to German arguments, and reluctant to commit themselves before a decision had been reached over the fate of the American aviators.[102] Shackling prisoners, Ott was told, was contrary to the Bushido spirit—Japan's 'treatment of English prisoners [. . .] has so far corresponded to generous and unbounded humanity'—and might provoke reprisals against Japanese nationals in North America.[103] Tokyo was, moreover, reluctant to hammer its colours to the mast without assuring itself of Italian involvement. It was, then, not until 24 October that the Japanese finally agreed to come out in support of its Axis partner and only on the morning of the 7 November that a statement to that effect

[99] London's communiqué of 8 Oct. spoke of taking 'similar measures upon an equal number of enemy prisoners of war in their hands'. TNA. CAB65/28 126(42)2.

[100] For shima's views, see memo, Weizsäcker 10 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490. Carl Boyd, *Hitler's Japanese Confidant: General Oshima Hiroshi and MAGIC intelligence, 1941–1945* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1993), pp. 68–74.

[101] Ribbentrop to Ott, 9 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490.

[102] John Dower, *War without Mercy: War and Race in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 49.

[103] Ott, Tokyo, to AA 12 and 23 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490, 1491.

was released to the press. Ribbentrop's headlong rush to rally the Axis behind German action thus exposed precisely the kind of disunity he had hoped to dispel. Tokyo's obvious distaste for shackling stymied any chance of extending the measure to other members of the Axis, and even the secondary goal of publishing a joint communiqué had been sabotaged by Rome's refusal to associate itself with German action.[104] The Japanese statement, though hardly mealy-mouthed, was woefully late in coming and had little appreciable effect on British behaviour.

What did, however, send a shiver down British spines was the orchestrated propaganda campaign that appeared to indicate Berlin's willingness to withdraw from the POW convention if it did not get its way. A long communiqué on 18 October, detailing British atrocities in the Greek, Crete, and North African campaigns, and threatening to treat all prisoners of Allied nationalities—including the Russians—as one, gave way by the third week of October to a series of inflammatory statements in the German overseas radio services which, according to some observers 'exhibited the typical action which the Germans would be taking, if they meant to denounce the Geneva Conventions in the course of the next week or so'.[105] Britain's intelligence and planning staff were requested to look into the matter, and a comprehensive report on German breaches of the rules of war was drafted in case it was needed to counter further German accusations. A gradual improvement in German statements over the last week of October gradually eased British anxieties, and encouraged the hope that Germany's blood-thirsty pronouncements were part of a war of nerves rather than the prelude to decisive German action.[106]

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that London's sober assessment of German intentions was accurate. From the outset, General Jodl, head of the army planning staff, assumed that the *Repressalienkrieg* would eventually, 'in one form or another', be turned over to the protecting power to resolve: in the meantime, he arranged for all correspondence to be handed over to the lawyers to prepare Germany's case. Josef Goebbels, who, as propaganda minister was responsible for Germany's overseas radio broadcasts, shared Jodl's views. Indeed, he appears to have viewed the ill-treatment of prisoners with some distaste and expressed the hope that 'the English will, if not immediately, sooner or later back down and bring about, at least in the area of POW, a humanization of warfare'.[107] In the OKW headquarters in Berlin, officials were clearly thrown by the sudden turn of events, and annoyed at being left out of the loop. 'After first doing all sorts

[104] Ribbentrop to Ott 16 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490. Ott to Ribbentrop, 26 Oct. 1942. BA Lichtefelde R901 28592.

[105] WM (42) 144, 22 Oct. 1942. TNA. CAB65/28. Minute, G. W. Harrison (FO), 22 Oct. 1942. FO916/277. de Zayas, *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, p. 154. Britain could hardly complain about German intentions having intimated its willingness to chain Italian POWs.

[106] Lawford (SIS) to Curle (War Cabinet offices) 31 Dec. 1942. TNA. FO371/30924 C1246.

[107] *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, p. 89 (8 Oct. 1942).

of things without consulting us', wrote an irate official in the legal department, 'they have to pull back . . . '.[108] In contrast to the British, who were deeply suspicious of any outside meddling, the German leadership looked favourably on the Swiss and ICRC's offers of assistance, both as a way of bringing the crisis to an end and publicizing German complaints. Opinion was, however, even in the *Führerhauptquartier*, unsure of how to proceed and divided over whether to threaten severing of links with the Geneva conventions to strengthen Germany's hand.[109] For Jodl and Karl Ritter, ambassador for special assignments at the *Führerhauptquartier*, the threat, included in their draft reply to the ICRC, was little more than a tactical device to bring Britain to heel. Ribbentrop, however, was unconvinced, and instructed his staff to erase any mention of German intentions towards the conventions in German communications.[110] Whatever their differences over tactics, both parties were convinced that public pressure would compel Britain to back down, and agreed that Germany's objectives would be met by forcing Britain to seek a solution to the crisis through diplomatic channels. Hitler's determination to keep up the pressure gave Jodl the upper hand. Hopes were high that the 'white book' on British conduct during the Crete and Greece campaigns would undermine Britain's position, but when the British government successfully stifled discussion of Germany's accusations in the British press, Goebbels set to work, adding his own brand of invective to German overseas broadcasts over the middle weeks of October. Only concern over the impact on Germany's Axis partners prompted a rethink in German strategy and led to a calming in the tone of propaganda broadcasts over the last week of October.[111]

The climactic events of November—Montgomery's breakout from El Alamein on the 4th, the Allied landings in Tunisia on the 8th and the entrapment of von Paulus' 6th army at Stalingrad on the 22nd—inevitably coloured official perceptions of the shackling crisis. By the end of the month, 12,000 men had been added to Britain's tally of German prisoners, lowering the 'mutual hostage' balance from 1:4 in Germany's favour at the start of the crisis to 1:3.[112] The tectonic shifts in the strategic landscape naturally emboldened the British prime minister. In public Churchill struck a dignified note—baptizing the events as 'the end of the beginning'—but in cabinet he was unrepentantly belligerent: 'This is the moment for the offensive', he insisted on the 9th: 'Hitler is playing now for a

[108] von Oppen (ed.), *Helmuth James von Moltke*, letter of 12 Oct. 1942. Interrogation of Dr Friedrich Gaus, 6 Mar. 1947. IfZ. ZS705.

[109] For Goebbels' anxiety; *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, p. 103 (11 Oct. 1941).

[110] Notes, Ritter, 9 and 12 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1490.

[111] For Hitler's involvement see memo, Sonnleither for Dr Megerle, 24 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1491, and Japanese intentions, Tani (Japanese foreign minister) to Hiroshi, Berlin, 26 Oct. 1942. TNA. HW1/1077. *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, pp. 162, 175, 180, 187 (22, 24, 25, 26 Oct. 1942).

[112] I. S. O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. iv, The Destruction of the Axis Forces in Africa* (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 79.

stalemate [. . .] Never has there been more need for urgency in the war.'[113] Such urgency could hardly be achieved by caving in over the treatment of prisoners. 'It is a terrible thing', he told Attlee, 'to have one's will-power broken by the enemy. It reacts on every form and every phase of the struggle'.[114] Japan's public declaration in support of Germany on 7 November, with its explicit threat to replicate the measure if Britain refused to back down, naturally fanned concerns over German intentions. But the cabinet's determination to hold to its policy, criticized as blinkered and short-sighted in Ottawa, was based on a reading of Axis diplomatic traffic dating from early October, which exposed the reluctance of Germany's partners to play along with Hitler's plans.[115] Even Japan's hostile declaration on 7 November looked distinctly less menacing when, four days later, decrypted telegrams revealed Tokyo's equivocal stand on the affair, and Berlin's anxiety to have Britain resolve the matter through Swiss channels. One Japanese telegram, which reached Churchill's desk on 11 November, ended with the telling admission; 'as by this declaration we want to help with our good offices in mediating between Britain and Germany through the Swiss or the Red Cross, and to hasten a solution of this question; please bear it in mind that in actual practice we wish to reserve complete liberty of action as to whether we shall take retaliatory action or not'.[116] It is little wonder, then, that the cabinet was ready to defy its critics and continue to give German 'moderates' the chance to engineer an exit from the crisis that left Britain's position intact.

Though British faith in the basic benevolence of the German officials was not misplaced, it is questionable whether the views of these men ever percolated up the chain of command to shape the outcome of German policy. Feldscher's meetings in Berlin should have given London pause for thought: German officials promised to do their best, but none claimed to have the slightest influence with the Führer. So long as German actions remained limited to humiliating British prisoners, rather than their physical abuse, officials might discretely voice their distaste at official policy, but were scarcely ready to take up the cudgels in support of the POW regime. For Hitler, the series of military and political setbacks suffered over the course of the crisis strengthened his commitment to the reprisal policy. The recrudescence of activity amongst would-be mediators

[113] WM (42) 151, 9 Nov. 1942. TNA. CAB195/2. The 'end of the beginning' was a phrase used first by Churchill on 10 November.

[114] Minute, Churchill, 30 Oct. 1942. TNA. PREM3/363/2. It was probably Attlee's influence that saw off an incipient revolt by Labour backbenchers at the end of October: Parliamentary Labour Party, minutes of meetings, 14 and 21 Oct. 1942. Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Peoples History Museum, Manchester.

[115] Japanese ambassador, Rome, to Tokyo, 13 Oct. 1942 (decrypted, 18 Oct.); Tani (Tokyo) to Hiroshi (Berlin), 20 Oct. 1942 (decrypted, 25 Oct.) TNA. HW12/281, folios 110147, 110345. Tani to Hiroshi, No. 794, 26 Oct. 1942; Hiroshi to Tani, 28 Oct. 1942. Last two handed to Churchill on 8 Nov. 1942. TNA. HW1/1066.

[116] Tani (Tokyo) to Hiroshi (Berlin), No. 792, 26 Oct. 1942. TNA. HW1/1077.

probably strengthened his belief that Britain was ready to come to terms, but this was clearly not a good time for London to rely on the German 'generals'.[117] Hitler's annoyance at the petering out of Germany's summer offensives led him to turn against those in his inner circle. Keitel and Jodl escaped the fate of Franz Halder who was summarily replaced as chief of staff, but both remained out of favour with the Führer until the end of the year. Seldom had either done more than parrot the Führer's opinions but their views were of particularly little account over the autumn and winter months of 1942.[118]

Nevertheless, it is clear that, over November, as the German leadership absorbed news from North Africa and Stalingrad, attitudes towards the shackling crisis softened. Having convinced themselves, in mid-October, that the Allies were intent on transforming the war into 'a life and death struggle' in which 'he who wins, wins everything, and he who loses, loses everything', Germany's military setbacks encouraged the Reich's leadership to take a more temperate view of the shackling crisis.[119] No one was prepared to submit to Britain's 'inhumane' reading of the POW code, but British actions were no longer seen as a fundamental assault on the POW regime. Berlin's new statement on the crisis, delivered to the Swiss legation on 24 November, though reiterating Germany's position in 'bitterly controversial and uncompromising' terms, thus differed from earlier communications in its depiction of German attitudes towards the conventions. In contrast to the aggressive language used in the past, the November note merely recorded Berlin's willingness to 'regard the corresponding provisions of the Hague and Geneva conventions as no longer binding' if Britain continued to permit the binding of prisoners.[120]

In London the arrival of Germany's note ended British hopes that the OKW or civilian bureaucrats might sway the Führer in favour of a compromise. It did not disprove British assumptions about the sympathies of the German military, 'merely that [the generals] have been quite unable to make Hitler accept their view'.[121] The only person who believed that a capitulation was avoidable was the prime minister, but most of his cabinet colleagues quickly accepted the need to go through the Swiss, an option which had been explored informally over the preceding fortnight. Vincent Massey's exaggerated belief in Churchill's powers of persuasion convinced him that the cabinet were intent on ignoring the German note, and prompted a reluctant cabinet in Ottawa to declare its intention to unchain prisoners in Canadian camps if London refused to act.

[117] E. Grawitz (DRK) to Ribbentrop, 14 Nov. 1942. Note, von Weizsäcker, 10 Nov. 1942. PA-AA. R29824. Fiche 1491.

[118] Geoffrey P. Mergargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), pp. 179–85. According to General Warlimont, the two only avoided dismissal because their obvious replacements, von Paulus and Kesselring, were too busy to be recalled: *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, p. 258.

[119] *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, p. 162 (22 Oct. 1942).

[120] C. J. Norton (UK minister, Berne) to FO, 27 Nov. 1942. TNA. WO32/10719.

[121] Minute, Roberts (PWD), 30 Nov. 1942.

Churchill's forlorn warning—submission would 'doom our men to indefinite shackling'—failed to move his colleagues.[122] Berne was brought into Britain's confidence on 4 December and urged to make a 'spontaneous' appeal to both sides to suspend the shackling measures. Four days later, in 'response' to the Swiss appeal, London announced the end to its shackling. Germany reciprocated by unchaining the prisoners for periods over Christmas and the New Year, but to London's dismay, shackles were returned to British wrists on 2 January and remained in place until the reprisal order was suspended in early November.

THE IMPACT OF THE SHACKLING CRISIS ON ANGLO–GERMAN RELATIONS: INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

We will delay a final judgement on the impact of the shackling crisis on Anglo–German relations until the next chapter, when we can take stock of its longer-term significance. Nevertheless, some interim conclusions can usefully be made at this juncture. Firstly, while it is certainly true that the decision to match German reprisals marked a break from earlier British policy, the distinguishing feature of the crisis was the level of intentionality in German actions. Hitler was clearly spoiling for a fight in the autumn of 1942, searching for an issue on which he could challenge the British government and lay bare the dangers it ran in trying to intensify the war against Germany. Churchill was, in this sense, entirely correct in his reading of German intentions. The issue at stake was not the fate of British POWs, or even the POW regime—important though these were—but rather the political balance between the belligerents. The bullish attitude taken in London over the early weeks of the crisis may, then, have been novel, but in privileging its political and strategic interests over the humanitarian needs of its prisoners, British behaviour reflected a set of priorities that were unchanged since the start of the war.

Secondly, while Britain's legal case was not especially strong, it was sufficiently robust to enable London to stand up to German blandishments, at a time when Hitler was clearly prepared to extend the kind of practices routinely employed in Russia to the western theatre. London could not overturn German reprisals, but its actions prevented Germany from walking away with all the prizes, and forced Berlin to acknowledge the inherent weaknesses in its own position. As a result, as we shall see in the next chapter, the crisis had a noticeably restraining effect on German, and not just British, behaviour over the coming months. At the same time, however, the episode clearly exposed the growing constraints affecting POW decision-making in London. If the cabinet erred in failing to keep the Dominion governments on side, Churchill's spat with Mackenzie King

[122] WM (42) 164, 3 Dec. 1942. TNA. CAB195/2. War Cabinet Committee, 30 Nov. 1942. *DCEA* vol. 9, Docu. 460.

epitomized the broader problem of coordinating policy across an empire whose constituent parts held increasingly divergent views on POW matters. The spate of reprisals over the summer likewise underlined the fragility of the government's domestic position and the difficulty of striking a balance between the need for secrecy—not least for the benefit of the Swiss, who were acting on Britain's behalf—and maintaining the confidence of the next-of-kin and their allies in parliament. The litany of problems over the year—Adams' resignation, renewed problems with the parcel service, continued failure to secure the return of ill POWs, and finally the descent into tit-for-tat reprisals in the autumn—left the government's standing at home in tatters and exposed the inherent volatility of the domestic consensus behind government policy on POW affairs. These difficulties would continue to dog British policy-making over the coming years.

And yet, for all the embarrassment caused by the crisis for the British government, some positives emerged to give heart to those responsible for promoting the wellbeing of British prisoners in German hands. Perhaps the most significant was the opportunity it provided the Swiss to prove their worth as intermediaries. True, Pilet-Golaz's failure to deliver on the repatriation talks over the early part of the year and his flustered attempts at mediation in the first months of the crisis certainly won him few plaudits. But his deft handling of Britain's clumsy 'exit strategy' in early December revealed a much more sophisticated and sympathetic side to the federal foreign minister than many had hitherto appreciated. 'Throughout these talks', noted Clifford Norton, Britain's minister in Berne, 'M. Pilet-Golaz has [. . .] been actuated by genuine sentiments of humanity'; he was a 'responsible and conscientious counsellor' and ultimately acted 'not merely as a post office, but as a prime mover'.[123] This was a particularly promising sign, since one of the key lessons drawn from the crisis was the importance of having an independent protecting power, willing and able to stand up to German blandishments. Henceforth, British policy-makers would pay much greater attention to Swiss opinions and actively seek to promote the prestige and zeal of its protecting power. To do otherwise, warned Norton, would 'increase the risk that the Germans, who already suspect the Swiss of not being really neutral, will finally decide to ignore her [. . .] and deal in future by way of reprisals and public statements only'.[124]

Finally, for all the venom in German statements, it would be wrong to see the catalogue of incidents over the second half of the year as a serious challenge to the stability of the POW regime in the west. The perceptible decline in the quality of treatment meted out to prisoners, for which Britain was partially to blame, can scarcely be ignored. But if we leave aside the commando order, it can hardly be said that the confiscation of shaving articles, holding up of mail, or even the binding of prisoners' hands for periods of each day, amounted to an irresistible

[123] Norton to FO, 13 Dec. 1942, 17 Mar. 1943, and 24 Dec. 1942. TNA. WO32/10719.
[124] Norton to FO, 9 Dec. 1942. TNA. WO32/10719.

assault on the POW convention. Only one in every twenty British prisoners was affected by the shackling order.

What the events over 1942 ultimately signalled, however, was a weakening in the fabric of the POW regime, and a decline in the willingness of both sides to cooperate in pursuit of their common interests. Hitler's waxing involvement in POW policy-making precipitated a sharp decline in existing levels of mutual confidence, and encouraged both governments into adopting an increasingly restrictive view of reciprocity. The POW regime, which had, up until this date, seen both sides cooperate in pursuit of their collective interests, gave way to one which relied on a much stricter form of equality and a more limited trading of 'equivalents'. Coordination, and not cooperation, was the new norm. This was still a relationship of mutual benefit, but the scope for productive dialogue was demonstrably narrower than it had been at any time since the start of the war.

6

The Shadow of the Shackling Crisis, 1943

Historians generally agree that the events of late 1942 represented a turning point in Anglo–German diplomacy over POWs. For Bob Moore, the reprisals marked an end to the 'gentleman's war' in the west. The British government remained committed to the POW convention, but with its forces now engaging German units on a number of fronts, it was increasingly prepared to shirk its legal responsibilities for 'positive military or intelligence gains'. Arieh Kochavi differs in his conclusions, but shares Moore's judgement on the significance of the year's events. The shackling crisis, he suggests, drove home the need to avoid giving Berlin the pretext to retaliate against British POWs, and revealed to both parties the importance of reciprocity as the guiding principle for resolving their mutual problems.[1] As we saw in the last chapter, the British authorities, no less than the German, learnt some uncomfortable truths about POW diplomacy during the initial crisis-filled months between October and December 1942, but as will become clear, it was the longevity of the shackling crisis—dragging on for a further eleven months, until early November 1943—that made the episode so decisive in shaping Anglo–German relations over the middle years of the war.

LORD VANSITTART, POWRA, AND DOMESTIC AGITATION ON BEHALF OF BRITISH POWS

The pronounced shift in the balance of military fortunes over the course of 1943 inevitably coloured attitudes towards POW affairs. In Russia, the Soviets held the line at Kursk and then pushed westwards, crossing the Dneiper and taking Kiev by the end of the year. In the Mediterranean, Anglo-American forces maintained the momentum of the previous year's offensive, ejecting the *Afrika Korps* from Tunisia in mid-May, taking control of Sicily in July and early August, and opening up a front on the Italian mainland in September. The vast majority of the 275,000 men taken in Tunisia and 140,000 in Sicily were Italians, but the influx of 80,000 German servicemen into Allied

[1] Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 53. Moore, 'The Last Phase of the Gentleman's War', p. 55. See also Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', p. 795.

enclosures by the autumn—some 37,000 to the British—inevitably affected the dynamics of Anglo–German POW relations.[2] Policy-makers on both sides remained ignorant of the exact figures, but the sheer number of German POWs entering Anglo-American captivity by mid-1943 forced German officials to give greater consideration to POW matters than they had been accustomed to in the past. Crucially, the military events over the first half of 1943 ended the sense of invulnerability that had marked Germany's outlook towards POW questions since the summer of 1940. Britain could no more match German brutality than it had in the past, but, after the El Alamein campaign, officials and politicians in London could begin to conceive of a time, in the not too distant future, when German behaviour would be coloured by the looming prospect of defeat.[3]

One area where Britain had been susceptible to German pressure over POWs was on the domestic front. It had been Hitler's belief in the fragility of Churchill's political position that had encouraged him to precipitate a showdown over POWs in the autumn of 1942. To some British observers, Hitler's refusal to end the crisis that winter and instead continue reprisal measures into 1943 was driven by a desire to sow further discord between the British government, its Dominion allies, and the prisoners and their relatives. The war cabinet had expended considerable political capital in weathering the shackling crisis in late 1942. Coming as it did in the wake of the parliamentary debate over the JWO's treatment of Stanley Adams and months of official silence over the state of the repatriation negotiations, the shackling crisis inevitably enflamed public disquiet over the tenor and direction of government policy. Matters had not been improved by POWRA's attack on the WO, and its insistence that responsibility for POW affairs be transferred into the hands of an independent 'POW department', or an inter-departmental committee, chaired by minister of cabinet rank. Such calls had already soured POWRA's relations with the authorities in earlier years of the war, but looked set to reach a new level of intensity in February 1943, when Lord Robert Vansittart assumed the position of acting president of POWRA.

The energetic, well-connected Vansittart was, in many ways, ideally suited for the job. Though not a 'next-of-kin' himself, he was thoroughly knowledgeable on POW issues, having worked in the PWD during the Great War, including a spell with Lord Younger's committee on the enemy treatment of British POWs. He readily acknowledged the effect that Germany's treatment of prisoners had played in shaping his views on Prussian militarism. His experiences after 1914 also gave him a taste of the kind of diplomacy required in negotiating with Berlin over

[2] Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, p. 36. DPW memo, 5 Jan. 1944. TNA. PREM3/364/8. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and the Middle East, vol. iv.*, p. 460. Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, p. 228.

[3] In May 1944, Berlin had 121,725 British and 8,489 US POWs; Churchill believed there to be 80,000 British POWs at this date, when the best 'guesstimate' was 120,000. Minute, E. I. Jacob (WO), 7 May 1944. TNA. CAB121/294.

POWs.[4] By late 1941, his searing criticism of Nazi policies and pungent writings on Germany's 'Black Record' made 'Vansittartism' synonymous with the most extreme forms of Germanophobia. As a former head of the Foreign Office, and chief diplomatic adviser to the government, Vansittart moved in the right circles to promote the POWRA's agenda. He lost little time in organizing meetings up and down the country, and with groups of concerned MPs, to garner support for a shake-up of Whitehall's administration and to shame the government into acknowledging the 'magnitude and importance' of the POW issue, and securing the prisoners' speedy repatriation and rehabilitation into British society.[5]

The POWRA's agitation clearly posed the government with a problem. The FO, which had escaped the worst of public censure, was inclined to adopt the line of least resistance and appease the irascible diplomat on the grounds that 'a friend, however critical, is less of a nuisance than an enemy'.[6] Officials frequently grumbled about POWRA's exaggerated opinion of its own importance, but with twenty-five regional branches in the United Kingdom, sister branches across the US and Commonwealth and an ever-growing membership—estimated at about 40,000 by late 1942—it could scarcely be ignored.[7] Aware of the depth of public disapproval over the government's attitude towards the shackling crisis, the PWD set out, in early January 1943, to open a dialogue with the POWRA leadership in the hope of heading off criticisms before they manifested themselves on the floor of the House. POWRA's organizing secretary, Mrs P. M. Stewart, was gradually brought into the PWD's confidence over the course of 1943, alerted to the resumption of repatriation talks in May and even, on occasion, passed copies of official papers. Resentment of the 'troublesome society' in the WO's DPW remained, but other departments wisely followed the FO's lead, and worked to improve their relations with POWRA and the public at large.[8]

Efforts were also made to take the sting out of Vansittart's campaign in the House. This was no easy task. Any overt association with the proponents of institutional reform naturally smacked of disloyalty to the DPW, which had borne the brunt of POWRA ire for the best part of two years. With an inter-governmental committee already in existence and an inter-departmental repatriation committee up and running, few in Whitehall saw any merit in returning to the arrangements of the Great War. Fear that Vansittart might 'nobble the PM' nevertheless meant that he and his parliamentary allies had to be treated with kid gloves.[9] Richard Law, the Foreign Office minister,

[4] Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1987), pp. 41–43. Lord Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p. 157.

[5] Draft memo all party MPs, House of Commons, 6 July 1943. TNA. FO916/550.

[6] Minute, Sir H. Satow (PWD), 18 June 1943. TNA. FO916/550.

[7] For the Canadian POWRA, see Jonathan Vance, 'Canadian Relief Agencies and Prisoners of War 1939–1945', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 31/2 (1997), pp. 133–47.

[8] See S. Cole (Colonial Office) to G. A. Wallinger (WO), 10 Apr. 1943. TNA. WO32/9906. Mjr.-Gen. Gepp (DPW) to Sir H. Satow (PWD), 16 June 1943.

[9] Minute, R. Law MP, 16 Oct. 1943. TNA. FO916/550.

dutifully attended Vansittart's conclaves and put the case for retaining the current administrative arrangements. Key Conservative, though not Labour, back-benchers—Sir Alfred Knox, Irene Ward, and Sir William Davison—were courted and informally briefed on the status of talks with Berlin.[10] The successful exchange of sick and wounded POWs in October 1943, discussed below, marked an important milestone in this journey, showing—if belatedly—that the government had not been neglecting its duties. The event even swayed opinion in the POWRA, which went out of its way to praise WO's 'patient work' in its monthly newsletter. By the end of the year, the emollient actions of the foreign secretary and his staff had largely assuaged the government's critics. Dissatisfaction over the government's refusal to appoint a POW 'tsar' to coordinate departmental policy continued into 1944, but this lacked the urgency of earlier interventions and was easily stifled. Henceforth, though next-of-kin and their allies remained concerned, and rightly so, about the fate of British prisoners in German hands, their criticism was principally directed at the process of decision-making in London rather than the decisions themselves.

THE SHADOW OF THE SHACKLING CRISIS, 1943

In removing the shackles from German prisoners in December, Churchill had gambled on Hitler's willingness to follow suit. The Führer's refusal to act as predicted left London in something of a quandary. Repudiating the battlefield use of shackles, as Germany demanded, might resolve the current crisis, but would leave Hitler free to victimize British prisoners whenever it suited his purpose. The substantive issues at stake after December 1942 were, therefore, of less importance than the political implications of giving in to Berlin's demands. At the same time though, by accepting the COS argument for maintaining the right to bind prisoners' hands on the battlefield, the war cabinet reaffirmed its determination to prioritize Britain's military requirements over the interests of its prisoners, even when, as in this case, the impact on prisoner wellbeing was tangible. A similar attitude was taken to Hitler's infamous commando order, evidence of which reached London in early 1943, which was treated as a political rather than a military matter. The COS were instructed to plan commando operations without regard to the consequences for British prisoners, whose interests were to remain the responsibility of the FO and protected through normal diplomatic procedures.[11]

[10] Eden did not 'entirely trust' the two Labour MPs, R. R. Stokes and R. W. Sorensen, who had taken an interest in POW matters. Minute, Eden, 21 Sep. 1943. FO916/560.

[11] Minute, Gen. Sir H. Ismay (cabinet secretary), 17 Mar. 1943. TNA. CAB121/293; R. Sutton Pratt (UK military attaché, Stockholm) to Director of Military Intelligence (WO), 4 Feb. 1943. TNA. DEFE2/1126.

The cabinet's willingness to risk the lives and wellbeing of British prisoners was by no means new, but the frequency with which the issue arose naturally increased as Britain's military operations and commitments expanded over the middle years of the war. It was seen, for instance, in the decision to intensify attacks on Axis shipping plying between Italy and Tunisia, despite the 'probability', as the COS put it, of British POWs being killed as a result, and the decision to transfer 23,000 Axis prisoners, including 5,000 Germans, into French custody in North Africa—to ease the overcrowding in British POW pens—despite serious doubts over the Free French treatment of Axis captives.[12] Nevertheless, at this stage of the war and with the shackling crisis fresh in memory, the government was reluctant to court controversy. Thus, the danger of Hitler turning against British POWs was used to justify rejecting appeals to mount raids against German cities in reprisal for German atrocities in Poland and elsewhere over the winter of 1942–43.[13] Likewise, while attitudes towards French ill-treatment of its POWs gradually became more permissive over the latter half of 1944, in 1943, officials were still careful to avoid any action that might unnecessarily play into German hands. In the spring, instructions were issued to stop the transfer of German POWs into the custody of the French intelligence services in Cairo, lest the savage techniques routinely employed to extract information in French detention centres became known in Berlin.[14] German complaints about the treatment of prisoners in French custody at the end of the year effectively led the British and American governments to lobby on behalf of their adversary, and pressed the French to remedy the most flagrant deficiencies.[15]

Regrettably, there was little Britain could do on its own to compel Berlin into withdrawing the shackling measure. The suggestion that Britain should retaliate by unleashing 'punitive' bombing raids against German cities met the same response as the earlier inquiries over the launching of raids in reaction to German occupation policies. Quite apart from encroaching on the RAF's operational freedom, there was little to be gained from encouraging Hitler in the belief that the fate of British prisoners and the activities of the RAF *Terrorflieger* were in any way related; indeed, quite the reverse.[16] Churchill's pet proposal of threatening to shackle German soldiers after the war for as long as Germany's reprisal measure remained in force was also rejected. The Allies' growing interest in prosecuting Axis war criminals over the autumn and winter of 1942 had, it

[12] Comment, Admiral Pound, 321st meeting COS, 19 Nov. 1942; 322nd meeting, 20 Nov. 1942. TNA. CAB121/293. For earlier difficulties see David Killingray 'Africans and African Americans in Enemy Hands', in Moore and Fedorowich (eds.), *Prisoners of War and their Captors*, p. 203, note 50. Moore, 'Unruly Allies', esp. pp. 184–87. Overmans, 'Das Schicksal der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen', pp. 400–2. Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, pp. 525–27.

[13] See Breitman, *Official Secrets*, pp. 168–70.

[14] JIC (43) 19 (0), 13 Apr. 1943. TNA. CAB81/90. I am grateful to Adam Shelley (Pembroke, Cambridge) for this reference.

[15] See Moore, 'Unruly Allies', p. 186.

[16] See memo 'Shackling of POW', 13 Jan. 1943. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 20.

was felt, little appreciable impact on German behaviour. Some senior officials even suspected that it had been partially responsible for provoking Germany's reprisals in the first place.[17] The possibility of holding German interests in other areas of the POW regime to ransom was, likewise, no more appealing, given the large number of British prisoners in German hands, and was not given serious consideration. Finally, an offer by the ICRC to pursue negotiations through Red Cross channels was turned down for fear of ill-disposing Britain's official protecting power in Berne. There was, then, little London could do other than restate its position: deprecating the battlefield use of shackles as a general policy while reserving the right to bind prisoners' hands in certain circumstances. When Britain's statement to this effect, communicated to the Swiss on 10 February and announced in the House the following day, merely elicited another categorical rejection from Berlin in mid-March, London resigned itself to 'letting matters run on', as Churchill put it, in the hope that Hitler would tire of the matter and let it fizzle out.[18]

Germany's continuation of reprisals into 1943 was naturally frustrating for British officials, but it was the repercussions in Berlin which, over time, proved the most significant aspect of the affair. At the start of the crisis many German officials firmly believed London to be in the wrong. As in Britain, however, there was considerable unease at the spectacle of prisoners having their hands bound for periods each day, and a strong desire, in the words of one OKW lawyer, to 'bury the nasty affair' as quickly as possible.[19] These reservations were only amplified when Hitler unilaterally reinstituted the reprisal in the New Year, and left Britain to reap the benefits of its earlier show of magnanimity.[20] The evasive replies given to Swiss inquiries in Berlin merely exposed the depth of officials' embarrassment over the matter. In the camps, prisoners soon realized that, in the words of one POW officer, 'the goon authorities . . . obviously dislike having to carry out these orders [. . .] on defenceless prisoners'.[21]

It was not merely the ethical implications that bothered German officials though. There were important policy implications arising from Germany's continued shackling that could scarcely be ignored, not least the danger that London would retaliate in other ways. This was a concern the Swiss quietly encouraged. Pilet-Golaz repeatedly urged Berlin to rescind the measure in order to safeguard Germany's wider political and humanitarian interests. Walter

[17] Sir Desmond Morton to P. Loxley (FO), 26 Oct. 1942. TNA. FO916/272. W. S. Churchill to R. Law, 22 Mar. 1943. TNA. CAB120/222. Breitman argues that Allied publicity on the Holocaust influenced attitudes in Germany's satellites and the neutrals. *Official Secrets*, pp. 155–76.

[18] *Parl. Debs. Commons*, vol. 386, 11 Feb. 1943, folio. 1511.

[19] von Oppen (ed.), *Helmuth James von Moltke*, letter of 10 Dec. 1942. For Goebbels' concern over popular unease, see *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, p. 130 (16 Oct. 1942).

[20] Some thought London ceased its reprisals for propaganda reasons. Rieschsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, 'Zur Frage der Fesselung von Kriegsgefangenen', 17 Dec. 1942. IfZ. R55/1357, folio 125.

[21] Booth, 'Diary of a Prisoner of War', p. 153 (14 Oct. 1942). IWM. Docus. P370.

Preiswerk said much the same thing when he briefed German officials in March 1943. The fact that the firebrand Lord Vansittart had assumed a leading role in POW affairs naturally lent weight to Swiss warnings.[22] By April, officials in the OKW began agitating to have reprisal measures dropped; by the early summer most of the permanent bureaucracy in Berlin viewed the shackling order as at best a worrying distraction and at worst a corrosive influence on Germany's wider interests. The *Oberkommando der Kreigsmarine* (OKM) was convinced that this was what lay behind London's refusal to recognize German hospital ships, on the flimsy grounds that the ships were 'too small' to act in this capacity. 'One cannot avoid the conclusion', the OKM concluded in early August, 'that the tying of British prisoners has turned out to be a *persistent and continuous obstacle* to the realization of important German interests, and made it impossible for us to capitalize on the obvious good will of the protecting power representatives'.[23]

Such fears were clearly overblown. There is no evidence that Britain's disobliging attitude over Germany's choice of hospital ships was in any way influenced by the continued shackling of British prisoners. What such behaviour reflected, instead, was the increased intensity of the Anglo–German conflict, at a time when British forces were returning to the battlefield in significant strength. The Admiralty had, since the Norwegian campaign, taken the view that hospital ships were regrettably part of the battle space. Obstructing German efforts to evacuate its wounded from the Baltic and Adriatic by withholding recognition of German hospital ships was entirely in keeping with this outlook. In the main, although the armed forces sought, where possible, to live up to Britain's legal obligations, operational planning took little account of how actions might rebound against the interests and wellbeing of British prisoners. The service ministries were usually content to keep Berlin ignorant of any dubious practices, and leave it to the Foreign Office to deal with any repercussions that may arise. Thus, in May 1943, RAF Coastal Command was instructed to press home attacks against submarines whose crews had signalled their intention to surrender, unless British warships happened to be in the vicinity. When evidence of this policy surfaced the following month, in a written complaint by the captain of U-331, H. D. Tiesenhausen, the FO was instructed to take the matter up with Preiswerk in the hope of 'intercepting' Tiesenhausen's report before it reached Berlin and precipitated reprisals against British airmen.[24]

Apart from the general sense of unease created by the continuation of the shackling order, there were two particular ways in which Hitler's decision affected German behaviour. The first concerned the conduct of individual camp guards, commandants, and officials in the OKW headquarters in Berlin. In mid-February,

[22] German legation, Berne, to AA, 9 Mar. 1943. PA-AA. R40788.

[23] *Emphasis* added. OKW Amt Ausl Abw to Chef OKW, 21 Aug. 1943. BA-MA. RW4/765.

[24] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, FO, 3 June 1943. TNA. FO371/36546 W8521. For Tiesenhausen see, Sönke Neitzel (ed.), *Tapping Hitler's Generals: Transcripts of Secret Conversations, 1942–1945* (Barnsley: Front Line, 2007), pp. 18, 69–70.

word reached London that the German military authorities were flouting Hitler's instructions by applying the reprisal order in an increasingly perfunctory manner. Isolated instances of this behaviour had been discernable the previous autumn, but, by the spring of 1943, it was clearly standard practice in the three principal reprisal camps.[25] In the short term, the relaxation of the reprisal regime obviously calmed fears that Britain's refusal to renounce the battlefield use of shackles might lead Hitler into further escalation. British officials continued to fret over the shackling—the good news from the camps could hardly be made public and anxiety over the long term effect on the prisoners' mental state remained—but from mid-March, Churchill's inclination to sit tight and wait on the march of events was not as contentious as it might otherwise have been.[26]

Of even greater significance was the fact that Germany's application of the reprisal order vindicated London's long-held belief in the inherent good will of the German military. Clearly neither the OKW nor the AA could openly challenge the Führer's instructions, but the dilution of the reprisal regime showed that the military was not a spent force. Much depended on the courage and integrity of individual camp commandants, but discrete soundings by the Swiss revealed that the new, relaxed arrangements originated from within the OKW headquarters itself.[27] In a curious way therefore, instead of denting faith in German commitment to the POW regime, the shackling episode actually enhanced it. Despite the malicious intentions of the Führer and his acolytes, and notwithstanding the brutal treatment meted out to Germany's Soviet captives, German officials and military authorities could still be relied upon to act with tact, discretion, and humanity when the situation demanded. This was important, since, as we shall see in Chapters 8 and 9, it was precisely on the good faith and good sense of individual German officials, sentries, and officers that Britain would come to rely in the final months of the war.

THE FIRST EXCHANGE OF SICK AND WOUNDED POWS, OCTOBER 1943

The second implication of the shackling order concerned Berlin's attitude towards the repatriation of sick and wounded POWs. It will be recalled that negotiations

[25] Stalag 383, Hohenfels, Stalag VIIIB, Lamsdorf, and Oflag VIIB, Eichstätt. See Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, pp. 246–47, who examines prisoners' accounts. Some put the new regime down to the change in prison guards in the spring; J. O. Bradcock, 'Life in Stalag VIII B German POW Camp and After', IWM. Docus, 99/47/1.

[26] This was true even for the ever-sensitive Canadians: Memo H. Wrong (DEA) 22 Mar. 1943. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 20. News of Germany's relaxed procedures reached Britain through prisoners' mail: see minutes, meeting of next-of-kin, 6 Oct. 1943, cited in Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, pp. 290–91.

[27] Aktennotiz betr. Besprechung mit Mjr. Clemens (OKW Kgf), 17 Mar. 1943. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14 bis. A. de Pury (FID) to C. Norton (UK minister, Berne), 18 May 1943. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 33.

on this subject had gathered momentum over the summer of 1942, only to be derailed by the eruption of the shackling crisis in early October. British hopes that the suspension of their own shackling measures in early December might pave the way for renewed discussions over repatriation were dealt a blow at the end of the month when Ribbentrop, evidently acting on his own authority, abruptly announced that no talks would take place until London had complied with German demands over the battlefield use of shackles.[28] The fact that, to many in Berlin, this merely cut off Germany's nose to spite its face, was apparently lost on the excitable foreign minister. There the matter rested until early March when, out of the blue, Berlin formally replied to the Swiss *avant-projet* on repatriation, which had lain unanswered for over a year. Two months later, on 13 May, the day Axis resistance in Tunisia ended, the Swiss received another communication, this time offering to return British and American POWs in exchange for the 'several thousand' injured German servicemen abandoned in North Africa.[29] These two communications formed the basis of talks that were to lead, in October, to the first large-scale Anglo–German exchange of POWs and protected personnel of the war.

Historians have, understandably, struck a cautionary note in explaining Berlin's sudden fondness for the repatriation of prisoners. It would be perverse to suggest that Germany's recent losses in Russia and Tunisia had no bearing on German thinking over the summer and autumn months.[30] At the same time, however, German documents indicate that the initial offer of early March was affected by the continued fallout of the shackling crisis. Ribbentrop appears to have agreed to restart the repatriation talks in March in order to soften the blow of Germany's final, uncompromising statement on the shackling issue, which reached London three days before its offer to resume the repatriation talks.[31] True, the petering out of Rommel's offensive at Kasserine Pass by 22 February heralded the end of the Axis ambitions in North Africa, but German officials were confident of evacuating the bulk of Germany's sick and wounded men before Tunisia fell.[32] In mid-March, the AA was still operating on the assumption that Germany had two and a half times as many prisoners as Britain (80,000 against 29,000), but barely a tenth of the number of serious sick or wounded prisoners (335 against 3,043), and a third of the number of medical personnel (200 against 500–600).

[28] M. Pilet-Golaz to P. A. Feldscher, 18 Jan. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 33; Swiss Legation, Berlin to FID, Berne, 19 Jan. 1943. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 30 vol. II.

[29] The Swiss were 'somewhat surprised' to receive the note: Minute, de Pury, 14 May 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 02 11 vol. 63. The German text was forwarded to the British on 15 May.

[30] Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 115.

[31] If this was indeed the intention, it had the desired effect; the cabinet decided to treat repatriation and reprisals together. See WM (43) 44, 22 Mar. 1943. TNA. WO32/10719.

[32] Reinhard Stumpf, 'The War in the Mediterranean Area 1942–1943: Operations in North Africa and the Central Mediterranean', in Horst Boog, Werner Rahn, Reinhard Stumpf, and Bernd Wegner (eds.), *Germany and the Second World War, vol. vi, The Global War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 821.

These were hardly attractive conditions for an exchange, even if Britain agreed to throw civilian internees into the bargain.[33]

That the shackling crisis continued to cast a shadow over German thinking towards POW repatriation over the year can be seen in Ribbentrop's willingness, in late May, to agree to discuss the two issues with the ICRC's Carl Burckhardt when he visited Berlin later that year.[34] By July, the foreign minister was even ready to join Field Marshal Keitel in broaching the subject with the Führer. Although the approach did not immediately bear fruit, Hitler consented to the cessation of reprisals as soon as the repatriation operation was under way. By the third week of September, Ribbentrop was sufficiently confident about the progress of the repatriation talks to initiate steps to bring about a 'positive solution' to the shackling question.[35] Germany's reprisal measures thus remained in force until *after* the exchange of prisoners—Burckhardt eventually visited Berlin to receive the news in early November—but the ongoing dispute clearly constrained German perceptions of their freedom of manoeuvre. It was, in short, Berlin, and not London, whose position was most conspicuously compromised by Hitler's insistence on extending the shackling measure into 1943.

The resurrection of the repatriation issue in March may have taken the British by surprise, but Berlin's observations on the *avant-projet* were not unexpected, nor did they raise insuperable problems for the British authorities. Indeed, when the cabinet considered the German proposals on 19 April, all but one of Berlin's demands—that merchant seaman be included in the exchange—were found to be acceptable. London had already agreed to the majority of Germany's conditions the previous year while waiting, forlornly, for Berlin's response to the Swiss *avant-projet*. As Churchill ruefully remarked, 'We could have got this a year ago.'[36] Since Germany was palpably not willing to exchange POWs on anything other than a strict numerical basis, there was little point in London clinging to its legal rights. To insist on prisoners being repatriated by categories brought no benefit to those languishing in German *lazaretts*. Although officials were uncomfortable departing from the letter of the law, for fear of encouraging Hitler to disregard other clauses of the convention in the future, it was felt that German action would ultimately be driven by self-interest, not its 'legal' obligations or precedents. London was therefore ready to accept a 'head-for-head' exchange, with any shortfall in prisoner numbers made up by including protected

[33] According to German figures, there were 13,724 civilians interned in British hands (incl. 4,512 merchant mariners), and only 9,131 British interned in Germany (2,467 from the merchant navy). Memo, Albrecht, 11 Mar. 1943. PA-AA. R40788.

[34] Memo, Rintelen, 29 May 1943. PA-AA. R40788.

[35] AA to German consul-general, Geneva, 24 Sep. 1943. PA-AA. R40813. Minute by Field Marshall A. Jodl (Chef WFSt) on OKW Amt Ausl. to Chef OKW, 21 Aug. 1943. BA-MA. RW4 765. Albrecht (AA) to consul-general Siegfried (Geneva), 23 Sep. 1943. PA-AA. R29824. Sonnleithner to Albrecht 21 July 1943. R40788. Note by Saussure (FID), 3 Aug. 1943 SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 33; UK legation, Berne, to FO, 6 Aug. 1943. TNA. FO916/560.

[36] WM (43) 56, 19 Apr. 1943. TNA. CAB195/2.

personnel and civilian internees of military age. In the last resort, London was even willing to consider following the Great War practice and allow any sick prisoners who missed out of direct repatriation to sit out the remainder of the war in Swiss sanatoria.[37]

The arrival of Germany's observations of the *avant-projet* in early March was a positive sign, but it was the second communication in May, proposing an immediate exchange of Britain's long-suffering wounded for the 'several thousand' injured Germans recently captured in Tunis, that confirmed the seriousness of German intentions. Berlin's offer could scarcely have come at a better time. Here, finally, was an opportunity to realize a central objective of Britain's policy for over three years, to silence the government's critics, and draw a line beneath a problem which had, more than any other, exposed Britain's powerlessness in dealing with Berlin over POW issues. By mid-1943, over 3,000 British prisoners had been deemed eligible for repatriation by the Swiss–German mixed medical commission; 1,200 of these had taken part in the abortive operation in October 1941 and waited patiently ever since for their moment of deliverance. While London had done what it could to protect its men—protesting about the overcrowding in some hospital wards, for instance—it was not until the escape of Lt. Col. E. King-Slater, in late 1942, that London grasped the gravity of the prisoners' condition. Since Berlin regarded the detention of severely injured prisoners as a temporary measure, little effort had been made to provide vocational education or physical training to equip the prisoners for life after the war. 'Perhaps the worst feature', commented the adjutant general,

> is that [the prisoners] are continually allowed to believe that repatriation negotiations are approaching finality; rumours are put about, even preliminary concentrations are effected, so much so that King-Slater has frequently known them to be actually waiting for the ambulances to arrive. It is obvious that quite apart from their physical conditions a large number of them are likely to suffer from neurotic and pathological illness, which it will be difficult to cure.[38]

In these circumstances, the FO had little difficulty in securing agreement that 'nothing but a matter of vital interest, and not one of secondary importance, should be allowed to cause a breakdown in the negotiations'.[39]

Such was the strength of the consensus behind the need to secure the speedy return of Britain's injured POWs that a basic agreement on accepting Berlin's proposals was reached with little ado. But if officials felt that a repatriation operation was in sight, they were to be sorely disappointed. Two hurdles had to

[37] Minute, W. S. Churchill, 22 Mar. 1943. TNA. CAB120/222. Minutes, inter-departmental meeting 21 Apr. 1943. AIR2/4669. Memo, Eden, WP (43) 166, 16 Apr. 1943. FO916/530.

[38] Minute, Sir R. Adam, Feb. 1943. TNA. AIR2/4669. For King-Slater's influence see Hollis to Loxley, 30 Aug. 1943, and memo, King Slater, 'Provision of Artificial Limbs for British POWs in Germany', n.d. TNA. CAB121/293.

[39] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, 21 Apr. 1943. TNA. AIR2/4669.

be cleared before the repatriates could return home. The first involved securing American support. London's natural inclination was to go it alone. In March, when questioned over whether Washington should be invited to comment on Britain's response to the German offer, Eden retorted he would 'tell [the] U.S., not ask them'.[40] By May, however, unilateralism was not an option. Berlin's note had been addressed to both governments not just London. Moreover, through arrangements reached with General Eisenhower on 27 April, London had, in effect, mortgaged its independence over POW matters by agreeing to a division of POWs that left most of the Axis soldiers captured in Tunisia in US hands. The agreement had been born out of the need to deal with the large numbers of Axis prisoners that fell into British hands, when Britain had neither the guards nor the facilities to accommodate them in theatre. Washington had agreed in late 1942 to hold upwards of 150,000 POWs, but efforts to expand detention facilities within the British empire had been only partially successful.[41] It thus fell to the Americans to deal with the majority of prisoners captured in North Africa, some 229,000 men, despite the fact that the lion's share, 185,000, had been originally picked up by British forces.[42] Naturally, while the agreement eased Britain's resource problems, its implications for Britain's diplomatic position were hardly favourable. In surrendering its haul of prisoners, Britain effectively relinquished control of the very asset needed to redress that chronic imbalance in POW numbers which had so hampered Britain's dealings with Berlin over the past three years.

In negotiating the agreement with Eisenhower, officials appear to have paid little attention to how it would affect Britain's wider political or humanitarian interests, and instead blithely assumed that Britain could have its cake and eat it: extracting the political credit of capturing large numbers of Axis prisoners, without having to shoulder the cost of their upkeep. Efforts were made to keep hold of several thousand wounded German prisoners for a future exchange, but it nevertheless came as an unpleasant surprise to discover in June that Washington was not prepared to defer to British policy on repatriation as a matter of course.[43] Since the US government treated POWs as a military rather than a political matter it was the US joint COS, and not the civilian agencies, who were responsible for deciding on the issue. Whatever the humanitarian case, there was little military advantage to be gained from repatriating Britain's injured POWs, or for seeing the return to Germany of large numbers of doctors and medical orderlies. Regrettably, the joint chiefs' were woefully ignorant of

[40] WM (43) 56, 19 Apr. 1943. TNA. CAB195/2.

[41] See memo, A. D. P. Heeney (DEA), 8 Dec. 1942. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 12. File W-35–2.

[42] Of these 'British' captures, 110,000 were shipped to the US, where they were counted against a quota of 175,000 men which Washington had agreed to detain on Britain's account. Minute, Sir R. Adam, 24 June 1943, and memo, Mjr.-Gen Gepp, (DPW), 17 Jan. 1945. TNA. WO32/10721.

[43] Memo, Gen. Sir H. Ismay, 27 May 1943; Churchill to Eden, 13 May 1943. TNA. PREM3/363/7.

the basic principles governing POW exchanges and of Britain's earlier tortuous dealings with Berlin on the issue. To believe that Hitler would adhere to a strict interpretation of the POW convention, or forego the return of medical orderlies and doctors, was a gross misreading of German attitudes and past behaviour. Despairing at American intransigence, the Director of Prisoners of War, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Cyril Gepp, journeyed to Washington in late July to inject a sense of sanity, and urgency, into the proceedings. It took a marathon seven hour meeting on 1 August for Gepp to wear down American resistance and extract agreement for an exchange on German terms. A reply to that effect was speedily transmitted to the Swiss on 9 August, but the fact remained that a full three months had elapsed since Berlin's proposal had first been put to the Allied governments.[44]

Paradoxically, the delay in responding to the German offer probably worked to Britain's advantage. Unbeknown to Gepp and his American counterparts, Anglo–American silence over the summer was taken in Berlin as further evidence of a stiffening of British attitudes on POW matters. London's apparent reluctance to entertain talks while its men remained in chains prompted German officials to rethink their approach to POW policy, and recognize the extent to which the shackling crisis and the loss of Tunisia had eroded the basis of German dominance over POW matters. Ribbentrop's readiness to welcome Burckhardt to Berlin, and even broach the possibility of rescinding the shackling order with the Führer in July, attests to the shift in German perceptions, and the new awareness of the need to approach POW issues with greater circumspection than they had in the past. Nevertheless, one major hurdle remained to be crossed, and this, as before, concerned the question of numbers. Taking his cue from a meeting with Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander-in-chief south, on 12 May, Ribbentrop became convinced that of the '6,000' injured German soldiers left behind in Tunis about a half were likely to be eligible for repatriation under the terms of the convention.[45] When, however, the British and American reply reached Berlin in early August, talking of barely a fraction of this number—285 POWs in the Middle East, plus a further 171 in the United Kingdom—Ribbentrop immediately sensed foul play, and demanded a reconsideration of the entire operation.

The resolution of this problem tells us a great deal about the status of the POW regime in Germany by the fourth year of the war. The principal reason for concluding an exchange, despite the apparent disparity in the numbers, lay in freeing up the hospital space currently occupied by British POWs. By this stage of the war it was not just a concern for accommodating the flow of sick

[44] UK embassy, Washington, to FO, 5 Aug. 1943. TNA. AIR2/4669. The dispute is described in Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 116–21. Gepp may have been aided by the War Department's relaxed attitudes towards repatriations by the mid-summer. See Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, pp. 72–95.

[45] OKW Amt Ausl. to Albrecht, 2 Oct. 1943. PA-AA. R40789.

and wounded from the eastern front that shaped OKW thinking on the issue but the dwindling stock of available hospital beds, on account of the destruction of urban centres in western and central Germany.[46] The army medical service was naturally keen to see the return of the several hundred doctors and medical orderlies eligible for repatriation under the scheme. In practical terms therefore, the rationale for securing the repatriation of German POWs was little changed from 1942. What had changed, however, was its appreciation of the fragility of the POW regime and the extent to which the handling of this issue affected Germany's broader relations with London over the issue of POWs. If London's efforts to negotiate a return of their men were thwarted, for a third year in a row, German officials genuinely believed Britain would suspend all further talks, whether over the repatriation of POWs or any other issue covered by the convention.[47] What was at stake, then, was not a few hundred injured POWs and medical orderlies but the credibility of the POW regime in the west. Thus, while Ribbentrop continued to obsess over the disparity in numbers and accuse his officials of sentimentality, his room for manoeuvre was constrained by the OKW's outspoken support for the operation. Frustrated at being unable to manage the situation to his own liking, Ribbentrop passed the matter over to Erich Albrecht, head of the AA legal division, making him *personally* responsible for ensuring that every eligible German soldier was returned under the scheme. In the light of this decision, it is questionable whether, short of a direct intervention by the Führer, the foreign minister was capable of prevailing against both the OKW and his own staff in the AA and stopping the operation in its tracks.[48]

The significance of the Anglo–German exchange in October 1943 can hardly be overestimated. In terms of its complexity alone, the operation was an extraordinary achievement. Between the 17 and 27 October over 10,000 men were assembled in Gothenburg, Barcelona, and Oran and transferred into the hands of their compatriots. Timetables, shipping routes, lists of repatriates, and even the position of mine fields, had all to be exchanged between the two belligerents beforehand. The choreographers—the Swiss, Swedish, and Spanish governments—had also to be kept informed; so too, the many agencies which provided assistance to the injured men—the ICRC, under whose watchful gaze the exchanges took place, and the German, British, Vichy, Swedish, and Spanish Red Cross societies. Naturally, not everything went to plan. The German hospital trains suffered prolonged delays before they reached their destinations.

[46] See Winfried Su*β*, *Der 'Volkskörper' im Krieg. Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhaltnisse und Krankenmord im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, 1939–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003) pp. 269–91.

[47] Minute, E. Albrecht, 2 Oct. 1943; OKW Amt Ausl. to Albrecht (AA), 2 Oct. 1943. PA-AA. R40789.

[48] See Sonnleithner to Albrecht, 24 Aug. 1943. PA-AA. R40788. Steengracht to Albrecht, 2 Oct. 1943, and Lohmann to Albrecht, 4 Oct. 1943. R40789; Sonnleithner to Steengracht, 7 Oct. 1943. R40790.

The exuberance of one homebound Australian POW, who threw his German sausage out of the train window, so infuriated the German commander that he prohibited the French Red Cross from distributing comforts when the train pulled in to Belfort.[49] One luckless German merchant seaman fell overboard en route to Gothenburg, and the *Empress of Russia*, crammed to the gunnels with wounded men, nearly came to grief when it encountered a stray mine in the North Sea. More seriously, 283 Britons scheduled for repatriation failed to arrive at the exchange ports, and the names of another 180 men, who had passed the mixed medical commission over the summer, were mysteriously absent from the manifests exchanged on the eve of the operation. Berlin explained the shortfall by pointing to difficulty of collating information from numerous hospitals across Germany, and, in some instances, this indeed appears to have been the case: Albrecht certainly believed that the discrepancy in numbers—5,096 British, including 17 Americans, to 5,681 Germans—was due to administrative errors.[50] German 'sloppiness' was, however, rather more wilful than Albrecht was prepared to admit. Certain Czech pilots were deliberately excluded from the exchange on political grounds, and Berlin was distinctly obstructive over London's request that 112 POWs, scheduled for repatriation in Lisbon under an Italo–British agreement, but intercepted by German forces in September, be included in the exchange. Berlin saw no reason to augment the number of prisoners included under its own scheme.[51] Even if we accept German excuses, its administrative shortcomings are an early indication of the decline of central control over POW affairs that would come to characterize German actions during the last months of the war. According to the ICRC's chief delegate in Berlin, Roland Martin, many officials were so convinced Hitler would repeat his earlier performance and veto the scheme at the last minute that they found it difficult to give the matter the attention it required.[52]

Having been stumped by German machinations twice before, the British welcomed the exchange with as much relief and surprise as pleasure. Ever since the abortive exchange in October 1941, British officials had learnt to grasp the moment and not stand on ceremony. That London chose not to break off the operation after learning of the shortfall in numbers at Gothenburg is evidence of the distance officials had travelled over the intervening two years. Whatever the irritation at German duplicity, or distaste at having to acquiesce to a 'head-for-head' exchange, the safe return of 3,255 wounded servicemen, 1,893 medical

[49] The commandant apparently viewed the action as an 'insult to the Third Reich'. Report, Dr E. Jegge (ICRC), 2 Nov. 1943. ICRC. G14 Carton 427.

[50] Memo, E. Albrecht, 12 Mar. 1944. PA-AA. R40794. See the experience recounted in the diary of Arthur F. Gibbs, 'Kriegie' pp. 152–54. IWM. Docus, 92/4/1.

[51] Grp. Capt R. Kellett RAF (SBO Stalag Luft III) to Swiss legation, Berlin, 19 Oct. 1943. PA-AA. R40792, and view reported in Thiess (AA) to OKW, 11 May 1944. R40794.

[52] Report, R. Marti, 5 Nov. 1943. ICRC. G14 Carton 427. See UK Legation, Berne, Aide-Mémoire, 9 Oct. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 02 11 vol. 63.

orderlies, 175 merchant marine, and 104 civilian internees was a humanitarian triumph however one cared to read it. Naturally both sides sought to capitalize on the exchange, grilling the returning prisoners for any information likely to be of value. In London, care was taken to prevent sensationalized reporting of the repatriates' experiences in the press, lest Berlin be ill-disposed towards further exchanges. Fewer qualms were shown in Berlin, where lurid descriptions of Allied POW camps as bad as 'bug-invested Soviet villages', of aggressive interrogation techniques, and of the widespread looting of German POWs soon featured in the German press and radio. Yet, if the soundings of Roland Marti are anything to go by, it is possible that British standing in Berlin was improved by the prisoners' return. According to the Germans he met at Oran and Barcelona, 'the aphorism of ''Britanniques des gentlemen; Américains des gangsters, Français des brutes'' corresponded, *grosso modo*, to reality'.[53] As against the vindictive treatment experienced in Gaullist hands, or the 'dishonour' of being guarded by black and Jewish sentries in the United States, most returning prisoners admitted to finding their detention under the British fairly tolerable. One soldier, repatriated in October 1943, became so irate at the rosy picture to emerge of camp life under the Allies that he felt compelled to write to Josef Goebbels to set the record straight.[54]

If the exchange proved anything, it demonstrated the endurance of the POW regime in the west and its continued capacity to promote a humanitarian agenda, four years into an increasingly bitterly-fought war. The range of sentiments which had driven the process to its conclusion varied between individual officials, departments, and governments, but what united all sides was the belief that every effort ought to be made to exchange prisoners, even if the actual chances of pulling it off may seem slim. Both parties had their own reasons for welcoming the prisoners' return, but it is striking to see how the POW regime itself influenced official attitudes and helped empower those sections favourable to the deal, despite the scars left by the ongoing shackling crisis. The exchange could not reverse the decline in mutual confidence that had begun the previous summer. What it did do, though, was emphasize the common ground uniting the two sides, especially now POW numbers had been equalized, and highlight the extent to which each side was capable of prudent, judicious action when required. 'During the negotiations and the actual operation', noted one German diplomat, 'the British government behaved in a way which would be characterized even

[53] Report, Marti, 5 Nov. 1943. ICRC. G14 Carton 427. For evidence of ill-treatment and poor conditions, see C. Dubois, 'Internés et prisonniers de guerre italiens dans les camps de l'empire français de 1940 à 1945', *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains* XXXIX (1989), pp. 53–71, and R. H. Rainero, 'I prigionieri italiani in Africa', in R. H. Rainero (ed.), *I prigionieri militari durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale: aspetti e problemi storici* (Milan: Marzorati, 1985), pp. 149–70. Louis E. Keefer, *Italian Prisoners of War in America 1942–1946: Captives of Allies?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), pp. 18–20.

[54] E. Beyer to Goebbels, 9 Aug. 1944. BA Lichtefelde. R55/623. Massey to DEA, Ottawa, 15 Dec. 1943. LAC. RG24 Series C 1 Reel 5339.

in peacetime as correct, even obliging'. London had accommodated German wishes, alerting it to the position of mines, agreeing to a last-minute switch from Smyrna to Barcelona, and scouring its camps to locate as many wounded prisoners as possible. Above all it had continued the operation even after Berlin failed to deliver all those eligible for repatriation. The diplomat was even moved by Britain's sober reporting of the affair.[55] Germany was still locked in a life-and-death struggle—no more so since the enunciation of the Allied policy of unconditional surrender in January of that year—but there was still reason to hope that, in this area at least, traditional norms of war continued to hold sway.

RISING CONCERNS OVER THE STANDARD OF TREATMENT AND CONDITIONS OF CAPTIVITY

Whatever the significance of the October 1943 exchange for the general state of Anglo–German POW relations, the fact remained that barely three per cent of British prisoners were deemed eligible for repatriation.[56] For the vast majority therefore, the most they could hope for from their government was a plentiful supply of parcels, and diplomatic assistance whenever their guards overstepped the mark. It would be wrong, of course, to assume that the camp inspection reports, upon which London based its judgement, came close to approximating the actual experience of imprisonment. The cards were always stacked in Berlin's favour. Access to the main camps was freely granted, but the inspection teams reached few of the outlying work detachments—where over two-thirds of the prisoners were held at any one time—and were reliant on the OKW for such information as the movement of prisoners or closure of camps. They had no authority to interview prisoners serving penal sentences, nor could they insist on the details of those held by the Gestapo.[57] Moreover, as their itineraries were approved at least a month in advance, camp authorities had ample opportunity to prepare for the visit.[58] Proceedings were carefully choreographed and contact

[55] Aide-mémoire, early Nov. 1943, probably written by Erich Kordt (German legation, Berne) PA-AA. Gesandschaft BERN Schutmachtabteilung, 1939–1945 3974. The AA collected cuttings from *The Times* (27 Oct. 1943) and the *Guardian* (26 Oct.) quoting favourable comments about German internment conditions. See R40792.

[56] In Germany's case the figure was nearer one per cent. The proportion of eligible British POWs later rose to four and a half per cent. See 'Besprechung mit Herrn C. J. Burckhardt, 17 Nov. 1943', 18 Nov. 1943. PA-AA. R40812. Aide-mémoire, German legation, Berne, 16 Dec. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 02 11 Vol. 63.

[57] For US doubts; Tait to Huddle, US legation, Berne, 22 Feb. 1944. NARA. RG84 Berne Box 63. Swiss camp visits rose from 174 in 1942 to 191 in 1943 and civilian internment camps from 20 to 50. Pilet-Golaz to FID, 11 May. 1944. SBA. E2001 (D) 2/97.

[58] 'The better the visit's preparation', commandants were told in late 1941, 'the shorter its duration, and this can only be to the benefit of the OKW and the camp'. Sammelmitteilungen

with the prisoners' representatives—the senior British officer (SBO) in Oflags, and the elected 'Man of Confidence' in Stalags—kept to a minimum. Even if the inspectors managed to penetrate the German smokescreen, as reports were invariably written up only at the end of the tour, it could take anything up to four months for news to reach London. In the circumstances, it was little wonder that the information was frequently inaccurate, out-of-date, or contradictory.[59]

Nevertheless, notwithstanding its obvious limitations, the inspection regime—supplemented by information received from coded letters and, after October 1943, the testimonies of repatriated POWs—meant that Germany could scarcely hope to either evade its responsibilities or bury evidence of gross misconduct.[60] By late 1942, London was receiving twenty-six reports every month, and this figure rose to forty-three a month by the end of 1943 and remained at this level until the last months of the war.[61] Though prisoners occasionally belittled the influence of the neutral inspectors—'I have yet to meet the camp commandant', opined one former POW, 'who could tolerate interference of a minor power like Switzerland in running of the camp where he was boss'[62]—in London, officials were impressed by the protecting power's success in extracting concessions from the German authorities, either in response to British complaints or on the basis of their own appeals.[63] 'Experience has shown', noted one diplomat, 'that if prisoners are cut off from contact with the representative of the Protecting Power, conditions in a camp deteriorate very rapidly'.[64] The spontaneous remarks in October 1943 of the WO's Director of Prisoners of War, Mjr.-Gen. Gepp, after ploughing through 115 reports, detailing the findings of Swiss camp visits over the summer, is perhaps indicative of the

Nr. 6, 11 Nov. 1941, BA-MA. RH49/44. See Helmuth Forwick, 'Zur Behandlung alliierter Kriegsgefangener im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Anweisung des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht über Besuche ausländischer Kommissionen in Kriegsgefangenenlagern', *MGM*, 2 (1967), pp. 119–34. Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, 'What the Angels Saw: Red Cross and Protecting Power Visits to Anglo-American POWs, 1939–1945', *JCH*, 40/4 (2005), pp. 689–706.

[59] See Jonathan F. Vance, 'The Politics of Camp Life: The Bargaining Process in Two German Prison Camps', *War & Society*, 10/1 (1992), pp. 109–26, and Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, 'What the Angels Saw: Red Cross and Protecting Power Visits to Anglo-American POWs, 1939–1945', *JCH*, 40/4 (2005), pp. 689–706; Helmuth Forwick, 'Zur Behandlung alliierter Kriegsgefangener im Zweiten Weltkrieg', pp. 119–34.

[60] By mid-1941, over sixty coded messages reached London every month, rising to 300 a month by mid-1943. For coded letters, MI9's War Diary. TNA. WO165/39. Lt. A. G. Wygard (M.I. liaison officer, Chief Postal Censor), 'Report on POW mail', 9 Feb. 1943. LAC. RG24 Reel 5059.

[61] Approximately four protecting power reports were produced by every one by the ICRC. DPW War Diary: TNA. WO165/59.

[62] Capt. R. F. Campbell, 'Memoir', p. 4. IWM. Docus, 93/17/1. A. R. Prouse, *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe* (Toronto: Fleet, 1982), p. 192. Vance, 'The Politics of Camp Life', pp. 109–26.

[63] DPW, 'summary of action' No. 12 (Oct. 1942). TNA. WO165/59.

[64] UK legation, Berne to FID, n.d., cited in Matthias Inhelder, 'Die Schweiz als Schutzmacht Grossbritanniens und Deutschlands im Zweiten Weltkrieg', Lizentiatsarbeit, University of Zurich, 1989, p. 97.

admiration and gratitude felt by British officials for the work of Swiss and ICRC delegates. The Swiss inspectors did 'their work with great thoroughness and zeal', he wrote, 'visiting a large number of work camps which are often not very readily accessible and markedly contributing to the welfare of our men'.[65]

The main irritant during 1942 had been Berlin's failure to admit to the claims of prisoner ill-treatment during and after the fighting in Greece and Crete the previous spring. Since Berlin had its own litany of complaints against the behaviour of British and Commonwealth troops during these campaigns, Britain's protests were soon lost amidst a rather pointless trading of claims and counter-claims.[66] Living conditions for most prisoners saw a general, but by no means alarming, deterioration over 1942 and 1943, despite London's success in tackling some of the more blatant abuses or inequities uncovered by the Swiss inspectors. Conditions took a turn for the worse with the arrival of prisoners from Italy, seized by German forces after Marshal Badoglio's armistice with the Allies in September. British officials were, however, heartened by German efforts to ease the psychological and physical strains of prolonged detention. In June 1943, the AA opened two 'holiday' camps, where selected prisoners could rest and recuperate for periods of between four and six weeks.[67] 'Public relations' officers were also stationed in some of the main British compounds, ostensibly to facilitate relations between the prisoners and camp authorities. Changes within the OKW administration, through the appointment of *Generalinspektor für das Kriegsgefangenenwesen* in late June, were taken in some quarters as a step in the same direction.[68] Not all of these initiatives were as benign as they first appeared. The AA's involvement in camp affairs arose from Ribbentrop's wish to recruit disaffected prisoners to Germany's cause, and restrict the influence of his rival, Josef Goebbels, in this area. The changes within the OKW were by no means as positive as some believed, and probably resulted in a stiffening of German attitudes towards POWs and security issues. At the same time, though, there is little doubt that the broadening of the AA's remit over POW matters brought direct benefits to British prisoners, and helped sharpen the camp authorities' awareness of the political implications of their behaviour and the possible impact their actions might have on Germany's foreign relations.[69]

[65] Mjr.-Gen. Gepp (DPW) to Roberts (PWD) 11 Oct. 1943. TNA. WO32/10712. The message was relayed to Berne: Aide-mémoire, UK legation, Berne, 21 Oct. 1943. SBA. JI3 1990/98 Dossier 179.

[66] See de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 154–61.

[67] Special Detachment 999 at Zehlendorf, Berlin, for officers and a special compound at Stalag III D Steglitz for other ranks.

[68] Col. H. J. Phillimore (DPW) to Sir H. Satow (PWD), 14 Feb. 1944. TNA. FO916/887. 'Nazi new deal for prisoners. Change of heart', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 Oct. 1944. See Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, pp. 251–52; Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, p. 171, and Gilbert, *POW*, p. 247. 'Schaffung der Dienstelle "Generalinspekteur für das Kriegsgefangenenwesen" ', 28 June 1943, printed in Martin Moll (ed.), *Führer-Erlasse, 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997), p. 347.

[69] See Note, Ritter, 14 Jan. 1944. PA-AA. R278334. Fiche 7762; Aide-mémoire, UK legation, Berne, 12 Aug., and 2 Sep. 1943; A. Feldscher, Berlin, to A. de Pury, Berne, 24 Sep. and 18 Oct. 1943.

The issues that gave London most cause for concern were the conditions of employment in German coal mines, the excessive judicial punishments handed out to prisoners who infringed German laws, and the increasingly repressive conditions of internment. Problems in the mining sector were not new. Over half the instances of alleged ill-treatment of British prisoners during the Great War related to their employment underground. Complaints about unhealthy or dangerous working conditions, excessive working hours, inappropriate or inadequate equipment, and the denial of the statutory rest days were frequently made to the neutral inspectors and amounted, in British eyes, to a 'definite contravention of the letter and the spirit of the POW convention'.[70] Prisoners' attitudes towards this kind of work were clearly not helped by having to do dangerous and unpleasant tasks that were, if not strictly 'war work' (and therefore contrary to the convention), nevertheless a vital contribution to the German war effort.[71] Despite regular visits by neutral inspectors, and frequent representations, little substantive improvement in working conditions was made over the course of 1942 and 1943.

Equally little headway was made in protecting prisoners from the injustices of the Nazi judicial system. The principal difficulty lay in the fact that minor offences such as breaches of discipline, malingering, or insubordination, which in Britain would have been dealt with by the camp authorities, were made the subject of formal judicial hearings in Germany, and carried hefty sentences as a result. In general, German prison sentences were two to three times longer than those handed out in Britain. Cases analogous to that of a German officer POW at Latrun camp, who received a three-month sentence for striking a guard, could result in sentences of up to fifteen years' penal servitude. Prisoners could, moreover, fall foul of a galaxy of offences unique to the Nazi regime. Between April 1941 and October 1942, thirty-seven Britons received prison sentences for expressing unflattering remarks about the Führer and the Nazi Party, despite owing no allegiance to either Hitler or his regime.[72] Large numbers were also punished for fraternizing with German women, a crime which not only violated Nazi race laws but also endangered internal security by providing prisoners with increased opportunities to escape or conduct espionage and sabotage activities.[73]

SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 Vol. 14. Minute, meeting between ICRC and Rödiger (AA), 16 Sep. 1943. ICRC G23 carton 604. See Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 852–53.

[70] FO memo for the Swiss legation, London, 24 Dec. 1943. TNA. FO916/520. Minute, Sir H. Satow, 19 Aug. 1943. FO916/519.

[71] See incident recalled in D. W. Luckett, memoir, p. 41 IWM. Docus. 90/4/1. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, pp. 198–200.

[72] Aide-Mémoire, UK legation, Berne, 23 July 1942; AA to Swiss Legation, Berlin, 12 Jan. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 37.

[73] See Kietel (OKW) to OKH, OKM, Luftwaffe, Reichsminister der Luftfahrt, Präsidenten des Reichskriegsgerichte etc. 19 Feb. 1942. BA. Lichtefelde. R901. Theirack to Presidents of the 'Reichsgerichts', 'Oberlandesgerichts' and Generalstaatsanwälten, 14 Jan. 1943. BA Lichtefelde.

Though courts were warned that their proceedings would be scrutinized by enemy governments, this had little appreciable impact on the severity of the judgements handed down, which, as one British official caustically remarked, were regrettably 'in keeping with the terrorism which the Regime [was] obliged to practise in the interests of self-preservation'.[74] Little, however, could be done to remedy the situation, other than to remind Berlin of the grotesque disparity between its scale of punishments and those in force in Britain, and ensure that the accused received legal assistance from the Swiss legation.[75]

Though unpleasant for those directly involved, neither working conditions in German mines, nor the excessive sentencing regime of German courts amounted to a serious assault on the POW regime. Far more worrying for British officials was the increasingly level of violence directed against prisoners. The principal concern here lay not so much with individual acts of brutality, appalling though these undoubtedly were, but rather with the broader issue of how changes within Germany were undermining the OKW's hold on POW policy, and impinging on the day-to-day wellbeing and safety of British prisoners. Pressure to increase labour productivity was partly to blame. The AA tried to make light of the matter by pointing out that the old and infirm men called upon to act as sentries had little choice other than to use firearms to discipline their young charges, but it was widely acknowledged that British prisoners, despite being comparatively well fed, were among the worst workers in the Reich. Their work habits, general demeanour, and haughty attitude towards the local population often had a corrosive influence on the behaviour of other nationalities, and frequently featured in internal security reports.[76] Efforts to coerce this sullen company into working harder contributed to a death rate among British prisoners that was higher, proportionally, than among other western POWs.[77] The ability of the OKW to satisfy British protests was, however, limited by the fact that responsibility for the employment of POWs lay with the Ministry of Labour and working regulations varied widely, with eastern Wehrkreise having a particularly

NS6/340. For the laws on sexual relations, see Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London: Longman, 2001), pp. 47–48. There was a four-fold increase in cases involving POWs and German women from 1941 to 1942. OKW KTB for 11 Feb. 1943. BA-MA. RW5/314.

[74] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, 9 Apr. 1942. TNA. FO916/260. Keitel, 'Strafverfarhen gegen Kriegsgefangene', 19 Feb. 1942. BA-MA. RW5/333. See Martin Hirsch, Diemut Majer, and Jurgen Meinck (eds.), *Recht, Verwaltung, und Justiz im Nationalsozialismus. Ausgewählte Schriften, Gesetze und Gerichtsentscheidungen vom 1933 bis 1945* (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1984), p. 553.

[75] POWs in military prison were placed outside the POW regime, and the best the Swiss could do was ensure they were not forgotten.

[76] See H. Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938–1945* (Herrschning: Pawlag, 1984), vol. 12, Report No. 357, 8 Feb. 1943; *idem*, vol. 14, SD Berichte zu Inlandsfrage, 12 Aug. 1943; Feldscher, Swiss Legation, Berlin, to de Pury, FID, Berne, 24 July 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 37; Graevenitz (OKW Kgf) to camp commandants, 26 Oct. 1943; and M. Bormann, circular No. 163/43, 25 Nov. 1943. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73.

[77] Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 775, 779, 799.

bad reputation. In early 1942, the Swiss discovered in Stalag XX B, Marienburg, instructions which permitted guards to use their firearms against 'work-shy' prisoners. The ruling was subsequently withdrawn, but trigger-happy habits died hard. By 1943, the demand for greater productivity saw the introduction of regulations governing the employment of foreigners which explicitly permitted the use of firearms to compel prisoners to work.[78]

Similar constraints affected British efforts to protect the small, but growing, number of men found to have been killed, tortured, or maltreated in German custody. These obviously included the commandos and special forces executed under the commando order, and members of Britain's SOE who were captured, often in civilian clothes, and handed over to the Gestapo. By late 1943, there were thought to be between 150 and 250 men, mostly RAF, held at the Gestapo prison at Fresnes in Paris. Repeated attempts to get Swiss inspectors into the prison came to nought, and only went to underline the impotency, both of the Swiss legation and their collaborators in the OKW and AA, in the face of Germany's mushrooming internal security apparatus. Perhaps even more worrying was the evidence of ill-treatment meted out to Allied pilots at Dulag Luft, the Luftwaffe interrogation centre at Oberusel, near Frankfurt, as this appeared to suggest that the regular armed forces were prepared to adopt techniques that contravened the letter and spirit of the POW convention. Despite frequent, energetic representations by the Swiss authorities, only limited headway was made in ameliorating conditions at Oberusel over the course of 1943.[79]

Berlin was quick to justify the detention of British servicemen at Fresnes and elsewhere on the grounds that those held were either 'illegal' combatants—spies, *agents provocateurs*—or had in some way forfeited their right to POW status by violating the laws of war—deliberately targeting civilians, for instance—prior to their capture. The same excuse could not be made so easily in the case of prisoners, ill-treated, or killed, in the act of escaping. Before the 'great escape' from Stalag Luft III in March 1944, discussed in Chapter 8, relatively little attention was paid to this matter in London, given the small numbers of those involved and the limited impact their activities had on the general tempo of Anglo–German relations.[80] The reported deaths of prisoners invariably led to a protest being lodged in Berlin, and gave rise, in August 1942, to an agreement clarifying the procedures to be followed on these occasions. But in the main,

[78] UK legation, Berne, aide-mémoire, 20 Nov. 1943 referring to German regulations supplement of 1 May 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 37 vol. II; Feldscher to FID, Berne, 7 Sep. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 37.

[79] See correspondence in SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 32, E2200 Berlin (56) 3 Vol. 74. Mackenzie notes 'most aircrew passing through Dulag Luft [. . .] emerged unscathed'. *Colditz Myth*, p. 56.

[80] By early 1943, barely 75 men had escaped from German camps; by mid-1944, 120. MI9, War Diary, entries for Feb. 1943, July 1944. TNA. WO165/39. MI9's post-war report is misleading: see M. R. D. Foot and Jim Langley, *MI9: Escape and Evasion 1939–1945* (London: Book Club, 1979), pp. 310–12.

most officials involved in POW policy saw these incidents as one of the inevitable risks run by those who set their sights on a successful 'home run'. In Germany, however, with several million foreigners living inside the Reich, escapes were increasingly viewed as a security threat. This outlook was not entirely new. Pre-war studies by the OKW had stressed the damage caused to German interests by enemy prisoners before 1918, and the large influx of Polish, French, and Soviet POWs after 1939 naturally fanned these concerns. It was not until 1942, however, that escapes began to have a serious impact on German policy. By the summer, over 79,000 men had either escaped or temporarily abandoned their workplaces since the start of the war. In August 1942 alone, 14,583 prisoners were recorded as on the run.[81] By the following March, on the OKW's own admission, matters had reached 'dangerous proportions'.[82] Quite apart from the economic implications—an estimated 620,000 man hours lost since 1939—the escapes placed an enormous drain on the Reich's resources. Two 'mass escapes' from Oflag XXI B, Schubin, and Oflag VII B, Eichstätt, in March and May 1943, reputedly led to the mobilization of 300,000 members of the home guard, 100,000 members of the volunteer fire-brigade plus a further 250,000 men from other organizations and associated units. At the border regions, there were no fewer than six different agencies engaged, in whole or in part, in the job of tracking down escaped prisoners.[83]

The vast majority of prisoners at liberty at any time were Soviet, French, or Polish. British prisoners, however, were clearly perceived as posing a distinct problem. Camp authorities were instructed to be especially vigilant when transporting British prisoners and careful in selecting their employment.[84] It was the break-out of forty-three British officers from Schubin and sixty-seven from Eichstätt that plunged the country into a state of alert in the summer of 1943. At Stalag Luft I, Barth, at least one prisoner was punished every week for trying to escape between March 1943 and April 1944; in some months the figure was over a dozen.[85] The lengths to which London went to promote these activities naturally lent weight to German fears. Interrogation of re-captured prisoners appeared to confirm the ease with which British POWs secured assistance from abroad, and, as early as April 1942, London was thought to posses a widespread network of escape lines and safe houses across western Europe. According to one report, about thirty-five POWs, the majority airmen, were whisked across the

[81] Graevenitz (OKW Kgf) memo. 'Fluchterlass', 22 Sep. 1942. IfZ. MA438, folios 296272–3.

[82] Chef, OKW to camp commandants, 22 Mar. 1943. BA Lichtefelde. NS6/344.

[83] See Aktennotiz über Besprechung Gen. von Graevenitz (Chef OKW Kgf); Oberst Kappie 'Fahndungdienst im Kriegsgefangenenwesen', 26 Feb. 1943. BA Lichtefelde. NS19/3464. Report X, Stalag Luft III, n.d., p. 29. TNA. AIR40/285.

[84] See Dr Syrup (Reichsarbeitsministerium) to Präsidenten der Landesarbeitsämter, 26 Apr. 1941, referring to a letter of 17 June 1940. BA Lichtefelde. NS6/334. Befehlsammlung Nr 23, 5 Apr. 1943. BA-MA. RH49/30.

[85] Stalag Luft I, Luftwaffe Bautruppen/Einheiten für Wach- und Sicherungsaufgagen. BA-MA. RL23/91.

Pyrenees *every week*, and it was only to be expected that similar numbers were being 'lost' to Switzerland and Sweden.[86] By early 1944, Britain was thought to have recovered 'about 2,000' men from German POW camps since the start of the war.[87]

Escaping had always been a dangerous activity, but there was little doubt that the risks for those involved were growing. Of the sixty-eight British prisoners shot by their guards between January 1941 and July 1943, twenty-five had been killed in the act of escaping. Over half the fatalities recorded in the first half of 1943 resulted from escaping: four men lost their lives this way in June alone.[88] Mortality rates remained well below those found in Soviet compounds, but, according to the Swiss legation in Berlin, sentries were far more likely to shoot at British escapers than, say, French. The upward trend naturally gave cause for concern in London, but the real impact of the development was felt in Berlin. While the roots of Keitel's demise lay elsewhere, his failure to contain the plague of escaping inevitably undermined his efforts to fend off rival bids for control of POW affairs. Officials in the OKW routinely accused Himmler of deliberately exaggerating the menace in order to play up the success of his security forces and further his own political ends.[89] In 1942, in the wake of General Henri Giraud's audacious escape from Koenigstein, near Dresden, Keitel reluctantly agreed to let Himmler's *Kriminalpolizei* (Kripo) into POW camps. The break-outs from Schubin and Eichstätt the following year led, in July, to the Kripo assuming responsibility for investigating mass escapes in army and Luftwaffe camps.[90] The regime's fixation with internal stability, evident from its first days, naturally sensitized officials to the problem of POW escapes, but the Allied propaganda campaign, begun in the autumn of 1943, which spoke of a 'Trojan Horse' in Germany's midst, naturally added to the sense of alarm. The success of British camp escape committees in sowing chaos and confusion across large swathes of German occupied territory thus came at a price. By the end of 1943, the security of POW camps had become the subject of debate within the Nazi leadership.

[86] Memo for the Höhere SS und Polizeiführer Mitte, Braunschweig, 17 Apr. 1942. BA Lichtefelde. NS19/2868. Eighteen per cent of successful escapes went through Switzerland, thirty per cent through Sweden.

[87] M. Bormann, 'Fluchtanweisung für britische Kriegsgefangene', 30 Apr. 1944. IfZ. MA127/1, folio 79. Interrogation report of a British major, 4 Aug. 1942. IfZ. MA446. Memo, Breyer (OKW Kgf) 28 May 1942. IfZ. MA438, folio 2962734. OKW Sammelmitteilungen Nr 8, 31 Dec. 1941. BA-MA. RW49/30. Generalstab des Heeres Abt Fremde Heere West III, Einselnachrichten des I c Dienstes West, 27 Dec. 1943. RH2/1506.

[88] AA memo 28 Sep. 1943. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14 bis; WO memo 'Violent Deaths and Woundings of POW in German Hands', Nov. 1942. TNA. FO916/266. Feldscher to A. de Pury, Berne, 24 July 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Vol. 37.

[89] See Interrogation report, Mjr.-Gen. Adolf Westhoff, 23 Nov. 1946, pp. 3–4. IfZ. ZS425 vol. 1. See Himmler's speech to the German Press, 4 Dec. 1943. IfZ. MA313, folio 2613145; Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Purity 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 21–78.

[90] Goering memo. 5 July 1943; Keitel (OKW) memo 'Fluchterlass: Zusammenarbeit mit Kripo', 2 July 1943; memo, Ayrer (OKW), 12 May 1942. IfZ. MA438, folio 2962723 ff.

The OKW's authority over POW matters, and the comparatively benign regime they promoted in the British compounds, thus came under threat from elements who had little affection for the POW convention or intuitive understanding of those traditional military norms which had shaped German attitudes towards its own prisoners and those of its Anglo-Saxon adversaries.

STRAINS IN THE POW REGIME

Faced with such contradictory signals from Germany, opinion in London was understandably divided over what to expect from future German policy. Winston Churchill, ever willing to pronounce on the mindset of his enemy, was convinced that Germany's treatment of British prisoners would become increasingly vindictive as the Nazi regime inched towards its denouement. The JIC, which had kept an eye on German POW policies since the start of the war, was more sanguine, and believed that the prospect of defeat would have a salutary effect on German conduct. The subtle dilution of the shackling order, the opening of 'holiday' camps, employment of public relations officers, not to mention the successful exchange of POWs, all seemed to point in this direction and underline the extent to which Allied success in North Africa had fortified Britain's bargaining position.[91] Regrettably, as we shall see in Chapter 8, it was the grim forebodings of the prime minister that appeared to be borne out by events. Evidence of a hardening of German attitudes was already evident in 1943. In July, for instance, the inmates of Oflag VII B, Eichstätt, and Ilag VIII H, Laufen, were warned that they risked death if found outside the camp in civilian attire or German uniforms.[92] News of the draconian regulations for enforcing labour discipline also filtered through by this date. British prisoners might be underfed, overworked, and under strict surveillance, but for many inside Germany, they had become the embodiment of a hated enemy; not just symbolically—in their uniforms and insignia—but physically—in their sullen, truculent attitude towards work, their insubordination, and their ceaseless efforts to escape. As the war edged towards its finale, British prisoners were increasingly viewed as either a source of labour, to be ruthlessly exploited, or a convenient target for those wishing to 'equalize' Germany's dealings with the western powers. Such views gathered weight after the 'Kharkov trials' in December 1943 led to Moscow's execution of three members of the Gestapo for committing atrocities against Russian civilians. The possibility of Germany following suit and trying Allied airmen for bombing civilians was sufficiently worrying to encourage authorities in Britain and America to discourage speculative press reports and play down the

[91] Minute, Cavendish Bentinck (JIC), 13 May 1943 TNA. FO371/36545 W7015.

[92] The orders were originally distributed in April: Befehlsammlung Nr. 23, 5 Apr. 1943. BA-MA. RH49/30. FID to UK Legation, Berne, 17 July 1943. TNA. ADM1/15107.

significance of the Soviet trials, lest public opinion become aroused at the thought of their loved ones being sacrificed to serve Soviet political aims. Fortunately, after a threatening communiqué by the AA on 22 December and a brief flurry of interest in German overseas broadcasts over Christmas, the matter died down in the New Year.[93]

Perhaps the clearest indication of the change in German attitudes towards its British prisoners was the Luftwaffe's proposal to house British aircrew in the centre of cities in order to provide what it called a 'certain security' against further raids.[94] The justification offered for this blatant violation of the convention was a curious blend of political cynicism and artful legalism. The possibility of Britain retaliating in kind was discounted since the bulk of German prisoners were held overseas, safely beyond the range of German bombers. Officials also reasoned that, as the proposed camps would be sited in inner-city parks, their presence would not infringe the convention's prohibition on the endangering of prisoners' lives since, technically, they were not located near 'legitimate' military targets. While some officials might have believed that an 8,000-strong human shield was capable of disrupting Britain's bombing offensive, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the policy was anything other than a callous attempt to make Allied prisoners pay with their lives for the misery inflicted on the German population.[95]

In commenting on the Luftwaffe's proposal, the *Wehrmachtsführungstab* recommended that Berlin dispense with its agreement with London and instead allow the British authorities to learn of the existence of such camps through the death notices issued for British prisoners. Though an extreme case, the suggestion reflected a change in the tenor of Anglo–German relations over POWs that took place at this time. This was a significant development, for one of the core elements underpinning the POW regime was the capacity of both sides to communicate their wishes in a non-conflictual, non-provocative manner. Traditionally this was achieved by dispatching diplomatic notes through the intermediary of the protecting power. The system functioned effectively during the first years of the war, with *aide-mémoires*, representations, and protests freely exchanged between the two sides on a whole raft of issues relating to the treatment of POWs and civilian internees. As late as October 1942, London received a satisfactory reply to a protest about the inadequacy of recreational facilities in POW camps.[96] It was in this month, however, that the system was thrown into

[93] See AM to Britman, Washington, 24 Dec. 1943. 'Note on German Propaganda Threatening Trial of Aircrews for Break of International Law', n.d. TNA. AIR2/8559. de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 99–101.

[94] Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe Führungstab I c to OKW Kgf, 9 Aug. 1943. BA-MA. RW4/765.

[95] Ibid., OKW Kgf to Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe Führungstab I c, 13 Aug; WFSt/Qu F. H. Qu. Vortragsnotiz für Chef OKW, 3 Sep. 1943.

[96] See DPW Monthly letter, No. 12 for Oct. 1942. TNA. WO165/59.

jeopardy by Ernst von Weizsäcker, state secretary at the AA, who, in conversation with the head of the Swiss special interests division in Berlin, P. A. Feldscher, commented that 'protest' notes were inappropriate for states that were either at war with each other or had severed diplomatic ties.[97] The timing of Weizsäcker's remarks, coinciding with the outbreak of the shackling crisis, may partly explain his intervention, but later comments, recorded the following week, suggest that he saw this as an inevitable result of the deterioration in Anglo–German relations.[98] That this new policy covered the treatment of POWs, as opposed to the conduct of operations, became clear in early December when Feldscher tried to deliver an *aide-mémoire* protesting over the reprisals introduced in Oflag IX A/H, Spangenburg. In refusing to take delivery of the note Weizsäcker referred to his earlier conversation, and brusquely remarked that Britain was hardly in a position to complain of German policies after its maltreatment of German prisoners on board the *Pasteur* earlier in the year.[99] By the early New Year, it was clear that, as a point of principle, Ribbentrop would return any communication relating to the protection of British interests containing the word 'protest'.[100]

The danger that Berlin would extend the practice, adopted during the autumn's reprisals, of merely 'plac[ing] on record with the protecting power the fact that they consider they have grounds for complaint against our treatment of prisoners—perhaps not even that—and [. . .] arbitrarily instituting what they consider the appropriate reprisal, accompanied or not by a public statement', could hardly be discounted.[101] With the pile of protests diverted to the AA's wastepaper bin before reaching the foreign minister's desk growing by the month, officials in London were forced to take stock in early 1943 and reconsider the role of protest notes in British diplomacy. Discussions quickly revealed that the issue was far from straightforward. Indeed for many, the primary value of protests lay in convincing an anxious and doubting public at home that the prisoners' interests were not being neglected. There was, moreover, some debate over whether Berlin was the primary target of the protests at all, at least in so far as protests over the alleged infractions of the law of war were concerned. The 'original object in making protests', commented the FO's legal adviser, 'was to make it clear to the Swiss Government that the Axis governments were being guilty of breaches of international law'. The fact, then, that protests never went beyond Swiss hands was immaterial. Britain's protest against Germany's use of marine mines without adequate moorings to anchor them in place—which

[97] Note, von Weizsäcker, 15 Oct. 1942. PA-AA. R29837, folio 284946.

[98] Feldscher to de Pury, Berne, 22 Oct. 1942. SBA. E2001 E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 30 vol. I. For Weizsäcker's gambling on British nerves, see L. E. Hill, (ed.), *Die Weizsäcker-Papiere, 1933–1950* (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1974), pp. 304–05.

[99] C. J. Norton (UK minister, Berne) to FO, 19 Jan. 1943. TNA. FO916/563.

[100] C. J. Norton, Berne, to FO, 5 Feb. 1943. TNA. FO371/36572 W2201. A de Pury, FID, to Feldscher, Berlin, 8 Sep. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Vol. 11.

[101] C. J. Norton, Berne, to FO, 19 Jan. 1943. TNA. FO916/563.

was returned, unread, in April 1943—had been lodged purely with an eye to countering the recent deluge of Italian and German complaints and stop the Swiss from thinking that Britain was 'at least as bad offenders as the enemy against international law'.[102] Officials were less cavalier when it came to protests over POW affairs: if Germany was failing in its duty of care towards British prisoners, it mattered that Britain's complaints got through. But, even here there was sufficient gamesmanship involved to give credence to Weizsäcker's criticism of the earlier diplomatic charade. Fortunately, by the summer, German tetchiness over British protests abated, eased, in part, by the adroit diplomacy of the Swiss and by the growing realization in Berlin that, after the loss of Tunisia, Germany had much to lose in undermining established customs.

Berlin was not alone, however, in challenging the diplomatic norms of the POW regime. Buoyed by the upturn in Allied military fortunes, a more abrasive tone entered British statements over POW matters from the middle of 1943. When news reached London of German efforts to seize control of Italian POW camps containing British prisoners, Churchill immediately warned the Italian King to 'expect no mercy if [he] delivered our and allied prisoners of war now in your hands to the Germans'. An equally combative approach was taken in November, when London let it be known that anyone found maltreating the forces of Britain's fighting allies, including those of its new Italian co-belligerent, would be held personally accountable. A similarly *ad hominem* approach was taken the following February, in threatening to hold the commander-in-chief of German forces in Norway, General von Falkenhorst, responsible if the forces under his command continued to execute British commandos out of hand.[103]

London remained reluctant, though, to dispense with diplomatic protocol entirely. Officials readily agreed for Feldscher to use his initiative in translating—even redrafting—British notes if he felt the circumstances required.[104] Rather more concern was voiced at Pilet-Golaz's refusal, in early 1943, to transmit statements relating to the Allied policy on war crimes, or accusations concerning German misconduct on the battlefield, for reasons of propriety or etiquette, though officials ultimately decided to let the matter rest.[105] However stilted and unsatisfactory the dialogue conducted with Berlin over the question

[102] Minute, P. Dean (FO), 1 May 1943. Waldock (Adty) to FO, 13 Feb. 1943. TNA. FO371/36545.

[103] W. S. Churchill to the King of Italy, 28 July 1943 and Thurnheer to FPD, Berne, 29 July 1943. SBA. E2200 London Vol. 44/3; UK legation, Berne, Aide-mémoire, 8 Nov. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 32; FO to UK legation, Berne, 10 Feb. 1944. TNA. FO371/42997 W16695; E. H. Stevens, *Trial of Nikolaus von Falkenhorst* (London, William Hodge, 1949).

[104] Feldscher routinely used 'Einspruch' (objection) for 'protest', rather than the more literal translation, 'Erheben'. The threat to hold Gen. von Falkenhorst *personally* responsible for the murder of British commandos was erased from the Swiss note. A. de Pury to Feldscher, 8 Sep. 1943. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 65. Norton to FO, 2 Feb. 1944. TNA. FO371/42998 W2766.

[105] Col. R. E. A. Elwes (DPW) to M. Ignatief (Canada House), 7 June 1943. TNA. WO32/9889. FO to C. J. Norton, Berne, 21 May 1943. FO371/36545 W6329. Minute, R. A. Law MP (FO) 23 Mar. 1944. FO371/42998 W2766. For Swiss views, see note, de Pury, 15 Feb. 1944. SBA.

of POWs, it was only with Japan that British patience with diplomacy was exhausted. Steps to improve the lot of prisoners in Japanese captivity had so patently failed by mid-1943 that London reluctantly came round to the belief that 'gentle publicity' was needed to 'work the oracle' in Tokyo. Concern over the ramifications of this change of policy, especially on Washington's ongoing negotiations over the routing of relief shipments via Vladivostok, were set aside, on account of the need to prove to sceptics in Britain and the Dominions that the lack of progress with Tokyo was not for want of trying.[106] In Europe, however, despite mounting disquiet in the WO and some military circles over the futility of diplomatic protests, and a desire to capitalize on the upturn in Allied military fortunes to deter further German violence against British prisoners, Britain's commitment to diplomacy remained in place.

THE OUTLOOK BY LATE 1943

In summing up his study of the shackling crisis, historian S. P. Mackenzie noted that the episode introduced 'a much more cautious and flexible approach to prisoner-of-war diplomacy in the latter years'.[107] It is certainly true that the crisis had a sobering effect on Anglo–German POW relations. Churchill's cabinet was anxious to avoid a repeat performance, and went to some lengths to isolate the problem and prevent it from souring other areas of mutual interest. Churchill may have felt few qualms in extending his struggle with Germany into the realm of POW affairs, but most of his colleagues, their counterparts in Ottawa, and observers in the country at large were convinced by the events over the autumn and winter of 1942 that Britain had more to lose than gain in abandoning the moral high ground and aping German brutality. It was, however, in Germany where the impact of the crisis was most profound. Churchill's fervent hope that the episode might open up fissures in the German government ultimately proved correct. The military and permanent bureaucracy were too weak to bring the matter to a close, but they were in a position to contest policy decisions in other areas, either directly, as in the case of the repatriation negotiations, or indirectly, in limiting the impact of the reprisal on the day-to-day lives of British POWs. To many in Berlin, the episode exposed the weakness, not the strength, of Germany's bargaining position and aggravated doubts over the wisdom of challenging Britain at a time when the tide of war was turning ever more decisively in the Allies' favour.

E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 32, and Churchill's letter to the Italian king: FID to M. de Stoutz (Swiss minister, Rome), 30 July 1943. E 2001 D 20 vol. 1.

[106] G. A. Wallinger (FO) to Col. R. E. A. Elwes (DPW), 22 July 1943. Minutes, IPOWC A, 9 June and 14 July 1943. TNA. WO32/9906.

[107] Mackenzie, 'The Shackling Crisis', pp. 97–98.

The cautionary element that entered POW diplomacy after the shackling crisis was, however, offset by some worrying developments elsewhere. While both sides were still ready to compromise, the level of confidence shown in the workings of the POW regime noticeably declined over the middle years of the war. Weizsäcker's churlish attitude towards the phrasing of Britain's diplomatic notes was an obvious example, but other areas were not immune to this kind of thinking. A sense of brittleness, then, entered Anglo–German relations that went some way to detract from the flexibility in POW diplomacy observed by Mackenzie. Furthermore, while the upturn in Britain's military fortunes obviously strengthened London's hand in negotiations, it placed additional strains on the functioning of the POW regime in Germany itself. The implications of this were highlighted by P. A. Feldscher, when he noted in March 1943 that German officials appeared ready to stick with the POW convention, but only in so far as it did not impinge on Germany's conduct of the war. With the war increasingly encroaching on all aspects of German life, this was clearly a worrying trend.[108] Berlin's bloodthirsty pronouncements about the price it would exact in revenge for Britain's carpet bombing of German cities only added to western fears, even though by late 1943 there was still no evidence to indicate whether Hitler intended to include British prisoners in his plans.[109]

The winter of 1942–43 was, then, an important juncture in the evolution of Anglo–German wartime relations. The shackling crisis drove home to both sides the fragility of their positions and the limited array of options open to them. Coinciding as it did with Germany's loss of Tunisia, the episode came to represent Berlin's last chance of challenging Britain's political interests in an area where it enjoyed clear-cut advantages (i.e. its superior number of British POWs). Far from being worsened in the contest, Britain actually did rather well out of the shackling crisis. Its climb-down in December 1942 was humiliating, and the sight of British prisoners suffering in German hands without reply obviously vexed observers in London. But on the key issue of whether to permit the battlefield use of restraints, Britain held firm: it would not allow itself to be blackmailed out of a concern for the wellbeing of its prisoners. It was this, rather than the growing equality in prisoner numbers, that forced Berlin to abandon its habitual use of reprisals—a policy which had begun in early 1942 and gathered pace over the year—and made the shackling crisis the last major confrontation of this type of the war.[110] Few in London, though, had time to dwell on Britain's apparent success, far less appreciate its wider significance. By the end of 1943, new concerns had come to dominate Britain's outlook towards its POWs which made its earlier fussing over prisoners' chafed wrists seem rather

[108] Feldscher, Annual report for 1942, 22 Mar. 1943. SBA. E2001 (D) 11 vol. 26.

[109] V. Massey (Canada House) to DEA, 22 Dec. 1943. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 12. File 35–3.

[110] In mid-January 1945, blankets and bedding were temporarily withdrawn from British POWs in reprisal for the conditions said to exist at Camp 306 in Egypt. The measure was, however, only half-heartedly enforced and petered out within a matter of days.

ridiculous. The question that loomed ever larger in British thinking was whether the prospect of defeat on the battlefield would encourage German compliance with the POW regime or whether, instead, it would provoke Hitler and his cronies into dispensing with customary norms and indulge in an orgy of violence against British prisoners in their hands. As we shall see, this was a question that would remain open until the final days of the war.

7

The Role of the Dominions in British POW Policy

When British officials came together to hammer out a policy towards its prisoners in German hands, the policy they had in mind was not so much 'British', as 'imperial'. Britain's fighting forces during the Second World War were comprised of men drawn from an empire that stretched across the globe: from India, Britain's colonies and dependent territories, and from the Dominions. Servicemen fighting under the British Crown were as likely to have been born in Auckland, Adelaide, or Aurangabad, as the cities, towns, and villages of the British Isles.[1] Although officials occasionally agonized over the correct terminology to employ, most were content to use the term 'British' when dealing with prisoners, not least since it had the virtue of simplicity.[2] But there were also important practical implications for Britain's POW policy. By classifying all servicemen captured in British uniforms the same, London hoped to prevent its enemies victimizing prisoners on the basis of their political beliefs, race, or nationality. Fortunately, in most cases, Berlin was happy to oblige. Some German officials, it is true, could not quite shake off the belief that all Canadians were lumberjacks and ought to be employed in forestry work. The SS and AA also flirted with the idea of enticing South Africans of German stock back to the Reich, or recruiting disaffected Irishmen from amongst their British captives. But on the whole, Berlin was content to leave such distinctions aside. Lumping all Britons into one category was administratively convenient, and allowed Berlin to insist that is own men were equally well treated in British custody, irrespective of where they happened to be detained.[3]

THE 'IMPERIAL' VOICE IN BRITISH POLICY-MAKING

The obvious practical benefits that flowed from maintaining a unified imperial position did not, however, mean that policy-making towards POWs was free

[1] Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2006), passim.

[2] See G. Kimber's (DO) letters to Roberts (PWD) and Mjr. J. S. Walton (WO), 15 Aug. and 21 Sep. 1942. TNA. DO35/997/10; DO35/998/2.

[3] For British efforts to ensure uniformity; Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, passim.

from what we might call 'imperial' considerations. The Dominions developed a keen interest in POWs. As independent signatories to the POW convention, the Dominion governments were technically responsible for the wellbeing of prisoners in their care. All accommodated large numbers of prisoners at Britain's request, and by the summer of 1942, most had lost large numbers of their own men to enemy captivity, the majority to the Japanese, but a sizeable number to the Axis forces in Europe and the Mediterranean, including 7,586 Canadians, 8,951 Australians, 8,900 New Zealanders, and 12,800 South Africans.[4] In total, some eighteen per cent of all British servicemen captured during the war came from the Dominions, with a further twenty-seven per cent drawn from India, and Britain's colonies and dependencies.[5] Prisoners of war were rarely far from the thoughts of Dominion leaders.

The Dominions' contribution to British POW policy must be seen within the broader context of the 'psychology of Commonwealth [wartime] relations'.[6] When the Dominions entered the war in September 1939, they did so as independent sovereign states and members of the British Commonwealth. In contrast to India and the colonies, who entered into the fray by dint of decisions taken in London, the Dominions acted on their own volition and in accordance with their own procedures. The right to decide upon such questions was enshrined in the 1931 Statute of Westminster. As a piece of legislation, the Statute stood in the best traditions of the British Empire: it was a classic constitutional fudge, averring imperial cohesion by asserting the principle of a single Crown, while offsetting incipient 'nationalist' demands—from the Irish, Afrikaners, and French-Canadians—by transferring sovereignty to the Dominion assemblies and giving each the right to forge an autonomous identity on the international stage.[7] These contradictory impulses were evident in Dominion choices in 1939. For the Australian premier, R. G. Menzies, the decision for war was self-evident: 'Britain is at war, therefore Australia is at war.'[8] Elsewhere, parliamentary assent was deemed essential. In Ottawa and Wellington few doubted the final outcome, but in Pretoria the issue was only put to rest after

[4] Hermann, *Report to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs*; Field, 'Prisoners of the Germans and Italians', pp. 755–821. Jeffrey Gray, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 169, 180. Mason, *Prisoners of War*, pp. v, 41, 524–55. Kent Fedorowich, 'The "Forgotten" Diggers: Australian POWs in Europe, 1939–1945', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, XXVIII (2002), pp. 551–66. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. iii*, p 274. Minute, Jacob, 7 May 1944. TNA. CAB120/222.

[5] Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 286.

[6] Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Wartime Co-operation and Post-War Change, 1939–1952* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 26.

[7] John Darwin, 'A Third British Empire?: The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. iv, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 64–87.

[8] Sir Robert Menzies, *Afternoon Light: Some Memories of Men and Events* (Melbourne: Cassell, 1967), p. 16.

Jan Smuts' return to the premiership.[9] In Dublin, to Westminster's obvious irritation, the *Dial* coolly exercised its statutory powers and declared Ireland neutral.

Given the ambiguity surrounding Dominion status, it is hardly surprising that the question of the Dominions' place in British strategic and political decision-making was left in the air. The set of obligations and responsibilities underpinning the Commonwealth were neither universally understood nor accepted. Protestations of royal and imperial sentiment could easily confuse those ill-versed in the constitutional subtleties of Britain's imperial relationships. The rapturous welcome given to the royal family in Canada in May/June 1939 left one Canadian diplomat with the feeling that 'all the talk of Canadian isolation and neutrality [was simply] academic eye wash'.[10] Caught between 'political aborigines' at home (a public determined to hold on to its British heritage) and a Whitehall culture clinging to Britain's imperial past, it was only natural for Dominion statesmen to take London's genuflection towards Dominion sovereignty with a pinch of salt.[11] Memories of Lloyd George's attempt to bounce the Dominions into a showdown with the Turks at Chanak in 1922 cast a long shadow over Commonwealth relations which the Westminster Statute did little to assuage. Jan Smuts was not alone in sensing the 'Chanak spirit' behind Chamberlain's abrupt offer of a security guarantee to Poland in April 1939.[12] Churchill's blatant disregard of Dominion interests during the shackling crisis in late 1942 provoked a similar reaction. 'Re-read the fifth volume of [Winston Churchill's] *The World Crisis*', advised one senior Canadian official to an American diplomat at the time. Churchill's conduct was 'merely a repetition on a smaller scale of [his] methods exhibited at the time of Chanak [. . . and he] has always run true to form ever since'.[13]

So while most Dominion statesmen were comfortable making Britain's cause their own in September 1939, few doubted that wartime relations with Britain would be smooth. Commonwealth relations were repeatedly tested as interests

[9] Andrew Stewart, 'The British Government and the South African Neutrality Crisis, 1938–1939', *English Historical Review*, CXXIII 503 (2008), pp. 947–72.

[10] L. Pearson (Canada House, London) to O. D. Skelton (DEA), 9 June 1939. LAC. MG26 Series N1 vol. 14.

[11] Memo by J. E. Read (legal adviser, DEA), 21 Aug. 1943. LAC. MG30 E101 Vol. 4. File 24.

[12] Jan Smuts to M. C. Gillett, 6 Apr. 1939, printed in Jean van der Poel (ed.), *Selections from the Smuts Papers, vol. vi, December 1934–August 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 158–160. Ritchie Ovendale, *'Appeasement' and the English Speaking World: Britain, the United States, the Dominions, and the Policy of 'Appeasement' 1937–1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), pp. 117–44.

[13] Memo, P. Moffat (US minister, Ottawa), 2 Nov. 1942 cited in J. L. Granatstein, *A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929–1968* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1981), p. 129. Churchill admitted that the Dominions were 'naturally incensed', but emphasized the depth of popular support for British policy: *The World Crisis, vol. v. The Aftermath* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929), pp. 428–29.

diverged, perceptions changed, and old certainties were challenged or discarded under the pressure of events.[14] Dominion standing in London reached its zenith between the spring and early autumn of 1940, but gradually waned thereafter. Churchill's growing conviction that Britain's salvation lay with the 'arsenal of democracy' across the Atlantic inevitably diminished his willingness to pander to Dominion sensitivities. The dispatch of former cabinet ministers to head British representation in the Dominions in the first months of 1941, taken by some as a sign of Churchill's desire for closer collaboration, was merely a ploy to strengthen British leverage over the Dominion governments and a convenient way of ridding Churchill of politicians who had blotted their copybooks. Malcolm MacDonald, the one-time Dominions secretary appointed high commissioner in Ottawa in 1941, was convinced that Churchill's 'lingering Imperialistic prejudices inclined him to regard Canada and the other dominions as still partly dependent colonies, whose ministers should accept their old British suzerain's views on all problems as the last word of wisdom'.[15]

This outlook was mirrored in the relatively low status accorded to the Dominion Office in Whitehall. It was not until February 1942, with Clement Attlee's appointment as secretary of state, that the Dominion Office was represented in the war cabinet on a permanent basis. Even inside the Dominion Office, officials were ill-equipped to deal with the changing texture of Commonwealth relations. Many had been recruited direct from the Colonial Office and retained something of the paternalistic outlook that pervaded this department.[16] Attitudes elsewhere in Whitehall were scarcely more enlightened. 'There's nothing like contact with some of the less progressive elements in Whitehall', commented Lester Pearson of Canada House on meeting some of the 'superior gentry at the Horse Guards', 'to make one a good Canadian'.[17] Even in the FO, officials were occasionally guilty of neglecting the Dominions' new rights. An FO proposal for improving inter-governmental cooperation in POW matters in early 1943 was found to be so riddled with errors and misconceptions that its circulation had to be stopped for fear of its contents reaching the high commissions and provoking 'a first-class constitutional controversy'.[18]

[14] See Andrew Stewart, *Empire Lost: Britain, the Dominions and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2008), passim.

[15] Malcolm J. MacDonald, 'King: The View from London', in John English and J. O. Stubbs (eds.), *Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 40–54 (46). See Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald: Bringing an End to Empire* (Liverpool and Toronto: Liverpool University Press/McGill University Press, 1995), pp. 209–60; Stewart, *Empire Lost*, p. 103.

[16] Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, pp. 299–304. See J. M. Lee and Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy: Organisation and Planning of a Metropolitan Initiative, 1939–1945* (London: University of London, 1982).

[17] L. Pearson diary, 11 Jan. 1940. LAC. MG26. N8. Minute, Roberts (PWD) 26 Dec. 1941. TNA. FO916/15.

[18] Head (DO) to Wilbraham (WO) 19 Mar. 1943. TNA. WO32/9380.

London's habitual neglect of Dominion interests posed Dominion leaders with a conundrum. How could they ensure their country's voice was heard in London without simultaneously surrendering the authority vested in their own parliaments thousands of miles away? The experimentation with an 'imperial war cabinet' in 1917–18 had proved unsatisfactory and did little to strengthen Dominion control over their destinies. After 1939, it was Australia and New Zealand who showed the greatest willingness to sacrifice local autonomy. Churchill turned down Menzies' suggestion for a return to an 'imperial war cabinet', but agreed that Australian representatives could attend war cabinet meetings whenever issues relating to Australia were tabled for discussion.[19] None of the other Dominions, however, pressed for similar privileges, and instead relied on the lobbying power of their high commissioners. The principal champion of Dominion autonomy was the Canadian premier, William Lyon Mackenzie King. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Mackenzie King opposed any form of common imperial foreign policy. Whether over the Chanak crisis in 1922, or at the succession of Imperial Conferences that followed, Mackenzie King steadfastly upheld the rights of Dominion parliaments to decide their own fate.[20] His attitude reflected in part the need to placate his Francophone allies in parliament, but beneath the appeals to Canadian autonomy was a visceral mistrust of British intentions and a deeply held belief that Whitehall was bent on shackling Canada to the imperialist bandwagon. While he was prepared, then, for his ministers to visit London to negotiate technical agreements, he was loath to journey there himself for fear of being ensnared in Downing Street plots.[21] He was swift to stifle Menzies' proposal for an imperial war cabinet in February 1941, and kept a watchful eye over his Anglophile high commissioner, Vincent Massey, to ensure Canada was not sold short. Whether this ultimately helped Canada's evolution from British servitude, or merely hastened its absorption into the US orbit, remains hotly debated.[22] For our purposes, however, it is important to note that Mackenzie King's actions severely hamstrung Canadian representatives in London, and restricted their ability to engage with their British colleagues over areas of common concern.[23]

[19] P. G. Edwards, 'Menzies and the Imperial Connection, 1939–1941', in Cameron Hazlehurst (ed.), *Australian Conservatism* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), pp. 193–212; Stewart, *Empire Lost*, pp. 52–56.

[20] Mansergh, *Commonwealth Experience*, p. 219.

[21] King made only two trips to London in 1941 and 1944. King to Massey, 26 May 1941. *DCEA* vol. 7. No. 563. For criticism, see Charles Ritchie, *The Siren Years: Undiplomatic Diaries, 1937–1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974), p. 110 (16 June 1941). Lester Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson, vol. i, 1897–1948* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), pp. 105–06.

[22] For an overview see David Mackenzie, 'Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the Empire', in Brown and Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire. vol. iv*, pp. 574–96.

[23] J. L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 42–66.

LIMITED LIABILITY: THE AGENT/PRINCIPAL FORMULA AND DOMINION ATTITUDES TOWARDS POWS, 1939–1942

The friction that characterized so much of the inter-Dominion wartime relationship can clearly be charted in the debates surrounding POW policy after 1942. In the first years of the war, however, discussions over POWs were mercifully free from Mackenzie King's relentless 'blathering about status'.[24] Indeed, for all their later passion on the subject, the Dominions entered the war with little appreciation of how the imprisonment of their nationals would affect Commonwealth relations. None showed the slightest interest in assuming responsibility for their own men in enemy hands when belatedly asked in October 1940. Since the handful of Dominion servicemen captured by that date had, for most part, been serving under British command, there was obvious merit in letting the WO act on their behalf.[25] All Dominion governments enlisted the services of the USA as their protecting power, but only Canada chose to open direct communications with Washington on questions relating to prisoners and civilian internees. The remainder were happy to route inquiries through British channels, and make use of the POW Information Bureau in London, despite the fact that similar bureaus had been opened in their own capitals in compliance with their duties under the convention.

The Dominions' primary interest in POW affairs during the first years of the war stemmed from their detention of Axis nationals after the summer of 1940. As we saw in Chapter 3, London's decision to detain enemy POWs in the Dominions was not without controversy. Nevertheless, notwithstanding German claims to the contrary, there is no reason to doubt the professionalism and humanity shown by the Dominion authorities in their detention of Axis prisoners, or to think that German and Italian prisoners would have fared any better had they remained in Britain or Egypt.[26] The vast majority of problems encountered in interning POWs in the Dominions arose from local variations in practice, facilities, and resources and the inevitable difficulties in communicating and coordinating policies across such large distances. Some of the camps housing Italian prisoners in India were too remote to be reached by representatives of the protecting power, and satisfying the prisoners' dietary needs proved difficult on account of the scarcity of European foodstuffs. Even when resources were more plentiful, problems remained. Repatriating sick and wounded prisoners from Australia and Canada was hampered for want of suitably

[24] J. L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935–1957* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 120–21.

[25] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, p. 106.

[26] de Zayas, *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 154–61.

qualified neutral doctors to staff the mixed medical commissions. In Australia's case, Berlin eventually agreed to allow Australian doctors to take the place of neutral nationals on the commissions. The dispatch and receipt of mail was also a recurrent problem, never fully resolved, and occasionally led to reprisals being taken against British POWs in Germany.[27] These and other problems meant that, though London aspired towards equality and uniformity in its treatment of Axis POWs, it rarely achieved this in practice.

While the Dominion authorities were, as separate signatories to the convention, technically responsible for the Axis prisoners detained on their territory, by mutual agreement, primary responsibility for the wellbeing of enemy prisoners in British hands rested with the government in London. As the Canadian high commission put it in November 1940, Ottawa 'never regarded itself as being the ''detaining power'' in respect of the transferred prisoners'. 'Principal' responsibility for these men—paying for the construction and upkeep of the camps, footing the bill for the prisoners' food and clothing needs—lay with the British government.[28] The Dominions acted as caretakers: 'agents' of the British government, with, at least in theory, no individual political responsibility for the prisoners in their care. Though confusing, these arrangements had obvious advantages. They ensured, first and foremost, that authority resided in a single source. When Britain negotiated with the German and Italian authorities it spoke on behalf of all British POWs in enemy hands and as the 'principal' detaining power responsible for Axis prisoners in British custody. For the Dominions the arrangement was administratively convenient, financially expedient, and politically astute. With little at stake in the POW regime at this stage, it clearly made sense for London to take the lead role. All were happy to do their bit and relieve Britain of its unwanted Axis nationals, but there was obvious advantage in limiting their liabilities and insulating themselves, as far as possible, from the repercussions of any deterioration in Anglo–German relations over POWs.[29]

The Dominions' noncommittal attitude towards POW affairs evaporated over 1941–42 as the reality of war and captivity struck home for thousands of families across the British Commonwealth. The first blow landed in the spring of 1941, when a hastily improvized force, composed largely of Australian and New Zealand troops, was unceremoniously ejected by German forces from Greece and Crete. Some 2,065 Australians and 1,856 New Zealanders were left behind in Greece, while a further 3,109 Australians and 2,180 New Zealanders were

[27] David Kelly (UK minister, Berne) to FO, 26 Dec. 1940. TNA. FO916/2579. Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, pp. 59–61.

[28] Remark by C. S. A. Ritchie (Canada House), inter-governmental meeting 1 Nov. 1940. TNA. FO916/2581.

[29] Dominion views are given in Minutes of 'Informal Meeting to Discuss Questions Affecting the Commonwealth of Australia as regards POW', 28 Aug. 1941, Ignatieff (Canada House) to Redman (DO) 23 July 1941. TNA. WO32/9889.

stranded on Crete when organized resistance ended.[30] Further men were lost during the 'complicated tangle of captures, escapes, recaptures and liberations' that characterized the campaign season in North Africa in 1941.[31] Nearly half of all Australian and New Zealand troops captured in the European theatre during the war were lost in these two brief campaigns.[32]

The creation of an Imperial Prisoners of War Committee (IPOWC) on 30 April 1941 was clearly influenced by the unfolding events in the eastern Mediterranean. The Dominions' willingness to give London 'a broad and generous measure of indulgence', to use Churchill's words, had already waned over the course of 1940, as the arrival of Commonwealth troops in Europe raised the Dominions' stake in the collective war effort.[33] Now, with nearly 10,000 Dominion nationals in enemy hands, there was obvious need to formalize Dominion involvement in POW policy-making and preventing Berlin from playing one government off against another.[34] The tragedy in Greece was not, however, the only, or even principal, impetus behind the committee's creation. In London, officials clearly hoped that an integrated system for POW policy-making would offset Australian disappointment at Churchill's refusal to consider returning to an imperial war cabinet. The decision was also motivated by a desire to outflank the government's critics at home, who had been demanding a more rational, centralized system of control since the fiasco over the distribution of relief parcels the previous year. For most officials in Whitehall, the unveiling of the IPOWC was then, not so much a 'sop' to Dominion demands for greater representation as a convenient way to deflect calls for a wholesale reform of administrative machinery in Whitehall.

This view is borne out when we look at the inner workings of the IPOWC. Despite its impressive title, the committee did little more than formalize the *ad hoc* arrangements that had existed up until that time. The full IPOWC soon became redundant since the Dominion high commissioners had ample opportunity to raise concerns in their daily meetings with the Dominions secretary. The full committee met on only three occasions. The committee's principal business therefore devolved down to two sub-committees: 'A' which dealt with policy issues, and 'B' which was responsible for financial matters. Though the standing membership of the sub-committees varied slightly, in

[30] This number excludes the several hundred who escaped or evaded capture and subsequently left the island. See Mason, *Prisoners of War*, pp. 53–92, esp. 76–77. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. ii.*, p. 147. A. E. Field, 'Prisoners of the Germans and Italians', in Barton Maugham (ed.), *Tobruk and El Alamein* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966), pp. 755–56.

[31] Mason, *Prisoners of War*, p. 104.

[32] Joan Beaumont, 'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East', in Joan Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War, 1939–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 13. Mason, *Prisoners of War*, pp. 53–103, 524.

[33] W. S. Churchill to R. G. Menzies, 2 Oct. 1940. TNA. DO114/113. D. M. Horner, *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy, 1939–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 40.

[34] This was the main issue at the IPOWC (A)'s first meeting, 26 June 1941. TNA. WO32/9889.

practice their composition was almost identical: both were chaired by the financial secretary to the WO, and drew on the expertise of the high commissions and the relevant Whitehall departments.[35] The making and execution of POW policy thus remained pretty much where it had lain since the start of the war: the 'agent-principal' formula governing the division of responsibilities remained in force, with only Canada resisting the attempt to have communications with the enemy governments channelled through British hands.[36] The new committee structure remained stamped with the Whitehall mould. Discussion developed along inter-departmental lines, with policy made in consultation rather than in collaboration with the Dominion representatives. 'It is often said that the genius of the British race in constitutional matters has been its refusal to press to the point of definition questions which are not of immediate significance', remarked one WO official. '. . . [O]ur present Empire machinery for coordinating action regarding POWs is [not] perfect, but it is reasonably effective and is so because we address ourselves to immediate practical issues and not to abstract constitutional relationships.'[37] The reason for such obvious smugness lay in the fact that, at base, the creation of the IPOWC merely involved, as the Dominions Office candidly admitted, ' ''camouflaging'' a WO committee as ''inter-governmental'' '.[38]

If events in the eastern Mediterranean had been a wake-up call for the Dominion authorities, it was the catalogue of defeats in the Far East that finally forced POWs onto the political agenda. Within a matter of weeks, Japanese forces had overwhelmed British and Dutch resistance, captured the 'impregnable' fortress of Singapore, seized Hong Kong and struck Darwin from the air. For Australia, the war, which had hitherto always seemed a distant affair, suddenly became a matter of national survival. In Singapore alone, 15,000 Australians were lost to captivity: 6,000 more became prisoners before the Japanese advance was finally stemmed in March 1942.[39] Relations with Australia's partners inevitably came under strain. Britain was accused of misleading Canberra over the state of its defences and wilfully denuding Australian manpower by posting its divisions to the deserts of North Africa.[40] Ottawa, meanwhile, was admonished for yielding too easily to London's 'Europe first' strategy and failing to come to Australia's aid.[41] The Australians did not, however, have a monopoly on suffering. Some

[35] Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, pp. 167–68.

[36] The DO was quick to discourage other Dominions from following Canada's lead. See Lord Cranborne (Dominions secretary) to FO 4 July 1941. TNA. FO916/214.

[37] Roseway (WO) to Gepp (WO) 20 Sep. 1942. TNA. WO32/9380.

[38] DO. memo, 4 Sep. 1941, cited in Vance, *Objects of Concern*, p. 121.

[39] Sweeting, 'Prisoners of the Japanese', p. 511.

[40] See David Day, *The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939–1942* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1988). For a more sympathetic appraisal of British policy, see Nicholas Tarling, *Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War* (Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[41] Ronald Haycock, 'The ''Myth'' of Imperial Defence: Australian–Canadian Bilateral Military Co-operation, 1942', *War & Society*, 2/1 (1984), pp. 65–84. John Hilliker, 'Distant Ally: Canadian

10,822 South Africans were marched into captivity when Tobruk fell in June, and Canada also encountered its first taste of defeat, losing some 2,000 men to the Japanese in Hong Kong in December 1941, and another 1,873 to the Germans at Dieppe the following August. Losses in North Africa meant that, by the mid-summer, New Zealand had sustained nearly ninety per cent of the total number of POWs it was to lose over the entire war.[42]

The sense of crisis and estrangement within Commonwealth relations in 1942 inevitably affected debates on POW policy, and encouraged Dominion officials to look beyond London for solutions to the problems they faced. In Canberra, the onset of the Pacific war reinforced pre-existing attitudes towards the issue of captivity. Despite the large number of Australians captured by Axis forces in 1941, Canberra had always judged POW issues with an eye to events in Asia. Its response to the Admiralty's proposed seizure of enemy hospital ships in the Mediterranean, discussed in Chapter 3, is a case in point. While Canberra had little doubt that Berlin was likely to exact revenge on its helpless British prisoners, Australia's primary interest was felt to lie 'in the possibility of Japan as an enemy'. 'If the proposed breach [of the laws governing hospital ships] by the U.K. occurs', Canberra explained, '[we] fear [that Japan] might *not* hesitate to act similarly, should the occasion arise, on the pretext that action justified by precedent so established'.[43] Fixation with the looming Japanese threat came to dominate Australian strategic and political thinking over the course of 1941, and naturally increased after Japan made her bid for Asian mastery at the end of the year. Under these conditions, while it might be unfair to call Australian POWs in Europe the 'forgotten Diggers', the immediacy of the Japanese threat, coupled with the withdrawal of Australian forces from the European theatre by early 1943, meant that Canberra tended to subsume discussion of their fate under that of the infinitely less fortunate souls who fell into Japanese hands.[44] In London, Australian representatives increasingly took a backseat in IPOWC

Relations with Australia during the Second World War', *Journal of Imperial & Contemporary History*, 13/1 (1984), pp. 46–67.

[42] Mason, *Prisoners of War*, pp. 524–25. H. J. Martin & Neil D. Orpen, *South Africa at War: Military and Industrial Organisation and Operations in Connection with the Conduct of the War, 1939–1945* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1979), p. 148.

[43] Commonwealth Government to Lord Cranborne (DO) 23 May 1941 in W. J. Hudson & H. J. W. Stokes (eds.), *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–1949, vol. iv, July 1940–June 1941* (hereafter *DAFP*) (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980), pp. 677–78 (Docu. No. 468). Curiously nothing was said about the threat to Australia's own hospital ship in the region, or those of New Zealand and South Africa.

[44] See Hamish Ion, ' "Much Ado about Too Few": Aspects of the Treatment of Canadian and Commonwealth POWs and Civilian Internees in Metropolitan Japan, 1941–1945', *Defence Studies*, 6/3 (2006), pp. 292–317; Fedorowich, 'The "Forgotten" Diggers', pp. 551–66. Australian FEPOWs dominate Australia's collective memory of the war: see Joan Beaumont (ed.), *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, vol. vi, Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 338–43; Christina Twomey, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), passim.

debates on Germany, preferring instead to marshal their resources for questions relating to events closer to home. The palpable weakness of Britain's position in the Far East also encouraged Canberra to look to Washington rather than London to sponsor the interests of Australian prisoners and civilian internees in the Far East.[45]

Australian behaviour during the shackling crisis was entirely in line with this outlook. Canberra initially judged the crisis purely in terms of its impact on Australian standing in Whitehall, and the high commissioner's position within the war cabinet. Though sceptical of the wisdom of Britain's bullish policy, the high commissioner, S. M. Bruce spared his harshest words for Attlee's failure to invite him to the cabinet meeting on 12 October, when German action was debated for the first time.[46] Ottawa's willingness to play along with British policy also drew strong rebuke from Canberra, where officials feared Canada's action would merely encourage Berlin to extend the reprisal measure to other Dominion prisoners.[47] London left Canberra in the dark over Berlin's efforts to persuade Tokyo to adopt shackling measures of its own, so it was only in early January, when it was discovered that Australian prisoners were amongst those shackled, that Canberra began to take a closer look at the affair.[48] Again, however, Australian attitudes were driven less by a desire to protect Australian POWs in Europe than by a concern over how the episode might affect Australian interests in the Far East. Britain's defence of the use of shackles on the battlefield was therefore applauded—notwithstanding the fact that this prolonged the crisis—as any climb-down might play 'into the hands of the Japanese who used this method of securing captives in New Guinea, apparently until they decided to conduct a propaganda campaign on their "humane" treatment of

[45] See Kent Fedorowich, 'Damned from the Outset? Internment and Civilian Exchange in the Far East: The British Failure over Hong Kong, 1941–1945', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25/1 1997, pp. 47–67.

[46] For Bruce's sensitivity on this issue, and his clash with Churchill in late September, see David Lee, 'Stanley Bruce at the Wartime Australian High Commission', in Christopher Baxter and Andrew Stewart (eds.), *Diplomats at War: British and Commonwealth Diplomacy in Wartime* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2008), pp. 149–69, esp. 165–68. and P. G. Edwards, 'The Rise and Fall of the High Commissioner: S. M. Bruce in London, 1933–45', in W. H. Morris-Jones and A. F. Madden (eds.), *Australia and Britain: Studies in a Changing Relationship* (London: Routledge, 1980), pp. 39–56.

[47] Memo, Robertson, 17 Oct., and War Cabinet Committee, 21 Oct. 1942. LAC. RG2 7c vol. 11. Reel 4874, and Mjr.-Gen. Victor W. Odlum (high commission, Canberra) to DEA, 14 Oct. 1942. LAC. RG25 Series G2 vol. 3116. S. M. Bruce (Australia House, London) to John Curtin (minister for external affairs, Canberra), 13 Oct., Note by S. M. Bruce on Conversation with Clement Attlee (Dominions secretary), 14 Oct. and Bruce to Curtin 15 Oct. 1942, *DAFP, 1937–1949, vi*, pp. 127–32 (Docus. 58, 59, 60).

[48] John Curtin, Canberra, to S. M. Bruce (Australia House, London), 16 Jan. 1943. Australian Archives. Melbourne Office MP742/1 255/2/72. In early March, the OKW exempted Australian POWs in Stalag VII B, Memmingen, from the measure; the 77 Australians immediately protested against the favourable treatment: RSM Sherriff (MoC, Stalag VII B) to commandant and Swiss legation, Berlin, 3 Mar. 1943. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14.

P[O]Ws'.[49] Australian priorities were also evident in Canberra's willingness to use the departure of Australian troops from Europe to justify independent discussions with the German authorities. 'Although throughout the negotiations the Empire has presented a united front and spoken with one voice', noted an official in the Army Department, 'it might now be possible to make an approach [. . .] emphasising the absence of Australian troops with a view to securing the unshackling of all Australian POW'.[50] The policy was never put into effect, but the fact that it was raised at all is indicative of Canberra's desire to distance itself from POW affairs in Europe and concentrate on the defence of its interests closer to home.

THE CANADIAN CLAIM OVER POW POLICY-MAKING

For the purposes of this study, it is the Canadian reaction to events of 1942 that bear closest scrutiny, for it was the Canadians who took the keenest interest in the direction of POW policy in Europe. For Ottawa, the impact of events in the Far East was aggravated by the fact that the battle for Hong Kong was the first independent action seen by Canadian forces since the start of the war.[51] The loss of 2,000 men to Japanese captivity propelled POW issues up the political agenda. On 13 March, Col. C. W. Clarke was appointed to the new post of special assistant to the adjutant general with responsibility for coordinating all activities, voluntary or official, on behalf of Canadian POWs. An inter-departmental 'committee on the protection and welfare of Canadian Prisoners of War in enemy hands' was established the following month. The Department of External Affairs' (DEA) 'special section' soon became the largest section in the department, and both the high commission in London and embassy in Washington received additional staff to deal with the growing volume of work. Though inter-agency coordination remained far from perfect, by mid-1942 Ottawa possessed an administrative system capable of taking the initiative in policy matters.[52]

It is important to recognize, though, that even before Clarke's appointment Canada had carved out a distinctive position for itself in humanitarian affairs.

[49] Memo, adjutant general for the CGS, 12 Feb. 1942. General Blamey (CIC, Australian Military Forces) to F. M. Forde (minister for the army) 8 Apr. 1943. Australian Archives. Melbourne Office MP742/1 255/2/145.

[50] Minute for secretary, Department of the Army, 26 Apr. 1943. Australian Archives. Melbourne Office MP742/1 255/2/145.

[51] The events are covered in C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. i, Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: E. Cloutier, 1955), pp. 437–91, and, more recently, Brereton Greenhouse, '*C' Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), Kent Fedorowich, ' "Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons": Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941', *Modern Asian Studies*, 37/1 (2003), pp. 111–57.

[52] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, pp. 99–112, *idem*, 'Canadian Relief Agencies', pp. 133–47. Massey (Canada House) to L. Pearson (DEA) 4 Mar. 1942. LAC. MG26 Series N1 vol. 10.

At the start of the war, Ottawa established direct links with its protecting power in Washington, partly for reasons of prestige and partly to help Ottawa meet the particular needs of its citizens abroad. With few POWs to worry about, Ottawa's primary interest before January 1942 lay in protecting the 2,000 Canadian nationals who had been trapped in Europe after the summer of 1940.[53] Ottawa's success in meeting these people's needs was, by any standards, impressive. Two trade officials, captured with their families in Oslo in April 1940, were exchanged, relief payments were distributed to over 1,200 individuals scattered across Europe, and, after exhaustive negotiations, Berlin agreed to recognize Canadians as a distinct category and release Canadian women from their internment camps, where they had languished together with other 'British' nationals for over two years. By the autumn of 1941, the number of Canadians interned in Europe had fallen to 375.[54] Ottawa even managed to exchange eight women, captured after their ship, the *Zam Zam*, had been torpedoed *en route* to South Africa. Interestingly, South Africa's *Zam Zam* survivors fared less well. Pretoria's refusal to countenance a 'head-for-head' exchange, preferring instead to await the result of negotiations for a general exchange, meant that its nationals remained in captivity for another year. Ottawa's experience with civilian internees before 1942 had, then, been instructive. Above all, it had demonstrated the advantage to be gained from Canadian autonomy, and shown, as the war cabinet committee put it in early 1942, that 'parallel' action was often preferable to 'unified' action through the British government in London.[55]

Whether Ottawa could replicate this success with respect to POWs after 1942 was, however, another matter. American entry into the war not only diminished Canada's standing in the wartime alliance but also ended the privileged access Ottawa had enjoyed with its protecting power. The Swiss, who assumed Canada's mandate in December 1941, were unwilling to follow Washington's example and establish direct communications with the Canadian government. Having decided against recognizing the Axis' puppet regimes until after the war had come to an end, the Swiss could hardly agree to accept accredited diplomats from states like Canada, who had never had diplomatic representatives in Berne before. Ottawa's attempts to find someone capable of dealing with Berne's 'polite, cordial, efficient but hard-bitten' bureaucrats also proved harder than expected. The possibility of extending the bailiwick of Pierre Dupuy, Canadian chargé in Vichy, met with strong objection in London, and a promising substitute—the businessman

[53] Memo by A. Rive (special section, DEA) 18 Aug. 1941. LAC. RG25 G2 vol. 2874. By August 1941, there was only twenty-five Canadian servicemen in captivity, plus some 200 merchant seamen and 100 other Canadian nationals, captured while serving in British units.

[54] Memo, 15 Sep. 1941. LAC. MG26 J4 vol. 410. File 3975. Memos, A. Rive (special section, DEA) 21 June and 18 Aug. 1941. LAC. RG25 G2 vol. 2874. DEA to DO, 5 Jan. 1942. TNA. DO35/998/4.

[55] War Cabinet Committee, 7 Jan. 1942. LAC. RG2 7c vol. 8. Reel 4874. See also memo by N. Robertson (DEA), 19 Dec. 1941. LAC. RG25 G2 vol. 2942.

Hugh Macdonnell, himself a former POW, who had convalesced in Switzerland during the Great War and been a regular visitor there ever since—dithered for over a year before declining the offer. In early 1943, Ottawa grudgingly accepted a compromise solution, agreed earlier by the other Dominions, whereby major policy matters were handled through British channels in Berne—in line with Swiss (and German) wishes—while issues relating to the treatment of enemy POWs in Canadian hands were taken up directly with the local Swiss representatives.[56]

The absence of direct contacts with the Swiss was seen as a 'serious handicap' for Canadian diplomacy, but did not put an end to Canadian ambitions in the area.[57] Over 1942, in response to Canada's growing marginalization within Allied war counsels, Canadian officials embraced a 'functional' approach to Ottawa's external relations. In essence, 'functionalism' was a form of niche diplomacy that entailed pressing Canada's claim for consideration in those areas where it could demonstrate legitimate expertise and proven capacity. It was this strategy that lay behind Ottawa's demand for a seat on some of the Anglo-American 'combined boards', the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and representation at the Chicago conference on civil aviation in December 1944. It also explains Ottawa's insistence on a Canadian 'beach' on D Day.[58] The case for extending 'functionalism' to the direction of Canada's POW policy was a strong one. Apart from Canada's record in detaining Axis prisoners and negotiating on behalf of its citizens abroad, Ottawa could also point to the work of the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) whose chairman, Judge Gordon, had established excellent relations with his opposite numbers in Washington and London and imbedded the CRCS into Allied arrangements for the production and management of POW relief parcels. Over the course of 1942, Clarke joined senior officers from the DEA—Norman Robertson, Hume Wrong, and the head of its 'special section', Alfred Rive—and applied the functional principle to Canada's humanitarian diplomacy. Functionalism was accepted as the guiding principle for Canadian foreign policy in the summer of 1942, but its application to POW affairs can be dated to August, when London agreed to delegate responsibility for overseeing relief operations in the Far East to the Canadians and Americans. The arrangement provided Canada, for the first time, with a position on Allied war counsels that was commensurate with its interest in POW affairs.

Ottawa's determination to make humanitarianism a central pillar in Canadian foreign policy led Ottawa to propose a fundamental restructuring of Britain's

[56] Memo, A. Rive, 3 Dec. 1942. LAC. RG25 Series G2 vol. 2942.

[57] V. Massey (Canada House, London) to DEA 22 Jan. 1943. LAC. RG25 Series G2 vol. 2942.

[58] For 'functionalism' see Granatstein, *Ottawa Men*, pp. 92–133; A. J. Miller, 'The Functional Principle in Canada's External Relations', *International Journal*, 35/2 (1980), pp. 309–28; John Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs, vol. i, The Early Years, 1909–1946* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), pp. 255–56.

decision-making procedures and creating a system that was more attuned to the global challenge now facing the United Nations. The proposals essentially boiled down to either re-forging the IPOWC into an inter-Allied or United Nations body or, should this prove impracticable, divorcing the IPOWC from its WO roots, and elevating its status within the joint-decision-making machinery in London. Ottawa clearly preferred the former. With London already agreeable to Canada taking the initiative in servicing British POWs in the Pacific, it was a small, and, in Ottawa's eyes, logical step to extend US–Canadian liaison to include some of the junior allies, notably the Dutch.[59] The exiled governments had been poorly served by the IPOWC system, and increasingly resented London's refusal to countenance large-scale relief shipments to POWs of the 1939–40 'invasion epoch'. Ottawa had long shared American uneasiness about London's indifference to these men and had frequently urged expanding the relief programme to take account of their humanitarian needs. The 'probable necessity' of such action, noted the DEA, 'is no doubt more evident in Canada and the United States than in the United Kingdom, because of the proportionally larger immigrant populations from Norway, Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia and even Belgium and Holland'.[60] But while domestic factors clearly coloured Canadian thinking, there were also important political considerations driving Canadian policy. 'I cannot imagine anything which [. . .] would be better evidence of our good will than the contribution of food parcels to the Allied prisoners', Mackenzie King wrote in late 1943. 'It has the advantage [. . .] that the individual soldier in Europe had put into his hands tangible proof of Canadian aid, which he is not likely to forget. Every dollar spent in this form of assistance, just because it goes to thousands of ordinary people, may be far more effective [. . .] than a hundred or perhaps a thousand [dollars] given to a government.'[61]

The alternative to creating a United Nations committee—reforming and elevating the current IPOWC—though ultimately easier for the British to swallow, represented something of a revolution in Canadian policy. For the best part of two years, Mackenzie King had jealously guarded Canadian autonomy, and denied Vincent Massey, his high commissioner in London, any latitude in his dealings with the British authorities. Massey's vanity and fascination for the more ceremonial side of his duties probably helped him bear the indignity of the situation with good grace. In the autumn of 1942, however, Mackenzie King instructed Massey to press for a reform of the IPOWC machinery that would

[59] Although Ottawa did not envisage dismantling the IPOWC, it is hard to see how an inter-Allied committee in Washington would not make the IPOWC redundant. For early indications of Canadian views see memo, Lt. Col. F. W. Clarke, 20 July 1942, and DEA to Massey (Canada House) 21 Aug. 1942. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 120.

[60] DEA to Massey (Canada House) 25 Aug. 1942. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 120.

[61] W. L. Mackenzie King to Col. J. Ralston, circa late Dec. 1943. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 120. See Wylie, 'Prisoners of War and Humanitarianism', pp. 239–58.

essentially *deepen* Canada's involvement in collective decision-making.[62] Ottawa proposed reconstituting the IPOWC on a strictly inter-governmental basis: high commissioners would represent their respective governments, a secretariat would provide dedicated administrative support, and the chair would be held by a minister of cabinet rank. The purview of the new 'inter-governmental' committee would also be broadened to include everything from civilian relief and the treatment of enemy property to the administration of non-interned enemy aliens in British hands.[63] Most importantly, responsibility for the formulation of POW policy, over which Canada wanted a greater say, would be separated from the process of policy execution, which, for practical reasons, had to remain largely in British hands.[64]

CANADA AND THE SHACKLING CRISIS, OCTOBER 1942–NOVEMBER 1943

Before officials could debate Canada's proposals, discussions were cut short by the outbreak of the shackling crisis in October 1942. As we saw in Chapter 5, the episode proved as much a challenge for Anglo–Canadian relations as it was for the POW convention and the treatment of prisoners in the west. London's rash decision to match German reprisals, without the Dominions' consent and in complete disregard for their wishes, provoked fury in Ottawa. It was Canada, not Britain, who would be responsible for carrying out the shackling order on German prisoners, and it was Canadian troops—captured at Dieppe—who were the first in line to have their hands bound in German camps.[65] While the Canadian war cabinet committee felt compelled to comply with London's request, the antipathy shown towards chaining prisoners, both in Ottawa and the country at large, ran deep. From the outset, Ottawa tried desperately to draw Churchill back from a 'contest of brutality' in which he was 'bound to lose'. Mackenzie King fired off a blizzard of telegrams, and instructed a series of eminent figures—Col. J. Ralston, the minister for national defence, C. D. Howe, the minister of supply, and Hume Wrong, number two at the DEA—to press Canada's case in person.[66] When Churchill refused to entertain

[62] These matters were addressed in Wrong's meetings in London in late 1942. See FO minute, 19 Nov. 1942. TNA. FO916/265.

[63] DEA to Massey (Canada House), 28 Jan. 1943. LAC. MG26 J4 vol. 410. File 3976.

[64] This was based on Britain's proximity to the theatre of operations, its diplomatic resources, and long experience in servicing the needs of POWs in Europe.

[65] See C. G. Roland, 'On the Beach and in the Bag: The Fate of the Dieppe Casualties Left Behind', *Canadian Military History*, 9/4 (2000), pp. 6–25.

[66] Comments by St. Laurent (minister for justice) and Mackenzie King: War Cabinet Committee, 9 Oct. 1942, *DCEA*, ix, No. 422. Mackenzie King Diary, 9 Oct. 1942, folio 855. LAC. For Howe's time in London, see Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C. D. Howe: A Biography* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), pp. 128–32.

the idea of third party mediation, Ottawa upped the ante and twice threatened to unchain German prisoners without waiting for Britain or Germany to follow suit. That Ottawa finally stepped back from the brink was due not so much to British concessions—Churchill, for one, was perfectly willing to tough it out alone—but to the timely arrival of a reply from Berlin, which effectively killed off any hope of negotiating a mutually acceptable end to the crisis within a timescale likely to satisfy Churchill's critics at home and abroad. Even after London backed down and suspended Britain's reprisals, however, Canadian opposition to British policy continued. Ralston refused to believe that a ban on the battlefield use of shackles would impair British military operations, and was unhappy to see the shackling crisis drag on, unresolved, while London revived negotiations for an exchange of wounded POWs. Although by this stage only one in every three members of Germany's 'chain gangs' were Canadian, there were too few Canadians eligible for repatriation to excite Canadian interest in the proposed exchange.[67] The shackling crisis was therefore both intense and protracted. It dragged Anglo–Canadian relations to one of their lowest ebbs for the entire war, and had a profoundly unsettling effect on the fabric of Commonwealth unity.[68]

In some respects, Ottawa's reaction to the shackling crisis was entirely natural. Its view of the crisis as politically ill-advised and morally questionable was echoed by the vast majority of informed opinion in Britain and Canada. But there is little doubt that the sense of outrage at the turn in British policy was sharpened by the personal experiences of some of the senior policy-makers involved. James Gardiner, minister for national war services, lost his son over Dieppe on 19 August, and his wife died, broken-hearted, shortly after.[69] More important was the attitude of Vincent Massey, Canada's urbane high commissioner in London, who worked furiously to break the vicious spiral of reprisals and became one of the leading advocates of Canadian unilateralism. Massey's fixation with the affair stemmed in large measure from his own personal stake in the survival of the POW regime: his son, Lionel, had been captured in Greece in April 1941. Badly wounded and in need of repatriation, Lionel's health depended on Germany remaining bound by the POW convention. It was not until 13 November, some way into the crisis, that Massey discovered that his son was 'one of the lucky ones', but many of Lionel's friends in Oflag VI B, Warburg, were subject to the

[67] Ottawa expected to receive back between twenty to thirty wounded and fifty protected personnel. DEA, 'Repatriation of POW from Germany and Italy', 27 May 1943. LAC. RG2 vol. 12. File W-35–2. In all only 225 Canadian POWs were repatriated from Germany.

[68] For Australian attitudes see above. Pretoria agreed with Ottawa, although was anxious to draw other members of the United Nations into the affair. Jan Smuts (Pretoria) to DEA, 25 Oct. 1942. LAC. RG2 Series B2 vol. 20.

[69] Nathaniel A. Benson, *None of it Came Easy: The Story of James Garfield Gardiner* (Toronto: Burns & MacEachern, 1955), pp. 201–11.

reprisal measure.[70] The anxiety caused to Massey and his wife, Alice, by the crisis is alluded to in a number of sources, but an insight into the kind of turmoil they suffered is offered by Massey's private secretary, George Ignatieff.[71] On 21 August, intending to welcome Canadian troops back from Dieppe, the Masseys' party was unexpectedly diverted to a military hospital. '[We] were totally unprepared for the sight of which awaited us', Ignatieff recalled.

> The hospital was overflowing with the dead, the dying and the wounded waiting to be attended. The landing craft were still arriving from France, and each one brought more casualties. [. . . T]hat remarkable woman, Alice Massey, was at her best; [. . .] talking individually to the men, finding words of comfort for those in pain, reassuring the ones going into surgery, promising to write to their wives and parents. She even knew what to say to an obviously frightened German boy [. . .] lying there on a stretcher among the wounded. She told him, in German, that her own son had been wounded in action and was a prisoner of war in Germany. 'Don't be afraid', she assured him, 'you'll be treated well in Britain just as I know that my son Lionel is being treated well by your people'.[72]

The shock awaiting the Masseys in Portsmouth was shared by Canadian officials hundreds of miles away in Ottawa. The Canadian military had been party to operational planning, but the bungled 'reconnaissance-in-strength' provoked intense soul-searching in Ottawa, giving rise to a mixture of anger at the senseless waste of life and guilt for agreeing to the enterprise, largely to have Canadian forces in action before the end of the year and thereby deflect calls for their redeployment to the Middle East.[73] Two years of enforced idleness had a corrosive effect on the discipline of Canada's troops in Britain: Mackenzie King had been booed during an inspection in August 1941, and a growing number of soldiers had sought an escape from boredom by assaulting 'the village pub or even the odd village maiden'.[74] The Dieppe fiasco, with the loss of seventy per cent of the 4,000 men who made it ashore, was a bitter blow for the Canadian government. In Britain memories of the affair were soon eclipsed by the news of Montgomery's triumph at El Alamein in early November, but in Canada the press continued to dwell on the episode well into the winter.[75] For the British, then, the shackling crisis was a test of wills, to be endured for as long as it took

[70] L. Massey (Oflag VI B, Warburg), to V. Massey, 11 Oct. 1942. LAC. MG32 A1 vol. 33, roll 9217.

[71] Wrong, 'Incidental Experience in London, 24 Oct.–27 Nov. 1942'. LAC. MG30 E101 vol. 4. File 23.

[72] Ignatieff, *Making of a Peacemaker*, pp. 68–69.

[73] Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn. 1994), pp. 212–31.

[74] Lester Pearson (Canada House) to Grant Dexter (DEA), 10 Jan. 1941. LAC. RG26 N1 vol. 4.

[75] Memos of 7 and 17 Dec. 1942. LAC. MG27 III B II vol. 43. C. P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939–1945* (Ottawa: 1948), p. 86.

the eighth army to tip the balance of prisoner numbers in Britain's favour. For the Canadians, by contrast, the event was a pointless postscript to a national tragedy: the shackled Canadians, innocent victims of a bungled operation, and the bruised vanity of Britain's obstinate old warrior in No. 10.[76]

Canadian and British approaches to the crisis differed in other ways too. From the first days of the crisis, Churchill's war cabinet pinned its hopes on the German military to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. The benefits of this strategy were obvious: all the British had to do was hold their nerve and await news from Berlin, and the longer the crisis went on, the greater the pressure on Germany's notoriously faction-ridden elite. Ottawa was, of course, fully appraised of British thinking. Clement Attlee, Stafford Cripps, and Malcolm MacDonald all worked hard to keep the Canadians abreast of events and explain the need to 'keep open the breach between Hitler and the Army [. . .] and avoid giving Hitler a victory'.[77] The problem was that British attitudes were shaped by secret information on the internal workings of the German regime, military and diplomatic service that was difficult to share with Canadian officials sitting thousands of miles away. Ottawa was too far removed from the central hub of British decision-making to be in the intelligence 'loop'. Canadian officials had been hamstrung in this way before,[78] but there is little doubt that Mackenzie King's insistence on keeping London at arm's length accentuated the difficulties he and his colleagues faced in deciding how to respond to the unfolding crisis. Ignorant of the details of Britain's case, Ottawa was never able to give it the 'full consideration' some felt it deserved.[79] Moreover, accepting London's reasoning ultimately required a leap of faith on Canada's part which, given Churchill's mendacious behaviour at the start of the crisis, was not something Canadian officials were inclined to do lightly. At base, Ottawa's blindness to the German side of the affair meant that the crisis was seen not as a part of Britain's titanic struggle against Nazi Germany but rather as a constitutional issue, and a challenge to Canadian autonomy.

In the circumstances, it was only natural that the suggestions put forward in support of Canadian unilateralism had a distinctly 'nationalist' flavour. Those who argued for independent action did so in the belief that a display of autonomy was in Canada's best interest. In the effusive words of J. D. Ketchum, a member of Canada's Wartime Information Board and himself a former POW from the

[76] After the war, Dieppe POWs showed a significantly higher incidence of health deterioration than any other category of Canadians taken prisoner in the European theatre.

[77] Wrong to Robertson, 10 Nov. 1942 *DCEA*, vol. 9, No. 452. H. Wrong, memo on a talk with Sir S. Cripps, 10 Nov. 1942. LAC. MG30 E101 vol. 4. File 23. 'Re. shackling of Ps', by Mackenzie King, 7 Nov. 1942. LAC. MG26 J4 vol. 410. File 3975.

[78] See Pearson's concerns after the war scare of late 1938: Pearson (Canada House) to O. J. Skelton (DEA) 23 Feb. 1939. LAC. MG26 Series N1, vol. 14.

[79] This was acknowledged by A. Rive (DEA): memo, 17 Nov. 1942, following receipt of Massey's note on meeting Cripps: Massey to DEA, 10 Nov. 1942. *DCEA*, vol. 9, No. 452. LAC. RG2 B2 vol. 20.

Great War, breaking ranks with London would 'bring a thrill of pride to every Canadian [and] tell him more clearly than any Statute of Westminster that he belongs to a free country—a country which knows how to act, when good sense demands it, decisively and without too much deference to Downing Street'.[80] When Ketchum's views were brought before the war cabinet committee, ministers instinctively sought to give Canadian unilateralism a positive gloss. Releasing German prisoners would help Allied unity by illustrating the democratic spirit pervading the western alliance, and countering Goebbels' efforts—unwittingly abetted by certain sections of the US press—to present the war to the American public as a British imperialistic war.[81] But the altruistic veneer was thin. Ketchum's 'nationalist' line clearly struck a chord with some members of the war cabinet committee, particularly the minister of defence, James Ralston, and amongst officials in the DEA. Once London bowed to pressure and agreed to unchain the German POWs, Canadian officials moved quickly to turn the affair to Canada's advantage, insisting, for instance, that communications with Berne be addressed in the name of both governments. Ralston and the head of the DEA, Norman Robertson even considered seizing the limelight by pre-empting London's announcement on the end of the reprisal measures.[82]

Yet while questions of prestige clearly influenced Canadian thinking, it is wrong to assume that this drove Canadian policy.[83] For all the appeal of the nationalist agenda, what is striking about Canadian actions during the crisis is its reluctance to test Commonwealth solidarity on an issue of such importance. Massey, the most ardent advocate of Canadian unilateralism, remained the quintessential 'imperial Canadian', committed to the maintenance of Canada's place in the Commonwealth. There was not the slightest hint of irony in his radio address on 18 December when he waxed about the enduring qualities of the 'British system'.[84] Mackenzie King too, though easily tempted to play to the gallery, consistently took the line of least resistance, and edged away from a split with London on this issue. His view of the British empire was less starry-eyed than Massey's, but he still aspired to a future in which Canada would be, as he put it in December 1942, 'in time [. . .] the greatest of nations of the British Commonwealth'.[85] Over October and November, the Canadian premier went to

[80] For the board, set up in September 1942, Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs, vol. i*, p. 274.

[81] 'The Chaining of Prisoners and Canadian Autonomy: A Suggestion for Action by Canada' by J. D. Ketchum (Reports Branch, Wartime Information Board) 20 Nov. 1942; memo, A. D. Heeney (secretary, War Cabinet Committee), 1 Dec. 1942. LAC. RG2 B2 vol. 20. Cabinet War Committee, 30 Nov. 1942. *DCEA*, ix, No. 460.

[82] See DEA to Massey (Canada House) 4 Dec. 1942. *DCEA*, ix, No. 469; Mackenzie King Diary, 7 Dec. 1942, folio 1066 LAC.

[83] Vance, 'Men in Manacles', pp. 483–504.

[84] Vincent Massey, *The Sword of Lionheart and Other Wartime Speeches* (London: Hodder Stoughton, 1943), pp. 93–96. L. Pearson, diary, entry for 3 Mar. 1941. LAC. MG26 N8.

[85] Mackenzie King cited in Mansergh, *Commonwealth Experience*, p. 385.

extraordinary lengths to find a path for Canada that would avoid breaking with London. Even after the worst of the crisis had passed, he found the suggestion that Canada should try to steal London's thunder unbecoming.[86] In retrospect, his actions during the crisis reflected the views he expressed two years earlier, when he foretold that his 'greatest service' to the British war effort would be in the 'many unwise steps I prevent'. Churchill's reckless shackling policy was one such step, but so too was endangering Anglo-Canadian relations.[87]

EQUALITY WITHOUT AUTONOMY: THE 'JOINT' FORMULA, 1943–1945

The shackling crisis inevitably injected a sense of purpose and urgency into Ottawa's efforts to reform the POW structure in London. Irritation at Britain's brusque treatment of Canadian interests mingled with a sense of disillusionment over the consultative arrangements within the Commonwealth over POW affairs. To Ottawa's surprise, though, the other Dominions, while sympathizing with its predicament and finding the case for reform 'logically sound', showed little interest in overhauling the IPOWC machinery.[88] Instead, Canadian proposals found some support from officials in Whitehall, the very people Mackenzie King assumed would be the most obstructive. Naturally, there were limits to British concessions. No one saw any sense in duplicating the work of the WO by establishing a dedicated secretariat for POW affairs. Nor was there support for extending the committee's remit beyond POWs. The Home Office voiced the 'strongest political and administrative objections' to either blurring the distinction between civilians and POWs, imposing common standards of treatment towards enemy aliens across the empire, or, indeed, surrendering any authority over civilian matters for which the home secretary was responsible to parliament. Canadian wishes in this regard were only partially met in April 1944 with the creation of the Commonwealth Civilians Committee, chaired by the foreign secretary.[89]

Other aspects of Canada's programme were, however, more easily accommodated. Anxious lest further foot-dragging impair British standing in the United States, London grudgingly agreed to expand the provision of relief parcels for 'invasion epoch' POWs, and gave its blessing to the participation of the Dutch

[86] 'Robertson and officials urged strongly we should announce we would unshackle at once, thereby showing we were acting independently of Churchill etc. I said that would be wrong.' Mackenzie King, diary, 10 Dec. 1942, folios 1074–75 LAC.

[87] J. W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record, vol. i, 1939–1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 436. For similar sentiments in Sep. 1940, see Mansergh, *Commonwealth Experience*, p. 382.

[88] Massey (Canada House, London) to DEA, 15 Feb. 1943. LAC. RG24 Reel C5330.

[89] Minute, L. W. Clayton (Home Office), 23 Mar. 1943. HO215/191. The Home Office was responsible for over 70,000 German nationals, some of whom were refugees.

and other junior allies in the management of relief policy in the Far East. The government was likewise happy to pacify the Dominion nationalists and change the committee's name from 'imperial', which had never sat comfortably with South Africa, to 'inter-governmental'. More significantly, though, British officials accepted two of Ottawa's principal proposals. The 'agent/principal' distinction, which had allowed the Dominions to transfer some of the responsibility for detaining Axis POWs onto British shoulders, had been exposed as little more than an allusion. For the Canadians, the riot of German prisoners at the Bowmanville POW camp, and the subsequent sensational reporting of the events in the US press, drove home the point that Canada was not immune from the consequences of detaining Axis prisoners on its territory. The violent clashes between the prisoners and their guards not only ended any chance of Berlin exempting Dominion prisoners from its reprisals—though there is no evidence to suggest the thought ever crossed Hitler's mind—but also threatened to jeopardize Canadian efforts to negotiate an exchange of protected personnel with the Japanese. Some officials clearly felt that Ottawa ought to publicly reiterate its support for the Geneva Convention, lest its complicity in Churchill's shackling order compromise Canadian prestige in humanitarian affairs.[90]

The British too had their reasons for wishing an end to the formula. Though its merits when negotiating with the Axis governments were undeniable, the South Africans and Australians in particular had long since abandoned any pretence of following British instructions to the letter in the administration of Axis POWs under their control. When inconsistencies were brought to London's attention—invariably through the reports of Swiss inspectors acting under instruction from Berlin—officials avoided making a crisis out of a drama. The occasional German request for clarification was artfully brushed aside, not least since the 'conception of the Commonwealth of Nations' was considered 'well nigh incomprehensible to Germany'.[91] Events over the autumn and winter of 1942 had shown, however, that crises could not be avoided indefinitely. Better, then, to replace the fictitious 'agent/principal' formula with a principle in which all prisoners were held 'jointly' on behalf of the whole empire. The Dominions would retain individual authority under the Geneva Convention, and be responsible for assuring that any concessions to 'local circumstances' did not cause trouble in Berlin.[92]

The second element in the Canadian proposals to meet with British approval related to the Dominions' input into the policy-making process. Again, Britain's inclination to 'muddle through' had become unstuck over the course of 1942, as Germany increasingly resorted to reprisals. By the end of the year, the FO was forced to admit that methods of consultation on important matters

[90] War Cabinet Committee, 11 Nov. 1942, *DCEA*, ix, No. 454.

[91] Minute, Lambert (WO), 4 Jan. 1943. Memo, German Legation, Berne, 2 Sep. 1942. TNA. WO32/9380.

[92] Minute, Roberts (PWD) 28 Mar. 1943. TNA. FO916/543.

were 'inadequate'. 'Whenever [. . .] serious complaints are made by an enemy government, sometimes accompanied by immediate threats or reprisals, it has been impossible to arrange for joint personal consultation between the WO and its representatives and the representatives of the Dominions.' On more than one occasion, Berlin had instituted reprisals before the necessary consultation had taken place between the various interested parties in London.[93] The ability of the high commissions to provide information or assent in a timely fashion hinged on a raft of factors that only rarely depended to the alacrity of their cipher clerks.

The root of the problem probably lay with the Dominion governments themselves. The case of Canada is both illustrative of the general problem and significant in its own right, given Canada's importance in POW policy-making. In common with its fellow Dominions, Ottawa had been slow in setting up the necessary bureaucratic machinery, and, while structures were in place by the late spring, officials found it difficult to keep on top of the volume of work.[94] The DEA's 'special section' was forced to call on officials' wives to cope with the mounting paperwork. Liaison between the government departments and the myriad of organizations jostling to have a finger in the humanitarian pie also left much to be desired.[95] Mackenzie King's working habits only compounded the problem. His insistence on retaining control of foreign affairs on top of his duties as prime minister and leader of the ruling liberal party meant that he rarely gave departmental business the attention it required. Decisions on POW issues, along with other issues not deemed of paramount importance, were routinely logjammed: '[R]equests and queries sat on [Mackenzie King's] desk for months without response.'[96] One official sheepishly admitted to Massey that 'every day' he discovered 'some delayed action which must be a cause of embarrassment' to the high commission in London.[97]

In British eyes, the sclerosis affecting the IPOWC system was thus rooted in the phrasing of the Statute of Westminster, which permitted Dominion involvement in policy-making without committing them to a definite stake in the process. Any reform of the POW policy-making system had, then, to liberate the process from the dead weight of Dominion bureaucracy and persuade the Dominion governments to delegate authority to their representatives in London. Agreement on the 'joint' principle was thus made dependent on the Dominion governments endowing their representatives on the IPOWC with sufficient authority to make the system work. The South Africans, New Zealanders, and Australians all

[93] Minute, Roberts (PWD) 23 Dec. 1942. TNA. FO916/265.

[94] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, pp. 99–125.

[95] See Granatstein, *Ottawa Men*, pp. 92–133; Arnold D. P. Heeney, *The Things that Are Ceasar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 54–81.

[96] Granatstein, *Man of Influence*, p. 184.

[97] T. A. Stone (DEA) cited in Granatstein, *Man of Influence*, p. 185. Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs, vol. i*, pp. 244–45.

expressed themselves satisfied with the new arrangements, and agreed to be bound by decisions taken by the new inter-governmental committee.[98] Ottawa was less easily won over, and retained doubts over the level of 'Whitehall' influence on policy-making and London's commitment to imperial solidarity when the chips were down. But with the other Dominions aligned against them, Canada grudgingly gave its consent to the new arrangements in the early spring of 1943.

The beauty of the joint principle appeared to lie in its ability to provide the Dominions with a position of equality in POW matters, while at the same time affording Britain the advantages of imperial solidarity in its dealings with the Axis governments. Very soon, however, it was found to provide neither. The Canadians had long suspected that, when push came to shove, Churchill would show the new inter-governmental committee the same disdain he had showed the earlier imperial one. In the end, however, it was the Canadians rather than the British who were seduced by the prospects of unilateralism. True, apart from a brief flurry in July 1944, when Ottawa appeared set to break ranks and retaliate against the SS's butchering of Canadian troops in Normandy, events in Europe were of insufficient gravity to justify independent action on the part of the Canadians.[99] In the Far East though, where London had always struggled to maintain a common imperial line, Ottawa showed little compunction in going its own way. It declined to join Britain's protest over the treatment of British POWs on board the stricken *Lisbon Maru* in September 1942, many of whom drowned after their guards refused to release them from their cages before the ship went down.[100] A similar attitude was taken towards Churchill's attempt to mount a united defence of New Zealand's action after the shooting dead of forty-eight Japanese prisoners, and the wounding of another seventy-four, during the mass break-out from Featherstone POW camp on 25 February 1943. The Canadian war cabinet committee felt that the proposed action would be an 'invitation to reprisals against Canadians'. In both cases, Ottawa was happy to fracture Commonwealth unity in the hope of securing some faint advantage for Canadian nationals in Japanese hands.[101] It was hardly surprising that British officials quickly tired of Ottawa's conduct.

[98] R. H. Wheeler (Australia House, London) to Mjr. E. H. Wilbraham (WO), 18 Feb. 1943. TNA. WO32/9380.

[99] War Cabinet Committee, 26 July 1944. LAC. RG2 7c vol. 16. Reel 4874; Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, DPW, 25 July 1944. TNA. FO914/871.

[100] DEA to Massey (Canada House) 13 Mar. 1943. LAC. RG25 Series G2 vol. 3116. File 4538040C. See Tony Banham, *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru: Britain's Forgotten Wartime Tragedy* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).

[101] War Cabinet Committee, 23 June 1943. LAC. RG2 7c, vol. 13, reel 4876. Mjr. Gen H. F. C. Letson (Canadian Adjutant General) to Robertson (DEA), 22 May 1943. RG25 G2 vol. 3190. For British thinking see DO to New Zealand Government, 27 Mar. 1943. RG25 G2 vol. 3190. W. S. Churchill to W. L. Mackenzie King, 19 June 1943. CCAC CHAR20/113 p. 62.

'It seems to me very difficult to concede Canada's claim that the character of the committee should be inter-governmental only', opined one exasperated official, 'when at the same time, Canada do not accept inter-governmental responsibility . . . [Ottawa] takes all the privileges that "the joint principle theory" would confer upon them and imposes all the disabilities on us that it would involve'.[102]

Autonomy did not, however, amount to the same thing as equality. Over the last year of the war, the Canadians, as much as the other Dominions, found that their ability to affect policy ebbed as American influence grew and responsibility for policy increasingly shifted from London to the theatre commanders. The joint principle continued to function, in as much as the Dominions assumed authority for the prisoners taken by their forces, and agreed to expand their detention facilities to cope with the growing number of Axis POWs falling into Allied hands. But Washington was reluctant to accord the Dominions much say over policy-making and was quick to shut them out of the combined Anglo-American machinery, where an increasing volume of technical business relating to POW affairs was conducted in the final months of the war.[103] The introduction of the 'joint principle' in early 1943 thus marked both the high point of Dominion influence over policy-making towards British POWs in Germany and the beginning of its decline. By the end of the year, the Dominions had largely been relegated to the role of bystanders in a decision-making process that was dominated by the British and American governments and their theatre commanders.

CONCLUSION

The complex, rather arid discussions that characterized much of Britain's dealings with the Dominions over the issue of POWs should not mask the fact that the transition from the 'agent/principal' formula in late 1940 to the 'joint formula' in early 1943 reflected and in part contributed to the transformation that overtook the United Kingdom's relations with its former colonies of white settlement at this time. Whether their interest in Germany's detention of British prisoners sprung from the state of supreme national emergency, as in Australia's case, or from a conscious decision to stake out a claim over humanitarian affairs, as in Canada's, the Dominions' engagement in POW affairs ultimately came to mirror the growing sense of self-confidence and assuredness they developed over the war years. The willingness to meet the needs of their citizens in enemy hands marked an important stage in the maturing of these young states.

[102] Minute, Roseway (WO) 6 June 1943. TNA. WO32/9380.

[103] For British efforts to secure Dominion representation, see P. H. Gore Booth (UK embassy, Washington) to G. Magam (Canadian embassy, Washington), 25 Oct. 1944. TNA. CAB122/665.

The Dominions' part in Britain's POW policy is undeniable. After June 1940, most of Britain's German prisoners and the vast majority of its Italian captives were detained outside the United Kingdom. Though London shouldered some of the financial cost, the influx of enemy prisoners into the Dominions and dependent territories placed enormous strains on the local administrations.[104] The Dominions could not, in the end, ignore the consequences of their actions. By early 1942 at the latest, their own military losses were also 'sufficiently' grave to assure them a place in British deliberations. Nearly one third of the 152,850 men thought to be held by Germany by May 1944 hailed from outside the British Isles.[105]

London did, of course, take account of Dominion wishes and amended its policy-making process accordingly. But its ability to react to the changing circumstances was constrained by the fact that the Dominions themselves were unsure as to their own commitment to the policy-making process, and rarely, if ever, spoke with one voice on the issue. Moreover, while London may have been guilty of neglecting Dominion wishes, officials were right to emphasize the importance of maintaining a united front in its dealings with enemy governments. Elements within the Nazi regime did occasionally try to extract short-term advantage by favouring one section of British prisoners over another, but on the whole the German authorities resisted the temptation to differentiate between different nationalities under the British Crown, and accorded all British captives—even those of Jewish faith—the status of 'privileged' prisoners.[106] It was ultimately the 'Britishness' of these prisoners that afforded them the greatest protection from ill-treatment or discrimination.

Britain's tardiness in acknowledging the depth of Dominion sensitivity over the fate of their prisoners and its insistence on relying on collaborative arrangements that were not fit for purpose very nearly led it to becoming unstuck in the autumn and winter of 1942. If the shackling crisis revealed London's vulnerability to German pressure on the POW issue, it also exposed the depth of its reliance on the decisions of a Canadian war cabinet committee sitting thousands of miles away. Canadian support was ultimately vital to London's ability to manage the crisis in the way it wished. Yet, it is also true that the episode was the exception rather than the rule for inter-Commonwealth relations on POWs. The Dominions were rarely able, on their own, to set the tone in their dealings with

[104] In South Africa, the presence of German troops was considered so incendiary to the Boer population that Pretoria eventually asked London to move them on to other parts of the Commonwealth. Moore, 'Unwanted Guests', pp. 63–90.

[105] India (15,058), the colonies (3,131), the Dominions (29,628). The latter comprised 12,821 South Africans, 7,188 New Zealanders, 6,408 Australians, and 3,211 Canadians. Minute, Jacob, 7 May 1944. TNA. CAB120/222.

[106] See Gebber, 'Palestinian POWs in German Captivity', pp. 89–138. Gerry Douds, 'The Men Who Never Were: Indian POWs in the Second World War', *Journal of South Asia Studies*, XXVII/2 (2004), pp. 183–216 and Daniel G. Dancocks, *In Enemy Hands: Canadian Prisoners of War, 1939–1945* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1983).

the British. It was German actions, and not those of the Dominions, that dictated Britain's approach to its imperial relations. It was Germany's increasing recourse to reprisals from early 1942, and not the new-found interest in POWs in the Dominion parliaments, that drove home the importance of meeting German threats in a timely fashion and persuading the Dominions to empower their representatives in London with sufficient authority to make this possible. For all Ottawa's efforts to realign its relations with London and pursue its own agenda on humanitarian issues, it was Berlin that ultimately dictated the nature of Britain's response and the parameters of Canadian autonomy.

8

The Limits of Attraction: British POW Policy and the 'Great Escape', 1944

Few officials in London or Berlin had any illusion in late 1943 that the coming year would prove the most decisive twelve months of the war. Having ejected Axis forces from Tunisia, knocked Italy out of the war, and opened up a front on the Italian mainland in 1943, the British government could no longer disregard the demands of its American or Russian allies for a cross-Channel assault over the coming year. The D-Day landings on 6 June were a close-run affair, but provided the Allies with the necessary springboard to fan out their forces towards the south and east, taking Caen in early July and liberating Paris by the end of August. By the third week of August, Field Marshal Montgomery was able to report that some 440,000 Germans had been 'written off': with 40,000 dead, 200,000 injured, and another 200,000 captured.[1] The following month, the Allies launched an audacious airborne assault in the Netherlands with the aim of seizing the Rhine crossing at Arnhem, outflanking the German Siegfried Line defences, and leaving German territory open to Allied forces for the first time since the war began. The failure of the Arnhem operation ended any chance of overwhelming German resistance by Christmas.[2] But the advantage still lay with the Allies, and with the German city of Aachen falling to US forces on 21 October and Soviet troops threatening German territory in the east, few had any doubt that the days of the 1,000 year Reich were numbered.

The air of excited anticipation that hung over Allied discussions in the lead-up to D-Day, and the mixture of elation and relief that greeted the news of each successive Allied victory in the latter half of the year had little appreciable impact on the tenor of thinking on POW matters; quite the contrary. As early as the autumn of 1942, officials had come to realize that the waxing scope and intensity of fighting produced pressures that inevitably undermined the mutual respect and confidence that had sustained the POW regime in the west over the first years of the war. The bitter fighting in the Normandy *bocage* gave ample evidence

[1] Montgomery to Churchill, 24 Aug. 1944. CCAC. CHAR20/170/81.

[2] John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy, vol. vi, October 1944–August 1945* (London: HMSO, 1956), p. 30.

to confirm these fears. It was, however, the deaths of fifty RAF POWs, shot in cold blood after the 'great escape' from Stalag Luft III in late March, that proved decisive in shaping official attitudes towards its prisoners over the remaining fourteen months of the war. No other event, before or since, had such a profound effect on Britain's collective 'memory' of captivity. If the 'Colditz story' was, as S. P. Mackenzie suggests, 'central to creating an enduring set of popular assumptions in which life behind the wire was interpreted, both figuratively and sometimes literally, in sporting terms', it was the gruesome fate of the great escapers that provided the British public with a more substantial, realistic, and ultimately more compelling image of captivity in German hands, and the risks prisoners ran in defying the wishes of their captors.[3] The event's impact on British policy was no less significant. For the first time, Britain acquired a direct stake in the United Nations' quest to try Germany's war criminals, enunciated some fifteen months previously.[4] Within days of learning of the Stalag Luft III shootings, the Air Ministry began investigations that were only wound up after those responsible for carrying out Hitler's instructions were put before a firing squad.[5] The events steeled Britain's determination to fight on until Germany's unconditional surrender. More immediately though, the murder of Britain's airmen underscored the ferocity of the Nazi regime, and forced policy-makers to confront the possibility of their men being subjected to the kind of violence and brutality that had hitherto been reserved for Hitler's racial enemies.

APPLYING THE RULES, IGNORING THE SPIRIT: POW EXCHANGES OVER 1944

In late 1943, there were two issues, however, that dominated British thinking towards POWs. Both related to Germany's willingness to comply with traditional norms. The first was the repatriation of sick and wounded prisoners. Ribbentrop's refusal to exchange prisoners on anything other than a strictly numerical basis over the first four years of the war underscored the futility of building a case for repatriation based on humanitarian grounds alone. Fortunately, the loss of Tunisia in mid-May had finally awoken Berlin's interest in the return of German prisoners, sufficient to keep German negotiators at the table, and, as we saw in Chapter 6, months of exhausting negotiations gave rise to a complex series of exchanges in October 1943. The same basic conditions continued to hold good into 1944, and three operations—via Barcelona (17–19 May 1944), Gothenburg

[3] Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, p. 1. The 'Great Escape' appears more frequently on contemporary TV schedules than 'Colditz'.

[4] Kochavi, *Prelude to Nuremburg*, pp. 80–91.

[5] Priscilla Dale Jones, 'Nazi Atrocities against Allied Airmen: Stalag Luft III and the End of British War Crimes Trials', *Historical Journal*, 41/2 (1998), pp. 543–65. Allen Andrews, *Exemplary Justice* (London: Harrap, 1976).

(10 September 1944), and Switzerland (17–21 January 1945)—were carried out before the war came to an end, repatriating a total of 4,249 British and Americans POWs and 7,466 German.[6]

For the British, the importance of repatriating their men only grew the longer the war dragged on. By mid-1944, Britain's Dunkirk veterans entered their fourth year of captivity—with all the attendant psychological and physical complications this entailed. The precipitous decline in living conditions across Germany, chronic overcrowding, inadequate food and medical provisions in the camps, and the waxing danger of death or injury through Allied air action, naturally strengthened the case for evacuating as many of these vulnerable men as possible while the opportunity remained. There were, however, inevitable problems associated with the repatriation programme. The key stumbling block concerned the question of repatriating able-bodied 'protected personnel'; doctors, dentists, medical orderlies, and padres. Western counsels had been divided over whether to include these men in the exchange arrangements over 1943.[7] Washington's belated capitulation to British pressure over the summer meant that nearly three-quarters of the Germans returned in October 1943 were able-bodied protected personnel, some 4,366 in total.[8] London's determination to see subsequent operations return to the POW convention and have prisoners exchanged by categories, and not the 'head-for-head' basis insisted upon in late 1943, ensured that the question of protected personnel continued to dominate Anglo-American discussions in 1944. Of the 2,722 'surplus' protected personnel detained in American camps in mid-1944, only 395 were considered 'genuine' cases by the US authorities. Efforts to have Berlin authenticate their protected status, or agree to a doubling of the number of protected personnel that could be legitimately retained to administer to the prisoners' medical and spiritual needs, made little progress: so too attempts to convince those selected for repatriation to give their parole and pledge not to take up arms in the future.[9] British officials were scarcely ignorant of the danger of returning able-bodied men to German shores; the Soviet government, who routinely claimed to capture repatriated Germans on the eastern front, made sure of that. But in the last resort, officials were reluctant to see disputes over protected status delay or block the return of Britain's sick and wounded prisoners.[10]

[6] May 1944: 1,001 Anglo-Americans, 801 Germans. September 1944: 1816 Anglo-Americans, 1,787 Germans; February 1945: 2,432 Anglo-Americans, 4,878 Germans. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 132, 140, 144. Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, pp. 54–56.

[7] Washington felt that protected personnel were less endangered by prolonged captivity as their work kept them busy. UK embassy, Washington to FO, 17 July 1943. TNA. AIR2/4669.

[8] Fernschreiben, E. Albrecht (AA), n.d., referring to aide-mémoire by UK legation, Berne, 13 May 1943. BA-MA. RM7/1325.

[9] The two agreed in 1939 to retain ten protected personnel for every 1,000 POWs. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 143.

[10] For pressure on this score, see Mjr. E. R. C. Walker, 'Memo on Position of British Medical Officers in Captivity', Dec. 1944. TNA. WO222/245.

Allied doubts over Germany's commitment to restricting the employment of repatriated protected personnel to non-war related tasks were not without foundation. True, in December 1943, the OKW forbade the employment of repatriated prisoners 'at the front, in the occupied territories, in allied or friendly states', but support for the OKW's position was not universal.[11] The *Oberkommando der Marine* (OKM) immediately questioned whether the restrictions were applicable to protected personnel, whose right to repatriation was derived from the Red Cross, not the POW, convention, and argued that there was sufficient ambiguity in the definition of 'protected personnel' to allow Germany to regard certain categories, such as auxiliary stretcher-bearers, as combat troops.[12] In contrast to their counterparts in London, German officials, even outside the OKM, tended to emphasize the practical rather than the humanitarian results of POW exchanges. In early March 1944, for instance, with the west now assumed to hold the advantage in POW numbers, the head of the AA's legal department, Erich Albrecht, pressed for further exchanges on the grounds that Germany would receive more 'combat deployable' men than the Allies.[13] And while the exchange in May 1944 saw only injured POWs return to Germany, Albrecht tellingly reminded his superiors that of the 6,350 men repatriated in the two Anglo–German exchanges to date, the majority were veterans, fresh from the North African campaign (4,700) and able-bodied (4,350).[14] The most flagrant assault on the OKW's stated position on repatriates came from the Reich's propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels, who, in an editorial in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 9 September 1944, claimed to have released 10,000 medical orderlies for combat duties. If true, it is probable that some of those involved had spent time in Allied POW camps.

Germany's acute shortage of manpower by 1944 inevitably inclined German officials towards viewing prisoner exchanges as a way of plugging gaps in German lines. What is equally clear, however, is that Germany's permanent officials were uncomfortable in openly flouting established norms governing the employment of repatriated prisoners. The OKM's proposals over the use of auxiliary stretcher-bearers provoked a fierce reaction from the OKW, the AA, and the Luftwaffe. As the OKW explained in early June 1944, 'for individuals, who are privileged by their status as medics, and returned home solely as a result of this fact, to be employed as combatants . . . would contradict the spirit and sense of the Red Cross convention'. 'In this sense', it explained, 'it is immaterial whether

[11] Keitel, WFSt/Org/II, F. H. Qu, 28 Dec. 1943. BA-MA. RM7/1887.

[12] *Seekriegsleitung* (SKL) Vermerk, 17 Nov. 1943; SKL to AA, OKW Untersuchstelle, OKW Ausland, OKW WFSt, 29 Mar. 1944. BA-MA. RM7/1887. Memo, Dr C. Roediger, 31 Mar. 1944. BA Lichtefelde R901 28592.

[13] Memo, Albrecht, 12 Mar. 1944. PA-AA. R40794. 165,000 German POWs in Allied hands (US, 130,000; British, 35,000) against 160,000 (15,000 US and 145,000 British) in German hands.

[14] Report, Albrecht, 17 May 1944. Note discrepancy in figures. PA-AA. R40796. When the number of protected personnel was found to be lower than expected, Albrecht struck 450 names from the repatriation lists, reducing the number of POWs exchanged in May 1944 by a third.

they belonged to permanent medical units or were employed only as temporary stretcher-bearers'. The benefits from any given exchange may favour one side over another, but the final balance of advantage could only be calculated at the war's end. If the OKM's standpoint was accepted, the OKW feared, further exchanges of POWs might be made all but impossible.[15] The OKW's reluctance to ride roughshod over accepted practices might well have been influenced by the recent Allied landings in Normandy, and the renewed importance of freeing up hospital beds for Germany's own casualties.[16] Nevertheless, despite the OKM's and Goebbels' criticisms, the OKW felt sufficiently confident to restate its prohibition on the use of repatriated personnel in combat roles on 30 June and 31 December; the latter conveniently timed to calm Allied anxieties before the planned exchange of POWs early in the New Year.[17]

If the sensitivity shown towards violating agreed norms appears strange for a government which had, by this date, overseen the murder of millions of its own citizens, Jews, Gypsies, and Soviet POWs, it is worth noting that this was not the only aspect of the humanitarian regime shored up at this time. Hospital ship immunity had long been taken as a litmus test for gauging belligerent attitudes towards humanitarian norms, and both sides had routinely traded accusations on this point since the start of the war. The spate of attacks on Allied hospital ships off the coasts of Italy and Sicily in late 1943, however, brought the matter to a head in Berlin. Growing anxiety over the damage to Germany's image abroad led the OKW's foreign relations department to draw the Luftwaffe's attention to foreign media reports on the incidents, in the hope that the information provided might help expedite the Luftwaffe's investigations. The department even toyed with inviting neutral diplomats to join hospital ships in order to guarantee their immunity from abuse: an idea first mooted by the Spanish government during the Great War.[18]

As with the status of protected personnel, Berlin had its own reasons for wishing to uphold hospital ship immunity. Sick and wounded troops were regularly evacuated by sea from Norway, Italy, and Yugoslavia and the OKM was loath to lose these facilities. But what ultimately alarmed the authorities were not so much the 'insufficient and unsatisfactory' results of the Luftwaffe's investigations as the 'unbelievable rumour', as Albrecht put it, that the Luftwaffe leadership actively condoned attacks on Allied hospital ships. If news of this reached London, not only would reprisals against German ships inevitably

[15] OKW WR to SKL, 17 June 1944. BA-MA. RM7/1887. de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 114–16.

[16] If 'for political reasons' all 2,500 eligible POWs could not be returned, the OKW wanted rid of TB cases, amputees, and the blind. OKW Kgf/Allg/9VI to AA, 8 June 1944. BA-MA. RM7/1887.

[17] Vortragsnotiz, WFSt, 19 Dec. 1944. BA MA. RW4/905. AA to Swiss legation, Berlin, 31 Dec. 1944, cited in de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, p. 116.

[18] Vertragsnotiz, Amt Ausl/Abr OKW, 13 Feb. 1944. BA-MA. RW5/334. Rome put a similar suggestion to the ICRC in early 1943. See ICRC Bureau, 26 May 1943. ICRC. C11. Amt Ausl/Abr OKW to Luftwaffeführungsstab Ic, OKL, 11 Feb. 1944. BA-MA. RW5/334.

ensue but the Reich would be prevented from rejecting fraudulent Allied claims against German conduct with a clear conscience in the future. It is hard to judge whether the concessions wrought from the Luftwaffe—including the compulsory training of aircrew and punishment of those who knowingly disregarded the regulations—led to a reduction in the number of incidents.[19] That the OKW, OKM, and AA could, however, oppose the Luftwaffe's prevailing institutional norms and force the leadership to return to internationally agreed standards clearly demonstrates the 'pull' exercised by the humanitarian regime at this time.[20] British protests continued to be met with indignant denials and counter-accusations, but the fact that replies were returned at all by late 1944 was, in the opinion of Swiss diplomats in Berlin, no mean achievement and symptomatic of Berlin's desire to maintain customary standards in this area.[21]

THE 'GREAT ESCAPE' FROM STALAG LUFT III, SAGAN, MARCH 1944

Important though the repatriation of prisoners was to the British government, it was the second issue colouring British thinking in late 1943—the rising level of violence inflicted on British POWs—that came to dominate official discussions in the final eighteen months of the war. The decline in German treatment of British POWs stemmed, in large measure, from the deterioration of material conditions inside Germany. Nevertheless, it was the growing number of incidents involving death or serious injury at the hands of the German authorities—variously justified on the grounds of prisoner indiscipline, insubordination, lax working habits, or escape attempts—that most alarmed British observers over the course of 1943. These concerns were naturally aggravated by Berlin's growing propensity for withholding POW status to certain categories of British servicemen and allowing them, instead, to be either shot out of hand or handed over to the Gestapo for 'special treatment' in civilian prisons or concentration camps.

Before 1944, the principal victims of German cruelty had been Britain's commando forces. London had caught wind of the Führer's infamous 'commando order' in late 1942 and received detailed evidence of the wilful execution of British commandos the following year. Attempts to force Berlin to explain these incidents continued into 1944.[22] A copy of the 'commando order' eventually fell into Allied hands in October 1944, but signals intercepted in early June 1944 confirmed

[19] Kriegstagebuch, OKW, 27 Feb. and 3 Mar. 1944. BA-MA. RW5/314.

[20] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, 4 Mar. 1944; Note, WFSt, 6 Mar. 1944. Albrecht (AA) to Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe, Luftwaffeführungsstab Ic Pol. 11 Mar. 1944, and OKL response of 4 Apr. 1944. BA-MA. RW5/334. de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 261–68.

[21] A. Feldscher to A. de Pury, 3 Nov. 1944. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 vol. 11.

[22] Aide-mémoires by UK legation, Berne, 12 Feb., 23 Oct. 1944. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 32. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp 187–89.

that instructions for the liquidation of British raiding parties remained in force for troops manning German defences in France. Several Special Air Service units, exterminated during the D-Day operations, were assumed to have fallen foul of the grisly order.[23]

Disturbing though the unlawful killing of British commandos unquestionably was, the principal focus of British concern by mid-1944 lay on Germany's treatment of Allied airmen. This category was numerically far larger than Britain's commando forces, and as 'regular' forces, their fate was more closely tied to the central concerns of the POW regime. Anxieties had initially centred on the possibility of Berlin pressing trumped-up charges against Allied pilots in retaliation for the Soviet Kharkov war crime trials in late 1943.[24] A communiqué, hinting at the possibility of action against Allied airmen, was issued on 22 December 1943, and the replies given to Swiss inquiries in the AA were sufficiently evasive to raise alarm bells in Berne, and convince the US government to take the German threat seriously. In London, however, officials took a more sanguine view: the language and limited dissemination of the communiqué appeared to suggest more 'modest' aims, and while officials remained attentive to any sign of German intentions in this area, little evidence emerged over the first five months of 1944 to corroborate Swiss and American fears. Indeed, German statements appeared to be primarily geared towards exploiting western discomfort at the divergence in Allied policies over the treatment of war criminals, exposed by Moscow's execution of the Kharkov defendants, which flew in the face of London's decision to treat Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, as a POW until the end of the war.[25]

Though no formal proceedings were ever initiated against Allied *Terrorfliegern*, a front page editorial by Josef Goebbels in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 27 May 1944 suggested that Berlin had not abandoned its objective.[26] Goebbels' article lauded the actions of some Saxon farmers who had spent their Whit Sunday afternoon hunting down and murdering an Allied pilot who had allegedly strafed a group of children at play.[27] Reports of similar incidents involving the lynching of Allied pilots began appearing in the German and neutral press over subsequent

[23] SKL, 'Treatment of Commando Personnel', 27 June 1944. CX MSS C270. TNA. HW5/704. Memo, Sir P. J. Grigg, 18 Oct. 1944. WP (44) 554. TNA. CAB121/293. SHAEF to Combined COS, 6 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB122/689.

[24] FO to UK embassy, Washington, 12 Jan. 1944. TNA. AIR2/8559. Gerd R. Ueberschär, 'Die Sowjetischen Prozesse gegen deutsche Kriegsgefangene, 1943–1952', in Gerd R. Ueberschär (ed.), *Der Nationalsozialismus vor Gericht: Die alliierten Prozesse gegen Kriegsverbrecher und Soldaten, 1943–1952* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999), pp. 240–61.

[25] Feldscher to de Pury, 31 Dec. 1943 and 5 Jan. 1944. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14 bis. R. Maudling (AM) to K. C. Turpin (Downing Street), 22 Jan. 1944. TNA. AIR2/8559. Kochavi, *Prelude to Nuremburg*, pp. 71–73. Paul Stauffer, 'Rudolf Hess und die Schutzmacht Schweiz', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 37/1 (1987), pp. 260–84.

[26] de Zayas, *Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau*, pp. 100–01.

[27] Josef Goebbels, 'Ein Wort zum feindlichen Luftterror' *Völkischer Beobachter* 27 May 1944. Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels* (London: Robert Hale, 1972), p. 321.

weeks and, by early July, the Swiss legation in Berlin had come to the conclusion that German police authorities were actively inciting civilian mobs to beat up Allied pilots.[28] As early as the first week in June, British intelligence was able to confirm that Berlin was deliberately publicizing incidents of 'spontaneous' mob violence against downed pilots in the hope of intimidating Allied aircrew and discouraging low-level attacks.[29] Decrypted German signals on the subject hardly made pleasant reading, but they suggested that the lurid stories appearing in the press were essentially symbolic, exemplary events, designed to impress Allied airmen, and did not represent a fundamental transformation in German attitudes towards British POWs or indicate that the maltreatment of pilots had become the norm.

It was the murder of the fifty RAF officer prisoners—the 'great escapers'—following a mass breakout on the night of 24–25 March 1944 from Stalag Luft III, Sagan, that transformed British thinking over the final year of the war. Before this, most officials had assumed that, once behind barbed wire, the chances of prisoners losing their lives at the hands of their captors were relatively slim. MI9 probably knew a mass break-out was planned from Sagan that spring, but confirmation that the escape had taken place came from deciphered German police communications, which revealed something of the scale of the security operations, though not their severity.[30] It was only on 12 May, with the arrival of a Swiss report on an inspection of Stalag Luft III on 17 April, that London finally discovered the scale of the tragedy.[31]

The realization that the German authorities were prepared to butcher defenceless prisoners came as a shock for Britain's policy-making establishment. Even those who saw Nazism as a sinister offshoot of traditional Prussian militarism had grown accustomed to taking German benevolence towards Britain's prisoners for granted. Now, at a stroke, such certainties were gone. In the immediate aftermath of the affair, attitudes hardened and the formerly convenient distinction between 'good Germans' and 'bad Nazis' evaporated. On returning to London in July, Walter Preiswerk, head of the Swiss special interests division in London, found people still talking of little else. Though he was confident that Britain would remain bound by international norms, he found it difficult to believe that British officials would pay any attention to German complaints about minor infractions

[28] Feldscher to de Pury, 4 July 1944. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14 bis. The police had already, in mid-1943, been told not to prevent lynching. M. Bormann, Rundschreiben 125/44g, 30 May 1944. BA Lichtefelde NS6/350. Memo, Frack for Himmler, 10 Aug. 1943. BA Lichtefelde NS19/344. See Barbara Grimm, 'Lynchmorde an alliierten Fliegern im Zweiten Weltkrieg', in Dietmar Süss (ed.), Deutschland im Luftkrieg (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), pp. 71–84.

[29] CX MSS C279 OKW Propaganda IA to Propaganda Army Groups C, F, E, 2 June 1944. TNA. HW5/705.

[30] Lt. E. D. Phillips, 'Government Code and Cipher School Air and Military History', vol. xiii. 'The German Police', n.d. TNA. HW11/13.

[31] FID to C. J. Norton, UK minister, Berne, 10 May 1944. SBA. E2001 02 20 vol. 1. Norton to FO, 12 May 1944. TNA. WO32/15502.

of the convention from now on, whatever their validity.[32] One senior naval official, on reading a circular about the need to apply the POW convention to German prisoners, openly questioned whether favours should be shown to such 'outcasts to the society of decent men' given the way Germany had behaved since the start of the war.[33] The mood was captured in a motion tabled by Lord Vansittart in the House of Lords in mid-July which called upon the government to acknowledge the *Wehrmacht's* complicity in the affair and make the cessation of hostilities dependent on Germany handing over a 'substantial proportion' of the Gestapo 'as an instalment'. The motion met with near universal acclamation, with even Lord Cranborne, son of the late Lord Salisbury and heir to traditional Tory conservatism, sharing Vansittart's trenchant views. The sole voice of moderation, that of the Bishop of Chichester—who prophetically warned against provoking Berlin into handing POW matters over entirely to the secret police—was easily drowned out.[34]

British officials were clearly unnerved by the upsurge of violence against British POWs, and, throughout the summer, struggled to come up with a cogent response to the crisis. The need to manage public expectations while avoiding any measures likely to jeopardize Britain's wider political or humanitarian interests was obviously acute. Eden's initial statement to the House on the shootings on 19 May (delayed until the completion of the exchange of sick and wounded POWs) deliberately sought to limit press speculation and protect the government against subsequent charges of withholding information.[35] From the outset, however, it was clear that further statements would be required, and immediate steps were taken to garner information from Stalag Luft III's former inmates, including the SBO, Group Captain H. M. Massey, who had fortuitously been repatriated in the recent exchange. Eden's second statement on 23 June, a candid account of the events leading up to the prisoners' deaths which ended with a pledge to hunt down those responsible, rattled the German leadership and undermined Swiss efforts to extract a reasonable reply from Berlin, but in truth the appearance of sensationalist press reports, alleging new atrocities against British POWs, left the foreign secretary with little choice. Most commentators felt his remarks captured the prevailing sentiment and reflected the gravity of the situation.[36] Other incidents over the summer, particularly the killing of nineteen Canadian soldiers by the *Hitler Jugend* behind German lines in early June, threw up similar pressures. Lurid descriptions of the Canadians' fate soon appeared

[32] W. Preiswerk, London, to de Pury, FID, 17 July 1944. SBA. E2001 02 20 vol. 1.

[33] Memo, Flag Officer, Harwich, 20 June 1944. TNA. ADM1/16898.

[34] W. Preiswerk, London, to Mjr. R. Iselin, FID, Berne, 16 Aug. 1944. SBA. E2001 02 20 vol. 1. *Parl. Debs. Lords* 1943–44 vol. 132, 13 July 1944, folios 916–28

[35] Although Eden claimed to have delayed the announcement to inform the next-of-kin, the latter had all been contacted by the 16th.

[36] *Daily Mail*, 24 May 1944, cited in Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 177. Feldscher to de Pury, 26 June 1944. SBA. E2001 02 20 vol. 1. *Parl. Debs. Commons* 1944–45 vol. 400 23 June 1944, folio 578–79.

in the press and the Canadian military feared revenge attacks against German prisoners unless moves were taken to clarify the situation.[37]

At the same time, officials remained anxious about how Britain's actions would go down in Berlin. Eden's reference on 19 May to 'standard' German procedures for dealing with escaped POWs—three weeks in solitary confinement—was purposely included to fan tensions presumed to exist between the OKW and the Gestapo. The measured tone of his second statement in June had the same objective.[38] The danger, though, of inadvertently exacerbating Anglo–German relations or undermining the safety of British POWs was never far away, and news of Heinrich Himmler's appointment as head of the home army in the wake of the failed attack on Hitler's life on 20 July naturally inflamed these concerns. Not only was the *Wehrmacht's* position gravely weakened by its involvement in the bomb plot but its apparently supine role following the break-out from Stalag Luft III naturally discouraged British officials from looking to the army as a natural 'ally' in defending the POW regime against the malign influence of Himmler's security forces.[39] 'The prime consideration', noted an FO official, in discussing British options after the murder of Canadian prisoners in Normandy, 'was the result upon the enemy of what was now decided'.[40] The distinctly muted reaction to these and other killings, as well as Goebbels' bloodthirsty utterances on popular *Lynchjustiz* in May, reveals a good deal about the sense of confusion and anxiety in London created by the early summer's events.[41]

ALLIED PLANS FOR THE PROTECTION OF POWS, JULY–DECEMBER 1944

The vacillation that marked Britain's reaction to the 'great escape' finally came to an end in late July, with the appearance of an assessment by the Joint Intelligence sub-Committee (JIC)—later endorsed by the COS—on future German intentions towards Britain's prisoners. For our purposes, the importance of the JIC report lies not just in its attempt to discipher German thinking but

[37] They were right to: of 1,327 POWs taken by the II Canadian Corps by late July, only eight were members of the *Hitler Jugend*. Anthony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (London: Viking, 2009), p. 432.

[38] Col. N. J. Phillimore (DPW) to G. O. Venn (AM), 27 May 1944; Note, inter-departmental meeting, DPW, 16 May 1944. TNA. AIR2/10121.

[39] After the killings, it became official policy to discredit the German general staff as a force for moderation. See Phillimore (DPW) to Roberts (PWD), 14 Aug. 1944. TNA. FO916/871.

[40] Minutes, inter-departmental meeting, DPW, 25 July 1944. TNA. FO916/871.

[41] The segregation of Canadian POWs in Oflag V/C in early August, in apparent preparation for reprisals, should the Canadian government decide to retaliate against the butchering of its men, underlined the fragility of Anglo–German POW relations at this time. Minute, MI9, 9 Aug. 1944. TNA. WO32/18505. Gepp (DPW) to Brig. R. Naesmyth (SHAEF) 23 Nov. 1943. TNA. CAB122/678.

for its policy recommendations, which were to become, in time, the bedrock of Britain's approach to the POW issue for the remainder of the war. Though the JIC did not challenge official policy on the German generals, it rejected Vansittart's hard line and reiterated its confidence in the basic good faith of the German military. 'Broadly speaking', it noted, 'the *Wehrmacht* adhere to the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 and [. . .] disapprove of the shooting of the RAF escapers'. Should the *Wehrmacht* be in control at the war's end, it was 'most unlikely that any general action would be taken against Allied POWs'. If, however, the army was a spent force, the fate of Britain's prisoners would hinge on the behaviour of the Nazi leadership, the SS and Gestapo, elements whose conduct had, until that time, been entirely inimical to the interests of British POWs. The possibility of Nazi 'fanatics' avenging their imminent defeat by turning against Allied POWs and foreign workers was a real one, even 'at ''five minutes past twelve'' '. Fortunately, this group was considered 'relatively small', and the majority of the SS and Gestapo—'less fanatical and less deeply compromised' than the extremists—were thought likely to be swayed by appeals to rational self-interest. The Nazi leadership might try to use the prisoners as hostages to bargain for their immunity, but most would probably try to 'win favour by a last show of moderation'.[42]

As we shall see, the JIC's evaluation of German thinking towards British POWs was remarkably perceptive. But what stands out in this and other assessments written by British and American planners over subsequent months was the attention devoted to events during the final days of the war. The principal thrust of Allied planning centred on the need to protect British and American prisoners from revenge attacks before and immediately after the cessation of hostilities. We will explore the reasons for this shortly, but before doing so we need to consider the three policy recommendations put forward by the JIC in July, as these effectively set the tone for subsequent Allied thinking on the subject.

The JIC's first recommendation was that communications with the camps be strengthened in order to keep the prisoners abreast of changes in the military situation and possible Allied rescue plans. The debacle following the armistice in 1918, when prisoners left their camps and melted into the throng of displaced people meandering across Europe, provided an object lesson in the danger of leaving prisoners to their own devices. In early 1943, the COS instructed prisoners to 'stand fast' on the cessation of hostilities and await the arrival of Allied ground forces. This remained the official position until the end of the war, despite doubts over the wisdom of the policy following events in Italy when British prisoners, acting on London's instructions, remained in their barracks and thereby lost the chance of making good their escape before German troops turned up at the camp gates. Attempts to publicize the 'stand fast' order amongst British

[42] JIC (44)322 (revised final), 29 July 1944. TNA. CAB119/94.

POWs in Germany were, however, far from successful. By mid-1944, four camps had still to acknowledge the instructions. Another message, sent out in July, reached only eighteen of the fifty-two principal camps holding Anglo-American POWs by early 1945.[43] In October 1944, MI9 claimed to be in contact with 'the bulk' of officer POWs and aircrew, but of the eleven Stalags known to possess wireless receivers, only three had acknowledged receipt of messages sent by that date.[44] This left a disturbingly large number of men outside the reach of British communications. The disruption of POW mail service after the summer of 1944, coupled with the frequent transfer of POWs between different camps and work detachments, especially after the winter of 1944, played havoc with London's system of coded letter writing and severely hampered its efforts to maintain radio contact. The comparatively simple goal, then, of communicating London's intentions to its prisoners thus remained largely out of reach. The implications became all too clear in the third week of August when Allied prisoners in Bucharest were left to decide for themselves how best to react to Romania's sudden exit from the war.[45] The lack of basic communications inevitably limited the options open to military planners in protecting Allied prisoners during the final months of the war.

The implications of this situation were no more apparent than in the second of the JIC's recommendations; providing physical protection to the prisoners by inserting either arms or airborne forces into German held territory. This proposal threw up a host of intractable problems, none of which afforded a simple answer. Would the Allies possess sufficient men, materiel, and aircraft to carry out such operations when required? Might direct action aggravate tensions between the POWs, their guards, and the local German forces and lead to the very events the Allies hoped to forestall? Were operations on behalf of the prisoners even feasible, given the dispersal of prisoners across POW camps, labour battalions, and work detachments? London's initial inclination was to err on the side of caution. The COS were loath to commit forces for the protection of men whose ultimate safety would, they figured, 'best be assured by the speedy occupation and control of Germany'. At their meeting on 9 September the chiefs concluded that, 'since the camps are numerous and widely dispersed [. . .] and since many of the prisoners are not accommodated in camps at all', it was unlikely that 'airborne troops could assist in this way on a large scale'.[46] Opinions were even more pessimistic over the prospect of distributing small arms, a task which was

[43] MI9, 'Directives to Germany: Position as at 5 Feb. 1945'. Brig. R. H. S. Venables, (G1, SHAEF) to WO, 22 Jan. 1945. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 75.

[44] WO to PWX G1 SHAEF. 7 Oct. 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73.

[45] See recollections of the Senior American Officer of Lager XIII, Bucharest, Lt. Col. Gunn, AAF, cited in Col. G. Bryan Conrad (ACOS, G2, SHAEF) to ACOS G1 SHAEF, 17 Oct. 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73.

[46] Seven in eight 'other rank' POWs were housed in work detachments. SHAEF memo. 'Position of POW and Foreign Workers in Germany', Feb. 1945. TNA. FO1049/26.

not only considered 'very difficult to execute' but, even if partially successful, 'would probably precipitate the action which we wish to avoid and which might not otherwise have taken place'.[47]

These doubts were not, however, shared in Washington. Of the 45,000 US POWs in German hands by early November 1944, three-quarters were believed to be held in seven camps in Poland, many of which were conveniently situated near airfields. A preliminary investigation by the US COS suggested that, if regimental sized combat teams provided 'initial security' to each camp, a fleet of 400 heavy bombers could evacuate the men in as little as four or five days.[48] Opinions also diverged over whether to extend protection to prisoners of other nationalities. For the Americans, it was the British and American POWs who were most at risk from revenge attacks as it was they who were held responsible for the bombing of German cities. Although officials in London agreed with the general point, they felt that, as Allied contingents had fought under British command, there was 'as much obligation to watch their interests as those of our own men'.[49] Despite doubts, then, about the feasibility, wisdom, and proposed scope of direct action, London agreed to allow planning to continue. The two theatre commanders, General Eisenhower and Field Marshall Alexander, were known to share London's reservations, and as so much depended on the speed of the Allied advance and the imponderable question of German attitudes at the close of the fighting, there seemed little danger in keeping the matter under consideration. As the Joint Planning Staff admitted in early December, preliminary planning might 'save time when the emergency arises and may make just the difference between safety and disaster'.[50]

At the heart of British apprehension over the possibility of mounting military operations in support of the POWs was the danger that any such action might compromise the 'immunity' prisoners enjoyed under the Geneva conventions and undermine the subtle, though vital, distinction between POWs and other categories of individual—employed, imprisoned, or interned by the Nazi regime—whose status and privileges lay at the caprice of the German authorities. Regrettably, Allied policy on this issue had been far from consistent. On the one hand, Allied political warfare authorities had tried since 1943 to undermine German morale by fanning popular anxieties about the number of foreign workers in their midst.[51] On the other, MI9, the War Office department responsible for assisting POW escapes, had been careful to avoid aligning its activities too closely with Britain's various secret agencies, or encouraging

[47] JP (44) 234, 8 Sep. 1944, approved by the COS, 9 Sep. 1944. TNA. CAB119/94.
[48] JSM, Washington, to AMSSO, 24 Nov. 1944. TNA. PREM3/364/7.
[49] AMSSO to JSM, Washington, 14 Dec. 1944, 18 Jan. 1945. TNA. PREM3/364/7.
[50] JP (44) 299, 7 Dec. 1944. TNA. CAB199/94.
[51] For the 'Trojan Horse' campaign and its D-Day variant, see SHAEF Psychological Warfare Division, memo, 'Plan for Psychological Warfare', 31 May 1944. TNA. FO898/340.

British prisoners from associating with local resistance groups. Britain's secret services were of the same view, and were generally unwilling to see their networks used for the benefit of escaping POWs. In July 1943, MI9 tentatively agreed to cooperate with SOE and the Polish VI Bureau in the event of a general uprising in central Europe, but the contingency plans were primarily geared towards *protecting* Britain's prisoners, rather than providing resistance movements with a pool of trained personnel.[52] MI9's efforts to insulate British prisoners from the effects of Germany's disintegration suffered a severe blow by a series of broadcasts by General Eisenhower that implicitly encouraged foreign workers to abandon their work places and resist their oppressors. Swiss observers were, frankly, horrified by the lunacy of the exercise and were convinced that the broadcast merely played into the hands of the Gestapo. Berlin had, after all, depicted the 'great escape' as part of a wider operation masterminded in London, and all subsequent events—the D-Day landings in June, failed bomb plot in July, and Warsaw uprising, which began on the 1 August and was not finally extinguished until late September—inevitably strengthen these views.[53]

Swiss reports on the impact of Eisenhower's broadcast were sufficiently sobering to persuade the British and American authorities and their military planners against making similar statements in the future, but other parties were less easily swayed. The Polish government-in-exile continued to look to Poland's prisoners as a potentially valuable resource, so too the French 2eme Bureau. By late 1944, all contact with French deportees was channelled through French POWs, and the 2eme Bureau was loath to exclude POWs from its military plans merely to assuage Anglo-American concerns.[54] The nature and scale of French activities amongst POWs remains unclear, but, in SHAEF, officers were clearly alarmed by the prospect of any independent French action in this area. Every effort was made to rein in, and where necessary constrain, French planning.[55] Allied thinking on the issue of direct operations thus remained distinctly low-key over the second half of 1944, despite growing fears—both in London and amongst the prisoners themselves—of German intentions. Notwithstanding the fact that power in Germany at the end of the war might lie with a variety of more or less unsavoury groups, the Allies continued to build their contingency plans around the belief that the prisoners' 'status' as privileged combatants, deserving of sympathy and fair treatment, was their best defence against violence, neglect, or intimidation.

[52] 'MP' to 'AD/E', 13 July 1943. TNA. HS6/637, folio 130.

[53] For German information on Polish resistance movements in POW camps, see Bormann to Gauleiter etc. 11 Oct. 1944; OKW, Torgau, 21 Sep. 1944. 'Betr. Abwehr eines polnishcen Widerstandsbewegung im Wehrkreis II'. IfZ. Microfilm MA127/1, folio 79.

[54] Memo, by Venables (SHAEF), 19 Nov. 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73.

[55] Lt. Gen. W. B. Smith (SHAEF) to General Juin, Chief General Staff for National Defence, 3 Feb. 1945. DPW (WO) to G1 SHAEF, 2 Oct. 1944. Minute, E. Jones, 1 Dec. 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73.

The third and final recommendation advanced by the JIC concerned the possibility of issuing a public statement, warning the camp authorities, guards, and German civilian population that they would be held personally responsible for the wellbeing of British and American prisoners under their control. In some respects, the suggestion flowed logically from the JIC's gloomy prediction over the conditions likely to exist at the war's end. If centralized government ceased to exist, or if the levers of power lay in the hands of groups unsympathetic to the interests of British POWs, the Allies would have little choice other than to appeal directly to those responsible for the day-to-day lives of POWs.

It is easy to overlook the point, however, that, despite becoming the centrepiece of Allied policy, the proposal marked something of a break in Allied thinking. From mid-1940, London had sought to work *through* the German authorities to foster a compliant attitude towards the principles of the POW regime. This strategy had not been without its difficulties, and the growing marginalization of the army and permanent bureaucracy in German policy-making over 1944 naturally augured ill for the future. But in abandoning all pretence of conducting affairs at the inter-governmental level and directing Allied diplomacy towards subordinate levels of the German administration, the proposal represented a clear departure from earlier policy. It was also something of a gamble. 'Going public' flew in the face of the accepted wisdom that spats over POW questions were best avoided as they tended to rebound on the prisoners' interests and needlessly distress the prisoners' next-of-kin. Naturally, attitudes on this issue were not static. In late 1943, frustrated by the lack of diplomatic progress—especially in Tokyo—and anxious to capitalize on the upturn in Allied military fortunes, the WO suggested publicizing German atrocities, in the hope that such stories, if coupled with threats of future punishment, would exercise a restraining influence on German behaviour. The proposal was not well received in the FO, however, where officials doubted the practical benefits of abandoning the agreed policy, and were reluctant to impinge on the work of the United Nations' War Crimes commission by taking unilateral action in this area.[56] Discussions were cut short by the shooting of the RAF escapers and lynching of Allied pilots in the early summer of 1944; events which left the Nazi regime so irreparably compromised in British eyes that any publicity would, it was feared, merely incite the Gestapo into inflicting further atrocities. Finally, the government had always to keep in mind that any pronouncements of this nature were likely to arouse suspicions in Moscow, where Stalin had long doubted London's mettle in standing up to German taunts over POWs, and naturally rejected any hint that German officials could

[56] Roberts (PWD) to Gepp (DPW), 17 Dec. 1943, and Gebb's letter of 29 Nov. 1943. TNA. WO32/9906. For earlier demands to increase pressure on Berlin: memo, by Canada House for WO, 31 May 1943. WO32/9889.

atone for their earlier sins by a last-minute display of generosity towards western prisoners.[57]

The one area the JIC passed over in silence was the question of whether the Allies should capitalize on its growing haul of German prisoners as a bargaining counter in its dealings with Berlin. The D-Day landings brought a wave of German POWs into Allied hands, and, by early 1945, notwithstanding the set backs at Arnhem and in the Ardennes, the Allies enjoyed a healthy 3:2 advantage in POW numbers. With the end of the war in sight, officials on both sides of the Atlantic began to turn their attention to the possibility of using German POWs to hold Berlin to the surrender terms. As we saw in Chapter 6, as early as March 1943, Churchill had proposed threatening to bind the hands of German prisoners after the end of the war to force Hitler into rescinding the shackling order.[58] At the time, neither the cabinet nor the COS had been prepared to follow his lead. The general reluctance to return to a policy of reprisals, after the bruising shackling crisis, continued to influence thinking, long after the revival of Britain's military fortunes. In July 1944, London pressed de Gaulle to step back from executing German POWs, in response to the killing of French resistance fighters, on the grounds that the mere threat of reprisals might provoke Hitler into retaliating against Allied prisoners. Even Churchill, never one knowingly to shrink from a challenge, expressed his fear that the two sides might descend into a 'general counter-massacre of prisoners'.[59] Sensitivity on this issue certainly diminished, and, by late 1944, officials were ready to turn a blind eye to French ill-treatment of German POWs, and even court German displeasure by transferring prisoners into French custody. But at no time did British officials seriously consider resorting to reprisals as a way to influence German treatment of British POWs. Not only were such threats thought to have little effect on Hitler and the Nazi fanatics but any step in this direction contradicted the thrust of British propaganda, which had stressed Britain's willingness to observ the Geneva conventions.[60] When Mjr.-Gen. Gepp discovered, to his evident surprise, that Swiss diplomats routinely alluded to the danger of Britain withdrawing privileges from German POWs if conditions in German camps were allowed to deteriorate, he immediately requested that they desist from taking this line: 'Whatever happened to British prisoners in Germany', he told the Swiss, 'the British government had no intention of departing from the convention'.[61] As we shall see in the next chapter, Britain's determination to

[57] For pressure to publicize German atrocities, see Vansittart to Brendan Bracken (minister of information), 15 Dec. 1944. TNA. FO898/328.

[58] WM (43) 44, 22 Mar. 1943. TNA. CAB194/2.

[59] Minute, Churchill, 7 July 1944, cited in Moore, 'Unruly Allies', p. 190. FO to WO, 9 July 1944. TNA. CAB121/293.

[60] JP (44) 234 (Final), 8 Sep. 1944. TNA. CAB119/94. Minute, Groves (PWE), 22 Dec. 1944. TNA. FO898/328.

[61] Anglo–Swiss meeting, 1st session, 28 Nov. 1944. TNA. FO1049/26.

remain bound by the convention, even unilaterally, was to be a major contributing factor in holding Berlin to its international obligations over the last months of the war.

RULES, NORMS, AND THE HEALTH OF THE POW REGIME BY LATE 1944

Before judging British policy in 1945, it is worth pausing to consider the health of the POW regime in the west by the end of 1944, and to ask how far those elements of restraint, which had hitherto influenced German policy-makers, still exercised a hold over German policy-makers. Central to this question is the issue of reciprocity, long considered the linchpin of the POW regime. Clearly, the principle still had some purchase over the repatriation talks where, as we have seen, Berlin had belatedly come to recognize the benefit of seeing its prisoners return from Allied captivity. Despite the fevered atmosphere created by the shooting of the RAF escapers, POW exchanges continued apace over 1944, and indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, Berlin even considered repatriating a new category of prisoners—'long-term' POWs—early the following year. None of these initiatives were, of course, cost free. But such was the political and humanitarian importance of securing the release of British prisoners while the door remained open that London was happy to treat repatriation as a special issue and insulate it from the general tenor of POW relations. This remained the case until March 1945, when Hitler abruptly vetoed all further substantive negotiations.

But what of other aspects of the POW regime, beyond the rarefied area of POW repatriation: how did these stand up to the shifting tide of events? To officials in London the shooting of escapees and lynching of downed aircrew seemed to indicate that reciprocity no longer figured prominently in German thinking. Since the start of the war Berlin had habitually punished British prisoners for London's alleged infractions of the POW code, or its failure to show German prisoners the care, respect, and attention considered their due. The shackling crisis had brought a halt to this practice, and, over 1943, as POW numbers gradually equalized, an uneasy truce took hold. The cold-blooded murder of the great escapers suggested, however, that Hitler either doubted London could match this level of brutality or simply did not care. Goebbels clearly shared this view. London was unlikely to make a 'fuss', he wryly remarked after reading Eden's statement to the House on 19 May. 'Our experience to date shows that the English are glad to avoid disputes over prisoners.'[62] Western POWs remained valuable bargaining counters: Berlin's determined effort to keep hold of

[62] *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 12*, p. 323 (20 May 1944).

its western prisoners was evidence enough of this. But their value increasingly lay in the leverage they provided in influencing Allied strategy or in exacting revenge for the decline of Germany's military fortunes, rather than for holding London to its obligations under the POW convention. German officials were scarcely indifferent to the fate of their compatriots in Allied hands—in mid-January 1945 blankets and bedding were temporarily withdrawn from British prisoners in reprisal for the poor facilities in POW camps in Egypt—but, by this stage of the war, the Reich's leadership was clearly not prepared to allow concern for its own prisoners to stand in the way of its prosecution of the war.[63] Not only were there bigger issues at stake but doubts over the fighting spirit of German forces in the west increasingly coloured judgements in Berlin. By February 1945, the need to stem desertions from German units in the west came to dominate Hitler's attitude towards the Geneva conventions, but such thoughts were clearly evident the previous autumn. 'In a struggle for life or death', Hitler declared the day Allied airborne forces were reported to have landed near Arnhem, '[i]f someone gives himself up as a prisoner, [. . .] he can't expect us to show consideration for American or British prisoners because of him'.[64]

One of the biggest issues to affect German attitudes towards the POW regime was the mounting sense of alarm at the 'threat' posed by British and other prisoners to Germany's internal security. Though the 'great escape' was the largest break-out of British POWs, it was by no means the first, and, by early 1944, Hitler clearly believed that 'normal' security procedures were no longer sufficient. As the Nazi party had long held the view that the German army had been 'stabbed in the back' in 1918, and made a feature of exaggerating the strength of its internal enemies ever since, it is hardly surprising that Hitler inflated the danger posed by foreign workers and POWs. The frequency with which this subject cropped up in internal discussions suggests that such fears were genuinely held, and not simply a convenient excuse to justify ill-treating Allied prisoners.[65] On 4 March 1944, three weeks before the 'great escape', a secret decree arranged for all Allied officer and non-working NCOs, with the exception of British and Americans, captured in the act of escape to be handed over to the *Sicherheitsdient* (security service, SD) and *Sipo* (security police) and not returned to their camps.[66] The arrival of fighting to Germany's doorstep naturally fuelled

[63] For the January reprisals, see E. G. C. Beckwith (ed.), *The Mansel Diaries: The Diaries of Captain John Mansel, Prisoner-of-War—and Camp Forger—in Germany 1940–45* (Abingdon: Burgess & Son, 1977), pp. 137–38 (entry for 15 Jan. 1945).

[64] Evening Sit. Rep., 17 Sep. 1944. Helmut Heiber and David M. Glantz (eds.), *Hitler and his Generals: Military Conferences 1942–1945* (New York: Enigma, 2002), p. 501. For similar views by Himmler at the same date, see SS Hauptamt, Berlin to Obergruppenführer Frank (Chef des Heersverwaltungsamt, Berlin) n.d., BA Berlin Lichtefelde, NS19/778.

[65] See Borman to Gauleiter, 10 Sep. 1944. 'Widerstandsbewegung unter den Kriegsgefangenen'. IfZ. MA 127/1, folio 87.

[66] A copy of the decree and papers from the Gestapo office, Cologne, 4 Mar. 1944 in TNA. HS6/632.

German anxieties, and over the autumn of 1944 led to the importation into the Reich of security practices, organizations, and techniques which had previously been confined to Germany's eastern territories.[67]

There is little doubt that the shooting of RAF officers horrified many German officials and army staff.[68] Senior staff in the OKW's POW department did their best to prevent Keitel from meekly submitting to the Führer's diktat. The blatant departure from established procedures—failing to notify the Swiss legation of the prisoners' deaths or allowing postmortem examinations to take place on the corpses before cremation—coupled with the numbed silence that greeted Swiss inquiries in Berlin, says something of the discomfort felt in official circles.[69] The fact that Berlin's first official statement on the issue—an awkward missive, so verbose in style and vacuous in content that even Swiss diplomats dismissed it as an absurdity—coincided with news of the Allied landings in Normandy only went to accentuate officials' sense of unease.[70] It was equally clear, however, that, over the course of the year, the influence exercised by the permanent bureaucracy markedly declined. The Foreign Relations Department of the OKW, responsible for reigning in some of the OKW's excesses in the past, was disbanded in early 1944 and its functions assumed by Himmler's SD. Its lawyer, Graf von Moltke, who had argued against Germany's shackling of POWs in 1942, was arrested and imprisoned. The failed plot against Hitler's life in July 1944 continued the process: irreparably damaging the *Wehrmacht's* standing within the regime and ending the careers of officials like Adam von Trott, the AA official responsible for introducing 'public relations officers' into British compounds, who had been implicated in the plot.[71] Naturally, those who survived the purge were more wary of challenging directives issued from the *Führerhauptquartier*, and less willing to make decisions without securing prior authorization. The kind of foot-dragging and artful reading of instructions, at which certain members of the bureaucracy had excelled, became a much more dangerous activity in the febrile atmosphere following the attempt on Hitler's life.

[67] Gerhard Paul, ' "Diese Erschieβungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt". Die Kriegsendphasenverbrechen der Gestapo 1944/45', in Paul Gerhard and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (eds.), *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Heimatfront und besteztes Europa* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000), pp. 543–68 (esp. 545–52).

[68] Feldscher to de Pury, 16 June 1944; Aktennotiz, 24 Oct. 1944. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 14 bis. Interrogation report, Generaloberst d. Luft. H-J. Stumpf, 20 Jan. 1948. IfZ. ZS158.

[69] *TMWC* xi, pp. 2–4, 158–61. Wilhelm Keitel and Adolf Westhof testimonies.

[70] Goebbels' encouragement of *Lynchjustiz* created an 'uproar' in the OKW: H. Frölicher, Swiss minister, Berlin, to Pilet-Golaz, Berne, 2 and 7 June 1944. SBA. E2001 02 20 vol. 1. See also Frölicher's meetings with state secretary von Steengracht: Paul Widmer, *Die Schweizer Gesandschaft in Berlin. Geschichte eines schwierigen diplomatischen Postens* (Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1998), p. 269.

[71] MI9 report, 'Holiday Camps', 21 Dec. 1944. TNA. HS6/631. See Peter Hoffmann, *The History of the German Resistance, 1933–1945* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 3 edn. 1996), passim, and on the take-over of Canaris' Amt/Ausl., Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitsamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Editions, 2002), pp. 702–06.

In London, officials viewed the radicalization of German POW policy with mounting alarm. Berlin's brusque rejection of British protests over the Stalag Luft III episode came as no surprise; but the fact that it did not bother to refute Eden's depiction of events was worrying. So too was the inexorable rise to power of Himmler's SS, and the increasing influence of the Gestapo and other security organs in the running of POW camps. In mid-September, posters appeared in British compounds alerting prisoners to the creation of 'death zones' in which all 'unauthorized trespassers [would] be immediately shot on sight'. 'Escaping from prison camps', the prisoners were warned, 'has ceased to be a sport!'[72] A fortnight later, responsibility for internal POW policy, long the preserve of the OKW, was transferred into the hands of the SS. Henceforth camp commandants would be under the orders of SS General Gottlob Berger, and not the *Wehrmacht* officers in the OKW.[73] Berger's only involvement with Allied POWs before this date had been in recruiting British prisoners for service in the Waffen SS.[74] Not surprisingly the tenor of German propaganda activities took a turn for the worse: parole walks were reduced and pressure was placed on the AA to close its two 'holiday' camps.[75] Worse still, stocks of tined food, held in the camp stores, were punctured to prevent their used by escapers or partisan groups.

And yet, for all the heightened tension surrounding the treatment of British POWs, the murders, lynchings, and waxing presence of Himmler's security forces, it would be wrong to assume that earlier restraints on German actions no longer applied. German decision-making remained to a surprising degree shaped by traditional political and legal imperatives, even in those instances where German behaviour appeared to flout established norms. The JIC's generous judgement on the outlook to be expected from the 'less fanatical Nazis' was, in this respect, remarkably astute. Evidence of Himmler's pragmatism over such questions as peace feelers, the treatment of Anglo-American prisoners, and bartering of Jewish lives, would come to light the following year, but, in mid-1944, it required a considerable leap of imagination for British officials to talk of Hitler's henchman in such terms.[76] Himmler appears, however, to have supported Herman Goering's efforts to have the Führer limit the number of RAF officers killed to fifty—rather than the whole seventy-six—and demonstrated a passing concern for Germany's international reputation in insisting that the shootings were conducted in such a way as to lend credence to the claim that

[72] 'To all Prisoners of War'. Distributed, Aug. 1944; copy in Mackenzie, *Colditz Myth*, plate 27.

[73] "Neuordnung des Kriegsgefangenenwesens", 25 Sep. 1944, printed in Moll, *Führer-Erlasse*, p. 460.

[74] Gerhard Rempel, 'Gottlob Berger and Waffen SS Recruitment', *MGM* 27 (1980), pp. 107–23.

[75] See Wagner to Brandt (Pers. Stab des RFSS), 5 Dec. 1944. BA Berlin Lichtefelde, NS19/2162. Goebbels also encroached on POW camp activities after July: Interrogation report, A. P. Steengracht 20 Feb. 1947. IfZ. ZS1546. para. 30.

[76] Peter Padfield, *Himmler: Reichsführer SS* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 520–89.

the men were shot while trying to resist capture.[77] Even the Gestapo, who dutifully carried out Hitler's odious orders, showed an awareness of the gravity of the situation in their use of unnumbered telegrams and the selection of British nationals for survival, ahead of those of Britain's European allies.[78] Indeed, everything about the way the matter was handled indicates that the executions were considered an exceptional event and not indicative of a new norm.

The desire to underline the continuity in German policy is no clearer than in the decision to leave the OKW's *Generalinspektor* for POWs, Mjr.-Gen. Adolf Westhof, as the primary point of contact for neutral and foreign diplomats in Berlin, and those relief and humanitarian agencies responsible for the wellbeing of German and Allied POWs. Hitler was perfectly aware that the Allied governments, no less the neutral ones, would baulk at the thought of discussing issues relating to Germany's obligations under international law with representatives of the *Reichsführer SS*. Himmler's take-over of POW affairs in October 1944 was never complete: traditional structures governing the operation of POW regime remained in place and continued to affect German treatment of its western POWs.[79] Indeed, on taking up his appointment, Berger was apparently informed that the position of western POWs was already settled and did not, therefore, require his attention.[80]

Such steps can, of course, be dismissed as mere window-dressing, allowing Hitler to maintain a veil of legality—sufficient to hold the western governments to their undertakings—while leaving the SS free to impose discipline upon an increasingly underfed and intimidated POW workforce. But it is clear that even a show of compliance required the Reich's leadership to make concessions to pre-existing norms and practices that ultimately curtailed their freedom of action. The attempt to place *Terrorfliegern* beyond the writ of the law shows the situation up well. So long as Berlin publicly adhered to the POW convention, it had to accept certain procedures—giving notice before carrying out death sentences on POWs, or allowing the accused the right to due legal process—that constrained its policy options. It could not, as a matter of routine, pass Allied pilots over to the SD, shoot them out of hand, or brand them as war criminals.[81] It was for this reason that the authorities turned to 'spontaneous' mob lynching as a way of intimidating Allied pilots, in a form suitable for foreign media consumption. The

[77] Anton Gill, *The Great Escape* (London: Granada, 2001), pp. 191–98.

[78] This information was not passed on to London. Feldscher to de Pury, 9 June 1944. SBA. E2001 02 20 vol. 1. For the Gestapo's activities after Eden's statement of 19 May, see Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Keil, 2 Js 360/64, 16 Feb. 1966. Schwurgerichtsanklage, F. Schmidt-Schütte. IfZ. Gk05.08. Schwurgericht, Stuttgart, 26–30 Mar. 1957. Urteil Strafsache gegen Dr Guenther Venediger. IfZ. Gs05.03. Detlef Korte, *'Erziehung' ins Massengrab. Die Geschichte des 'Arbeitserziehungslagers Nordmark' Kiel-Russee 1944–1945* (Kiel: Neuer Malik, 1991), pp. 79–85.

[79] Interrogation report, A. Westhoff, 23 Nov. 1946. pp. 3–7. IfZ. ZS425 vol. 1.

[80] Interrogation report, G. Berger, 14 June 1947. p. 1. IfZ. ZS427 vol. 2.

[81] AA to Chef OKW, 20 June 1944. IfZ. MA208.

debate sparked off by Goebbels' editorial in the *Völkischer Beobachter* quickly shifted, therefore, to a discussion of the kinds of attacks that would justify recourse to 'mob rule'. Ribbentrop and Goebbels both argued for an expansive list that would have seen any bomber pilot falling to earth being met with a pitchfork, but a narrower definition, favoured by the military, ultimately won the day. *Lynchjustiz* would only be applicable for those pilots guilty of strafing civilians, commuter trains, and hospitals, or firing upon German pilots as they descended by parachute.[82] It would appear that steps were taken to enforce these guidelines. When Goebbels' deputy, Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, presumptively executed an American pilot he encountered on a street, it took the personal intervention of Keitel to save him from an official reprimand. German civilians also turned out to be reluctant executioners. While incidents certainly took place—it is likely that about 700 airmen lost their lives at the hands of local mobs—the number did not meet Goebbels' expectations, and as a consequence the foreign publicity campaign gradually petered out over the autumn.[83] Ribbentrop's hand in the affair earned him his place in the dock at Nuremburg, but there is enough evidence—especially in the restrictive guidelines—to lend credence to General Jodl's later claim that his staff succeeded in quietly strangling the measure in red tape.[84]

Similar constraints can be seen in the 'warning' alerting British prisoners to the dangers of escape. The basis of both this and Berlin's second diplomatic note to London on the Stalag Luft III shootings was the contents of a secret British training manual, the *Handbook of Modern Irregular Warfare*, which had fallen into German hands earlier that summer.[85] Produced in 1942 by SOE's Cairo station, the *Handbook* provided agents and special forces with instruction in a number of dark arts: 'irrefutable' proof, in German eyes, of Britain's embrace of illegal, 'gangster-like' methods of warfare.[86] Yet, while the *Handbook* was welcome as grist to Goebbels' propaganda mill, it could not, on its own, either absolve Berlin from its responsibilities under international law or justify the summary execution of RAF prisoners. It was apparently Hitler who settled upon the entirely fictitious 'death zones' as a way of explaining the suspiciously high fatality rate amongst the

[82] See Stellv. Chef WFSt. Vortragsnotiz, 6 June 1944. and minutes, Keitel and Jodl n.d. IfZ. MA208.

[83] See Neville Wylie, 'Muted Applause: British Prisoners of War as Observers and Victims of the Allied Bombing Campaign over Germany', paper delivered to 'Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940–1945: An International Conference', 10–13 September 2009, University of Exeter; Grimm, 'Lynchmorde an alliierten Fliegern', passim; Clutton-Brock, *Footprints on the Sands of Time*, pp. 198–224; Robert Sigel, *Im Interesse der Gerechtigkeit. Die Dachauer Kriesgverbrecherprozesse 1945–1948* (Frankfurt a. M: Campus, 1992), pp. 113–19.

[84] Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, pp. 402–03. Marlis G. Steinert, *Hitler's War and the Germans* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977), pp. 236–37. Ralf Georg Reuth, *Goebbels* (London: Constable, 1993), p. 326.

[85] Note by Ritter, 2 Aug. 1944. PA-AA. R278334. Fiche 7762. The front cover of the Handbook was reproduced on the front page of the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 29 July 1944.

[86] On the Handbook's provenance see Col. H. Sporborg (SOE) to Gen. Hollis (War Cabinet) 22 Jan. 1945. TNA. CAB121/293. Some 3,623 copies were unaccounted for by this date.

great escapers. But while he may have been happy to sanction their deaths, he also recognized the difficulty of admitting that escaped POWs would henceforth be liquidated or allowed to end their days in concentration camps.[87] The 'warning' actually began by affirming Berlin's willingness to abide by the 'principles of international law' and respect adversaries captured at the front while fighting in an 'honest manner'.[88] Earlier drafts were deliberately amended—and in the process softened—to remove any statements that openly contravened the Hague rules and POW convention, or left Berlin open to awkward questions from Britain's protecting power. A reference to prisoners who had already come to grief in the 'death zones' was removed from the final draft, as was a statement claiming that the wearing of uniform offered no immunity for anyone caught in the zones.[89] The warning made unpleasant reading for British prisoners, but came to look rather ridiculous when it became known to British officials visiting Berne at the end of the year that the menacing 'death zones' were nothing more than a figment of the Führer's imagination.[90]

We must obviously be wary of exaggerating Germany's 'commitment' to international law by the last year of the war. Goebbels' claim that Nazi Germany was defending western civilization rung hollow for a European population subjected to four years of occupation, hostage-taking, and racial extermination. The preposterousness of Hitler's appeals to international law was not lost on British prisoners worked to the bone in German labour battalions. At the same time, however, enough of the procedural legal POW framework remained in place to influence German actions, despite the growing influence of Nazi extremists, whose philosophical and political outlook was entirely antithetical to the humanitarian ambitions of the POW convention and its associated norms. British POWs were still physically abused and, occasionally, shot out of hand, subjected to collective punishments, compelled to work without rest days, and denied the relief parcels that were rightly theirs.[91] They were not, as yet, exposed to the kind of untrammelled brutality routinely visited upon other sections of Germany's imprisoned population. But whether this fragile balance could continue into the final months of the war, as Hitler's regime went through its death throes, was anyone's guess by the winter of 1944–45. If a 'strictly confidential' report by one of the ICRC's delegates in Berlin, Otto Lehner, in

[87] For the connection, in Hitler's mind, between the great escape and the warning, and his reaction to American shooting of Organization Todt workers, see Führhernotiz, 13 July 1944, cited in memo by Brenner (Büreau RAM) 17 July 1944. *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 12*, p. 546 (25 June 1944).

[88] The reference to the Hague rules, and not the POW convention, may have been driven by a desire to maintain the latter's integrity.

[89] Memo, Brenner, 29 July 1944. Aufziechnung, Albrecht, 30 July 1944. PA-AA. R278344 Fiche 7762.

[90] Anglo–Swiss meeting, 1st session, 28 Nov. 1944. TNA. FO1049/26.

[91] For a full list of infractions, see C. Empeyta, ICRC delegation, Berlin, to P. Pictet, ICRC, Geneva, 24 Oct. 1944. ICRC. G7 Carton 265.

October 1944, was anything to go by, the signs were ominous. Attitudes were hardening against Allied POWs, especially pilots, and Berger's appointment at the start of the month was an ill omen. A 'classic example' of the changes under way was an incident at Stalag Luft IV, Gross-Tychow, where sentries reportedly used bayonets and rifle buts to goad prisoners into making a bid to escape, in the hope of justifying recourse to their firearms. 'We now have a struggle for control taking place', Lehner warned, 'and we can only hope that the men in the OKW POW department retain the upper hand'.[92]

[92] Note, R. Lehner (ICRC, Berlin), 16 Oct. 1944 (strictement confidentiel. Ne doit pas être copié). ICRC G3/26f Carton 107. The affair is probably the 'run up the road' incident described in Nichol and Rennell, *The Last Escape*, 25–28.

9

Avoiding Götterdämmerung, 1945

The failure of Germany's Ardennes offensive, which started on 16 December 1944 and ground to a halt in the first days of January, ended Hitler's last chance of averting defeat through military means. The Führer had admitted as much before the campaign began when he told his armaments' minister that he saw 'no other possibility of bringing the war to a favourable conclusion'.[1] Germany had, of course, faced defeat before, but for those in London responsible for protecting British POWs in Germany during the final weeks, days, or even hours of the war, past lessons were of dubious value. As a SHAEF report put it, the 'mild and "polite" overthrow of the Hohenzollern in 1918' was unlikely to repeat itself. Instead Hitler's demise looked destined to give way to 'totalitarian chaos in which blind hatred and uncontrolled passions will dominate' and defenceless POWs would become 'easy victims of new disorganised gangsterism'.[2] Hitler himself forecast such an eventuality shortly after calling off the Ardennes offensive in early January: indeed, he seemed almost to welcome it as a fitting finale for his regime. 'I know the war is lost. The superior power is too great [. . .]. We can go down. But we'll take a world with us.'[3]

The last six months of the war were, therefore, uncharted waters for Britain's POW policy-makers. On all the key questions, officials were effectively forced to make up policy as they went along. What factors were likely to influence German behaviour towards British POWs: reciprocity, the fear of personal indictment or post-war retribution, or a desire to avenge Germany's defeat? How much responsibility could, or should, the Allies take in meeting the needs of their men? With the end in sight, should military commanders press on with their attacks regardless, or tailor their operations with an eye to the prisoners' security or subsistence requirements? How far, in short, ought the pursuit of victory be compromised for the humanitarian or material wellbeing of Allied prisoners? Finally, how, given the fractious nature of the Nazi leadership and the disintegration of centralized authority, could London communicate its wishes, and who should it seek to communicate with? Were those who were willing to parley ultimately capable of protecting the lives and wellbeing of British POWs?

[1] Hitler to Speer, cited in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 732.

[2] Special Legal Unit. SHAEF G5 Ops, 'Report on Laws Concerning POW in Germany', 18 July 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 73.

[3] Nicholas von Below, cited in Kershaw, *Hitler*, p. 747.

Discussion on these themes in 1944 had been largely inconclusive, partly because of the inherent difficulties of coordinating policy with Britain's allies in Washington and Moscow—who shared neither London's priorities nor its sense of urgency—and partly out of officials' inability to come up with a realizable plan of action that did not depend, at some fundamental level, on German willingness to conform to traditional norms and restraints. By the end of the year, with Germany's POW camps now in Himmler's hands, an air of desperation seeped into British thinking. Matters were going from bad to worse, and nothing the Allies did, or could do, appeared to make any difference. It was, therefore, with a mixture of anxiety and foreboding that a succession of delegations—from SHAEF, the JWO, and Whitehall—journeyed to Switzerland in the second half of November to hear first-hand the views of those Swiss officials who had personal experience of the conditions facing British prisoners in Germany. The seriousness of the meetings can be measured by the standing of those sent out from London; the JWO's Sir Richard Howard Vyse, the Director of Prisoners of War, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Cyril Gepp, two of his deputies, and his FO counterpart, W. St. C. Roberts, in sum, Britain's most senior figures involved in POW affairs. The meetings were also of enormous significance and proved critical in shaping British attitudes, policy, and expectations towards POWs over the final, climactic, months of the war.

THE SECOND 'PARCEL CRISIS', MAY 1944–MAY 1945

The delegations' first port of call was the ICRC's headquarters in Geneva. The ICRC had its finger in most parts of the POW pie, but its principal responsibility, so far as the British authorities were concerned, lay in coordinating the distribution of relief parcels. This issue had largely slipped off the official agenda since the resolution of the 'parcels crisis' in mid-1941. With the exception of a slight dip in the summer of 1942, the supply of parcels to German POW camps had held up well: a remarkable achievement and a credit to the industriousness and ingenuity of the ICRC's 'division des secours' and the Allied Red Cross societies. Despite mounting difficulties with overcrowding, particularly after the influx of prisoners from Italy in late 1943, relief parcels were able to satisfy the bulk of the prisoners' nutritional needs. By early 1944, most British compounds held reserves of parcels sufficient to meet three to four months requirements.[4]

Events over the second half of 1944, however, prompted renewed fears of a second 'parcel crisis', and it was this issue that topped the discussions British

[4] On average only one in every 5,000 parcels was lost. Report, M. Zollinger (ICRC), London, 29 Apr.–23 July 1943. ICRC. G23 29e vol. 158. ICRC meeting with delegation from British WO and FO, 26 Nov. 1944. ICRC. G23 Carton 605. Minutes of meeting, 24 Nov. 1944. Report by Sir R. Howard Vyse. BRCA. JWO/1/1/12.

officials held with Carl Burckhardt and his colleagues in the ICRC in November. The problems were essentially threefold. Firstly, the 'southern route', via Lisbon, Marseilles, and Geneva, through which the bulk of parcels had reached Germany, was severed in early May 1944 in advance of the Allied landings in southern France on 15 August. The route remained closed to traffic until the first week of November, by which time the ICRC's reserve stocks had dropped to perilously low levels. Secondly, the careful monitoring of prisoners' food supplies had been thrown into confusion by the deliberate running down of camp food reserves in early 1944 and Hitler's decision, later that autumn, to eradicate stocks of tinned foods so to prevent their use in escape bids or falling into the hands of partisans. Geneva tried to overturn these decisions, but, by late 1944, camp reserves had dwindled to between one month and eight days' supply; well below the two-month level deemed advisable by the ICRC.[5]

Finally, to this fraught situation was added the additional burden of coordinating deliveries to a camp system that was thrown into disarray by the evacuation of POW camps in Poland and east Germany.[6] The first British camp to be affected by this order was Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug, whose inmates were transferred to Stalag Luft IV, Gross Tychow, in July 1944, but the opening of the Soviet offensive, in early January 1945, triggered an exodus of POWs from the east that only finally came to an end in the closing days of the war. In most cases, the prisoners could take only the parcels they could carry. Little was done to improve, or expand, the detention facilities in southern and western Germany to cater for the new arrivals. The loss of camp reserves, coupled with the increasing intensity of Allied air attacks on Germany's rail and road network, meant that the job of feeding the estimated 180,000 British POWs detained in Germany by late 1944 became daily more difficult.[7] Though the general state of health amongst British prisoners was adequate by late 1944, the combined effect of mid-winter marches, poor sanitation, overcrowding, and a diet which, by mid-March, had slumped to little more than 1,300 calories a day, inevitably impaired the prisoners' health, and led to a sharp rise in the number of men succumbing to disease, illness, and infections over the spring.[8]

The shortage of food and provisions inside Germany was by no means unexpected. As early as mid-1943, the ICRC had broached the possibility of

[5] R. Marti, ICRC, Berlin, to ICRC, 4 Dec. 1944. ICRC. G3 Carton 107. Given the precariousness of food supplies, the decision to allow reserves to return to a two-month level in early March 1945 was meaningless. Swiss legation, Berlin, to FID, Berne, 9 Mar. 1945. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 67. Memo for UK legation, Berne, 23 Mar. 1945. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 37.

[6] See Nicol and Rennell, *The Last Escape*, passim, and Mason, *Prisoners of War*, pp. 449–72.

[7] Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, p. 16. For the loss of material—40,000 parcels from Stalag Luft VI alone—see ICRC memo 'Aufzeichnung für das OKW', 24 Nov. 1944. ICRC. SG4 Carton 1175.

[8] This was 1,000 short of the level required to keep healthy and 150 lower than the scale set for German civilians under Allied military occupation. Lt. Col. G. T. Hankay RAMC, Minutes, meeting with the DKR and German medical services, 18–21. Mar. 1945. TNA. WO224/220; COS (45) 130, 16 May 1945. CAB122/666.

leasing trucks from the Allies to assist in the distribution of relief parcels. Negotiations in Berlin gave rise to an agreement in May 1944 which authorized the creation of central distribution centres inside Germany to ease the strain on the ICRC's limited supply of rolling stock.[9] The issue had also been addressed in SHAEF in the spring of 1944, when officials had woken up to the possibility of central Europe slipping into famine before the war was out. The most optimistic assessments suggested that Germany would be able to meet barely two-thirds of the prisoners' medical and food needs in the final stages of the war.[10] In August 1944, anticipating ongoing delays with parcel traffic through southern France, the JWO instructed camp captains to place British POWs on half rations (one parcel a fortnight per man). Its American counterpart, the American Red Cross Society (ARCS), which by this date was responsible for over seventy per cent of Allied relief effort, also took steps to improve the situation, and began talks with the British, American, and Swedish authorities over the opening of a 'northern' supply route into Germany via Gothenburg and the German port of Lübeck.[11]

These initiatives were a step in the right direction but hardly sufficient to meet the needs of Allied POWs by early 1945. All too often their impact was blunted by the petty narrow-mindedness of some of those involved. Washington's initial refusal to follow the JWO's lead and cut US POW rations provoked consternation in London, but Britain's new fondness for equality rung hollow, at least to American ears, given the indifference Britain had shown to the needs of its European allies over the past four years.[12] The ARCS's efforts to establish a 'northern route' also made depressingly slow progress, floundering on Stockholm's reluctance to allow Swedish ships and ferries to enter the war zone, and the Admiralty's refusal to permit the use of north German ports or grant safe-conduct passes to the relief ships. Negotiations were also hampered by London's insistence on detaining ships in the Mediterranean, lest their sudden departure for Sweden compromise Allied deception operations for the 'Dragoon' landings in southern France. Objections were also raised at increasing the volume of commercial traffic in the Baltic at a time when Stockholm was being pushed to sever commercial ties with the Reich. It was only in early November, under intense pressure from Washington, that the British COS

[9] For a resumé, see Rigg (ICRC) to JWO, London, 14 June 1944. ICRC. SG4 Carton 1175. Earl of Drogheda, MEW, London, to C. J. Burckhardt, ICRC, 4 Sep. 1944. ICRC. G11 Carton 401.

[10] SHAEF G4, 'Delivery by Air of Food and Medical Supplies to Allied POW Post Hostilities', 17 Aug. 1944. TNA. AIR2/5638. Minute by Vice CIGS, 27 July 1944. CAB121/293.

[11] ARCS memo. 'Relief Shipments to Prisoners of War in Europe—1944', 1 Jan. 1945. NARA. RG200 ARC Branch 3 Box 993 619.2/02. Sir R. Campbell (UK embassy, Washington) to FO, 4 Aug. 194. TNA. CAB122/669.

[12] European prisoners had received, at best, less than a quarter of the rations enjoyed by their British and US counterparts. FO to UK embassy, Washington, 10 Oct. 1944. TNA. WO229/10.

finally relented, and agreed to allow relief ships to disgorge their cargoes in Lübeck.[13]

The reopening of bulk shipments into Germany in the first week of November was nothing if not timely. Within weeks, the evacuation of POWs from the east plunged Allied relief operations into renewed turmoil. Burckhardt did his best to alert his Allied visitors to the difficulties in maintaining an adequate flow of supplies to the camps, but his words fell on deaf ears. Long accustomed to leaving 'relief' issues in the hands of the aid societies, British officials and their SHAEF colleagues were reluctant to offer the Red Cross adequate logistical, material, and political support. The pervading outlook was summed up by SHAEF's Lt. Gen. Sam Reber who, in the course of a meeting on 24 November, blithely dismissed Burckhardt's concerns over the dilapidated state of the German railways and insisted that 'as long as Germany prosecutes the war, it is that country's duty to supply motor transport'. 'The care of prisoners', he fatuously added, 'is a matter of reciprocity, and as long as the Allied POW in Germany are cared for according to the regulations, the same treatment will be accorded to German POW in Allied territory'.[14] In the face of such intransigence, it was hardly surprising that Geneva made little progress in improving its distribution system before the onset of Russia's offensive in the early New Year. Over January, only nine railway wagons left Switzerland for German camps a day, instead of the estimated seventy-five required to service the needs of Allied POWs.[15]

It was not until the third week of February that Allied officials finally woke up to the seriousness of the situation. SHAEF agreed to place eighty-eight trucks at Geneva's disposal to ease the 'critical situation' facing the ICRC's relief effort, but further lorries from the JWO and ARCS were held up until a 'test' convoy, bearing supplies for prisoners located in and around Nuremburg in early March, had proved the viability of the ICRC's new arrangements.[16] Notwithstanding this belated show of concern, it is doubtful whether the Allied military authorities ever fully grasped the enormity of the problems facing the Red Cross relief effort. SHAEF's trucks, for instance, could shift barely 90,000 parcels per trip, for a POW population in southern Germany bordering 1.5 million. The ICRC

[13] By the end of 1944, the northern route was providing 10,000 tons of supplies per month. COS (44) 685 (0) 2 Aug. 1944; Head of M(I) for 1st Sea Lord, 2 Aug. 1944; Memo Head of Military Branch (Adty) to Ass. Chief of the Naval Staff, 24 Oct. 1944. TNA. CAB121/293. Sir V. Mallet (UK minister, Stockholm) to FO 23 Nov. 1944. NARA. RG200 Box 993 619.2/02 BRC 1944–1946. For the 'northern route', see ICRC, *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, vol. iii*, pp. 85–95.

[14] Meeting between representatives of SHAEF and ICRC, 24 Nov. 1944. ICRC. G23 Carton 604.

[15] Meeting, ICRC, ARCS, and JWO, 7 Feb. 1945, and members of the Anglo–American economic delegation, 15 Feb. 1945. ICRC. G23 Carton 605.

[16] British COS to SHAEF Main, 23 Feb. 1945. TNA. CAB119/94. Minutes of meeting, DPW, 21 Feb. 1945; Berne to FO, 17 Feb. 1945. WO193/343. Minutes, meeting, 15 Feb. 1945. BRCA. JWO1/1/12. ICRC, *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, vol. iii*, pp. 191–93.

was left to beg, borrow, or buy ships, rolling stock, petrol, and trucks from whatever sources were available, and continued to suffer shortages of all these commodities.

Though the Allies frequently professed their concern for the security of Red Cross relief convoys and the columns of prisoners shuffling their way across Germany, little real effort was made to reduce the danger of air attacks. In early February, SHAEF offered to supply Swiss camp inspectors with two-way radios so they could alert Allied aircraft to the presence of POWs in their vicinity: a proposal that overlooked Berlin's trenchant views on the role and responsibilities of neutral inspectors, and the length of time taken to obtain diplomatic visas from the *Auswärtiges Amt*. Not surprisingly, the proposal was quietly shelved.[17] Red crosses were etched on the sides of aid trucks, 'POW'—or more imaginatively, 'RAF—finger out!'—was daubed on POW barrack roofs and paradegrounds or on large sheets trailed by prisoners whenever they were on the move. The spectre of 'friendly fire' incidents was, however, never far away. Three attacks on POW columns between 12 and 16 April claimed the lives of fifty-one POWs alone. By the end of the month, over a quarter of all relief trucks operating out of Lübeck had been destroyed by Allied air action; another quarter was laid up with mechanical difficulties. Further incidents, the US minister in Stockholm warned on 28 April, not only endangered the lives and wellbeing of Allied POWs but threatened to undermine Allied prestige in Scandinavian eyes. It was only on 1 May that restrictive rules of engagement were imposed on Allied squadrons operating near Lübeck, but, by this stage, most of the friendly-fire incidents had already taken place, with tragic consequences for all concerned.[18]

NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE REPATRIATION OF 'LONG-TERM' POWS

One of the first issues raised by the British in their meetings in November was the question of repatriation. Plans were already afoot for an exchange of sick and wounded POWs and protected personnel early the following year, and a list of eligible German POWs was communicated to Berlin shortly after the return of the British delegation in early December. Despite a last-minute change of venue—from Gothenburg to Constance on the Swiss–German border—the operation was completed without major upset. This, the last Anglo–German exchange under the POW convention to take place in the war,

[17] Memo, G. M. Godfrey, US legation, Berne, 7 Feb. 1945. NARA. RG84 Berne Box 85.

[18] It is likely that up to 1,000 Anglo–American POWs died as a result of Allied bombing: see Wylie, 'Muted Applause'; Nichol and Rennell, *The Last Escape*, pp. 298–302. Johnson, US minister, Stockholm, to State, 26 and 27 Apr. 1945. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 91.

saw 1,932 British personnel, 500 American servicemen, and 807 American civilians released, in return for 4,687 German POWs, 191 protected personnel, and 863 civilians.[19]

What really interested the British delegation, however, was not sick and wounded POWs but rather so-called 'long-term' prisoners: men whose sole justification for repatriation was based on the length of their captivity. The prospect of repatriating fit prisoners was not quiet as improbable as it might first appear. The Great War had seen a number of agreements for the reciprocal internment, in neutral countries, of 'elderly' prisoners who had served more than eighteen months in captivity.[20] The 1929 POW convention encouraged the exchange of 'long-term' POWs, but limited the right of automatic, direct repatriation to prisoners suffering acute ailments or injuries, and offered neutral internment for those with less severe, though still debilitating, wounds or illnesses. In late 1940, however, the British and German governments agreed to merge the two categories, and offer direct repatriation for anyone passed by the itinerant mixed medical commissions. Any discussion of repatriating able-bodied prisoners had first, then, to decide on whether to take advantage of neutral internment facilities, or stick to current practice and return the men direct to their homelands.

Prospects for the more liberal practice initially looked promising. Hitler clearly had a soft spot for Great War veterans, and had earlier in the war agreed to the return of 60,000 *Anciens combattants* to France.[21] Nevertheless, despite prodding from the ICRC, Mjr.-Gen. Sir Victor Fortune (Britain's most senior POW in Germany), and the prisoners' next-of-kin, there was little chance of either side agreeing to repatriate long-term able-bodied POWs until they had succeeded in returning those eligible under the convention—protected personnel and sick and wounded POWs—and this, as we have seen, was not accomplished until October 1943. Talk of returning able-bodied men fell easy victim to the 'attritional' mindset that dominated the service ministries' attitude towards repatriation. Germany's 'long-term' prisoners were largely merchant seamen who, the Admiralty feared, could be easily re-trained as submariners.[22] With 'roughly a hundred U-boat crews' worth of merchant seamen behind wire by late 1943, the inter-departmental 'repatriation committee' insisted that neutral internment was an essential pre-condition for any repatriation of long-term POWs.[23] A proposal to this effect was put to Berlin in April 1944. Any prisoner

[19] Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 144.

[20] Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War*, pp. 34–38.

[21] Overmans, Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 767, 770–72.

[22] London treated merchant seamen as POWs, and thereby denied them the right, under the 11th Hague convention, to repatriation in return for their parole. Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, pp. 123–24.

[23] A. V. Alexander (1st Lord, Adty) to Lord Leathers (minister for war transport) 30 Sep. 1943. TNA. ADM116/5353. By this date Britain held 4,774 merchant seamen. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 149–50.

over forty-two years old by 1 March 1944, and who had been detained for longer than eighteen months would be allowed to sit out the remainder of the war in Swedish internment camps.

Britain's approach to Berlin in early 1944 was driven by a mixture of humanitarianism and political pragmatism. The psychological and physical effects of prolonged captivity frequently cropped up in camp inspection reports, and featured prominently in the interrogation of those repatriated home in October 1943. According to Col. d'Erlach, head of the Swiss–German mixed medical commission, by early 1944, some seventy per cent of all British POWs were affected by tuberculosis, and many were suffering from psychological ailments.[24] Political pressure was also growing to have long-term POWs returned home. The issue was repeatedly raised in parliament over the winter of 1943–44, and with an exchange of injured POWs already accomplished, ministers found it difficult to justify further delay. It is doubtful, though, whether officials, for all the protestations of concern, were genuinely committed to exchanging able-bodied men at this stage of the war. London's proposals were scarcely tailored to meet German tastes. Berlin's reluctance to intern its men in neutral countries was well known, as was its resistance to exchanging on the basis of categories rather than numbers. Why officials believed Ribbentrop would consent to an agreement that envisaged the return of 3,351 Britons for only 808 Germans is tantalizingly unclear, and strongly suggests that the offer of April 1944 was principally designed to appease the government's critics at home.[25] Not surprisingly, the initiative failed to win support in Berlin. With so few prisoners dating from 1939–40, the OKW saw no reason to depart from a strictly numerical exchange.[26] Nor was there any enthusiasm to confront the 'considerable exchange difficulties' and 'political stress' created in having men interned in neutral countries. Apart from Spain, none of the neutrals were thought sufficiently free from Allied influence to warrant placing German servicemen in their care.[27]

It was, then, something of a surprise for the British delegation to learn, in late November, that German diplomats had floated the idea of repatriating long-term POWs with the Swiss earlier that month. Members of Berne's foreign interest division advised against offering neutral internment, but suggested London precipitate Berlin's move by tabling a proposal of its own.[28] It is possible that popular clamour might have forced London's hand as it had earlier

[24] L. Harrison, US minister, Berne, to State, 3 June 1944. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 64.

[25] See Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, p. 62.

[26] Note, E. Albrecht 17 Dec. 1943. PA-AA. R40793. This and other notes frequently referred to British parliamentary debates. Note, R. Marti (ICRC), 13 Dec. 1943. Note, meetings held in Berlin by Count Bernadotte, 16–23 Nov. 1943. ICRC. G14 Carton 414, G85/282.

[27] For d'Erlach's views: Col. d'Erlach to G. Tait, US legation, Berne, 1 June 1944. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 64. See also OKW WFSt Ag/Ausland to WFSt/Qu, 9 Oct. 1944. BA-MA. RM7/1887. UK legation, Berne, to FO, 26 Oct. 1944. TNA. AIR2/4671.

[28] Anglo–Swiss meeting, 1st session, 28 Nov. 1944. TNA. FO1049/26.

in the year. The failure to help long-term POWs had featured in criticism of the WO's handling of POW matters over the autumn and a full debate in the House on the issue on 17 November had severely taxed government spokesmen. With three exchanges of injured POWs already complete, and a further one scheduled for the New Year, public dissatisfaction over the government's apparent 'abandonment' of long-term POWs was only set to grow.[29] News of the acute overcrowding and inadequate food supplies in German camps naturally made the recovery of the 37,187 veterans of the Norway and French campaigns still in captivity compelling. As a joint WO/FO memorandum noted on 15 January, 'the repatriation of even a small percentage of the long-term men would have a good effect [on POW morale], not only among [long-term prisoners], but also among those who have been in enemy hands for a shorter time'.[30]

Offering to exchange able-bodied men, nevertheless, represented a major gamble for the British government, whatever the likely humanitarian and political benefits. Ministers naturally put a positive gloss on the matter, but few in London, let alone in Washington or Moscow, had any confidence that Hitler would abide by the terms of the exchange and not return the repatriates to the front. Evidence that German diplomats had at least broached the subject in Berne was probably critical in steeling British resolve to press on with the negotiations. Eden's admission to the House on 6 January that Britain's earlier offer remained unanswered was designed to alert Berlin to Britain's continued interest in the matter. Six weeks later, London tabled a fresh set of proposals with the Swiss authorities, offering Berlin a simple, one-off exchange: 3,000 German soldiers, captured in the Middle East before 31 July 1943, for a similar number of British prisoners, captured before 1 July 1940.

Berne's reading of German intentions proved correct. After the collapse of the Ardennes offensive the German leadership increasingly came to see a split within the Allied alliance as Germany's best chance of avoiding outright defeat. Moscow's failure to come to the Anglo-Americans' aid over the winter, by mounting diversionary attacks in the east, seemed to indicate that a rift was opening up in the Allied camp. 'If Germany and Japan are able to continue the war to the end of 1945', Ribbentrop confided to the Japanese ambassador on 7 January, 'various conflicts of interest among the enemy will make themselves clearly manifest'.[31] But even a defensive posture required resources that were in chronically short supply, and it was the hope of augmenting German manpower, and not concern over the effects of 'barbed wire' disease on German POWs, as claimed by Keitel, that fired German interest in the return of long-term POWs

[29] See remark by Sir J. Lucas, *Parl. Debs. Commons* 1944–45 vol. 404. 17 Nov. 1944, folio 2358.

[30] 'Repatriation of Able-Bodied Long-Term Prisoners of War from the British Commonwealth and Germany', 15 Jan. 1945. TNA. PREM3/364/8.

[31] Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 419.

in January.[32] A German proposal, transmitted to the Swiss on 16 February, was thus breathtakingly ambitious: a staggered exchange of POWs imprisoned for longer than three years, involving some 25,000 men on either side.[33]

The prospect of liberating so many prisoners was scarcely something British officials could ignore, especially given the appalling conditions known to be facing those making the long westward trek from camps in Poland. The fact that the Allied bombardment of German cities had created an increasingly 'ugly mood' against British prisoners naturally added to the sense of urgency. Nevertheless, Swiss reports that Berlin was 'genuinely anxious' to clinch a deal inevitably factored into British calculations.[34] Within a week of receiving Ribbentrop's proposal, London agreed to abandon its own limited operation and offered Berlin an initial exchange of 7,000 men through Gothenburg on 27 March, with additional exchanges in the future when transport became available.[35]

As neither American nor Soviet POWs were to be returned under the deal, the attention of Britain's allies naturally focused on how the proposed exchange would affect German defences. The war cabinet was willing to court Soviet ire by coming clean only after Berlin had shown its hand, but rather more finesse was felt necessary with the Americans. Over the first three weeks of March a concerted effort was made to secure US acquiescence.[36] The previous July, anxious to resolve a deadlock over the repatriation of civilian internees in the Far East, President Roosevelt had cautioned against allowing security considerations to override 'higher humanitarian interests'.[37] His officials had not felt so inclined when the ICRC inquired about exchanging long-term POWs in Europe that year. With few personnel likely to profit from an exchange, an agreement with Berlin was considered 'inadvisable', and, by early 1945, with the military initiative once again in Allied hands, the US COS were even more averse to returning combat-ready troops to Germany, and assumed, no doubt correctly, that the 'casualty conscious' American public would share their misgivings.[38] Since D-Day the US had lost 3,000 soldiers killed, 12,000 wounded, and another 2,000 'missing' for every 25,000 Germans captured, and naturally, no one in Washington wished to pay the same price again.[39]

[32] Keitel to Ribbentrop, 5 Jan. 1945. BA-MA. RW4/905. For worry over the effect of untreated syphilis amongst prisoners: Dibowski (OKW, Chef W San) to DRK and WAST Feb. 1945. RH12/23 vol. 5.

[33] See Ribbentrop to Keitel, 20 Jan. 1945. WFSt/Qu to Insp. Kgf, 8 Jan. 1945. BA-MA. RW4/905.

[34] UK legation, Berne, to FO, 25, 27 Feb. and 3 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB122/690, CAB121/294.

[35] The German offer reached Berne on 16 Feb. 1945, Britain's two days later.

[36] COS (44) 68, 14 Mar. 1945, AMSSO to JSM, 14 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB122/690. Minute, Roberts (PWD), 6 Jan. 1945. TNA. FO916/1173.

[37] Roosevelt to Churchill, 13 July 1944, cited in P. Scott Corbett, *Quiet Passages*, p. 102.

[38] C. Hull to L. Harrison, US minister, Berne, 23 June 1944. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 64. The decision lay with the War Department: see Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 153.

[39] JSM to AMSSO, 24 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB119/94.

American objections failed, however, to dampen British enthusiasm for the deal. Not only had Washington agreed in principle to carry out an equally ambitious exchange with Japan the previous summer, but body-bag calculations based on D-Day operations were hardly appropriate for gauging current or future operations: the US 1st army captured over 20,000 prisoners in the last week of February alone. Moreover, by the time the US chiefs gave their judgement on 24 March, the proposed timetable for exchanging the first quota of prisoners had already slipped, and the likelihood, therefore, of Germany receiving any men in time for them to play an active—far less decisive—part in hostilities had diminished. American opposition, though disappointing, was not, therefore, deemed sufficiently grave to halt British policy in its tracks.

What ultimately scotched the project was the change of heart in Berlin. There is some doubt as to whether the German government was even capable of mounting an operation of this nature by the spring of 1945. Repatriation operations were notoriously complex undertakings involving the cooperation of a host of different agencies. The administrative competency of the OKW POW department had been severely damaged by the loss of its central card index during an air raid on Berlin on 22 November 1943. The following spring, hopes of instituting regular POW exchanges had to be shelved after the German railway authorities refused to release the necessary hospital trains.[40] The plans for repatriating 'long-term' POWs in early 1945 did, it is true, have the virtue of simplicity, but the transfer of thousands of POWs remained a major undertaking, and by late March it is open to question whether the German administration possessed the functional capacity to live up to its side of the bargain.

The problem was aggravated by internal tensions within the administration. Since the previous summer, the AA and OKW had been unwilling to pronounce on issues of principle without first obtaining a ruling from the *Führerhauptquartier*. By late 1944, with the Führer and leading Nazis increasingly isolated from each other and the rest of the administration, the simple task of securing a directive could take weeks, if not months.[41] The evacuation of government departments from Berlin from early 1945 compounded the situation, but it was the degradation of Germany's administrative assets that proved most debilitating. An air raid on central Berlin on 3 February left much of the AA's main building in ruins and destroyed the central catalogue of the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA). Information on the number, location, and condition of British POWs by early 1945 was therefore simply unavailable. By mid-March, the AA's legal department possessed only two typewriters and was all but cut off from the headquarters building as a result of fallen debris. German officials

[40] For the impact this had on the selection of prisoners for repatriation, see OKW Kgf to AA, 15 Mar. 1944. BA MA. RM7/1887; Graevenitz to AA 31 Dec. 1943. PA-AA. R40794.

[41] Anglo–Swiss meeting, 1st session, 28 Nov. 1944. concl. 4. TNA. FO1049/26.

were increasingly forced to rely on the Swiss legation to keep them abreast of developments and supply them with copies of important documents.[42]

Although preliminary arrangements were put in place to assemble the prisoners and allocate trains for their use, by early March, German enthusiasm for an exchange had waned.[43] Military developments made the practical realization of an exchange increasingly unlikely, but Ribbentrop appears to have decided to tread water and await events. Hitler's criticism of the proposal on 25 March—on the grounds that an exchange would be viewed as a sign of weakness—effectively sealed any hope of clinching a deal.[44] Subsequent German statements, though avoiding an outright rejection, put forward so many obstacles that British officials, and their Swiss intermediaries, quickly came to realize that the chance of pulling off an exchange had slipped from their grasp.[45] With advanced Allied units already recovering parties of British POWs, the impact of the proposal's demise can, perhaps, be overstated. The last two months of the war were, however, some of the hardest the prisoners had to endure, and there is little doubt that many of those who might have benefited from any early release failed to get through their final days of captivity and savour the taste of freedom.

NEGOTIATING AN END TO CAPTIVITY

The principal objective in sending an official delegation to Switzerland in November 1944 was to hear Swiss views on the security situation likely to face prisoners in the final months of the war, a subject that had dominated British thinking towards its prisoners since the previous summer. The news the delegation received was far from reassuring. The progressive marginalization of the OKW's *Generalinspektor* for POWs, Mjr.-Gen. Adolf Westhoff, from all key decisions had become all too apparent to Swiss observers. Internal German documents confirm this view; so too the post-war recollections of Westhoff's successor, SS-Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger. From the winter of 1944, the fortnightly collection of instructions issued to camp commandants no longer bore Westhoff's signature.[46] The struggle for control over British POWs—which had first emerged with Hitler's intervention into the

[42] P. A. Feldscher, annual report for 1944–45, 9 Aug. 1945. SBA. E2001 (D) 11 vol. 26. Statistics on German casualties also dry up from this date: see Rüdiger Overmans, 'German Historiography, the War Losses, and the Prisoners of War', in Gunter Bischof and Stephen Ambrose (eds.), *Eisenhower and the German POWs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), pp. 127–69 (129–39).

[43] SKL Vermerk betr. Neuer Kriegsgefangenenaustausch. n.d. BA-MA. RM7/1906.

[44] Note, WFSt/Qu, 25 Mar. 1945. Marginal comment by Keitel, n.d. (about 27 Mar.). BA-MA. RW4/905.

[45] UK legation, Berne, to FO, 4 Apr. 1945. TNA. WO193/349; FO to Lord Halifax, Washington, 25 Apr. 1945. TNA. CAB122/690.

[46] See Befehlsammlung Nr 45 and Nr. 49. BA-MA. RH49/30.

cross-Channel exchange arrangements in October 1941—appeared to have finally been resolved in favour of the Nazi 'radicals'. Britain's fears about the possibility of a last-minute massacre of British POWs had come one step further to realization.[47]

To the last, the Nazi regime never lost its capacity for brutality and exacted a frightful toll on its opponents. Having showed its hand in the Stalag Luft III affair the previous March, the Gestapo remained the most potent menace to prisoners' wellbeing, but members of the SS, *Wehrmacht*, *Werwolf* units, *Volkssturm,* and Nazi party organs all contributed to the wave of terror that saw some 10,000 people murdered behind German lines over the last months of the war.[48] The vast majority of those killed were foreign workers, but Allied POWs unquestionably suffered indiscriminate attacks at this time. The chequered success of those who tried to rein in German excesses and secure access to detention facilities and concentration camps has been chronicled elsewhere, but of the scores the Gestapo wanted to settle before the game was up, fortunately, the murdering of British POWs was mercifully well down the list.[49] By late February, Swiss visitors to the RSHA's headquarters in Berlin or its outlying centres, frequently found officials too distracted by their own worries to give much attention to Swiss inquiries.[50]

For our purposes, the most important point to emerge over the final months of the war was that Gottlob Berger proved to be much less hostile to British interests than many had feared. Although the treatment of POWs and the conditions of their captivity declined under Berger's watch, there is some evidence to support Berger's later claim that he acted in good faith. 'I wouldn't say ten thousand men owe me their lives', he told Allied interrogators in May 1947, 'but they certainly owe me their health'.[51] A man of 'simple, elementary character, full of honest good nature, indefinite garrulity and unsophisticated emotion', Berger appears to have taken a proprietary interest in the wellbeing of Anglo-American prisoners. His first act on taking command on 1 October 1944 was to accompany a team of DRK and army medical personnel on a tour of British compounds to assess the quality of provisions and detention facilities.[52] The following March, he invited

[47] Anglo–Swiss meeting, 1st session, 28 Nov. 1944. TNA. FO1049/26.

[48] Paul, ' "Diese Erschieβungen . . ." ', pp. 543–68. Perry Biddiscombe, *Werewolf!: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944–1946* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 117–50.

[49] See Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust*, pp. 258–72; Ronald W. Zweig, 'Feeding the Camps: Allied Blockade Policy and the Relief of Concentration Camps in Germany, 1944–1945', *Historical Journal*, 41/3 (1988), pp. 825–51.

[50] R. Lehner (ICRC) 'Allgemeiner Situationsbericht', 28 Feb. 1945. ICRC. G3 26f Carton 108. See also Schutzmachtabteilung, Kisslegg, Würtemburg, to FID, 18 Apr. 1944. SBA. E2001 (D) 11 vol. 26.

[51] Interrogation report, G. Berger, 1 May 1947. para. 21. IfZ. ZS427 vol. 2.

[52] Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn., 1950), p. 138. Gerhard Rempel, 'Gottlob Berger: "Ein Schwabengeneral der Tat" ', in E. Syring (ed.), *Die SS Elite under dem Totenkopf* (Paderborn: Schaningh, 2000), pp. 45–59.

British and American POW doctors to a conference in Berlin to discuss health and sanitation issues in British compounds.[53] The dearth of food, medicine, equipment, and building materials put paid to any major improvement in the prisoners' lot, but the fact that the medical conferences were not transformed into a propaganda stunt is suggestive of Berger's intentions.[54] The admittedly patchy documentary record from the period paints him in a favourable light. In early March he interceded to secure tented accommodation for evacuated officer POWs, while the following month, decrypted signals show him berating his subordinates for failing to provide adequate facilities for the prisoners in their care.[55]

Berger's outlook was perhaps most evident in his choice of collaborators, and in the wide measure of support he gave them to fulfil their duties without fear of rebuke. This was certainly the case for Dr Baur, the Anglophile doctor who presided over the medical conferences, but was also true of Berger's principal lieutenant, the former Dulag commandant, Oberst F. W. Meuer, who was recruited for his administrative competence and Swabian roots, not his ideological fervour.[56] Neither he nor his adjutants, Obsert von Weltzin and Major Naus, were members of the SS, and all had built their earlier careers in the OKW. Meuer's influence over policy matters was marginal, but, as he was principally responsible for executing policy decisions, his benevolence was by no means unimportant. By all accounts, Meuer was 'very reasonable' and 'good natured': the Swiss had nothing but praise for him, and came to rely on his assistance in helping locate groups of POWs in the final, chaotic weeks of the war.[57]

The fact that Berger and Meuer seemed intent on maintaining a measure of order over Germany's creaking POW machinery was all the more significant given Hitler's determination to cling on to his Anglo-American captives for as long as possible. What this decision implied about the Führer's longer-term intentions towards British POWs was something that naturally exercised British minds, but the immediate, practical implications were no less momentous, for it was the physical and psychological strains of being shunted from one camp to

[53] Joachim Scholtyseck, 'Der "Schwabenherzog" Gottlob Berger, SS-Obergruppenführer', in Joachim Scholtyseck and Michael Kibner (eds.), *Die Führer der Provinz: NS-Biographien aus Baden und Würtemberg* (Constance: Universitätsverlag, 1997), pp. 77–110, esp. 97, 102.

[54] R. Marti (ICRC, Berlin), minutes, meetings 18–22 Mar. 1945. ICRC. G3 26f Carton 109. For Berger's involvement: Note for Amtschef, Chef des Stabes, Abt Chef Wi G. 24 Mar. 1945. BA-MA RH12/23 vol. 5.

[55] Berger to Himmler, 8 Mar. 1945. BA Lichtefelde. NS19/3811; Berger to Commander of POW, Wehrkreis 4, 19 Apr. 1945. TNA. HW5/706 CX/MSS/C477.

[56] Westhoff claimed not to have known Meuer before his appointment. Berger often chose Swabians, like himself, for his staff. Interrogation, A. Westhoff 3 Apr. 1947, para 44. IfZ. ZS425 vol. 2.

[57] Feldscher to de Pury, FID, 16 Apr. 1945. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 74. Interrogation, A. Westhoff, 3 Apr. 1947, para 49. IfZ. ZS425 vol. 2. Interrogation, F. W. Meuer, 28 Feb. 1947. para 26. IfZ. ZS1255.

another that in the end posed the greatest threat to the prisoners' wellbeing over the final six months of the war. London was first alerted to the evacuation of POWs from the east by German radio broadcasts on 31 January, which claimed that British prisoners had begged to join their guards in fighting the advancing Russian hordes.[58] Swiss reports of exhausted Allied POWs staggering westwards indicated the magnitude of the operation, but officials put particular weight on an incident at Saarguemines in early February when the German defenders, having agreeing to relinquish control of a camp stranded in no-man's-land, had a sudden change of heart and evacuated the camp's forty-three Anglo-American inmates before withdrawing from the area. Confirmation of German policy came in early April when a decrypted German signal, describing a meeting between Hitler, Himmler, and Berger on 20 March, showed that the Führer remained 'most emphatic' in wanting to hold on to Anglo-American officers and NCO prisoners.[59]

In the short term, there was little the Allies could do to influence German policy other than to protest at Berlin's failure to make adequate preparations to feed and protect its prisoners before herding them from one camp to another.[60] The possibility of making a formal approach to Berlin to have the prisoners left 'in situ', however—first raised by SHAEF in mid-February—quickly exposed the difficulties of 'negotiating' with Berlin over POWs. Though sympathetic, the FO doubted Hitler would willingly relinquish his prisoners, and questioned the wisdom of publicizing Allied anxieties 'at the very moment when it is so vital to drive home [our] overwhelming superiority'.[61] The real problem, though, lay in convincing the Soviets, and later the French, to agree to an approach. The former were vehemently opposed, in principle, to any dialogue with Berlin and were convinced that Germany would merely use the prisoners to gain tactical advantage on the battlefield. The French, for their part, were reluctant to agree to any arrangement that prevented the redeployment of former POWs on combat operations, a precondition London felt sure Berlin would demand before releasing any prisoners.[62] While Churchill was ready to override French objections, the Soviets required more delicate handling, not least as negotiations over the return of British POWs liberated by the Red Army had stalled and looked set to become a major bone of contention in Anglo–Soviet relations. Though Allied representatives in Moscow recommended raising the question at the highest level, for Churchill, priority lay in securing the repatriation of British

[58] Remark by Gruppenführer H. Fegelein, 27 Jan. 1945. Heiber and Glantz, *Hitler and his Generals*, p. 666. Nichol and Rennell, *Last Escape*, p. 85.

[59] Berger to SS Obergruppenführer Martin, 31 Mar. 1945. TNA. HW5/706 CX/MSS/C463. For the Saarguemines incident, see meeting of IPOWC, 17 Feb. 1945. TNA. WO193/343.

[60] For a detailed discussion, see Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 212–21.

[61] Sir O. Sargent (FO) to Mjr.-Gen. L. C. Hollis (war cabinet), 15 Feb. 1945, cited in Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p. 214.

[62] Duff Cooper (UK ambassador, Paris), to FO, 17 Apr. 1945. TNA. PREM3/264/15.

POWs from Russia, and he was anxious, therefore, to keep his 'wire' to Stalin 'clear'.[63]

With no progress made in Moscow, and the health of British prisoners deteriorating by the day, the FO decided to throw caution to the wind and ask the Swiss to make tentative soundings in Berlin. To British relief, German officials proved receptive. The AA informed Swiss diplomats in Berlin on 11 April that prisoners would be left 'in situ' if the Allies undertook not to deploy any liberated POWs in combat units. Facing daily questions in the House over the fate of British POWs, Churchill was, 'strong[ly] resolve[d] to accept' the offer 'in good time to save our prisoners'.[64] Stalin was duly asked for his opinion, but when, on 19 April, no reply was forthcoming, London unilaterally announced—via the BBC and the Swiss government—its acceptance of German terms.[65]

The agreement to leave prisoners 'in situ', heralded as a breakthrough for Allied diplomacy, was not without its problems. Curiously, while FO officials mulled over Berlin's likely motives, no one paused to consider the provenance of Germany's offer. This was a serious oversight for, although it had been the AA who had authorized the communication on 11 April, it was Berger who confirmed the deal on 28 April and issued the necessary instructions to camp commandants.[66] Such was the chaos in Germany by this date that Berger's instructions did not reach all those required. As late as 2 May, AA officials in Berlin disclaimed any knowledge of Berger's decision. Agreements were struck at a local level, but groups of prisoners continued to be shepherded around the Reich until the hour of Germany's defeat. Equally worryingly, Berger's instructions were not comprehensive. Reports reached London, over the last week of April and first week of May, of groups of two to three hundred prisoners, mostly British and US airmen, being marched off into a 'redoubt' in southern Bavaria. Though the figures were found to be exaggerated, officials became particularly concerned about the fate of a small party of prized prisoners, the *Prominente*, who included the scions of British aristocracy and commanders of the Polish Home Army. It took a 'most interesting discussion lasting some three hours' before Berger finally agreed to relinquish the party into Swiss custody and allow it to pass through German lines and into American hands on 5 May.[67]

[63] Minute, Churchill for Eden, 1 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB120/222. General Deane (Military Mission, Moscow) to General G. Marshall, 2 Mar. 1945. NARA. RG331 Entry 27 Box 85.

[64] WM (45) 43, 12 Apr. 1945. TNA. CAB195/3. Minute, Churchill, 16 Apr. 1945. PREM3/364/15. UK legation, Berne to FO, 11 Apr. 1945. WO193/349.

[65] Memo by Special Interests Section, Berlin, for AA, 2 May 1945 'Sehr Dringend'. UK legation, Berne, aide-mémoire, 19 Apr. 1945. SBA. E2200 Berlin (56) 3 vol. 74. Paris later agreed to the proposal, while Moscow let London accept the offer on its behalf. W. Stucki, FPD to Frölicher, Swiss minister, Bernried bei Tutzing, 23 Apr. 1945. Ibid.

[66] UK legation, Berne, to FO, 28 Apr. 1945. TNA. CAB121/293.

[67] W. Buchmüller, 'Report on the liberation of the Group of Prominent POW', 12 May 1945. SBA. E2001 (D) 15 Classeur 34. SHAEF PWX diary, 1 May 1945. NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 69. Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*, pp. 260–62. For the redoubt, see Stephan Linck, ' "Festung Nord"

TAKING THE WORLD DOWN WITH US: GERMANY AND THE POW REGIME, FEBRUARY–MARCH 1945

In many respects, the experience of the *Prominente* epitomized the fluctuations in German attitudes towards British POWs in the latter years of the war. From late 1943, the privileged status enjoyed by Allied POWs was progressively undermined by Britain's indiscriminate bombing of German cities and the growing influence of Himmler's security forces over internal German affairs. By early 1945, Swiss inspectors reported a hardening in popular attitudes against Allied POWs, and British POWs, especially airmen, being singled out for 'special treatment'.[68] The fate of the great escapers had already demonstrated the extent to which the Nazi regime was prepared to flout international norms and understandably it was fear of a repetition of this event that dominated official thinking after May 1944. At the same time, however, there remained a strong possibility that the prospect of defeat might have a salutary effect on German behaviour; encouraging German officials, guards, and civilians to view Allied POWs as either hostages—to be bartered in return for their liberty—or potential witnesses—who could appeal for clemency on their behalf before Allied courts or tribunals.

Berger's ostentatious 'protection' of the *Prominente* in the final days of the war seemed to fit this mould, but the behaviour of von Ribbentrop offers perhaps the most conspicuous example of how German officials sought to capitalize on Britain's obvious sensitivities in this area, and ingratiate themselves with the Allied governments. Having been ambassador in London in the mid-1930s, Ribbentrop frequently claimed to have an understanding of the British mind and a status in London unique amongst the Nazi elite. Therefore it came as a shock to discover, in October 1944, that even traditional conservatives like Lord Simon, Chamberlain's mild-mannered chancellor, were intent on trying him for war crimes. 'Do you really think that the Allies will . . . er . . . hang us all?' Ribbentrop reputedly spluttered to Fritz Hesse, his aide and former press attaché in London. 'I've only done my duty like any other patriot . . . and', he went on, conveniently overlooking his enthusiastic support for *Lynchjustiz* three months earlier, 'I [have always] tried to have the Geneva Convention respected'.[69] Whether Simon's views were as decisive in shaping Ribbentrop's outlook as Hesse claims, the foreign minister's approach to POW questions noticeably softened over the autumn of 1944. Hesse was given charge of the two 'holiday' camps run for British POWs, while Germany's pre-war consul-general in Liverpool was

und "Alpenfestung" Das Ende des NS-Sicherheitsapparatus', in Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (eds.), *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg. 'Heimatfront' und besetztes Europa* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000), esp. pp 574–79.

[68] UK legation, Berne, to London, 27 Feb. 1945. TNA. CAB122/690.

[69] Fritz Hesse, *Hitler and the English* (London: Alan Wingate, 1954), p. 195.

charged with overseeing the repatriation of the POWs. Ribbentrop's ambitious proposal for the exchange of long-term prisoners in mid-January should be seen in this light. The foreign minister was not so much concerned in returning German prisoners as burnishing his credentials as a German 'moderate' and making London more receptive to peace feelers he put out the following month.[70]

Ribbentrop was not the only Nazi leader to think along these lines. Himmler's penchant for bartering with prisoners' lives was already evident in late 1944 when he started parleying with a succession of neutral intermediaries over the release of concentration camp inmates.[71] It would be strange indeed if the fate of British POWs had not figured in his thinking. Gottlob Berger, Himmler's POW chieftain, was intimately involved in some of the earliest talks, and took steps to assemble the *Prominente* at Oflag IV C, Colditz, over the winter in possible preparation for their use as bargaining chips.[72] Himmler was certainly not averse to trumpeting Germany's 'humanitarian record' when it suited his book. When the Swede, Count Bernadotte, journeyed to his headquarters on 19 February 1945, the Reichsführer SS talked 'with rapture about the gentlemanly methods of warfare between Germans and British in France in the summer of 1944, when action was interrupted in the middle so that both sides could collect their wounded . . .'.[73]

At first sight, the conceit in thinking that London would overlook the Stalag Luft III shootings or be swayed by a belated show of affection for the Geneva conventions is hard to fathom. But German officials were certainly encouraged to think along these lines by Carl Buckhardt, who frequently played on the German desire for a negotiated settlement to secure concessions for concentration camp prisoners. On 13 December 1944, he told the German minister in Berne that, on the basis of inferences picked up 'from occasional remarks, in particular regarding the treatment of prisoners of war in Germany', he had 'the impression that Germany could still call on much sympathy in England'. Meeting the ICRC's desiderata on 'POW or internee affairs' would give 'new impetus' to the groundswell of opinion in favour of an early end to the war with Germany.[74] Burckhardt's biographer dismisses these remarks as hyperbole, but the fact that he had spent a full day in the company of the WO's Director of POWs only a fortnight before would certainly not have gone unnoticed in Berlin, and could well have influenced Ribbentrop and Himmler's reading of the situation in the New Year.

[70] See Bloch, *Ribbentrop*, p. 416. MI9 report, 21 Dec. 1944. TNA. HS6/631; F. James, ACRS, Geneva, to Tait, US legation, Berne, 29 Mar. 1945. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 88.

[71] See Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust*, pp. 258–62.

[72] O. Köcher (German minister, Berne) to AA, 15 Dec. 1944, cited in Paul Stauffer, *Sechs furchbare Jahre. Auf den Spuren Carl J. Burckhardt durch den Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Zurich: NZZ Verlag, 1998), p. 316.

[73] R. Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte: His Life and Work*, p. 118, cited in Padfield, *Himmler*, p. 565.

[74] For Berger's involvement in late November, see Stauffer, '*Sechs furchtbare Jahre . . .*', p. 318.

Such views need to be borne in mind in evaluating the events that followed the Allied attack on Dresden on the night of 12/13 February. When news of Dresden's obliteration came through, Goebbels immediately pressed Hitler to have 'tens of thousands' of Allied POWs executed in retaliation. Only two months earlier, Hitler had suggested interning 5,000 Allied POWs in central Berlin to stem the relentless bombardment of his capital. Although he had agreed to Ribbentrop putting out peace feelers to the Allies in January, neither he nor Goebbels placed much faith in these overtures, and a communiqué issued at the close of the Yalta conference on 13 February, affirming Allied unity and pledging their commitment to fight on until Germany's unconditional surrender, naturally strengthened these views.[75] Despite Goebbels' outburst, however, conversation in the *Führerhauptquartier* moved from the question of killing POWs to a more general debate over whether Berlin should abandon all legal restraints on the conduct of fighting in the west. Quite why this occurred is not clear, though the most likely explanation lies in Hitler's desire to capitalize on Dresden's destruction to justify extending the concept of 'total' war, which had hitherto been largely restricted to the eastern front. Hitler had become increasingly dismayed at the lack of fighting spirit shown by German forces in the west since the collapse of the Ardennes offensive, and clearly felt that, by withdrawing Germany from the Geneva conventions, soldiers would be less inclined to show the white flag.

Whatever the reasons, the shift of focus had momentous repercussions. By promoting a debate on the merits of German adherence to international law, the danger of Hitler impulsively ordering the execution of Allied prisoners receded. When the issue was next raised, six days later, some of the initial shock to the horrific events in Dresden had abated. Furthermore, by broadening discussion, attention shifted from a question of Germany's 'right' to avenge the bombing, over which there was little dissent, to one of Germany's strategic interests, over which a diversity of opinions were likely to emerge. It did not take long for those inclined towards a compromise peace with the west to beat a path to Hitler's door. Ribbentrop and Himmler both claimed credit for talking Hitler out of killing the prisoners. As they were engaged in talks with Count Bernadotte at the time, they had good reason to rein in the excitable Führer.[76] More influential, though, was the advice Hitler received from the military on 20 February when Admiral Dönitz, Jodl, and Ambassador Hewel, Ribbentrop's liaison officer at the *Führerhauptquartier*, all spoke out against any change of policy.

[75] Interrogation, G. Berger, 1 May 1947, p. 1. IfZ. ZS427 vol. 2. David Irving, *Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich* (London: Focal Point, 1996), pp. 500–502.

[76] Joachim von Ribbentrop, *The Ribbentrop Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954), pp. 172, 194. Padfield, *Himmler*, pp. 560–66. For similar sentiments picked up by the Swiss minister on 3 Mar. 1945, see Widmer, *Die Schweizer Gesandschaft*, pp. 269–70. Ribbentrop's peace emissary, Fritz Hesse, left for Stockholm on 17 February.

The essence of their argument lay in the fact that Germany had more to lose than gain from tearing up the lexicon of international law. If the 1925 Geneva gas protocol was discarded, there would be nothing to stop the Allies deploying their ample stocks of chemical weaponry against German cities.[77] If the Hague laws were brushed aside, Germany's vulnerable hospital ships would be endangered, its *Volkssturm* militia units denied combatant status, and its civilians, currently under Allied occupation, left defenceless against rapacious Allied demands. Berlin's unilateral withdrawal from the POW convention would, moreover, do nothing to stem the flow of surrenders on the western front, as it was the prospect of good treatment in British hands—and not German adherence to the conventions—that ultimately motivated German soldiers into deserting their posts.[78] Hitler's trusted party boss, Martin Borman, may also have cautioned the Führer against upping the ante at a time when Berlin was awaiting London's response to Ribbentrop's proposal for an exchange of able-bodied prisoners: any large-scale shooting of prisoners would dash the chance of Germany securing the return of 25,000 combat-ready men.[79]

Such arguments were clearly designed to appeal to Hitler's sense of pragmatism. Though he subsequently riled against the 'idiotic convention', the weight of argument in favour of holding Germany to its legal obligations was compelling.[80] It is striking, though, that those in favour of the status quo chose to situate their arguments within a broader understanding of the place of law and norms in international politics. Whether these views had any influence over the Führer is not known—he never referred to them, either at the time or later—but their inclusion is indicative of the mindset of the German military and conservative elite. Jodl explicitly connected the modern legal codes—to which generations of German military thinkers had shown such scorn—to a century's worth of unwritten customary international law (*Völkergewohnheitsrecht*) which, he claimed, embraced 'the last principles of humane warfare'. It was precisely observance of this unwritten law, Jodl argued, that constituted one of the 'prerequisites for membership of the international community'.[81] Irrespective of whether the government was legally entitled to renounce its obligations in the midst of a conflict, Germany could not ignore the traditional principles

[77] Admiral Wagner (OKM) to Admiral Buerkner, 20 Feb. 1945; 'Stand der Vorbereitungen für den chem. Krieg auf Seiten der Feindmächte', Feldwirtschaftsamt W-2 Ausland, 20 Feb. 1945. IfZ. MA240, folios 5519325–26, folios 5519328.

[78] WFSt Ausland. 20 Feb. 1945 'Kündigung völkerrechtlicher Abkommen'. IfZ. MA240, folio 5519329.

[79] *TMWC* xvii, p. 258. Hans Fritzsche testimony.

[80] Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (New York: Da Capo, 1952), p. 427. See Hitler's caustic remarks to Jodl, 1 and 2 March. Heiber and Glantz, *Hitler and his Generals*, pp. 676, 684. Goebbels shared Hitler's views: *Die Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 15*, p. 457 (9 Mar. 1945).

[81] WFSt Ausland. 20 Feb. 1945 'Kündigung völkerrechtlicher Abkommen'. IfZ. MA240, folio 5519329.

of humane warfare in the west so long as it chose to remain within the community of nations. More significantly, any abandonment of Germany's legal responsibilities threatened to repeat the Kaiser's mistake of abandoning the legal high ground to Germany's enemies. Two months earlier, Berlin had sought to counter Allied 'atrocity stories' by publishing evidence of British transgressions of international law since the start of the war. The planned publicity campaign was only called off when it was discovered that the once voluminous records on these incidents had either been destroyed or, in the case of the German naval archive, fallen into Allied hands.[82] The danger, however, of letting London dominate the legal debate remained. 'Just as it was wrong in 1914 that we ourselves . . . took the whole guilt of the war on our shoulders', Jodl wrote on 21 February, '. . . so it would be wrong now to repudiate openly the obligations of international law which we accepted, and thereby to stand again as the guilty party before the whole world'.[83] Any withdrawal from the conventions, or summary execution of Allied POWs, would gift the Allies the initiative, turn neutral opinion against the Reich, embolden Allied policy on war crimes, and give encouragement to those intent on besmirching Germany's illustrious military record.

Goebbels' hope of keeping these discussions secret proved forlorn. News leaked out almost immediately to the Swiss legation and reached British ears by the first days of March.[84] Knowledge that Hitler was even contemplating such drastic action inevitably concentrated minds in London, but when planners turned to consider how to react, the options before them were scarcely more promising than they had been the previous year. By January 1945, with both military operations and the POW count now flowing decisively in the Allies favour, the Allied negotiation position was clearly strengthened, but serious doubts remained over how to translate this into tangible influence.[85] There was no shortage of ideas on how best to use German POWs *after* the war. Over the course of 1944, the western allies effectively committed themselves to withholding the POW status from German POWs at the end of the war, partly to keep in step with the Soviets, and partly to take advantage of German POW labour.[86] Consideration was also given to using German prisoners to hold Germany to its surrender terms,

[82] See WFSt to SKL I, 30 Dec. 1944; SKL I i to WFSt 24 Feb, and 12 Apr. 1945. BA-MA. RM7 1903.

[83] Draft of Jodl's report for Hitler, 21 Feb. 1945, printed in *TMWC* xxxv, Document D606.

[84] UK legation, Berne, to FO, 2 Mar. 1945. TNA. PREM3/364/11; A. Dulles, OSS, Berne, to W. Donovan, OSS, Washington, 3 Mar. 1945. NARA. RG226 M1642 Roll 30, folio 183. Curt Reiss, *Joseph Goebbels* (London: Hollis Carter, 1949), pp. 391–92.

[85] By January the Allies held 303,000 Germans in return for 226,000 Anglo–Americans. Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command*, p. 36.

[86] For a good resumé, see Brian Loring Villa, 'The Diplomatic and Political Context of the POW Camps Tragedy', in Bischof and Ambrose, *Eisenhower and the German POWs*, pp. 52–77 (esp. 60–64); Richard D. Wiggers, 'The United States and the Denial of Prisoner of War (POW) Status at the End of the Second World War', *MGM*, 52 (1993), pp. 91–104.

echoing proposals aired by Lord Vansittart at the time of the great escape.[87] In September 1944, Britain's flag officer designate for Kiel, Rear Admiral H. T. Baillie-Grohman, suggested banishing German prisoners to St. Helena or other remote islands to deter attacks on members of the Allied occupation forces. This was preferable to shooting hostages (though this might be necessary 'failing an alternative') and had the added advantage of 'reducing somewhat the German birthrate'.[88] But while the British and Americans were prepared to renege on their legal obligations over the upkeep, employment, and post-war repatriation of German POWs, they remained reluctant to sanction collective reprisals so long as the war was still on. As one SHAEF official put it, 'the taking of hostages in the normal (or German) manner is not acceptable'.[89]

Even greater reluctance was shown to the possibility of using Britain's haul of prisoners to blackmail the German leadership. As we saw in the last chapter, Mjr.-Gen. Gepp had gone out of his way to disabuse the Swiss of any thought that London would withdraw privileges from German prisoners in retaliation for the deterioration of conditions for British POWs inside Germany. As recently as July 1944, orders had been issued reminding Allied forces of the need to adhere strictly to the international rules governing the treatment of enemy POWs. The only time the policy was questioned was in the wake of the shooting of seventy American soldiers at Malmédy on 17 December 1944, when the US JCS proposed banishing 1,000 German POWs to the four corners of the globe for every Allied soldier killed behind German lines. The proposal, however, provoked stern criticism in civilian quarters in Washington and London. Not only were such threats thought unlikely to intimidate Hitler or the Gestapo and merely give Goebbels' fresh copy for his propaganda broadcasts but they would also undo the Allied re-education programme for German POWs, undermine Allied claims to remain bound by the POW convention, and, worse still, provoke precisely the kind of violence against Allied prisoners that everyone was anxious to avoid.[90] While the improvement in Allied fortunes did, then, encourage officials to take a more relaxed attitude towards the treatment of German POWs in Allied custody, it did not bring about any fundamental reappraisal of British relations with Berlin, or the role of reprisals in POW policy.

Military operations afforded equally little scope for protecting Allied prisoners in German hands. The realization that Hitler was prepared to hold on to Allied prisoners until the bitter end forced SHAEF to overhaul its earlier plans for

[87] Brig. J. C. Haydon for Lt. Gen. Sir G. N. Macready, British Army Staff, 15 Jan. 1945. TNA. CAB122/695. Col. C. A. Howkins (JSM), to Col. F. C. Drew (WO) 23 Jan. 1945. TNA. CAB122/678.

[88] Memo, 26 Sep. 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 2 Box 113.

[89] Memo by T. N. Grazerbrook, G-3 SHEAF, 11 Oct. 1944. NARA. RG331 Entry 27 Box 85; Gen. Beddell Smith to Admiral Sir B .H. Ramsey, Adty., 24 Oct. 1944. RG331 Entry 2 Box 113; annex to letter by Haydon to Howkins, 2 Feb. 1945. TNA. CAB122/695.

[90] For US discussions see Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 196–98; and British, minute, Groves, 22 Dec. 1944. TNA. FO898/328.

the period following Hitler's 'eclipse'.[91] Neither Eisenhower nor Alexander were ready to tamper with operational decisions for the prisoners' benefit and, while they were prepared to dispatch relief columns if militarily feasible, the fear that dropping men, arms, and materiel by parachute would provoke attacks on Allied POWs meant that those prisoners lying outside the axis of advance were unlikely to receive any practical assistance.[92] One hundred and twenty three-man teams were assembled in mid-March for insertion behind enemy lines in order to facilitate communication with individual camp authorities, but only six teams were ever deployed as initially intended and dropped near Stalag XI A at Altengrabow. The rest took to the roads and acted as liaison teams for the advancing Allied units. PWX, SHAEF's POW recovery unit, which opened for business on 31 March, spent most of its time coordinating the delivery of relief supplies rather than directing protection teams.[93] There was, then, ultimately little active military support for Allied POWs in the final weeks of the war. Had the prisoners been confronted with mobs, intent on exacting revenge or seizing camp food reserves, they would have been forced to rely almost entirely on their own devices.

Though some historians have criticized Allied efforts to protect their prisoners at the close of the war as 'utterly ineffective', it is difficult to see what practical military measures could have been taken—short of allowing the recovery of POWs to dictate the direction of the Allied advance—that would not have endangered the lives of those they were meant to save.[94] The one time a column was sent through German lines to liberate a POW camp—Oflag XIII C, Hemmelburg—the enterprise ended in disaster, with the capture or death of all those involved.[95] By mid-March, most prisoners were considered too debilitated or confused to be capable of wielding arms effectively. Indeed, Eisenhower was so anxious to avoid provoking German retaliation that he forbade the dropping of any equipment within twenty-five miles of known camps or work detachments.[96] Allied POWs were so widely dispersed, and the final collapse of German resistance so swift, that there was never any chance of providing protection to more than a fraction of those in need. Even on the cusp of an Allied victory, the salvation of Allied POWs ultimately hinged, as before, on the willingness of their captors

[91] K. G. McLean, G-3 SHAEF, to Brig. Bosville, G1, 18 Jan. 1945. NARA. RG331 Entry 27 Box 85.

[92] See Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 192–94.

[93] For SAARF, see TNA HS7/20, the Altengrabow operation, Philip Worrall, 'Surviving without a Father'. IWM Docus; for PWX activities, see its 'room journal': NARA. RG331 Entry 7 Box 69.

[94] Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, pp. 5, 202. Nicol and Rennell, *Last Escape*, 174–85. For criticisms of Washington's failure to protect Jewish POWs, see Roger Cohen, *Soldiers and Slaves: American POWs Trapped by the Nazis' Final Gamble* (New York: Knopf, 2005).

[95] See Stanley P. Hirshson, *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 620–23.

[96] Eisenhower to Troops (MO-1 SP), for Templar, UK base for OSS, SHAEF, Main for McClure, 7 Mar. 1945. NARA. RG331 Entry 27 Box 85. JPS, 'Security of Allied Prisoners of War', 28 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB119/94.

to hold to standards of decency and humanity in their treatment of enemy prisoners.

In this the Allies had two cards up their sleeves, neither particularly strong in themselves, but sufficient to reinforce the POW regime in the last days of the war. The first was the 'solemn warning' alerting German soldiers and civilians to the danger they ran in ill-treating Allied POWs in their care. The matter had been raised by the JIC in July 1944, but had made painfully little progress ever since. Though slated for discussion at the Anglo-American summit in Quebec in early September 1944, the conference broke up before the matter could be raised, and a British proposal for a tripartite declaration, cabled to Washington on 17 October, slid, as one official put it, 'deep in the bowels of the State Department' where it remained firmly lodged until the following spring.[97] The fault appears to have lain in Washington's inability to decide on who the warning was actually for. Although Jews, foreign workers, and civilian internees were all in desperate need of protection, London was determined to avoid lumping prisoners, who enjoyed specific legal rights under the Geneva conventions, with those who did not. Neither the Yalta conference in early February 1945 nor Eden's meetings with the Soviet foreign minister, V. Molotov, in mid-March afforded an opportunity to explore the issue with the Soviet leadership, but news of Hitler's musings after the attack on Dresden was sufficiently alarming to convince the western powers to push ahead and agree a common text.[98]

President Roosevelt's death on 12 April, plunging Washington into temporary confusion, held up discussion on the matter, but in Moscow a concerted effort to puncture the wall of silence that habitually greeted any western inquiry on POWs and secure Stalin's signature for the declaration finally bore fruit. In the interim, the recovery of a copy of Hitler's 'commando order' of 18 October 1942 prompted Eisenhower to publish a declaration on 24 March, threatening to prosecute anyone found to have ill-treated Allied airborne or commando forces.[99] Though it was initially intended to let the theatre commanders decide on when to publish the 'solemn warning', the suspicious movement of the *Prominente* in the second week of April convinced Churchill that the time for publication had arrived. The announcement featured in Allied radio broadcasts on 24 April, and six million leaflets bearing the declaration were jettisoned across Germany that evening.[100]

[97] Cdr. R. D. Coleridge, RN (JSM) to Rankin (UK embassy, Washington), 14 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB122/684. FO to Washington and Moscow, 17 Oct. 1944. FO1049/26.

[98] UK legation, Berne to FO, 2 Mar. 1945. TNA. PREM3/364/11. Minute, Eden, 5 Mar. 1945. FO954 Roll 22.

[99] Lt.-Gen. W. B. Smith, SHAEF, to Combined COS, Washington, 6 Mar. 1945. TNA. CAB119/94.

[100] Churchill to Eisenhower, 19 Apr. 1945. TNA. CAB120/222. Lord Halifax, UK ambassador, Washington, to E. Stettinius, secretary of state, 20 Apr. 1945. CAB122/684. AM to Bomber Command HQ, 24 Apr. 1945. FO898/328.

The second card available in the final weeks and days of the war was the presence of neutral observers inside Germany. There were of course obvious limits to what these individuals could achieve. By 1945, the Vatican had become so disheartened by the failure of its various initiatives that little could be expected from that quarter.[101] It was likewise difficult to know what more either the Swiss or Swedes could realistically accomplish. Nevertheless, the FO was probably correct in believing that the neutrals possessed various 'ways and means of bringing influence to bear' where it counted.[102] Paradoxically, the transfer of POW affairs into Berger's hands in October 1944 finally gave Swiss diplomats an entree into the corridors of power in Berlin. The Swiss minister spent Christmas 1944 as a guest at Berger's estate in Poland, and used the opportunity to forge a personal link with the SS general that proved invaluable to his staff over the final months of the war.[103] Though Pilet-Golaz remained fearful of compromising Swiss independence and neutrality, by late 1944 he agreed to permit his diplomats to 'stand behind' Allied protests if they believed the situation called for it.[104] Carl Burckhardt's dealings with the head of the RSHA, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, in March and April, were precisely the kind of leverage the FO no doubt had in mind.[105] Although Burckhardt was principally interested in civilian detainees, he was not averse to interceding on behalf of individuals or groups of Allied POWs, both on humanitarian grounds and to curry favour with the Allied governments.[106] Of equally great significance, however, was the actual presence of neutral officials in German detention camps and the increasingly visible sign of their activities, in the shape of relief convoys snaking their way through the German countryside. On 12 April, the Allies forwarded to the ICRC a list of twelve camps known to be holding prisoners deemed most at risk—RAF officers and the *Prominente*—with the request that delegates be sent there to keep an eye on proceedings. Similar arrangements were put in place by the Swiss later that month, when diplomats were dispatched to the three principal holding centres for Anglo-American POWs.[107]

[101] See Léon Popeleux, *Les actions caritatives du Saint-Siège pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Brussels: 1991), passim.

[102] FO to UK embassy, Washington, 13 Apr. 1945. TNA. CAB121/293.

[103] Widmer, *Die Schweizer Gesandschaft in Berlin*, p. 269.

[104] Memo by J. H. Huddle, US legation, Berne, 7 Dec. 1944. NARA. 800.2 Leland Harrison papers. Folder 'Pilet-Golaz'.

[105] Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust*, pp. 263–66, 270–71. Peter R. Beck, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 239–43. Stauffer, *'Sechs furchtbare Jahre . . .'*, pp. 342–45.

[106] Memo 'Négociations de M. Carl J. Burckhardt . . . avec les autorités du Reich', 24 Mar. 1945, James, ACRS, Geneva, to Tait, US legation, Berne, 29 Mar. 1945. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 88.

[107] Stalag VII A, Moosburg, Stalag VII B, Memmingen, Ilag Laufen and Stalag 317, Markt Pongau. L. Harrison, US legation, Berne, to State Department, Washington, 30 Apr. 1945. NARA. RG84 Bern Box 85. UK legation, Berne, to FO 30 Apr. 1945. TNA. CAB121/293.

It is impossible to judge the effectiveness of these measures in influencing individual German commandants, guards, or officials. Attitudes were, of course, already being shaped by the course of events or by personal, religious, or political beliefs, long before the publication of the Allies' tripartite warning. As early as the summer of 1944, one *Wehrmacht* officer stationed at Laufen began helping to equip a team of American prisoners with small arms, in case the local Nazis made good their promise to avenge defeat by attacking prisoners in the camp at the war's end. By late 1944, arms and ammunitions for about 270 men had been assembled inside Weidmennsdoft working camp, near Klagenfurt, through the assistance of the local resistance movement.[108] With the war's end in sight, it became progressively easier for German officials to justify the benevolent treatment of Allied POWs on the grounds of national interest. In late March, for instance, Adolf Westhoff defended the decision to continue negotiations with the ICRC for the repatriation of POWs—notwithstanding the Führer's express wishes to the contrary—in order to avoid forfeiting Geneva's help for German war victims or exposing his country to 'unwanted political repercussions after the war'.[109]

But to suggest that German attitudes were unaffected by either the presence of neutral diplomats or the Allied warnings would be to underestimate the very real dangers facing Allied POWs in the final days of the war. Berger's willingness to leave the prisoners 'in situ' on 28 April, and—if we are to believe his own account—to disregard Hitler's instructions and spare the lives of the *Prominente*, may well have been influenced by the tripartite Allied declaration.[110] None of the reports on Werner Buchmueller's talks with Berger over the release of the *Prominente* in early May suggest that the Swiss diplomat's presence, like that of his compatriots elsewhere in Germany, did not play a key role in securing the safe deliverance of prisoners into Allied hands. Kaltenbrunner's biographer dismisses his belated concessions to Burckhardt on 24 April as a 'last-minute alibi', but his action led to the release of fifty Allied airmen from Balzano camp in Italy and his offer to assist the passage of Allied POWs through the front lines anticipated Berger's decision on the same subject by four days.[111] The lives of the *Prominente*, along with many other Allied POWs—especially airmen—hung in the balance in the last days of the war, but it was news that Swiss diplomats were on the trail of the *Prominente* that gave Churchill the confidence to write, on 29 April, that 'several things I have heard about the inside of Germany make me feel less anxious than I had been before'.[112]

[108] Roswell McClelland, US legation, Berne, to F. James, ARCS, Geneva, 10 Feb. 1945. Report by Lt. Col. Allan, MI9, 7 Jan. 1945. NARA. RG311 Entry 7 Box 46, Box 73.

[109] Gen. A. Westhoff to Chef W. San, 26 Mar. 1945. BA-MA. RH12 23 vol. 5.

[110] Robert Kübler, *Chef KGW. Das Kriegsgefangenenwesen unter Gottlob Berger* (Lindhorst: Askania, 1984), pp. 38–39. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days of Hitler*, pp. 141–42.

[111] Black, *Kaltenbrunner*, p. 242.

[112] Churchill to Nelly Romilly, 29 Apr. 1945. TNA. PREM3/364/12.

AVOIDING GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

Though accurate calculations of the number of British POWs who perished in the final months of the war have so far eluded historians, there is little doubt that the closer these men came to the moment of liberation, the greater the danger of suffering death or serious injury, whether through deliberate malice, neglect, or tragic mistaken identity. If the recollections of one prominent POW are to be believed, as many POWs were killed in a single 'friendly-fire' incident on 19 April 1945—when a column of POWs from Stalag 357, Fallingbostal, were strafed by a squadron of typhoons—as were murdered by the Gestapo following the great escape in early 1944.[113] The most recent study to examine the issue put the total number of British POW fatalities after the start of the camp evacuations in early January 1945 at between 2,500 and 3,500, well over double the number of deaths recorded by the German authorities before that date.[114] The appalling loss of life was made all the worse by the fact that many of the victims had waited the best part of five years for their hour of salvation. In most cases, death or serious injury could have been avoided had adequate safeguards been put in place.

Nevertheless, this was hardly the bloodbath that many in London had feared. Had the Gestapo been allowed to run amuck, or Hitler acted on Goebbels' advice and executed prisoners in retaliation for the attack on Dresden, the number of deaths would have been of a different order of magnitude. Once the fate of the great escapers had become known, planning to prevent a similar scenario taking shape at the dying days of the war inevitably dominated official deliberations. That the issue was able to command the attention of the most senior military and political leadership for so long is testament to the disquiet provoked by the Stalag Luft III shootings, and to Whitehall's success in forcing the issue onto the political agenda at a time when all eyes were trained on the military events on the continent. Yet, for all the interest shown to the POWs plight, none of the contingency plans put forward were either militarily feasible or capable of providing the prisoners with the protection they required.[115] News of Hitler's reaction to the bombing of Dresden naturally focused minds, but even by mid-March there was, as one Air Ministry official bluntly put it, 'no plan

[113] Sergeant Jimmy 'Dixie' Deans, cited in Nichol and Rennell, *The Last Escape*, p. 302. The authors admit, though, that estimates of the number of casualties vary from between thirty and sixty. Ibid., p. 443 (note 16).

[114] According to WASt, the figure for British deaths stood at 836 in Dec. 1942, 1,003 by Oct. 1943, 1,453 by June 1944, and 1,928 by Feb. 1945: 'Aufstellung der Beurkundung zugeführten Sterbefälle verstorbender Kriegsgefangener', various dates. BA-MA. RW48/12. Nichol and Rennell *The Last Escape*, p. 403.

[115] Memo, WO, 'The Committing of Acts of Violence towards British Prisoners of War', 18 Oct. 1944. TNA. PREM3/364/11.

to help POWs if threatened prior to collapse, other than the warning' and this was still buried in the lower reaches of the US administration.[116] Not only was there remarkably little to show for all the ink spilt on behalf of Britain's POWs, but in most areas of policy decision-makers remained wedded to outmoded assumptions. Had an equal amount of thought been given to the prisoners' dietary and medical requirements as their physical protection, it is probable that fewer would have succumbed to illness, disease, or death in the closing weeks of the war.

If discussions in late 1944 and early 1945 merely underlined the Allies' powerlessness to affect the lives of their men in enemy hands, events over the final months of the war suggested that those structures which had helped sustain the POW regime in the west were still capable of influencing German behaviour. In Berlin, officials might have adopted an increasingly self-serving view of their responsibilities towards British prisoners, but it was precisely because the whole issue of POW treatment was swaddled in legal codes and normative assumptions that made displays of generosity towards prisoners so attractive for those anxious to atone for earlier transgressions. Notwithstanding the fact that authority now lay in the hands of the SS, Berlin remained open for business, and ready to negotiate with London over POW issues. Centralized authority inevitably disintegrated under the weight of sustained attack by air and land, but British prisoners were not subjected to the 'totalitarian chaos' and 'disorganized gangsterism' that SHAEF officials had foreseen the previous summer. Britain's 'guardian angels', the Swiss diplomats and delegates of the ICRC, remained in place: none were subjected to violent attack or assault on account of their association with the POW convention, or the duty of care they exercised for Germany's hated enemies. Holed up in his bunker, with the Reich crumbling around him, Hitler increasingly succumbed to bouts of anger and frustration, accusing the army, bureaucracy, and even the SS of conspiring against him and sabotaging his authority. Though most of the allegations were little more than figments of a demented mind, the opposition he encountered in mid-February, over Germany's withdrawal from the Geneva conventions, was an object lesson of the limitations on the Führer's authority. It was also a measure of Britain's success, in collaboration with its neutral intermediaries, in promoting German identification with a set of norms and legal prescriptions that pre-dated Hitler's rise to power and proved capable of restraining German behaviour despite five years of Nazi excesses and global warfare.

[116] Minute, Director of Plans (AM), 17 Mar. 1945, 'Security of POW'. TNA. AIR2/5638.

Conclusion

Two basic facts need to be borne in mind in evaluating British efforts to protect UK nationals in German captivity after 1939: firstly, that the war in which Britain was engaged between 1939 and 1945 was one of the most bitterly fought conflicts of the modern era; secondly, that in Nazi Germany, Britain faced a foe that possessed an almost unparalleled capacity for brutality and violence. The conduct of war, especially after 1941, challenged most of the traditional normative constraints on war fighting that had been embodied in the lexicon of modern international law and the set of unwritten 'conventions', based on European state practice stretching back over half a millennium. Many of the fundamental principles underpinning modern conceptions of warfare—ideas of restraint, discrimination, proportionality and a chivalric 'warrior's code'—were discarded over the course of the war, overwhelmed by levels of cruelty that were barely imaginable to pre-war scholars, statesmen, and jurists. Nazi Germany was not the only party at fault, but its noxious brand of superheated collectivism, its elevation of terrorism to the level of state policy, and its mixture of xenophobia and racism made it particularly susceptible to the kind of excesses that came to characterize armed conflict in the middle years of the twentieth century. This was a regime that marginalized, sterilized, and finally murdered whole sections of its population, tried to 'annihilate' its ideological and racial opponents, and routinely razed whole villages in collective reprisals for the actions of partisans or resistance groups. Conservative estimates of the number of Soviet POWs to perish in German captivity start at 3.25 million, some 57.5 per cent of all those captured.

British servicemen who fell into German hands during the war were not spared from the effects of the violence that was the hallmark of the Nazi regime. Members of Britain's commando units and special forces were denied POW status and either liquidated where captured or ended their days in German concentration camps. An unknown number of Allied soldiers, sailors, and airmen were summarily shot or lynched by angry mobs of civilians or party-faithful, and passed into history as 'missing in action, presumed killed'. While the odds of survival lengthened the further prisoners went from the battle lines, many who reached the comparative safety of their camps failed to return home, dying of illness, disease, or 'industrial accident', or succumbing to wounds suffered at the hands of their guards or overseers.

Notwithstanding these unpalatable facts, the case remains that Germany's treatment of British POWs between 1939 and 1945 was, in historical terms, 'relatively' benign. Estimates of the mortality rate for British POWs range from between three and three and a half per cent; comparable to those experienced by other western Europeans in German captivity, and significantly lower than those of prisoners held by the Japanese and Russians or Soviet POWs in Germany.[1] The point was not lost on British prisoners. The Canadian, Robert Prouse, weighed about 180 pounds (80 kgs) when captured at Dieppe in August 1942. 'During my term as a prisoner', he recalled, 'I had dropped to 160 pounds. After the long march and the dysentery, I was 130 pounds, soaking wet and still felt fat beside the Russian prisoners.'[2] The experience of British POWs after 1939 likewise compares favourably when set alongside the death rate amongst British prisoners in German hands during the Great War.[3] In judging these figures, we also need to bear in mind that about a fifth of all prisoners endured nearly five years of captivity, just under a half were held for over thirty months and a significant proportion had suffered serious injuries or wounds before capture, which inevitably lowered their chances of survival, whatever the quality of care they received in German hands.

The central concern of this book has been to explain how the British government sought to protect its servicemen in German hands. In doing so it explored the relationship between British 'POW' policy, the functioning of the international regime governing the treatment of POWs, and German actions on the ground, and examined how practical and normative constraints affected state behaviour. Not all governments and their militaries respond to these constraints in the same way, though few have records that stand up well under close scrutiny. The United Kingdom is no exception. The assumption of moral or cultural superiority may come easily to the British governing classes, but accusations of deliberate ill-treatment of prisoners in British detention have echoed down the ages and can still be heard today.[4] After 1939, the British authorities frequently cut corners when the opportunity arose: exploiting Axis POWs for economic, political, or strategic gain, or adopting policies that infringed Britain's legal

[1] About a quarter of British FEPOWs lost their lives. As against a mortality rate of 3 per cent for British POWs, Overmans suggests rates for Poles of between 2 and 4 per cent, for French of 2.8 per cent, and for Belgians of between 2 and 2.5 per cent: 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', pp. 755, 772, 779. See Mackenzie, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War', pp. 487–520; Streit, 'Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht', pp. 80–91.

[2] A. Robert Prouse, *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe: From a Prisoner's Wartime Log 1942–1945* (Exeter: Webb & Bower, 1982), p. 145.

[3] Jones finds the most 'realistic' mortality rate as 6.8 per cent, though other studies suggest rates nearer 3 per cent. Jones, 'The Enemy Disarmed', pp. 3–4, 252. Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, p. 41.

[4] See Brigadier Robert Aitken, 'The Aitken Report: An Investigation into Cases of Deliberate Abuse and Unlawful Killing in Iraq in 2003 and 2004' (London: Ministry of Defence, 25 January 2008) http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7AC894D3-1430-4AD1-911F-8210C3342CC5/0/aitken_rep.pdf.

responsibilities and jeopardized prisoners' lives and wellbeing.[5] Some of those directly in charge of Britain's captives abused their positions for personal gain, and, as we have seen, for a time at least, this failing seeped into the work of the War Office's directorate for POWs, the very institution responsible for overseeing the application of Britain's legal obligations.

There were, nevertheless, powerful forces at work after 1939 that helped foster a culture of compliance towards the POW regime within British official circles. The collapse of Britain's military fortunes in May 1940 created a chronic imbalance in POW numbers that was only finally eased in the last years of the war. In the circumstances, London had little choice other than to rely on diplomacy to encourage German commitment to international norms, irrespective of Germany's shoddy record during the Great War and the actions of Hitler's government after 1933. British policy was not simply a rational response to its strategic predicament. In a very real sense, the POW convention of 1929—the foremost articulation of state rights and responsibilities towards POWs—complemented Britain's geo-strategic interests, its historical experience, political culture, and social values. If any government could claim 'ownership' of the convention, it was the British.

The code also meshed with the government's domestic and imperial interests. It was not just the size of the 'POW lobby' that accounts for the government's sensitivity towards POW issues over the course of the war, as the fact that public debate over prisoners quickly cut itself loose from the normal restrictions that restrained political life during periods of national crisis. Though the intensity of public interest fluctuated, officials were never free to address POW issues *solely* in terms of their likely impact on Britain's political or strategic relations with Germany. Hitler might treat British prisoners as pawns in a larger political game; British officials could hardly afford to follow his lead. Politicians and officials were occasionally guilty of 'blind bureaucracy' and pandering to their parliamentary critics, but at no stage did anyone seriously question the government's duty of care to its servicemen in enemy hands.[6] As one committee noted in late 1944, failure to protect Britain's prisoners from violence, suffering, or death, would 'constitute an unforgivable indictment [against the British authorities] which could never be erased'.[7]

A balance had, of course, to be struck between the interests of Britain's prisoners and the country's wider political and strategic objectives. Policy-makers were happy to negotiate improvements to the prisoners' lot, but enthusiasm quickly

[5] Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, 226. Moore, 'Turning Liabilities into Assets', pp. 117–36. Mackenzie, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War', p. 503.

[6] Rolf, 'Blind Bureaucracy', pp. 47–67. Rolf's concluding remarks on British government performance are more measured than the title, or some of his earlier judgements, imply.

[7] Combined Operational Planning Committee, 8th Air Force, 'The Evacuation of Allied POW from Germany', 31 Aug. 1944. TNA. AIR2/5638.

waned when these came at the cost of Britain's political or military freedom. Even in 1940 and 1941, when the numerical balance was ten to one in Berlin's favour, the Foreign Office encountered stiff, and invariably insurmountable opposition whenever it tried to rein in British military objectives for the benefit of Britain's prisoners. Churchill, in particular, showed little compunction in jettisoning humanitarian ideals in the pursuit of military goals. Whether a more subtle trade-off could have been struck between Britain's military and humanitarian needs is open to debate, but it is noticeable how reluctant officials were, even in the Foreign Office, to overplay the humanitarian card. Even in retirement, Sir George Warner, Britain's one-time delegate to the 1929 Geneva conference and head of the FO PWD, took it for granted that the 'main' priority lay in bringing the war to a speedy conclusion; 'interests, however important and deserving of sympathy', he noted, 'cannot be allowed to hamper the general war effort'.[8]

London's ability to negotiate with Berlin was inevitably constrained by the need to accommodate the wishes of its imperial and alliance partners, many of whom questioned British policy in this area. In the main, Dominion officials and politicians were more wary of straying from the POW convention in Europe than their counterparts in London. They also doubted the wisdom of granting London *carte blanche* to negotiate on behalf of all British and Commonwealth POWs in German hands. Attitudes in Washington and Moscow also diverged from the British line; the former largely on account of the small number of American prisoners in German hands, the latter for fear that London's 'excessive' concern over its POWs might leave it exposed to German blackmail. But if London occasionally moderated its position for the sake of Allied unity, a glance at events in the Far East, where coordinated Allied action quickly broke down, suggests that British management of POW issues in Europe was surprisingly effective. Though Berlin sporadically tried to sow discord in Allied ranks, its attempts were half-hearted at best, and never seriously threatened London's ability to craft policy as it saw fit. Imperial and alliance considerations complicated British policy-making, but only rarely did they force policy-makers into a course of action they would not otherwise have selected.

Historians frequently point to the power of 'reciprocity' in explaining why the Anglo–German POW regime proved so resilient after 1939. As we have seen, however, reciprocity is a far from simple concept, either in theory or practice. Belligerent attitudes evolved considerably over the course of the war and gave rise to very different forms of 'reciprocal' behaviour. Before the winter of 1941–42, the concept was interpreted in a diffuse, liberal fashion. Substantial headway was made in resolving difficulties and recognizing—and satisfying—their respective needs. Naturally, there were limits to this process—notably Berlin's refusal to fulfil its obligations towards meeting the prisoners' dietary needs—but such

[8] Sir G. Warner to Mrs P. M. Stewart (POWRA), 26 Feb. 1943. HRO. 5M79 A25.

'reserved areas' were never permitted to undermine the integrity of the POW regime as a whole. London's insistence on keeping parcel operations in private hands, though motivated in part by the desire to avoid relieving Berlin of its legal obligations, also had the object of preventing difficulties in this area, souring the sense of mutual confidence in the POW regime that had developed over the first two years of the war.

A change in attitudes was clearly under way by the late autumn of 1941, ushered in not just by the mounting intensity of fighting but also the sense of disillusionment created by the abortive Anglo–German POW exchange in October.[9] In Whitehall, belief in the benevolence of the German 'military' remained strong, but officials became more wary of relying on German good will. The scope of discussions was deliberately narrowed and a more dogmatic approach taken towards the functioning of reciprocal relations.[10] In Germany, attitudes developed along a different trajectory, though the results were largely the same. The litany of slights and insults to which German prisoners were subjected over the first half of 1942, though not in themselves injurious to their health, was taken as indicative of a hardening of attitudes in London, and an unwillingness on Britain's behalf to interpret its reciprocal obligations in a flexible and generous fashion. By late 1942, the basis of Anglo–German relations over POWs had thus been transformed. Instead of cooperating with each other with the aim of securing mutually desired outcomes, as had been the case in the first years of the war, officials on both sides increasingly devoted their energies towards maintaining a minimum level of coordination, sufficient to protect the essential elements of the POW regime from the corrosive effects of the war.[11]

That it had come to this is clear from Josef Goebbels' anxious diary entries during the shackling crisis in late 1942, and the determination shown by Churchill, and his cabinet colleagues, in trying to prevent Hitler using British POWs for political aims.[12] Many contemporary observers criticized British action during the shackling crisis, and these sentiments have been echoed by subsequent historians. In matching German reprisals, the government imperilled its standing at home and so strained its relations with the Canadian government that it was obliged to bow to pressure the following year and cede a measure of control over policy-making to the Dominions. Yet, as we saw in Chapter 6, the shackling crisis should not necessarily be seen as a British 'defeat'. The episode had a noticeably salutary effect on attitudes in Berlin. The reversal of German fortunes in North Africa and loss of the 6th Army at Stalingrad naturally sensitized

[9] Moore, 'The Last Phase of the Gentleman's War', pp. 41–55

[10] This is perhaps best seen in London's abandonment of its efforts to explore imaginative solutions to break the impasse over POW repatriation in the summer of 1942.

[11] For a discussion of common 'interests' and 'aversions': Arthur A. Stein, 'Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World', *International Organization*, 36/2 (1982), pp. 299–324.

[12] *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, p. 89 (8 Oct. 1942), p. 426 (11 Dec. 1942).

German officials to the value of the POW regime, especially the provisions dealing with the repatriation of protected personnel and wounded POWs, but the showdown with Britain over shackling also exposed the extent to which important German interests were contingent on the health of the POW regime. As a consequence, an uneasy truce took hold over 1943, which saw both sides steer clear of precipitating confrontations over POW issues.

Although reciprocity continued to influence Anglo–German POW relations in the final eighteen months of the war, from as early as the spring of 1944 it is difficult to see the concept playing a dominant, or even major role in shaping the policy on either side. In London, the murder of the 'great escapers' in March 1944 shattered any hope of maintaining a relationship based on an equality of expectations. How could it be otherwise when the British were incapable of matching German barbarity and executing German POWs in cold blood? Moreover, in justifying the shootings—and the public lynching of downed pilots later that summer—as retaliation for Britain's conduct of the war, rather than as a 'legitimate' reprisal for alleged ill-treatment of German POWs, the event took POW relations onto a new level. In effect, it denied London the opportunity to capitalize on its growing superiority in POW numbers to influence the behaviour of the German leadership. Hitler's obvious disdain for German soldiers who chose captivity over further resistance—clearly evident by the late summer of 1944—was implicit in his decision to execute the RAF prisoners earlier in the year. Though the two sides were still capable of achieving a limited number of common objectives, such as the repatriation of POWs, relations moved beyond the point where British officials could rely on the power of reciprocity to hold German excesses in check.

Given, then, that Britain's actual capacity to reciprocate German actions was limited to a relatively brief period of time (from the autumn of 1942 to the spring of 1944), something else must clearly have been at work in sustaining the POW regime in the west. Historians have tended to answer this question by pointing to Hitler's ideological and racial preferences and the 'cleanliness' of combat conditions in the western theatre. Neither explanation, however, is entirely convincing. Fighting on the western front could be just as brutal as in the east. From 1942, British troops in North Africa were given 'hate training' to puncture the aura that had come to surround Erwin Rommel and his *Afrika Korps*.[13] Few who observed the carpet-bombing of German cities would consider Allied tactics as either 'clean', 'proportionate', or in accordance with traditional norms.[14] As Anthony Beevor has recently pointed out, fighting in Normandy

[13] Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, p. 461. See James L. Weingartner, 'Massacre at Biscari: Patton and an American War Crime', *The Historian*, 52/1 (1989), pp. 24–39.

[14] For the 'legality' of strategic bombing, see W. Hays Park, 'Air War and the Laws of War', and Manfred Messerschmidt, 'Strategic Air War and International Law', in H. Boog (ed.), *The Conduct of the Air War in the Second World War: An International Comparison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 298–309, 310–72.

was so intense that the attrition rate for Allied and German forces was almost double that found on the eastern front over the same period. While German units redeployed from the eastern front received instructions on the Hague and Geneva conventions, legal restraints and customary practices were frequently ignored. At least 362 US soldiers were killed in 'mass executions' by German forces in the first days of the Ardennes offensive in December 1944 alone.[15] Probably double this number of airmen lost their lives to German lynch mobs by the time the war came to a close. In short, had either side wished to bring 'total war' to the western theatre, there was no shortage of atrocities to justify the move.

Furthermore, while there was a close correlation between the conditions of captivity inflicted on different categories of POWs in German hands and the racial 'hierarchy' promulgated in Nazi ideology,[16] as Rüdiger Overmans has shown, it was Germany's 'national conservative value system', and not Nazi racism, that ultimately shaped German preferences.[17] When Nazi leaders spoke, as they often did, of a 'soldierly', 'honourable', or 'chivalrous' art of warfare they gave voice to a 'warriors code' that was rooted in traditional German military thought. This code was particularlist, reflecting customary European practice, and differentiated between Germany's various foes. Though the extent of the brutality meted out to Red Army prisoners was new, German discrimination of prisoners of Russian or east European origins was not. To officials in the OKW there was nothing inherently contradictory in granting privileges to one nationality while denying them to another.

It was Britain's national status and not its racial worth that accounted for German benevolence towards British POWs. British forces, particularly those drawn from the New World, were occasionally accused of lacking a 'conception of chivalry', and Britain's use of strategic bombing and commitment to pursue German war criminals after the war were likewise held responsible for the radicalization of warfare in western Europe and the Far East.[18] But Germany's traditional understanding of the Anglo–German conflict, and its conviction that the British were essentially 'honourable' opponents, were never entirely overturned. That Goebbels believed the British were capable of mending their ways is seen in his reaction to an interrogation report on the attitudes of captured British pilots, read the day before the shackling crisis broke. 'Oddly enough', Goebbels noted, 'the English fliers admitted to a set of humanitarian constraints. [. . .] In the long run, it is naturally no fun for a young man to throw his bombs on residential areas'.[19] Hitler's infamous 'commando order', enunciated

[15] Siegel, *Im Interesse der Gerechtigkeit*, p. 129. Beevor, *D-Day*, p. 113.

[16] Streit, *Keine Kamaraden*, p. 69. For a particularly good example, see Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims*.

[17] Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches', p. 871.

[18] Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table-Talk*, p. 696 (6 Sep. 1942).

[19] *Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels II 6*, p. 85 (7 Oct. 1942).

less than a fortnight later, was thus the exception, not the rule; his respect for his British opponents was undiminished.[20] Likewise, for Hitler, the suggestion that Germany walk away from the Geneva conventions in February 1945 appealed, not so much as a means by which he could retaliate against Britain's obliteration of Dresden, as for the practical benefits it brought in steeling German defences against the advancing Anglo-American forces in the west.

In its treatment of British prisoners, Hitler's government thus remained wedded to a cultural outlook that echoed time-honoured practices—what Jodl rather confusingly called 'unwritten customary international law'—which implicitly embraced ideas of restraint and moderation. Germany would abide by the standards of 'chivalrous' warfare, applicable to conflict between honourable foes, and comply with those elements of the legal codes that reflected these older practices. Thus Berlin's willingness to entertain reciprocal relations over the treatment of POWs after 1940 was driven by a desire to see the Luftwaffe pilots, submariners, and sun-blistered veterans of the *Afrika Korps* in British captivity accorded the respect and privileges appropriate to their status as heirs to Germany's illustrious military traditions. While humanitarian considerations loomed larger in British thinking than in German, humanitarianism nevertheless retained a place in German depictions of chivalric warfare.[21] The readiness of German officials to acknowledge instances of moderation in British detention policy suggests that they, more than their British counterparts, saw themselves engaged in a collective defence of customary values and traditions.

What is perhaps more surprising, however, is the extent to which the rules set out in the 1929 POW convention actually constrained German behaviour. Clearly the presence of neutral diplomats and inspectors inside Germany played an important part in this process by providing the system of oversight essential for the functioning of reciprocal relations. They also interceded with the local authorities, interpreting the POW convention and offering practical advice and guidance on policy matters. It was, however, the very clarity of the convention's provisions that made it difficult for the German authorities, or British for that matter, to openly flout the agreed rules. The convention offered, in the words of one FO official, 'a standard which can be applied in a number of day-to-day matters . . . If prisoners are being ill-treated, we can test the extent of ill-treatment by reference to the Convention, and we can frame our representations to the Germans accordingly. If the Convention vanishes', he concluded, 'there is nothing left . . . except a little very vague and indeterminate customary law which is in most cases totally indefinite and undetailed'.[22] The convention was not *binding* in the sense that it prevented either party from embarking on a course of action

[20] The reported capture of soldiers in Sicily in December 1942 led Hitler to remark that they were probably Americans: 'English people won't get caught so easily, they are tough dogs'. Evening Sit. Rep., 1 Dec. 1942. Heiber and Glantz, *Hitler and his Generals*, p. 12.

[21] Wylie, 'Captured by the Nazis', passim.

[22] Minute, Patrick Dean (legal adviser, FO) 22 Jan. 1943. TNA. FO916/563.

it had set its sights on, but it was clearly a restraint influencing policy-makers. Even when Berlin was intent on violating agreed norms, the convention's 'paper walls' limited Germany's freedom of action. Consider the contortions German officials went through in trying to avoid blatant infringements of the convention, in discussions over the creation of 'death zones' in the late summer of 1944 or grappling with the issue of Allied *Terrorfliegern* earlier in the year.

It was not just that agreed standards left Berlin with little room to manoeuvre if it wished to remain in step with traditional norms; the existence of the regulations required Berlin to adopt procedures and routines that proved remarkably resilient, despite radical changes in the external environment. Even in 1945, when German actions were in breach of a whole raft of the convention's provisions, officials and commandants remained conscious of what was expected of them, and were occasionally admonished for failing to fulfil their duties.[23] Equally importantly, the convention provided the common language and set of understandings and expectations needed to promote dialogue between the two sides. The sheer volume of communications generated over POW issues provided officials with tangible proof of the existence of shared interests. Some 3,100 notes and letters were passed on by the Swiss authorities to British POWs every month between mid-1942 and the end of 1944, with a smaller, though nevertheless substantial number, some 2,000, directed the other way.[24] It was this density of interaction that helped sustain commitment to the POW regime, despite the deterioration of other areas of Anglo–German relations. It helped foster an environment in which policy-makers came to see the convention as an immutable feature of the political and strategic landscape. Not for nothing did the Swiss set such store on Berlin's continued willingness to furnish replies to British inquiries and protests in the final months of the war, even if the actual substance of their replies failed to satisfy British officials.

If British prisoners, to paraphrase Churchill, ultimately owed their lives to German humanity and their daily bread to German compassion, this did not mean that the British government was powerless to influence their condition or treatment. The decisions taken by British statesmen and their officials during the war had a major bearing on German willingness to apply the POW convention in its treatment of British POWs. The convention's inspection regime would not have operated as effectively as it did had London not taken neutral diplomats into its confidence or transferred such unprecedented levels of responsibility to the

[23] A remarkable instance of this was the poetry competition instituted for guards in Stalag III C, Alt Drewitz, in March 1945 on the theme of how to prevent escapes. First prize went to Mjr. Seidel whose poem began 'Die Kreigsgefangenen sind wohl der Feind, doch auch Soldaten/ Drum seine in gutter Vorgestzter stets in Wort und Taten!/ Behandle deine Kriegsgefangenen gerecht/ Und prüfe selbst, ob's ihnen gut geht oder schlecht!/. Ko. Kgf WK III to camps, 9 Apr. 1945. BA-MA. RH49/30.

[24] FID, 'Graphische Darstellung des Schriftenwechsels (Noten und Schreiben) der verscheidenen Sektionen während der Jahre 1942–1945', 3 Jan. 1946. SBA. E2001 (D) 2/97.

Swiss authorities in the final year of the war. Throughout the conflict, officials had to juggle competing priorities, gauge the mood of their adversary, and make judgements on when to stand firm, and when to give ground. Most particularly, they had to maintain their faith in the POW regime and its associated norms, and ensure that if, for reasons of military or political necessity (or convenience) the rules had to be bent, they were not irrevocably broken in the process. Inevitably, there were those who questioned whether repeating the mantra of international law was appropriate for a regime that had taken prisoners' lives in cold blood in March 1944, but in retrospect London's insistence on framing its interests using the language of the POW convention was correct. As German discussions after the bombing of Dresden revealed, even Britain's unilateral compliance with the convention had a powerful effect on German behaviour. Even at this stage of the war, with Hitler's death camps disgorging their terrible secrets, the German leadership remained committed to defending Germany's stake in the international legal order. This was the nub of Jodl's argument against taking Germany out of the conventions. However perverted Nazi Germany's reading of history, so long as it saw itself as standing at the apex of forces derived from Europe's past, it could not afford to sever its links with the laws and norms that defined the 'civilized' world. This explains the 'really rather surprising' fact, as Sir Harold Satow put it, that Berlin ultimately 'respected the provisions of the Convention as much as [it] did'.[25] Even when faced with an adversary capable of perpetrating the most heinous crimes in modern history, Britain's avowal of customary rules and norms over the treatment of POWs was not without effect. It is a humbling lesson, and one which future western politicians and their militaries might do well to remember.

[25] Satow and Sée, *Prisoners of War Department*, p. 74.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

Australia

Australian Archives. Melbourne Office

MP742	Army AHQ, Secretariat Branch: Central Registry, General Correspondence

Canada

Library and Archive of Canada, Ottawa (LAC)

MG26 J	W. L. Mackenzie King, papers, memoranda, notes, diary
MG26 N	Lester Pearson papers, diary
MG27 III B	Col. J. L. Ralston papers
MG30 E101	Hume Wrong fonds
MG30 E390	Flying Officer Harold J. Dothie, 'A wartime log'
MG32 A	Massey family fonds
R112	Office of Special Assistant to the Adjutant General (Col. Clarke)
RG2	Privy Council Office. War Committee Minutes
RG24	Department of National Defence
RG25	Department of External Affairs (DEA)

Federal Republic of Germany

BA Berlin Lichtefelde

R55	Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda
R901	Rechtsabteilung, AA
NS6	Partei Kanzlei der NSADP
NS19	Persönlicher Stab, Reichsführer SS

Bundesarchiv Militärchiv, Freiburg (BA-MA)

RH2	Handakten Dibowski
RH49	Kriegsgefangenenlagern, Arbeits- und Baueinheiten der Kriegsgefangenen, 1940–45
RL23	OKL Luftwaffenbautruppen, Wach- und Landesschuetzeneinheiten, sowie Kriegsgefangenenlager der Luftwaffe
RM7	OKM. Seekriegsleitung
RW4	OKW Wehrmachtführungsstab
RW5	OKW Amt Ausland-Abwehr

RW6 OKW. Allgemeines Wehrmachtamt (AWA)
RW48 OKW Wehrmachtsauskunftstelle für Kriegsverluste, 1940–45

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz—Generalsekretariat: Archiv (Berlin)

RK152 Der Präsident und der stellvertretende Präsident. Bericht über den Kriesgeinsatz des DRK
RK127 Hauptabteilung IV/7: Versorgung und Fürsorge. Versand von DRK-Typenpaketen an Kriegsgfangene
RK106 Amt VIII: Amt für Auslandsdienst. Bemühungen des DRK um eine Verbesserung des Postverkehrs

Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ), Munich

MA127 Records of National Socialist German Labour Party
MA206 Records of HQ. German Armed Forces High Command
MA208 Records of HQ. German Armed Forces High Command
MA240 Records of HQ. German Armed Forces High Command
MA438 Records of Reichsleader SS and Chief of German Police
MA446 Records of Reichsleader SS and Chief of German Police
MA654 OKW records
ED157 Nachlass Erich u. Theo Kordt.
Gk05.08 Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Keil, 2 Js 360/64,
Gs05.03 Schwurgericht, Stuttgart, 26–30 Mar. 1957. Urteil Strafsache gegen Dr Guenther Venediger
ZS158. Interrogation reports, Generaloberst d. Luft. H-J. Stumpf
ZS425 Interrogation reports, Adolf Westhoff. vols. 1–3
ZS427 Interrogation reports, Gottlob Berger. vols. 1–2
ZS705 Interrogation reports, Dr Friedrich Gaus
ZS803 Interrogation reports, Gesandter Erich Albrecht
ZS1255 Interrogation reports, F. W. Meuer
ZS1503 Interrogation reports, Eduard Sethe
ZS1546 Interrogation reports, A. P. von Steengracht

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin (PA-AA)

Botschafter Karl Ritter, Handakten
Büro RAM
Büro des Staatssekretärs
Büro Unterstaatssekretärs
Rechtsabteilung, AA
Gesandschaft Bern

Switzerland

Achiv für Zeitgeschichte, Zurich

III.23.9.1. Nachlass Paul Ruegger

International Committee of the Red Cross Archive (ICRC), Geneva

C2	Minutes of meetings
C11	Minutes of Bureau
G3	Service des Delegations
G7	Violations des Conventions
G11	Blocus
G14	Blessés et Malades
G23	Visites du CICR au CICR
G25	Traitement des PG et IC
G85	Gouvernements
SG4	Secours

Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Berne (SBA)

E2200 London 55	Schweizerische Gesandtschaft London Fremde Interessen, 1939–1945
E2200 Berlin 3	Archivplan Abteilung für Schutzmachtangelegenheiten der Schweizerischen Gesandtschaft Berlin
E2001 (D) 11	Plan des Archives de l'Administration centrale
E2001 (D) 15	DIE Section 'Britannique'
E2001 (D) 16	DIE Section 'Allemand'
E2809	Handakten Marcel Pilet-Golaz
JI 17 1990/98	Nachlass Marcel Pilet-Golaz

Universitätsbibliothek, Basle

BII41	Nachlass C. J. Burckhardt

United Kingdom

Bodelian Library, University of Oxford

MSS Eng.d.3475	Dame Irene Ward, MP, Baroness of North Tyneside.
MS Rumbold	Sir Horace Rumbold, diaries and correspondence

British Red Cross Archive (BRCA)

JWO/1/1/1.	Minute book, Joint War Organization executive committee meetings; chairman's meetings
JWO/1/1/2–5.	Minute books, Executive committee meetings
JWO/1/1/9.	Minutes of Inner Cabinet meetings
JWO/1/1/12.	Minutes of chairman's meetings

Churchill College Archive Centre (CCAC), University of Cambridge

CHAR7	Chartwell Trust Papers (W. S. Churchill): Constituency: Epping, 1924–1945
CHAR19	Chartwell Trust Papers (W. S. Churchill): Official: Admiralty, 1939–1940

CHAR20	Chartwell Trust Papers (W. S. Churchill): Official: Prime Minister, 1940–1945

Post Office Heritage Centre, London (GPO)

POST56	Post Office: Emergency Services: War and Civil Emergencies
POST122	Post Office: Registered Files.

Hampshire Record Office (HRO), Winchester

5M79	Sir George Warner, papers.

Imperial War Museum, London (IWM) Dept. of Docus.

Misc. 94 Item 1434.	Miscellaneous
HEB1/3.	Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Belfield diaries and correspondence
P370	E. Booth, 'The Diary of a Prisoner of War'
P463	Mjr. A. T. Casdagli, diary
92/4/1	Arthur F. Gibbs, Ms. diary, 'Kriegie'
9/18/1	R. P. Evans, 'My Life Story'
83/41/1	R. A. Wilson, 'Five Years Easy'
90/4/1	D. W. Luckett, memoir
99/47/1	J. O. Bradcock, 'Life in Stalag VIII B German Prisoner of War Camp and After'
93/17/1	Capt. R. F. Campbell, 'memoir'
06/19/1	Philip Worrall, memoir, 'Surviving without a Father'

Liddel Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA) King's College London

ADAM.	Mjr.-Gen. Sir Ronald F. Adam, Adjutant-General to the Forces (1941–1945), memoirs
KCKEE	Lt. Col. John (Jock) Alec McKee

The National Archive (TNA)

ADM1	Admiralty and Secretariat Papers
ADM116	Admiralty and Secretariat Cases
AIR2	Air Ministry Registered Files (B89) Prisoners of War (C27) Conventions
AIR14	Bomber Command
AIR20	Air Ministry: Unregistered Papers
AIR40	Air Ministry Directorate of Intelligence
CAB4	Committee of Imperial Defence: B Papers/Miscellaneous Memoranda
CAB66	War Cabinet Memoranda WP and CP Series
CAB79	War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committee, Minutes of Meetings

CAB81	War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committees: Joint-Intelligence Committee
CAB119	Joint Planning Staff: Files
CAB120	Minister of Defence: Secretariat Files
CAB122	Cabinet Office: Special Secret Information Centre: Files
CAB195	Cabinet Secretary's Notebooks
CO980	Colonial Office: POW and Civilian Internees Department
DEFE2	Ministry of Defence: Combined Operations HQ Records
DO35	Dominions Office and Commonwealth Relations Office: Original Correspondence
FO369	General Correspondence: Consular
FO371	Foreign Office: General Correspondence: Political
FO372	Foreign Office: General Correspondence (after 1906): Treaty Correspondence
FO373	Peace Conference of 1919–1920. Handbooks
FO837	Ministry of Economic Warfare
FO898	Political Warfare Executive
FO916	War of 1939 to 1945: Consular (War) Department: Prisoners of War and Internees
FO954	Lord Avon (Anthony Eden) Papers
FO1049	SHAEF: Political Office: Control Commission for Germany Political Division
HO215	Home Office: Internment: General Files
HS6	Special Operations Executive: Western European Files
HW1	Government Code and Cypher School: Signal Intelligence passed to the Prime Minister
HW5	Government Code and Cypher School: Reports of German Army and Air Force High Grade Machine Decrypts
HW11	Government Code and Cypher School: World War II: Official Histories
HW12	Government Code and Cypher School: Diplomatic Section and Predecessors
PREM3	Prime Minister's Office: Operations Papers
PREM4	Prime Minister's Office: Confidential Papers
T231	Treasury: Exchange Control Division: Files
T300	Treasury and Civil Service: Ceremonial Branch: Registered Files: Campaign Stars and Medals
T301	Treasury and Civil Service: Ceremonial Branch: Allocation of Awards
WO32	War Office: Registered Files: General Series
WO165	War of 1939 to 1945, War Diaries, War Office Directorates
WO193	Directorate of Military Operations: Collation Files
WO208	Directorate of Military Intelligence
WO222	War of 1939 to 1945: Medical Historian Papers
WO224	War of 1939 to 1945: Enemy POW Camps: Reports of ICRC and Protecting Powers

WO235	Judge Advocate General's Office: War of 1939 to 1945: War Crimes Papers
WO258	Private Office Papers: Permanent Under-Secretary

The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

Mam O Nedd Collection. W. Coombe Tennant JP. (WCT.)

People's History Museum, Manchester

Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Parliamentary Labour Party, minutes of meetings

United States

National Archive and Records Administration, Maryland, USA (NARA.)

RG59	State Department Central Files
RG84	Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (Bern)
RG200	American Red Cross Society
RG226	Office of Strategic Services
RG331	Records of Allied Operational and Occupational HQ. SHAEF

OFFICIAL HISTORIES/REPORTS

Belfield, Mjr. Gen. Sir Herbert E., 'Report on Directorate of Prisoners of War', Sep. 1920. TNA. FO369/1450 K15026.

British Red Cross Society, *Red Cross and St. John War History, 1939–1947: Confidential Supplement*, 2 vols. (London, British Red Cross Society, n.d.).

Cambray, P. G. and Briggs, G. G., *Red Cross and St. John: The Official Record of the Humanitarian Services of the War Organisation of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John of Jerusalem, 1939–1947* (London: Sumfield and Day, 1949).

Canadian Red Cross Society, *History: Toronto Branch, 1914–1948* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1949).

Crew, F. A. E., *The Army Medical Services. Campaigns, vol. i* (London: HMSO, 1956).

Ehrman, John, *Grand Strategy, vol. vi, October 1944–August 1945* (London: HMSO, 1956).

Field, A. E., 'Prisoners of the Germans and Italians', in Barton Maugham (ed.), *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series 1, vol. iii, Tobruk and El Alamein* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966), pp. 755–821.

Hermann, J. Douglas, *Report to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs of a Study on Canadians who were Prisoners of War in Europe during World War II* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974).

International Committee of the Red Cross, *Propositions et observations des gouvernements sur l'avant-projet de convention internationale relative au traitement des prisonniers de guerre* (Geneva: ICRC, 1929).

——*Report of the ICRC on its activities during the Second World War (September 1, 1939–June 30, 1947)*, 3 vols. (Geneva: ICRC, 1948).

International Law Association, *Report on the Twenty-Ninth Conference, Portsmouth, May 27–31, 1920* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1920).

——*Report on the Thirtieth Conference, The Hague, 30 August–3 September 1921* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1922).

Mason, W. Wynne, *Prisoners of War: Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–1945* (Wellington: War Historical Branch, 1954).

Medlicott, W. N., *The Economic Blockade*, 2 vols., (London: HMSO, 1959).

OKW, *Kriegsgefangene 1914–1918. Auf Grund der Kriegsakten bearbeitet beim OKW* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1939).

——*Vorschrift für das Kriegsgefangenenwesen, Teil 2: I Abkommen über die Behandlung der Kriegsgefangenen vom 27. Juli 1929* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1939).

Phillimore, Col. N. J., 'The Second World War 1939–1945. Army. Prisoners of War', WO, May 1949 TNA. WO366/26.

Playfair, I. S. O., *The Mediterranean and the Middle East. vol. ii, The Germans Come to the Help of their Ally* (London: HMSO, 1956).

——*The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. iii, Sep. 1941–Sep. 1942. British Fortunes Reach their Lowest Ebb* (London: HMSO, 1960).

——*The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. iv. The Destruction of the Axis Forces in Africa* (London: HMSO, 1966).

Satow, Sir Harold and Sée, M. J., *The Work of the Prisoners of War Department during the Second World War* (London: Foreign Office, 1950).

Stacey, C. P., *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. i, Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: E. Cloutier, 1955).

Sweeting, A. J., 'Prisoners of the Japanese', in Lionel Wigmore (ed.), *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series 1, vol. vi, The Japanese Thrust* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957), pp. 511–645.

PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

Actes de la Conférence Diplomatique de Genève de 1929, International Committee of the Red Cross (Geneva: Journal de Genève, 1930).

Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence, 3 vols., Warren Kimbal (ed.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Die Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels, 15 vols. Elke Frölich (ed.) (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1995–96).

Die Weizsäcker-Papiere, 1933–1950, L. E. Hill (ed.) (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1974).

Documents Diplomatiques Suisses, ser. 1, vol xiii (Berne: Bentelli, 1991).

Documents in Australian Foreign Policy, 1937–1949, vol. iv, July 1940–June 1941 (*DAFP*), W. J. Hudson and H. J. W. Stokes (eds.) (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980).

Documents in Canadian External Relations, vol. 9. 1942–1943 (*DCER*), John F. Hilliker (ed.) (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1980).

Führer-Erlasse, 1939–1945, Martin Moll (ed.) (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997).

Helmuth James von Moltke: Letters to Freya 1939–1945, Beate Ruhm von Oppen (ed.) (London: Collins, 1991).

Hitler and his Generals: Military Conferences 1942–1945, Helmut Heiber and David M. Glantz (eds.) (New York: Enigma, 2002).

Hitler's Table Talk. Hitler's Conversations Recorded by Martin Bormann, Hugh Trevor-Roper (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
The Mackenzie King Record, vol. i, 1939–1944, J. W. Pickersgill (ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960).
Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938–1945, H. Boberach (ed.) (Herrschning: Pawlag, 1984).
Parliamentary Debates House of Commons (*Parl. Debs. Commons*), year, vol., date, folio.
Parliamentary Debates House of Lords (*Parl. Debs. Lords*), year, vol., date, folio.
Roosevelt and Hopkins, Robert E. Sherwood (ed.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1958).
Selections from the Smuts Papers, vol. vi, December 1934–August 1945, Jean van der Poel (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).
Tapping Hitler's Generals: Transcripts of Secret Conversations, 1942–1945, Sönke Neitzel (ed.) (Barnsley: Front Line, 2007).
Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremburg (Nuremburg: IMT, 1947).

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS/CONFERENCE PAPERS

Frey, Dominque, 'Zwischen Briefträger und Vermittler. Die Schweizer Schutzmachttätigkeit für Grossbritannien und Deutschland im Zweiten Weltkrieg', Lizentiatsarbeit. University of Berne, 2004.
Hately-Broad, Barbara, 'Prisoner of War Families and the British Government during the Second World War', PhD Thesis. University of Sheffield, 2002.
Henn, Charles, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Idea of Protecting Powers', PhD Thesis. University of Cambridge, 1986.
Inhelder, Matthias, 'Die Schweiz als Schutzmacht Grossbritanniens und Deutschlands im Zweiten Weltkrieg'. Lizentiatsarbeit, University of Zurich, 1989.
Jones, Heather, 'The Enemy Disarmed: POWs and the Victims of Wartime: Britain, France and Germany, 1914–1920', PhD Thesis. Trinity College Dublin, 2006.
Wylie, Neville, 'Muted Applause: British Prisoners of War as Observers and Victims of the Allied Bombing Campaign over Germany', paper delivered to 'Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940–1945: An International Conference', 10–13 September 2009. University of Exeter.

PUBLISHED MEMOIRS/DIARIES

Beckwith, E. G. C. (ed.), *The Mansel Diaries: The Diaries of Captain John Mansel, Prisoner-of-War—and Camp Forger—in Germany 1940–45* (Abingdon: Burgess & Son, 1977).
Butcher, Harry C., *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946).
Churchill, Winston S., *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1930).
Dominy, John, *The Sergeant Escapers* (London: Ian Allan, 1974).
Dönitz, Karl, *Memoirs: Ten Years and Twenty Days* (New York: Da Capo, 1997).
Duncan, Michael, *Underground from Posen* (London: William Kimber, 1954).

Gordon, P. H., *Fifty Years in the Canadian Red Cross* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969).
Green, J. M., *From Colditz in Code* (London: Hale, 1971).
Guderian, Heinz, *Panzer Leader* (New York: Da Capo, 1952).
Heeney, Arnold D. P., *The Things that Are Ceasar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).
Hesse, Fritz, *Hitler and the English* (London: Alan Wingate, 1954).
Ignatieff, George, *The Making of a Peacemonger* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
Junod, Marcel, *Warrior without Weapons* (Geneva: ICRC, 1982).
Knox, Sir Alfred, *Notes on Some of the Ranfurly Knoxes* (Windsor: Oxley, 1950).
Liddell Hart, B. H. (ed.), *The Rommel Papers* (London: Collins, 1953).
Massey, Vincent, *The Sword of Lionheart and other Wartime Speeches* (London: Hodder Stoughton, 1943).
McCarthy, Daniel J., *The Prisoners of War in Germany . . . With a History of the Development of the Principle of Neutral Inspection and Control* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co, 1918).
Oliphant, Sir L., *An Ambassador in Bonds* (London: Putnam, 1947).
Pearson, Lester, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson, vol. i, 1897–1948* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972).
Prouse, A. R., *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe* (Toronto: Fleet, 1982).
Ribbentrop, Joachim von, *The Ribbentrop Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954).
Ritchie, Charles, *The Siren Years: Undiplomatic Diaries, 1937–1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974).
Roberts, J., *A Terrier Goes to War* (London: Minerva, 1998).
Romilly, Giles and Alexander, Michael, *The Privileged Nightmare* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954).
Vansittart, Lord, *The Mist Procession* (London: Hutchinson, 1958).
Warlimont, Walter, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939–1945* (Novaro, CA: Presidio, 1964).
Williams, Elvet, *Arbeitskommando* (London: Gollancz, 1975).

BOOKS

Absalom, Roger, *Strange Alliance: Aspects of Escape and Survival in Italy, 1943–1945* (Florence: Olschki, 1991).
Acton, Carol, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).
Andrews, Allen, *Exemplary Justice* (London: Harrap, 1976).
Arnold, Klaus Jochen, *Die Wehrmacht und die Besatzungspolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion. Kriegsführung und Radikalisierung im Unternehmen Barbarossa* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002).
Atkinson, Rick, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa 1942–1943* (London: Abacus, 2004).
Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (London: Penguin, 1990).

Bartov, Omar, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide and Modern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Baudendistel, Rainer, *Between Bombs and Good Intentions: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Italo–Ethiopian War, 1935–1936* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2006).

Beck, Peter R., *Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Becker, Annette, *Oubliés de la grande guerre. Humanitaire et culture de guerre. Populations occupées, déportés civils, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1998).

Beevor, Anthony, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (London: Viking, 2009).

Bellush, Bernard, *He Walked Alone: A Biography of John Gilbert Winant* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968).

Berridge, G. R., *Talking to the Enemy: How States without 'Diplomatic Relations' Communicate* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

Best, Geoffrey, *Churchill and War* (London: Hambledon, 2005).

—— *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980/1983).

Biess, Frank, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Bissell, Claude, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

Bloch, Michael, *Ribbentrop* (London: Bantam, 1994).

Bond, Brian, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

Boyd, Carl, *Hitler's Japanese Confidant: General Oshima Hiroshi and MAGIC Intelligence, 1941–1945* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1993).

Breitman, Richard, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (London: Penguin, 2000).

Bridgland, Tony, *Waves of Hate: Naval Atrocities of the Second World War* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2002).

Browning, Christopher, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office: A Study of Referat D III of Abteilung Deutschland, 1940–43* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978).

Burgstaller, Markus, *Theories of Compliance with International Law* (Leiden: Nijhoff, 2005).

Byers, Michael, *Custom, Power and the Power of Rules: International Relations and Customary International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Carter, David J., *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire: Alien, Refugee and POW Camps in Canada, 1914–1946* (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980).

Churchill, Randolph, *Winston C. Churchill, vol. i, Youth* (London: Heinemann, 1966).

Clark, Ian, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Clarke, Peter, *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

Clutton-Brock, Oliver, *Footprints on the Sands of Time: RAF Bomber Command Prisoners-of-War in Germany 1939–1945* (London: Grub Street, 2003).

Cohen, Roger, *Soldiers and Slaves: American POWs Trapped by the Nazis' Final Gamble* (New York: Knopf, 2005).

Corbett, P. Scott, *Quiet Passages: The Exchange of Civilians between the United States and Japan during the Second World War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1987).

Corni, Gustavo and Gies, Horst, *Brot, Butter, Kanonen. Die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997).

Crang, Jeremy A., *The British Army and the People's War 1939–1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Crowther, Anne, *British Social Policy 1914–1939* (London: Macmillan & Economic History Society, 1988).

Dancocks, Daniel G., *In Enemy Hands: Canadian Prisoners of War, 1939–1945* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1983).

Datner, Szymon, *Crimes against POWs: Responsibility of the Wehrmacht* (Warsaw: Zachodnia Agencja, 1964).

Döscher, Hans-Jürgen, *Das Auswärtiges Amt im Dritten Reich. Diplomatie im Schatten der 'Endlösung'* (Berlin: Siedler, 1987).

Dower, John, *War without Mercy: War and Race in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

Durand, André, *History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, vol. ii, From Sarajevo to Hiroshima* (Geneva: Henri Dunant Institute, 1984).

Durand, Yves, *Les Prisonniers de guerre dans les stalags, les oflags et les kommandos, 1939–1945* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 1994).

Farrell, Theo, *The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2005).

Favez, Jean-Claude, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Ferguson, Niall, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (London: Penguin, 2002).

Fishman, Sarah, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940–1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

Foot, M. R. D. and Langley, Jim, *MI9: Escape and Evasion 1939–1945* (London: Book Club, 1979).

Forsythe, David P., *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Franklin, W. M., *Protection of Foreign Interests: A Study of Diplomatic and Consular Practice* (New York: 1969/1947).

French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army and the British People, c.1870–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Garrett, Stephen A., *Ethics and Airpower in World War II: The British Bombing of German Cities* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993).

Gellately, Robert, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Purity 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

Gilbert, Adrian, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe, 1939–1945* (London: John Murray, 2006).

Gilbert, Martin, *Sir Horace Rumbold: Portrait of a Diplomat 1869–1941* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

Gilbert, Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981).

Gill, Anton, *The Great Escape* (London: Granada, 2001).

Gillman, Peter and Leni, *Collar the Lot! How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books, 1980).
Granatstein, J. L., *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975).
——*A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929–1968* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1981).
—— *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935–1957* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982).
Gray, Jeffrey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
Greenhouse, Brereton, '*C' Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941–1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997).
Hankel, Gerd, *Die Leipziger Prozesse* (Hamburg: Hamburg Edition, 2003).
Hasenclever, Andreas, Mayer, Peter, and Rittberger, Volker, *Theories of International Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
Heiber, Helmut, *Goebbels* (London: Robert Hale, 1972).
Henckaerts, Jean-Marie and Doswald-Beck, Louise, *Customary International Humanitarian Law, vol. i, Rules* (Geneva and Cambridge: ICRC and Cambridge University Press, 2005).
Henkin, Louis, *How Nations Behave: Law and Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).
Herbert, Ulrich, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge* (Munich: Beck, 2001).
Hilliker, John, *Canada's Department of External Affairs, vol. i, The Early Years, 1909–1946* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).
Hirshson, Stanley P., *General Patton: A Soldier's Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002).
Horne, John and Kramer, Alan, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
Howard, Michael, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
Hutchinson, John F., *Champions of Charity : War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996).
Hyde, Charles Cheney, *International Law: Chiefly as Interpreted and Applied by the United States*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Little Brown & Co., 1922).
Ignatieff, Michael, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Vintage, 1999).
Iremonger, F. A., *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury: His Life and Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948).
Irving, David, *Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich* (London: Focal Point, 1996).
Jackson, Ashley, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2006).
Jackson, Robert, *The Prisoners, 1914–1918* (London: Routledge, 1989).
Kalshoven, Frits, *Belligerent Reprisals* (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1971).
Keefer, Louis E., *Italian Prisoners of War in America 1942–1946: Captives or Allies?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992).
Keen, Maurice H., *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965/1993).

Kershaw, Ian, *Hitler: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).
Kier, Elizabeth, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
Klemperer, Klemens von, *German Resistance against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad, 1938–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
Kochavi, Arieh J., *Prelude to Nuremburg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
—— *Confronting Captivity: Britain and the United States and their POWs in Nazi Germany* (London and Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
Korte, Detlef, *'Erziehung' ins Massengrab. Die Geschichte des 'Arbeitserziehungslagers Nordmark' Kiel-Russee 1944–1945* (Kiel: Neuer Malik, 1991).
Kübler, Robert, *Chef KGW. Das Kriegsgefangenenwesen unter Gottlob Berger* (Lindhorst: Askania, 1984).
Kydd, Andrew H., *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
Legro, Jeffrey, *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo–German Restraint during World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
Longden, Sean, *Hitler's British Slaves: Allied POWs in Germany, 1939–1945* (London: Constable, 2005).
—— *Dunkirk: The Men They Left Behind* (London: Constable, 2008).
Mackenzie, S. P., *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
Mansergh, Nicholas, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Wartime Co-operation and Post-War Change, 1939–1952* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).
—— *The Commonwealth Experience* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969).
Melady, John, *Escape from Canada! The Untold Story of German POWs in Canada, 1939–1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981).
Mergargee, Geoffrey P., *Inside Hitler's High Command* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000).
Moore, Bob and Fedorowich, Kent, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940–1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).
Moorhead, Caroline, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (London: HarperCollins, 1998).
Mullins, Claud, *The Leipzig Trials: An Account of the War Criminals' Trials and a Study of German Mentality* (London: H. R. and F. Witherby, 1921).
Nichol, John and Rennell, Tony, *The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Germany, 1944–1945* (London: Viking, 2002).
—— *Home Run: Escape from Nazi Europe* (London: Viking, 2007).
Nish, George Pratt, *The Wartime History of the Scottish Branch of the British Red Cross Society* (Glasgow: Jackson & Son, 1952).
Ovendale, Ritchie, *'Appeasement' and the English-Speaking World: Britain, the United States, the Dominions, and the Policy of 'Appeasement' 1937–1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975).
Padfield, Peter, *Himmler: Reichsführer SS* (London: Macmillan, 1990).
Paskins, Barrie and Dockrill, Michael, *The Ethics of War* (London: Duckworth, 1979).

Pletschnigg, Edith, *Von der Front aufs Feld. Britische Kriegsgefangene in der Steiermark 1941–1945* (Graz: Verein zur Förderung der Forschung von Folgen nach Konflikten und Kriegen, 2003).

Popeleux, Léon, *Les Actions caritatives du Saint-Siège pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Brussels: 1991).

Porter, Mackenzie, *To All Men: The History of the Canadian Red Cross* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1960).

Princen, Thomas, *Intermediaries in World Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Probst, Raymond R., *'Good Offices' in the Light of Swiss International Practice and Experience* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1989).

Rachamimov, Alon, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

Reese, Peter, *Homecoming Heroes: An Account of the Re-Assimilation of British Military Personnel into Civilian Life* (London: Pen & Sword, 1992).

Reiss, Curt, *Joseph Goebbels* (London: Hollis Carter, 1949).

Reuth, Ralf Georg, *Goebbels* (London: Constable, 1993).

Rolf, David, *Prisoners of the Reich: Germany's Captives, 1939–1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988).

Rollings, Charles, *Wire and Walls: RAF Prisoners of War in Itzehoe, Spangenberg and Thorn 1939–1942* (London: Ian Allan, 2003).

—— *Wire and Worse: RAF Prisoners of War in Laufen, Bibarach, Lubeck and Warburg 1940–1942* (London: Ian Allan, 2004).

—— *Prisoner of War: Voices from Captivity during the Second World War* (London: Ebury, 2007).

Rose, Norman, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1987).

Roy, Patricia, Granatstein, J. L., Lino, Masako, and Takamura, Hiroko, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

Scheck, Raffael, *Hitler's African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in* 1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Shephard, Ben, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000).

Shore, Zachary, *What Hitler Knew: The Battle for Information in Nazi Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Sigel, Robert, *Im Interesse der Gerechtigkeit. Die Dachauer Kriesgverbrecherprozesse 1945–1948* (Frankfurt a. M: Campus, 1992).

Simpson, A. W. Brian, *In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention without Trial in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

Spaight, J. M., *War Rights on Land* (London: Macmillan, 1911).

Speed, Richard B. III, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity* (New York: Greenwood, 1990).

Stacey, C. P., *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies. vol. ii, 1921–1948. The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

Stauffer, Paul, *Sechs furchbare Jahre. Auf den Spuren carl J. Burckhardt durch den Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Zurich: NZZ Verlag, 1998).

Steinert, Marlis G., *Hitler's War and the Germans* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1977).
Stewart, Andrew, *Empire Lost: Britain, the Dominions and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2008).
Streim, Alfred, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im 'Fall Barbarossa'* (Heidelberg: Juristischer Verlag, 1981).
Streit, Christian, *Keine Kameraden: die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Stuttgart: Delitsche Verlag, 1978).
Suβ, Winfried, *Der 'Volkskörper' im Krieg. Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhaltnisse und Krankenmord im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, 1939–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003).
Trevor-Roper, Hugh, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn., 1950).
Twomey, Christina, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilian Interned by the Japanese in World War Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
Trachtenberg, Marc, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
Urner, Klaus, *Let's Swallow Switzerland: Hitler's Plans against the Swiss Confederation* (New York: Lexington, 2001).
Vance, Jonathan, *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War through the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).
Villa, Brian Loring, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn., 1994).
Vourkoutiotis, Vasilis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command: The British and American Experience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).
Walzer Michael, *Just and Unjust War: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 3rd edn., 2000).
Waltzog, Alfons, *Recht der Landeskriegsführung* (Berlin: Franz Vahlen, 1942).
Watson, Alexander, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
Wheeler-Bennett, John W., *The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918–1945* (London: Macmillan, 1964).
Widmer, Paul, *Die Schweizer Gesandschaft in Berlin. Geschichte eines schwierigen diplomatischen Postens* (Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1998).
Willis, James F., *Prologue to Nuremberg: The Politics and Diplomacy of Punishing War Criminals of the First World War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982).
Wolff, H., *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in britischer Hand: Ein Überblick* (Munich: Gieseking, 1974).
Wootton, Graham, *The Politics of Influence: British Ex-servicemen, Cabinet Decisions and Cultural Change, 1917–1957* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).
Wylie, Neville, *Britain, Switzerland and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
Zayas, Alfred de, *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 1939–1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

EDITED COLLECTIONS

Bischof, Günter and Ambrose, Stephen (eds.), *Eisenhower and the German POWs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

Bischof, Günter, Karner, Stefan, and Stelzl-Marx, Barbara (eds.), *Kriegsgefangene des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Gefangennahme, Lagerleben, Rückkehr* (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 2005).

Boog, H. (ed.), *The Conduct of the Air War in the Second World War: An International Comparison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Bull, Hedley and Watson, Adam (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Chickering, Roger, Förster, Stig, and Greiner, Bernd (eds.), *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Echternkamp, Jörg (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg Band 9/2 Die Deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945* (Munich: Deutsche-Verlags-Anstalt, 2005).

Echternkamp, Jörg, Kunz, Andreas, Loth, Wilfried, Müller, Rolf-Dieter, Overmans, Rüdiger, and Schwartz, Michael (eds.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg Band 10/2 Die Folgen des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Munich: Deutsche-Verlags-Anstalt, 2008).

Elman, Colin and Elman, Miriam Fendius (eds.), *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

Förster, Stig and Nagler, Jörg (eds.), *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification 1861–1871* (Washington DC/Cambridge: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Gerhard, Paul and Mallmann, Klaus-Michael (eds.), *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Heimatfront und besteztes Europa* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000).

Goldstein, Judith L., Kahler, Miles, Keohane, Robert O., and Slaughter, Anne-Marie (eds.), *The Legalization of World Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

Hirsch, Martin, Majer, Diemut, and Meinck, Jurgen (eds.), *Recht, Verwaltung, und Justiz im Nationalsozialismus. Ausgewählte Schriften, Gesetze und Gerichtsentscheidungen vom 1933 bis 1945* (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1984).

Kassimeris, George (ed.), *The Barbarisation of Warfare* (London: Hurst, 2006).

Kroener, Bernhard R., Müller, Rolf-Dieter, and Umbreit, Hans (eds.), *Germany in the Second World War, vol. 5/ii, Organisation and Mobilization in the German Sphere of Power. Wartime Administration, Economy, and Manpower Resources 1942–1944/5* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Moore, Bob and Fedorowich, Kent (eds.), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996).

Moore, Bob and Hately-Broad, Barbara (eds.), *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace. Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

Overmans, Rüdiger (eds.), *In der Hand des Feindes. Kriegsgefangenschaft von der Antike bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Cologne, Vienna, Weimar: Böhlau, 1999).

Rittberger, Volker (ed.), *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Wildt, Michael, *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitsamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Editions, 2002).

ARTICLES/BOOK CHAPTERS

Beaumont, Joan, 'Victims of War: The Allies and the Transport of Prisoners-of-War by Sea, 1939–1945', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 2 (1983), pp. 1–7.

——'Starving for Democracy: Britain's Blockade of and Relief for Occupied Europe, 1939–1945', *War and Society*, 8/2 (1990), pp. 57–82.
——'Australia's War: Europe and the Middle East', in Joan Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War, 1939–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp. 1–26.
——'Protecting Prisoners of War, 1939–1945', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 277–97.
——'Review Article: Prisoners of War in the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42/3 (2007), pp. 535–44.
Belfield, Lt. Gen. Sir Herbert E., 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 9 (1923), pp. 131–47.
Billig, J., 'Le Rôle des prisonniers de guerre dans l'économie du IIIe Reich', *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, 37 (1960), pp. 53–76.
Bischof, Günter, 'Kriegsgefangenschaft als internationales Forschungsthema', in Bischof, Karner, and Stelzl-Marx, *Kriegsgefangene des Zweiten Weltkrieg*, pp. 24–47.
Botzenhart, Manfred, 'French Prisoners of War in Germany, 1870–71', in Förster and Nagler, *On the Road to Total War*, pp. 587–96.
Buβmann, Walter, 'Das Auswärtiges Amt unter der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur', in Funke, Manfred et al. (eds.), *Demokratie und Diktatur. Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa* (Bonn: Droste, 1987).
Cave, Lord, 'War Crimes and their Punishment', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 8 (1922), pp. xix–xxxi.
Chickering, Roger and Förster, Stig, 'Are We There Yet? World War II and the Theory of Total War', in Chickering, Förster, and Greiner, *A World at Total War*, pp. 1–16.
Darwin, John, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. iv, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 64–87.
Davis, Gerald H., 'Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economics', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12 (1977), pp. 623–34.
——'National Red Cross Societies and Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–18', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28 (1993), pp. 31–52.
Doherty, Martin A., 'The Attack on the Altmark: A Case Study in Wartime Propaganda', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38/2 (2003), pp. 187–200.
Douds, Gerry, 'The Men Who Never Were: Indian POWs in the Second World War', *Journal of South Asia Studies*, XXVII/2 (2004), pp. 183–216.
Dubois, C., 'Internés et prisonniers de guerre italiens dans les camps de l'empire français de 1940 à 1945', *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, XXXIX (1989), pp. 53–71.
Fedorowich, Kent, 'Doomed from the Outset? Internment and Civilian Exchange in the Far East. The British Failure over Hong Kong, 1941–1945', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25/1 (1997), pp. 47–67.
——'The "Forgotten" Diggers: Australian POWs in Europe, 1939–1945', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, XXVIII (2002), pp. 551–66.
——' "Cocked Hats and Swords and Small, Little Garrisons": Britain, Canada and the Fall of Hong Kong, 1941', *Modern Asian Studies*, 37/1 (2003), pp. 111–57.
Ferguson, Niall, 'Prisoner Taking and Prisoner Killing in the Age of Total War: Towards a Political Economy of Military Defeat', *War in History*, XI (2004), pp. 148–92.
Fleury, Antoine, 'L'Action humanitaire de la Suisse en Grèce pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale', in Bernard Prongué (ed.), *Passé pluriel: en homage au professeur Roland Ruffieux* (Fribourg: Editions universitaires, 1991), pp. 209–29.

Forwick, Helmuth, 'Zur Behandlung alliierter Kriegsgefangener im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Anweisung des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht über Besuche ausländischer Kommissionen in Kriegsgefangenenlagern', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 2 (1967), pp. 119–34.

Frey, Dominque, 'Kleine Schritte, langer Atem. Handlungsspielräume und Strategien der Schutzmachttätigkeit im Zweiten Weltkrieg am Beispiel der "Fesselungsaffäre" ', *Politorbis*, 40/1 (2006), pp. 33–43.

Gelber, Yoav, 'Palestinian POWs in German captivity', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 14 (1981), pp. 114–16.

Geyer, Michael, 'National Socialist Germany: The Politics of Information', in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing one's Enemies: Intelligence Assessments before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 310–46.

Grieco, Joseph M., 'Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism', *International Organization*, 42/3 (1988), pp. 485–507.

Grimm, Barbara, 'Lynchmorde an alliierten Fliegern im Zweiten Weltkrieg', in Dietmar Süss (ed.), *Deutschland im Luftkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), pp. 71–84.

Haas, Peter M., 'Epistemic Communities and the Dynamics of International Environmental Co-Operation', in Rittberger, *Regime Theory and International Relations*, pp. 168–201.

——'Choosing to Comply: Theorizing from International Relations and Comparative Politics', in Dinah Selton (ed.), *Commitment and Compliance: The Role of Non-Binding Norms in the International Legal System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 43–64.

Hartmann, Walter G., 'Rotkreuzdienst über dern Erdball', *Jahrbuch des deutschen Rotes Kreuz 1942* (Berlin: Verlag des DRK, 1942), pp. 24–32.

Hately-Broad, Barbara, ' "Nobody Would Tell you Anything": The War and Foreign Offices and British Prisoner of War Families during World War II', *Journal of Family History*, 27/4 (Oct. 2002), pp. 459–77.

——'Coping in Britain and France: A Comparison of Family Issues affecting the Homecoming of Prisoners of War following World War II', in Moore and Hately-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace*, pp. 141–50.

Hearder, Rosalind, 'Memory, Methodology and Myth: Some of the Challenges of Writing Australian Prisoners of War History', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 40 (2007). http://www.awm.gov.au/journal/j40/hearder.asp.

Hill, Christopher, 'Where Are We Going? International Relations and the Voice from Below', *Review of International Studies*, 25/1 (1999), pp. 107–22.

Hinz, Uta, 'Humanität im Krieg? Internationales Rotes Kreuz und Kriegsgefangenenhilfe im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Jochen Oltmer (ed.), *Kriegsgefangene im Europa des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), pp. 216–36.

Hohrath, Daniel, ' "In Cartellen wird der Wert eines Gefangenen bestimmt". Kriegsgefangenschaft als Teil der Kriegspraxis des Ancien Régime', in Overmans, *In der Hand des Feindes*, pp. 141–70.

Hurrell, Andrew, 'International Society and the Study of Regimes: A Reflective Approach', in Rittberger, *Regime Theory and International Relations*, pp. 49–74.

Ion, Hamish, ' "Much Ado about Too Few": Aspects of the Treatment of Canadian and Commonwealth POWs and Civilian Internees in Metropolitan Japan, 1941–1945', *Defence Studies*, 6/3 (2006), pp. 292–317.

Joll, James, '1914: The Unspoken Assumptions', in H. W. Koch (ed.), *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 307–28.

Jones, Heather, 'The Final Logic of Sacrifice?: Violence in German Prisoner of War Labor Companies in 1918', *The Historian*, 68/4 (winter 2006), pp. 770–91.

——'The German Spring Reprisals of 1917: Prisoners of War and the Violence of the Western Front', *German History*, 26/3 (2008), pp. 335–56.

Jones, Priscilla Dale, 'Nazi Atrocities against Allied Airmen: Stalag Luft III and the End of British War Crimes Trials', *Historical Journal*, 41/2 (1998), pp. 543–65.

Keohane, Robert O., 'Reciprocity in International Relations', *International Organization*, 40/1 (1986), p. 8.

Killingray, David, 'Africans and African Americans in Enemy Hands', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 181–204.

Kramer, Alan, 'The First Wave of International War Crimes Trials: Istanbul and Leipzig', *European Review*, 14/4 (2006), pp. 441–55.

——'Prisoners in the First World War', in Sibylle Scheipers (ed.), *Prisons in War: Norms, Military Cultures and Reciprocity in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 75–90.

Krasner, Stephen D., 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables', in Stephen D. Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 1–21.

Lee, David, 'Stanley Bruce at the Wartime Australian High Commission', in Christopher Baxter and Andrew Stewart (eds.), *Diplomats at War: British and Commonwealth Diplomacy in Wartime* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2008), pp. 149–69.

Lee, Dr J. Fitzgerald, 'Prisoners of War', *Army Journal*, 3 (1921–1922), pp. 348–57.

Linck, Stephan, ' "Festung Nord" und "Alpenfestung": Das Ende des NS-Sicherheitsapparatus', in Paul and Mallmann, *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, pp. 569–95.

MacDonald, Malcolm J., 'King: The View from London', in John English and J. O. Stubbs (eds.), *Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 40–54.

Mackenzie, David, 'Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the Empire', in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. iv, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 574–96.

Mackenzie, S. P., 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II', *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (Sep. 1994), pp. 487–520.

——'The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy in the Second World War', *International History Review*, XVII, I (Feb. 1995), pp. 78–98.

——'The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War', *War in History*, 15/1 (2008), pp. 1–16.

Maclennan, Capt. J. M., 'A Prisoner of War Camp', *Army Quarterly*, 13 (1926–27), pp. 368–75.

Marks, Sally, 'Review Article: Postwar and Prewar', *Contemporary European History*, 17/2 (2008), pp. 263–73.

Marx, Christoph, ' "Die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht": Kriegsgefangene im Burenkrieg 1899–1902', in Overmans, *In der Hand des Feindes*, pp. 255–76.

Mégret, Frédéric, 'From "Savages" to "Unlawful Combatants": A Post-Colonial Look at International Humanitarian Law's "Other" ', in Anne Orford (ed.), *International Law and its Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 265–317.

Messerschmidt, Manfred, 'Kommandobefehl und NS- Völkerrechtsdenken', *Revue de droit pénal militaire et de droit de la guerre*, 11 (1972), pp. 109–34.

——'Kriesgtechnologie und humanitäres Völkerrecht in der Zeit der Weltkriege', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 41 (1987), pp. 63–110.

——'Strategic Air War and International Law', in Boog, *The Conduct of the Air War*, pp. 310–72.

Miller, A. J., 'The Functional Principle in Canada's External Relations', *International Journal*, 35/2 (1980), pp. 309–28.

Mitchell, Reid, ' "Our Prison System, Supposing We Had Any": The Confederate and Union Prison Systems', in Förster and Nagler, *On the Road to Total War*, pp. 565–86.

Moore, Bob, 'Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32/1 (1997), pp. 117–36.

——'The Last Phase of the Gentleman's War: British Handling of German Prisoners of War on Board HMT Pasteur, March 1942', *War & Society*, 17/1 (1999), pp. 41–55.

——'Unruly Allies: British Problems with the French Treatment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1943–1945', *War in History*, 7/4 (2000), pp. 180–98.

——'Italienische Kriegsgefangene in britischen und amerikanischem Gewahrsam, 1941 bis 1947', in Bischof, Karner, and Stelzl-Marx, *Kriegsgefangene des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, pp. 287–302.

——'Unwanted Guests in Troubled Times: German Prisoners of War in the Union of South Africa, 1942–1943', *Journal of Military History*, 70/1 (2006), pp. 63–90.

Moore, Bob and Hately-Broad, Barbara, 'Living on Hope and Onions: The Everyday Life of British Servicemen in Axis Captivity', *Everyone's War*, 8 (2003), pp. 39–45.

Overmans, Rüdiger, 'Das Schicksal der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen des Zweiten Weltkrieges', in Echternkamp, Kunz, Loth, Müller, Overmans and Schwartz (eds.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg Band 10/2*, pp. 379–507.

——'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1939 bis 1945', in Echternkamp, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 9/2*, pp. 729–875.

——'The Repatriation of Prisoners of War once Hostilities are Over: A Matter of Course?', in Moore and Hately-Broad, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace*, pp. 11–22.

——'German Historiography, the War Losses, and the Prisoners of War', in Bischof and Ambrose, *Eisenhower and the German POWs*, pp. 127–69.

Park, W. Hays, 'Air War and the Laws of War', in Boog, *The Conduct of the Air War*, pp. 298–309.

Parker, Geoffrey, 'Early Modern Europe', in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Shulman (eds.), *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 40–58.

Paul, Gerhard, ' "Diese Erschießungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt". Die Kriegsendphasenverbrechen der Gestapo 1944/45', in Paul and Mallmann, *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, pp. 543–68.

Phillimore, G. G. and Bellot, H. H. L., 'Treatment of Prisoners of War', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 5 (1919), pp. 47–63.

Phillimore, George G., 'Some Suggestions for a Draft Code for The Treatment of Prisoners of War', *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 6 (1920), pp. 25–34.

Rempel, Gerhard, 'Gottlob Berger and Waffen SS Recruitment', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 27 (1980), pp. 107–23.

——'Gottlob Berger: ''Ein Schwabengeneral der Tat'' ', in E. Syring (ed.), *Die SS Elite under dem Totenkopf* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), pp. 45–59.

Reus-Smit, Christian, 'The Politics of International Law', in Christian Reus-Smit (ed.), *The Politics of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 14–44.

Reynolds, David, 'Culture, Discourse, and Policy: Perspectives on the New International History', in David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 331–51.

Roberts, Geoffrey, 'History, Theory and the Narrative Turn in IR', *Review of International Studies*, 32/4 (2006), pp. 703–14.

Rolf, David, 'Blind Bureaucracy: The British Government and POWs in German Captivity, 1939–45', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 47–67.

Roland, C. G., 'On the Beach and in the Bag: The Fate of the Dieppe Casualties Left Behind', *Canadian Military History*, 9/4 (2000), pp. 6–25.

Scholtyseck, Joachim, 'Der ''Schwabenherzog'' Gottlob Berger, SS-Obergruppenführer', in Joachim Scholtyseck and Michael Kibner (eds.), *Die Führer der Provinz: NS-Biographien aus Baden und Würtemberg* (Constance: Universitätsverlag, 1997), pp. 77–110.

Smith, Steve, 'Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations', in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds.), *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 11–26.

Spoerer, Mark, 'The Mortality of Allied Prisoners of War and Belgian Civilian Deportees in German Custody during World War I: A Reappraisal of the Effects of Forced Labour', *Population Studies*, 60/2 (2006), pp. 121–36.

Stauffer, Paul, 'Rudolf Hess und die Schutzmacht Schweiz', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 37/1 (1987), pp. 260–84.

Stein, Arthur A., 'Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World', *International Organization*, 36/2 (1982), pp. 299–324.

Stibbe, Matthew, 'The Internment of Civilians by Belligerent States during the First World War and the Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41/1 (2006), pp. 5–19.

Strachan, Hew, 'Total War: The Conduct of War, 1939–1945', in Chickering, Förster, Greiner, *A World at Total War*, pp. 33–52.

Streim, Alfred, 'International Law and Soviet Prisoners of War', in Bernd Wegner (ed.), *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939–1941* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1997), pp. 293–308.

Streit, Christian, 'Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht', in Hannes Heer, Klaus Naumann, and Roy Shelton (eds.), *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941–1944* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), pp. 80–91.

Stumpf, Reinhard, 'The War in the Mediterranean Area 1942–1943: Operations in North Africa and the Central Mediterranean', in Horst Boog,Werner Rahn, Reinhard

Stumpf and Bernd Wegner (eds.), *Germany and the Second World War, vol. vi, The Global War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 631–840.

Thomas, Martin, 'Captives of their Countrymen: Free French and Vichy French POWs in Africa and the Middle East, 1940–3', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors*, pp. 87–118.

Towle, Philip A., 'Japanese Treatment of Prisoners in 1904–1905: Foreign Officers' Reports', *Military Affairs*, 39/3 (Oct. 1975), pp. 115–17.

Ueberschär, Gerd R., 'Die Sowjetischen Prozesse gegen deutsche Kriegsgefangene, 1943–1952', in Gerd R. Ueberschär (ed.), *Der Nationalsozialismus vor Gericht. Die alliierten Prozesse gegen Kriegsverbrecher und Soldaten, 1943–1952* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999), pp. 240–61.

Vance, Jonathan, 'The Politics of Camp Life: The Bargaining Process in Two German Prison Camps', *War & Society*, 10/1 (1992), pp. 109–26.

——'Men in Manacles: The Shackling of Prisoners of War, 1942–1943', *Journal of Military History*, 59 (1995), pp. 483–504.

——'The Trouble with Allies: Canada and the Negotiation of Prisoner of War Exchanges', in Moore and Fedorowich, *Prisoners of War and their Captors*, pp. 69–85.

——'Canadian Relief Agencies and Prisoners of War 1939–1945', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 31/2 (1997), pp. 133–47.

Villa, Brian Loring, 'The Diplomatic and Political Context of the POW Camps Tragedy', in Bischof and Ambrose, *Eisenhower and the German POWs*, pp. 52–77.

Vourkoutiotis, Vasilis, 'What the Angels Saw: Red Cross and Protecting Power Visits to Anglo-American POWs, 1939–1945', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40/4 (2005), pp. 689–706.

Ward, Stephen R., 'Great Britain: Land Fit for Heroes Lost', in Stephen R. Ward (ed.), *The War Generation: Veterans of the First World War* (Port Washington, NY and London: Kennikat Press, 1975).

Watt, D. C., 'Restraints on War in the Air before 1945', in Michael Howard (ed.), *Restraints on War: Studies in the Limitation of Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 57–77.

Weingartner, James L., 'Massacre at Biscari: Patton and an American War Crime', *The Historian*, 52/1 (1989), pp. 24–39.

Wiggers, Richard D., 'The United States and the Denial of Prisoner of War (POW) Status at the End of the Second World War', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 52 (1993), pp. 91–94.

Wylie, Neville, 'Pilet-Golaz and the Making of Swiss Foreign Policy: Some Remarks', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 47/4 (1997), pp. 608–20.

——'Prisoner of War Relief and Humanitarianism in Canadian External Policy During the Second World War', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 3/2 (2005), pp. 239–58.

——'Das Internationale Komitee vom Roten Kreuz und die Kriegsgefangenen', in Bischof, Karner, and Stelzl-Marx, *Kriegsgefangene des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, pp. 249–66.

——'Protecting Powers in a Changing World', *Politorbis*, 40/1 (2006), pp. 6–13.

——'Captured by the Nazis: "Reciprocity" and "National Conservatism" in German Policy towards British POWs, 1939–1945', in C. C. W. Szejnmann (ed.), *Rethinking History: Dictatorships and War: Essays in Honour of Richard Overy* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 107–24.

——'The 1929 POW Convention and the Building of the Inter-War POW Regime', in Sybille Scheipers (ed.), *Prisoners in War: Norms, Military Cultures and Reciprocity in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 91–108.

Zweig, Ronald W., 'Feeding the Camps: Allied Blockade Policy and the Relief of Concentration Camps in Germany, 1944–1945', *Historical Journal*, 41/3 (1988), pp. 825–51.

This page intentionally left blank

Index

Aachen 213
Adam, Lt Gen Sir Ronald 61, 77, 139
Adams, Stanley 115–16, 119, 126–7, 156
Albrecht, Erich 30, 133, 168, 169, 216, 217
Alexander, Field Marshal Harold, 1st Earl 225, 259
Alexander, Lt Michael 2–3
Altmark (German supply ship) 66, 140
American Red Cross Society (ARCS) 240
Arandora Star, SS 74, 75
Arnhem 213
Asquith, H H 43
Attlee, Clement 145, 189, 204
Australia:
  and direct discussions with Germany suggested 197
  and entry into war 187
  and focus on Japanese threat 195–6
  and impact of capture of Australian forces 192–3, 194
  and prisoners of war policy 5, 126
  and shackling crisis 196–7
  and United States 196
  see also Dominions
Auswärtiges Amt (AA, German Foreign Ministry) 83
  and British transfer of prisoners to Canada 74
  and destruction of records 247
  and hospital ship policy 218
  and leaving POWs 'in situ' 252
  and marginalization of 28, 176
  and repatriation negotiations 88, 90, 129, 131, 168, 216
  and responses to British protest notes 79
  and treatment of British POWs 83, 173, 175

Baillie-Graham, Rear Admiral H T 258
Beevor, Anthony 270–1
Belfield, Maj-Gen Sir Herbert 46, 67
belief systems, and regimes 26–7
Bell, George, Bishop of Chichester 221
Bellot, H H L 46, 47
Berger, General Gottlob:
  and leaving POWs 'in situ' 252
  and marginalization of OKW 248
  and placed in charge of internal POW policy, 232, 233, 236
  and *Prominente* (Allied prisoners of high standing) 252, 253, 254, 262
  and relationship with Swiss 261
  and treatment of British POWs 249–50
Bernadotte, Count Folke 254, 255
Berndt, Alfred-Ingemar 234
Best, Geoffrey 35
Bormann, Martin 35, 256
Bowmanville POW camp (Canada) 207
Braybrook, Major Alfred James 76
Breyer, Oberst Hans-Joachim 80, 81, 84
British prisoners of war (POW) policy:
  and abuses 266–7
  and administration of:
    divided responsibility 28, 54, 66–7
    shortcomings in 71
  in aftermath of French defeat 69–70
  and anguish of POW families 1, 2, 3–4
  and armed services, pre-war attitudes of 54–5
  and attitudes towards prisoners of war 61–2
    impact of social and political changes 59
    impact of social reform 59–60
    influence of ex-POW memoirs 58
    influence of former prisoners 57–8
    'old army view' 55–6
    pre-Great War 40–1
    public support for 56
    softening of 56–7
    suspicions of 57
    welfare provision 59–60
  and balancing prisoners' interests and war prosecution 72–3, 267–8
  and battlefield use of hand-ties 135, 138, 158, 160
  and classification of Crown forces as British 186, 211
  and constraints on 152–3
  and context of:
    increase in atrocities 132–3
    increase in British offensive operations 132, 133
    nature of conflict 265
    nature of Nazi regime 265
  and diplomatic communication with Germany:
    commitment to 183
    role of protest notes 181–2
    use of protest notes 180–2
  and direct negotiations 50–1

British prisoners of war (POW) policy: (*cont.*)
and domestic politics 120–1, 127–9
and Dominions 5, 126, 186–7, 268
agent-principal relationship 192, 194
attitudes toward POW policy (1939–42) 191–7
authority delegated to Dominion representatives 208–9
Canada's claim over policy-making 197–201
decline in policy influence 210
detention of Axis prisoners 73–8, 191–2, 211
impact of capture of Dominion forces 192–3, 194–5, 211
joint principle 207, 209, 210
shackling crisis 144–6, 151, 152, 196–7, 201–6
transformation of relations with 210
unilateral action by Canada 209–10
and effectiveness of 268
and emergence of POW 'lobby':
calls for institutional reform 116–17
influence of 99–100
parcels crisis 92, 96–8
see also POWRA (POW relatives association)
and European allies' POWs 124–5
as extension of belligerency 29
and German treatment of British POWs 173
Allied airmen 219–20, 233–4
Berger's influence on 249–50
camp inspection reports 171–3
casualties 266
Churchill's expectations of 179
'commando order' 137, 158, 218–19, 271–2
creation of 'death zones' 232, 235
escaped prisoners 176–8
Gestapo prisons 176
great escape 214, 220–1, 231, 232–3, 270
hardening of attitudes 179–80, 236
JIC's assessment on future intentions 222–3
judicial punishments 174–5
relatively benign 266
use of protest notes 180–2
violence against prisoners 175–6, 218, 220–2
working conditions 174
and great escape, impact of 214, 220–1, 263, 270
and Great War (1914–18) 43–4
and impact of Dunkirk 68–9
strengthening status of POW Convention 69
strict adherence to POW Convention 69
and Imperial POW Committee (IPOWC):
authority delegated to Dominion representatives 208–9
Canadian reform proposals 200–1, 206–8
formation of 117, 193
inadequate consultation methods 207–8
inner workings of 193–4
name changed to inter-governmental committee 207
and increased assertiveness of 182
and influences on 11–12
and interwar years (1918–29) 44–7
government deliberations 45–6
influence of legal community 46–7
and Japan 122, 183
and multidimensionality of 6
and phoney war period 65–8
administrative arrangements 66–7
and planning for war's end 237–8
adherence to POW convention 228–9
bargaining with German POWs 228, 258
Berger's treatment of POWs 249–50
casualties among POWs 263
difficulties with 237–8
fears over German actions 249
German agreement to leave POWs 'in situ' 251, 252
German evacuation of eastern camps 250–1
German personal responsibility for POWs 227–8
impact of 'great escape' executions 214, 220–1, 263, 270
inadequacies of 263–4
influences on German behaviour 262
JIC's assessment of German intentions 222–3
meetings with Swiss officials 238, 248
military operations in support of POWs 224–6, 258–9
neutral observers in Germany 261
objective of 223
post-war treatment of German POWs 257–8
reinforcement of POW regime 260
rejection of reprisals 228–9
'solemn warning' on treatment of POWs 260
Soviet Union, POWs liberated by 251–2
'stand-fast' order to POWs 223–4
strengthening communications with camps 223–4

and post-war treatment of German POWs 257–8
and POW Convention (1929) 53, 267, 273–4
conference negotiations 51–2
Foreign Office (FO) influence 54
humanitarian aspects 49–50
negotiation objectives 48
preparatory work 45–7
protecting powers 48–9, 52
ratification of 53
reprisals 50–1, 52–3
strengthening status of 69
strict adherence to 69
War Office attitude 54
and predictions of German behaviour 64–5
and prisoners of war regime:
compliance with 267
progress in strengthening 78–80
upholding of 62
and public scrutiny of 4–5, 267
availability of information 118–19
failure to manage public dissatisfaction 119–20
and repatriation:
Anglo-German negotiations (1941) 84–7
Anglo-German negotiations (1941–42) 129–32
collapse of exchange operation (1941) 88–90
early opposition to 71–2
exchange of prisoners (1943, Oct) 162–71
exchange of prisoners (1944–45) 214–15, 229, 242–3
German employment of repatriated personnel 215–17
growing importance of 215
negotiations over long-term POWs (1944–45) 243–8
protected personnel 215
Soviet Union, POWs liberated by 251–2
and reprisals 7
attitude towards 50–1, 52–3, 228–9
see also shackling crisis
and shortcomings of 78
and Soviet Union 268
and studies of:
academic 10–11
official 9
popular 9–10
and Switzerland as protecting power 123
and transfer of Axis prisoners to Canada 73–5
Fort Henry (Ontario) 77–8
German protest against 75–6
German reaction to 74
looting of Axis prisoners 75–7
and United States 5, 268
concern over European POWs 124
as protecting power 66, 67–8, 71
securing support for repatriation 166–7
and welfare provision 59
and willingness to risk lives of British POWs 158–9, 161
see also Foreign Office (FO); Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC); Joint War Organization (JWO); relief parcels for British POWs; shackling crisis; War Office (WO)
British Red Cross Society (BRCS) 77
and official studies of POW policy 9
and relief parcels 103
see also Joint War Organization (JWO)
British War Relief Society 99
Browning, Christopher 29
Bruce, S M 145, 196
Brussels Code (1874) 40
Buchmueller, Werner 262
Burckhardt, Carl 164, 167, 239, 241, 254, 261, 262

Campbell, Mrs Ian 99–100, 101, 110–11
camp inspection reports 171–3
Canada 207
and administrative arrangements 197, 208
and advantage of autonomous action 198
and civilian internees in Europe 198
and Department of External Affairs (DEA) 197, 208
and entry into war 187
and functional approach to foreign policy 199
and German violence against Canadian prisoners 221–2
and humanitarian diplomacy 197–8, 199–200
and impact of capture of Canadian forces 195, 197
and impact of Dieppe raid 203
and Imperial POW Committee (IPOWC), reform proposals 200–1, 206–8
and POW Convention (1929), ratification of 53
and prisoners of war policy 5, 126
and repatriation negotiations 130
and restrictions on Canadian representatives 190
and shackling crisis 144–6, 151
ignorance of intelligence support for policy 204

Canada (*cont.*)
nationalist influence on policy 204–5
officials' personal stake in 202–3
preservation of Commonwealth unity 205–6
reaction to 201–2
significance for 203–4
and Switzerland as protecting power 198–9
and transfer of Axis prisoners to 73–5
Fort Henry (Ontario) 77–8
German protest against 75–6
German reaction to 74
looting of 75–7
and unilateral action by 209–10
and United States, direct links with 198
see also Dominions
Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) 109, 199
Cartwright, H A 58
Cave, Lord 43, 45
Cecil, Lord Robert 46
Chamberlain, Neville 188
Chanak crisis 188
Chetwode, Field Marshal Lord Philip 103–4, 107, 108, 109, 112, 113, 115, 116, 127, 142
Chiefs of Staff Committee (COS) 158, 159
and military operations in support of POWs 224
Churchill, Clementine 114
Churchill, Winston:
and adherence to Geneva Convention 27
and anticipates vindictive behaviour by Germans 179
and attitudes towards prisoners of war 140
and Dominions 188, 189
and issue of 'solemn warning' on treatment of POWs 260
and nephew captured 3
and recommends transfer of Italian prisoners to de Gaulle 73
and relief parcels 112–13
and repatriation of POWs liberated by Soviet Union 251–2
and reprisals 140–1
and seizure of Italian hospital ships 72–3
and shackling crisis 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 149–50, 151, 152, 160, 269
Canadian reaction 201, 202
and warning to Italian King 182
Clarendon, Lord 108–9, 113, 115
Clarke, Col C W 197, 199
Clemens, Major (OKW section head) 133
Coates, Colonel N 69, 76
cognitive theory, and regimes 25–31
belief systems 26–7
culture 27–8
English school 31–2
epistemic communities 29–30
trust 31
commando raids:
and Dieppe 134–5
and German 'commando order' 137, 218–19, 271–2
British attitude to 158
and Hitler's concern over 137
and Sark 134, 138
Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) 47
and POW Convention (1929):
humanitarian aspects 49–50
reprisals 50
Commonwealth Civilian Committee 206
conscription 39
Cooper, Alfred Duff 57
cooperation:
and cognitive perspective on 25–31
belief systems 26–7
culture 27–8
English school 31–2
epistemic communities 29–30
trust 31
and functional perspective on 22–5
and International Relations 16
and neo-liberal perspective 23–4
and realist perspective on 17–18, 19–21
and reciprocity 18–19, 22
diffuse reciprocity 31
specific reciprocity 19, 22
and regimes 16
definition of 16–17
and warring states 13–14
and wartime alliances 13
see also prisoners of war (POWs) regime
Cranborne, Lord 117, 221
Cripps, Sir Stafford 24, 127, 128
and shackling crisis 142, 204

Davis, Darius A 96
Davison, Sir William 113, 116, 158
D-Day 213, 228
de Gaulle, Charles 228
Des Gouttes, Paul 44, 48
Desta Damtew, General Ras 64
Deutsches Rote Kruez (DRK, German Red Cross Society) 87
Dieppe, and raid on 134–5
impact in Canada 203
Directorate of Prisoners of War (DPW, War Office), *see* War Office (WO)
Dockrill, Michael 27
Dodd, Sir Rennell 45
Dominions:
and British prisoners of war policy 5, 126, 186–7, 268

agent-principal relationship 192, 194
joint principle 207, 209, 210
and British strategic and political decision-making 188
and Churchill's attitude towards 188, 189
and decisions to enter war 187–8
and decline of influence on policy 210
and detention of Axis prisoners 73–8, 191–2, 211
and impact of capture of Dominion forces 192–3, 194–5, 211
and Imperial POW Committee (IPOWC):
authority delegated to representatives 208–9
Canadian reform proposals 200–1, 206–8
formation of 117, 193
inadequate consultation methods 207–8
inner workings of 193–4
name changed 207
and shackling crisis 144–6, 151, 152
Australia 196–7
Canada 144–6, 151, 201–6
and sovereign status of 187
and transformation of relations with Britain 210
and unilateral action by Canada 209–10
and United States as protecting power 191
and wartime relations with Britain 188–90
see also Australia; Canada; New Zealand; South Africa
Dönitz, Admiral Karl 255
Drake-Brockman, Brigadier 35
Dresden, and Allied attack on 255
Dulag Luft, Oberusel 176
Dupuy, Pierre 198

Ebbisham, Lord 128
Eden, Anthony 260
and exchange of prisoners (1943, Oct) 166
and forbids direct talks with Germany 89
and questions seizure of Italian hospital ships 72–3
and relief parcels 107, 114
and repatriation of long-term POWs 245
and shackling crisis 143
and statements on 'great escape' 221, 222
Eisenhower, General Dwight D 166, 225, 226, 259, 260
Empress of Russia, RMS 169
English school, and international relations 31–2
epistemic communities, and prisoners of war policy 29–30
d'Erlach, Lt-Col Albert 244
escapes:
and Allied propaganda 178
and escape networks 177–8
and German treatment of prisoners 177
and Himmler's involvement in camp security 178
and mass escapes 177
and number of escaped prisoners 177
as security threat in Germany 177, 230–1
see also great escape
Ettrick, SS 74
exchange of prisoners, *see* repatriation of prisoners

Falkenhorst, General Nikolaus von 182
Fedorowich, Kent 10
Feldscher, P A 123, 133, 135, 150, 181, 182, 184
Ferguson, Niall 20
First World War, *see* Great War (1914–18)
Fleck, Ludwig 27 n48
Foreign Office (FO):
and attitudes towards Anglo-German talks 84–5
and British POWs food shortages 94
and divided administration of POW policy 67
and official studies of POW policy 9
and POW Convention (1929) 54
and POW Department (PWD):
dialogue with POWRA 157
Satow's appointment to 71
staff levels 68
and relief parcels, curtailment of voluntary operations 101–2
and repatriation negotiations 130–1
and transfer of Axis prisoners to Canada 73–4
Fort Henry (Ontario), and German objections to 77–8
Fortune, Mjr-Gen Sir Victor 243
Free French forces 125, 159
Friemel, Colonel G 75–6

Gaddis, J L 15
Galloway, 12th Earl of (Randolph Stewart) 98
Gardiner, James 202
General Post Office (GPO), and relief parcels 105, 106
Geneva Convention (1864) 40
Geneva Convention (1906) 44
Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1929):
and Britain 53
conference negotiations 51–2
Foreign Office (FO) influence 54

Geneva Convention relative (*cont.*)
humanitarian aspects 49–50
negotiation objectives 48
preparatory work 45–7
protecting powers 48–9, 52
reprisals 50–1, 52–3
War Office attitude 54
and German approach to conference (1929) 65
and German prisoners of war (POW) policy 272–4
and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 7–8
preparatory work 44–5
and prisoners' diet 93
and prisoners of war (POWs) regime 17
and protecting powers 7–8, 48–9, 52
and ratification of 53
and relief parcels 92–3, 102–3
and repatriation provisions 85
see also prisoners of war (POWs) regime
Geneva gas protocol (1925) 44
Gepp, Mjr-Gen Sir Cyril 77, 90, 167, 172–3, 228–9, 238, 258
German Foreign Ministry, *see* Auswärtiges Amt (AA, German Foreign Ministry)
German prisoners of war (POW) policy:
in aftermath of French defeat 69–70
and anxiety over British treatment of German POWs 133–4
and British protest notes 180–2
refusal to accept 181
and British transfer of prisoners to Canada:
protest against 75–6
reaction to 74
response to Fort Henry conditions 77–8
and 'commando order' 137, 158, 218–19, 271–2
and continued influence of traditional norms 232–5
and cultural influences on 271–2
and decisive factor in 32
and equalization policy 134, 136
and escaping prisoners:
Himmler's involvement in camp security 178
murder of 'great escapers' 214, 220, 231, 232–3, 270
number of 177
as security threat 177, 230–1
treatment of 176–8
and evacuation of eastern camps 239, 241, 251
agreement to leave POWs 'in situ' 251, 252
and humanitarian considerations 272
and Luftwaffe proposal to house aircrew in cities 180
and military context of 149, 151, 155–6
and national conservative value system 32, 271
and non-British Allied prisoners 125–6
and POW Convention (1929):
influence of 272–4
ratification of 65
and prisoners as bargaining counters 229–30
and prisoners of war regime 17, 32–3
attitudes towards (1940–41) 80–5
residual commitment to 37
success in strengthening 78–80
and protecting powers, obstruction of 63
and protest at conditions of detention of German POWs 77
and reciprocity 32, 58, 229–30
and rejection of Soviet offer to apply Hague provisions 63
and repatriation:
Anglo-German negotiations (1941) 84–7
Anglo-German negotiations (1941–42) 129–32
collapse of exchange operation (1941) 88–90
employment of repatriated personnel 215–17
exchange of prisoners (1943, Oct) 162–71
exchange of prisoners (1944–45) 214–15, 229, 242–3
Hitler's intervention 88
negotiations over long-term POWs (1944–45) 243–8
and reprisals 134–5
early measures 68
response to Fort Henry conditions 77–8
retaliation for mail delays 70, 75
tightening of procedures 83–4
see also shackling crisis
and responsibility for 28
and Russian prisoners 82
and shackling crisis 138–9
and SS takes responsibility for internal policy 232
and summary executions 69
and treatment of British POWs 173
Allied airmen 219–20, 233–4
Berger's influence on 249–50
British use of protest notes 180–2
camp conditions 78–9, 95, 96
camp inspection reports 171–3

casualties 266
'commando order' 137, 158, 218–19, 271–2
creation of 'death zones' 232, 235
diet 93–4
escapes 176–8
Gestapo prisons 176
great escape 214, 220–1, 231, 232–3
hardening of attitudes towards 179–80, 236
influences on 271–2
JIC's assessment on future intentions 222–3
judicial punishments 174–5
relatively benign 266
treatment of Crown forces as British 186, 211
violence against prisoners 175–6, 218, 220–2
working conditions 174
and violence in military culture 63–4
at war's end:
attempts to appear moderate 253–4
Burckhardt's encouragement of moderation 254
debate on adherence to international law 255–7
Himmler 254
impact of neutral observers 261
influence of Allied 'solemn warning' 260
influences on 262
POW casualties 263
restraints on 264
Ribbentrop 253–4
see also shackling crisis
Gestapo 176
and behaviour at war's end 249
and increasing influence in running camps 232
and murder of RAF POWs 233
Giraud, General Henri 178
Gladisch, Admiral Walter 81
Goebbels, Joseph 11, 27, 170, 271
and employment of repatriated personnel 216
and British avoidance of prisoner disputes 229
and reaction to Dresden attack 255
and shackling crisis 148, 269
and treatment of Allied airmen 219, 234
Goering, Herman 232
Gordon, P H 199
Graevenitz, Hans von 80
great escape, and murder of RAF POWs 214, 220, 231, 232–3
impact of 214, 220–1, 263, 270
Great War (1914–18):
and attitudes towards prisoners of war 55–6
post-war memoirs 58
and prisoners of war regime 42–4
and relief parcels 103
Grigg, Sir Edward 107, 115
Grigg, Sir P James 107, 127, 128, 135
Grotius society 46, 47

Haas, Peter 29
Haccius, Rudolphe 76
Hague regulations, 4th (1907) 44
Haig, George, 2nd Earl 2
Halder, Franz 151
Harrison, M C C 58
Harvey, Craig 116
Hately-Broad, Barbara 10
Hendler, Albert 133
Henkin, Louis 34
Hess, Rudolf 89, 219
Hesse, Fritz 253
Himmler, Heinrich 178, 222
and behaviour at war's end 254, 255
and murder of RAF POWs 232–3
and pragmatism of 232
Hiroshi, Oshima 147
history, and theory 14–15
Hitler, Adolf:
and 'commando order' 137, 218, 271–2
and concern over commando raids 137
and consequences of failed bomb plot against 231
and debate over adherence to international law (1945) 255–6
and intervention in repatriation talks 88–9, 129
and limitations on authority of 264
and murder of RAF POWs 234–5
and prepares for showdown over POWs 138
and requests details of POWs held 137
and retention of Allied POWs 250, 251
and security threat of POWs and foreign workers 230
and shackling crisis 146, 149, 150–1, 152, 160
cessation of reprisals 164
political motives 156
on treatment of British POWs 136
and treatment of prominent prisoners 3, 136
and vetoes repatriation negotiations 229
on war's end 237
Home Defence (Security) Committee 73
Hoover, Herbert 101
Hopetoun, Charles, 9th Earl of 2
Hore-Belisha, Leslie 60, 61

hospital ships 24–5
  and Australian policy towards 195
  and British policy towards 161
    seizure of Italian 72–3
  and German policy towards 217–18
Howe, C D 201
humanitarianism:
  and Canadian diplomacy 197–8, 199–200
  and exchange of prisoners (1943, Oct) 169–70
  and German prisoners of war (POW) policy 272
  and POW Convention (1929) 49–50
  and prisoners of war regime 39–40
Hunter, Mjr-Gen Sir Alan 67, 76
  and benefits of Anglo-German conference 84
  and relief parcels 107–8
Hurrell, Andrew 32
Hurst, Sir Cecil 46–7
Hutchinson, Lt Col Graham Seton 56

Ignatieff, George 203
Ilag VIII H, Laufen 179
Imperial Prisoners of War Committee (IPOWC):
  and authority delegated to Dominion representatives 208–9
  and Canadian reform proposals 200–1, 206–8
  and creation of 193
  and formation of 117
  and inadequate consultation methods 207–8
  and inner workings of 193–4
  and name changed to inter-governmental POW committee 207
India:
  and detention of Axis prisoners 191
  and entry into war 187
inspection regime, and reports on German camps 171–3
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):
  and food situation in German camps 96
  and POW Convention (1929) 7–8
    preparatory work 44–5
  and relief parcels 105
    meetings with British officials (1944) 238–9
    problems near war's end 239–40, 241–2
    security of relief convoys 242
  and shackling crisis, British rejection of assistance 160
  and Soviet Union 82–3
international history, and theory 14–15
international law:
  and German debate on adherence to (1945) 255–7
  and German report on reform of 81
  and prisoners of war regime 33–6, 39–40
  and realist scepticism 33
International Law Association (ILA) 46, 47
International Relations, and cooperation 16
Ireland, Republic of, and neutrality of 188
Iselin, Colonel F 106
Italy:
  and shackling crisis 147, 148
  and prisoners of war:
    Allied treatment of 20
    German disinterest in 85

Jackson, Judith 106
Japan:
  and Allied POWs 122
  and British POW policy 183
  and shackling crisis 147–8
Jodl, General Alfred 90, 148, 149, 234, 256, 257, 272, 274
Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC):
  and encounters opposition to exchange proposals 71
  and German treatment of British POWs:
    assessment of future intentions 222–3
    fears of 64–5
    sanguine view of 179
  and planning for war's end:
    German personal responsibility for POWs 227–8
    military operations in support of POWs 224–6
    'stand-fast' order to POWs 223–4
    strengthening communications with camps 223–4
Joint War Organization (JWO):
  and Adams' appointment to 115–16
    resignations from 126–7
  and calls for public inquiry into 111–12
  and contacts with American organizations 123
  and Jowitt's inquiry into 127–8
  and lack of information on prisoner numbers 108
  and organizational shortcomings 109–10
  and parcel production problems 108–9
  and public dissatisfaction with 111–12
  and relief parcels 103–4, 240
    intervention in transport matters 105–6
Joll, James 2
Jowitt, Sir William 127

Kaltenbrunner, Ernst 261, 262
Keeling, Sq Ldr E H 98
Keitel, Field Marshal Wilhelm 77, 80, 90, 131, 164, 178, 234
Kennedy, Paul 15
Kesselring, Field Marshal Albert 167
Ketchum, J D 204–5
Kharkov trials (1943) 179, 219
Kier, Elizabeth 27–8
King, William Lyon Mackenzie 200
  and booed by Canadian troops 203
  and mistrust of British intentions 190
  and preservation of Commonwealth unity 205–6
  and presses for IPOWC reform 200–1
  and shackling crisis 144, 145, 201
  and working habits 208
King-Slater, Lt-Col E 165
Knox, Mjr-Gen Sir Alfred 89, 113, 116, 158
Kochavi, Arieh 5, 11, 139, 155
Köcher, Otto 131
Krasner, Stephen 16

labour shortages, and use of prisoners of war 20–1
Laconia, SS 75, 132
Lascelles, Viscount George 2
Latrun camp, Palestine 78, 84, 134, 135
Law, Richard 120–1, 157–8
League of Nations 33, 44
Legro, Jeffrey 28
Lehner, Otto 235–6
Leipzig 'war crimes' trials (1921) 45, 65
Lidice 141
Lieber Code (1863) 40
Linlithgow, Lord 118
Lisbon Maru (Japanese freighter) 209
Livingstone, Dame Adelaide 46, 116, 120, 128
Lloyd George, David 188
London submarine protocol (1936) 44
Luftwaffe:
  and Allied hospital ships 217–18
  and proposal to house British aircrew in cities 180
Lynch, Jessica 19

McCarthy, Daniel 4
MacDonald, Malcolm 189, 204
Macdonald, Dr W G 116
Macdonnell, Hugh 198–9
Macdonogh, Lt Gen Sir George 46
Mackenzie, S P 4, 11, 183, 214
Malmédy, and shooting of American soldiers 258
Margesson, David 86, 114, 115
Marti, Roland 91, 169, 170
Massey, Alice 203
Massey, Group Captain H M 221
Massey, Captain Lionel V 1–2, 202
Massey, Vincent 5, 190
  and commitment to Commonwealth 205
  and instructed to press for IPOWC reform 200–1
  and letter to son 1
  and shackling crisis 2, 144–5, 151, 202–3
Menzies, R G 187, 190
Meuer, Oberst F W 250
MI9 220, 224, 225–6
military necessity, and prisoners of war regime 40
Milner, Mjr James 116
Molotov, V 260
Moltke, Helmuth James Graf von 231
Montgomery, Field Marshal Bernard L 213
Moore, Bob 10, 155

nationalism, and attitudes towards prisoners of war 41–2
neo-liberalism, and regimes 23–4
Newton, Lord 43, 46
New Zealand:
  and entry into war 187
  and impact of capture of New Zealand forces 192–3, 195
  and prisoners of war policy 126
  see also Dominions
Nichol, Flight Lt John 19
Nicholson, Brigadier (Senior British Officer at Laufen) 119
Norton, Clifford 153

Odier, Mlle Lucie 70
Oflag IV C, Colditz 254
Oflag IX A/H, Spangenburg 78, 134
  and reprisals at 135
Oflag VII B, Eichstätt 179
  and mass escape from 177
Oflag VII C/H, Laufen:
  and conditions in 95
  and food shortages 96
  letter-writing campaign to highlight 97
Oflag VII D, Tittmoning 96
Oflag XIIB, Hadamar 79
Oflag XIII C, Hemmelburg 259
Oflag XXI B, Schubin 177
OKH (Oberkommando des Heers (High Command of the Army)) 82

OKM (Oberkommando der Marine (Navy High Command)):
and employment of repatriated personnel 216
and shackling crisis 161
OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Wehrmacht)) 28
and 'commando order' 137
and commission commentary on laws of war 83
and distributes POW Convention to camps 83
and equalization policy 134, 136
and non-British Allied prisoners 125–6
and prisoners of war policy 32–3
continued responsibility for external contacts 233
declining influence on 231, 232, 248
and prisoners of war regime, attitudes towards (1940–41) 81–4
and repatriation 87, 90, 131–2
employment of repatriated personnel 216–17
exchange of prisoners (1943) 168
and shackling crisis 148–9, 161–2
and study of POW detention in Great War 64
and threatens to shackle Dieppe prisoners 138, 141
and threat to authority over POW matters 179
and treatment of British POWs 173
limited influence on 175
Oliphant, Sir Lancelot 71
O'Malley, Mrs Owen 99, 100
Order of St John of Jerusalem 103
see also Joint War Organization (JWO)
organizational culture, and regimes 27–8
Ott, General Eugen 147
Overmans, Rüdiger 6, 32, 271

Paravicini, Madame 100
Parker, Geoffrey 39
Paskins, Barrie 27
Pasteur, HMT 133, 134, 135
Patton, General George 3
Pearson, Lester 189
Pell, Herbert 99
Permanent Court of International Justice 44
Peters, Flight Lt John 19
Philipps, General Sir Ivor 59
Phillimore, G C 46, 47, 49
Phillimore, Col N J 9
Phillimore, Walter George Frank, 1st Baron 47
phoney war 63
and British POW policy 65–8
Pilet-Golaz, Marcel 123, 131, 145, 153, 182, 261
and repatriation negotiations 129–30
and shackling crisis 160
POW Convention (1929), *see* Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1929)
POW Information Bureau 191
POWRA (POW relatives association) 98, 115
and campaign for institutional reform 116–17, 127, 156
and criticism of government and JWO 128
and government briefing of 120
and organizational strength of 157
and radicalization of 128
and Vansittart becomes acting president 156
campaigns for institutional reform 157–8
Preiswerk, Walter 8, 123, 133, 134, 220
and shackling crisis 144–5, 146, 160–1
prisoner exchanges, *see* repatriation of prisoners
prisoners of war (POWs) regime:
and civilianization of war conventions 39
and cognitive perspective on 25–31
belief systems 26–7
culture 27–8
English school 31–2
epistemic communities 29–30
trust 31
and decision-making procedures 17
and effectiveness of 17
and functional perspective on 22–5
and the Great War (1914–18) 42–4
and historical development of 38–9
19th/early 20th centuries 39–41
and humanitarian concerns 39–40
and international law 33–6, 39–40
and interwar years (1918–29) 44–7
British government deliberations 45–6
influence of British legal community 46–7
and legal status of prisoners of war 40
and military necessity 40
and nationalism 41–2
and nature of 17
and nature of total war 41
and principles, norms and rules 17
and realist perspective on 19–21
and reciprocity 18–19
diffuse reciprocity 31
specific reciprocity 19, 22
and resilience of 17
and shackling crisis 153–4
weakening effects of 154
see also Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1929)

Prominente (Allied prisoners of high standing) 2, 3, 252, 253, 254, 260, 262
protecting powers 7–8, 48–9, 52
  and German obstruction of 63
  see also Switzerland; United States
Prouse, Robert 266

Ralston, Col J 201, 202, 205
realism:
  and criticism of 19
  and international cooperation 17–18
  and prisoners of war policy 19–21
  and specific reciprocity 19
Reber, Lt Gen Sam 241
reciprocity:
  and Anglo-German POW regime 268–9, 270
  and application of rule of 22
  and development of concept 38–9
  and diffuse reciprocity 31
  and equivalence of treatment of POWs 22
  and German prisoners of war (POW) policy 32, 58, 229–30
    reprisal policy 136
  and international cooperation 18–19
  and POW Convention (1929) 55
  and repatriation 85
  and restrictive view of 154
  and shackling crisis 155
  and specific reciprocity 19
  and trust 31
Red Cross convention (1929) 24, 44, 216
Red Cross movement 39
regimes:
  and cognitive perspective on 25–31
    belief systems 26–7
    culture 27–8
    English school 31–2
    epistemic communities 29–30
    trust 31
  and definition of 16–17
  and functional perspective on 22–5
  and international cooperation 16
  and international law 33–6
  and neo-liberal perspective 23–4
  and realist perspective on 17–18
  and reciprocity 18–19, 22
    diffuse reciprocity 31
    specific reciprocity 19
  see also prisoners of war (POWs) regime
Reinecke, Gen Hermann 80, 135
relief parcels for British POWs:
  and administrative shortcomings 105
  and Churchill's intervention 112–13
    influence of Tennant's campaign 113–14
    parliamentary considerations 113
  and domestic politics 120–1
  and government's distancing from 106, 121
  and government takes control of 101–2
  in Great War 103
  and growth of POW support groups 96–8, 116
    calls for institutional reform 116
    influence of 99–100, 113–14
  and impact on prisoners 117–18
  and implications of crisis:
    failure to manage public dissatisfaction 119–20
    government inability to control information 118–19
  and Joint War Organization (JWO) 103–4
    Adam's appointment to 115–16
    calls for public inquiry into 111–12
    intervention in transport matters 105–6
    lack of information on prisoner numbers 108
    organizational shortcomings 109–10
    parcel production problems 108–9
    public dissatisfaction 111–12
  and parcel crisis 92
  and parliamentary campaign 113
  and POW Convention (1929) 92–3, 102–3
  and prisoners' food shortages 93–6
    POW letter-writing campaign to highlight 96, 97
  and public dissatisfaction with arrangements 110–11, 112
    government's failure to manage 119–20
    Tennant's campaign 113–14
  and second parcel crisis (1944–45) 238–42
    British meetings with ICRC 238–9
    food shortages 239–40
    security of relief convoys 242
    transport difficulties 239, 240–2
  and transport of:
    confusion over responsibility for 105–6
    difficulties with 104–5, 239, 240–2
    improvements in 117–18
    public dissatisfaction 110–11
  and voluntary supply of:
    British expatriate communities 98–100
    financial and economic effects 100–1
    inequitable effects of 100
    limits to 100
  and War Office 107
repatriation of prisoners 21–2
  and Anglo-German negotiations (1941) 84–7
    collapse of exchange operation (1941) 88–90
    Hitler's intervention 88

repatriation of prisoners (*cont.*)
and Anglo-German negotiations (1941–42) 129–32
and exchange of prisoners (1943, Oct):
British acceptance of German proposals 164–5
British concern over injured POWs 165
British need to secure American support 166–7
complexity of operation 168–9
German administrative shortcomings 169
German motives 167–8
German proposals 163, 165
handling of returning prisoners 170
as humanitarian triumph 169–70
impact of shackling crisis 162–3, 164, 167
numbers involved 167, 168
significance of 168, 170–1
and exchange of prisoners (1944–45) 214–15, 229, 242–3
and German employment of repatriated prisoners 215–17
and negotiations over long-term POWs (1944–45) 243–8
American opposition to 246–7
British fears over employment of 243
British neutral internment proposal (1944) 243–4
British proposals (1945) 245
German approach to Swiss 244
German motives 245–6
German proposals (1945) 246
Hitler's criticism of 248
lack of German capacity to implement 247–8
political pressure in Britain 244, 245
in phoney war period 66
and POW Convention (1929) 53
and protected personnel 215
and Soviet Union, British POW's liberated by 251–2
reprisals:
and British attitudes towards 50–1, 52–3, 228–9
and early German measures 68
and German use of 70, 75, 134–5
equalization policy 134, 136
response to Fort Henry conditions 77–8
tightening of procedures 83–4
and prisoners of war policy 7
see also shackling crisis
Ribbentrop, Joachim von 28, 88, 90
and behaviour at war's end 253–4, 255
and hopes for Allied disunity 245
and rejection of protest notes 181
and repatriation negotiations 131–2, 163, 164, 167, 168, 214
and shackling crisis 149
seeks Axis partners' support 147–8
and treatment of Allied airmen 234
and treatment of British POWs 173
Ritter, Karl 149
Rive, Alfred 199
Roberts, Geoffrey 14
Roberts, W St C 238
Robertson, Norman 199, 205
Rolf, David 10, 139
Romilly, Giles 3
Rommel, Erwin 270
Roosevelt, Franklin D 246, 260
Rumbold, Sir Horace 51, 52, 54, 65

Saarguemines 251
Salisbury, Lord 97–8, 113, 118
Sandys, Duncan 107, 127
Sark, and raid on 134, 138
Satow, Sir Harold 9, 71, 86, 94, 274
Schroeder, Paul W 15
Schwarzberger, Georg 33
Sethe, Eduard 133
shackling crisis 138–9, 269–70
and Australian policy towards 196–7
and British policy towards 139–43
criticism of 142–3
Dominion influence on 144, 152–3
intelligence support for 150, 204
lack of options in countering 159–60
public opinion 143
rejection of punitive bombing raids 159
suspension of shackling measures 152, 158
and Canada:
ignorance of intelligence support for policy 204
influence on British policy 144–6, 151
nationalist influence on policy 204–5
officials' personal stake in 202–3
opposition to British policy 201–2
preservation of Commonwealth unity 205–6
significance for 203–4
and Germany:
Hitler's commitment to reprisals 150–1
impact of military setbacks 149, 151
impact on repatriation discussions 162–3, 164, 167
political motives 156
relaxation of reprisal regime 161–2
seeks Axis partners' support 147–8
shackling of Dieppe prisoners 138, 141
softening of position on 151

threatens withdrawal from POW convention 148, 149
unease over shackling order 160–1
and impact of 183
and longevity of 155
and political and strategic significance 152
and prisoners of war regime 153–4
weakening of 154
and restraining effects of 152
and Switzerland 139, 144–5, 152, 153
as turning point in Anglo-German POW relations 155
SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) 242, 258
and PMX (POW recovery unit) 259
and relief parcels 241
Simon, John, 1st Viscount 253
Singapore, and fall of 57
Smuts, Jan 145, 187–8
social reform, and pre-war Britain 59–60
SOE (Special Operations Executive) 176, 226, 234
Somerset, Brigadier N F 78
South Africa:
and entry into war 187–8
and impact of capture of South African forces 195
see also Dominions
Soviet Union:
and blocks ICRC delegation 82–3
and casualties among POWs 265
and Kharkov trials 179, 219
and prisoners of war policy 268
and repatriation of liberated British POWs 251–2
and suspicions of Anglo-German collaboration 89
Spaight, J M 40–1, 42
SS (Schutzstaffeln), and internal POW policy 232
Stalag 319, Cholm (Poland) 134
Stalag Luft camps 79
Stalag Luft I Barth 177
Stalag Luft III, Sagan 176, 220
see also great escape
Stalag Luft IV, Gross-Tychow 236, 239
Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug 239
Stalag VIIIB, Lamsdorf 134
Stalag XI A, Altengrabow 259
Stalag XX A, Thorn 78
and conditions in 95
Stalag XX B, Marienburg 176
Stalag XX D, Posen 78
and conditions in 95
Stewart, Mrs P M 98, 157
strategic bombing 27
Switzerland:
and active neutrality policy 123–4
as America's protecting power 123
as Britain's protecting power 123
and British meetings with Swiss officials (1944) 238, 248
and camp inspection reports 171–3
as Canadian protecting power 198–9
and POW diplomacy 8–9
and repatriation negotiations 129–30
and shackling crisis 139, 144–5, 152, 153
Syers, C G L 51

Temple, William, Archbishop of Canterbury 142
Tennant, Winifred Coombe 97, 101, 112, 118, 128
and calls for institutional reform 116
and campaign on behalf of POWs 113–14, 116
theory, and history 14–15
Thorne, Mr (leader of Edinburgh POW relatives association) 98, 116
Thurnheer, Walter 76, 144–5
Tiesenhausen, H D 161
Tito, Marshal Josip Broz 27
Tobruk, and loss of 57, 128
total war, and impact of 13, 41
Trachtenberg, Marc 14
Trott, Adam von 231
trust:
and reciprocity 31
and regimes 31

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration 199
United Nations War Crimes Commission 227
United States:
as Britain's protecting power 66
concern over British procrastination 67–8, 71
and concern over European POWs 124
as Dominion governments' protecting power 191
and entry into war 122
and military operations in support of POWs 225
and POW Convention (1929), ratification of 53
and prisoners of war policy 5, 268
and repatriation:
exchange of prisoners (1943, Oct) 166–7
opposition to long-term POW exchange 246–7
protected personnel 215

Vance, Jonathan 10
Vansittart, Lord Robert 258
  and background of 156–7
  and becomes acting president of POWRA 156
  and campaign for institutional reform 157–8
  and great escape 221
Vatican 7
Vourkoutiotis, Vasilis 11
Vyse, Sir Richard Howard 238

Ward, Irene 3, 127, 128, 158
Ward, Leonard 3
Warner, Sir George 30, 51, 54, 67, 71, 78, 268
War Office (WO):
  and advice on evading capture 70
  and British POWs food shortages 94
  and Directorate of Prisoners of War (DPW) 67
    attitude towards repatriation of prisoners 71–2
    looting of Axis prisoners 76–7
    relief parcels 107
  and divided administration of POW policy 67
  and official studies of POW policy 9
  and POW Convention (1929) 54
  and pre-war reform trends in 60–1
  and pre-war social welfare and pension reforms 60
  and relief parcels 107
Warsaw uprising 226
Waters, Colonel Johnny 3
Weizsäcker, Ernst von 30, 133, 181, 182, 184
Weltzin, Oberst von 250
Westhof, Mjr-Gen Adolf 233, 248, 262
Westminster, Statute of (1931) 187
Wilson, Field Marshal Sir H M 25
Winant, John 2
Wrong, Hume 199, 201

Younger, Lord Justice Robert 43, 45, 46, 47
  and direct negotiations 51
  and prisoners' diet 93
  and reprisals 50
Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) 7

Zam Zam, SS 198