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# Allied Unshackling: British, Canadian, and American Prisoner of War Diplomacy during the Shackling Reprisals, 1942-43

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Allied Unshackling: British, Canadian, and American Prisoner of War Diplomacy during  
the Shackling Reprisals, 1942-43

By

Kiera Bridley

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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May 2014



Allied Unshackling: British, Canadian, and American Prisoner of War Diplomacy during the Shackling Reprisals, 1942-43

Kiera Bridley

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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## **ABSTRACT**

“Allied Unshackling: British, Canadian, American Prisoner of War Diplomacy during the Shackling Reprisals, 1942-43”

Kiera Bridley

Master of Arts in History

Minnesota State University, Mankato, May 2014.

Prisoner of war studies have largely focused their research on the experiences of the men and women within their captor countries. Although some country-specific work has been done regarding prisoner of war policy, there has been a significant gap in research regarding prisoner of war policy during the Second World War. This research focuses on the convergence of prisoner of war policy and diplomatic relations between Great Britain, Canada, and the United States during the shackling reprisals with Germany from 1942-43. The shackling reprisals represented the first conjunction of the three nations in diplomatic relations with Germany over the issue of prisoner of war policy. In addition, as the first instance of prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany for both the United States and Canada, the shackling reprisals signified the entrance of the Canadian and United States governments into prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany during the Second World War. The shackling of prisoners of war became a source of tension between the Allies because of the nature of each nation's role in the incident and conflicting perspectives of the three governments on the issue. Through the examination of the Canadian, British, and United States' foreign correspondence, domestic and individual leaders' accounts, as well as the provisions of the prisoner of war conventions in effect at the time, a detailed analysis of the interaction of the three governments over prisoner of war policy and diplomacy during the shackling reprisals will be accomplished. During the shackling reprisals, prisoner of war policy was based on the relationships between the British, Canadian, and United States governments, individual leaders and their respective interests. This work adds yet another dimension to the fragmentary field of prisoner of war and military history by focusing on the top tiers of British, Canadian, and United States military and government, ultimately fueling further research in international POW studies.



## Introduction

A prisoner of war is a man who tries to kill you and fails, and then asks you not to kill him.

-Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill's sentiment on the uncertain fate of prisoners of war succinctly describes the experiences of captured soldiers, the need for the establishment of international regulations for the treatment of prisoners of war, and the cause for the periodic revision of those policies. In 1949, the international community updated and revised the 1929 Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War as a result of regulatory and treatment issues that arose during the Second World War. Prisoners of war were vulnerable to their host nations during the Second World War, and their treatment depended largely on the individual nations holding them. Captor nations faced questions regarding the various aspects of holding prisoners of war while also managing their domestic and foreign policies. Broad regulations on the issues of food, housing, and treatment of prisoners of war could be interpreted within a wide margin and became sensitive to the sentiment of their captors. Discrepancies in treatment, when in accordance with the Geneva Convention, were rarely of international concern. In situations where the treatment of prisoners of war bordered on breaking regulation, or outright violated policy, the international community took interest and attempted to mediate the issue. At this point, the treatment of prisoners of war depended on the



policies created through international diplomacy. Prisoners of war were vulnerable to both their captors and the international diplomatic maneuvers that created the policy regulating their treatment.

One of the first major crises in international prisoner of war policy occurred between Nazi Germany and the Allied nations in the fall of 1942 over an interpretation of the 1929 Geneva Convention. A dispute over the ability of captors to bind the hands of enemy prisoners of war on the battlefield resulted in the shackling crisis, which lasted until December 1943, when the last prisoners of war were unshackled. As Germany, Britain, and Canada engaged in the illegal retaliatory shackling of prisoners of war, the leaders of Britain, Canada, and the United States sought to end Allied participation in the shackling of prisoners of war and to regain Germany's compliance with the Geneva Convention. The shackling reprisals became a source of tension between Canada, Britain, and the United States because of their conflicting perspectives on appropriate action, level of involvement in terms of prisoners of war affected, and the three nations' future in the war against Nazi Germany. As a result of their differing wartime and national objectives, individual national interests and beliefs, the relations of individual leaders with one another, and the status of each nation during that time in the war, the shackling crisis resulted in conflict amongst Britain, Canada, and the United States over Allied prisoner of war policy. The shackling reprisals demonstrated the frailty of prisoner of war regulations and how easily diverse objectives and sentiments influenced the treatment of prisoners of war during the Second World War among the Allies.

Many dimensions of inter-Allied relations during the Second World War have been examined by historians, including the shackling reprisals and prisoner of war policy. However, the intersection of the British, Canadian, and American prisoner of war diplomatic policies during the shackling reprisals has yet to be examined in a single study. The unique relationship between the three nations between 1942 and 1943 during this key point in international prisoner of war relations during the Second World War provides a greater understanding of the challenges that the Allies faced developing a combined military strategy and in international prisoner of war diplomacy. The complex interchange of international relations is a necessary addition to scholarship on the Second World War, because it allows for a greater understanding of prisoner of war diplomatic relations between the belligerents and Allies involved in the shackling reprisals.

The Allies' combined military effort at Dieppe leading to the shackling reprisals has been chronicled in numerous works of military history. From this approach, the Dieppe Raid's significance lies in its failure as a military excursion. Brian Loring Villa takes a multinational approach to the military failure of the Dieppe Raid and focuses on the elements that contributed to the tactical disaster at Dieppe.<sup>1</sup> David Bercuson and Robert W. Black's respective histories of the Canadian and American Rangers' engagements in the Second World War include analyses of the troop movements and battle plans of the Dieppe Raid as they related to later battles and combat in the European

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid*. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Theatre.<sup>2</sup> Military histories focus on the excursion and its role as a precedent to the 1944 invasion of Europe, as is the case of William Breuer's *Operation Torch: The Allied Gamble to Invade North Africa*. Breuer details the chronology of the joint military campaign in North Africa and its role as a precedent for the invasion of Europe.<sup>3</sup> Military history's inclusion of prisoners of war is largely limited to casualty reports of the Dieppe Raid. The shackling reprisals resulted from action and orders from the military raids at Dieppe and Sark, but the events have yet to be analyzed together in a work of military history. Prisoners of war and international diplomacy are covered more extensively in diplomatic and political scholarship.

Studies on Britain, Canada, and the United States' foreign policy document the nations' involvement in prisoner of war issues and prisoner of war diplomacy during the Second World War. Comprehensive studies of Canadian and British wartime objectives by C.P. Stacey and Jonathan Vance explain the conflict between Canada and Britain regarding the status and roles of dominions as well as their differing wartime agendas.<sup>4</sup> Such comprehensive scholarship is able to demonstrate the context of relations in which the retaliation controversy of 1942 occurred, but neglects to address the shackling crisis

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<sup>2</sup> David Bercuson, *Maple Leaf Against the Axis: Canada's Second World War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1995); Robert W. Black, *The Ranger Force: Darby's Rangers in World War II* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> William B. Breuer, *Operation Torch: The Allied Gamble to Invade North Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970); Jonathan F. Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain, and Two World Wars* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and prisoner of war policy in detail. Jonathan Vance's article "Men in Manacles: The Shackling of Prisoners of War, 1942-1943" provides a more focused analysis of the incident in terms of British-Canadian relations which, in addition to S.P. MacKenzie's analysis of the prisoner of war diplomacy of the shackling reprisals, demonstrates the British-Canadian political dynamics during the incident.<sup>5</sup> The bilateral prisoner of war relations analyzed in these studies excludes the diplomatic role of United States.

Likewise, scholarship on the United States' foreign policy separates the United States from its interlaced role with the Allies. Robert Dalleck's comprehensive examination of United States foreign policy during Franklin Roosevelt's tenure as president is exclusive of other Allies' foreign policies as a result of this perspective.<sup>6</sup> The foreign policies of Britain, Canada, and the United States during the Second World War have been covered extensively as individual and bilateral studies. The triumvirate of prisoner of war interests during the shackling reprisals has yet to be examined, and thus represents a neglected aspect of Allied diplomatic history.

The treatment of prisoners of war by the United States, Britain, and Canada has fallen into two primary categories of scholarship: examinations of the prisoners' conditions and analyses of the motivations behind captors' treatment of prisoners. Historiography for prisoner of war diplomacy during the shackling reprisals consists

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, "Men in Manacles: The Shackling of Prisoners of War, 1942-1943," *Journal of Military History* 59, no. 3 (July 1995): 483-504; S.P. MacKenzie, "The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy in the Second World War," *International History Review* 17, no. 1 (February 1995): 78-98.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Dalleck, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

primarily of individual national histories of British, Canadian, and American internment of prisoners of war and overarching themes in prisoner of war policy history. In the edited volume *Prisoners-of-War and Their Captors in World War II*, the individual analyses of captor nations demonstrates that the domestic political considerations of captor nations became the main influence in determining the treatment of prisoners of war.<sup>7</sup> S.P. MacKenzie's article on this topic also demonstrates how the prisoner of war policies adopted by captors were tied to ideological perspectives as well as practical motives.<sup>8</sup> These studies demonstrate the international trends in prisoner of war policy that influenced the management of Britain, Canada, and the United States' leaders during the shackling reprisals. These individual analyses and overarching themes fail to address specific international diplomatic relations regarding prisoner of war diplomacy and policy. Research on the interchange of diplomacy between Britain, Canada, and the United States during the shackling reprisals has a foundation in these studies, but requires a more specific study in order to grasp the complexities of this individual event.

The individual nations' domestic conditions have been examined in relation to the development of prisoner of war treatment of policy, supplementing the overarching studies of prisoner of war policy during the Second World War. J. Anthony Hellen and Bob Moore provide articles that examine British domestic politics and its influence on

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<sup>7</sup> Kent Fedorowich and Bob Moore, eds., *Prisoners-of-War and Their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> S.P. MacKenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II," *Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 3 (September 1994): 487-520.

the treatment of prisoners of war, both arguing that British prisoner of war policies were dictated by Britain's military and political needs as well as the nationality of the prisoners of war more often than by the Geneva Convention.<sup>9</sup> Studies on Canadian prisoner of war policy have primarily focused on the experience of prisoners of war in Canadian prisoner of war camps.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, a great deal of scholarship has been dedicated to the experiences of prisoners of war in the United States rather than the policy that influenced their treatment.<sup>11</sup> Altogether, studies on Allied prisoners of war have focused on individual regions and the experiences of prisoners of war and fail to examine the international diplomatic relations that resulted in the shackling of prisoners of war during the shackling reprisals. An analysis of the British, American, and Canadian prisoner of war diplomacy during the shackling reprisals has yet to be addressed in the historiography of prisoners of war during the Second World War.

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<sup>9</sup> J. Anthony Hellen, "Temporary Settlements and Transient Populations: The Legacy of Britain's Prisoner of War Camps: 1940-1948," *Erdkunde* 53, no. 3 (July-September 1999): 191-219; Bob Moore, "Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy Towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 1 (January 1997): 117-136.

<sup>10</sup> Martin F. Auger, *Prisoners of the Home Front* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Daniels, Roger and Kay Saunders, eds., *Alien Justice: Wartime Internment in Australia and North America* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2000); John Melady, *Escape from Canada! The Untold Story of German POWs in Canada, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981); Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946* (Saskatoon, Sask.: Fifth House Publishers, 1995); John Joseph Kelly, *The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, 1939-1947* (master's thesis, University of Windsor, 1976); Chris Mark Vedel Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada during the Second World War* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in American during World War II* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010); Arnold Krammer, "German Prisoners of War in the United States," *Military Affairs* 40, no. 2 (April 1976): 68-73.

In research on the shackling reprisals, biographies of the leaders of Britain, Canada, and the United States must be taken into account because of the influence which individual leaders had on prisoner of war policy and diplomatic relations. Individual biographies of Winston Churchill, William Lyon Mackenzie King, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt have been written that reveal the personal traits, influences, and beliefs of each man during their leadership in the Second World War.<sup>12</sup> In addition, dual and triad biographies of Allied leaders focus on the relationships and conflicts between the ‘greater’ leaders of the Allies: France, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> The relationships between Churchill, Mackenzie King, and Roosevelt have yet to be studied in one work, just as their relationships in context of national and international situations has yet to be considered. Because of the instrumental influence of these three leaders on the diplomacy during the shackling reprisals, it is necessary to analyze the shackling reprisals with consideration for the involvement and influence of Britain, Canada, and the United States’ individual leaders.

Previous scholarship provides a foundation for this research as contextual matter. Allied relations and prisoner of war policies have been studied in numerous contexts, but

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<sup>12</sup> Norman Rose, *Churchill: An Unruly Life* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2009).; J. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), 146; Allan Levine, *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011).; Conrad Black, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry Among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2001); David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000); Remi Nadeua, *Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt Divided Europe* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1990); Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship* (Toronto: Random House, 2003); Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997).

not in an effort to understand the larger relationship behind Canada, Britain, and the United States and their leaders that influenced prisoner of war policies. Through pinpointing this pivotal time in prisoner of war diplomacy during the Second World War and analyzing the convergence of United States, Britain, and Canada in international prisoner of war policy, this research provides a comparative study on the shackling reprisals that fills in many gaps in many fields of scholarship.

This study is organized chronologically, with one chapter devoted to each significant development in the shackling reprisals. Chapter I outlines the provisions for the treatment of prisoners of war and bodies responsible for mediating conflicts regarding policy disputes between belligerent powers. This chapter analyzes the foundation of prisoner of war diplomacy during the Second World War and reveals the ideal and intended arbitration methods intended to be used for events like that of the shackling reprisals. Chapter 2 analyzes the Dieppe and Sark raids in the context of Britain, Canada, and the United States' trilateral military and diplomatic entrance into the European Theatre. In addition, it provides a chronology of the events leading up to the shackling reprisals.

Chapters 3 and 4 encompass the diplomacy between the United States, Canada, and Britain during the extent of the shackling reprisals. The shackling reprisals are separated into two segments: October through December 1942 and January through December 1943. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the fall of 1942, which analyzes the period of time German prisoners of war in Britain and Canada were shackled and as diplomatic



relations between the three nations were largely in the hands of the nations' individual leaders. Within the chapter, the British-Canadian and American aspects are addressed in two parts from the perspective of the nations' leaders. This reflects the nature of diplomacy during the shackling reprisals at this time. Chapter 4 continues the chronology from a universal and intertwined perspective as Britain and Canada ended their involvement in retaliatory shackling, the British, Canadian, and American governments took over the diplomatic relations, and the urgency of the shackling reprisals faded. The Conclusion closes this research with analysis on the trilateral development of prisoner of war policy between the United States, Canada, and Britain during the shackling reprisals and its impact on the revision of the 1949 Geneva Convention.

## Chapter 1

### Precedents

International prisoner of war policy during the Second World War was determined by the 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War for those nations signatory. Britain, Canada, the United States, and Germany were among those nations, and so their actions were theoretically regulated by international policy. As leaders of the Allied war effort in the North African and European Theatres by 1942, the British, Canadians, and Americans became the leading nations involved in prisoner of war policy with Germany.<sup>14</sup> In addition, during the course of the war these three nations remained unoccupied by Germany and “were the three countries which had the vast majority of German servicemen in captivity, ensuring...the attention of the German government.”<sup>15</sup> These factors made the three nations unique in their relation to German prisoner of war treatment and policy and together distinguish their roles in the shackling reprisals.

As the forefront of Allied prisoner of war diplomatic relations and policy at the time, the United States, Britain, and Canada’s relative adherence to the 1929 Geneva Convention demonstrated the circumstantial developments that made national policy

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<sup>14</sup> Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, July 27, 1929, International Humanitarian Law—Treaties and Documents, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.icrc.org>.

<sup>15</sup> Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, “The German Armed Forces Supreme Command and British and American Prisoners-of-war, 1939-1945: Policy and Practice” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2000), 4.

differ from international regulations. The shackling reprisals represented a prisoner of war treatment and policy crisis that had regulatory precedents in place meant to prevent the escalation of such a situation, but the individual belligerents' failure to utilize these measures resulted in the preventable escalation of hostilities. In order to assess the shackling reprisals in terms of converging Allied prisoner of war policy, it is necessary to analyze the regulations in place that were intended to manage prisoner of war treatment and conflicts regarding prisoner of war policy as well as the conditions that made the United States, Canada, and Britain unique in their relation to German prisoners of war.

Regulations on the conduct of the Allies during the Second World War included both aspects of international humanitarian law in effect at the time: the 1907 Hague Rules of Land Warfare and the 1929 Geneva Convention. All belligerents during the shackling reprisals were signatories of these conventions, thus binding them to the modern conventions of prisoner of war treatment. Humanitarian regulations for the conduct of war during Second World War were based on a principle "distinction between combatants and civilians, the requirement that wounded and captured enemy combatants must be treated humanely, and that quarter must be given."<sup>16</sup> The 1907 Hague Convention and the 1929 Geneva Convention included provisions for the humane treatment of prisoners of war and laid out the regulations for the captor government for

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<sup>16</sup> Dieter Fleck, ed. *Handbook of Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

the treatment of prisoners of war.<sup>17</sup> This universal policy provided a basis for the signatories regarding their handling of prisoners of war, although during the duration of the Second World War these regulations would be tested, bent, and broken in a variety of ways. The United States, Britain, and Canada's collective experience with German prisoners of war was based on the foundations of international humanitarian law in place during the Second World War.

The 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War stood as the primary regulation on prisoner of war diplomacy and treatment during the Second World War. The regulations outlined in the 1929 Geneva Convention served as an update to the 1907 Hague Convention on the laws and customs of war on land, providing significant additions regarding the treatment of prisoners of war, which had previously been limited to the definitions and roles of captors and prisoners of war.<sup>18</sup> One of the most significant additions in the 1929 Geneva Convention was in Article 2, the addition stating: "They [prisoners of war] must at all times be humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, insults and public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against them are prohibited."<sup>19</sup> The problem with the vagueness of this article became

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<sup>17</sup> Additional Declaration II: Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 1899 Hague Convention, on Laws and Customs of War on Land, included provisions from the Geneva Convention of 1864, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.icrc.org>; Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II), July 29, 1899, Ibid.; 1929 Geneva Convention, Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV): October 18, 1907, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.icrc.org>.

<sup>19</sup> Convention Between the United States of American and Other Powers, Relating to Prisoners of War; July 27, 1929, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.icrc.org>.

apparent during the Second World War, as was the case in the shackling reprisals. The definition of humane was disputed, as will be discussed later, and served as a point of tension not only between the Allied and Axis forces, but among the Allies themselves. The problematic nature of the “humane” cited in Article 2 of the 1929 Convention was elaborated upon in its successor in 1949, thus demonstrating that there had been a general issue with the vague definition and its ability to be interpreted differently by the belligerents of the Second World War. The shackling reprisals of 1942-43 began as a result of this exact issue and would only be resolved once the opposing powers came to their own compromise.

Diplomatic relations between the Allies and Nazi Germany were overseen by the regulations of the 1929 Geneva Convention, which established the role of a Protecting Power. The Protecting Power was, and remains, “a state which has accepted the responsibility of protecting interests of another state in the territory of a third, with which, for some reason, such as war, the second state does not maintain diplomatic relations.”<sup>20</sup> The 1929 Geneva Convention established the role of the Protecting Power as well as their role in the management of prisoner of war treatment. The Protecting Power was responsible for representing prisoners of war, and agents were supposed to be available for appointment wherever there were prisoners of war as an intermediary between the prisoners of war, military authorities, and the Protecting Power.<sup>21</sup> The importance of the

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<sup>20</sup> United States Foreign Service Manual. Vol. 2. Consular Affairs, July 13, 1955. Paragraph 923.31-2.; Articles 43 and 44, 1929 Geneva Convention, Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Article 43, 1929 Geneva Convention.

Protecting Power in prisoner of war diplomacy was significant, as it served as both a representative for prisoners of war and as a mediator between belligerents.

Article 87 of the 1929 Geneva Convention was a provision intended to manage cases where belligerents disagreed over the provisions of the Geneva Convention, as in the case of the shackling reprisals.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of disagreement between the belligerents as to the application of the provisions of the present convention, the protecting Powers must, in so far as possible, lend their good offices for the purpose of settling the difference. For this purpose, each of the protecting Powers may, in particular, suggest to the interested belligerents a meeting of representatives thereof, possibly upon a neutral territory suitably chosen. Belligerents shall be bound to accede U [sic] proposals in this sense which are made to them. The protecting Power may, if occasion arises, submit for the approval of the Powers concerned a person belonging to a neutral Power or a person delegated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, who shall be summoned to take part in this meeting.<sup>23</sup>

The 1929 Geneva Convention provided a fail-safe for the shackling reprisals, where earlier provisions and articles could be disputed between belligerents. In the case of the shackling reprisals, it should be noted that the use of the Protecting Power was limited by Britain's choice. This dynamic of the prisoner of war diplomacy will be examined in greater detail later.

The legislation that created the Protecting Power was first implemented and tested during the Second World War, where the institution of Protecting Power was recognized as the official institution responsible for safeguarding of belligerent nations' interests. Most of the belligerents of the war had a Protecting Power representative, with the

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<sup>22</sup> Article 87, Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

exception of the USSR and Japan, countries that had not signed the 1929 Geneva Convention.<sup>24</sup> Because there were very few neutral parties in relation to the number of nations involved in the Second World War, problems with the institution arose. The selection of a Protecting Power was limited to the few neutral countries and so often a Protecting Power represented two opposing belligerent nations.<sup>25</sup> In addition, because “there was no large neutral world public opinion to be affected by violations of the convention, and the power of neutral public opinion in forcing compliance with a humanitarian convention cannot be overestimated,” the power of the Protecting Power was inadvertently limited.<sup>26</sup> Switzerland, the Protecting Power for many of the belligerents on both sides of the Second World War, was however able to “obtain a general observance of the law of war by each belligerent on the basis of reciprocity.”<sup>27</sup> As the Protecting Power for up to thirty-five states at one point during the war, Switzerland represented all sides during the shackling reprisals. As a result of its representation of both Germany and the Allies, the Swiss government found limited success in both diplomatic mediation and enforcement of prisoner of war policy during the shackling reprisals.

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<sup>24</sup> Leslie C. Green and Michael N. Schmidt, “Prisoners of War and the Protecting Power,” *American Journal of International Law* 70 (1961): 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> William McHenry Franklin, *Protection of Foreign Interests: A Study in Diplomatic and Consular Practice* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 228; Green and Schmidt, “Prisoners of War and the Protecting Power,” 34-5.

The International Committee of the Red Cross supplemented the role of the Protecting Power in the shackling reprisals and other prisoner of war conflicts during the Second World War. The International Committee of the Red Cross claims responsibility for the implementation of a prisoner of war convention during the interwar period, the result being the 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross in relation to wartime actions was included within the 1929 Geneva Convention. The organization's humanitarian activities were not to be impeded by articles of the convention, giving the International Committee of the Red Cross the ability to maneuver outside of the regulations of the convention.<sup>29</sup> The role of the International Committee of the Red Cross often overlapped with that of the Protecting Power when it came to prisoners of war, and the organization often had to work against an attitude that they were duplicating the role of the Protecting Power, and thus were not needed in prisoner of war camps.<sup>30</sup> Because the International Committee of the Red Cross paid regular visits to prisoner of war camps and inspected the prisoners' health, accommodation, and quality of food in

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<sup>28</sup> 1929 Geneva Convention.

<sup>29</sup> Article 79 and 83, *Ibid.* Article 79 states "A central information agency for prisoners of war shall be created in a neutral country. The International Committee of the Red Cross shall propose the organization of such an agency to the interested Powers, if it considers it necessary. The function of that agency shall be to centralize all information respecting prisoners, which it may obtain through official or private channels; it shall transmit it as quickly as possible to the country of origin of the prisoners or to the Power which they have served. These provisions must not be interpreted as restricting the humanitarian activity of the International Committee of the Red Cross." Article 88: "the foregoing provisions are not an obstacle to the humanitarian activity which the International Committee of the Red Cross may use for the protection of prisoners of war, with the consent of interested belligerents."

<sup>30</sup> Green and Schmidt, "Prisoners of War and the Protecting Power," 43-44.



addition to taking complaints about treatment of prisoners of war, the organization became vital link between governments and their prisoners of war.

The 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War had provisions dictating not only the appropriate treatment of prisoners of war, but the paths to take should a disagreement over the convention arise. The convention included provisions validating the roles of the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross so that belligerent powers could “learn what was occurring in the enemy's prisoner-of-war camps and, when necessary, engage in indirect negotiations.”<sup>31</sup> As signatories of the treaty, Germany, Britain, Canada, and the United States were held to its provisions and its diplomatic proceedings. The established roles of the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross were intended to prevent incidents such as the shackling reprisals. However, this required the belligerent powers to follow the proceedings outlined in the Geneva Convention. Of the involved powers, the United States was the only disassociated party abiding by the prisoner of war regulations during the shackling reprisals. Although all signatories of the 1929 Geneva Convention assured the International Red Cross that they would abide by the convention in September 1939 and for the most part operated under the basic assumption that prisoners of war were human beings and deserved to be treated as such, the protocols of the convention were often interpreted by individual nations according to their own needs.<sup>32</sup> The shackling reprisals

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<sup>31</sup> MacKenzie, “Shackling,” 78.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 80.

of 1942-43 were the result of such interpretation intermixing with the interests of individual nations and their leaders.

As unoccupied nations, Britain, Canada, and the United States had varying degrees of disassociation from the fighting that contributed to their collective experience with the shackling reprisals. This was a greater factor in the United States and Canada with the Atlantic Ocean as a separation from Nazi Germany, whereas Britain faced Germany across the English Channel early on in the war. The relative separation from the war-front was instrumental in the treatment of and holding of prisoners of war. One of the most convincing arguments for this comes from a comparison of the treatment of German prisoners of war by France and Britain following the war—the treatment by French captors was affected by Nazi Germany's occupation of the country during the war, resulting in some of the worst treatment of German prisoners of war by an Allied nation.<sup>33</sup> The distance from the immediacy of the war influenced the behavior and mindset of the United States, Canada, and Britain during the shackling reprisals in varying degrees, but with a universal positive trend. German prisoners of war held by the United States and Britain had respective casualty rates of .15% and .03%, whereas the rate for German prisoners of war held by France was 2.58%.<sup>34</sup> Canada, Britain, and the United States' unoccupied status had an even greater influence on their treatment of German prisoners of war; once again, in a comparison with France, where cases of severe

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<sup>33</sup> MacKenzie, "Treatment of Prisoners of War," 488.

<sup>34</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Prisoner Taking and Prisoner Killing in the Age of Total War: towards a Political Economy of Military Defeat," *War in History* 11, no. 2 (2004): 186.

violations of the Geneva Convention were reported, it is evident that the unoccupied status of its three Allied nations significantly affected their treatment of German prisoners of war.<sup>35</sup>

Britain, Canada, and the United States' isolation from the fighting during the Second World War in both the European and Pacific Theatres directly influenced the Allied decision to hold German prisoners of war in those countries. Early in the war, Britain and the Soviet Union held the vast majority of German prisoners of war. The British government dispersed them throughout the Commonwealth due to the potential threat of German prisoners in Britain and the lack of space in the British Isles. Canada, New Zealand, and Australia were selected to hold the German and Italian prisoners of war taken by British forces because of their dominion statuses. The transfer of German prisoners of war to the United States occurred later in the war, following the United States' entrance into the war and its eventual agreement to house prisoners taken by Britain.<sup>36</sup> Britain, Canada, and the United States' dedication to housing German prisoners of war attracted attention from Germany. The potential repercussions from this attention influenced their interest and involvement in the shackling reprisals. As would prove true during the shackling reprisals, housing German prisoners of war increased a

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<sup>35</sup> David Lubañ, *Legal Modernism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 360-1.

<sup>36</sup> Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 2; "Interview by Colonel William Catron Rigby, F.A.G.D., U.S. Army, with Lieutenant J. Turner, Adjutant, Featherstone Park, Haltwhistle (Invasion Camp)," 7 November 1941, Box. 1435, Entry 457, RF 389.

nations' potential of becoming involved in a diplomatic crisis over the respective treatment of prisoners of war.

The involvement of the United States, Britain, and Canada in the shackling reprisals was a direct result of their signatory status to the 1929 Geneva Convention, as unoccupied nations, and as the holders of the majority of German prisoners of war during the Second World War. The Canadian, British, and American triumvirate created during the shackling reprisals reflected the prisoner of war conditions of the war prior to and during the shackling reprisals in addition to the power dynamics of the Allies during the entirety of the war. As such, it is necessary to address the wartime leaders of these three nations as agents of diplomacy during the shackling reprisals. The individuals leading the nations at war were instrumental not only to the development of war, but also the diplomatic proceedings that occurred as a result of war. Britain, Canada, and the United States' individual leaders, national interests, and degree of involvement with German prisoners had significant influence on the diplomatic process during the shackling reprisals. These elements intertwined, taking on varying levels of importance throughout the crisis as the three nations responded to German diplomacy and threats.

## Chapter 2

### Dieppe and Sark

The shackling reprisals began with the Dieppe Raid on August 19, 1942, when the hand-tying of German prisoners of war gained international attention and provoked Germany to respond. In addition to its importance in the chronology of the shackling reprisals, the Dieppe Raid signified the origination of the United States, Britain, and Canada's collective prisoner of war diplomatic front against Germany. The Dieppe Raid was the first collaborative military excursion between the three nations in the European Theatre and signified the entrance of both Canada and the United States into prisoner of war relations with Germany. The political and military elements of the Dieppe and Sark Raids provides context for why the shackling reprisals were important to all three nations. Additionally, it also explains their individual interests and gradations of involvement in the prisoner of war diplomatic crisis.

Prior to the United States' official entrance into the Second World War, President Roosevelt met with Prime Minister Churchill to discuss the possible courses of action if the United States entered the war. In March 1941 at the ABC-1 Conference, the United States and Britain agreed that their strategic objectives were to defeat Germany first while maintaining a strategic defense of the Pacific Theatre.<sup>37</sup> Following the United

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff: Pre-war Plans and Preparation. The United States Army in World War II* (United States Army Center of Military History, 1991), 371.

States' entrance into the Second World War on the side of the Allies, American diplomats began official discussions with their British counterparts regarding the plan for defeating the Axis powers. The United States continued to support the Europe First strategy and reassured Britain that "Germany was the main enemy and that the major effort would be made initially in Europe."<sup>38</sup> By the spring of 1942, the European front had moved westward to the English Channel. Germany controlled northern and eastern France, leaving the English Channel as Britain's only physical barrier from German troops. With this immediate threat at hand, preparation for the use of Canadian and American forces in the European Theatre began. For this reason, Canadian and American forces began preparation for their maiden voyage into combat with the Nazis in Europe.

The Allies planned for a British-American cross-channel invasion of German-occupied France in 1943, which required not only American forces to be concentrated in England, but also for the American troops to gain battle experience in order to supplement their training.<sup>39</sup> With this in mind, the Rangers had been formed and those Canadian units training in Britain began preparation for combat. In preparation for the collective British, Canadian, and American military effort in the European Theatre, the Allied governments decided that a major raid should be staged on the French port of Dieppe in 1942. With this attack, the Allies sought to demonstrate their strength and

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<sup>38</sup> Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two years. The United States Army in World War II* (Washington: GPO, 1962), 141-2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

presence to the German high command, as well as divert attention away from the Allied invasion of North Africa. The Dieppe Raid, code-named Operation Jubilee, also tested the coordination of the Allies in a large-scale military operation and an evaluation of new techniques and equipment. The Canadians and Americans first saw combat in the European Theatre during the Dieppe Raid, an assault that also served as a test of the Rangers' training and combat readiness. A raid on the coastal city of Dieppe served several purposes:

To gain the preinvasion experience of putting a large body of men and equipment, including tanks, ashore under air and sea covering fires; to test the enemy response; and to learn how fast he could rise to the challenge, and hopefully, give the appearance of helping the Russians by causing the Germans to worry about their western defense and draw off some forces from the Russian front. There was also concern about Allied morale. Something in the nature of offensive action needed to be done to bring ground war in Western Europe to the Germans.<sup>40</sup>

The Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, in England since 1940, was an obvious choice for the mission because a limited number of British troops were available and the Canadians had been training in England in anticipation for such an opportunity.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the Rangers were readily available, but had trained for a significantly shorter amount of time. At President Roosevelt's demand, the plans for a raid on Dieppe included American forces in order to test the Rangers and to increase the American public's morale.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 26.

<sup>41</sup> The Canadian troops chosen for the Dieppe Raid had been training since the beginning of the Second World War in preparation for an opportunity to fight in the European Theatre. *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

The initial raid was planned for July, but rescheduled for August 19, 1942 due to weather conditions. Operation Jubilee included five thousand Canadian troops, one thousand British Commandos, and fifty American Rangers, creating a triumvirate of forces.<sup>43</sup> The American role in Dieppe was relatively minor, with only fifty Rangers selected to participate in the fighting at Dieppe.<sup>44</sup> The inclusion of the American Rangers was primarily political, intended to raise American morale regarding the war through the participation of American troops in the European Theatre. Canadian troops first fought in the European Theatre during the Dieppe Raid, where they made up the majority of the fighting force and casualties. The Canadian government's interest in prisoner of war relations with Germany increased dramatically as a result of their involvement in the Dieppe Raid. The combination of British, Canadian, and American forces at Dieppe was the first of its kind in the European Theatre of the Second World War. As a result, the Dieppe Raid became much more than the Allies had planned for: a diplomatic crisis over the shackling of prisoners of war.

At 18:30 on August 18, 1942, Allied forces set across the English Channel in landing crafts towards the German-occupied port city of Dieppe, France as a part of Operation Jubilee. The raiding force intended to seize and hold the Dieppe port for a short period of time, proving that it was possible, to gather intelligence, and upon leaving,

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<sup>43</sup> O'Donnell, *Beyond Valor*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Nine of the fifty Rangers selected to participate at Dieppe were from Minnesota. Commando Organization to HQ USA in Britain, June 1, 1942; General Orders No. 7 to HQ USANIF and V Army Corps. "Activation of 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion," and "Report of Dieppe Operations," August 31, 1942. In Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Beyond Valor: World War II's Rangers and Airborne Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 2.



to destroy strategic buildings, port structures, and German coastal defenses. As the product of the Combined Operations Headquarters, Operation Jubilee consisted of three points of attack: a frontal assault by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division on the town and two flanking assaults by the Number 3 and 4 British Commandos with American Rangers dispersed throughout the British and Canadian units.<sup>45</sup> Operation Jubilee planned for the stealthy landing of troops on a ten mile stretch of the French coast at Dieppe. However, at 03:46 on August 19, a convoy of German torpedo boats escorting a German tanker unintentionally intercepted the assault force, alerting German defenses around Dieppe, sinking several of the Allied landing craft.<sup>46</sup> This divergence from the strategy of the Dieppe Raid proved to be disastrous from the immediate military standpoint and from the subsequent diplomatic consequences.

The frontal assault comprised of an attack by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division, who would land on four of the six beaches in front of the town. This plan relied not only on the element of surprise for the main assault, but on its ability to allow the flanking units to neutralize some of the more significant German defenses at Dieppe.<sup>47</sup> With limited air support and insufficient armored capability on the beaches, the troops were pinned on the beach by German machine gun and grenade fire. As a result, they were

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<sup>45</sup> "Report of Action Against Enemy," Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion, 11 January 1942, accessed January 14, 2014, [www.wwiirangers.com](http://www.wwiirangers.com).

<sup>46</sup> Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

unable to make it to the town as planned.<sup>48</sup> Casualties were enormous, with 3,367 of the 5,000 Canadian killed, wounded, or taken prisoner.<sup>49</sup> The flanking maneuvers by the British Commandos and United States Rangers were slightly more successful, but also resulted in exceptionally high casualty rates. A total of 1,874 Canadian, eighty-seven British, and four United States soldiers were taken as prisoners of war at Dieppe, creating a new dimension of interaction for the three nations in their wartime diplomacy with Germany.<sup>50</sup>

The Dieppe Raid resulted in massive casualty rates and failed enormously as a pre-invasion experiment, but the consequences reached much farther than the immediate military action. One of the Canadians taken prisoner was caught with a copy of the Dieppe assault plan, which included a recommendation for the binding of prisoners of war “wherever possible...to prevent the destruction of their documents.”<sup>51</sup> In addition, the German government received reports of dead German soldiers with their hands tied washing ashore after the Canadian withdrawal. Upon receiving news of these purported events, the German government threatened to shackle the Allied soldiers taken at Dieppe. Britain sent a response denying that the government had issued orders to shackle captured

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<sup>48</sup> Robin Neillands, *The Dieppe Raid: The Story of the Disastrous 1942 Expedition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 55.

<sup>49</sup> Terrence Robertson, *Dieppe: The Shame and the Glory* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), 386; Ken Ford, *Dieppe 1942* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 44; James Dunning, *The Fighting Fourth, No. 4 Commando at War 1940-5* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), 89.

<sup>50</sup> Sgt. Lloyd N. Church, Sgt. Albert T. Jacobsen, Pvt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Walter C. Bresnahan, and Pvt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Edwin R. Furr became the first German-held prisoners of war during the Dieppe Raid. Ibid.; “Report of Action Against Enemy,” www.wwiirangers.com.

<sup>51</sup> Vance, “Men in Manacles,” 485.

German soldiers.<sup>52</sup> Apparently satisfied with this reply, the German threat of shackling faded away until October 1942.

August 19, 1942 marked the first time that Canadian and United States soldiers fought in the European Theatre of the Second World War. As such, it was also the first time that Canadian and United States servicemen were taken as prisoners of war by Germany. Until that point, prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany had an unmistakable British accent: Britain was the primary opponent to Nazi Germany, as well as the leader of the Allies, and had the greatest prisoner of war ties with Germany regarding both captive British and German soldiers. As a result of the overwhelming losses for Allied forces at Dieppe on August 19, 1942, Canada and the United States became entangled in prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany. The Dieppe Raid was instrumental in the shackling reprisals as the first excursion of Canadian and U.S. forces, along with British, in the European Theatre. As a result of the casualties at Dieppe, the United States and Canada became involved in prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany. In addition, it was at Dieppe that the first allegations of hand-tying and mistreatment of German prisoners of war by Allied forces were made. In many ways, August 19, 1942 became a preface to the shackling reprisals and the prisoner of war policy crises it caused.

During the evening hours of October 3, 1942, a British Commando raid called Operation Basalt was launched on the German-controlled island of Sark in the Channel Islands. Five German soldiers were captured during the raid and had their hands tied,

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<sup>52</sup> Telegram, High Command of the Armed Forces [Adolf Hitler] to the Secretary of the War Cabinet [E. E. Bridges], Oct. 10, 1942, Cabinet Papers CAB 66/30/4, The National Archives (TNA).

four of whom were killed while attempting to escape and thus found by the Germans. The German military declared that the four dead soldiers were found with their hands bound, and German propaganda stated that two had been shot while resisting the hand-tying, the same procedure used at Dieppe.<sup>53</sup> Citing the hand-tying incidents at Dieppe and Sark, the German government issued a retaliatory shackling order. Germany announced that a total of 1,376 prisoners of war—107 officers and 1,269 of other rank—would be shackled on October 7, 1942.<sup>54</sup> Germany ordered that Britain must provide evidence that they would not shackle prisoners of war in the future and that they could maintain control of their soldiers in the future.<sup>55</sup> The hand-tying incidents at Dieppe and Sark became an international crisis with the German government's October 7 order. Britain, Canada, and the United States became embroiled in the diplomatic crisis, in various stages and to various degrees, but were undoubtedly the three Allied nations affected the most by the incident.

The prisoner of war situation in Britain, Canada, and the United States after the Dieppe Raid contributed significantly to their involvement in the shackling reprisals. Britain's ongoing prisoner of war diplomatic relationship with Germany between the beginning of the war in September 1939 and October 1942 meant that it assumed a

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<sup>53</sup> The details of the German soldiers' deaths at Sark were disputed between the British and German governments. The British government admitted that the Sark POWs hands were tied for their own protection and in order to prevent them from escaping, but that the men had not been killed while resisting the procedure. Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Auger, *Prisoners of the Home Front*, 58.

<sup>55</sup> Telegram, High Comm. of the AF to Sec. of the War Cab., Oct. 10, 1942, CAB 66/30/4, TNA.

leadership role in prisoner of war diplomatic relations during the shackling reprisals. However, although Canada had no prior diplomatic relationship with Germany regarding prisoners of war, its investment in the shackling reprisals outweighed Britain's by far in terms of the number of their prisoners of war taken during the Dieppe Raid. Almost 2,000 Canadians became prisoners of war during the Dieppe Raid, compared to the eighty-seven British prisoners captured.<sup>56</sup> In addition, by October 1942, Canada held the vast majority of German prisoners of war compared to other Allied nations. In comparison to Britain's five hundred and Australia's 1500, Canada held 16,000 German prisoners of war.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the Canadian government had a significant investment in prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany during the shackling reprisals. Much like Canada, the United States first saw its men captured by the Germans during the Dieppe Raid. In comparison, the four United States Rangers who became prisoners of war of Germany were hardly significant compared to the 2,000 Canadians taken at Dieppe and even the eighty-seven British.<sup>58</sup> Despite the numerical insignificance of the four versus the compiled number of Canadian and British prisoners of war in Germany at the beginning of the shackling reprisals, the symbolic significance of the four American Rangers taken prisoner at Dieppe and the potential for future American prisoners of war

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<sup>56</sup> Ken Ford, *Dieppe 1942* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 44; James Dunning, *The Fighting Fourth, No. 4 Commando at War 1940-5* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), 89.

<sup>57</sup> Vance, "Men in Manacles," 487.

<sup>58</sup> "Fuehrer Order Concerning Handling of Commandos," October 18, 1942, Translation of document 498-PS, In *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression 3* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 416-17.

was enormous. As such, the United States became an instrumental figure in the shackling reprisals. Together, the leaders of Britain, Canada, and the United States were forced to resolve inter-Allied issues before they could properly address the situation with Germany.

### Chapter 3

#### October-December, 1942

##### British-Canadian Diplomacy, Fall 1942

On October 8, Winston Churchill convened the British war cabinet in order to discuss Adolph Hitler's decision to shackle the prisoners of war taken at Dieppe and the demands he had of Britain. Churchill and the war cabinet admitted to having issued orders to tie the hands of captured German soldiers taken at Dieppe so that they could not destroy their papers.<sup>59</sup> Their formal response to the German government's telegram recanted the British previous denial of involvement in the hand-tying of Germans at Dieppe. Their response included a promise to revoke the order to tie the hands of captured German soldiers.<sup>60</sup> Churchill did not believe that the hand-tying that had occurred broke the parameters of Article 2 because the action itself fit within the guidelines of humane treatment. There was no reference to hand-tying prisoners of war in the 1929 Geneva Convention because it applied broad terms to the treatment of prisoners of war. The Germans' retaliatory act of shackling British and Canadian prisoners of war was undeniably a breach of Article 2, which clearly stated that "Measures of reprisal against them [prisoners of war] are forbidden."<sup>61</sup> While this was

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<sup>59</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 8, 1942, CAB 65/28/6, TNA.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Article 2, 1929 Geneva Convention.

clear, the 1929 Geneva Convention did not contain a regulation on the binding of prisoners' hands on the battlefield. The closest comparable regulation contained the vague order for the humane treatment of prisoners, which did not include specifications on the definition of humane or on the tying of prisoners' hands on or off the battlefield.<sup>62</sup> Churchill did not believe that an admission of guilt was necessary in the matter of tying prisoners of war' hands because it was not specifically mentioned in the Geneva Convention. In the same telegram that rescinded British orders for prisoners of wars' hands to be tied, Churchill declared that Britain was "compelled, in order to protect their own prisoners of war, to take similar measures [shackling] upon an equal number of enemy [German] prisoners of war."<sup>63</sup> This show of British power was meant to force the German government to adhere to the Geneva Conventions regulations of retaliatory acts against prisoners of war. In doing so, Churchill broke the convention as well and created tension between the British and Canadian governments.

Britain had not consulted Canada before announcing that it would retaliate against the German shackling of British and Canadian prisoners of war. This was not unprecedented behavior, as William Lyon Mackenzie King had complained about not being consulted on aspects of the Dieppe invasion and for not having approved on aspects regarding the participation of the Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Divisions.<sup>64</sup> Mackenzie King

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 8, 1942, CAB 65/28/6, TNA.

<sup>64</sup> Diaries, Oct. 10, 1942, Mackenzie King Diaries, Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>.



supported Britain with Canada's entrance into the war and had continued to support the British war effort through primarily non-military industrial and financial means. Canada was a British dominion, but Mackenzie King had refused to place a representative in the British war cabinet in order to maintain Canadian independence. Unlike Australia and other members of the British Commonwealth, Canada was therefore left out of the decisions made by the war cabinet because of this decision despite there being two senior Canadian Cabinet ministers in London at the time.<sup>65</sup> Churchill had reason to believe that the war cabinet had the authority to act in the name of the entire British Commonwealth. The other dominions were a part of the war cabinet decision making, and Canada's refusal to send a representative meant that it had given up their representation. The October 8 war cabinet meeting was held without any of the dominion representatives present, meaning none of the dominions were consulted about Britain's retaliatory action. Churchill later apologized for this oversight and justified it because of the need for immediate action.<sup>66</sup> Despite this reasoning, the issue was clear: Canada had not been consulted on a matter that involved Canadian soldiers and Canada's participation in the shackling of German prisoners of war.

Mackenzie King had made it clear that Canada was at Britain's side at the beginning of the war, but as an independent nation. As was evident from Mackenzie

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<sup>65</sup> Vance, "Men in Manacles," 487.

<sup>66</sup> Telegram, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs [Clement Attlee] to Secretary of State for External Affairs [Mackenzie King], Oct. 10, 1942, in *Documents on Canadian External Relations* vol. 9 (Quebec: Department of External Affairs, 1967): 483; War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 8, 1942, Cabinet, CAB 65/28/6, TNA.

King's desire to be included alongside Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Canadian prime minister did not intend to act as a subordinate to the British or American leaders.<sup>67</sup>

Canada was often disregarded when it came to Allied decisions because Roosevelt and Churchill considered Canada to be a secondary power that followed Britain's lead. This infuriated Mackenzie King, who sought to demonstrate Canada's independence.<sup>68</sup>

Britain's failure to consult the Canadian government before engaging in reprisals was even more aggravating. Not only was Canada required to shackle all but two hundred of the German prisoners of war that would be shackled in the initial reprisal, but Canadian soldiers made up the majority of those prisoner of war shackled by the Germans.<sup>69</sup>

Without consultation, Britain had volunteered Canada for a situation that was arguably more Canada's concern than Britain's in terms of who would be affected.

The main dispute between Churchill and Mackenzie King was not the decision to respond to German threats with a show of force. Mackenzie King agreed with Churchill's initial decision to engage in shackling reprisals as a response to the German government's actions, viewing the retaliatory action as a necessary, but regretful, show of power.<sup>70</sup> Mackenzie King and Churchill were at odds over Canada's right to have been

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<sup>67</sup> "Mr. Mackenzie King's Speech in London," *Bulletin of International News* 18, 19 (September 20, 1941): 1202.

<sup>68</sup> J.L. Granatstein, *The Canadians: W.L. Mackenzie King*. Markham (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2002), 52.

<sup>69</sup> Extract from Minutes of Cabinet War Committee, Oct. 9, 1942, "German Prisoners of War—Fettering of German Prisoners in Canada," in *DCER*, 474.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

consulted before being committed to participate in the shackling reprisals. The Canadian cabinet war committee ultimately decided to comply with Britain's decision in order to maintain a united front with Britain. They had already been committed by Churchill, and any move to the contrary would be a public opposition to Britain's decision. Mackenzie King advised the war committee that they should emphasize to Britain that Canada was reluctant to engage in the reprisals.<sup>71</sup> This reprimand articulated Mackenzie King's irritation with Churchill's presumptuous actions and made it clear that such behavior would not be tolerated in the future.

Mackenzie King understood that Canada and Britain would not be able to outdo the Germans in a prolonged war of prisoner of war reprisals. Mackenzie King's decision to acquiesce to Britain's decision was not without stipulations for additional action for this very reason. The acceptance of Canada's role in the initial shackling of German prisoners was sent along with a request for Churchill to request the assistance of the Swiss government in ending the retaliation and shackling of prisoners of war.<sup>72</sup> In doing so, Mackenzie King made a delayed attempt to regain Canada's authority in the shackling reprisals.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> The Swiss government was chosen to act as the Protecting Power during the shackling reprisals. The Protecting Power acts as a third party mediator when two countries do not have diplomatic relations, as was the case between the Allies and Germany at this time. The Protecting Power's duties relative to POWs were laid out in the 1929 Geneva Convention, which primarily meant that they were responsible for upholding the regulations and maintaining contact between belligerent powers and their POWs. Geneva Convention, 1929.; War Committee Conclusions, Oct. 9, 1942, *DCER*, 475; Telegram, Canadian High Commissioner (HC) in Britain [Massey] to the Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Oct. 10, 1942, CAB 66/29/38, TNA.

The Canadian suggestion to allow the Swiss government to mediate the shackling crisis was considered and ultimately rejected by the British war cabinet. The proposed mediation could result in having to divulge information about the treatment of German prisoners of war that would not be received well by the Germans.<sup>73</sup> This reasoning suggests a less than appropriate treatment of the German prisoners of war by the British. The dubious actions at Dieppe and Sark regarding hand-tying and the deaths of German prisoners of war after their capture indicate that Churchill and the war cabinet were stretching the boundaries of the 1929 Geneva Convention. Churchill's refusal to use a Swiss mediator, even after Mackenzie King's proposal, indicates Churchill's overall perspective of the situation: he would do as he pleased and take advice only if it was consistent with his position.

At noon on October 10, the shackling of German prisoners of war in Canada and Britain began. From 9 a.m. until 9 p.m., 240 German prisoners of war held in Britain had their hands shackled with 1-foot chains. The British-held German prisoners of war had been informed of the circumstances prior to the shackling. Additionally, the highest ranking German officer to be involved in the shackling, General Cruwell, ultimately gave his consent to being shackled alongside his men, although his eczema prevented him from this treatment.<sup>74</sup> While shackling in Britain had gone rather smoothly, in part because of the consent of the General Cruwell, the shackling of German prisoners of war

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<sup>73</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 13, 1942, CAB 65/28/10, TNA.

held in Canada did not go nearly so well. On October 10, 1,100 German prisoners of war were supposed to be placed in shackles by the Canadian government, but only 400 were actually put in chains.<sup>75</sup> The events surrounding the Canadian shackling differed greatly from the compliance in Britain, which added to the difficulties between Mackenzie King and Churchill.

Mackenzie King faced opposition for participating in the shackling reprisals from both the German prisoners of war in Canada and the Canadian public. A prisoner uprising at the Bowmanville prisoner of war camp in southern Ontario, later called the Battle of Bowmanville, became the most publicized incident resulting from attempts to shackle German prisoners of war. High-ranking German officers at Bowmanville objected to the plan to shackle 100 of the prisoners, which led to a three-day battle where four hundred prisoners of war barricaded themselves in one of the prison halls.<sup>76</sup> This incident was the only significant rebellion and information of the event was effectively withheld from the public until late October. The public response to Canada's involvement in shackling was already negative. A series of reports by the *Globe and Mail* on October 13 and 14 denounced the shackling of German prisoners of war in Canadian custody. These articles condemned shackling as an act of "aping the depravity

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid; War Committee Conclusions, Oct. 9, 1942, in *DCER*, 474; Telegram, Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Oct. 10, 1942, in *DCER*, 483.

<sup>76</sup> "Shackling Order Caused Trouble in Prisoner Camp; Inmates, Guards Injured: Germans Barricaded Themselves Inside Their Quarters—Two of them Suffered Light Bayonet Wounds in Fracas," *Hamilton Spectator*, Oct. 23, 1942; "Prisoners Resisted Shackling: Bowmanville Nazis Fought Camp Guards, Minister Reveals," *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 23, 1942; "Incidents In Prison Camp In Canada," *Times* [London] Oct. 24, 1942; "World Battlefronts, Prisoners: Battle of Bowmanville," *Time Magazine*, Oct. 26, 1942.

of the Nazis beasts and discarding civilization's conventions."<sup>77</sup> Public opinion deemed such behavior unacceptable on moral and political grounds. Imitating Germany would "weaken the high moral position of the United Nations" and engage Canada and Britain in a war of reprisals with "Hitler, who murders and destroys even his own people without the slightest human compunction."<sup>78</sup> Such conduct would only result in the shackling of more British and Canadian prisoners of war by Germany and the disgrace of those involved. The Canadian public's discomfort with Canada's participation in the shackling reprisals reflected Mackenzie King's own unease with the situation. Public opinion and prisoner revolts fueled Mackenzie King's determination to end Canada's role in the reprisals. He issued a temporary cease-shackling order after only four hundred German prisoners of war were shackled. He was also determined that the Swiss government would be consulted on Canada's behalf.

On October 12, Mackenzie King notified Churchill of the cease-shackling order, explaining the public discontent and prisoner revolt in Bowmanville. On October 13, the British war cabinet considered the concerns of the Canadian government regarding the initial shackling. In addition, Churchill brought up Mackenzie King's request for the Swiss government "to ascertain whether Canadian prisoners in German hands had offered resistance to the order and whether the Germans had used force in applying it."<sup>79</sup> This

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<sup>77</sup> "Shackling is Wrong," *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 14, 1942.

<sup>78</sup> "C.C.F. Protests Over Shackling of Prisoners," *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 14, 1942; "Majority of Men-on-Street Doubt Wisdom of Shackling Hun Prisoners," *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 13, 1942.

<sup>79</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 13, 1942, CAB 65/28/10, TNA.

request was based on the universal opposition to shackling, but it also represented a transition in Mackenzie King's position on shackling reprisals. He was not only taking affirmative action by ceasing reprisals, but seeking to separate Canadian and British power relations and interests. Churchill and the British war cabinet decided that acting upon the Canadian's request was not in the best interest of the Allies because "it might provoke the Germans to make a similar enquiry about the enforcement of the order in this country and in Canada."<sup>80</sup> Mackenzie King's attempt to separate Canada's interests in the shackling reprisals was in vain. Although Mackenzie King had made significant progress in upholding Canadian independence, allowing Churchill to handle mediation with the Swiss government meant that Canada remained subjected to Britain's interests.

On October 10, 1942, the German government issued a response to the shackling of German prisoners of war in Britain and Canada. Beginning on October 10, the Germans declared that they would implement a three-to-one reprisal policy; for every German prisoner of war shackled by Britain, German would shackle three British soldiers.<sup>81</sup> The German response referenced Britain and Churchill as the belligerents carrying out the controversial action but made no reference to either Canada or Mackenzie King. The German government placed heavy emphasis on Churchill's role in the shackling reprisals, describing his reasons to engage in reprisals as "arbitrary and

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to the Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Oct. 10, 1942, CAB 66/29/38, TNA; War Cabinet Minutes, Oct. 9, 1942, CAB 191/1 IR 41, TNA.

devious,” and having lent “the entire Geneva Convention *ad absurdum*.”<sup>82</sup> Churchill’s decisions regarding the prisoner of war reprisals aggravated both his allies and the enemy. It was clear that the situation had become a fight between Britain and Germany, perhaps even more so between Hitler and Churchill. Because Churchill had not made a request to the Swiss government on behalf of Mackenzie King, Canada’s interests were not being adequately represented.<sup>83</sup> It was becoming increasingly clear that Canada’s interests would be best served if Mackenzie King acted independently from Churchill.

The British government sent an official telegram to the Canadian government asking for their agreement to engage in additional reprisals in response to the German’s threat of three-to-one shackling. In order to do so, the British proposed that the Canadian government would have to shackle additional prisoners. A private message from Churchill to Mackenzie King followed the official telegram. Churchill asked the Canadian prime minister to “stand by us in this anxious business in which we both have much at stake.”<sup>84</sup> Mackenzie King had demonstrated that Canada had a significant amount of power in the shackling reprisals, and that it was necessary for Churchill to consult him as an ally. Churchill was aware that any retaliatory action by Britain was inconsequential without Canadian action, and so then afforded Mackenzie King the respect and authority necessary to ensure his participation in the British plan.

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<sup>82</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to the Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 13, 1942, CAB 65/28/10, TNA.

<sup>84</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Oct. 10, 1942, in *DCER*, 483.



The united Canadian-British front against Germany during the shackling reprisals was no longer beneficial to Canadian interests. Mackenzie King's strategy to end the shackling reprisals by actively working towards an unshackling date conflicted with Churchill's position. The Canadian prime minister believed that Churchill had "bungled the whole business terribly" by shrouding the British government's role in the hand-tying at Dieppe in deception and through Churchill's determination to continue on the questionable path of shackling reprisals.<sup>85</sup> Churchill's determination to match the German's threat of three-to-one retaliatory shackling weighed heavily on Mackenzie King, who became even more convinced that Canada's role in the reprisals must end.<sup>86</sup> Continuing the retaliatory shackling was futile, as Germany held the greater number of prisoners of war and had continuously shown their brutality.<sup>87</sup> Germany responded to Churchill's decision to engage in retaliatory shackling with the implementation of a three-to-one reprisal policy, and so Mackenzie King reasoned that Churchill's current path would not end the shackling reprisals. Canada's interests would not be advanced if Mackenzie King followed Britain on this issue.

Mackenzie King decided not to support Churchill if he attempted to match Germany's reprisal threat of three-to-one shackling. As a result, a standstill ensued as neither the Allies nor Germany made a move. The Canadian government continued to propose that the British government seek mediation from the Swiss government and

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<sup>85</sup> Diaries, Oct. 10, 1942, LAC.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

establish a definite plan to end the shackling reprisals. Churchill, however, was content to wait and dismissed Canada's proposal. On October 22 Churchill brought up the prisoner of war reprisals before the war cabinet. He addressed the situation as Germany's attempt to "stir up hatred among the German people against us," to "hamper the effectiveness of our Commando raids and of our bombing attacks."<sup>88</sup> As a result, the British government engaged only in limited talks with the Swiss government in an effort to get information from Germany. However, Churchill refused to release any information about the conditions of the German prisoners of war in Britain and Canada. He decided to wait for the German government to reply to the Swiss government's inquiries regarding prisoners of war in Germany and their attempts at mediating an unshackling date.<sup>89</sup> On October 23, the British government sent a telegram to the Canadian government stating that they would not take any action at the current time.

On October 23, the Canadian government made another attempt to reach a decision with Britain that would end the shackling reprisals. Mackenzie King expressed his concern for the deterioration of the treatment of prisoners of war following the shackling reprisals. He also proposed a course of action to end the shackling of German prisoners of war.<sup>90</sup> According to this plan, all governments of the Commonwealth would issue a joint public statement addressing the treatment of prisoners of war and also make

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<sup>88</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 26, 1942, CAB 65/28/15, TNA.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid; Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Oct. 24, 1942, in *DCER*, 491-2.

<sup>90</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs to Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Oct. 23, 1942, in *DCER*, 490.

an appeal to the Swiss government to investigate the German's treatment of allied prisoners of war as hostages.<sup>91</sup> Mackenzie King's proposal relied on the premise that Canada, Britain, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand would act as independent states. Unfortunately, the Canadian and British communication regarding their respective decisions on the reprisals situation crossed. The war cabinet decided against the immediate action that the Canadian government had suggested, and so Mackenzie King's attempt to end the reprisals fell flat.<sup>92</sup> Once again, the British plan was chosen as the more prudent.

The decision to wait until the Swiss government received information from the German government meant that Mackenzie King was no closer to ending Canada's role in the reprisals. Unfortunately for the Canadians, that decision did not produce any immediate results. Adding insult to injury, High Commissioner Vincent Massey informed Mackenzie King that Churchill's decisions regarding the shackling reprisals were met with widespread disapproval in Britain because he took a "less serious view of the implications and consequences of the situation than [was] held by the majority of people, officials and otherwise, almost all whom regard the present position with the greatest disquietude."<sup>93</sup> Mackenzie King was exasperated by Churchill's position. He viewed the situation as one of Canada's most vital interests and responded accordingly.

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<sup>91</sup> This message was circulated to the governments of the Commonwealth. In addition, "the Government of the United States is being advised of our views." Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> War Cabinet Conclusions, Oct. 26, 1942, CAB 65/28/15, TNA.

<sup>93</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Oct. 28, 1942, in *DCER*, 493.

Churchill however had continually deferred making a decision, preferring to play a waiting game with the German government. Mackenzie King's decisive telegram on October 23 had come to nothing and the standstill continued into November.

In November, new considerations concerning the prisoner of war shackling reprisals drove Mackenzie King to take another stand. The shackling was believed to have a "serious effect on the mental and physical health of the prisoners" and trust within the international community.<sup>94</sup> Mackenzie King felt international pressure as the shackling reprisals continued into November, and he responded by making another attempt to find a solution. The Canadian government had deferentially followed Britain's policies but with no success. On November 3, Mackenzie King proposed that the shackled German prisoners of war in Canadian and British custody be unshackled on November 10 without consulting the Swiss government.<sup>95</sup> There had been no word from the German government since October 10 on the shackling reprisals, which made Churchill's plan increasingly impractical. Mackenzie King's newest proposal to end the shackling crisis required action, rather than a continuing impasse. The British government needed to back down from their current stalemate with Germany. Churchill, however, was not ready to accept Canada's newest proposal.

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<sup>94</sup> The Japanese Government was reported to have been protesting against the treatment of Japanese nationals evacuated from British Columbia. The Canadian government felt that the language being used made "it only too apparent that the enemy are working up a concerted case for undermining the protection which the International Conventions now afford to prisoners of war and civilians in their power." Telegram, Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs to Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Nov. 3, 1942, in *DCER*, 497.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 498.

Negotiations with Churchill continued to stall Mackenzie King's plan of ending Canada's participation in the shackling reprisals. On November 4, Churchill responded to Mackenzie King's proposal that Britain and Canada should unshackle their German prisoners of war on November 10. Churchill asked the Canadian prime minister "not [to] press me too hard about these 400 prisoners whom you can tie up as loosely as you please."<sup>96</sup> He urged Mackenzie King to continue to be patient. Churchill believed that backing down would be a sign of weakness. He told Mackenzie King that it would be "a thousand pities to give in to this bully and make a failure of it at this juncture. Such an advertised surrender might well lead to a prolongation of these indignities on your men and ours."<sup>97</sup> Churchill's policy had not changed since the initial declaration on October 8 in retaliation against Germany's decision to shackle British and Canadian prisoners of war. Taking the initiative, as Mackenzie King wished to do, would mean admitting that it had been a mistake to engage in the reprisals. However, Churchill could no longer dismiss the Canadian government's concerns since doing so incited Mackenzie King to take the initiative. Churchill's telegram appealed Mackenzie King's desire to be viewed as a fellow leader with whom the British prime minister shared plans. The Canadian government did not unshackle their German prisoners of war on November 10 and Churchill maintained British control over the shackling reprisals.

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<sup>96</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Nov. 4, 1942, in *DCER*, 499.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

Allied victories in Egypt resulted in the capture of a significant number of German soldiers. The British and Canadian prime ministers believed that this large number of German prisoners of war could be used to their benefit in the shackling reprisals. Churchill reasoned that the combination of military victories and capture of additional German soldiers could be used as leverage against the German government.<sup>98</sup> Surely the German government would be forced to answer the Swiss government's appeals for mediation. Mackenzie King contended that because the successes in Egypt placed Britain in a position of power, the allies would be able to initiate unshackling without being perceived as weak.<sup>99</sup> He believed that Britain had the leverage to end the shackling reprisals with Germany. On November 20, Mackenzie King proposed this new course of action to the British government, stating that now was the ideal time to unshackle the German prisoners of war in Britain and Canada.<sup>100</sup> However, the situation in Britain remained "as unsatisfactory as ever... [I]t now appears that nothing at all has been done except to enquire of the Swiss how the matter stands."<sup>101</sup> Once again, the plan of pursuing independent action was set aside in favor of waiting for the Swiss government to mediate the reprisals.

On November 24, the German government replied to the Swiss government on the issue of the unshackling of prisoners of war in Britain, Germany, and Canada. The

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<sup>98</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Nov. 10, 1942, in *DCER*, 500.

<sup>99</sup> Extract from Minutes of Cabinet War Committee, Nov. 11, 1942, in *DCER*, 501.

<sup>100</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs to Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Nov. 20, 1942, in *DCER*, 503.

<sup>101</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Nov. 26, 1942, in *DCER*, 504.

German government set forth a series of terms that must be met before they would agree to end their shackling of allied prisoners. In particular, Britain must issue “to its troops an entirely categorical and general order forbidding under severe penalties any binding (*Fesselung*) of prisoners of war and also possession of bonds (*Fesseln*) for the purpose [of shackling prisoners of war].”<sup>102</sup> In the meantime, on November 30 the Canadian war committee had decided to “communicate directly with the Swiss government to the effect that if they extended an invitation to both sides to unshackle, Canada would comply unconditionally” once they received notice from the German government.<sup>103</sup> Upon receiving the German’s conditions, it was clear that this decision would end Canada’s participation in the shackling crisis, but it would not have an impact on the Canadian prisoners of war shackled in Germany. The end of the shackling crisis would require Churchill’s cooperation.

Mackenzie King decided that it was necessary to unshackle the German prisoners of war in Canadian custody to demonstrate its independence from Britain in the shackling reprisals. Doing so would at least end Canada’s participation in the unsavory situation. At the very best, it would force the German government to consider Canada as a separate actor in the reprisals. The Canadian government considered two courses of action. The first was to approach the Swiss government directly and the second was to unshackle

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<sup>102</sup> On November 4, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the Swiss Minister the telegram, which was then presented to His Majesty’s Minister at Berne. On December 1, the telegram was circulated in two parts. In the second, a summary of the rest of the German note was circulated. Telegram, Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Dec. 1, 1942, in *DCER*, 509.

<sup>103</sup> Extract from Minutes of Cabinet War Committee, Nov. 30, 1942, in *DCER*, 505.

German prisoners of war in Canada regardless of what Britain and Germany did.<sup>104</sup> On December 3, the British war cabinet considered the new developments, including Mackenzie King's decision to act independently and end shackling in Canada. The war cabinet decided to request mediation from the Swiss government, which would include setting a date and time for a mutual unshackling by the Allies and Germany.<sup>105</sup> Churchill's acquiescence to mediation included an irritated reference to the unacceptable behavior of the Canadians because they were forcing Britain to act with Canada, and not vice versa as had been the case before.<sup>106</sup> Mackenzie King had finally gained the upper hand in this policy confrontation with Britain.

In December, Mackenzie King strengthened his position on the shackling reprisals. He arranged to have the Swiss government communicate directly with him so that Canada did not have to rely on Britain for information. As a result, the Canadian government gained recognition as a principal player in the shackling controversy.<sup>107</sup> On December 7, the Swiss government revealed their current plan to end the shackling reprisals. The Germans intended to unshackle all British and Canadian prisoners of war during the Christmas week, so the Swiss government proposed that a temporary but

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<sup>104</sup> Telegram, Sec. for Ext. Affairs to Canadian HC in Britain, Dec. 1, 1942, in *DCER*, 506.

<sup>105</sup> Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Dec. 3, 1942, in *DCER*, 510.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes, Dec. 3, 1942, CAB 195/2 IR 5, TNA.

<sup>107</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs to Canadian HC in Britain, Dec. 4, 1942, in *DCER*, 511; Telegram, Canadian HC in Britain to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Dec. 7, 1942, in *DCER*, 512.



universal Christmas unshackling occur on December 14.<sup>108</sup> Churchill and Mackenzie King agreed to this turn of events because it satisfied both their interests. Churchill had the Swiss government mediation that he had been waiting for, and Mackenzie King was able to go along with the planned unshackling of German prisoners of war held in Canada while retaining unity with Britain.<sup>109</sup>

#### The United States, Fall 1942

The United States' involvement during the first stage of the shackling reprisals, during which Canada and Britain engaged in shackling, was that of a disapproving ally who was largely unattached to the situation. Unlike Canada and Britain, nations with active roles in the engagement of retaliatory measures against prisoners of war and in diplomatic relations over the incident, the United States had not been confronted by the Germans regarding their handling of prisoners of war, and therefore was not a belligerent in the shackling reprisals. However, the importance of the United States and President Roosevelt during this time cannot be overlooked. President Roosevelt's opinion of the shackling matter was that the act of hand-tying on the battlefield was allowable under the Geneva Convention, but the retaliation against prisoners of war on both sides was

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<sup>108</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs, Dec. 9, 1942, in *DCER*, 513; War Cabinet Conclusions, Dec. 7, 1942, CAB 65/28/35, TNA.

<sup>109</sup> Telegram, Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs to Sec. of Ext. Affairs, Dec. 8, 1942, in *DCER*, 514; Telegram, Sec. of State for Ext. Affairs to Sec. of State for Dom. Affairs, Dec. 8 (2), 1942, *Ibid*.

unacceptable.<sup>110</sup> It was in the United States' best interests to assist in negotiating the shackling reprisals because of its emerging prisoner of war diplomatic relationship with Germany.<sup>111</sup> Roosevelt's actions influenced Churchill and Mackenzie King in their decisions and pushed the United States forward as the primary power among the Allies. His engagement during the fall of 1942 reflected the United States' continuously growing status as an Ally during the Second World War as he gradually became a greater influence in prisoner of war relations with Germany and the United States became more entrenched in the European and African fronts.<sup>112</sup> President Roosevelt's engagement with Prime Minister Churchill and Prime Minister Mackenzie King regarding the shackling crisis reflected the concerns of the United States and the potential effects of the shackling reprisals on his country.

President Roosevelt's interest in the shackling reprisals began unofficially with its support of Britain and opposition of Germany prior to Pearl Harbor and strengthened as

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<sup>110</sup> On October 23, President Roosevelt provided a brief summary on his knowledge of the shackling incident to the press. "Well, I have—the only thing I can tell you—there may a lot more since then—is that when the prisoners [sic] that were captured by the British in the Dieppe raid were brought ashore, I understand it that some of them had their hands tied during the time that they came out of the boats—the time between then and the time they went into the concentration camp. Now that, of course, was not a violation of the Geneva Convention, it was merely security in transportation. And that was followed by a wholesale, apparently a wholesale shackling—or whatever the word is—of British and Canadian prisoners, which were not being transported—who were not being transported but were actually there under guard. Now that was a violation of the Geneva Convention. Now what has happened since then, I don't know." Franklin Roosevelt, "October 23, 1942 Press Conference (Number 854)," in *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1933-1945/FDR and the Era of the New Deal Series* vol. 20 (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1973), 174-5.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> During press conferences, Roosevelt was quick to defer questions on the details of the shackling reprisals to the State Department. However, on the Geneva Convention he did state "Of course, I suppose—I suppose the easiest way of putting it is that theoretically the Geneva Convention is the rule under which the United Nations have been operating." "October 23, 1942 Press Conference," Ibid., 173.

the United States entered the Second World War as a member of the Allies. The United States' investment in the shackling reprisals went beyond that of Britain and Canada's ally because the crisis had a potential impact on the United States' growing military involvement in the direct fight with Germany.<sup>113</sup> The immediate concern was for the treatment of United States citizens in German hands as prisoners of war. The capture of four United States Rangers during the Dieppe Raid commenced the U.S.-German prisoner of war diplomacy during the Second World War. Although Germany did not direct their attention to the United States in regards to the shackling orders, their relationship with the United States regarding prisoners of war would no doubt be impacted by the shackling crisis. The inconvenient timing of the United States' entrance into prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany meant that the four American prisoners of war could be directly affected, either by being shackled alongside their British and Canadian counterparts of the Dieppe Raid or through less than legitimate treatment in captivity. Even more concerning still for Roosevelt was the impact the shackling crisis may have on the treatment of American prisoners of war in the future.

Looking ahead, Roosevelt had undeniable reason for concern regarding the shackling crisis' impact on the United States and its future prisoners of war in German hands. In addition to the concern for those four Americans taken prisoner at Dieppe, the United States was on the verge of an even greater prisoner of war possibility. In November 1942, American soldiers began fighting in North Africa, thus exponentially

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

increasing the possibility of Germany taking American prisoners of war.<sup>114</sup> With the plan in place for the British, Canadian, and American military effort in North Africa, President Roosevelt was well aware of the potential for American forces to be taken prisoner by Germany at the beginning of the shackling reprisals. If the shackling crisis continued to the point where Germany ran out of British and Canadian soldiers to shackle, they may very well begin to shackle American prisoners of war in order to continue the retaliation. Once Germany announced that the nationality of prisoners of war would not bar them from retaliatory acts the concern for American soldiers became real.<sup>115</sup> Once Japan and Italy threatened to carry out reprisals against Allied prisoners, the United States' interest in the shackling reprisals increased exponentially, as did the number of American soldiers who were potentially affected by the incident.<sup>116</sup> President Roosevelt faced the threat of United States prisoners of war being shackled because of Britain and Canada's involvement in the shackling reprisals, and thus his interest in ending the shackling reprisals and restoring the Geneva Convention's principles grew.

Roosevelt had to consider the immediate as well as the potential effects of the shackling reprisals on United States prisoners of war and the United States. In the summer of 1942, the United States agreed to hold between 150,000 and 175,000 of Britain's prisoners of war, whom would be transported to the United States later in the

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<sup>114</sup> Halifax to FO, Oct. 28, 1942, CAB 122/232, TNA; MacKenzie, *Shackling*, 88.

<sup>115</sup> Vance, "Men in Manacles," 504

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

war.<sup>117</sup> Should the shackling reprisals continue on to a point where the number of German prisoners of war shackled exceeded the number held by Britain and its dominions, there was the possibility that the United States would be asked to participate in the venture and engage in shackling. The United States would have had the option of refusing because they were the detaining power, just as Canada did in the fall of 1943. Even so, the United States would have undoubtedly seen negative diplomatic effects as the detaining power of so many German prisoners of war while Britain and Canada continued to engage in reprisals. In addition, it would create an uncomfortable situation between Britain and the United States, which would be viewed as a power struggle by allies and enemies alike. Roosevelt faced the complicated question of what to do in the midst of the shackling reprisals. His actions, complicated enormously by the fact that the United States was only potentially impacted, reflected the issues the United States faced as a non-belligerent Ally in the shackling reprisals.

Roosevelt's opinion on the situation Britain had dragged the Allies into was made evident in a public manner on October 23, when he expressed the United States' concerns with the potential effects of the shackling reprisals: the United States would not engage in reprisals as it was against the laws of the Geneva Convention.<sup>118</sup> In a private conversation with Mackenzie King, recorded in the latter's diary, Roosevelt "said that Winston [Churchill] was inclined at times to take things a little too quickly in hand

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<sup>117</sup> Thompson, *Men in German Uniform*, 6.

<sup>118</sup> Roosevelt, "October 23, 1942 Press Conference," in *Complete Presidential Press Conferences*, 173; *Ibid.*

himself.”<sup>119</sup> Publically and privately against the British decision to engage in shackling and the bilateral retaliatory shackling, Roosevelt placed himself in the position that Mackenzie King had wished to take by upholding international law and avoiding engagement in questionable practices towards prisoners of war. His relationship with Britain and Canada in regards to prisoner of war diplomacy was a reflection of the power status of the United States as the war continued: independent. The United States distanced itself from the illegal retaliatory shackling in protection of international regulations and its own interests. As a result, it maintained an inactive role in prisoner of war diplomatic relations during the initial stage of the shackling reprisals.

The initial stage of diplomacy during the shackling reprisals reflected the individual nature of each nation and the separate of interests of Britain, Canada, and the United States in prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany. Britain and Canada’s participation in the retaliatory shackling of prisoners of war and their respective positions on this action estranged them from the United States and each other. Once Britain and Canada untangled themselves from the shackling practice, the nations could work jointly to rein in Germany to the policies of the Geneva Convention. The diplomatic relationship between Britain, Canada, and the United States in 1943 reflected a collective Allied policy and their increased cooperation in the shackling reprisals.

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<sup>119</sup> Diaries, Dec. 4, 1942 page 8, LAC.

## Chapter 4

### 1943, Unshackled

On December 12, 1942, German prisoners of war in Canada and Britain were released from their shackles. This unshackling would be permanent, whereas the British and Canadian prisoners of war in Germany were returned to their shackles on December 26, 1942. Mackenzie King had succeeded in freeing Canada from the political nightmare of the shackling reprisals, even though Canadian prisoners of war would not be unshackled until December 1943. The release of German prisoners of war from their shackles was only half of a solution to the shackling reprisals. After the universal Christmas unshackling, Germany once again shackled its Allied prisoners of war and “maintained its refusal to unshackle unless the Allies gave a “categorical and general order” forbidding the binding of prisoners of war.”<sup>120</sup> The prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany over the shackling of Allied prisoners of war ceased to be a major focus in international wartime diplomacy. Free from the illegal reprisal situation, the Canadian and British governments were once again in a position to collaborate with the United States in their diplomatic relations with Germany. However, the conflict for the Allies was far from over. From January 1943 until the unshackling of Allied prisoners of war in November 1943, Churchill, Mackenzie King, and Roosevelt struggled to come to an agreement as Allies that would satisfy the German government.

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<sup>120</sup> Vance, “Men in Manacles,” 496.

With German prisoners of war released from their shackles, the shackling reprisals became largely a one-sided matter as the Allies sought to gain the freedom of their prisoners of war shackled by Germany. Germany, adamant that the practice of tying prisoners' hands on or off the battlefield was a violation of the Geneva Convention, refused to untie its Allied prisoners of war until the Allies (notably not just Britain) issued an order that completely and categorically forbade any form of shackling or tying prisoners of war under severe penalty before Allied prisoners of war would be released from their shackles.<sup>121</sup> Although the United States, Canada, and Britain had come to an agreement that prisoners of war would not be shackled off of the battlefield, they were not at an agreement regarding the conditional situations of tying prisoners' hands in conflict, and so could not present the German government with an acceptable statement that would release Allied prisoners of war from their shackles. The legality of battlefield conditions for prisoners of war became the point of contention not only between the Allies and Germany, but among the Allies as well.

Churchill, in agreement with British cabinet and war cabinet, refused to order a cessation of the practice of tying prisoners' hands on the battlefield.<sup>122</sup> The British government informed the Protecting Power that the act of shackling would only be used

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<sup>121</sup> The notice was addressed to the British and Canadian governments. German legation, Bern, to the Swiss government, March 11, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA; Conclusions of forty-fourth War Cabinet meeting, March 22, 1943, PRO, CAB 65/33, TNA.

<sup>122</sup> Extract from conclusions of the first War Cabinet meeting, January 4, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA; Conclusions of eighteenth War Cabinet meeting, January 27, 1943, PRO, CAB 65/33, TNA; Bern to FO, nos. 4657, 4658, December 17 1942, PRO, PREM 3/363/2, TNA; Conclusions of 168<sup>th</sup> War Cabinet meeting, December 14, 1942, PRO, CAB 65/28, TNA.



“when particular operations conditions make it essential in the interests of the safety of the prisoner and when any other action would be less humane.”<sup>123</sup> The hand-tying, then, was to be considered as a last-resort measure where otherwise prisoners may be harmed in an attempt to prevent their escape during battle. Hitler rejected the British declaration and accused Britain and Canada of continuing to allow violations of the Geneva Convention.<sup>124</sup> Once again, the British-Canadian situation was being dictated by Churchill and the British government. The situation, however, was alleviated slightly by the fact that the governments were no longer engaged in illegal or uncertain activities (other than the allowance of the tying of prisoners’ hands on the field). The shackling reprisals and the immediate illegality now lay solely on Germany, as the allegations against Britain, Canada, and any Ally of a like mindset were purely based on policy and not direct action at this point. In January, the British government drafted their stance on the shackling of prisoners of war and began the draft negotiations with Canada as to what their official statement to the Protecting Power would be.

His Majesty’s Government desires to point out to Swiss Government that whatever allegations German Government may make as to action taken by British soldiers in the field of battle, these can provide no possible justification for manacling of British prisoners of war in the hands of the German Government. Under Article 2 of International convention relative to treatment of prisoners of war, the treatment of such prisoners as

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<sup>123</sup> FO to Bern, no 572, February 10, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA; FO to Bern, no. 572, February 10, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA.

<sup>124</sup> Arieh J. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity: Britain and the United States and Their POWs in Nazi Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 48.

hostages and their subjection to measures of reprisal is expressly forbidden.<sup>125</sup>

This position reaffirmed Britain's declaration that the tying of prisoners' hands on the field of battle was not official policy and Britain had never created a general order of that kind. However, Britain maintained that "such a process might indeed be in the best interests of safety of prisoners themselves," and so they would not agree with Germany's position.<sup>126</sup> In another draft, Britain elaborated upon the actions taken by their government and military as well as their stance on the shackling issue. The British government ensured that "all ranks shall be acquainted with and observe the terms of the Convention with particular reference to treatment of prisoners of war immediately after capture. In these orders the general binding of prisoners of war is strictly forbidden."<sup>127</sup> Thus, the regulations in place were in accordance with Germany's demands and may have resulted in the end of the shackling of Allied prisoners of war in January. However, the draft continued in such a manner—meant to defend the actions previously taken by British and Canadian soldiers as well as the decisions of the British government during Dieppe and Sark—that a policy conflict with Germany would be continued.

Attention, however, is called to the following consideration. It is the duty of a prisoner of war during operations to escape or to impede his captors if he can do so. It is equally the duty of every soldier to prevent any such action by a prisoner of war who may be in his keeping during operations.

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<sup>125</sup> Dominions Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London, January 12, 1943, in *DCER*, 516-17; High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London January 26, 1943, in *DCER*, 517-18.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London January 26, 1943, in *DCER*, 518.

In fulfillment of this duty special measures of restraint, such as the binding of prisoners, may be adopted if the operational conditions make it essential but measures must be carried out in a humane manner and as soon as the emergency which necessitated them is over they must be at once discontinued.<sup>128</sup>

Military authorities, including Canadian Generals Stuart and McNaughton, concurred with the British position of allowing prisoners' hands to be tied on the field if necessary. With the apparent need for hand-tying to be allowed in special circumstances, it was "obviously impossible to give the categorical undertaking required by the Germans."<sup>129</sup> The issue was put in writing, which the British and Canadian governments proceeded to discuss into February.

Britain and Canada strove to create a reply to the Swiss government and a resolution for the shackling reprisals in February 1943. Churchill and Mackenzie King submitted drafts and revisions to one another throughout this time period in an attempt to create a statement that would maintain their united position while also working towards an understanding that would release Allied prisoners of war in Germany from their shackles. The effort towards a joint declaration by Britain and Canada to the Swiss government demonstrated the development of Allied prisoner of war diplomacy since the beginning of the shackling reprisals in October 1942.<sup>130</sup> However, while the British-

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London January 27, 1943, in *DCER*, 519.

<sup>130</sup> The draft revision submitted by the Canadians included certain elements, such as the note of including both British and Canadian governments in the text that paralleled the issues between the two governments during the first stage of the shackling reprisals. However, the back-and-forth shows

Canadian joint effort progressed upon relatively good terms, their efforts faced the wall of German determination and interpretation.

The effort to free Allied prisoners of war in Germany went hand-in-hand with the greater attempt to keep Germany obedient to the regulations of the Geneva Convention. To do so, it was necessary to convince them that the Allies intended to follow the convention themselves and that their policies reflected international law. Churchill and Mackenzie King fought to explain that the Allies' shackling policy was based on the idea that the Geneva Convention's regulations on the treatment of prisoners of war "does not attempt to regulate what happens in the actual fighting," whereas Germany interpreted the allowance of shackling as the understanding that the Geneva Convention was not binding in the battlefield.<sup>131</sup> The subject of the draft revisions was how to accomplish this and how to phrase the British and Canadian policy in an agreeable and productive manner.<sup>132</sup> Thus, the official statement eventually read:

The binding of prisoners in fulfillment of this duty will only be countenanced when particular operational conditions make it essential in the interests of the safety of the prisoner and when any other action would be less humane: such measures must be carried out in a humane manner and must be at once discontinued immediately they are no longer required to prevent the prisoner's escape.<sup>133</sup>

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considerable progress from that of the fall of 1942. Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in Great Britain, Ottawa February 3, 1943, in *DCER*, 520-1.

<sup>131</sup> High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, London January 27, 1943, in *DCER*, 519-20.

<sup>132</sup> Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in Great Britain, Ottawa February 3, 1943, in *DCER*, 521.

<sup>133</sup> The Canadian government suggested this change, which was accepted and became a part of the official statement to the Protecting Power. Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in

However, Hitler's engagement in the prisoner of war diplomacy over the shackling reprisals remained steadfast. Allied prisoners of war in German hands remained in shackles and, even more daunting, Hitler was becoming less inclined to follow the Geneva protocols towards those prisoners of war in German hands. Germany and Japan were "beginning to make of the situation one that treats prisoners as hostages," rather than captured enemy soldiers in 1943.<sup>134</sup> In order to pull Germany back to the regulations of the Geneva Convention, Britain and Canada faced the possibility of having to comply with Hitler's will.

On March 31, 1943, Mackenzie King's diary entry reflected the unfavorable stance that the Allies found themselves in regards to the shackling crisis. "On shackling...we felt we should give full undertaking to Germans as to no shackling hereafter—leave them nothing to complain of. It might mean that men might be shot instead of shackled."<sup>135</sup> To Allied leaders, it appeared that Germany would gain a de facto 'win' in the battle over shackling as the Allies fought to maintain the Geneva Convention on both sides. As imminent as that possibility may have seemed, however, Germany's stance in the shackling reprisals was weaker than it appeared. Between November 1942 and March 1943, over 100,000 German soldiers were taken as prisoners

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Great Britain, Ottawa February 3, 1943, in *DCER*, 521; Dominions Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs [2], London, February 5, 1943, *Ibid.*, 522. The United States' stance on the legality of shackling prisoners of war had been set in October 1942 and mirrored the British and Canadian policy. Roosevelt, "October 23, 1942 Press Conference (Number 854)," 174-5.

<sup>134</sup> Japan was not a signatory of the Geneva Convention. Diaries, October 23, 1942, LAC.

<sup>135</sup> Diaries, March 31, 1943: Page 2, LAC.

of war by the Allies in North Africa, thus creating a more even balance of prisoners of war held by each side.<sup>136</sup> Germany had the welfare of their own captured soldiers to consider and Hitler faced contention from his government, who feared that the shackling policy would prevent the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war.<sup>137</sup> Although the reality of the shackling of Allied prisoners of war was much more lenient than the official German policy and shackling was a symbolic rather than an actual practice, Hitler's threat to Allied prisoners of war remained.

Churchill and Mackenzie King faced a new set of issues in negotiating the end of the shackling reprisals as the German threat to Allied prisoners of war ceased. In April the British government decided to pursue an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war with Germany in response to the latter's efforts in that direction, creating a sense of security towards the treatment of prisoners of war.<sup>138</sup> Although the news that the treatment of Allied prisoners in Germany was better than German policy dictated due to the efforts of camp commandants, Churchill and Mackenzie King faced the issue of keeping the shackling issue a priority in wartime diplomacy and efforts.<sup>139</sup> The Allies sought to ease the concern of families at home, but revealing that Germany did not enforce their shackling policy would take away from the greater concern of Germany upholding the Geneva Convention in addition to possibly alerting the German

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<sup>136</sup> MacKenzie, "Shackling," 91.

<sup>137</sup> PRO WO 366/26, TNA; *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, Berne to FO, no 1344, March 19, 1943, PRO WO 366/26, TNA; Berne to FO, no. 1346, March 19, 1943, *Ibid.*; Bern to DO, no. 2024, April 22, 1943, PRO, WO 193/355, TNA.

government of leniency in prisoner of war camps.<sup>140</sup> Although Germany progressed towards the better treatment of prisoners of war, Hitler's policy on shackling stood fast and maintained a standstill.

In May, Allied successes in North Africa resulted in a progression in the shackling reprisals. On May 9, the Allies achieved a complete defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa with the unconditional surrender in northern Tunisia. Just as had occurred in the fall of 1942, the success in the spring of 1943 gave the Allies leverage in the shackling reprisals through increased numbers of German prisoners of war.<sup>141</sup> The number of German prisoners of war in British hands increased from 33,315 on April 15, 1943 to 142,315 on May 9, 1943.<sup>142</sup> In comparison, Germany held approximately 80,000 British [including Dominions] prisoners of war.<sup>143</sup> With the overwhelming number of German prisoners of war taken from the North African campaign, the United States was forced to accept responsibility for them per their 1942 agreement with Britain. With this substantial development and leverage, the Allies sought to gain the upper hand and force Germany's hand in the shackling policy crisis.

The United States' role in the shackling reprisals became much more apparent with the successes in North Africa in 1943. In the plans for the European front in 1942, a

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<sup>140</sup> Dominions Office to Dominions governments, no. 279, May 10 1943, and Bern to FO, no. 2335, May 11, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA; Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 50.

<sup>141</sup> Meeting at the Foreign Office, PWD, May 28, 1943, PRO, FO 916/531, TNA; FO to Bern, no. 1910, May 17, 1943, PRO, WO 193/355, TNA; Lochner, *The Goebbels Diaries*, 382; Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 50.

<sup>142</sup> Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 297.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

compromise between Churchill and Roosevelt's plans for the defeat of Germany scheduled the 1943 attack of Italy and an assault on German forces in mainland Europe in 1944.<sup>144</sup> As a result, the European and North African theatres of war the British and United States' armies "fought as one," unlike in any other theatre.<sup>145</sup> The success of the American forces in North Africa demonstrated their vital contribution to the Allied war effort, fully integrating them into the conflict and, with the African threats completed, creating the European front. As American forces prepared for the fight in Europe, the United States' prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany became real. As the American war effort "grew larger in relation to that of the British," they became a contending power within the Allies, making their involvement in the shackling reprisals not only obvious, but essential as well.<sup>146</sup> The capture of German soldiers in North Africa substantially increased the United States' interest in the shackling reprisals as well.

In the fall of 1942 Canada held the majority of German prisoners of war among the Allies, but the defeat of Germany in North Africa resulted with the majority of the Allies' German prisoners of war held in the United States. The captured German Afrika Korps, numbering at about 130,000, were sent to the United States.<sup>147</sup> With this vast

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<sup>144</sup> Greg Kennedy, "Anglo-American Diplomatic Relations, 1939-1945," in *War and Diplomacy*, Andrew Dorman, ed. (Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 52.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>147</sup> Arnold P. Krammer, "When the "Afrika Korps" Came to Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (January 1977): 248. Ian Stanley Ord Playfair and C. J. Molony, *The Mediterranean and Middle East: The Destruction of the Axis Forces in Africa* (H.M. Stationery Office, 1966), 460; Robert Doyle, *The Enemy in our Hands: America's Treatment of Prisoners of War from the Revolution to the War*



influx of prisoners of war, the United States jumped ahead of the other Allies in terms of the number of German prisoners of war held. This sudden change in relative numbers of German prisoners of war, the United States' importance in prisoner of war diplomacy with Germany increased. Combined with its increased military importance in the European/North African Theatres, the prisoner of war increase made the United States even more of a contending political power among the Allies.<sup>148</sup> Roosevelt's interest in keeping Germany true to the Geneva Convention and his increased influence in Europe made the shackling reprisals an even greater concern.

The increased number of German prisoners of war in Allied hands did little to sway Hitler. At the end of June, the Swiss government reported that Hitler personally insisted on maintaining the shackling of Allied prisoners of war despite the frequent arguments against such a measure.<sup>149</sup> A stalemate ensued, as neither the Allies nor Germany was willing to compromise any further on their positions. Late in July, Churchill suggested threatening Germany with a statement declaring that

A careful record will be kept of the total number of man-days on which British and Canadian prisoners are chained, and that [the Allies] will require double this number of man-days to be served in chains by the Officer Corps of the German Army after the defeat and surrender of Germany has been achieved.<sup>150</sup>

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*on Terror* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 179; Matthias Reiss, "The Importance of Being Men: The Afrika-Korps in American Captivity," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 23.

<sup>148</sup> Kennedy, "Anglo-American Diplomatic Relations, 1939-1945," 44.

<sup>149</sup> Bern to FO, no. 3081, June 25, 1943, PRO, WO 193/355, TNA; Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 51.

<sup>150</sup> Note by the prime minister, W.P. (43) 348, July 30, 1943, PRO, CAB 66/39, TNA.

Although Churchill's position would have been supported by the North African victory and the July 10, 1943 invasion of Sicily, his decision was not supported by his own government because of the knowledge that shackling was largely symbolic and ceased to be a hardship on Allied prisoners of war.<sup>151</sup> The War Office, reflecting the Swiss and Allied prisoner of war position, acknowledged that such a threat might cause Germany to resume a more stringent policy on shackling. Unless Germany bowed to the threat, it was evident that harsher measures and "the effect on men who have been subject to this inhuman measure since October 1942 and the consequent reaction on public opinion here and in the dominions might well be serious."<sup>152</sup> Finally, in mid-September a comprehensive report on the state of Allied prisoners of war arrived that confirmed the reasonability of the current inaction.<sup>153</sup> Because the prisoners of war affected by the shackling order were being treated well, the Allies would not take offensive action.

In August, the Swiss government provided the belligerents with a new initiative for ending the shackling crisis, believing that the time had come for such a move. In an "unofficial suggestion" to the German Foreign Office, the Marcel Pilet-Golaz, Swiss ambassador at Berlin, discussed how ending shackling would positively affect the

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<sup>151</sup> Brief for the secretary of state for war on shackling of POWs, August 2, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> At the time of the report, 4,128 prisoners were being shackled. The prisoners had no complaints or demands for the Swiss inspectors and asked that, because their current treatment was bearable, the matter to be treated with discretion so that the German authorities did not take harsher measures. extract from conclusions of 109<sup>th</sup> War Cabinet Meeting, August 2, 1943, PRO, PREM 3/363/2, TNA; Bern to FO, no. 4379, September 14, 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA.

treatment of both sides' prisoners of war and facilitate exchange negotiations.<sup>154</sup> In order to do so, the Germans did not need to formally declare their moves and could instead have the Swiss minister report the cessation of shackling to the Allies.<sup>155</sup> The German foreign ministers favored this suggestion, but held out over the possible issue of Britain and Canada tying the hands of German prisoners of war.<sup>156</sup> Britain sent a request that the shackling be carried out by rotation as alleviation for the prisoners of war affected while Germany considered the Swiss proposal, but it was denied.<sup>157</sup> However, late in October the first successful mutual exchange of seriously wounded and sick prisoners of war took place with the exchange of 5,765 German and 5,195 British prisoners of war.<sup>158</sup> With the success of the exchange, the German government decided at last on the matter of the shackling crisis. On November 22, 1943, the Germans agreed to unshackle Allied prisoners of war on terms that the decision was given a low profile and that they would not formally rescind the original order.<sup>159</sup> Fearing that Germany may decide to resume

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<sup>154</sup> MacKenzie, "Shackling," 93.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Berne to London, February 17, 21, 1943, PRO WO 32/10719, TNA; April 20, 1943, CAB 65/34 TNA.

<sup>157</sup> Because of the symbolic nature of shackling, the proposed method of shackling by rotation would have benefited prisoners of war little or not at all. Bern to FO, no. 3783, August 6, 1943, PRO, WO 193/355, TNA; Bern to FO, no. 3894, August 16, 1943, PRO, WO 193/355, TNA.

<sup>158</sup> Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 52; MacKenzie, "Shackling," 94.

<sup>159</sup> Bern to FO, no. 5621, November 23, 1943, PRO, WO 193/355, TNA; Bern to FO, no. 6100, December 20, 1943 and Bern to FO, no. 6220, 24 December 1943, PRO, WO 32/10719, TNA.

shackling, the Allies acquiesced and did not give the issue any more publicity.<sup>160</sup>

Without a great deal of publicity, the matter of the shackling reprisals faded.

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<sup>160</sup> Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 52.

## Conclusion

The quiet resolution of the shackling reprisals contrasted the ostentatious manner that they had begun in October 1942, with the loud declarations and threats between heads of states. This in itself confirmed that the shackling reprisals were less about the matter of shackling prisoners of war than it was a power struggle between Britain and Germany, and even more so between Churchill and Hitler. For Hitler and Churchill, the matter of their prisoners of war seems to have come in second to national pride, meaning that “approximately 4,000 British POWs had to endure being manacled for more than a year.”<sup>161</sup> The importance of proper treatment for prisoners of war and the upholding of the Geneva Convention and international diplomacy during the war were a higher priority for Mackenzie King and Roosevelt, although neither leader nor nation could claim complete selflessness of political and wartime aims. Altogether, concern for the well-being of prisoners of war was superseded by the greater wartime aims and power struggles. Once the Allied shackling of prisoners of war ceased at the end of 1942, the conflict among the United States, Britain, and Canada decreased substantially. Although the shackling policy contention’s importance lessened in comparison to greater wartime objectives, the growing number of Allied soldiers in German hands ensured Britain, Canada, and the United States’ increased interest in the diplomatic relations of 1943. Prisoners of war were best represented by the Protecting Power, Switzerland, whose

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

interest in maintaining the Geneva Convention was not hindered by one leaders' individual mindset, as was especially the case for Britain and Germany.<sup>162</sup>

For the United States, the shackling reprisals signified the type of prisoner of war diplomacy that may be in their future while at war with Germany. The nature of Allied relations with Germany from 1942-43 would undoubtedly influence future relations during the war for the United States as it increased its presence and involvement specifically in the North African and European Theatres. Roosevelt would have had to view the shackling crisis as a precedent of prisoner of war diplomacy for the United States as the nation became increasingly prominent in the war. Much like the status of the United States in entering the war, its role in the shackling reprisals was very individualistic and subdued. As a non-belligerent in the shackling reprisals, the United States was able to usher Britain and Canada as they sought to resolve the issue. Britain and Canada's roles in the shackling reprisals were heavily influenced on individual action, as evident from the Mackenzie King-Churchill relationship dynamics in 1942. Prisoner of war diplomacy between the United States, Britain, and Canada during the shackling reprisals reflected the individual nations' relationship dynamics, individual concerns, and leaders' personal policies. Had the international precedents outlined in international regulations been utilized, at least the inter-Allied conflict could have been avoided during the shackling incident.

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<sup>162</sup> "To my mind, this shows fear by German that the war is nearing its end and the extra risks of reprisal' also of a certain power which the Generals gained over Hitler." Diaries, Dec. 1, 1943: page 2, LAC.

The degree to which Britain, Canada, and the United States engaged in prisoner of war diplomacy during the shackling reprisals reflected the relationships between governments and that of each government with the Allied war effort at the time. At the head of diplomatic relations with Germany through the Protecting Power, Churchill and Britain assumed a sole leadership role in October 1942 that it was reluctant to give up, especially to its dominion Canadian government under Mackenzie King. The battle of wills that ensued over the method of ending the shackling reprisals was as representative of Britain and Canada's greater relationship as it was of Mackenzie King and Churchill's personal/political relationship. The same can be said of Roosevelt and the United States, for whom the shackling reprisals represented the first prisoner of war crisis with Germany during the Second World War. The United States was not directly involved except for the possibilities that the shackling reprisals represented for the future of relations with Germany, which dictated Roosevelt's removal from the situation. In addition, as the newcomer to the Allies, the United States has little interest in interfering in the British-Canadian-German situation unless it directly involved them. Although the United States remained a side-line player during the diplomacy of the shackling reprisals, their newness to the war effort as a whole must be considered, after which the significant of their role is revealed. The triumvirate of Allies involved in the shackling reprisals had varying degrees of influence and concern for the prisoner of war diplomacy, reflecting the complexity of prisoner of war policy in Allied countries and its reliance on individual leaders and nations.

On August 12, 1949, the Convention (III) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War established an updated international protocol for the treatment of prisoner of war. Among the updates to the 1929 convention, the protocol on the humane treatment of prisoners of war was revised to state:

Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention. In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest. Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against prisoners of war are prohibited.<sup>163</sup>

The shackling reprisals represented one of the many considerations that led to the revision of international prisoner of war policy and diplomatic regulations at the 1949 Geneva Convention. The interplay of diplomacy between the United States, Britain, and Canada from 1942-43 signified the reliance of prisoner of war policy on the individual interests, leaders, and governments of each nation during the Second World War. The treatment of prisoners of war during the shackling reprisals was subject to national ideals and concerns, reflecting the frailty and dependence of prisoners of war and prisoner of war policy on individuals, individual nations, and international diplomacy. Although protection existed in the form of the international regulations in the 1929 Geneva

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<sup>163</sup> Article 13, 1949 Geneva Convention (III) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of war; August 12, 1949, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.icrc.org>.



Convention, the shackling reprisals demonstrate the weakness of the system in its reliance on individual cooperation.

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