

“WE HAVE IMPROVISED”: THE ANGLO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE AND AXIS
PRISONERS OF WAR IN WORLD WAR II

by

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(Under the Direction of John H. Morrow, Jr.)

ABSTRACT

This project assesses the dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship with regard to prisoner of war policies in Western Europe during the Second World War. Through an examination of government documents, particularly those of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, this study determines that American and British policies developed disparate trajectories as the war continued. Though Britain and the United States established a relationship of informality and generosity in the early stages of the war, public concern encouraged American policy-makers to embrace self-serving policies of prisoner detention, as Britain grew increasingly reliant upon American assistance. British attempts to motivate American aid through exhibitions of their harrowing experiences as a European state lost efficacy as the war continued. Ultimately, the culture of informality and integration established early in the war, contributed to the friction between the United States and the British Commonwealth in the late stages of the conflict.

INDEX WORDS: Diplomacy, World War II, prisoners of war, Anglo-American alliance, Great Britain, United States, policy, Axis, Allies, culture of informality, experience, Combined Chiefs of Staff, German prisoners, Italian prisoners

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INTRODUCTION

“No American will think it wrong of me if I proclaim that to have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy.”¹ When Prime Minister Winston Churchill learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent American declaration of war, he felt deeply relieved. In December 1941, Britain gained a powerful ally with whom it could share the burdens and the responsibilities of waging war. Churchill made no effort to disguise his elation, nor his determination that the two states share an intimate relationship throughout the conflict. In a speech to the United States Congress on December 26, 1941, he proclaimed his “hope and faith, sure and inviolate, that in the days to come the British and American peoples will for their own safety and for the good of all walk together side by side in majesty, in justice, and in peace.”² In the dramatic fashion characteristic of the Prime Minister, Churchill articulated his conviction that Britain and the United States work concertedly as they strategized for war. Allied military and civil policy-makers attempted to fulfill this ambition with varying degrees of success over the course of the war in a variety of endeavors, including combined military operations, foreign diplomacy, trade, and development of a post-war world order. Historians treat Anglo-American efforts with varying approaches, and scholars of the Anglo-American relationship fall into one of three rather distinct camps.

¹Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), 606.

² *Ibid.*, 672.

The first of these groups of historians has been termed the “Evangelical” camp.³ Championed by Winston Churchill, this approach to Anglo-American relations revolves around a sense of mission, and as evidenced above, “Evangelical” scholars characteristically emphasize the cultural and sentimental aspects of the relationship. This view of the Anglo-American relationship understands the alliance in World War II as the coming together of a fraternity of English-speaking people of the same stock. Often, Evangelical historians write to emphasize the value and importance of continuing the alliance.⁴

The second camp of historians writing about Anglo-American history take a ‘Functionalist’ approach to studying the alliance.⁵ These historians are less concerned with the common culture of the United States and Great Britain, and convinced that instead common interests motivated the alliance. Many historians view the Anglo-American relationship first in opposition to Germany, and then to the USSR, and always as an alliance that requires nurture and negotiation, both during the Second World War and after it. Their histories highlight both the harmonious and the antagonistic elements of Anglo-American relations.⁶ The “Terminal” approach to the Anglo-American relationship represents a third group of scholars who believe the “special relationship” between Britain and the United States is mythical. This approach suggests the unique

³ Alex Danchev, “On Specialness,” *International Affairs* 72, No. 4, (1996): 738-740; John Baylis, ed. *Anglo-American Relations Since 1939: The Enduring Alliance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 8-14.

⁴ John Baylis describes these historians in *Anglo-American Relations*, 9-10, as does Alex Danchev in “On Specialness.” Historians that fall into this camp include Winston Churchill and H.C. Allen, particularly in his book *The Anglo-American Relationship since 1783* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1959).

⁵ Danchev, “On Specialness,” 738-740; Baylis, ed. *Anglo-American Relations Since 1939: The Enduring Alliance*, 8-14.

⁶ Examples of functionalist representations of the Anglo-American relationship include: Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the war against Japan, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Reynolds, David. *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

Anglo-American relationship as understood by Britons is a rhetorical construct, fostering a damaging national illusion. Scholar John Dickie explained that this took place following the Second World War in Britain, as a result of an inability to accept the reality of British status as a medium European power.⁷

Within these broad categories of historical approaches to assessing the Anglo-American relationship, several studies closely examined the decision-making process between the British and Americans under the stress and chaos of the wartime atmosphere. In particular, Alex Danchev wrote extensively about wartime Anglo-American relations and contributed extensively to the literature on the topic. Danchev's biography of Field Marshal Sir John Dill marked one of his first forays into the field of Anglo-American relations. Danchev admitted that within the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), Americans and Britons alike remained suspicious of the other's self-interest throughout the war. Individual commitments to the success of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, such as that of Dill, as well as personal relationships between British and American diplomats kept the CCS functioning. With regard to the Anglo-American alliance, Danchev explained that despite British (particularly Churchill's) attempts to define the relationship as "equal," by the end of the war, the alliance became more of a client-patron relationship controlled by the Americans.⁸

Despite this assertion about the nature of the Anglo-American relationship, Danchev later qualified his argument. In his essay, "Being Friends: The Combined Chiefs

⁷ Danchev, "On Specialness," 738-740; Baylis, ed. *Anglo-American Relations Since 1939: The Enduring Alliance*, 8-14 describe this scholarship, and the history that most thoroughly embodies this approach is John Dickie, *"Special" No More: Anglo-American Relations, Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994).

⁸ Alex Danchev, *Very Special Relationship: Field Marshal Sir John Dill and the Anglo-American Alliance 1941-1944* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1986).

of Staff and the Making of Allied Strategy in the Second World War,” Danchev argued that although the British formula for successful bargaining produced diminishing returns as the war progressed, the history of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was not the history of “an engorged Uncle Sam overpowering a debilitated John Bull.”⁹ Instead, he found that the United States was forced in many ways to react to a very well coordinated Great Britain.

In addition to Alex Danchev, other scholars contribute influential insight to the power struggle between the British and the Americans in the twentieth century. David Reynolds argued that British financial reliance on America and consequential US leverage over the British dominated Anglo-American relations in the 1940s. Although Britain maintained military superiority over the United States at the outset of the conflict and held dominance in military matters, the United States quickly found its footing and challenged British military authority.¹⁰

Although Danchev studied the intricacies of the power struggles between the British and American policymakers, he also remarked on the general character of the relationship and considered it a strong alliance. He attributed the strength of the relationship to the common language shared by the British and Americans. Though diplomats used this common language to aggravate one another, it was precisely this informality and frustration that bound them together in a stronger alliance.¹¹ Another

⁹ Alex Danchev, “Being Friends: The Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Making of Allied Strategy in the Second World War” In *War, Strategy, and International Politics: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard*, ed. by Lawrence Freedman, Paul Hayes, and Robert O’Neill. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 208.

¹⁰ David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*. 2nd ed. Harlow, (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000).

¹¹ Alex Danchev, “God Knows: Civil-Military Relations with Allies.” In, *On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations*, 46-73. (London: Macmillian Press, 1998).

explanation for the strength of the wartime relationship between the British and the Americans is that Churchill's approach to the United States' foreign policy contrasted dramatically with his predecessor Neville Chamberlain's more distant and reserved style of diplomacy. Consequently, the relationship seemed more unique than it may have otherwise been perceived.¹²

David Reynolds has also commented on the character of the relationship, seeking specifically to bridge the gap between studies on Anglo-American relations that focus either on the 1930s exclusively or the period between 1941-1945 with his book, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-41: A Study in Competitive Cooperation*. He explained that early writing about the two states was prone to sentimentality, but that more recent writing focused too exclusively on the hostility between Britain and the United States. Instead, he explored the areas of agreement and of difference between the two nations, investigating not only bilateral, Anglo-American diplomacy, but also domestic pressures and partisan politics that influenced international diplomacy. He argued that Anglo-American co-operation rested not on cultural unity, as Churchill claimed, but on certain similar geopolitical and ideological interests that assumed great importance in 1941.¹³

Mark Stoler took an optimistic approach to the Anglo-American alliance, relying heavily on comparative analysis in the process. In his assessment of Anglo-American efficacy, Stoler often compared it to the blunders and lack of communication within the Axis Alliance, and suggested that by contrast, the Allied alliance was incredibly strong

¹² Alex Danchev, "On Specialness."

¹³ David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-41: A Study in Competitive Cooperation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

and effective.¹⁴ In contrast to Stoler's generally optimistic characterization of Anglo-American relations, Christopher Thorne articulated a more contentious Allied relationship. Christopher Thorne investigated the character of Anglo-American cooperation in Southeast Asia and Australia over the course of American involvement in the war. He assessed the broadest political and strategic issues of the war and concludes that the greatest differences between the two allies revolved around colonialism: where Churchill worked to sustain the British Empire, President Franklin Roosevelt hoped that an Allied victory would mean an end to colonialism. Thorne used private diaries and internal memoranda of Anglo-phobic American diplomats to illustrate the very real mistrust between the two nations, and suggests that even where the two nations held common interests and goals, skeptical diplomats created more trouble than actually existed, particularly with regard to China. He did, however, point out that when absolutely necessary, the two states could compromise and work together effectively.¹⁵

Despite these valuable discussions regarding the nature of the Anglo-American relationship during the Second World War, room for additional scholarship exists, particularly in the under-represented field of prisoner of war studies. Approximately thirty-five million military personnel spent time in enemy hands between 1939 and 1945, and the range of treatments to which they were exposed varied enormously.¹⁶ Conditions on the Eastern Front and in the Pacific were deadly, owing to both a scarcity of resources

¹⁴ Mark Stoler, *Allies in War: Britain and America Against the Axis Powers, 1940-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005).

¹⁵ Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

¹⁶ S.P. MacKenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II." *The Journal of Modern History* 66, No. 3. (September 1994): 487; Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, "Prisoners of War in the Second World War: An Overview" in *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*. ed. Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich. (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 1. In both cases the authors admit the difficulty of pinpointing the exact number of prisoners, as not all belligerents kept accurate records.

and disparate moral codes and ideologies. In the West, however, belligerents provided safer conditions for war prisoners, often shouldering political, economic and social burdens to do so. When the Americans joined the war effort in alliance with the British, they committed not only to fighting the Axis in North Africa and Western Europe, but also to sharing this burden of Axis prisoner accommodation in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1929. The complex relationship that emerged between Great Britain and the United States with regard to the maintenance and exchange of prisoners over the course of the Second World War evolved as each attempted to cater to domestic public opinion, adhere to the constraints of the Geneva Convention, maintain economic viability, and of course, win the war.

Because the United States served as Britain's protecting power from the outset of the war, the United Kingdom and the United States began discussing issues of war prisoners as early as September 1939. As a protecting power, the United States oversaw British interests in enemy territory as well as assessed Axis treatment of British prisoners of war.¹⁷ The two powers had recognizably similar ideologies, governing policies and goals from the outset of the conflict, evidenced when Churchill and Roosevelt met off the coast of Newfoundland for the Atlantic Conference in August 1941. The subsequent formation of the Atlantic Charter in August 1941, demonstrated that despite disparate worldviews, Britain and the United States possessed the ability to cooperate and compromise to achieve common goals. When the United States entered the war as a belligerent in December 1941, the two nations officially committed to an integrated and collaborative approach to defeating the Axis powers.

¹⁷ Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

The British and the Americans established the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) at the Arcadia Conference in December 1941 after the attack at Pearl Harbor. The CCS was a network of combined Anglo-American committees with specialized purposes, such as transportation, planning and intelligence. These committees answered to the Combined Chiefs of Staff themselves, which were the American Joint Chiefs of Staff and the British Chiefs of Staff together. Because the CCS operated from Washington, the British appointed representatives to live permanently in Washington and represent the views of the British Chiefs of Staff over the course of the war.¹⁸ The Combined Chiefs of Staff developed and adopted strategies that determined the course of Allied operations throughout the war.¹⁹ In addition to discussing military operations, the Combined Chiefs of Staff dealt with recurring issues surrounding Allied policies of prisoner of war detention.

Although these policies greatly affected both civil and military operations and projects, both social and military historians often overlook issues of prisoners of war. Military historians tend to examine the victors in battle, turning to prisoners only when they present strategic importance, often in the form of intelligence. Also, prisoner status as military personnel causes their history to slip through the cracks of social examinations of military conflicts.²⁰

The first histories about the treatment of Axis prisoners of war in World War II used personal survival stories and captive soldiers' memoirs to convey the experience of wartime captivity. Scholars taking this approach were interested in the psychology of

¹⁸ Alex Danchev, ed., *Establishing the Anglo-American Alliance: The Second World War Diaries of Brigadier Vivian Dykes*. (London: Brassey's [UK], 1990), 6.

¹⁹ Forrest C. Pogue, *European Theater of Operations: The Supreme Command* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), 36.

²⁰ Moore and Fedorowich, "Prisoners of War in the Second World War: An Overview," 1.

wartime captivity, the dynamics of camp life, and the reaction of local populations to the presence of enemies in such close proximity.²¹ More recently, scholars such as Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich have launched nuanced investigations into the field, examining not only memoirs about Axis prisoners subjected to captivity in Allied territory, but also the politics and the economics of maintaining prisoners of war while simultaneously waging total war.²² Bob Moore traced the changes within British policies over the course of the war and also observed disparate treatment of the Italian and German prisoners of war, due to prejudice within the government as well as in the general public.²³ Moore's work opened many doors in the field, including an examination of British policies in collaboration with those in America.

Other historians examined prisoner of war diplomacy between the Allies and Germany. Neville Wylie investigated exclusively Anglo-German diplomatic relations and the environments in which those two belligerents made their decisions about prisoners, while Arieh J. Kochavi also included American diplomacy in his assessment of prisoner of war policy negotiations.²⁴ While Kochavi discussed the dynamics between the Anglo-American alliance and Germany, he only tangentially mentioned the characteristics of the Anglo-American relationship itself when he commented that while London and

²¹ Examples of this kind of history include Matthew Sullivan, *Thresholds of Peace: Four Hundred Thousand German Prisoners and the People of Britain 1944-1948* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979); Allen V. Koop, *Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in A New England Village* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988); Richard P. Walker, *The Lone Star and the Swastika: Prisoners of War In Texas* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 2001). Jason Morgan Ward, "'Nazis Hoe Cotton': Planters, POWs, and the Future of Farm Labor in the Deep South" *Agricultural History* 81, No. 4, (2007).

²² Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich. *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War 1940-1947* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

²³ Bob Moore, "Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy Toward German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War." *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, No. 1 (January 1997); Bob Moore, "Unwanted Guests in Troubled Times: German Prisoners of War in The Union of South Africa, 1942-1943." *Journal of Military History* 70, No. 1 (January 2006).

²⁴ Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy*; Kochavi, Arieh J. *Confronting Captivity: Britain and the United States and Their POWs in Nazi Germany* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

Washington maintained a united front in terms of exchanging seriously wounded and ill prisoners, they disagreed considerably with regard to the exchange of long-term prisoners. This discord stemmed from the significant public pressure facing British authorities to repatriate British captives in Germany, as their prisoners of war had been in captivity much longer than American war prisoners.

Kochavi's book assessed the dynamics of the relationship between the Allies and their enemies, but ignored the evolution of diplomacy within the Anglo-American alliance regarding prisoner of war policies. The resulting gap in the scholarship is significant to Anglo-American relations due to the unique nature of prisoner of war politics. Detaining war prisoners lacks the glory and heroics afforded to military victories. Unlike money spent on planes and tanks, detention of war prisoners offers minimal direct return, particularly in the case of World War II, when the Allies deemed many of the German prisoners to be ideologically "rabid" Nazis and felt compelled to detain them in isolated camps. The allocation of responsibility for Axis prisoners captured in combined Allied military operations offers a nuanced window through which to study Anglo-American relations. It reveals unexpected discord within the Anglo-American relationship, and deviates from the historiography because it was the informal, friendly nature of the alliance that bred the greatest tension in the relationship. At the height of cooperative Allied military operations, the British and the Americans experienced the greatest friction over issues of Axis war prisoners. Questions regarding Axis war prisoners affected the Anglo-American relationship in unique ways, and elicited remarkable behavior from both sides of the Atlantic.

Conversations about prisoners of war are particularly meaningful because they blur the lines between military and civilian policy-makers, and the scholarship about these groups. Detaining prisoners of war requires collective effort on behalf of the civilian government and the military, as hosting the enemy on the home front can be a complex task, even involving the requisitioning of private buildings for the purpose of detaining prisoners. The policies established regarding war prisoners represent not just the ideas of an isolated group of policy-makers, but rather a concerted effort on behalf of large sections of national bureaucracies. The ways in which Americans and Britons thought about and reacted to issues of Axis prisoners of war offers a nuanced perspective of the Anglo-American relationship during the Second World War.

CHAPTER ONE

“Friendly and Personal”

“I have met very few Nazis, 25 years or older, that the world would not be better off without. They are vicious, dangerous criminals, on whom welfare and conversion efforts are wasted. The failure to meet the challenge of that group is the major weakness of the British system. The feeble efforts to counteract the drive of these able, unscrupulous agents are pitiful by contrast.”¹ Following the American entrance into the Second World War, an American official visiting British prison camps made this report in order to determine how best to develop and maintain American camps. Needless to say, Allied nations often felt less than enthusiastic about the prospect of detaining enemy prisoners on the home front. The cynical attitude reflected in this quote indicates that for some, the burden of detaining enemy troops seemed ill fated. Echoing these sentiments, Winston Churchill deemed Axis nations “wicked” in their efforts against the Allies.² Despite British and American frustration and even resentment with the project, the two states worked together to detain hundreds of thousands of Axis prisoners after American entrance into the war.

Perhaps begrudgingly, but certainly faithfully, the British government took measures to harbor Axis prisoners from the war’s outset in September 1939. The Geneva

¹ John Barwick, “Prisoners of War Memorandum Submitted to Lieutenant Commander Albrecht USNR,” May 4, 1942. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No. 1411, Folder 254: Great Britain, National Records and Archives Administration (NARA). In this report, Barwick distinguishes Nazi party members from German soldiers.

² Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), ix.

Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, commonly referred to as the Geneva Convention, defined the role and obligations of a capturing power. This international agreement held Britain and the other belligerents fighting in Western Europe accountable for their treatment of enemy prisoners of war.³ Signed into existence in 1929, this document contained ninety-seven articles aimed at protecting the interests of captive combatants. The Convention largely served its purpose among the belligerents in Western Europe, as the threat of retaliation encouraged both Britain and the United States to adhere to the stipulations of the Convention over the course of the war.

In the early stages of the conflict, Britain held few Axis prisoners, but depended on the United States to serve as its protecting power, inspecting the German camps and reporting back to Britain regarding the conditions of British war prisoners. In order to visit these camps, American embassy personnel needed permits, but once attained, they permitted full access to prison camps anywhere in the Reich, including the hospitals and affiliated work camps. Although the Germans created difficulties and inconveniences for American officials with regard to the issuing of permits, as a protecting power the US personnel were able to speak directly with British prisoners, without the presence of German camp representatives. Thus, their reports were as authentic as possible and provided the British with important information about the status of their captive troops.⁴ Even as a neutral power, the United States became familiar with the British war prisoner system, specifically with British concerns over their troops in captivity abroad, and the imprisonment of enemy troops in the United Kingdom.

³ Japan did not sign the Geneva Convention and therefore did not adhere to the same standards of treatment to their prisoners of war in the Pacific. As such, the story of Anglo-American relations and prisoners of war in the Pacific is a markedly different story and deserves singular attention. This study examines Italian and German prisoners of war exclusively.

⁴ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 17-18.

America's role as Britain's protecting power materialized after enduring twenty-one years of a strained relationship with Britain since their previous alliance in World War I. After the conclusion of the First World War, popular opinion in America reprimanded the British as manipulative and sly. The majority of Americans regretted entering World War I at all, and held Britain accountable for coercing their efforts.⁵ For their part, British politicians spent the interwar years feeling frustrated with America for what they termed the "betrayal" of the League of Nations in 1919-20. This sense of frustration partly stemmed from to the British sentiment surrounding their conception of a community of 'English-Speaking Peoples.'⁶ Despite frustrations with the United States and its commitment to isolationism, British leaders acknowledged the undeniable potential of the United States as a powerful ally. British politicians believed they could benefit from American assistance in several ways, primarily in the form of financial and material aid. British politicians hoped that in the event of another difficult war erupting in Europe, American help would come sooner than it did in the First World War. Much of the language British diplomats used during the interwar period conveyed a sense of paternalism toward American policies. Many British politicians viewed contemporary Anglo-American relations as an extension of the colonial relationship.⁷

These sentiments played a powerful role in the Anglo-American relationship during the beginning stages of the Second World War. As a neutral power, the United States' first maintained their non-interventionist policies, and worked with Britain solely as their protecting power in issues of prisoners of war. As the war progressed, the US

⁵ Stoler, *Allies in War*, 3.

⁶ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, 10, 12. Reynolds suggests that this mentality was not limited to Churchill, but that it permeated all of British diplomacy, most notably in the behavior of Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador in Washington from 1929-1939.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

moved decisively away from these isolationist principles, and took a vested interest in Allied materiel, as evidenced by the implementation of the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941. Though the United States still remained a technically neutral state, their bonds with the United Kingdom grew stronger when American and British diplomats met in August 1941 for the Atlantic Conference and the subsequent Atlantic Charter. At the meeting, the two states agreed to a post-war settlement based upon a series of fundamental principles, to which all of the Allies later agreed. Though Roosevelt, Churchill, and their diplomats agreed upon a wide range of goals, disparities remained between the American and the British vision of the post-world order. The discussion focused primarily on post-war territorial agreements, post-war trade policy, as well as the future of colonial empires, and combined military strategy in the event of US entry into war.⁸

At this point, the Anglo-American relationship became more tangible. The chaos of war and the early victories of fascist states in Europe highlighted the similarities between the British and American nations. The severity of the circumstances convinced these two states, the U.S. in particular, that cooperation was necessary to shape the future of the international order. This coordination paved the way for a congruous alliance when the United States joined Britain in war against the Axis Powers in December 1941.

Immediately upon the US declaration of war on Japan, Prime Minister Churchill set to work planning a meeting between Britain and the United States. Code-named ARCADIA, this Anglo-American summit was held in Washington and served to establish an important foundation for the wartime alliance. At this summit meeting the two powers instituted the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) to merge American and British Chiefs of

⁸ Stoler, *Allies in War*, 27.

Staff in order to direct their combined forces and to plan a global strategy.⁹ In order to run the organization more effectively, the United States rearranged their military advisory structure so that it more closely paralleled that of Great Britain. Thus, in February 1942, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) replaced the Joint Board (JB) previously in place.¹⁰ The Combined Chiefs of Staff served as a vital link between the United States and Britain over the course of the war even as political and military circumstances evolved. Churchill went so far as to address the Combined Chiefs of Staff as “the most powerful group in the world.”¹¹

The US members of the CCS included General George C. Marshall representing the US Army, Henry H. Arnold as Air Chief and Admiral Ernest J. King as the Commander in Chief of the US Fleet.¹² Admiral William D. Leahy held the position of Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, and worked as the link between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their civilian superior, President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This group of men worked in collaboration with their British counterparts to determine extensive national policies and strategies. The British Chiefs of Staff included Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as well as Charles Portal, serving as Chief of the Air Staff, and Dudley Pound as First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy from 1939-1943, succeeded by Admiral Andrew Cunningham from 1943-1946. The British Joint Staff Mission (JSM) represented these men in Washington throughout the war. Headed by Field Marshal Sir

⁹ Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 65.

¹⁰ The Arcadia Conference gave formal definition to the terms “JOINT,” as involving two or more services of the same nation and “COMBINED” as referring to organizations of two or more nations. “Origin of Joint Concepts,” <http://www.jcs.mil/>.

¹¹ As remembered by Admiral Leahy in his memoirs on May 12, 1943: William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, Based on his Notes and Diaries Made at the Time*. (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950), 158.

¹² Admiral Harold Stark served as the US Naval Chief of the Combined Chiefs of Staff for one month, until Admiral King replaced him in March of 1942.

John Dill, the JSM included a British Admiralty Delegation, British Army Staff representative, and a Royal Air Force Delegation. Conversations between these delegations and their American counterparts featured countless debates, but these men also collaborated over the course of the war to make decisions regarding military, social and economic strategies with wide-reaching implications, including questions of responsibility for the detention of war prisoners.

Prior to the American entrance into the war, however, all conversations about war prisoner policy took place within the British Government. At the outbreak of war, Whitehall delegated the policy decisions regarding all British Commonwealth and enemy war prisoners to the War Office. On May 25, 1940, the War Office created the Directorate of Prisoners of War (DPW) to concentrate specifically on issues of war prisoners. In addition to maintaining responsibility for the administration of enemy prisoners in the United Kingdom, the directorate was also responsible for the general welfare of all British prisoners in enemy hands. For these prisoners, the directorate ensured that enemy states maintained British war prisoners' rights under the Geneva Convention. The War Office did not hold sole responsibility for questions of war prisoners, as the Foreign Office retained authority over all diplomatic contacts with Axis powers. The Foreign Office directed its own Prisoner of War Department (PWD), which worked via the protecting power, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to handle these contacts during the war.¹³ Britain dealt with significant numbers of war prisoners over the course of the war. By March of 1945, the United Kingdom's

¹³ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 18.

economy employed a total of 154,082 Italians and 66,500 Germans in a variety of sectors.¹⁴

Britain depended heavily upon the Dominion governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa to aid in the detention of prisoners. Though the Dominions began detaining Axis prisoners from mid-1940, their commitment to London's leadership was conditional. As independent signatories to the 1929 POW convention, the Dominion governments were individually accountable for their treatment of enemy prisoners of war and resisted London's policies when inconvenient.¹⁵

In the aftermath of the hapless Anglo-French Norwegian campaign, and the successful German invasion of France and the Low Countries in May 1940, the newly formed Churchill War Cabinet assumed a hard line on internal security. Driven by either genuine concern for the safety of the United Kingdom, or by desire to atone for recent mishaps, Whitehall exploited the press' fixation on the possibility of a "fifth column" in the United Kingdom and began taking measures to deport enemy aliens deemed dangerous. At the time, the Home Defense (Security) Executive (HD[S]E) saw fit to include Axis prisoners and enemy merchant seamen in these deportations.¹⁶ These deportations set the stage for a system of exporting Axis prisoners of war to Allied detaining powers that the United Kingdom relied upon for the rest of the war.¹⁷

¹⁴ BT168/85 "Ministry of Production Memorandum: Prisoners of War," September 30, 1945. Cited in Bob Moore, "Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy Toward German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War," 118.

¹⁵ Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy*, 5.

¹⁶ The HD(S)E Files are still kept secret and are unavailable to the public, presumably because of modern governmental sensitivity regarding civilian internment programs. Bob Moore, "Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy Toward German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War," 120.

¹⁷ It should be noted here that Axis prisoners of war were not deported from the United Kingdom at the same rate. Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War 1940-1947*. This book convincingly argues that the Germans were deported significantly more often than Italians.

Although the War Office and the Foreign Office largely worked together effectively, looming public criticism occasionally created disputes between the two offices. As the war continued into 1941, fissures emerged between various organizations as the Admiralty and the Air Ministry looked after the interests of their own troops who had fallen into enemy hands. The Colonial Office and the Indian Office behaved similarly, and as Dominion governments began to demand a larger role in the creation and delegation of prisoner of war policies, the necessity for better coordination between governmental departments with regard to POW issues became evident. Thus, in 1941, the Secretary of State for War began chairing the Inter-Governmental Prisoners of War Committee, which soon changed its name to become the Imperial Prisoners of War Committee (IPWC).¹⁸ This committee facilitated coordination of the action of the government regarding matters of both Allied and Axis prisoners. Essentially, the DPW, War Office and the PWD worked under the umbrella of the IPWC, responsible for the treatment of Axis prisoners of war, both during and after the conflict.¹⁹

Circumstances forced the British to develop methods to cope with prisoners quickly, and largely on their own. In the spring of 1940, the Germans captured around 34,000 British Commonwealth troops at Dunkirk, and by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Germany held nearly 70,000 British soldiers in captivity.²⁰ This early captivity of British troops significantly affected British policies regarding prisoners of war because it drew the attention of the British public at an early point in the war.

Furthermore, while the British harbored pity for Italian war prisoners, the Germans inspired fear and anxiety.

¹⁸ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 19.

¹⁹ Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, 17.

²⁰ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 3.

The first real test of British prisoner of war policy came in September 1940, when British General Sir Archibald Wavell orchestrated unexpected military successes against the Italians in Libya. Despite the numerical superiority of the Italians, their attack on British positions on the Egyptian frontier resulted in a comprehensive British victory. The British advanced a total of 550 miles, and captured 133,000 Italian prisoners by early February 1941.²¹ This success was followed by a series of additional British successes in North Africa that overwhelmed the underprepared Italian military.

The military campaign stretched resources thin, and the British lacked provisions to care for the captured prisoners. Wavell and the British government became desperate for space to intern the war prisoners. Though India and the Dominions had agreed in the spring of 1940 to accept war prisoners from the United Kingdom, the situation in North Africa required more immediate action. Desperate pleas were made to Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius and South Africa. The difficulties of transportation in North Africa complicated the circumstances further, and Kenya served as an important detaining location for Italian prisoners. Initially, the decision to deport the Italian prisoners of war throughout the British Empire was largely due to Wavell's perceived security threat in Egypt, as well as the dire shortages of resources facing the British military.²²

From across the Atlantic, the American policymakers observed British behavior in anticipation of war. The British developed a pragmatic response to the constraints of war in the North African theater, and their efforts did not go unnoticed by the United States. In October 1941, the United States Chief of the Aliens Division, Major Karl R.

²¹ Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian Prisoners of War*, 19.

²² *Ibid.*, 20-26.

Bendetson, sent American Colonel Rigby to inspect British prison camps, as “the investigation of which might be helpful should the problem confront this government.”²³ Preparing for the potential onset of world war, the United States took interest in British prison camps beyond their duty as a protecting power, hoping their investigation would directly benefit their own strategy in the future. Bendetson gave Rigby detailed and precise instructions for his examination of British prison camps. Bendetson instructed Rigby, “It is, therefore probable that the British have devised some very effective methods of simplification. We are vitally interested in learning what these methods are. In this connection it is suggested that any available blank forms employed by the British be secured for information.”²⁴ Confident that the British had developed a successful strategy for detaining prisoners, the US Chief of Aliens Division was interested in the British process down to the forms used to sort prisoners. Arming Rigby with dozens of questions to ask the British about their systematic imprisonment of enemy troops, Major Bendetson concluded by admitting his lack of expertise and subsequent dependence on the British insight. “As you know, the Provost Marshal General’s Office has been only recently established and the subjects involved are very new to me. Whatever information you may find it convenient to obtain will be appreciated.”²⁵ By examining British policies and learning from them, Bendetson suggested his belief that Americans would be better off than if left to forge their own path.

Despite the fact the United States hosted about 425,000 Axis prisoners between 1941 and 1945, at the beginning of the conflict, no facilities existed in the United States

²³ PMGO 254, “Memorandum for Colonel William C. Rigby” from Major Karl R. Bendetson, October 13, 1941. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No. 1411, NARA.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

for housing POWs.²⁶ Prior to the arrival of prisoners, the Americans had to create and implement an administrative system to coordinate the detention of prisoners of war, establish communication systems between various branches of government, and construct the holding facilities. Neither the military nor the government undertook serious planning for these issues before 1942 and thus were forced to find solutions quickly and efficiently.²⁷ These circumstances necessitated the American reliance on British systems for guidance as illustrated in Bendetson's orders.

Similar in structure to the British government, the American government established a system of coordinating departments, largely under the jurisdiction of the War Department. Also similar to the British, the US government experienced confusion and overlapping interests among various departments concerning the operation and administration of the prisoner of war (POW) program, even after a significant restructuring of the War Department in 1942. After this restructure, the newly re-established Office of the Provost Marshal General (PMGO) reported to a new division of the War Department, the Army Service Forces (ASF), headed by General Brehon B. Somervell. The PMGO itself ballooned to contain nine divisions as American POW responsibility grew, and it also worked collaboratively with the War Department's Personnel Division (G-1), which largely planned policy throughout the US POW program. The Department of Justice maintained responsibility for all civilian internees and the State Department monitored US adherence to the Geneva Convention and served

²⁶ Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

as a liaison between the War Department and foreign representatives concerning prisoner of war treatment.²⁸

With multiple government departments involved in the administration of POW affairs, it's hardly surprising that the US Chief of Aliens Division was not the only American looking to the British for guidance in the treatment of war prisoners. Both civilians and military personnel alike recognized the necessity for Americans to rely upon British experience with implementation of war prisoner policies. When America committed to fighting the war, they relied heavily on their British allies for advice and counsel in developing the American Provost Marshal General Office and the implementation of prisoner of war camps. Prior to the United States' entry into the war, John Barwick served as a visitor to British prisoner of war camps for the World's Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association. As such, he enjoyed a close view of the Prisoners of War Department in the British War Office. He spoke German, and took time to interview German prisoners held in these camps. Upon request, Barwick submitted a "valuable" report to the US Navy, forwarded to Colonel Bryan, Assistant Provost Marshal General.²⁹

Largely, Barwick's report praised British practices. Referring to British guards as both "firm and fair," he explained British processes of prisoner treatment, intelligence, propaganda and segregation of Nazis from the rest of the captives, all the while noting the

²⁸ Ibid., 1-5.

²⁹ John L. Riheldaffer, Commander, US Navy (ret.) to Lt. Col. B.M. Bryan, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, June 12, 1942. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No.1411, Folder 254:Great Britain, NARA. Riheldaffer was so impressed with Barwick's survey of the British Prison System, he suggested that Bryan consider him for employment.

efficiency of the British system.³⁰ However, Barwick also pointed to circumstances in which the Americans could improve their own prison system. He lamented that the government left the British War Office to contend with the “pernicious system” of volunteer societies, and noted the inefficiency that followed from such circumstances.³¹ Barwick perceived the circumstances as a teacher-student situation; he genuinely believed the United States had an opportunity to both learn from and improve upon British work. He concluded his commentary on volunteer societies with the note, “I hope America can avoid this unfortunate situation by foresight.”³²

Americans sought to emulate British policies across the board with regard to detention of enemies, not just prisoners of war, but also civilian internees. In his report to Colonel Rigby, Bendetson commented “it would also be interesting to learn whether the British are observing any treaty or convention relative to the treatment of civilian internees and, if not, whether there has been any understanding reached between Germans and the British relative to standards of treatment.”³³ Six months later, after the United States entered the war, the newly appointed Chief of the Aliens Division, Brigadier General Blackshear M. Bryan, received a memorandum regarding the British Censorship of Internee Mail. In reply he commented, “The report contains such valuable information in regard to the British system of censorship of internee mail...The fact that the report was forwarded to this office for consideration is appreciated.”³⁴ Well into the

³⁰ “Prisoners of War Memorandum,” John Barwick, World’s Alliance of Young Men’s Christian Associations War Prisoners’ Aid, May 1, 1942. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No. 1411, Folder 254, Great Britain, NARA.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ PMGO 254, “Memorandum for Colonel William C. Rigby” October 13, 1941 from Major Karl R. Bendetson. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box 1411, NARA.

³⁴ SPMGA (10). “Memorandum for Chief, Counter Intelligence Group” May 11, 1942 from Lt. Col. B.M. Bryan, Chief, Aliens Division. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No. 1411, Folder 311.7- Great Britain, NARA.

spring of 1942, the United States military gratefully accepted British input with regard to issues of detaining the enemy at home.

Apparently, American inquiry paid off. By October 1942, Colonel Bryan received a letter from the Allied Force Headquarters. American Major Collman E. Yudelson addressed Bryan “to render a full report of various problems incident to the handling of prisoners of war, from a theatre.”³⁵ He continued, “It will be of interest to you to know that the British were surprised at the completeness of the coverage of the PMG regulations. They closely paralleled the approach the British had evolved after three years of labor and effort. They feel it is a fine job, to have grasped the sense of the problem with no experience upon which to base it.”³⁶ The British placed significant emphasis on experience, as evidenced by their surprise that the United States functioned so well, despite lacking the experience of the British military. The British appreciated the American efforts thus far in the war, noting that it was through mimicry of British policies that the Americans proved successful. Despite their applause for American efforts, the British did not hesitate to dole out directions and suggestions to American policymakers. With regard to the forms Americans employed in the processing of war prisoners, Yudelson explained to Bryan:

Some concern has been expressed over the inclusion of the sentence ‘No tag- No food,’ which appears on the rear of PMG [Provost Marshal General] Form #1. The British experience with regard to reprisals over alleged orders issued in the Dieppe rain [sic] indicate the extent to which the Axis will go in finding excuses to commit breaches of agreement. The presence of such a phrase would be ample excuse for reprisal. Its removal would not restrict the escorts from issuing the same warning orally. It is one of those matters that is best not committed to writing.³⁷

³⁵ Major Collman E. Yudelson, CMP to B.M. Bryan, Allied Force Headquarters, October 17, 1942. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No. 1411, Folder 383.6: England. NARA.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Yudelson continued his letter to highlight the similarities between British and American censorship policies. To conclude his letter to Bryan, Yudelson exalted the comfort of Anglo-American ties with regard to prisoner of war policies.

It has been possible to establish on a most friendly and personal basis the work relative to prisoners of war. I have been in frequent contact with Major-General E.C. Gepp, the Director of Prisoners of War, and have been able to build up very cordial relations with both him and his staff. I am confident that this close personal relationship has made infinitely easier the task of enlisting their cooperation for the future and procuring the transfer of facilities for our use now. There are available for U.S. prisoners of war one 3000-men capacity prisoner of war camp and two transit camps. These were procured with practically no cries of anguish from their lawful owners.³⁸

Imprisoning the enemy offered Americans and Britons an opportunity for easy cooperation. Their opposition to fascist enemies in Europe, and to the violent spread of this ideology was a conspicuous foundation upon which Americans and British policy-makers agreed. Captured Germans and Italians had previously sought to directly harm American and British troops, resulting in a shared Allied distaste for the prisoners. Consequently, issues of prisoners of war differed from disputes over imperialism, trade, and territorial boundaries; the United States and the United Kingdom had a mutual interest in keeping captured prisoners out of battle, and of upholding their obligations concerning the Geneva Convention of 1929. Unlike disputes over military strategy, prisoner of war policy offered no room for egos, and no opportunity for glory; instead it represented a task both the Americans and the British had interest in completing successfully.

American interest in British policy facilitated the easy and comfortable relationship between the two states in the early years of the conflict concerning Axis war

³⁸ Ibid.

prisoners and civilian internees. American inexperience, coupled with the emphasis British diplomats placed on their own experience earlier in the war, resulted in circumstances in which the British employed their experience to manipulate American behavior in these early stages of the war. As the United States actively sought British advice, they reinforced the British tendency to behave paternalistically toward American policymakers.

The “friendly and personal” nature of the Anglo-American relationship as described by Major Yudelson contributed to the informality of the interactions between the two states regarding the maintenance of Axis war prisoners. This culture of friendliness lent itself to a comfortable culture of mutual dependence. As the United States sought help from the British in processing and maintaining enemy prisoners of war, the British needed material support from the United States. London officials walked a delicate line, attempting to maintain a sense of superiority by emphasizing experience, while simultaneously seeking assistance from America.

In an Aide-Memoire from the British Embassy in April 1942, the British posed their first request for American assistance with regard to prisoner detention. “His Majesty’s Government are experiencing great difficulty in regard to the disposal of enemy prisoners as a result of the outbreak of war in the Far East.”³⁹ The note explained that British Dominions are full to their capacity and that while the United Kingdom could host Italian war prisoners, “Germans cannot, however, safely be kept in the United

³⁹ “Aide-Memoire, British Embassy in Washington DC.” April 14, 1942. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

Kingdom as long as a risk of invasion exists.”⁴⁰ The British Embassy revealed the selective nature of the United Kingdom’s deportation schemes, and then continued:

In these circumstances, His Majesty’s Government would be very grateful if the United States Government would be prepared to consider the possibility of accommodating German, Italian and Japanese prisoners already captured or who may be captured by the armed forces of the United Nations. If this proposal is acceptable to the United States Government in principle His Majesty’s Government would suggest that the prisoners should be regarded as having been captured by the United States forces and that the United States Government should assume all obligations and acquire the rights of the captor power in regard to them.⁴¹

The British Embassy concluded its request, “His Majesty’s Government sincerely trust that the United States Government will be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to this proposal, which on practical grounds is of great importance to them.”⁴²

This request amounted to 150,000 prisoners of war, and before agreeing to accept the British proposal, the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff commissioned a committee to investigate the matter and report back regarding the viability of hosting these prisoners. This committee recommended that the United States decline the British proposal involving the American acceptance of 150,000 Axis prisoners of war, and suggested instead that the Provost Marshal General accept those prisoners currently in the United Kingdom. The subcommittee reported that Canada appeared perfectly capable of accepting more war prisoners, and that the construction of more internment camps seemed an undesirable project in the United States.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ JPS 32/1. “Report of Subcommittee: Acceptance of Custody of Prisoners of War Taken By the United States,” Washington, August 23, 1942. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No. 1411, Folder 383.6- England. NARA.

The US Chief of Aliens Division responded to the inquiry with a report that the United States could accommodate the 220 German prisoners of war and the 24,000 Italian prisoners of war that were currently being detained in the United Kingdom “without difficulty.”⁴⁴ Bryan continued, “It should be pointed out, however, that in the event the United States accepts custody of other large groups of prisoners of war, additional construction of internment camps will become absolutely necessary.”⁴⁵ Hesitantly, Bryan agreed with the subcommittee and recommended that the United States offer assistance on a more limited scale than the British requested.

On September 7, 1942, the Joint U.S. Staff Planners published a report in which they also advised against the acceptance of 150,000 prisoners that had been asked of them. The report again reiterated that Canada had much greater opportunity for POW labor than the United States, and that Britain needed to lean more heavily on its Dominions.⁴⁶ Just two days after this Joint U.S. Staff Planners recommendation that the United States accept only 50,000 war prisoners from the European theater, the US Secretary of State telephoned the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, that the United States would “assume custody of 150,000 prisoners of war now in the hands of the British.”⁴⁷

The Joint Chiefs of Staff overrode the recommendation of the Joint Staff Planners, and the United States accepted a large burden from the British. This exchange

⁴⁴ SPMGA (22). Colonel B.M. Bryan Chief, Aliens Division to Colonel A. V. Winton, “Acceptance of Prisoners of War from the United Kingdom” August 26, 1942. RG 389, Entry 452 C, Box No.1411, Folder 383.6- England. NARA.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ JCS 64/2, “Acceptance of Custody of Prisoners of War Taken by the United Nations: Report By the Joint U.S. Staff Planners,” Joint U.S. Chiefs of Staff, September 7, 1942. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

⁴⁷ US Department of State, “Memorandum,” September 9, 1942. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

of prisoners lay questionably outside the legality of the Geneva Convention of 1929, which stipulated that the capturing power should assume all responsibilities of the detaining power.⁴⁸ The significant assistance the United States lent to Great Britain during this stage of the war represents an enormous gesture of coordination. Upon receiving this information, the British Embassy replied that the British authorities would “appreciate this generous and helpful decision of the United States Government.”⁴⁹

One month after the United States agreed to accept 150,000 Axis war prisoners, the British posed an additional request to the US Government. Relying on the informal nature of the Anglo-American relationship, the British took a personal approach to this request, and broached their inquiry at an individual level. On October 19, 1942, Head of the Joint Staff Mission, John Dill, wrote a letter to General Marshall explaining the circumstances. “We have been in considerable difficulty for some time with regard to the problem of disposing not only of our prisoners but also of refugees.”⁵⁰ Dill explained to Marshall that the Russians forced the British into a position of accepting upwards of 26,000 Polish refugees in exchange for seasoned Polish troops to fight for the Allies. Because the British had to provide for these refugees, space and resources across the Empire ran thin, and Dill articulated the British fear that they would be unable to detain enemy captives in the Libya campaign. Thus, they turned to the Americans for help imprisoning Italian captives. Emphasizing the role the British had already played in detaining prisoners, Dill explained:

⁴⁸ Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Signed at Geneva, 27 July 1929 in *Laws of Armed Conflicts: A Collection of Conventions, Resolutions and Other Documents*, ed. Dietrich Schindler and Jiri Toman, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988), 339.

⁴⁹ “British Embassy, Washington DC to Department of State”. September 12, 1942. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

⁵⁰ Sir John Dill to General George Marshall, October 19, 1942, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

If things go as well as we hope in Libya, we shall not be able to accommodate in British possessions the prisoners resulting from those operations as well as the 26,000 Polish refugees whom the U.S. Government cannot receive. The limited resources of the African colonies and of South Africa are already strained by the burden and the Union of South Africa, with its very small white population, has already taken a total of 100,000 prisoners, refugees and internees.”⁵¹

Dill pointed out the effort the British and their Dominions previously made concerning the detention of war prisoners, as he requested more assistance from the United States. Perhaps most interesting, is the manner in which Dill concluded his letter to George Marshall, with a handwritten sentence at the bottom of a document otherwise composed by typewriter. “Our ambassador has approached the State Department on this subject, but I conclude that the last word will rest with you.”⁵² Suggesting an intimate knowledge of the decision-making process in the Joint Chiefs of Staff and State Department, Dill fused a kind of personal flattery with this knowledge of American policymaking, in order to sway the United States to make a decision satisfactory to the British.

The same day that Dill addressed his letter to General Marshall, British Ambassador to the United States Lord Halifax personally called to see American Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles. In a Department of State memorandum of conversation, Welles recalled his visit with Halifax. “Lord Halifax said that this request is made with great reluctance and that the British Government did not see any way out of this difficulty unless the American Government was willing to grant this request.”⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “Memorandum of Conversation,” Department of State, October 19, 1942. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

Whether out of a sense of duty, friendship, or practicality, the United States assisted the British yet again. Just two days after Dill's letter to Marshall, Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Robert McNarney explained to American Secretary of the Combined Chiefs of Staff General Deane, "Although it will entail some additional construction, the War Department is able and willing to accept these prisoners. General Marshall asked me to handle this matter informally."⁵⁴ Although the US had already accepted 150,000 prisoners just one month prior to this correspondence, they undertook additional construction to assist the British. This American willingness to accept 25,000 prisoners on account of private conversations and correspondence, in addition to McNarney's explanation of the informality concerning this shift in responsibility, indicates a remarkably casual culture of diplomacy between the two states.

Despite the atmosphere of informality, the American State Department felt keenly aware of the generosity they showed the British in accepting these prisoners. In a memorandum issued in January 1943, the United States hinted at the limits of their goodwill, and also at their expectations of the British in return for American benevolence. "Considering that the Government of the United States will be relieving the British Government of the burden of holding these prisoners of war, the United States assumes that at the appropriate time, the British Government will be willing to provide adequate facilities, including shipping, to return these prisoners to British custody or to repatriate them."⁵⁵ Though the Americans felt motivated to assist the British in 1942, this

⁵⁴ "Acceptance of Prisoners of War from the British." Lieutenant General Joseph T. McNarney to General Deane. October 21, 1942. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

⁵⁵ US Department of State, "Memorandum," January 9, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

memorandum indicated that the State Department sought to dispel notions of an endlessly obliging United States.

Within the first year of American participation in the war, the British and the Americans coordinated prisoner of war policies convivially. British rhetoric and behavior suggest a continuation of the inter-war paternal attitude they adopted towards the United States. In 1942, the United States not only tolerated British paternalism concerning prisoner of war policies, but also sought it. Enduring British commentary and criticism about American prisoner of war policies, American civilian and military planners alike hoped to learn from British prison systems and policies.

Experience served as the engine driving British paternalism towards the United States, and it also served a tool Britons used to manipulate American behavior. In 1942, the British successfully navigated their relationship with the United States, convincing them to accept 175,000 British and United Nations' captured war prisoners, against the advice of the Joint US Planning Staff. Reminding the United States of the United Kingdom's struggle to singularly manage war prisoners over the previous year, British diplomats persuaded American leaders to shoulder a burden unnecessary by the standards of international law. American opinion was divided over the issue, as evidenced by the Joint US Planning Staff's recommendation against assisting the British based on material conveniences. Whether American policymakers genuinely respected British experience, or whether they felt duty-bound as a British ally to assist British war prisoner efforts, American authorities who felt compelled to relieve British responsibilities as a detaining power won out over those advising against it.

The informality of the Anglo-American relationship with regard to war prisoners is another explanation for the exceptional assistance the United States offered Britain in 1942. Cultural and linguistic similarities enabled communication between diplomats and military advisors, and owing to the nature of the issue at hand, captive enemies, British and American authorities found cooperation both attainable and affable. This casual culture of diplomacy regarding war prisoners in 1942 affected both civil and military planners, and set the stage for the Anglo-American relationship regarding war prisoners over the course of the war.

CHAPTER TWO

“Economy of Effort”

In the early summer of 1942, the Axis Powers boasted success in nearly every theater of war. After American entry into the conflict, Anglo-American conversations about prisoner of war policy took place under the strain of lost battles, lost material and frustrated public opinion. By 1943, however, the Allies effectively turned the tides. Successfully halting Axis offensives, the Allies scored crucial military victories at El Alamein in North Africa, Stalingrad in the Soviet Union, and Guadalcanal in the Pacific. Though these successes prevented total Axis victory in 1942, uncertainty plagued British and American military and civilian planners for whom the conclusion of the war was far from inevitable. The Mediterranean Theater of operations played a decisive role in Anglo-American relations with regard to prisoner of war policies, owing to the influx of Axis prisoners captured in 1943. The Mediterranean was virtually the only location where Western Allied and Axis ground forces engaged in consistent combat until the Allied invasion in June 1944. When the United States entered the war, the Mediterranean offered the only place for the Americans to apply direct force against the Axis in the short run, and Churchill saw the region as one of paramount importance.¹ In this theater, the Allies faced uncoordinated and uncompromising Axis powers.

The North African military campaigns left the Allies with thousands of Axis war prisoners. Joseph Goebbels commented on May 17, 1943, “We can no longer indulge in a

¹ Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory: The Mediterranean Theater in World War II*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, 37. Porch argues for the historical importance of collaborative Allied campaigns in the Mediterranean, without which, OVERLORD would likely have failed.

prestige fight with the English in the matter of fettering, since the English hold many more German prisoners in custody than we do English.”² The day after Goebbels recorded his comments regarding the shackling crisis, the British Secretary for State, Sir Percy James Grigg, reported to the House of Commons about Axis captives detained by the British. On April 15, 1943, the British held 33,315 German prisoners and 284,776 Italian prisoners of war. Between April 15, and May 18, 1943, British forces in North Africa captured 109,000 Germans and 63,000 additional Italian prisoners of war. At this point, the Germans detained approximately 80,000 British prisoners, from all services as well as Dominion, colonial and Indian troops, while Italians held approximately 70,000.³

In April of 1943, the comfortable nature of the Anglo-American relationship with regard to prisoner of war diplomacy matched a similar level of comfort on the battlefield. The distinction between capturing and detaining powers totally eroded between the British and American troops. Focused on military objectives, the British and American military commanders ambiguously avoided designating responsibility for war prisoners. While these unofficial policies suited Allied field commanders, German authorities demanded clarity with regard to the powers detaining German captives. In a haphazard and initial attempt to allocate responsibility for Axis prisoners of war, British and American military officials deemed all prisoners of European descent as an American responsibility in 1942. Because this stipulation was impractical and unobserved on the

² Louis Lochner, ed, trans, *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-1943*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1948), 362. Here, Goebbels refers to the so-called “Shackling Crisis” between the Germans and the British. After an Anglo-Canadian raid on Dieppe, the Germans claimed to have found a British order condoning the shackling of German prisoners to prevent them from destroying their documents. Enraged, the Germans threatened, and then carried out reprisals against British prisoners in German hands, even as the British did the same. As indicated in Goebbels’ diary entry, the crisis dwindled by the spring of 1943.

³ *Hansard, House of Commons*, vol. 389, col. 921, 18 May 1943. (Accessed through www.parliament.uk at <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1943/may/18/prisoners-of-war>).

battlefield, the German inquiry about responsibility resulted in chaos for the Allied powers. Under the direction of General Dwight Eisenhower in North Africa, the Allied forces had made little attempt to distinguish disparate captors among Allied troops.

When the British received the German inquiry regarding the responsibility for captured German prisoners, Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, wrote to Cordell Hull, US Secretary of State, and explained the critical circumstances under which the Americans and British must reach a decision.

Halifax indicated the urgency of the circumstances and explained, “As the matter is one of great practical urgency in view of German inquiries as to the responsibility, His Majesty’s Ambassador would be most grateful if he could receive Mr. Hull’s observations at a very early date.”⁴ Halifax’s letter suggested a system that did not closely adhere to a literal interpretation of the Geneva Convention, as his proposed system did not stipulate that specific capturing powers also operate as detaining powers. Instead, the British developed a system of convenience; a process tailored to the constraints of the circumstances in North Africa. The British War Office proposed that Axis prisoners captured in Gibraltar or Malta, or any other Axis prisoner evacuated east to British occupied territory should be considered British responsibility. Likewise, those Axis prisoners captured by His Majesty’s ships and landed in French North West Africa, as well as all prisoners evacuated west, should be deemed American responsibility.⁵

This proposal did not sit well with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, because it seemingly deviated from the stipulations of the Geneva Convention. Article 2 designates

⁴ Halifax to Hull. British Embassy in Washington. April 15, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

⁵ British War Office Memorandum, enclosed in correspondence from Halifax to Hull, April 15, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

that prisoners of war are to be kept in the power of the hostile governments that captured them, and the United States argued that they were unwilling to accept the British suggestions, as they appeared out of line with the Convention to which both states were signatories.⁶ The US Joint Chiefs of Staff instead urged that the United States and Britain assume responsibilities for their respective prisoners captured.⁷

Both the British and the American Chiefs of Staff approached Eisenhower explaining the German inquiry and the proposed Allied solutions; Eisenhower responded on April 20, 1943. He described the lack of resources in North Africa, as well as the 1200 miles of territory over which the Allies had conducted campaigns. Owing to the circumstances,

British prisoners of war go through American camps just as our prisoners are fed through English camps. It is impossible to route American prisoners of war through channels other than British because our troops are not clearly defined areas [sic] segregated from English and distance and time in evacuation through other than present channels would require use of combat troops who have never been available. We have no personnel or material to construct such camps in forward areas or man them nor time to do so [sic]. It is regarded as necessary to sustain our present system which was established original agreement to regard USA as ultimate detaining power for all Axis European captives. It is based on an economy of effort and maximum beneficial employment of meager facilities on hand to cope with huge [sic] volume of prisoners estimated from this campaign...Closest coordination has permitted use of British forms for processing for their personnel under our administrative instructions. All possible legal complications have been given serious consideration. Careful observation of all Geneva provisions being maintained by both sides [sic]. Not regarded as probable that any difficulties will arise to redound to embarrassment American Government [sic].⁸

⁶ JCS 241/1. "Conclusions of JCS Planners in JCS 241". April 21, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

⁷ JCS 241/1. "Responsibility for Prisoners of War: Note by the Secretaries," Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 21, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

⁸ War Memo No. 5639, Eisenhower to Marshall, April 20, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

Eisenhower concluded that the American proposal was neither economically viable nor possible due to material constraints. He further pointed out that the Germans and Italians would likely reject the system suggested by the Americans of separately processing and detaining captives.

The above detailed data is submitted for your consideration in that a comprehensive picture of the practical difficulties created by the circumstances of this theater would be before you when the policy relative to assumption of responsibility of prisoners is decided on a combined basis. Urge that no change in present method be ordered as such action will cause disorganization at a critical time in a system already working with full efficiency and cordiality.⁹

Eisenhower's description suggests that just as Anglo-American prisoner of war diplomacy enjoyed an informal culture of amiability, the circumstances in North Africa compelled integrated Anglo-American efforts with regard to the capture and processing of Axis prisoners. This close coordination undoubtedly resulted from the material and geographic limitations of circumstances in North Africa, but likely also resulted from the cordial and cavalier attitude of British and American authorities with regard to captured Axis prisoners, beginning even in 1942. In turn, the comfortable sharing of war prisoners on the battlefield reinforced the casual Anglo-American diplomatic attitude towards Axis POWs.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to Eisenhower's system of managing captured war prisoners, admitting that his methodology was similar to the system the British proposed earlier. In accepting Eisenhower's system over the War Department's proposal, the JCS condoned the improvisation adopted by Eisenhower and demonstrated Washington's unwillingness to override prisoner of war policies adopted in the stress of

⁹ War Memo No. 5639, Eisenhower to Marshall, April 20, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

battle overseas.¹⁰ Further, the American acceptance of Eisenhower's suggestion proves to be an instance in which the United States, even indirectly, continued submitting to British will concerning prisoner of war policy.

Eisenhower himself was fervently devoted to the integration of Allied military operations. He assumed command of the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) on August 14, 1942 and made a concerted effort to integrate military staff. Whenever possible, he assigned American commanders British deputies and vice versa. Though allegiance to the alliance rather than to the nation-state proved counter-intuitive for many officers, the AFHQ can be overall interpreted as evidence of Eisenhower's achievements as a coalition-builder.¹¹ Eisenhower's commitment to the Anglo-American alliance illustrated his reluctance to distinguish between Axis prisoners captured by the British and those captured by the Americans. His policies favored the blurring of national lines, even when it also blurred Geneva Convention stipulations.

One month after his refusal to adopt American prisoner of war policy in North Africa, Eisenhower took a more public opportunity to articulate his belief in the integrated culture of Allied operations in North Africa. Broadcasting from Algiers on a British radio show called, "All Africa Calling Europe," Eisenhower explained that Allied teamwork in North Africa was built on a foundation of "indestructible devotion to a common cause."¹² The Allied Commander further asserted that any enemy attempt to sow discontent among the Allies was futile.¹³ This radio performance conveyed

¹⁰ Memo No. 6824. "Joint Chiefs of Staff to Eisenhower." April 27, 1943. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

¹¹ Porch, *The Path to Victory*, 341.

¹² *New York Times*, "Eisenhower and Army in Africa Are 'Ready for Any Further Task,'" May 29, 1943.

¹³ *Ibid.*.

Eisenhower's commitment to an Allied war effort, reflected prominently in Anglo-American prisoner of war policies.

At Eisenhower's insistence on the efficacy of Allied handling of Axis prisoners of war, the Joint Chiefs of Staff granted him permission to maintain his current policies.¹⁴ However, the US State Department found this arrangement unsatisfactory and two months later, the US Secretary of State inquired after the prisoner of war circumstances in North Africa, writing to Admiral Leahy in hopes of learning that the United States and Great Britain formalized an agreement with regard to POW policy.¹⁵ In response to Hull's inquiry, Leahy responded, "No formal text agreement was adopted by the United States and British authorities in regard to division of responsibility for prisoners of war."¹⁶ He continued, "However, all action taken in the handling of prisoners of war in North Africa has been based upon decisions informally agreed upon by the proper United States and British authorities."¹⁷ The geographic circumstances in concert with Eisenhower's integration attempts and the foundation of informality established in 1942 motivated the culture of nonchalance and integration that pervaded the Anglo-American system of coping with prisoners of war throughout the North African campaigns in 1943.

Leahy explained to Hull the circumstances in North Africa:

It was originally contemplated that all Axis prisoners of European origin evacuated West were to be regarded as American prisoners of war. Actually, prisoners captured by British and American troops in Tunisia were evacuated to

¹⁴ Memo No. 6824, "Joint Chiefs of Staff to Eisenhower," April 27, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

¹⁵ Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Department of State, June 9, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

¹⁶ Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, No date. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the West through British cages under British control because of the exigencies of the situation. By subsequent informal agreement, American responsibility attaches only to those evacuated and to be evacuated to the United States, either directly or indirectly through the United Kingdom, in addition to a small number to be retained by United States forces for labor in the North African Theater.¹⁸

This situation indicates that both the United States and Great Britain adopted reactive rather than proactive stances with regard to prisoner of war policies. Perfectly willing to stubbornly resist changes to predetermined policies in various military strategies, British and American authorities readjusted reactively to circumstances surrounding POW transfer policies, though not without internal strife as well. This exchange reveals dissent within the United States government. Eisenhower, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department differed in their approach to this issue. In this case, the State Department searched for a formalization of policy that the Anglo-American approach to war prisoners failed to produce. Instead, reactive behavior was a characteristic of the informal nature of the relationship that permeated Anglo-American attitude towards war prisoners. The reactive policies allowed Anglo-American planners flexibility to adapt prisoner of war systems for immediate convenience; however, it set the stage for tension between the two states in the future. The harsh conditions of North Africa reinforced the casual and informal nature of the relationship established in 1942.

Contemporary newspapers in both Britain and the United States reflected similar ambiguity with regard to responsibility for prisoners of war. Articles written about the North African campaign treated the capture of Axis prisoners as a symbol of Allied success, a side effect of winning battles, but most importantly, as a signal of enemy loss. Disinterested in the process of captivity in the long term, newspapers instead used

¹⁸ Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, No date. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42) Sec. 1, NARA.

captured Axis prisoners as a rallying point, a tool to encourage support of the Allied war effort. The rhetoric used to discuss captured POWs enforced a sense of camaraderie between the British and the American troops as the journalists often made no distinction between Axis prisoners captured by the Americans or those captured by the British. In April 1943, the *New York Times* reported that “Thousands more Germans and Italians are being gathered together by the British and Americans and moved far behind the lines. Correspondents heard estimates running as high as 11,000.”¹⁹ With the emphasis on the number of prisoners captured rather than on the Army capturing them, the journalists encouraged an atmosphere of amiability with the British. Just as the military planners understood removal of the enemy from the battlefield was equally in the best interests of all Allied forces, journalists also reflected this attitude.

In May 1943, the *New York Times* continued to follow the Tunisian campaign and published:

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Allied Commander in Chief in North Africa, revealed tonight that Axis prisoners in Tunisia totaled “well over 200,000.” General Eisenhower’s revelation that the total of prisoners exceeded even the most optimistic estimates came in a reply to messages of congratulations on the Tunisian victory from all parts of the world. The latest of these was received today from Marshal Alexander Mikhailovich Vassilevsky, Chief of Staff of the Red Army.²⁰

The article recited Vassilevsky’s note of congratulations, and equated the capture of prisoners with an immediate victory, rather than a long-term commitment of responsibility to detain these prisoners. Furthermore, journalists treated prisoners as the product of concerted Allied action, rather than specifically designated to American or

¹⁹ “Yanks Bag Drove of Axis Prisoners,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1943.

²⁰ “Tunisian Captives Now Pass 200,000. Eisenhower Announces Total Exceeding All Estimates and Earlier Figures. British Loss Ratio 1 to 4. German and Italian Casualties in African Campaigns Far Above Those of Empire.” *New York Times*, May 19, 1943.

British troops alone. That same day, the *New York Times* published a similar article, offering more specific numbers of captured Axis prisoners.

Total war became total destruction for the Axis armies in Tunisia, where they suffered approximately 324,000 casualties, according to figures released today by Allied Headquarters. The losses are the heaviest suffered by the Germans in any campaign of similar size in this war. The Allies captured 267,000 Axis soldiers in Tunisia, killed 30,000 and seriously wounded 27,000 more. These figures include all casualties inflicted by the Second United States Corps, the British First Army and various French units since the opening of the campaign, as well as those dealt by the British Eighth Army since the beginning of the Mareth Line battle on March 21...One of the factors that contributed to the wholesale surrenders of the last days of the campaign of thousands was the fact that the German soldiers, though well armed and with sufficient ammunition for weeks more, were leaderless.²¹

In this instance, the journalist seemed less interested in the nationality of the capturing power, and more compelled by the German surrender. The enemy garnered the attention of the journalist, not the particular Allied army that captured them. The inclusion of all forces participating in the Tunisian campaign echoed Eisenhower's attitude of integration and shared responsibility among Allies.

British journalists employed similar tactics in the spring of 1943. They used the capture of prisoners to mock opponents, sharply differentiating between their Italian and German enemies. "The number of prisoners taken since the first attack on the Mareth Line less than a month ago, 30,000, is substantial, but according to an unofficial commentator this includes only 7,000 Germans. To a certain extent the disparity between the numbers of Germans and Italians captured is due to the greater readiness of the last named to surrender."²² American newspapers derided Italian troops in comparison to

²¹ "Enemy Casualties in Tunisia 324,000. 267,000 Captured, 30,000 Killed and 27,000 Wounded Since Start of Campaign. Record Loss for Reich. 1,795 Axis Aircraft Destroyed- Allies Believed to Have Suffered Only Lightly" *New York Times*, May 19, 1943.

²² "Lull on Eighth Army Front: Serious Obstacles," *The Times*, April 16, 1943.

Germans as well, usually in an attempt to bolster morale about the front lines rather than to discuss the implications of their captivity.²³

In other instances, journalists equated the capture of enemy prisoners with the good fortune of capturing war materiel.

It is officially announced here that Rommel and Arnim have lost 66,000 men killed wounded, or taken prisoner in North Africa between January 1 and April 15. In addition, 250 tanks have been captured or destroyed. Also our land-based aircraft have sunk 34 Axis ships, severely damaged 53 and damaged 55. Further enemy losses in the same period have been 3,000 vehicles, 425 guns, and over 1,000 aircraft.²⁴

Conveying the same ambiguous approach to capturing powers observed in the American papers, this British article treated prisoners as though their capture was as exciting or worthwhile as a sunken Axis ship or downed aircraft. Although Britain felt keenly aware of their compatriots in Axis hands, it did not consistently translate into interest in national responsibility for the detention of Axis captives. The prisoner of war situation as depicted to the newspaper-reading public in the United States and the United Kingdom reflected the ambiguity among military planners and civil policy-makers and indicated willingness to overlook the long-term responsibilities associated with captured enemy troops.

Though an atmosphere of informality existed between the British and the United States concerning Axis prisoners, 1943 revealed a new characteristic of the American behavior in terms of assisting the British. Americans drew the line with their hospitality in 1942, and stood firm in 1943, acting less malleable than they had the previous year. As indicated by Cordell Hull's letter, concerns circulated in the American government about

²³ "99 Italians Surrender Without a Struggle to 2 British Medical Orderlies in Tunisia," *New York Times*, April 2, 1943.

²⁴ "66,000 Axis Casualties in Three Months," *The Times*, April 27, 1943.

the direction in which the Anglo-American relationship was headed. In an effort to quell Hull's anxiety about the lack of formal agreement, Leahy responded to Hull and reiterated the limits of American goodwill.

The Commander in Chief, Allied Forces in North Africa, estimates that approximately 45,000 prisoners were captured by American troops. Therefore, all Axis prisoners arriving in the United States from North African Theater of Operations in excess of 45,000 should be charged against the 175,000 British prisoners which the U.S. agreed to accept in the agreements of September and October, 1942.²⁵

Leahy reminded Hull of the previous years' agreements and although he demonstrated flexibility towards certain aspects of the American agreement with the British, he also indicated that the financial and material resources devoted to assisting Britain detain Axis prisoners had a limit. The United States' POW policies would be reactive and informal, but not totally malleable to British needs. Hull certainly felt this way, as he had expressed in earlier correspondence to Leahy that the United States was not obliged "to take responsibility for prisoners of war captured by British forces during the period of transport by sea to the United States."²⁶ Hull hoped to minimize American liabilities when transporting prisoners, indicating that even for captives the United States had already agreed to accept, the State Department articulated the limits of American assistance.

The communication between Britain and the United States surrounding an exchange of seriously ill and wounded prisoners of war with Germany in the summer of 1943 indicated subtle differences in American deference to British experience by 1943.

²⁵ Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, No date. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

²⁶ Hull to Leahy, Department of State. April 15, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) Sec. 3, Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 1, NARA.

In May of that year, the German and Italian authorities proposed a mutual repatriation of seriously sick and injured prisoners of war from the Tunisia campaign.²⁷ By mid-May of 1943, Anglo-American forces expelled the Afrika Korps from Tunisia, took control of Sicily in July and early August, and opened a front on the Italian mainland in September. Allied forces took 275,000 Axis troops captive in Tunisia and an additional 140,000 prisoners in Sicily. The majority of these captives were Italians, but Anglo-American forces captured 80,000 Germans as well. The day Axis resistance in Tunisia ended, May 13, the Germans contacted the Swiss and communicated their willingness to return British and American war prisoners in exchange for several thousand injured German soldiers. This proposal began the correspondence that led to the first large-scale Allied prisoner exchange with Germany during the conflict.²⁸

Switzerland delivered the identical offers made by Germany and Italy to the United States and Britain on May 15, 1943. Upon receiving the German and Italian proposals, Britain reached out to the US Secretary of State, explaining “His Majesty’s Government would like to concert their replies with the United States Government and to have their views on most convenient and rapid method of conducting negotiations with the Axis Governments and of issuing the necessary instructions to the military and naval authorities to implement any agreement reached.”²⁹ Here, the British acted eager to present a united front to their German and Italian enemies with regard to exchanging prisoners of war. The note continued with the British suggestion that the Anglo-American alliance form a small, central organization in London, in which the United States would

²⁷ “Repatriation of Sick and Wounded Prisoners of War” May 24, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1.

²⁸ Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy*, 155, 163.

²⁹ British Embassy to United States State Department, May 31, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1, NARA.

be represented by military and diplomatic officers with the ability to make rapid decisions regarding the exchange of prisoners. The British Embassy explained their vision of a group with six members; the British would contribute representatives from the Admiralty, the War Office and the Foreign Office, and they invited the Americans to select their own representatives for the organization. "This arrangement appears to His Majesty's Government to offer the best prospect of rapid and efficient treatment of the problem, and they are confident that Anglo-American cooperation in this instance would be as cordial and effective as it has been in the Operations in North Africa."³⁰ Enthusiastic about the opportunity to work concertedly with the United States, Britain suggested that the Combined Chiefs of Staff direct their attention toward Germany, as they felt significantly more concerned about British captives in German hands than those under Italian control. The British Embassy concluded their proposal with a familiar harkening back to their own, earlier experiences in the war:

In conclusion, His Majesty's Government trust that the United States Government will agree that all public discussions of this matter should be avoided until agreement with the Axis has not only been reached but has actually begun to operate. It will be recalled that the failure of similar negotiations between His Majesty's Government and the German Government in October 1941 was in some measure due to premature publicity.³¹

The British Embassy's letter to the State Department indicated that the British held an optimistic view of their cooperation with the United States, and desired to present a united front to the Germans during negotiations. The United States however, did not immediately feel inclined to support the British proposal; this American hesitation

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ In October 1941, following Ribbentrop's personal intervention in negotiations taking place between the British and the Germans, Germany reneged on the agreed upon exchange, and had since refused to consider exchanges except on the basis of numerical equality (Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 119). British Embassy to United States State Department, May 31, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1, NARA.

echoed their previous uncertainty regarding the prisoner of war policy suggested by the British during the North African campaign, which the Americans initially rejected.

The American Joint Chiefs of Staff took issue with various aspects of the British proposal. They disagreed with the British insistence of acquiring safeguards from the Germans against potential breaches of faith, and also disputed a British suggestion for an Allied counter-proposal involving the repatriation of protected personnel. Furthermore, the Americans agreed to the creation of a central Anglo-American organization, but they proposed the establishment of this organization in Washington instead of London.³² The two governments exchanged stubborn telegrams and letters between various individuals and departments, each nation eager to maintain its own agenda regarding the execution of the exchange. All the while, both countries remained painfully aware of the urgency of the situation, each encouraging the other to quickly concede so the prisoners could be exchanged at the earliest possible date.

In the initial stages of the negotiation process, the JCS held a meeting to discuss the problems associated with exchanging prisoners in concert with Britain. In this meeting, Admiral Leahy acknowledged the frustration of working with the British, and suggested that in light of the extreme difficulties Britain experienced in previous attempts to exchange prisoners with Germany, the United States might face similar difficulties if they proceeded in the exchange alongside Britain. He further stated that while he knew Britain and the United States hoped for harmonious action on this issue, the two states differed significantly in their specific demands regarding protected personnel, the safeguarding issue as well as the location of the central organization. In the same

³² The US Secretary of War explains that this is because the Combined Chiefs of Staff is already located in Washington, and the establishment of this new organization would facilitate good communication. US Secretary of War Stimson to US Secretary of State, June 21, 1943.

meeting, Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Joseph T. McNarney noted that Britain's desire to include protected personnel lay outside the scope of the Geneva Convention. He commented that the United States would do well to proceed with the negotiations unilaterally, leaving Britain to negotiate her own terms. He did, however, comment that if Britain acquiesced to US demands, he would be content to continue the negotiations alongside Britain.

General Marshall, staunch in his dedication to the Anglo-American alliance, offered a different opinion. He questioned the advisability of dealing with the Germans on a unilateral basis, believing that it would not accord with the accepted idea of defeating the Germans as a British-American team. He wanted to avoid proceeding unilaterally in fear of setting a precedent of individual action. The JCS seemed to utter their general agreement with Marshall's opinion, and the meeting drew to a close.³³

Just as in North African prisoner policy, the United States displayed initial resistance to British proposals, but eventually submitted to the will of their ally. Also reminiscent of their behavior in the North African campaign, the United States acquiesced to British suggestions despite initial hesitation and allocated an officer of the American embassy and two representatives of the War Department to serve on the small, central organization established in London for the purposes of carrying out the administrative tasks of repatriating prisoners.³⁴ After several months of deliberation, the two nations developed parallel responses to Switzerland, and had them delivered

³³ J.C.S. 370/2. "Prisoners of War," May 28, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1, NARA.

³⁴ Hull to Brigadier General John R. Deane, Department of State, Washington. August 6, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1, NARA.

simultaneously.³⁵ With both the British and the Americans agreeing to exchange prisoners with Germany, each acknowledged the parallel requests of their ally, and articulated that their agreement would be carried out simultaneously and by the same means.³⁶ Essentially, after a summer of arguments over the particulars of the exchange, the Americans and British presented themselves as a strong, united alliance to their enemy.

Engaging the enemy diplomatically may have been less deadly than meeting the enemy on the battlefield, but it was no less significant. Though communications were filtered through a third, neutral party, negotiations with the enemy offered an avenue through which the Allies attempted to influence German behavior, and sought to do so concertedly. Despite arguments behind closed doors, the Americans and the British presented a united front to their enemies, sending parallel responses that illustrate the compromises made in the interim months.

Issues of safeguarding against German breaches of faith were dropped completely from the American and British responses, indicating a small American victory. However, British insistence won out in the case of protected personnel, as both the United States and Britain suggested that they be included in the exchange, though they used distinctly different language to do so. American hesitation to include protected personnel was evident in their response to the Germans, while the British used much bolder and more insistent rhetoric. Further, the implementation of the central group in London marked another British victory.

³⁵ As explained by British Embassy to British Foreign Office, "Airgram" British Embassy, Washington to Foreign Office, London, No date, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1, NARA.

³⁶ "Appendix to Enclosure A." August 2, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (5-28-43) sec. 1, NARA.

At this point in the conflict, the United States evolved from the role it had played upon first entering the war. Rather than seeking the advice and direction of British authorities with regard to the handling of war prisoner issues, the United States advocated its own initiatives, arguing against British proposals. Though Britain still loomed as the authority, prevailing in many of the Anglo-American disputes concerning the appropriate nature of war prisoner treatment, 1943 saw the United States resist British will and articulate their own aims and goals.

The JCS meeting reveals one factor behind this change in the Anglo-American dynamic. In the United States' first year of war, American rhetoric reflected intimidation and awe of British experience. However, the JCS conversation indicates that by 1943, the United States interpreted British experience differently. Rather than impressive, British experience was foreboding. Previous British missteps, such as the failed attempt to exchange prisoners with Germany, encouraged Americans to forge their own path rather than follow in British footsteps. Although American opinion began to change, the British continued imposing an instructive and paternal attitude upon American authorities.

The Italian armistice offered Britain another opportunity to attempt influence over American behavior. At the time of the armistice, September 3, 1943, the British and the Americans had accumulated about 450,000 Italian prisoners of war and faced difficult decisions about their future. As the Geneva Convention lacked provisions regarding a belligerent state effectively changing sides during the conflict, the Allies dealt with a variety of options pertaining to the treatment of Italians. When the armistice went public,

on September 8, 1943, there were some 80,000 Allied prisoners in Italy.³⁷ Of this number, approximately 74,000 were British.³⁸ Furthermore, the Germans held 58,795 United Kingdom service personnel in captivity, in addition to 2,605 Canadians, 5,540 Australians, 4,044 New Zealanders, 7,893 Indian army troops, and 3,384 colonial and Southern Rhodesian troops, totaling 82,261 British Commonwealth POWs.³⁹ Because such a small portion of the prisoners in Italy were American, the United States felt significantly less pressure from the public to aggressively seek the return of American soldiers.

By contrast, Britain faced a great deal of public pressure to bring British prisoners home. With many prisoners enduring captivity for upwards of three years, the population and the government felt eager to see the return of their troops in enemy hands. As a result, the British developed a scheme to handle the war prisoner situation in their best national interests prior to the capitulation of Italy. The British expressed a tone of paternalism in proposing their plans to the Americans. On August 1, 1943, the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff sent a memorandum to the Combined Chiefs of Staff regarding the forthcoming surrender of Italy and proposed a plan to repatriate British captives interned there. "In view of the present situation, the U.S. Chiefs of Staff will be interested to know of the scheme which has been prepared by the British for the repatriation of large numbers of British prisoners of war."⁴⁰ The report

³⁷ The National Archives. "Prisoners Held in Italy: Post-Armistice Escape Reports." Accessed Thursday March 15, 2012. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/prisoners-war-1939-1953.htm>

³⁸ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 53.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Memorandum for Information No. 122. "Repatriation of Prisoners of War from Italy." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. August 1, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (8-1-43) sec. 2, NARA.

continued to articulate the procedures for repatriation, the development of reception camps and the allocation of Allied troops to facilitate the process.⁴¹ The British Directorate of Prisoners of War produced thousands of pamphlets to be spread among British prisoners, preparing them for the upcoming repatriation efforts, outlining their duties, and designating various ports from which prisoners of from different Dominions will be transported home.⁴²

The detailed scheme produced in Whitehall for the repatriation of captive Allies offered stark contrast to the reactive nature of Allied policies regarding captured Axis prisoners to this point in the war. When public pressure encouraged action, and the British felt pressing, individual responsibility to cope with prisoner of war policy, they demonstrated detailed, proactive behavior. In this instance, British attitudes translated into a paternal attitude towards the Americans, who had less at stake in the repatriation of Allied prisoners from Italy.

This attitude changed when the American forces were equally as involved, as was the case in North Africa. The “special relationship” between the two allies created a kind of safety net that allowed for the reactive behavior demonstrated by both the Americans and the British with regard to Axis prisoners captured in North Africa. The relaxed attitude between the two states provided comfort and security, but it resulted in disagreements as well. Although the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to the British proposal for the repatriation of British Commonwealth prisoners of war, American and

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Advance Orders to Prisoner of War Camps, Italy.” The Directorate of Prisoners of War. The War Office, Whitehall. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-1945. CCS 383.6 sec. 4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 361, Folder CCS 383.6 (8-1-43) sec. 2, NARA.

British authorities held different beliefs about the appropriate action to be taken on behalf of the Italian prisoners in Allied captivity after the Italian surrender.

In October of 1943, Pietro Badoglio, the Prime Minister of Italy following the removal of Dictator Benito Mussolini, verbally consented to the Allied use of Italians captured in Sicily and North Africa in various types of war work. Then, in January 1944, he recanted his earlier agreement and rejected official Allied proposals to use the Italians in war work because he viewed it as an affront to national honor for Italians to be kept in captivity after their formal surrender. Negotiations dragged on through the spring of 1944, and although the Allies failed to reach a formal agreement with Italy, it became clear that Badoglio would not complain if the Allies altered the conditions under which they held Italian prisoners. In the absence of a formal agreement between Britain, the United States, and Italy, the Allies improvised.

In both America and in the United Kingdom, Italian prisoners of war had become important components of the war economy, largely working in the agricultural sector. Thus, Eisenhower created a stir when he announced over the radio on July 29, 1943 that so long as the Italians did not turn Allied or United Nations captives over to the Germans, all of the Italian prisoners taken in Sicily and Tunisia would be returned home. This announcement distressed British authorities because the United Kingdom had become increasingly dependent upon the exploited labor of Italian captives. However, it shortly came to the attention of the War Office in London that the Italians did not prevent the Germans from taking 2,500 British prisoners from their control, negating the deal described by Eisenhower in his radio announcement.⁴³

⁴³ Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War*, 137.

Having survived this first incident jeopardizing British labor sources, the War Office hoped to continue importing Italian prisoners to assist in the extreme manpower shortages in Britain. Eisenhower refused to acquiesce to these British requests; he had ceased shipments of Italians to both the United States and the United Kingdom owing to the changing political situation in Italy. The State Department supported Eisenhower on this issue and the United States again found itself locked in dispute with Britain. By October, the War Office convinced the Allied Force Headquarters of the American dependence on Italian labor, and ensured the continued import of their Italian labor source.⁴⁴

The failure of negotiations with Badoglio encouraged the British to develop a unilateral solution to their desperate need for labor in the United Kingdom. In April 1944, Britain offered a deal to the Italians, explaining that they could become “co-operators” and offered a much wider range of jobs, including war work. Those who refused were returned to camps.⁴⁵ The Americans offered a similar, unilateral arrangement to their Italian war prisoners, and required prisoners to sign a “Declaration of Italian Prisoners of War.” American authorities organized those who signed the form into Italian Service Units (ISU) and those who refused to sign, either because of a commitment to fascism or a fear of reprisals at home, maintained prisoner of war status. Americans never involved the ISUs in combat, as they were formally still considered prisoners of war and the Geneva Convention strictly prohibited their use in combat.⁴⁶ By the fall of 1944, 195

⁴⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁵ Bob Moore, “Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy Toward German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War.”

⁴⁶ Charles O’Reilly, *Forgotten Battles: Italy’s War of Liberation, 1943-1945* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 167.

ISUs consisting of 954 Italian officers and 32, 898 enlisted men worked in the United States.⁴⁷

The different attitudes towards Italian prisoners of war following the Italian surrender highlight the extent to which economic concerns and manpower shortages drove British prisoner of war policy, even as early as 1943. Fighting a total, global war for four years severely crippled the British economy and stretched British manpower reserves to the breaking point. By 1943, few Americans understood the magnitude of British shortages.⁴⁸ Though the British leaned on American resources from the outset of their relationship concerning prisoners of war, the disagreement over Italian prisoners of war in 1943 marked a divergence of interest based on economic and resource capabilities available to the United States and Great Britain.

Despite the disparate approaches the United States and the United Kingdom took towards Italian prisoners immediately after the Italian surrender, the two states worked in concert in communications with Germany about treatment of war prisoners. On October 13, 1943, Italy declared war on Germany, joining the Allied war effort. As a result of this declaration of war, Germans threatened to treat captured Italians with the same hostility they afforded captured Franc-Tireurs. This term refers to armed fighters who were not entitled to prisoner of war status, and were subject to immediate execution upon capture. Germany considered many partisan fighters in Eastern Europe to be Francs-Tireurs, and upon learning that Italian troops would be classified as such; the Italian government entreated the United States and the United Kingdom to threaten retaliation on German

⁴⁷ Louis E. Keefer, *Italian Prisoners of War in America 1942-1946, Captives or Allies?* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 76.

⁴⁸ Carlo D'Este, *World War II in the Mediterranean, 1942-1945* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1990), 121.

prisoners in the event that the German army administered this violent treatment to Italian troops.⁴⁹

The United States and the United Kingdom felt uncomfortable threatening retaliatory measures on German prisoners for harm committed to Italian captives as such “action may lead to disregard of the rules of warfare by the enemy with respect to our [Anglo-American] soldiers who are prisoners of war.”⁵⁰ Though unwilling to threaten retaliation, the British and Americans worked in concert to respond to German threats. Simultaneously, Roosevelt and Churchill released announcements directed towards the German government.

A state of war exists between the Royal Italian Government and Germany. Loyal Italian soldiers are engaging the enemy wherever he can be found. Such of these loyal troops as may fall into the hands of the enemy are entitled to all of the rights, privileges, and immunities afforded to prisoners of war by international law and by the Convention to which Germany had obligated itself. If these soldiers are not accorded all such rights, privileges and immunities, it is the solemn pledge of the United States and United Kingdom that the persons responsible will be held to the strictest accountability.⁵¹

Among themselves, the British and the Americans disagreed about the proper treatment of Italian prisoners of war. Britain hoped to continue importing Italians from North Africa to ease the labor shortages in the United Kingdom, and the Americans argued against such a plan, considering it a breach of the Geneva Convention. The two states also pursued independent policies concerning captive Italians incarcerated at home.

⁴⁹ Message No. 783. From AFHQ Avd. Cmd. Post (signed Eisenhower) to War Department. October 23, 1943. Action AGWAR for the CCS. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-20-44) Sec.4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 359, Folder CCS 383.6, NARA.

⁵⁰ “Emergency Propaganda.” Memorandum for the Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 24, 1943. From Major General J.H. Hilldring, Chief, Civil Affairs Division. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-20-44) Sec.4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 359, Folder CCS 383.6, NARA.

⁵¹ “Emergency Propaganda.” Enclosure B. Memorandum for the Secretary, Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 24, 1943. From Major General J.H. Hilldring, Chief, Civil Affairs Division. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-20-44) Sec.4 to CCS 383.6 (3-15-44). Box No. 359, Folder CCS 383.6, NARA.

However, when confronting an enemy threat, the two states consistently worked in concert to preserve the image of a united and synchronized alliance.

Confrontation with the enemy directly impacted the dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship. When Italy ceased threatening the Allies, Britain and America embraced disparate means of coping with Italian prisoners. This indicates that the presence of an enemy, either in diplomatic circles or on the battlefield, encouraged the united, concerted action taken by the Americans and the British towards prisoners. Similar to the circumstance of the Anglo-American debates over the prisoner of war exchange with Germany earlier in the year, the stress of engaging the enemy drove the British and the Americans to cooperate.

Although the Anglo-American relationship at the conclusion of 1943 maintained aspects of integration and informality developed in 1942, the relationship had changed in significant ways as well. The United States stood up to Great Britain and advocated for national prerogatives in conversations with Britain about prisoner of war policy. British experience lost efficacy in terms of manipulating American behavior, as the United States began to consider British experience to be a detriment to the Anglo-American alliance rather than a guide. The North African campaign produced thousands of Axis prisoners over whom the Americans had control, and consequently, the dynamics of the Anglo-American alliance and their prisoner of war policies changed notably.

CHAPTER THREE

“This Frightful Prisoners of War Problem”

In 1943, combined Allied forces ejected the Germans from Tunisia, forced an Italian surrender, and opened a new front on the Italian mainland. In doing so, they significantly changed the military circumstances and necessitated a new Allied strategy. Allied combat experiences in North Africa helped prepare Anglo-American forces for an Allied invasion of Europe, a campaign that represented remarkable military cooperation between Britain and the United States. The ambitious invasion plans required meticulous logistical planning, and proved a daunting task for prisoner of war policymakers. Anticipating the arrival of war prisoners and arranging for their care proved an overwhelming task and one that markedly affected the dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship in the last stages of war.

Military planners were justified in their efforts to prepare for the onslaught of prisoners upon the Allied invasion of Europe, as Field Marshal Montgomery reported 40,000 dead German troops, 200,000 wounded and another 200,000 captured between the D-Day landings on June 6, and the third week of August 1944.¹ The large influx of German prisoners in 1944 and 1945 posed substantial issues for an increasingly exhausted Britain. Simultaneous with Britain's decreasing capability to accommodate Axis prisoners of war, the United States asserted an increasingly self-serving agenda. While in 1943 the United States hesitated before acquiescing to British prerogatives with

¹ CHAR20/170/81 Montgomery to Churchill, August 24, 1944. CCAC, as cited in Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy*, 213.

regard to prisoner of war policy, in 1944 and 1945 Americans exhibited staunch opposition to policies aimed at easing British burdens of detaining war prisoners.

Throughout the fall of 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff discussed the implications of the upcoming Allied invasion. Unlike the reactive policies developed concerning prisoners of war in the Tunisian campaign, the CCS hoped to organize a scheme for the dispersal of German prisoners of war in advance. After the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign, the United States suggested a new policy concerning the allocation of responsibility for captured prisoners. The United States proposed that America and Great Britain divide responsibility for prisoners captured in combined operations in Northwest Europe on a 50-50 basis, regardless of the specific capturing power. After several months of deliberation, the Combined Chiefs of Staff formally agreed to this policy in March 1944.² While conversations about detention responsibility dragged on, Americans began preparations to increase their potential as a detaining power immediately following the Italian surrender. On November 17, 1943 the American JCS reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staff:

As of 30 September 1943 there were approximately 164,000 prisoners of war in this country. As of the same date, prisoner of war camps had been authorized for the accommodation of 263,000 prisoners of which accommodations for 209,982 had been completed and ... accommodations for 24,502 approved for construction. For planning purposes, additional accommodations for 75,000 prisoners of war have been authorized to be obtained largely by conversion of existing facilities.³

² WARX 15302. TOPSEC Book Message from Marshall to Eisenhower, March 26, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

³ J.C.S. 241/5, "Maintenance, Transshipment and Disposition of Prisoners of War." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the U.S. Chiefs of Staff. Annex A, Report by the Joint Administrative Committee. November 17, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

The remainder of the lengthy report detailed American plans to increase escort guard companies as necessary alongside the increase of German prisoners of war, as well as the disparate treatment allocated to German captives described as “rabid” Nazis. The report concluded with finite numbers of prisoners the United States felt capable of accepting. Based on the allotment of guard companies presently authorized in the troop base, the Americans reported that they could accept 290,000 prisoners of war within their own territory by July 1, 1944. The report also stipulated that based upon the provision of 93 additional prisoner of war escort guard companies, the United States could detain up to 383,000 prisoners by mid-summer.⁴ The report conveyed flexibility in the American plans as well as determination to prepare adequately for the pending Allied invasion by successfully hosting their share of the captured German prisoners.

In contrast to the American attitude of ambitious detention projects, the British approached the impending onslaught of German prisoners with more caution. In late December 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff convened and discussed the implications of the upcoming Allied invasion. In this meeting the CCS estimated OVERLORD would generate 150,000 German war prisoners by July 1, 1944. At the same time, the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff reported the inability of Great Britain to fulfill its detaining responsibilities based on the 50-50 policy. The report maintained that as of December 1943, the United Kingdom held 78,058 German and Italian prisoners, with zero capacity for future prisoners, and Australia held 7,702 prisoners with certain additional capacity for 2,500. Canada detained 23,102 Axis prisoners with capability of accepting another 6,740. Furthermore, South Africa detained 49,305 prisoners and India held 64,458, neither of which had the resources or manpower to accept additional

⁴ Ibid.

prisoners. 70,179 Axis prisoners were detained in the Middle East, 58,180 in East Africa, 612 in West Africa, and 572 in Jamaica. The British argued that none of these regions could sustain additional prisoners of war in accordance with the Geneva Convention. In total, the British Commonwealth detained 352,168 Axis prisoners of war by December 1943.⁵

Of the 150,000 anticipated German war prisoners by July 1, 1944, the 50-50 agreement allocated responsibility for 75,000 prisoners to the United States. The British maintained a 57,000-prisoner credit in the U.S. as a result of the agreements made in 1942, reducing the number of prisoners for whom the British were responsible. Even upon considering the 6,740 additional prisoners allocated to Canada, the British explained that shipping to Australia was impossible under the circumstances and concluded that accommodation within the British Commonwealth for the remaining 11,260 anticipated prisoners could not be found. Thus, the British representatives recommended the establishment of a combined committee to devise a plan for the detention of these remaining prisoners outside of the British Empire. The British suggested that the committee look primarily to Brazil, North Africa and North America as the most likely places to find additional accommodation for the British share of future war prisoners. As the report drew a distinct limit to additional prisoners in Canada, it can be assumed that by North America, the British referred to the United States.⁶ This behavior significantly deviated from American efforts because the representatives of the

⁵ C.C.S. 276/5, "Maintenance, Transshipment and Disposition of Prisoners of War," Combined Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff, December 29, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

⁶ Ibid.

British Chiefs of Staff sought to avoid prisoner of war responsibility immediately following the American effort to increase their detaining capacity.

As an annex to the quantitative data listed above, the British also prepared qualitative reports explaining their inability to accommodate additional prisoners of war. This report, assembled by the Imperial Prisoner of War Committee, in concert with Major General Gepp, DPW War Office, explained in greater detail why the British Empire could not accept more prisoners of war. The report clarified:

The principle difficulty of holding prisoners in the British Commonwealth is not primarily one of accommodation. Already more than 350,000 prisoners of war have been disposed in the various holding countries in the Empire, mainly in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India, more than 200,000 of them for nearly three years. So far as accommodation is concerned, it would be possible to hold many more.⁷

The report continued to discuss the five primary issues identified by the IPOWC as hindering the British Empire's efforts to detain German prisoners. The report acknowledged shipping and maintenance as two significant problems. The British purported that with the exception of areas in which the war prisoners could be profitably employed (such as the Italian workforce in the U.K.) it made little economic sense to hold prisoners of war in any country that was not self-sustaining in foodstuffs. The third issue listed was that of manpower. As German prisoners required significantly more guards than the Italians, the increase of German prisoners of war resulted in a decrease of guards for incarcerated Italians. The IPOWC also acknowledged the issues of security and local political considerations. Here, the report used South Africa as an example,

⁷ C.C.S. 276/5, "Annex: Survey of Additional Accommodation in British Commonwealth for Prisoners of War," Combined Chiefs of Staff. Maintenance, Transshipment and Disposition of Prisoners of War. Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. December 29, 1943. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

explaining that the complex political problem in that country resulted in the Union Government's distaste for detaining German prisoners.⁸

Through this inclusion of qualitative reasoning behind the British inability to accept Axis prisoners of war, British policy-makers sought to differentiate themselves from the United States. While some of the British logic fairly assessed their position as distinct from that of the American circumstances, other obstacles, such as that of shipping and manpower, applied equally to American and British situations. When it became apparent that the United States was capable of accepting large quantities of prisoners of war, the British responded with evidence of the work they had already done in terms of prisoner detention rather than seeking to match American advances. Just as their experience impressed American allies in 1942, the British sat back, regurgitated their previous efforts, and hoped it would motivate American assistance as it had in the past. This effort to inspire American aid extended past the military, as the IPOWC and the War Office played a major role in the compilation of reports denying capacity in the British Empire. Americans temporarily appeased the British in this instance, granting them the establishment of a committee to research potential locations for the detention of the anticipated 11,000 additional war prisoners.

The creation of this committee alone did not satisfy British concern over the placement of prisoners. In January 1944, correspondence between American Captain Forrest B. Royal and British Brigadier Harold Redman, then the Combined Secretariat for the Combined Chiefs of Staff, revealed continued British frustration. In a letter addressed to his American counterpart, Brigadier Redman wrote, "As far as I can see, the ad hoc committee, which was appointed to examine the question of prisoners of war...has gone a

⁸ Ibid.

bit adrift.”⁹ He continued, “It is understood that the ad hoc committee now in existence has gone to a lot of trouble to establish facts and details and to make a report regarding the fifty fifty responsibility for prisoners of war as between the U.S. and the British. This has never been questioned.”¹⁰ He explained that the ad hoc committee misunderstood British intentions, and he sought to correct this with a clearly articulated statement of the British position.

The British Chiefs of Staff, while fully accepting their responsibility for the accommodation of 50% of the prisoners that will be captured in future combined operations, find as a result of their survey, now completed, of additional accommodation for prisoners of war in the British Commonwealth, that the accommodation available does not make it possible for them to absorb therein the 50% quota. The necessary accommodation, therefore, will have to be found elsewhere.¹¹

Although the British were unable to accommodate their share of the prisoners in practice, they insisted upon maintaining their status as an equal partner with the United States in the 50-50 agreement. This suggests that in 1944, the British propagated an illusion of equality despite significant changes to the power dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship.

Despite the intentions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to plan for the accommodation of German prisoners, the disparity in holding capability between the two countries prevented an effective implementation of the 50-50 agreement.¹² The informality established in the first years of war, created a precedent of amiable assistance

⁹ Brigadier Redman to Captain Royal, British Joint Staff Mission, Offices of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Washington, January 17, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The British suffered greatly from their long-term commitment to the war, they exhausted themselves in terms of manpower and resources by the time of the Allied invasion of Europe. The British could hardly sustain a functioning domestic economy, as the United Kingdom spent 55% of their national income on the war, while 30% of the working male population served in the Armed forces in June 1944. Angus Calder, *The People's War, Britain: 1939-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 321-322.

from the Americans with regard to the detention of war prisoners, a crutch for British policymakers. The policies of improvisation set the stage for a casual approach to policymaking in 1944, but the circumstances surrounding the relationship had changed. The comfortable trust and the informal attitude established in the beginning of the war handicapped prisoner of war discussions later in the conflict. The British depended upon American support and without it, coupled with the absence of assistance from Dominions; they could not equally participate in the burden of prisoner detention. Unwilling to become a junior partner in the relationship, the British insisted upon equal allotment of responsibility, while simultaneously articulating their dependence on American assistance in terms of resources and space.

In March 1944, the United Kingdom and the United States stalled in deadlocked disagreement over the detention of approximately 11,000 prisoners for whom the British were responsible. When the American members of the subcommittee suspected the British concealed political reasoning behind their refusal to accept more prisoners, the U.S. members suggested that America would do better to open direct communications with Canada. The British opposed this proposal, arguing that London would handle the negotiations most efficiently. Ultimately, these meetings concluded without determining a solution to the problem of detaining the anticipated German captives and the committee adjourned with another request for more research.¹³

The inability of Combined committee members to agree on a plan for prisoner detention did nothing to stymie Allied invasion preparation. The initial attack on D-day proved successful, and the Allies began their march across France in June of 1944. The

¹³ C.A.D.C. 5/5. "Maintenance, Transshipment and Disposition of Prisoners of War," Joint Logistics Committee. March 14, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

successful invasion of Europe generated more prisoners than the Allies expected. The message sent from the Headquarters of the European Theater of Operations, United States Army (ETOUSA) to the United States War Department in September 1944 illustrated the extent to which the Anglo-American detention policies affected operations on the ground. Under the command of General Eisenhower, ETOUSA reported that the unexpectedly high number of German captives necessitated a reduction in guards for all German prisoners in the European theater. In order to gauge the situation in Europe, the War Department wrote General Eisenhower, asking a series of questions concerning the circumstances facing Allied troops. In response to the War Department's inquiry as to the amount of German prisoners that could be held in Europe, ETOUSA reported that if necessary, 300,000 prisoners could be contained in enclosures and an additional 112,000 could be used for labor. However, detaining these prisoners would require 12,000 additional personnel and an alteration of the Allied supply program.¹⁴

In response to a War Department inquiry about the 50-50 agreement, ETOUSA reported, "All captures to date have not been divided 50-50 with the British. Delay is being experienced with having the British under the 50-50 agreement accept their share. It is hoped that in October this will have been accomplished."¹⁵ Although the message optimistically reported hopes for British responsibility in the upcoming month, Americans bore more than 50% of the prisoners captured in combined operations well into the fall of 1944. The report concluded with a statement of the degree to which this affected Americans military operations:

¹⁴ JCS 241/10. CM-IN 26571. September 28, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 2, NARA.

¹⁵ Ibid.

It is emphasized that the number of presently held prisoners far exceeds the number planned for. In order to meet this situation, we have improvised, and until the port capacity situation is improved materially, it will be a severe burden upon the theater retaining prisoners of war in the numbers now held. The request made in our unnumbered cable... that 6,000 additional personnel be shipped immediately to reduce our holdings in the theater is stressed.¹⁶

Eisenhower set the precedent of improvisation with regard to war prisoners in the North African campaign. He improvised in the absence of Anglo-American agreement or direction, and did so again in the European theater, although this time circumstances had changed. Americans felt the heavy weight of military casualties and subsequent public scrutiny. Their previous ability to adapt to British weaknesses faltered by 1944, and the British proved unable or unwilling to accommodate the changes in American circumstance.

The war significantly affected the American people and the US economy, creating a nation with a disparate set of aims from the country who accepted 175,000 prisoners from the British in 1942, even different from the nation planning to host additional war prisoners in 1943. This is evident in a letter sent in September 1944, when the American Under Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, wrote a letter to the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, voicing his concerns about the United States' future holding capacity for prisoners of war. Urging Stimson to solidify future policies regarding the detention of German war prisoners, Patterson explained that the United States could not afford to offer additional assistance to the British.

We have 280,000 prisoners of war in the United States, and the number is rising rapidly. Of those already here, 175,000 are prisoners taken by the British but accepted for custody by the United States under a commitment made by Sumner Welles to Lord Halifax. The British are asking that we bring here 50,000 additional prisoners at present in their custody. At least 200,000 additional

¹⁶ Ibid.

prisoners, captured by our forces in Europe, are awaiting shipment to this country. The 200,000 now awaiting shipment are likely to become 400,000 soon.¹⁷

While Patterson admitted that war prisoners had to date helped the United States overcome manpower shortages, he anticipated distress if 200,000 or 400,000 prisoners awaiting shipment soon arrived in the United States. Because the repercussions of the importation would be economic and political, he pled for Stimson to implement formal policies. At the war's conclusion, Patterson argued that American labor would again be available, and the public would not be pleased to have their work taken by Germans, nor would they be pleased to see "idle" and "well-fed" Germans loitering about.¹⁸ Furthermore, the cost to ship Germans back across the Atlantic after the cessation of hostilities would only increase with every shipment of prisoners the United States accepted as the conflict continued. Thus, Patterson recommended the immediate termination of all shipments of prisoners to the United States. Alternatively, he suggested they be turned over to the de facto government of France, and to the governments of Belgium and Holland, who had immediate use for German prisoners in the tasks of reconstruction.¹⁹

The French originally posed this suggestion to Eisenhower early in September, requesting that the Allies transfer German prisoners of war to them who might be used for work in agriculture and rehabilitation of war-damaged zones.²⁰ Despite some American hesitation that the Germans would not recognize the de facto French

¹⁷ JCS 241/10. "Memorandum for the Secretary of War Dated 26 September 1944," Importation of Additional Prisoners of War. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ SCAF 89. From Supreme Allied Expeditionary Force, Forward on Continent to War Department, Headquarters Communications Zone, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, Paris, France. September 18, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA.

government as a belligerent, and might subsequently retaliate on Allied prisoners in Germany, the Americans and British agreed to transfer German prisoners to the French.²¹ Not surprisingly, the American Provost Marshal General and the British Chiefs of Staff strongly supported acceptance of the French request, as both were eager for relief from the pressure of detaining additional prisoners.²²

The overwhelming numbers of prisoners captured in Allied advances through Europe gave the Allies cause for enthusiasm regarding the French request for German prisoners. The estimated number of additional prisoners of war already captured in October 1944 or expected to be captured aggregated 1,004,000. With 350,000 already captured in Northern France, the British and Americans alike felt the strain of guarding these men and believed the benefits of transferring prisoners to the French far outweighed the potential risks.²³

The United States and Great Britain subsequently decided to transfer as many prisoners to the French as possible while adhering to the stipulations of the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, the United States acted upon the Under Secretary of War's recommendation and halted the import of German war prisoners in the fall of 1944. As

²¹ Lieutenant-Colonel M.C. Bernays submitted a statement disagreeing with American decision to transfer prisoner authority to the de facto French government: JCS 927/495-1, "Statement by Lt. Colonel M.C. Bernays," G-1, War Department General Staff. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA; the British agreed with the American proposal to transfer the prisoners, CCS 276/9. "Transfer of German Prisoners to the French." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum of the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. October 19, 1944, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA.

²² CCS 276/9. "Transfer of German Prisoners to the French." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum of the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. October 19, 1944, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA; JCS 927/425-1, Statement by Brigadier General B.M. Bryan, Jr, Assistant Provost Marshal, in reply to statement by Lt. Colonel M.C. Bernays, G-1, WDGS, no date, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA.

²³ JCS 241/10. "Facts Bearing on the Problem Report." RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 362, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 3, NARA.

articulated by Patterson, this policy aimed to quell American political and economic concerns, but in the process, dismayed the British. By November 1944, it became apparent that the French were unable to accept enough German prisoners to significantly reduce the stress on the Americans and British detention facilities, and the British placed another call for help from the Americans.

The British report explained that the French could likely accept only 50,000 German prisoners, a number too small to significantly lighten the burden faced in the United Kingdom. The British claimed that in an attempt to spare the Americans from the burden of additional prisoners, “accommodation resources in the United Kingdom have been stretched to the utmost.”²⁴ The report continued:

Arrangements are now in hand to hold 170,000 prisoners in the United Kingdom. Of these, 100,000 will be held in covered accommodations, overcrowded by austerity scales, by 50%. The remaining 70,000 will be under canvas. It is anticipated that this will house prisoners of war captured up to the clearance of the Scheldt pockets, but allows no provision for future captures.²⁵

The report observed that this system could not be maintained due to medical standards, and that furthermore, to detain prisoners without shelter through the winter would be a violation of Article 10 of the Geneva Convention. The report established a clear distinction between hosting prisoners in Europe and prisoner detention in America. The British explained that the “war damage and subsequent housing shortage for the civilian population” in Europe complicated not only British attempts to undertake their share of the prisoners, but that the rest of Europe suffered trauma as well. The report explained that at the request of Eisenhower, the British accepted “a commitment of

²⁴ CCS 276/12. “Accommodation for Prisoners of War Captured In Northwest Europe,” Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. November 18, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 4, NARA

²⁵ Ibid.

indefinite duration to accommodate seven U.S. divisions which must be able to remain in the United Kingdom. This commitment has absorbed suitable covered accommodation for 35,000 prisoners of war.”²⁶ The British justified their inability to detain their share of captured Germans by citing the harrowing experiences of the European war and by reminding the United States that the presence of Allied troops limited their capability as a detaining power. The British used their wartime experience to generate pity and understanding from the United States, and encourage them to assist the government in London.

In view of the foregoing and the pressing need for relief in the United Kingdom the British Chiefs of Staff urge that immediate reconsideration be given to the recommendation that no more prisoners of war be transferred to the United States. They further urge that the United States Government be requested to grant a further accommodation credit of 50,000 places in the United States to His Majesty’s Government, to be filled with British owned prisoners of war by mid-February, 1945.²⁷

Echoing their request for United States assistance in 1942, this British report sought to elicit American aid through descriptions of the British plight and justification for their reliance on their ally. An ally, the British emphasized, largely protected from German bombs and other hardships European nations suffered since 1939.

The American response to this plea for assistance neither mirrored previous United States responses to British requests for aid, nor offered comfort to the British seeking recourse. A report by the American Joint Logistics Committee addressed the requests made by the British the previous month. As the United States halted importation of their own war prisoners, the Committee asserted that accommodating prisoners for whom the British were responsible was out of the question. The Committee also

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

expressed frustration that the British report omitted the possibility of detaining prisoners in its Dominions, and the Americans suspected the British to have additional housing even within the United Kingdom that could be employed to accommodate German prisoners. The Americans cited the difficulty of securing cargo ships for the purpose of westbound movement, and also noted the economic implications of shipping the Germans back to Europe after the conclusion of hostilities. It would be more economically viable for the United States to ship supplies to the prisoners in Europe than to transport prisoners to North America. The Joint Logistics Committee concluded their report with little sympathy for the British predicament regarding war prisoners. “The British Request in C.C.S. 276/12 does not establish that it would be injurious to the war effort to require the British to provide accommodations for the half of the prisoners for which the British are responsible.”²⁸

In their response to the British call for assistance, Americans illustrated a significant change in their willingness to relieve Britain of its detention responsibilities. When Americans accepted Axis prisoners from the British in 1942, they agreed to bear the burden of enemy troops captured solely in British operations. However, in 1944, the United States refused to lend assistance to Britain with regard to prisoners captured in combined operations, in a campaign the Americans initiated. Unmoved by the British explanations of difficulties, the Americans articulated that only circumstances “injurious to the war effort” would motivate American intervention. When the British understood that the Americans would not accept 50,000 “British-owned” prisoners of war, they

²⁸ JCS 241/15. “Accommodation for Prisoners of War in Northwest Europe.” Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Logistics Committee. December 7, 1944. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 4, NARA.

adopted a new strategy and lobbied for the disbandment of the 50-50 agreement in favor of a different system of their own suggestion.

In response to this British proposal, the Combined Administrative Committee (C.Ad.C) discussed the suggestion and subsequently compiled an extensive report articulating the disparate perspectives of the British and the Americans on the Committee regarding the 50-50 agreement. Instead of the 50/50 agreement, which stipulated that the British and the Americans split equally the responsibility for all prisoners of war captured in combined operations after the Tunisian campaign, the British suggested a new arrangement. They proposed that the British Commonwealth and the United States each take responsibility for their own captures with effect from September 25, 1944. Additionally, when the British and Americans transferred responsibility for war prisoners to a third power, the prisoners taken from American and British holdings should be in proportion to the number of prisoners each nation captured after September 25.

The British admitted that although the British Chiefs of Staff understood the disparity of fighting forces that would participate in the Allied invasion at the time the British and Americans consented to the 50-50 agreement, they did not foresee the large number of Axis prisoners for which they would be responsible.²⁹ The disparity between British and American captures frustrated the British considerably, and with fair cause. The Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) estimated that between January 1 and June 30, 1945, the 21st Army Group (British forces) would capture 225,000 German prisoners, while U.S. Army Groups would capture 635,000 Germans. Despite

²⁹ CADC 70/4. "Agreement Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe." Report by the Combined Administrative Committee, No date. Page 12. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 5, NARA. The British and Americans officially agreed to the 50-50 policy on March 24, 1944.

this significant disparity, the British argued that the lack of accommodation available in the United Kingdom and in the 21st Army Group's area on the continent was the primary reason they sought the abandonment of the 50-50 agreement. The British argued that the only possibilities in the Dominions included potential space for 32,000 prisoners in Canada, (but that the Canadians had not consented to the acceptance of these prisoners) and also room for 10,000 prisoners in the Mediterranean. The British commented on the differences between British and American holding capacities, and cited the fact that the United Kingdom allotted only 30 square feet per prisoner, and at the present experienced 50% overcrowding. Conversely prisoners in America enjoyed 40 square feet of space per captive.³⁰

Expressing the hardships of prisoner detention on the average Briton, the British committee members explained that while prisoners were detained in the United Kingdom, the military accommodated British troops in requisitioned buildings that could otherwise be returned to their owners, such as schools, private homes, and boarding houses. Here the British committee members leaned heavily on the harsh experience of British civilians to generate support for their cause. "Due to the wholesale destruction of houses of which 202,000 have been destroyed and 225,000 rendered uninhabitable, in addition to the numbers of hotels and schools, strong pressure is being brought to bear for the return of these present requisitioned properties to relieve intense over crowding of the civilian population."³¹ This effort on behalf of British committee members to emphasize the

³⁰ CADC 70/4. "Agreement Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe." Report by the Combined Administrative Committee, No date. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 5, NARA.

³¹ Ibid.

adversity faced by average British civilians stemmed from their desire to generate American support.

British claims of domestic crisis were not unfounded. By June of 1943 London had only 76% of its prewar population. The British housing crisis only worsened as the war continued, and between the start of the war in 1939 and the end of the conflict in 1945, “some sixty million changes of address took place among a civilian population of about thirty-eight million.”³² As construction projects and house building had virtually ceased, three hundred thousand families lived in houses considered condemned by the end of 1942.³³ This significant material damage on the British home front differentiated the British war experience from that of Americans, and the British hoped to exploit the difference to earn American assistance regarding the question of prisoners of war. The committee’s attempt to showcase this stress coincided with British public frustration with perceived American apathy.

A British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) poll from March 1945 revealed this British resentment when 73% of the 1,500 British civilians surveyed responded that the Americans did not live up to British expectations. The conductor of the survey explained the comments as follows:

It is felt that American civilians do not realize the seriousness of the war and a few mention that too much attention and energy is being expended on the Pacific war. American boasting about its part in the Allied operations and a failure to give Britain sufficient credit for her part in the fighting and on the homefront [sic] also come in for a share of the criticism.³⁴

³² Angus Calder, *The People’s War*, 316.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Ruth T. Hooper, British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), March 1945. RG 84: Records of the US Embassy, London, England, E2603. Records maintained by Ambassador John G. Winant 1938-1946. Box No. 5, Folder: Morale/Public Opinion, NARA.

At this point in the war, British policymakers operated in an environment in which their public believed that their war experiences did not generate the sympathy or respect from Americans that they merited. At the beginning of the war, the British faced American reluctance and isolationist sentiment. However, when the U.S. entered the war, Americans revered British experiences, hoping to learn from them and improve US wartime efforts. In this late stage of the war, American behavior continued to evolve and the British felt neglected and attempted to stimulate American activism by flaunting their difficult experiences.

American policymakers did not remain in the same mindset under which they operated in 1942, either in regard to British experience, or their own flexible, reactive prisoner of war policies. Britain's inability to adapt alongside the evolving American approach to prisoner of war policy-making is clearly evidenced in their concluding argument regarding the 50-50 policy in the Combined Administrative Committee. "The Combined Chiefs of Staff did not regard the 50/50 agreement as permanent in respect of accommodation of P.W. [prisoners of war] but envisaged a continuously changing situation as regards the extent of U.S. and U.K. responsibility which would make it necessary to revise that proportion periodically."³⁵ The United Kingdom maintained the comfortable and flexible attitude towards prisoners of war that they held in the early stages of the conflict. Assuming the Americans would cater to the demands of the British and their home front, as they had done in 1942 and even in the 1943 North African campaign, albeit more reluctantly as time passed. The British continued to believe that

³⁵ CADC 70/4. "Agreement Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe." Report by the Combined Administrative Committee, No date. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 5, NARA.

their experience could be used to manipulate American behavior, long after it ceased to be an effective motivation for American prisoner of war policies. As the Axis threat faded, domestic public opinion, economics and post-war considerations played a more significant role in dictating American decision-making.

In contrast to the British recommendation for an alternate approach to the Anglo-American system of prisoner detention, the Americans on the Committee argued instead for the maintenance of the 50-50 agreement. The United States' members noted that if the Combined Chiefs of Staff implemented the proposed British system, the United States would effectively be responsible for 977,000 prisoners (in addition to those already detained in the United States). The Americans argued that the British exaggerated figures of prisoners detained in the United Kingdom, and commented that 100,000 of those men had been listed as Italian cooperators. The Americans nullified the British case about respective manpower capacities between the United Kingdom and the United States, when the US Committee members commented that the agreement was between all of the British Commonwealth Governments and the United States, rather than solely the United Kingdom. The American argument highlighted United States' participation in wars on two fronts, noting that American participation in the Pacific created severe manpower shortages comparable to those in the United Kingdom. The US concluded, "The fact that approximately 70% of the Forces now fighting in Northwest Europe are American is not equitable justification for requiring the United States Government to assume, in addition, the burden of responsibility for more than one half of the prisoners taken in such

fighting.”³⁶ The American argument did not reveal a spiteful attitude towards the British, but instead argued that the circumstances of the war genuinely prevented Americans from offering the British respite with regard to war prisoner policies.

Despite the fact that the American half of the Combined Administrative Committee failed to sympathize with the British struggle to detain prisoners, American General Marshall still carried a torch for the British cause. In March of 1945, he wrote a letter to Eisenhower pleading the British case. Marshall explained to Eisenhower that the British hoped to modify the 50-50 agreement and that they cited relevant information in making their case. “Based on SHAEF estimate 860,000 captures between 1 January and 30 June 1945, they will be required under present agreement to take care of 502,000 prisoners in addition to their present holdings of 357,000 German and Italian prisoners in United Kingdom [sic] and on continent.”³⁷ Marshall continued to emphasize that the 50,000 additional personnel the British would need to employ in order to detain these prisoners would come at the expense of operational commitments. Because the United Kingdom lacked the accommodations to detain these prisoners, Marshall predicted, “considerable British public resentment and adverse effect on morale of troops would result if large influx of prisoners required housing British and Allied troops under canvas.”³⁸ Marshall argued that the retention of the current 50-50 policy would leave the United Kingdom suffering an “impossible” burden and that British Dominions had not agreed to bear responsibility for enough of the prisoners to offset the United Kingdom’s

³⁶ CADC 70/4. “Agreement Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe.” Report by the Combined Administrative Committee, No date. Page 12. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 5, NARA.

³⁷ WARX 58191. Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, Forward Echelon, Rheims, France, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, Main Echelon, Versailles, France. From Marshall for Eisenhower. March 24, 1945. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 5, NARA.

³⁸ Ibid.

struggle. Marshall also acknowledged the obstacles to dissolving the 50-50 agreement, including possible interference with redeployments, shipping and the significant shortages of American manpower shortages within the armed forces. Ultimately, he asked Eisenhower to consider the British request for a new policy of determining responsibility for prisoners, through a system by which the Americans and British would be responsible for the prisoners they captured, as of September 25, 1944.³⁹

Eisenhower's response to Marshall succinctly conveyed his opinion regarding British detention capacity. The Supreme Commander of Allied Forces first commented that the Allied Headquarters appreciated the British point of view and that he understood the difficulty of detaining prisoners. However, his sympathy did not translate into material assistance in the matter:

Nevertheless, we are not prepared at this time to recommend abandonment of the 50/50 basis. We do not feel that the UK is the only holding area available to the British and while we are not in a position to weigh the holding capacities of the British Empire, it would appear that Canada should be urged to take the 32,000 mentioned and British should accept the 10,000 into the Mediterranean. In general, the entire capacity of the British Empire to care for prisoners of war should be fully examined before the 50/50 basis is abandoned. We are taking full advantage of facilities in France and Belgium, and it is believed that British should do the same to a greater extent than they now contemplate.⁴⁰

Eisenhower conveyed suspicions about the veracity of British reports regarding their holding capacity, and demanded greater efforts on behalf of the entire British Empire to absorb German prisoners of war. He articulated the reasons for his frustration when he described the situation in France. While the British accommodated 50,000 captives for whom they held responsibility on the continent, the Americans detained

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ S83161. From Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, Main, Versailles, France, To War Department. March 26, 1945. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 4, NARA.

136,000 prisoners for the British in addition to 376,000 of their own prisoners. Eisenhower also explained that of the 50,000 prisoners the French agreed to accept, only 4,000 have been successfully transferred to French authorities. While he acknowledged that the British and Americans would seek further accommodations with the French, the transfer process took so long that it seemed unlikely to offer respite. He concluded with comments to the War Department that he would soon write to request additional personnel, as he anticipated the situation would grow more severe. “Our present facilities are stretched to the limit. During the past few days our captures have been enormous, and are increasing steadily.”⁴¹ Eisenhower’s letter revealed the stress of detaining prisoners and his response was consistent with the new American standard of performance as articulated by the Joint Logistics Committee in December. The Americans could not afford to offer as much assistance to the British as was possible in the early stages of the conflict. Eisenhower’s concerns and hesitations echoed those articulated by the Americans on the Combined Administrative Committee. The stakes were too high for Americans to bear the burden of British responsibilities in addition to their own. Marshall’s appreciation for the British difficulties was not unlike Sumner Welles’ sympathy for the British in 1942; however, the circumstances in the United States no longer allowed for such gestures.

Although Eisenhower sent his reply to the War Department on March 26, 1945, the Americans withheld a direct answer regarding the British request for an abandonment of the 50-50 arrangement. With the Combined Administrative Committee again in a deadlock, the British seemed unlikely to find relief in the United States and they proved unrelenting in their efforts to coerce Americans into an agreement. In April, the British

⁴¹ Ibid.

Combined Secretary, Brigadier Arthur Cornwall-Jones sent a letter to his American counterpart, General McFarland, expressing the British sentiment.

I am getting into a bit of a jam over this. By mutual agreement with you I am holding my people off pressing yours on the question of the 50-50 agreement which we want to get revised on what we think would be a more equitable basis. London feels pretty strongly on the matter and have no knowledge of the fact that we are stalling here.

I cannot hold the position much longer unless I get something official from you. As you know, we are waiting on some proposal coming forward from your side which we understand may help clear the air on the whole of this frightful prisoners of war problem every day.

Can you please give me a forecast of when we can expect something? If you cannot see that I have any alternative but to suggest to our C.Ad.C. team than that they must go into battle again on the C.Ad.C. 70/3.⁴²

This letter offers insight into the complex dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship in 1945, as Cornwall-Jones revealed the stress and the urgency with which London considered the 50-50 policy while simultaneously hoping to maintain good relations with the Americans. It communicated a cordial nature of Anglo-American diplomacy, as Cornwall-Jones referenced his personal accord with McFarland in an effort to halt antagonism over the 50-50 agreement, but simultaneously illustrated the persistent bitterness created by the disparate opinions. Cornwall-Jones equated the conversations within the Combined Administrative Committee to battles, indicating the severity of the disagreement and the determination of each side to prevail. By April 1945, with the war edging ever closer to Allied victory in Europe, the British and American allies felt less motivation to work in harmony, as they had done in 1943 over issues of prisoner exchange.

⁴² 492/CJ, From Brigadier A.T. Cornwall-Jones to McFarland. Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. British Joint Staff Mission. Washington. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 4, NARA.

In addition to the 50-50 policy dispute, the British and the Americans found themselves locked into another different argument as well. Disparate circumstances again drove Americans and Britons to adopt conflicting perspectives regarding war prisoners. In this instance, the disagreement took the form of a prisoner exchange opportunity. In the spring of 1944, the British attempted a unilateral exchange of prisoners with Germany, but failed to advance in the negotiations without United States support. Although the British contacted Germany in March 1944 about opening negotiations for a prisoner of war exchange, their request went unanswered. The British contacted Germany again in February 1945, suggesting an exchange of 3,000 long-term prisoners of war. Immediately following this proposal, the British received a German response to the initial exchange offer, suggesting an exchange of 25,000 prisoners of war. Under significant pressure from the home front to return long-term prisoners, the British received the offer enthusiastically, but “realised that in view of the operational implications of accepting the total offer of 25,000 prisoners it would be necessary to obtain the concurrence of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff before this larger proposal could be accepted.”⁴³

The Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff explained to the Americans that 37,187 British personnel had been in German captivity for nearly 5 years and that the increase in mental cases among British captives held in Germany and political pressures on the home front motivated such an exchange. The British further argued that the Germans initiated this offer and to refuse could negatively impact all Allied captives held in Germany. The report also made the case that all prisoners of war in Germany suffered

⁴³ CCS 794/2. “Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War.” Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. March 23, 1945. RG 218 Entry UD1- Decimal File 1942-45. Box No. 351. Folder: Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War, NARA.

due to chronic food shortages. By removing 25,000 British troops, the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff contended that all remaining captives would enjoy better conditions.⁴⁴

The British report anticipated United States objections and attempted to quell fears about the repatriation of able-bodied German troops at this point in the war. The British first explained that Germans considered particularly helpful to the war effort would be excluded from repatriation. Thus the Luftwaffe, U-Boat personnel and members of the Schutzstaffel (SS) would not be considered. In justifying this exchange to the Americans, the British further explained that only recently captured German troops (those captured since D-Day) would be eligible for repatriation. The report noted that these men would have an updated impression of the United Kingdom and could understand the exaggeration of German propaganda. Rather than stiffening the resolve of German resistance, the British argued these repatriates might do the opposite. The report predicated this argument on the assumption that the Germans would not request long-term captives for the exchange, as the repatriation of Afrika Korps troops would have been more problematic. The British optimistically contended that by the time they completed the transfer, it would be too late for additional troops to significantly help the German cause. The British concluded the report with a request for American consent to avoid inclusion of the Soviet Union in the discussion, as the British believed they would delay conversations about the exchange.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ CCS 794/2. "Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. March 23, 1945. RG 218 Entry UD1- Decimal File 1942-45. Box No. 351. Folder: Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War, NARA.

The American response to the British indicates once again the ways in which circumstances changed American policy towards the United Kingdom since 1942. After acknowledging that they understood the situation as presented by the British, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to the report with a memorandum. "It is the view of the US Chiefs of Staff that to do this in the present state of the war would have such an adverse effect on the war effort that the United States Chiefs of Staff do not feel free to recommend to their government that it concur. They further feel that it would be a mistake which might have critical repercussions to proceed in this matter without informing the Soviet Government."⁴⁶ The memorandum acknowledged the plight of the United Kingdom and understood the weight of the public pressure. However, the JCS also emphasized the high casualty rates American troops had born consistently since D-day, and explained the public outrage that would ensue in America if Britain benefitted so royally from the proposed exchange.

Specifically, the memorandum explained that since D-day, U.S. troops suffered the loss of approximately 3,000 men killed, 12,000 men wounded and 2,000 troops missing for every 25,000 German prisoners captured. As such, they could not condone the repatriation of 25,000 able-bodied Germans. Because the proposed exchange involved only British Commonwealth troops from the Allied side, the US Chiefs of Staff asserted that aside from articulation of their disagreement, they would not participate in further consideration of the matter.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ CCS 724/3. "Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff. March 24, 1945. RG 218 Entry UD1-Decimal File 1942-45. Box No. 351. Folder: Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War, NARA.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The British and the Americans again found themselves deadlocked in argument. The British seemed determined to complete the exchange and the Americans acted just as resolutely to prevent it. The Combined Administrative Committee debated the issue at length, and although the Americans conceded to an exchange of 5,000 prisoners, the Committee never agreed on the remaining 20,000.⁴⁸ Ultimately military developments forced the British to reevaluate their position. When the American forces advanced into Germany, the British conceded that an exchange would be too difficult to maneuver, leaving the American policy-makers victorious in this instance.⁴⁹ This final wartime conflict between the British and American policymakers over POW policies marks a decisively different American policy towards the British than had been employed in 1942. Previously, American politicians bent over backwards to assist the British, accepting 25,000 additional prisoners owing to an unfavorable situation with Polish refugees in 1942. In 1945, the Americans acknowledged of the long-term British captives in Germany, but did not support their immediate repatriation. The Americans consistently put their war effort before their good relationship with the British. Prior British experience had lost its effect on the battle-hardened United States by 1945. The Americans recognized that British prisoners suffered longer imprisonment, but their own severe casualties prevented them from assisting their allies. Just as the British understood the burden of detaining war prisoners, by 1945 so too did the Americans. A British plan to ameliorate domestic concern without benefitting the United States found sympathy in 1942, but it fell flat in 1945. American participation in the conflict earned them their own

⁴⁸ CADC 89/1. "Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War" March 20, 1945. RG 218 Entry UD1- Decimal File 1942-45. Box No. 351. Folder: Proposed Exchange of Able-Bodied British and German Prisoners of War, NARA.

⁴⁹ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 166.

leverage in conversations with the British, and left them with the weight of domestic public criticism as well. The failure of this final instance of British experience to win American assistance demonstrates the marked shift in American attitude and subsequent Anglo-American dynamics over the course of the war.

EPILOGUE

“Power is relative: it is not simply that Britain changed, but even more, that the world changed around it.”¹ Although David Reynolds made this comment in reference to the twentieth century in its entirety, it aptly describes British relations with the United States over the course of the Second World War, particularly concerning prisoner of war diplomacy. Reynolds argued that although Britain’s share of the world’s wealth diminished over the course of the twentieth century, the decline represented a long-term trend. He maintained that no immediate correlation exists between changes in economic performance and shifts in international position, essentially between wealth and power. Policy is the fundamental intermediary; the attitudes and decisions of government departments can bridge the gap between wealth and world power when foreign and domestic policies are capable of adapting to international circumstance.²

In the case of prisoner of war policies, the British civil and military authorities proved incapable of this elasticity, crippling their position within the Anglo-American alliance. The United Kingdom’s initial approach to the Americans worked in favor of the British war effort. Relying on their experience detaining prisoners in the First World War and in the first years of the Second World War, the British presented themselves as a teacher to the United States. Unfamiliar with vast, international prisoner detention systems, the Americans appreciated the opportunity to learn from the British, inquired about British processes, and praised British work. When the British asked for material

¹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 1.

² *Ibid.*, 47-48.

assistance, the Americans granted it on good faith. Embittered after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and concerned about Axis advances on most fronts, the Americans dove headfirst into the war effort.

This initial, enthusiastic American response to the British paternalism and their generous replies to British calls for aid reinforced British policies and established a comfortable and informal atmosphere surrounding questions of prisoners of war. At this juncture, the British took this informality to heart and henceforth their policies towards their American allies concerning prisoners of war became static. Assuming the American attitude towards war prisoners would not change, the British believed their previous experience would continue to impress American policy-makers for the duration of the conflict. British policies reflected the belief that their position as a European nation more closely involved in the European war would afford them a superior position in the Anglo-American relationship.

As such, the British continued to lean on their experience in the North African campaign and the prisoner of war exchanges that took place in 1943. However, Americans were less enthusiastic about British experience at this point, having matured as a detaining power. Both the Americans and British felt the effects of the informal nature of the relationship, as it left the Allied prisoner detention system uncoordinated and at the mercy of the geographical limitations of the North African environment. Unnoticed by the British, Americans began to view British experience as a deterrent rather than as an inspiration. Although the United States began questioning the adequacy of British policies, they still largely acquiesced to British proposals in 1943.

By 1944, the circumstances of the war changed markedly, and as the Allies planned coordinated military attacks, questions of responsibility for the captured prisoners strained Anglo-American relations. British rhetoric appeared out of touch with reality and although the British maintained similar policies to those in place at the beginning of the war, the United States grew less willing and able to assist the British. In contrast to static British war prisoner policies, the United States' war machine grew and adapted to their responsibilities. When the British requested assistance, the Americans responded with criticism of the British war effort and suspicions about the veracity of British reports. When the strain on American policymakers increased, they became less forgiving of British weaknesses. This tension burgeoned at the height of the Allied invasion of Europe, partially owing to the previously established culture of informality and reactive policies regarding prisoners of war. It was precisely the comfortable nature of policymaking for which both the Americans and British were grateful in the early stages of the war that bred discord, indecision, and confusion in the latter stages of the conflict.

Despite the various instances of conflict between these two states, both preferred to preserve the appearance of a cooperative alliance. Direct diplomatic contact with the enemy motivated the two states to overcome discord in the relationship, suggesting that both states shared a singular priority of presenting a united image of the alliance to outside threats. This desire to maintain appearances forced compromises from both sides over the course of the war. When the threat of an enemy disappeared, such as in the case of Italy, the British and the Americans reverted to disputes over policy and procedures.

It was not until months after Germany surrendered that the United States released Great Britain from its responsibilities under the 50-50 agreement, and throughout the summer of 1945, the United States and Britain continued to negotiate over responsibility for prisoners of war. By May 31, 1945 United States forces held an aggregate total of 3,100,000 German personnel both inside and outside of Germany and Austria, while Eisenhower expected an additional increase of 230,000. At this time the Americans further held 935,000 Germans captured by the British. Eisenhower reported on the extremely strained United States resources and he aggressively advocated for the transfer of 350,000 prisoners back to British authority.³

Two months later, the British accepted the transfer of 200,000 German prisoners into their care, while still attempting to negotiate the termination of the 50-50 agreement. After the dissolution of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, the British argued that prisoners should be divided based on the size of the occupation zone and that the Combined Chiefs of Staff needed to establish a new committee in Germany to oversee the necessary transfers of prisoners.⁴ While the United States disagreed with the formation of the committee suggested by the British, they agreed to terminate the 50-50 agreement in September 1945. In this memorandum conceding the British proposal, the Americans made a significant comment:

The United States Chiefs of Staff are informed that substantial numbers of prisoners and disarmed enemy personnel have already been transferred from the United States to the British and French zones. Informal agreement has been reached by the commanders of these zones for the transfer of all prisoners and

³ JCS 276/32. "Arrangements Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 6, NARA.

⁴ CCS 276/33. "Arrangements Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe. Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 6, NARA.

disarmed enemy forces, not being used for labor, to the zone of proper residence. The United States Chiefs of Staff therefore feel that the situation has already been dealt with.⁵

This acceptance of such an informal agreement suggests the extent to which informality permeated the Anglo-American relationship. Whether the British controlled the relationship, teaching the Americans the proper functioning of an international prison system, or the Americans dominated the partnership, holding the British against their desire to a mutually agreed upon division of prisoners, the informality which permeated the diplomatic relationship in 1942 persisted through to the post-war period with regard to prisoners of war. Although the American response to British requests for assistance grew less malleable as the war continued, American and British policymakers alike tolerated a certain degree of improvisation and flexibility over the course of the war. The indecision or informality at a diplomatic level forced Eisenhower's improvisation on the ground, in both the North African and Northwest European campaigns. Despite American insistence that the British uphold the formalized 50-50 agreement, this September 1945 report indicates that traces of the informality of Anglo-American decision-making persevered through the war's conclusion.

Prisoner of war diplomacy fails to fit neatly into any of the three established schools of thought regarding Anglo-American relationships. Characteristics of each of these three schools are evident in the wartime division of responsibility for Axis war prisoners. The common language uniting Americans and Britons undoubtedly contributed to the informality of their relationship, and allowed for a relaxed demeanor and a reactive

⁵ CCS 276/34. "Arrangements Regarding Prisoners of War Captured in Northwest Europe." Combined Chiefs of Staff. Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff. RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45. CCS 383.6 (5-27-42) to CCS 383.6 (4-24-42) sec. 3. Box No. 363, Folder 4-24-42, Sec. 6, NARA.

set of policies enacted by Great Britain and the United States. The early stages of the war, during which the Americans generously accepted 175,000 prisoners for whom the British held responsibility, indicates of a feeling of camaraderie deeper than a military alliance. Furthermore, hosting the enemy in one's own backyard does nothing if not force a sharp contrast between your allies and your enemies. The ideological nature of the war brought the British and the Americans together in defense of their similar forms of government and lifestyle, and in opposition to the enemy they held captive. For these reasons, the case of prisoners of war fits into the "Evangelical" school of thought.

Anglo-American policies about war prisoners convey characteristics of the "Functionalist" school of thought as Americans and Britons cooperated in pursuit of a common goal. Removing the Axis troops from the battlefield and simultaneously upholding Geneva Convention stipulations concerning their safety, benefitted both the British and Americans hoping to protect Allied prisoners in Axis hands. The Anglo-American relationship required significant nurturing by various individuals who stimulated cooperation, including Dwight Eisenhower and George Marshall. The two states overcame disputes when necessary to appear strong and unified against their enemies. These purposeful aspects of the relationship are characteristic of the functionalist school of thought.

This wartime relationship also possesses qualities identified within the "Terminal" school of thought. In several instances throughout the conflict, British rhetoric was out of touch with the reality of the relationship. Their claim that they had the resources to keep up with the American rate of prisoner detention and their demands to be considered a full partner in the 50-50 relationship brought the British consistent

frustration in the later years of war because they were incapable of keeping pace with the United States. The static diplomacy of the British in contrast to the dynamic, progressive nature of the Americans ultimately created problems on both sides of the Atlantic.

Prisoner of war diplomacy did not occur in a vacuum. Countless factors influenced the decisions made in both the American and British camps, including domestic pressures, military concerns, foreign relations (particularly among the other Allied nations) and the post-war order. Nevertheless, an identifiable pattern emerges between American and British diplomats and military policy-makers in the Combined Chiefs of Staff. This pattern fails to adhere singularly to any one school of thought about Anglo-American relations, and consequently offers a nuanced perspective of the wartime relationship between the United States and the British Commonwealth.

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