

**CAMP 132:
A GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMP
IN A CANADIAN PRAIRIE COMMUNITY
DURING WORLD WAR TWO**

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iii

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ABSTRACT

During World War Two, the Canadian Government was responsible for over 34,000 German Prisoners of War. These prisoners were housed in twenty-five separate camps across Canada, with the two largest being situated in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge, Alberta.

In the first year of the war the Canadian Government had intended to only intern Canadian enemy aliens, people suspected of being subversives. In June 1940 this changed. The British Government requested Canada accept that country's civilian internees. However, included in the first shipment of civilians were Jewish refugees and German prisoners of war, groups not expected by the Canadian administration. The country's own internment policy became inadequate and the government decided that if the nation was to intern any group from Britain, it would be German soldiers captured during military operations. The two countries began negotiations on developing a prisoner of war policy while at the same time Canada was receiving German prisoners of war. The lack of a congruent policy, and the presence of devout Nazis within the prisoner ranks created problems for the country. By the time the Canadian Government was able to formulate an articulate internment policy, a Nazi regime had taken control of Camp 132 in Medicine Hat. It took two murders of prisoners of war to bring the seriousness of the problem to Internment authorities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 1
Chapter One "An Unwilling Partner"	Page 6
Chapter Two "A Change in Attitude"	Page 29
Chapter Three "The Incorporation of the 1929 Convention"	Page 57
Chapter Four "Camp 132: A Small Island of Germany"	Page 76
Chapter Five "Nazi Continuity in Camp 132"	Page 96
Epilogue and Conclusion	Page 113
Appendix	Page 124
Bibliography	Page 128

INTRODUCTION

Canada's role in World War Two was not restricted to the European or Pacific theatre and the battles in which Canadian men fought. There were other important aspects to Canadian involvement and these were occurring inside the country. These included the training of Air Force personnel under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) and the production of armaments. A lesser known effort by the Canadian Government and military was the internment of German combatant soldiers as prisoners of war. Between 1940 and 1946, the Canadian Government held over 34,000 German prisoners of war on behalf of the British Government.

This thesis is an examination of a single German prisoner of war camp in Medicine Hat, Alberta. This camp was in operation from February 1943 to January 1946 and would reach a population of 12,000. The study of this camp reveals the extent to which the policies of Internment Operations were successful, and what negative or positive impact these policies had on the German prisoners of war. It will be argued that Internment Operations' reliance on the 1929 Geneva Convention, and the establishment of the Psychological Warfare Committee in 1943, undermined the success of Internment Operations. The murder of two German prisoners of war reveals the inability of Internment Operations personnel to discover and combat the Nazi prisoners of war.

I have approached this topic by moving from general

government policy down to the single camp. I have attempted to provide background information about Canada's acceptance of prisoners of war, and the logistical problems it created. My primary purpose is to show the movement of the government from an unwilling participant to a willing custodian of prisoners of war.

Most historians view the Second World War in terms of battlefield operations. Because of this, secondary material relating to prisoners of war is limited. Only two written monographs deal directly with the internment of German prisoners of war in Canada. Both of these were written by non-academic historians and were aimed at the general public. The first is David Carter's Behind Canadian Barbed Wire (1980), which provides a general overview of the internment of prisoners of war and Canadian civilians. Carter examines various camps to provide the reader with an idea of what being a prisoner of war was like. He looks at the murders of the two prisoners and the subsequent trials but does not draw any conclusions from them. Rather he is content to let the reader feel offended by the actions of some of the prisoners and Canadian Officials. His underlying theme is that war is not glorious and that many men lose a section of their lives because they were interned as prisoners of war.

The other book directly related to German prisoners of war is John Melady's Escape From Canada (1981). Like Carter, Melady provides an overview of the camps and attempts to reveal what camp life was like. Yet his focus is on escape attempts by prisoners. He examines two well-known escapes and provides a

descriptive account on these escapes. He also examines the murders but does not draw any conclusions from them.

The only academic work done on German prisoners of war in Canada is John J. Kelly's Master of Arts thesis, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada During World War Two 1939-1947" (1977) and his article in Dalhousie Review, "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence in German Prisoner of War Camps in Canada During World War Two" (1978). Kelly's thesis is an examination of the development of policy by the Canadian Government regarding prisoners of war. He argues that the Canadian Government was totally unprepared when agreeing to accept prisoners of war. The result was a haphazard effort by Internment Operations to develop its policies throughout the war. The impact of this is revealed in the administration of the prisoner of war camps and labour camps. Kelly believed that the camp administrators were not able to operate their camps effectively because of the lack of concrete policies within Internment Operations. He argues that the success of the operation can only be summarized by examining each camp and its administration.

Kelly's article deals with the attempt by the Internment Operations Psychological Warfare Committee to combat the presence of Nazi prisoners. The article is based on his thesis and brings together a number of thesis chapters. At times this becomes confusing. Kelly reiterates the central argument of his thesis regarding Internment Operations policy and provides examples of the Psychological Warfare Committee's work.

This lack of secondary material made primary materials an important aspect of this thesis. The Department of National Defense Records relating to German prisoners of war were very important. As well, the records of the Privy Council Office, Department of Secretary of State, Department of External Affairs, and the Mackenzie King Papers all provide material relating to prisoners of war. I have also relied on Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigative reports and transcripts from Preliminary Hearings, along with diaries, newspaper reports, and interviews.

The use of the Preliminary Hearings and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigative reports provided information regarding the establishment of a Camp Gestapo. The reports include interviews with prisoners during the investigation of the murders and the prisoners talk about the Gestapo. Although previous writers have written about the Gestapo I have examined the background to its creation, its activities, and its impact on the Medicine Hat camp.

This thesis fits into the historiography of the German prisoner of war camps because it provides a closer examination of one particular camp. The Medicine Hat camp was chosen because of the history of the camp and the problems that were encountered during its construction and the transfer of prisoners to it. The other writers all provided general information about the camps or background to the policies of the Internment Operations. It is important to move away from the general descriptions of policy or the camps, and examine much more closely, the individual camps

and their place within the Internment Operations. I feel that the first step has been taken in this regard with this examination of Camp 132 in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

The first chapter is an examination of the first year of the war and the problems the Canadian Government faced regarding prisoners of war. Chapter Two looks at the attempts made by the Canadian Government to develop a congruent policy with Britain regarding German prisoners of war. The Geneva Convention and its Articles are the subject of Chapter Three. These Articles set the standards by which the Camp Commandants ran their camps. The last two chapters specifically examine the Medicine Hat camp. The chapters deal with prisoner life, the development of a Nazi regime, and the murder of Dr. Karl Lehmann.

Chapter 1: "An Unwilling Partner"

During World War Two, the Canadian Government was responsible for nearly 40,000 German prisoners of war, civilian internees, and Enemy Merchant Seamen.¹ Prisoners of war were combatant soldiers and officers taken in warlike operations. Civilian internees were British or Canadian civilians suspected of being disloyal to either Britain or Canada or having sympathy towards Germany or Italy. Enemy Merchant Seamen (EMS) were members of a crew or ship that had been captured but were not members of the enemy's Armed Forces.

There were twenty-five separate internment and prisoner of war camps located across Canada.² There were five camps in Alberta, ten in Ontario, nine in Quebec, and one in New Brunswick. Some of these camps, notably Camp 132 in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Camp 30 in Bowmanville, Ontario, or Camp 20 in Gravenhurst, Ontario, were used exclusively for German prisoners of war. Other camps, such as Camp 70 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, held civilian internees, as did the jail in Hull, Quebec. During the war some camps had different types of personnel placed inside of them. Camp 23 in Monteith, Ontario began as a camp for Enemy Merchant Seamen and civilian internees

¹ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, Department of National Defense, C-5420, Colonel H.N. Streight to Director of Internment Operations, 12 January, 1945.

² See Appendix at end of thesis for location, size, and years in operation, of prisoner of war, internee, and enemy merchant seamen camps.

in July 1940. From November 1941 to May 1944 it held German Officers and Other Ranks but in May 1944 it held Enemy Merchant Seamen once more. In 1946 it housed German Officers and Other Ranks once again. This changing of prisoner personnel occurred in many other camps as the need for space increased or decreased.

The Canadian Government had not expected to be the recipient of large numbers of German prisoners of war and civilian internees when the war began. In May 1940, the British Government requested that Canada accept 7,000 prisoners of war and civilian internees but the Canadian Government refused. One author has suggested that this reflected a total unpreparedness of the Canadian Government.³ This was not entirely accurate. Canada had internment policies in place by May 1940, but it did not have the facilities to intern the large numbers requested by Britain. Canada was prepared to intern the country's own suspected subversives in the unemployment relief camps used during the Depression, such as the ones in Kananaskis, Alberta and Petawawa, Ontario.

The policy of interning prisoners of war or civilian internees was not the main concern of the King administration when the war began. The King Government was more concerned with the overall participation of the country and the form of that

³ John J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada 1939-1945", Thesis, (M.A.), University of Windsor, 1977, p. 47.

participation.⁴ King wanted to avoid sending large numbers of Canadian men to fight in Europe. He realized that sending military contingents over to Europe could result in conscription; a political crisis that divided the country during World War I.⁵ King and his closest advisors were determined to keep Canada's war effort to a minimum, thus reducing the possibility of conscription and the political repercussions behind it.

O.D. Skelton⁶, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, believed that Britain's desire to keep its Empire would result in Canadian involvement.⁷ Skelton believed that Canadian participation in the war should take the form of "limited liability". He presented this view to King on 24 August, 1939 in a document entitled, 'Canadian War Policy'. Under the heading "Military Action":

If any military action is to be taken overseas, it should, in the first instance, be in the air service rather than by military contingents. An announcement of an immediate and intensified programme of building planes and training men for air service in Canada for a Canadian air force operating in France would

⁴ C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Government: Canadian War Policy 1939-1945, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 9.

⁵ Jack L. Granatstein, Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government 1939-1945, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 42.

⁶ O.D. Skelton was born in 1878 and died in 1941. Skelton was Under Secretary of State for External Affairs from 1925 until his death in 1941. Prior to his appointment he had been Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. His major scholarly work was on Sir Wilfred Laurier.

⁷ Norman Hillmer, "O.D. Skelton; The Scholar Who Set a Future Pattern", International Perspectives, October 1973, p. 48.

be effective from the standpoint both of military value and of consolidation of public opinion.⁸

Skelton wanted Canadian participation to benefit Canadians rather than Britain. Airplane manufacturing and pilot training were to be the specific areas of this limited liability war. His document met Cabinet approval immediately and led directly to the creation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.⁹ The BCATP became Canada's main contribution to the Commonwealth war effort and it benefited Canada economically and politically.¹⁰ The great attention placed on the BCATP did not mean that other areas of participation in the war were ignored.

The development of a policy towards enemy aliens in Canada began in January 1936. On 7 January 1936, Ian Mackenzie¹¹ sent

⁸ NAC, MG 26, King Papers, As quoted by C.P. Stacey in Historical Documents of Canada: Vol. 5, The Arts of War and Peace 1914-1945, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), p.596.

⁹ The BCATP is important in understanding the government's attitude of participation during World War Two. It is especially significant when interpreting British and Canadian bilateral agreements and the context of the negotiations over these plans. For a detailed examination of the BCATP, its origins and importance, refer to Peter Conrad, "Saskatchewan in War: The Social Impact of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan", Thesis, M.A., University of Saskatchewan, 1987. J.L. Granatstein, Canada's War, pp. 43-71. C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men, and Government, pp. 17-37.

¹⁰ Granatstein, p. 42.

¹¹ Ian Mackenzie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1890. He received an M.A. and L.L.B. from the Edinburgh University. He was appointed Minister of Immigration in 1930 before the defeat of the King Administration. In 1935 he was re-elected and was made Minister of National Defence on 23 October 1935. He held that portfolio until 1939 when he was appointed Minister of Pensions and National Health.

an outline of a proposal to Prime Minister King concerning the creation of a Canadian Defence Committee, that would deal with, among other things, the issue of enemy aliens. This Committee was to be merely advisory and consultative. As well, it was to bring together the Chiefs of Staffs for defence estimates.¹²

In the spring of 1937 Mackenzie to sent a memo to King recommending that a number of sub-committees be established under the Canadian Defence Committee. These sub-committees were to study specific areas of defense relating to Canada, including censorship, the treatment of enemy aliens, neutral shipping and air raid preparations.¹³ The establishment of the sub-Committee on the treatment of enemy aliens was to be "purely for the purposes of the tabulation of information and on this the Department of Justice should take the lead".¹⁴ King agreed to Mackenzie's request and instructed Mackenzie to "put the machinery in motion".¹⁵ By March 1938, the sub-committees were established with the approval of order-in-council PC 531.¹⁶ The sub-Committee on the Treatment of Enemy Aliens and Alien Property (Canada) was to be chaired by the Under Secretary of State and have as members or representatives for External Affairs, Justice,

¹² C.P. Stacey, Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), p. 9.

¹³ Kelly, p. 2.

¹⁴ N.A.C., King Papers, MG 26, J1, Vol. 237, p.203733, Ian Mackenzie to Prime Minister, 8 April, 1937.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 203751, King to Ian Mackenzie, 22 April, 1937.

¹⁶ Ibid., RG 2, Vol. 2003, PC 531, 14 March 1938.

Mines and Resources, National Defence, and Finance.¹⁷

The first report of the sub-Committee was tabled on 25 January 1939. Included in the report was an analysis of the types of individuals residing in Canada that were to be interned at the outbreak of hostilities. These included: members of the National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei¹⁸, male members of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, other male German nationals resident in Canada, and naturalized Canadians of German birth who could not be regarded as loyal citizens. The power of arrest and detention was to be the responsibility of the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.¹⁹ The report also suggested that aliens refusing to sign an observance of Canadian laws were to be interned in camps operated by the Department of National Defence. The sub-Committee's report became the foundation of Canadian Internment policy during the first year of the war.

On 26 August 1939, Commissioner Wood of the R.C.M.P. wrote two letters to the Minister of Justice. In these letters he listed names of individuals that were to be arrested on the outbreak of the war.²⁰ Wood also wanted to shut down any

¹⁷ Kelly, p.6.

¹⁸ The National Socialist German Workers Party. This was the official title of the Nazi Party.

¹⁹ Kelly, p. 7.

²⁰ N.A.C., King Papers, MG 26, J1, Vol. 273, pp. 231077-231079, "Internal Security-Measures Taken on the Outbreak of War", 2 December 1939.

organization or newspaper that he considered subversive²¹ and authorization to make searches and to seize the property of organization suspected by the R.C.M.P. to be illegal.²² Fearing that Wood was asking to make Canada a police state, Ernest Lapointe²³ instructed J.F. MacNeill and Norman Robertson to review Wood's program. They decided to dismiss it because it would have "created inter-racial resentment and would drive the organizations and personnel underground,... increasing police problems".²⁴ But Canada did establish a policy under which enemy aliens in Canada were interned and one in which the RCMP did not have the sweeping powers sought by its Commissioner.

The declaration of war by Britain on 3 September resulted in the Canadian Government putting its internment of enemy alien policy into action. The government enacted the Defence of Canada Regulations under the War Measures Act which allowed Cabinet to

²¹ Some of these organizations and newspapers included the Italian Fascio, Opere Volontarie Repressions Anti-Fascito, (National Organization for the Repressions of Anti-Fascism), Japanese Nationalists, and other Italian Organizations. Refer to On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945, ed. Norman Hillmer, Bohdan Kordan, and Lubomyr Luciuk, (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1988).

²² N.A.C., King Papers, MG 26, J1, Vol. 273, pp. 231078.

²³ Ernest Lapointe was the Minister of Justice in the King administration until his untimely death in 1944. He was also King's Lieutenant for Quebec. J.F. MacNeill was Deputy Minister for the Department of Justice. Norman Robertson was First Secretary for the Under Secretary of State for External Affairs. In 1941 he was appointed Under Secretary of State for External Affairs. In 1946 he became the High Commissioner to Britain for Canada.

²⁴ Ibid., pp.231080-231081.

develop policies for security reasons but still be accountable and responsible to Parliament.²⁵ The Defence of Canada Regulations allowed the government to suspend arrest, detain, exclude and deport any individual considered a threat.²⁶ Even though Canada did not officially declare war against Nazi Germany until 10 September 1939, its wartime administration policies were ready. On 3 September 1939 the arrest of 325 persons took place; 265 German nationalists and 60 naturalized Canadians of German birth.²⁷ By 20 October this number reached 358 individuals that were seen as Nazi sympathizers.²⁸

On 4 September a Director of Internment Operations was appointed to oversee camp sites and the administration of these camps. The first Director was Edouard de Panet, a Brigadier-General who had received the Legion d'Honneur in 1918 for his service in World War I. Lieutenant-Colonel Hubert Stethem was appointed Assistant Director and would later become the Director. One of the first moves by Panet was to inform the Deputy Minister of National Defence that Kananaskis, Alberta and Petawawa,

²⁵ N.F. Dreisziger, "The Rise of a Bureaucracy for Multiculturalism: The Origins of the Nationalities Branch, 1939-1941", pp.1-29, On Guard For Thee, p. 2.

²⁶ Defence of Canada Regulations, 3 September 1939, Regulations 21,23,24, and 25.

²⁷ Kelly, p. 14.

²⁸ N.A.C., RG 24, Department of National Defence, Vol. 6585, File 4-1-5 (1), Inspector D.C. Saul of RCMP to Director of Internment Operations, 20 October, 1939.

Ontario were to be used as internment camps.²⁹ Both of these camps were former relief camps used during the Depression to provide work for unemployed males. He felt that the location of these camps, away from the general population, was important. Both of the camps were relatively new and the existing buildings could be used without extensive renovations. Once there, the internees could continue the forestry work that was begun during the Depression. Until these camps were ready for occupation the internees were kept in receiving stations. One was located at Fort Henry, Ontario (Kingston), while the other was at the Citadel at Quebec City. These stations housed the internees while the necessary paper work could be done, and a sufficient number of men were assembled so that transportation costs could be reduced.

Order-in-Council PC 4121, adopted by Cabinet on 13 December 1939, was the first attempt by the government to establish a concrete internment policy.³⁰ PC 4121 had two main objectives. The first was to provide definitions of civilian internees and prisoners of war. The second objective was to ensure that Canadian internment policy adhered to the "Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War".

The need to define the difference between a civilian

²⁹ N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, 4-3-1, General Panet to Lt. Col. Desrosiers, 11 September 1939.

³⁰ NAC, RG 2, PC 4121, 13 December 1939, "Regulations Governing the Maintenance of Discipline Among and Treatment of Prisoners of War".

internee and prisoner of war was important. General Panet initially made no distinctions between the two, and civilian internees received the same benefits as prisoners of war.³¹ PC 4121 made a distinction between the two. Prisoners of war were individuals captured in military operations as defined in the Geneva Convention Regulations 1-81. They were defined in Canada as Prisoners of War Class I.³² Civilian internees detained under Military Law or the Defence of Canada Regulations did not receive Class I status. PC 4121 allowed civilian internees to be classed as prisoner of war Class II, but Articles 19, 23, 24, 50, 51, 68-75, of the Geneva Convention did not apply to them.³³ Enemy Merchant Seamen also fell under the Class II classification but in 1942 this was changed.³⁴ This allowed the Enemy Merchant Seamen to receive the same benefits as Class I prisoners.

The second aspect of PC 4121 confirmed Canada's decision to adhere to the Geneva Convention of 27 July 1929 which Canada had ratified 20 February 1933. The Convention, in a straightforward and simple manner, details the proper procedure for the treatment of prisoners of war. Accepting the provisions of the Convention

³¹ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6587, file 5-1-2, General Panet to O.D. Skelton, 5 October 1939.

³² Ibid., RG 2, PC 4121, 13 December 1939.

³³ Ibid. These Articles specifically dealt with military personnel taken as prisoners of war. They include the wearing of military badges (13), rate of pay to prisoners that was dependent on their rank (23 and 24), and legal matters (68-75).

³⁴ Ibid., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6577, file 1-2-4, (3), Colonel H.N. Streight to Commandants Camps 22,31,33,40,43,70,100,130, 27 June 1942.

gave Canada the foundation for its own prisoner of war policy, and helped the Canadian Government's Camp Commandants to administer the internment policy in a humane but firm manner.³⁵

At the end of 1939 Canada appeared to be ready for its role in the war. The government had negotiated an agreement with the British Government regarding the BCATP and had in place policies regarding domestic issues. The internment of enemy aliens seemed to have reached its peak, resulting in Panet wanting to close the Kananaskis camp. He felt that Petawawa could handle the 400 people interned by the government.³⁶ At that time it did not appear that the government would be interning more people.

The swiftness of Germany's move into the western regions of Europe altered Panet's view on the need for Kananaskis:

Owing to the present situation, it may become necessary to intern many more Germans. We have decided not to move prisoners of war now interned at Kananaskis to Petawawa.³⁷

Panet's view was not the only one that changed. Near the end of May, the British Government requested that Canada accept some of that country's interned aliens. This resulted in the Canadian internment operation becoming much larger than the government

³⁵ Ibid., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6587, file 5-1-2, "Instructions Relating to the Maintenance of Discipline and Treatment of Enemy Aliens Held as Prisoners of War in Internment Camps in Canada", December 1939.

³⁶ Ibid., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6587, file 5-1-5 (1), General Panet to Dr. E.H. Coleman, 8 February 1940.

³⁷ Ibid., Vol. 6586, file 4-3-3, General Panet to Brigadier C.E. Connolly, D.S.O. District Officer Commanding, Military District 13, 24 May 1940.

expected or wanted.

When Britain declared war on Nazi Germany 70,000 German and Austrian refugees became enemy aliens.³⁸ The large numbers produced a logistical problem. It was decided by the Chamberlain administration to look for a solution. It was decided that the best procedure would be to screen every alien and discover any with Nazi sympathies.³⁹ This was achieved through the creation of 120 tribunals, each would be comprised of one King's counsel, or one country judge with a police secretary in attendance.⁴⁰ Each refugee (alien) was examined to discover if he or she had any sympathy for Nazi Germany. After being examined each alien was classified by the tribunal as either "A", "B", or "C". "A" were deemed German or Austrian nationalists and were interned. "B" were those of Austrian or German descent who would be restricted in their movements. "C" meant that an alien was interviewed but allowed to go free. At the outbreak of war only 600 aliens were interned.⁴¹

The German assault on France in May propelled Britain to intern its "B" and "C" aliens. The large numbers created a logistical problem. The British Government not only had to

³⁸ Miriam Kochan, Britain's Internees in the Second World War, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1983), p.1.

³⁹ Sir John Anderson, British House of Commons Debates, 28 September 1939. Sir John Anderson was the British Home Secretary for the Chamberlain administration.

⁴⁰ Eric Koch, Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder, (Toronto: Methuen, 1980), p. 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 9.

attend to the civilian internees but the country was now in possession of German prisoners of war. The administration began to look for alternative sites within the Commonwealth to intern the surplus enemy aliens and ease the crisis at home. Canada and Australia became popular choices. Both countries had large sections of relatively uninhabited land, ties to the British Government, and previous experience in handling prisoners of war during World War I. At the end of May Britain formally asked Canada to accept some of its German and Austrian internees.⁴²

The Cabinet War Committee⁴³ met on 5 June to discuss Britain's proposal. The Cabinet rejected the request but agreed to conduct a survey of possible camp locations.⁴⁴ Britain was not deterred and pressed the Canadian Government to consider accepting 4,000 internees and 3,000 prisoners of war.⁴⁵ Canada agreed to the request and began making preparations for the

⁴² N.A.C., King Papers, MG 26, J1, Vol. 292, p. 24701, Vincent Massey to Mackenzie King, 31 May 1940.

⁴³ The Cabinet War Committee was established by PC 4017.5 on 5 December 1939. It was initially the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Defence, and later changed to the Emergency Council of Cabinet in September 1939. The Cabinet War Committee was to become the key directing committee of the government until the end of the war. The first members of the Cabinet War Committee were the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice, Finance, National Defence, Mines and Resources, and the Senate Leader. In May 1940, the Committee was to include Ministers from Munitions and Supplies, and Defence (Air). Other ministries were included when needed. Information from Granatstein's Canada's War.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 247122.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 247128-147129, Vincent Massey to Mackenzie King, 7 June 1940.

incoming internees and prisoners of war.⁴⁶

The first shipment of internees and prisoners of war was to leave on the 20 June 1940 from Britain. This left little time for preparation. The need to find suitable locations to house the prisoners of war and internees became the priority. The sites had to have proper heating, sewage, and electrical facilities and they had to be close to a rail line.⁴⁷ Two sites were immediately designated; the Calydor Sanitorium at Sanatorium, Ontario and Fort Henry, Ontario. The Fort Henry site had been used as a receiving station for Canadian civilian internees but was closed in December 1939. It had been decided to reopen the Fort and use all available space. The Calydor Sanatorium was chosen because of its high standards which were needed as the site was to be used mainly for German officers.⁴⁸

The first shipment of internees left Britain aboard the Duchess of York on 20 June. The next shipment was set to leave on the 30 June aboard the Arendora Star and on 3 July the Ettrick was to sail for Canada.⁴⁹ The Arendora Star was torpedoed by a German U-boat on 2 July. The ship was carrying mainly Italian

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 247153, Mackenzie King to Vincent Massey, 10 June 1940.

⁴⁷ N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1 (1), Memo of Meeting on Friday 14 June, 1940.

⁴⁸ Kelly, p. 51.

⁴⁹ N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1, (1), Brig. General Panet to Deputy Minister (Militia Services), 29 June 1940.

and German, class "A", internees of which over 600 were lost.⁵⁰ The 800-900 survivors were returned to England and shipped to Canada aboard the Ettrick and Sobieski. By mid-July 6877 prisoners of war and internees, 921 more than anticipated, had been sent to Canada.⁵¹

The rushed movement to get camps into operation after accepting Britain's proposal makes the Canadian Government appear unprepared. The lack of physical structures to house the incoming internees supports this. Yet, the government was not totally unprepared. In May, the government established the Veteran's Guard of Canada (VG). This was an intentional move to create a military corps to guard internment camps.⁵² The responsibility had previously belonged to the Provost Corps, a trained military unit. German advances in Europe necessitated a move by the government to release the Provost Corps of its internment camp responsibility because the Provost Corps was to be sent overseas.

The VG was to be made up of World War I veterans considered too old for military combat when war was declared. A veteran applying for a Guard position could not be older than 49 years of age but there were individuals who were able to bypass that restriction. Many of those who volunteered were seeking a

⁵⁰ Kelly, p. 52.

⁵¹ N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1, (1), Brig. General Panet to Deputy Minister (Militia Services) 29 June 1940.

⁵² Stacey, C.P., Six Years of War, p. 151.

regular paycheque since many had not been able to do so during the Depression, and it was a way to serve the country in a military fashion.⁵³ Prior to May 1940, internment staff had numbered only 5,524 but with the establishment of the Guard that total reached 9,806 guards of various non-commissioned ranks and 451 officer ranks.⁵⁴ They guarded camps in Britain, the Bahamas, British Guiana, Newfoundland, and Canada.⁵⁵ By 1941, the Veteran's Guard were the sole guardians of internees and prisoners of war.

Three new sites were established in Canada to receive the first group of civilian internees. Camp "E" at the Abitibi Pulp and Paper Co. mill site near Espanola, Ontario which was to hold 1500 German prisoners of war. Camp "Q" at the Monteith Industrial Farm at Monteith, Ontario was to house 501 German internees of "B" and "C" classification.⁵⁶ The third camp was located at Ile aux Noix, 12 miles south of St. John's on an island on the Richeleau River was designated to hold 273 "B" and "C" internees.

The rapid influx of the large numbers of civilian internees presented a problem not expected by the Canadian Government.

⁵³ Interview with Carmen Jackson, 10 September 1989, conducted by Robin Stotz. Mr. Jackson was a former member of the Veteran's Guard from 1940-1945. He was stationed at Ozada, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat.

⁵⁴ C.P. Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 151.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 151.

⁵⁶ Kelly, p. 54.

Within three weeks of the arrival of the civilian internees it was discovered that not all those sent over from Britain were of "A" classification. Most of them had been of "B" and "C" classification and not the "A" type as promised.⁵⁷ To complicate matters further, many of the "B" and "C" internees were actually Jewish refugees from other countries who had escaped to Britain for their own personal safety. Their only crime was that they joined the Fascist party in hopes they would be safe, but for that they had been interned by the British Government.⁵⁸

Even more surprising was the fact that 1,958 of the 7,000 expected civilian internees were not British civilian internees but actually German combatant soldiers and officers.⁵⁹ Canadian Officials discovered this while the prisoners of war were housed in camps with the civilian internees and refugees. During the early weeks following their arrival the three groups had been housed together. It became quite apparent that the internees and refugees from Britain were being coerced by these German soldiers and the process of segregation began.⁶⁰

The Canadian Internment Operations began the process of separating refugees from internees and prisoners of war.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁸ Koch, Deemed Suspect, p. 73.

⁵⁹ N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1 (1), General Panet to Major G.A.I. Dury, August 1940.

⁶⁰ Koch, Eric, Deemed Suspect, p. 20.

Separate camps were designated specific classes of prisoners thus keeping refugees away from ardent Nazis. Compounds were set up at Little River, New Brunswick for the purpose of separating refugees from the other groups. From there, refugees were sent to refugee camps. 600 refugees were sent to Farnham, Quebec. The camp at Ile-Aux-Noix in New Brunswick was to house 273 German Jews. There were 717 German and Austrian Jews sent to Camp "T" at Three Rivers, Quebec.⁶¹ Camps at Monteith, Ontario and Newington, Quebec housed both non-Jewish and Jewish refugees who had the same political philosophy.

Two road construction camps were established in Ontario between Schreiber and White River. These camps housed 600 British internees each to be used as road construction crews to complete the Trans-Canada highway in that region.⁶² Another camp was established at Sherbrooke, Quebec to house 700-800 internees. Canadian civilian internees were interned at the original Canadian internment camps. The Italian-Canadian civilians were housed at Petawawa while German-Canadian civilian internees went to Kananaskis.

Along with the civilian internees, prisoners of war, and refugees, Enemy Merchant Seamen were sent to Canada. Under the Geneva Convention these men were to be housed separately from the other groups. Once they were identified by Canadian authorities

⁶¹ Kelly, p. 63.

⁶² N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 11,252, file 11-1-5, Major D.J. O'Donahue to Directorate of Internment Operations, 19 September 1940.

the process of separating them began. The German Merchant Seamen were sent to Mimico, Ontario and the Italian Merchant Seamen, who were also sent from Britain, were housed at camp "S" at St. Helen's Island.

The German combatant soldiers and officers were also separated. The sanatorium at Gravenhurst, Ontario was used for German officers as was Fort Henry at Kingston. The camp at Espanola, Ontario housed German combatant soldiers of Other Ranks.

The Canadian Government was not happy with so many "B" and "C" internees being sent over to Canada. In short, they did not want them. This was especially true regarding Jewish refugees.⁶³ General Panet wrote to the British liaison officer stating:

It is considered that these people should not have been sent to Canada and that it would be much better if they were replaced by a similar number of prisoners of war or Dangerous Enemy Alien internees.⁶⁴

The Canadian Government had been expecting more enemy aliens and German prisoners of war than refugees and non-dangerous internees. The Canadian administration wanted the British to correct the situation. In a letter from Vincent Massey to King, Massey explains the view of the British Home Office:

⁶³ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, None Is Too Many, (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1983), p. 1-37.

⁶⁴ Ibid., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1 (1), General Panet to Major G.A.I. Dury, August 1940.

B" and "C" categories of German and Austrian internees are persons not regarded as individually or even potentially dangerous,...Had "C" not left England their case would have been reviewed,...If Canada wishes, the United Kingdom will make arrangements for the return of any person authorized unless Canada is willing to keep them and they want to stay.⁶⁵

Canada agreed to check the qualifications of any "B" or "C" internee and see if they met the entrance qualifications to enter the country. Any that did not were returned to Britain at Britain's expense.⁶⁶

At the end of the summer of 1940 the internment situation in Canada was stabilized. The makeshift camps that were hastily chosen began to resemble proper internment enclosures. The separation of the Jewish refugees from the British internees and German prisoners of war was nearing completion and most camps had become stabilized. There were still problems at some camps where pro and anti-Nazi groups had been interned together. The most notable was the camp at Red Rock, Ontario where 85% of the 1,150 internees were pro-Nazi.⁶⁷ By the end of 1940, the camp had been stabilized and all internees and prisoners of war had been separated into their proper internment facilities.

In September 1940, the Directorate of Internment Operations

⁶⁵ Ibid., MG 26, King Papers, Vol. 292, p.247277-247278, #1257, Vincent Massey to King, 30 July, 1940.

⁶⁶ Kelly, p. 61.

⁶⁷ N.A.C., RG 24, DND, Vol. 11,249, file 10-2-2, Captain K. Kirkness (British Liaison Officer) to Headquarters, Military District 10, 26 November, 1940.

had listed the criteria for future camp locations which would prevent any unnecessary scrambling by the Department. Three factors were to be used to decide future locations; where work could be provided, little or no possibility of escape, and access to a rail line.⁶⁸ In late autumn the intensity of the war increased and Britain once again wanted Canada to accept German prisoners of war. This request eventually lead Canada to accept more prisoners of war than was anticipated at the outset of the war.

During the first year of the war, the Canadian Government went through a number of stages regarding its internment policy. The initial plan was to intern only Canadian civilians suspected of being subversives. The Canadian Defence Committee's sub-Committee on the Treatment of Enemy Aliens and Alien Property had been in place as early as 1938 and its report in January 1939 provided the framework for the government to implement an internment operation when war did break out.

The key internment policy was defined in PC 4121 on 13 December 1939. It distinguished a prisoner of war from a civilian internee which was important in deciding the rights of a civilian while interned. This was important when the large numbers of British internees began to arrive in July 1940. Without PC 4121, the logistical problems associated with the internees would have resulted in the internment operation being

⁶⁸ Ibid., RG 24, DND, Vol. 11,253, file 11-2-100, Inspection of Major D.J. O'Donahue, 19 September 1940.

completely overwhelmed. With this, the Canadian Government was not totally unprepared for incoming prisoners of war, internees, and refugees.

The lack of a congruent internment policy with Britain put Canada's own internment policy in confusion. The initial policy was to intern enemy aliens living in Canada. However, agreeing to accept British internees, and receiving German prisoners of war, Enemy Merchant Seamen, and Jewish refugees, forced the government to diversify its own recently established internment policy. The Canadian Internment Operations had to quickly formulate a policy that would deal with the unexpected groups that had arrived in July.

The problem lay in the types of people that were sent to Canada. None of these groups could be interned together, especially the Jewish refugees and German prisoners of war. It was decided by the Canadian Government that, if Britain was going to send anybody to Canada for internment, those people were to be of the same group. This would allow the Canadian Government to formulate a policy towards one specific group which would make enforcement much easier. Since many of the people Britain sent to Canada were assumed to be enemy aliens were mostly otherwise, the Canadian authorities opted to accept German prisoners of war and work on developing a constructive policy for that particular group. After the summer of 1940, no more British civilians were sent to Canada for internment. The groups that had already arrived, stayed, until it was appropriate to release them either

during the war, or after.

The first year of the war made the King administration realize an important matter. If Canada was to be involved in the war either by sending troops overseas, building aircraft, or interning prisoners of war, the need to develop a congruent policy with Britain was important. Without an equal partnership Canada would be viewed as a colony and a dumping ground for Britain's wartime prisoners.

The years between 1940-1942 would become the most important regarding the establishment of an effective and congruent policy with Britain regarding German prisoners of war. During that time, Canada and Britain worked out legal and financial concerns regarding prisoners of war. It was also the period during which Canada would accept nearly 20,000 German combatant soldiers and officers as prisoners of war.

Chapter 2: "A Change in Attitude"

At the end of 1944 the Canadian Government had over 34,000 German combatant soldiers as prisoners of war.¹ Along with the German prisoners, there were 4,170 Enemy Merchant Seamen (EMS) and 2,241 Canadian and British civilian internees interned by the Canadian Government. When the war had broken out the government did not expect to intern large numbers of German soldiers. This changed between 1940-1943 when the government became more willing to accept German prisoners on a much larger scale than originally anticipated, provided the British Government made certain concessions.² The main concession was that Britain must be willing to pay for the construction of large prisoner of war camps that would house thousands of prisoners.

The result of the changes was reflected in the Canadian internment operations. In 1942, the government consolidated the camps under the Department of National Defence. A Psychological Warfare Committee was created to reduce Nazi influence on the prisoners. In 1943 a policy was established that was designed to use prisoners of war in labour camps and in other industries to alleviate the labour shortage created by the war. Between 1940-1943, the Canadian Government went from an unwilling partner to a willing partner with Britain regarding the internment of German prisoners of war.

¹ NAC, RG 24, Department of National Defense, C-5420, HQS 7236-96, 12 January 1945.

² Ibid., RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1, Mackenzie King to Vincent Massey, # 37, 7 January 1942.

Through the summer of 1940 the attitude of the government towards P/W was mixed. The administration realized that interning German prisoners was going to be part of Canada's participation in the war. On the other hand, the facilities within the country did not warrant a continuous stream of German prisoners into the country. Canada's role was to be minor and discharged without much fanfare:

... In Dr. Skelton's opinion and in mine, it would be desirable to allow the United Kingdom to take the initiative in suggesting the transfer of further P/W and/or internees (civilians) to the Dominion. We do not wish to give the impression that we are pressing for an enlargement of this movement.³

The number of prisoners of war in Canada reflected this attitude. At the end of the summer there were only 1,958 German P/W housed in either the Gravenhurst or Espanola camps.

During the summer of 1940 a number of government concerns were raised. The most pressing of these was whether Canada was a Detaining Power or a Holding Country. Articles 3 and 4 of the 1929 Geneva Convention make very explicitly the role of the Detaining Power. All prisoners of war captured by the main belligerent were under the power of that country. That country was to provide for the maintenance of the prisoners which included proper housing, food and clothing, hygiene, and pecuniary resources. The Holding Country was an agent holding prisoners of war on behalf of the Detaining Power. Since Britain

³ Ibid., RG 24, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1, Hugh Keenleyride to General Panet, 8 July 1940.

was the main belligerent against Germany it had the status of Detaining Power while Canada was relegated to Holding Country status. This relationship was not the issue. The issue was whether or not Canada, as the Holding Country, had to accept all prisoners of war transferred from Britain. If this was the case then Canada's status as a sovereign state would be jeopardized.

The issue of sovereignty related to the role of the holding country began once Canada agreed to accept German prisoners of war in June 1940. The problems that had arisen during the summer of 1940, were due to the fact that many of the Germans transferred from Britain were in actuality Jewish refugees. Canada did not feel it was obliged to accept these refugees. The issue did not become resolved, or at least a process for resolution was not established until 1941. The main concern was that Canada wanted input into the type of people Britain was sending to Canada to be interned.

In October 1940 an incident regarding German airmen provided the impetus for a workable Anglo-Canadian prisoner of war agreement. Britain had requested that Canada accept 1,000 German airmen and intern them in Newfoundland. Work had been started on a camp for these men near Conception Bay and the British were eager to utilize this structure. Canada rejected the proposal because these German airmen would present a serious military hazard and jeopardize the defence of Newfoundland.⁴ Canada had

⁴ *Ibid.*, Cabinet War Committee, RG 2, 7c, Vol. 2, Secretary of State for External Affairs to Secretary of State of Dominion Affairs, #177, 9 October 1940.

no jurisdiction in Newfoundland but it was felt by the government that Britain was attempting to force Canada to guard prisoners outside of the country. Placing the airmen in Newfoundland would result in Canadian guards being placed under British jurisdiction since Britain could not provide the men needed.

Britain countered with an alternate proposal. Canada could intern 1,000 Enemy Merchant Seamen in Newfoundland since they were not a high security risk and intern the 1,000 airmen within Canada.⁵ Canada was not willing to intern any prisoners of war or EMS in Newfoundland but agreed to accept both groups for internment within Canadian borders.⁶ The British Government agreed and made preparations for the airmen and seamen to arrive in January.⁷ On their arrival the airmen were interned in the Neys and Angler camps situated in Ontario. The EMS were interned in a number of camps in operation such as Kananaskis, Alberta and Mimico, Ontario.

Canada's initial rejection of the airmen and seamen was the result of objections raised by the Permanent Joint Board of Defense (PJBD). The PJBD had been created in August 1940 through an agreement between Prime Minister King and President Roosevelt. Its responsibility was to design a joint defence policy for both

⁵ NAC, King Papers, MG 26, J1, Vol. 296, p. 251433, Lord Cranborne to King, #152, 2 November 1940.

⁶ *Ibid.*, King Papers, W.L.M. King to Lord Cranborne, #207, 20 November 1940.

⁷ *Ibid.*, King Papers, Vol. 296, #166, Lord Cranborne to King, 27 November 1940.

the United States and Canada. The PJBD viewed Newfoundland as a high security risk and was concerned about the inadequate defence facilities on the island.⁸ It was the view of the PJBD that an internment camp in Newfoundland would only compound a serious military hazard, and possibly endanger Canada and the United States.⁹ On the recommendations of the Board, Canada refused to accept the internment of prisoners of war in Newfoundland even though Newfoundland was not part of Canada. It was on the Board's recommendation that Canada agreed to accept the airmen and seamen.¹⁰

The negotiations over the airmen involved more than security considerations. At risk was Canada's status as a sovereign state within the Dominion. This was emphasized by C.H.S. Ritchie of the Office of the High Commissioner at the London conference in January 1941. Ritchie raised the question whether Canada, as Britain's agent, was bound by Britain's interpretation of the 1929 Geneva Convention?¹¹ Canada had signed the Convention as a sovereign state and was not willing to abrogate its sovereign status by treating interned German soldiers in accordance with British interpretations of the Geneva Convention. Canada was,

⁸ C.P. Stacey, Six Years of War, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1955), p. 154.

⁹ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁰ NAC, King Papers, W.L.M. King to Lord Cranborne, #207, 20 November 1940.

¹¹ C.H.S. Ritchie, quoted by J.J. Kelly in "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, 1939-1947", p. 111.

however, willing to accept Britain's requests for help.¹² Sir George Warner, K.C.V.O., representative of the British Foreign Office, explained Britain's view. He stated that the regulations in force in the Dominion should be identical to those in Britain.¹³ This did not mean that the Dominion Governments had to accept P/W from Britain. Canada, according to Warner, would be able to refuse any prisoners of war from Britain, but accepting the prisoners meant that Britain would be regarded as the principle holder. Canada would be able to make security regulations regarding prisoners within its own boundaries. What Britain desired was an avoidance of discrepancies between Britain and the Holding countries over the internment of prisoners. A uniform policy for all German soldiers held in Britain or the Dominions would ensure that British soldiers interned in Germany would receive proper treatment. As principle holder and detaining Power, Britain was responsible for the Axis powers' captured soldiers it had captured. If there were varying interpretations of the 1929 Convention within the Dominion it could cause problems in negotiations with Germany regarding prisoners of war. Britain wanted the Dominion Governments to follow the British interpretation of the Convention but a Dominion Government could refuse to accept any prisoners of

¹² ibid., p. 111.

¹³ ibid., p.111.

war.¹⁴

The end result was an agreement under which Britain became the international spokesmen for the Dominion Governments in matters pertaining to Prisoners of War but would consult with a newly established InterGovernmental Prisoner of War Committee.¹⁵ This Committee was designed to work out the problems between the Dominion Governments holding prisoners of war and Britain regarding the treatment of prisoners. The Committee was the forum where those governments having problems could air their grievances. Only those countries holding prisoners for Britain and British Government departments were allowed to attend the discussions.¹⁶

A sub-Committee was created to dispose of the minor differences over the interpretations of the Convention. This sub-Committee was to:

to consider such questions affecting policy and general administration of POW as concern for more than one Government within the Empire, with a view of undesirable differences of treatment.¹⁷

The main focus of the sub-Committee was to work towards uniformity within the Commonwealth regarding the maintenance of prisoners of war. It was not designed to handle diplomatic

¹⁴ NAC, RG 24, D.N.D., Vol. 6577, File 1-2-8, Vincent Massey to W.L.M. King, #905, 19 May 1941.

¹⁵ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6577, File 1-2-8, Vincent Massey to W.L.M. King, #905, 19 May 1941.

¹⁶ ibid.

¹⁷ NAC, RG 24, Vol. 6576, file 1-2-3, 26 June 1941.

relations between any of the Dominion Governments and an Axis Government. The first meeting of this sub-Committee occurred 26 June 1941.

The Inter-Governmental Prisoner of War Committee re-affirmed the sovereign status for Dominion signatories of the 1929 Convention. More importantly, it alleviated the fears of many governments, including Canada, that accepting prisoners of war might compromise that country's independence. It was there to dispose of the minor differences and questions that affected the governments interning prisoners for Britain. It helped to improve communication, between all Dominion governments who were experiencing the same problems regarding the treatment of prisoners of war.

The role of Canada in the internment of prisoners of war was not the only issue facing Canadian authorities. The question of financial responsibility needed to be resolved. In July 1940 the Treasury Board of Canada recommended that 2.5 million dollars be allocated from the War Appropriation budget for internment operations.¹⁸ The money was to be used for opening new camps and for the maintenance of internment camps already in operation. The amount was distributed between the Department of National Defense and the Secretary of State. It was hoped that the expenditures would be recovered from the United Kingdom when hostilities ended.¹⁹

¹⁸ NAC, RG 2, Order-in-Council, 125/3030, 9 July 1940.

¹⁹ Ibid.

In October 1940, Canada and Britain worked out a financial agreement regarding prisoners of war.²⁰ According to the Minister of Finance J.L. Isley, Britain was to repay the Canadian Government any costs incurred by Canada on their behalf in the transport and maintenance of the P/W. The Canadian Government had to pay for any work done by prisoners while they were in Canada. If a labour camp was established the cost of the construction and administration were to be recoverable from the United Kingdom. The Canadian Government was responsible for all military personnel in the internment and labour camps.

In January 1941, Britain wanted changes to the October agreement. Canada was to pay for all salaries of German Officer P/W once they disembarked from Britain. According to Article 23 of the Geneva Convention, officers and persons of equivalent status who are prisoners of war shall receive from the detaining Power the same pay as officers of corresponding rank in the armed forces of that Power.²¹ The rate of pay must not exceed the amount a soldier received from the country for which he was fighting.²² Article 23 of the Convention also required belligerents to agree to a rate of exchange applicable to this payment. The exchange rate was set at 15 Rm/1 British pound

²⁰ NAC RG 24, Vol. 11,258, file 12-1-9, J.L. Isley to O.D. Skelton, 26 October 1940.

²¹ Article 23, Geneva Convention (1929).

²² Three order-in-councils outlined the payment of German Officer P/W and Other Ranks. PC 79/5204, 16 July 1941, PC 67/6016, 6 August 1941, and PC 120/7474, 23 September 1940.

sterling. British soldiers interned in Germany were paid their British salary in Reichmarks. German soldiers interned by Britain were paid in British pounds after their salary had been converted from Reichmarks.

German prisoners held in Canada for Britain posed a minor problem. Britain viewed those prisoners as the responsibility of the United Kingdom. Yet Britain felt that the rate of exchange should be applied in Canadian dollars equivalent to the pound sterling for those P/W in Canada.²³ It was feared that Germany might claim that Canada was responsible for P/W and that could mean that Canada and Germany would need to work out an exchange rate operative the day before Canada declared war.²⁴ If Canada was to deal directly with Germany it would have had an effect on Dominion P/W policy which had not yet been completely set. Since Britain viewed itself as the spokesmen for all the Dominion Governments holding prisoners it was imperative that Britain set the exchange rate for Canada.

After the German and British Governments set their exchange rate the Foreign Exchange Control Board set the rate between Canada and Britain at \$4.43/1 pound sterling.²⁵ German soldiers in Canada were paid in Canadian dollars after the German prisoner's payment had been converted from Reichmarks to British

²³ Ibid., p. 117.

²⁴ NAC, RG 24, Vol. 11,257, file 12-1-9, Vincent Massey to W.L.M. King, 22 October 1940.

²⁵ Ibid.

pounds to Canadian dollars. For example, if a German Officer P/W was entitled to 75 RM/month, it would be converted to British pounds. The exchange rate at 15 Rm/pound sterling meant that a German soldier received 5 pounds. After the conversion from British pounds to Canadian dollars, the German prisoner of war received \$22.15 Canadian. All monies were credited to the prisoner's account except for the amount which the Detaining Power allowed the prisoner to keep on his person.²⁶

The agreements between Britain and Canada did not mean that there was a large influx of German soldiers from Britain during 1941. Other than the German airmen and seamen which arrived in January, the only major shipment of German prisoners came in September, when 2,010 Germans were sent to Canada. This number did present an accommodation problem. As a result, Canada set up a camp in Bowmanville, Ontario. This camp handled officers from Neys and Fort Henry and the officers from the United Kingdom. By the end of 1941 this piecemeal operation changed and Canadian internment operations became much larger than the government had expected in 1939.

The British Army's successful campaign in North Africa resulted in 24,000 Italian and German P/W. The 20,000 Italian prisoners were shipped to India and South Africa. The remaining 4,000 Germans were to be sent to Australia; but adequate shipping facilities were not available. Britain then requested that

²⁶ Article 23, Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 1929.

Canada accept the 4,000 Germans,²⁷ and Canada agreed subject to receiving at least six weeks notice. Prime Minister Mackenzie King also warned:

The acceptance of these 4,000 prisoners of war will exhaust the capacity of the existing system of camps and consideration will have to be given to the establishment of new, larger camps designed to hold 1,000's instead of 100's. Canadian authorities are considering plans for such units to take 10,000 prisoners of war each and if this appears feasible may be prepared to accept custody of a larger number of prisoners of war.²⁸

Canada was willing to change its original plan regarding the acceptance of prisoners of war, but it had to improve its internment operations

In March 1942 the Canadian Government requested that Britain build three large prisoner of war camps.²⁹ This request came after Army and Internment personnel had conducted surveys for possible camps locations. They had suggested that three large camps be built in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Ozada, Alberta.³⁰ It was felt that these locations met the criteria

²⁷ NAC, RG 24, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1, Vincent Massey to W.L.M. King, #2487, 27 December 1941.

²⁸ Ibid., W.L.M. King to Vincent Massey, #37, 7 January 1942.

²⁹ Ibid., RG 24, DND, C-5396-72, Lt. Col. H.L. Macpherson to District Officer Commanding, HQS, 7236-72, 22 September 1942. In his letter, Macpherson describes what transpired between the Canadian and British Governments regarding the construction of the Medicine Hat and Lethbridge camps.

³⁰ Ozada was never constructed to the same degree as the other two camps were. It was a tented camp that held prisoners until their transfer to either Lethbridge or Medicine Hat.

for suitable camp sites, as defined by Major D.J. O'Donahue in September 1940.³¹ They provided a work area, little or no possibility of escape, but immediate access to a major railroad. The Canadian authorities had estimated construction costs at \$2,183,000 for each camp, and Britain was to pay \$2,180,000 of the total cost of constructing the camps.³² The British authorities granted the request for Lethbridge to be built but construction at Medicine Hat was not to proceed.³³

The reasons why Lethbridge was approved can only be speculated. There are three possible reasons. Lethbridge was an area that needed farm labour as it had lost most of its labour force to the war. The sugar beet farms were labour intensive and it was assumed that prisoners could provide the necessary labour. The second reason was that Lethbridge had been a site for a prisoner of war camp during World War One. It was possible that the British were familiar with the territory. The third reason may have been logistics. A new shipment of prisoners was to arrive in May and the construction of a new camp became essential. It was better to have one fully operational camp than two under construction when large numbers of prisoners arrived.

The initial rejection of the Medicine Hat site did not deter

³¹ Ibid., RG 24, Vol. 11,253, file 11-2-100, Inspection of Major D.J. O'Donahue, 19 September 1940.

³² David J. Carter, Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980), p. 166.

³³ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5396, High Commissioner of Canada to Britain, to Department of External Affairs, Cable 649, 7 March 1942.

the Canadian Government. It had been interested in the location as early as February 1942. During that month members of City Council and officials of the Internment Operations had discussed the location and boundaries of a camp.³⁴ The location of Medicine Hat met all the requirements that had been set down by Major O'Donahue. The area was a farming and ranching district. The Depression had an impact on the local economy and building a camp there would provide an economic boost to the region. The war had also reduced the labour force in the area and a camp with prisoners could alleviate that shortage.

Medicine Hat's geographical location was ideal for deterring prisoner of war escapes. It was surrounded by prairie and farmland. The landscape was relatively flat and trees were few. This provided clear sight lines both from the air and on the ground. The closest urban centres of significance were Lethbridge (180km) and Calgary (300km). A person unfamiliar with the region could easily become disorientated and perish from heat exhaustion during the summer or hypothermia during the winter.

Medicine Hat was on the mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The rail line was the only major transportation infrastructure and anyone attempting to escape had to use the tracks. Authorities were aware that the boxcars could provide a mode of transportation during an escape. Patrols were set up

³⁴ City of Medicine Hat Archives, City of Medicine Hat Council Proceedings, 21 May, 1942. The Council was discussing a letter from Lt. Col. P.V. Harcourt concerning definite boundaries for a camp. The letter from Harcourt refers to a discussion between him and the City Council, February 1942.

along the rail line diminishing the possibility of escape. If an escape was reported all boxcars would be checked for the P/W escapee. There are no records of any German prisoners successfully escaping from the Medicine Hat camp.

The Department of External Affairs continually pressed the British to approve the city as a viable location. Submissions were made by External Affairs between 19 March and 26 June 1942. Although Britain accepted these submissions, clarifications of certain points were requested.³⁵ The United Kingdom granted authority for the Medicine Hat location on the 26 June 1942. Requests for tenders went out in July and the contract to build the camp was awarded to Smith Bros. and Wilson of Regina.³⁶

While External Affairs negotiated with the British Foreign Office, the Internment Operations were discussing the matter with City officials. The Internment department proposed that the camp be placed at the top of Dunmore Hill, southeast of the city. The city was asked to provide one million gallons of water and 2,000 kilowatts of electricity daily.³⁷ The city informed Internment Operations that it could provide the water but not the

³⁵ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5396, HQS 7236-72. The dates of these submissions are as follows: Department of External Affairs to British Foreign Office, Cable 969, 17 May 1942, High Commissioner to DEA, Cable 1381, 22 May, DEA to British Foreign Office, Cable 1151, 13 June 1942.

³⁶ Ibid., HQS, 7236-72, 54-27-19-12-25, 21 July 1942.

³⁷ City of Medicine Hat Council Proceedings, 11 May 1942.

electricity, unless it obtained a new turbine.³⁸ The government approved the purchase of a new turbine but the city had to place the order with a British firm, C.A. Parsons & Co. of Newcastle-on-Tyne.³⁹ Once delivery of the turbine was assured the city prepared for the construction of the new camp.

Ozada became a temporary prisoner of war camp until Medicine Hat and Lethbridge were completed. It was located between Calgary and Banff, Alberta along the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Since it was temporary the prisoners were housed in United States army surplus tents. Only a few administration structures and the twenty guard towers were regarded as proper buildings. At its peak, the population of the camp reached 12,500 prisoners of war. Most of these prisoners were from the North Africa campaign. Ozada was in operation from May to December 1942 and closed when the Lethbridge camp began operation.

When the Medicine Hat and Lethbridge camps were completed they were the largest and the first to be used exclusively for P/W in Canada. Prior to their construction, the government had relied on refurbishing existing buildings such as prisons, military barracks and housing at a pulp mill. The camps in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat were identical. Each covered 6.25

³⁸ In 1940 the city had asked the government for a new turbine but was rejected. Knowing that the government wished to put a camp within its boundaries, the City Council recognized its opportunity to get the new turbine.

³⁹ City of Medicine Hat Council Proceedings, Col. Harcourt to City Council, 11 May 1942.

million square feet. Each side of the camp was 2,500 feet long and had barbed wire and sentinel towers. Thirty-six dormitories accommodated 350 men in double bunks. Each of these dormitories was 160 feet by 36 feet by 10 feet. There were two large recreation halls 145 feet by 140 feet, each capable of holding 3,000 men. Six education huts, six workshops, six packing storage barracks, and six messhalls with kitchens were also part of the camps. Each messhall could sit 800 men. The camp also had its own hospital and dental clinic and a morgue. The final construction costs of the Medicine Hat camp was 2.3 million dollars, \$120,000 more than the original estimate.⁴⁰

The anticipated arrival of large numbers of prisoners necessitated new administrative arrangements. The government amalgamated Internment Operations with the Department of National Defense. The amalgamation was approved by the War Committee on 19 November 1942. An order-in-council was passed on the same date outlining the new responsibilities of the Department of National Defence (DND).

the supervision of the carrying out of the policy of the Government of Canada and for the guarding, disciplining, control, and the welfare of enemy prisoners of war, and for the establishment, maintenance, administration, and provision of supplies for such internment stations or camps. The Department of Secretary of State for External Affairs shall be responsible for dealing with POW and internment problems and their international aspects particularly in

⁴⁰ NAC RG 24, DND, Vol. 6585, file 4-2-1, HQS, 7236-65, Vol. 3, Lt. Col. Macpherson to Commissioner of Internment Operations, 3 November 1942.

regard to the enforcement of duties imposed and rights given by International law; liaison with their governments and communication with the International Red Cross and the Protecting Power for enemy interests".⁴¹

The actual transfer of power did not occur until January 1943. When the transfer took place, custody of prisoners of war, enemy aliens, and other internees was under the Department of National Defence.⁴²

The governance of the camps would be in the hands of the Camp Commandants. They were to run the camps in accordance with Canadian Internment policy and the Geneva Convention. However, each camp was different and it was up to the Camp Commandant to provide solutions unique to his camp. For example, according to the camp policy no prisoner was to enter the warning zone ten feet before the outer fence but a provision was allowed for a prisoner to retrieve a soccer ball from the zone if he waved a flag, and waited for the tower guard to signal so that he could retrieve the ball.

Camp Commandants issued Camp Standing Orders to everyone in the camp including Camp Staff, Veteran's Guard, and the prisoners. The Standing Orders for the Staff and Guards were the rules and regulations and these orders detailed what each occupant was to do. Both the Camp Staff and the Veteran's Guard were subject to Canadian Military Law and its punishments. The

⁴¹ Ibid., RG 2, Order-in-Council, PC 10571, 19 November 1942.

⁴² Ibid., RG 2, Order-in-Council, PC 36/500, 22 January 1943.

Standing Orders for the prisoners provided, in detail, the proper conduct for the prisoners. The prisoners failing to obey these orders would be punished according to Articles 45-67 of the Convention.

The day to day operations of the camps revealed to the Camp Commandant what was successful or failing. If certain measures were not achieving the results desired, the orders were changed. At times the orders were altered to accommodate a particular aspect of the camp, such as allowing prisoners to earn extra money by selling handicrafts to the general public in a supervised auction. The orders were the by-laws of the camp and were the governing rules for all those inside the enclosure.

During the negotiations regarding an Anglo/Canadian prisoner of war policy Canada had received prisoners of war. This complicated the procedure for creating proper internment and prisoner of war policies and this put the Canadian Internment Operations behind in identifying ardent Nazi prisoners. The opportunity had risen the pro-Nazi prisoners to influence and partly control the system inside the camps.

A disturbance in the tented camp at Ozada, Alberta, revealed the extent the Nazi prisoners were willing to control the camps. This disturbance also provided the impetus for the establishment of a Psychological Warfare Committee. An unusual wet and cold summer had made the living conditions in the camp unliveable, and the prisoners rioted. The riot was regarded by the Canadian authorities as a "carefully organized demonstration by the

prisoners of war recently arrived from Egypt".⁴³ Many of these recent arrivals had been part of General Rommel's Afrika Corps and were considered the most ardent followers of Nazi ideology, and devotees of Hitler. They truly believed that Germany was only a few months away from defeating the Allied Forces. Many planted flowers outside their tents to make the camp look presentable for Hitler when he arrived.⁴⁴ When the riot was put down 28 prisoners were charged with an "act prejudicial to the good order and discipline among prisoners of war".⁴⁵ On the 10-11, August 1942 hearings were held for the 28 prisoners. Seventeen were acquitted, nine were to be imprisoned 28 days, and two were remanded for court-martial.⁴⁶

The presence of fanatical Nazis within camp compounds was a problem for the government. It was feared that this subversive element would endanger other prisoners. Captain J.A. Milne, British Intelligence Officer at Ozada noted:

the Gestapo element within the enclosure is extremely active and it is known that it threatens with direct penalties, ostracism, court martial, and death penalty after the war to any POW who gives in to the Camp

⁴³ Ibid., RG 24, Vol. 11,247, file 9-1-3, Captain F.C. Mason to Col. H.N. Streight, 28 July 1942.

⁴⁴ Interview with Carmen Jackson, 10 September 1989, conducted by Robin Stotz. Mr. Jackson had been stationed at Ozada during the summer 1942 and he experienced the attitude of many of the prisoners.

⁴⁵ J.J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, p. 167.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

Staff.⁴⁷

The Nazi element could also present a danger to the camp administration and the outnumbered guards. This was especially true if the Gestapo element had success. The Psychological Warfare Committee was created to combat this element by segregating and re-educating the devotees of Nazism.

During 1943 Intelligence work was carried out in each camp. Camp interpreters read incoming and outgoing mail, conducted interviews, and basically had to discover what was occurring in each camp. The Psychological Warfare Committee changed the roles of the Intelligence Officers in 1944. The Committee created sections which dealt with specific areas of intelligence. Military Intelligence #3 (M.I.3) was to concentrate on counter-intelligence, escapes and intended escapes, detect secret writing equipment, and break any secret codes used by the prisoners.⁴⁸ Military Intelligence #5 (M.I. 5) officers were in charge of the educational policies of the Psychological Warfare Committee. M.I. 5 officers were given short courses on intelligence and security to help them in their studies on the attitudes of the prisoners. The M.I. 5 groups reported on prisoner attitudes

⁴⁷ NAC, RG 24, Vol. 11,247, file 9-1-3, Captain J.A. Milne to Commandant, 26 December 1942. Since Canada was interning prisoners for Britain it was not uncommon for British Internment officials to be present in Canadian camps. Their presence was mainly to offer advice or suggestions. When the Canadian internment officials create their own Intelligence Operations, British officials helped in formulating a system of classification.

⁴⁸ John J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada", p. 171.

toward the educational policies and what influence Nazi pressure groups had on other prisoners.

The re-education programmes that were organized were to prepare the prisoners for their final repatriation to Germany. These education programmes emphasized the ideology of democracy. It was hoped that the prisoners would adopt democratic ideals and support political and social reform in post-war Germany.⁴⁹ In more general terms the education programmes were to "de-Nazify" individuals to make them more accommodating towards democratic ideals.

One area that the democratic ideals were to be taught was in the selection of camp representatives. The Internment Officials were willing to allow prisoners to select their own camp leaders as it would allow prisoners to handle their own affairs and reduce the workload of the Camp Staff. The second reason was the electoral process could aid in teaching the democratic process, a process that the Intelligence section for re-education wanted the prisoners to learn.

The prisoner leadership was set up to allow each hut to have representatives. In Camp 132 there were 36 hut leaders. From these 36 hut leaders, six were chosen to represent six huts.⁵⁰ From these six representatives a camp leader was chosen. His duties were outlined by the Camp Standing Orders issued by the

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵⁰ NAC RG 24, DND, C-5396, file H.Q.S. 7236-69-132, Camp Standing Orders, Camp 132, 1 April 1943.

Camp Commandant, and included the discipline of prisoners (not exceeding camp regulations), translation of orders from the Camp Commandant, and serving as the official representative to military authorities on behalf of the prisoners.

There were challenges to the intelligence divisions. In the Medicine Hat camp a short wave radio was discovered with the antenna threaded through a prisoner of war clothesline. The M.I. 3 groups also worked to identify members of the S.S., the elite group of the German Armed Forces. These S.S. individuals were considered to be the most avid followers of Hitler and the devotion of many never waned. It was hoped that by identifying them the Intelligence Officers could segregate them from the other prisoners and prevent them from slowing down the re-education process.

The Military Intelligence divisions used an interrogation system called PHERUDA to discover the political leanings of each prisoner. PHERUDA referred to each capital letter in each of the areas prisoners were interrogated.⁵¹ There was a list of five questions used by the interrogators that helped in the classification of prisoners. These questions dealt with a prisoner's background, political orientation, military history, personal details, and prisoner of war history. All information gathered from the intelligence sources was used to classify

⁵¹ P for political leanings, H for attitude towards Hitler, E for education, R for Religion, U for usefulness, D for Dependability, and A for attitude to Hitler (pro/anti). Each of these areas had five categories ranging from one extreme to the other. The A area had nine categories.

prisoners into colours. A BLACK classification meant strong Nazi, WHITE was anti-Nazi, and GREY were those in-between. Degrees of colour were also used to identify each prisoners ideological commitment. For example, a prisoner with a FOUR X BLACK rating was an ardent Nazi who had served with or was linked to the Waffen SS.⁵² At the end of September 1945, 9,172 prisoners had been classified by the Military Intelligence.⁵³

One of the last major policy decisions made between 1940-1943 was the authorization to allow the Ministry of Labour to use prisoners of war as labourers.⁵⁴ The prisoners would be used on agricultural and labour projects. Article 31 of the Geneva Convention allowed for prisoners to be used a labour as long as there was no direct connection with the war. For Canadian authorities this meant that prisoners could be used in areas where a labour shortage was occurring, mainly agriculture, forestry, and mining. Using prisoners would alleviate this shortage.

The use of prisoners as labour had been discussed by Canadian authorities early in the war. It was felt that working would keep prisoners busy, leaving them no time to plan an escape:

Everyone,..., realizes the importance of finding work for the prisoners. It is

⁵² NAC, RG 24, C-5416, HQS, 9139-132, Commandant Bull to Intelligence Officer, Military District 13, 15 August 1944.

⁵³ J.J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps", p. 189.

⁵⁴ NAC RG 2, Order-in-Council, PC 2326, 10 May 1943.

essential to employ all of them, if possible, all the time. They will be happier if they are occupied. It will improve their morale and as a result it will be easier to handle the camp,...

Providing work for prisoners was one of the prerequisites for choosing a camp site. Each camp location had something different to offer. Medicine Hat had large acreages of land and if it was possible to have prisoners work on private farms or small plots of their own, the produce could be used by the prisoners or sold to the Defense Department.

In June 1943 a Directorate of Labour Projects for Prisoners of War was created. Lieutenant Colonel R.S.W. Fordham was appointed as the Director.⁵⁶ It was his duty to handle all aspects of the Prisoner of War labour program. In August 1943 four large labour projects were given approval. The first project was in Lethbridge where 100 prisoners were to be used to hoe crops. The second project was three projects in one. 100 men were used at Brooks, Alberta, building an irrigation system, 100 men at Thurso, Quebec were used to cut wood, and another 60 men were working at South River, Ontario. Unloading grain at Fort Williams, Ontario needing 200 men was the third project and the fourth project was a 300 man farming project at Metcalf, Ontario.⁵⁷ Eventually prisoners were used in pottery plants,

⁵⁵ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6576, file 1-2-3, General Panet to District Office Commanding, Military Districts, 2,3,4,5,7,10, 6 August 1940.

⁵⁶ NAC RG 2, Order-in-Council, PC 5022, 2 June 1943.

⁵⁷ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5381, file HQS 7236-34-3.

tanneries, brick plants, and as farm labourers.

Prisoners of war were selected on a volunteer basis. but not all prisoners who volunteered were selected. Initial projects used non-combatant prisoners because they were not serious security risks. Soldiers that were considered dangerous were not selected for work outside the prison camp. A prospective employer would sign an application form and volunteers would be sought at the nearest internment camp. The prisoners who volunteered were told that they must follow certain regulations set out by the Labour Directorate. Before any prisoners were sent to a project site, the site had to be inspected by the Department of Labour. The site also needed approval from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in case it posed a security threat. Any accommodations had to be in satisfactory condition or the application was refused. All terms of the agreement between the prospective employer and the Labour Department needed to meet the Geneva Convention.⁵⁸ The rate of pay was \$2.50 per day with \$1.00 deducted per day for the meals and accommodation costs.

The success of the labour projects can be measured in the response of those wishing to employ prisoners as well as the prisoners themselves. By March 1946 10,185 prisoners had been employed in various projects across Canada.⁵⁹

In December 1942 Britain requested that Canada accept more

⁵⁸ J.J. Kelly, *The Prisoner of War Camps*, p. 154.

⁵⁹ Report of the Deputy Minister of Labour, Canadian Department of Labour Report, 31 March 1946.

prisoners. The Cabinet War Committee agreed to accept 5,000 prisoners in the early part of 1943.⁶⁰ Britain maintained that Canada had sufficient room to accommodate up to 100,000 prisoners. The Canadian Government remained firm on the issue. If Britain was willing to build another large camp like Medicine Hat or Lethbridge then Canada was willing to accept 10,000 more prisoners.⁶¹ In September 1943 Britain approached Canada once more but the Canadian Government refused to accept any prisoners until a new camp was constructed.⁶² The 5,000 German prisoners who had arrived in the early part of 1943 were the last to arrive in Canada. The acceptance of any more prisoners without adequate accommodations and manpower meant a security risk. Canada was not willing to overburden its prisoner of war facilities.⁶³

The Canadian Internment Operations went from a piecemeal operation to a large scale between 1940-1943. This occurred because the government was willing to accept large numbers of prisoners once the concerns of interning prisoners was addressed by Britain. Canada's hesitancy to intern German prisoners of war came from the fear that British policy decisions would override Canadian sovereignty. The creation of the InterGovernmental Prisoner of War Committee eased Canadian fears. It provided a

⁶⁰ NAC, RG 2, 7c, Minutes of Cabinet War Committee, 9 December 1942.

⁶¹ Ibid., #359, 8 December 1942.

⁶² Ibid., 15 September 1943.

⁶³ Ibid., Minutes of Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 16, 11 December 1944.

forum for discussion of general questions regarding prisoners. The Committee improved the channels of communication between the Dominion Governments and Britain.

Working out a financial agreement was another priority of the Canadian Government. The Canadian administration had appropriated funds for internment operations but that amount was based on the numbers interned in July 1940. It was felt by the government that if Canada was to have large numbers of prisoners within its borders then it should know its financial responsibilities.

The impact of working out agreements with Britain was reflected in the improvement of Canadian Internment operations. The establishment of the Psychological Warfare Committee, Directorate of Labour Projects for Prisoners of War, and the consolidation of the camp operations under one department show that the government was willing to be active in interning German prisoners. More importantly, the government knew that it was an equal partner with Britain and not colonial entity. Yet the Internment Operations still had a major concern inside its camps. The ardent Nazis were able to utilize the inadequacies of the Internment Operations during the negotiations between the Canadian and British Governments and allowed the Nazis to work on controlling the camps. Though there was a change in direction, the problems encountered during that change would affect Canadian prisoner of war policy.

Chapter 3: "The Incorporation of the 1929 Convention"

The treatment of all prisoners in all prisoner of war camps was subject to the International Convention Relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, the Geneva Convention (1929). The 97 Articles of the Convention provide explicit rules and regulations for Detaining Powers who were interning prisoners of war. In December 1939 the Canadian Government adopted the Convention as the basis for its own prisoner of war policy. This order-in-council made all prisoners in military custody subject to the laws of the Armed Forces of Canada.¹

The issue of clothing was covered by Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention. A prisoner was allowed to wear his uniform and badge of rank if he chose to do so. The Detaining Power was to supply underwear and footwear for any prisoners choosing to wear their uniforms. During the summer of 1940 this created a problem. Many of the captured Germans believed that the war would soon end with a German victory. They refused to accept a standard uniform, opting instead to wear their summer fatigues. When the cold weather began they changed their minds and asked for proper winter uniforms.²

¹ NAC, RG 2, Records of the Privy Council, Order-in-Council, PC 4121, 13 December 1939.

² John Melady, Escape From Canada, (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1981), p. 34.

An ongoing conflict between the prisoners and camp officials was in regards to the standard prison uniform. Each prisoner received from the Canadian Government a uniform consisting of leather boots, gum boots, three pairs of socks, two pairs of underwear, one winter cap, one summer cap, one mackinaw overcoat, woollen mitts, winter coat and trousers.³ Each prisoner also received razors and shaving brushes.⁴ The standard issued uniform was denim with special markings. These markings included a red stripe down the right leg and a 14 inch red circle at the back of the coat. It was the red circle marking that angered the prisoners. The German soldiers resented the design which they felt resembled a target. They believed that the Canadian Guards were not able to shoot a man in the chest as the target was not visible. This produced a stigma amongst the prisoners. They felt they could not turn their back on the guards fearing they would be shot.

The British authorities expressed their concern over the Canadian uniform design.⁵ The British feared that stitching patches in the uniform trousers or jackets was not desirable as it would " undoubtedly result in retaliation by Germany which the

³ NAC, RG 24, Department of National Defense, C-5378, file 7236-25, Col. Stethem to Department of External Affairs, 19 March 1941.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., Lt. Col. Stethem to Department of External Affairs, 9 May 1941.

war office wishes to avoid".⁶ Lt. Col. Stethem, Director of Internment Operations, pointed out to the Department of National Defence and the British authorities that the plain blue German Naval or grey Army trousers were facilitating escapes because they were similar to civilian trousers.⁷ As well, putting patches on uniforms was not against the Geneva Convention.

The uniform, from Lt. Col. Stethem's standpoint, served a more useful purpose. If a prisoner escaped it would be difficult for him to remove the circle without destroying the entire jacket. Civilians would have no trouble in identifying a prisoner because of the peculiar circle. The Directorate of Internment Operations would not compromise on this issue. Colonel Stethem argued that the use of red was held in the highest of regards by the British and Canadian Services. Royal Regiments of Britain wore Red Tunics as did the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.⁸ Playing up to the fears of many prisoners, Stethem also warned the prisoners that the red circle could be changed to yellow, knowing that the Nazis used yellow to identify Jews in Germany.⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6577, file 1-2-7, Lt. Col. H. Stethem to Department of External Affairs, 29 January, 1941.

⁹ Ibid., 29 January 1941.

The establishment of a canteen within the camp confines was permitted by Article 12 of the Geneva Convention.¹⁰ The canteen was to be operated and used by the prisoners for their benefit. Goods in the canteen were to be sold at local market prices. All goods were subject to the approval of the Camp Commandant but the prisoners did the ordering under the supervision of an officer selected by the Camp Commandant. The canteen provided a variety of goods. Some of the goods available at the Petawawa camp and their prices in May 1941, were the following:

Coca Cola.....	\$.05
Palmolive Soap.....	2/\$.15
Players Mild Cigarettes.....	\$.10
Eggs.....	\$.30/dozen
Green Peas in tins.....	2/\$.25 ¹¹

If the canteens wanted to sell fresh fruits or vegetables, the produce had to be domestic.¹² Prisoners of war used canteen tickets, earned from working outside the camp or doing certain jobs within the camp, to purchase canteen goods. When prisoners began to work in labour camps the money earned could be exchanged for canteen tokens. These tokens soon replaced the tickets as the legal tender within the camp. When canteens began to show profits, the camp administration began to deduct \$2.00

¹⁰ Article 12 of the "International Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War", 27 July, 1929.

¹¹ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6580, file 3-2-1, May 1941.

¹² *Ibid.*, Col. Streight to Department of National Defense, 17 March, 1942.

per capita to offset the costs of recreational, educational, and other facilities.¹³

Prisoners not able to work outside the camps began to find alternative ways to raise money for canteen purchases. Some prisoners started gardens behind their huts in hopes that they could sell the produce to the camp canteen. Other prisoners used their talents in woodworking to make a variety of crafts. Things such as jewellery boxes, ships in bottles, and pictures were made in hopes they could be sold. At the Medicine Hat camp the excellent workmanship of the prisoners resulted in the Camp Commandant allowing the products to be sold to the general public in a farmer's market setting.¹⁴ At the end of 1945 there were 1,200 prisoners of war in Medicine Hat working on a variety of crafts in hopes of selling their product.¹⁵

The materials for these handicrafts were not easily accessible. The prisoners relied on their own ingenuity to find the necessary materials. Discarded toothpaste tubes, wood shavings from the workshop, tin, razor blades, and other materials no longer needed by the general camp population were

¹³ John J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada 1939-1945", Thesis (M.A.) unpublished, University of Windsor, 1977, pp. 95.

¹⁴ Ibid., C-5416, file H.Q.S., 7236-94-6-132, Summary of Intelligence Report, January 1946.

¹⁵ Ibid.

quickly retrieved.¹⁶ Each discarded piece eventually became a key element needed to complete a project.

Initially alcoholic beverages were not available at the canteens. But the presence of contraband liquor made from makeshift stills soon prompted the camp administrators to change this rule. The varieties of alcohol appeared endless. Stills made out of copper tubing from toilets or showers, and fresh water combined with stolen raisins or dried prunes with some sugar, produced a liquor that was quite palatable.¹⁷ The Guards knew of the stills and worked to destroy them but the process was in vain. In an attempt to reduce the amount of illegal liquor, beer was made available to the prisoners. It was considered a luxury and no prisoner was allowed to purchase more than six pints per month. Each pint of beer was twenty-five cents. Camp Commandants were always quick to inform the prisoners that having beer was a luxury and that abuse of the privilege meant that the sale of it could cease. For many prisoners, hard liquor was preferred and they continued to produce their own brand of alcohol.¹⁸

Prisoner's rations and hygiene were covered by Articles 11 through 15. All prisoners were allowed the same rations as the Canadian depot troops. In Canadian prisoner of war camps this

¹⁶ Diary of Herbert Hentschel. Mr. Hentschel was a prisoner of war in Medicine Hat from September 1943 to December 1945.

¹⁷ Melady, p. 77.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

amounted to approximately 3,500 calories per day. The four major food groups were represented in the daily and weekly rations and were measured into exact amounts:

Beef..... ten ounces per week
 Bread and biscuits..... ten ounces per day
 Milk..... three and three-quarter ounces daily
 Beans..... two ounces per week
 Prunes..... two ounces once a week¹⁹

A prisoner was allowed eight ounces of fresh vegetables five times a week or six ounces of canned vegetables. If neither was available, a prisoner could receive one and one-half ounces of dehydrated vegetables five times a week. Prisoners also received coffee, tea, fish and other items to round out their daily or weekly rations.

The food was prepared in the camp kitchens by cooks who were themselves prisoners of war. Many of the cooks in the camp kitchens were trained chefs, and their culinary expertise allowed them to prepare meals that were a great improvement over traditional army rations. It became common knowledge that the prisoners' meals were much better than those of the Guards because of the experienced cooks. Some Guards even went as far as to visit the camp kitchens during mealtime in hopes of receiving a taste of that particular meal. As one former guard said, "it was at a prisoner of war camp kitchen that I received

¹⁹ Carter, David, Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980), p. 315.

the best Christmas dinner I ever had".²⁰ Prisoners who had purchased goods at the canteen could prepare their own meals.

Proper hygiene had to be kept up in the camps at all times. This meant that prisoners were to have access to showers or baths and had to be provided with sufficient water to maintain proper cleanliness. Prisoners were to have twenty-four hours a day access to the showers but any camp curfew would prevent a prisoner from showering in the middle of the night.²¹ Physical activities were to be promoted and prisoners were to have access to inside and outside recreation facilities. In Camp 132 (Medicine Hat), prisoners built their own stadium complete with a three-tier embankment for spectators.²² Along with a regular size soccer field, the stadium also had a quarter-mile track, shot put facility, and a 100 metre track. In the winter the field was frozen for hockey.

Prisoners of war who were combatant Officers, or Enemy Merchant Seamen were allowed to write four postcards and three letters per month. Other ranks were allowed the same number of postcards but only two letters per month. There were no postal charges for parcels and correspondence addressed to prisoners of war. Sending letters or parcels by air mail was allowed, but the

²⁰ Interview with Carmen Jackson, September 1989. The interview was conducted by Robin Stotz.

²¹ Article 12, "Geneva Convention", 1929.

²² NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5400, file H.Q.S. 7236-96-132, Col. R.C. Bull (Commandant) to Director of Internment Operations, 2 June 1944.

prisoner had to pay for all charges. If a prisoner wished to send a telegram or cable overseas, he did so at his own expense. In 1940, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation allowed prisoners to send radio messages to their families in Germany. These messages allowed many prisoners to send Christmas greetings to relatives in Germany. The messages provided the prisoners a chance to say they were being treated well, thus providing a useful propaganda tool for the Canadian Government.

All mail was censored by the Ottawa Post Office Personnel. It was their job to watch for anything that might have intelligence value. A concern for Canadian authorities was any message that could be used for propaganda purposes, either inside the camps or outside.²³ This included letters that could improve the morale of the prisoners. Letters detailing German victories over Allied Forces were of importance as they could undermine the effectiveness of the camp officials in maintaining camp discipline. If prisoners discovered that Germany was winning or had won a battle, they could become insolent and refuse to yield to camp authority. Near the end of the war when Germany was obviously losing, camp officials made sure that reports of Allied victories and German losses were seen by all

²³ Kelly, "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence", p. 287.

prisoners.²⁴ This helped in lowering the morale of prisoners, but was very useful in the de-Nazification of prisoners.²⁵

The job of censoring incoming and outgoing mail was the responsibility of the Camp Interpreter. Officers performing censorship duties were expected to check all prisoner correspondence. These officers were instructed never to put any comments on prisoner's mail. Their comments had to be written on separate sheets of paper. If a letter or a portion of a letter had to be deleted, the Censors were to follow certain instructions. A Censor could not just blot out a line or paragraph with ink. He had to obliterate the line with ink and then roughen the surface. This process prevented the prisoner from receiving the intended message. In extreme cases the Censor could use scissors to cut out any sentences that were viewed as undesirable.²⁶

The authorities were aware of the methods used by prisoners and their correspondents to evade censorship. Some of the methods were simple. Certain words, phrases, or letter could be underlined in such a way that they could be rearranged in a pre-arranged order. Information could be written inside envelopes or on wrappers, or unintelligible marks or signs outside or inside

²⁴ Ibid., p. 287.

²⁵ The term "de-Nazification" refers to the process of opening the minds of German prisoners of war to the concept of democracy and social reform.

²⁶ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6594, file 6-3-1, "Instructions For Officers Performing Censor Duties", 6 February, 1940.

envelopes could be used. One of the more ingenious methods was the insertion of information between the layers forming a postcard or photograph, or putting cuttings and letters under labels and in the lining of clothes. The most common method was the use of invisible ink, and the continued usage of these materials created problems for the Canadian censors.²⁷

The most frequently used inks used on incoming mail were ones that prisoners could easily decipher by heating the letters with any type of heat. These inks were made from common chemicals such as sulphate of copper or sulphuric acid.²⁸ Everyday materials were also used as a form of invisible ink. Potato juice, sugar and water, starch and water, and cabbage juice could all be used as inks to send messages. At times the incoming letters were written with a combination of linseed oil, ammonia and water. These letters were to be immersed in cold water and read while the paper was still damp. Once the paper dried, the message could no longer be deciphered.

Prisoners used materials that were readily available to them to send coded messages. These materials included orange juice, lemon juice, and urine. Prisoners were not allowed to receive lemon juice or lemons from an outside source. They had to rely on their regular rations of approximately one ounce of lemon juice per week, or supplies available from the canteen and thus subject to effective camp control.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

Instructions to the censors explained where to look for the hidden messages. Very often the messages were written between lines of a letter, or on a blank side of a paper. The invisible inks were seldom used on glazed paper as the message would be easily discovered, but censors had to be aware of unglazed paper. It absorbed the ink and therefore made the message invisible to the naked eye. A censor was instructed to hold unglazed paper to the light at an angle and see if traces of writing could be seen if the message itself was not legible.²⁹ If a prisoner's correspondence was suspect, it was sent to Ottawa for examination under Mercury glow ultra-violet ray lamps.³⁰ This allowed authorities to read the prisoner's mail without damaging it.

In 1944, Camp Intelligence in Medicine Hat discovered a solid ink commonly known as AV Putty. This putty had been used extensively by the German Secret Service (Abwehr) in Germany and was not easily detectable on correspondence.³¹ A special paper was developed by Dr. Flemons, the Allied censorship chemist, that was immune to any ink, but it was not available until April 1945 and therefore had no real effect on the secret writing war. Article 36 of the Geneva Convention allowed prisoners a set amount of correspondence paper, and the Internment Operations were not willing to withhold any paper from prisoners in case this action contravened the Convention.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

³¹ Kelly, "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence", p. 290.

Along with censoring incoming and outgoing mail, the Canadian authorities were determined to prohibit certain articles from entering the camps.³² These articles were usually located in parcels sent to the prisoners from private individuals. Cigarette papers were prohibited as they could be used for letter writing instead of standard issued writing material. Photographic materials were also prohibited as the components could be used for radios. As well, Canadian officials were sensitive about photographs being taken in the camp for security reasons. Money, writing paper, raisins, liquors, and anything else that may be used by a prisoner for purposes other than what they were designed for were not allowed. Newspapers and magazines were also prohibited, as were any books dealing with Nazi propaganda. When it became apparent that the Allies were winning the war, newspapers proclaiming Allied victories were readily available in hopes that this would de-moralize the Nazi prisoners.³³ When a prohibited article was found in a parcel the article was removed and a record was kept that showed what article(s) had been removed and the name of the addressee.

Materials sent by the German or International Red Cross were allowed into the camp even if they were on the list of prohibited materials. If a prisoner received a parcel from the Red Cross the parcel would have its outer wrapping removed prior to the prisoner receiving it. All food sent to prisoners was examined.

³² NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6594, file 6-3-1, 23 July 1941.

³³ Kelly, "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence", p. 287.

Cakes were cut into four portions, sausages cut into pieces and other articles that were capable of hiding illicit articles were divided. Tins of food were opened and the tin destroyed. If a prisoner wished to have the contents of the tin he had to bring his own receptacle and the contents would be emptied into his bowl and the tin destroyed.³⁴

Chapter Three, Articles 45 to 67 of the Convention covered the penal sanctions against prisoners and their judicial rights as prisoners of war. Officers were to be accorded the rights of their rank and were not to be placed in the same building with Non-Commissioned Officers or enlisted men.

Punishment of prisoners of war was allowed by the Geneva Convention for various infractions. If a crime was of a military nature, the District Office Commanding (DOC) could bring the accused before a military court for trial. The punishments would be in accordance with regulations of the Armed Forces of Canada. If the case involved a civil offence the accused was brought before a court that had jurisdiction in civil or criminal cases.³⁵ Article 46 prevented the Detaining Power from confining prisoners to dark cells for any length of time. Withholding food as a form of punishment was also forbidden.

Solitary confinement was the most severe disciplinary punishment. No prisoner could be placed in solitary confinement

³⁴ NAC, RG 24, DND, Vol. 6594, file 6-3-1, p. 3, 23 July 1941.

³⁵ Article 60, Geneva Convention, 27 July 1929.

longer than thirty days. If a prisoner had committed a number of disciplinary infractions he could be imprisoned longer than the thirty days but he must be allowed three days outside the imprisonment facility for each ten days he was in confinement. When a prisoner served time for disciplinary infractions, he was entitled to two hours recreation outdoors each day, to facilities that provide proper hygiene and cleanliness, write and receive letters, and to seek medical help when needed.³⁶

Prisoners who attempted escapes but were recaptured were tried for their offence based upon the military regulations of the Detaining Power. If a prisoner escaped and managed to return to his Armed Forces and was later taken as a prisoner of war, he could not be punished for his first escape. There were many attempted escapes, but the Guards of the camps were successful in preventing most of them by discovering tunnels or catching the escapees almost immediately.³⁷

The most famous escape by a German prisoner of war interned in Canada occurred in January 1941. The prisoner, Franz von Werra, managed to escape from a train carrying prisoners of war from Halifax to the Neys camp in Ontario.³⁸ He fled to the United States since that country was not yet at war with Germany. Von Werra was captured in Ogdensburg, New York on 24 January 1941

³⁶ Article 56 "Geneva Convention" 1929.

³⁷ For a detailed description of prisoner of war escapes and attempted escapes, John Melady, Escape From Canada, (1981), provides details of the more famous escapes.

³⁸ Melady, Escape From Canada, pp. 83-98.

when he was arrested for vagrancy. His arrest led to an international debate. German officials felt that Von Werra should not be returned to Canada as he had escaped from Canada to a neutral country. According to Article 50 of the Geneva Convention a prisoner could not be charged with escape if he was successful in reaching his Armed Forces or leaving the territory in which he was interned. This put the United States in a precarious position. They were neutral, and determined not to get involved with either side. Eventually the American officials charged Von Werra with failing to report to an immigration officer on his entry into the United States. A five thousand dollar bond was set, which the German consulate paid. Von Werra was sent to El Paso, Texas, by train, from where he eventually made his way to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Six months later he was shot down while flying a mission for the German Luftwaffe.

A prisoner of war was entitled to receive the same considerations as a civilian regarding judicial proceedings.³⁹ He could not be sentenced until he had been given the chance to defend himself. A prisoner had the right to have a lawyer defend his case like a civilian charged with a crime. If a prisoner was unable to find a lawyer the detaining Power had to provide him with one from a list of qualified individuals furnished by the Protecting Power.⁴⁰ During the course of judicial proceedings

³⁹ Articles 60-63, "Geneva Convention", 1929.

⁴⁰ The Protecting Power was a country deemed neutral. During World War Two, Switzerland was the Protecting Power for German prisoners of war. The Swiss Representative was responsible in

representatives from the Protecting Power were allowed to attend the proceedings but if there was a concern for State safety, the representatives were informed of the proceedings.

When prisoners were sentenced by military or civilian courts, that had to be communicated to the Protecting Power. If the prisoner was sentenced to death, the execution could not take place until three months after the Protecting Power had been notified. This allowed for a proper appeal process either by the prisoner or by the Protecting Power. The Geneva Convention also allowed for representatives of the Protecting Power to visit prisoners of war to hear complaints and view the camp. The representatives could intervene on the part of the prisoner of war and present a prisoner's complaint to the authorities. The Swiss Consul-Generals representing Germany in Canada were Mr. Gaston Jaccard and John Oertly. They filled out reports on what they saw and how conditions could be improved after each visit.

The International Red Cross and the World Council of the Young Mens Christian Association (YWCA) played a role similar to that of the Swiss Consul-Generals. The general duties of the Red Cross was to centralize all information on prisoners of war and civilian internees.⁴¹ This included notifying the respective

protecting German interests, and provide information to the German Government regarding prisoners of war. If the Swiss had relinquished their protection of German interests, the International Committee of the Red Cross would have been asked to carry out the same functions.

⁴¹ Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on its activities during the Second World War, Volume Two, "The Central Agency For Prisoners of War, (Geneva, May 1942), pp. 10-14.

nations of capture, deaths, and transfers. The Red Cross was to act as an intermediary between the belligerent Powers for the transmission of all information regarding prisoners of war. The last duty was to be the information centre for private organizations and citizens concerned about prisoners of war. The Red Cross often sent packages to the prisoners that included highly regarded items such as chocolates or books. Ernest Maag was the Red Cross delegate who visited the prisoners in the Canadian camps and heard their complaints. He sent his reports to Switzerland, from where they were then transferred to Germany.

The YWCA tried to meet the intellectual, recreational, musical and religious demands of the prisoners.⁴² The YWCA often provided prisoners with musical instruments, books, films, and athletic equipment so as to alleviate much of the boredom associated with being a prisoner. In Commandant Bull's monthly report regarding Medicine Hat, he lists five German language films shown in the camp that were received from the YWCA.⁴³ In total, 30,000 prisoners took in these films. The library at the Medicine Hat camp had 4600 books with many of them coming from the YWCA and Red Cross.⁴⁴ At times the YWCA would attempt to discuss religion with prisoners, but this was frowned upon by

⁴² Melady, p. 52.

⁴³ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5400, file 7236-83-4-1, 3 November 1944.

⁴⁴ Ibid., C-5416, file HQS 7236-94-6-132, Intelligence Report, "Mood and Morale", 31 December 1943.

many of the devout Nazis who continually maintained that the only true religion was that of Nazism.⁴⁵

The 1929 Geneva Convention provided the rules and regulations for detaining Powers regarding prisoners of war. It was hoped by the signatories of the Convention that these rules would be followed, allowing for the humane treatment of prisoners of war. The Convention covered all matters dealing with prisoners of war which included everything from food and clothing to punishment.

The Canadian Government did attempt to follow the Convention as closely as possible. Prisoners did have complaints, some legitimate and others non-legitimate, and Camp authorities tried to deal with them as quickly as possible without undermining Canadian policy. The adoption of PC 4121 by the Canadian Government was an important move by the government as it gave legitimacy to the Convention's rules and regulations. There was no guarantee that all the Articles of the Convention would be followed as closely as possible, but with PC 4121 the Canadian Government did recognize the Convention. The camp situation did appear relatively stable, but there was animosity between prisoners and the Camp Staff. In wartime, ill-feelings and mistrust are the norm between participants and often result in confrontations and hardships. No camp could escape the reality of the situation.

⁴⁵ Ibid., C-5400, file 7236-83-1, "Report on Religious Attitudes in Prisoner of War Camps", 24 January 1945.

Chapter 4: "Camp 132: A Small Island of Germany"

Inside Camp 132 a German society flourished. It was a society that provided most prisoners with a semblance of Germany. The recreational, cultural, and educational activities provided many prisoners with a chance to have their internment be as close to civilian life as possible. A prisoner's worst enemy was boredom and camp officials wanted to make sure that prisoners had every opportunity to combat the monotony of camp life. The last thing the camp administration wanted was 10,000 bored and unhappy prisoners of war.

Camp 132 was destined to be a camp plagued with problems. Initially in the spring of 1942, the camp had been refused by the British Government. When it was finally approved, the difficulties in securing building materials had slowed its construction.¹ The result was that the camp was behind schedule and would not open in January 1943 as had been expected.

There were other problems compounding the late opening of the camp. The Lethbridge camp had opened in November 1942 and was housing nearly 10,000 prisoners, most of them from the Ozada camp. These Ozada prisoners were supposed to be divided amongst the Lethbridge and Medicine Hat camps. Since the Medicine Hat camp was not finished the Lethbridge camp became overcrowded. This was not what officials of the Internment Operations wanted.

¹ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, Department of National Defence, C-5396, file 132c, Memo from Col. H.O. Bull to Lieutenant-Colonel R.W. Catto, 29 December 1942.

With conditions being what they were the decision to move prisoners to the uncompleted Camp 132 was made. In February 1943, 500 prisoners left Lethbridge for Medicine Hat² accompanied by the Veteran's Guard Company 25.³ The conditions at Medicine Hat were less than accommodating. The warm temperatures in the last two weeks of February had melted most of the snow.⁴ This turned the camp into a muddy quagmire. Some of the Guards who had served in World War One commented that the camp reminded them of the Somme.⁵ Complicating matters further was the unfinished Guard Quarters. This forced the guards to use the prisoner barracks inside the camp which put the guards on twenty-four hour alert. The camp's Commandant, R.C. Bull, and his administration were without barracks or administrative buildings. They were housed in the old Armouries in downtown Medicine Hat, completely away from the camp. Bull therefore did not have the advantage of establishing an official military presence in the camp. Not until 1 April 1943 was the camp officially opened. Commandant Bull was then able to provide the

² Brief, "Murder of Karl Lehmann, Camp 132, Corporal A.R. Bull (R.C.M.P.), page 1, no date.

³ P.O.W. WOW, 'Medicine Hat Internment Camp No. 132 Sees Eventful Three Years of Service', 2 March 1946. The P.O.W. WOW was the official camp newspaper and was published by the camp Guards.

⁴ The average temperature between 11-28 February was 35 degrees fahrenheit as the high and 16.6 degrees fahrenheit was the low. The temperature reached 47 degrees on 18 February. Canada Atmospheric Service Monthly Record and Meteorological Observations, February 1943.

⁵ P.O.W. WOW, page 1, 2 March 1946.

rules and regulations of the camp for prisoners and guards through official Camp Standing Orders.

This inauspicious beginning of the camp set the tone for the operational years. Even though the camp opened four months behind schedule no time was wasted in having prisoners of war sent to the camp. In May, 2,000 prisoners arrived from Lethbridge and another 3,000 arrived from Monteith in July. This brought the camp's population to 5,550 prisoners of war. Along with the 5,550 prisoners were three Guard companies of 250 men each. Companies 23 and 27 arrived in April and May respectively while Company 25 had been in the camp since February.⁶

The role of the Veteran's Guard was a combination of military presence and law enforcement. The guards were a military unit with the military ranks and discipline of a military unit. Yet, similar to a city police force, they were the enforcers of the rules and regulations stipulated by the Camp Commandant. Their main responsibility was to prevent escapes, but otherwise allow prisoners to run their own show as long as they did not break the camp rules.⁷ The guards were part soldiers and part policemen.

The prevention of escapes was the responsibility of the Scouts, a sub-section of the Guard. These men were trained to watch for any clandestine activities of prisoners, such as

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5396, file 7236-69-132, "Standing Orders for Camp 132", 1 April 1943.

tunnelling, covert gathering of prisoners, or drunkenness. The Scouts strolled through the camp looking for signs of tunnelling which would constitute an escape attempt. During these strolls the Scouts did not carry firearms.⁸ The obvious reason was that the outnumbered Scouts could easily have been overpowered by the prisoners. The last thing the camp authorities wanted were armed prisoners.

The unarmed Scouts had a psychological effect on the prisoners. The message conveyed was that the Scouts were willing to respect the prisoners right to run their own affairs if the prisoners respected the Scouts. By not carrying firearms the Scouts were relaying a message of trust. If the prisoners wanted to have their internment to be of a positive nature, allowing the Scouts to walk through the camp without the fear of being attacked was important. A mutual respect was developed further by the Scouts willingness to talk to the prisoners on non-military matters. Even then, Scouts could not show any form of kindness towards the prisoners, as many prisoners viewed this as a sign of weakness.⁹ This was especially true at the beginning of the war when the prisoners were riding high and taunting the Guards.¹⁰ A number of German soldiers taken prisoner had been told that if they were sent to Canada, the Camp Commandants would

⁸ Ibid. Scouts were allowed to carry billyclubs but they were to be concealed and were only issued by the Camp Commandant.

⁹ Carmen Jackson Interview, September 1989.

¹⁰ Ibid.

be Jewish and would treat the German prisoners harshly.¹¹ When prisoners discovered that this was not true they were surprised. As their internment dragged, many prisoners of war were willing to discuss just about anything with the Scouts, provided the Scouts were willing to talk.

Engaging in conversation with the prisoners was not allowed. But many Scouts ignored the orders which were very hard to follow because of the Scouts work schedule.¹² A Scout spent eight hours inside the camp, eight outside, then another eight inside during his shift. During a twenty-four shift sixteen hours were spent in contact with the prisoners. After a period of time it was hard for some Scouts to avoid having conversations with the prisoners. These conversations were usually about general topics and from these some friendships developed between Scouts and prisoners¹³ At times prisoners informed the Scouts that other prisoners were in danger and the Scouts, along with other Guards, would try and get those prisoners moved to protective custody. This meant that a prisoner was moved into a hut outside the camp's boundaries but near to the Guards' quarters.

The relationship between the Scouts and prisoners was good. It appeared to be idyllic, but there was always a dark undercurrent associated with the relationship. Each side had its

¹¹ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5396, file H.Q.S. 9139-5-132, Letter from W. Fisher, Assistant Interpreter to Camp Commandant at Camp 132, 4 October 1944.

¹² NAC, RG 24, DND, "Camp Standing Orders", 1 April 1943.

¹³ Carmen Jackson Interview, September 1989.

own daily routine and in time respect for these routines was established. However, these daily routines could result in an outburst of anger. This was evident during the prisoner body counts. During outside body counts prisoners were lined up in two ranks not exceeding forty prisoners but not less than thirty.¹⁴ Five Scouts took part in the counts. Two Scouts did the actual counting, with one walking behind the ranks while another walked in front. Two other Scouts were placed in strategic locations preventing other prisoners from joining the ranks or attempting to leave. All the prisoners counts were done under the supervision of a non-Commissioned Officer. Prisoners often viewed these body counts with disdain and attempted to disrupt the count by either talking, attempting to leave, or joining the ranks. When this occurred the count was started from the beginning. It was the one way that prisoners could show their displeasure with the procedure in a non-violent manner.

15

If the outside body counts were viewed by the prisoners in a negative manner, then the counts that took place inside the prisoner barracks were seen as nothing less than an invasion of privacy. These counts were conducted in the same manner as the outside counts, except that an extra Scout was used to guard the entrance of the barracks.¹⁶ These type of counts violated the

¹⁴ NAC, RG 24, DND, "Camp Standing Orders", 1 April 1943.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Camp Standing Orders", 1 April 1943.

prisoners own sanctum from the militarism of the camp. Yet their only form of objection was through disruptive tactics such as pretending to faint, giving out wrong names and numbers, or attempting to shift ranks.¹⁷ Their level of victory was graded on the amount of aggravation they created amongst the Scouts. One can imagine a comical scene taking place during these counts as both prisoners and Scouts tried to complete their respective routines. Both sides knew that the roll call was a monotonous and boring routine but that it had to be done.

The two types of counts were designed to keep the prisoners off-guard and to remind them that they were prisoners of war.¹⁸ At times, the Scouts would begin an outside body count but only under the pretence of letting other Scouts enter the prisoner barracks. This allowed the Scouts to search the barracks for any illegal paraphernalia. During these impromptu searches short-wave radios and tunnelling devices were discovered along with banned writing materials.¹⁹ It was during one of these impromptu searches when the non-violent actions came close to turning into violent situations. Carmen Jackson pointed out that at one time, a Camp Leader's quarters was searched, and the other prisoners who had been on roll call, rushed inside the hut. The collective action by the prisoners almost resulted in a fight but

¹⁷ John Melady, Escape From Canada, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada), p. 76.

¹⁸ Diary of Herbert Hentschel.

¹⁹ Jackson Interview.

the prisoners eventually left the hut.

The Scouts were able to develop a unique relationship with the prisoners. The tower Guards were not in that position. They were the last defense against any escape attempts and their specific orders were to shoot any prisoner who attempted to escape.²⁰ For many tower Guards this was a chance to enact some form of revenge. Dave Watson, a tower guard in Medicine Hat, felt a certain amount of animosity towards the prisoners. This animosity stemmed from his experience as a prisoner of war during World War One.²¹ Another former Guard, Carmen Jackson had experienced the same feelings as Watson:

I had been taken prisoner during World War One and was put into a prisoner of war camp in Germany. During my stay I came to hate Germans because of the way the soldiers treated us. They would make us search for food in the trash cans and if we were lucky they would give us a piece of black bread to go along with our finds... When I was a tower guard in Ozada and I heard the screams of prisoners being beaten by the other prisoners. This hatred increased and it took almost all my strength not to shoot every prisoner in that camp.²²

There were three tower guards on duty for each tower. Two guards rested below the tower while one man was in the tower for two hours. Each shift was twenty-four hours. During his time on duty a guard was to make sure that no prisoners attempted to

²⁰ "Camp Standing Orders", 1 April 1943.

²¹ Dave Watson as quoted by David Carter in Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, page 173.

²² Jackson Interview. Eventually Jackson changed his attitude towards the prisoners when he became a Scout even becoming friends with Adolph Meier, a former prisoner of war in Medicine Hat.

escape by scaling the barbed wire. There was a ten-foot forbidden zone before the barbed wire and if a prisoner entered that zone he was shot. It was up to the tower guard to fire warning shots before the prisoner reached that forbidden zone. At times, a soccer ball would go to the barbed wire and prisoners would have to ask permission to retrieve the ball. This was done by signalling the guard with a white cloth.

The trappings of militarism were evident throughout the camp. The barracks, guard towers, and the barbed wire confirmed this. However, the prisoners were allowed to recreate a small German town inside the barbed wire. It was believed by camp Officials that if the prisoners were allowed to live a near civilian type life, they would be less inclined to create large scale problems. If the camp ran smoothly the strain on the understaffed camp would be lessened. The result was a reconstruction of a small German town inside the barbed wire.

The words of Herbert Hentschel that were written in his dairy when he was a prisoner of war try to explain what being a prisoner of war was like:

Should one explain what it means to be a prisoner of war? We know, unfortunately from our own experience. It is damned hard,... You celebrate your second, third, or fourth year as a prisoner so that you won't have to think about it. But one can't escape from it. It is never good and one tries not to think about it,...Homesickness is not a sorrow, but it can so take hold of you that the big wait becomes too long.²³

²³ Diary of Herbert Hentschel. Mr. Hentschel was a prisoner of war in Medicine Hat from 4 October 1944 to September 1945.

Homesickness and boredom were the enemies and it was a constant battle to prevent the two from defeating prisoners. A policy was then established to do everything possible, within the parameters of the official Internment policy, to alleviate prisoner boredom.

The prisoners were allowed to name street signs in German. Buildings that held importance to the prisoners received German names. Two buildings, the Weichsel and the Rhine, were two large halls that held a symbolic meaning to the prisoners. These halls could accommodate up to 3,000 people. The Weichsel was the entertainment hall where variety shows, live theatre, films, and concerts were held. The Rhine was the athletic centre. Gymnastics, weightlifting, and boxing were some of the activities that took place in that hall. Because both halls were the centres for social activities they became similar to that of a town hall.

The importance of the halls are reflected in their names. Both hall were named after European rivers which provided natural boundaries to the east and west. The Rhine hall was located at the west side of the camp. The Rhine river was the natural boundary to the west which separated France and Germany. The Weichsel hall was at the east side of the camp like its namesake river (Vistula) was to east, which many in Germany believed should be the extension of Germany's border. Since both halls were the last buildings on their respective sides, the prisoners were identifying them as the boundaries of their internment not associated with the barbed wire. It was an attempt by the

prisoners psychologically to downplay the fact they were prisoners of war.

The prisoners were given the opportunities to continue pre-war occupations, or learn a new trade. Trained chefs created German dishes in the messhall kitchens. A total of 630 prisoners of war were employed by the camp in a variety of capacities.²⁴ Medical doctors who were prisoners were allowed to treat ailments among prisoners. Another 260 prisoners were employed as orderlies in the camp hospital, camp canteen, dental clinic, and post office.²⁵ As well, tailor and barbershops were staffed by prisoners.²⁶ In the workshops, artists, carpenters, and machinists plied their trade. Even prisoners without much aptitude for mechanics or woodworking were encouraged to use the workshops. Some of the products created were eventually sold to the general public. These products included jewellery boxes, paintings, and ships in bottles.²⁷ The workshops gave everyone the opportunity to further himself in a chosen trade.

The workshops and kitchens were not the only facets of camp life. There was a great emphasis placed on physical,

²⁴ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5400, H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, Summary of Intelligence Report, 4 February 1946.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ J.J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada 1939-1945", unpublished thesis (M.A.), University of Windsor, 1978, p. 104.

²⁷ Ibid., C-5396, file 7236-64-132, "Camp Standing Orders", 4 January 1944.

intellectual, and cultural pursuits. Sporting activities were the most popular:

Sports activities draw the widest interest and practically every prisoner is engaged in it one way or another.²⁸

The choice of most prisoners was football (soccer). There were ninety teams made up of 1025 prisoners. Other sports included handball (628), fistball (465), and tennis (59). The individual sports such as boxing, gymnastics, calisthenics, and wrestling were also available to prisoners wishing to keep fit.²⁹

Eventually the game of ice hockey became a very popular sport. This was especially true when the new stadium was built by the prisoners and more equipment was made available.³⁰ The lack of equipment for all sports was a major obstacle. Donations from the International Red Cross, Young Men's Christian Association, and private citizens helped to alleviate the equipment shortage but did not eliminate it. The YWCA had donated twenty-four pairs of skates per thousand prisoners in each camp but this was not sufficient.³¹

The arts were very important to the cultural well-being of many prisoners. A grand orchestra was established by 56 prisoners and entertained other prisoners of war in the Weichsel

²⁸ Ibid., C-5416, file H.Q.S. 7236-9-6-132, Intelligence Report, "Mood and Morale", June 1943.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., C-5420, H.Q.S., 7236-96-132, 2 June 1944.

³¹ Jerome Davis, "In Canadian Prisoner Camps," The Christian Century, 13 August 1942, pp. 1002-1003.

hall. A smaller orchestra of 26 prisoners also gave concerts.³² There was also a string ensemble of 6 prisoners, a grand dance band of 20, and a barn dance band that had 14 members. The instruments were received from the Red Cross and YWCA but, like the sport equipment, there was always a shortage.

Live theatre was also popular. The prisoner of war theatre group re-enacted popular plays complete with the backdrops and female roles. Everything that was necessary to stage a play was found at the Weichsel Hall. There the costume designers, stagehands, and make-up men used their time and talent to make sure that the play being staged was professional. Vaudeville actors also took the stage in the Weichsel giving the prisoners a chance to forget the barbed wire.³³ A number of variety shows were also held which gave the amateurs a chance to show off their hidden talents.

The opportunity to improve ones own education was available to all prisoners of war. Canadian Internment officials and the camp administration wanted all prisoners to take advantage of the courses being offered. In Medicine Hat, there were six education huts that were used as classrooms. Each of these huts was 24 feet by 120 feet.

The classes offered to the prisoner included everything that would allow a prisoner to gain a certificate that would be

³² NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5416, file H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, 4 February 1946.

³³ Diary of Herbert Hentschel.

honoured in their country after the war.³⁴ By January 1946, 2,298 prisoners of war took part in eighty-eight courses. These courses were taught by 156 teachers.³⁵ Some of the teachers were from the prisoner of war ranks who held university degrees when the war broke out. Other teachers came from the Medicine Hat district. For example, three Medicine Hat High School teachers were brought in once a week to conduct English lectures to fifteen prisoners of war.³⁶ For the more advanced students university courses were available. These courses provided the prisoners an opportunity to study towards a Liberal Arts degree. Prisoners able to teach the higher level courses were allowed to do so. Yet, two prominent Canadian historians, Professor W.L. Morton of the University of Manitoba and Professor George Simpson of the University of Saskatchewan, were approached to teach Canadian History classes.³⁷ The classes included; Canada and its People, Canadian Indians, New France, Development of Self-Government, Wilfrid Laurier and his Times, and Canadian Political Parties. As well, nine prisoners of war took correspondence

³⁴ Jerome Davis, "In Canadian Prisoner Camps", pp. 1002-1003.

³⁵ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5416, H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, 4 February 1946.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., C-5400, file, H.Q.S. 7236-83-2, "Educational Facilities", Letter from Col. H.N. Streight, Director of Prisoners of War to Department of External Affairs, 28 November 1944.

courses from the University of Saskatchewan which allowed them to attain a Liberal Arts degree.³⁸

The materials for these classes were donated by the Red Cross or the YWCA. Many books had been donated by universities and colleges in the United States and Canada or by libraries.³⁹ In time, the camp had over 4,000 books on a number of subjects in its library.

There was another motivation to educate the prisoners. That was to re-educate them away from the teachings of Nazism. Authorities believed all prisoners of war had been exposed to Nazi ideology and would benefit from a program of de-Nazification:

The authorities decided to "open their (prisoners) minds" to ideas more in harmony with those of the democracies, and thus make these returning soldiers potential supporters of political and social reform in postwar Germany.⁴⁰

It was soon discovered by the Intelligence personnel in the camps that this was not true. In any case the authorities were not willing to send any man back to Germany without attempting to "de-Nazify" him. Classes were then aimed at educating everyone on the ideals of democracy in hopes they would use those ideals in a constructive manner. In political studies courses, emphasis

³⁸ Ibid., C-5416, file H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, 4 February 1946.

³⁹ Jerome Davis, "In Canadian Prisoner Camps".

⁴⁰ John J. Kelly, "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence in German Prisoner of War Camps in Canada During World War Two", Dalhousie Review, Summer 1978, Volume 58, No. 2, pp. 285-294, p. 286-287.

was placed upon the Canadian democratic process. Before repatriation to Germany, the prisoners in Camp 132 received weekly lectures on democracy.⁴¹

For many prisoners, keeping or turning to religion was one way of combating the stress of being a prisoner of war. To do so meant going against the doctrine that only Nazism was the true religion. It also meant that any type of services had to be done in a covert fashion and announced only to those who admitted their religious beliefs. The prisoners who had formal training in religious practices found the loss of religious practice unsettling. They were determined to hold a service for anyone wishing to attend. These men would inform others wishing to take part in a church service to meet in areas considered non-traditional for such an event, such as open areas, camp kitchens, or any place that would not arouse much suspicion from the Nazi element was in opposition to all formal church services. As the war dragged on the prisoners who wanted to worship increased, and their services were very much in the open. Unlike the early months of the camp's operation, these prisoners would openly announce when and where a service would be held. A Catholic service was held on 10 December 1944 in the Recreation hall and over 1,200 prisoners were present.⁴² It was believed by the camp administration that holding open services would help to

⁴¹ P.O.W. WOW, "German Prisoners of War Themselves Carry on Re-Education", 27 October 1945.

⁴² NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5366, file 9139-132 (Vol. 2), "Intelligence Report", 18 December 1944.

combat the Nazi presence inside the camp.⁴³ Prisoners were encouraged to attend the services in hopes that it would free them from the Nazi rule.

This was not as easy as it sounded. There was still fear amongst many prisoners that openly worshipping their faith meant reprisals from the Nazis. What developed, according to Lt. Col. A.J. Schimnowksi, was a "queer mixture of faith and adherence to the Nazi hierarchy".⁴⁴ Regular services were held on alternate Sundays for Catholics and Protestants yet Catholics were not allowed to go to confession. Not even the seven Catholic clergymen were allowed to confess.⁴⁵ The eighteen Protestant ministers, mostly Lutheran, were treated with no respect and were given menial tasks by the Nazi leadership. By October of 1945 this had changed. It was noted by Reverend O.J. Nothhacksberger that the Medicine Hat camp had gone through a revival. The attendance at the religious services had increased substantially and the "religious spirit of the camp was very good".⁴⁶

There were other ways of escaping the tedium of prison life. Some prisoners began to keep pets for companionship and anything that came from outside the camp was cherished. In Camp

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., C-5400, file H.Q.S. 7236-83-1, "Report on Religious Attitudes in Prisoner of War Camps", 24 January 1945.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., C-5400, file H.Q.S. 7236-83-2 (Vol. 2), Report of Reverend O.J. Nothhacksberger on Prisoner of War Camp 132, 2 November 1945.

132 there was a large variety of dogs such as huskies, terriers, spitz, poodles, Saint Bernards and all the possible cross breeds.⁴⁷ Other animals such as cats, pigeons, and other birds were kept by prisoners. Some prisoners even caught gophers or prairie dogs for pets.

Between Reveille (6:00 am) and Lights Out (10:00 pm) a prisoner's life was structured but not varied. Breakfast, lunch, and supper were held at the same time each day. The Commandant's inspection was at 10:00 am every day except Sunday. If a prisoner was not part of a work party that went outside the camp, he could look forward to many hours inside the confines of the barbed wire. With many hours to kill each day, a prisoner tried to do as much as he could to keep from going insane. As Herbert Hentschel wrote:

A prisoner flees the noise of his barracks, to think here in the quiet of the morning or evening perhaps to think of his home. Another walks for his health, another walks his dog or simply shows off his newly made trousers.⁴⁸

Some prisoners could not adapt to prisoner life. In Camp 132 two prisoners committed suicide by hanging themselves. One was diagnosed as having schizophrenia, which led him to commit suicide.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Diary of Herbert hentschel.

⁴⁸ Diary of Herbert Hentschel.

⁴⁹ David J. Carter, Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980), p. 316-330.

To some people the prisoners led a Utopian existence. Everything was provided for and they could do as they pleased. One former guard even wrote a letter to the Department of National Defence detailing the prisoners lifestyle:

The camp holds approximately 15,000 soldiers and they all have the freedom they want...have seen them on the street up to about ten or eleven pm. without escorts visiting dancehalls and beer parlours...several girls in and around Medicine Hat have become pregnant from prisoners of war. I joined the Canadian Army and I asked to go over and fight and kill these people... we are told to hate them. Why are these prisoners of war allowed the freedom of our shows, homes, women, public entertainment, and are allowed to work in the Medalta Potteries and therefore throw people out of work who had worked there for 8-10 years?⁵⁰

Most of the claims made by Lt. Col. Breland were never substantiated. The prisoners who may have been seen walking outside the camp may have been protected personnel. These were prisoners who, if left inside the camp, would have been beaten or killed by the Nazis. These men were put into protective custody and housed outside the main camp structure to protect them because of their anti-Nazi stance. They were important to the Intelligence Sections as they could help identify the devout Nazis in the camp. They also knew that if they broke any rules of the camp that they would be placed inside and be on their own. If these men had been walking in the city they were breaking the rules.

⁵⁰ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5396, file 7236-72, Letter from Lt. Col. J.G. Breland to Secretary of National Defense, 7 October 1944.

The prisoner of war lifestyle was neither posh, glamorous, or exciting. It was mundane and tedious. It was hard for all prisoners to comprehend their situation and each prisoner had his own view on what being a prisoner was all about. For some, it was a chance to improve a skill. For others it was a chance to wait out the war and anticipate a return to Germany. Others used their time in a constructive manner and worked on improving their education. Unfortunately, some never accepted their predicament and worked on destroying the hopes of others or themselves.

Camp 132 did resemble a German town. The residents all spoke German and there was a variety of occupations being pursued. The social life was like any German town. There was sports, entertainment, and religion. It all appears normal, and it was. That was the goal of the administration, to allow prisoners to recreate their culture inside the camp to alleviate the boredom and have the prisoners think about something other than escapes or open revolt. However, there was a dark side to the camp's social life and that was the ever present Nazi prisoners of war. Their presence overshadowed the good things about the camp and brought a sense of reality to the interned prisoners. As long as Germany was at war, and Hitler was in power, no prisoner of war was safe from the clutches of Nazism.

Chapter 5: "Nazi Continuity in Camp 132"

The continuation of Nazism in Camp 132 did not go unnoticed by Canadian Internment officials. This was clearly evident when the Psychological Warfare Committee was established. This Committee's mandate was to combat the presence of Nazi prisoners of war. The lack of manpower and the late start in developing education programmes prevented the Committee from being successful.¹ The inability of the Committee to combat the Nazi presence and the Camp administration's unwillingness to be involved in prisoner activities assisted in the creation of the Nazi regime in Medicine Hat.

The Nazi regime that was able to establish itself did so through an election process allowed by the Geneva Convention. The purpose of the elections was to provide the prisoners with spokesperson to the Camp authorities. In this role the Camp Leader was to relay official messages from the Camp Commandant to the prisoners and present prisoner grievances to the Camp Commandant. Once established, the regime took control of the other prisoners using acts of terror. These acts of terror were carried out by a Camp Gestapo which was created by the Camp Leadership to maintain order inside the camp. This Gestapo or Secret Police was not sanctioned by the Camp administration. It

¹ Commandant R.O. Bull, to Director of Operations, Military District 13, 25 April 1944, as quoted by J.J. Kelly in "Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, 1939-1947", M.A. Thesis, University of Windsor, 1977, p. 201.

was an illegal group and therefore its activities were covert. The Gestapo spied on and gathered information about prisoners suspected of being anti-Nazi. Using twisted logic they held their own courts of inquiry resulting in beatings of suspected prisoners.² and in the death of Doctor Karl Lehmann. The murder of Dr. Lehmann ended the Nazi stronghold in the camp because the camp administration and Internment Operations increased their activities against the Nazi prisoners of war.

The existence of Nazi sympathizers in the prisoner of war camps led to the creation of the Psychological Warfare Committee in 1943. Though the Committee was established in 1943 its first mandate had been to read incoming and outgoing mail, doing interviews with prisoners and generally find out what was going on. However the Committee's role changed in May 1944 when it was decided by Internment Operations that the Committee would actively pursue a classification, segregation, and re-education programme.³ The PHERUDA teams went through each camp interviewing prisoners so that prisoners could be classified and segregated. The prisoners themselves were not cooperative. Many attempted to alter their identification papers or made false statements about their political beliefs.⁴ By 30 September 1945

² Scrapbook of a German prisoner of war in Medicine Hat as quoted by Kelly in "Prisoner of War Camps", p. 175-177.

³ J.J. Kelly, "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, 1939-1947", Thesis, (M.A.), University of Windsor, 1977, p. 169-170.

⁴ David J. Carter, Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980), p.147.

only 9,172 of 34,000 German prisoners of war were categorized.⁵ This was approximately 26 percent of the prisoner of war population. The sheer volume of prisoners coupled with the late start of the Committee had made it difficult to interview every prisoner and achieve the results needed for the process to be successful.

The accuracy of the Committee's findings was questionable. They not only left out 74 percent of the prisoners, but did not give a definitive number. 774 prisoners were transferred from Monteith to Medicine Hat yet the number of BLACKS is unknown. As Commandant Bull noted, "in two-thirds of the list it is not known if BLACK or BLACK masquerading as WHITE or if prisoners are WHITE".⁶ Considering that the Medicine Hat camp had been designated as a GREY camp, the failure of the Committee to identify prisoners who could cause problems in camp 132 was evident. Some of these prisoners transferred were involved in the murder of Dr. Lehmann. The late start and early confusion prevented the Committee from fulfilling its two other objectives; segregation and re-education.

This would be achieved by designating certain camps as BLACK, WHITE, or GREY. The ideal was to have BLACKS in designated BLACK camps and so forth. Yet the fallibility of this

⁵ Kelly, "Intelligence", p. 291.

⁶ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5366, H.Q.S. 9139-132, letter from Commandant Bull to Intelligence, Military District 13, 15 August 1944.

system was that not every prisoner was categorized. Therefore each camp would have a percentage of each colour in its confines. Medicine Hat housed mainly known GREY prisoners but did have a percentage of Nazi prisoners as well as anti-Nazi. The number in each group changed as more prisoners were classified and transferred in or out of a camp. At any time there could be a large number of BLACKS in a GREY or WHITE camp. The problem was that until they were discovered the Nazi prisoners would continue their coercive behaviour.

Ironically, the S.S prisoners of war were anxious to let Camp authorities know who they were. In the early part of the war this was true, as many felt their internment would be short. Their training had made them fanatics of National-Socialist ideology and obedient to Hitler.⁷ The known number of suspected Nazis or members of the S.S. can only be estimated. Numbers from individual camps put the number between 17 and 20 percent after the end of hostilities.⁸ During the war this number would have been higher as Lethbridge was considered a BLACK camp and many BLACKS had been sent there. Neys had a capacity of 650 men and it was known that 122 prisoners were either Nazi or members of the S.S.⁹ Confusing matters further was the designation of 378

⁷ Heinz Hohne, The Order of the Death's Hand, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1969), p. 449.

⁸ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5366, file 9139-10, Prisoner of War Classification Report for Lethbridge 15 September 1946.

⁹ Ibid., Col. Bull to Intelligence, Military District 13, 15 August 1944.

prisoners in Medicine Hat. In October 1944, these men had been labelled as member of the S.S or suspected S.S. because many sent birthday cards or New Years Congratulations to Hitler.¹⁰

Commandant Bull was confident that his camp was only 12 percent BLACK, a small but significant number.¹¹

Article 43 of the Geneva Convention (1929) provided the prisoners of war with the opportunity to select their own camp representatives to the military authorities. The selection of a Camp Leader became the ideal forum for the Nazi regime to gain a stronghold inside the enclosure. The devout group of Nazis used threats and coercion on those prisoners who did not support their selections for hut and Camp Leader. Many prisoners were fearful of the S.S. and the consequences of not supporting the Nazi selections. As a result the Nazi prisoners of war were able to have their selections chosen as the hut leaders and section representatives.

One important aspect of the democracy lectures and the process of choosing a camp leader was not recognized by the Intelligence Committee. This was the notion that the prisoners were familiar with the democratic process. In 1933, the German National-Socialist Party came to power through a national

¹⁰ Ibid., C-5416, file H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-1 (1), Report from Department of National War Supplies-Canadian Postal Censorship, 27 October 1944. It must be noted that one of the men identified was Willi Mueller who was later found guilty for the murder of Dr. Lehmann.

¹¹ Ibid., H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, Commandant Bull to Director of Prisoners of War, 10 August 1944.

election. During that election the S.A. used terror tactics against their opponents in an attempt to ensure that members of the Nazi Party would be victorious in the election.¹² The same tactics of threats, coercion, and beatings were to resurface in Medicine Hat.¹³

Commandant Bull was well aware of the situation in his camp. On 1 April he issued Camp Standing Orders that detailed his administration's rules and regulations for both prisoners and camp staff. The rules relating to the prisoners were designed to prevent the abuse that was occurring in other camps. Many prisoners were being threatened or beaten by Nazi sympathizers. Bull believed that if he could outline his administration's position he could somehow prevent the Nazis from gaining control. There was a fear amongst Internment Officials that the Nazi prisoners were going to make their presence well-known and take control of the camps. In Medicine Hat, Bull's instructions were ignored.

One of the first steps, taken by the Nazi regime in 1943 inside Camp 132, was to establish a Gestapo under the direction of the Camp Leadership. This camp Gestapo was much like the Gestapo (Secret Police) in Nazi Germany. The members for this Gestapo came from a core of prisoners which included S.S. men and

¹² William Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1922-1945, revised edition, (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), p. 184-185.

¹³ Corporal A.R. Bull (RCMP), Royal Canadian Mounted Police Brief, "Murder of Dr. Karl Lehmann", no date. Statement of Walter Wolf, p.37.

any other prisoner who wanted to show his devotion to the Third Reich. It is possible that some may have been turned down by the Gestapo in Germany and they saw their opportunity to join this organization. In Germany the Gestapo's main function was to terrorize opponents of the Nazi regime.¹⁴ The Gestapo in Camp 132 followed the same mandate. Even though it was a concern for the camp administration the members were viewed as nothing more than political agitators:

These individuals support for Nazi ideology causes trouble for Canadian authorities... use of Gestapo is used too loosely... Political agitators more appropriate as they have nothing to do with the German Secret Police.¹⁵

But the camp Gestapo was more than what Commandant Bull perceived them to be. They did covert surveillance on those it felt posed a threat to the camp leadership. This list could include political opponents such as Communists, prisoners engaging in homosexual activity, or prisoners attempting to hold church services not associated with Nazism. Their spy system was elaborate, and combined surveillance and trickery.¹⁶ At times a member of the Gestapo would appear as an anti-Nazi to a prisoner suspected of being anti-Nazi. It was hoped that the prisoner would vent his feelings about Nazi Germany. If this was done, the prisoner would be paid a visit from a number of Nazis who

¹⁴ William Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, (New York: Crest Books, 1960), p. 373-374.

¹⁵ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5416, file H.Q.S. 7236-9-46-132, Commandant Bull to Director of Prisoners of War, 26 May 1944.

¹⁶ Kelly, "Intelligence", p.289.

would try and change his view by beating him. One former prisoner wrote in his diary:

Woe to him who dared to give free vent to his thoughts! Pitilessly, measures were taken against him... Such a spy system started allowing for no one to speak his mind. Everyone was for himself. Nobody was anxious to stick (sic) their own necks out. Beatings were a common occurrence.¹⁷

The prisoners who had visits from the camp Gestapo tended to withhold their feelings. At times they would tell the authorities but doing so could mean another beating. It even appears that with the knowledge of the self-appointed terror squad, the camp administration was indifferent. In an Intelligence Report the Camp Commandant stated, "the anti-Nazis are forced on the defensive though they do grumble".¹⁸ There were some prisoners who were able to become Protected Personnel because of the fear that they would be killed for providing information to authorities about the Nazi leadership.

There were times when the Nazi element was more overt in its operations. One of their most common methods of exercising control was to tamper with the incoming prisoner mail. The Nazis would attempt to prevent news of German losses from reaching other prisoners. Keeping mail from prisoners had a psychological

¹⁷ Scrapbook of a German prisoner of war in Medicine Hat as quoted by Kelly in "The Prison of War Camps", p. 175-177.

¹⁸ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5416, file H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, Intelligence Report from Camp Commandant (132), January 1944.

effect on the prisoners, maybe even more so than beatings.¹⁹ They even complained to the Camp Commandant via the Camp Leader about certain magazines available in the camp. Magazines such as Reader's Digest, Coronet, and Picture Post were viewed as Allied Propaganda.²⁰

The re-education of prisoners was to be the most important objective of the Intelligence Committee. Emphasis was placed upon the de-Nazification of prisoners of war before repatriation to post-war Germany. The educational programmes became the domain of M.I.5, a section of the Psychological Warfare Committee. This section was to use the classification of prisoners to develop education programmes that would combat the Nazi presence. However, not knowing how many prisoners were Nazi or anti-Nazi put M.I.5 in an awkward position. The solution was to re-educate all prisoners even if they had been classified as anti-Nazi. There are two perspectives on this issue. Educating anti-Nazis on the benefits of democracy was counter-productive. These men had rejected Nazism and teaching them ideals of western-style democracy was unnecessary. The other perspective was that not knowing the exact number of Nazis meant that the re-education process could not be selective. Therefore all prisoners were to attend democracy seminars and those that began

¹⁹ Assistant Director of Military Intelligence to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, 1 August 1944, as quoted by Kelly in "Intelligence", p. 287.

²⁰ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5416, H.Q.S. 7236-94-6-132, Intelligence Report from Commandant Bull, January 1944.

to favour the system could come under attack from the Nazi element. Another problem was that the programmes did not become truly efficient until near the end of the war. When peak efficiency had been reached many prisoners were more concerned with going home than with these "indoctrination" or "propaganda" seminars.²¹ One Intelligence Officer noted that only ten percent of the camp population ever attended the seminars and none were hard-core Nazis.²² In other words, the main objective of the Intelligence Committee was an inadequate response to the Nazi element in the camps.

By July 1943 the Nazi leadership, under a prisoner named Hofman, had control of the prisoners. In a short period they had established a system of terror. Those not adhering to the Nazi ideology were disciplined by the Leadership through the workings of courts of inquiry. Innuendo and rumour were the principle forms of evidence during these courts. As a result the findings of the court often favoured the Leadership since they controlled these courts of inquiry. Two prisoners suspected of attempting to overthrow the Leadership were brought to one of these courts on 22 July 1943.

August Plaszek and Christian Schulz had been identified as subversives by the camp Gestapo. This conclusion had been reached because the two men often met to have private discussion

²¹ Kelly, "Intelligence", p. 292.

²² Major Henry Smith, as quoted by Kelly in "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada", p. 206-7.

with one another.²³ As the men were being escorted to a hut for interrogation Schulz broke free. A mob chased after him but was unsuccessful in catching him. Schulz was able to get the attention of a tower guard by running towards the barbed wire and waving a white rag. The guard saw the mob and fired warning shots above their heads which stopped them. During this time, Plaszek had been sitting in an office waiting to be interrogated. The mob that failed to catch Schulz burst into the office and attacked Plaszek. Someone struck him over the head and he was then dragged to a recreation hall. Once there, Werner Schwalb placed a noose around Plaszek's neck and he was hanged.²⁴

August Plaszek was murdered because of his affiliation with the Legionnaires. These were men who were ex-Germans living in France prior to the war. When France was defeated by Germany these men were incorporated into the German army. The Nazis held disdain for these men as they felt they were not "true Germans" and were aligned with Communists.²⁵ Plaszek's private discussions with Schulz, also a Legionnaire, increased suspicion that the two were attempting to overthrow the Leadership. In an attempt to exert their strength the Nazis were going to discipline the two men. An overzealous prisoner and an outburst of anger led to Plaszek's murder:

²³ Ibid., C-5420, H.Q.S. 7236-95-1-132, Report of Lt. Col. H.L. Macpherson, 13 September 1943.

²⁴ David Carter, Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, p. 210.

²⁵ RCMP Brief, Statement of Bruno Perezenowski, 30 January 1946, p. 61.

From my discreet inquiries, my personal view is that the hanging was not a premeditated affair and resulted from a sudden outburst when the other prisoner of war, Schulz, and others sought protection from the Camp Staff. Schultz and Plaszek were called before the Gestapo to explain their conduct. Schultz made a dash for the wire and asked for protection and the other prisoners of war in an outburst in anger vented some against Plaszek.²⁶

After the Plaszek murder the camp returned to normal. Prisoners were transferred in and out of the camp which altered the demographics of the camp. But the hard-core Nazi group was very determined to continue its Draconian rule. There was still an undercurrent of fear among the prisoners, especially those who did not adhere to ideals of Nazism.²⁷ A small minority of prisoners were openly critical of the camp leadership and one of these men was Dr. Karl Lehmann.

The murder of Dr. Lehmann was not like Plaszek's. The murder was more than an attempt by the Camp Leadership to maintain its grasp on power. It was a murder that was premeditated and prompted by nationalist fervour. Those responsible believed that it was their duty as German citizens to kill anyone opposed to Hitler and the Nazi Government.²⁸

On 10 September 1944, Lehmann was asked to be present at education hut E-z on the pretext of signing some education

²⁶ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5420, file H.Q.S 7236-95-1-132, Report of Lt. Col. H.L. Macpherson, 14 September 1943.

²⁷ RCMP Brief, Synopsis of Col. A.R. Bull, no date.

²⁸ RCMP Brief, Statement of Bruno Perezenowski, p. 61.

certificates. These certificates were to be for prisoners who were being transferred from Medicine Hat to Neys the following day. The signing of these certificates was not uncommon as prisoners often had certificates verified by Camp teachers. This allowed them to continue their studies at the camp they were being transferred to. Lehmann was a Camp teacher and had signed many of these certificates before. When Lehmann entered the classroom he was asked if he knew of any radical underground movements. He replied that he did not. At that moment he was attacked by four men and beaten unconscious.²⁹ A rag was stuffed in his mouth and he was then hanged from an exposed gas pipe. The official cause of death was asphyxia.³⁰ The four men involved in the murder were Bruno Perezenowski, Walter Wolf, Willi Mueller, and Heinrich Busch.

The murder was the culmination of the Gestapo's surveillance on Lehmann and the rumours about his past. When he was first interned in Oldham England, Lehmann was accused by Nazis of making dissentious speeches to other prisoners.³¹ As well, he was suggesting that the German students were attempting to revolt against Hitler. According to statements made by other prisoners the Nazi leadership in Oldham was conspiring to murder Lehmann

²⁹ According to transcripts from the Preliminary Hearings of the four men who were tried for this murder, there was more than the four men in the room. However, none of the four who committed the murder were willing to say who was in the room.

³⁰ RCMP Brief, Coroner's Report, 12 September 1944.

³¹ RCMP Brief, Statement of Herman Schweizer, p. 27.

but their attempts were thwarted when he was transferred to Canada.³²

Lehmann was the antithesis of Nazism. He was highly educated with a Doctoral degree in Philosophy. He was fluent in three languages including English. At one time he was a reporter for a German newspaper which had been banned by the Nazi Government because of its Communist leanings.³³ As a teacher he would not include Nazi doctrines in his lectures which did not please the Leadership. The Leadership also viewed his translation of English newspapers and the reports of Allied victories as a deliberate attempt to undermine their control and decrease prisoner morale. The Leadership feared that if the prisoners believed that Nazi Germany was going to lose the war they (P/W) would not fear reprisals from the camp Gestapo. After the Normandy invasion this was clearly evident. New arrivals from the French battlefields held contempt for the S.S. and were "willing to assist in the overthrow of Hitler but were prevented with the arrival of new S.S. Divisions".³⁴

In March and April of 1944, a number of prisoners were transferred to Medicine Hat from Monteith. Among these prisoners were several devout Nazis and members of the S.S. including Bruno

³² Ibid.

³³ RCMP Brief, Statement of Bruno Perezenowksi, p. 62.

³⁴ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5368, file 9139-5, letter from W. Fisher, Assistant Interpreter and Censor on Train No. 1 from Halifax to Medicine Hat, 4 October 1944. In his letter, Fisher states that the morale of German prisoners was very low.

Perezenowski, Willi Mueller, and Heinrich Busch. Mueller was a boxing instructor in Monteith while Perezenowski was a sport leader. Upon their arrival they became part of the Leadership infrastructure with Perezenowski being selected as hut leader for hut E-4.³⁵ This transfer was important as it was the group of 774 prisoners about which Bull had reservations. He was not sure of the number of BLACKS included in the transfer. Once they had arrived in the camp they immediately strengthened the Nazi regime under Wilhelm Wendt, the Camp Leader.³⁶

The turning point that prompted the Nazi regime to murder Lehmann was the assassination attempt on Hitler on 20 July 1944. A home-made short-wave radio in the camp had received the broadcast that detailed the assassination. During the broadcast the German Military issued orders that anyone suspected of being a traitor should be killed.³⁷ It was felt by many individuals in the Leadership that they had justification to murder Lehmann with the information they had on him. There was still more condemning evidence. General Rommel was implicated in the

³⁵ RCMP Brief, Statement of Willi Mueller, p. 55.

³⁶ The exact date Wilhelm Wendt came to be Camp Leader under the process outlined by the Camp administration is unknown. In his statement to the RCMP, Wendt does not explain when he became Camp Leader but does refer to the previous Leader, Hofman, as becoming his assistant. He was well aware of the accusations surrounding Lehmann but he steadfastly maintained that he did not order any action against Lehmann, nor did he know of any courts of inquiries against Lehmann. He also stated that he believed that the Camp Standing Orders issued by Commandant Bull took precedence over any orders issued by the German military. RCMP Brief, "Statement of Walter Wendt, p.78-80, no date.

³⁷ RCMP Brief, Statement of Bruno Perezenowski, p. 63.

assassination attempt. Many of the men who had fought under Rommel in North Africa were the Legionnaires. Lehmann was not a Legionnaire but had fought under Rommel. More importantly, Lehmann had sided with the Legionnaires on a number of occasions against the Nazi Leadership. His sympathies with the anti-Nazi group and his own outspoken views had put Lehmann in the unenviable position of being a traitor to Nazi Germany.

The determination of the Leadership to kill Lehmann was further strengthened when news of a transfer of prisoners from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge became known. Many of the men to be transferred were well-known Nazi sympathizers in the Medicine Hat camp including Wolf, Mueller, Perezenowski, and Busch. These men decided that Lehmann should be murdered the night before the transfer. It was hoped that the body would not be found until the men had left the camp and therefore they would not come under suspicion. On the 10 September, Perezenowski gave the orders to murder Karl Lehmann.³⁸ Mueller was asked to participate because of his boxing skills. It was Mueller who carried the noose in his pocket and slipped it over Lehmann's head.³⁹ The murder took place between the 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. meal shifts.

The establishment of a Nazi regime in Camp 132 was the combination of three factors. The strict adherence to the Geneva Convention by Internment Operations allowed prisoners to select their own Camp Leaders without much interference by the Camp

³⁸ RCMP Brief, Statement of Bruno Perezenowski, p.62.

³⁹ Ibid., Statement of Willi Mueller, p. 55.

Staff resulting in the Camp Staff disassociating itself from the internal political structure of the prisoners of war. The administrators were aware of the existence of a camp Gestapo but did not think it a serious threat. When Commandant Bull finally realized the situation it was too late.

The Psychological Warfare Committee's own classification and re-education programmes were not efficient. They failed to classify the majority of prisoners and the re-education programmes were not being attended by the targeted group; the devout Nazis. It was also the failure of the Intelligence Committee to foresee the implications of having democratic elections within the camp. It was known there was an active Nazi group inside the enclosure and that they would attempt to gain control. Not being able to prevent this shows the failures of the Committee.

Lastly, the ardent Nazis were determined to continue their devotion to Hitler while interned. Their indoctrination did not allow them to stray from the doctrines of Nazism. As perceived defenders of Nazi Germany, they were determined to prevent anyone from attempting to resist Nazi Germany. Their motivation to extend Nazism into the camps was an outgrowth of this belief. A belief that was much stronger than the programmes created to combat it. The belief in Nazism motivated the ardent Nazis to gain power in the camps and suppress those who posed a threat to this power.

"Epilogue and Conclusion"

The last of the German prisoners of war left Canada in January 1947. The months between September 1944 and the January date were months of intense activity for the Internment Operations. During that period the Psychological Warfare Committee intensified its mandate of classification, segregation, and re-education. The Canadian Government finalized its Internment Operations refusing to accept any more prisoners from the United Kingdom. As well, the RCMP continued their investigations into the two murders which resulted in the subsequent trials of the prisoners involved.

Immediately after the murder of Lehmann the Psychological Warfare Committee intensified its program to rid the camps of Nazi sympathizers. By 1944 the Committee had not been very successful in classifying the Nazi prisoners. This may have been the result of inexperience on the part of the Intelligence Officers. Yet there was a movement by the Intelligence Officers to complete their task. They began to search camps for all contraband materials held by prisoners. In Medicine Hat, writing materials and directions from Germany on how to use them were discovered. Lists of anti-Nazis were found on playing cards that were being mailed back to Germany. The process of classification began to show some results. Most of the 9,132 prisoners who had been identified by September 1945 had been classified during the

year after Lehamn was murdered. This helped in segregating the BLACKS from the WHITES and in turn increased the possibility of success in the education programmes.

The Intelligence Officers were also gleaning information from newly arriving prisoners. They were discovering that many of the arrivals were not sympathetic to the Nazi cause and that many blamed the Nazi Party for the defeat of Germany.¹ It was apparent to the Intelligence personnel that the Nazis in the camps would increase their own activities to try and change the view of the new arrivals. This prompted the Intelligence Officers to increase their own counter-intelligence. They began to allow more newspapers detailing Allied victories into the camps. In camps designated GREY or WHITE, such as Medicine Hat or Bowmanville, prisoners were allowed radio sets. The Intelligence personnel also began to confiscate Nazi literature. The end result was a recognition by prisoners that Germany had lost the war.²

In October 1944, the Canadian Government received a request from the British Government to accept an additional 50,000 German prisoners of war.³ At that time there were 34,865 German

¹ National Archives of Canada, RG 24, C-5368, file 9139-5, letter from W. Fisher, Assistant Interpreter and Censor on Train No. 1, from Halifax to Medicine Hat, 4 October 1944.

² J.J. Kelly, "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence in German Prisoner of War Camps in Canada During World War Two, Dalhousie Review, Summer 1978, Vol. 58, No. 2, p.290.

³ NAC, RG 24, DND, C-5389, file 7236-43-1 (1), Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 17 November 1944.

prisoners of war in Canada. The Canadian Government firmly believed that accepting any more prisoners would be too much of a risk because of the lack of manpower.⁴ Another reason was that the Psychological Warfare Committee was beginning to have success with the number of prisoners already in the camps. Increasing the number of prisoners would have only hampered the Committee's success that was beginning to occur at that time.⁵ More importantly, the Canadian Government was fully aware that the end of the war was near and that its own internment operations were finally running smoothly. The government realized, quite rightly, that accepting additional prisoners would only jeopardize what had been achieved by December 1944.

When V-E day occurred on 2 May 1945 the prisoners were informed that active hostilities had ended. A proclamation was read to all prisoners with no mention of repatriation. The reaction inside Medicine Hat by the prisoners there was a mixture of stoic acceptance and weeping, along with a military parade.⁶ The International Red Cross and the YWCA were instructed to continue their activities until further notice. Even with the ending of hostilities the Intelligence personnel continued their own activities. They began to purge the Camp Leaderships of BLACKS and DARK GREYS and replace them with WHITES, elected by

⁴ Ibid., RG 2, 7C, Vol. 16, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Meeting 11 December 1944.

⁵ Ibid., RG 24, DND, C-5389, file 7236-43-1 (1), Department of National Defence, 12 December 1944.

⁶ P.O.W. WOW, 2 March 1946.

secret ballot supervised by the Camp Commandants.⁷

During the increased activity of the Internment Operations the RCMP was conducting its own series of interviews with prisoners regarding the murders of Plaszek and Lehmann. The RCMP had been investigating the Plaszek murder since July 1943. They had planted a German speaking RCMP Officer in the Medicine Hat camp as an engineer to try and find information about the murder. The covert activity was not a success. The Officer, George Krause, reported that no prisoners were willing to talk because of the fear of Nazi retaliation.⁸ Krause was left in the camp until October 1943. The Lehmann murder resulted in the RCMP embarking on a series of visits to a number of prisoner camps. No success was being achieved but when the war ended in Europe, Krause was once again placed in a position to discover any information. At that time many prisoners were not fearful of any retaliation by Nazi prisoners and were willing to give information about the murders. In the Neys camp, a prisoner who knew Walter Wolf had said that Wolf had continually bragged about the Lehmann murder. From that information, Krause and A.R. Bull, another RCMP Officer, were able to approach Walter Wolf. Walter Wolf talked and in the process named Willi Mueller, Heinrich Busch, and Bruno Perezenowski.⁹ The prisoners responsible for

⁷ Ibid., p. 291.

⁸ Carter, David, Behind Canadian Barbed Wire, (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press, 1980), p. 220.

⁹ Royal Canadian Mounted Police Brief, "Murder of Dr. Karl Lehmann", Statement of Walter Wolf, p. 37-48.

Plaszek's murder were arrested on 10 October 1945. Johannes Wittinger, Werner Schwalb, and Adolf Kratz were arraigned on 16 November 1945 and charged with the murder of August Plaszek under section 263 of the Criminal Code of Canada. The Articles 43-67 of the Geneva Convention allowed for prisoners accused of a crime to be tried by a Criminal Court.

The trial of the three accused of murder opened on 26 February 1946. The defense counsel, L.S. Turcotte had requested all three be tried separately which was granted. Werner Schwalb was the first to be tried and he was found guilty. Adolf Kratz was also found guilty. The third member of the group, Johannes Wittinger was found not guilty because of Schwalb's testimony that Wittinger was not at the scene of the crime. Kratz was sentenced to hang but his sentence was altered because of ill health and was eventually imprisoned at Fort Saskatchewan penitentiary. Schwalb was sentenced to hang on 24 June 1946 and he was executed on that date. His last words were, "My Fueher, I follow thee".¹⁰

The four men accused of murdering Dr. Lehmann were committed to stand trial beginning in June 1946. The lawyer for the accused, G.E.A. Rice, immediately requested that the four be tried in a military court and not a civil court. He argued that the four were following German military law when the crime was committed and therefore the four should be tried by their fellow German prisoners. Justice Howson dismissed the request on the

¹⁰ Carter, p. 252.

grounds that the murder had been committed on Canadian soil and Article 45 of the Geneva Convention clearly states that prisoners were subject to the laws and regulations of the detaining power.¹¹ The four were to be tried by jury.

The first to be tried was Bruno Perezenowski. His trial began on 24 June 1946. During his trial the information regarding Nazi activities was presented. In his defense, Perezenowski stated he was following orders issued by the German military. On 30 June he was found guilty and sentenced to hang. On 2 July 1946, Walter Wolf went on trial. In his defence he stated he was following orders. He was found guilty and sentenced to hang. Heinrich Busch was next to go on trial and the main witness for the Crown was the fourth member of the group, Willi Mueller. His evidence helped convict Busch, who was also sentenced to hang. Willi Mueller was the last to be tried and his trial was on 29 July. Defence lawyer Rice wanted leniency for Mueller because of his participation as a Crown witness. The jury found him guilty on 1 August and Justice Howson sentenced him to hang. On the 18 December 1946 the four were hanged in the Lethbridge jail. It was the largest mass hanging in Canada since the 1885 Rebellion.

During the months that the trials of the seven men were being held, the movement of prisoners out of the country had begun. The process began in February and continued through to

¹¹ Carter, p. 265. All information pertaining to the trials will come from Carter's book.

January 1947. In January there were sixty German prisoners of war left in Canada most in hospitals or serving time in jails.¹² In a little more than twenty months after the hostilities had ended the Canadian Internment Operations ceased and all prisoner of war camps were no longer in operation.

From the outset of the war the Canadian Internment Operations developed policies in response to outside forces because there was a lack of experience and uniformity. The success of the policies in relation to the camps, particularly Medicine Hat, was dependent on the ability of the Camp Commandants to implement policies in relation to the prisoner population. As the war ended, and the process of repatriation began, the overall performance of Internment Operations improved.

During the first year of the war the Canadian Government went from not expecting to intern German prisoners of war to canvassing Britain for a congruent policy regarding this matter. Initially, the Canadian Government was more concerned with the internment of enemy aliens residing in Canada. However, this changed in June 1940 when Britain requested that Canada accept British civilian internees. The Canadian Government had first refused the request mainly due to the lack of internment facilities. Once these prisoners were accepted it was discovered that not all were civilian internees but some were Jewish refugees and German soldiers taken as prisoners of war. The problems of segregating these groups led Canada to work

¹² Kelly, "Intelligence", p.292.

towards a congruent policy with Britain over the issue of internment and ensure that only German prisoners of war were sent to Canada and not British civilians suspected of being enemy aliens. The agreement that would follow allowed Canada to maintain control over the number of prisoners coming into the country and have control its own internment policy. In the process on negotiating with Britain, the government had a poorly articulated prisoner of war policy which afforded the Nazi prisoners of war to use to their benefit.

The main issues surrounding the Anglo/Canadian agreement dealt with sovereignty and financial matters. The Canadian Government was concerned with Britain attempting to dictate the entire prisoner of war operations within the Dominion without consulting the other governments. To ease this fear an InterGovernmental Prisoner of War Committee was established which provided a forum for general questions regarding prisoners of war. It also provided a foundation for Dominion policy on the internment of prisoners. More importantly, it allowed independent Dominion countries to establish internment policies relative to their needs. The financial issue was another key area of concern. The government was concerned with the cost of interning prisoners of war and wanted a financial agreement with Britain. The Canadian Government was willing to accept prisoners of war if Britain was willing to shoulder the financial burden. This was in response to the British wanting Canada to accept more prisoners of war and to the construction of the Medicine Hat and

Lethbridge camps. The other financial matter was related to the payment of German prisoners of war.

Once the Canadian and British Governments established an agreement it was the responsibility of the Canadian Government to develop its own internment policy. The Canadian Government had opted to use the Geneva Convention as the basis for its internment policy when the Cabinet adopted PC 4121 in December 1939. There was no guarantee that the Articles in the Convention would provide a stable internment camp operation but it did provide a structure for governing the camps. Yet the Convention did not provide solutions to the variety of problems inside the camps. This was the weakest part of the Canadian Internment Operations as it was the Camp Commandant who was to provide solutions to problems unique to his camp. The Camp Commandant for Medicine Hat, R.O. Bull, noted that this lack of uniformity forced Camp Commandants to operate camps on a day to day basis.¹³ Bull also noted that the system was cumbersome because there was shared responsibilities with other departments such as the Veteran's Guard, Department of Labour, Department of External Affairs, and of course the Department of National Defence.

One of the key areas of Internment Operations was the creation of a Psychological Warfare Committee to combat the Nazi elements in the camps. The functions of each Intelligence

¹³ Statement by Commandant Bull as quoted by J.J. Kelly in "The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada 1939-1947", (M.A.) Thesis, University of Windsor, p. 200.

section of the Committee was varied and included the censoring of mail, searches, interviews of prisoners, and surveillance. The Committee had been established in 1943 but it did not begin to fulfill its mandate until well into 1944. The late start and the volume of prisoners prevented the Committee from achieving its desired results, but as the war progressed and ended, the Committee showed that it could have become a very important section of Internment Operations.

The examination of the Medicine Hat camp reveals that the policies of the Internment Operations resulted in the camp resembling a small German town. Prisoners were allowed to run their own affairs and establish a camp life that the prisoners would feel comfortable in. Prisoners were given every opportunity to involve themselves in education, recreation, and workshop activities. These programmes allowed prisoners to escape the monotony of camp life and provided prisoners the opportunity to learn or continue pre-war skills which could be used after the war.

There was a dark undercurrent to this seemingly idyllic life. The governing rules allowed prisoners to select their Camp Leader and his assistants. In the Medicine Hat camp the establishment of a Nazi regime occurred which was able to impose Nazi doctrines on the prisoners. Using a Camp Gestapo the Camp Leadership was able to prevent most of the prisoners from informing the Camp administration. This Gestapo used threats, coercion, and physical beatings to enforce their rule and turn

the prisoner population into a fearful population.

The murder of Dr. Karl Lehmann brought the seriousness of the situation to the attention of the Camp administration. Only after his murder did the Psychological Warfare Committee intensify its program of prisoner classification and segregation. Like so many areas of Canadian Internment Operations, it responded to an event, which it had been unable to prevent.

The camps provided a unique participation in the war for the Canadian Government. For many, the camps are unknown and receive little recognition in Canadian history. The coverage of the Medicine Hat News on 11 February 1946 summarizes this feeling:

There were no cheering crowds, no brass bands. no waving flags or fond farewells as the men boarded the waiting trains... Silent farewells were being said only by the passengers aboard the train as they peered out of the frost covered windows for a look at the darkened prisoner's barracks.¹⁴

¹⁴ Medicine Hat News, 11 February 1946.

APPENDIXLIST OF PRISONER OF WAR, CIVILIAN INTERNEE, AND ENEMY MERCHANT SEAMEN CAMPS IN CANADA DURING WORLD WAR TWOAlberta

Camp 130-Kananaskis . 29 September 1939 to 28 January 1946
Internees/Enemy Merchant Seamen
Capacity 650

Camp 132-Medicine Hat 1 February 1943 to 15 May 1946
German Prisoners of War-Other Ranks
Capacity 10,000-12,000

Camp 133-Ozada May to December 1942
German Prisoners of War-Other Ranks
Capacity 10,000

Camp 133-Lethbridge November 1942 to 18 December 1946
German Prisoners of War-Other Ranks
Capacity 12,500

Camp 135-Wainwright 5 January 1945 to 14 June 1946
German Prisoners of War-Officers
Capacity 1,000

Ontario

Camp 10-Chatham 15 May 1944 to 1 November 1944
Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees
Capacity 325

Farming Operations 3 June 1945 to 14 November 1946
Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees/Officers
Other Ranks

Camp 20-Gravenhurst July 1940 to 11 June 1946
German Officers/Other Ranks
Capacity 400

Camp 21-Espanola 16 July 1940 to 1 May 1944

German P/W-Other Ranks, Capacity 1,200

Repatriation Assembly Centre
May to August 1943Camp 22-Mimico19 July 1940 to 1 May 1944
Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees

Capacity 550

Camp 23-Monteith16 July 1940 to November 1941
Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees

Capacity 1,800

29 November 1941 to May 1944
German Officers/Other RanksMay 1944 to January 1946
Enemy Merchant Seamen/InterneesJanuary 1946 to December 1946
Officers/Other RanksCamp 30-BowmanvilleNovember 1941 to 12 April 1945
German Officers/Other Ranks

Capacity 750

Camp 31-Kingston

(Fort Henry)

Capacity 600

1 July 1940 to 20 November 1941
German Officers/Other Ranks23 November 1941 to 16 November 1943
Enemy Merchant Seamen/InterneesCamp 33-Petawawa

Capacity 800

September 1939 to 20 July 1942
German and Italian Civilian Internees (Can.)6 August 1942 to February 1944
Enemy Merchant SeamenFebruary 1944 to 6 March 1946
German Officers/Other Ranks

<u>Camp 100-Neys</u>	25 January 1941 to 25 November 1941 German Officers/Other Ranks, Capacity 600
	26 November 1941 to 30 November 1943 Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees
	13 September 1944 to 28 March 1946 German Officers/Other Ranks
<u>Camp 101-Angler</u>	10 January 1941 to 29 July 1946 German Other Ranks
Capacity 650	June 1942 Japanese Internees
<u>Quebec</u>	
<u>Camp L-Cove Fields</u>	not used
<u>Camp T-Three Rivers</u>	
<u>Camp V-Valcartier</u>	
<u>Camp 32-Hull</u>	August 20 1941 to September 1942 Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees
Capacity 100	September 1942 to end of war Officers/Other Ranks
<u>Camp 40-Farnham</u>	16 October 1940 to 1 July 1941 Internees/Refugees
Capacity 600	18 April 1942 to december 1942 Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees
	December 1942 to 28 June 1943 Officers/Other Ranks
	September 1944 to 22 May 1946 Officers/Other Ranks
<u>Camp 41-Ile aux Noix</u>	16 July 1940 to 1 July 1941 Internees/Refugees
Capacity 500	

Camp 42-Sherbrooke

16 October 1940 to 1 July 1941
 Internees/Refugees

Capacity 750

2 December 1942 to June 1946
 Officers/Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees

Camp 43-Montreal

St. Helen's Island

Capacity 300

16 July 1940 to November 1943
 Enemy Merchant Seamen/Internees

Camp 44-Grande Ligne

Capacity 750

Fall 1942 to May 1946
 Officers/Other Ranks

Camp 45-Sorel

Capacity 350

30 June 1945 to March 1946
 Officers/Other Ranks/Enemy Merchant Seamen

New BrunswickFredericton

Capacity 900

13 August 1940 to 26 June 1941
 Internees/Refugees

July 1941 to 1 September 1945
 German and Italian Civilians

30 September 1943 to August 1945
 Italian Internees
 Enemy Merchant Seamen-U.K. Responsibility

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