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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION W. D. G. S.

MILITARY ATTACHÉ REPORT Great Britain.
(Country reported on)

Subject British Prisoners-of-War Organization. I. G. No. 5950
(Brief descriptive title)

From M. A. London Report No. 50039 Date 7 September, 1942

Source and degree of reliability:
Office of the Theater Provost Marshal. European Theater of Operations.

SUMMARY.—Here enter careful summary of report, containing substance succinctly stated; include important facts, names, places, dates, etc.

The British Organization for handling Prisoners-of-War is very similar to that evolved by the United States Provost Marshal General. Herewith a brief outline of the British organization.

Auth: Maj Black
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1. Major Uttelson, the office of the Provost Marshal, Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, has prepared at the instigation of this office, a short report on the British organization for handling prisoners-of-war.

2. As this Report is only in outline form, it is possible that agencies in Washington may desire amplification of certain phases of the report which will be made, upon application to this office. The Report follows:-

"The British Prisoner of War system of organization does not differ in any substantial respect from that organized in the Office of the Provost Marshal General, War Department, Washington D.C. It is an interesting coincidence that the system that has been evolved is strikingly similar to the British organization after 3 years of experience. For purposes of organization this memorandum is broken down into the following categories:

I. ORGANIZATION

"1. The Prisoner of War Directorate is organized into two main subdivisions, P.W.1 and P.W.2. P.W.1 deals with all questions of camps and camp administration, such as the site layout and construction of camps, their administration, the employment and welfare of enemy prisoners of war, movements of prisoners, rations and clothing, and the necessary liaison with the various other divisions of the War Office and Home Office concerned.

"2. P.W.2 deals with all questions involving the interpretation of the Geneva and Hague Conventions; reciprocity of treatment of prisoners of war, communications with the protecting Powers, and liaison with the representatives of the Allied Governments and the Foreign Office.

"3. The Directorate is staffed with personnel approximating 100 persons, of whom 26 are officers.

"4. P.W.1. The general basic functions have been outlined above. P.W.1 is further sub-divided into three sections; P.W.1(a), which deals with camp administration and the selection and movements of the staff thereof; P.W.1(c), dealing with the employment and labor questions and the siting and construction of the Prisoner of War Labor Camps; P.W.1(m), has charge of the movements and accommodations of prisoners of war abroad, questions of discipline, welfare and security within the camps, and liaison with the International Red Cross Committee and Political Intelligence Departments.

"5. P.W.2. is further sub-divided into three sections consisting of (1) P.W.2(a) which deals with all policy questions in relation to Empire and Colonial prisoners of war; (2) P.W.2(b) handles the interpretation of the Conventions and policy questions in relation to reciprocal treatment of prisoners of war, handles all negotiations for repatriation of protected personnel, Mixed Medical Commissions throughout the Empire, complaints by prisoners and all matters incidental thereto;

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(3) P.W.2(c) handles camp censorship and Intelligence, with the necessary liaison with the members of other interested departments of the Government. The Prisoner of War Information Bureau and the Casualty Records Bureau, Liverpool, are not under the direct control of the military personnel of the Directorate but are handled by civilian agencies. This involves a question of liaison that is difficult at times. This differs from the system employed in the United States in that the Information Bureau is directly under the control of the military agency which handles prisoners of war and all questions relating thereto.

II. CAMPS.

- "1. Camps are broken down into various types.
 - a Command Cages. These have been spotted in strategic locations for the purpose of being able to cope with the flow of prisoners arising out of operations on the Continent or invasion of the United Kingdom, irrespective of the points from which such groups of prisoners may originate. They vary in size.
 - b Invasion Camps, which are camps of permanent construction and larger in size have been constructed and are being constructed, to house permanently prisoners of war.
 - c Labor Camps have been constructed for the purpose of permitting the fullest employment of prisoners.
 - d Interrogation Centres and Cages have been prepared for the use of the military intelligence service, and are under the administrative control of the Prisoner of War Directorate.

"2. The size of these camps vary from camps of 250 capacity to the permanent invasion camps of 3,000 capacity. The permanent camps compare with the camp measurements in the United States in which the basic figure of 3,000 men capacity was adopted. Prisoners of war are moved from camp to camp, depending upon whether or not they have been interrogated by the Intelligence and also upon the necessity for the employment of groups of such prisoners in different localities.

"3. The ratio of guards and administrative personnel to prisoners approximates 1 to 10 in the ordinary camps. For example the overhead staff for a 3,000 camp is 72 and the guard personnel is 209, with a total of 281. In an officers' camp the requirements of the Geneva Convention authorizing orderlies and cooks, runs the percentage up to approximately 1 in 6.

III. SEGREGATION.

Officers are segregated from other ranks prisoners of war from the outset, though the average invasion camp has a separate section which houses approximately 500 officer prisoners of war as well as 3,000 other rank prisoners of war. It is assumed that the reason for this is to permit the orderlies and cooks for the officers to be furnished from prisoner personnel that is conveniently at hand.

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IV. REPATRIATION AND EXCHANGE:

"The British do not contemplate too much in the way of repatriation and exchange of other than sick and wounded and protected personnel during the periods of conflict. However the keynote of the British system is one of reciprocity, not only in treatment but in all phases of prisoner of war work. For example, Vichy French that are captured are given an opportunity of repatriation in exchange for British prisoners now under the control of the Vichy French Government.

V. INFORMATION BUREAU.

"Principles of organization follow closely those laid down in the Geneva Convention. Rapidity in transit of information is the keynote. This has been carried to the extent that the British Government condones direct transmission by certain agencies of the Information Bureau with their opposite numbers in Berlin and Rome, in order to facilitate the exchange of information lists. Similarly the Dominions that are the scenes of operations, such as Middle East and Australia, have been granted the right of direct transmission of information lists to the enemy Governments to avoid delay occasioned by the relating of this information to the United Kingdom for transmission.

VI. EVACUATION.

"The British have in operation a policy of evacuating prisoners to Canada, particularly Germans, from the United Kingdom. Evacuation to India and Australia and South Africa from other fields of operations is also carried out. This appears to be a logical development. German prisoners in the United Kingdom are evacuated therefrom. Those who remain are closely guarded and maintained. On the other hand, Italian prisoners are permitted to roam more or less freely about the country. In many cases no guard is set over them, nor does any guard accompany them to or from their places of employment. When a guard is furnished it approximates a ratio of 1 to 25-50. Where Germans are concerned the ratio of guards approximates 3 - 20."

3. This report should be called to the attention of the Provost Marshal General.

F. J. WELLS
Lt. Col. Infantry
Assistant Military Attache

OMA, AMERICAN EMBASSY, London. 7 September, 1942. Forwarded

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