Understanding escape: the development of the British-led escape organisation, the Pat Line, 1940-1942

by

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Abbreviations

Archives Nationale, Paris	A.N.
Bureaux for Anti-National Affairs	B.M.A.
Military Attaché	M.A.
National Archives, Kew	N.A.
National Archives, Washington	N.A. Washington
Non- commissioned officer	N.C.O.
Other Ranks	O.R.
Private	Pte.
Prisoner of war	POW
Royal Air Force	R.A.F
Royal Army Service Corps	R.A.S.C.
Service Historique de la Défense	SHD
Senior British officer	SBO
War Office	W.O.

Introduction

This thesis seeks to identify and examine the dynamics and processes underpinning the emergence and protraction of British-led escape activities in France during the period 1940-42. From the outset of this research, it quickly became clear that Second World War escape histories had, rather ironically, captured popular imagination. For five years, when explaining the research to those curious enough to ask, quips about movies such as *The Great Escape* and *Von Ryan's Express* or long- running sitcoms such as '*Allo 'Allo* quickly worked their way into the conversation. Admittedly, this had one advantage; it provided a discussion point and frame of reference for the topic and piqued general interest. Yet such popular impressions of escape activities during the war had a number of downfalls; the subject of escape was not considered 'real' or 'serious' history. One local journalist ventured to describe the study of such history as 'barmy'. In a way, this response is understandable particularly considering that researchers in the field have done little to correct this interpretation. This problem is further compounded by the lack of academic research on the topic, as will be discussed later. Much of the written popular histories on British escape activities and civilian efforts to help these men retain an element of a Hollywood-meets-history appeal. This is not to argue that the facts of these popular histories are necessarily inaccurate but the aim is often related to glorifying the individuals involved rather than understanding why and how such organisations developed.

In order to move away from such histories, this research focuses on the social, political, diplomatic and military factors leading to the development of escape organisations aiding British servicemen and airmen during the period 1940-42, after which time escape activities were severely curtailed with the German occupation of the whole of France in November 1942. The primary focus of this thesis is centred on one organisation, commonly known as the 'Pat Line', so named after a *nom de guerre* of one of its chief organisers, Pat O'Leary (Albert Guerisse). The 'Pat Line' developed in early 1941 to pass men across the Pyrenees and into Spain. Arguably, 'Pat' reached its apogee in the summer of 1942 with connections not only across France but also with London. Through its connections with the latter, the 'Pat Line' also established links with the Coastal Watching Flotilla (CWF), a Polish group operating in the

Mediterranean.[1] In tandem with the CWF, the leadership of the Pat Line successfully arranged a serious of sea evacuations of British military personnel in hiding along the south western French coastline, at Canet Plage.

For the most part, the 'Pat Line' or, in French, '*le reseau Pat'* is understood as a resistance network. Resistance scholarship usually distinguishes between 'networks' and 'movements'.[2] A movement was considered as inspiring a wide appeal and was usually associated with distribution of a newspaper. In this respect, movements often had political overtones with newspapers acting as a medium to disseminate ideas. This was opposed to networks which were involved in more specific, covert, military-type activity such as committing acts of sabotage, gathering intelligence or aiding escape. Yet the use of the word 'network' in relation to escape activities is problematic. Applying the term network to describe 'Pat' oversimplifies the development of the organisation giving the idea of a small group of individuals in one area coming together to form an escape line. This was not the case with 'Pat' stretching from Pas de Calais right to Marseilles and into the Pyrenees. Instead, 'Pat' developed from the separate work of small ,localised escape efforts concentrated in cities such as Lille, Paris and Marseilles that eventually connecting with one another.

Establishing connections outside local areas was not an easy task. The Franco-German Armistice, although ending hostilities, compounded these difficulties. France was loosely divided into two zones, the Occupied Zone in the north which also ran along the west coast and the Unoccupied Zone in the south of France. While German military authorities administered the Occupied Zone, the Unoccupied Zone retained some semblance of sovereignty with a nominally independent French government located at the spa town of Vichy. A third division of France included the Forbidden Zone,

[1] Brooks Richard, *Secret flotillas volume II: clandestine sea operations in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Adriatic 1940-1944* (London and Oregon, 2004).
[2] See Julian Jackson, *France; the dark years 1940-1945* (Oxford, 2001), pp 408-10. According to another researcher, Phillip Le Blanc, the term 'network' and 'movement' are contestable. In a private communication Le Blanc informed this author that 'networks were called organisations until 1945'. His argument has been confirmed in this research. In the contemporary sources the term network is rarely used.

encapsulating the Nord and Pas de Calais region and governed by the German military administration of Belgium (see figure 1).[3]

Fig 1. Map of France 1940-42: Eric Alary, *La ligne de démarcation* (Paris, 2009) p. 468.

Thus, even in terms of geography, crossing various frontiers made the emergence of a unified escape network difficult. As will be demonstrated in chapter two, it was only when a number of British officers reached the Unoccupied Zone, organising escape

[3] Eric Alary, *La ligne de démarcation* (Paris, 2009), pp 33-4. In addition to these zones, Alsace-Lorraine was annexed directly to Germany. Italy also received a small portion of French territory in the south-west along the Franco-Italian border. However, these zones will not be looked at in detail in this study as there is no evidence of significant British escape activity.

activities there and maintaining links with civilian helpers in the north that an escape network, which ultimately after the war became known as the 'Pat' line or the Pat O'Leary network, developed. Considering this, it is important to understand that for a significant period during its development, the 'Pat Line' consisted mainly of loosely-connected smaller groups in the Forbidden and Occupied Zone. These groups passed men across the demarcation line into unoccupied France. The 'Pat Line' did not emerge until the summer of 1941 when British escape organisers in unoccupied France began to connect with, and direct the activities, of these northern groups. This view is supported by a contemporary and French intelligence agent who had dealings with the organisation, André Postel Vinay (see chapter four). During the war Postel Vinay considered the 'Pat Line' as simply a British organisation charged with helping men left behind after Dunkirk to escape from France, commenting that it only became known as 'le réseau Patrick O'Leary' (Patrick O'Leary network) after the war.[4] In this thesis the term 'British-led escape organisation' is used when referring to the escape activities of British officers in the Unoccupied Zone, and the term 'Pat Line' used when referring to the fully-fledged escape network as a whole, that is, as it stretched from the Forbidden Zone to the Pyrenees.

Before continuing, it is also necessary to address issues surrounding the categorisation of escapees as either 'escaper' or 'evader'. An 'escaper' referred to a man captured by the Germans but who managed to escape. An 'evader' was a man who avoided capture and remained at large.[5] These definitions were contemporary under the Geneva Convention 1929 and had important legal ramifications (for more details on the Geneva Convention see chapter two). The Convention protected the rights of prisoners of war and was relatively well respected by the Germans fighting on the western front. In relation to the term, 'escapers' or 'evaders', escapers, on reaching neutral territory, were given the right to return to their country while evaders were subject to internment.[6] This distinction, for the most part, is not necessary and therefore, for the purposes of convenience and simplicity the term 'escapee' has been adopted to refer to either an escaper or evader in the occupied zones or unoccupied France.

[4] André Postel-Vinay, *Un fou s'évade: souvenirs de 1941-1942* (Paris, 1997), p. 9.
[5] M.R.D. Foot and J.M. Langley, *MI9: escape and evasion 1939-1945* (London, 1979), p. 19.
[6] Ibid.

Moreover, while this thesis focuses on men who escaped or evaded captivity, it must also be acknowledged that the majority of British servicemen left behind after Dunkirk and airmen shot down over occupied territory remained prisoners for the duration of the war. The common experience of capture and imprisonment has been dealt with in countless autobiographies, biographies and histories such as Adrian Gilberts, *POW, Allied prisoners in Europe* or Charles Rolling's *Prisoner of war voices from behind the wire.*[7] Both of these authors deal with the deprivations, hardships and boredom of camp life. Another book, *The barbed-wire university: the real lives of Allied prisoners of war in the Second World War* takes a more focused approach, dealing with the efforts of both officers and rank and file to educate themselves.[8] This helped counteract and distract from the harsh realities of prison life. Perhaps one of the most harrowing books on prisoners of war in western Europe, *The last escape,* examines the effect of the Russian advance on Allied prisoners.[9] On Hitler's orders, and in the depths of winter, thousands of prisoners were marched westward away from the approaching Soviets. Hundreds of prisoners, poorly clad and undernourished, died from exhaustion. Thus, by focusing on escape, the aim of this thesis is not to downplay or ignore the hardships experienced by men who remained in captivity. This, as already stated, was the fate of the majority of Allied servicemen and airmen in occupied Europe.

Yet escape, and the ramifications of escape, is an important area of research. Such activities directly affected the families and communities who chose to harbour these men. In France, civilian interaction with escapees led to the improvisation of various escape organisations, which in turn paved the way for the emergence of the 'Pat Line'. The main objective of this thesis is to offer an insight into the growth of these escape activities and the development of the 'Pat Line', an area of research that has been significantly under-investigated and generally forgotten. In order to achieve this, this author identified three phases underpinning the development of the 'Pat Line'. Firstly, there was the beginnings of British escape activities in the Nord, Pas de Calais region coupled with the willingness of French civilians to assist escapees into unoccupied France. The second phase was characterised by the arrival of a number of British

[7] Adrian Gilbert, *POW: Allied prisoners in Europe, 1939-1945* (London, 2006) and Charles Rolling, *Prisoners of war, voices from behind the wire in the Second World War* (London, 2008).
[8] Midge Gillies, *The barbed wire university; the real lives of Allied prisoners of war in the Second World War* (London, 2012).
[9] Tony Nichol and John Rennell, *The last escape: the untold story of prisoners of war in Germany* (London, 2010).

officers in the Unoccupied Zone who proved willing to remain in France and establish an escape organisation. During this second phase, these officers (namely two officers, Captain Charles Murchie and Captain Ian Garrow) consolidated connections they had made during their time in the Forbidden and Occupied Zone. In doing so, these officers were in a position to help civilians in the north continue to pass men into the Unoccupied Zone. The third phase relates to the final stage of escape, that is, arranging the passage of men across the Pyrenees and into Spain. Again, a number of British officers, including the officers mentioned above, played a crucial role in forging these escape routes. In order to achieve their goal, these officers connected with various friendly consulates including the Czech, Polish and American diplomatic services. In addition to these, connections were established with the British Consulate in Barcelona, which offered practical support for escapees once they reached Spain.

These three important phases are examined in turn, forming chapters one to three of this thesis. The final chapter shifts the spotlight onto Vichy, focusing on the French military and intelligence services in unoccupied France. The French military authorities, responsible for the internment of the British, gave both officers and servicemen considerable freedom to leave internment camps and to interact with locals. They often turned a blind eye to escapes. Equally, French intelligence knew about, and often had dealings with, individual escape organisers. It is, therefore, argued in chapter four that the French authorities implicitly helped to promote a culture of escape. The freedom given to, in particular, officers and the willingness of the French authorities to turn a blind eye, also contributed to the development of the 'Pat Line'.

Primary Sources

The main source for this thesis was the War Office's collection of Escape and Evasion reports. When British servicemen or airmen sucessully reached neutral territory, they were required to give an official account of their actions and experiences. These accounts are available in a number of volumes arranged in loose chronological order. The earliest accounts date to late May/early June 1940 and continue right throughout the war providing regular insights into the situation in France as the war progressed. The Escape and Evasion reports, to be hereafter referred to simply as escape reports, proved an invaluable source of information. The men making these reports lived among the civilian population and as a result these accounts reveal rich details on ordinary

families, their communities and their daily struggles under occupation. These often provide insight into how civilians became involved in aiding escape activites.

Other sources consulted did not provide the same level of detail. For instance, Foreign Office papers are useful in relation to the contribution of diplomatic services in Spain to escape activities in France but are limited in relation to the actual development of escape organisations in France, coming into contact with such organisations only when they were relatively well established. Therefore, in terms of revealing details on the development of the 'Pat Line', escape reports continued to provide the prinicipal material for this research. Yet the escape reports also have a number of significant limitations. These reports could only be derived from people who managed to escape, as opposed to men who were recaptured, those who never managed to escape and also men who remained in hiding for the duration of the war. While it is perhaps impossible to account for these experiences, it is worth noting that the majority of successful escapees had been re-captured numerous time and so this research was able to explore the issue of failed escapes and recaptures.

Historian Philippe Le Blanc, raised another concern in relation to the escape reports during his research on the Belgian escape organisation, *le réseau Comète* or the Comet network.[10] Le Blanc, who in recent years worked with Belgian military intelligence, claimed in a personal communication that for every escape report there was another one taken that remained, and apparently still remains, secret. This statement is almost impossible to confirm and was initially treated with a degree of scepticism. However, as this research progressed, two reports stood out as lending a degree of credibility to Le Blanc's assertion, that of Captain D.B. Lang and Captain R.N. Brinckman. Captain D.B. Lang, was a British officer, who not only managed to escape German captivity in late summer 1940 but eventually made his way to Marseilles and from there to North Africa. In his official escape report, Lang referred to an earlier report he had made to his superiors on his experiences.[11] There is, as of yet, no trace of this report. As historians, all that can be said with certainty is that an earlier account was made of Lang's experience. This does not mean Lang's first report was necessarily secret but could

[10] The Comet network remains outside the scope of this thesis as the focus is on escape activities in France and the Comet line developed in Belgium.
[11] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

easily have been misplaced or filed elsewhere. There is nothing to suggest, in Lang's official account, that the earlier report was purposefully held back.

This is where Captain R.N. Brinckman's account is of particular importance. Brinckman escaped German captivity in Belgium in November 1940 and similar to Lang managed to travel to Marseilles before crossing to North Africa in January 1941. Written on top of Brinckman's official escape report is the following: 'expungated copy- most secret bits- see original for what was deleted'.[12] This handwritten note appears to confirm Le Blanc's claim that, in some cases at least, certain escape reports were vetted and potentially still remain unavailable to the public. If this is the case, what does this mean for historians studying British escape activities? Firstly, it is important to consider these reports in context and the nature of the information withheld. Brinckman's report suggests that he had valuable intelligence gathered from his time in Brussels. According to Brinckman, his Belgian helpers gave him

> Certain particulars to take to England and important information about a Belgian working for the Belgian Government in England, and suspected to be working for the Germans. I was also entrusted with 30 negatives which included message to certain men in London, photographs of gun positions and German tank-carrying barges.[13]

Considering the above, Brinckman's report appears to have been of value to British intelligence. This is problematic if the primary concern of research is to determine the impact of escape activities at a purely military, or more particularly, intelligence gathering level. In Le Blanc's communications with this author, his primary concern related to intelligence and therefore, his frustration at withheld information specific to intelligence is understandable.

Determining the military impact of escape activities is not the objective of this thesis. However, Brinckman's report and Le Blanc's comments illustrated the importance of treating the escape reports with a level of caution. In addition to Le Blanc's observations, it must also be noted that a substantial number of appendices which often accompanied escape reports and contained information such as lists of helpers and

[12] Account of escape of Capt. R.N. Brinckman, 3/Grenadier Guards, 1st Div., 3 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[13] Ibid.

intelligence are missing. Reasons for this are unknown, particularly as the vast bulk of missing appendices are for the early period 1940-42. Appendices for 1942-45 are archived separately and available to researchers.

Nevertheless, in spite of missing appendices and some files, the existing reports provide a wealth of information on the period and subject under review in this thesis. In fact, the problem was not the lack of material but the wealth and volume of it.[14] The number of extant reports paved the way for the next stage of the research which was to ensure the integrity of the existing escape accounts. This was done by constructing a database containing information from over five hundred reports and cross referencing each report where possible. This approach also proved useful in both establishing the veracity of the reports and also in allowing this author to place individual experiences within the wider collective experience of escapees in France.

Autobiographies, both from French civilian helpers and British escapees, were used to supplement and clarify information in the escape reports. French memories, like that of Natalis Dumez, a resister in Lille, were useful in revealing the motivation of individuals involved in escape. However, such accounts were written with the advantage of post war hindsight and as such had to be treated with some degree of caution. It was also necessary to be cautious in using autobiographies as memories tend to fade and details are often forgotten, misplaced or interpreted differently**.** For instance, in a memoir written by escapee James Langley, he referred to the sea evacuations launched by the British escape-led organisation in the summer of 1942.[15] Langley's recollection of the sequence of the events has a number of inconsistencies in terms of chronology.[16] Such discrepancies do not draw into question the personal integrity of the authors involved but do convey the difficulties in relying solely on memoirs for an accurate description or depiction of events. Where memoirs were used, efforts were made to cross reference information with available contemporary records. Where discrepancies were recognised, this has been highlighted, and addressed where relevant.

[14] Historian Simon Kitson noted the same problem in his research. Simon Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies; fighting espionage in Vichy France* (Chicago and London, 2008), p. 4.
[15] See J.M. Langley, *Fight another day* (London, 1974), p. 169 & compare with Brooks Richard's chronology of these sea evacuations. Brooks Richard, *Secret flotillas*, p. 193 & pp 368-72.
[16] Foot and Langley, *MI9,* p. 19.

In relation to French archival material, the *Service Historique de la Défense*, Vincennes holds documentation relating to groups involved in escape activities including the 'Pat Line'. However, these files proved disappointing. The archive on the 'Pat Line' were composed mainly of lists of helpers and reflected the French determination to both establish the fact that resistance did indeed exist in France during the war, and to support the entitlement to pensions of resisters, rather than giving a true depiction on the development of the 'Pat Line' .[17] For instance, helpers gave dates on which they joined the organisation with some individuals listing their date of entry as early as June/July 1940.[18] This is interesting considering the 'Pat Line' did not exist at that time. This does not mean that helpers gave the wrong dates in terms of when they became involved in escape activities. This is not argued here. Yet it is important to point out that it is more likely that these individuals participated in escape activities at a local level at this time as opposed to being part of a wider escape network spanning Pas de Calais to Marseilles. In this respect, these archives can be misleading but once the difficulty with these dates in terms of their relationship to the 'Pat Line' is highlighted there is no known reason to question the dates individuals gave for their participation in escape activities. This is not a trivial observation but in point of fact gets to the heart of this thesis, that is the importance of producing a scholarly work that examines the complexities of the development of escape activities and organisations. In relation to this archival source, it proved useful in terms of identifying individuals engaged in escape activities.

Nevertheless, the *Service Historique de la Défense* archive on the 'Pat Line' did not reveal the motivations or means by which various individuals became involved in escape activities. Finding contemporary sources on the motivations of French helpers proved a pressing problem. In 1940-42, it was dangerous to keep a record of one's activities and therefore, it was not until the war was over that civilians recorded their experiences, often in the form of autobiographies. Considering this, it was difficult to establish the contemporary French perspective on early escape activities. However, French newspapers proved useful in helping to address this imbalance. Resistance newspapers strove to justify Britain and connect ordinary French civilians to the British

[17] Historian Eric Hobsbawm argued that in post war France emphasising resistance was crucial as it promoted the idea that 'the eternal France had never accepted defeat'. Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes 1914-1991* ((London, 1994), p. 164.
[18] Pat O'Leary, 1946 (SHD, 17P187).

war effort. Arguably, this connection, or sense of connection, to the British war effort, was a motivating factor in civilian willingness to assist escapees. Yet in making this point, it is important to acknowledge that these newspapers did not reflect the views of the general population. In order to overcome this limitation, only groups publishing resistance newspapers and who had members engaged in escape activities were selected for review. In this way, it was considered possible to gain some insight into the early motivations of civilians willing to engage in escape activities.

In the course of this research, other repositories were visited including *Le Mémorial de Caen* in Caen and the National Library of Scotland. For various reasons, material from these repositories did not end up in the final thesis. *Le Mémorial de Caen* related to those who were deported from France by the German authorities. This was the fate of many civilians engaged in escape activities, particularly in the latter years of the war, 1943-44. Acknowledging these experiences is important but a detailed study remains outside the remit of this research. The National Library Scotland holds letters written by a Presbyterian minister, Reverend Donald Caskie who was based in Marseilles since the German occupation of northern France. Caskie wrote to the families of escapees he knew in Marseilles. This collection is indeed interesting and merits further investigation but in terms of this thesis it shed little light on the development of escape activities in France.

Secondary Sources

As already noted, the escape lines have generated interest even outside the field of history. Due to the breadth of this interest it is practically impossible to give a thoroughly comprehensive review of the field. The following is a brief overview of the main publications in relation to escape activities, the nature of existing research and the current gaps in the historiography. To date, the main contribution to escape history is M.R.D. Foot's *MI9, the British secret service that fostered escape and evasion 1939-1945 and its American counterpart.*[19] M.R.D. Foot co-authored this work with James Langley, an escapee from France who on his return to Britain worked for the British secret services. This book centres on the work of MI9, the British secret service set up in autumn 1940 with the aim of promoting escape activities among members of the British armed forces. Foot's work gives a good overview of the escape organisation in

[19] Foot and Langley, *MI9.*

Europe and as such it is the foundational text when it comes to the history of escape lines. Foot's work focuses on the successes and failures of escape organisations and military contributions to the war rather than fully establishing how such networks came to exist.

Moreover, Foot examines various escape lines in terms of their relationship with the British secret service, MI9. As the focus is on MI9 and London's official efforts to assist escape activities in France, there is a tendency to neglect the complexities of such activities as they developed on the ground. This is one of the primary reasons this thesis focuses on the escape reports as these men were living with civilians and their accounts provide an insight into events as they unfolded and developed in France.

This is not to take from Foot's work but merely to establish the contribution of this thesis to existing scholarship. Moreover, this lack of depth in terms of research on the emergence of escape organisations may also be explained by the fact that Foot did not have access to the extensive archives that are now available today. This neglect has continued. It is difficult to venture any specific reasons for this but there appears to be an over-reliance on Foot's research with few researchers willing to go beyond what he has accomplished. In a recent work undertaken by Edward Stourton, *Cruel crossing, escaping Hitler across the Pyrenees*, Stourton interviewed Foot as a source for his book.[20] Stourton relied heavily on published literature such as autobiographies. In terms of archival material, this was limited and it would appear that the author did not examine any escape reports. Similarly, Sherri Greene Ottis, and Herman Bodson provided an overview of a number of escape organisations but relied mainly on published sources. Ottis consulted a number of escape reports but only in the United States.[21] However, the United States commenced operations over France only in late summer 1942 and therefore, any escape reports made by American aircrews to their superiors occurred relatively late in the context of this research. At this point in the war, the 'Pat Line' was already relatively well established.

[20] Edward Stourton, *Cruel crossing: escaping Hitler across the Pyrenees* (London, 2013).
[21] Sherri Greene Ottis, *Silent heroes: downed airmen and the French Underground* (Kentucky, 2001) and Herman Bodson, *Downed Allied airmen and evasion of capture: the tale of local resistance networks in World War II* (North Carolina, 2005); also see John Nichol, and Tony Rennell, *Home run: escape from Nazi Europe* (London, 2007).

Considering the above, it would appear that most of the researchers in the field have not made full use of the available primary sources, namely the escape reports. The main exception to this is Oliver Clutton Brock's work on escape activities which makes extensive use of archival material.[22] However, in spite of this, Brock's work shares a similar characteristic with Ottis and Bodson in that it is, by and large, a commemorative history. It is important to reiterate that the intention is not to put down these histories but to note that these histories are more concerned with recounting the brave actions of helpers rather than rigorously examining how escape organisations came to exist. There is a strong online community devoted to the study of escape lines. 'Conscript Heroes' is of particular use to those seeking information on the 'Pat Line'. Its creator, Keith Janes, had a personal connection with the 'Pat Line'. Janes' father, Peter Janes, escaped France via French helpers working under the umbrella of the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles. This site has continued to grow with interested researchers posting articles relating to various aspects of the organisation. In terms of archival material, the website 'Conscript Heroes' has posted details of all the men known to have been helped by the 'Pat Line'. This information is based on the escape reports. Nevertheless, little information is given in relation to how and where these men came under the guidance of the 'Pat Line' and, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, these details are necessary in tracking the development of the organisation.

Equally, this website acts in a commemorative capacity with the main aim being to highlight the courage of the individuals involved and the achievements of the 'Pat Line'. These aims are not just refined to this type of history but mirrored in academic circles. Researchers in fields such as moral psychology, sociology and political science have displayed an interest in 'rescuer' activities, that is, those who helped Jews escape Nazi detection.[23] Although this is a different field to the study of civilians helping

[22] Oliver Clutton Brock, *RAF evaders: the comprehensive story of thousands of escapers and their escape lines, western Europe 1940-1945* (London, 2009), Kindle edition.
[23] Bar-Tal, Daniel, 'Altruistic motivation to help: definition, utility and operationalization' in *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, xiii No. 1&2 (Fall/Winter and Spring Summer, 1986), pp 3-14; Manus I. Mildarsky, 'Helping during the Holocaust: the role of political, theological and socioeconomic identifications' in *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, xiii No. 1&2 (1985-1986), pp 285-305; Kirsten Renwick Monroe, *Ethics in an age of terror and genocide: identity and moral choice* (Princeton, 2012); Kristen Renwick Monroe, 'The ethical perspective: an identity theory of psychological influences on moral choice' in *Political Psychology*, xxx No. 3 (2009), pp 419-44; Kirsten Renwick Monroe, *The hand of compassion; portraits of moral choice during the Holocaust* (Princeton, 2004), Kristen Renwick Monroe, 'The ethical perspective: an identity theory of psychological influences on moral choice' in *Political Psychology*, xxx No. 3 (2009), pp 419- 44 & Kristen R. Monroe, Barton, Michael C.,

British service and airmen, the principle prompting the study appears to be similar to that of the commemorative histories outlined above. One such researcher, Kirsten Renwick Monroe, a political scientist, has written numerous papers and books on this subject and uses her research on 'rescuers' in her work on 'altruistic' personality types. Monroe's later work takes her research on rescuers during the Holocaust right up to more modern conflicts such as the genocide in Rwanda. In this respect, academics are interested in the courage displayed by those who risked their lives to save others and have gone to some lengths to explain these behaviours, going so far as to develop theoretical frameworks in order to best understand these actions.

In contrast historians, aside from the popular histories discussed above, have not yet ventured to examine escape activities in depth. Yet most historians would agree that aiding British soldiers was a form of early resistance. Julian Jackson makes this acknowledgement in his book *France the dark years 1940-1944* before noting that the 'first resisters did whatever seemed possible'.[24] Jackson's comments reflect a broader trend in terms of the approach of academic histories to resistance activities in France. Historians focused more on grappling with the nature of resistance, pointing out that 'Resistance was a territory with maps, and sometimes developed differently from what the first pioneers had expected'.[25] Socially-minded researchers attempted to construct a sociology of resistance arguing that those engaged in resistance were supported by a wider circle of complicity.[26] Historian H.R. Kedward's research on the communist resistance illustrated that those engaged in subversive activities before the war continued this behaviour following French defeat. In such cases, individuals engaged in resistance were not breaking with the past but rather their continued opposition to authority was a continuation of past behaviour.[27] Another more recent contribution to the historiography is Robert Gildea's *Fighters in the shadows: a new history of the French resistance.* Gildea's work forms part of a growing trend among researchers to

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Klingemann, Ute, 'Altruism and the theory of Rational Action: rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe' in *Ethics,* ci No. 1 (Oct., 1990), pp 103-22; Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl Oliner, *The altruistic personality rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe what led ordinary men and women to risk their lives on behalf of others* (New York, 1992).

[24] Julian Jackson, *France; the dark years 1940-1945* (Oxford, 2001), p. 408.

[25] Ibid., p. 406.

[26] Francois Marçot, 'Pour une sociologie de la Résistance: intentionnalité et fonctionnalité' in Antoine Prost (ed.), *La Résistance, une histoire sociale* (Paris, 1997), pp 21-42.

[27] HR. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France, a study of ideas and motivation in the southern zone 1940-1942* (Oxford, 1972), pp 47-81.

focus the lens on non nationals (often political refugees) within the French resistance. From this perspective, Gildea argues that instead of focusing on traditional terms such as French resistance, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of resistance in France as more reflective of the multipicity of such activities.[28]

Insights provided by these historians have contributed to the understanding of the period and framed the research for this thesis. Although escape activities came to be considered part of the French resistance, the reality is far more complex. In studying escape activities, it is necessary to adopt Gildea's perspective and consider the emergence of escape organisations as 'resistance in France' as opposed to 'French resistance'. Yet even this perspective undermines the complexity of the emergence of an escape organisation such as the 'Pat Line'.

The existence of the Unoccupied Zone, the presence of diplomatic missions in Vichy France, and the attitude of the French military and secret services all contributed to the emergence, expansion and protraction of British escape activities. Yet individuals working within these institutions, particularly within the French military and secret services, may not have perceived their actions as acts of resistance. Simon Kitson, in his research on French counter-espionage noted that it seems to have been mainly anti-German. According to Kitson,

> Whenever the Vichy secret services had to choose a camp, they opted for the anti-German option. In this their attitude differed from the government which employed them.[29]

Yet Kitson also cautioned that French counter-espionage in the Unoccupied Zone must not be seen in terms of resistance but directly related to efforts at asserting French independence.[30] Kitson's research is mirrored in the military and secret services attitudes to British escape activities, that is, tolerating such activities was both a means of expressing an anti-German attitude and a way of asserting independence.

However, it is important to assert, as Kitson also noted in the introduction to his research, that this thesis does not seek to challenge the work of Robert Paxton who

[28] Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the shadows: a new history of the French Resistance* (London, 2015).
[29] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p. 86.
[30] Ibid., p. 152.

argued that Vichy actively collaborated with Germany. Paxton led the way in terms of scholarship on Vichy France and his work is one of the foundational texts in the field. This research acknowledges that Vichy did actively collaborate with the Germans but there were also efforts made, as Kitson highlighted in terms of counter espionage activities and as will be illustrated in this thesis in relation to the attitude to British prisoners of war, on the part of Vichy to assert its independence.[31] This will be addressed more fully in chapter four, suffice to say here that this thesis recognises, works within and seeks to add to the existing scholarship of the period.

Historians have remained fascinated by the fall of France and the occupation. Most agree that the occupation elicited complex and multifaceted responses both on a national and individual level. While this thesis explores the development of the 'Pat Line' in the summer of 1940, few French civilians or British military personnel considered the possibility of establishing an escape organisation stretching from Nord Pas de Calais to Marseilles. Yet it was the response of both British servicemen and French civilians to the confusion of invasion, defeat, occupation and, in the British case, being taken prisoner, that ultimately, as will be explored in the coming pages, set the stage for the emergence of escape activities as an act of resistance.

[31] Ibid., p. 6.

Chapter One

Aiding escape as resistance: the impact of the British presence

This chapter will examine the development of escape organisations in northern France and the social processes contributing to their formation. This chapter argues that the French civilian contribution to the successful escapes of British soldiers, from both German internment and the Forbidden and Occupied Zones, to unoccupied France, were some of the first gestures of resistance on French soil. Some historians have pointed to early signs of resistance or gestures of resistance in the first weeks of occupation. In this context, the historical debate between Hanna Diamond and Jean Vidalenc is noteworthy. In her book, *Fleeing Hitler,* Diamond examined the refugee exodus from the north in the wake of the advancing German army. Diamond took issue with the work of Vidalenc who argued that those fleeing civilians were demonstrating their faith in the French army and its ability to stop the German advance.[1] Moreover, by fleeing, refugees also indicated their unwillingness to live under German occupation. According to Vidalenc, this was resistance.

While Diamond agreed that some French men headed south in the belief that the French army were forming another front, she pointed out that, for the majority, the exodus was a time of anguish and suffering. Diamond argued, rather, that some of the first 'gestures of resistance' were the civilian response to the exodus (as opposed to the exodus itself) and it was 'born of helping distressed refugees'.[2] Diamond pointed out that, in some cases, in aiding refugees, civilians had their 'first contact with political life.'[3] As a result, they were more likely, to use Diamond's expression 'poised', to engage in acts of resistance at a later stage of the occupation.[4]

Diamond's focus on resistance in the south of France leads her to overlook the political awakening or, more specifically, the 'resistance awakening' of northerners who remained in their homes. Civilians in the north witnessed the final stages of the defeat of France and the large marching columns of French and British prisoners.

[1] Hanna Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler, France 1940* (Oxford, 2007), p. 81.
[2] Ibid., p. 195.
[3] Ibid., p. 195. See also Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France 1939-1948: choices and constraints* (Harlow, 1999), p. 2 & 116.
[4] Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler*, p. 195.

Approximately 40,000 British (and *c.* 1.5 million French prisoners[5]) were taken and marched from battlefields in Dunkirk, Calais and St Valery towards Germany. Similar to civilians opening their homes to refugees, French men and women strove to help these prisoners with offers of food and water. Arguably, these actions were more obvious and committed gestures of resistance than those discussed by Diamond, and it will be established in this chapter, that such action often led civilians into deeper acts of resistance. This view is supported by historian, Dominique Veillon, who argued that the first opposition to the occupation came from civilians helping French and British soldiers to avoid capture or assisting the passage of the young to England.[6] This was particularly the case with aid given to the British. From the earliest stages of occupation helping British escapees was punishable by death which strongly suggests that the aid extended to the British was more than an act of kindness (as in the case of assisting refugees) but also a demonstration of resistance. (Interestingly, according to Ronald Modras, giving help to persecuted peoples, such as the Jews, did not carry the death penalty, at least in Western Europe).[7]

Nevertheless, while it is important to recognise early resistance on the part of French civilians, this research suggests that emphasis on civilian aid must also be balanced with the understanding that aid was often predicated on British action, that is, the British actively sought civilian assistance. This argument is supported by research undertaken by sociologist (and Holocaust survivor) Samuel P. Oliner and a professor of education, Pearl M. Oliner, on helpers and rescuers across Europe during the Second World War. Oliner and Oliner discovered that in their research sample the majority of these rescuers or helpers (some 68%) were approached directly for help (as opposed to seeking people to help).[8] Such statistical analysis does not undermine the risks for those involved or the

[5] Julian Jackson, *The fall of France, the Nazi invasion of 1940* (Oxford, 2003), p. 180.
[6] Dominique Veillon, 'Les réseaux de résistance' in Jean Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (eds), '*La France des années noires, tome 1: de la défaite à Vichy'* (Paris, 1993), p. 387.
[7] Ronald Modras, 'Jewish citizenship in emerging nation states: Christian anti-semitism, nationalism, and Nazi ideology' in Judith H. Banki and John T. Pawlikowski (eds), *Ethics in the shadow of the Holocaust Christian and Jewish perspectives* (Chicago, 2001), p. 94. See also report by C. Hillier 'All houses in Calais bore a notice saying that the penalty for sheltering escapers was death' Account of escape of 1509075 Gnr. Hillier, C., 2 S/L Regt. R.A., 51 Div., 13 April 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[8] The Oliners' study was international in scope interviewing over 700 people (406 rescuers, 126 non rescuers and 150 survivors) from countries right across Europe. Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl Oliner, *The altruistic personality: rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York, 1992), p. 2. Samuel Oliner and Pearl Oliner research conclusions were also quoted in Jane Allyn Piliavin and Hong-Wen Charng, 'Altruism, a review of recent theory and research' in *Annual Review of Sociology,* xxvi (1990), p. 35.

gravity of the decision to help, but it does shed light on a civilian's entrance into escape as resistance.

These insights frame the central theme of this chapter, that early resistance gestures were the result of a continual interaction between the British soldiers and French civilians, particularly in the first weeks of occupation. These weeks were crucial to the emergence of nascent escape organisations. The physical British presence, combined with their continued presence in the war (maintained in the minds of the French population through resistance and BBC propaganda), were essential components influencing civilian willingness to help. The escape reports indicate that, for the most part, the British were the first to initiate contact with civilians, rather than the other way around. Nevertheless, while the first gestures of resistance may have been precipitated by British escapees seeking aid, the support was sustained by an intention to resist, and to give assistance on the part of civilians. It may have been that the trauma of defeat robbed the civilian population of the ability to take the initiative, such that it was often the British requests that invoked a reaction and directed early gestures of resistance. Their requests, and responding to them, offered an opportunity to resist. It was not until civilians started to come to terms with the reality of occupation that considerable efforts were made to maintain contact with the British imprisoned on French soil.

First encounters: German efforts to undermine confidence in the British

Before it can be established that early resistance gestures, and the emergence of some of the first resistance organisations, were the result of continual interaction between the British and French, it is important to set this action within the context of German actions and agenda. This contextualisation is necessary in order to understand the power, form and significance of early resistance and the role of the British presence in precipitating it. This research has identified that from the first stages of the occupation, the Germans realised that prisoners, and in the context of this research notably British prisoners, could potentially become a focal point of resistance. The main evidence for this comes from early escape reports which detailed German attempts to prevent the forging of connections between prisoners and French civilians; this they likely saw as the most effective way of preventing opportunities for civilians to use prisoners to demonstrate their opposition to German authority. From the available evidence it would appear that in order to achieve this, the German authorities sought to undermine and

discourage, through isolation, fear and intimidation, any demonstration of civilian support for the British. Isolating the British was, perhaps, one of the most passive, but nevertheless effective, ways of realising this objective. It is unclear if isolating these men was part of official German policy but its impact was experienced by the British from the first moments they were taken as prisoners of war.

The forced marching columns were the primary flashpoints for the implementation of this policy. For instance, a report by three British officers, Lieutenant W. Millet, Captain Denis Edmund Blacquiere and Captain E.A.W Williams, recounted an incident when the column rested in Hucqueliers where the Germans ordered 'inhabitants of the village… to feed the officers and the French troops but the English troops received nothing'.[9] On separate occasions, two British officers and two privates recounted circumstances where the French were allowed to buy food from locals but this privilege was denied to the British.[10] In consideration of the above and similar accounts in the escape reports, this markedly different treatment towards British prisoners suggests there was a deliberate policy to engender a sense of isolation in these men and prohibit any form of contact with the French population.

This policy of isolation was further reinforced by attempts to emasculate the British in the eyes of French civilians. This was achieved through visual acts of aggression. Men who attempted to break ranks to talk to or accept food from civilians were beaten with rifle butts or whips. On some reported occasions, shots were fired at the feet of stragglers.[11] Such treatment left a strong impression on the minds of those who experienced it. Lance Corporal A.M. Garden recounted the horror of leaving the marching column to 'make a purchase' in a chemist only to be beaten by one of the

[9] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[10] Account of escape of Major John Ronald Mackintosh-Walker, M.C., Seaforth Highlanders commanding 4/Bn. Cameron Highlanders and Major Thomas Gordon Rennie, Black Watch, G.2.51st Div., 5 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298); Account of escape of 2930870 Sgt. Robert Duncan and 2931298 Pte Donald Edward Pearce. 4th Bn. Cameron Highlanders, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[11] Account of escape of No. S/103035 Pte. Brown F.W., R.A.S.C. H.Q. 51st (H) Division, 30 Oct. 1940 (N.A. WO208/3299); Account of escape of No. 1072762 L/Bdr. J. Dixon, 237 Battery, R.A., Sept/Oct 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of No. 2571954L/Cpl. Garden, A.M., 51st (H) Div. Sigs., No.1 Coy, 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A. WO208/3299); Account of escape of 5110625 Pte. Astley, C., 2/R/Warwickshire Regt., 48th Div. and 76610 Dvr. Craig, A., 526 (Petrol) Coy., R.A.S.C., 52st (H) Div., 19 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2930870 Sgt. Robert Duncan and 2931298 Pte Donald Edward Pearce. 4th Bn. Cameron Highlanders, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2870129 A/C.S.M. A. Moir, 1/Gordon Highlanders, 153 BDE., 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

guards by a rifle butt.[12] On this occasion, Garden witnessed a number of his colleagues experience a similar fate. These physical assaults were combined with verbal insults and jeers as reported by three lieutenants who observed German troops laughing, jeering and taking photographs of British prisoners at they approached civilians for water.[13] Arguably, this type of aggression not only emasculated the British and was in violation of the Geneva Convention protecting prisoners of war but when committed in full view of the French population represented a 'double isolation' in that it fed into a visual display of subjugation and reinforced the magnitude of German victory. It effectively removed any remaining vestiges of hope in British military prowess.

Moreover, it would appear that German attempts to isolate the British did not end with French civilians as the Germans also took great pains to generate resentment between French and British prisoners. The evidence indicates that on any given day the Germans cultivated antipathy in a number of ways. Rations were a common concern with reports claiming the French were deliberately favoured by the Germans.[14] French prisoners were fed first, given greater freedom and allowed more interaction with civilians.[15] Another German method of differentiation was to excuse the French from work parties. In one report, a British soldier complained that the British were forced to form work parties, carrying out tasks like burying the dead (including dead horses) while 'the

[12] Account of escape of No. 2571954L/Cpl. Garden, A.M., 51st (H) Div. Sigs., No.1 Coy, 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A. WO208/3299).
[13] 2/Lt Tinn, 2/Lt Hardey and 2/Lt. Campbell Highland Light Infantry Captured at about 4.30am on 30th May 1940, near Rex Poede, 12 June 1940 (N.A., WO3298).
[14] Account of escape of Major John Ronald Mackintosh-Walker, M.C., Seaforth Highlanders commanding 4/Bn Cameron Highlanders and Major Thomas Gordon Rennie, Black Watch, G.2.51st Div., 5 Aug. 1940 (N.A, WO208/3298); Account of escape of No. S/103035 Pte. Brown F.W., R.A.S.C. H.Q. 51st (H) Division, 30 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298); No. 1547071 Bdr. George Melas 44/101 Light A.A. end A/T/ R/A, 5 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298); Account of escape of Lt. H.S.M. Hogg, R.E., 26th Fd. Coy., 28 Oct. 1940 (N.A., 3299); Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A., 31 Dec. 1941 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2930870 Sgt. Robert Duncan and 2931298 Pte Donald Edward Pearce. 4th Bn. Cameron Highlanders, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 281982 Cpl. Norman Miller 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 7603667 Cpl. Rennie, I.H.C., 14th Army Field Workshop, R.A.O.C., 27 Oct. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[15] Two officers, Major John Ronald Mackintosh-Walker and Major Thomas Gordon Rennie, reported that the French were allowed to 'send out' and obtain food from local civilians. Account of escape of Major John Ronald Mackintosh-Walker, M.C., Seaforth Highlanders Commanding 4/Bn. Cameron Highlanders and Major Thomas Gordon Rennie, Black Watch, G.2., 51 Div., 5 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).

French were not given any work to do'.[16] Signalman D.W. Herring escaped from a marching column and on watching it pass observed

> The French troops did not look as if they had done any fighting and had British blankets and gasmasks, and our troops had only what they stood up in.[17]

This resentment illustrates the effectiveness of German efforts in promoting discord. The impact of this policy is best exemplified in the report of Wing Commander Basil Embry. Embry was captured at the end of May 1940 and interned in a football stadium with four thousand other prisoners. He quickly discovered that relations between the various nationalities were difficult and reported being warned by some British officers that many of the French and Belgians were fifth columnists.[18] As Embry indicates, the effect of German policy not only weakened individual morale but also destabilised previous loyalties and engendered distrust.

Responding to German hegemony: British efforts to assert morale

In light of the above, the available evidence suggests that there was a German agenda to undermine British morale and alienate these men from the French prisoner and civilian populations. Against this backdrop, the first challenges to German authority within these marching columns, therefore, were not necessarily escape attempts but British efforts to overcome German attempts to isolate them from their fellow prisoners and potential civilian support. The escape reports illustrate that the first step in challenging German authority were efforts to reinforce a sense of group cohesion. Thus, in order to understand the emergence of early escape activities, it is first necessary to examine the importance of the support of colleagues or what in British military circles was more readily labelled 'morale'.

Such terminology was common parlance in the reports. It referred to the sense of group cohesion.[19] When morale was 'high', men were more willing to act together as a unit, compared to 'low' morale which was closely linked to despondency. Writing on the importance of military morale in 1941, American Brigadier General James A. Ulio argued that morale (in this case high morale) was 'brought to life by a spirit of mutual

[16] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3298).
[17] Account of escape of Signalman D.W. Herring No.2328065 Royal Corps of Signals. Attd. 51 Highland Division sigs., 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[18] Basil Embry, Confidential report, 12 Aug. 1940 (N.A., W308/3299).
[19] Account of escape of 7604901 Cpl. C. Fagg, R.A.O.C., 17 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

respect and co-operation'.[20] Other contemporaries writing on morale such as Arthur Upham Pope and Charles I. Glickberg declared that 'morale wins wars'[21] and its importance cannot be 'overestimated'.[22] According to these writers, morale was considered as a unifying force which could be the basis for overcoming difficulties and encouraging action. Notwithstanding that such writers were somewhat removed from the experiences of defeat suffered by these men, it must be noted that the British were familiar with the concept of morale and went to some lengths to reinforce it.

Efforts to assert morale not only helped men overcome a sense of isolation but also laid the groundwork for the first challenges to German authority within these marching columns. This was progressive as, initially, attempts to boost morale were largely symbolic and relatively tame. These involved marching 'in step' and 'singing the old songs' (songs long associated with the British such as 'A long way to Tipperary').[23] Indeed, to the observer, such activities may appear relatively passive with little intrinsic value; they hardly inspired terror in German guards. Moreover, it could also be argued that while efforts to reinforce morale such as singing and displaying a disciplined front granted a certain dignity to the situation, in reality by continuing to march into captivity these men did in fact co-operate with the Germans. However, this stance overlooks a crucial aspect of such exercises. Marching 'in step' and 'singing the old songs' were essentially attempts to bolster morale and the fact that such actions appear innocuous or 'passive' does not undermine their importance. This type of behaviour marked the spawning of a unity. Once men conveyed a willingness to work together, braver challenges to German authority could emerge.

Mutual cooperation was needed to mount more visible challenges to German authority. Complicity was important in helping to thwart punitive measures taken by the Germans

[20] James A. Ulio, 'Military morale' in *American Journal of Sociology,* xlvii No. 3 (Nov. 1941), p. 321.
[21] Arthur Upham Pope, 'Civilian morale' in *Journal of Educational Sociology',* xv No. 4 (Dec. 1941), pp 195-205.
[22] Charles I. Glicksberg, 'Morale promotion in wartime' in *Phi Delta Kappam*, xxv (Sept. 1942), pp 7-16. See also Henry Durant, 'Morale and its measurement' in *American Journal of Sociology,* xlvii No. 3. (Nov. 1941), pp 406-14, William Ernest Hocking, 'The nature of morale' *in American Journal of Sociology,* xlvii, No. 3 (Nov. 1941), pp 302-20, Raymond L. Hightower, 'A sociological conception of morale' in *Social Forces,* xxii No. 4 (May, 1944), pp 410-15. (Only one of these writers, Hightower, downplayed the importance of morale in relation to the individual, instead he placed emphasis on the institutional and associational aspects of morale. In this way, Hightower still recognised it as a powerful influence albeit in an institutional setting).
[23] Account of escape of 7604901 Cpl. C. Fagg, R.A.O.C., 17 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

against individual offenders. From the evidence available, there appears to have been a number of activities, besides marching in step and singing in unison, which required the cooperation of colleagues. Communal acts of indiscipline included slowing the march down or getting out of line. These acts were designed to frustrate the German guards.[24] On any given day, and as a consequence of efforts to boost morale, a column of prisoners engaged in challenging German guards acted either as a disciplined unit or deliberately sought to undermine discipline. [25]

Other acts of indiscipline referred to in the reports included acts of sabotage; these were, however, rare as they were serious and if discovered such actions would have carried harsh penalties.[26] An account given by three officers, Captain Denis Talbot, Lieutenant W. Millet and Captain E.A.W. Williams, referred to acts of sabotage committed by prisoners. Talbot wrote

> They could tell at quite an early stage that they were on a main line and looked out for chances to effect damage. Captain Williams cut a cable and Lieutenant Millett knew of a Sgt. who had cut it three times.[27]

With high risks attached to sabotage, it may be concluded that sabotage was not associated with large numbers of men. However, when acts of this nature were combined with other acts of indiscipline, the desire by some prisoners to assert some form of independent action emerges. Moreover, it must also be acknowledged that these actions were witnessed by others and required the colleagues of offenders to either distract German guards, give some degree of cover or, at the very least, to turn a blind eye to the behaviour.

Arguably, the ultimate challenge to German authority within these marching columns was escape. On a personal level, individual escapees required tenacity and courage but equally they needed opportunity. Opportunity was often connected to, and depended

[24] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[25] Other challenges to German authority in this period, May-June 1940, included 'a show of tiredness and stupidity' during interrogations. Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[26] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298). See also Account of escape of No. 806140 Bdr. Albert Edward Bird, 60/100 Fld. Battery 23rd Field Brigade, 51st Division, 6 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[27] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).

upon, other challenges to authority within the marching column and therefore escape depended on a wider collective complicity. For instance, colleagues were often called upon to challenge the authority of the guards (through acts of indiscipline) to distract the Germans and make escape possible.[28] While only a small number of men escaped, Ulio's identification of morale as a source of 'mutual respect' and 'co-operation' was significant in that each escape required a wider support network. Men, even if reluctant to escape, suffering fatigue or struggling to come to terms with the situation, continued to cover for colleagues. As Talbot, Millet and Williams observed

> It was impossible to slip away without being seen by someone, and if possible, it would undoubtedly pay to do so from the middle of a party of British soldiers.[29]

These three officers took for granted the support from fellow British officers and troops. It was expected.

This support was based on a sense of a shared experience and common bond. Singing the 'old songs' bolstered this sense of commonality and contributed to Talbot, Millet and Williams' expectation that an escape in front of fellow British soldiers 'would undoubtedly pay'. The importance of support from colleagues and a sense of unity may also be perceived in the fact that most men escaped in groups of twos and threes, rarely alone. Notwithstanding the idea that they may later have agreed to separate, men found a certain solace in facing the unknown with colleagues.[30] Given this backdrop, it could be argued that escaping with colleagues was a means of reinforcing that 'high' morale needed for this ultimate challenge to German authority**.**

The British presence and civilian solidarity

The evidence suggests that prisoners' experience with civilians was equally important in terms of encouraging men to attempt to escape the marching columns. Efforts to bolster morale within the columns combined with demonstrations of civilian kindness to prisoners (despite German efforts to discourage it) underpinned the British willingness to attempt escape. It is important not to underestimate the effect of such kindness or empathy, particularly in the light of ongoing academic research. Moral psychologists

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] See volumes WO208/3298-3300: Most escapes were undertaken in twos or threes (rarely higher than this number). Some men escaped alone (including the Earl of Cardigan) but this was unusual.

and political scientists Kirsten Renwick Monroe and Samuel P. Oliner examined rescuer behaviour during the Second World War and identified the importance of compassion and empathy as a starting point for resistance and escape activity.[31] These observations are particularly relevant in gaining insight into some of the first civilian-assisted escape efforts. For instance, in the context of the experience of the marching columns, historian Robert Gildea noted the 'surge of solidarity'[32] the sight marching columns engendered in onlookers. Numerous escape reports affirm this assessment. British non-commissioned officer (NCO) Bombardier George Melas reported being 'treated kindly by the French inhabitants'.[33] Other reports declare that civilians were 'wonderfully kind' or 'hospitable'.[34] Considering the above, Oliner and Monroe's observations are important in that evidence from the escape reports suggest that displays of kindness were not only important in helping to forge connections between both prisoners and civilians but also laid the ground work for escapes. Men seeking to escape did so in the knowledge that some sort of help from French civilians was likely to be forthcoming.

Numerous accounts given by successful escapees suggest that there were certainly aspects of civilian behaviour which encouraged this belief. For instance, when the Germans ordered local civilians in Hucqueliers to feed French officers and troops, these civilians also obtained food for the British.[35] As Gildea noted, civilians lined routes taken by prisoners with offers of food and water which was, as a soldier, Private F.W. Brown observed, particularly welcome, especially considering prisoners experienced a lack of the latter.[36] Through these efforts, which appear to have been prolific, British

[31] Oliner and Oliner, *The altruistic personality*; Kirsten Renwick Monroe, *Ethics in an age of terror and genocide, identity and moral choice* (Princeton, 2012); Kirsten Renwick Monroe, *The hand of compassion portraits of moral choice during the Holocaust* (Princeton, 2004); Kristen Renwick Monroe, 'The ethical perspective: an identity theory of psychological influences on moral choice' in *Political Psychology*, xxx No.3, (2009), pp 419-44 & Kristen R. Monroe, Barton, Michael C., Klingemann, Ute, 'Altruism and the theory of rational action: rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe' in *Ethics,* ci, No.1 (Oct., 1990), pp 103-22. See also Manus I. Mildarsky, 'Helping during the Holocaust: the role of political, theological and socioeconomic identifications' in *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, xiii No. 1 & 2 (1985-1986), pp 285-305, Bar-Tal, Daniel, 'Altruistic motivation to help: definition, utility and operationalization' in *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, xiii No. 1 & 2 (Fall/Winter and Spring Summer, 1986), pp 3-14.
[32] Odette Goxe quoted in Robert Gildea, *Marraine in chains* (London, 2002), p. 70.
[33] No. 1547071 Bdr. George Melas, 44/101 Light A.A. and A/T, R.A., 5 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[34] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940*,* June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298); Account of escape of No. 70802 F/O/ R/Hawkins, 103 (B) Squadron, B.E.F. (Fairey Battle), 10 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[35] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940*,* June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[36] Account of escape of No. S/103035 Pte.Brown F.W., R.A.S.C. H.Q. 51st (H) Division, 30 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

prisoners experienced at first-hand civilian empathy and compassion, actions which appear to have had a bearing (albeit perhaps even subconsciously) on ideas of escape. The influence of such gestures is illustrated in the escape plans of a number of British officers including Talbot, Williams, Millet and Wing Commander Basil Embry. All four carefully assessed their situation and the direction of marches. While the march was moving south they were willing to continue but once there was a change in direction escape became a pressing matter. An easterly direction was of grave concern to those planning their escape as it indicated a push towards Germany. In Germany men could not expect civilian support for escape efforts. Therefore, those desiring an escape needed to do so before reaching permanent camps or the German frontier. Escapes needed to take place in territory where some level of support for the British presence was likely.

French civilians had already demonstrated this support and the planning of these four officers suggests that they took this into account. This is indicated in the concern expressed in their respective reports in relation to the direction of the march. For Talbot, Williams and Millet, the march from Hucqueliers to Hesdin suited their interests but at Hesdin they

> Were informed that they were going to Frevent and they heard a rumour that at Frevent was the first P/W collecting Camp. They were then moving an easterly direction and they determined to get away that day.[37]

Embry was of a similar mind set. While he was determined to escape, Embry decided that as long as the march was moving in a south-easterly direction (towards the Somme and as he thought near the British front) he would keep with it.[38] However, as soon as the marching column began moving in an easterly direction towards Germany, Embry determined to escape at the first available opportunity and continue his journey south. Considering such accounts, it may be argued that the determination to escape in the French countryside was based on the assumption that it would be easier to get help in the French countryside than it would be after crossing the German frontier.

[37] Account of escape of three officers p/w in Northern France, captured 26th May 1940, June 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[38] Basil Embry, Confidential report, 12 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

Such expectations of assistance in the French countryside were not wholly unfounded as is indicated in one particular case where there evidence to suggest that in early June a small number of civilians were already organised and assisting British soldiers to escape. This evidence is based on the report of a French lieutenant, Jean Bouvier d'Yvoire. In early June 1940, d'Yvoire reported encountering 'an organisation and collecting centre for escaped British soldiers in an isolated farm' in Matringhem.[39] This report is sparse on details, recording only the fact that an organisation existed and also that it was discovered by German 'agents, disguised as refugees'.[40] While Bouvier d'Yvoire escaped and left France around the 14 June 1940, it is unclear if the organisation arranged his departure. In many ways, the report leaves more questions than answers: how large was the organisation? How many men did it help? Did it help French as well as British soldiers? Why did Bouvier d'Yvoire identify it as an organisation specifically set up to help the British? These questions remain unanswered. The lack of detail notwithstanding, d' Yvoire does provide evidence that civilians, from the earliest stages of the invasion, intentionally and specifically sought out and aided British soldiers.

Yet it also must be added that this report is singular and there is no way of knowing how extensive the activities of this organisation in Matringhem were. It seems that the extent of organisation was limited to the immediate locality, an assumption based on the lack of evidence for the organisation elsewhere. For the most part, civilians in general do not appear to have been in a position to be as pro-active as the group in Matringhem; rather it seems that the British, by directly requesting help, played the leading role in precipitating civilian resistance in order to effect British escapes.

This assertion must be balanced with the recognition that civilian acts of support and kindness often opened the door for the British to make requests or to ask for help. This in turn drew civilians who were willing to enter into deeper forms of anti-German activities or resistance. For instance, Bombardier George Melas noted the kind treatment he received from the French, which most likely encouraged him to request a map from one French man. This man

[39] Extract from report (received from M.I.14) by Sous-Lieutenant Jean Bouvier d'Yvoire who escaped from German capture (3-14.6.40), June, 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[40] Ibid.

> Sent someone to find one and eventually produced a calendar map which he folded up and pushed inside the front of my battle dress.[41]

This map was given to Melas in the knowledge that he desired to escape. There are strong arguments for considering this man's actions as resistance. He had no objection to Melas' request, responding to it with alacrity. Alternatively, it could be argued that this man's intention was not necessarily to resist or subvert German authority but rather to express that surge of 'solidarity' referred to by Gildea. Nevertheless, even if such actions represented nothing more than a surge of 'solidarity', these types of request and the response to them changed the dynamics of kindness and pushed civilians closer to resistance. In this regard, arguably, the British directed some of the first gestures of civilian resistance in that they pushed willing civilians across the rubicon of a 'surge of solidarity' towards aiding an escape.

British morale meets resistance: British escape efforts and civilian support

Though it was not always immediately obvious, when men escaped the marching columns the nature of the aid given often changed from open gestures of empathy, such as giving food which was regularly done in front of German onlookers, to more covert, committed actions of support for these escape activities. This ranged from silent complicity (turning a blind eye to escapes) to civilian willingness to harbour men. Escape reports suggest that civilian assistance was often crucial to the success in the first moments of an escape. In one incident particular case, that of Basil Embry, civilian help proved vital to his escape. On the 29 May, Embry managed to leave the column and hide in a ditch along the roadside.[42] As he was preparing to cross the road

> A French woman milking a cow signalled me to drop, as I did some German motor patrols passed, when they were out of sight she gave me an all clear signal, but she signalled to me twice more to take cover before I reached a position 200 yards from the road where there was adequate cover.[43]

In this case, the woman did not seek out opportunities to resist but her actions, as simple as they may seem, subverted German authority. In this regard, early gestures of civilian resistance, similar to initial resistances inside the marching columns, were small

[41] No. 1547071 Bdr. George Melas, 44/101 Light A.A. and A/T, R.A., 5 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298).
[42] Anthony Richardson, *Wingless victory* (London, 1953), pp 76-7.
[43] Basil Embry, Confidential report, 12 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

symbolic actions rather than an open challenge to the German authorities. However, this does not mean that there was any less awareness of the dangers attached to such actions.

Moreover, while early civilian resistances may have been directed by British requests for assistance, civilians interpreted their actions in the light of resistance (even before the word was coined)[44] or perhaps, more correctly, as an anti-German action. For instance, shortly after meeting the woman milking the cow, Embry encountered a French farmer keen to help him. This man had fought in the First World War and informed Embry that he believed Britain and France were still fighting a common enemy. In his memoir, Embry recounted the following conversation

> If I had thought you were running away to escape being a prisoner, I should not have troubled and taken the risk to help you, for that would have been the easy way. But I know in my heart that you are taking this harder way so that you can join your friends once more, and be given another aeroplane, and then fly over again and kill more Germans.[45]

This man, 'Monsieur Paul', felt too old to fight but recognised that Embry could still make a contribution to the war. While Monsieur Paul had not sought to resist, when the opportunity to do so arose he attached a personal interpretation and meaning to his actions in the light of his desire to respond to the German occupation; he connected the help he gave to Embry to the wider war. Indeed, it would appear in light of Embry's experiences and similar accounts that whether help given was the result of an accidental encounter or not, does not undermine the act of helping, the commitment involved in this assistance or the significance helpers might attach to it.

As in the case of Monsieur Paul, the French response to men seeking help was crucial. In this respect, the evidence may suggest that escapees may have been the first to initiate contact with civilians but without civilian support British escape efforts were futile. While it is difficult to assess the extent of this early civilian support, it would appear that it was enough to allow the British to establish a foothold in French communities especially along marching routes near Bethune and Lille. There are no accurate statistics as to the number of escapees or the numbers of men in hiding in

[44] Hanna Diamond suggested out that relief efforts to help refugees were part of a resistance 'before this word appeared'. Diamond, *Fleeing Hitler,* p. 196.
[45] Richardson, *Wingless victory*, p. 94.

northern France but the British estimated between 2,500-3,500 British soldiers were in hiding and were being supported by the civilian population.[46] Corporal J.A. Martin proposed a modest estimate of a few hundred men.[47] These two vastly different estimates give a sense of the care needed in reporting numbers as it is not simply possible to substantiate these figures from available documentation. Moreover, accurate statistics may never be fully ascertained. There are a number of reasons for this. Some men may have remained in hiding for the duration of the war; certainly there is a discrepancy in the number of men reaching Britain in this period and the higher-end estimates for those in hiding. In addition, some men may have reached the Unoccupied Zone but never left France.

In spite of the lack of proper statistics, the impact of these early escapes continued well beyond this initial early period. This argument is supported by the escape reports which indicate that most successful escapes from France in 1941 were dominated by men who had managed to remain in hiding after escaping German captivity in the summer of 1940 and had slowly been making their way south to the Unoccupied Zone. This consideration further illustrates the importance of the marching columns and the 'surge of solidarity' such sights invoked among the civilian population. These men were assisted south by civilians willing to provide food, clothing and sometimes shelter. In this respect, for the civilian population the act of helping, or the desire to help, became foundational to a political or resistance awakening. Against this backdrop, and similar to the research carried out by Hanna Diamond on the impact of refugees fleeing south, this research argues that the marching columns, to use Diamond's term, were a 'consciousness-raising' experience and 'politicising influence'.[48] Similarly, sympathy for the marching columns became a key contributory factor in the protraction of escape activities, particularly, as will be demonstrated, when prisoners disappeared from public view into internment camps or were removed to Germany.

[46] Lieutenant James M. Langley estimated that were 2-2,500 men in hiding in northern France but also noted that the French suspected that the numbers were higher at c.3,500 men in hiding. Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C., 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301). According to Captain A. Irvine Robertson and Lieutenant R.D.W Griffin, French helpers in Lille estimated that between 4,000-7,000 men were in hiding in the region. Account of escape of Captain A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieutenant R.D.W Griffin, 2/Dorsets 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[47] Account of escape of 3191176 Cpl. J.A. Martin, 8/D.L.I., 50th Div., 27 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[48] Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, p. 116.

Civilian resistance: building on a tradition of escape as resistance

In order for 'consciousness-raising' to move beyond a nebulous existence in the minds of those who helped escapees, there needed to develop clearly defined and well understood objectives to such actions. Civilians offering men such as Melas a place to stay until the end of the war may have interpreted their outreach as an act of resistance but also may not have connected it with a wider war effort. Indeed, it cannot be established if early civilian gestures of help were or were not 'imagined' or understood in terms of their contribution to the war effort. In contrast, Embry's helper, Monsieur Paul was much more in tune with the potential impact of aiding British escapees. Thus, while a 'consciousness-raising' experience or 'politicising influence' may result from action, there was still a need for escape to have some direction and focus.

It is argued that one of the major components in framing and directing escape as resistance, beyond the initial weeks of the war in France, was a previous tradition of such activities stemming from the First World War. This tradition dated to the German occupation of Belgium and parts of France including Lille in 1914. In Lille, a small resistance cell, *le Comité Jacquet*, helped a French garrison, stationed in the town, back to the front lines and later continued to help both French and British soldiers return to the frontlines. The German authorities became aware of these activities and arrested and executed the leaders, Slyvére Verhulst, Ernest Deconinck, Georges Maertens, Eugène Jacquet, in 1915.[49] Another more famous case, which received much international attention at the time, involved an English woman Edith Cavell, living in German-occupied Brussels. Cavell helped British and French soldiers reach neutral Holland. In 1915, she was captured by the Germans, tried by a military court and executed. This region, Nord Pas de Calais, therefore had a tradition of aiding escape which provided a frame of reference for similar resistance in the occupation of 1940. One of the first escape organisations, referred to in the report of Jean Bouvier d'Yvoire (mentioned earlier), was based in Matringhem just over eighty kilometres from Lille. D'Yvoire discovered the organisation at the beginning of June 1940 when it was likely the organisation sought to return men to the front. This effort was not necessarily out of sync with the situation considering escapees, such as Embry, were also attempting to

[49] *Michelin illustrated guides to the battlefields 1914-1918 Lille Before and during the war* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1919), p. 16.

return to the front, unaware of the order to evacuate at Dunkirk.[50] More importantly, it could be argued that the Matringhem group were aware of the tradition in the region and perceived their actions as continuing the struggle against occupation.

This hypothesis is supported by evidence elsewhere in the reports (and secondary sources) which illustrate the power of previous memories and commemoration of past resistances. Living memory and lived experiences played a role in reinforcing the influence of the past. A lived connection to the past helped bridge the gap between knowledge of previous resistances and the practical application of this resistance in 1940. Journalist Brendan Murphy, biographer of a British serviceman Sergeant Harold Cole, noted the impact of tradition. Murphy writes that northerners had not forgotten the 'rules of a generation before'.[51] To reinforce his point he draws on the Widow Samiez, who had lived through the First World War in Lille and in 1940 'spread the word', that is, 'We must collect the English and send them home!'[52] Besides this, Murphy does not offer much evidence to reinforce his point. Yet there is other evidence to support this claim and to connect the lived experiences of the First World War with resistances in 1940. According to the report of Lieutenant A.R.P.K Cameron, on the 23 October 1940 Cameron escaped from hospital with Major H.M. Curteis. Both men spent time hiding in the home of an old woman who engaged in resistance during the First World War. According to Cameron,

> This house was the headquarters of an organisation which was to get us out of France, but as the old lady (who had worked with Nurse Cavell in the last war) was very old and extremely deaf and plans of escape were being shouted all over the house, we decided that we would be better working independently.[53]

The key significance of this report is Cameron's identification of and connection between 'the old lady's' activities in the First World War and her activities in 1940. Her past actions shaped the direction of her resistance in 1940.

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[50] Embry was shot down at the beginning of May 1940 when fighting was still on-going. See Basil Embry's confidential report and lessons learned, 12 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[51] Brendan Murphy, *Turncoat the true case of traitor Sergeant Harold Cole* (London, 1988), p. 46. See also Natalis Dumez, *Le mensonge reculera* (Lille, 2006), p. 32.
[52] Murphy, *Turncoat* (London, 1988), p. 46.
[53] Account of escape of Lieut. Cameron, A.R.P.P.K., 4 Cameron Hrs., 51 (H) Div., 2 Feb. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308). It is quite possible that the woman referred to by Lieutenant Cameron was Widow Samiez. However, this cannot be corroborated with certainty. The only evidence linking Cameron's helper to Murphy's description of Widow Samiez is scant respect for the German authority, her involvement in anti-German activities during the First World War and her display of leadership qualities.

Cameron also referred to her home as headquarters of ‘an organisation’. This claim suggests that she was active in the role of helper for some time. Her home as headquarters was also likely to have resulted from her previous involvement in anti-German activities. Additionally, it could be argued that this woman was proud of her activities in the last war: proud enough to share her knowledge and expertise. In sharing her experiences of previous occupation, or more importantly allowing her actions in the summer and autumn of 1940 to be guided by her past activities, this woman played a role in propagating escape activities in her local community. Such incidences illustrate that in some cases at least individual experiences of past occupation directly framed early entry into resistance activities.

However, it is easy to propound the importance of tradition without giving some recognition to the fact that enthusiasm from helpers influenced by public memory or actions taken in their youth needed to be tempered with the reality of occupation and the practicalities of aid. Notwithstanding Cameron’s account highlighting the importance of the historical legacy of Cavell, it must be noted that his report also illustrates the difficulties in translating history and tradition into practice. In relation to Cameron’s experience, both Cameron and Curteis felt their position with this ‘organisation’ was untenable and left for Paris alone. In this sense, while tradition and public memory of previous resistance helped support their position, it did not guarantee safety or ensure that helpers would act responsibly. These early escape efforts, although given direction by past tradition, still had to account for the realities of 1940.

During the First World War men were helped back to the frontlines near Lille but with the occupation in 1940 there was no frontline or, if assisted to the Unoccupied Zone (over 400 kilometres away) created by the signing of the Armistice, 22 June 1940, there was no guarantee men would reach England. In this regard, celebrating a heroic tradition was different to living it. On the other hand, it also must be pointed out that acknowledging difficulties does not undermine the importance of public memory of previous resistance. As a result of this legacy, there was a complicit understanding that the goal was not simply to hide men but to return them to the war.

In addition to living memory, these acts of civilian bravery exerted a powerful influence on the commemoration of the war in Lille and Brussels while also forming part of the historical tradition of the region. This is significant as it created a public forum for perceptions of civilian heroism and bravery. In 1940, even if civilians were too afraid to help, they could at least understand the motivations of those who did. Arguably, tradition did not only guide the actions of a few enthusiasts but also by praising this type of civilian action during an earlier occupation, paved the way for an understanding of this activity by the general public. Commemoration was important in the interwar period and, in areas occupied by Germany, civilian bravery was commemorated. For instance, monuments were erected in Cavell's honour on the continent and throughout the Commonwealth.[54] Commemorations to Cavell culminated in 1939 with a movie based on her activities in Brussels.[55] Similarly, the four men executed in Lille were also commemorated but to a somewhat lesser extent. Michelin tourist brochures of Lille recounted the details of their actions.[56] Their names were inscribed on the Roll of Honour of the Army[57] and on the 18 December 1918 the *Journal Officiel* announced that the *Legion d'Honneur* was conferred on Eugène Jacquet.[58] A statue, the *Fusillé Lillois*, was commissioned in their honour and completed in 1929. Thus, it may be argued that commemorations played a role in defining civilian bravery and praiseworthy behaviour in times of occupation.

Indeed, if one is inclined to doubt the importance of public memory and commemoration in pushing the concept of escape as resistance into the public imagination, the German reaction to commemoration forces a reflection of this position. The German authorities sought to dominate commemoration and directed their efforts to the destruction of these memorials. Two incidents in particular highlight German efforts to control public memory. The first incident occurred in June 1940 when Hitler

[54] Memorials to Edith Cavell can be found in Melbourne, Brussels, Manchester, London, Norwich,. A number of streets have been named in her honour in England, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, England, France, Mauritius and Australia. See also Cavell Memorial Unveiled in Paris American Embassy Represented at a Simple Ceremony in the Tuileries Gardens*, New York Times,* 13 June 1920.
[55] The movie was a Herbert Wilcox production called Nurse Edith Cavell. It premiered on the 22 September 1939 in New York.
[56] *Michelin illustrated guides to the battlefields 1914-1918 Lille Before and during the war* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1919), p. 16.
[57] Claudine Wallart, *The Lille Resistance: le Comité Jacquet* (http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/the-department-of-the-nord-and the-coal-basin-under-german-occupation/resistance-to-the-first-german-occupation.html) (3 Feb. 2012).
[58] 'Eugène Camille Jacquet', 8 Dec. 1918 (Archives Nationale, LH/1343/65).

personally ordered the destruction of two war memorials in Paris, a statue of General Charles Mangin and a memorial to Edith Cavell. The Mangin statue was destroyed as a result of the general's involvement in the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. Mangin used colonial troops to occupy the Ruhr and also pressurised local mayors to provide brothels for his men. Mangin's use of colonial troops was considered an insult to Nazi racial ideology.[59] In contrast, the Edith Cavell memorial was destroyed because of her involvement in escape activities. The second incident took place a number of weeks later, in August 1940. The Germans destroyed the war memorial, the *Fusillé Lillois* in Lille. Given that the German authorities generally respected French memorials, this alone makes the destruction of these monuments noteworthy.[60] These monuments were targeted for what they represented and in the case of Cavell and *Fusillé Lillois* they honoured actions the Germans were determined to discourage.

In destroying these monuments the Germans were recognising the power of history and tradition and seeking to dominate it. As writer and contemporary George Orwell famously stated, 'He who controls the past, controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past'.[61] Orwell identified the past as a source of contending ideas and interpretations. Equally, German efforts to assert control over the French interpretation of the past, notably its commemoration of civilian resistance, was an attempt to control the present. In attacking the statue the German authorities were sending a clear message in relation to the German position on unacceptable civilian behaviour. The message was both pointed and powerful.

Nevertheless while the destruction of the memorials indicated the dominance of the Germans, another viewpoint is that by destroying the memorial the Germans in reality added significance to past resistance tradition. This is particularly suggested by the French response to the destruction of the *Fusillé Lillois.* The civilian reaction to the monument's destruction was threefold. Firstly, the mayor of Lille sent a letter of

[59] Margaret L. Rossiter and Noel Barber also stated that the statue of General Charles Mangin was destroyed because he insisted German mayors provided brothels for his African troops. Margaret Rossiter, *Women in the resistance* (New York, 1986), p. 9. See also Noel Barber, *The week France fell* (New York, 1979), p. 237.
[60] Major Windsor Lewis reported 'There was always a large crowd round the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior where the German soldiers would stand reverently beside the flame giving the Hitler salute'. Account of escape of Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, 2 Bn. Welsh Guards, 20th Gds. Bde., 13 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[61] George Orwell, *The complete works of George Orwell volume 9: 1984* (London, 1987), p. 37.

protest.[62] This represents the official French response and merits some attention considering the irony of defending to the Germans the right to honour civilian resistance to their previous occupation of the region. Added to this irony is the fact that the escape report of British sergeant, J.W. Phillips, implicates the mayor of Lille, in the autumn and winter 1940, in escape activities. Phillips was provided with false identity papers by the mayor of Lille.[63] However, the unofficial reaction is of particular interest and this appears to have taken two forms, namely, the pieces of the statue were collected and hidden by civilians until the end of the war[64] and according to Captain D.B. Lang 'the French… dug up newly-made graves of Germans killed near Lille in this war'.[65]

Moreover, this destruction not only drew public attention to these memorials and what they represented but also aroused a defence of these memories. In relation to the latter action, which appears the most shocking, it is difficult to interpret digging up graves of German soldiers in the light of resistance but when set in the context of an ideological struggle over historical memory such actions sent a powerful message. The message was clear: the German desecration of the *Fusillé Lillois* precipitated the desecration of German graves. Perceived in this light, hiding the broken monument pieces also conveys the importance attached to the monument and the determination, in the face of German aggression, to honour this memory. All three reactions to the destruction of the memorial indicate that the German response to this past resistance legacy meant that public memorials were not only a reference point for resistance but became sites of resistance. The destruction of the memorial gave it a renewed significance in the context of the second occupation of the region.

Propaganda and escape activities

The power of tradition lay in the fact that assisting escapees was not a novel idea. It was already understood as a contribution to the war, that is, returning men to the front. However, as the occupation intensified, the difficulty lay not in propagating the idea of aiding escape as resistance but in continuing to maintain a positive perception of the

[62] Les monuments aux morts (http://monumentsmorts.univ-lille3fr/monument/441/lille-place/) (17 Oct. 2014).
[63] J.W. Phillips was given these false ID papers in August or September 1940, around the same time the mayor sent his letter of protest. Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., 15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[64] Les monuments aux morts (http://monumentsmorts.univ-lille3.fr/monument/media/4870) (17 Oct. 2014).
[65] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

British. In other words, in order for escape to continue, French helpers needed to remain connected to the British war effort. As the war progressed and the population had time to reflect on defeat, maintaining support for the British was difficult, particularly in the face of increasingly entrenched German propaganda that blamed British policy such as the blockade for food shortages and also thrived on the British bombing of industrial targets in France. To maintain support for the British and by extension British escapees in France, it was important to propagate an alternative view to that propounded by the German authorities. Accordingly, the struggle to maintain support for the British continued as a propaganda or ideological struggle between the official and resistance press. On one hand, the German authorities strove to convince the French public that Britain did not serve their interests and on the other hand, the resistance press strove to reconnect French interest with their former ally.

According to Paul Jankowski, the 'leaders of the Resistance were proselytizers, trying to develop at least tacit mass support for their ideas.'[66] Certainly, early resisters needed to find an outlet for their ideas but those harbouring British soldiers were not in a position to draw attention to their activities. As a result, they depended on other forms of resistance such as the emerging clandestine press and also the BBC to offset the power of the official German voice. Most resistance historians emphasise the importance of propaganda in establishing, to use a term borrowed from Hanna Diamond, 'a counter culture'.[67] In relation to early escape activities, it is necessary to narrow the focus of this propaganda study to the struggle over perception of the British in both the collaborationist and resistance press. The main reason for this is to recognise the fact that escape activities did not occur in a vacuum and civilians were influenced by the ideas and struggles of the society in which they lived. In general, escape histories do not address the importance of a positive perception of the British and the lengths taken to maintain this perception by the resistance press. This resistance propaganda was important in continually reminding civilians of the British presence in the war and providing reasons why the population should support the British. An understanding of the struggle of the resistance press contributes to a deeper appreciation of the ideological struggles of those engaged in escape.

[66] Paul Jankowski, 'In defense of fiction: resistance, collaboration, and Lacombe, Lucien' in *The Journal of Modern History,* lxiii No. 3 (Sept. 1993), p. 473.
[67] Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, p. 110.

Without a sense of connection and support for the British, aiding escapees would not have survived as a resistance activity. While some historians point to the small circulation of resistance newspapers, it must be noted that these newspapers were passed around, therefore, the true extent of their circulation is difficult to ascertain.[68] Moreover, newspapers reflect and shape the ideas of a society and the struggles of that society. Equally, and as will also be addressed, the efforts of the BBC in France and the leaflet drops by the R.A.F. all fed into efforts to maintain a positive perception of the British in the minds of French civilians. This is significant as ideas influenced decisions to help or alternatively to support the German position and report the presence of British escapees hiding in communities across the Forbidden and Occupied zones.

However, in order to appreciate the significance of pro-British propaganda it is necessary to first establish the nature of the German propaganda being countered. For the Germans, the first course of action was to emphasise the scale of the defeat and the futility of a British victory. This was done without delay. On the 17 June 1940, after a five-day closure, the French newspaper, *Le Matin*, published *Le Communiqué Official Allemand*. This was the first indication of German acquisition of the newspaper. In the communication the prowess of the German army stood in sharp contrast to the 'fleeing and exhausted' Allies.[69] However, instead of a large article announcing German victory, the *Communiqué* was relatively unobtrusive and readers would be excused for missing it at first, lost as it was amid the plethora of war articles cramming the front page. That is until the reader went to turn the page, in which case the *Communiqué* was unavoidable, located on the bottom right hand corner. The following day there was little room for subtlety with the *Le Communiqué Official Allemand* taking centre stage. It left no doubt as to the occupied status of France and recounted details of recent German advancement. The *Communiqué* ended with a detailed listing of German navy victories against the British (a quick calculation places British losses at 114,900 tonnes of

[68] Julian Jackson estimated the circulation of some resistance newspapers. Julian Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 479. See also Captain D.B. Lang who reported that the people 'always managed to listen' to the BBC and 'those who could not listen received pamphlets written out secretly by others'. Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[69] *Le Matin*, 17 June 1940.

shipping).[70] In this respect, the *Communiqué* served a dual purpose, reminding the French of their recent losses and underscoring the hopelessness of the British cause.

With recent losses established, the Germans attempted to disconnect British and French interests. This was the start of a common theme that emerged early in German propaganda. This was done in a number of ways, including attempting to convince the French public of the perceived hypocrisy of the British war effort and shift blame for the war onto Britain. In the collaborationist newspaper, *Le Matin,* the first major attack on the British focused on the prime minster, Winston Churchill, who came to embody the perceived callousness and hypocrisy of the British. On the 19 June 1940 Churchill was quoted as stating 'England never engaged all her air force in the battle waged on the French front'.[71] Warming up to its theme, the article continued to 'quote' Churchill and his promise that final victory would come by starving countries dominated by Hitler. This was followed by Churchill's refusal to release France from its obligations to the British. The article continued to highlight the seeming hypocrisy of the British by pointing to its refusal to release France from her war commitments (the implication being that Britain clearly did not live up to her obligations and was willing to see France starve). In the coming weeks, Churchill remained the subject of attacks and a personification of British betrayal. On the 24 June the headlines opened with a statement from Pétain declaring that 'M. Churchill judges the interest of his country. It is not our interest'.[72] The official message was clear, Britain had already gambled with France, and if allowed, would continue to do so. By the 26 June 1940 the newspaper left no doubt as to its stance on Britain,

> While it appears an absolute fact that the king and Churchill are insane, it only remains for us French, to regret having put our security into the hands of individuals who would have, if they were French, been sent to a special hospital.[73]

Articles such as those undermined the credibility of the British leadership and formed part of a concerted German effort to destroy any positive perception of the British war effort.

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[70] Ibid., 18 June 1940.
[71] Ibid., 19 June 1940.
[72] *Édition du soir, Le Matin,* 24 June 1940.
[73] *Le Matin,* 26 June 1940.

It was also reflective of the third element in Germany's anti-British propaganda campaign that is, shifting responsibility for the war and the French defeat onto Britain. German propagandists and the collaborationist press lost no time in attempting to achieve this end as on the 1 September 1940, when *Le Matin* encouraged readers to continue reading the newspaper and discover how Britain both 'wanted and triggered' a European war.[74] In addition to the above, Britain also provided the fodder for German propaganda attacks especially in relation to episodes like the Oran affair (the killing of almost 1,300 French sailors by the British). Incidences like this provided collaborationist newspapers with opportunities to attempt to gain the moral high ground. The affair allowed *Le Matin* to declare 'a total rupture' in diplomatic relations between France and Britain. Britain was accused of 'always deceiving the world'.[75] In this regard, collaborationist propaganda consistently endeavoured to break any sense of French connection with the British war effort.

A sense of French connection to the British war effort was crucial to civilian willingness to aid escapees. Consequently, British escapees were vulnerable to changing perceptions of the British and French attitudes to the war. Events like Oran put positive perceptions to the test. Captain W.G. Stuart-Menteth reported a positive attitude to Britain among the French officers until news of the Oran affair filtered through. Menteth observed that these officers

> Were under the impression that the French Fleet had been fired on after only three hours' notice and I met one who was convinced that the British had machine gunned French sailors when leaving their ships.[76]

Menteth added that several of these officers had intended travelling to Britain until this affair forced them to reconsider. He witnessed first-hand how quickly positive attitudes changed and how this change shaped willingness to support Britain's war effort. The event framed the French officers' interaction with Menteth and on a wider scale did not endear the British to the French public.

[74] Ibid., 1 Sept. 1940.
[75] *Édition du soir Le Matin,* 5 July 1940.
[76] Account of escape of No. 90807 Capt. W.G. Stuart-Menteth, 2/6th Queens Regt., 30 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

Yet despite the continual onslaught of German propaganda, the majority of escapees reported receiving help from civilians in the Forbidden and Occupied Zone. Perhaps one escapee, Bombardier George Melas, was a little over zealous in his claims that the French in the Pas de Calais region were 'very loyal' and were 'looking forward' to the time when they 'will belong to the British empire'.[77] Nevertheless, such accounts convey that the British were frequently positively received. While Melas' account refers to his short period as an escapee in the summer of 1940 at a time where there was virtually no resistance press, it must be recognised that as the war progressed it became increasingly important to defend the British action, particularly in light of incidences such as Oran or British bombing campaigns. Equally, and perhaps just as important, resistance propaganda was also necessary in defending the British against the consistent mundane attacks of German propaganda which was quick to blame Britain for the everyday harsh realities of war .

George Orwell, through his work with the British propaganda office, identified the dangers of continual propaganda and spoke about it on the airwaves in 1942 warning listeners,

> To the Axis powers, propaganda is an actual weapon, like guns or bombs, it is as important as taking cover during an air raid.[78]

The continual and relentless stream of collaborationist and German propaganda with its aim to disconnect French and British interests needed to be addressed by the resistance press. Julian Jackson commented, 'In 1941, resistance meant above all propaganda'.[79] Ian Ousby observed,

> Whatever else resistance might have lacked when it started - and in lacking numbers, experience, arms, equipment and money, it seemed to lack almost everything - it had language. And language had assumed critical power.[80]

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[77] Report of No. 1547071 Bdr. George Melas, 44/101 Light A.A. and A/T. R.A., 5 Aug. 1940 (NA., WO208/3298).
[78] This quote is an excerpt from an address given over the BBC on the 17 January 1942. His comments were aimed at an Indian audience but reflect the situation in France. George Orwell, *War commentaries* (London, 1987), p. 37.
[79] Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 407.
[80] Ian Ousby, *Occupation the ordeal of France 1940-1944* (London, 1997), p. 219.

Ousby's assessment is a valid one as language, that is propaganda, had 'assumed critical power'. In relation to resistance propaganda or 'language' and its impact on escape activities, resistance newspapers continually strove to re-connect French interest with that of Britain. Sustaining sympathy for the British cause in France was vital for escapees in their daily encounters with civilians.

In fact, often resisters engaged in printing or distributing newspapers were involved in helping escapees. This is exemplified in the actions of a young woman, Suzanne Warenghem. In April 1941 she became involved with the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles (discussed later in this chapter and chapter two). Towards the end of 1941 she was also engaged with distributing the early resistance newspaper, *Pantagruel.*[81] This newspaper was strongly pro-British. It defended Britain against the collaborationist press on a number of key issues, and by so doing, it strove to re-connect French with British interests.

An examination of resistance newspapers suggests that they sought to defend the British in several key areas, namely, food shortages, British responsibility for the war and RAF bombing campaigns where German and collaborationist press sought to undermine British credibility.[82] As already noted, one of *Le Matin's* first attacks on Churchill was the claim he intended to defeat Hitler by starving Europe. The British blockade was continually given as proof of British intent. Food shortages informed most people's experience of war, therefore, the German authorities and early resisters had a vested interest in directing blame. For the Germans and advocates of collaboration, blaming the British for food shortages was a crucial strategy in destabilizing their support. Julian Jackson highlighted the importance of the food issue by pointing out that, 'When prefects listened to popular opinion, the loudest sounds they heard were not political slogans but rumbling stomachs'.[83]

[81] Statement of Suzanne Warenghem, 24 Apr. 1944 (N.A., KV 2/416).
[82] For further research on propaganda in this field see also the work of historians, Martyn Cornick and Olivier Wierviorka. Martyn Cornick, 'Fighting myth with reality: the fall of France; anglophobia and the BBC' in Valerie Holman & Debra Kelly (eds) in *France at war in the twentieth century propaganda, myth and metaphor* (Oxford, 2000), pp 65-87 & Wierviorka, 'Between propaganda and telling the truth: the underground French press during the Occupation (1940-1994)' in Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly (eds), *France at war*, pp 111-25.
[83] Jackson, *France the dark years*, pp 250-51.

The resistance newspapers re-directed blame for the war and the resulting hardships on Germany**.** While the full impact of resistance propaganda on civilians may never be fully realised, it still must be recognised that resistance movements and their newspapers, such as *Libération Nord,* were crucial in attempting to establish and defend the British perspective of the war. *Libération Nord* was founded in the occupied Zone by socialist journalist Jean Texcier and trade unionist Christian Pineau.[84] On the 29 December 1940 the newspaper's leading article, *La Vérité sur le ravitaillement,* accused German exploitation for the shortage of meat, butter, cheese, potatoes (and coal).[85] The Vichy government was accused of colluding with the Germans. After each paragraph presenting the 'facts' the reader was asked: *Tout cela est-il la faute de Vichy ou des Anglais?* (whose fault is it Vichy or England?).[86] On the 19 January 1941 the newspaper justified the British blockade in the following terms,

> The blockade was inspired by a simple principle: We want to supply France, say the English, but we do not want produce destined for the French to fall into German hands and help them to continue the war.[87]

Libération Nord aimed to vindicate Britain by pointing out that the British could not be expected to hand over cargo destined for their enemies. The article concluded with an indictment against German motives, arguing that 'the Germans prefer, for their propaganda needs, to see a famine in France and to try and lay responsibility on the English.'[88] Challenges like this laid down the gauntlet to German propaganda. Over the course of the next few months *Libération Nord* consistently defended British action, claiming French deliverance depended on a British victory.[89] The newspaper also consistently attacked the Vichy government for passing on materials to the Germans.

One of the many accusations levelled at the British was particularly sensitive, namely, that Britain had abandoned France to her fate. The resistance newspaper, *La Voix du Nord,* sought to tackle this sensitive topic but took this defence a step further and claimed that, in fact, it was the French who had defected in June 1940. The newspaper

[84] H.R. Kedward, *Occupation of France, collaboration and resistance* (Oxford, 1985), p. 57. See also Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 408 and Ousby, *Occupation*, pp 212-13.
[85] *Libération,* 29 Dec. 1940.
[86] Ibid., 29 Dec. 1940.
[87] Ibid., 19 Jan. 1941 p. 2.
[88] Ibid., 19 Jan. 1941 p. 2.
[89] *Libération organe des français libres*, 2 Mar. 1941.

went on to add that the British were continuing the 'struggle'.[90] This deliberately challenged collaborationist newspapers' efforts to re-assert the concept of the 'perfidious albion' (essentially meaning treacherous English). On the 20 September 1941, *La Voix du Nord,* condemned the German use of the slogan 'The English fight until the last French man'.[91] This continual defence of the English by *La Voix du Nord* is particularly noteworthy considering it was founded in Lille in April 1941[92] and described by Julian Jackson as a newspaper 'with a specifically regional appeal'.[93] Its appeal was rooted in a region with a strong tradition of aiding escape as resistance. Indeed, some members of *La Voix du Nord* were also aware of, and involved in, hiding escapees in Lille, and one of its founders, Natalis Dumez, was acquainted with the Widow Samiez.[94] This goes some way to explaining *La Voix du Nord's* efforts to continually engage with and challenge the anti-British slogans of collaborationist newspapers.

The resistance press and its ability to challenge and invert such slogans illustrate the dynamism of these newspapers. This dynamism was not confined to challenging the slogans discussed above, but also through the resistance press's direct response to specific articles in collaborationist newspapers. For instance, on the 9 February 1941 *Libération Nord* took issue with photographs published in *Paris Soir*. *Paris Soir* had published a picture of 'French' military planes attacking refugees including a mother clutching her baby. *Libération Nord* accused *Paris Soir* of not consulting its archive. It pointed out that the pictures had appeared in the paper in May and that the refugees were actually 'strafed by German planes'.[95] These types of articles convey the extent of the continual engagement of resisters with political and military events and their determination to challenge the claims and rhetoric of the occupation authorities. The inability of the collaborationist press to directly counter claims of the resistance newspapers was perhaps related to the possibility that such action would have extended some legitimacy to alternative interpretations and perceptions of the war and Britain. The resistance press, therefore, was crucial in establishing an alternative perspective to that presented in official news outlets.

[90] *La Voix du Nord,* 20 Sept 1941 pp 5-6.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Voix du Nord, (SHD, 18 P 44).
[93] Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 413.
[94] Natalis Dumez, *Le mensonge reculera* (Lille, 2006), p. 32.
[95] *Libération Nord*, 9 Feb. 1941.

This alternative perspective or justification grew gradually more important to British escapees as the war progressed. Increasingly, the high number of French casualties killed or injured in Royal Air Force (RAF) raids posed a real threat to a positive perception of the British.[96] This was particularly problematic considering that RAF planes were bombing French targets, and aerial war meant that shot-down aircrews were dependent on civilian aid if they were to escape the German search parties. The collaborationist press were quick to exploit any opportunity to portray British attacks as senseless. Collaborationist newspaper *Les Nouveaux Temps*[97] published almost daily accounts of bombing campaigns which were not only incredibly biased but also repetitive. It is not difficult to sum up nearly four years of *Les Nouveaux Temps* coverage on both German and RAF bombing campaigns; it consistently informed readers that German bombing campaigns hit industrial and military installations and in contrast, bombs dropped by the RAF hit civilian targets. There has been some historical research carried out on the effect of the British bombing campaigns in France. Research undertaken by the Centre for the Study of War, State and Society at the University of Exeter noted that the French reaction to these bombings was 'ambiguous'.[98] According to the Centre, there were fears in London that such action could alienate the local population. However, London eventually came to consider the bombings as 'politically beneficial' as they were 'seen as showing the French that Britain could and would hit their occupiers hard.'[99]

An examination of the resistance newspapers shows that London's fears were shared by resistance propagandists in France. Justifying British bombing was one of the first tasks assumed by some of the early resistance newspapers. *Pantagruel*, which was possibly the first resistance periodical, claimed as early as October 1940, that British bombing paralleled the actions of French soldiers destroying French bridges. It all amounted to a 'painful necessity inherent to war'.[100] It reminded civilians that in spite of British

[96] See Robert O. Paxton for details on the negative impacts of British bombing, Robert O Paxton, *Vichy France old guard and new order 1940-1944* (New York, 1972), pp 239-40.
[97] *Les Nouveaux Temps* was founded by Jean Luchaire and was 'heavily subsidized and firmly controlled by the Germans.' Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 200.
[98] 'The bombing of France 1939-1945' available at The Centre for the Study of War, State and Society (http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/history/research/centres/warstateandsociety/projects/bombing/staff/) (01 July 2014).
[99] Ibid.
[100] *Pantagruel*, Oct. 1940. No. 3.

destruction they would 'certainly save us'.[101] On the 14 July 1941, the resistance newspaper, *Le Voix du Nord*, blamed the devastation caused by British bombing on 'the politics of collaboration and the government of Vichy'.[102] According to this paper, the British had no other choice as French factories were used for the German war effort and a denial that French factories were not producing war material was in effect German propaganda. The significance of this type of propaganda lies in the fact that not only was it justifying British action but portraying it as a necessity, one in France's interest and one which would contribute to her ultimate liberation. In this way, newspapers attempted to reinforce the connection between the British war effort and French interests.

While the occurrence of propaganda is not in dispute, the effect of such propaganda is difficult to gauge. Escape reports suggest that in relation to the bombing campaign, aircrews shot down over France were treated well. Grenadier C. Hiller who witnessed the aftermath of R.A.F. raids on Calais between June-November 1940, reported that the 'raids had been very effective and were welcomed by the inhabitants, although few of them had shelter'.[103] Private Peter Scott Janes met a man injured in a raid who informed him it did 'not matter it was the English'.[104] On occasion, entire villages were complicit in hiding R.A.F. personnel. On the 8 July 1941 Pilot Officer H.P. Duval was on a 'sweep' over northern France when he was shot down by a German Messerschmitt. He bailed out and landed in the village of Tincques. French children hid his parachute while Duval hid in an abandoned house. Within fifteen minutes German troops arrived and forced villagers to search for the pilot. No one gave him up and the following day he was taken to a safe house in Abbeville.[105] These accounts illustrate cases where a sense of shared connection to the British war effort helped underpin civilian willingness to help escapees**.**

Connecting with the British: The importance of philanthropy

Yet while resistance propaganda strove to reconnect British and French interests, the visible, physical presence of the British in France all but disappeared towards the end of

[101] Ibid.
[102] *Le Voix du Nord,* 14 July 1941.
[103] Account of escape of 1509075 Gnr. Hillier, C., 2 S/L Regt. R.A., 51 Div., 13 Apr. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[104] Peter Scott Janes, *Conscript heroes* (London, 2004), p. 144.
[105] 63092 Pilot Officer Duval, H.P., R.A.F.V.R., 258 Squadron, 27 Aug. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).

the summer of 1940. Men were interned in temporary camps in France, waiting removal to prisoner of war camps in Germany or they were receiving treatment in hospitals across northern France (in places like Bethune or Lille) or they were in hiding. Consequently, the initial 'surge of solidarity' experienced by those who had witnessed the marching columns was replaced with the struggle to come to terms with the vast number of French prisoners taken. This 'surge of solidarity' and civilian efforts to cope with the French prisoner of war situation shaped the civilian response to the defeat. In the weeks and months following German occupation, there was an increase in demand for the services of existing philanthropic societies such as the Red Cross. Equally, there was a dramatic demand for, and development of, prisoner of war aid societies across France. These organisations represented a means by which civilians, or at least those desiring to do so, could remain connected to the British.

Philanthropic activities, similar to the civilian response to the marching columns, were a means of coping with or reacting to the occupation. Such actions were driven by a deeper sense of frustration at the German occupation and as such they were an early indication of a potential desire to engage in some sort of resistance (even if for the civilian the concept or the means to resist was not yet tangible). This was particularly important in relation to those who deliberately sought to connect with the British. Consider the opinion of early resister, Yvonne Odden who dated her 'anti-German activities' to 'the occupation of Paris'.[106] Odden defined these activities as including 'sending books and clothes to prison camps around Paris'.[107] Odden measured her 'anti-German activities' in terms of her motivation to engage in philanthropy and not in the action of philanthropy. Sending items to prisoners offered an outlet for her to channel personal dissatisfaction. She attached significance to these actions as they were part of her 'consciousness-raising' experience and an initiation into a more active role within the occupation. For Odden, her charitable endeavours were anti-German and the beginning of her resistance activities.

Odden's behaviour as resistance, however, needs to be balanced with the fact that sending parcels to prisoners remained within acceptable social boundaries. Historians such as Hanna Diamond have argued that philanthropic societies aiding prisoners

[106] Voix du Nord: Rapport sur mon activité de Résistance, 1946 (SHD,17 P 173).
[107] Ibid.

neutralised resistance. Diamond wrote that far from challenging the status quo these types of prisoner of war activities supported the status quo. According to Diamond,

> What could be more reassuring than meeting up with other women in the same position? What could seem more legitimate than the Red Cross? These women, who would apparently have strong reasons to be hostile, were arguably being socialised into supporting the Vichy regime.

Perceived in this light, it is possible to argue that Odden overstated her parcel-sending as 'anti-German actions'? In order to address this question it is important to acknowledge that while philanthropic agents may have acted as a socialising influence, in certain cases there are exceptions to this. This chapter does not challenge or contradict the research of historians like Diamond but simply adds another dimension and interpretation to it. In this incidence, it is important to argue that while philanthropic agents may have acted as a socialising influence, there are exceptions to this. Individuals such as Odden engaged in philanthropic activities in order to respond to the shock of occupation but this does not mean that their activities socialised them to support the current situation or Vichy. In point of fact, it may be argued that it had the opposite effect in cases where civilians undertook philanthropic activities to channel anti-German sentiments into a more positive response to the situation. Where civilian accounts such as Oddens are corroborated in the escape reports the suggestion is that the earliest escapes from internment were indeed led by civilians acting under the philanthropic banner.

Therefore, while sending parcels or visiting the wounded may not appear as grand gestures of resistance, historians are faced with the reality that some participants considered such modest actions as 'anti-German'. In this, Odden was not alone. Some took clearer steps in establishing their anti-German stance and visited wounded British prisoners in civilian hospitals across the occupied zones. Hospitals were not heavily guarded and some men were being treated in civilian hospitals which made visiting possible. The entry of Suzanne Warenghem into resistance, the person mentioned earlier as a distributor of the resistance newspaper, *Pantagruel*, was fostered through her 'habit of visiting wounded British prisoners'.[108] In autumn 1940, Warenghem sought out these prisoners and discussed her desire to continue resisting with them. She informed them

[108] Statement of Suzanne Warenghem, 24 Apr. 1944 (N.A., KV 2/416).

that she was 'anxious to join the forces of General De Gaulle'.[109] Warenghem continued to visit the wounded and in June 1941, when it came to her attention that several French visitors facilitated escapes, she endeavoured to do the same and helped five men escape in early 1941. In the summer of 1941, she travelled with two of these men to Marseilles and became involved with the British-led escape organisation there (for more details see chapter two).

In this way, Warenghem's visits, although motivated by her desire to resist, were not necessarily illegal. Furthermore, these visits became the gateway for her more committed resistance activities. In the above cases, Odden and Warenghem perceived communicating with prisoners as an outlet for their frustration at the German occupation and in this sense their philanthropic endeavours were the beginning of their resistance activities. In Odden's case, she later became a member of the resistance group *Musée de l'Homme,* while Warenghem progressed to working for the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles (see chapter two). Considered in this light, their initial philanthropic actions allows them to be perceived as what Hanna Diamond labelled 'proto'-resisters, that is, resisters in mind if not in deed.[110] Philanthropy was not a resistance activity but in the case of Odden and Warrenghem, philanthropic activities were part of their progression to more committed resistances such as aiding escapes.

British accounts reinforce Odden and Warrenghem's experiences and declarations that philanthropic activities often acted as the gateway to resistance. British reports indicated that wounded prisoners in French hospitals regularly received civilian visitors. This is particularly the case when one considers the report of Captain G.F. Collie who sheds some light on the importance, extent and frequency of visits to British prisoners. Collie, a wounded prisoner in hospital in Paris, estimated that he received five hundred visitors, a hundred of whom visited on a regular basis. In 1942, in the midst of food rations, Collie was able to report receiving 'fresh grape-fruit for breakfast every morning' and

[109] Ibid.
[110] Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, p. 110. H.R. Kedward also pointed out that resistance could have been widespread and multifaceted but with no set form. He noted terms such as 'infra-resistance' or 'peri-resistance' applied by other historians to explain this phenomenon. H.R. Kedward, 'Rural France and resistance' in Sarah Fishman, Laura Lee Downs, Ioannis Sinanoglou, Leonard V. Smith and Robert Zaretsky (eds), *France at war, Vichy and the historians* (New York, 2000), p. 126.

always having fresh butter.[111] Who were his visitors? Did they have to go without in order to provide him and his companions with food? While in some respects Collie's experience raises more questions than answers, it highlights two important points: these visits occurred regularly and on a sizeable scale. Equally, while it is almost impossible to determine the extent of this phenomenon, Collie's report makes it difficult to dismiss the importance of prison visits to civilians seeking an outlet for the sense of helpless experienced in the aftermath of the German occupation. At the same time, similar to Odden's initial 'resistance' activities, visiting wounded prisoners remained within legal parameters. This was further supported by the fact that hospitals could only offer nominal security. In some cases, hospitals were run by the Royal Army Medical Corp or by civilian administrators.[112] This lax security allowed civilians to regularly visit wounded men like Collie and encouraged schemes such as the *marraine de guerre.*

Philanthropy, *marraine de guerre* and early improvised escape networks

The concept of the *marraine de guerre* was crucial in establishing connections between potential helpers and men seeking a means of escape. The *marraine de guerre* was one means by which the British not only maintained a sense of the outside world but in some cases accessed a solid support base of civilians willing to aid their journey to the Unoccupied Zone. The scheme combines two of the elements discussed in the previous section: the British presence in France as a stimulant to resistance and the importance of local tradition. According to Margaret H. Darrow, the concept of *marraine de guerre* developed in the course of the First World War, in 'the spring of 1915'[113] as a 'wartime penpal scheme'.[114] The original aim of the movement was to bolster the morale of soldiers, especially soldiers whose families were cut off by the occupation of Lille in 1914.[115] Darrow described the movement as a 'peculiarly French creation without close parallels in Britain and Germany.'[116] The scheme involved a *marraine* (godmother) adopting a *filleule* (godson) and encouraging the patriotism of their *filleule*. It was hugely popular with soldiers placing advertisements in newspapers seeking a

[111] Account of escape of 77940 Capt. (W.S.) G.F. Collie, H.Q., 51 (H) Div. R.A.S.C., 14-15 Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).
[112] Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., 15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303) and Account of escape of 514724 Sgt. Berry, H. 150(b)Squadron R.A.F., 3 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[113] Margaret H. Darrow, *French women and the First World War: war stories of the home front* (Oxford and New York, 2000), p. 79.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., p. 81.
[116] Ibid.

marraine.[117] On the whole, the movement earned high praise from the press and some commentators wrote

> By knitting hats, writing letters, collecting money, sending treats and aiding war victims, French women were making an important contribution to the war effort.[118]

In the interwar period, the concept of *marraine de guerre* disseminated across popular culture and became the subject of many books and films. Arguably, this contributed to the enduring legacy of the original movement as it is clear from the escape reports that the movement was resurrected in the summer of 1940.

According to Margaret H. Darrow, the original *marraine de guerre* movement was driven by a strong patriotic fervour and propelled forward by humanitarian and philanthropic concerns. In the Second World War, and in the context of aid given to the British, *marraine* were often motivated by resistance under the guise of caring for sick prisoners. However, there is a lacuna in current research on the marraine movement about the women involved. While Darrow's interest in the movement is rooted in the First World War, Julian Jackson identified the presence of '*marraine*' in relation to the later resistance activities of the *maquis* in southern France (1942-44).[119] He observed that

> Maquis groups were adopted by 'Godmothers', who provided food and medical help, and organized shelter.[120]

In the context of aid given to the *maquis*, the *marraine* helped sustain but did not drive resistance activities. Despite the paucity of research on the movement, the evidence suggests that the *marraine* shaped the experiences of wounded British prisoners and in some cases the *marraine,* by their escape activities, were drivers of early resistance (1940-42).

The work of the *marraine* was facilitated by the German authorities' willingness to turn a blind eye to civilians visiting the wounded. Visits became an acceptable part of life in

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., p. 86.
[119] The maquis refers to armed guerilla groups mainly composed of men in hiding and avoiding compulsory work in Germany (STO). This phenomenon dominated the later phases of the war 1942-44.
[120] Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 493.

hospitals so much so that some friendly competition developed between various British prisoners as to who could acquire the most accommodating *marraine.* Langley reflected on the support of his *marraine* and wrote

> No Marraine de Guerre could compete with Madame Caron, who adopted me. Nearer 50 than 40, she was married to a French gendarme, who regarded her enthusiasm for the British with a jaundiced eye, largely, I suspect, due to the effect it had on his meals.[121]

When security was tightened and civilians temporarily banned from the hospital, Mme Caron convinced a number of German guards to continue bringing Langley his meals. This suggests there was an eagerness to help British prisoners and yet much of this aid had an innocuous, seemingly innocent basis. In Langley's case, the German guards even indulged it.

The British seem to have acquired a *marraine* in various ways. Sergeant E.G. Hillyard, wounded and in a hospital in Angers, received visits every Sunday from an Irish and Scottish governess.[122] As illustrated by Hillyard, *marraines* actively sought out men to 'adopt' but as noted previously men also canvassed for a *marraine.* In late summer 1940 Sergeant J.W. Phillips was in the *Faculté Jean d'Arc,* Lille and, prompted by other men receiving visits from French civilians, wrote his details on a piece of paper, attached it to a piece of lead and threw it from a window.[123] His methods worked and an Irish nun brought him letters from a woman he named 'Mme X'.[124] Some men tried more traditional routes and placed advertisements in newspapers, even in the collaborationist newspaper *Le Matin*.[125] These advertisements were notably ambiguous, merely stating a name and location of the prisoner. However, in the cases stated above, once communication was established the association slowly progressed to aiding escape. Hillyard was supplied with gifts by his *marraine* and when it became clear he was well enough to be transferred to Germany in October, both the Irish and Scottish governesses arranged his escape. Phillips maintained a written communication with his *marraine*

[121] James Langley, *Fight another day* (London, 1974), p. 72.
[122] Account of escape of 747947 Sergt. Hillyard, E.G., 150 Bomber Squadron, R.A.F., 30 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302).
[123] Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., 15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[124] Ibid.
[125] Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

and by this means ascertained that she was willing to help him escape. Knowing that civilian clothes were a prerequisite for any successful escape, she sent food to the hospital wrapped in civilian clothing. In all cases, the British were entirely dependent on the *marraine* to maintain communication. The topic of escape was approached tentatively by all parties involved but when the *marraines* responded positively, plans quickly progressed. In this regard, it is not enough to point out that the *marraine* simply acted as a support for escape but rather she could enable escape, perhaps even, canvass for it.

Arguably, by their willingness to help, *marraine* contributed to the spawning of improvised escape groups. The evidence suggests that through *marraine,* men escaping hospitals often gained access to other potential helpers, usually close family and friends. For instance, in August 1940, Phillips left the hospital and went to a meeting point arranged by his *marraine* where he was greeted by a French man.[126] This man hid Phillips, obtained identity papers for him from the mayor of Lille (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) and eventually, on the 19 January 1941, Phillips travelled to the Unoccupied Zone with a French youth. In Phillips' circumstances he was in constant communication with a number of individuals while in hiding. Besides the direct assistance he received in his journey to the Unoccupied Zone, there was a wider network of individuals that knew and assisted Phillips during his time in hiding. In Phillips' case, he also communicated with several clandestine organisations in an attempt to arrange his passage to the demarcation line.

Interestingly, Phillips' account also refers to his personal efforts and determination to make connections with other potential helpers while in hiding. In most of the histories on escape networks the British are referred to as 'parcels'.[127] This suggests a passive role and belies the nature of early resistance. Indeed, it must be recognised that in many cases the British were not passive but played an important role in preparing for their escape. A report by Captain G.F. Collie illustrates the forward thinking and detail involved in planning an escape. During his time in hospital in Paris, Collie along with two of his colleagues, Driver E. Flack and Sergeant R.E Aston, co-ordinated the

[126] Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., 15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[127] Edward Stourton, *Cruel Crossing* (London, 2013), p. 2.

activities of their various visitors in order to facilitate their own escape. Their planning took four months, running from January until their eventual escape on the 8 April 1942. Through their visitors they received food, which they, with the help of other patients, traded on the black market in order to raise the necessary funds. They arranged for their photographs to be taken and recruited visitors to prepare identity papers. They planned their route and as their time to leave approached they sent food parcels to helpers along their chosen track and letters to friends warning them not to visit. In addition, a wider community within the hospital was complicit in keeping their presence secret from the German authorities who were removing men to Germany. According to Collie

> The German military service in Paris, which was run by Czech and Austrians, had not allowed us to be sent to Germany, where we would not have been able to obtain the special medical treatment we required. The medical service also refrained from telling the Kommandatur in Paris of our presence.[128]

Their escape plans were supported by an Algerian patient and a number of French patients. A French surgeon was taken into their confidence so that outstanding surgeries would be performed on time.

On the basis of this evidence, it seems fair to suggest that there were three pillars to successful escapes in occupied France. Firstly, British commitment to escape; the level of detail and planning undertaken by Collie and his colleagues highlights that often these men were not passive bystanders but carried responsibilities in both the planning and execution of their escapes. Secondly, civilian support was often built on friendships (Collie continual referred to these visitors as 'friends'). Thirdly, the wider circle of complicity was important in executing an escape, as for example in Collie's case, where proper medical attention was received on time. Collie's meticulous planning paid off and within twelve hours of leaving the hospital he crossed over into unoccupied France with his colleagues. Thus, in this way early escape activities were predicated on continued interaction and negotiation between British escapees and their helpers.

Hospital visits provided the initial basis for communicating with prisoners and were effective in aiding escapes like that of Collie and his colleagues but on numerous

[128] Account of escape of 77940 Capt. (W.S.) G.F. Collie, H.Q., 51 (H) Div. R.A.S.C., 14-15 Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).

occasions philanthropic organisations were also important for men already in hiding. For instance, evidence from the reports suggest that on at least one occasion agents for the Red Cross helped link both escapees and their helpers in the countryside with a support base in cities like Lille. Rural helpers, unless they had connections in nearby cities or trusted members of the community with connections, were limited in their ability to help men beyond their immediate locality. Therefore, in order to move men on effectively, trustworthy connections between urban and rural helpers was essential. Arguably, the occupation had left a vacuum in the ability of French civilians' willingness to trust but the historically established philanthropic organisation, the Red Cross was regarded as trustworthy.

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that members of the Red Cross helped forge connections between the town and countryside. This may have been the result of its longstanding position in France with the Red Cross's involvment in both the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War cementing its reputation as both a humanitarian and a patriotic organisation. This reputation appears important in allowing Red Cross agents access to rural communities. The available evidence, which will be addressed in detail later in this chapter, indicates that in at least one small rural community Red Cross agents were almost immediately active in aiding civilians hide British officers and soliders.

In order to fully assess the reasons for this it is important to consider the position of the French Red Cross in the context of German occupation. Essentially, the French Red Cross oscillated between three contending demands: it had to balance its accountability to the French (or German) authorities; it had to preserve its neutrality; and it had to maintain its appeal to the local community. With regards the first of these, the Red Cross was highly praised for its philanthropic efforts in collaborationist newspapers.[129] This philanthropic role was important to both the authorities, in the face of increased rationing, and to the Red Cross and its agents in terms of the connections it established between prisoners and the local communities. Historians, such as Robert Gildea, noted the Red Cross's role and the ambiguities surrounding some of its members' activities

[129] Both *Le Nouveaux Temps* and *Le Matin* continually praised the work of the Red Cross between 1940-42.

when he pointed to one case in particular where, in February 1941, a subprefect of Saumur, Robert Milliat, called a meeting in which

> The police, gendarmerie, and Catholic and Protestant church leaders ... put pressure on individuals, notably in the Red Cross, who were suspected of helping escapees[130]

Despite the fact that authorities were aware individuals in the Red Cross were engaged in clandestine activities, there was a reluctance to be heavy handed with them. The French authorities, in this case Robert Milliat and other notable local leaders, recognised that aid workers were involved in escapes and attempted to deal with, or contain, the situation without German interference. Incidences such as this one illustrate not only the importance of the Red Cross within the community but also reinforce the concept that close connections forged with prisoners under the banner of philanthropy were instrumental in promoting escapes. In this case, members of a longstanding neutral organisation like the Red Cross were willing to participate in escape activities.

The latter point was particularly important in relation to gaining the trust of rural communities. This trust was cemented by civilian perceptions of the Red Cross. Because it was long associated with patriotism and played a visible role in French military conflicts from the Moroccan crisis 1907,[131] the Red Cross was associated with 'Frenchness' and patriotism (as well as maintaining the support of French and German authorities).[132] This position is supported by Max Huber, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross 1928–44, who wrote that the Red Cross has 'never been uninfluenced by the social structure and political, philosophical and religious ideas of the different countries'.[133] Furthermore, he pointed out that the organisation sustained support by regularly undertaking work far beyond its primary function (namely, services performed during war time) and thus, became 'a popular organization... gaining the support of the community as a whole'.[134] In relation to the Red Cross and

[130] Gildea, *Marriane in chains*, p. 74.
[131] Darrow, *French women and the First World War*, pp 28-9.
[132] For more on how war belligerents perceived the Red Cross see Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, 'What the angels saw: Red Cross and protecting power visits to Anglo-American POWS, 1939-45' in *Journal of Contemporary History,* xl No. 4 (Oct. 2005), pp 689-706.
[133] Max Huber, 'The principles of the Red Cross' in *Foreign Affairs',* xxvi No. 6 (July, 1948), pp 723-37.
[134] Ibid.

nationalism, political scientist D. P. Forsythe reached similar conclusions to Huber, writing that the Red Cross

> Is part of an international network officially devoted to universal humanitarianism, but one characterized historically by strong nationalism.[135]

Arguably, as a result of this tradition, isolated communities were open to trusting members of the Red Cross.

The primary evidence for the importance of the Red Cross in building trust in rural communities is based on the report of Captain D.B. Lang. While this may appear a narrow basis for this assertion, Lang's report is particularly detailed in relation to the role of the Red Cross within the community in which he lived. In this respect, as will be demonstrated, Lang's account proves illuminating in helping to develop an understanding of how civilians engaged in philanthropic organisations like the Red Cross were in a position to bridge the gap between rural and urban France. Therefore, while Lang may be the main source in relation to the Red Cross, his experience illustrates the importance of philanthropy as a gateway to, and means of extending escape activities.

Lang's accounts focused on the actions of one particular Red Cross agent, Mme Siauve Evausy and her role in helping rural families hiding British escapees to connect with supporters in Lille. According to Lang, agents regularly visiting isolated farms and rural communities raising money for French prisoners in early autumn 1940.[136] Lang, who was in hiding in Pont Thibault with a colleague, referred to the visiting Red Cross agent as 'our Red Cross lady', Mme Siauve Evausy. Through these visits she came to know the family on a more intimate level, that is, close enough to know about the presence of Lang and Buckingham. While Mme Siauve was based in Lille, her position as a member of the Red Cross and her aid work gave her access to, and helped her earn the trust of, this rural community. Because of her position as a Red Cross worker, she did not represent a threat to rural families but instead, by promoting the interests of prisoners of war was able to establish trust among these communities.

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[135] D. P. Forsythe, 'The ICRC, a unique humanitarian protagonist' in *International Review of the Red Cross',* lxxxix No. 885 (Mar. 2007), pp 63-4.
[136] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

Besides the work of Mme Siauve, Lang's report provides evidence that other members of the Red Cross performed a similar role. As Lang reported, he, along with his companion, Lieutenant John Buckingham

> Heard of many other British hiding in the area, but we were not in a position, rather naturally, to visit them. If they were not actually on farms, they were hiding in woods, and were fed by local villagers or agents for the Red Cross.[137]

It is perhaps possible to envisage the forging of these bonds of trusts as cyclical, where civilians receiving regular visits from Red Cross agents revealed the presence of soldiers in hiding. The support then received from these agents reinforced this trust and in turn drew them into deeper confidences within the community and eventually deeper into resistance.

In the incidences highlighted above, these confidences not only enabled communities to sustain aid given to British escapees but also, given their intimate knowledge of communities, such as the farms harbouring Lang and his colleagues, Red Cross agents were in a position to establish when it was best to move men on. This in turn paved the way for Red Cross agents to assist these farmers to engage in escape activities and hence, agents like Mme Siauve acted as a bridge between town and countryside. Lang's report illustrates this point with Mme Siauve eager to move Lang and Buckingham to Lille when it became clear that too many people knew of their presence. Her intimate knowledge of the community facilitated this assessment but equally important, her position as a Red Cross worker contributed to her ability to arrange their removal to the city. Lang gave the following account of the move:

> We did the journey from the farm to Lille by bicycle, guided by one of Mme. Siauve's agents and reached our new hiding place without mishap. The next fortnight we spent virtually in one room, though we visited the flat where our guardians lived, to wash plates etc. Once again too many people got to know about us, and we had to be moved.[138]

Lang's statement indicates that Mme Siauve's connections in the city, combined with her organisational efforts, were the catalyst for the move to the city. Mme Siauve took

[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

the lead in these plans, organising adequate and safe accommodation and sourcing guides to bring the men to the various safe houses. Effectively, Mme Siauve acted as the liaison, drawing on knowledge as a Red Cross worker to expand her personal connections and contacts in order to create a network of helpers.

Mme Siauve's actions are a prime example of how civilians working under the banner of charitable organisations drove escape activities forward. She effectively connected helpers in Lille with their rural counterparts. On the other hand, in spite of progress in making such connections, these early improvised escape organisations encountered severe difficulties. Often civilians engaged in assisting an escape or hiding men had no set plans beyond keeping men from German internment and returning them to England. The practicalities of achieving this objective were overlooked. This was by and large the experience of most escapees in northern France throughout 1940 and early 1941 with the main aim being to pass men into unoccupied France. In order to illustrate these difficulties and attempts to overcome them, the focus will remain on Mme Siauve's efforts to help Lang, Buckingham and the two private British soldiers. While Mme Siauve provided these men with a base in the city there was still no set plan on how they should proceed south, cross from the Forbidden Zone and into the Occupied Zone and from there make their way to the Unoccupied Zone. Lang reported hearing many different schemes in Lille to return men to Britain during his time in hiding, including an aeroplane scheme.[139]

This rumour appears to have been in common circulation, as a number of escapees on their return to Britain report hearing plans for such a scheme around this time.[140] Moreover, these accounts indicate that these rumours were believed by helpers and shaped their behaviour. Some men were moved to collecting points or sent to Paris in order to wait for planes.[141] In Lang's case, rumours of this scheme were taken as

[139] Ibid.
[140] Account of escape of C.Q.M.S. Shearer R. 1/Gordons and No.2875565 Pte. Ewen, W. 1/Gordons, 31 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299), Account of escape of Capt. A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A/. &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieut. R.D.W. Griffin, 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301), Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301), Account of escape of 344749 Cpl. Hogan, N.J., R.A.S.C., 2 Division., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[141] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301), Account of escape of Capt. A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A/. &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieut. R.D.W. Griffin, 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

credible and on the 11 October 1940 it prompted Lang and Buckingham's departure to Paris with Mme Siauve's husband, a French commandant. On their arrival in Paris, the three men were to meet a pre-arranged contact but no help arrived. With an hour before curfew the men just about managed to find accommodation with their false papers. In relation to these aeroplane schemes, most escapees lost faith in them relatively quickly although they noted that their helpers were sincere in the belief that such schemes were in progress. To date, there is no evidence available that gives these rumours substance or sheds light on their source.[142] In this regard, despite philanthropic activities contributing to forging connections, it is evident that key problems remained namely, communication breakdowns, security problems and extending activities over considerable distances, in this case Lille to Paris (over 200km).

These concerns jeopardised the welfare of the men but also the lives of those involved in assisting them. The experiences of Lang were not singular but common in early improvised escape lines, particularly when men were given details of contacts in Paris and arrived there from the Forbidden Zone. Often, these connections were ill advised or did not show up. In some cases, they were incredibly dangerous. For instance, before Lieutenant James Langley travelled from Lille to Paris with two colleagues and a French guide, he had been given the address of a police union office in Paris and told to seek assistance there. When he arrived not only did he cause consternation among the French officers who had no idea what he was talking about or why he was directed to the building but they also informed Langley that this was not the first time that this had happened.[143] Needless to say Langley and his colleagues made a quick departure.[144] Eventually Langley established contact with helpers in Paris under arrangements made by helpers in Lille and they proceeded south, successfully crossing the demarcation line.

For Lang, another Red Cross connection, Mme Bonnefous, aided his journey to the Unoccupied Zone. He met Bonnefous at the American Embassy and eager to help she took Lang, Buckingham and Mme Siauve's husband to her apartment in Paris where she

[142] From the escape reports available, it is fair to conclude that no escapes during this period were facilitated by aeroplane.
[143] This is confirmed in the report of Lieutenant Griffin and Robertson who were also directed to the police union office, Paris. Account of escape of Capt. A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A/. &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieut. R.D.W. Griffin, 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[144] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

arranged their passage to the Unoccupied Zone. Bonnefous' presence at the Embassy appears to have been in her official capacity as Red Cross worker. Yet there is evidence to suggest that her presence at the Embassy was expressly to make contact and assist British prisoners and that her philanthropic work was designed as a cover for this objective. There are a number of factors behind this assumption, one of which was her nationality. Bonnefous was a British woman married to a Frenchman and her shared nationality may have engendered some degree of sympathy. This is reinforced by her assertion to Lang that she had helped other men escape. This claim is supported by Lieutenant C.D. Hunter and Corporal G. Hood-Crees who both named Bonnefous in their reports. In Hunter's case, in September 1940, Bonnefous acted as his *marraine de guerre* whereas G. Hood-Crees encountered her through the 'French Prisoner Aid Society'.[145] She helped both men, separately, to escape a hospital in Doullens and took them to her apartment in Paris. From here, Bonnefous organised their passage to the demarcation line and on to Marseilles.

In all of the above cases, Bonnefous used her charitable endeavours to connect with British prisoners and assist their escape. On at least one occasion, she enlisted the help of her colleague.[146] While her efforts were, similar to other *marraine de guerre* or charity workers, in that they were limited to a small number of men, her ambitions were much bigger. Whereas, most civilian-aided escapes terminated at the demarcation line, an assessment of the escape reports suggests that Bonnefous was one of the first civilians to attempt to create an escape organisation stretching from Paris to Marseilles. According to Hunter, at the end of November 1940, Bonnefous arrived in Marseilles.[147] It was clear from this meeting that she not only wanted to see how the men were doing but intended to continue and extend her activities. She secured Hunter's assistance in raising money to cover the cost of sending men south. Up until that point, she was using her personal finances. Both Hunter and Bonnefous succeeded in raising money, including 35,000 francs from an Englishman in Cannes. In addition to seeking to defray her personal costs, she intended using this money to expand her support base and had earmarked 20,000 francs for two priests who were assisting her escape activities.

[145] Account of escape of 6288221 Cpl. Hood-Crees, G., 5/The Buffs, 18 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[146] Ibid.
[147] Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

Before her plans were realised Bonnefous heard of the arrest of an American colleague loosely involved in her activities. This was followed by her own arrest on her way back to Paris, a journey undertaken to warn other helpers and arrange for the arrival of more British soldiers. Bonnefous' experiences exemplify the problems facing civilian escape activities. From the Bonnefous example, it is evident that her actions were initially on a minor scale, however, when she took on the role of aiding an escape she was forced to expand her activities and draw on the support of those around her. In augmenting her activities, Bonnefous increased the risk and it is possible that in her eagerness to connect with prisoners through the Red Cross, American Embassy, prisoner of war aid societies and in her role as *marraine,* she drew the attention of the authorities and exposed herself to suspicion. However, the significance of Bonnefous' actions shows the extent to which philanthropic endeavours potentially played an important role in early escape activities. Equally, her ultimate arrest demonstrates the limitations of early escape organisations. While philanthropic efforts were important in forming connections, civilians were still living within the limits of occupation and this put restrictions on the scope of escape activities. Civilians had to work within these limits and find ways to overcome them. All this took time and therefore even arranging the passage of a small number of men across the demarcation line was an achievement.

In light of the above, it is feasible to argue that that there was, on occasion, a connection between early philanthropic efforts and those desiring to seek stronger ways to engage in anti-German resistance activities. By extension, during the early years of occupation, philanthropy contributed to the formation of escape organisations. However, it is also important to recognise that while aid organisations assisted civilians in forging connections with the British in the towns and countryside, new problems emerged with the reality of border crossings, communication breakdowns and security issues which rendered the extension of these activities across France increasingly difficult.

Philanthropy and escape: a gendered resistance?

The reports suggest that, for the most part, French women were the means by which contact was established between the civilian population and the British, particularly British prisoners. There were, perhaps, a number of reasons for this. While, men were in the process of being demobilised and forced into a more passive role (that is, in hiding, taken prison or disarmed), women could still perform roles that were socially acceptable

but emphasised and directed their patriotism. This ability was underpinned by the perception of acceptable codes of feminine behaviour. Organisations like the Red Cross helped women combine 'feminine versions of patriotism' with 'national service in war time'.[148] The First World War added credibility to this tradition with women's work in the Red Cross, according to Margaret H. Darrow, combining femininity, virtue and patriotism.[149] Darrow pointed out that 'Red Cross promoters were the first to pose squarely the question of what French women should do in case of war and to provide an answer'.[150] Women became nurses and care givers. This role, reinforced by the fact that over a thousand Red Cross nurses received the *Croix de guerre,* set the tone for women's involvement in the war.[151]

However, it is important to note that when women like Mme Bonnefous or Mme Siauve, went beyond the limits of philanthropy and engaged in resistance activities, they needed male assistance to extend these activities. Male support was crucial as it offered both moral and material help in assisting an escape and the harbouring of men. This was particularly important in overcoming some of the social limitations placed on female behaviour. A number of historians including Diamond and Gildea address the subject of women and the high level of social scrutiny they endured during the occupation. Vichy's National Revolution reinforced the concept of femininity and its links to the home. Awareness of this scrutiny and the importance of appearing to conform also shaped the decisions of various *marraines* who were aware that harbouring men would engender some degree of scrutiny among neighbours. In these cases, women living alone who were seeking to aid escapes, turned to male friends or family members for assistance. Sergeant J.W. Phillips experienced such a situation when he escaped a hospital in Lille on the 27 August 1940 with the help of his *marraine.* He made his way to a prearranged 'rendez-vous' where

> I was met by a man, Monsieur Y who had a tandem cycle with him, and on this we rode to his place. I did not actually stay with Mme X. as she lived alone and it might have created suspicion.[152]

[148] Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, p. 28.
[149] Ibid., p. 28.
[150] Ibid., p. 28.
[151] Ibid., p. 142.
[152] Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., 15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).

Phillips' account offers an interesting insight into the social expectations framing these early escape activities. Arguably, on one hand, 'Mme. X' position as a first point of contact between Phillips and potential helpers was facilitated by the acceptability of women's philanthropic work. On the other hand, her willingness to help Phillips was limited by her concerns over social decorum. 'Mme. X.' was aware that any deviation from what was expected of her as a woman living alone would have generated suspicion among neighbours. Her acceptance of these social expectations, combined with her continued desire to assist Phillips, contributed to her need for male support. In recruiting male acquaintances, 'Mme X' attempted to overcome these social limitations. Ironically, while 'Mme X's' consideration of her social position, based on her gender, may have limited the action she took in aiding Phillips, it could be argued that her need to recruit male support did in fact contribute to and effectively extend the scope of her escape activities.

When male support was lacking women were reluctant or unable to give assistance. Two accounts in particular exemplify the role of gender politics in early escape activities. The first account, given by James Langley, refers to his *marraine de guerre*, Mme Carron.[153] As already mentioned, Mme Carron proved an invaluable asset to Langley during his time in the *Faculté Catholique*. However, while Carron informed Langley she was personally willing to aid his escape, her husband disapproved. Her husband, a gendarme, tolerated Mme Carron's enthusiasm for helping Langley and her desire to associate with wounded British soldiers but it appears he was also keen to curb the extent of her activities. As a result, Mme Carron offered Langley alternative types of assistance such as money which he refused. He eventually escaped the *Faculté* and went to an address given to another prisoner by a female visitor.

Mme Carron's reluctance to help Langley without the full support of her husband was not an isolated phenomenon and was mirrored in the experiences of Corporal G.R. Wheeler. Wheeler was involved in a St Nazaire raid in March 1942, where he evaded capture and travelled the French countryside. He observed that

[153] Langley, *Fight another day*, p. 75.

> It is no good in France going to houses when the women are there alone, as they will not give shelter without the consent of the man of the house.[154]

Wheeler's account suggests that it was not that women did not want to help but that they were reluctant to do so without their husband's approval. In the above accounts (of Langley and Wheeler), one can see that often a woman's resistance was tied to her husband's approval. Women may have expressed an interest in supporting an escape but a husband's disapproval was a weighty factor that merited due consideration. As indicated by Mme Carron, the predominantly female role of *marraine* or other such philanthropic work was a gateway to escape activities which needed the support of the husband. A husband's sense of resistance and support for his wife's endeavours was an important precursor to the extension of women's activity beyond philanthropy and into resistance. In the case of women like Mme Bonnefous or Mme Siauve, both their husbands supported and equally participated in assisting escapees. In Mme Bonnefous' case her husband used business connections to help men cross the demarcation line. Mme Siauve's husband acted as guide and journeyed with Captain D.B. Lang and Lieutenant John Buckingham from Lille to Marseilles.

This is not to suggest that women espoused only the views or opinions of their husbands, or relied on their husbands for a personal sense of resistance. Rather, it demonstrates that agreement between husband and wife was necessary to sustain escape activities. Escape involved entire families and therefore a certain amount of harmony in the home was crucial to its success; disharmony in the household created unnecessary risk. For the most part, there is relative silence in the reports on the family life of helpers and this may be taken to reinforce the claim that family members, husband and wife, had mutually agreed to share the risk and open their homes to these men. However, some reports record martial and family disputes which endangered not only escapees but potentially the lives of their helpers.

Occasionally, escapees were drawn into these marital and familial disputes. In an account given by Private Sydney Fullager (owing to Fullagher's interference), marital conflict led to the breakup of the family unit. The conflict was centred on assistance given to Fullager and his companion, Private Coshal. In the summer of 1940, Private

[154] Statement by 6899188 Cpl. Wheeler, G.R., 2 Commando, Royal Sussex Regt., 17 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).

Sydney Fullager and his companion were hidden by a French family in Pont St Pierre. A number of months later Fullager

> Discovered that the husband was collaborating with the Germans. On one occasion a party of 30 Germans turned up to collect timber. The officer in charge put the husband in charge of them and then left. This man spoke German and I discovered he was acting as interpreter for the enemy. I told Madame what had taken place; she apparently knew nothing about it.[155]

'Madame' as a result of Fullager's 'discovery' left her husband and advised Fullager to do the same. This advice was duly followed, with Fullager leaving for a hotel in Rouen shortly after her departure. Interestingly, her husband continued to harbour Coshal, a circumstance which suggests that his collaboration with the Germans was superficial, perhaps intended to hide his resistance activities. Notwithstanding his motivations, his wife saw the matter in a different light and it was the impetus for her departure from the family home. The break-up of the family unit left Fullager and his colleague vulnerable, forcing them to re-consider their position. While it appears both men remained in hiding, this incident illustrates the importance of agreement between husband and wife in relation to harbouring men. Safe houses needed harmony, that is trust needed to exist between family members. Immediate family members, husbands and wives needed to share the same political outlook or sense of resistance as men in hiding depended on the support of the entire household. Both men and women carried the weight of this responsibility.

Beyond gender and philanthropy: community relationships and escape

In many respects, given the above discussion, the family and the home, that is, the safe house; was the nucleus of escape activities. Equally, the extension of escape beyond the family unit needed the support of wider community networks. Philanthropy was one means of connecting potential helpers but families hiding men also took the initiative and formed personal connections and support networks within their communities.

In rural areas, community leaders such as priests, mayors, teachers and doctors were equally important in establishing connections in neighbouring towns and thus, in a similar way to philanthropic organisations, their activities aided the development of embryonic escape organisations. The importance of local leaders to the resistance in

[155] Statement by 60540181 Pte. Fullager, Sydney, Queens Royal Regiment 51st Div., July-Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

general has been noted by several historians. John F. Sweets observed the high numbers of middle class leaders in the resistance writing 'leadership was essentially middle class, but recruitment of militants stressed the little man'.[156] Elsewhere he states that,

> Although the resisters ranged over the full spectrum of society, certain elements were noticeably more prominent than others. Completely satisfactory statistics on the social composition of the Resistance are lacking, but available evidence provides a good estimate of the nature of the leadership elite. The leaders were largely from the middle class, and members of the liberal professions played a major role in the early organizations.[157]

John Merriman espoused Sweets' view but expands on the reasons for this phenomenon. Merriman recognises the power of local elites in the resistance who were 'opinion makers and engaged in sorting out local problems'.[158] According to Merriman

> Whether they were Gaullist, communist or not affiliated with a party, Resistance depended on neighbourhoods, small towns, above all village networks, thus, the role of the school teacher or some kind of local leader.[159]

Merriman's argument emphasises the importance of existing social structures in shaping resistance activity. Both Merriman and Sweets suggest that the leadership of early improvised escape organisations was essentially middleclass. Mayors, priests, teachers or doctors quite often assumed responsibility for organising the removal of men from one safe house to the next. Nevertheless, an analysis of the escape reports sheds light on one crucial point; this middle or professional class leadership was recruited by the 'lower' or working classes and peasants.

British action was instrumental in shaping this dynamic as it was easier for an escapee to approach a peasant farmer or a member of the working class rather than a prefect de police, local mayor or various professionals who, as a result of their social position, were more likely to have regular contact with Germans. Captain E.A.W. Williams indicated a second reason for British escapees favouring peasants or the working class when he contrasted help he received from inhabitants of a chateau and a French family of 'lower class' in the summer of 1940.[160] The latter, Williams observed, 'had much less

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[156] John F. Sweets, *The politics of resistance in France, 1940-1944* (Dekalb, 1976), p. 16.
[157] Ibid., pp 13-4.
[158] John Merriman, '*Resistance'* available at Yale courses (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5NNaMiXQ-4) (17 Sept. 2014).
[159] Ibid.
[160] Account of escape of three officer p/w in northern France, Summer/Autumn 1940 (NA., WO208/3298).

respect for law and order' and this made them more likely to be 'persuaded to help'.[161] This disrespect for law and order or ambivalence towards the authorities (either French or German) was recognised by Williams as beneficial, and in many ways it made it easier for this family to help him.[162] Williams' report is singular in directly making this observation and therefore it is impossible to establish its validity outside his personal experiences. However, support for this assumption or position is reinforced by the fact that, according to evidence in escape reports, the majority of early escapees consistently approached the lower classes or peasants rather than professionals or the middle classes for assistance.

The impact of these British preferences for the first contact reinforces the importance of the working classes and peasants throughout the occupation. The first escapees to return home reported their experiences; these accounts were in turn incorporated into escape lectures for RAF crews flying over France and commandos embarking on raids. It is interesting to compare the advice extrapolated by the War Office from the experiences of the first escapees 1940, to the advice given to commandos about to embark on the St Nazaire Raid in April 1942. In 1940, the War Office recognised the importance of the 'poor people',[163] a position which, two years later, did not change. In the briefing given to commandos about to set off for St Nazaire they were warned to 'never approach any official and, for choice, go for help to poor people rather than the well-to-do'.[164] This advice was also communicated to RAF crews who were also lectured on escape and evasion. Evidence from the reports indicated that shot down aircrew continued this pattern and approached small, isolated farmsteads. This behaviour had an impact on the development of escape activities as it meant that the lower classes, particularly peasants, continued to be the first point of contact for escapees. Once contact was established, and help given, peasants and lower classes turned to trusted local leaders or 'opinion makers' such as the school teacher or mayor.

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[161] Ibid.

[162] See also Dominique Veillon and her argument that a history of engaging in subversive activities prior to 1940 often aided the transition into, or set the stage for, resistance activities. Her research focused on this phenomenon in relation to military officers. Dominique Veillon, 'The Resistance and Vichy' in Sarah Fishman, Laura Lee Downs, Ioannis Sinanoglou, Leonard V. Smith, Robert Zaretsky (eds), *France at War*, p. 167.

[163] Commando Lecture Notes, May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3264).

[164] Ibid. Kedward also referred to a briefing on a Saint Nazaire raid. During the briefing men were advised to go to the smallest house in the landscape 'where they would find no Germans and would be certain of help'. H.R. Kedward, 'Rural France and resistance', p. 133.

In this way, peasants and the lower classes acted as the drivers of escape activity. They were pro-active in discerning potential helpers and connecting with the local community leader. As a result, help (and escape as resistance) usually followed a bottom up development with peasants drawing in local elites. In one particular case in Honfleur, one of the local leaders or opinion makers was the Prefect de Police, Monsieur Edmond Bailleul whose help contributed to the successful escape to the Unoccupied Zone of seven soldiers and their officer, Lieutenant Richard Broad.[165] This case is interesting in that connections were not only established with the Prefect de Police but they also went to the upper echelons of French society and drew in the support of French aristocrat, Pierre d'Harcourt. D'Harcourt was already working with Vichy intelligence and secretly passing information to the British.[166] Yet Broad and his men's initial contact with the community was through local farmers. For a number of days Broad and his men were hidden in barns in the area before their helpers recruited the support of an English Mother Superior in the local convent. These connections quickly spiralled upwards and by the 4 July the Prefect of the Police was appraised of the situation. The involvement of the Prefect de Police proved crucial for Broad and his men as an anonymous letter sent to him revealing their whereabouts required timely intervention.[167] It was through the Prefect of Police that a wider circle of complicity was drawn to support the escapees. The Prefect was also in a position to call on the assistance of one of the local elites, the well-to-do Mme Bouchet de Fariens who agreed to hide the escapees for a short period. With this lady's help assured, the circle of helpers in Honfleur gained access to a wider network of connections. These connections included an aristocratic circle from which contact was established with d'Harcourt through one of his relatives.[168]

While involving aristocrats such as d'Harcourt represents one of the more unusual and most dramatic elements of this upward spiral, the pattern of social escalation of support

[165] In William Moore's biography of Richard Broad and his experiences in France Moore noted Edmond Bailleul's reputation as a problem solver, William Moore, *The long way round, an escape through occupied France* (London, 1986), p. 60.
[166] Pierre d'Harcourt, *The real enemy* (New York, 1967), pp 7-10.
[167] Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[168] d'Harcourt, *The real enemy*, p. 13. This upward spiral continued when d'Harcourt also approached his uncle in Marseilles, Prince Andrea Poniatowski, for help. Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).

in the reports remains consistent. In most cases, this came through local leaders or 'opinion makers' who were mayors, school teachers, doctors or priests. To reiterate Merriman's argument, these figureheads were crucial in sustaining escape activities as they were perceived as problem solvers. Mayors were of notable importance, often providing vital information on the whereabouts of German troops or safe places to hide. In all reported connections with helpful mayors, introductions were provided by ordinary civilians. For instance, after finding shelter in Lille, Corporal N.J. Hogan, reported that in September 1941, he made contact with and hid in the house of the mayor of Louvril.[169] It appears he was sent there by his helpers in Lille to verify rumours about an aeroplane to return men to England. Hogan was in a position to approach the mayor as a result of connections he had already established. Similarly, while Sergeant J. W. Phillips escaped from hospital with the help of his *marraine*, his circle of helpers widened to include the mayor of Lille who provided him with an identity card.[170]

Equally, teachers were viewed as 'opinion makers' and problem solvers in communities. A.R. Evans, an RAF sergeant, recalls that one elderly couple he approached for help on the 28 September 1942 thought nothing of calling on a school teacher[171] given his capacity as a local 'problem solver'. In this instance, while the couple were willing to take Evans in, they were unsure of how best to proceed. In each of the above cases, teachers, doctors, priests and mayors were called upon by 'the lower classes' to organise safe houses and they established communication with potential helpers in neighbouring towns and villages. The school teacher helping Evans passed him on to another safe house where he was assisted to the Unoccupied Zone.[172] This was mirrored in the experiences of Private H. Coshal and Private J. Bregan who were in hiding in rural communities in Pont St Pierre and Bonnemare for a number of months (June 1940-February 1941). In February their passage to unoccupied France was finally

[169] Account of escape of 344749 Cpl. Hogan, N.J., R.A.S.C., 2 Division., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[170] Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., 15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303), Account of escape of 344749 Cpl. Hogan, N.J., R.A.S.C., 2 Division., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308). For further information on mayors cited as helpful see also Account of escape of 745340 Sgt. James O.B., 23 Squadron R.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308), Account of escape of 581464 Sgt. Observer MacGrath W.J., 82 Sqn., R.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[171] Statement by 1379093 Sgt. Evans, A.R., 102 Squadron, R.A.F., 9 Sept. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).
[172] Ibid.

arranged by a French doctor.[173] Another doctor arranged for a woman to guide Corporal H.W.C. Surridge to the demarcation line from his safe house in Radepont.[174]

Priests also proved useful as they more often than not had connections outside the community and were therefore in a position to help move men to the next safe house.[175] On one occasion, a priest living close to the demarcation line used his local knowledge to find a guide and assist two men into the Unoccupied Zone.[176] Similarly, mayors were also approached to give assistance on the basis of their connections outside of the community. For instance, the mayor of Sirod was approached by helpers assisting men across the demarcation line, and using his connections, arranged the safe passage of two escapees into the Unoccupied Zone. The common link between these professionals and their involvement in escape activities was their position of trust, their intimate knowledge of local communities and their ability to strengthen and broaden the circle of helpers surrounding these men.

Non-nationals and British escape activities

Escape organisation involved helpers from a wide social spectrum which was a challenge considering that, according to Julian Jackson, France was virtually in a class war throughout the 1930s.[177] However, Jackson noted resistance activities were marked by a willingness to overlook old rivalries. He writes 'Catholics found themselves

[173] Account of escape of 6082710 Pte. Coshall, H., Queen's Royal Regt. Att. 11 A.M.P.C. 6082585 Pte. Breagan, J., Queen's Royal Regt, att. 11 A.M.P.C., 17 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[174] Account of escape of 6284682 Cpl. Surridge, H.W.C., 111 A.M.P.C., 15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[175] Priests (and nuns) played an important role in escape organisations and performed many functions, including harbouring and in the case of the Abbé Carpentier, forging papers. See Statement by P.0118 F/O Taras, M., 300 (Polish Squadron, R.A.F., 9 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308). See also Statement by P)325 P/O Groyecki, Z., 300 Polish Squadron, R.A.F., 22 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307), Account of escape of T/95011 Dvr. Smith, J. 3 G.H.Q. R.A.S.C., attached 51 (H) Div., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307), Statement by P.1693 P/) J. Tyszko, 301 (Bomber) Sqn, R.A.F., 7 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3310), Account of escape of 5110625 Pte. Astley, C., 2/R. Warwickshire Regt., 48th Div. 76610 Dvr. Graig, A. 526 (Petrol)Coy., R.A.S.C., 51st (H)Div., 19 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300), Statement by 1191521 Sgt. Obs. Reid, Hawthorn. 115 Sqn. Bomber Command, R.A.F., 27 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312), Account of escape of 6135552 Sgt. G. Roskell, 226 Bmbr. Sqdn., R.A.F. and B/73568 Pte. Thompson, G., 1 Can. Inf. H.W., 1 Can. Div., 1 Apr. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302), Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303); Account of escape of 2931814 Pte. Donald McKenzie, 4/Camerons, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299), Statement by 792693 Sgt. Polesinki, E., 307 Polish (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).
[176] Account of escape of 2931814 Pte. Donald McKenzie, 4/Camerons, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[177] Jackson, *France the dark years*, p. 65.

alongside anti-clericals, Socialists alongside conservatives'.[178] John F Sweets offers an explanation for this willingness pointing out that

> Occupation troops and German police in the northern zone made resistance activity extremely dangerous, but their presence clearly defined the enemy. Resistance in the occupied areas meant resistance to the Boches[179]

The identification of a common enemy was important for the final crucial component in the development of escape organisations in northern France, namely, the presence of non-nationals. There was a strong non-national contribution to escape activities and various national groups were cited in reports as being helpful including Americans, Belgians, Swiss, Portuguese, Polish, Irish and British all of which contributed to the protraction of escape activities (not all of which can be examined here).

Non-nationals in France, for the purposes of this study, may be divided into loosely into three main groups; non-neutrals or countries that experienced occupation, that is, Polish, Belgians.; neutrals for example, Irish, Americans, Swiss; and help given by German and Italian civilians and soldiers. This final category was rare but not unknown. In relation to the Occupied Zone there is only one direct reference to German soldiers supporting an escape effort. This reference comes from the report of Gunner J.H. Clapham who recounted

> In one house, where I lived for five or six weeks, there were two German soldiers billeted. They knew I was in the house, and, in fact, I actually had my meals with them and used to play football with them in the yard. Both were telephonists in the Signals: one of them was about 42 years of age and the other about 30. They used both to speak to me in French, and one used sometimes to try talk English with me. They had been living in the house for some time, and though other British soldiers had been sheltered there before me, they did not make any attempt to denounce any of us. One of them said to me he did not care which country won the war, because the condition of the working class would not be any better.[180]

These two German soldiers although not actively participating in assisting Clapham and his colleague, Private A. Neill, by their silence contributed to the continuation of escape activities. For non-neutrals and neutrals, aid given to the British depended on their perception of the British and their experiences of conflict. Non-neutrals such as the

[178] Ibid., p. 406.
[179] Sweets, *The politics of resistance,* p. 19.
[180] Account of escape of 2883173 Pte Neill, A., 5 Gordon Hrs., and 69239 Gnr Clapham, J.H., 1 Regt. R.H.A. (52 (H) Div.), 9 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).

Poles, Czechs and Belgians who had already fled or experienced occupation, were, on the whole, usually willing to help British soldiers.[181] Yet, apart from the occasional reference to these nationalities, there appears to have been no attempts at organised assistance. The Polish were the most frequently cited non-neutral grouping outside the British community. In some incidences it appears Polish communities formed or had the potential to form escape networks. This is elucidated in the report of RAF Sergeant E. Polesinki. Polesinki was shot down on the 28 April 1942 and on avoiding capture approached a small farm in Villers. This farmer drew on the support of a local priest who gave Polesinki contact details of a Polish priest in Troyes. On his arrival, Polesinki was cared for by a Polish gardener and an English woman before he left for Le Creusot by train. In Le Creusot, he was taken into the care of a Polish teacher who arranged for a Polish youth to guide him across the demarcation line.[182] Polesinki's report appears to suggest that there was a certain amount of collusion between his helpers on the various stages of his journey, yet his report never made these connections explicit. Therefore, it cannot be conclusively established that Polesinki was passed from helper to helper based on their prior knowledge of one another.

Apart from Polesinki's experience there was no suggestion that aid given by the Polish community went beyond sporadic assistance, which was more often than not prompted by escapees taking the initiative. Yet the Polish community remained a significant presence in escape reports especially for shot down Polish pilots fighting with the RAF. Many of these pilots having already served in France before fleeing to Britain still retained some connections in the country. There are a number of reports from such pilots who, on hearing Polish, approached the speakers seeking, and expecting, to receive help.[183] In these reported cases men obtained shelter, were given material assistance for a continued journey and/or were guided across the demarcation line.

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[181] Account of escape of 808757 Gnr. Stephenson, G., 23 Fd. Bde., R.A., May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303). See also Account of escape of Captain B.C. Bradford, Adjutant, 1/Black Watch, 51st Division, 13 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 787243 Gnr. Elbro, G.E., 1 Regt. R.H.A.,15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Statement by 82511 L/Bdr. Heather, J., 10/26 Bty., 17 Field Regt. R.A. 51 (H) Div. & 828422 Gnr. Fryer, H., 10/26 Bty., 17 Field Regt. R.A. 51 (H) Div., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).

[182] Statement by 792693 Sgt. Polesinki, E., 307 Polish (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

[183] Statement by 784763 Sgt. Pilot Pietrasiak, A., 308 Squadron, R.A.F., 6 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Statement by P.1006 P/O Radwanski. W., 300 (Polish) Squadron, Bomber Comd., R.A.F., 9 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308); Statement by 792693 Sgt. Polesinki, E., 307 Polish (Bomber) Sqn.,

The Poles, having experienced occupation, shared that common enemy but neutrals also offered assistance to escapees and thus, contributed to the success of individual escapes. Neutrals such as Irish civilians were approached or sought out by British soldiers for assistance. The impact of the Irish contribution was a small one but it is argued that not only the presence of Irish civilians but also the perception of 'Irishness' contributed to some successful escapes. David Murphy has uncovered details of a number of Irish in the French Resistance including Katherine Anne McCarthy, who became involved in British escape activities.[184] However, relatively little is known in relation to her entrance into this type of resistance or the extent of her involvement, although reports indicate that a number of Irish women, including nuns, acted as *marraine* and later engaged in assisting escapes.[185] It is possible that McCarthy followed a similar path to resistance. Donald Darling's memoir pinpointed another Irish man, Joe Balfe who set up an escape line with the aid of his family. Darling described Balfe and his two sons 'as looking so Irish they might have been born on the 'Ould Sod', except for the fact that they also very French'.[186] Similarly, there is a paucity of research on the Balfe line but researcher Keith Janes dated Balfe's involvement in escape organisation to 1943.[187] In relation to Balfe's 'Irishness', it could be argued that Joe Balfe's connections with Britain were stronger than those with Ireland. This assessment takes into account the fact that Balfe, although of Irish descent, was born in Manchester and served in the Great War.[188]

Although it is difficult to measure the Irish contribution to escape organisation, one point is worth considering, the German perception of Ireland's tenuous relationship with Britain proved useful to escapees. The Germans considered the Irish as potentially anti-British. Collaborationist newspapers certainly played on negative aspects of Britain's

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R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309); Statement by P. 0400 F/O Wacinski, J.T., 304 (Polish) Squadron, R.A.F., 27 Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).

[184] David Murphy, '"I was terribly frightened at times': Irish men and women in the French Resistance and F Section of SOE, 1940-5"' in Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac and David Murphy (eds), *Franco-Irish Military Connections, 1590-1945* (Dublin, 2009), p. 274 see also 'Musée de l'homme', 1948 (SHD, 17 P173).

[185] Account of escape of 747947 Sergt. Hillyard, E.G., 150 Bomber Squadron, R.A.F., 30 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302); Account of escape of 561185 Sgt. J.W. Phillips, R.A.F., 54 Fighter Sqdn., (15 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303); Account of escape of 6397485 L/Sgt. A. Tilling, 7/R. Sussex, 12th Div. Wounded, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

[186] Donald Darling, *Secret Sunday* (London, 1975), p. 133.

[187] Keith Janes, 'The Joe Balfe escape line' available at Conscript Heroes (http://www.conscript-heroes.com/escapelines/EEIE-Articles/Art-12-Balfe.htm) (10 Jan. 2015).

[188] Ibid.

relationship with Ireland to discredit Britain by continually predicting the occupation of Ireland by the British. On one occasion, Basil Embry was arrested and questioned by the Germans but released on the strength of his claim that he was an IRA leader. This preferential treatment of Irish nationals in France worked to the advantage of at least two escapees. In November 1941, Sergeant O.B. James and Sergeant W.J. McGrath approached an Anglican Church in Paris and on finding it closed and under the protection of the American Embassy, turned instead to an Irish Catholic Church. Not only was this church allowed to remain open but both men were assisted to the demarcation line by an Irish priest.[189]

Equally, American nationals and the American Embassy played a small role in early escape activities. Almost without exception, men arriving in Paris from the Forbidden Zone throughout the summer and autumn of 1940 called upon the American Embassy. Notwithstanding the lack of an official policy towards the British, Embassy staff discretely referred soldiers to the 'English section'. There are even some extreme examples of staff agreeing to harbour men for a short period of time. Embry was

> Taken to the English section where I was introduced to the English wife of a Russian Count (White Russian) working in the American Consulate.[190]

The report of Sergeant S.G.C Park related an analogous experience. Park attested to being harboured by an Embassy employee for a month in November 1940. However, Embry's and Park's experiences appear to have been the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, the Embassy's ability to help was restricted to its capacity to discreetly forward money to arriving soldiers and/or refer men to hostels such as the Salvation Army. There are three separate accounts of Embassy referrals to the Salvation Army, one of these being Private J. Lee Warner.[191] While there, Warner counted the presence

[189] O.B. James, account of escape of 745340 Sgt. James O.B., 23 Squadron R.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942. (N.A., WO208/3308). In a private communication with independent researcher John Morgan, Morgan informed this author that the Irish priest's name was Fr Kenneth Monaghan. Interestingly, research undertaken by historian Jefferson Adams indicates that Fr Kenneth Monaghan had links with MI6. Jefferson Adams, *Historical dictionary of German intelligence* (Lanham, 2009), p. 347.
[190] Basil Embry's confidential report and lessons learned, 12 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[191] Notes on interview with No. 6088621 L/Cpl. J. Lee Warner 2/5 The Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, Aug. 1940 (NA., WO208/3298); Account of escape of No. 2871816 P.S.M. Fullerton, Charlie, 5 Bn. Gordons, att. 153 Bde., 51st (H) Division, 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Basil Embry's confidential report and lessons learned, 12 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

of at least seven other men, possibly referred by the Embassy.[192] By late autumn 1940 the ability of the Embassy to offer any kind of assistance was increasingly precarious and accounts are varied as to ability and type of aid received. In spite of this, men continued to attempt to contact the Embassy and, where possible, staff offered assistance. One of the last accounts of such help was August 1941 when officials aided Wing Commander Whitney Straight. Straight reached Paris shortly after being shot down and was somewhat surprised at, not only finding the Embassy closed, but a sign declaring that all queries be addressed to the American Embassy in Berlin. In spite of this, Straight had the presence of mind to continue his efforts and ring the Embassy, a move which was duly awarded. An official met Straight in a café nearby, handing him 1000 francs which he used to reach the Unoccupied Zone.

Straight's experience, and that of other escapees assisted by non nationals, illustrates the contribution of these various nationalities to escape activities in France. In this consideration of non-national involvement in escape, the British contribution to such activities must not be overlooked. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, the efforts of British officers, namely Captain Charles Murchie and later Captain Ian Garrow, helped crystallise escape activities in the occupied zones and facilitated the expansion of these efforts beyond the demarcation line.

The main account of Murchie's activities come from three primary sources: his report, a letter he wrote to the British ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare while imprisoned in Spain and the report of his colleague Sergeant H. Clayton. In order to counteract the bias inherent in personal accounts it was necessary to cross reference Murchie's account with the experiences of other British escapees. Five men, Private J.T. Clarke, Second Lieutenant R.E.H. Parkinson, Private R.W. Rankine, Captain A. Irvine Robertson and Lieutenant R.D.W. Griffin, loosely corroborate Murchie's claims and provide credibility to his chronology. From these accounts it is evident that Murchie's activities extended from Frévent, where he remained in hiding until August 1940, to Lille. As early as July 1940 it appears from Parkinson's report that Murchie intended to form an escape organisation. According to Parkinson, he heard of Murchie from his hiding place

[192] Notes on interview with No. 6088621 L/Cpl. J. Lee Warner 2/5 The Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, Aug. 1940 (NA., WO208/3298).

in Burbure-sure-Conchie and went to see him.[193] Murchie informed him of the existence of an organisation and told him to remain in hiding until summoned. Parkinson duly followed this advice and at some point in August, Murchie reported he left for Lille. It is unknown where he stayed but his presence there at this time was substantiated by Clarke. Clarke met Murchie in September and also noted a meeting with Lieutenant James Langley.[194] Langley had escaped from the *Faculté Catholique* in October and was hidden by a number of French civilians active in escape activities (including Mme Samier). This indicates that not only was Murchie in Lille as he claimed but that he was also actively involved with French helpers.

Clayton's report goes one step further and claims that Murchie was one of the main organisers behind escape endeavours. Clayton stated that he met Murchie in September and immediately put himself 'under his orders'.[195] Clayton had previously worked as an interpreter for the British and had a French wife. According to Clayton, he used his language skills to expand the scope of Murchie's efforts which extended to a thirty mile radius around Lille and also involved connections in Dunkirk and Ghent, Belgium. As a result, Clayton managed to raise 50,000 francs for Murchie. In the meantime, Parkinson reported that Murchie kept in continual contact with him and his colleague, Sergeant Bell at their hiding place in Frévent.

There is no explanation as to how such connections were extended or maintained. Equally, it is difficult to substantiate Clayton's claims that Murchie was indeed strengthening ties with helpers in Dunkirk and Ghent. In addition to this, Rankine's report noted that Murchie had established connections in St Omer but his information was based on Murchie's account of his activities.[196] Yet there is evidence to suggest that there is substance to Clayton's account. This mainly comes from Clarke and Parkinson. Parkinson did profess that by October 1940 he had lost faith in these schemes, especially when he heard three other servicemen in the area, Boyd, Knight and Poole, had set off. On arrival in Lille later in that month Parkinson appears to have re-

[193] Account by 88070 2/Lt. Parkinson, R.E.H., 4/R Sussex, 44 Div., 22/23 Dec. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[194] Account of escape of 2755185 Pte. Clarke, J.T., 1 Black Watch, 51 (H) Div., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[195] Account of escape of 939118 A/Sgt/ Interpreter Clayton, H.K., Air Ministry Works Area No.1 (France) R.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[196] Account of escape of 3058442 Pte/ Rankine, R.W., 4/Seaforths, 51 Div., 19 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302).

established contact with 'the organisation' which he noted 'now' had its headquarters in Roubaix. Parkinson's report implied that three weeks after his arrival in Lille this organisation arranged his journey to the Unoccupied Zone and Marseilles. Parkinson's reference to 'the organisation' appears to link it to the one associated with Murchie. This is reinforced by the reference to Roubaix as an arrest of a helper in October forced Clayton and Murchie to leave for Paris (Clarke's account stated he went to Paris with both men at this time). This incident may possibly have precipitated the removal of the remaining organisation to Roubaix. Moreover, when Murchie arrived in Marseilles he claimed he sent for Knight and Boyle (possibly meaning Boyd) suggesting he also organised their departure to the Unoccupied Zone. These two men were also most likely the two men referred to in Parkinson's report. This indicates that all men, Parkinson, his colleague Bell (with whom he travelled), Knight and Boyd (Boyle) were in contact with the helpers working with Murchie and that Murchie played a role in extending this organisation.

Murchie's move south, prompted as it was by an arrest, enabled him to bring knowledge of these connections with him. By his account, in both the letter to Sir Samuel Hoare and his escape report, he records his preoccupation with passing men from the Occupied to the Unoccupied Zone after his arrival in Marseilles in October 1940. His knowledge of helpers in the north and his continued connections with them is further corroborated by Griffin and Robertson as Murchie was able to inform them of the fate of an arrested helper in Lille.[197] These accounts indicate that Murchie was, if not among the main organisers, heavily involved in escape activities. In the course of his work he engaged with locals willing to assist the British and, according to Clayton, carefully selected people for this role. He contributed to strengthening, expanding and linking various helpers in the Lille region and by doing so contributed to crystallising early escape organisations in northern France.

To conclude, the physical British presence in France was both a focal point and catalyst for some of the first gestures of resistance where the experiences of witnessing the marching columns were crucial to later involvement in escape activities. The sympathetic responses and kindness of civilians to prisoners in the marching columns

[197] Account of escape of Capt. A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A/. &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieut. R.D.W. Griffin, 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

encouraged escape activities which in turn propagated the development of escape as a form of resistance within communities along or near routes marched. As the occupation progressed and men disappeared from public view, connecting with the British became increasingly difficult. However, the British presence remained the focal point of resistance and civilians, like Mme Bonnefous, seeking a means to resist German occupaton, deliberately sought to connect with prisoners. As demonstrated in this chapter, this was often achieved under the guise of philanthropy and caring for wounded prisoners. Philanthropic organisations were often used by civilians as a cover for their escape activities. This chapter has also illustrated that philanthropic organisations, on occasion, not only helped civilians connect with the British but played a role in connecting helpers in rural communities with helpers in the city and thus, expanding the scope of such activities. Communities, however, did not solely rely on philanthropic organisations but also had internal support structures and those hiding men drew on these resources to move men to the safety of the Unoccupied Zone.

Support often drew in family members expanding outwards to include trusted members of the community. Those harbouring British servicemen assumed responsibility for recruiting the support network necessary to sustain these men in hiding. As British servicemen were more likely to approach poorer civilians and isolated farmsteads, this support network was more often than not recruited from this group. Teachers, priests, doctors and mayors were regularly drawn into escape activities by seeking to assist poorer members of their community pass on British servicemen. In this manner, a point heretofore often overlooked in studies on escape activities, recruitment for such resistance actions appears to have come from below. Equally, non national communities such as Irish, American and Polish civilians living in France were important in the success of early escapes. British servicemen identified members of these communities as potentially sympathetic and approached them for help. These individuals also contributed to the success of a number of early escape activities. In this way, other nationalities engaged in escape activities, indicating that it is important not to consider assistance to British soldiers as restricted to a French resistance but as part of a wider European resistance that, in the cases discussed above, happened to take place in France.[198]

[198] Historian Robert Gildea deals with this concept more fully in his latest book. Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the shadows: a new history of the French Resistance* (London, 2015).

However, on a practical level early improvised organisations had serious limitations; few went beyond the Forbidden or Occupied Zones. Communication break downs and security issues were a continual problem making it impossible to establish or consolidate a centre for escape activity. As a result of these problems, the British in hiding assumed some of the responsibility for organising their own passage south. In doing so, organisers like Captain Charles Murchie became important in crystallising support despite the German occupation in the north hindering his ability to organise. As a result, a shift to the south to the Unoccupied Zone was essential. As will be established in chapter two, it was only with the shift in escape organisation south of the demarcation line that organisers, north and south, were in a position to consolidate improvised groups and begin to develop a coherent escape network.

Chapter Two

Overcoming isolation: British escapees in unoccupied France

The previous chapter examined the development of escape organisations in the north and the social processes contributing to their formation; this chapter shifts its focus to the Unoccupied Zone and the social, political and military factors contributing to the emergence of a British-led escape organisation, more commonly known as the "Pat Line", in Marseilles. The focal point of this chapter is not so much how the British, on arriving in the Unoccupied Zone, sought to continue their journey out of France via the Pyrenees or ports (see Chapter Three), but on how the British established a presence and foothold in the Unoccupied Zone and how this foothold ultimately laid the foundation for an organised escape network.

First encounters in the Unoccupied Zone

Although it is agreed that the British appeared to be in a better position in this zone, mainly due to liberal parole terms (discussed later in this chapter), they were initially unable to connect with or recognise a potential support base in unoccupied France. The reports suggest that there was reluctance on the part of French civilians in the Unoccupied Zone to assist British escapees. In contrast to recorded experiences in the Occupied Zone, there is a notable absence of references to an outpouring of civilian support. While officers such as Captain D.B. Lang asserted the willingness to help matched his experiences in occupied France, such assertions were singular.[1] In an account given by Corporal George Shepherd Newton in autumn 1940 he described inhabitants of the Unoccupied Zone as 'not unfriendly'.[2] Newton clarifies his assessment, reporting that in unoccupied France 'we had to buy all our food and, sometimes, had to stay in hotels and pay for our accommodation'.[3] In doing so, he implicitly implies that this was not the case in occupied France, a point reinforced by the fact that his statement was proceded by descriptions of help he received in the north. Newton's assessment is bolstered by similar references to this difference, with one

[1] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[2] Account of escape of 2917945 Cpl. George Shepherd Newton, 2/Seaforth Highlanders, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of Lt H.S.M Hogg, R.E. 26th Fd. Coy., 28 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of 6285098 Pte. Arthur Taplin, 1/Buffs, att'd 111 Coy. A.M.P.C., 6 Dec 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of 3518831 Pte. Hugh Gallacher Monaghan, 5/Gordon Highlanders, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[3] Account of escape of 2917945 Cpl. George Shepherd Newton, 2/Seaforth Highlanders, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

British soldier proclaiming civilians in occupied France as 'kind' and the attitude in unoccupied France as 'the opposite'.[4]

This attitude difference, or more correctly the British sense of this contrast in attitude between the Occupied and Unoccupied Zone, endured throughout the period under review, 1940-42. Therefore, while the examples cited in the above paragraph reflect the early months following the establishment of Vichy, this change in attitude continued as a recurrent theme in the reports. In this respect, escapees such as Squadron Leader E.P.P. Gibbs, who crossed the demarcation line in June 1941, was struck by the reluctance of civilians in unoccupied France to render him assistance. Gibbs, an R.A.F. pilot, had made a forced landing near Fruges, Pas de Calais in June 1941 before making his way, with assistance, across the demarcation line. Gibbs noted

> It was most noticeable that the attitude of the civilian population in the Unoccupied Zone was very different from that which I had experienced in the Occupied Zone.[5]

Another British officer summed up this reluctance to give assistance, as a result of a population 'thankful that they have been saved' and a feeling that 'the war for them is over'.[6] This sentiment echoes what many historians consider Robert Paxton's ground breaking research on Vichy France. Paxton, in relation to resistance in Vichy, observed that the absence of the Germans made it difficult for the population in the Unoccupied Zone to recognise a 'clear target' for their resistance.[7] Paxton argued that it was not necessarily evident to anti-German Frenchmen that the Vichy government was also an enemy.[8] H.R. Kedward's work on resistance in Vichy France also accepts Paxton's assessment adding that under the terms of the Armistice the Germans actually withdrew troops from areas such as Lyon, Saint-Étienne, Mâcon and parts of the Indre.[9] Both historians argue that resistance in the Unoccupied Zone took time to develop as it not only had to address the German presence in the north but also come to terms with the question of Vichy. In practical terms, this meant that civilians in the Unoccupied Zone were reluctant to engage in resistance activities, including aiding escapees. The reports,

[4] Account of escape of 6399582 Pte. Eric Bryant 5th (Cinque Ports) Bn. R. Sussex Regt., 44 Div, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[5] Account by S/Ldr E/P.P. Gibbs, R.A.F., No. 616 Sqdrn., No. 11 Group, Fighter Command, 18/19 Sept. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3306).
[6] Further Notes by Lt.- Col. F.A.A. Blake, R.A. formerly M.A. Brussels, Nov. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[7] Robert Paxton, *Vichy France old guard and new order 1940-1944* (New York, 1972), p. 291.
[8] Ibid., pp 291-92.
[9] H.R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France* (Oxford, 1978), p. 14.

and British observations in relation to this attitude, reinforce this position. Whereas in the north, where Corporal J. A. Martin could boldly make the general claim that in his experience French civilians considered British victory as their 'only hope'[10], there is a notable absence of similar claims in relation to the Unoccupied Zone. Equally, and in contrast to the Occupied Zone, there was no evident outpouring of civilian support for escapees arriving in the Unoccupied Zone. This is not to argue that there was no sympathy or empathy for the British but that it was difficult for arriving men to identify potential helpers. The resulting attitude difference contributed to the sense of alienation experienced by escapees in unoccupied France.

The reaction of the French authorities helped compound this isolation. This was not as obvious a marginalising factor as the attitude of the general population but it was no less effective. Initially, the British experienced respect and good will from the French authorities on reaching the Unoccupied Zone. In relation to the Franco-German Armistice, which saw the formation of unoccupied France, the Vichy authorities were obliged to intern escapees but there were no stipulations or obligations to hand these men back to the Germans, which stood in sharp contrast to the Armistice's position on political refugees.[11] The French took this responsibility seriously and there is little evidence to suggest, unlike incidences on the Franco-Spanish frontier, that men were pushed back across the demarcation line or handed over to the Germans. On one occasion, there was a rumour that the French had transferred men from Chateauroux (Unoccupied Zone) to Lille (Forbidden Zone). This rumour made an appearance in the report of Sergeant I.T. Hughes who crossed the demarcation line in August 1940, was arrested by the French and sent to Chateauroux with a colleague.[12] While there he met a number of escapees, one of whom he met in the north, Sergeant R.W. Lonsdale.[13] According to Hughes, and he does not clarify the source of his information, the French sent Lonsdale and two servicemen to an internment camp in Lille. However, there is evidence refuting the veracity of this rumour. Hughes does not refer to Lonsdale's first name but his claim, based on hearsay, is contradicted by the report of Sergeant R.W.

[10] Account of escape of 3191176 Cpl. J.A. Martin, 8/D.L.I., 50th Div., 27 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[11] This clause was referred to as 'Surrender on demand'. See Varian Fry's book 'Surrender on demand' which takes its title from this clause. Varian Fry, *Surrender on demand* (New York, 1997).
[12] Account of escape of 1058955 Sgt. Hughes, I.T. 60/100 Fld. Bty. 23rd Fld. Regt., R.A., 51 (H)Div., 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300) and Account of escape of 755548 Sgt. Observer Lonsdale, R.W., 107 Bomber Sqdn. R.A.F. R.A.F.V.R., 18 Apr. 1941 (N. A., WO208/3303).
[13] Account of escape of 1058955 Sgt. Hughes, I.T. 60/100 Fld. Bty. 23rd Fld. Regt., R.A., 51 (H)Div., 16 Dec. 1940 (N. A., WO208/3300).

Lonsdale.[14] Details in Lonsdale's report suggest that R.W. Lonsdale was the individual at the heart of this rumour. If this was the case, the events unfolded in an entirely different manner to that recounted by Hughes. Lonsdale continued to the Pyrenees but was re-arrested and spent time in a number of internment centres before managing to cross the Pyrenees at the end of December 1940.

In spite of such rumours, which it must be noted were rare, the French authorities were not compelled and, to all intents and purposes, did not pass escapees back across the demarcation line. In this respect, men arriving in the Unoccupied Zone were safe from German internment. Moreover, and adding to the difficulty in tracing British isolation, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that French authorities, on an individual basis at least, were initially reluctant to make arrests. Numerous accounts from British escapees commented on French authorities, both military and civil, congratulating them on their escapes, turning a blind eye, and on occasion actively aiding their continued journey across the Unoccupied Zone. Sergeant I.T. Hughes' first experience of the Unoccupied Zone illustrates this phenomenon. Hughes crossed the demarcation line in July 1940 with two colleagues and was arrested by gendarmes. All three were handed over to the military authorities and congratulated by a French Colonel on their escape. They were given a free pass to Chateauroux, travelling there apparently without any guards. In Chateauroux, there is evidence to suggest they had a good deal of friendly contact with French authorities especially considering, as Hughes reported,

> We were warned that we were likely to be interned, cleared out and got a pass from a military guard, on the railway station, to Marseilles[15]

This goodwill was a common experience for escapees arriving in the Unoccupied Zone throughout the summer of 1940.[16]

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[14] R.W. Londsdale, account of escape of 755548 Sgt. Observer Lonsdale, R.W., 107 Bomber Sqdn. R.A.F. R.A.F.V.R., 18 Apr. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).

[15] I.T. Hughes, account of escape of 1058955 Sgt. Hughes, I.T. 60/100 Fld. Bty. 23rd Fld. Regt., R.A., 51 (H)Div., 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

[16] Private J. Lee Warner crossed the demarcation line and in Limoges the French Military Commission gave him a permit to travel to Toulouse. Notes on interview with No. 6088621 L/Cpl. J. Lee Warner 2/5 The Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3298); Sergeants A. Faith and F. Nicholls were assisted by a demobilised army captain and a French liaison officer. Account of escape of 808830 Sgt. Faith, A., 1/R.N.A. and 2927357 Sgt. Nicholls, F., 4/Camerons, 30 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299). Numerous reports from WO208/3299 through toWO208/3312 confirm these experiences.

This goodwill was, it must be noted, at times expected by the British. For instance, two men, Sergeant F. Faith and Sergeant J.R. Nicholls, on crossing the demarcation line in August 1940, were approached and given assistance by a French captain who drove them fifty kilometres in the direction of Chateauroux.[17] On another occasion, they were helped by a French Liaison officer who lodged them in his house. They were informed that they had ten days before the authorities would intern them. Continuing their journey south, both men approached and were given assistance in a French barracks on at least two, possibly three occasions.[18] Given that Faith and Nicholls, arguably rather audaciously, sought assistance at a number of military barracks it is possible to assert that this was done in the expectation that they would receive help, or at the very least fair treatment. Taking this account in context it was not uncommon for escapees, on crossing the demarcation line, to seek some support or assistance from the local French authorities.[19] This is perhaps indicative of some remaining faith in French empathy, especially in relation to British dealings with the military authorities.

On occasion escapees even indicated their surprise following refusals on the part of the authorities to help. Yet disappointments mounted with the French under pressure to come to terms not only with prisoners of war but also the refugee crisis besetting the Unoccupied Zone. Even within early accounts there are suggestions that the French were attempting to assert a clear policy in relation to the treatment of the British. For instance, while the military authorities were aware of Hughes' presence in Chateauroux

[17] Account of escape of 808830 Sgt. Faith, A., 1/R.N.A. and 2927357 Sgt. Nicholls, F., 4/Camerons, 30 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

[18] Nicholls and Faith report being assisted at a French barracks in Alibi and again in Alban. At Alban it was indicated to both men that they could find help at the barracks in Belarbre. However, it is unclear if they continued to Belarbre and met the officer willing to help them. Account of escape of 808830 Sgt. Faith, A., 1/R.N.A. and 2927357 Sgt. Nicholls, F., 4/Camerons, 30 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

[19] In August 1940 Driver W. Davidson was given assistance by French gendarmes at Loches, a town near the demarcation line. It is, however, unclear if he directly sought assistance. Account of escape of 895205 Dvr. W. Davidson, R.A., 23rd Field Rgt., 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). In July/AugustSergeant D. L. Phillips and his colleague reported to the Military Authorities at Lyon, no doubt seeking assistance. On this occasion both were imprisoned. Account of escape of No. 545177 Sgt. D.L. Phillips R.A.F. No. 150 Squadron, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). In September 1940, Sergeant E. Watson was with a number of colleagues in Toulouse. A Red Cross worker approached the French military authorities for help on their behalf. Statement by No. 967923 Sgt. E. Watson, R.A.F. No 40 Squadron, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300). In the summer/autumn 1940 Private A. Sangster reported to a French military post on crossing the demarcation line. He was spent the night there and was sent to Chateauroux. Account of escape of 2753595 Pte. Alexander Sangster, 1/Black Watch (R.H.R.), 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). See also Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Attd. 178th Lancashire Fusiliers.2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of Capt. F. Fitch, Royal Norfolk Regt. H.W. 4 Inf. Bde. Attached 2 Div., 17 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301); Account of escape of 3525734 Pte. Morton, John, 1/Black Watch, 51st Div., 19 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301); Account of escape of 19275551 Dvr. Hall, W.T., 107 Army Fd. Coy., R.E. 1 Corps Tps., 12 Aug. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).

he was warned he was likely to be interned. Thus, by August, despite the personal sentiments of individual French officers and gendarmes, there was a loyalty to Vichy authority which made arrests increasingly more likely. This is also exemplified in the experiences of Faith and Nicholls who received assistance from a number of French officers but on arriving in Mont Louis were arrested by a gendarme and placed in the town jail. According to Faith and Nicholls, they were visited by a French Liaison officer who advised them to cross into Spain. However, in spite of the officer's 'pro-British' tendencies both men were sent to an internment camp in St Cyprien.

Similar to civilians, the French authorities had a vested interest in Vichy and did not necessarily see it as an enemy. Therefore, pro-British sentiment was progressively tempered with a duty to make an arrest. This experience is mirrored in numerous situations and contexts during the period 1940-42. In a particularly notable example in January 1941, the crew of an airplane which crash landed near Lyon had lunch paid for by a 'nice and pro-British' French commandant. The commandant seems to have had reservations about his role in interning the crew and informed them that

> If any other British machine should have trouble in that neighbourhood and needed medical help, they could land in the aerodrome and ask for him, personally, but that it is essential that they leave both engines running, so as to get off again. He would give them any help he could and possibly he and others would try to come over with them.[20]

Yet despite this declaration of pro-British sentiment there was no question that the aircrew would be released and all were interned in St Hippolyte du Fort, near Nîmes (unoccupied France).

Thus, the escape reports suggest that in relation to personal sentiments of the French authorities, and despite British appeals to the patriotism of arresting officers, the obligation to arrest appears to have triumphed in most cases. Analysing the reasons or motivations for this are beyond the scope of this thesis, although one member of the aircrew did attempt an explanation, noting that 'every Frenchman' he met was '100% Pétain' but in the context of this chapter the significance of this attitude relates to its impact on the British. This impact is suggested in a number of ways, all of which illustrate the marginalisation and isolation experienced by British servicemen and

[20] Statement by 742649 Sgt. S.M.F. Parkes, 9 Squadron, R.A.F., 19 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).

officers in the Unoccupied Zone. There was a growing trend, in relation to both men in unoccupied France for a considerable period and those newly arrived, of avoiding the French authorities completely. This was combined with the lack of expectation in regard to assistance. As one officer put it, while the French authorities were friendly, they were 'not playing'[21], that is, not helping men continue their journey south to either one of the major port cities such as Marseilles or across the Pyrenees. Therefore, while the British had been initially willing to accept, and in some cases actively sought, the assistance of the French authorities, this position was unsustainable.

French authorities, parole and the growing isolation of British escapees

Inevitably, as the German grip tightened the French authorities took a more hardline approach to escapees and men in unoccupied France were increasingly likely to be arrested. As some individual gendarmes continued to remain sympathetic to the British war effort, the push to intern British escapees was potentially a delicate issue. However, it could be argued that the French authorities' willingness to introduce parole went some way to easing the concerns of individual sympathetic gendarmes at making arrests. To put it simply, the introduction of parole meant that sympathetic French gendarmes could make arrests in the course of their work in the knowledge that those they arrested could use their parole to plan another escape. In order to address this argument and convey the importance and impact of parole it is necessary to firstly address the concept itself. Parole refers to a handwritten or typed official agreement given by a British prisoner to the French (or German) authorities through his senior officer. In this agreement, the prisoner pledged he would not escape and in return for this guarantee he was granted certain freedoms.

The origins of parole are relatively obscure but medieval historians suggest that it was a concept initially developed by knights participating in jousting tournaments and later, as a result of its association with knights, transcended the playing field into the battlefield.[22] Paul Robinson's book, *Military honour and the conduct of war from ancient Greece to Iraq,* traces the application of parole and its development from its

[21]Account of escape of Major John Ronald Mackintosh-Walker, M.C., Seaforth Highlanders Commanding 4/Bn. Cameron Highlanders and Major Thomas Gordon Rennie, Black Watch, G.2., 51 Div., 5 Aug. 1940 (NA., WO208/3298).

[22] Private communication with medievalist David Collins. Collins has carried out extensive primary source research in medieval warfare and castle building and is currently completing his PhD in Maynooth University.

medieval roots to the modern day.[23] Given the scope of his study he gives only cursory attention to the application of parole in the Second World War. Similar to Robinson's study, Gary Brown also undertook a cursory examination of parole and argued that the concept was an enduring one associated with the upper echelons of society.[24] His argument has merit particularly considering autobiographies such as that of George Halstead Boylan. Boylan was an American serving as an assistant surgeon major in the French Army during the Franco-Prussian War. He was captured by the Germans in November 1870 and informed by German general, General von Voigts-Rhetz that if he gave his word of honour, that is his parole, then the general would not 'be obliged' to place him in confinement.[25] There has been some reference to parole in histories of escape networks such as M.R.D. Foot's work on escape lines, which refers to the use of parole in the context of the Second World War. However, Foot does not distinguish between the different interpretations of parole and the impact of this different interpretation in areas such as unoccupied France.

The power of parole and the ability of this concept to influence policy was underpinned not only by its long tradition but also by the fact that parole was given legal status in international law. One of the first attempts to codify the concept of parole in a European context took place in 1874 with the Brussels Convention; although this convention did not gain widespread international consensus, it paved the way for The Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907). Both Hague conventions recognised parole and, in fact, for the most part the same wording as the Brussels Convention was used in laying out both the obligations and parameters of parole.[26] In 1929, parole was also recognised by

[23] Paul Robinson, *Military honour and the conduct of war from ancient Greece to Iraq* (New York and London, 2006), p. 75.
[24] Gary D. Brown, 'Prisoner of war parole, ancient concept, modern utility' in *Military Law Review,* cxli (1998), p. 210.
[25] George Halstead Boylan, *Six months under the Red Cross* (Cincinnati, 1873), pp 228-29.
[26] Brown pointed to the Lieber Code, 1863, which he claims 'articulated the rules of warfare' during the American civil war. This preceded the Brussels Declaration by eleven years. Brown, 'Prisoner of war parole', p. 210. Brown's argument is supported by an examination of the Brussels Declaration. The Declaration stated that prisoners of war were 'bound, on their personal honour' to fulfil the terms of their parole. The Hague Convention also asserted the place of parole in warfare. This Convention used language similar to the Brussels Declaration, reiterating that prisoners were 'bound, on their personal honour' to fulfil the terms of their parole. Project of an International Declaration concerning the Laws and Customs of War, Brussels, 27 Aug. 1874 available at the Cultural Policy Research Institute (http://www.cprinst.org/Home/cultural-property-laws/1874-brussels-declaration) (30 Apr. 2015); Hague Convention Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II): July 29, 1899 available at The Avalon Project, The Yale Law Library (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp) (18 Apr. 2015).

the Geneva Convention[27] propelling parole as a concept into the twentieth century. Thus, the tradition of parole, combined with its acceptance and presence in international treaties, lent it credibility but also provided a common platform from which signatories of those treaties, in this case specifically Britain, France and Germany, understood, appreciated and used parole.

Parole, or more correctly the French interpretation of parole, had profound implications for the British in the Unoccupied Zone. In order to elucidate this position, it is worth having a point of contrast and therefore it is necessary to briefly outline the German application of parole in occupied territory. In relation to the escape reports, there are few accounts of parole in the Occupied Zone. However it is named in the account of Private Patrick J. Harper who noted that he was approved for parole in autumn 1940 in order to facilitate his work as an interpreter in a prison camp near Cambrai. Harper's work required additional freedom, freedoms his colleagues did not have. His account reinforces the sense, that in this context at least, parole was task-orientated and restricted to Harper's skills as interpreter. Another account, given by Sergeant E.G. Hillyard, suggests that on occasion the Germans took a liberal attitude to parole. Hillyard recorded receiving parole while wounded in hospital in Angers; he used parole to leave the hospital and visit the town.[28] There is no indication that Hillyard fulfilled any duties or tasks and therefore it is difficult to determine the basis of his parole considering that few reports record receiving parole from the German authorities and fewer still noted receiving it without fulfilling some specific purpose such as forming work parties. However, the fact that Hillyard's case is unusual does underscore the rarity of parole in the occupied zones. It seems that it did not play a major role in the daily lives of British prisoners and potential escapees.

This stands in sharp contrast to the Unoccupied Zone and the French authorities' liberal interpretation of parole. When men did find themselves interned by the authorities in the weeks following the defeat, it was often purely cursory. For instance, Lieutenant H.S.M. Hogg and Captain Raikes arrived in the Unoccupied Zone in mid July 1940 and

[27] Brown, 'Prisoner of war parole,' p. 210. See also Convention of July 27, 1929 Relative to Prisoner of War available at The Avalon Project, The Yale Law Library (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/geneva02.asp) (30 Apr. 2015).
[28] Account of escape of 747947 Sergt. Hillyard, E.G.,150 Bomber Squadron, R.A.F., 30 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302).

'reported' to the French authorities at Loches, a town close to the demarcation line. Both men were 'taken' to Belabre along with five other British escapees where, Hogg's account indicates, they were joined by at least five more men.[29] All were lodged at a hotel at the expense of the local authorities and given what Hogg termed, *surveillance libérée,*[30] which effectively allowed them the freedom of the town. There is no detail relating to the procedure behind this *surveillance libérée* but there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that it was relatively informal. Within days of giving it, a change of guard prompted the escapees to leave the area and all used their *surveillance libérée* to do so. Parole violation was taken seriously and men were aware of this. The escape reports provide one account of an escapee in the Occupied Zone violating his parole but he also personally changed the dates on his parole papers to cover his violation. This was done in order to prevent any ramifications for his actions in the event of re-capture.[31] Yet in the case of Hogg and his companions, no precaution was necessary, nor were there any concerns over consequences; they simply left before they were due to make their daily report to the authorities. This incident is mirrored in numerous similar accounts which equally reinforce the impression that there was a lack of formal arrests. This was often followed by an apparent equally informal parole, which it must be pointed out directly facilitated early escapes.[32]

This type of behaviour denotes an early comaraderie between the British and French but as indicated officials, in spite of individual sentiment, were under increasing pressure to come to terms with the situation. This is particularly evident in relation to the reaction of gendarmes to British escapees in Marseilles. Numbers of men had arrived in this port city in the hope of reaching Gibraltar or North Africa and while in the city found

[29] In Hogg's report, he noted the presence of Captain Bradford and five ordinary ranks on his arrival in Belarbre. Hogg reported that this number increased with the arrival of Captain Ian Garrow and another ordinary rank a few days later. This was followed by the arrival of Captain Fitch and Lieutenant Sillar. Account of escape of Lt H.S.M Hogg, R.E. 26th Fd. Coy., 28 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[30] This term is used in Hogg's report and is reproduced here.
[31] Account of escape of 747947 Sergt. Hillyard, E.G.,150 Bomber Squadron, R.A.F., 30 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302).
[32] There are numerous examples of this in volumes WO208/3298-WO208/3301 of the escape reports. One particularly extraordinary example occurred in July 1940. Flight Officer R. Hawkins arrived in Vichy and met Captain Waters, Major W.C.W. Potts and Captain C.R.I Besley. He was invited to dine with them so he accompanied them. They took him to a local internment camp. The officer in charge of the camp started asking him questions prompting Hawkins to leave. He left without difficulty and from Potts and Besley's report, even though they were arrested in Vichy, they later left the internment camp without difficulty, continuing their journey to Marseilles. Account of escape of No. 70802 F/O R. Hawkins 103 (B) Squadron, B.E.F. (Fairey Battle), 10 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of 2144 Major W.C.W. Potts, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

shelter at the Seamen's Mission, taken over by Reverend Donald Caskie (discussed in more detail later in this chapter). On the 24 July 1940 French gendarmes arrived at the Mission, the incident was recorded by an officer present, Major W.C.W Potts, who wrote

> The French Police … demanded to see the S.B.O. [Senior British Officer] who was myself. They informed me that they had orders to intern all British soldiers in Fort St. Jean.[33]

Potts' statement indicates that not only were the French authorities aware of the presence of escapees in Marseilles but they also knew that they were being harboured at the Mission, a claim reinforced by the fact that they knew exactly where to find these men. In spite of this knowledge, it appears they had not acted, one may argue they turned a blind eye, on this fact until they had received definite orders. Once these orders were received, a formal procedure was followed with this order transferred to the senior British officer. Yet, at this point, there is still evidence of a reluctance to follow through on immediate arrests as indicated by the report of Flight Officer R. Hawkins who was also at the Mission around that time; he suggests that men were required to appear at the fort at their personal volition.[34] In Hawkins case, he chose this moment to leave Marseilles and cross the Pyrenees to Spain. However, these niceties were temporary in nature and throughout August it became a matter of course to intern men arriving in Marseilles in Fort St Jean, a French Foreign Legion barracks situated in the Vieux Port area of the city. By October, Marseilles, or more particularly Fort St Jean, became the focus of wider French efforts to come to terms with escapees with British interned or arrested elsewhere transferred to the city.

Yet this tougher policy went hand in hand with generous parole terms. Initially, it appears that officers more so than ordinary ranks benefitted from parole. One serviceman, bemoaning his lot in August, complained that he was required to carry out 'fatigues' (menial labour) in the morning and in the evening was not allowed outside

[33] Account of escape of 2144 Major W.C.W. Potts, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[34] Account of escape of No. 70802 F/O R. Hawkins 103 (B) Squadron, B.E.F. (Fairey Battle), 10 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

his barracks.[35] However, a month later this situation appears to have changed and an officer newly arrived in the fort observed that ordinary ranks were allowed out on parole in the evenings for 'recreational purposes' and most used this time to visit the Seamen's Mission.[36] This is mirrored in the reports of this time with most men referring to parole as if it was expected as a matter of course. According to Captain D.B. Lang, who arrived in Marseilles from the Occupied Zone in October 1940 (his experiences were recounted in the previous chapter), the guards at Fort St Jean did not question the comings and goings of officers. This was confirmed by another officer who declared internment in Marseilles as 'purely nominally'.[37] Parole, in contrast to the Occupied Zone, played a defining role in the experiences of British prisoners in unoccupied France.

While this freedom appears to the advantage of the British, it could also be argued, rather conversely, that it had an isolating impact on these men. Arguably, generous parole and internment conditions alleviated the responsibility of decision making or taking sides on the part of the French, particularly arresting gendarmes. In the early weeks following the defeat, as already demonstrated, the French authorities willingly tolerated, in some cases, actively aided soldiers to escape. Yet as time progressed, French gendarmes, even those expressing pro-British sentiments, were more likely to make arrests than turn a blind eye. The substantial majority of reports do not go into great detail concerning arrests by French gendarmes but on at least two known occasions there is evidence to suggest that the gendarme's knowledge of lenient internment conditions reconciled his pro-British tendencies to his duty to make the arrest. Arrests were accompanied by escape advice. For instance, a British serviceman, D.W. Herring, was arrested attempting to cross the Pyrenees in August 1940.[38] According to Herring the arresting gendarme pointed out the correct route across the mountains should he have the opportunity to escape again. In the second incident which also took place in August 1940, a French officer with 'pro-British tendencies', advised

[35] Account of escape of Signalman D.W. Herring, No. 2328065 Roayal Corps of Signals. Attd. 51 Highland Division Sigs., 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[36] Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[37] Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[38] Account of escape of Signalman D.W. Herring, No. 2328065 Royal Corps of Signals. Attd. 51 Highland Division Sigs., 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

two men, sergeants A. Faith and F. Nicholls, in his custody to 'try to make for Spain'.[39] Thus, while arrests were made, in the cases discussed above, these arrests were accompanied by escape advice in the expectation that men would have the opportunity to escape again.

Therefore, in giving advice, there was also an indication of a level of support for British escape efforts. Nevertheless, in spite of this support Herring, Faith and Nicholls were still arrested. All three experienced extra time in internment and had to rely on their personal tenacity to escape with little or no help.

Incidences where French gendarmes were willing to assist the British short of entertaining escape was not limited to the experiences of Faith, Nicholls and Herring but were mirrored elsewhere and in a number of different contexts. Lang's description of a French detective in Marseilles exemplifies this latter point. Lang wrote

> One French detective called Balleygran responsible to French officers for British in Marseilles - an excellent type all out to help - half English by birth, speaking English perfectly - could be approached with safety on any subject except actual methods of escape - always ready to get British out of trouble - even helped Britisher who got arrested after escaping to North Africa. He asked no questions if a Britisher returned after attempted escape, and when that Britisher had handed in his parole.[40]

According to this account, 'Balleygran' appears to have had particular sympathies and empathy with the experiences of escapees and actively advocated on their behalf when plans failed or men ran into trouble. His actions earned him the attention of British officers and no doubt his views and actions were noted by his colleagues. However, he continued to act within the legal framework and did not move beyond that position. Arguably, this French detective was able to reconcile this pro-British outlook with his position of authority within the Vichy state apparatus.

Thus, while Lang felt comfortable in broaching almost any topic with 'Balleygran', escape methods were essentially prohibited territory. In this sense, as Vichy came to grips with the situation, the British were isolated and deprived of direct support.

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[39] Account of escape of 808830 Sgt. Faith, A., 1/R.N.A. and 2927357 Sgt. Nicholls, F., 4/Camerons, 30 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[40] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

The continued impact of parole: isolation from British consular services

In light of the above, it is argued that the British found it difficult to connect with and establish a solid French support base in unoccupied France. This sense of isolation was further compounded by lack of assistance of the British diplomatic services in the Unoccupied Zone.

The occupation led to the withdrawal of official British diplomatic services from France but there remained an unofficial presence in both the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones under the protection of its American counterpart. In unoccupied France, two consular officials, Major Hugh Dodds and Arthur Dean were of particular importance. Evidence from one source suggests that Dean, who was initially posted close to the Franco-Spanish frontier, played a role in supporting early escape efforts.[41] However, it must be noted that beyond one reference to Dean's presence on the frontier there is no confirmation of this in early escape accounts.[42] Moreover, if this was the case it would also appear his presence there was short lived, at most a number of weeks in June or July 1940 as both Dodds and Dean were working under the protection of the American Consulate in Marseilles by the end of July. Again, Dean appears to have been initially particularly active and it was Dean who had ensured that Scottish Presbyterian minister, Reverend Donald Caskie took over the Seamen's Mission. According to Caskie, this was done on the understanding that they would be helping soldiers arriving in Marseilles.[43] Equally, Dodds and Dean appear to have originally had some faith in the French, reassuring one officer on the 14 July that he would be 'sent back to England very soon and that there was no need to worry.'[44]

Yet, and perhaps out of frustration or hopelessness at the situation, this attitude was quickly replaced by avoidance and an unwillingness to offer assistance. Dodds appears

[41] Statement by 2nd Lt. A.D. McGregor, R.A. 51 Division, 22 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[42] McGregor was wounded and therefore does not appear to have personally journeyed to the frontier in the months of June or July. Therefore, his account of this may be second hand. There is a strong possibility he may be corrected but there is no way of confirming Dean's role while near the Pyrenees and its impacton the men attempting to cross.
[43] Caskie went to the American Consulate, Marseilles where he met Dean who asked him if anything could be done to help the 'chaps' arriving in the city. Caskie then went to the police station and was told he could take over the Mission but that no British servicemen could be found there. Donald Caskie, *The Tartan Pimpernel* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp 32-5.
[44] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

to have spearheaded this shift in attitude and comes in for sharp criticism. One officer, Second Lieutenant A.D. McGregor, detailed an incident in either late summer or early autumn where the American consul, Hugh Fullerton, had to ask Dodds to visit him in hospital. Pleading illness, Dodds refused to go. According to McGregor, Dodds' eventual visit only came to fruition as a result of the intervention of some American friends. In recounting this visit McGregor wrote

> I greeted Major Dodds, on his arrival, as British Consul, to his obvious dismay and fright. To my request for his help his reply was - "Young man, you must just resign yourself to being interned here".[45]

The unwillingness of the British diplomatic services to deal with the situation facing arriving men emerges as a common theme in this late summer and autumn 1940 period. Major Dodds in particular was criticised for avoiding men; McGregor's experiences are mirrored elsewhere, for instance, another account declares that Dodds was 'disinclined' to give 'any practical assistance'.[46]

In other cases, rather than deal with the daily concerns of these men, the consular authorities referred them to The Seamen's Mission. The extent of this practice is exemplified in the report of British private, Thomas Ford who provided the consulate with an intelligence report. On needing assistance with his paper work he was quickly 'directed' to the Seamen's Mission.[47] This incident highlights the unwillingness of the Consulate to engage in the daily lives of escapees or internees. It remained aloof from the situation facing these men. It must be recognised that responsibilities to and concerns for British civilians in the region may have checked consular officials' willingness to help escapees.[48] There was a serious reason for maintaining a distance from British servicemen in the city, particularly as engaging in escape activities would have further compromised the already precarious position of British diplomatic

[45] Statement by 2nd Lt. A.D. McGregor, R.A. 51 Division, 22 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[46] Account of escape of Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, 2 Bn. Welsh Guards, 20th Gds. Bde., 13 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[47] Statement by 3907214 Pte.Thomas Ford R.A.O.C., 19 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[48] A number of reports indicate this, notably Captain C.F.P. Mills and Sergeant R.A.J Newman. Mills noted that a British official advised him to give himself and that this was an order from the 'home authorities'. However, it is doubtful that his stance reflected official British policy. Sergeant R.A.J. Newman related an incident in which Captain Besley advised him to report to Fort St Jean. Account of escape of ARM/S/Sgt. R.A.J. Newman, R.A.O.C., Attd Highlanders. No: 7583169, 20 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299). Account of escape of ARM/S/Sgt. R.A.J. Newman, R.A.O.C., Attd Highlanders. No: 7583169, 20 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299) & Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

officials. Nevertheless, equally, it must be acknowleged that, however justified this stance, it also contributed to the sense of alienation and feelings of resentment among internees towards their consular services.

In essence, there was little or no practical assistance given to men seeking to leave France, either in terms of money or advice. Frustration at this lack of help emerged as a continual theme in escape reports. Dodds in particular came under constant criticism for his insensitivity to the needs of both British officers and servicemen. In one report, Captain C.R.I Besley went so far as to accuse Dodds of encouraging him to remain in France. Besley wrote

> I tried to discuss with him [Dodds] how we should escape and how he could assist us, but he would have nothing to do with it […] He asked us why we should want to escape, since we were as safe in Marseilles as anywhere else I am told that when one of the Sergeants asked him for a special allowance for clothing, he told him that if he had not thrown away his battle dress he would not need new clothes. I wrote to the British Embassy in Madrid, enclosing a list of the soldiers interned and asking for instructions. I received no reply, but I know the letter was received as an enclosure was sent to England.[49]

Dodds' unwillingness to engage with Besley is consistent with other accounts of his behaviour. This attitude is illustrated in another officer's, Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, description of his experiences with Dodds. According to Lewis, Dodds informed him that

> 200 English soldiers and some dozen officers were safely housed and well looked after by the French in Fort St. Jean, whom he recommended me to join.[50]

In this respect, parole and the relative freedom granted by the French appears to have absolved or at the very least lessened the sense of responsibility of the consulate, or more particularly Dodds, for these men.

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[49] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

[50] Account of escape of Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, 2 Bn. Welsh Guards, 20th Gds. Bde., 13 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300). See also the report of Captain C.F.P. Mills. When Mills complained about the allowance given by the Consulate Major Dodds informed him that he was 'quite at liberty to surrender' himself where he would be kept for nothing for the remainder of the war. Numerous reports confirm this including the Earl of Cardigan. Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

The British diplomatic service did attempt to cater for the material needs of each man through the payment of a stipend.[51] Nevertheless, for British servicemen arriving in the city this offer fell far short of expectation and in general, the consular authorities were perceived as inactive and inept. Even the offer of a stipend reinforced the status quo in Marseilles with men being paid only if they reported to the French authorities. This often caused dismay considering the hardship many had experienced in arriving in the city. The idea of escaping German imprisonment in order to be willingly interned by the French was not part of many original plans. More specifically, the encouragement given by the British consul to escapees to report to the French caused some consternation and in effect alienated men from what should have been a natural support base.[52]

During this period, the British were not alone in Marseilles as a dispossessed military service seeking a means out of France. Large numbers of Polish military personnel had joined the French army after the defeat and occupation of Poland in 1939. Many were in Marseilles seeking a means to leave France. The Polish leadership in Marseilles had already established a foothold in France and had managed to connect with the Free Poles in London. By the end of the summer 1940 were attempting to acquire ships (discussed in more detail in chapter three). Yet, far from being a consolation, the organisation of the Poles only served to highlight for some officers like McGregor the defiencies in British planning. McGregor wrote

> There seemed to be considerable traffic in the Polish organisation between their headquarters in London and Marseilles. The general feeling amongst British military personnel was indignation, as, while the Poles were able to get their men out of France by various means, so very little was done for the British.[53]

Such comparisons only served to compound the frustration of the British and, whether true or not, framed the actions of these men and forced them to rely on their personal

[51] Even this stipend came at a struggle. Besley said it took time for him to argue the case for one with Dodds. Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[52] Account of escape of Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, 2 Bn. Welsh Guards, 20th Gds. Bde., 13 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300). Moreover, on occasion men advised to go to Fort St Jean refused this advice. See also Account of escape of Lt. The Earl of Cardigan, R.A.S.C., 6 M.A.C., 28 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of 2917945 Cpl. George Shepherd Newton, 2/Seaforth Highlanders, 5 Dec 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2360831 Sgmn. Adams D.H. R. Signals, 1/Arm. Div., 17 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[53] Statement by 2nd Lt. A.D. McGregor, R.A. 51 Division, 22 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

tenacity and the support of their colleagues rather than seek the help of or include their diplomatic authorities in Marseilles in their escape schemes.

Reaction to isolation: the importance of British military cohesion

Achieving cohesion among escapees in the Unoccupied Zone was a slow process. While many men were congregating in Marseilles, there was still a sense that in many respects they were scattered. Parole and its relaxed terms meant that many of the officers chose and had the means to live outside the Fort. In contrast, ordinary ranks remained in Fort St Jean and in the absence of officers willing to assume active leadership roles, these men were, as Private John Christie asserted,

> Very much a collection of individuals. We had reached Marseilles very much under our own steam, either singly or in pairs and none of us was very inclined to give up any part of control over our own destiny.[54]

Christie's comments refer to summer 1940 and reflect the absence of officers from the daily lives of men. Officers such as Potts and Besley, who were also in Marseilles at this time, were busy planning their escapes and lacked the connections or time to begin organising the escapes of others. Nevertheless, while Christie's claims illustrate the lack of active leadership, it must also be balanced with the knowledge that officers were, even from July 1940, willing to advocate on behalf of the men.

Most of this work was behind the scenes; for instance, it was through the efforts of Besley that the British consulate agreed on a stipend for each man.[55] According to McGregor, it was his efforts, in spite of the lassitude displayed by the consulate on this matter, that led to the formation of the Mixed Medical Commission, a committee which under the Geneva Convention had the authority to repatriate wounded soldiers.[56] The first Commission board convened in October 1940 with the first groups repatriated in January 1941. Thus, officers, although their work by and large went unrecognised in these early days, did have an impact on the experiences of those in Marseilles. The Mixed Medical Commission in particular was recognised by internees as relatively pro-

[54] Account of escape of 2319499 Sgmn. Sutton, A.C.2. Signals, and 2577618 Sgmn. Christie, J.F., R. Signals (H. Section No. 2 Coy. Attached 51st Division, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300) and see also Sean Longden, *Dunkirk, the men they left behind* (London, 2009), p. 310.
[55] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[56] Statement by 2nd Lt. A.D. McGregor, R.A. 51 Division, 22 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

British. It continued to send men home right throughout the period 1940-42, and beyond.

In spite of these initial efforts and the establishment of the Mixed Medical Commission, there was still a lack of cohesion among the men. One of the key components in forging strong communal bonds was a shared military background and more importantly a shared sense of duty, notably a duty to escape. In Marseilles, or unoccupied France more generally, the concept of duty to escape was given a particular moral emphasis. This was true elsewhere but in unoccupied France it was especially important given that the immediate German threat was somewhat removed. As Dodds' attitude highlighted, there were certain inducements to staying in the Unoccupied Zone and remaining out of the war. In addition, the British frequented bars and cafés in Marseilles getting caught up in an active social scene. Most men were lured by the bright lights of the city but there were still acceptable and unacceptable codes of behaviour. The presence and power of this value system or code of honour is evident in escape reports on occasions when men felt that such codes were breached by their fellow colleagues.

The ambivalence around parole is a good example of such breaches. Parole was discouraged by the War Office but justified in the context of the Unoccupied Zone on a technicality, that is, as the British were not at war with the French then they were not prisoners of war.[57] However, men who used parole for purely personal reasons, and not for the purposes of planning an escape, were marginalised and treated with derision by those who considered escape their duty. A number of men began to express concerns about the impact parole was having on the men. Driver W.B.A. Gaze, who arrived in Marseilles at the end of November, noted that

> Owing to the cosy conditions of life for the British internees in Marseilles, who are well fed, get clothes given and 85 frs. per week, many are becoming very demoralised on the many pleasures available, and will suffer permanently in life.[58]

These moral judgements were not confined to Gaze's report nor were they merely confined to judgement; they also framed action. Lieutenant James Langley (whose escape from the north was discussed in the previous chapter) became heavily involved

[57] Account of escape of 2144 Major W.C.W. Potts, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[58] Account of escape of 7618141 Dvr. Gaze, W.B.A., R.A.O.C., 25 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

in escape activities on reaching unoccupied France at the end of October.[59] On one occasion he participated in a plan to obtain a boat (discussed later in this chapter) with the aim of aiding the escape of as many men as possible. Although the plan ultimately failed, in his autobiography, Langley indicated that it had been decided to leave 'self-confessed deserters' behind as it was considered better for the war that they would 'continue as a burden on their captors'.[60] Langley's sense of duty and moral superiority echo the tone taken by Gaze but in Langley's case this moralising shaped important decisions that is, who should stay and who should go. Those not sharing the same values or portraying a commitment to duty were deliberately excluded and derided. Moreover, this derision and moralising has worked its way into the histories of the escape organisations, notably in the work of British military historian M.R.D. Foot. His work remains one of the main publications in this field but Foot, a war veteran himself, adopted a morally superior tone when referring to men unwilling to risk the uncertainty of escape as 'Mr Fainthearted'. In Foot's work 'Mr Fainthearted' stood in sharp contrast to those he termed as 'Mr Valiant', that is, men willing to risk the unknown and escape.[61]

As indicated by Foot, this moralising went beyond the experiences of officers in Marseilles and was endemic across the armed forces. However, in unoccupied France, notably Marseilles, it had an added significance. As Dodds reminded a number of officers, there were certain inducements to staying in the Unoccupied Zone where men could opt out of the war while enjoying what Gaze described as the 'cosy condition of life'. British internees frequented bars and cafés in Marseilles and enjoyed the amusements of Marseilles. In this respect, duty to escape had the added importance of reinforcing military cohesion and establishing a sense of purpose at a time when easy living conditions threatened this togetherness. The importance of military cohesion has been addressed by G.L. Siegbold, who argued that it

> Stabilizes relationship patterns and provides a sense of outside and above a person that there is something more than a collection of individuals'.[62]

[59] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[60] Ibid.
[61] M.R.D. Foot and J.M. Langley, *MI9: escape and evasion 1939-1945* (London, 1979), p. 107.
[62] Guy L. Siegbold, 'The essence of military group cohesion in *Armed Forces and Society'*, xxxiii No. 2 (Jan. 2007), p. 288.

While men like Gaze or Langley certainly expressed a notion they were connected to a great war effort, there was still the problem of stable relationship patterns.

This was, in part, due to the high turnover rate of officers and potential leaders leaving for the Pyrenees. More specifically, even though officers such as Besley, McGregor or Langley were willing to assume responsibility for the welfare of their colleagues, they were also busy planning their personal departures from France. Thus, advocating on behalf of the men was coupled with personal self-interest. For instance, McGregor pushed for the formation of the Mixed Medical Commission knowing that, as he was wounded, it was likely he would benefit from it, as indeed he did. Equally, while Besley successfully ensured stipends would be paid to men arriving in Marseilles, he was also busy preparing for his departure and left France in early autumn. In fact, as far as can be established, nearly all the officers to arrive in Marseilles in the summer of 1940 departed France at the earliest opportunity. This is understandable given that their intention in reaching the Unoccupied Zone was to return to Britain. However, this high turnover did not lead to a steady leadership or to a consolidated position in Marseilles.

Nevertheless, by early September 1940 it is important to acknowledge that there were cursory attempts by a small number of officer to co-ordinate escape activities. These were initiated by Captain F. Fitch and Lieutenant William Sillar who arrived in Marseilles at the beginning of September. Fitch in particular appears to have been pro-active in such efforts. Evidence of his activities do not come from his account but descriptions from other reports. One escapee, Captain H.B. Burn, who was present in Marseilles between September and October 1940, observed

> Escape organisation from this town was in the capable hands of Capt. Fitch (S/P.G.181) who worked hard and modestly to get men away.[63]

[63] Account of escape of: Capt. H.B. Burn, 7/R/N/F/. 51 Div., 18 Sept 1941 (N.A.,WO208/3306). For more details see also Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2321375 Pte. J.F. Baron, 1st Black Watch, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2917945 Cpl. George Shepherd Newton, 2/Seaforth Highlanders, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2814207 Sgt. Hugh Caldwell, 4/Camerons, 51st (H) Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

In fact, Fitch's ability to organise left an impression on Besley who, at the end of September, appears to have sought his advice on leaving France. At this stage, Fitch and Sillar were attempting to work out a system of communication between Marseilles and the Pyrenees (discussed in more detail in chapter three). This system helped a small number of men to cross the Pyrenees at the end of September. In essence, the arrival of Fitch and Sillar in September signalled a shift from officers indirectly assisting their men to more direct and co-ordinated participation in escape activities. However, the success of this operation was short lived and it ended with Sillar's departure to Spain in early October.[64]

Moving beyond isolation: emerging British leadership

While the efforts of Sillar show the growing potential of the British to organise, his early departure undermined the capacity for a more concerted effort. However, there were two key events at the end of October that led cumulatively to changing the situation in the leadership in Marseilles. The first was the arrival of Captain Charles Murchie at the beginning of November. Murchie was the first officer to arrive in Marseilles with the explicit intention of setting up an escape organisation. On his arrival, Murchie began the process of consolidating British connections with civilian resistance.

In spite of Murchie's early influence there is relative silence on his activities in the secondary source literature. As far as can be established, there is no valid reason for this and yet a discrepancy between the contemporary sources, subsequent autobiographies and histories of the period persists. For instance, James Langley, in his escape reports emphasises the importance of Murchie and his escape activities during Langley's time in Marseilles. Langley's report gave a detailed assessment of Murchie's work (and will be discussed later in this chapter) and yet Langley's autobiography, first published in 1974, does not mention Murchie at all! This is carried through in M.R.D. Foot's work on escape networks; this oversight may be explained in Foot's works taken in conjunction with Langley.[65] Memories fade overtime and it may be an oversight that Murchie's work is eclipsed by later escape organisers. Foot's work, however, forms the basis of most of the publications on escape history, excluding the recent extensive

[64] Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[65] Foot and Langley, *MI9*.

research undertaken by Philippe Le Blanc on the Belgian escape organisation, the Comet line.[66] The only substantial focus on Murchie comes from the work of Sean Longden in his book, *Dunkirk the men they left behind.*[67] But even in this work the focus is on the Foreign Office records with no references to escape reports. Another researcher, Oliver Clutton Brock refers to Murchie's activities in Marseilles but does not focus on the impact or significance of Murchie's role in early escape activities[68]; consequentially there is no substantial assessment of Murchie's work. A number of websites, including *Conscript heroes*, give accounts of Murchie's activities but again his contribution in shaping the British-led escape organisation, which began to emerge in Marseilles in his time, is still largely overlooked in the mainstream literature.[69]

Yet the evidence suggests that Murchie was crucial in helping British officers to connect with a civilian support base in Marseilles. In many respects, he was already in a strong position to begin this process when he arrived in Marseilles in early winter 1941 having established connections with helpers in the north. His aim was to consolidate these connections and to continue the process of passing men across the demarcation line. His efforts to achieve this were aided by Sergeant H.K. Clayton, who arrived in Marseilles ahead of Murchie and immediately set to work on retaining British links with the north. In order to achieve this, both men needed to have a solid support base in the city which, according to Langley's report, appears to have been the Seamen's Mission. It would seem that Murchie was one of the first British officers to actively involve the Reverend Donald Caskie, keeper of the Mission, directly in escape activity. Langley informed the War Office that Caskie 'undoubtedly' worked 'with Capt. Murchie, R.A.S.C., in helping people out of Occupied France'.[70] Caskie acted as banker with Murchie using any funds available to cover the expenses of guides arriving from the north. Murchie described his system as follows:

> The method was self-developing and was simplicity itself. A guide arrived in Marseilles, bringing with him 3, 4 or 5 Britishers, submitted to me a list of his

[66] Philippe Le Blanc, *Comète: le réseau derrière la ligne DD, de la creation en 1940 à fevrier 1943* (Arquennes, 2015).
[67] Longden, *Dunkirk,* pp 307-8.
[68] Oliver Clutton Brock, *RAF evaders: The comprehensive story of thousands of escapers and their escape lines, western Europe 1940-1945* (London, 2009), Kindle edition.
[69] Conscript heroes, (http://www.conscript-heroes.com)
[70] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

> expenses plus the cost of his return journey, which I settled, with this money he returned to the North of France and passed on the good word, with the result that I had at one time twenty-five such guides working.[71]

Murchie continued to extend his activities throughout 1940-41, living in hiding in Marseilles but also connecting with officers officially interned in Fort St Jean. Clayton was one of his main agents and he worked closely with Murchie attempting to extend their contacts in Marseilles while maintaining connections with the north.

Murchie's success helped crystallise connections and support for the British in occupied France. There is no way of determining the extent of these connections but if his personal estimates are to be believed then as a result of these connections Murchie succeeded in bringing between three to four hundred men across the demarcation line. Even if these numbers are inflated, it still must be recognised that he facilitated the forging of vital contacts with helpers in the north and went so far as to continue recruiting support in occupied France from his base in Marseilles. Murchie's real coup came in January with the arrival of a young Frenchman, Ronald Lepers in Marseilles. Lepers had guided a party of British soldiers to Marseilles. In Lepers' account, there was no indication that he had heard of or encountered Murchie but in Marseilles he established contact with him. Lepers' agenda in establishing this connection was personal; he planned on leaving France and joining the Free French. His aim was to acquire Murchie's help. However, on meeting Murchie, Lepers discovered Murchie had a different agenda. Lepers wrote

> Captain MURCHIE and M. DELVALIER, an Englishman, whose real name was CLAYTON, suggested that I should not go to England but should work for their organisation, helping British soldiers and airmen to escape through Marseilles. I agreed and returned alone to La Madeleine in the middle of January 1941.[72]

In establishing connections with Lepers, Murchie redirected attention to the north. Before his arrival, the focus of the British in Marseilles, almost without exception, was on their activities on the Franco-Spanish frontier or the port. There was, as referred to in chapter one, an attempt to establish a more stable escape line in autumn 1940. An officer recently arrived in Marseilles, Lieutenant C.D. Hunter, assisted his French helper

[71] 'Letter from Charles Murchie to Sir Samuel Hoare', 15 Aug. 1941 (N.A.,FO371/26949a). See also Clutton Brock, *RAF evaders*.
[72] Statement of Roland Lepers, 18 June 1945 (N.A., KV 2/416).

in Paris to acquire funds to pass men across the demarcation line. However, this attempt failed with Bonnefous' arrest on her return to the Occupied Zone and Hunter did not pursue the matter further. With Murchie's arrival in Marseilles, there was a more co-ordinated attempt to connect with the north. Murchie's work was crucial in re-directing attention of the British in Marseilles to the north and attempting to maintain connections with civilian helpers in the Forbidden and Occupied Zones. However, while Murchie pushed to expand connections in the Occupied Zone, he did not see the fruits of this vital connection with Lepers. Murchie left France shortly afterwards, in April 1941, in part due to fear of arrest but this connection was maintained by officers (notably Garrow) who took over Murchie's work (discussed later in this chapter). In spite of this impromptu departure, Murchie's success in recruiting Lepers help changed the nature and scope of such activities in unoccupied France. Murchie's work in the north pushed British escape activities in Marseilles beyond their initial insular nature, expanding its scope and connecting it with resistance activities in the north.

Despite the benefits that a focus on the north brought, it was this same strategy that proved to be one of the drawbacks of Murchie and Clayton's work. Clayton arrived in Marseilles before Murchie, as Murchie was briefly detained by the French authorities en route. As Clayton spoke fluent French and had identity papers he chose to live as a civilian in the city. This self-imposed removal from the men, however, combined with his interest in soldiers arriving in the city, brought him under suspicion from internees. On this matter, Clayton reported

> I had my own civilian clothes and a certain sum of money and lived apart from the British Officers and men in Fort St Jean. Because of this and my interest in soldiers arriving from the north, I was immediately suspected by the British officers of being a German agent ... an attempt was made on my life by the soldiers in Fort St Jean.[73]

The British, both servicemen and officers, in Marseilles were determined to maintain group cohesion and the significant communication between internees helped them to identify Clayton's interest. In Clayton's case, his interest was perceived as a threat. In response to that threat a number of men were mobilised or motivated to take direct action. In many respects, it was Clayton's determination to remain aloof from men

[73] Account of escape of 939118 A/Sgt/ Interpreter Clayton, H.K., Air Ministry Works Area No.1 (France) R.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).

already experiencing isolation and relying on the support of colleagues that acted as the impetus for this reaction. In response to all of this behaviour, Clayton, instead of avoiding or reporting the men who attacked him, moved into Fort St Jean. Following his move to the Fort, there were no more threats on Clayton's life and his plans were allowed to progress. Interestingly, the incident highlighted the presence of a quasi-policing system among internees. Those working with the British were placed under some sort of implicit surveillance. Their activities needed to be recognised as being in the general interest of internees before they could progress. When Murchie arrived in Marseilles, some days later, it would appear that he followed Clayton's lead and established connections with British officers staying at the Fort. In time, like a number of officers, he took private accommodation in the city.[74]

An examination of the escape reports highlights another challenge with the focus on the north. The majority of escapees arriving from the north were not crossing the Unoccupied Zone unimpeded and assisted but rather were instead facing arrest and internment in Fort St Jean, Marseilles or, from January 1941, internment in St Hippolyte du Fort. Thus, most men arriving from the Occupied Zone during the period of Murchie's tenure as leading escape organiser in Marseilles faced French internment.

The difficulties notwithstanding, Murchie's work re-directed attention to the north and in doing this, helped to broaden the vision of the British escape organisation in Marseilles. Murchie's focus on connections with the north, which he did not notably replicate in Marseilles, was his legacy to escape activities when he left France in April 1940.

Having established Murchie's contribution to escape activities in Marseilles, it is necessary to turn to the second key event that gave added impetus to such activities. In October 1940 the French, in an effort to come to terms with the British prisoner of war problem, transferred all the British interned in various locations in the Unoccupied Zone to Fort St Jean. This effectively placed all men determined and committed to escape in one location. This transfer also led to the arrival in Marseilles of a number of officers, notably Captain L.A Wilkins and Captain Ian Garrow.

[74] Statement by Capt. C.P. Murchie, R.A.S.C. (Headquarters, E.F.I., Arras), 10 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).

Wilkins and Garrow had experienced a number of weeks of internment at the hands of the French before their arrival in Marseilles. Garrow crossed the demarcation and was interned in a prisoner of war camp at Monferran-Saves in August 1940.[75] Wilkins crossed the demarcation line in September, was arrested by the French and interned in a concentration camp at Agde. According to Wilkins, he was placed 'under close arrest for fifteen days on charges of inciting troops to escape'.[76] Their removal to Marseilles in October contributed to this concentration of officers assuming responsibility for escape activities already building up in the city. The evidence suggests that they engaged in escape schemes almost immediately with accounts given to the War Office by returned British escapees indicating that both men were heavily involved in the planning and consolidating of escape activities in the city.[77]

It would appear that there were two phases to this work namely, working on escape activities with officers such as Captain F. Fitch, who focused on passing men across the Pyrenees, and, by January 1941, working under the stewardship of Murchie.[78] Murchie's phase became particularly important following the departure of Fitch and Wilkins from Marseilles by the end of December leaving Garrow as one of the only officers in Marseilles assisting Murchie in forging an escape organisation. In contrast to Murchie, Garrow's focus was not on consolidating the British position in the north (the Occupied Zone) but on strengthening the British position in the Unoccupied Zone. This proved increasingly difficult and in January 1941 they faced one of their toughest challenges.

British internees in Fort St Jean were removed to St Hippolyte du Fort, some fifty kilometres from Nîmes. This move separated British internees from connections they had acquired in Marseilles; most likely, such a move was specifically designed to achieve this. Added to the physical removal from Marseilles, St Hippolyte du Fort was

[75] According to Garrow there were 25 O.R.'s (ordinary ranks) in the camp. 57346 Capt. (W/S.) Ian Grant Garrow, 1st Glasgow Highlanders, (H.L.I.) 52nd Div., Feb. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[76] Account of escape of 94831 Capt Wilkins, L.A., 2/5th West Yorks., 46 Div., 16 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[77] Account of 4540274 C.Q.M.S. Lepper D.T., 2/5 W/ Yorks., 46 Div., 13 Apr. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303). Account of escape of 94831 Capt Wilkins, L.A., 2/5th West Yorks., 46 Div., 16 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[78] Richard Broad's report put Murchie as head of the escape organisation. Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).

also isolated from the main rail communication network. Thus, escapees seeking to cross the Franco-Spanish frontier had to first trek the fifty kilometres to Nîmes to access trains for Perpignan. Overcoming the isolating impact of this removal was crucial if escape organisers, at this stage Garrow and Murchie, were to maintain their activities. Both Murchie and Garrow managed to avoid the move but as a result were left without official status and living clandestinely in the city. In this respect, both men suffered a double isolation that is, removed from the support of colleagues and living as fugitives in Marseilles[79].

Garrow overcame his personal isolation and continued to forge connections with and to include internees in St Hippolyte du Fort in escape activities. In order to achieve this, he expanded and extended the strength of the burgeoning escape organisation, responsibility for which fell increasingly to Garrow. As a result of continued difficulties connecting with a solid civilian support base, Garrow initially confined his activities to British internees and recruited within that group. One of his first moves, on learning that men were to be moved to St Hippolyte du Fort, was to approach another officer, Second Lieutenant W.M. Hewitt. Hewitt intended to leave France at the first available opportunity but reconsidered after a discussion with Garrow in January. According to Hewitt, both men agreed Hewitt 'should go to St Hypolyte [St. Hippolyte] in charge of the men'.[80] The motivation for this decision was directly related to Garrow's efforts to maintain communication with the men in St Hippolyte. Hewitt was to act as the main contact in the camp and all communication was directed to him. The willingness of Hewitt to accept this scheme, and it is perhaps worth noting he continued in this role until November 1942, marks the growing importance of the escape organisation in the lives of British internees.

Without the assistance of the British escape organisation in Marseilles there was little opportunity to execute or plan an escape beyond discussions with colleagues. St Hippolyte du Fort, a relatively small town, was removed from significant escape connections established in Marseilles and was within easy reach of the Pyrenees. The

[79] Langley noted this in his autobiography or, to use his words, parole gave the men 'official' status in Marseilles. Langley, *Fight another day*, p. 104.
[80] Hewitt retained the position of escape organiser until the end of 1942 and the German occupation of the Unoccupied Zone. Statement by 67606 Lieut. Winwick Miller Hewitt, 5/2 S.L. Regt. Royal Artillery, 29 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).

appointment of officers such as Hewitt and their continued connection to escape organisers in Marseilles helped overcome this enforced isolation and extend their escape activities in St Hippolyte du Fort. There is evidence to suggest that Garrow's efforts to maintain connections with internees through officers like Hewitt met with success and several methods of communications were accounted for in escape reports. For instance, one report indicates that, on one occasion, when men were up for review with the Mixed Medical Board, permission was given for an officer to accompany these men to Marseilles. The opportunity was seized to make contact with escape organisers in the city.[81] This is supported by two more references to Hewitt accompanying men, cleared by the Mixed Medical Commission, to the Franco-Spanish frontier; presumably, although it is not made explicit, he did this in an official capacity before turning back at the border![82] There is also evidence of obvious and open methods of communication. One particularly impressive example of direct communication came within days of the arrival of internees in St Hippolyte du Fort. In January 1941, an RAF bomber crew crash landed in Meserieux, between Lyons and Macon, with the crew subsequently interned in St Hippolyte. One of the crew, Sergeant S.M.P Parkes, recounted that shortly after their arrival they were informed by an officer at the fort that a call had come through from Marseilles wanting to get the crew to the city.[83] Apart from these details, Parkes does not expand on this communication, but his account does suggest that there was, on occasion at least, telecommunications between officers in St Hippolyte and presumably Murchie and Garrow in Marseilles. Beyond this report there is nothing to substantiate this idea.

While details are sketchy, incidences such as these show the growing extent of Garrow's activities and his ability to consolidate escape in the Unoccupied Zone. However, these achievements were tempered by problems balancing Murchie's escape activities and men arriving in the city from the north, with Garrow's interests and concerns for men already interned in the Unoccupied Zone. In some cases, there was a lack of foresight resulting in the Marseilles leadership occasionally alienating British internees in St Hippolyte du Fort. This is highlighted in an account of the situation

[81] Account by S/Ldr. E/P.P. Gibbs, R.A.F., No. 616 Sqdrn., No. 11 Group, Fighter Command, 18/19 Sept. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3306).
[82] Account of escape of 514724 Sgt. Berry, H. 150(b) Squadron R.A.F., 3 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303); Statement by 6144709 Pte. Small, E.J., 2/6 East Surrey Regt, 15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[83] Statement by 742649 Sgt. S.M.F. Parkes, 9 Squadron, R.A.F., 19 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).

given by Lieutenant Richard Broad (referred to in chapter one). Broad arrived in Marseilles in February 1941 with seven ordinary ranks. He intended continuing his journey with these men across the Pyrenees but all, excluding Broad, were arrested and removed to St Hippolyte du Fort on arrival in Marseilles. Broad established contact with Garrow and began planning the escape of his men. Though communication was a difficult, Broad overcame this by personally travelling to the camp, spending the night there and leaving unobserved the next morning.[84] Broad's plans proved a success and he managed to arrange the continued escape and removal of all the men he had accompanied to unoccupied France, with the exception of one, Private Osbourne, as he was wounded. However, his experience of the internees required him to alter and expand the scope of his scheme. Explaining the reasons behind this, Broad wrote,

> A party of men headed by Sgt. Bell had recently left for Spain […] The officers at the Camp were highly indignant since Murchie unthinkingly had made up the party from men lying low in Marseilles, whereas the men at the Fort felt that, as they had done as they had been asked and voluntarily gone to the Camp, they should have been chosen for the trip.[85]

Broad's actions were, thus, framed by the strong feeling in the camp. By Broad's account, it would appear, men went to St Hippolyte du Fort willingly or 'voluntarily' either on the advice of their leadership or on the understanding that from there, there were opportunities to escape; at the very least Murchie and Garrow would keep the men informed through Lieutenant Hewitt. In Hewitt's case, his departure for the camp was on Garrow's instructions and linked directly to expanding escape activities there.

The communication breakdown referred to by Broad shows the impact of perceived neglect and also the determination of officers in the camp to hold the Marseilles leadership accountable to their interests. In this case, in order to mollify interested parties, Broad had to alter his plan and include men from the camp. Therefore, while officers in the camp may have been willing to accept a degree of isolation from the former active Marseilles escape scene, they were not willing to accept being

[84] Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303). See also William Moore, *The long way round: an escape through occupied France* (London, 1986), p. 140. This account gives more details. One of the men who travelled with Broad, Sergeant Chalmers, was 'called from his quarters and told that an officer wanted to see him in a café in St Hippolyte'. The officer was Broad. Broad stayed in the camp that night.
[85] Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).

marginalised from the plans of Murchie or Garrow. Two sources indicate Garrow's early involvement in intelligence gathering activities namely, a number of escape reports and James Langley's autobiography. In the escape report, Private J Graham details giving Garrow a map of the German coastal defences in May 1940. On a number of occasions Garrow and Murchie prioritised the passage of individuals they considered important.[86] Historian Simon Kitson, who has undertaken extensive research on Vichy intelligence services, noted that Garrow came to the attention of the French for his work on behalf of the British secret service.[87] It is difficult to gauge exactly when Garrow began working for British intelligence but evidence from Langley's autobiography indicates that they were interested in him as early 1941. Langley had been repatriated back to Britain by the Mixed Medical Commission arriving in Liverpool in March. According to Langley, his interrogator indicated to him he was interested in Garrow's activities and had already had some idea of his activities in Marseilles.[88] His interrogator informed him that Garrow had sent a number of messages to the War Office, presumably through the unofficial British consulate.

Langley's arrival in Liverpool was well-timed in that he was the first with inside information on the workings of the burgeoning escape organisation. Langley had also been deeply involved in these activities with Murchie and Garrow. He had, during his time in Marseilles, requested that Dodds write to the British military attaché and appoint him head of escape activities in the city.[89] Nothing came of this request and it is doubtful that it was taken seriously. However, the situation changed with Langley's arrival in England in March 1941. Within weeks Langley received a request, which he accepted, to join the British Secret Intelligence Service, otherwise known as MI6.[90] His

[86] Account of escape of Capt. R.N. Brinckman, 3/Grenadier Guards, 1st Div., 3 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Report by Lieut. Colonel F.A.A., R.A., Military Attaché Brussels, on events subsequent to the 9th May, 1940, resulting in his capture by the German army, escape and hiding, and eventual arrival at Gibraltar after passing through unoccupied France and French North Africa, Nov. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307) & Further notes by Lt-Col. F.A.A., R.A. formerly M.A. Brussels, Nov. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[87] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p. 64 & 77.
[88] Langley, *Fight another day*, p. 119.
[89] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[90] It would appear that MI9 was controlled by MI6 or SIS. Donald Darling, who did some work for MI9 was an MI6 agent. Furthermore, according to Phillippe Le Blanc, James Langley, who worked for MI9 when he returned to England, was more an MI6 agent than MI9 (private communication with the author). For more details on this relationship see also Keith Jeffery, *MI6: the history of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949* (London, 2010), pp 409-10.

objective in this new post was to maintain connections with escape lines in France, particularly the activities of the British escape organisation in Marseilles.

MI6 and the secret service responsible for British prisoners of war, MI9, made efforts to set up an escape line along the Pyrenees in June but this had been a failure.[91] It remained difficult for MI6 agent Donald Darling to maintain connections with escape efforts in Marseilles and, given the attitude of the British consulate, there was little or no official support for British escape activities. The appointment of Langley, as it seems he was the first escapee to be appointed to such a post, signalled a change in this attitude. The War Office was beginning to take events in Marseilles seriously and were, as indicated by Langley, making efforts to establish the extent of escape efforts including those associated with Garrow. This appears to have culminated in Garrow achieving an official position in Marseilles shortly after Langley's arrival and appointment to MI6/MI9 in March. This is confirmed in a War Office file which recommended Garrow for a DSO (Distinguished Service Order) in 1943. According to this recommendation, Garrow was 'under definite orders to remain in France and perform this work' from April 1941, the month of Murchie's departure to Spain,.[92]

However, while contact had finally been established with London, Murchie's departure meant that Garrow was one of the only officers remaining in Marseilles assuming responsibility for escape activities. Garrow needed to consolidate this leadership but it would take a further two months before he achieved this. As part of this process, Garrow took the lead in recruiting members of the British escape organisation. Historians and researchers such as Foot generally agree that Garrow's recruitment of a Belgian, Albert Guerisse, was crucial in crystallising the growing escape network and bolstering the leadership of the escape organisation.[93] Garrow, in the early days, appears to have favoured British military personnel for key roles within the burgeoning organisation. Guerisse, in spite of his Belgian nationality, was no exception to this. Guerisse was a Belgian military doctor who made his way to London following the collapse of Belgium and joined the Royal Navy, under the pseudonym Patrick O'Leary.

[91] Donald Darling, *Secret Sunday* (London, 1975), pp 17-9.
[92] Recommendation for the D.S.O: Captain Ian Garrow, 28 Feb. 1943 (N.A., WO373/62/355).
[93] Foot and Langley, *MI9*. See also other general histories on escape organisations Herman, Bodson, *Downed Allied airmen and evasion of capture: the tale of local resistance networks in World War II* (North Carolina, 2005); John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *Home Run: escape from Nazi Europe* (London, 2007); Sherri Greene Ottis, *Silent heroes: downed airmen and the French underground* (Kentucky, 2001).

This name, or more correctly the abbreviated version, Pat, later became synonymous with the British escape organisation in Marseilles; Pat or O'Leary rather than Guerisse will be used from this point on in this thesis. During his time with the Royal Navy, O'Leary was involved in a number of clandestine operations off the French coast, one of which in April 1941 led to his arrest and internment by the French. Claiming he was French Canadian, O'Leary was removed to St Hippolyte du Fort where he displayed a tenacity for escape activities making a number of attempts before eventually succeeding and reaching Marseilles in the summer of 1940.

According to his biography, written by Vincent Brome, O'Leary headed escape activities in the camp. This may have been an exaggeration, particularly in the light of Hewitt's report which claims he, Hewitt, remained one of the main organisers and senior escape organiser until August 1941.[94] Brome also states that O'Leary escaped from St Hippolyte du Fort in summer 1941 with the intention of organising an escape organisation. Further on in his book, Brome contradicts this by asserting that Garrow convinced O'Leary to stay in France once he reached Marseilles.[95] No escape report from this period places O'Leary as head of escape activities in St Hippolyte du Fort. It is therefore, most likely that O'Leary escaped the camp intending to reach Britain and it was only his encounter with Garrow that led to his later recruitment into the escape organisation.

There is another significant point surrounding O'Leary's appointment beyond Garrow's efforts to consolidate the escape organisation. O'Leary sought official British approval for his appointment, and approval was signalled by a previously-agreed cryptic message aired via the BBC. Donald Darling, the MI6 agent in Spain responsible for maintaining connections with the British in Marseilles (discussed in chapter three) recounted hearing the official approval while at a dinner party.[96] This particular incident has been mentioned in a number of histories on escape organisation. However, its significance has been under played as though the approval were a matter of course. In seeking this approval, Garrow and O'Leary successfully moved escape beyond the isolation

[94] Whitney Straight was senior in rank to Hewitt but Hewitt still remained active in organising escape and when Straight left Hewitt continued to help men escape. See the following: Statement by W/Cdr. W/W/ Straight, M.C., D.F.C. 242 (Fighter) Sqn., R.A.F., July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3309) & Statement by 67606 Lieut. Winwick Miller Hewitt, 5/2 S.L. Regt. Royal Artillery, 29 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[95] Brome, *The way back*, pp 34-6.
[96] Darling, *Secret Sunday*, pp 24-5.

experienced by early escape organisers such as Fitch and placed the burgeoning British escape organisation on an official footing. Garrow's orders had signalled this shift but O'Leary's approval reinforced the escape organisation's growing connections with the War Office.

By July 1941, tentative communication was established with London and Garrow, with O'Leary's assistance, successfully bolstering the organisation's leadership.[97] The British escape organisation needed to gain the approval of London and the support of civilian helpers. Continued alienation from a civilian support base would have made the emergence of an escape organisation untenable especially considering the removal of the British to St Hippolyte du Fort in January 1941.

Garrow continued Murchie's activities and took over his northern connections. When French helper Ronald Lepers guided a number of British escapees to Marseilles after Murchie's departure, Garrow met with Lepers instead. The specific dates of Lepers' second arrival is difficult to establish; Lepers claims he made at least four trips to Marseilles between January and March 1941.[98] In this period, Lepers was told that Murchie had departed from France but Murchie did not leave until April. It is possible, considering the increased pressure Murchie was under, that Garrow took over the northern connection before Murchie's departure. Despite some inconsistencies in the chronology, Garrow's action in meeting Lepers is significant in that Garrow, following Murchie's lead, proved equally determined to maintain connections with helpers in the Occupied Zone.

Moreover, Garrow demonstrated a determination to assist Lepers in expanding these northern connections. Lepers recommended that Garrow establish contact with Sergeant

[97] There is a suggestion that Garrow in fact ceded control to O'Leary at this time. The documents recommending Garrow for the D.S.O. placed Garrow's involvement in escape activities between April to July 1941. However, Garrow remained in Marseilles and it is possible that he was increasingly concerned with intelligence. This assessment is supported by the recommendation for the D.S.O which refers to Garrow's intelligence activities. See also: Account of escape of 5726306 Pte. Graham J., 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 19 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302); Moreover, historian Simon Kitson carried out extensive work on intelligence networks in Vichy France and in relation to Garrow focused more on Garrow's intelligence activities than his escape activities labelling him head of intelligence in Marseilles. Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p.64, 77. Furthermore, a French intelligence officer, Colonel Paul Paillole classified Garrow as 'a British intelligence officer' in his book. Paul Paillole, *Fighting the Nazis French intelligence and counterintelligence 1935-1945* (New York, 2002), p. 180.

[98] Statement of Roland Lepers, 18 June 1945 (N.A., KV 2/416).

Harold Cole, a British escapee in hiding near Lille. Cole was living under false papers and had already a number of useful French contacts. Garrow successfully forged this connection with Lepers' help and in crystallising this support forwarded a sum of fifty thousand francs to be distributed to French helpers by Cole. In this respect, although Lepers established this connection, Garrow was in effect placing Cole as head of operations in the Lille area.[99] This was done at the suggestion of and in agreement with Lepers. This action conveys the determination of Garrow to attain British control over northern escape activities and stands in sharp contrast to Murchie's more casual approach to French helpers arriving in Marseilles guided by rumour of his presence and seeking him out by name. Garrow was attempting to consolidate these more casual escape efforts and, in gaining the support of Lepers, he effectively established a support basis that remained virtually unchanged throughout the summer, autumn and early winter 1941, until Cole's betrayal in November 1941 (discussed in chapter four).

Although Garrow managed, through Lepers, to consolidate the British connections in the Occupied and Forbidden Zones, he still faced difficulty in identifying potential helpers in the Unoccupied Zone. This problem was not solely confined to Garrow's earlier efforts led by Fitch, Wilkins and Murchie all appear to have experienced difficulty in relation to extending a British support base in Marseilles. This difficulty, perhaps, goes some way to explaining why some of the earliest connections forged in Marseilles were not with willing helpers but criminal gangs eager to capitalise on the British position. It is difficult to establish specific reasons for this but arguably the physical location of Fort St Jean and also the Seamen's Mission was a contributing factor. As Caskie observed, the Old Port was a notorious area and 'an ideal place for criminals hiding from the police'.[100] It may be worth considering, in relation to the Old Port, that the Germans when they occupied all of France in November 1942 ordered that the population of a substantial proportion of the Old Port be evacuated for security reasons such was it's reputation. Consequently, it was perhaps difficult for ordinary French civilians, seeking to assist the British, to venture into this part of the city. The secondary source literature, and notably Foot's work, remains silent on British dealings with criminal gangs and yet in order to fully understand the development of British escape activities in the Unoccupied Zone it is necessary to address these early

[99] Ibid.
[100] Donald Caskie, *The Tartan Pimpernel* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 32.

connections. The fact remains that the British in Marseilles were not only isolated from their consular authorities but also removed from and initially at least unable to recognise or connect with committed civilian supporters.

Given their physical location in the Old Port and their presence in bars and cafés in their immediate environs, it is hardly surprising that the first efforts to organise and co-ordinate escape activities involved some level of complicity with local criminal gangs. The earliest escape plans were made with such assistance, a point often neglected in mainstream escape histories despite it being a recurring theme in the primary sources, both in terms of the escape reports and autobiographies.[101]

While the British were through these associations, in effect connecting with a well-established underworld, this did not necessarily pave the way for success. More often than not, these connections had disastrous results. For instance, in early autumn 1940, shortly after his arrival in Marseilles, Fitch attempted to pursue a number of boat schemes with the aim of removing as many men from Marseilles as possible.[102] In one such scheme, organised in tandem with Varian Fry an American assisting political refugees to leave France, Fitch lost a considerable sum of money. According to Fry, Fitch questioned the trustworthiness of the ship's crew and as a safely measure divided the money for the scheme among the men.[103] His intention was to ensure that the money could not be robbed or taken from any one man before they boarded the ship. However, those organising the ship insisted on the full amount before departure leaving the British officer with no other option than to produce the full amount. Once they had the money, the chief organisers absconded leaving Fitch, his selected passengers and Fry's passengers without a ship.

This incident highlights the lack of perceived options on the part of the British. Fitch's action in dividing the money indicates his distrust of the financial motives of those

[101] See Varian Fry, *Surrender on demand* (New York, 1997) & Langley, *Fight another day*.
[102] Varian Fry's autobiography contains details of Fitch's schemes but there is also reference to them in the escape reports of Captain C.F.P. Mills and Lieutenant C.D. Hunter. Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301) see also Account of escape of 2814207 Sgt. Hugh Caldwell, 4/Camerons, 51st (H) Div., 5 Dec 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[103] Fry, *Surrender on demand*, p. 112.

willing to assist him. Equally, his willingness to cede on this point and hand over the money in these circumstances suggests the lack of better alternatives. The criminal underworld was the only one willing to actively engage with British internees. This argument is supported by continued British engagement with schemes they knew were dubious and held no guarantee of success, an engagement which could not have continued if officers such as Fitch were in a position to tap into another support base. Other officers, similarly, recognised the ambiguous support offered by criminals with Hunter noting that during his time in Marseilles, October to December 1940, the 'most remunerative trade in Marseilles at the time was swindling British who wanted to get away'.[104] This conclusion is borne out elsewhere. In Langley's autobiography he recounts two separate escape schemes involving criminal organisation. On one occasion, Langley took the lead attempting to gain the support of a woman whom he claimed was involved in the infamous Blue Train robbery before the war.[105] Similar to Fitch's experience, no men escaped and money was lost. On the second occasion, according to Langley, a criminal organisation led by the infamous Paul Carbonne made overtures to the British via Langley. Langley was promised a ship to bring all the men in Marseilles out on the guarantee that the British government would not interfere with Carbonne's smuggling operations. It is hard to grasp the audacity of such a proposal but Langley considered it genuine and, whether known to the British government or not, committed them to the proposal! While Langley claimed the scheme progressed significantly it never came to fruition. According to Langley, the French government offered Carbonne a better deal on the condition he would not help the British.

These schemes seem far-fetched but the willingness of the British to engage with various criminal organisations marks the desperation and frustration experienced by these men. In some cases, if Langley's account in relation to Carbonne is to be believed, it would appear that the British were probably pawns in a 'turf' war.[106] While Langley's account may appear extraordinary, particularly with regard to the French government's role in the proceedings, which it must be added Langley learned through second hand

[104] Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[105] Langley, *Fight another day*, p. 114.
[106] It is quite possible that the British were used as pawns in a bigger scheme run by Carbonne. French intelligence was aware of his activities and intelligence officer Colonel Paul Paillole noted in his autobiography that Carbonne was also dining in top restaurants associated with Germans and collaborationists in Paris. Paillole also indicated that Carbonne was caught up with French intelligence officers working with him in Marseilles. Paul Paillole, *Fighting the Nazis*, p. 232, 248.

accounts, it fits with the general trend of British officers striking deals with various dubious individuals and criminal gangs.

Overcoming isolation: identifying a civilian support base

Murchie continued these associations with criminal organisations as evidenced in reports, relating to two separate escapes in January and February 1941.[107] The latter escape involved Lieutenant Richard Broad who noted that

> Clayton [Murchie's associate] was extremely well in with all the Marseilles gangsters and in consequence was able, at times, to be very useful.[108]

In spite of this usefulness, as already indicated by Fitch and Langley's experiences, this reliance on the criminal underworld ultimately threatened British escape activities and the burgeoning British-led escape organisation. There is evidence to suggest that these connections, combined with the harassment they received from the French authorities, were the impetus behind Murchie's and Clayton's departure from France. In April 1941, the month of Murchie's departure, Murchie acquired a sum of fifty thousand francs to fund his escape efforts. Soon afterwards, Murchie's apartment was robbed and the money stolen. Murchie, in a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, the British ambassador to Spain, detailing the incident, did not venture any insight or offer suggestions as to who was possibly involved in the robbery. However, a number of Murchie's contemporaries noted that he was indiscreet, flamboyant and flashy with money.[109] Fry placed blame for the robbery on a number of mutual connections with whom Murchie had recent dealings.[110] Whoever the culprit, the episode prompted Murchie's departure from France a few days later.

While the location of the British internees in the Old Port may have initially prevented them from establishing a solid support base with sympathetic French helpers, there were examples of help given without expectation of return or monetary gain. This sympathy was not so much directed at the British internees but rather appears to have been

[107] Statement by 742649 Sgt. S.M.F. Parkes, 9 Squadron, R.A.F., 19 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304) & Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[108] Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[109] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301) & Fry, *Surrender on demand*, p. 210.
[110] Fry, *Surrender on demand*, p. 214.

channelled through the Seamen's Mission. The Mission appears to have quickly become associated with British servicemen and on at least two separate occasions men, on hearing English spoken, approached speakers for help and were directed to the Mission.[111] The main evidence for this draws on Reverend Donald Caskie's autobiography which suggests that the Mission became a focal point for those sympathetic to the British.

In his autobiography Caskie credited several groups of helpers with the first show of support coming from Greek and Cypriot merchants working in the harbour. According to Caskie, these merchants on learning he was a Scottish clergyman helping British soldiers; 'went to extraordinary lengths to find us provisions. Without them I could not have fed the men'.[112] Equally, Caskie, in his position as minister, succeeded in expanding the Mission's support in both spiritual and philanthropic terms by tapping into a number of local Christian communities. In spiritual terms, Caskie sought to cater for the needs of Catholic soldiers and in so doing, acquired the support of a Polish chaplain. It is unclear if this chaplain provided any additional practical assistance but another Catholic religious community, an 'Irish order of Roman Catholic Sisters' supplied the Mission with clothing collected from locals.[113] A local Presbyterian minister, and through him members of his congregation, supplied the Mission with practical assistance; collections were specifically taken up to provide the British at the Mission with various essentials including clothing.[114]

As far as can be established this support was not given directly to British internees but instead channelled through Caskie via the Seamen's Mission. Because the only evidence of this assistance comes from Caskie's autobiography it is difficult to determine the extent of the donations and the manner in which they were distributed. There was however one source of assistance referred to by Caskie and also indicated in numerous escape reports. This support came from the British living along the French Riviera. Caskie writes highly of the British community and their financial donations, listing the individuals sponsoring his work and their commitment to his cause, that is,

[111] Account of escape of 4271002 Spr. F. Bradley, 170th Tunnelling Coy., R.E., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2814207 Sgt. Hugh Caldwell, 4/Camerons, 51st (H) Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[112] Caskie, *The Tartan Pimpernel*, p. 36.
[113] Ibid., p. 53.
[114] Ibid., pp 45-6.

the welfare of soldiers. Captain D.B. Lang also pays tribute to this help writing that 'comforts and clothing for British troops in Marseilles' were 'provided where possible by British civilians'.[115]

Arguably, a shared heritage and a sense of common cause lay at the root of this assistance but it may not have been entirely one way. The evidence of this is limited to one account, that of Captain A.R. Thackrah, who in August 1940 took personal responsibility for a number of British civilians being evacuated from France. According to Thackrah, he 'conducted' as a singular officer this party to the Franco-Spanish frontier.[116] It is more likely that British civilians living in the Riviera were in a position to offer assistance. Being civilians, it was also easier for them to travel unimpeded to the frontier and to do so legally.

The main contribution of these British civilians was financial support which, it may be argued, was not solely given out of an overriding sense of patriotism but on the understanding that it would be repaid. Contributions by British civilians are indicated in a number of sources including Caskie's autobiography and there are several incidences of help recorded in Hunter's, Langley's and Lang's escape reports. However, in spite of this, details of such support remain relatively sparse making it impossible to determine the scope of this support network. For instance, as referred to in the last chapter, according to Hunter, when Mme Bonnefous arrived in Marseilles seeking funds in autumn 1940, he went to Cannes to raise the funds which were given to him by 'an Englishman' on the understanding that it was a loan.[117] Hunter does not expand on how he originally came into contact with this Englishman nor how he managed to raise 35,000 francs on short notice. This is particularly significant given that Hunter personally recognises that the 'situation of the British in unoccupied France in regard to francs was very difficult'.[118] This is mirrored in the experiences of Lang, another officer in Marseilles in the autumn of 1940, who referred to the assistance of British civilians in the south of France. Lang noted that these civilians provided comforts for the 'troops' but that funding was a problem. Lang, in his report, appears to suggest that the War

[115] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[116] Account by Capt. A.R. Thackrah att. 13 (Foreign) G.P., A.M.P.C., 18 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[117] Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[118] Ibid.

Office should fill this breach stating that 'further supplies' to these troops would be 'nearly impossible unless more money is made available'.[119]

The theme of repayment for assisting escape efforts and the manner of this repayment is exemplified in Langley's account of his dealings with Britain's wealthy subjects living in France. According to Langley, he negotiated a deal towards the end of autumn 1940 with Mr Jurgens Price, a businessman attached to the multinational corporation Jurgens of Unilever. This company had strong British and Dutch connections. Price was in Cannes and was prepared to support Langley's escape efforts; in order to do this he was willing to advance five thousand pounds to Reverend Caskie but it would appear that this was far from a charitable venture. As Langley reported

> None of the money will be released … until such time as word is received from me, in code to Caskie ... that this sum has been paid back into Mr Price's account at East Sheen.[120]

Considering the above, while British civilians sought to actively assist troops in the cases mentioned above, it appears that financial motivation or, at the very least, financial reimbursement was an important consideration in this type of support. Though this claim cannot be asserted as a general rule, one researcher on the topic, Helen Long, goes one step further and suggests that

> British residents along the Riviera formed a committee to raise funds to help their own nationals. They came up with loans against promises of repayment by the War Office ... It became a good investment and was returned with interest after victory.[121]

Long is the author of *Safe houses are dangerous,* and niece to Dr George Rodocanachi one of the French helpers in Marseilles (discussed later in this chapter).[122] She does not reveal her sources for this information but claims firmly that assistance from British residents, most likely wealthy, was predicated on, or at the very least concerned by financial considerations. There is nothing in the escape reports to confirm or deny Long's assessment of the situation. Her claim serves to highlight the self-interested

[119] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[120] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301). This pattern was repeated with other officers raising loans from British residents in the south of France include Account of escape of 69673 Lieut. C.D. Hunter, Cameron Hldrs, 51st Div., 24 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[121] Helen Long, *Safe houses are dangerous* (2nd ed., Bristol, 1989), p. 63.
[122] Ibid.

nature of this support base but it also highlights the fact that British residents along Riviera were still one of the first sources of civilian assistance. Despite the necessity to repay the support, British civilians were perceived as trustworthy and unlikely to rob or betray those they assisted unlike the criminal gangs with whom British officers also dealt. As British residents they were easily recognisable as potential supporters and money forwarded by them to officers like Langley came at vital times when officers were seeking to consolidate escape efforts but unable to tap into a French civilian support base.

It took some time before British officers, notably Garrow, established a solid French civilian support base. In some cases, British escapees arriving in the Unoccupied Zone were given addresses by their helpers in the Forbidden or Occupied Zones. For instance, Mme Bonnefous gave Hunter, Hood-Crees, Lang and Buckingham details of an acquaintance in Marseilles which proved useful on their initial arrival in the city. Yet such connections were often one-off events or relatively short lived. In the case of Mme Bonnefous, following her arrest in October-November 1940, her contacts and safe houses appear to have dissolved. This is difficult to prove with absolute certainty but no further references are made to indicate her connections remained intact in Hunter's report or other escape accounts from this period.

It would appear that it was not until late spring or early summer 1941, around the time Murchie and Garrow were assuming control over British escape activities and British internees were removed to St Hippolyte du Fort, that there was progress in tapping into a solid support base in Marseilles. It is difficult to trace this change through the escape reports given the lack of details; autobiographies and biographies fill this breach, though such sources of information, given their nature, must be treated with some circumspection.

Robert Paxton's ground-breaking research on Vichy France argues that in relation to the composition of the French resistance

> Only the young and the already outcast can adopt easily to a life of extended rebellion and that is why the Resistance in France contained a disproportionate

> share of the young, Communists and old streetfighters from the prewar protofascist leagues.[123]

This appears to hold true for some of the first genuine and committed helpers in Marseilles. The burgeoning escape organisations' initial connections were with those 'already outcast' and/or experiencing a sense of alienation under the regime. A number of the first crucial connections established by British officers were with those who were what may be termed 'outcast' or experiencing a life of 'extended rebellion'. Evidence from one such helper, Elizabeth Haden Guest, indicates that British officers were becoming increasingly discerning on who to approach for assistance. In her case, introductions were made with Lieutenant James Langley through the offices of the unofficial British Consul, Major Dodds. Haden Guest was married to a British MP and was living in France at the time of the invasion with her son, Anthony. Haden Guest was also German and a former communist. She had fled Germany in the 1930s and was heavily involved in assisting other communists to do the same. Shortly after German occupation, she was arrested but managed to escape with her son and cross the demarcation line.

Haden Guest had experienced life as an outcast and endured years of extended rebellion. Langley, in approaching Haden Guest, appears to have had some awareness of her background which arguably paved the way for these overtures. He knew that Haden Guest was bilingual, a skill he was specifically interested in. The dates of Haden Guest's entry into the British-led escape organisation are unclear but Langley arrived in Marseilles at the end of October and left on the 21 February 1941. It is likely that she began assisting their activities sometime between November and February. Her main point of contact was Garrow with her mission being to accommodate British soldiers. Haden Guest's autobiography suggests she was comfortable living an underground lifestyle and went so far as to move into a brothel, a move which she points out meant she could 'have a room without registering'.[124] Haden Guest's activities highlight the validity of Paxton's argument. She was one of the first civilian helpers and adapted to the lifestyle required with relative ease. Her willingness to live as an outcast aided her work with the emerging organisation. However, escape organisations need stability almost as much, if not more, than those willing to live lives of extended rebellion.

[123] Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. 292.
[124] Elisabeth Furse and Ann Barr, *Dream weaver* (London, 1993), p. 113.

Haden Guest's activities were still rooted in the Marseilles underworld which was far from a solid support base on which to build an escape organisation.

It was not until British escape organisers connected with French helpers, notably middle class helpers, that the British eventually moved beyond their isolation in Marseilles and stabilized escape activities.

Garrow appears to have been the main officer driving this recruitment, however, he did so slowly and only after establishing the credentials of potential helpers. In the cases which will be illustrated below, helpers went to considerable trouble to accommodate and show support for the British. These helpers were not necessarily aware of British escape activities but their continued support demonstrated to Garrow their amenability to the British cause. This paved the way for recruitment. For instance, Nancy Fiocca (née Wake), an Australian married to a French industrialist, began entertaining British officers in her home after an accidental encounter with one in a bar in Marseilles.[125] Fiocca opened the doors of her home to British officers signalling her support and empathy for these men. In continuing this activity she drew the notice of Garrow which eventually paved the way for her, and her husband's, recruitment as helpers in early 1941. In this manner, recruitment was far from spontaneous and took place over a number of weeks, indicative of the growing caution of Garrow who was determined and recognised the importance of establishing a solid support basis.

Recruitment progressed in the same manner for a number of other key helpers. Helpers such as Dr George Rodocanachi and Louis Nouveau joined the organisation in late spring but had signalled their pro-British sympathies long before they were approached for assistance. Rodocanachi, a doctor working with the Mixed Medical Commission, had already come to the attention of at least one British officer in late 1940. McGregor identified Rodocanachi as sympathetic to the British; in his case it was Haden Guest and not a British officer who approached him to work for the organisation in April.[126] In Nouveau's case, his apartment overlooked Fort St Jean which meant he was well aware

[125] Nancy Wake, *World War Two secret agent 'The White Mouse'* (London, 2006) p. 36-37; Russell Braddon, *Woman in arms* (London, 1956), pp 21-3.
[126] Furse and Barr, *Dream weaver*, p. 113.

of the British presence.[127] Nouveau, a rich industrialist, approached officers in Fort St Jean. He was seeking a way of helping his son to England to join the Free French. In doing this, he signalled his antipathy towards the status quo. A letter written by Murchie on his arrival in Spain to the Spanish ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare indicates that by April Nouveau had advanced considerable sums of money to the British in Marseilles.[128] His published diaries also assert that by May 1941 Nouveau, alongside his wife, had already hidden between twenty to thirty men in his apartment.[129]

While the British took the lead in recruiting support, potential helpers were active in seeking their company and later, similar to the process in the north, became involved in more committed escape activities. More importantly, officers like Garrow, in seeking to recruit such individuals, sought to give the growing British escape organisation stability. Paxton's argument that resistance consisted of a disproportionately high number of outcasts and youth may reflect broader trends in unoccupied France within the resistance as a whole but in relation to escape activities middle class support proved a crucial stabilising factor for the British-led escape organisation.

This middle-class support formed the core of Garrow's network in Marseilles. Moreover, once the British-led organisation, later known as the 'Pat Line', established a foothold, recruitment continued through these connections. This is exemplified with Rodocanachi whose wife, Fanny, and subsequently their extended family, became heavily involved in the escape organisation. The Fioccas and Nouveau funded Garrow's activities. Men arriving in Marseilles from the north or from St Hippolyte du Fort were hidden in various locations including Nouveau's and Rodocanachi's homes. In addition, both Garrow, and later Pat, in the spring and summer of 1940 lived in the Rodocanachi home. Another important middle-class connection was with Gaston Negre in Nîmes whose fourteen-bed apartment acted as a bridge between the leadership in Marseilles and the men in St Hippolyte du Fort, located fifty kilometres away. All these connections helped Garrow, and later Pat, to crystallise his support base in Marseilles.

[127] Researcher Brendan Murphy also says that Nouveau was introduced to Garrow and Langley at a dinner party in December 1940. Brendan Murphy, *Turncoat, the true case of traitor Sergeant Harold Cole* (London, 1987), p. 72.
[128] 'Letter from Charles Murchie to Sir Samuel Hoare', 15 Aug. 1941 (N.A.,FO371/26949a).
[129] See Louis Nouveau's autobiography. His published diary has a list at the beginning of men hidden in his flat. Before he compiled this list he had already hidden approximately twenty men. L.H. Nouveau, *Des captaines par milliers* (Paris, 1958).

The veneer of respectability offered by this middle-class support enabled escape organisers to stabilise and expand their organisation and, by harbouring its leaders, allowed the escape organisation to retain a presence in Marseilles.

The motivation for this support appears to have been driven by a sense of alienation. This alienation was referred to in both autobiographies and biographies of individuals such as Nouveau. In Nouveau's published diaries he spoke of a family tradition of challenging the status quo with his father supporting Dreyfus in the Dreyfus Affair. This left a deep impression on Nouveau, leading him to challenge the indifference or *attentisme* of his peers. His willingness to help his son join the Free French conveys the extent of his disillusionment with the situation. In this regard, while Nouveau may not appear as an 'outcast' or to have lived a life of obvious 'extended rebellion', he felt alienated from his class, that is, he was essentially an outcast. Similarly, Rodocanachi, according to his biographer Helen Long, experienced a similar sense of alienation.[130] He worked with the American Consulate in assessing the health of Jewish refugees for American visas and that of the British wounded for the Mixed Medical Commission. The former acquainted him with the excesses of fascism and the latter revealed his sympathy to the British. This was mirrored in Nancy Fiocca's personal opposition to fascism which was based on her past as a journalist. In this capacity, Fiocca witnessed the treatment of the Jews first hand in Austria.[131] Arguably, in helping the British to overcome their isolation, their supporters gave voice to their frustration at and alienation from the status quo.

British escapees arriving in the Unoccupied Zone were forced to be more self-reliant and take an active approach to organising their continued journey from France than their counterparts in occupied France. This ability to remain pro-active was facilitated by, and contrasted with the Forbidden and Occupied Zones where there was greater reliance on civilian help and generous parole terms. Parole enabled the British to take the lead in organising their personal escapes from the Unoccupied Zone. However, to some extent, parole and the relatively comfortable conditions in unoccupied France threatened British escape endeavours. Military cohesion and concepts of duty, sense of purpose and

[130] According to Helen Long, he removed his medal pinned on him by Pétain. Long, *Safe houses*, p. 29.
[131] Interview with Nancy Wake, September 2011, (RTE Radio One Documentary on One, RTE Radio Archives).

leadership were particularly important in countering the allure and promise of an easy life in Marseilles. Moreover, while parole contributed to individual escape schemes, connecting with a civilian support base was necessary in order to progress such schemes beyond individual endeavours.

The British in the Unoccupied Zone were slower to identify and connect with resistance in the south. Difficulties in connecting with civilian helpers were compounded by the high turnover rate of British officers in Marseilles and their departures by various routes from France. While there were escape-oriented officers such as Potts, Besley, McGregor, Hunter, Sillar and Fitch willing to assist the escape of others, these men were also engaged in planning their personal departures and had no intention of remaining in unoccupied France long term. Consequently, the British, not in a position to consider establishing and maintaining long term connections, relied, for want of a better term, on 'quick fix' solutions including engaging with criminal gangs and resorting to bribery in order to organise their exit from France. Such an approach became untenable and was unlikely to have contributed long term to the protraction of escape activities. Connecting with local resistance was crucial in order to consolidate the British position in the Unoccupied Zone.

It was only with the establishment of a more solid leadership, which was reinforced by the War Office's official recognition of Garrow's role in Marseilles, were the British in a position to connect with a more committed support base. Garrow, and later O'Leary, learning from the mistakes of officers such as Murchie, were determined to move beyond criminal connections in Marseilles and recruit civilian helpers. The credentials of helpers like Nouveau and Fiocca appear to have been carefully tested and established before Garrow sought their assistance in escape endeavours. Once such support was vetted and received it gave the British-led escape organisation a stability it previously lacked. This was the final component in the success of the British escape organisation with its impact going beyond simply consolidating the British position in Marseilles. This support underpinned the British ability to maintain and strengthen connections in the north and also to continue the push to establish connections along the Pyrenees. Securing support for escape efforts in this region and in Spain was crucial for the protraction of British escape activities and it is to this we now turn.

Chapter Three

Crossing the Pyrenees: diplomacy in Vichy France and British escape activities

While the previous chapter focused on the British in the Unoccupied Zone, this chapter shifts attention to British efforts to escape unoccupied France and the means by which these men returned to Britain. British attempts to leave France concentrated on both land and sea routes, with efforts directed towards the Pyrenees and into Spain or by sea to North Africa. In spite of the multiplicity of early escape efforts, the common theme of diplomacy emerges as particularly influential in shaping not only British efforts to leave France but also the journey back to Britain.

Diplomacy helped sustain and expand British escape efforts in the Unoccupied Zone. For the purpose of this chapter, diplomacy is used as an umbrella term to refer to the numerous embassies, consulates and legations from various countries, which had a presence in or contributed to British escape activities in unoccupied France. Before continuing, it is worth pointing out that not only did neutral countries such as Ireland, and until December 1941 America, retain a diplomatic presence in the Unoccupied Zone, but for a time countries occupied by Germany such as Czechoslovakia, Poland and Belgium also preserved some form of official or 'diplomatic' presence in unoccupied France. All of these in some way, had dealings with British escapees. The continued presence in France of various diplomatic services emerged as particularly important in terms of providing information to escapees and in some cases actively assisting in escape activities. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated in the course of this chapter that the diplomatic services, notably the American diplomatic service in France and the British diplomatic presence in Spain and Switzerland, contributed to sustaining, maintaining and expanding British escape activities in Marseilles.

Neutral diplomacy: Escape activities and the Irish Legation

This chapter begins with a brief assessment of the role of neutral diplomatic services notably those of Ireland, in British escape activities. In addition to Ireland, the United States for a time was neutral and its diplomatic services played a crucial role in assisting British escape efforts. The role of the United States embassy and consular services in British escape activities, however, will be addressed separately and extensively later in

this chapter. The focus here remains on assessing British use of the Irish diplomatic presence in the Unoccupied Zone. While assistance was minimal, evidence for Irish involvement is recorded in two known cases, that of Major James C. Windsor Lewis and that of Flight Lieutenant W.P.F Treacey.[1] These cases are significant in that British escapees approaching the Irish diplomatic service were aware of their actions and did so with the intention of gaining a neutral passport to leave France. Moreover, it is important to highlight that in both of these cases British use of the Irish diplomatic presence contributed to the success of escapes. Though the Irish role should not be overstated, the Irish Legation is one of the few mentioned in the reports that as a neutral, issued passports to British servicemen. In relation to the Irish Legation's experience in France, research undertaken by historian Niall Keogh on the Irish diplomat in France at the time, Con Cremin, highlights the difficulties experienced by the Irish. According to Keogh, up to this point Irish civilians living in France travelled on British passports.[2] Given German occupation and the German influence in the Unoccupied Zone, holding a British passport placed the holder in a potentially precarious position. This appears to have been the perception of Irish civilians in France as, according to Cremin, the main work of the Irish Legation after their arrival in Vichy in July 1940 related to the 'issue and renewal of passports'.[3]

Cremin referred to this passport work as a 'very important question'.[4] His designation of this task as a 'question' is insightful; the Irish Consulate placed a premium on ascertaining if applicants were genuinely Irish civilians. Keogh's research highlights that members of the Irish Legation visited a number of internment camps in unoccupied France assessing passport applicants. Of the two hundred internees claiming to be Irish by birth or parentage, seventy were deemed 'definitely Irish'.[5] The results of Keogh's research indicate that while the Irish Legation was pro-active in seeking the release of individuals, the Legation displayed a determination to ensure the 'Irishness' of those granted passports and to remain within this remit.

[1] Account of escape of Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, 2 Bn. Welsh Guards, 20th Gds. Bde., 13 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300) & Account of escape of 37617 F/Lt. W.P.F. Treacey, 73 (F)Sqdn., No. 11. (F)Group, 10 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[2] Niall Keogh, *Con Cremin: Ireland's wartime diplomat* (Cork, 2006), p. 22.
[3] Con Cremin quoted in Keogh, *Con Cremin*, p. 22.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 25.

This assessment process may go some way to explaining their relatively limited use but certainly the two aforementioned British escapees appear to have acquired Irish passports. In Flight Lieutenant W.P.F Treacey's case he obtained an Irish passport sometime after his arrival in Marseilles in October.[6] Treacey gives no indication as to how he procured this passport only commenting that he 'managed to get hold of an Irish passport and went to live as a civilian in a hotel in the town'.[7] With his Irish passport, Treacey lived freely in Marseilles while drawing money from the unofficial British consulate in the city (see chapter two). This gave Treacey the ability to move about unimpeded, unlike many of his contemporaries who were living in Fort St Jean. Treacey's report does not reflect on the implications of his Irish passport and the relative independence that came with it but other sources indicate that throughout the early autumn of 1940 Treacey continued to play a role in escape planning. As Treacey's report does not go into detail on his escape activities, it is necessary to draw on other references to his activities. Two separate sources, Varian Fry's autobiography and Lieutenant James Langley's report refer to Treacey's continued participation in escape activities.

Fry, an American who arrived in Marseilles in August 1940 to help political refugees leave France, observed that Treacey was one of the chief organisers of British escape activities. Fry supplied Treacey with money and Treacey used this money to help men cross the Franco-Spanish frontier. According to Fry, Treacey

> Generally sent his men down to the frontier in threes and fours, and miraculously, never had an arrest that had serious consequences.[8]

Beyond this assessment, Fry does not expand on Treacey's activities. However, Treacey's involvement in the escape scene in Marseilles is further highlighted by Langley. Langley's report noted that in November 1940 Treacey was one of two men chosen by Langley to travel to Lyon and establish contacts with the American Consul in Lyon.[9] Treacey succeeded in this objective, the implications of which will be discussed

[6] Account of escape of 37617 F/Lt. W.P.F. Treacey, 73 (F)Sqdn., No. 11. (F)Group, 10 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Varian Fry, *Surrender on demand* (New York, 1997), p. 133.
[9] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301). Independent researcher Oliver Clutton Brock claimed Treacey was Langley's second in command. While this may be true, it is also important to note that Treacey arrived and was

later in this chapter. When Treacey eventually decided to leave Marseilles in January 1941, his neutral passport facilitated his application for the necessary visa and his departure:

> I managed to get an identity card as a civilian, my visa de sortie and my visa for Portugal. I left Marseilles on 22nd January, arriving at Lisbon, via Narbonne, Barcelona and Madrid.[10]

This easy passage to Portugal stood in sharp contrast to the bulk of British escapees, most of whom did not consider the visa application process a means of leaving France.

Treacey, a native of Dublin, had the advantage that most men lacked: he could legitimately present himself as a neutral. There is at least one other case of a British escapee in Marseilles having a similar advantage to Treacey. A British serviceman, Bombardier George Melas, arrived in the Unoccupied Zone in the summer of 1940. Melas, coming from a Greek background, immediately on crossing the demarcation line went to seek the Greek Legation in Vichy. He then travelled to Marseilles, where he obtained a Greek passport. At this stage of the war, Greece was neutral and Melas successfully used his Greek passport to leave France in July 1940.[11]

Though successes like Treacey's and Melas' were rare, this did not stop others from attempting to personally present themselves as neutral. This approach was successful in at least one case, that of Major James C. Windsor Lewis, who arrived in Marseilles in August 1940 and managed to obtain a neutral passport. It is not clear which neutral diplomatic service provided Lewis with a passport but there are indications that he received an Irish one as Lewis changed his name to 'O'Brien', a common name in Ireland.[12] Lewis specifically referred to this name in his report as 'being a neutral name'. Under this name and with these papers Lewis travelled freely to various places in the Unoccupied Zone including Perpignan, Marseilles, Cannes, Vichy and Nice and successfully obtained a Portuguese visa. Subsequently, with his French papers declaring

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active in the Marseilles escape scene two months before Langley's arrival. Oliver Clutton Brock, *RAF Evaders: The comprehensive story of thousands of escapers and their escape lines, Western Europe 1940-1945* (London, 2009), Kindle edition.

[10] Account of escape of 37617 F/Lt. W.P.F. Treacey, 73 (F)Sqdn., No. 11. (F)Group, 10 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

[11] Report of No. 1547071 Bdr. George Melas, 44/101 Light A.A. and A/T. R.A., 5 Aug. 1940 (NA., WO208/3298).

[12] Account of escape of Major J.C. Windsor Lewis, 2 Bn. Welsh Guards, 20th Gds. Bde., 13 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

him neutral, Lewis obtained a neutral passport and with this neutral passport applied for a Spanish visa and the French visa de sortie, that is a visa to leave France. Lewis' neutral passport allowed him to approach the French authorities for the visa de sortie which was entered into his passport by gendarmes in Nice.

Equally, possession of a neutral passport enabled Lewis to approach the Spanish Consulate for a Spanish visa, permission for which could only be given through the Minster of the Exterior in Spain. It would have been virtually impossible for him to have requested this permission without a neutral passport. While waiting for his Spanish visa, Lewis continued to seek a means out of France, including at one stage a Brazilian visa for which he needed, and acquired, signatures from gendarmes in Marseilles. In this regard, Lewis' assumed neutral identity enabled him to continually approach the French authorities and pursue legitimate means of departing France. However, the process was cumbersome and required a great deal of waiting. From the time Lewis began the process in August it was some three months before he was in a position to leave France. Permission did not come through for his Spanish visa until 22 November 1940 and by that time Lewis had lost money on various failed escape schemes. In this respect, while Lewis' determination to continue pursuing the passport route to leave France ultimately paid off, it required patience, perseverance and communication with various consulates and the French authorities, the latter of which was difficult for escapees. This was particularly the case considering the French were obliged to make an arrest if there was a suspicion the applicant was British.

These difficulties may go some way to explaining why only a small number of individuals approached neutral diplomatic services and pursued legitimate means to leave the country. Others claimed 'Irishness' in order to receive special treatment. One incident, referred to in chapter one, involved a British officer, Wing Commander Basil Embry, who claimed to his German captors that he was an IRA man and heavily engaged in fighting the British for Irish freedom. On another occasion, in November 1940, a British private arrested in Spain wrote to the Direction General de Securidad, Madrid presenting himself as Irish and asserting that his relations 'had fought for the establishment of the Franco regime'.[13] In both cases, these men were promptly released

[13] Account of escape of 7603318 Pte. Patrick J. Harper R.A.O.C., 28 Nov. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).

and yet there is no evidence to suggest help was given in the knowledge that the men were escapees. Unfortunately, in Lewis' case, he does not go into the details on how he obtained his passport or the reaction of the diplomatic service, and therefore, it is almost impossible to determine whether the diplomatic service involved in issuing his passport was aware if he was a British officer or not. Even if Lewis' provided more information it must be also acknowledged that the scale of this help was relatively minimal though it does demonstrate a broader trend, namely, that diplomatic services from other countries, including those recently occupied, played a role in assisting men seeking to leave France.

Non-neutral diplomatic services in the Unoccupied Zone

In relation to help provided by the diplomatic services of occupied countries stationed in unoccupied France, help was given with the informed aim of returning men to Britain. In general, diplomatic services from Czechoslovakia or Poland proved useful and strove to assist not only their stranded civilians but also the British. Poland and Czechoslovakia already had the advantage of having an organisational structure in France after German occupation of their respective countries forced the setting up of governments in exile. With the departure of these governments to Britain in the summer of 1940, both countries still retained a diplomatic presence in France. In contrast, newly overrun and occupied countries like Belgium did not have a pre-existing organisational structure in France and therefore there was no strong diplomatic presence in the Unoccupied Zone which was in a position to offer assistance to escapees on par with that, which as will be illustrated, was offered by the Czechs and Poles.

Despite the lack of an obvious Belgian diplomatic presence in unoccupied France, Belgian authorities in the Unoccupied Zone were attempting to deal with the problem of their armed forces being stranded in France and they had set up a number of Belgian repatriation centres. On at least two occasions, Belgian officers working in these repatriation centres proved amenable to British escapees and actively sought to assist them in an individual or personal capacity. In July/August 1940 Corporal J.R. Horsman recounted strategically approaching the Belgian Mission in Toulouse where he received food and train tickets to Marseilles which, according to Horsman 'the Belgian Liaison

officer paid out of his own money'.[14] Because Belgian repatriation centres could not provide official travel documents, assistance to the British was limited. Nevertheless, while Belgian officers may have been limited in their ability to provide direct practical assistance to escapees, as Captain C.F.P Mills discovered on his arrival in Marseilles, Belgian officers connected to the repatriation centre were a useful source of information on the situation along the Franco-Spanish frontier. A number of these Belgian officers provided Mills with information and contacts along the Pyrenees and he successfully used these connections to cross into Spain in November 1940.

The Czech Consulate and its contribution to British escape activities

The limited help from Irish and Belgian emissary services stood in sharp contrast to the assistance offered to British escapees by Czech and Polish organisations in the Unoccupied Zone. The Czechs and Poles benefitted from their ability to retain a diplomatic service for at least a number of months. However, Czech and Polish officials also held different legal positions in Vichy France and this had a direct impact on the type of assistance they could respectively offer the British. In relation to the Czech case, or the Czechoslovakian case, this was complicated by the fact that, as historian Vojtěch Mastný writes

> Prewar Czechoslovakia had been a state in which national identity was still a problem to be discussed, rather than a certainty to be taken for granted.[15]

Compounding the internal problems faced by Czechoslovakia, the German occupation of the Sudeten lands in 1938 and the remainder of the country in 1939 effectively meant, according to Mastný, that Czechoslovakia 'had become extinct before the war began'.[16] Given the problems facing Czechoslovakia's status as a nation state, Mastný further pointed out that 'its restoration was not a foregone conclusion'.[17]

Unlike Poland, the difficulties of defining Czechoslovakia undermined efforts to establish a government in exile, headed by former president, Edvard Beneš. Beneš resigned his presidency and left for Britain following the Munich Agreement and consequent German occupation of the Sudeten region in 1938. However, the German

[14] Account of escape of 434244 Cpl. Horsman, J.R. 6/D.L.I., 30 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[15] Vojtech Mastný, 'The Czechoslovak government in exile during World War II' in *Jarbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge* XXVII No. 4 (1979), pp 548-49.
[16] Ibid., p. 550.
[17] Ibid.

occupation of the whole country in March 1939 provided Beneš the opportunity of repudiating his resignation, an action he justified by claiming that German action 'rendered the Munich settlement with all its consequences [including Beneš resignation] null and void'.[18] With this precarious legal argument Beneš attempted to establish a government in exile; Mastný noted that he received popular support for this claim in Czechoslovakia.[19] In contrast, the reaction of both Britain and France was more circumspect. As Mastný highlighted, even with the outbreak of war in September 1939 the French consented only to the establishment of a Czech army and a National Committee in France, falling short on the issue of recognising a Czech government in exile.[20] The British also refused to give full status or recognition to a Czechoslovakian government in exile. It was only with the collapse of France and the departure of Czech officials to Britain that a Czech government in exile was finally established, and even this was not granted full diplomatic recognition.[21]

Rather ironically, for a number of months following French defeat the Czechs retained consular services in the Unoccupied Zone. The position of this consulate was unusual given that it was composed of Czech exiles though the Czech government in exile was in Britain and the current government in Czechoslovakia (then called the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) operated under German control. It is difficult to establish the various connections of the Czech Consulate as almost no research has been carried out in this area. Indirect anecdotal evidence indicates that the Czech Consulate maintained strong ties to the government in exile. Fry noted that the goal of the Czech Consul based in Marseilles, Vladimir Vochoč, was to help smuggle 'Czech volunteers out of France so they could fight again with the British'.[22] There is further evidence, illustrated in Mastný's research, which suggests that top level Czech government officials working under the German protectorate may have had sympathy with the aims of Vladimir Vochoč and the Czechs in exile. According to Mastný, Alios Eliáš, prime minister of the official government shortly after the formation of the Czech government in exile, sent word to London placing himself at Beneš's disposal.[23]

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p. 551.
[22] Fry, *Surrender on demand*, p. 18.
[23] Mastny, 'The Czechoslovak government in exile during World War II', p. 550.

Given the confusion surrounding the status of Czechoslovakia in international affairs, it is difficult to establish the exact nature and relationship that the Czech Consulate in unoccupied France maintained with either the government under the German protectorate or the government in exile, or indeed, if it acted autonomously and under French protection. In spite of this confusion, the important point remains that for a number of months following French defeat the Czech consulate retained and continued to exercise its right to issue passports to its civilians.[24] This suggests that Vichy granted or recognised the legal status of the Czech Consulate.

A British officer, Captain C.R.I. Besley, was one of the first British officers to make contact with the Czech Consulate in Marseilles. Besley approached the consulate in September 1940 requesting demobilisation papers for both his personal use and for a number of his colleagues. The Consulate recommended Mr Donald Lowrie to Besley, an American who appears to have been working closely with the Czech Consulate. It is perhaps odd to find, at this time, an American working for or with the Czech Consulate and in a position to provide British escapees with Czech demobilisation papers. However, Lowrie had already spent a considerable period of time in Czechoslovakia working on behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). According to archives on the YMCA held by the University of Minnesota, Lowrie helped expand the organisation in the 1920s before moving to Paris.[25] However, it appears from Varian Fry's autobiography that Lowrie continued to maintain close connections with Czechoslovakia and was in Prague at the time of the German invasion.[26] According to Fry, before leaving Prague, Lowrie helped a number of individuals to escape the country and was therefore considered a friend of the Czechs on his arrival in France.

Besley's report also confirms the close connections maintained between Lowrie and the Czech Consulate as it was Lowrie who provided Besley with the necessary forged Czech demobilisation papers.[27] In spite of the willingness of the Czech Consulate to

[24] Fry, *Surrender on demand*, p.18.
[25] 'YMCA International Work in Czechoslavakia: an inventory of its records', University of Minnesota website available at (http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/yusa0009x2x9.xml) (14 May 2015).
[26] Lowrie continued to remain interested in Czechoslovakia publishing a book on a Czechoslovakian president: Donald A. Lowrie, *Masaryk of Czechoslovakia: a life of Tomas G. Masaryk, first president of the Czechoslovak Republic* (London, 1937).
[27] Varian Fry's book, *Surrender on Demand* gives a first-hand account of Lowrie's work in Marseilles. However, for further information see also the work of researcher, Daniella Greene. Greene asserts that Donald Lowrie also engaged in relief efforts on behalf of Vichy's Ministry of the Interior. Daniella

provide direct assistance to the British, Lowrie warned Besley that the French authorities had recently discovered some forged Czech papers and advised that the papers he gave Besley should not be used. Interestingly, the recent discovery of these papers by the French authorities did not curtail Lowrie's willingness to help Besley and he still handed over these papers. This incident had an added significance when considered in the light of Varian Fry's autobiography. After seizing a number of false Czech passports the French authorities complained to the American Consulate about both Fry and Lowrie. This complaint, as described by Fry, appears to have been relatively unofficial but its impact was almost immediate. Word of this meeting filtered through to Fry and Lowrie and was quickly communicated to the Czech Consulate. In late September or in early October 1940, its activities in terms of issuing false papers immediately ceased.

Besley heeded Lowrie's warnings and ceded his desire to use these papers, exploring alternative means of exiting France. While Besley's communication was not the sole interaction between British escapees and the Czech Consulate, it is difficult to gauge the full extent of this connection. Captain D.B. Lang, arriving in Marseilles in autumn 1940, established contact with 'Polish, Belgian and Czech organisations' but gave particular praise to the Czechs describing them as the 'most stout hearted' and commented that the Czech organisation went to 'magnificent efforts' to help both British and Czech reach British territory.[28] In his escape endeavours Lang reported working 'hand in glove with the Czech Legation'.[29] Lang eventually left France by boat in November 1940 but he does not state if his connections with the Czechs facilitated his departure from France. Equally, although his account gives significant praise to Czech support, he does not expand on the nature or extent of this help or provide details of schemes involving the Czechs. This makes it difficult to assess the impact of Czech support on early British escape endeavours. However, Lang does give some indication of the Czech consulate's value in terms of the information it provided, claiming that the situation in Marseille compelled him to work with the Czechs as there was no British organisation which 'possessed any local knowledge of the situation'.[30]

Greene, 'Racial Motivations for French collaboration during the Second World War: uncovering through film and memoir' (PhD thesis, Clemson University, 2008), p. 105.
[28] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

Lang's comments may be perceived as a veiled criticism of the shortcomings of the British handling of the situation and the lack of assistance from its diplomatic services (see chapter two) but they also highlighted the importance of information to escapees. The Czech Consulate may have been unable to continue providing documents but the information it could convey was considered valuable to British officers like Lang. Equally, British contact with the Czech Consulate expanded the scope of British connections. Lowrie, as already mentioned, had established contact with Varian Fry and provided him with a number of passports for political refugees. On Besley's arrival at the Czech Consulate in September, Lowrie not only gave him the demobilisation papers but also Fry's details. Although Fry does not refer to Besley in his autobiography, it would appear from the chronology of the escape reports that this was Fry's first, albeit brief, contact with British officers.[31]

Ultimately, this connection had long term consequences for British escape activities. Fry's involvement gave added impetus in escape activities and as a result of his American nationality he was able to travel to Spain and act as an intermediary between the British diplomatic services in Spain and British escapees in Marseilles (discussed later in this chapter). This connection brought much-needed funds to the British escape efforts although the value of these funds is questionable given that much of it was spent on a number of failed boat schemes (see previous chapter). On the positive side, through this connection the British gained access to Fry's contacts on the Pyrenees and in the winter of 1940 Fry established an escape route along the Pyrenees with the aid of Lisa and Jonanes Fittko.[32] This couple were Jewish leftists who had fled Berlin in 1933; following the German invasion of France they planned to flee a second time and acting accordingly they made their way to the eastern Pyrenees with the aim of crossing into Spain. The Fittkos were shown a safe route across the mountains near Banyuls and assisted a number of refugees across including the famous historian and scholar Walter Benjamin. Fry heard of the Fittkos' activities and convinced them to stay in Banyuls and pass other political refugees into Spain. Both stayed until late spring 1941 and in

[31] Fry refers to Fitch as the first contact but Fitch did not arrive in Marseilles until September. Besley had been living in the city since July. Fry, *Surrender on demand*, p. 105.
[32] Interview with Lisa Fittko, 22 Jan. 1999 (University of South California Shoah Foundation Institute, Code 48643-2). See also Lisa Fittko, *Escape through the Pyrenees* (Evanston, 1991).

that time, according to both Fry's and Lisa Fittko's published memories, the Fittkos, with Fry acting as intermediary, continued to pass British escapees along this route.[33]

In this respect, the connections with Fry, which appear to have been made first through the Czech Consulate, helped the British to expand escape efforts into Spain. Yet it must also be noted that while Fittko asserts a continued role in assisting British escapees throughout the spring of 1941, the majority of escape reports give relatively little information on guides assisting men across the Pyrenees. In addition, the Fittkos were not directly mentioned in these accounts.[34] This, however, does not challenge the veracity of Fittko's claim and there may be indirect support for her assertion that both she and her husband Johannes continued to help men escape up until March 1941 based on the fact that the escape reports continually refer to Banyuls as a crossing point into Spain. The escape reports also reveal, however, that as the organisation in Marseilles developed, the British leadership pushed to establish their own connections along the Pyrenees (discussed later in this chapter) and moved away from working through intermediaries such as Varian Fry. Equally, the Czech Consulate, which contributed to the British establishing contact with Fry, also appears to lose its importance to British escape organisers throughout 1941. None of the main British escape organisers, all of whom were dealt with in the last chapter, such as Fitch, Murchie or Garrow, refer to Czech officials in any detail in their reports leading researchers, including this author, to believe that the connection between the Czech and British escape organisers dissolved soon after the British managed to establish contact with Fry in autumn 1940.

Only one report contradicts this assessment. Corporal J.A. Parker arrived in Marseilles in May 1942 and was taken to the Czech Relief Centre where he was cared for by M. Dubina.[35] Whether this relief centre was, or at least was connected to, the Czech Consulate is almost impossible at this juncture to establish.[36] Regardless of its actual status, through this centre Parker was passed directly to a safe house established by the British-led escape organisation. This is the only information in relation to the Czechs

[33] Fry, *Surrender on demand*; Fittko, *Escape through the Pyrenees*; Interview with Lisa Fittko, 22 January 1999 (University of South California Shoah Foundation Institute, Code 48643-2).
[34] Fittko, *Escape through the Pyrenees*, p. 159.
[35] Account of escape of NX. 3653 Cpl. Parker, J.A., 2/1 Field Coy A.I.F., 14/17 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[36] Oliver Clutton-Brock also noted that two escapees, Duncan and Rowan-Hamilton, went to the Czech Relief Centre in late 1941. However, Clutton Brock provides no further information on the Czech Relief Centre or possible prior connections to the Czech Consulate. Clutton Brock, *RAF Evaders*.

contained in Parker's account of his escape. However, it highlights a continued connection between the British leadership of the fully-fledged escape organisation and the Czech presence in Marseilles. The Czech Consulate at this stage no longer had an official presence in unoccupied France and had been left in a particularly precarious position following the arrest of the Czech Consul, Vladimir Vochoč, in later spring 1941. Yet Parker's report indicates that the Czechs still managed to retain a semi-official presence in Marseilles and that this 'Czech Relief Centre', in Parker's case, was a contact point for the British-led escape organisation in the city. Beyond this assessment and indeed beyond Parker's report, there appears to be no information currently available that gives further insight into the continued contact and scope of British relations with Czech officials and how they contributed to expanding escape activities in Marseilles.

The Polish Consulate and British escape activities

The relative silence in the escape reports respecting the developing relationship between the Czechs and the British stands in sharp contrast to British connections with the Polish Consulate in unoccupied France. The Poles did not have the same difficulties as the Czechs in establishing an official presence in France. According to historian Anita Prazmowska, the Polish government in exile was not only supported by the French but also by the Polish army, which on the eve of the German invasion consisted of 83,000 men, was 'equipped and maintained by the French government'.[37] On the defeat of France, the head of the Polish government in exile issued radio instructions to the troops encouraging them to make it to the nearest port where they would be picked up and transported to Britain.[38] This instruction never translated into widespread action. Though Prazmowska noted that 27,614 men reached Britain, she also points out that 16,092 men were taken as prisoners of war while a further 54,647 Poles were scattered across Switzerland and France or were making their way to Spain.[39]

Effectively, this meant that in the summer of 1940 there was a Polish presence in various French port cities attempting to leave France for Britain. As Prazmowska's focus shifts to the Polish contingent in Britain, she does not provide details on the scope

[37] These figures, 83,000 men are also drawn from Prazmowska's work. Anita Prazmowska, *Britain and Poland: the betrayed ally 1939-1943* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 14.
[38] Ibid., p. 25.
[39] Ibid., p. 26.

or impact of this Polish presence but she makes one interesting point which is important in the context of this research. In relation to the Polish perspective, Prazmowska argues that

> Until June 1940 Britain was viewed as a secondary ally. Now she became the principal and only patron.[40]

This change in perspective is particularly evident among Polish servicemen who arrived in the port city of Marseilles. The Poles had a strong and active presence in Marseilles where the French interned these men in the former English Hospital, not to be confused with the British Seamen's Mission run by Reverend Donald Caskie and used by British internees. This perception of Britain as the 'principal and only patron' appears to have directed Polish activity in Marseilles. The Poles, through their officers and backed by their diplomatic services, within a month of their arrival in Marseilles initiated contact with the British interned in Fort St Jean with the aim of co-ordinating escape activities.

Brooks Richards examined the role of the Polish diplomatic services in the Unoccupied Zone and their efforts to assist Polish military efforts to leave France for Britain.[41] Brooks noted the setting-up of a Polish Embassy in Vichy and points to an official Polish diplomatic presence in various cities in the Unoccupied Zone such as Lyon, Toulouse, Marseilles and Perpignan.[42] However, the main interest of Richards' study relates to the Poles in London or North Africa and as a result, Richards' research does not fully assess the contribution of Polish diplomatic services to early escape activities in aiding Poles and for British efforts to leave France. This is important considering that British escapees in contact with Polish servicemen in unoccupied France frequently refer to the Polish Consulate in connection with Polish escape efforts. The focal point for these activities appears to have been the English Hospital with escape schemes centring around two main ideas: firstly, the issuing of Polish passports, which similar to Czech passports were accepted by the French authorities until November 1940;[43] secondly, Polish efforts to obtain ships.

[40] Ibid., p. 27.
[41] Brooks Richards, *Secret flotillas vol. II: clandestine sea operations in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Adriatic 1940-1944* (London, 2004), p. 8.
[42] Ibid., p. 6.
[43] Ibid., p. 8.

The issuing of passports was the first recourse. As initially there were no concerns over the Polish Consulate's ability to issue passports, the main concern for the Polish appears to have been their reception in their destination neutral countries such as Portugal, from which they hoped to reach Britain. This concern, as elucidated in an account provided by Second Lieutenant R.A.J. Newman, seems to have prompted one of the first Polish attempts to connect with the British. Newman arrived and was interned in Fort St Jean at the end of July or early August 1940, when after a fortnight

> A Polish padre appeared, who was then in charge of arrangements for evacuating Poles through Lisbon to England. Apparently he thought that the addition of some British would smooth the Poles' path through Portugal.[44]

Although Newman does not provide specifics, this scheme involved the use of Polish passports and by extension needed the Polish Consulate's complicity to sign off on providing British escapees with false passports. While the British may have been provided with false passports without the knowledge of the Polish Consulate, this is unlikely to have been the case when considered in the light of similar British experiences of this Polish passport scheme. While the scheme ultimately failed to come to fruition, two British officers, including Captain C.R.I Besley (the same officer who had also approached the Czech Legation) attempted to use their fake Polish passports to cross into Spain.[45] Seeking assurance that it was possible to use this passport, Besley, along with his colleague, directly approached the Polish officials at the consulate in Toulouse. Not only did the consulate approve the use of these fake passports but provided Besley with a renewed Portuguese visa and money in American dollars to bribe the Spanish Consulate (presumably for a transit visa).[46]

Besley's experience illustrates the resources and resourcefulness of the Polish Consulate officials and their willingness to directly aid escapes. Moreover, while the Spanish Consulate did not grant either Besley or his colleague's visa, the Consulate continued to work on their behalf and arranged for them to join a group of Poles and cross into Spain

[44] Account of escape of ARM/S/Sgt. R.A.J. Newman, R.A.O.C., Attd Highlanders. No: 7583169, 20 Sept 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299). See also Account of escape of 6397485 L/Sgt. A. Tilling, 7/R. Sussex, 12th Div. Wounded, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

[45] Besley reported that F/Lt Verity accompanied him to Toulouse, also with the intention of using his fake Polish passport. Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

[46] In order to travel through Spanish territory the Spanish authorities required a transit visa.

illegally.[47] In addition, Second Lieutenant R.A.J. Newman, also a participant in the original scheme, implies that he also used his fake Polish passport to gain entry to Spain. This same passport may have been the 'fake Polish passport, which bore visas for China, Portugal and Spain'.[48] Newman and a number of his colleagues also received an exchange order for third-class passage on a ship from Lisbon to Shanghai and twenty American dollars to cover expenses. This list marked the end of Newman's account on his escape such that it is reasonable to assume he utilised the above and crossed the frontier into Spain as a Pole.

Although the Polish scheme did come to fruition on the scale envisaged, the level of detail and planning demonstrates the ability of Polish officers in Marseilles to organise. This scheme, as it was revealed to the British in early autumn months of 1940, involved these men only in the final stages of planning. British officers and servicemen were presented with the plans as they existed and the numbers of places open to British escapees filled requirements already set by the Poles (two officers and four non-commissioned officers).[49] Even when this Polish passport scheme was abandoned, Polish officers with the help of their Consulate in Toulouse were in a position to supply men with money and guides to cross the Pyrenees into Spain illegally. In this respect, the Poles based in the English Hospital displayed a level of organisation not yet reached or possibly not yet fully conceived by the British in Marseilles. This was likely achieved with the assistance, co-operation and know-how of their consular authorities.

On other occasions help came directly from the Polish Consulate. For instance, when Lieutenant William Sillar and Captain F. Fitch first arrived in the Unoccupied Zone at the end of July 1940, the Polish Consulate in Toulouse directly attempted to help them to cross the Franco-Spanish frontier.[50] Both men reached Salies du Salat, a small commune located near the western Pyrenees, where they met a Polish lieutenant who referred them to the consulate in Toulouse. They had previously attempted to make

[47] Besley's companion, F/Lt Verity left before the guide arrived and therefore did not join Besley on the Pyrenees crossing. Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[48] Account of escape of ARM/S/Sgt. R.A.J. Newman, R.A.O.C., Attd Highlanders. No: 7583169, 20 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[49] Ibid.
[50] Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

contact with the American Consulate there with little success but found willing aid from the Polish Consulate. According to Sillar, the 'officers' at the Consulate in Toulouse

> Undertook to supply us with Polish passports issued to civilians of 16 years of age. The passports arrived 3 weeks later and we set off via Toulouse, by train, for Perpignan.[51]

Sillar's statement indicates that the Consulate provided fake passports under the military age in order that the men might enter into Spain without difficulty. At that time, men of military age had particular difficulty in travelling. In addition to this precaution, when applying for visas the Prefect in Perpignan insisted on a personal appearance of the applicants, the Polish Consul refused and arranged for Sillar and Fitch to stay in Banyuls 'until the matter could be adjusted'.[52] In so doing, the Consul indicated an intention to act and advocate on their behalf. This, combined with the Polish Consul's ability to make arrangements for Sillar and Fitch to stay in Banyuls, further highlights the resources the Polish Consulate was willing to offer not only Polish, but British escapees.

Despite their intentions, before the Polish Consul could act the Vichy authorities arrested him leaving Sillar and Fitch in Banyuls. While Polish contacts continued to attempt to help both men cross into Spain, Sillar and Fitch left for Marseilles where they later became heavily involved in British escape activities. At the end of September 1940 Sillar again travelled to Banyuls in an attempt to help British escapees cross the frontier. It is unknown if Sillar used connections he had made through the Polish Consulate to do this but he had some success before he too crossed the frontier into Spain some weeks later. Interestingly, Sillar, once he crossed the Franco-Spanish frontier, used his Polish passport to travel safely through Spain reaching the British Consulate without being arrested. Sillar credits his fake passport with his ability to reach Barcelona without arrest, an assertion which is credible considering at this time most escapees fell into the hands of the Spanish authorities either en-route to Barcelona or at the British Embassy in Madrid (discussed later in this chapter).

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

In considering the Polish Consulate's role in facilitating escape, it is important to point out that even with the failure of the above scheme, Polish officials still continued to assist Sillar. The ability of the Polish diplomatic services to aid escape activities, provide passports, money, and in Sillar and Fitch's case accommodation, was because their diplomatic services were remarkably well organised and financed from their Polish counterparts in London. Furthermore, the Polish in London channelled this funding to their diplomatic services in France with the intention that it should be used for escape activities.

Two sources identify the nature of Polish funding, namely Besley's account of Polish activities and an account given by Lieutenant A.D. McGregor. According to Besley's account, Major Polakewitz informed him that in August 1940 the Poles were running short on funds. Polakewitz asked Besley if he would approach the British Consul in Marseilles, or more particularly, Major Dodds for help (see chapter two for details on Major Dodds). Dodds was reluctant to help and no money was forthcoming. According to Besley, on the 1 September Polakewitz informed Besley that Polish financial affairs had improved with the arrival of a Polish agent from London.[53] This agent brought with him a substantial sum of money in American dollars. In fact, Besley benefitted from this cash injection and in total received two thousand five hundred francs from the Poles, not including the two hundred dollars he received from the Polish Consulate in Toulouse.

Lieutenant A.D. McGregor confirms Besley's claims.[54] Similar to Besley, McGregor had personal contact with the Poles in Marseilles and through these connections met the agent bringing funds from London. Building on Besley's knowledge, McGregor's connections with the Poles gave him to understand that there was 'considerable traffic'[55] between the Poles in London and those in Marseilles. McGregor's impression of the Poles in Marseilles was positive and in fact his description of their activities suggests he was somewhat envious of their organisational ability. McGregor's report continues to illustrate the ongoing co-ordination between the Polish internees and their diplomatic services with McGregor not only receiving a false passport but also a letter

[53] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[54] Statement by 2nd Lt. A.D. McGregor, R.A. 51 Division, 22 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[55] Ibid.

'signed' by the French Minister of the Interior and also a Brazilian visa 'signed' by the Brazilian ambassador in Vichy.

Polish ambition went beyond passport escape schemes with the Poles also exploring sea routes. Richards' research on the Poles in France focused on their efforts to obtain ships and make their way to North Africa or Gibraltar. According to Richards, almost all Polish efforts made inside France to evacuate men by sea stalled and ultimately failed. While this chapter does not seek to challenge the veracity of Richards' assessment, in the context of this research Polish boat schemes are considered important in relation to their effect on escapees. British officers initially focused on boat schemes as the most effective way of getting as many men out of France as possible. Equally, Polish organisers also explored the possibility of a sea escape and in doing so continued to include the British in their plans. Thus, when, as Besley noted, the Polish passport scheme fell through he found he was included in one of these boat schemes. According to Besley,

> Very considerable sums were paid by the Polish authorities for the purchase of yachts and motor boats and I was myself aboard a steamer of some 1500 tons which I understand had been bought by the Polish authorities and fitted out to carry 300 men in the holds.[56]

Besley was not the only British escapee on board; he counted among the number two of his colleagues. While this is a relatively small number, it is important to remember that the entire plan was financed and organised by the Poles. Moreover, the Poles, sailing under a Panamese flag, were willing to pick up forty British escapees at an agreed rendez-vous point once the ship set sail.

This scheme, also, in spite of the careful planning, ultimately failed to come to fruition. From this point on individual references to shared Polish and British escape schemes became less frequent. This pattern continued throughout early 1941 with few escapees mentioning contact with Polish officers or servicemen in their reports. However, there is some evidence to indicate, that while individual servicemen or airmen no longer interacted with the Poles, the British leadership namely Garrow and Pat, maintained

[56] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). See also Account of escape of 6397485 L/Sgt. A. Tilling, 7/R. Sussex, 12th Div. Wounded, 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

some degree of contact. Due to the nature of the evidence, it is impossible to ascertain the means or nature of continued Polish or British interaction in this period, the escape reports indicate that by late 1941 Polish consulates in the Unoccupied Zone and the English Hospital acted as gateways for the British escape organisation.

This assertion is supported by a number of escape accounts particularly in late 1941 and into 1942. For instance that of Flight Officer M. Taras, who was shot down over Calais in November 1941, on reaching Marseilles Taras went to the English Hospital where he stayed until the 21 February 1941.[57] In this time, he made one failed attempt to cross the Pyrenees alone in December but finding in his words that Perpignan was 'full of Gestapo'[58] he returned to the English Hospital. It is at this point and, presumably through connections established in the English Hospital, that he was 'introduced into an organisation' in January.[59] This organisation, according to Taras, made all arrangements for his journey to Spain.[60] The Polish Consulate, Lyon, also retained links with the British and in May 1941 when the British escape organisation in Marseilles was expanding in scope, the Polish Consulate passed a number of recently shot-down RAF pilots directly into the organisation. One of these pilots, Sergeant Edward Polesinki, actually sought out the 'Old Polish Consulate' as a result of a lecture he heard in England advising men that the Polish Consulate, Lyon was a particularly useful source of help.[61] Interestingly and as already referred to, the Polish Consulate, while officially closed in November 1940, still maintained and staffed its former offices. More importantly, this consulate appears to have maintained connections with British escape activities and maintained contact with the emerging British escape organisation in Marseilles.

However, further analysis on the nature of this communication, and how it developed and was maintained, is hampered by another long silence in the escape reports. From

[57] Statement by P.0118 F/O Taras, M., 300 Polish Squadron, R.A.F., 9 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308). See also Account of escape of 543236 Bandsman Barrett, G.A., 2/D/C.L.I., 4 Div., 13 Apr. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[58] Statement by P.0118 F/O Taras, M., 300 Polish Squadron, R.A.F., 9 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid. See also the report of Major R. Challenor who made the journey with Taras. Account of escape of Major Challenor, R. R.E., 16 Apr. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[61] Statement by 792693 Sgt. Polesinki, E., 307 Polish (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309). Polesinki travelled with Sergeant A. Malecki. See also Statement by 793809 Sgt. Malecki, A., 300 Squadron, R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

May 1941 there are no substantial references to the role of the Polish Consulate or the English Hospital in relation to escape activities. At this time, the British escape organisation in Marseilles had developed a steady leadership until Captain Ian Garrow and Patrick O'Leary. Most references to escapees and their time in Marseilles refer to time spent in safe houses or plans made by the organisation for their departure across the Pyrenees. This long silence is broken by an account given by an RAF pilot in early September 1942 which suggests that there were continued links between the Polish and the British. This pilot, Sergeant F. Kula, went

> By train to Marseilles arriving there on 8 Sep. I went to the American Consulate where I was told that there was a Polish Office in the former Polish Consulate buildings. The Polish Officer directed me the Polish Hospital which is where the old rest house for British seamen used to be [that is, the English Hospital]. From the hospital I was taken over on 19 Sep by the organisation which arranged for my repatriation.[62]

Kula was passed into the organisation relatively quickly and directly from the English Hospital in Marseilles.

The Poles and English continued to communicate and in some cases co-ordinate escape schemes. Moreover, in spite of the official closures of Polish Consulates, the Consulate in Toulouse, Lyon and Marseilles continued to operate at an unofficial capacity and in some incidences to pass men directly or indirectly into the British-led escape organisation. Similarly, the role of the English Hospital and Polish Consulates in initially assisting British escapees and later passing men into the British-led escape organisation, contributed to both assisting individual escapes and extending British escape activities. Equally, while the evidence suggests that this was done on a relatively small scale, it must also be noted that the contribution of the Polish Consulate in Lyon was significant enough to be referred to in an RAF lecture as a safe place to contact. In this regard, the role of the Polish diplomatic services and their contribution to British-led escape activities merits acknowledgement and is further indication of the role of diplomacy in sustaining and maintaining escape activities.

[62] Statement by P.782693 Sgt. Kula F., 305 Squadron (Polish) R.A.F., 8 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).

American diplomatic services and British escape activities

American diplomatic services, being initially a neutral power, took a more cautious approach to assisting the British. Nevertheless from the defeat of France in June 1940, British escapees arriving in the Unoccupied Zone made their way to the various American consulates in Lyon, Marseilles and Vichy. American acceptance of the role of protector of British interests in France further crystallised the perception of the American diplomatic services among escapees as a potentially friendly power or ally. This perception is reflected in the escape reports which indicate that, if the opportunity arose or a situation required it, the majority of escapees attempted to initiate contact with an American Consulate.

Policy researcher and author Arthur L. Funk noted there was no 'debate as to whether there should be a Vichy policy or not' as the setting up of an American diplomatic presence and base in Vichy effectively meant that the American government recognised the authority of Pétain's government.[63] Against this backdrop, American diplomatic involvement in aiding the escape of British escapees was unthinkable given that such actions conveyed a disregard for Vichy and its responsibility under the conditions of the Franco-German Armistice to intern such men. Yet the escape reports and a number of autobiographies reveal a more complex picture of events and point to a rather different reality hidden under the veneer of American diplomacy. Funk's research supports this assessment as he notes that by early 1941 American officials in Vichy began to give 'cautious' aid to French resistance with the aim of supporting the British war effort.[64] While this cautious aid was given relatively early in the war evidence suggests that American diplomatic involvement in assisting the British began months earlier and not only involved officials in Vichy but also, to varying degrees, officials based in Lyon and Marseilles.

One of the first actions common to each American diplomatic services in all cities (including the Embassy in Paris) was the establishment of a British section. Although America also assumed responsibility as protector for several other occupied countries, including Poland, there appears to have been no equivalent to a 'Polish section' and so

[63] Robert Murphy, the American ambassador to Vichy France quoted in Arthur L. Funk, 'American contacts with the resistance in France 1940-1943' in *Military Affairs,* xxxiv No. 1 (Feb. 1970), p. 15.
[64] Ibid.

forth in the various American Consulate. In this respect, the American diplomatic services displayed a strong degree of flexibility in their interpretation of protector of British interests. In fact, as demonstrated in chapter two, with the presence of two British officials, Major Hugh Dodds and Mr Arthur Dean at the American Consulate in Marseilles, it would appear that British diplomats remaining in France were used to staff the British sections of the various American consulates. The American Consulate in Marseilles provides one of the best early illustrations of the lengths the American diplomatic services were prepared to go to in order to accommodate their British counterparts.

Reports on the American Consulate in Marseilles indicate that the British working there were given offices in the consular building as early as June 1940. However, an account given by Captain C.F.P Mills indicates a change in this arrangement.[65] Mills, on arriving in Marseilles in August 1940, was advised to and approached the old British consulate in Rue d'Arcole. Arriving there, he found three British consular officials who, according to Mills were 'employed by the American Consulate to look after British interests'.[66] Mills' account is crucial in that it highlights that not only was the American Consulate in Marseilles maintaining a British section and employing British officials but that by August 1940 these officials had acquired the former British Consulate building. Documents from the National Archives, Washington reveal the role of the American Consul, Hugh Fullerton, in acquiring the building. The American Consulate in November 1940 officially took over the British lease of the building allowing British officials to retain a presence in their former consulate under the umbrella of American protection.[67]

In taking over the lease, the American Consulate Marseilles went beyond what was expected of a neutral power. [68] This determination to offer assistance within legal limits

[65] Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). See also Colonel F.A.A. Blake, R.A., Military Attaché Brussels, on events subsequent to the 9th May, 1940, resulting in his capture by the German army, escape and hiding, and eventual arrival at Gibraltar after passing through unoccupied France and French North Africa, Nov. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[66]Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[67] Provisional Agreement Lease between His Britannic Majesty's Government and Secretary of State of the United States of America, 15 Nov. 1940 (N.A. Washington, RG 84 Box 2 Entry UD 2508).
[68] G.R. Berridge, *Embassies in armed conflict* (London, 2012), p. 99. Berridge noted that the role of a neutral embassy or a protecting power in times of conflict was to act as observer ensuring the withdrawal

underscored direct dealings between the American Consulate and British escapees. The American Consulate appears to have played a daily role in the lives of British escapees up until their removal from Marseilles in January 1941 but it performed this role with careful regard to remaining within the law and diplomatic protocol. Lieutenant James Langley, who arrived in Marseilles in November 1940, noted that the American Consul

> Mr Fullerton does everything Mr Dean and Major Dodds ask, excepting aid to British Prisoners. He will on no account do this ... Major Dodds and Mr Dean, however willing, particularly the latter, may be to help, are completely handicapped by the present attitude of the American Consulate.[69]

Langley's statement is difficult to assess, especially in light of the previous chapter which addressed the negative attitude and lack of help experienced by escapees from their consular officers in Marseilles. Langley remains the only escapee to link the American Consulate and its reluctance to become directly involved in escape activities to the inability of Dodds and Dean to help these men. This may perhaps go some way to explaining why both Dodds and Dean recommended that men, instead of continuing to the Franco-Spanish frontier, give themselves up. In giving such advice, they were acting within the remits of the American Consulate which, once men were processed and interned by the French authorities, could then, as a protecting power, provide a stipend for each internee. In this regard, the payment of the stipend allowed the American Consulate to fulfil its obligations as a neutral power charged with protecting British interests, without outwardly undermining or challenging the Vichy government. By insisting men must first report to the French authorities the American diplomatic services displayed a determination to respect the authority of the Vichy government.

On rare occasions American officials stepped beyond their remit and gave advice or sought to assist in individual escapes. For instance, Platoon Sergeant Major Charles Fullerton, on approaching the American Consulate, Marseilles in early autumn 1940 for help, found that the American Consul was more than willing to offer assistance. The consul directed Fullerton to the captain of a Norwegian ship who might help him leave

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of a belligerent embassy was 'safe and dignified' or if diplomats were interned to visit them as often as possible. It was also the responsibility of protecting powers to travel with those being repatriated to ensure their safe passage.

[69] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

France.[70] Although this lead dried up, passing on information which could have ultimately facilitated Fullerton's escape was beyond the American Consulate's diplomatic remit. This was not a singular incident. When Lieutenant William Sillar and Captain F. Fitch were attempting to cross the Pyrenees near Cerbère in August 1940, Sillar met a representative of the American Consulate, Marseilles. This representative informed Sillar that there was a British headquarters in Marseilles organising the evacuation of British soldiers.[71] It is not certain if this representative exaggerated the position of the British in Marseilles or if at this stage there was genuine hope that men would be evacuated but the incident highlights the willingness or desire of American officials to offer assistance to individual escapees. On a number of occasions, when British escapees reached French colonial territory in North Africa, the American consulates in these colonies provided these men with material assistance. American consulates in Algiers and Casablanca forwarded money to, advocated for and accommodated a number of men who were smuggled aboard ships in Marseilles.[72] For instance, on 28 October 1940 Captain B.C. Bradford stowed away on ship from Marseilles to Algiers with a colleague and on their arrival sought out the offices of the American Consulate.[73] The consul provided Bradford and his colleague with money and they continued their journey to Oran in Algeria (a former French colony in North Africa). Curiously, Bradford felt that the American Consul did not go far enough to help them and appears unjustly critical of the American Consul when his account is cross referenced with Lieutenant Colonel F.A.A. Blake's report. In the latter's case, January 1941, Blake was smuggled on board a boat bound for Algiers, also with a colleague and on their arrival in the city both men were arrested. Writing to the American Consul, Mr Felix Cole, Blake managed to obtain a monthly allowance and spending money which allowed them to live in a hotel. Blake also gained the support of the Swedish diplomatic official in Algiers.

[70] Account of escape of No. 2871816 P.S.M. Fullerton, Charlie, 5 Bn. Gordons, att. 153 Bde., 51st (H) Division, 29 Sept. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[71] Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[72] Account of escape of: Capt. H.B. Burn, 7/R/N/F/. 51 Div., 18 Sept. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3306). See also Account of escape of Captain B.C. Bradford, Adjutant, 1/Black Watch, 51st Division, 13 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304);
[73] Account of escape of Captain B.C. Bradford, Adjutant, 1/Black Watch, 51st Division, 13 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).

According to Blake, both the American and Swedish consuls went to considerable efforts to petition the French authorities for the release of Blake and his colleague, Sergeant Clayton. In his praises of their efforts he wrote

> The French civilian administration is about as inefficient as it could possibly be, and we encountered delay and obstruction everywhere. Both Mr Gautray [the Swedish Consul] and Mr Cole [the American Consul] gave wholehearted support and the obstruction was eventually overcome.[74]

Blake continued his escape machinations and widened his pool of supporters by writing to two American vice consuls based in Oran. Both agreed to help him and a letter was passed on with this help to the British Consul General in Tangiers, Morocco. With the combined support of the American vice consuls in Oran and particularly the American Consul in Algiers, Blake finally left Algeria, arriving in Tangiers in October 1941. In this respect, American commitment to assisting British escapees appears sincere, and, more particularly in Blake's case, the help of the American Consul was crucial in overcoming serious obstacles preventing his onward journey through Algeria. Cole demonstrated commitment not only in ensuring Blake and Clayton were well treated by French authorities but also in continuing to advocate for both men during their nine month struggle to leave Algeria. Equally, while Cole appears to have gone to extraordinary lengths to secure the continued journey of Blake and Clayton to Tangiers, it must also be pointed out that this assistance remained within legal limits.

American help in establishing connections with Spanish Republicans

This appearance of neutrality and determination to pursue by the Americans a legal course is belied by a number of autobiographies which suggest that the American Consulate, Lyon attempted to connect British escape organisers in Marseilles to a support network in the Pyrenees. Escapees crossing into the Unoccupied Zone regularly sought out the American Consulate in Lyon given its close proximity to the demarcation line. The American Consulate in Lyon initially appeared to remain aloof from escapees, advising them to go to Marseilles but there is strong evidence to suggest that behind this official response the American Consul, George Whittinghill, was more actively engaged

[74] Report by Lieut. Colonel F.A.A. Blake, R.A., Military Attaché Brussels, on events subsequent to the 9th May, 1940, resulting in his capture by the German army, escape and hiding, and eventual arrival at Gibraltar after passing through unoccupied France and French North Africa, Nov. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307).

in assisting British escape activities. In fact, it appears that Whittinghill's efforts in November 1940 were crucial in facilitating the British in Marseilles to connect with Spanish Republicans willing to guide them across the Franco-Spanish frontier into Spain. The initiative for this came from Donald Darling, an MI6 agent working on behalf of MI9, the agency interested in prisoners of war. The American Consulate, Lyon acted as a conduit for this information and as a vital link between Darling who was based in Lisbon, Portugal and British escapees in the Unoccupied Zone.

The evidence for this argument may be traced the flow of information via cross referencing a number of autobiographies and escape reports. The first relevant autobiography is that of Donald Darling. It was Darling's mission to set up an escape line across the Pyrenees and he left London for Spain with that purpose in mind in late summer 1940.[75] In order to achieve this, Darling hoped to re-establish connections with former colleagues in the French secret service in unoccupied France.[76] More particularly, Darling hoped to re-establish a connection with Michael Parayre, owner of a local garage in Perpignan. Parayre, according to the autobiography of French secret service agent Robert Terres, had close contacts with British intelligence. British intelligence maintained a presence along the western Pyrenees prior to the German invasion of France and had managed to connect with the Spanish Republican anarchist group led by Francisco Ponzàn Vidal. According to Terres' autobiography, and also Vidal's biographer Antonio Téllez Solá, as Parayre had been heavily involved with British efforts to establish contact with the Spanish, he 'inherited' these connections when British intelligence was forced to leave the region following French defeat in June 1940.[77]

Effectively, British departure meant that Parayre, based in Perpignan, was the main point of contact with Spanish Republicans already known to British intelligence. This was not lost on Darling. He, therefore, attempted to re-establish contact with Parayre and by extension make contact with the Ponzàn Vidal group.[78] The first part of Darling's scheme required an intermediary to travel to Perpignan and make direct

[75] Donald Darling, *Secret Sunday* (London, 1975), pp 11-4.
[76] Ibid., p.18.
[77] Robert Terres, *Double jeu pour France 1939-1944* (Paris, 1977) pp 59-63. See also Antonio Téllez Sola, *The Anarchist Pimpernel, the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and the Allied escape networks of WWII (1936-1944)* (Hastings, 1997), Kindle edition.
[78] Darling, *Secret Sunday*, p. 26.

contact with Parayre. Darling achieved this with the help of a rich Armenian business man willing to work for him, Nubar Gulbenkian. As a neutral Armenian, Gulbenkian travelled relatively unimpeded in unoccupied France and therefore had little problem in meeting with Parayre in Perpignan in October 1940.[79] In arranging this meeting, Gulbenkian rang him at a garage in Perpignan. This 'garage' will emerge as important later in this chapter when tracing the influence of the Darling-Parayre connection through the escape reports however, for the moment the focus remains on Darling's attempts to connect with Parayre. It would appear that Darling's plans met with success with Gulbenkian noting in his autobiography that Parayre willingly agreed to help and also that Parayre would make contact with the guides and work out the details on the French end.[80]

Arguably, it is at this point, that the American Consulate, Lyon proved crucial in establishing the initial link between British escapees and British intelligence. After laying the ground work Darling needed to establish a link between British intelligence and British escape organisers in Marseilles in order to communicate this information. Darling's autobiography falls silent on this point with no mention of any possible means of communicating his scheme to British escapees. This gap is bridged by the evidence from the escape report of Lieutenant James Langley. It is Langley's account of his experiences that indicates the American Consulate, Lyon was the means by which news of Darling's scheme reached British escape planners in Marseilles.

According to Langley's report, after crossing the demarcation line in the beginning of November 1940, Langley spent time in the American Consulate in both Lyon and Vichy. In fact, Langley spent three weeks in Vichy, living at the expense of the Americans, after which time he was encouraged to appear before the Mixed Medical Board in Marseilles. Langley noted that he left for Marseilles but on the way spent some time meeting with the American Consul in Lyon, George Whittinghill.[81] In referring to this meeting in his escape report Langley wrote

[79] Nubar Gulbenkian, *Pantaraxia;the autobiography of Nubar Gulbenkian* (London, 1965), p. 203.
[80] Ibid., p. 200.
[81] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301). Langley does not provide a date for when he left Vichy for Marseilles but his colleague, L/Cpl W.E. Clayton, accompanied him and put the date as 20 November 1940. Account of escape of 7897550 L/Cpl. Clayton, W.E., F.S.P., (Saar Force. Metz), 23 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).

> On the way I talked to Whittinghill who told me of a plan of evasion through a garage in Perpignan, and I arranged to send up to Whittinghill from Marseilles, officers and in order of seniority.[82]

This plan, including the reference to a garage in Perpignan, bears striking resemblance to that set in motion by Darling a few weeks earlier. This is further indicated by the relatively short time lapse between Darling's efforts to connect with Parayre in October 1940 and Langley's hearing of the scheme through the American Consulate in November 1940. Furthermore, barring Langley's account, no escape report refers to receiving intelligence of this plan via another route. Therefore, it would appear that the American Consulate, Lyon and notably the American Consul, George Whittinghill, was the only means by which Darling attempted to communicate the scheme to British officers in unoccupied France.

However, difficulties arise in establishing the success and impact of Darling's scheme. In Darling's autobiography he not only neglected to mention American involvement but also claimed that the connection with Parayre fell through as the French authorities were watching him closely.[83] Langley's report also noted that the scheme 'broke down' and that the men Langley sent from Marseilles returned to the city[84] and yet there are a number of contradictions to the overall assessment that the scheme was a failure. In Langley's book on escape lines, co-authored with historian M.R.D Foot, he noted that British officer, Captain Ian Garrow, established contact with Parayre and while Parayre could not offer direct help, he did give him some information on guides.[85] Foot and Langley did not provide dates for this connection but files held by the *Service historique de la Défense*, list a Spanish Republican closely associated with Ponzàn Vidal, Salvador Aguado, as working with the British in Marseilles from November 1940.[86] The date for Aguado's involvement with the British, circa November 1940, falls within Darling's initial contact with Parayre in October 1940 and British officers in Marseilles hearing of the scheme after this meeting in November. This suggests the strong possibility that Darling was the source of this information. However, it must also be recognised that it

[82] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[83] Darling, *Secret Sunday,* p. 27.
[84] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[85] M.R.D. Foot and J.M. Langley, *MI9: escape and evasion 1939-1945* (London, 1979), p. 76.
[86] Pat O'Leary, 1946 (SHD, 17P187).

is unclear if Parayre, and by extension the American Consulate, were the channel for this information and also the means by which British escape organisers connected to Aguado. Solà, in his research on Ponzàn Vidal, noted that the British connection to Salvador Aguado came through a Spanish woman living in Toulouse, Madame Cathala and all arrangements were made through her.[87] Solà does not expand on this point and therefore Parayre's involvement in establishing this connection is still likely. If he was under surveillance it is most likely Parayre could not direct British escape organisers to Spanish Republicans. Therefore, as Foot and Langley asserted, Parayre knowing how to make contact with Spanish Republicans, simply directed British escape organisers to likely helpers. This appears the probable scenario especially considering that it would be unlikely that British escape organisers could have connected with Vidal or his colleagues without some prior knowledge of their activities and the means to make that connection.

Whether the British found an alternative means to communicate with Spanish Republicans or not remains unclear but that did not necessarily undermine the willingness of the American Consulate to provide assistance to escapees. Furthermore, Langley's report suggests that Whittinghill was not content with merely passing on information; he also personally initiated one of the first attempts to use Darling's scheme to cross the Pyrenees. According to Langley, Whittinghill sent W.E. Clayton to Perpignan. This is confirmed in Clayton's report, with his arrival in Perpignan dated to the 24 November. A few days later, Clayton was joined by another escapee, Private D. N. Peterson. It is unclear if Whittinghill also arranged Peterson's passage to Perpignan but it is the most likely scenario given that Peterson arrived in Lyon at the end of November, from where he travelled directly to Perpignan and in Perpignan met Clayton.[88] Yet in spite of Whittinghill's enthusiasm and personal efforts, Clayton and Peterson's escape was not a straight-forward one. According to Clayton, both men spent six weeks in the city 'waiting in vain for a means of getting to Spain'.[89] From their arrival in Perpignan it is difficult to ascertain if the American Consulate continued to act

[87] Tellez Solà, *The Anarchist Pimpernel* (Kindle edition).
[88] Account of escape of 6288354 Pte. Peterson, D.N., 5 Buffs, 15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 7897550 L/Cpl. Clayton, W.E., F.S.P., (Saar Force.Metz), 23 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).
[89] Account of escape of 7897550 L/Cpl. Clayton, W.E., F.S.P., (Saar Force. Metz), 23 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305). See also Account of escape of 6288354 Pte. Peterson, D.N., 5 Buffs, 15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 7897550 L/Cpl. Clayton, W.E., F.S.P., (Saar Force.Metz), 23 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).

on their behalf but at one point, in January 1941, both men returned to Lyon, and spent three weeks there excluding a short trip to Vichy.[90] This suggests that their return to Lyon, although not explicitly stated, signalled a returned to the American Consulate.

If this was the case, Clayton and his colleague's trip to Vichy may also have involved visiting American diplomatic officials in that city. Ultimately, both men eventually left Lyon for Marseilles in March and a few days later crossed the Pyrenees.[91] Clayton's and Peterson's accounts are important in that both reports indicate initial problems with the connections Darling attempted to establish through the American Consulate, Lyon. Nevertheless, in spite of their setbacks, there is evidence to suggest that connections established by Darling were ultimately successful. In order to illustrate this, it is important to refer back to an earlier point, that is, Gulbenkian's first encounter with Parayre at a garage in Perpignan. In their history of escape lines Foot and Langley noted that Darling 'secured' a garage in Perpignan 'where Michel Pareyre [also spelled Parayre] … could collect parties before they set out to tackle the nearby Pyrenees'.[92] This is the sole reference to this garage and taken with Darling's statement that the connection with Parayre fell through it is unclear if the garage or Parayre had a lasting impact on escape activities. However, on three separate occasions throughout 1941, in March, June and August, a garage in Perpignan was referred to as a meeting point for British escapees and Spanish guides. The first of these involved Corporal W.F. Gardner who escaped St Hippolyte du Fort, journeyed to a contact in Nîmes and was taken to a garage in Perpignan with two colleagues.[93] From there they met their Spanish guide and crossed the Pyrenees. The second reference comes from the account of Sgt P.R. Herbert who escaped French internment and also went to a pre-arranged contact. Herbert was taken to a flat in Marseilles where, on the 26 June, he was joined by three other men. All were taken to Perpignan, where, according to Herbert they 'hid in a garage until called for by a guide who took us by car to Banyuls.[94] In August 1941, the pattern was repeated and a group of five men were taken to a garage in Perpignan, introduced to a

[90] Account of escape of 6288354 Pte. Peterson, D.N., 5 Buffs, 15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 7897550 L/Cpl. Clayton, W.E., F.S.P., (Saar Force.Metz), 23 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).
[91] Account of escape of 6288354 Pte. Peterson, D.N., 5 Buffs, 15 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 7897550 L/Cpl. Clayton, W.E., F.S.P., (Saar Force.Metz), 23 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3305).
[92] Foot and Langley, *MI9*, p. 76.
[93] Statement by 5567722 Cpl. Gardner, W.F., 2 Wiltshire Regt., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[94] Statement by 959970 Sgt. Herbert, P.R. 15 Squadron, R.A.F., 6 Jan 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).

Spanish guide and 'driven up part of the way into the Pyrenees towards the Spanish frontier'.[95] These three accounts indicate that 'a garage' in Perpignan was the contact point for British escapees and Spanish guides before crossing the Pyrenees. Moreover, these accounts add further credibility to the argument that the connection established through Whittinghill did in fact endure and made a significant impact expanding and crystallising escape activities along the Pyrenees.

This argument is support by Airey Neave's book *Saturday at MI9*.[96] Neave, a young lieutenant and colleague of Langley, worked with the British secret service agency responsible for escape, MI9. Neave, similar to Langley, had a personal interest in escape and had the fame of being the first prisoner to make a 'home run' from Colditz, Germany.[97] Neave was familiar with the working of the escape lines and also personally knew and worked with Darling. Commenting on Darling's connection with Parayre and his efforts to contact Spanish Republicans, Neave noted that Darling's plan to connect with Parayre 'tied together the two ends of the original escape line'.[98] Neave does not refer to the role of American officials in passing on this information but his work bolsters the importance of the Parayre connection. In doing so, Neave indirectly reinforces the importance of the American Consulate, Lyon in facilitating the initial contact between British escapees and Parayre.

Taking the combined evidence into account it appears that the American Consulate, Lyon went beyond its diplomatic remit and acted as a willing participant in British efforts. The American Consul, Whittinghill, in particular, appears to have played a particularly active role in acting as the link Darling needed to connect escapees with Parayre and Spanish Republicans. Although it would take a number of months until the escape routes became relatively stable and secure, the connection with Spanish Republicans, notably Vidal's group, was crucial in helping to underpin British escape activities in the Pyrenees. This remained the case, from late April 1941, the time Vidal officially began working with the British-led escape organisation, up until his arrest in April 1943. The *Service historique de la défense* files which date Vidal's involvement

[95] Account by S/Ldr. E/P.P. Gibbs, R.A.F., No. 616 Sqdrn., No. 11 Group, Fighter Command, 18/19 Sept 1941 (N.A., WO208/3306).
[96] Airey Neave, *Saturday at MI9* (London, 1969).
[97] Airey Neave, *They have their exits* (Barnsley, 1953).
[98] Neave, *Saturday*, pp 77-8.

in British escape activities also list Whittinghill as a member of the organisation.[99] Whittinghill's involvement in escape activities is formally dated to January 1942, following American entry into the war, however the evidence presented in this chapter suggests informal and disguised interest before then.

Following American entry into the war, a shift occurred and the American consulates in the Unoccupied Zone appear to have acted as a direct gateway into the British-led escape organisation. This was certainly the case with American consulates in Marseilles and Lyon. In the case of Marseilles, the consulate still maintained its efforts to assist British escapees discretely and appears to have been reasonably effective in this goal. So much so that in one particular incident two men seeking help from the consulate in February 1941 did not realise they were being passed into an organisation. Officials at the consulate gave the men a doctor's note and it wasn't until their arrival at the doctor where they met one of the leaders of the escape organisation, that they realised the extent of the consulate's assistance. In the case of the American Consulate, Lyon, in May 1942 two Polish RAF pilots, Sergeant E. Polesinki and Sergeant A. Malecki, were passed into the escape organisation.[100] Polesinki made his initial contact with the Old Polish Consulate and from there was directed to the 'British Consul' in the American Consulate.[101] Polesinki's account is interesting in that it illustrates not only the willingness of the American Consulate to help Polish RAF pilots but also indicates that the Polish Consulate was aware of this. In fact, in that same month, May 1942, the Polish Consulate passed a Polish escapee into the escape organisation along the same route as Malecki, without, it would seem, using the American Consulate as intermediary.[102] This suggests that both consulates were aware of their counterpart's involvement with and connection to the British-led escape organisation. Further compelling evidence that officials at the American Consulate, Lyon, notably Whittinghill, retained direct connections with British escape organisers is indicated in the report of Squadron Leader R.C. Wilkinson.[103] That same month, May 1942, Wilkinson arrived at the consulate and, according to his account, stayed at

[99] Pat O'Leary, 1946 (SHD, 17P187).
[100] Statement by 793809 Sgt. Malecki, A., 300 Squadron, R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).
[101] Statement by 792693 Sgt. Polesinki, E., 307 Polish (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).
[102] Statement by P.1347 F/O Krawczyk, S., 305 (Polish) Sqn., R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).
[103] Statement by 44125 Sqn. Ldr. Wilkinson, R.C., 174 Squadron, R.A.F., 2 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

Whittinghill's home before he was guided to Marseilles and to the home of a French member of the escape organisation, Louis Nouveau (see chapter two).[104]

Maintaining escape activities: British diplomatic services in Spain

While the American diplomatic services in unoccupied France may have proved pivotal in contributing to British ability to connect with guides along the Pyrenees, this exercise would have been fruitless if men arriving in Spain found they were unable to continue their journey to Britain. On the 26 November 1941, the British Embassy estimated that only twenty per cent of men crossing the Pyrenees arrived at either the British Consulate in Barcelona or the British Embassy in Madrid undetected. The rest were captured by Spanish authorities and interned in Spanish concentration camps. The responsibility fell on British diplomatic services in Spain to secure the release of these men. Moreover, the British diplomatic services zealously guarded their prerogative to advocate for British escapees interned in Spain. Minutes of a meeting held in late November 1941 not only defended but also pushed for continued diplomatic involvement in securing the release of British internees in Spain. These minutes declared that it was

> Desirable that this business [advocating for British prisoners] should be in the hands of a member of the Embassy staff, since he is more likely than anyone else to be able to conduct the negotiations with the minimum risk of friction with the Spanish authorities.[105]

These minutes indicate that the British diplomatic services in Spain were willing to secure the release of internees, and more importantly sought to retain this role.

In spite of the willingness of the diplomatic services to act on behalf of British prisoners, researchers have neglected or overlooked the role of the British Embassy in relation to escape activities, emphasising instead the role of British secret services such as MI6 or MI9. A number of autobiographies, including Donald Darling's, criticised Sir

[104] One of the known final examples of the American Consulate directly assisting an escapee occurred on the 8 September 1942, two months before the German occupation of the whole country. Flight Lieutenant G.C. Fisher arrived in Marseilles and having lost sight of his guide approached the American Consulate from which, to quote from his report he 'was put in touch with an organisation which arranged my repatriation to the United Kingdom'. Statement by J.4690 F/Lt. G.C. Fisher, 408 Sqn., R.C.A.F., 7 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).

[105] Escape of British prisoners in Spain, 26 Nov. 1941 (N.A., FO371/26949b).

Samuel Hoare, the British ambassador to Spain.[106] However, these criticisms must take into account the fact that Darling was based in Lisbon, Portugal and as a result was somewhat removed from the difficulties facing the Embassy in Spain. This sense of removal from British escape activities is slightly obscured in Darling's autobiography which gives a stronger sense of his connection with British escape activities in the winter of 1940 than actually existed. While Darling helped the British establish a connection on the Pyrenees, it took time to come to fruition. Darling's chronology is skewed, inserting no dates in relation to the emergence of an escape organisation and in general leaving the reader with the impression that events developed quicker than they actually did. This allows him to overlook the importance of the Embassy. Most histories have followed suit, including M.R.D. Foot's, which even in its title, *MI9 The British Secret Service that fostered escape and evasion 1939-1945 and its American counterpart* makes special mention of the efforts of MI9.

While historians, including Foot, refer to the work of the Embassy in securing the release of British internees, it is argued here that the work of British diplomatic services in neutral countries like Spain, but also Switzerland, was of greater importance than the current historiography allows for, that is, the release of internees. It is argued that in securing the release of these men, and thus aiding their continued journey to Britain, the British diplomatic services played a crucial role in maintaining, sustaining and even expanding and validating escape efforts for the British and their helpers. To better argue this point, the focus of this chapter now shifts to British diplomatic efforts in Spain, and also later in this chapter to Switzerland, to explore how the actions of the diplomatic services shaped, or worked in tandem with, British escape efforts in unoccupied France. Before continuing, it is important to point out that when escapees began arriving in Marseilles in the summer of 1940 it was not immediately obvious that crossing the Pyrenees would become the principle means of leaving France. The port was the city's main attraction but with activities in the port under close surveillance, crossing into Spain increasingly became the only alternative. The main deterrent to crossing the Pyrenees was not fear of the French authorities or the physical demands of the mountains but the lack of knowledge in relation to the reception escapees would be likely to receive in Spain.

[106] Darling, *Secret Sunday*, pp 14-5. James Langley, *Fight another day* (London, 1974), p. 115.

Men crossing into Spain, particularly in the early period 1940-41 were frequently arrested and subjected to harsh conditions in Spanish concentration camps. With approximately eighty percent of escapees arrested crossing into Spain, the poor treatment received in Spanish camps features in escape reports. Reported treatment includes beatings, forced labour, head shaving and handcuffing. Food was poor and accounts abound of cramped conditions. Commenting on one of the main internment camps, Private F.W. Brown noted that, 'there were frequent beatings' and men 'regularly worked for fourteen hours a day on very little food'.[107] Brown made his report in October 1940 but conditions had not improved over two years later with a British officer complaining in January 1942 that, Miranda del Ebro held '4,000 people in a camp normally accommodating 1000'.[108] The British ambassador, Sir Samuel Hoare, produced slightly more refined but no less startling statistics. According to Hoare, the camp at Miranda was originally built for seven hundred but accommodated numbers of up to three thousand.[109] Against this backdrop, the prospect of detainment and harsh conditions in Spain for the duration of the war were strong discouragements to British escapees leaving France. Officers in Marseilles in early autumn 1940, such as Captain F. Fitch, Lieutenant W. Sillar, Captain C.R.I. Besley, went to considerable efforts to discover the situation in Spain.[110] All were reluctant to travel, or encourage other men to travel, if circumstances were not favourable.

The situation Spain remained unclear to officers in Marseilles until September 1940. At this time, according to the report of Lieutenant W. Sillar,

> We received a message to the effect that if British soldiers succeeded in crossing the Franco-Spanish frontier, they would be interned in Spain and later repatriated.[111]

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[107] Account of escape of No. S/103035 Pte.Brown F.W., R.A.S.C. H.Q. 51st (H) Division, 30 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299).
[108] Account of escape of Lt. Cdr. Redvers Michael Prior, D.S.C., R.N., C.C.O, R.N., C.C.O. Staff, 21/22/23 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[109] Samuel Hoare, *Ambassador on a special mission* (London, 1946), p. 232.
[110] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of Capt. F. Fitch, Royal Norfolk Regt. H.W. 4 Inf. Bde. Attached 2 Div., 17 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[111] Account of escape of Lieut. William Sillar, R.A.M.C. Att.d 178th Lancashire Fusiliers. 2nd Division, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

This immediately re-directed Sillar and Fitch's attention away from escape by boat to seeking a means to cross the Franco-Spanish frontier. It was only later, when Sillar successfully reached Spain, that he discovered that the message came from the British military attaché (M.A.) in Spain. Military attachés were connected to and worked within their diplomatic services. Sillar's account of the military attaché, Brigadier Torr's, actions is crucial as it indicates that not only were the British diplomatic services in Spain seeking to obtain the release of men already in Spain but that they were also filtering word back into France that men would be repatriated once in Spain.

Unfortunately, Sillar does not refer to the source of the information he received in Marseilles. Establishing the source would be useful in determining if Torr intended to disseminate this information among as many men as possible and thus encourage men to continue a pattern of crossing into Spain. It is likely that this indeed was the case. Moreover, there is a strong possibility that the American Consulate, Marseilles was in fact the channel for this information. The main evidence for this relates to one particular communication discovered in the Foreign Office papers of the British Embassy in Madrid. This communication raised concerns over a confession given by British aviator, Bob Wilson, to Spanish authorities. Wilson informed Spanish authorities that he had been encouraged by the American Consulate in January 1941 to cross the Franco-Spanish frontier clandestinely.[112] Moreover, Wilson informed the Spanish authorities that not only had he 'been advised by the United States Consulate at Marseilles to cross the frontier clandestinely' but that the 'Acting Consul [British] at Figueras was… expecting him'.[113] This communication indicates that there was some form of interaction between the British Embassy in Madrid and the American Consulate in Marseilles in relation to escape activities. In giving advice to cross the Pyrenees clandestinely, the American Consulate appears to have been acting on knowledge of the situation in Spain and the likelihood of repatriation.

The British were aware of the importance of the American Consulate in advising men and sought to maintain this situation. When the War Office was alerted of the incident, it enquired through the Embassy in Madrid if a 'hint can be given [to the] U.S. Consul

[112] Spain: British prisoners of war in Spain, 21 Jan. 1941 (N.A., FO371/26949b).
[113] Ibid.

Marseilles to warn others of secrecy'.[114] This query further emphasises the role of British diplomatic services in Spain in relation to escape activities. Not only was the Embassy required to trace men interned in Spain, but also in this case at least it was expected to maintain connections with the American diplomatic services in unoccupied France. Considering this, it is understandable that the Foreign Office was quite scathing as to the impact of Wilson's confession on the prisoner of war situation in Spain. One Foreign Office official wrote

> It seems to me that the really unfortunate part of this is that the young officer mentioned the name of the United States Consulate at Marseilles. That he crossed the frontier clandestinely and that his papers were false does not, as far as I can see, alter the officer's position of being an escaped prisoner-of-war. The means by which he crossed the frontier are not, I think anything new to the Spaniards. There have been others.[115]

Yet despite the scathing tone adopted towards Wilson's confession, this letter conveys confidence in the position of British prisoners of war in Spain. When this letter is coupled with the War Office's encouragement that British diplomatic services in Spain should maintain contact with the American Consulate, Marseilles it can argued that it was likely that Sillar's encouragement to cross into Spain came from Torr via the American Consulate in Marseilles and that this information, albeit with encouragements of added secrecy after the Wilson affair, was still intended to be disseminated to escapees in the Unoccupied Zone seeking a means out of France.

This confidence was rooted in Britain's economic leverage over Spain. Spain depended on Britain to maintain its supply of grain and consequentially, needed to concede to some British demands. In his autobiography, Hoare attributed Spain's growing economic reliance on Britain as his primary bargaining tool in negotiating the release of British internees from Spanish concentration camps.[116] In relation to the practical implications of these concessions there was still a drawback and one that lasted for the duration of the war; men entering Spain would face approximately three weeks internment after which they would be released. This was a significant coup, considering that Franco's Spain favoured Germany. In his book reflecting on his experiences in Spain, Hoare wrote that the prisoner of war question remained one of the most decisive

[114] Telegram from the War Office to British military attaché, Madrid, 8 Feb. 1941 (N.A., FO371/26949b).
[115] Ibid.
[116] Hoare, *Ambassador on a special mission*, p. 62.

issues in his dealings with Spanish ministers throughout his time in Spain and one requiring continual and persistent attention.[117] The British Embassy, even with Spanish concessions, still faced severe difficulties in earning the release of prisoners of war. For instance, while British escapees entering Spain illegally were to be handed over to the military authorities, this was not always the case. In addition to arresting escapees for entering Spain illegally, matters were further complicated for the British Embassy, Madrid in that, extra civil charges were often added such as smuggling currency.[118] In these cases, as a document compiled on British experiences from 1940-43 in Spain noted

> From start to finish it is highly unlikely that the British Authorities will be aware of the presence of the escaper, as the Spanish Authorities would not inform our Consuls of the case. The escaper would also have great difficulty in getting a message to his Consul, telling of his plight, as the prison authorities would balk his efforts in this direction.[119]

Men were often unaware that such charges were pending against them and deprived of an opportunity of communicating with the Embassy could not challenge them. This is particularly evident in the case of Captain Charles Murchie. Murchie, one of the main escape organisers in Marseilles, crossed into Spain in April 1941 with ten other men. On reaching Spain the group were arrested and interned. In this particular incident, according to Murchie, it was not until August 1941, four months after his arrest that Murchie had opportunity to write to Hoare. In his letter, Murchie indicated that the associations, potentially political, of their Spanish guide, may 'have had some bearing on the treatment' they received at the hands of the Spanish authorities. On receipt of Murchie's letter and following British enquires, a confidential document was compiled on Murchie's case indicating that a 'more serious charge, that of espionage was… formulated' against Murchie and his colleagues, a number of whom had documents of a compromising nature.[120] In this particular case, the Embassy faced many more months of political intrigue before finally managing to extricate Murchie and his colleagues from Spanish jails.[121] This release, in February 1942, came almost a year after Murchie first entered Spain.

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[117] Ibid., pp 63-5.
[118] M.I.9 Bulletin Advice Memo No. 26 Chapter Twenty: Spain, Mar. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3428).
[119] Ibid.
[120] Secret and confidential: escape of British prisoners to Spain, Nov. 1941 (N.A., FO371/ 26949b).
[121] Ibid.

This incident highlights the precariousness of the situation in Spain and the difficult work facing British officials in securing the release of British escapees, particularly when men faced additional civil charges. Yet the Embassy's responsibility did not stop there, British officials at the Embassy housed men after their release from camps. Numerous documents refer to growing concerns over housing space, sanitary conditions and disease. Sir Samuel Hoare labelled this growing concern in November 1941 as a 'crisis'. In a communication to the Foreign Office, dated the 29 November 1941, Hoare outlined the problem in the following terms

> Although every corner of the building is needed for office work I have at present 22 men who have to live and sleep here for an indefinite time, during which I have to obtain exit permits. Already we have had two cases of typhoid, one of typhus, and two of diphtheria amongst the prisoners who have passed through. Living accommodation is quite unsuitable for these numbers.[122]

The problem was compounded by the lack of a better alternative. Escapees had to stay at the Embassy and under diplomatic protection until exit permits were issued. The seriousness of the issue was recognised in London and funding was quickly approved for the erection of huts for the purposes of housing men.[123] In taking these measures, the British diplomatic services moved beyond solely securing the release of British prisoners, extending its responsibilities to caring for the health and welfare of these men.

In many respects, this work was further delayed not only by the health complications of men arriving from Spanish camps but also by men who had reached the British Consulate Barcelona or the British Embassy Madrid without detection. Although it is difficult to establish the numbers of men who reached British consulates without detection, it can be discerned that as the escape organisation in Marseilles became more efficient and increasingly connected with trustworthy guides, the number of men reaching the consulate in Barcelona rose. In a substantial number of cases, where men reached Barcelona without detection, guides contributed directly to this success by accompanying men to the consulate there. While these men avoided internment, British officials could not declare the presence of these illegals and therefore, in contrast to the cases where men were released from internment, they could not apply for exit visas for them. Overcoming this problem required, to use the wording of an official document,

[122] Sir Samuel Hoare: Important From Madrid to Foreign Office, 29 Nov. 1941 (N.A., FO371, 26949b).
[123] Housing of British prisoners in Spain, 12 Dec. 1941, (N.A., FO371/26949b).

'the connivance of the Spanish authorities'.[124] It is difficult to ascertain with certainty the nature of this 'connivance' but it is likely that bribery and other such persuasions went a considerable way to ensuring the Spanish authorities turned a blind eye to a number of extra men mixed in with those leaving the country for Gibraltar through official channels.

In addition to this, the diplomatic services actively sought to extend the possibility of men reaching British consulates successfully. In March 1943, a training manual was produced, presumably for RAF crews, based on experiences of British officials in Spain.[125] This document advised men not to take documents or money across the frontier. It also provided more practical advice in relation to the responsibilities of escapees and how they should act once in Spain. Men were advised never to approach British consulates directly but to either wait for the guide to do this, or if travelling alone, to approach a Spaniard with the request. The document was explicit about what 'type' of Spaniard to approach and set out a description of 'dependable types'.[126] The 'dependable types' were 'lower grades' of railway workers, poorer country people and smugglers. In order to find one of the above, escapees were advised to approach a 'poorer type of café' and ask a working class man for help.[127] Language barriers were also addressed and men were provided with a phonetic guide to asking for help which read as follows

> Soy in-glaze por favor averca Al Consulado Britanico yo esperaré ah-key.
> I am English please tell the English Consul I will wait here.[128]

While the focus on the working class is interesting, the relevant point here pertains to the role of the British diplomatic services stepping up its commitments to helping escapees to identify potential support in Spain and their efforts to shape the behaviour of escapees accordingly.

The British diplomatic services in Spain ran a tight gauntlet between negotiating the release of prisoners and ensuring the 'connivance' of the Spanish authorities in

[124] Escaped prisoners in Spain, 26 Nov. 1941 (N.A., FO371/26949b).
[125] M.I.9 Bulletin Advice Memo No. 26 Chapter Twenty: Spain, Mar.1943 (N.A., WO208/3428).
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

overlooking 'illegals'. The British Embassy sought to safeguard the welfare of escapees, and in undertaking this role acted as a bulwark against the Spanish authorities, not only in their efforts to secure the release of men from Spanish prison but also in their efforts to ensure men reached a British consulate without detection. Moreover, the British diplomatic services in Spain were crucial in planning the onward journeys of all escapees to British territory.

Escape and the British diplomatic services, Switzerland

In addition to the above responsibilities, diplomatic services in Spain also maintained communication with British officials in Switzerland. Officials in Switzerland were in a difficult position. Switzerland, as a neutral country, became an important destination for men escaping internment in Germany, Poland and Italy. However, it was also landlocked and as air routes appear to have been ruled out, smuggling escapees out of Switzerland was by no means easy. In the early days following French defeat, British officials in Switzerland sent at least two men through to Spain, in July and October 1940 respectively, on falsified documents via the travel company Thomas Cook and Sons.[129] This arrangement did not last and a month later, November 1940, another British officer, Lieutenant A. Cameron crossed into Switzerland and found the British diplomatic services there could offer little help.[130] This situation continued until July 1941 when he was repatriated via a Mixed Medical Commission[131] (see chapter two). British diplomatic services in Switzerland appear to have been relatively isolated and apart from these initial successes did not contribute significantly to escape activities in this period.

In December 1941, however, a Foreign Office communiqué indicates the British diplomatic services in Berne were taking a more pro-active interest in the issue of escaped prisoners of war. Arguably, the impetus for this sudden interest in organising an escape route was precipitated by the arrival of a number of escapees in autumn 1941 from various camps in occupied Europe, two of whom, Second Lieutenant Rowan-

[129] Account of escape of No. 617217 A.C.2. Richard Clifford 13 Army Co-op, 28 Aug. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of 1020114 S/Sgt. Art. Garrett, W.J., 28 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).
[130] Account of escape of Lieut. Cameron, A.R.P.P.K., 4 Cameron Hrs., 51 (H) Div., 2 Feb. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[131] Ibid.

Hamilton and Lieutenant H.E. Stewart, were mentioned in the communiqué.[132] The communiqué detailed an effort to establish an escape route from Berne to Spain and it noted that in order for the scheme to continue, co-operation from officials in Spain was crucial.[133] Diplomats in Berne requested notification of certain arrivals in Spain to confirm success of their plans. The plan, which involved providing men with false French documents alongside proof of British citizenship once men reached Spain, required the complicity of British officials in Spain to continue. Once notified of the scheme's initial success efforts would be made to 'dribble' others through.[134]

While it is difficult to ascertain the nature and scope of this scheme given the lack of details in the communiqué, the involvement of British officials illustrates commitment to facilitating the journey of escapees, to the extent that these officials were willing to engage in illegal activities. With regard to the actual scheme, it was relatively shaky with no clear details on how men were to travel across France or indeed, into Spain. Success, as the communiqué noted, was 'not by any means a certainty'.[135] The plan appears to have centred on the use of false identity papers as the best means of guaranteeing a successful outcome and the first man to test the plan, Stewart, was chosen as he could 'pass anywhere as a Frenchman'.[136]

An examination of the escape reports, however, reveal the possible outcome of this communiqué. While men were passed into France, they were not passed in blind, armed only with French identity papers but rather into the hands of the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles. This is indicated in the report of Lieutenant H.E. Stewart, the officer mentioned in the communiqué. Details in his report suggest that the escape organisation not only waited for his arrival at the Franco-Swiss frontier at Annemasse but arranged his journey to Spain. While the reports of other escape officers in Switzerland at the time do not provide details of their onward journey, an officer who

[132] Account of escape of Lieut. (war-subs) H.E. Stewart, M.C., Intelligence Corps, att 9 Australian Div., M.E.F., 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Account of escape of 2/Lt. A.D. Rowan-Hamilton, Black Watch, 13/17/18 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Account of escape of Capt. Woolatt, H.A., 2 Lancs. Fusilliers, 13 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Account of escape of Capt. H.B. O'Sullivan, M.C., 3 Bn. Royal Tank Regt., 1st Armd. Div, 20/25/29 June 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Account of escape of 65656 (War Subs.) Lieut. M.G. Duncan, H.C., 4 Bn. Ox and Bucks.L.I., 17 June 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Account of escape of 128199 Dvr. Bach, W.C., R.A.S.C., 14 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).
[133] From Berne to Foreign Office, 3 Dec. 1941 (N.A., FO371/26949b).
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.

reached Switzerland in January 1942, Lieutenant Airey Neave, in his autobiography noted that he too was passed into Spain via the British-led escape organisation.[137]

In the light of the above, it is likely that the British diplomatic services in Spain after receiving the communiqué in Berne highlighted the existence of the British-led escape organisations to the British officials there. The timing reinforces this assessment given that there appears to have been little communication between the British escape organisation and diplomatic services in Berne before December 1941. In fact, from the time of the communiqué until the end of the period under review in this thesis, British officials in Berne remained connected to the organisation in Marseilles. Moreover, where evidence is available this connection appears to have dominated the response of the British diplomatic response to men arriving in Switzerland from prison camps in occupied Europe, all of whom were passed into the British-led escape organisation in unoccupied France.[138]

Against this backdrop, the British diplomatic services benefitted from the emergence of the escape organisation in Marseilles and also awareness of this organisation by British officials in Spain. Equally, by connecting with the escape organisation British diplomatic services in Berne were expanding the scope of British escape activities in unoccupied France, expanding its importance in a wider European context.

In order to facilitate this expansion, British officials in Switzerland still needed to establish helpful connections in Switzerland to smooth the border crossing into France. The escape reports shed light on the procedures involved in preparing for a border crossing. Men were put up in hotels, guides were arranged and men expected to follow instructions given at various stages of the journey. Interestingly, a number of accounts indicate that British Swiss police were involved in helping to smuggle men out of the

[137] Neave, *They have their exits,* p. 143. See also Airey Neave's report: Account of escape of P66519 Lt. Neave, A.M.S., 1 Searchlight Regt. R.A., 13 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[138] Account of escape of NX. 3653 Cpl. Parker, J.A., 2/1 Field Coy A.I.F., 14/17 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Statement by 37348 W/C Gilchrist, P.A., 405 Squadron, R.C.A.F., 7 Feb. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308); Account of escape of Lieut. A.J. Deane-Drummond, Royal Corps of Signals (Seconded to 11 S.A.S. Bn.), July-Aug. 1942, (N.A., WO208/3309); Statement by 1104336 Sgt. Beecroft, J. and 958800 Sgt. Hanwell, H.P,. both of No. 101 Sqn. (Bomber) R.A.F., 31 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309); Statement by 580451 F/Sgt. Houghton, K.J.L., 207 (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 25 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309); Statement by 580451 F/Sgt. Houghton, K.J.L., 207 (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 25 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309); Account of escape of 7621381 Pte. Edwards, D.R., R.A.O.C, and VX 6693 Pte. Lang, D., 2/8 Bn, 6 Div, A.I.F., July-Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

country. Corporal J.A. Parker who arrived in Switzerland in November 1941 reported that

> Under the instructions of Mr. Farrell I went from Berne to Geneva on 30 Apr. There I met Pte Lang… and at 1530hrs we were taken by a Swiss policeman and two plain clothes men to a cemetery on the outskirts of the town, from which we could see across the frontier. Our guides pointed out a position where the said a man was waiting with a push bicycle.[139]

Several accounts mirror Parker's report, including that of Airey Neave who claimed in his autobiography that he was driven to the frontier by Swiss police.[140] While not all these accounts refer to the involvement of Swiss police, it must be noted that in all accounts British officials organised guides to take men to the frontier.

While British officials in Switzerland did not have the heavy workload burdening their counterparts in Spain, they still needed to arrange for the 'connivance' of the Swiss authorities in these schemes. Equally, similar to British officials in Spain, once an escapee crossed the Swiss frontier British diplomatic services in Switzerland were responsible for planning the next stage in an escapee's journey and arrangements were made through these channels. Although, in the Swiss case, men were sent back to France, albeit unoccupied France, and into a potentially tricky situation, risk was minimised by passing them directly into the escape organisation. Thus, while it is argued here that British diplomatic services in both Switzerland and Spain contributed to maintaining and extending the viability of British-led escape activities in France, this was done on the back of the continued commitment to such activities displayed by British officers and civilian helpers in France.

In essence, consular services from various countries across Europe and the American diplomatic services underpinned the emergence and expansion of the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles. While a neutral legation like Ireland perhaps played an

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[139] Account of escape of NX. 3653 Cpl. Parker, J.A., 2/1 Field Coy A.I.F., 14/17 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307) see also Statement by 580451 F/Sgt. Houghton, K.J.L., 207 (Bomber) Sqn., R.A.F., 25 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309); Statement by F/O Szkuta, A., 305 (Polish) Sqn. R.A.F., 25 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309); Account of escape of 7621381 Pte. Edwards, D.R., R.A.O.C, and VX 6693 Pte.Lang, D., 2/8 Bn, 6 Div, A.I.F., July- Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

[140] Neave, *They have their exits,* p.142. See also Account of escape of Lieut. A.J. Deane-Drummond, Royal Corps of Signals (Seconded to 11 S.A.S. Bn.), July-Aug. 1942, (N.A., WO208/3309); Account of escape of 128199 Dvr. Bach, W.C., R.A.S.C., 14 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

unwitting and minimal role in escape activities, consulates from occupied countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland strove to actively assist the British, according to any means available to them. Admittedly, these early schemes often ended in failure and did not affect early British escape activities beyond a small number of individual successes. However, connections established with Czech and more particularly Polish officials in this period were important in that later, when the British-led escape organisation emerged in Marseilles, these unofficial consulates acted as gateways into the organisation. In this way, these connections facilitated the expansion of the escape organisation.

More significantly, the willingness of the American diplomatic services in unoccupied France to co-operate with British intelligence and diplomatic services contributed to the success of British escape activities in terms of their connection with Spanish Republicans along the Pyrenees. This connection defined and underpinned escape activities for the following two years. Moreover, it is likely that the American Consulate, Marseilles was the means by which the British diplomatic services in Spain sent assurances to escapees that repatriation from Spain was possible. This message was crucial in focusing escape activities on crossing the Franco-Spanish frontier into Spain.

Given the focus on crossing the Franco-Spanish frontier, the role of the British diplomatic services in Spain was significant. Their efforts in securing the release of internees, underpinned escape efforts in unoccupied France. Without this assurance and the prospect of an indeterminate period in Spanish concentration camps in dismal conditions, escape activities would have been futile and ultimately, unsustainable. Furthermore, by connecting the British diplomatic services in Switzerland to the escape organisation in Spain, officials at the Embassy in Madrid further expanded the importance of the organisation. Their work was supported by British officials in Switzerland who actively sought support among local authorities and helpers for this work. Effectively, by passing men arriving from camps across Europe, the British authorities in Switzerland expanded the scope of British escape activities in unoccupied France, giving it an added international dimension.

Chapter Four

Promoting an escaping culture: the attitude of French Military and Secret Services

This chapter focuses on the impact of the Unoccupied Zone and the presence of a nominally 'independent' Vichy government on British escape activities. More particularly, the discussion centres on two key elements of the Vichy state apparatus namely, the French military authorities and the French secret services, both of which played a significant role in shaping British escape activities. At this time, support for British escape activities in French military and secret service circles ranged from toleration to actively assisting escape activities.

The involvement of the Vichy authorities in British escape activities is remarkable considering the presence of German and Italian Armistice Commissions in the Unoccupied Zone. The Armistice Commissions monitored the French authorities and their adherence to the terms of the Armistice signed in June 1940. While the Franco-German Armistice of June 1940 did not directly refer to British prisoners, Article Ten placed responsibility on the French government to 'prevent members of its armed forces' and 'French citizens' from leaving the country to join the war against Germany.[1] Given the position of the Unoccupied Zone, and the fact that the bulk of the British Expeditionary Force was captured at Dunkirk, Calais and St Valery, the British presence in unoccupied France was overlooked. This, however, did not remain the case for long and with the Armistice Commissions active in cities which also attracted British escapees, such as Marseilles, the British presence was difficult to ignore. If French citizens were forbidden to leave France, is unlikely that the German authorities would allow a situation where British escapees passed into Spain unheeded. Thus, within weeks of the Armistice, many British escapees arriving in the Unoccupied Zone ended up in French internment camps.[2] However, French application and German expectation in relation to British internment were not necessarily aligned. This theme was noted in chapter two in relation to the liberal interpretation of parole in the

[1] Franco-German Armistice, June 25 1940 available at Avalon Project http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/frgearm.asp#art19 (1 Aug. 2015).
[2] Major W.C.W. Potts reported that on the 24 July 1940 French gendarmes received orders that they were to intern British military personnel. Up to this point, there appears to have been no clear policy in relation to how to deal with British escapees. Account of escape of 2144 Major W.C.W. Potts, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

Unoccupied Zone. While chapter two focused on how the British used parole to organise escape activities, this chapter draws attention to the French authorities and their part in aiding British escape activities. Current research on escape activities fails to address this imbalance.[3] In spite of frequent references to French military authorities and secret services in escape reports and autobiographies, little or no effort has been made to establish the extent and nature of this involvement and its impact on British escape activities.

The bulk of the source material from this chapter comes from escape reports and autobiographies. A numbers of factors restricted the use of French archival sources such as access issues and financial and time constraints. This limits the capacity to fully assess the French authorities' influence on British escape activities and the response to these actions. In order to counteract this constraint, there is a focus on direct interactions between the British and French authorities as recorded in the escape reports. This has proved an interesting approach as much of the direct British interaction with the French authorities in unoccupied France occurred around French internments. The picture that emerged in relation to officials responsible for the internment of the British was one that was unlikely to be reflected in documents produced by these officials. In relation to French secret services, several sources were used notably escape reports and autobiographies. In addition to this, files handed over to the British by the French authorities after the war relating to the betrayal of French helpers were also employed to gain insight into the perspective of the French authorities involved in this case. Where possible, all accounts were cross referenced with those other concerned parties in order to establish the veracity and authenticity of the claims made. The availability of source material on the British side highlighted areas that merit further research in the future; this will be addressed more fully in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

It is also necessary to set this chapter in the context of existing historiography, which provides greater insight into the assistance given to British escapees by the French

[3] See also Sherri Greene Ottis, *Silent heroes: downed airmen and the French underground* (Kentucky, 2001) and Herman Bodson, *Downed Allied airmen and evasion of capture: the tale of local resistance networks in World War II* (North Carolina, 2005); John Nichol, and Tony Rennell, *Home run: escape from Nazi Europe* (London, 2007); Oliver Clutton Brock, *RAF evaders: the comprehensive story of thousands of escapers and their escape lines, western Europe 1940-1945* (London, 2009), Kindle edition. All of the above may refer to some degree of sympathetic communication with French authorities, notably intelligence, but no attempt has been made to establish the impact of French intelligence on the developing escape organisation.

military and secret services. Robert Paxton's book, *Vichy France Old Guard and New Order*, still remains a key text in any study of Vichy France. In it, he challenged the perception that Vichy acted as a 'shield' against German aggression. In Paxton's words,

> Collaboration was not a German demand which some Frenchmen acceded… Collaboration was a French proposal that Hitler ultimately rejected.[4]

Paxton's research went on to illustrate the numerous ways in which the Vichy government actively worked with the Germans and how its efforts to promote collaboration exceeded German expectations and the original demands of the Armistice.

Over forty years later, Simon Kitson appears to challenge Paxton's work with his research on the French secret services and their efforts to curtail espionage activities in unoccupied France. Kitson's research revealed that the Germans were the 'main target' of French counterespionage activities.[5] Furthermore, Kitson's text illustrated that not only were French intelligence active in the Unoccupied Zone but that they worked to arrest and detain German spies. In dealing with the question of the French secret services Kitson dispels the notion that this secret service work was 'somewhat maverick and divorced from the government'[6]; rather, contemporary government archives, including the Ministry of the Interior and the Minister of Justice, indicate that the French government were aware of the activities of the French secret services.[7] These two trends operating within the Vichy state apparatus of German collaboration and the targeting of German spies appear almost irreconcilable. However, Kitson points out that there is no such contradiction and that Vichy's efforts at counter-espionage must be perceived in terms of its efforts to assert a degree of sovereignty. As Kitson writes,

> Rather what was happening here was that the French government was caught between the often-conflicting desires of asserting its own independence from the Germans whilst still promoting a policy of active co-operation.[8]

In this regard, Kitson's work is important in reinforcing Paxton's idea that Vichy was not a 'shield' for resistance activities but that its efforts to stem German espionage were

[4] Robert Paxton, *Vichy France, old guard and new order 1940-1944* (New York, 1972), p. 51.
[5] Simson Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies: fighting espionage in Vichy France* (Chicago and London, 2008), p. 59.
[6] Ibid., p. 2
[7] For the full list of the archives used by Kitson see Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p. 4.
[8] Ibid., p. 6.

part of the attempt to pursue an independent policy. However, Kitson also illustrates that these conflicts between German collaboration and independence explain 'why Vichy's behaviour in the domain of counterespionage oscillated between firmness and compromise'.[9] The same could be said of British escape activities both in terms of the French military authorities and the French secret services. There appears to have been a willingness to indulge and even on occasion engage in escape activities. This was coupled with a determination to remain aloof from direct involvement in such activities.

French authorities and escape activities in the Occupied Zone

In many cases, French civil authorities in the Unoccupied Zone appear to have been more willing to offer assistance than their counterparts in the north. This difference was noted by escapees. In one case, a British escapee, Driver W.B.A Gaze, singled out French gendarmes in the Occupied Zone for particular attention. Following his escape from a camp in Strasbourg in November 1940, Gaze encountered French gendarmes in both occupied and unoccupied France in his effort to reach Spain. Assessing his experience, Gaze made the general claim that, 'In the Occupied Zone the Gendarmerie turn a blind eye to escapers'.[10] Moreover, Gaze added that in relation to re-capture in occupied France, the danger came not from French gendarmes but from what he identified as German 'policiers'.[11] Gaze, in spite of spending nine days in the Occupied Zone, did not provide further details on his experiences beyond these comments. However, his experiences in the Unoccupied Zone appear to contrast sharply with those in the north. Not only was Gaze arrested and sent to Fort St Jean, Marseilles by the French authorities, but two escape attempts ended in his arrest by French gendarmes.

It is important to consider the difference in Gaze's reception in both the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones. In the north, despite encounters with gendarmes, Gaze avoided arrest and re-capture noting that they turned a blind eye to his presence. In doing so and allowing Gaze to continue his journey, gendarmes were effectively challenging the established status quo and indirectly undermining German authority. In contrast, the gendarmes arresting Gaze in the Unoccupied Zone acted within the status quo, accepting Vichy authority and their duty to make an arrest. This pattern of help from

[9] Ibid.
[10] Account of escape of 7618141 Dvr. Gaze, W.B.A., R.A.O.C., 25 Feb 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[11] Ibid.

gendarmes in the Occupied Zone followed by arrest in the Unoccupied Zone emerges throughout the period under review in this thesis 1940-42. One particularly remarkable example of gendarme willingness to turn a blind eye which occurred in October 1940 has already been mentioned in chapter one but it is worth recounting in the context of this chapter. On two separate occasions in that month two groups of escapees arrived at what was termed by one of the men as a 'police union'[12] office in Paris. Helpers in Lille listed the office as a potential safe house. On both occasions, the shocked gendarmes asked the men to leave but interestingly did not seek to detain either group.[13] The same cannot be said in relation to the arrival of these groups in unoccupied France where they were detained.[14]

On rarer occasions gendarmes in the Occupied Zone moved beyond turning a blind eye and played an active role in assisting escapees. This was done at increased risk as the experience of two escapees in August 1940 illustrates. These men were harboured for a night by a gendarme in his house at Chasnay. Their departure the next day was facilitated by the presence of German troops training nearby.[15] On reaching the Unoccupied Zone, both men were arrested. That same month two British servicemen, Gunner E. Lloyd and Gunner H. Turnbull, who had been working on a farm near Marly-le-Roi, were taken from the farm and driven to Paris by the chief of police of the town.[16] The chief of police not only supported Lloyd and Turnbull's civilian helpers but proved instrumental in ensuring their safe passage into the Unoccupied Zone, putting them on a train where, according to the escape report, they hid in the post van and safely crossed the demarcation line.[17] Similar to the above accounts, on arrival in unoccupied France, both Lloyd and Turnbull were arrested by the French authorities there. In other cases, gendarmes engaged in aiding escapes also shielded civilian helpers from the Germans

[12] Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[13] Account of escape of Capt. A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A/. &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieut. R.D.W. Griffin, 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[14] Account of escape of Capt. A. Irvine-Robertson, 7/A/. &S.H., 51 Div. and Lieut. R.D.W. Griffin, 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 10/12 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301); Account of escape of Lt. J.M. Langley, M.C. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards, 1st Division, 22 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301); Account of escape of 2030275 Pte. Wilson, A.M., R.A.M.C., 51 Div., 19 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302).
[15] Account of escape of 6288414 Pte. F. Hills, The Buffs and 6288414 Pte. V.H. Caldicott, The Buffs, 17 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[16] Account of escape of 933657 Gnr. Lloyd, E., 1 Regt. R.H.A. and 863963 Gnr. Turnbull, H. 1 Regt., R.H.A., 15 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).
[17] Ibid.

and there is at least one account where gendarmes used their privileged position to pass on updates on the German response to a mass breakout in Rouen in January 1942.[18]

There is also evidence to suggest that on occasion in the Occupied Zone French gendarmes acted as gateways into French communities. For instance, when Polish RAF Pilot Officer Z. Groyecki bailed out north of Lille in November 1941, desperate for help he directly approached a gendarme and asked him to take him to his house. Incredibly, Groyecki's tactic worked and the gendarme not only took Groyecki into his home, but allowed him to stay for three days. In addition to this practical assistance, through the gendarme's machinations Groyecki was passed through a network of safe houses and aided to the Unoccupied Zone. It is not known if the gendarme would have engaged in escape activities if he had not been directly approached. However, in other incidences, the reports suggest that gendarmes were pro-active in seeking men to help. In several cases, gendarmes were first on the scene of a bail out or crash with the aim of spiriting men away.[19]

One particularly interesting example of this is provided in an account given by an RAF sergeant, A. Pietrasiak. Pietrasiak was shot down in August 1941 and was almost immediately approached by two gendarmes near to where he landed after bailing out of his aircraft. They provided him with clothes from a nearby farm house and helped him to leave the area. Before leaving the Occupied Zone, Pietrasiak had a second encounter with a different group of French gendarmes in occupied France in September 1941. Pietrasiak and a colleague were, to use his words, 'challenged' by a gendarme. On discovering both men were recently shot down RAF pilots the gendarme informed them

[18] Account of escape of Major Challenor, R. R.E., 16 Apr. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[19] See Account of escape of C.Q.M.S. Shearer R. 1/Gordons and No.2875565 Pte. Ewen, W. 1/Gordons, 31 Oct. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of 2931814 Pte.Donald McKenzie, 4/Camerons, 51st Div., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3299); Account of escape of 2931810 Pte. Cairney, J., 4 Camerons, 20 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 580400 Sg.t Ingram, N.J., D.F.M., 82 Squadron, R.A.F., 4 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Statement by 68806 P/O Carroll, H.B., 207 Squadron, Bomber Command, R.A.F., 22 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307); Statement by 6899188 Cpl. Wheeler, G.R., 2 Commando, Royal Sussex Regt., 17 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308); Account of escape of 2880285 Pte. Philips, W. 6 Gordon Hrs. 51 Div., 9 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308); Account of escape of 999513 Sgt. Nabarro, D.D.W., 10 Squadron, R.A.F., 7/8 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310); Statement by N.Z. 391338 F/Lt. K. Barnett, No. 485 (Fighter) Sqn. R.N.Z.A.F., 7 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310); Statement by 888764 F.O L.G. Hawkins, 245 (Fighter) Sqn, R.A.F., 7 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310); Statement by 1256129 Sgt. Ainger, S.R.J., 49 Sqn., R.A.F., 29 Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310); Statement by Aus. 402258 P/O Silva, G., and 1168872 Sgt. Whicher, A.J., both of 24 O.T.U. R.A.F., 9 Sept. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310); Statement by 1190001 Sgt. Mills, W.H., 19 Squadron, R.A.F., 16 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3309). (These references do not take into account help given by Belgian gendarmes which, according to escape reports, was also quite significant).

that they 'were lucky there were no Germans about that day' and let both men proceed with their journey.[20] While, as Pietrasiak's experience highlighted, such help was given in a private capacity and without the knowledge of the German authorities, this does not take from the fact that it was done to undermine the German authorities and the status quo.

In contrast, this was not the case within the Unoccupied Zone where arrest happened as a matter of course. In point of fact, the majority of men crossing the demarcation line in the hope of reaching Spain were arrested and spent some time in French custody. Rather ironically, it would appear even gendarmes in unoccupied France were aware of the difference in attitude towards British escapees to their counterparts in the north. One British pilot on crossing the demarcation line in May 1942 unwittingly approached a gendarme for help and was advised to be

> Very careful, as it was much more dangerous in Unoccupied France, where gendarmes would pick up any Englishman.[21]

In contrast to the north, maintaining the status quo was crucial for the French authorities (namely, the French police and army) in the Unoccupied Zone.[22] Vichy was accepted as, according to Paxton, the lawful successor of the old regime.[23] Historian Dominique Veillon reinforced Paxton's observation arguing that although Vichy officials, and Veillon suggests specifically army officers, may have held out hope of liberating France, few wanted to become what she termed 'dissidents'.[24] Moreover, Veillon points out that in relation to those working for the state in institutions like the army, many considered 'it was not their proper place to call into question the authority of the state, and therefore their own legitimacy'.[25] This tension within the army is also witnessed in the attitude of gendarmes some of whom declared themselves pro-British but also accepted the authority of the Vichy government.

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[20] Statement by 784763 Sgt. Pilot Pietrasiak, A., 308 Squadron, R.A.F., 6 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[21] Statement by 44125 Sqn. Ldr. Wilkinson, R.C., 174 Squadron, R.A.F., 2 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).
[22] The French police and French army dealt with escapees, the paramilitary group known as the Milice was not founded until 1943, outside the timeframe of this thesis.
[23] Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. 16.
[24] Dominique Veillon, 'The Resistance and Vichy' in Sarah Fishman, Laura Lee Downs, Ioannis Sinanoglou, Leonard V. Smith, Robert Zaretsky(eds), *France at War Vichy and the historians* (Oxford and New York, 2000), p. 166.
[25] Ibid., p. 166.

Considering the willingness of gendarmes to make arrests, it is difficult to see how the French authorities in the Unoccupied Zone supported or were complicit in an escaping culture. Yet, rather ironically, this was exactly what British escapees experienced once interned. Moreover, there is evidence from the report of Flight Lieutenant K. Barnett which suggests that gendarmes arresting British escapees were aware of this escape culture and, in Barnett's case, actively endorsed it. According to Barnett, on his arrest in June 1942 two gendarmes informed him that 'escape from a French Internment Camp was a matter of no difficulty whatever'.[26] Remarkably, Barnett noted that this information was nothing less than what he expected having been informed that this was the case from lectures he received in England.[27]

Culture of escape: British internment camps in the Unoccupied Zone

Barnett's report is important in that it illustrates two important points in relation to this escaping culture: firstly, the appearance of maintaining the status quo was crucial; secondly that within that status quo there was an implicit sympathy for British escape efforts. This is visible in one of the first internment camps, or more correctly army barracks, specifically set aside for the British, Fort St Jean in Marseilles. French Foreign Legion officers at the camp performed their appointed tasks as guards. Yet the first discernible impressions of the camp related to the pro-British attitude of the guards. Several accounts refer to this pro-British attitude[28] with two internees reporting 'being extremely well treated'.[29] One internee went so far as to observe that the Foreign Legion officers guarding Fort St Jean 'without exception were pro-British and very hostile to the Germans'[30] with another British internee, Captain D.B. Lang, adding that the guards were 'all charming'.[31] This anti-Germanism which Foreign Legion officers did not hide from internees quickly manifested itself in implicit support for escape activities or, as

[26] Statement by N.Z. 391338 F/Lt. K. Barnett, No. 485 (Fighter) Sqn. R.N.Z.A.F., 7 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Account of escape of 2144 Major W.C.W. Potts, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). [Besley noted the guards were 'very hostile to Germans'].
[29] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300). See also Account of escape of 4271002 Spr. F. Bradley, 170th Tunnelling Coy., R.E., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).
[30] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[31] Ibid. See also Account of escape of 4271002 Spr. F. Bradley, 170th Tunnelling Coy., R.E., 5 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300);

Lang observed, these 'charming' French Foreign Legion officers 'did not ask questions if small numbers of British tried to escape at a time'.[32] Lang's description is revealing of the general attitude to escape among guards in the camp. To put it bluntly, escape was tolerated, even encouraged but only when it did not attract undue attention and therefore, might reflect badly on or draw the attention of the authorities to Fort St Jean.

In the case of Fort St Jean, this anti-German attitude and toleration of escapes occasionally boiled over to actively aiding such activities. Between August and November 1940 some Legionnaires guarding Fort St Jean were actively involved in a number of escapes. Escapes involving Legionnaires were by ship and facilitated by the protracted re-deployment of these officers to North Africa throughout autumn and winter 1940. British internees obtained Legionnaire uniforms, left Fort St Jean and boarded ships bringing these officers to North Africa. Two internees, Major W.C.W Potts and Captain C.R.I Besley, left Fort St Jean in August dressed in Legionnaire uniforms.[33] According to Besley,

> One of the Legion officers supplied us with uniforms and said he would do his best to get us to Casablanca if we could get undetected on to the ship.[34]

Potts and Besley were joined by another internee but it is unclear from Besley's report if that internee too benefitted from a Legionnaire uniform. Legionnaire transports appear to have been particularly popular among British internees with another internee successfully boarding a ship carrying Legionnaires bound for Oran a few weeks later.[35] In October, this was followed by two privates boarding another ship heading to Oran dressed as Legionnaires.[36]

There were over twenty successful escapes by sea crossing in the period between August-November 1940. It is difficult, however, to establish the number of sea

[32] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[33] Account of escape of 2144 Major W.C.W. Potts, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300); Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300); Account of escape of 2519794 Bdr. J.Sennett, R.A. 51 Div., 17 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[34] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[35] Account of escape of 808239 Bdr. J.W. Hodkisson, 23rd Field Regt., R.A., 17 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[36] Account of escape of 2319499 Sgmn. Sutton, A.C.2. Signals, and 2577618 Sgmn. Christie, J.F., R. Signals (H. Section No. 2 Coy. Attached 51st Division, 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).

crossings which were facilitated by Legionnaires. Accounts referring to the use of uniforms are relatively general. For instance, one internee Private W.D. Young simply reported, 'From Marseilles I crossed over to Oran, with others, disguised as a Legionnaire'.[37] In such cases, it is difficult to determine if Young obtained the uniforms directly from a Legion officer or acquired it by more resourceful means during his time in Fort St Jean. Moreover, Young refers to other internees on board the ship but does not provide details in relation to the use of uniforms by these 'others'. Young's account at least indicates he acquired and used a Legionnaire uniform; some accounts note boarding a ship but do not provide details outside of this fact. Given the lack of detail in some accounts it is difficult to determine the extent of Legionnaire involvement in escape activities. However, it is unlikely that men like Young were able to obtain Legionnaire uniforms without the complicity of Legionnaires. Even if obtaining uniforms was possible without the direct involvement of the guards, in remaining silent guards were complicit in such escape efforts. Perceived in this light, Legionnaires not only indulged or turned a blind eye to escapes but also, during phases of redeployment to North Africa, they assisted the British in their escape endeavours.

The help was given by individual Legionnaires but it is likely that their superior officers were aware of it. In her research on the French army, Veillon noted that not only was there room for anti-Germanism but that in cases where a 'few' French soldiers engaged in assisting various resistance networks, their involvement often met with the 'tacit agreement of their superiors'.[38] The tacit agreement of superiors was crucial to the promotion of an escaping culture as it created a situation where help given discreetly and without drawing attention or outwardly challenging the status quo met with approval or at the very least was ignored.

Nevertheless, balancing an openly acknowledged anti-Germanism with maintaining the status quo and sympathies with British internees in Fort St Jean was a challenge. The escape of Major W.C.W. Potts and Captain C.R.I Besley from Fort St Jean in August 1940 best illustrates how these contending factors played out and had an impact British escape activities. The Legionnaire officer providing Potts and Besley with the uniforms

[37] Account of escape of 2873535 Pte. W.D., Young 1/Gordon Highlanders, 51st Div., 16 Dec. 1940 (N.A.,WO208/3300).
[38] Dominique Veillon, 'The Resistance and Vichy', p. 166.

did so with the intention of helping them to escape but informed both men that their actual escape from Fort St Jean depended on their personal endeavours. In this way, the Legionnaire did not participate in the actual escape effort or directly compromise his role as guard. In addition to this, Potts and Besley were expected to make their way and board the ship without help and it was only when this was achieved that the Legionnaire would guarantee to do all in his power to facilitate their journey to North Africa. In laying down these conditions, the Legionnaire sought to both aid Potts and Besley's passage to North Africa but also to remove himself from direct involvement in their escape. Direct action of that nature would have challenged the authority of his superiors and met with disapproval. Arguably, in acting this way, the Legionnaire reconciled his duty to the Legion with his sympathy for the escape attempts of Besley and Potts.

More importantly, Potts and Besley's experience illustrates the awareness of superior officers and their complicity, by non-action, in these types of escapes. In this case, an inspection on board the ship by the French authorities led to Besley's discovery and his prompt return to Fort St Jean. According to Besley, on his return the camp guards noted Potts' absence that same night and some hours before the ship sailed and yet 'no attempt' was made to find him.[39] Equally, Besley's return to the fort in Legionnaire uniform does not appear to have raised any questions. This is an important consideration as Potts' absence and Besley's Legionnaire attire were not likely to go unnoticed by the camp's superior officers and yet no ramifications were reported in relation to either point. It can be argued that although Legionnaires remained reluctant to give direct assistance to internees, once Legionnaires provided aid without challenging their superiors, their actions gained implicit approval.

These intentional oversights and a 'no questions asked' policy were significant in reinforcing an escaping culture. Furthermore, this was not confined to members of the Foreign Legion; regular members of the army responsible for interning the British also adopted this attitude. This was particularly evident from January 1941 when the French authorities transferred British internees from Fort St Jean, Marseilles to St Hippolyte du Fort, an action which was likely part of a wider effort to stem British escape efforts which by January 1941 were prolific and centred around Marseilles. Indeed, this is

[39] Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

confirmed by the choice of location which was an army barracks located near a small village and over seventy miles from the nearest major city, Nîmes. The first British impressions of the move also reinforce this point with rumours in December 1940 of the transfer and 'stricter conditions'[40] awaiting internees in St Hippolyte prompting Driver W.B.A Gaze's speedy escape from Fort St Jean. There is little doubt that the geography of the new camp was a culture shock for internees accustomed to life in Marseilles, with one internee summing up his impression of St Hippolyte du Fort as 'wild isolated country'.[41]

Significantly, although the move to St Hippolyte was part of a wider policy to stem escape activities, there is evidence for a continued sympathy for, and even an appreciation of, British escape efforts. While outwardly, camp authorities at St Hippolyte did not indulge British activities on the same level as that witnessed in Fort St Jean and went to greater lengths to be seen to be tougher on escapes, there is evidence for a high tolerance for such activities. In one remarkable incident, three RAF sergeants on being returned to the camp by gendarmes after an escape were informed by the camp commandant that he was

> Not annoyed that we had tried to escape but rather that we had not gone out by a gate and at a time when internees in the camp were normally allowed out.[42]

This incident illustrates that the main concern of the camp authorities was not necessarily escapes per se but rather when an escape drew attention or raised questions in relation to the ineffectiveness of camp security.

In this regard, the commandant's concern remained not so much in discouraging escape but in maintaining the appearance of doing one's job. In the case referred to above, the commandant's advice was taken at face value and Willis, Vivian and Blaydon left the camp by the gate that afternoon. The Willis, Vivian and Blaydon escape occurred within days of the transferral to St Hippolyte but by the summer of 1940, the camp authorities expected internees to show an implicit understanding of what was expected when it

[40] Account of escape of 7618141 Dvr. Gaze, W.B.A., R.A.O.C., 25 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[41] Account of escape of 543236 Bandsman Barrett, G.A., 2/D/C.L.I., 4 Div., 13 Apr. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[42] Statement by 742172 F/Sgt. Willis, L.R; 905339 Sgt. Vivian, R., and Sgt. Blaydon R.W., then of 9 Sqn., Bomber Command, R.A.F., 29 Apr. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).

came to escape attempts. A breach of this sense of fair play, more so than the escape, had the potential to create tension between the authorities and internees. This is elucidated in an escape attempt initiated by internee, Patrick O'Leary (the eventual leader of the British escape organisation). O'Leary, like most men in St Hippolyte, had given his parole not to escape and received privileges including being able to leave the camp for a few hours a day. In summer 1940, O'Leary handed his parole back to the commandant, signalling his intention to escape. This procedure in itself is rather remarkable but what happened subsequently in even more so. On leaving the commandant's office O'Leary made a dash for the wall. Reaction was quick with guards dragging him away; within moments O'Leary was back before the commandant. O'Leary's biographer, Vincent Brome drawing on O'Leary account of the situation, provides a vivid description of the interview with the commandant and it is perhaps worth quoting his description in full. According to Brome,

> The interview that followed was ferocious…. Normally very polite, the commandant's threats were more ominous because delivered quietly, but above all, some sense of outraged morality drove him to say: 'It just isn't fair".
> "What's unfair about it?" O'Leary asked.
> "The way you rushed off two seconds after seeing me".
> "It's our duty to try to escape," O'Leary said.
> "Not by a trick," snapped the commandant.[43]

If Brome's account is accurate then the commandant's assertion that it was important not to escape 'by a trick' highlights the notion that there was a set of implicit principles surrounding escape activities that were understood by both sides, which when breached created tension. Brome's account suggests that the commandant was not annoyed at the escape attempt nor was he even seeking to discourage it but as in the case of Willis, Vivian and Blaydon, the commandant was annoyed by the method employed.

It would appear therefore that in both Fort St Jean and St Hippolyte the camp authorities implicitly endorsed an escaping culture, merely taking measures to keep it low key. Some researchers such as Brome note that the authorities issued punishments to escapees but do not go beyond this observation.[44] Yet an assessment of punishments

[43] Vincent Brome, *The way back* (London, 1958), p. 27.
[44] In his book on Albert Guerisse, Brome mentions that Guerisse was punished for a period of ten days and that at this stage guards were not as tough as they would be later. However he does not undertake a full account of the significance of these short punishments and their potential impact on escape activities. Brome, *The way back*, p. 28**.**

issued to men who escaped and were re-captured further draws into question the seriousness with which camp authorities attempted to deter escapes.

Under the terms of the Geneva Convention 1929 the maximum penalty that could be imposed on prisoners of war for various infringements, including escape activities, was thirty days' confinement. The majority of men who successfully passed into Spain between 1940-42 spent time in French internment, some escaping multiple times before they finally managed to cross the Franco-Spanish frontier. In spite of these multiple re-captures, camp authorities were slow to impose punishments. In relation to Fort St Jean, with the exception of two individuals, there were no references to punishments for serial escapees. The two individuals that were punished, Besley and Bombardier J. Sennett, received a penalty for the escape mentioned earlier in this chapter. This escape was attempted in the company of Major Potts with all three boarding a ship. Rather ironically, in relation to this escape it is known that Potts and Besley were assisted by a Legionnaire at Fort St Jean; it is uncertain if the same help was extended to Sennett. The French authorities returned Besley and Sennett to the fort where Besley was confined to his room for four days and Sennett received seven days solitary confinement and reduced rations.[45]

Considering the maximum penalty allowed was thirty days, the punishment enforced was relatively light. Moreover, it is likely that in this case a penalty was imposed because of the nature of the escape. Both men were returned to Fort St Jean from the ship raising the profile of the escape and the need to be seen to deal with such escapes. In fact, the push to curtail escapes does not appear to have come from camp authorities in either Fort St Jean or St Hippolyte but only emerges as a problem when direct attention is drawn to an escape by the men involved. For instance, in the case of Willis, Vivian and Blaydon, the commandant's annoyance may easily have been down to the fact that six men were returned to the camp that day by local gendarmes.[46] Yet in spite of the commandant's annoyance, all involved received no penalty for their escape

[45] Account of escape of 2519794 Bdr. J.Sennett, R.A. 51 Div., 17 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301); Account of escape of 37810 Capt. C.R.I Besley, 7/R/ Northumberland Fusiliers, 6 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).

[46] Statement by 742172 F/Sgt. Willis, L.R; 905339 Sgt. Vivian, R., and Sgt. Blaydon R.W., then of 9 Sqn., Bomber Command, R.A.F., 29 Apr. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308) see also Sergeant S.M.F. Parkes statement. Parkes was one of the six men involved in this escape. His account corroborates Willis, Vivian and Blaydon statement. Statement by 742649 Sgt. S.M.F. Parkes, 9 Squadron, R.A.F., 19 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).

attempt, with Willis, Vivian and Blaydon escaping a second time later that day. On the 20 February 1941 all three men were again re-captured and returned to the camp for the second time. Remarkably, this second attempt also appears to have earned no penalty and eleven days later all three were once again at large. This time only Blaydon was re-arrested. On his third return to St Hippolyte, Blaydon went unpunished. On 2 April, Blaydon made his final successful escape from the camp, crossing the Pyrenees some time later. Each of these escape attempts were only hours or days apart signalling that there was little or no penalty and therefore, no real effort made by the camp authorities to seriously deter even serial escapees.

This was a recurring theme with one particular internee making five escape attempts over a three month period from March until June 1941; his report does not refer to any penalties or punishment imposed on him during his time in St Hippolyte.[47] In cases where punishment details were recorded, solitary confinement ranged from between four to fifteen days.[48] These confinements, similar to punishments in Fort St Jean, remained notably shorter than that allowable and therefore not a deterrent to continuing such activities. From this perspective, the French military authorities responsible for British internees consistently displayed sympathy for the British position in unoccupied France to the point of indulging an escaping culture.

In making this assertion, it is necessary to turn the spotlight on the British as their actions challenged French ability to maintain this sympathetic line. The British were aware of the presence of both the German and Italian Armistice Commission in the Unoccupied Zone. The German Commission, in particular, maintained an active presence in Marseilles including keeping a close watch on the port. Yet, far from seeking to maintain a low profile, there are indications that British officers in Marseilles in the autumn and winter of 1940 used their relatively liberal internment condition to bait members of the Commission. James Langley in his autobiography recalls such an

[47] Statement by 5567722 Cpl. Gardner, W.F., 2 Wiltshire Regt., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[48] Account of escape of 2879107 Pte. Dunbar, R., 1 Bn. Gordon Highlanders, 51 Div., 27 Oct. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3307); Account of escape of 4449691 L/Cpl Prady, E., Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, 51 Div., July-Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309). See also Captain L.A Wilkins report on his time in Fort St Jean. Wilkins only received 15 days for inciting escape. In St Hippolyte, Private J. Farrell reported making four escape attempts. It was only on Farrell's fourth that he received the maximum penalty. Account of escape of 94831 Capt Wilkins, L.A., 2/5th West Yorks., 46 Div., 16 July 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304); Account of escape of 2819021 Pte Farrell, J., 2 Seaforth Hrs., 51 (H) Div., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).

episode noting that British officers sought out the offices of both the German and Italian Armistice Commission. The goal was to provoke representatives of the Commission, particularly the Italian Commission, into some kind of action with the Italians being considered 'easy meat'. According to Langley,

> It became a routine practice to chant out to the sentries… The officer officiating always wore as a buttonhole a large stick of macaroni, decorated with an oversize black mourning ribbon, and at the termination of his act he offered 50francs to anyone in the admiring crowd who could name an Italian victory since 1900. The results were always the same; the guard was turned out, the French police summoned, the British officer was arrested and marched out of sight, only to be released to continue the performance when next he had the energy.[49]

Langley recounts these memories as humorous anecdote but this type of behaviour had repercussions. The nuisance value of such behaviour drew German awareness to an open British military presence in Marseilles. Moreover, such actions as recounted by Langley made it impossible for the British presence in the city to remain low key. The 'admiring' crowds, the dramatic arrests, the release and the follow-up performance while entertaining, directed attention to rather than from the British.

In another incident in Vichy, Langley and a colleague although under curfew arrived drunk at their residence two nights in a row and were 'lucky not to be arrested'.[50] Considering that Langley arrived in the city to meet French officials willing to help him, this behaviour was not conducive to maintaining the necessary low profile. Escape reports are peppered with references to the British meeting civilians in various cafés. Varian Fry, an American working to help political refugees trapped in unoccupied France, is a useful source of information on early British escape activities. Fry gave one particular account of an incident in a café where Captain Charles Murchie, one of the early organisers of British escape activities, became quite drunk and indiscreet, openly discussing escape plans with a man Fry suspected, and later confirmed, worked for the Germans.[51]

Without access to French sources, one can only guess at the impact of this type of behaviour on the French authorities and their attempts to contain the visible British

[49] James Langley, *Fight another day* (London, 1974), p. 108.
[50] Langley, *Fight another day*, p. 98.
[51] Varian Fry, *Surrender on demand* (New York, 1997), pp 168-70.

presence in France. It may have underpinned the necessity of transferring internees to St Hippolyte. Although this is also supposition, it is interesting to note that Polish servicemen, who were it must be pointed out in a similar position to the British in Marseilles and also engaged in escape activities, remained in the city for the whole period under review 1940-42. While this may be explained by the stricter internment conditions imposed on the Poles, it could also be argued that this worked in their favour. By keeping a low profile, and as of yet there are no reported cases of Polish servicemen singing outside the offices of the German or Italian Armistice Commission, the Poles maintained their position and continued their escape activities from Marseilles. From this location, which they maintained from summer 1940, Polish officers had successfully continued to connect with Polish forces working for the British managing to set up an escape line by sea to North Africa.[52] Delving deeply into the activities of the Poles is outside the remit of this thesis but it is noteworthy as a point of contrast in relation to the British.

The behaviour of some British internees undermined the capacity of the French to continue a lenient policy towards them. Moreover, during the spring of 1941 when internees were moved to St Hippolyte, there is evidence that the Germans were growing increasingly concerned by British activities along the Pyrenees. In April 1941 two British escapees, Captain Charles Murchie and serial escaper Sergeant R.W. Blaydon, travelling separately into Spain, had similar experiences with Spanish authorities.[53] Murchie, in a letter to the British ambassador Sir Samuel Hoare, informed Hoare that the Spanish interrogation was based on his activities in France.[54] Murchie wrote that the focus of this interrogation was

> Directed to finding out what I was doing in Marseilles, by what means I arrived there, by whom I was hidden when in Occupied France, etc. etc. I admitted absolutely nothing and refused to disclose the names of persons who had rendered me individual service'.[55]

[52] Brooks Richard, *Secret flotillas volume II: clandestine sea operations in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Adriatic 1940-1944* (London and Oregon, 2004).
[53]'Letter from Charles Murchie to Sir Samuel Hoare', 15 Aug. 1941 (N.A.,FO371/26949a) and Statement by 742172 F/Sgt. Willis, L.R; 905339 Sgt. Vivian, R., and Sgt. Blaydon R.W., then of 9 Sqn., Bomber Command, R.A.F., 29 Apr. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[54]'Letter from Charles Murchie to Sir Samuel Hoare', 15 Aug. 1941 (N.A.,FO371/26949a).
[55] Ibid.

In Murchie's opinion, this information 'could hardly be any concern of the Spanish authorities.'[56] Blaydon's report sheds further light on Spanish interest in British escape activities. According to Blaydon he was

> Interrogated by a German in civilian clothes who asked my name, birth place and age, and expressed an interest in the organisation which had got us into Spain, as too many had been getting over. I said there was no organisation and that if there had been I would not have been before him. He mentioned various names but I denied knowing any of them.[57]

The Spanish, therefore, had an added interest in escape activities in that this information was passed on to the Germans. Furthermore, the questions directed at Murchie and Blaydon indicated that the Germans had knowledge of the presence of an escape organisation and were attempting to establish its extent. In taking trouble to connect with the Spanish on this issue, the Germans revealed an interest in, and a desire to closely monitor, the situation of British escapees passing into Spain.

This German interest in British escapees passing into Spain coincided with a tightening of security measures at St Hippolyte in April 1940. This did not go unnoticed by the British, who perceived, not that the French were behind tightened security measures, but that it was the Germans. According to internee Corporal F. Royston, in April 'the French were tightening their control at St Hippolyte at the instigation of the German Commission'.[58] Royston does not specify if this conclusion was the result of his personal observations or based on information provided by camp guards but, in light of Murchie and Blaydon's experiences during their interrogation in Spain, his report has credibility. It would appear that German pressure as opposed to French initiative lay behind efforts to curtail British escape efforts.

Interestingly, the French military authorities at St Hippolyte displayed a continued reluctance to impose even basic security measures to foil escapes. When men first arrived in the camp in January 1940, there was no barbed wire on the walls.[59] Considering that it was the duty of British prisoners to escape, and that many of the men

[56] Ibid.
[57] Statement by 742172 F/Sgt. Willis, L.R; 905339 Sgt. Vivian, R., and Sgt. Blaydon R.W., then of 9 Sqn., Bomber Command, R.A.F., 29 Apr. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[58] Account of escape of 6284264 Cpl. Royston, F., 2 Bn. The Buffs, 44 Div., 16 May 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).
[59] Statement by 742649 Sgt. S.M.F. Parkes, 9 Squadron, R.A.F., 19 June 1941 (N.A., WO208/3304).

in the camp were serial escapees, the lack of a simple security and deterrent measure such as barbed wire appears remarkable. Awareness that this may reflect badly on the camp officials may go some way to explaining why the camp commandant in the case of Willis, Vivian and Blaydon was eager to ensure men did not escape over the walls but by the gate! However, this awareness does not appear to have prompted action and while Royston observed tighter security measure in April 1940, O'Leary's escape attempt over the wall over in summer 1940 suggests that in the interim the French had done little to address this problem. In fact, evidence from the report of British sergeant, S.M.F. Parkes, suggests that the Germans were not satisfied with these tightened security measures and as a result the French commandant was dismissed, 'a German had taken his place and barbed wire put up'.[60]

Parkes did not witness these events personally as he had left France a few months previously, in January 1941. The commandant's removal and replacement by a German official remains unsubstantiated and must be acknowledged as unlikely; such a drastic measure would surely have been noted in other reports. Nevertheless, there is no doubting the French were under increased pressure to curtail British escape activities. Around this time there were also increased penalties for escape activities. For instance, a private, J. Farrell, received no punishment for his first escape attempt in April 1941. Farrell's second attempt in May earned fourteen days' imprisonment and in a third attempt in June 1941 Farrell received a maximum penalty of thirty days imprisonment.[61] Notably, the gendarmes who captured Farrell in June tried to force a confession that he escaped from St Hippolyte with the help of a guard and addresses he 'was making for'.[62] The attempts of the gendarmes to link Farrell's escape with guards in St Hippolyte is indicative of the pressure experienced by the French military authorities, pressure that goes some way to explaining the transferral of British internees to Fort de la Revère in March 1942. The move to Fort de la Revère was the first time since the creation of the Unoccupied Zone in 1940 that the French authorities took basic steps to reinforce security. Unlike Fort St Jean or St Hippolyte, Fort de la Revère was not located in close proximity to French inhabitants. Furthermore, British internees lost

[60] Ibid.
[61] Account of escape of 2819021 Pte Farrell, J., 2 Seaforth Hrs., 51 (H) Div., 7 Jan. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3307).
[62] Ibid.

privileges such as liberal parole terms (see chapter two) and therefore, access to surrounding areas.

The move to Fort de la Revère represented a significant shift in the dynamics of escape in the Unoccupied Zone. There is no evidence to suggest that the camp officials guarding Fort de la Revère displayed the same sympathies as the Foreign Legion in Marseilles or the commandant in St Hippolyte. The change in attitude had a marked impact on escape activities. Before the move to Fort de la Revère, the bulk of escapees assisted by the British-led escape organisation and reaching Spain consisted of men who had successfully escaped French internment. With the substantial drop in prison escapes the focus shifted to men who managed to make their way from the north and now had the added pressure of avoiding arrest in the Unoccupied Zone.

The significant point here relates not to those involved in escape activities but to the role of the French authorities in sustaining escape. The attitude of guards and their officers in both Fort St Jean and St Hippolyte had effectively sustained escape activities for over a year. Historians such as Foot place the focus for success on British organisation and it is not the intention of this chapter to undermine this perspective. However, it is equally important to recognise that the success of the British-led escape organisation was reinforced by the continued escapes from French internment. In fact, as mentioned in chapter two, the escape organisation went to some lengths to establish connections with St Hippolyte, setting up at least one safe house in Nîmes, the nearest city to St Hippolyte with access via train to Perpignan. Yet these connections would have been relatively pointless if it were not possible for internees to escape St Hippolyte on a regular basis. The escaping culture and lack of any real deterrent in relation to escape activities facilitated these regular escapes. From January 1941 to 17 March 1942, when the British were transferred again (discussed later in this chapter) a modest estimate suggests that of the men returned to Britain between 1940-42 over a hundred of these men escaped St Hippolyte.[63] In addition to this, during their time in St Hippolyte the British constructed three tunnels, albeit none of which were ultimately used.[64]

[63] This accounts for nearly one fifth of men escaping from France 1940-42.
[64] Account of escape of 4449691 L/Cpl Prady, E., Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, 51 Div., July-Aug. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309).

The seriousness of the situation and the sense that the French were coming under increasing pressure with regard to British prisoners fuelled rumours among internees in Fort de la Revère. In August 1942, for the first time British officers were separated from ordinary ranks and sent to a camp near Lyon, a city close to the German occupied zone. In Fort de la Revère rumours abounded that the camp, which was close to the Italian frontier, was on the verge of being taken over by the Italians. These rumours illustrate the British sense that the French were losing their authority in relation to British internees. The situation was not helped by a mass break out of prisoners from Fort de la Revère in September 1942. This breakout had been closely co-ordinated with the escape organisers in Marseilles. Fifty-six men escaped. A number of these reached safe houses near and in Marseilles. Throughout the summer of 1942 a number of successful attempts had been made to pass men to North Africa with the help of a number of small trawlers.[65] Some of the escapees from Fort de la Revère benefitted from this arrangement. However, if the German authorities were unaware of the ability of escape organisers to achieve this feat, they could not remain in the dark about the mass breakout.

The breakout is another example of the British drawing attention to their presence in the Unoccupied Zone. Regardless of British objectives, this type of action once again redirected the focus on the French capacity to guard the British. This breakout is particularly noteworthy as its repercussions were experienced in other areas of the Unoccupied Zone. British Flight Lieutenant G.C. Fisher who had recently arrived in the Unoccupied Zone from the north noted the impact of the breakout on travel. According to Fisher

> I caught the train to Marmande and on the way the train was controlled three times. There was at this time some excitement about Jews and the men who had broken out of Fort de la Revère.[66]

This type of action only added to the pressure already on the French to get to grips with the British situation. Within days of the breakout the entire camp at Fort de la Revère

[65] For more information see Richard Brooks, *Secret flotillas volume II: clandestine sea operations in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Adriatic 1940-1944* (London and Oregon, 2004).
[66] Statement by J.4690 F/Lt. G.C. Fisher, 408 Sqn., R.C.A.F., 7 Oct. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3310).

was moved again, this time to Chambarand where they were re-joined by their officers.[67]

The move to Chambarand marks the end of French attempts to balance efforts to retain a semblance of independence in terms of dealing with the British alongside their efforts to placate German interests. Each previous internment 'camp' was in reality an army barracks but Chambarand was a purpose-built internment camp. British captain, George Alleyne Browne described Chambarand in stark terms writing that

> There were double rows of barbed wire, machine-guns and searchlights at the new camp, which was guarded by a squad of Gardes Mobiles. The camp was not completed, huts for the winter being still under construction.[68]

Browne's observations are interesting in that not only did the appearance of the camp conform to prisoner-of-war camps in Germany but the French military also seem to have been relieved of their responsibilities. To what extent the military lost control is unclear but Browne's report is particular in noting that Gardes Mobiles as opposed to the regular military were in charge of the camp. Moreover, the camp had not been completed leaving the suggestion open that the mass breakout did merit a strong response and that the authorities had to been seen to act quickly. Browne's visual description of the camp and the seriousness with which the French were at this point treating escape was reinforced by their response to such activities. One of the first escape attempts made by Lieutenant Commander Redvers Prior, was 'met with a barrage of rifle fire'[69] a tactic that not been employed before.

Notwithstanding the physical descriptions and response of the guards to escape, there is evidence to suggest that the French camp authorities were still inclined towards sympathy. This claim is supported by the first-hand experiences of Reverend Donald Caskie. Caskie had been reprimanded by the French authorities for the support he gave to British escapees (examined later in this chapter). In response to this reprimand Caskie moved to Grenoble, near Chambarand. When the British were moved to this new camp

[67] Account of escape of Lt. Cdr. Redvers Michael Prior, D.S.C., R.N., C.C.O, R.N., C.C.O. Staff, 21/22/23 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[68] Account of escape of Capt. George Alleyne Browne, Royal Canadian Artillery, 2 Canadian Division, 27-28 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[69] Account of escape of Lt. Cdr. Redvers Michael Prior, D.S.C., R.N., C.C.O, R.N., C.C.O. Staff, 21/22/23 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).

Caskie sought to visit the men in a religious capacity. In spite of a long track record of aiding escapes and suspicions he may have helped in a number of prison breaks Caskie received permission to continue his visits to Chambarand. The irony of this was not lost on Caskie and in his observations of Chambarand he noted that it was

> Not a bad camp. True, the lads were held behind barbed wire; the French kept them prisoners and went through the motion of strict discipline but they gave their charges an easy time. Live and let live was their motto. Their attitude to the Germans was cynically correct.[70]

Caskie's comments when combined with the observations of British internees on the double barbed wire, searchlights and barrage of rifle fire illustrate French attempts to address a much bigger dilemma. As in Fort St Jean and St Hippolyte, efforts were made in Chambarand to both remain loyal to a collaborationist Vichy while also expressing sympathy to the British war effort. Indeed, the formidable appearance of Chambarand paid lip service to this collaborationist policy. Though no longer able to convey tacit approval in relation to escape activities, antipathy towards the situation was, as Caskie illustrated, indicated by going through the 'motion of strict discipline' but in reality giving 'their charges an easy time'.

The tension of balancing German interests, loyalty to Vichy and sympathy to British reached new heights on the 11 November 1942. In response to the invasion of North Africa by the allies a number of days earlier the Germans crossed the demarcation line and occupied the remainder of France. The Italians too gained more French territory, territory they had sought and been denied by the Germans in June 1940. This action removed any remaining illusions of Vichy independence and the impact of this was notable in the actions of the authorities in Chambarand. Outwardly, Chambarand continued to function as a British prison camp. However, there was one crucial difference; with the German invasion, loyalties to Vichy were severely shaken. In Chambarand, shaken loyalty was highlighted not only in the willingness of guards to turn a blind eye to escape but in their readiness to actively assist such endeavours. This is not to say that all guards participated in these endeavours or supported them but for the first time there was a willingness to take greater risks in offering such support. This

[70] Donald Caskie, *The Tartan Pimpernel* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 175.

is suggested in the report of Flight Lieutenant Robert Milton.[71] On the 16 November, four days after the occupation, a French guard walked Milton and a colleague past the sentry and out the main gate. Not only was the guard willing to do this but he may have done so with the knowledge of his superiors. Milton goes on to report that once outside the camp they were driven to the train station in the commandant's car. It is not known if the commandant was complicit in the escape but it is unlikely that his car could be used without his prior knowledge.

More direct proof of high level involvement in escape activities comes from an account of an escape which took place a few days later. According to one of the participants, Captain George Alleyne Browne, a British senior officer in the camp, Lieutenant Commander Redvers Prior, wrote to a local French military commander. No details of the content of the letter are provided in Browne's report but he asserted that 'as a result of this letter Lt-Cdr Prior, myself, and some other internees were liberated, on 27 November'.[72] Prior's report is circumspect on this point only reporting that

> A group of us managed to get round one of the guards who allowed us to get over the wire and out of the camp. There were seven in the party.[73]

Prior's account does not include Browne's reference to a local French military commander but only that he managed to get round one of the guards.[74] Therefore, it cannot be established with certainty that a local military commander was involved. Nevertheless, the incident illustrates the willingness of guards to help, a situation which would not have occurred before 11 November of that year.

Equally, the German and Italian authorities were disinclined to rely on the continued loyalty of the French as evidenced by the arrival of Italian troops at the camp in early December 1942 and followed by the removal of the internees to camps in Italy. This marked the end of the French authorities' control over the internment of British military personnel. Reflecting on the French military authorities' relationship with British

[71] Statement by 42866 F/Lt. Robert Milton, 220 Sqn. Coastal Command, R.A.F., Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[72] Account of escape of Capt. George Alleyne Browne, Royal Canadian Artillery, 2 Canadian Division, 27-28 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[73] Account of escape of Lt. Cdr. Redvers Michael Prior, D.S.C., R.N., C.C.O, R.N., C.C.O. Staff, 21/22/23 Jan. 1943 (N.A., WO208/3312).
[74] Ibid.

internees from 1940-42, it would appear that they continually made efforts to mitigate German demands towards the British. British prisoners were, where possible, given relative freedom and serial escapees were dealt with leniently.

French Intelligence and British escape activities

The French military authorities were not alone in indulging British escape activities. As with the military authorities, the French secret service, among them a number of high profile agents, displayed a sympathy and even a willingness to help British escapees.[75] However, before assessing the French secret services' contribution to British escape activities, it is necessary to establish the context for this assistance. In order to do this, it is important to provide a brief outline of the position of the secret services following the defeat of France. As one researcher noted, one of the leading figures in French intelligence, Colonel Louis Rivet, forbade French intelligence agents dealing with pro-British (Allied) intelligence and then set up an organisation to do just that.[76] While Rivet established the secret Cinquième Bureau to deal with espionage, it is somewhat of an overstatement to argue that this organisation was working purely for the British. Kitson's extensive research on French intelligence in Vichy France noted that the Cinquième Bureau was not necessarily interested in the British war effort *per se* but rather with maintaining the integrity of Vichy's sovereignty.[77] In this capacity, according to Kitson, intelligence agencies acted against all Axis and Allies agents in unoccupied France.[78]

The Cinquième Bureau was subdivided into the Service de Renseignments (gathering intelligence) and the Section de Centralisation du Renseignment which centralised intelligence. This latter was further subdivided into the Travaux Ruraux (TR) and the Bureaux for Anti-National Affairs (BMA).[79] The Travaux Ruraux or Rural Works owes its rather mundane name to camouflaging its intelligence activities.[80] According to

[75] For a comprehensive overview of the French secret services in the twentieth century see also Douglas Porch's work on this topic. Porch pointed out that the secret services were intrinsically linked to the military and thus lacked the ability to act independently. Douglas Porch, *French secret services: from the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War* (New York, 1995).
[76] William Moore, *The long way round: an escape through occupied France* (London, 1986), p. 182.
[77] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi Spies*, p. 143.
[78] Ibid., p. 43.
[79] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi Spies*, p. 47.
[80] Antonio Téllez Solá, *The Anarchist Pimpernel Francisco Ponzán Vidal (1936-1944). The anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and the Allied escape networks of WWII* (Hastings, 1997), Kindle edition.

Kitson the Travaux Ruraux had offices in Annemasse, Limoges, Clermont, Lyon and Toulouse, including a branch in Paris.[81] In relation to escape activities, as British escapees were not necessarily aware of the subtleties of French intelligence, the escape reports usually refer to French intelligence by the better named Deuxième Bureau. There is some evidence to suggest that agents from the Cinquième Bureau including both the TR and BMA were also in contact with British escapees. It is sometimes difficult to establish if agents interacting with the British were Deuxième Bureau or Cinquième Bureau, particularly considering that the British were fond of applying 'Deuxième Bureau' as a generic term to cover all intelligence. However, where these distinctions can be established with a degree of certainty they will be flagged in the course of this chapter.

A small number of men reported being directly assisted by the Deuxième Bureau in their escape activities. In autumn 1941, a French man guided Private John Morton to the Unoccupied Zone from the north. According to Morton, the French man, acting on advice he received in the north, brought Morton to the Deuxième Bureau in Chateauroux. Morton's account is interesting as he noted that the Deuxième Bureau were suspicious of both men and unwilling to render assistance until Morton confessed to being an escaped prisoner of war. On receiving this news, the Deuxième Bureau in Chateauroux promptly recommended that they try the Deuxième Bureau in Toulouse for help. In fact, the Bureau in Chateauroux informed Morton and his guide how they could contact the Bureau there and allowed both men to continue their journey unimpeded. Morton and his guide followed up on this advice, went to Toulouse and directly approached members of the Deuxième Bureau in Toulouse, informing agents there that they wanted to 'get to England to fight for General de Gaulle'[82] Incredibly, these agents directed Morton and his French companion to a priest who could help them cross the Pyrenees. In this respect, not only were members of the Deuxième Bureau in Chateauroux willing to allow Morton and his French companion to continue their journey through unoccupied France but they were confident in recommending the assistance of the Deuxième Bureau in Toulouse.

[81] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi Spies*, p. 45.
[82] Account of escape of 3525734 Pte. Morton, John, 1/Black Watch, 51st Div., 19 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

While Morton's experience may have been a singular case, it does lend support to Dominique Veillon's position, referred to earlier in this chapter, that anti-German activities were often carried out with the tacit knowledge of superiors.[83] While Veillon's observations referred to the French Armistice army, this principle is also applicable to the French secret services. In Morton's case, given the open nature of his encounter with the Deuxième Bureau, it is doubtful that this would have gone unnoticed by superior officers. Arguably, instructions given to him in Chateauroux on how to contact the Deuxième Bureau in Toulouse appear quite informal. Agents there told him to get in touch with the Deuxième Bureau 'through the barracks there'.[84] Essentially, from Morton's account it would seem that he would make contact with the Deuxième Bureau by openly approaching an army barracks and asking to be pointed in the right direction. Given the open nature of these enquires it is unlikely that superior officers remained unaware of the situation.

Morton was not alone in his encounters with French secret intelligence. Furthermore, other accounts provide more direct evidence of the involvement of senior intelligence agents in British escape activities. A particular relevant illustration of the level of involvement of secret service agents and their superiors is the case of Lieutenant Richard Broad. Broad's escape from the Occupied Zone with seven British servicemen has been discussed at various points in this thesis, however, in the context of this chapter, the connections he established within the French secret services come under scrutiny.

Broad's journey to the Unoccupied Zone was facilitated by French secret service agent Pierre d'Harcourt. Contact with d'Harcourt had been established through Broad's French helpers but in order to give assistance to Broad and his men, d'Harcourt had to clear it with his superiors.[85] D'Harcourt, based in Paris, worked for the Cinquième Bureau under Major d'Autrevaux.[86] Information was passed to the Cinquième Bureau in Vichy. Given that the primary concern of the Cinquième Bureau was intelligence

[83] Dominique Veillon, 'The Resistance and Vichy', p. 166.
[84] Account of escape of 3525734 Pte. Morton, John, 1/Black Watch, 51st Div., 19 Jan. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).
[85] Moore, *The long way round*, p. 105.
[86] Pierre d'Harcourt, *The real enemy* (New York, 1967), p. 12. d'Harcourt referred to d'Autrevaux as a major but elsewhere his rank appears as captain, André Postel-Vinay, *Un fou s'évade: souvenirs de 1941-1942* (Paris, 1997), p. 8 and Moore, *The long way round*, p. 105.

gathering adding extra risk by aiding escapees was a serious concern. Nevertheless, as Broad's biographer pointed out, French men like d'Harcourt were 'desperate to do something'.[87] Whatever the actual circumstances, Moore noted that approval for d'Harcourt's scheme to take Broad and his men across the demarcation line came from his superior, d'Autrevaux. D'Harcourt's autobiography lacks details in relation to the help he rendered to the servicemen and therefore it is difficult to corroborate Moore's claim. Moore's source of information, which presumably came from Broad is not clear nor is it clear if Broad met d'Autrevaux or received this information second hand. Yet there is no reason to doubt Moore's claim as undertaking such as a task required d'Harcourt's departure from Paris and this, given the nature of his intelligence work, would require an explanation.

On crossing the demarcation line, d'Harcourt met Broad in Marseilles and introduced him to his connections in Vichy. These connections included Raoul Beaumaine, a member of the Cinquième Bureau and d'Harcourt's superior. Beaumaine had already been in contact with a British escapee, Lieutenant James Langley, during Langley's time with the American Consul in Lyon (see chapter three) and he had attempted to assist Langley's companion to Switzerland.[88] Furthermore, it would appear that Broad also made connections with Colonel Leon Simoneau, a senior figure in the Cinquième Bureau. This is not referred to in Broad's contemporary escape report but during Moore's research for his book on Broad's escape Moore received a letter from Simoneau. In his synopsis of this letter Moore writes

> He [Simoneau] remembers providing facilities (e.g. identity cards) for Pierre d'Harcourt and, in particular, putting him in touch with Commandant Jonglez de Ligne, head of the counter-espionage service in Marseilles.[89]

The provision of identity cards is confirmed in Broad's contemporary account. However, it is impossible to confirm Simoneau's claim in relation to Commandant Jonglez de Ligne, the head of the counter-espionage in Marseilles. There is no evidence that this connection was followed up by Broad or other escape organisers in Marseilles at the time such as Murchie and Garrow. In a letter to the British ambassador in Spain, Sir Samuel Hoare, Murchie claimed a highly-placed official in Marseilles knew of his

[87] Moore, *The long way round*, p. 106.
[88] James Langley, *Fight another day*, (London, 1974), pp 96-8.
[89] Moore, *The long way round*, p. 181.

activities and attempted to protect him.[90] Yet, as Murchie provided no further details, it is impossible to ascertain if this official was Commandant Jonglez de Ligne.

In spite of these missing gaps, it can be established that highly-placed officials in Cinquième Bureau knew about British escape activities and the participation of their agents in such activities. Broad's account gives some insight into the reasons behind the interest of these officials in connecting with British escapees. According to Broad, one intelligence agent complained that

> There was now absolutely no co-operation between the British and French Intelligence services and he was most anxious that this should be renewed. If I would help he was prepared to give me identity papers of a French Canadian.[91]

Moore's biography also illustrates this point and expands on Broad's impressions of his encounter with French intelligence. The 'pro-British element' of Vichy was willing to employ Broad but 'had no particular interest in the fate of his men'.[92] Moore also claims that before meeting Broad, d'Harcourt had high hopes Broad might prove useful in aiding his superiors to establish firmer connections with British intelligence.[93] In this respect, Moore noted, d'Harcourt was disappointed but it is possible in making these assertions that Moore may have overextended his claims. D'Harcourt's autobiography does not indicate that he entertained any hopes of recruiting Broad, only stating that he agreed to help Broad as a personal favour to an acquaintance.[94]

However, while Broad received a false identity card, the seven men (all rank and file) he crossed into the Unoccupied Zone with did not. All were detained in St Hippolyte du Fort and no attempts were made by the Cinquième Bureau to assist them. These actions, perhaps, give credibility to Moore's argument that the Bureau's intention was not to assist an escape but to recruit Broad's services. Yet while French intelligence expected Broad to work with them, Broad personally had no intention of doing so. Instead he used his position to successfully plan his escape and that of his men as an indirect result of his interaction with the French secret services. Using identity papers provided by the

[90] 'Letter from Charles Murchie to Sir Samuel Hoare', 15 Aug. 1941 (N.A.,FO371/26949a).
[91] Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[92] Moore, *The long way round*, p. 137.
[93] Ibid., pp 100-1.
[94] d'Harcourt, *The real enemy*, pp 13-4.

Cinquième Bureau, Broad went to St Hippolyte du Fort to make arrangements with his men, plan their escape from the fort and their journey to the Pyrenees. In fact, Broad arranged the escape of twelve men from the camp, successfully reaching Spain on the 17 February 1941. Broad's priority was on reaching Spain and although benefitting from the perks of his French intelligence connections he does not appear to have engaged in intelligence work. Interestingly, Broad may have been unwilling to work with French intelligence but Pierre d'Harcourt appears to have introduced another member of the Cinquième Bureau, André Postel-Vinay to escape organisers in Marseilles until his arrest by the Germans in December 1941.[95] Based in Paris, Postel-Vinay, along with his intelligence work, assisted in British escape activities. In this regard, the involvement of Cinquième Bureau agents such as d'Harcourt illustrates the admittedly small but nonetheless direct contribution of the Bureau in extending escape activities.

Equally, Broad's relationship with French intelligence had a direct impact on British escape activities in unoccupied France. In addition to receiving personal identity papers, Broad also obtained passes compliments of the Cinquième Bureau for British escape organisers, Captain Charles Murchie and Captain Ian Garrow.[96] As both men did not move to St Hippolyte with British internees in Fort St Jean, Murchie and Garrow were living illegally in Marseilles and in danger of arrest. These passes allowed them to remain in the city. However, while these passes eased concerns of arrest in the short term, it is difficult to assess their longer-term impact. They needed to be renewed monthly which meant approaching the French authorities. Given the nature of the work carried out by Murchie and Garrow, this was not possible.

In point of fact, neither Murchie nor Garrow refer to these papers in the available accounts of their activities in Marseilles. Moreover, as noted earlier, Murchie, despite claiming he was protected by a French official, was continually harassed by French authorities in Marseilles.[97] These experiences ranked high on Murchie's reasons for departing France in April 1941. Therefore, although Broad may have obtained passes from the Cinquième Bureau for Murchie and Garrow, their value was limited. Not only

[95] Postel-Vinay, *Un fou s'évade*, p. 9.
[96] Summary of a report by Lieut. R.L. Broad, 2/Seaforths, 51 Div., 18/25/26 May 1941 (N.A., WO208/3303).
[97] 'Letter from Charles Murchie to Sir Samuel Hoare', 15 Aug. 1941 (N.A.,FO371/26949a).

did both men have to depend on French authorities to renew the visas in order to stay in Marseilles but even with the passes Murchie and Garrow still needed to keep a low profile and as Murchie suggests they continued to be vulnerable to arrest.

This continued vulnerability to arrest conveys the difficulties facing escape organisers and helpers. Receiving help from Vichy secret services did not necessarily guarantee safety. This was particularly evident in July 1941 when a number of helpers attending a meeting at the Hotel de Noailles were arrested by French police. Among the arrested was helper Elizabeth Haden Guest and one of the main organisers, Pat O'Leary (who had at that time been with the organisation for just one month). O'Leary successfully talked his way out of the situation but Guest was taken into custody and charged. In her autobiography, Guest noted that the police who approached her identified themselves as 'B.M.A.'[98] or Bureaux for Anti-National Affairs. The Cinquième Bureau set up the B.M.A and therefore, the B.M.A actions were carried out under the auspices of the Bureau. This incident, preceded as it was by previous assistance to British officers, adds a layer of complexity to the relationship between escape organisers and the French secret services.

In attempting to understand these arrests, it is necessary to draw on the work of Kitson who, as noted earlier in this chapter, argued that in order to maintain the veneer of French sovereignty agents of the Cinquième Bureau were just as likely to arrest Allied as well as Axis agents working in unoccupied France. Efforts to clamp down on espionage may go some way to explaining the sudden arrests in July 1941. There is evidence to suggest that as early as January 1941 Garrow was gathering intelligence.[99] The French were well aware of this and given that French intelligence was keen to curtail the activities of both Axis and Allied intelligence agents operating in unoccupied France, it could be argued that this prompted Garrow's arrest. Yet there are problems with putting these arrests down to French efforts to clamp down on Garrow's activities. Garrow's activities had been indulged by the Cinquième Bureau; according to Kitson, on one occasion Garrow passed on information concerning a German spy active in a

[98] Elisabeth Furse and Ann Barr, *Dream weaver* (London, 1993), p. 122.
[99] Account of escape of 5726306 Pte. Graham J., 2/Dorsets, 2 Div., 19 Mar. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3302).

resistance network to the Cinquième Bureau.[100] Given this degree of co-operation it is unlikely that the French acted on their own initiative in making these arrests.

What is likely is that German or Italian pressure lay behind these sudden arrests. According to an escape report written in December 1940, Hotel Noailles was the home of the Italian Armistice Commission.[101] Whether this was the case at the time of the July meeting is unlikely but it appears foolhardy to call a meeting at a hotel known to the Italian Armistice Commission, a place where as a result of the Commission's time there, members had most likely established connections. Interestingly, Guest suspected one of the hotel's concierge of tipping off the authorities. Given the connections at the hotel and possible links to members of the Italian Armistice Commission, it may have been prudent for the authorities to make the arrest. Pressure on French authorities is reinforced by Guest's account of the incident. According to Guest, after being taken to Fort St Nicholas for interrogation, two officers informed her that it was 'vital' to locate Captain Ian Garrow in order to warn him of his 'imminent arrest'.[102] On failing to gain information from Guest on his whereabouts the interrogating officers asserted that, 'No Frenchmen betrayed you, no Greek, nobody but one of your own'.[103] This may have been a ruse, and a poor one at that, to gain information on Garrow's whereabouts. However, it is also possible, considering the French authorities were aware of Garrow's activities and had held back from arresting him, that members of the Cinquième Bureau involved in the arrest of Guest did seek to warn Garrow. If this was the case, then it is likely that the French authorities were forced to act as a result of a betrayal. And yet this is also a problematic assessment. On the one hand the French secret services inform Guest of their desire to warn Garrow and followed this up with the release of three arrested helpers; at the same time, others including Guest were charged with aiding British escapees.

These incidents make it difficult to ascertain the position of the French secret services in relation to escape activities. Questions arise such as: Were these arrests the result of German pressure and a betrayal? If so, in making these arrests were the French secret

[100] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p. 77.
[101] Account of escape of 56146 Capt. Mills, C.F.P., 97th Kent Yeomanry Field Regiment, Attd. 1st R.H.A 50th Div., 31 Dec. 1940 (N.A., WO208/3300).
[102] Furse and Barr, *Dream weaver*, p. 122.
[103] Ibid., p.123.

services seeking to shield the main players involved in escape activities? Or, were these arrests the result of a French initiative? In this respect, the involvement of members of the Cinquième Bureau in escape activities, and as demonstrated in some cases with the implicit approval of superiors, did not guarantee protection and safety from arrest, even in the Unoccupied Zone. This was exemplified with Garrow, who, in spite of the fact that he had previously provided information to the Cinquième Bureau, was arrested in October 1941 (discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

Yet there were incidences where the French secret services appear to have taken action to protect those engaged in escape activities. One case of particular interest in this respect is, that of Sergeant Harold Cole. Cole had been working for Murchie and Garrow since early 1941 guiding escapees from Lille to Marseilles. In addition to this work, Cole also helped extend the organisation in the north and numbered among his connections there, Cinquième Bureau agent André Postel Vinay who was introduced to British escape activities by Pierre d'Harcourt[104] and another Deuxième Bureau agent identified as Commandant Bernaerd. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1941, suspicion of Cole's motivation increased, and it soon came to Garrow and O'Leary's attention that Cole was using money given to him by Garrow to bankroll a high lifestyle. Considered a threat to those engaging in escape activities, Cole was confronted in Marseilles in October 1941 but managed to escape returning to Lille where he was arrested by the Germans.

Shortly after Cole's arrest, helpers in the Forbidden and Occupied Zone were also arrested including, on the 13 December 1941, the Cinquième Bureau agent Postel Vinay. These betrayals were engineered by Cole who was personally involved in a number of these arrests.[105] There has been much speculation on when exactly Cole first betrayed the organisation. It is interesting to note that autobiographies of various helpers refer to their immediate distrust of Cole and one of Cole's biographers, Brendan Murphy, suggests that Cole was most likely working for the Germans yet there remains no concrete evidence as to exactly when Cole became an informant.[106] Equally, speculation on Cole's activities has centred on attempts to establish the number of

[104] Brendan Murphy, *Turncoat, the true case of traitor Sergeant Harold Cole* (London, 1987), p. 111.
[105] Postel-Vinay, *Un fou s'évade*, pp 16-21.
[106] Murphy, *Turncoat*, p. 155. See also Furse and Barr, *Dream weaver*, p.123; Caskie, *The Tartan Pimpernel*, p. 103.

helpers Cole betrayed. While this discussion is important it is not relevant to the subject matter of this chapter. Instead, in relation to the Cole case, the focal point is the reaction of the Vichy authorities to the betrayal and their efforts to curtail Cole's activities. This was evident in June 1942 when Cole on crossing the demarcation line was arrested by Vichy police. Cole was accompanied by his wife Suzanne Warenghem who was also arrested. There is much speculation as to the reasons behind Cole's arrest and Murphy, in his biography on Cole noted that the French secret services most likely arrested Cole as a German spy. This point, when taking into account Kitson's work on the French Secret Services, is a logical conclusion. Murphy's research, however, lacked the benefit of Cole and Warenghem's contemporary interrogation statements provided by the French to the British after the war which reveal not only details of Cole's activities but also the primary concerns of officials interrogating him.

An examination of two statements taken from Cole during his interrogation by French officials indicate that the primary concern of the French authorities was not his work with the British escape organisation in the Unoccupied Zone but his dealings with the Germans in the Occupied Zone. Following his arrest in June 1942, Cole was interrogated on the 9 June 1942 by George Stemart, the Commissioner of Police of the City of Lyon, Judicial Police and Assistant to the Public Prosecutor.[107] Cole provided a relatively superficial and cautious account of his affairs. On the subject of his arrest by the Germans he does not mention giving away any names blaming an acquaintance for feeding information to the Germans. The interesting aspect of Cole's statement relates to the nature of French questioning. The first questions put to Cole referred to individuals Cole was believed to have betrayed to the Germans. This included a direct question in relation to Cinquième Bureau agent Postel-Vinay and Deuxième Bureau agent Commandant Bernaerd. Cole had given both names to the Germans but the latter, Bernard, had managed to avoid arrest.[108] In response to this, Cole denied knowing Postel Vinay. In relation to Commandant Bernaerd he admitted working with him against the Germans but gave no indication he betrayed him. In this interview, Cole does not appear to have been pushed on any particular point and avoided directly implicating himself in providing names to the Germans.

[107] Statement of Harold Cole, 9 June 1942 (N.A., KV 2/416).
[108] Polish report on Harold Cole, 30 Dec. 1942 (N.A., KV 2/416).

This is not the case in the follow-up interrogation, dated 12 June 1942. In the three day period between the first interrogation and the one on the 12 June, it appears that Cole confessed to working with the Germans, even claiming to be a German agent. It is not clear why he did this but this confession shaped the direction of this interrogation. Having admitted to providing the Germans with information, establishing who was betrayed became one of the focal points of interrogation. In fact, the first demand put to Cole was the following:

> Give us the names of the members of this organisation [Garrow's escape network] which you divulged to the Gestapo?[109]

This interest was followed up by a demand for the names of individuals working with the Gestapo. The rest of the interrogation was dominated by Cole's time with the Gestapo and obtaining the names of Gestapo agents.

Cole provided cursory information on British escape activities but the interrogation report suggests that this was of little interest to the authorities. Rarely was Cole asked to expand on the activities of the escape organisation. However, the authorities did push Cole in relation to German knowledge of these activites. Interrogators continued to return to this point and this line of questioning. In light of this, it would appear that French interest lay not in the activities of the escape organisation but what the Germans knew about such activities and the individuals involved.

This is reinforced in a rather extraordinary letter Cole wrote to the Commissaire de Police dated 15 June 1942 in which he pleaded his case. Cole wrote in relation to his interrogation

> I did not tell them [the police] the truth because I was with my wife (who did not know of my activities until my arrest), and I was afraid that I should be re-conducted to the Line of Demarkation and handed over to the German authorities. I now believe that you (Vichy) are contre [against] the Reich and have now told the truth. My desire is to work as much against the Germans as I did when I was a good soldier.[110]

[109] Statement of Harold Cole, 12 June 1942 (N.A., KV 2/416).
[110] Letter from Harold Cole to the Commissaire de Police, 15 June 1942 (N.A., KV 2/416).

In sending such a letter Cole was acting upon impressions he received during his interrogation. This emerges in various points during his interrogation where he made various claims from being a British intelligence agent which involved on one occasion in 1930s acting as a bodyguard to 'Mrs Simpson, the wife of the Prince of Wales' to also claiming he was a German officer working with the Armistice Commission.[111] This letter was part of another attempt made by Cole to gain support for his position yet it is significant in illustrating that at this point in time, after Cole had admitted his guilt and the main points of his statements had been clarified, Cole felt it expedient to gain favour for his position by recognising Vichy as 'contre Reich' and express a desire 'to work against the Germans'.

Although Cole's interrogators overlooked his involvement in escape activities, focusing instead on his work with the Germans and recognising a 'contre Reich' sentiment throughout his interrogation, this was not necessarily to protect those involved in British escape activities. Arguably, Cole's betrayals had a direct impact on the French Secret Services, notably the Cinquième Bureau. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that Cole's initial arrest was personal. On crossing the demarcation line, Cole's wife Suzanne Warenghem, unaware of her husband's activities, persuaded him to visit an acquaintance in Lyon, Captain Biche.[112] Warenghem, in a statement given to British authorities in 1944, noted that she believed Biche to be behind the arrest. Murphy's research also identifies Biche as one of the men behind the arrest but apart from stating he was a Vichy official does not provide background information on him. Biche, according to Warenghem, was a friend of the Cinquième Bureau agent denounced by Cole, André Postel Vinay.

In addition to this, Cole's relationship with Deuxième Bureau agent, Commandant Bernaerd, was also a concern. Substantial parts of the interrogation focused on Bernaerd. According to Cole's statement the Germans had informed Cole that it was 'most important that this man should be arrested'.[113] Cole, not knowing Bernaerd's address, provided details of one of his acquaintances who was arrested. Cole also told French interrogators that the Germans considered Bernaerd a 'very important

[111] Ibid.
[112] Statement of Suzanne Warenghem, 24 Apr. 1944 (N.A., KV 2/416).
[113] Statement of Harold Cole, 12 June 1942 (N.A., KV 2/416).

personage'[114] and that he was 'possibly, in view of his position … protected by French police.[115] After Cole outlined his dealings with Bernaerd, Cole's interrogators returned to him on two more occasions. In light of the interrogations focus on gaining as much intelligence as possible on German agents and information passed on to the Germans by Cole, the Cinquième Bureau had powerful motivations for arresting Cole.

In this respect, it is a gross overstatement to argue that Cole was arrested to protect British escape activities. This was not the case. Cole's work with the Germans had threatened the Cinquième Bureau and Cole's arrest was an attempt to reduce that threat, preventing him from falling into German hands again. Cole's actions, and perhaps potential to cause future damage if in German hands, were taken seriously by the French, seriously enough that he was tried and sentenced to death, albeit a sentence which was ultimately never carried out.

However, Cole's arrest did potentially benefit helpers engaged in escape activities and not yet betrayed by Cole. The possibility of future betrayals was not lost on escape organisers and plans, according to researchers Brome and Murphy, had been laid to kill Cole before his arrest by French police.[116] Moreover, French response to Cole's betrayal highlighted British sympathies in French secret services which in turn had a favourable impact on individuals engaged in escape activities. This is particularly evident in French treatment of Cole's wife, Suzanne Warenghem. Warenghem who was at that time pregnant was also unaware of her husband's betrayal. Cole's statement exonerated her from all involved with the Germans. In order to convince Warenghem of her husband's betrayal, the interrogators confronted her with Cole. In doing so, the French authorities also informed Warenghem that Cole

> Had already denounced her to the Germans and that he was to have met certain Germans at Lyon who would most certainly have had her arrested.[117]

While it is difficult to ascertain with any certainty, if this assertion is correct Warrenghem's arrest by the French secret services may have spared her this fate.

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Murphy, *Turncoat*, p.189 & Brome, *The way back*, p. 142.
[117] Statement of Suzanne Warenghem, 24 Apr.1944 (N.A., KV 2/416).

In fact, Warrenghem's experiences with the French secret services offer an interesting point of contrast with that of Cole. As was the case with Cole, Warrenghem also faced a trial but she was 'questioned very little'[118] and acquitted of all charges and released. Furthermore, on her release Captain Biche, the man behind Cole's arrest, found her a room in a hotel and according to Warenghem

> The 2eme Bureau provided her with legal identity documents in her own name. She was able to keep herself for the time being as Cole ha**ve** given her Frs 10,000 at the time of their arrest which was refunded to her after her acquittal.[119]

Moreover, the Bureau forbade her to return to the Occupied Zone as she 'would certainly be arrested there'.[120] This was in spite of the fact that Warenghem was known to the Germans and had during her interrogations with the French confessed and provided details of her involvement in British escape activities.

This was not the only incident where individuals detained or arrested for helping British escapees appear to have received favourable treatment. Guest, whose arrest in July 1941 was referred to earlier, was also released on grounds that merit further research. According to Guest, Garrow contacted a Vichy official Captain Dutour and arranged to present himself in Dutour's office signing a document clearing Guest of any involvement in escape activities, in return for a two hour period to allow Garrow to get away.[121] Guest claims Dutour, whom she knew personally, agreed and that everything appeared to be going to plan until Garrow left the Fort and was arrested. Interestingly, Guest did not doubt Dutour's integrity and instead of blaming him for the arrest laid blame on 'one of his clerks' who must have been 'in the pay of the Germans and had betrayed the agreement'.[122] However, shortly after this event Guest was released. Recognising that there was much speculation surrounding her release and that some attributed it to giving away names or the interference of the American Consulate, Guest wrote,

> I remember what Ian Garrow signed about me, and I believe that his statement allowed Dutour to release me, as Dutour wanted.[123]

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Furse and Barr, *Dream weaver*, p. 136.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., p. 139.

This is speculation on Guest's part but it does not take from the fact that she was released, and if what she states was true, it was on the word of a man wanted by the Vichy and German authorities.

Garrow's arrest and subsequent sentence also merits some consideration. The French authorities knew of his involvement in escape activities and of his working for British intelligence. As French intelligence acted against both German and British agents operating in unoccupied France, Garrow's arrest is not that unusual. Nevertheless, when Garrow's sentence of ten years is compared with that of Cole who received the death penalty for working against the external security of the state, there are further indications of a certain implicit sympathy for the British war effort. Reverend Donald Caskie's arrest and two-year prison sentence for connections with British intelligence and aiding escape activities, is a further example of the lenient approach taken by the French authorities. Moreover, Caskie did not serve his sentence. Instead, he received probation and was required to leave Marseilles which he promptly did.[124] Taking up residence in Grenoble, Caskie continued to visit British military personnel interned in the Unoccupied Zone.

The treatment of individuals such as Warenghem, Guest and Caskie suggests that the Vichy authorities, or more particularly French intelligence, exercised considerable flexibility and discretion in relation to their dealing with individuals engaged in escape activities. More importantly, the willingness on the part of French intelligence to turn a blind eye to individuals engaged in escape activities was crucial to the emergence of the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles. While French intelligence was not engaged in assisting escape activities, apart from a small number of intelligence agents such as d'Harcourt, the willingness to tolerate such activities once they remained low-key allowed the organisation to expand and develop not only in the Unoccupied Zone but also in the Occupied and Forbidden Zone.

The final testimony to the importance of the Unoccupied Zone in the protraction of escape activities 1940-42 is illustrated when the vestiges of Vichy independence

[124] Caskie, *The Tartan Pimpernel*, p. 114.

dissolved with the German occupation in November 1942. Within three months of the occupation of the Unoccupied Zone most of the major organisers working for the British-led escape organisation had been arrested and the organisation, except for a small rump section in Toulouse that still retained contact with guides in the Pyrenees, had been all but dissolved. Significantly, the initiative to stem British escape activities, including those in the Unoccupied Zone, came not from the French but the Germans. A French man working for the Germans, Roger Le Neveu established an acquaintance with Louis Nouveau, one of the leading French figures in the organisation. Nouveau had recently moved to Paris from Marseilles where he met Le Neveu. As Le Neveu's credentials checked out, Nouveau engaged him in escape activities. Le Neveu relatively quickly orchestrated Nouveau's arrest and, supported by the Germans, travelled unimpeded to the Unoccupied Zone where he made contact with O'Leary along with other helpers in Toulouse in March 1943.[125] All were arrested by men O'Leary identified as Gestapo.[126]

M.R.D. Foot pointed out that a number of arrests and Le Neveu's betrayals effectively decimated the British-led escape organisation. In order to provide further insight into Foot's synopsis of the situation, it is necessary to point out that Le Neveu's ability to cross the demarcation line and organise the arrests of members of the organisation there without any apparent difficulty was facilitated by the German presence in the former Unoccupied Zone. Before November 1942, the Germans had to act through the French authorities, which in light of the evidence presented in this chapter, was not necessarily a reliable means of keeping a check on escape activities.

Furthermore, after the initial occupation in November 1942 there is evidence to suggest that a number of French intelligence agents sought to warn and protect individuals involved in escape activities either by providing a direct warning of danger of arrest or by keeping files back from the German authorities. The first example is reported by Vincent Brome, O'Leary's biographer. Brome noted that Louis Nouveau's departure from Marseilles to Paris was the result of a tip off. As Brome writes,

[125] Brome, *The way back*, p. 181.
[126] Ibid., p. 182.

> Towards the end of 1942 two agents indicated that Louis Nouveau's name might be known to the Gestapo headquarters in Marseilles.[127]

The identity of these 'two agents' remains unknown but apparently these agents had access to intelligence from the Gestapo headquarters and used this information to tip off the escape organisations leadership in order to avoid arrest.

The second indication of intelligence officers protecting individuals involved in escape activities is suggested by Suzanne Warenghem. Warenghem, in a statement given to the British, indicated that French intelligence held back or destroyed information on her activities following the occupation of the Unoccupied Zone. When Warenghem was released from French custody after her acquittal she remained in contact with a British prisoner, Lieutenant Shepherd. Two months after the German occupation, Warenghem attempted to visit Shepherd in prison but was denied access. Coincidentally, Shepherd escaped the following day. As Warenghem had tried to visit Shepherd suspicion immediately fell on her. Yet her interview with police Warenghem assumed that the 'police knew all about her previous activities'.[128] This was not the case. This raises the question as to what exactly happened to Warenghem's files and why the authorities had no record of her prior serious charge, namely, a threat to the external security of the state. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Warenghem suspected that on her arrest and detention in Castres prison, the French authorities were careful to keep her from falling into the hands of the Germans. According to Warenghem, she believed Castres prison was for those the 'French did not wish to fall into the hands of the Germans'.[129]

At this point and time, there is no evidence to corroborate the veracity of Warenghem's claim in relation to Castres prison. The case for Castres prison rests on Warenghem's testimony yet it may be relevant to point out that at this time a key figure in the Cinquième Bureau, Robert Terres, was remanded in Castres on suspicion of collaborating with the Germans. Terres was arrested by the Germans following their invasion in November but was released soon after, an event which gave rise to these suspicions. Terres was later re-arrested and this time by the French. This appears a bizarre set of events but it is in keeping with research undertaken by Simon Kitson.

[127] Ibid., p. 142.
[128] Statement of Suzanne Warenghem, 24 Apr. 1944 (N.A., KV 2/416).
[129] Ibid.

Kitson noted that up to the summer of 1941 the French had moved individuals they intended to keep out of German hands to North Africa. The Germans put an end to this practice but, according to Kitson, the

> French authorities continued to keep certain places of internment secret. This was the case with a section of the Castres prison in the southwest of France.[130]

This adds credibility to Warenghem's claim that during her time there Castres remain was still used as a prison to hold individuals in whom the French had a particular interest in and did not want to fall into German hands. Interestingly, on the 16 September 1942, a number of individuals took over Castres prison and escaped. Among the escapees were Warenghem and Robert Terres.[131] Details surrounding the escape are sketchy. Warenghem reported that a fellow prisoner, a Yugoslav, informed her that the prison was in the hands of the prisoners for two hours. Terres identified one of the organisers as a Yugoslav prisoner.[132] Beyond this, little is known of this particular escape and more importantly, if the authorities were complicit.

The exact nature of the Castres breakout remains one of the unanswered questions surrounding the clandestine world of escape activities. Yet in spite of some efforts made by individual French intelligence agents to protect civilians like Warenghem, it must be recognised that this was the exception rather than the norm. The invasion of the Unoccupied Zone in 1942 had huge ramifications for helpers who were now dealing with the German rather than the French authorities. The danger of these activities shifted and increased from French internment to German concentration camps.

Throughout 1940-42, the French military authorities continued to pursue an internment policy that implicitly favoured the British. This support not only benefitted the British in terms of lenient internment conditions but was also witnessed in the tacit approval for British escape efforts. In many ways, although the military authorities were responsible for interning the British, little was done to stem escape activities. Escapees often went unpunished or received minimal penalties and the camp authorities neglected for some

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[130] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p. 124.
[131] Statement of Suzanne Warenghem, 24 Apr. 1944 (N.A., KV 2/416); Antonio Téllez Solá, *The Anarchist Pimpernel Francisco Ponzán Vidal 1936-1944: the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War and the Allied escape networks of WWII* (Hastings, 1997), Kindle edition; Robert Terres, *Double jeu pour la France 1939-1944* (Paris, 1977), p. 328.
[132] Terres, *Double jeu*, p. 328.

time to impose basic security measures. In this way, the French authorities contributed to the promotion of an escaping culture.

This is not to argue that in doing so the French military authorities sought to challenge Vichy. On the contrary, camp officials continued to maintain camp routines, inspections, minimal security measures and a determination not to actively engage in escape activity which all suggests loyalty to Vichy. Efforts to pursue a lenient policy towards the British were more anti-German than anti-Vichy. It is only with the German occupation of the Unoccupied Zone in November 1942 and with it the last illusions of Vichy independence that guards and their superior officers engaged in escape activities.

Equally, the French secret services, notably the Cinquième Bureau, engaged in assisting British escape activities. Yet this help was far from altruistic. The goal of the Cinquième Bureau was often at odds with that of men engaged in escape activities, with secret service agents keen to establish their ends. However, the Cinquième Bureau, although knowing of the whereabouts and activities of men like Garrow and Murchie, turned a blind eye to their actions, allowing them to remain at large for a considerable period of time and to continue their work. Moreover, some members of the Cinquième Bureau including Pierre d'Harcourt and André Postel Vinay undertook considerable risk to help the British. In Vinay's case, he was betrayed by a British helper, Sergeant Harold Cole, and arrested by the Germans.

Harold Cole's arrest by French intelligence when he crossed the demarcation line in June 1942 also worked to the advantage of the British-led escape organisation. The arrest prevented Cole falling back into German hands (until the Germans occupied all of France in November 1942) and from giving away more members of the organisation. French intelligence may have been interested in Cole for his betrayal of some of their members but his arrest showed the crucial importance of the Unoccupied Zone in relation to British escape activities. Cole's trial illustrated that the priority of French intelligence was not preventing escape activities but curtailing espionage. Cole's death sentence indicated the seriousness with which the French considered the charges against him. In contrast, his wife, Suzanne Warenghem, was released in spite of her admission that she had helped British servicemen to escape. Lenient sentences for those engaged in

such activities were witnessed in other cases such as those of Reverend Donald Caskie and Elizabeth Haden Guest.

The importance of the Unoccupied Zone in relation to escape activities was acutely realised in November 1942. The German invasion meant that German authorities investigating escape activities no longer had to run their investigations in the Unoccupied Zone through the French authorities. The Cinquième Bureau's willingness to turn a blind eye to such activities no longer offered any degree of protection as the German authorities could now openly investigate escape activities in both zones and arrest French helpers in the former Unoccupied Zone. This was exactly what happened and when a traitor was introduced into the organisation in Paris, the German authorities could trace his activities and make the relevant arrests all the way to Toulouse, an action which had eluded them prior to November 1942. Within months of the occupation the main helpers in both zones were arrested, tortured and awaiting deportation to German concentration camps.

Conclusion

The emergence and protraction of the British-led escape organisation, known after the war as the 'Pat Line', relied on both the organisational ability of British officers and the willing participation of civilians. This is particularly evident in the north of France in regions such as Pas de Calais which had high concentrations of British soldiers left behind after the evacuations of Dunkirk. In these areas British soldiers became a focal point of resistance. Initially, the first acts of resistance were spontaneous and relatively passive such as gestures of kindness to British prisoners marching to prison camps following the defeat of France. Yet these gestures of kindness could, and did, lead to more committed acts of resistance with British prisoners assisted in escaping these marching columns. Those who did so and successfully remained at large, making their way to the Unoccupied Zone, were sustained by individuals they met along the way.

As the occupation took root and British prisoners were no longer as visible to the French public, the continued British presence in the war against Germany acted as a galvanising force for individuals seeking to engage in anti-German activities. Resistance propaganda and early newspapers counteracted the collaborationist press and defended British actions, on occasion directly contradicting claims made in German-controlled newspapers. German destruction of monuments commemorating individuals who hid Allied soldiers in the First World War also drew public attention, generating a muted but equally pointed response. German targeting of these monuments indicates the power of these traditions. Indeed, some of the first civilians engaged in hiding British soldiers such as the Widow Samiez had been reportedly involved in similar activities during the First World War.[1]

The influence of the First World War was also evident in the influence of the *marraine de guerre* movement. This movement was primarily philanthropic but equally some civilians used philanthropy to connect with wounded British prisoners. While these connections could be relatively innocent, for others connecting with British prisoners acted as a gateway into more committed resistance. Supplying food gave way to providing clothes or other necessities to assist a prisoner escape. In some cases, safe houses were provided and in this way *marraines* often acted as a gateway into a local

[1] Brendan Murphy, *Turncoat, the true case of traitor Sergeant Harold Cole* (London, 1987), p. 46.

community and a wider support network. This conscious action later led to actively aiding escape. Equally, in other cases aid workers, such as Red Cross agents, through the course of their work, encountered British soldiers in hiding and rather than report their presence supported those hiding them. In these incidences, aid workers may not have consciously sought out the presence of British soldiers but by choosing to help members of the community in their endeavours to support these men were equally complicit in early anti-German activities.

This is not to argue that all *marraines* or Red Cross workers engaged in resistance but that some civilians seeking to connect with the British took on philanthropic roles in order to fulfil this purpose. Yet at the same, in the Forbidden and Occupied Zone, philanthropy appears to have been an important means by which civilians connected with the British. Tracing connections is often overlooked in the current historiography but it is crucial in order to best understand how early improvised escape organisations developed. Connections established within the first months of occupation between civilians and British officers such as Captain Charles Murchie laid the ground work for the emergence of the British-led organisation, later known as the 'Pat Line'. Murchie, in his arrival in Marseilles, retained his connections in the Pas de Calais region and through these pre-existing contacts managed to extent the influence of British escape activities in the Unoccupied Zone into the Forbidden Zone.[2]

This research indicates the importance of these early connections. In fact, resistance as a whole needs to take into account the early connections and responses to occupation in order to better appreciate the development of escape organisations and other resistance networks. In the case of escape, connections were the key component to moving an escapee beyond one's locality and assisting these men to safety. Focusing on these early connections makes it possible to see not only how the local families responded to the situation but also how the family in turn interacted with the local community. Individuals approached by escapees actively sought out other members of the community to assist them. Families hiding these men needed help to pass them on. In the cases discussed in this thesis, Red Cross workers, school teachers, doctors and

[2] Statement by Capt. C.P. Murchie, R.A.S.C. (Headquarters, E.F.I., Arras), 10 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308) & Account of escape of 939118 A/Sgt/ Interpreter Clayton, H.K., Air Ministry Works Area No.1 (France) R.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308).

priests were pivotal in assisting helpers move men outside the community into safe houses elsewhere, often in bigger cities.[3]

This thesis has highlighted that in many cases poorer farmers and workers were the first point of contact for escapees. At the same time, it is interesting to note that members of the middle class came to occupy positions of leadership in local escape organisations and ultimately the 'Pat Line'. By tracing how connections were made, this research argued that poorer farmers and the working class recruited this leadership. As first point of contact, poorer farmers identified leaders within their community and individuals in positions of trust such as priests, doctors and school teachers. Viewed from this perspective, not only were peasants and working class individuals acting as a gateway into the community but they were also key to identifying and selecting certain trustworthy individuals to participate in escape activities. Effectively, this research indicates that peasants and working class were crucial in shaping the structure and development of early improvised escape organisations.

In this respect, while class may not have determined if an individual engaged in escape activity or not, it could and did determine how an individual became involved and their role within these early improvised escape organisations. In stating the above, it must also be recognised that while this research has begun the process of examining this issue, more research is needed to establish the scope of the impact of class on escape organisations. Yet such research would face a number of difficulties. For instance, there are relatively few autobiographies written by peasants or working class individuals involved in these early escape activities. Most autobiographies were written by those belonging to the middleclass. Thus, there is a missing voice in relation to the study of escape organisation. In the context of this thesis, this 'missing voice' has been filled in part by the contemporary escape reports and the War Office records. While the escape reports provide first hand accounts, it must be acknowledged that they come from the perspective of the escapee and thus the voice of the 'first point of contact', namely peasants and working class, is still missing from the record. In this respect, historians may never learn why particular priests, school teachers or doctors were chosen or the qualities that placed them in positions of trust.

[3] Detailed Report by Captain DB Lang, Jan/Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

Yet at the same time it is only through the escape reports that historians can gain any kind of insight into the actions of early helpers and help historians to discern how organisations expanded the question of and why this was so. Equally, just as this research has delved into class issues in relation to escape, this thesis has also illustrated numerous other nationalities, besides French, contributed to the protraction of British escape activities in both the Forbidden and Occupied Zone. The involvement of other nationalities, most notably the Poles, in assisting escapees challenges the notion that escape activities was part of a French resistance. More correctly, it formed part of a Europe wide resistance to German aggression. For instance, Polish civilians in the Occupied Zone assisting RAF crews could easily have perceived their actions not only connected with France but also a Polish resistance to German occupation.[4]

Any extensive study of non-nationals and their contribution to escape must also go beyond the Forbidden and Occupied Zone, as this research had done, and embrace the numerous refugees and non-nationals in the Unoccupied Zone. This thesis has also illustrated that the unique political climate of the Unoccupied Zone was crucial to the development of escape activities. This is perhaps another way in which this study pushed the boundaries of traditional resistance research which tends to study resistance activities in various zones as separate entities. Escape is unique in this respect as the political conditions and reception in the Unoccupied Zone underpinned the expansion and protraction of such activities in the occupied zones.

This is not to say that the Unoccupied Zone acted as a buffer for resistance. This theory has already been refuted by Paxton's extensive research on this point. However, there also needs to be an acknowledgement that certain conditions such as lenient parole terms existed in unoccupied France that worked to the advantage of the British. In asserting this, the research presented in this thesis did not challenge Paxton's work but alligns closely to that of Kitson. Kitson pointed out that French counter espionage activities directed at the Germans must not necessarily be perceived as resistance but as part of Vichy policy to assert independence.[5] In relation to Vichy reaction to the British presence, the first point of interest relates to internment conditions. British officers and

[4] Robert Gildea has recently published a book dealing with various nationalities including the Polish in France and their concept of resistance, see Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the shadows: a new history of the French Resistance* (London, 2015).
[5] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi spies*, p. 143.

servicemen were interned under lenient terms. French interpretation of parole was, to say the least, extremely generous right up until March 1942 when the men were moved to Fort de la Revère.

Lenient internment conditions did not mean that Vichy supported British escape activities. It is more likely that in imposing liberal conditions the authorities were asserting their independence to do so. Regardless of the motivation behind allowing such conditions to exist, it has been demonstrated in this research that liberal parole terms were crucial in giving the British, based mainly in Marseilles, opportunities to establish contacts and to organise. The British took advantage of the opportunity offered by parole, including a small number of British officers such as Murchie and Garrow who began organising escape activities.

Yet as this research highlighted, establishing a support base proved difficult. Histories on escape activities tend to overlook this point but it is crucial in understanding the complexities in developing an escape organisation. The difficulty confronting the British in attempting to overcome their isolation has broader implications for research on resistance in France. In research on escape activities such actions are usually categorised as an aspect of resistance but in Marseilles in early 1940 this was not necessarily the case. The majority of British officers and ordinary ranks were simply trying to return home. Few would have labelled their actions as acts of resistance. Equally, the individuals and groups connecting with British officers in Marseilles in early 1940 were quite often motivated by financial gain. For such individuals, assisting the British was an extension of subversive criminal activities rather than a commitment to the war effort. Investigating British efforts to overcome their isolation in Marseilles and connect with a support network has shed light on various aspects of escape history which do not fit comfortably with the existing research.

Yet it is crucial, in order to fully understand how escape organisations developed, that researchers go beyond civilian or British activities as the success of escape lines did not solely depended on civilian activities in the north or British organisational ability in the Unoccupied Zone. Other factors such as Vichy's willingness to maintain liberal internment conditions and early British connections with criminal gangs operating in the port at Marseilles all need to be considered. In addition to this, Vichy's attempt to

maintain diplomatic independence also contributed to the development of British escape activities in unoccupied France.

British officers such as Captain F. Fitch took advantages of these circumstances and connected with various diplomatic agencies, including several Polish consulates in the Unoccupied Zone.[6] It is noteworthy that the Poles retained a diplomatic presence in France considering Poland had been occupied in 1939. Not only did the Poles have a diplomatic presence, albeit for a short time, but this diplomatic service represented the Free Polish in Britain. The Polish diplomatic presence was extensive with at least three consulates, at Toulouse, Lyon and Marseilles. Moreover, as this research demonstrated, the Polish Consulate was heavily engaged in escape activities, including assisting the British to escape. The Polish involvement in British escape activities further complicates previous escape histories. In this particular case, Polish motivation went beyond simply remaining connected to the war. Polish assistance to the British rested on efforts to smooth the passage of Polish servicemen through Spain and onto Britain. This research has also illustrated, despite the official closing of Polish consulates in October 1940, that they continued to operate in an unofficial capacity and on occasion when the British established their escape organisation the Polish consulates acted as a gateway into the organisation.

In fact, the presence of foreign diplomatic missions proved pivotal to the emergence and success of British escape activities. This is particularly the case when one takes into account the American consulates in Lyon and in Marseilles. This thesis has demonstrated that both these consulates acted as the conduit between British officers in Marseilles and British diplomats in Spain. It is most likely through assistance from this source that British officers were in a position to connect with the Spanish Republican group led by Francisco Ponzàn Vidal. In order to fully comprehend the expansion of the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles it is necessary to take the research beyond France. The support of the British diplomatic mission in Spain was crucial not only in channelling information through the American Consulate but for its role in connecting with its counterpart in Switzerland. In so doing, the British diplomatic service in Spain underpinned the emergence of the 'Pat Line' and made it one of the important British

[6] Account of escape of Capt. F. Fitch, Royal Norfolk Regt. H.W. 4 Inf. Bde. Attached 2 Div., 17 Feb. 1941 (N.A., WO208/3301).

escape networks in Europe during the period 1940-42. Escapees reaching Switzerland from camps in German or Italian-occupied territory were now passed into unoccupied France and the hands of escape organisers there.

Current research has overlooked the role of the British diplomatic services in Spain and its importance to the development of escape organisations in France.[7] G.R. Berridge's diplomatic history briefly deals with the role of British consulates in neutral territory but does not go beyond noting that these consulates assisted men home. Berridge, therefore, does not examine the instrumental role of the British consulates in Spain or Switzerland in relation to sustaining and extending escape activities in France. Yet as this thesis illustrated, the British diplomatic services in Spain was instrumental in encouraging escape activities. British escapees in Marseilles were unlikely to cross the Pyrenees and swop relative freedom in unoccupied France for Spanish concentration camps. Equally, civilian assistance to these men centred on the idea of returning them home to Britain and to the war. Therefore, the role of the British diplomatic services in Spain proved the lynchpin in both the expansion and protraction of British escape activities in France.

Yet while this thesis has demonstrated the importance of the British diplomatic services, it has only begun to open the discussion on the contribution of the various diplomatic services to the development of escape activities. There is scope for future and more focused studies on British diplomatic services in Spain and their efforts to extract various prisoners throughout the period 1940-45. Such a study would greatly benefit from access to Spanish archives, which to date have been relatively unexplored. In addition to this, it would be interesting to see if the Polish consulates in unoccupied France retained correspondence with the Polish administration in Britain. The Armistice Commission, the Commission responsible for ensuring the French upheld the terms of the Armistice, may also prove instrumental to future research. It is unlikely the presence of Polish consulates and their involvement in escape activities went unnoticed by the Commission. In considering the above, it would also be worth investigating correspondence between the Commission and Vichy officials in order to establish if Commission members were aware that British escapees received aid and suppport from diplomatic sources.

[7] G.R. Berridge, *Embassies in armed conflict* (London, 2012), pp 121-26.

Such research would build on this thesis. However, such studies, particularly in relation to the presence of the Polish and American consulates need to take into account the unique position of the Unoccupied Zone. This returns the research to one vital point, that is the importance of unoccupied France to the development of the British-led escape organisation in Marseilles. Certain French state institutions such as the military and secret service may have helped to foster an escaping culture. This was evidenced particularly in daily interactions between military officials guarding British prisoners in the Unoccupied Zone. As military officers, guards understood the concept of duty to escape and once escapes remained low key few questions were asked. On numerous occasions guards appear to have indulged British escape efforts as for instance in the case of a number of French Foreign Legion officers in Fort St Jean, Marseilles. These men aided the passage of a number of British internees to North Africa. Even when moved to the stricter conditions of St Hippolyte du Fort in January 1941, escapes were tolerated. Men were still allowed to leave the prison and therefore, in a position to maintain contact with escape organisers in Marseilles. Moreover, instead of French guards actively seeking to deter potential escapees basic security measures such as barbed wire were almost non-existent for a number of months. Punishments for escapes were minimal (if at all). In this respect, although guards may not have participated in British escape efforts, little was done to undermine an escaping culture.

However, this attitude in the face of increased German pressure was unsustainable. In March 1942, British prisoners in unoccupied France were transferred to Fort de la Revère near Nice where, for the first time, they were denied interaction with French civilians. Yet even this move came relatively late in the war and appears to have been the result of German pressure rather than French initiative. Moreover, at the same time the French military authorities were making visible efforts to restrict prison escapes, the French secret service continued to maintain links with the British-led escape organisation, now led by Albert Guerisse (Pat O'Leary). Indeed, on occasion the secret services appear to have acted within the interests of the organisation. One particular case in point relates to the French arrest of Harold Cole, a British servicemen turned German agent when he crossed the demarcation line in June 1942.[8] Contemporary

[8] Statement of Harold Cole, 12 June 1942 (N.A., KV 2/416).

statements taken from Cole suggest that the French interrogators were not interested in establishing the details of British escape activities but in information given to the Germans. Following his confession he was tried and sentenced to death. Interestingly, Cole's wife was released on the basis she did not know of Cole's activities and yet she had confessed to engaging in British escape activities.

In this way, the French secret services may have appeared to have acted as a 'shield' to British escape activities but such an assessment would be simplistic. An examination of French motivation must take into account the work of two historians, Robert Paxton and Simon Kitson. Paxton dispelled the notion that Vichy acted as a buffer against German proving evidence that the French government actively sought to collaboration with the German authorities. Vichy pursued collaboration with the aim of asserting some form of independent policy in a German dominated Europe. Kitson, however, highlighted that at the same time the government pursued collaboration French intelligence also arrested spies, including German agents, in unoccupied France. According to Kitson, there is no discrepancy between his research and that of Paxton as both government collaboration with Germany and the activities of French intelligence were two sides of the same coin, that is, they represented Vichy efforts to assert some form of independent policy.[9]

Considering the above, Cole's arrest was part of a wider French intelligence effort to curtail German espionage activities. Prior to his arrest, Cole had worked with a number of French intelligence agents in Paris and had betrayed a number to the German authorities. In this respect, French intelligence were not so much interested in Cole's escape activities as they were his intelligence work. In fact, as demonstrated in chapter four, French intelligence appear to have tolerated, turned a blind eye to and in some cases assisted British escape activities most likely because such actions, unlike monitoring foreign intelligence agents, were not their primarily concern. Assistance to escape activities, as in the case of Richard Broad, appears to have fitted this pattern with help given to him in an attempt to extend French intelligence and connections abroad. Yet it was only when British escapees in unoccupied France went beyond escape planning and engaged in intelligence gathering as in the case of Ian Garrow that the French authorities appear to have acted harshly.

[9] Kitson, *The hunt for Nazi Spies*, p. 6.

Nevertheless, Garrow's ten year jail sentence paled in comparison with Cole's death sentence indicating that, at the very least, there was a bias in favour of Allies in certain Vichy circles. Arguably, the tipping point for this bias came one the 12 November 1942 with the German occupation of the entire country. The occupation sparked a number of escapes in which some Vichy officials were willing participants. The occupation removed the last vestiges of Vichy independence which appears to have had an equally dramatic impact on the attitude of French officials in charge of British internment. As the Italians moved to take over, this prompted the removal of British prisoners with a number of French officials, including it would seem the French camp commandant, actively assisting a number of escapes. Equally, official assistance was not confined to British prisoners but included civilians. French secret service agents warned escape organisers in Marseilles that one of their members, Louis Nouveau, was in danger of German arrest. Arguably, the German occupation and the visible German presence in the former Unoccupied Zone changed the dynamics of escape. Arguably, in this particular case at least, the German presence appears to have undermined any remaining sense of loyalty to Vichy prompting the guards and French secret service officials actively aiding British escapees or warning helpers of arrest.

Yet it is still important to place these actions in context. Such actions were relatively minimal and their impact limited to a few isolated cases. Only a handful of men escaped with the vast majority of men being transferred to Italian camps. Equally, although French officials may have warned or sought to protect certain civilians involved in escape this assistance was also relatively restricted. In early 1943, a betrayal led to the arrests of a number of key escape organisers in both the Occupied and former Unoccupied Zones which effectively broke up the British-led escape organisation and its contacts in the north. In this respect, although after the German occupation certain guards or secret service officials were willing to assist in escape or pass on information of an imminent arrest the impact of such help, outside a few isolated cases, was relatively minimal.

This research offers insight into the development of early resistance activities and how in the case of British escape activities such actions moved beyond the initial phases of occupation to a more co-ordinated organised escape network. This thesis demonstrated

that research on escape activities needs to move beyond an assessment of individuals involved but take into account communities, diplomatic services and state institutions, all of which were in some way drawn into such activities in an attempt to respond to the trauma of defeat and occupation. Yet there remains a paucity of research on this topic. This thesis represents the beginning of more serious study in this field by encouraging researchers to move beyond popular histories and understand escape activities in the context of the societies that produced them. In this respect, this thesis contributes to current research on escape activities in occupied Europe.

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Statement by 10263 A Sgt. Day A.D., R.C.A.F., 13 Mar. 1942 (N.A., WO208/3308/693).
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Statement by Aus 405035 Sgt. Collins, R.J., 15 O.T.U., R.A.F., 31 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309/792).
Statement by 784143 Sgt. Czekalski W., 305 (Polish) Sqn., R.A.F., 31 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309/794).
Statement by R.88360 Sgt. De Mone, H.E., R.C.A.F., 16 O.T.U., R.A.F., 13 July 1942 (N.A., WO208/3309/778).
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