

*Anybody else mean  
little hell to yell  
blarney!*

**RESTRICTED**

Air Publication 1548

March, 1936

2nd edition, June, 1941

3rd edition, April, 1944

(For European Theatre Only)

**THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A**  
**PRISONER OF WAR**

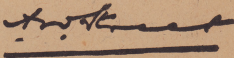
Instructions and guidance for all ranks in the event of capture  
by the Enemy

**EUROPEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS ONLY**

*Note.*—During hostilities a copy of this publication is to be issued to every member of aircrew, whether operational or under training; and C.Os. are also to ensure that *all* other personnel have a general knowledge of the principles laid down herein.

Issued for the information and guidance of all concerned.

By Command of the Air Council



**NOT TO BE TAKEN INTO THE AIR**

### **The Responsibilities of a prisoner of war**

1. It is the duty of all ranks to protect the Security of the Royal Air Force by every means within their power. Each individual must clearly understand that he is personally responsible for safeguarding Service information at all times. This responsibility is greatest after capture.
2. The Enemy is known to attach the utmost importance to the interrogation and search of prisoners, but he can learn nothing from a silent and resolute prisoner whose pockets are empty.
3. The Geneva Convention of 1929, which was signed by all the Great Powers, laid down that a prisoner of war is only required to give his

### **Name, Rank and Number**

and that no pressure may be brought to bear upon him in order to obtain any further information.

4. No further information whatsoever should be given. Remember that a prisoner who systematically refuses to give information is respected by his captors.

### **Behaviour under interrogation**

1. Any member of the Royal Air Force who falls into enemy hands should observe these simple rules when facing interrogation. He should :—
  - (a) stand correctly to attention ;
  - (b) give his name, rank and number—and nothing else ;
  - (c) maintain a rigid silence thereafter, avoiding even the answers " Yes " or " No ". If pressed, he may reply " I cannot answer that question " ;
  - (d) avoid all attempts to bluff or tell lies ;
  - (e) preserve throughout the interrogation a disciplined and strictly formal attitude, addressing any officer senior to himself as " Sir " ;
  - (f) avoid all fraternization, and refuse all favours ;
  - (g) establish from the outset that he is a type from whom nothing can be learnt.
2. After the official interrogation is over, a prisoner must remember that further efforts will be made to extract information from him. Only by constant vigilance and alertness can he avoid the many traps which may be set for him

3. He should therefore trust no one until he is absolutely certain of his integrity, and he should view every act on the part of the Enemy with suspicion. He should also remember that, although he is a prisoner of war, he is still a member of the Royal Air Force, and that the disclosure of Service information is an offence under the Air Force Act.

*Remember that a silent and resolute prisoner without articles or papers of any sort is an interrogator's nightmare*

### **What the Enemy will try to find out from you**

1. Information about any unit of the Air Force, or of the Navy and Army.

What is your squadron number ?

Where is it stationed ? and what is its strength ?

Where are other squadrons stationed ?

What have been their recent movements ? Any rumours as to future movements ?

What do you know about casualties suffered ?

2. Types of Aircraft—performances—new designs—and armament. Building and Supply.
3. Airfields and landing grounds at home and abroad.
4. Any information about Allied training and tactics—and how much you know of enemy tactics.
5. Information about air raid damage in U.K. or to British ships.
6. Anything about the weather, recent or forecasts.
7. Air Defence organization and A.A. Defences.
8. Home Conditions—Politics—Food Supply—Spirit of the People and serving Forces.

*A few careless words about these things and the whole of your operational war effort may be rendered valueless in comparison*

### **How information is obtained by the Enemy**

#### *Sources*

1. **Examination** of captured aircraft and material.
2. **Search** of prisoners of war for note-books, letters, diaries and any other incriminating articles or papers.
3. **Interrogation** of prisoners, either by direct questioning or by indirect methods such as the following :—

*Methods*

1. **Fraternization.** The commonest trick of all. Prisoners are well treated, entertained and given plenty to drink. An atmosphere of good fellowship is carefully built up and Service matters are then casually discussed. A skilled interrogator will be present to guide the talk into the right channels.
2. **Microphones.** These are always extensively used, and are sensitive to the slightest whisper. Some will be so cunningly hidden that not even an expert can find them.
3. **Stool-pigeons,** speaking perfect English and carefully briefed, will be introduced among prisoners. They will not be easy to recognize, and may even be the first to warn everyone of the need for caution when discussing Service matters.
4. **Agents.** The Enemy will have agents working among the nurses, doctors, attendants or guards who look after prisoners. These may either pretend to be sympathetic; or else pretend that they cannot understand English. Like the stool-pigeon, they will be good actors and very difficult to recognize.
5. **Know-all approach.** "We know everything already, so there is no point in your keeping silent." It may be suggested that another prisoner has talked; or an imposing-looking file may be produced which appears to give detailed information about R.A.F. units, aircraft, equipment and personnel, and may contain a number of photographs, newspaper cuttings and other such items.
6. **Intimidation.** A prisoner may be threatened, or attempts may be made to bully or browbeat him. A 'fake' shooting of other prisoners may be staged. Blackmail may be tried.
7. **Ill-treatment** may occasionally be resorted to by the Enemy, even though the Geneva Convention forbids it. Attempts may be made to lower a prisoner's morale and to undermine his resolution by means of unsuitable diet; overheated cells; or solitary confinement.
8. **Bribery.** A prisoner may be offered preferential treatment, with special liberties and luxuries, if he will co-operate with his captors, either by talking himself or by persuading others to talk. A prisoner who collaborates with the Enemy in return for an easy life is a traitor.

9. **Bogus Forms** may be produced in the hope that the prisoner will answer the questions which they ask. They may appear to be genuine Red Cross forms or official documents. Put your pen through every question except Name, Rank and Number—otherwise the Enemy may fill in the answers above your signature in order to bluff other prisoners. (*Note.*—Failure to fill in a Red Cross form does *not* delay notification to relatives, who are informed through official channels.)
10. **Propaganda.** From the moment a prisoner is captured he is subjected to enemy propaganda. He will continually be told lies about the war situation, and about his country and her Allies, in the hope that his resolution will weaken, and that his courage will fail.

*These are only ten of the Enemy's tricks. Be on your guard.  
He has many others up his sleeve*

#### **Do's and Dont's**

1. **Do** give your Name, Rank and Number, *but nothing else.*
2. **Do** convince your interrogator from the very outset that you are the type who will never talk under any circumstances. Therein lies the whole secret of successfully withstanding interrogation.
3. **Do** behave with dignity and reserve under interrogation, so that you command the respect of your captors.
4. **Do** maintain your resolution and morale; and encourage your comrades to do the same.
5. **Do** empty your pockets before going on operations.
6. **Do** destroy your aircraft, maps and documents whenever possible. Remember that incriminating articles and papers can often be disposed of before the Enemy has a chance to search you.
7. **Do** keep your eyes and ears open after capture—you may learn much which may be of value both to your country and yourself if you succeed in escaping.

1. **Don't** be truculent or aggressive under interrogation. You may regret it.
2. **Don't** try to fool your interrogators. They will be experts at their job, and in any battle of wits you are bound to lose in the end. Once you begin to talk, they have got you where they want you. *Say nothing and go on saying it.*
3. **Don't** imagine that you can find every microphone. You can't.
4. **Don't** talk shop. A careless word may cost old comrades their lives. If you have plans to discuss, do it in the open air—but remember, even trees have ears!
5. **Don't** accept old prisoners on trust.
6. **Don't** believe enemy propaganda, and don't let your comrades do so either.
7. **Don't** broadcast, no matter what inducement is offered.
8. **Don't** fraternize. The Enemy is not in the habit of wasting his time, whisky and cigars on those who have nothing to give him in return.
9. **Don't** give your parole, except under special circumstances.
10. **Don't** betray those who help you to escape. A careless word after you have reached safety may cost them their lives.
11. **Don't** write direct to any Service address in the U.K., and don't reveal in your letter that the addressee is in any way connected with the Services. Remember that the German censor will closely examine all your correspondence, and will note what you write and to whom you write.
12. **Don't** carry these instructions on you or in your aircraft. They are to help you and not the Enemy.

*A prisoner is always surrounded by his Enemies. Trust no one.*

#### **Rights of a prisoner**

1. The rights of a prisoner of war are fully safeguarded by the Geneva Convention of 1929, and this should be displayed in every Camp. Insist on this being done.
2. There is a neutral Protecting Power to whom all serious complaints can be addressed through the Camp Commandant.
3. If you escape to a neutral country, claim your freedom and report to the nearest British representative.