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**Dimensions of Military Leadership:
The Kimmel Park Mutiny of 4/5 March 1919**

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“The mutineers were our own men, stuck in the mud of North Wales, waiting impatiently to get back to Canada – four months after the end of the war. The 15,000 Canadian troops that concentrated at Kinmel didn’t know about the strikes that had held up the fuelling of ships and which had caused food shortages. The men were on half rations, there was no coal for the stove in the cold grey huts, and they hadn’t been paid for over a month. Forty-two had to sleep in a hut meant for thirty, so they each took turns sleeping on the floor, with one blanket each.”¹

Noel Barbour, “*Gallant Protesters*” (1975)

Mutiny is a subject that evokes strong emotions. For some it has connotations of disobedience and disloyalty, while for others it is a justifiable reaction to the draconian discipline associated with military life. Unfortunately, few attempts have been made to analyse such military revolt within a Canadian context. Official records reflect the viewpoint and processes of the service involved and at the same time few of the participants leave written accounts. One mutiny deserving of further study occurred at the Canadian camp located at Kinmel Park in Rhyl, Wales during 4/5 March 1919. This event, ostensibly precipitated by frustration with delays in demobilization and redeployment to Canada, involved hundreds of soldiers and resulted in five Canadian deaths, as well as a considerable number of court-martials.²

The violence at Kinmel Park aptly illustrates that military leadership has formal and informal dimensions. Formal leaders have *de jure* authority vested in them by legislation and informal leaders have *de facto* influence that can arise from many sources. The formal leadership of any organization must always ensure that it minimizes any possible divergence between the actions of informal leadership and institutional aims. Maintaining and facilitating communication is an effective method in preventing the disastrous consequences of the deviation of formal and informal leadership. The Kinmel Park Mutiny clearly demonstrates the necessity of the establishment and continuance of an interactive information flow within a military organization, particularly under conditions that produce uncertainty. Previous studies of this disturbance have not examined the role that leadership should have demonstrated at Kinmel Park Camp by

¹ Noel Barbour, “Gallant Protestors,” *The Legion* 48, no. 10 (March 1973): 45.

² The research and writing of this paper would not have been possible without the sponsorship of the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute and their support is gratefully acknowledged.

mitigating the negative influences experienced by the soldiers through the effective communication of critical information.

Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, in the Official History Of The Canadian Army In The First World War, briefly describes the Kinmel mutiny as part of a larger series of events that occurred during the post war redeployment of Canadian troops:

In all, between November 1918 and June 1919, there were thirteen instances of riots or disturbances involving Canadian troops in England.

The most serious of these occurred at Kinmel Park on 4 and 5 March 1919, when dissatisfaction over delays in sailing resulted in five men being killed and 23 wounded. Seventy eight men were arrested, of whom 25 were convicted of mutiny and given sentences varying from 90 days' detention to ten years' penal servitude.³

The synopsis provided by Nicholson is extremely brief and he rapidly transitions to other topics. Although, his reasons are not explicit one can surmise that in the aftermath of the First World War official military history would have preferred to avoid a critical examination of any failures, including potential organizational issues, in order to praise success.⁴ An analysis provided by the Canadian Army Historical Section suggested that in the case of Canadian Demobilization Camps they, "had been well organized and some of the disturbances could hardly have been guarded against."⁵ This rather offhand statement illustrates the proposition that mutiny amongst military forces is a subject either deliberately ignored or cursorily researched.⁶

Nicholson's seeming reluctance to interpret the events at Kinmel Park within the official history of Canadian Army participation in the First World War is completely understandable. For any nation the thought of its military forces revolting against legally constituted authority is

³ Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, CD, Official History Of The Canadian Army In The First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1962): 532.

⁴ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War (New York: The Free Press, 1990): 28.

⁵ Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, "Disturbances in Canadian Camps and Areas 1918-19," Canadian Army Historical Section, March 1941, 1. National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG C-1, Series III, Reel C-8375 2770, File 8779.

⁶ Joel Hamby suggests that "Militaries in general seem not to like dealing with deep systemic problems, and prefer to mete out justice once, and then move on with the prosecution of whatever operation is at hand." Joel E. Hamby, "The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat." Armed Forces & Society 28, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 592.

unpalatable and this arises from the unique position the military occupies within society.⁷

Militaries act on behalf of the state and countries expect that violence be applied only as directed. However, mutiny does not fall into that category and is normally summarily addressed by the authorities, with little introspection concerning the genesis of the event. Members of the military have established a covenant with the nation and are expected to adhere to the rules and regulations of that institution, no matter how unreasonable they may seem.⁸

In the context of the First World War, this idea can be discerned in the definition of mutiny contained within the 1914 British Manual of Military Law. This body of military law was adopted and used by the Canadian Army throughout the war. A mutiny was considered to be, “a combination of two or more persons to resist or induce others to resist lawful military authority.” Charges of mutiny could also be laid even if endeavours to incite mutiny did not succeed and nothing concrete transpired. In cases where an individual was present during a mutiny and did not take part, charges of mutiny could still be preferred. The Manual of Military Law lists the conditions under which a soldier could be charged:

...every person subject to military law who...

1. causes or conspires with any other persons to cause, any mutiny or sedition in any forces belonging to His Majesty’s regular, reserve, or auxiliary forces, or Navy; or
2. endeavours to seduce any person in His Majesty’s regular, reserve, or auxiliary forces, or Navy, from allegiance to His Majesty, or to persuade any person in His Majesty’s regular, reserve, or auxiliary forces, or Navy, to join in any Mutiny or sedition; or
3. joins in, or, being present, does not use his utmost endeavours to suppress, any mutiny or sedition in any forces belonging to His Majesty’s regular, reserve, or auxiliary forces, or Navy; or coming to the knowledge of any actual or intended mutiny or sedition in any

⁷ The military is a unique institution; it is part of the larger society, yet by the nature of its function, distinct. General Sir John Hackett’s concept of a “contract of unlimited liability” aptly summarizes the role of the military profession and the implications for how it and the actions of its members are perceived. Sir John Winthrop Hackett, “Today and Tomorrow”, in War, Morality and The Military Profession, 2nd ed., ed. Melham W. Wakin (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), 99.

⁸ “The rights of representation, free speech and collective action which had extended during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries meant little to soldiers and sailors, for whom they were severely curtailed. The profession of arms looked to the different values of duty, courage and honour.” Lawrence James, Mutiny: In the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956 (London: Buchan & Enright, Publishers, 1987): 32.

forces belonging to His Majesty's regular, reserve, or auxiliary forces, or Navy, does not without delay inform his commanding officer of the same.⁹

Although, the Manual of Military Law clearly defines mutiny as a treasonable act it has a different meaning when examined from the perspective of its participants. British historian Lawrence James proposes that mutiny is a collective action undertaken by members of the military when they feel they have no other recourse. In Mutiny: In the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956, James examines a number of mutinies in British and Commonwealth Forces between 1796 and 1956. He indicates that mutineers viewed their participation in this act completely justified given the nature of their complaints. The most prevalent sources of discontent were rooted in aspects of military routine and quality of life. Grievances could arise from onerous quantities of work, unacceptable quality or quantity of rations, curbing of previously accepted privileges, inadequate quarters, perceptions of poor leadership, inappropriate methods and types of punishment and difficulties with pay. Although the genesis of a mutiny could be attributed to trivial matters, the form and level of the resultant collective action could be completely disproportionate to the original cause. Once an individual or a group voiced their complaints and encouraged others to participate additional causes of unhappiness were aired and the mutiny would quickly gain momentum. Successful challenges to authority begat other confrontations and suggests an escalating scale of violence.¹⁰

James also proposes that the development and conduct of the collective action tended to be dependent on the initial reaction of military authorities. Leadership that demonstrated a heavy-handed response to a minor instance of protest could produce an uncontrollable escalation upwards, in size and violence, of the mutiny. Additionally, he attributes outside influences as sometimes giving form to mutiny. Socialism was viewed as being a potential catalyst for military

⁹ References to British military law cited in Julian Putkowski, British Army Mutineers 1914-1922 (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 1998): 9.

¹⁰ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1965): 13-15.

disturbances and was perceived with concern in the first decades of the twentieth century. This belief was apparent in the aftermath of the disturbances of Kimmel Park.¹¹

In focusing on the response of military officials to the disturbance this interpretation, as does others, minimizes the role of military leadership in the genesis of a mutiny. James examines the conditions of service and the reaction of authorities to the event rather than the prior action or inaction of leaders that may have reinforced the negative factors that prompted the mutiny. Still, his explanation of mutiny as a group response of last resort to perceived intolerable circumstances is probably the most useful interpretation. In certain ways, it can be visualized as a form of communication through collective action.¹²

In order to examine the role of duly constituted leaders in the origins of a mutiny one can turn to Joel E. Hamby, in “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat.” Hamby hypothesizes that leadership, training and military discipline are tools necessary to prevent “military rebellion” or mutiny. His theory is of utility in examining the underlying elements of a mutiny and suggest what commanders can do to mitigate the conditions that are precursors to such action. In the case of the Kimmel Park Mutiny this model is of great value in identifying the critical failures that led to revolt.¹³

Hamby proposes that there are eight influences in the genesis of a mutiny. These factors are depicted in Figure 1, “the Mutiny Wagon Wheel,” and are listed as, Alienation, Environment, Values and Hope, Combat Experience, Training, Discipline, Primary Groups and Leadership.¹⁴ These factors can act to provide or destroy group cohesion, as mutiny is more likely when leadership is not used to mitigate negative influences. Moreover, Hamby notes that leaders who

¹¹ Ibid., 14-18.

¹² Noted British scholar E.P. Thompson believed in much the same way that mobilization occurs when class interests are established: “...class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited and shared), feel and articulate the identity of the interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.” Thompson, 9.

¹³ Hamby, 575-578 and 591.

¹⁴ Ibid., 577.

exert a positive influence will moderate the impact of those negative factors that undermine the morale of a military unit and lead to a mutiny.¹⁵

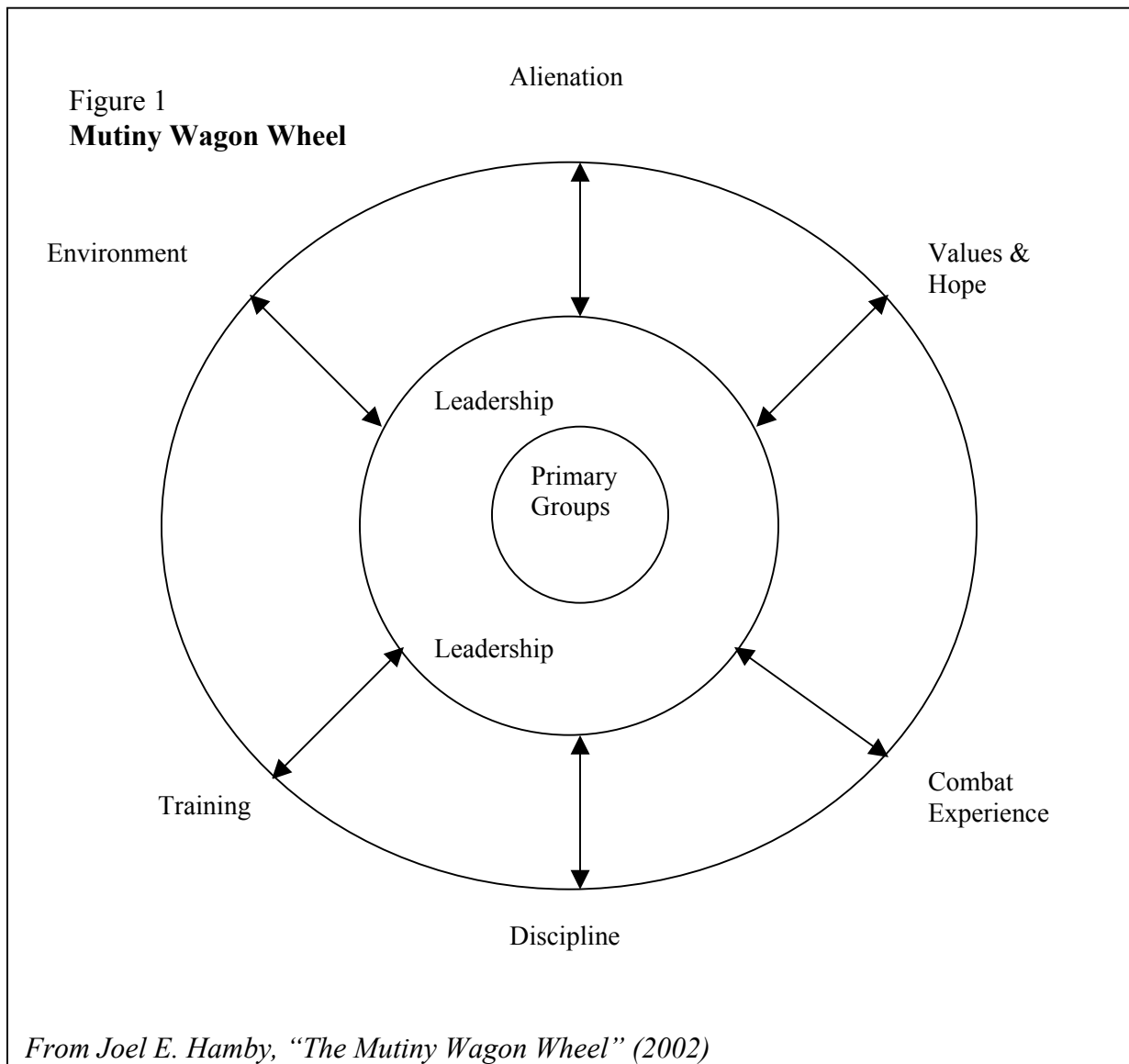
Alienation is described as that which inhibits the effectiveness of individuals and groups and has five common manifestations. First, there is a feeling of powerlessness with regards to effecting possible outcomes. Second, there is an impression of meaninglessness in that the individual or group is confused as to what to believe. Third, normlessness results when individual behaviour is no longer shaped by previously accepted social norms and earlier customary standards of conduct have become irrelevant. Fourth, a sense of isolation is produced when members of a group no longer value societal beliefs that attach importance to certain philosophies. Fifth, self-estrangement is the inability of individuals to find satisfaction in the tasks and duties that must be completed. Together these result in a disconnection between the purpose of the soldier and that of the unit and, “promotes inertia in individuals and units.”¹⁶

This alienation can only be increased by the impact of other centrifugal forces. The hardships and privations produced by the physical environment can produce emotions of despair that will affect both individual and group morale. At the same time, values and hope determine a soldier’s level of commitment. These personal convictions as to the worth of the larger society assist to determine the effort and dedication of an individual. A loss of faith in the nation will result in a diminishment of the level of demonstrated commitment. In combat, veterans, knowing that which awaits them, are more apt to mutiny when an “exceptional stress” occurs that results in a lessening of belief in the chain of command and causes individual doubts to spread throughout the group.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., 575-578.

¹⁶ Ibid., 578-579.

¹⁷ Ibid., 579-584.



Even though sound leadership is the primary method of maintaining cohesion, training that is deemed effective by the primary group is a positive influence in mitigating disintegrating factors. A further dynamic that minimizes disruptive influences is fair and balanced discipline. Nevertheless, despite the fact that effective discipline can instil pride and spirit, discipline that is deemed despotic will be disregarded and in the process produce feelings of dissatisfaction.¹⁸

In order to moderate negative stimuli efforts to maintain cohesion must be aimed at primary groups for the reason that these clusters of individuals are the primary reason why soldiers fight. The underlying bonds of loyalty to each other, the will and determination to live and the expectations of comrades keep individuals motivated in combat and the primary group

¹⁸ Ibid., 584-586.

forms and regulates accepted standards of behaviour. It is necessary to maintain alignment between the objectives of these primary groups and the larger organization because a divergence in primary group goals will result in a lessening of efficiency and contribute to a mutiny.¹⁹

The most important dynamic to ensure this congruence is leadership, which provides motivation and sustains soldiers throughout all situations. Hamby presents the four “authority factors” of Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman in On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society, as being paramount when determining the effectiveness of leadership.²⁰ These are proximity of the leader, intensity of demands, legitimacy of the authority, and respect. Of these four factors respect is the most important and leaders must provide and care for their soldiers in order to earn their respect. If the formal leadership is unable to do this the group will seek informal leaders to provide them with effective direction. From an analysis of the Kinmel Park Mutiny, informal and formal mechanisms of candid communication are critical within this leadership model and this aspect is not addressed by Hamby’s model.²¹

An amended version of the “Mutiny Wagon Wheel,” which emphasizes the role of leadership and the communication of information to explain the mutiny of March 1919 is outlined in Figure 2. This model emphasizes that leadership exists in two spheres, the formal leadership of duly constituted authority and the informal leadership of primary groups. With a lack of effectual formal leadership, disintegrating factors cause the catastrophic failure of formal authority enabling informal leaders to determine the actions of the primary groups. This divergence of aims and expected behaviours can manifest itself precipitously, as in mutiny. In order to maintain an alignment of formal and informal leadership the exchange of information is of vital importance. The establishment of methods of communication in a military organization is a key variable in preventing mutiny.

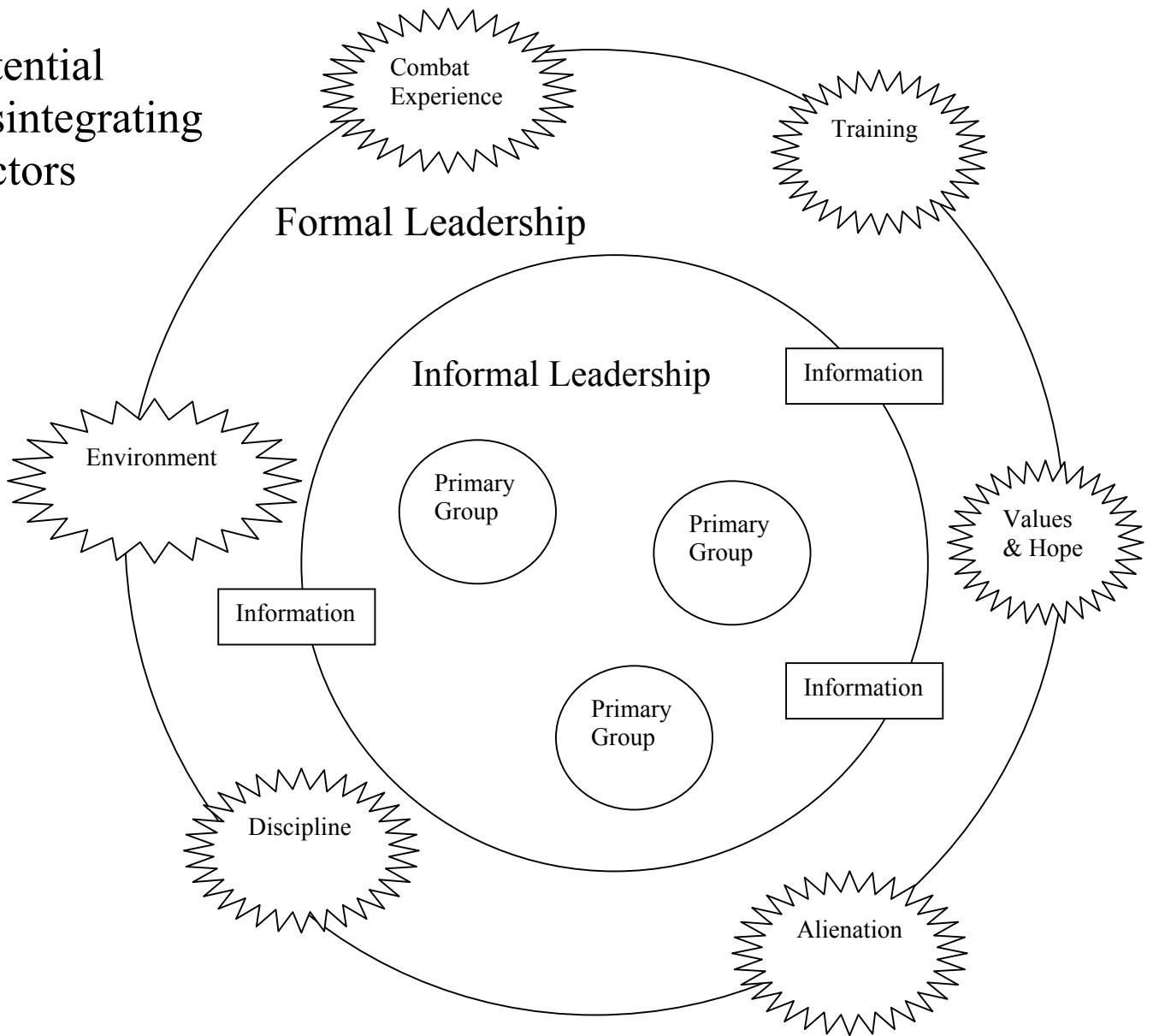
¹⁹ Ibid., 587-588.

²⁰ David Grossman, On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society (Boston: Little Brown, 1995): 143-146.

²¹ Hamby, 588-591.

Figure 2
Modified Mutiny Wagon Wheel

Potential
 Disintegrating
 Factors



Regrettably, the officers charged with responsibility for the management of the Kinmel Park Camp did not ensure the soldiers knew that their concerns were understood and, if not addressed, acknowledged. This was truly unfortunate because demobilization was not a haphazard event and planning had commenced as early as 1916. The Department of Militia and Defence, as well as the Ministry of Overseas Military Forces of Canada had attempted to provide

for an efficient redeployment to Canada.²² Considered in this process were the requirements to make this return occur without delay, be as comfortable as possible and create an equitable system to determine the priority of return.²³ It was originally envisioned that the soldiers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force would embark in France and sail directly to Canada, but a great many Canadians had relatives in the United Kingdom whom they wished to visit prior to leaving Europe. Since transportation to and from the British Isles was problematic it was impractical to grant them leave in the United Kingdom prior to embarkation in France. For that reason, on 23 January 1919 the commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, General Arthur Currie, made strong representation to the British Adjutant General and the Secretary of State for War that Canadian Troops should transit to the United Kingdom prior to their repatriation. Consequently, camps were established in England to facilitate the movement of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and one large staging area was created at Kinmel Park, near Rhyl, Wales.²⁴ Kinmel Park Camp was not a single encampment but a concentration of twenty cantonments organized in eleven autonomous wings mirroring the geographic military districts (MD) of Canada.²⁵ The wings had staffs that were responsible for administration of demobilization, rations, quartering,

²² In April 1917 the new Ministry of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada, under the Overseas Minister, Sir Edward Kemp, had commenced demobilization planning. Desmond Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’: Demobilization Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19,” Canadian Historical Review 61, no. 3 (September 1980): 335.

²³ “With the exception of the Canadian Corps, which, as we have seen, was returned by units, [on the recommendation of General Currie] the principle of ‘first in, first out’ was adopted. The full duration of the war was divided into seventeen three-month periods, with two service groups assigned to each. The first seventeen consisted of married men, the last seventeen of single, the married groups having priority over the single. Thus while the guiding principle for release was the order of enlistment men who had families dependent on them took precedence over the single men.” Nicholson, 531.

²⁴ In these staging camps the soldier completed his medical and dental clearances, as well as, any other final documentation. Demobilization leave of eight days to two weeks could be approved and upon return to the staging camp he was assigned to an embarkation company to await transportation to Canada. According to Nicholson the average soldier spent about a month in England, although it is noted that the policy was sometimes amended in individual cases for compassionate reasons. Nicholson states that these few early returnees were a reason for “dissatisfaction” for soldiers who were not cognizant of the reasons involved in these early repatriations. Furthermore, in order to obtain maximum use of the available shipping some recently arrived drafts of soldiers were returned to Canada soon after their arrival in the United Kingdom. *Ibid.*, 530-532.

²⁵ James, 115.

recreation and training while the transients passed through Kimmel Park.²⁶ A diagram of the sub camps and associated geographic region, or MD, is included as Figure 3.²⁷

The Canadian Ministry of Overseas Forces had forecasted the potential for trouble. Sir Edward Kemp was concerned about the mixture of troops staging through England. Within the formed units and formations of the Canadian Expeditionary Force the formal leadership could maintain discipline. In the combustible combination of ad hoc units and organizations in England there were innumerable soldiers who would not hesitate to voice grievances based on pre-war collective bargaining experiences. Kemp opined:

Where you mix up all kinds of combatant and non-combatant troops into drafts that fit into the demobilization necessities in Canada and these men are held pending shipping arrangements they become most difficult to control.²⁸

Others, such as Lieutenant General Sir Richard Turner, Chief of the General Staff of the Overseas Ministry, echoed this sentiment but with no effect.²⁹

Historian Desmond Morton suggests that for staging camps, such as that at Kimmel, the best solution was to keep transients moving through. Regrettably, for the authorities modifications to the shipping schedules reduced the number of departing soldiers to a fraction of that which should have redeployed to Canada. In February cold weather, continuous rain and fuel shortages made for an uncomfortable environment at Kimmel Park and this was exacerbated by a monotonous, although adequate, diet. Kimmel's "Tin Town," the area outside the main gates created by local entrepreneurs could have been used by the transient troops to obtain diversion or supplement their meals but the majority had no remaining pay after an extended stay in the camp. Regulations provided only one last payment prior to repatriation and extra food, alcohol or recreation became beyond the means of soldiers who were delayed in transit and had spent

²⁶ Morton, "Kicking and Complaining," 342.

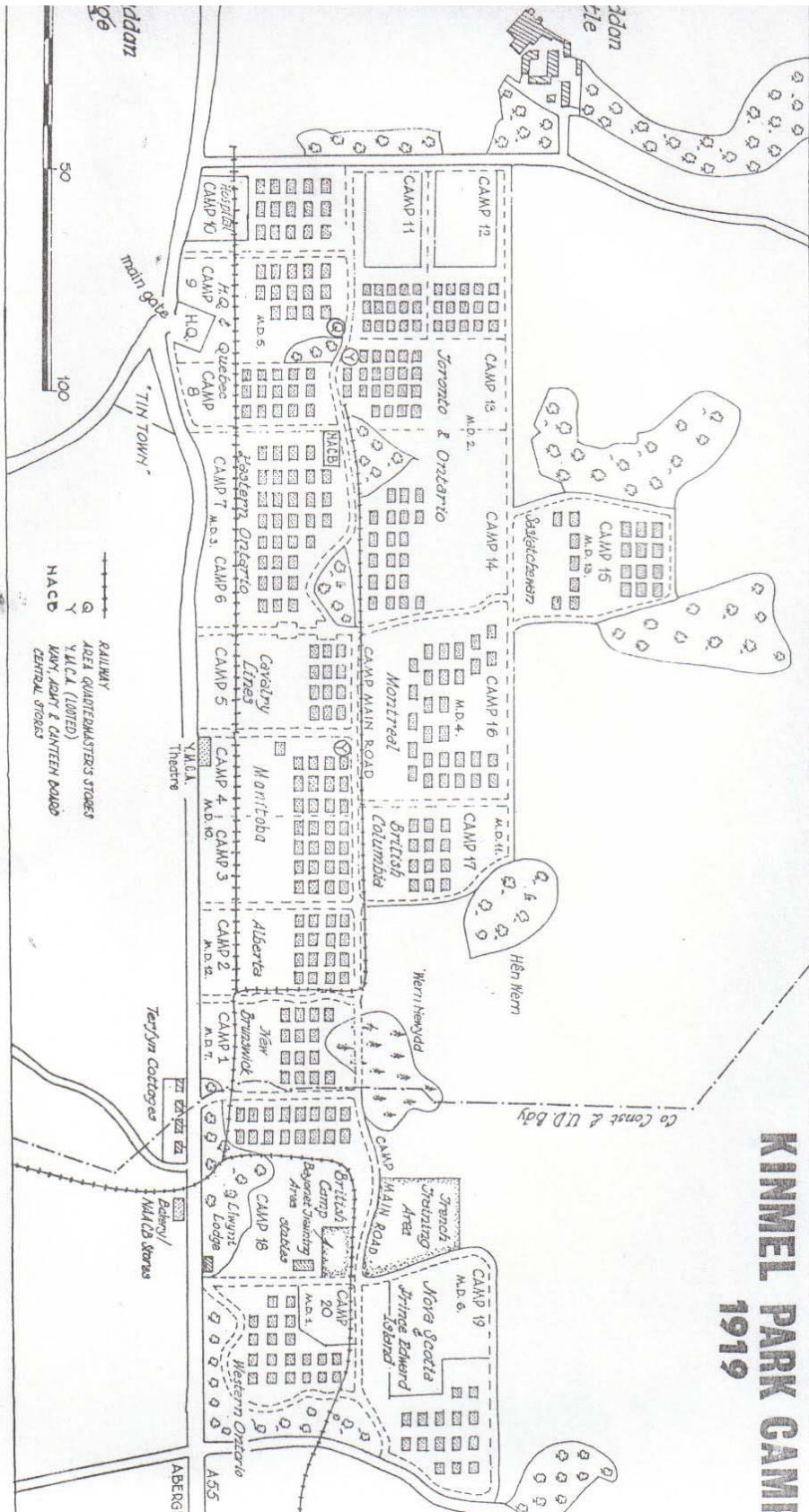
²⁷ Diagram contained in Julian Putkowski, "The Kimmel Park Camp Riots 1919," (Flintshire Historical Journal 32 (1989); reprint, Wrexham, United Kingdom: Bridge Books Publishers, 2002).

²⁸ Cited in Morton, "Kicking and Complaining," 340.

²⁹ Contained within a letter to Kemp, February 11, 1919. Cited in *Ibid.*, 340-341.

Figure 2

Kinmel Park Camp Map showing the various Military District Wings and subordinate camps.
From Julian Putkowski, "The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919," (2002)



all their money.³⁰

On 26 or 27 February it became common knowledge that a number of large liners had been reallocated from the Canadian Expeditionary Force to American troops who had not served overseas for nearly the same amount of time. Then news arrived at Kinmel Park Camp of the third postponement of the SS *Haverford*. Some 300 members of Sailing Party Number 21, who were in Camps 3 and 4, MD 10, wished to protest to Camp Commandant, Colonel Malcolm A. Colquhoun. After these representations were forwarded to the camp headquarters the Adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel R.G. Thackeray, agreed to meet with three representatives who would voice the concerns of this group of soldiers. After the meeting Thackeray felt he had explained the delays satisfactorily though was soon alarmed when other ships were allocated to the Canadian 3rd Division. Thackeray realized that Kinmel Park Camp soldiers would see this as an abrogation of the “first over, first back compact.”³¹

On 1 March Lieutenant Colonel J.P. French commander of Camp 2, MD 12, made a report of hearing rumours that all canteens would be looted, however no action by disenchanted soldiers occurred. On the same day Camp 1, MD 7 soldiers refused to go on a route march but later paraded on 2 March after that day’s march was cancelled. Also on 2 March, Sailing Party Number 21 again sent a delegation to Camp Headquarters because the *Haverford* had been delayed a fourth time. This caused Colonel Colquhoun to send his Adjutant to London with instructions to communicate the seriousness of the situation at Kinmel Park. Major H.W. Cooper, commander of MD 10, met with the Sailing Party Number 21 soldiers from Camps 3 and 4. He later reported that their unhappiness lay with the slow administration for demobilization. Colquhoun advised all subordinate wing commanders that if they requested he would personally explain the cancellations to the soldiers. He received no requests from the wing commanders to

³⁰ “Regulations were clear: soldiers awaiting discharge were entitled to a pound or two each fortnight.” Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’,” 344.

³¹ Putkowski, “The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919,” 15.

speaking to the various sub-camps.³² Later, during the evening of 3 March, groups of soldiers gathered in Tin Town. Their unhappiness with the situation was palpable. Private A.L. Wallace of MD 2 was quoted later as saying:

...many men were broke and couldn't buy cigarettes or soap, but were all looking forward to get away home...then came the cancellation of sailings – then came the news that the 3rd Division were going home first – that they were the fighting division of the Canadians – this was the climax. On the day before the riot it was on everybody's lips – it was the general feeling – every man I met was talking the same thing.³³

On the morning of 4 March the men of Sailing Party 21 boycotted the regular morning route march. Major Cooper spoke to them and one of their numbers was chosen to speak by telephone to Major G.L. MacGuillivray, the Assistant Adjutant. He was informed that Colonel Colquhoun would speak to them as a group if necessary. They dispersed soon after; seemingly satisfied their grievances were being addressed.³⁴

Morton emphasizes the impact that the cancellation of the *Haveford* had on the troops awaiting repatriation at the Kinmel Park Camp. This act was no mere whim of capricious fate since the ship had been deemed substandard and unfit for troop movement by an inspection team. This policy of verifying the suitability of shipping for military transport had been instituted as a result of an incident that caused the Canadian government great public embarrassment. A previous transport ship, the SS *Northland*, had received such negative reports in the press that the authorities were determined that there would be no reoccurrence. In the case of the *Haveford* the berthing areas were unventilated, heads unsuitable in quality and quantity and there were inadequate arrangements for feeding. Regrettably, the reasons for the cancellation were not disseminated to these troops scheduled for this transport. Compounding this situation was the

³² “On Monday a deputation went to the headquarters of MD No. 2 in a perfectly regular manner with a spokesman who addressed the Major. They were referred to Capt. Patterson who blustered and bulldozed them, and said that he would have none of this nonsense. They said that if Argyll House was not appealed to before 10.30 p.m. on Tuesday [4 March] they would riot. Col. Colquhoun said that he had appealed to Argyll House [Headquarters of the Overseas Ministry in London] several times and been able to accomplish nothing.” Cited in Putkowski, “The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919,” 16.

³³ Cited in *Ibid.*, 16-17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

failure of the camp staff to circulate that which Lieutenant Colonel Thackeray was able to accomplish in London at the Overseas Ministry. He persuaded the Quartermaster General, Brigadier Donald Hogarth, the situation at Kinmel was serious and shipping was reassigned from the 1st Division to the sailing parties at Kinmel Park Camp. Thackeray telegraphed the news to Colquhoun and then proceeded to spend the evening sampling the entertainment of the metropolis. This telegram arrived at Kinmel after Colquhoun had departed for an evening in the local town of Rhyl and there is no indication this information was circulated. Despite rumours of impending trouble the junior officers who heard them were reluctant disturb a senior officer with murmurings of discontent after normal duty hours.³⁵

The mutiny at Kinmel Park commenced on the evening of 4 March in a series of meetings that resulted in the choice of Sapper William Tsarevitch as the leader of the collective action.³⁶ James alludes to a report in The Times that the mutiny had been commenced with the shout of “Come on the Bolsheviks!” and quickly gained ground throughout the area.³⁷ These reports, which were considered exaggerated by Canadian authorities, are contained in Appendix 1. Although, some civilians had joined the mutineers in vandalizing and looting the collection stores at Tin Town, Camps 19 and 20, which contained administrative facilities and officers’ quarters, successfully resisted attempts to take control. The nearby populace of Rhyl viewed the resultant fires and disturbances with concern.³⁸

Desmond Morton offers a similar account but does not lay the emphasis on Sapper Tsarevitch. According to him, at 7:30 PM a group of soldiers vandalized the canteen at MD 3, the camp for soldiers from eastern Ontario. Corporal Bert Morrison, who had been recently demoted from his position as Provost Marshall of the Camp, led them. They attacked another

³⁵ Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’,” 344-345.

³⁶ David Lamb spells “Tsarevitch” as “Tarasevitch” and says that the press utilized Tarashaitch or Tarouke as other variations. David Lamb, Mutinies (London: Solidarity United Kingdom, 2002) [internet document]; available from <http://www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/mutinies.html>, accessed October 18, 2002, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28-31.

³⁸ James, 115.

canteen and then proceeded to Tin Town and destroyed those stores as well. Once finished in Tin Town soldiers flowed back into the camp and continued with the destruction and looting of the officers' and sergeants' messes and canteens as well as canteens managed by the Navy and Army Canteen Board (NACB). By 10:00 PM the mutiny had moved to the eastern edge of the camp and returned to empty the NACB main store and tobacco depot. Staff officers attempted to intervene and one Major was struck in the face, but this type of physical contact was unusual. At midnight a few hundred soldiers attacked the camp quartermaster stores. Officers utilizing sticks attempted to drive soldiers off but looting continued throughout the camp until 4:30 AM on 5 March.³⁹

At a conference with his senior officers the morning of 5 March Colquhoun took stock of the situation. The NACB stores, eleven canteens and messes, eleven stores in Tin Town and two Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) buildings had been vandalized and looted. No injuries had been reported and about two dozen soldiers were in custody. Colquhoun then directed his eleven wing commanders to avoid bloodshed and ordered all ammunition to be collected and guarded at the Kinmel Park Headquarters.⁴⁰ Moreover, he ordered that all stocks of spirituous beverages were to be drained immediately and directed an immediate pay advance of two pounds per soldier.⁴¹ A reserve of twenty-five troopers was formed from the Canadian Reserve Cavalry Regiment. After concluding his conference Colonel Colquhoun was able to

³⁹ In order to reduce unpopular duties Colquhoun had eliminated the piquet that would have been used to react to emergencies such as fires or, as in this case, a disturbance. Camp Military Police were in Rhyl and other nearby communities to prevent trouble between Canadian soldiers and locals. There were no formed units in the Camp, with the exception of the Canadian Reserve Cavalry Regiment, that could have reacted on behalf of the camp authorities. In the case of the Reserve Cavalry Regiment they reported they had no soldiers in barracks to use as a reaction force. Morton, "Kicking and Complaining," 345-346.

⁴⁰ All officers did not obey this. Major J.C. Stevenson of MDC 4 kept a box of ammunition, which he shared with bordering camps. Ibid., 347.

⁴¹ According to Morton this was not completed efficiently and soldiers found two unguarded carloads of liquor and beer that was distributed and consumed. Ibid., 346.

roam the camp unmolested throughout the morning and even though his efforts to convince the mutineers met with varying reactions he was not offered physical violence.⁴²

By the morning of 4 March the mutineers were relatively dormant while camp authorities were commencing vigorous actions to quell the disturbances. Lieutenant J.A. Gauthier took off his insignia of rank and moved amongst the mutineers in an effort to identify the leaders of the group.⁴³ A defensive perimeter, which included trenches, had been established in the area of Camp 20 to deter any further attack. In the early afternoon rifles and ammunition were issued to forty officers and trusted men. Lieutenant Gauthier warned mutineers about making another attempt on Camp 20 but was ignored. Mutineers approached the entrance to the camp organized in three groups.⁴⁴ The first group moved towards the camp followed by a second of similar size with both groups bearing, what appeared to be red flags, but may have been “a strip of red YMCA curtain hung on pool cues.”⁴⁵ Behind the second group was another, larger mass of mutineers. This third group was reported to be bearing rifles and carrying stones. An earlier report had mentioned homemade weapons of straight razors attached to sticks. The camp defenders made a pre-emptive foray into the first group and twenty mutineers were seized and removed to Camp 20. This provoked a rescue attempt on the guardroom and records office. One witness described the mutineers being led by two men with a red flag between the poles. The guardroom was entered and an attempt made to liberate the prisoners. After an unsuccessful foray the crowd moved to the area of the canteen in Camp 18. A group armed with sticks, stones and

⁴² Morton notes that although some instances of assault occurred they were rare. He also writes that the soldiers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force remembered their debt to the Salvation Army and did not target their facilities while the YMCA and NACB were disdained for their perceived exorbitant costs and haughtiness. *Ibid.*, 346-347.

⁴³ Lieutenant J.A. Gauthier organized the defence of Camp 20. After viewing the initial disturbances of 4 March he returned to Camp 20 and organized his movement draft of fifty to protect the camp. On the morning of 5 March he removed his insignia of rank and then circulated amongst the mutinous troops. Upon seeing that they were going to attack Camp 20 he tried to convince them not to attack. Morton writes that although Major Charles Maclean was the commander of MD 1 it was Gauthier who inspired the defence. Gauthier convinced soldiers that it was necessary to protect records to prevent further disruptions to repatriation and this caused several hundred soldiers to assist the camp authorities. *Ibid.*, 349.

⁴⁴ James writes that rifles were issued at 1:30 PM, Gauthier’s warning occurred at approximately 2:00 PM, and the mutineers moved to Camp 20 about 2:30 PM. James, 115-116.

⁴⁵ Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’,” 349.

some rifles collected near the road and attempted an attack on Camp 20 rushing through to the Camp 18 huts. Members of Camp 20 repelled the assault and as the initial rush subsided they withdrew to their perimeter and at that point an exchange of rifle fire occurred. As a result of this engagement there were four dead and twenty-one wounded.⁴⁶

The Canadian Military Court of Inquiry under Brigadier James MacBrien heard evidence that there had been rumours that some soldiers, to obtain earlier departures, had used bribery. MacBrien also heard that troops had not been kept informed about the reasons behind the delays in redeployment, that officers had absented themselves to enjoy leave in London, as opposed to taking care of the troops. Allegations were made that the mutiny would have been contained if a standing piquet of sufficient size had been maintained or if the camp leadership had taken an active role in suppressing the collective violence.⁴⁷

The statements contained in the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry provide further insight into the origins of the Kinmel Park Mutiny. Colonel Colquhoun testified he had been the Camp Commandant since September 1918 and acknowledged there had been problems with a Boy's Battalion and some canteen robberies. He indicated there had been difficulties with sailings and challenges due to the varied composition of the camp population. Of a total of 17,400 persons, all had been in France with the exception of about 2000 draftees, Forestry Corps and some Railway Troops. Colquhoun had been aware of the feelings in Camp regarding the latest sailing cancellations and he, in response, had dispatched Thackery to London. When Major MacGillivray had informed him that men were restless in the MD 10 Wing he offered, as previously indicated, on 3 March, to address the wings and explain the cancellation of the sailings

⁴⁶ Lawrence James provides a succinct list and circumstances of the casualties. "A Private Hickman was shot dead in Camp 18 and several men in one of its huts was wounded. Private Gillan, one of the guards, was hit in the crossfire as he was moving towards a group of mutineers who were in the ASC [Army Service Corps] stables. Gunner Haney was shot in the head, Corporal Young killed by a bayonet wound in the head and Tsarevitch, allegedly the leader, died from a bayonet wound in the lower stomach. The last two men must have been wounded during the sharp hand-to-hand fighting between the guards and the mutineers. The fierceness of the resistance led to the mutineers hoisting a white flag. Four had been killed, twenty-one wounded, and seventy-five were arrested. Fifty men were charged with mutiny, of which twenty-seven were convicted and sentenced to between 90 days and ten years." James, 116-117.

⁴⁷ Morton, "Kicking and Complaining," 352-353.

but none of the Wing Commanders thought it necessary. Colquhoun received no indication that there was likely to be further trouble. The problematic nature of informing the soldiers was evident in Colquhoun's testimony and this theme was to be reiterated time and time again within the Inquiry. Private A.L. Wallace of the 15th Infantry Battalion said:

I registered in this Camp on 21st February 1919. I live in hut 15 in sailing Lines, M.D.2.

I am a re-patriated prisoner of war.

The situation in this camp as I understand it was this: - There were the usual mumerings of soldiers, there were discomforts of various sorts, many men were broke and couldn't buy cigarettes or soap, but we were all looking forward to get away home and all these things were suffered with the hope in view of something better to come in the shape of sailing for home. Then came the cancellation of sailings - then came the news that the 3rd Division was going home first - that they were the fighting division of the Canadians - this was the climax. On the day before the riot it was on everyone's' lips - it was a general feeling - every man I met was talking the same thing.

I do not think it was organised, but once the thing was started others joined in and it turned into a demonstration about the sailings being cancelled and it became a protest designed to reach the attention of the highest authorities.

The sailings were the real cause - the want of pay was secondary. In my hut I don't think there was five shillings among the 30 men. One man had not received pay since 5th Feb. I had not received pay myself since 8th February, but personally I have no complaint about pay. I have drawn \$300 since coming back from Germany. I have still some \$600 coming to me. I knew I could have drawn pay at any time.

I think if the men had been told about the sailings, why they were postponed or cancelled there would have been no trouble. The first explanation given us was by Gen. Turner.⁴⁸ Now it is posted on boards. - things are improved. *Had the men known the true situation they would have thought different...*⁴⁹

Private Wallace's compatriots made similarly cogent observations regarding the flow of information. Corporal G.J. Clout of the 10th Canadian Railway Troops testified:

I have been addressed by Officers about the regulations as to pay since the riot - not before. Orders were read out. *Previous to the riot we had no explanations about cancellations of sailings* - nor about the washing system - nor about requiring a pass to go to Rhyl - nor about dress.⁵⁰

Some of the subordinate wing commanders also indicated a degree of dissatisfaction that was apparent before the mutiny but in their testimony did not provide the same emphasis to the issues described by Wallace and Clout. Lieutenant Colonel French stated:

⁴⁸ Turner toured the camp immediately after the mutiny.

⁴⁹ Kimmel Park Camp Court Of Inquiry, NAC RG 9, Series III, Volume 2770, File D-199-33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

From talking to the rioters I found them complaining about the cancellation of the boats and the 3rd Division going home first - also some complaints about lack of food and about coming here without proper documents, and consequent delays here.⁵¹

Major Cooper acknowledged that he had been aware of the dissatisfaction and had attempted to find some diversion to distract the soldiers from their concerns.⁵² Cooper and other senior officers also discussed the difficulty in obtaining staff for their camps and the unreliability of those they did have. There seems to be consensus that capable officer and non commissioned officer leadership was difficult to obtain and keep. Additionally, tensions were created within the camp by differences in pay between lower ranking permanent cadre and conscripts who were receiving specialty pay:

There is a shortage of suitable N.C.Os [Non Commissioned Officers]. There is no inducement to keep them here. I have not applied to H.Qrs. [Headquarters] for N.C.Os, but the reason is that my experience in applying for Officers was that the Officers sent were no good.

I am 12 Sergts [Sergeants] below Establishment, 21 Cpls [Corporals] and 35 L/Cpls [Lance Corporals]. Seven of my Officers received their commissions in Nov. 1918.

I am receiving constant applications from my permanent cadre to go home. There is no inducement for them to stay. There is dissatisfaction among the L/Cpls that they cannot get the pay that M.S.A [Military Service Act] clerks get. I have 100 M.S.A men employed in my Wing.⁵³

Examining the testimony of the different camp commanders it is interesting to note that while the fluidity of the various staffs was cited as an issue, none acknowledged that this problem could have also extended itself upwards throughout the entire chain of command. Almost all camp commanders who testified had three or less months in their positions. Ad hoc organizations, lacking experienced leaders in key positions, processing

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Not all officers were forewarned of potential unrest. Captain R.J. Davidson of the 21st Battalion and Second in Command of MD 2 said, "I was surprised at the outbreak. I knew there was unrest about the sailings, but I did not expect any outbreak. I do not think the outbreak was organised to any great extent..."
Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

large numbers of individual soldiers were bound to experience difficulties while in command. This observation was not listed in the findings of the Court of Inquiry.⁵⁴

A question that arises is one regarding the role of the non commissioned officers during the period prior to the mutiny. Acting Company Sergeant Major E.J. Williams of Number 1 Company, MD 10 stated to the Court:

The men of 21 Sailing had frequent parades on their own. Every time the Sailing was postponed, and when it was cancelled, the 21 Sailing men paraded by themselves.⁵⁵

He was not asked what he did with this information or if he or others had taken steps to allay the concerns that had led to these impromptu gatherings. In fact, one has the sense of non-involvement from the Sergeant Major's testimony.

Other sources reinforce the issues of, lack of information and inexperienced, or new, staff in the camps. Newspaper interviews in Toronto Daily Star after the mutiny provide similar perspectives:

The fault lay with the staff at Rhyll, he [unnamed returned Sergeant] declared. He dubbed it the worst camp in England. 'Most of the staff are drawing good pay,' he declared, 'and they don't care how long they do it. They have no interest in the men.'⁵⁶

Later a different soldier was questioned as to the probability of disturbances when he was processed at Kinmel Park three weeks previously:

Oh yes, I was sure a riot would break out any time. There was a lot of grousing. In fact, the soldiers said there'd be a riot if they did not get away.

Another article alleged:

Things were both good and bad. I will have a lot to tell you later on. There is a total lack of organization at Ryhl Camp and the men are up in the air about it.⁵⁷

In addition to the testimony of the witnesses, the members of the Court of Inquiry obtained documentary evidence that emphasized the necessity of informing the troops at Kinmel

⁵⁴ Although Colonel Colquhoun had been at Kinmel Park since September 1918 he was the exception. Lieutenant Colonel French had commanded since December and Major Cooper had occupied his position only since 3 March, but had been employed at Kinmel Park prior to this date. Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Toronto Men Explain Riots at Kinmel Camp," The Toronto Daily Star (Toronto), Saturday March 8, 1919.

⁵⁷ "Veterans Home To-Day Say Expected Riot," The Toronto Daily Star (Toronto), Saturday March 8, 1919.

Park of the reason behind shipping delays and the potential issues resulting from any violation of the principle of “first over, first back” during redeployment. The camp headquarters had sent a letter to the Secretary of the Headquarters of the Ministry of Overseas Military Forces of Canada complaining of the tardiness of official information pertaining to amendments in the shipping schedules. They had also articulated concerns that this information was in the local papers several days before being issued by the Ministry. Consequently, the soldiers were aware of probable sailing dates before they were issued by the Kinmel Park Camp Headquarters, which put the Camp staff in a, “very wrong light.” But despite the request that this information be communicated to the Camp in a timely manner no concrete action was taken by the Ministry to rectify this problem.⁵⁸

The Court of Inquiry conducted its initial investigation at Kinmel Park Camp immediately after the mutiny and later reconvened at the Overseas Ministry Headquarters in London on 31 March. The findings of the Inquiry attributed the causes of the mutiny to a number of issues:

1. Delays and postponements of sailings coupled with rumours of cancellations until the 3rd Division returned to Canada provoked great discontent. This was coupled with the last sailing previous to the mutiny being 25 February and no information regarding future sailings arrived prior to 4 March, too late to assuage the discontent.
2. Soldiers had an impression that their stay in Kinmel Park Camp would be brief, which was not always the case and coupled with these extended stays was the administrative issue that individuals did not receive pay after their initial repatriation issue until embarkation for Canada.
3. The Court mentioned that some soldiers experienced delays in repatriation due to loss of personal documents.
4. There were delays in pay also attributable to lost papers.
5. An inability to procure tobacco on credit was referred to as a problem.
6. Poor food due to a lack of qualified cooks was cited as a contributing factor.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Kinmel Park Camp Court Of Inquiry, NAC RG 9, Series III, Volume 2770, File D-199-33.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The recommendations of the Court of Inquiry focused on actions that occurred during disturbance. Colquhoun was criticized for not having a standing piquet for contingencies and neither taking more “vigorous” action upon the commencement of the mutiny nor placing guards on vulnerable buildings prior to the uprising. While the systemic problems regarding passage of information and camp staffing were not addressed per se the Court acknowledged some issues in that area. It was believed that Colquhoun was probably not aware of the breach of discipline in MD 10 on the morning of 4 March, and that Major Cooper was probably not cognizant of it as well, because he had taken over only the previous day. Thackery was criticized for telegraphing the information he had obtained in London regarding the two 15 March sailings for Kinmel troops. It should have been telephoned to the Camp and, while not explicitly stated by the board, given emphasis by Thackey to ensure it was quickly disseminated. Finally, the lack of timeliness of the arrival of information regarding amendments to sailings was cited as contributing to the mutiny. Despite these findings, in the end disciplinary action against some of the mutineers was the order of the day.⁶⁰

In the subsequent court martials fifty-one participants in the mutiny were charged and tried under the British Army Act.⁶¹ Canadian historian Chris Madsen raises the possibility that the British press, through lurid reporting of the violence, may have caused military authorities to be pressured into a desire to be perceived as acting decisively in the aftermath of the mutiny.

Various sentences were meted with those convicted ranging from differing lengths of detention or

⁶⁰ As of 10 March there had been 61 arrested and sent out of the area. Ibid.

⁶¹ Court martials were legal proceedings in which there was no jury. The President and members of the court had to be commissioned officers. There was no formal system of appeals regarding the sentences that were handed down. There were four types of court martial; regimental, district, general and field general with the main difference being the severity of the offence and the powers of sentencing that were provided to each kind. The most severe general and field general court martials could try all ranks and could award sentences up to and including death. General court martial had a board of between five and nine officers and a field general court martial required three officers and these two types of court martial normally tried charges of mutiny. Given the seriousness of these types of charges there was normally a court martial officer appointed whose duty was to advise the court on procedures and issues of military law. However the prosecution and members could come from the accused’s unit or from elsewhere. Most of the officers involved had minimal legal training. Putkowski, *British Army Mutineers 1914-1922*, 10; and, Morton provides the figure of fifty-nine soldiers jailed at Liverpool to await court martial and others were tried summarily by their commanding officers. Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’,” 350.

imprisonment. Madsen mentions a defending officer for British Columbia soldiers, Captain George Black, as sending a letter to Prime Minister Robert Borden, which detailed problems with the trials. These irregularities ranged from issues with members of the court, the briefness of the trial proceedings, as well as violations of legal procedures and evidence. As a result, Captain Black requested the Canadian government ask for release of jailed soldiers.⁶²

Even if Kemp had guaranteed cooperation with the Flintshire coroner, F.L. Jones, the civilian investigation was hampered by a lack of witnesses. Many of them had left England by the time the inquest had commenced near the end of March and the Court of Inquiry would not provide copies of the statements they had recorded from these witnesses:

Three days before the inquest, on March 17, 1919 the Coroner had received a note from the Canadian President of the Canadian Army's Court of Inquiry saying: 'I regret very much that I cannot furnish you with any statements from officers, which you ask for, as our proceedings are confidential and cannot be made public at present'.⁶³

Due to the paucity of evidence and pressure to allow the Canadians to resolve this matter themselves the Coroner recommended no criminal charges be laid.⁶⁴ In the intervening years this has resulted in some suggesting that there was a conspiracy to conceal details of the deaths.

In the final analysis, whatever the findings of the Court of Inquiry and Coroner's Inquest, the mutiny did achieve some positive effects for the soldiers. Redeployment was sped up and by 25 March approximately 15,000 soldiers had departed Kinmel Camp.⁶⁵ Contemporary sources confirm that Canadian authorities expedited sailings for the soldiers of Kinmel Park Camp and immediately after the riot the *SS Adriatic* and the *SS Celtic* were reallocated to the troops of Kinmel providing berths for approximately 5000 soldiers.⁶⁶

⁶² Chris Madsen, Another Kind of Justice: Canadian Military Law from Confederation to Somalia (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999): 51.

⁶³ Cited in Lamb, 39.

⁶⁴ Morton, "Kicking and Complaining", 353.

⁶⁵ James Lamb suggests, "...the men underestimated the ruthlessness and determination of the officers. When a mutiny is under way there can be no unarmed approaches to armed officers. Unless a mutiny is 100% solid the authorities will use all means at their disposal to crush it. When 'necessary' they will not flinch from bloodshed." Lamb, 38-39.

⁶⁶ Kinmel Park Camp Court Of Inquiry, NAC RG 9, Series III, Volume 2770, File D-199-33.

Desmond Morton believes there was no conspiracy to mutiny. There was, “no plan and many leaders.” Individuals garnered support by appealing to the anger of other disenchanted individuals. Once the soldiers found they could act at will they fortified themselves with alcohol and continued to vandalize and loot institutions within the camp.⁶⁷ Although, the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry allude to alcohol as a factor in the destruction that occurred, it does not provide intoxication a significant part in the genesis of this event. In fact, the soldiers who testified to the Board of Inquiry support Morton’s thesis regarding the spontaneity of the mutiny.⁶⁸

Although there are various interpretations as to origins of the dissatisfaction at Kinmel Park Camp the mutiny at Kinmel Park during 4 and 5 March should not have come as a surprise. There had been indications of great dissatisfaction since the beginning of the year and these incidents had increased in intensity.⁶⁹ The culmination of this escalating scale of protest was the violence of the mutiny and it was entirely preventable.

Some historians, such as Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, proposed that the amendments to the “first over, first back” redeployment policy, coupled with the delays to shipping were the primary causes of riots which occurred at several Canadian camps, including Kinmel Park.⁷⁰ This point of view is reinforced by Desmond Morton and Jack Granatstein, in Marching To Armageddon. They suggest that the mutiny at Kinmel Park resulted from the news that Military Service Act conscripts of 3rd Division units, with minimal time overseas, were being returned early, as well as, shipping delays and cancellations. In combination with this was an environment of, “cold weather, shortages, strikes and influenza” to produce what Sir Edward Kemp, the

⁶⁷ Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’,” 351-352.

⁶⁸ Kinmel Park Camp Court Of Inquiry, NAC RG 9, Series III, Volume 2770, File D-199-33.

⁶⁹ Friends of Colquhoun were cited as saying they had received letters from him describing the unrest in the camp and that, “riots of small scale” occurred almost daily. “Small-Scale Riots Common Occurrence,” The Toronto Daily Star (Toronto), Saturday March 8, 1919.

⁷⁰ The Canadian Army Historical Section concurred and stated the reasons for the outbreak were, sailing delays and postponements, tobacco shortages, poor food and concerns regarding postwar employment. Duguid, Appendix, NAC, RG C-1, Series III, Reel C-8375 2770, File 8779.

Overseas Minister, said was poor living conditions, “You cannot blame the soldiers for kicking and complaining... You are living in paradise in Canada as compared with this place.”⁷¹ James adds that Canadian troops were incensed that ships seemed to be available for American forces, most of whom were comparative newcomers to the war, unlike the Canadians.⁷² Moreover, rumours persisted of discrimination in the employment market in favour of officers and there was news of lay-offs and wage cuts, in response to a recession caused by the war debt. Soldiers realized that the longer they were delayed in England the more difficult time they would have securing employment in a dwindling job market. Unfortunately, by late February unemployment in Canada rose sharply and twinned with this were the previously mentioned shipping delays and discontent increased. All these factors combined to create an environment conducive to mutiny.⁷³

Another point of view is advocated by British researcher, Julian Putkowski, who rejects arguments that it was the living conditions at Kinmel Park that sparked the mutiny. He sees such interpretations to be simply another version of the conclusions of the Court of Inquiry. Putkowski believes the key cause for unhappiness to be that Canadian troops viewed themselves as being stuck in England. He indicates that there were precursors signalling the soldiers’ unhappiness with shipping delays and attempts to communicate this dissatisfaction to the camp authorities. Representations had been made to the Colonel Colquhoun on 27 February and there was a refusal to parade amongst some soldiers on the morning of 4 March. The mutiny did not spontaneously occur but resulted from a repudiation by camp authorities of soldiers attempts to communicate their grievances.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Kemp cited in Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein. Marching To Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919 (Toronto: Metropole Litho, Inc., 1989): 252-253.

⁷² James, 115.

⁷³ Ibid., 26-28.

⁷⁴ Julian Putkowski, E-Mail to wwi-l@raven.cc.ukans.edu Sat, 4 Dec 1999 12:22 +0000 (GMT Standard Time) [internet document]: available from <http://www.ukans.edu/~kansite/WWI-L/1999/12/msg00150.html>; accessed October 12, 2002, 1-3; and, Putkowski, “The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919,” 14-15.

Putkowski also argues that the social and political environment in England during early 1919 was conducive to forms of collective action by disaffected soldiers. Ongoing turbulence within the civilian populace had effects on the military. There was not a major camp that had not been influenced by actions such as strikes, demonstrations and protest marches. Most of this unrest was linked to conditions of life and terms of service.⁷⁵ Putkowski believes that three particular crises impacted negatively on the situation at Kinnel Park Camp: strikes in the civilian sector, a renewed Irish Republican Army campaign to cause the British to leave Northern Ireland, and a large number of soldier strikes across the British Army. The Empire was straining to keep itself together and attempting to ensure Germany did not resume the conflict. Approximately 100 soldiers' strikes involving almost 100,000 British Servicemen took place in France and England. The core of contention revolved around the complicated British demobilization process that released servicemen based on an array of categories as opposed to length of service. This collective action resulted in the system being amended to demobilize men based on time in the Army. Putkowski goes on to say that these soldier strikes were widely reported in the press and undoubtedly were viewed by the British and Canadian soldiers as the primary reason that the policy changed. It reinforced the idea of mutiny as a form of "collective bargaining."⁷⁶

Incidents at Kinnel Park Camp increased in frequency and magnitude prior to the eruption of violence in March 1919. Desmond Morton, in "Kicking and Complaining": Demobilization Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19," notes a series of disturbances in January and February. On 7 January an inter-racial disturbance occurred when a black Sergeant Major of the 2nd (Coloured) Canadian Construction Company attempted to put in custody an insubordinate white soldier. The black soldiers of the Construction Company were attacked as they prepared for their ablutions. In the fracas razors were used to slash five white soldiers and rocks injured some black soldiers. Several days later, on 10 January, some soldiers

⁷⁵ Putkowski, British Army Mutineers 1914-1922, 13-14.

⁷⁶ Putkowski, "The Kinnel Park Camp Riots 1919," 8-9.

from Nova Scotia attempted to liberate a friend from the guardroom. In the melee a “drunken” corporal struck an officer with the butt of an appropriated rifle. In February there was a disturbance, in the form of rock throwing and fights, between Canadians of the Young Soldiers’ Battalion and British officer cadets when they were turned away from a local dance. The subsequent Court of Inquiry laid the blame on the British officers. It is noteworthy that this Battalion was returned to Canada as soon as practicable.⁷⁷ Another incident occurred on 28 February, when Canadian soldiers, at the Rhyl railway station, unsuccessfully attempted to rescue a friend that had been arrested.⁷⁸

Nicholson, Lamb, Morton, Granatstein, Putkowski et al. and the primary sources of the period illustrate the eight issues that in accordance with the Mutiny Wagon Wheel model act as disintegrators and provide impetus to the origins of a mutiny. Alienation was produced by separation from parent units and primary groups for the return to Canada, the constant delays in shipping schedules, feelings of unequal treatment, monotony and boredom. Even though it paled in comparison to life in the trenches the physical environment of the camp, its rudimentary accommodations and diversions, on top of the poor weather, also acted as a centrifugal force. A loss of faith was created because the social turbulence of the period shattered the previously accepted values and hopes of the returning veterans. This disillusionment prompted men who had survived the rigours of combat to voice their unhappiness when the situation became in their opinion, unacceptable. Normlessness was prompted by an absence of effective discipline, in that the common standards of acceptable military comportment did not seem to be enforced in Kinmel Park. This lack of discipline and refusal by the camp leadership to take effective action in response to various incidents also reinforced the escalating scale of protest. Even training activities that could have assisted in diverting attention from the existent conditions were unimaginative and repetitious. Most importantly the command structure of the camp was fluid

⁷⁷ Desmond Morton, “‘Kicking and Complaining’,” 339-343.

⁷⁸ Putkowski, “The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919,” 14-15.

and changes in leadership were frequent. Individual soldiers transiting through the camp did not have the benefit of being members of a formed unit with its own officers and non commissioned officers and at the same time did not have a permanent camp staff to assist them.

Yet these explanations do not address the primary cause of the mutiny. In the case of Kinmel Park the critical issue was a failure of the leadership in the camp to inform the soldiers moving through the camp of the origins of the amendments to the shipping schedules that affected their movement back to Canada. This lack of communication in combination with other disintegrating factors led directly to the violence of 4/5 March. The importance of this omission has been neglected by previous studies of this mutiny.

It is apparent from the Board of Inquiry that the soldiers of Kinmel Park Camp did not understand the seemingly constant shift in ship movement priorities to other forces and units. The third and fourth delays of the *SS Haverford* and the subsequent protests and representations of Sailing Party Number 21 were indicative of this lack of comprehension. Such actions, although not within military norms, were likely viewed as the only method to achieve results. Over time the explanations and promises of the Camp Commander and his staff became empty platitudes, as no resolution seemed to be forthcoming. Soldiers then ceased believing their commanders and utilized mutiny to express their discontent.

There have been differing reports regarding the atmosphere of the camp but in the end it was probably no worse than others. Still, the combination of inclement weather, boredom, lack of money, monotonous meals and deficiency of meaningful work created a great deal of discontent. This blended with the extremely slow demobilization process and goaded by the perceived changes to the, “first over, first back” policy likely produced a feeling of disenfranchisement, or alienation, in the soldiers. Consider, as well, the fast diminishing hope for prosperity in the post war era. Growing unemployment in Canada and a perception of a shrinking pool of employment were not the rewards these veterans sought. This, on top of a perceived inequality of postwar benefits between soldiers and officers would cause troops to be less likely

concerned about the maintenance of their compact with the nation, particularly in a staging camp with leadership that appeared unknowing and uncaring. The volatile mix of individuals at Kinmel Park Camp included veteran combat troops, who were afflicted with restlessness and discontent. They had won the war, they were alive and they believed themselves deserving of better treatment than they received. But regardless of who was most prone to mutiny, in the context of Kinmel Park Camp the mix of experienced and other soldiers was volatile and, as some had feared, only needed a spark to ignite. Individuals unconstrained by unit loyalties, doubting the camp chain of command and suffering from restlessness, would have been more likely to take action to voice their disapproval of perceived wrongs in March 1919.

Even though training could be used to promote unit cohesion this was not true at Kinmel Park Camp. In the aftermath of the First World War training at the staging camp consisted of the morning route march and little else. There no impetus to devise something more imaginative and interesting to occupy the soldiers. Besides contributing to the boredom of camp life such repetitious unimaginative activity must have bred resentment.⁷⁹ Refusal to participate in the route marches on 1 and 4 March provide further evidence that the discipline imposed on the soldiery of Kinmel Park was not effective. In a number of instances since February soldiers had protected their own from the authorities at the camp. Not only were troops resisting the arrest and incarceration of their peers but the leadership at the camp took no effective action such as a piquet within the camp to enforce discipline.

Enabling all these disintegrating factors and providing the impetus to the mutiny was the lack of communication between the camp staff and the transiting soldiers. Specifically, a paucity of relevant information as to the shipping delays caused the uncertain leadership of the camp to fail catastrophically. It provided the spark that ignited the mutiny and unable to gain the trust of the soldiers or to respond to the individual and collective protests and representations, the formal

⁷⁹ Ibid.

leadership was replaced by that of informal leaders. These informal leaders galvanized the Kinmel Park troops to mutiny and gained the attention of the Canadian authorities.⁸⁰

The events at Kinmel Park Camp on 4/5 March 1919 should be considered for their primary lessons. For those involved it was the option of last resort to make their concerns known. There had been numerous indications of escalating dissatisfaction and they had been, for most part, misinterpreted or ignored. The leadership did not make efforts to be aware of the soldiers concerns nor address those apprehensions in any meaningful manner. An accurate and opportune two way flow of information would have impeded these disintegrating factors and prevented the divergence of the objectives of the *dejure* and *defacto* leadership of the camp. In the final analysis the Kinmel Park Mutiny of 4/5 March 1919 emphasises that in the presence of centrifugal forces that can lead to a breakdown of organizational effectiveness the communication of information is a powerful cohesive element that military leaders neglect at their own risk.

⁸⁰ Drastic actions of last resort to change soldiers' conditions continue in the Canadian Army to this day. The allegations surrounding actions of soldiers in the Warrant Officer Matt Stopford incident with the 1st Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group in Croatia during OPERATION HARMONY Rotation 2 can be taken as evidence of this.

Appendix 1

Excerpt from “Riot in Canadian Camp: Twelve Killed and Many Injured. V.C. Trampled to Death.” The Times (London), March 7, 1919:

On Tuesday night, the men held a mass meeting, which was followed by a mad riot. The outbreak began in Montreal Camp at 9.30 p.m. with a cry ‘Come on the Bolsheviks’, which is said to have been given by a Canadian soldier who is Russian. The men rushed to the officers' quarters, helped themselves to all the liquor they could find, then went for the stores, disarmed the guards, and with their rifles smashed doors and windows, helping themselves to the content of the stores. Boxes of cigarettes and cigars were thrown all about the ground. Then they went out to wreck the whole camp. One portion, where tradesmen's shops supplied soldiers, was stripped and in a few moments not a shop was left standing. The Church Army and Salvation Army buildings, however, were not touched. The rioters then proceeded to the quarters occupied by the girls, who were in bed, and carried away their clothes. The girls were not injured, but had to remain in bed the next day because they could not dress themselves. Next day, the rioters were masquerading about the camp in girls' clothing.

By mid-day on Wednesday the camp appeared as if it had been passed over by legions of tanks. Unfortunately a brewer's dray containing 48 barrels of beer arrived at the camp. The men took fire buckets, broke the barrels and drank the beer. Then they started shooting all round. In one of the distant parts of the camp a young soldier stood on guard and attempted to do his duty. In reply to his challenge one of the rioters shot him dead.

A little later a major from New Brunswick, who had gained the VC, attempted to interfere, but in his endeavour to hold the rioters back from such portion of the officers' quarters that was not demolished, he was thrown down and trampled to death. Another officer, going amongst the rioters, was so badly mauled that he died a few hours later.

During this time some of the men had been arrested. The rioters demanded the release of the men. The colonel refused, and the rioters released the men themselves. The whole disturbance was quelled by night and the ringleaders, numbering about twenty, and stated to be mostly of foreign extraction, were taken away. The Canadian soldiers in the camp, while explaining the cause of the affair, are now regretting it. They say that they did not anticipate that it would go to such lengths, and the mob went further than it meant to. The disturbance caused great alarm in Rhyl, when it was reported that 5,000 to 6,000 men of the camp were going to raze the town.

Yesterday an officer from the War Office arrived at the camp by aeroplane and found everything calm. He addressed the men, telling them it was murder for Canadians to kill Canadians. He gave them an assurance that within a few days about half of the Canadians in the camp should be on their way home. The others would follow quickly. This statement was cheered by the men who said it was all they wanted.

Excerpts from “The Camp Riot: Further Details.” The Times (London), March 8, 1919:

All was quiet yesterday at Kinmel Park, North Wales. It was officially stated that the casualties were five killed and twenty one wounded. The inquest on the victims was opened yesterday, and adjourned until next week. Brigadier General M. A. Colquhoun, in a statement yesterday morning, said that no attack was made on the officers who were treated with the greatest courtesy. ‘I myself’, he went on to say, ‘went in and out amongst the men freely. Some of them actually put down their loot in order to salute me, and then picked up their loot again. Reports of the damage are greatly exaggerated. Some fifty or sixty men got out of hand, and attacked some canteens. The men in one camp, anticipating danger, armed themselves and, contrary to express orders, fired.

That was on Wednesday, when the fatalities occurred. The girls' camp was not attacked. As a matter of fact the girls were treated with the utmost chivalry. No man entered the girls' bedrooms while they were occupied. One man raised the red flag in an attempt to introduce Bolshevism, but was shot.'

In view of the splendid discipline and record uniformly maintained by Canadian troops since the beginning of the war in England and France, the 'incident' at Kinmel Park is regretted. It is considered that by comparison with others discipline amongst the Canadian troops is of a high order. It is also regretted that reports of the incident have been exaggerated. Immediately after the Armistice, Kinmel Park was secured as a concentration area through which Canadian troops stationed near Liverpool could pass through to Canada. All documentation is completed there, and the troops are sorted into drafts, according to their destination in Canada. Considering the shortage of shipping, the Canadian authorities congratulate themselves upon the splendid record they have for sending troops to Canada.

In the month of February (1919), however, the Ministry of Shipping were unable to furnish sufficient ships to carry out the programme as promised to the Canadians. Owing to this the programme in February and early March had fallen short by one third. This had caused the 'backing up' of troops from Kinmel Park through to areas in England, through to France. This had caused disappointment to the Canadians, some of whom had been overseas, without seeing home, for four years . . .

Immediately upon the matter being reported to the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Richard Turner VC, KCB, he went to Kinmel Park and addressed the men in fifteen different places. They seemed to appreciate his explanations and there is not likely to be any further disturbances...

If the number of men originally planned for February had been allowed to embark, it is thought that there would have been no trouble. But the shipping situation, owing to strikes and other reasons, is admittedly a difficult matter to control. It is however hoped that there will not be a recurrence of the delays which have hitherto taken place.

It is not attempted, in the slightest degree, to excuse the misconduct of the men who took part in the disturbance. Many of the offenders have already been placed under arrest and these, with others involved, will be rigorously dealt with.

During the disturbance a certain amount of damage was done, and it was discovered that civilians were concerned. Up to the present twelve of these civilians have been arrested and handed over to the local authorities.

During the disturbance three rioters were killed and two men on picket duty. Twenty one soldiers were wounded, of whom two were officers. There is no foundation to the report that a Major, who was a VC, was killed or injured. The troops at Kinmel Park are concentrated in units representing the military districts of Canada to which they will proceed. They are not in their original units, these wings being composite formations consisting of personnel belonging to many different units. This sorting out is done in deference to the wishes of the authorities in Canada, in order to avoid delay when they reach the Dominion.

A court of inquiry, of which Brigadier J.O. MacBrien CB, CMG, DSO, is President, has been convened to make a thorough investigation into all circumstances in connection with the disturbance. (From the Ministry of Overseas Forces of Canada.)

Cited in David Lamb, Mutinies, London: Solidarity United Kingdom, 2002 [internet document]; available from <http://www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/mutinies.html>, accessed October 18, 2002.

Bibliographic Essay

Major Content Areas:

Research into the Kinmel Park Mutiny highlighted the paucity of scholarly works examining the topic of First World War mutinies, particularly within a Canadian context. Official histories such as Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, in the Official History Of The Canadian Army In The First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919, offer little other than brief descriptions of these disturbances with little analysis. At the same time most secondary histories that mention these military revolts treat them in much the same manner.

The explanatory paradigm utilized to interpret this mutiny was that proposed by Major Joel Hamby in “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel: A Leadership Model for Mutiny in Combat,” Armed Forces & Society 28, no. 4 (Summer 2002). Hamby suggests that mutiny has a number of different components that lie within the competencies of leadership, training and military discipline. He proposes that mutiny is more likely when leadership does not mitigate the negative influences within a given military environment. Although Hamby focuses on mutiny amongst units engaged in combat, his paradigm is of utility to interpret the collective action at Kinmel Park and suggest what could have been done to avoid this tragedy. In this model mutiny is the result of a failure of morale and the act of revolting becomes the culmination of soldiers’ concerns not the cause. As a result, in order to understand mutiny, it becomes necessary to focus on the problems underlying the actions.

While “The Mutiny Wagon Wheel” assumes the impact of causal factors on weak formal leadership to cause a disintegration of control, the reality is more complex. The presentation and management of information has been neglected as a fundamental issue in the genesis of military mutiny. The example of Kinmel Park Camp and the disturbances of March 1919 illustrate the critical nature of communications during periods of organizational change.

The primary sources provide information that illustrates the lack of communication. The Court of Inquiry, Camp Logs, and period newspapers offer a number of first hand opinions and

observations from participants and others. It was necessary to carefully examine and dissect this information to attempt to discern any bias in the manner in which these personal accounts were captured. The most effective method of doing this was to cross reference items of information across primary sources to ensure impartiality and confirm the accuracy of these documents.

Within the testimony of the official Court of Inquiry soldiers presented many reasons why they experienced dissatisfaction but the critical issue was the lack of communication with the camp staff. Informal leadership mobilized at Kinmel Park when commanders did not ensure that soldiers were kept informed of the details and reasons behind significant changes to shipping schedules. This breakdown in the flow of information, and subsequent loss of faith, was the principal factor that provided informal leaders with a mandate to react in what they deemed an acceptable manner to an unacceptable situation.

Secondary sources like Julian Putkowi's, "The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919," and Desmond Morton's, "'Kicking and Complaining': Demobilization Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19," provided a coherent overview to the mutiny and were extremely useful in focusing research efforts with regard to existing primary sources. Both Putkowski and Morton, as well as, David Lamb, in Mutinies, and Lawrence James, in Mutiny: In the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956, emphasize class to describe the mobilization of the soldiers along lines of common interest and provide a great deal of background information regarding the socio-political climate of the times. Although, this perspective of class explains the mobilization of the common soldiery rooted in a nascent ideology of common interest it does not provide a functionalist viewpoint of why the mutiny occurred and Hamby fills that void.

In general, primary sources provided excellent raw accounts of the incident but it was necessary to be cognizant as to the context and origin of these period documents. Secondary sources were of great utility in providing background information and a framework to the research that was conducted into this disturbance. Studying the Kinmel Park Mutiny was an enlightening experience because mutinies within a Canadian context are a topic that demands

further study. Due to the eight decades that have now passed the example of the Kinmel Park Mutiny of 1919 contains none of the issues that would preclude its use as an instance of failed stewardship. It is a case study of organizational leadership during periods of constant turbulence that has resonance in the present.

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