

Selling Disaster: How the Canadian Public was Informed of Dieppe

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the handling of the public relations and subsequent news reporting of the 1942 Dieppe raid. Based on official communiqués the Canadian newspapers initially portrayed Dieppe as success and featured human-interest stories written by war correspondents. The revelations of the heavy casualties and a more detailed explanation led some newspapers to criticize the raid, although their reactions reflected their political positions. The Canadian military conducted a campaign to sell the value of Dieppe to the Canadian public, largely patterned on the public relations plans of Mountbatten's Combined Operations Headquarters that distracted from failure by emphasising heroism, alleged successes, and the lessons learned. War correspondents actively assisted the military's publicity efforts. General McNaughton wanted a more truthful account, but ultimately chose coalition needs over accurate independent publicity. The information campaign although persuasive for many, left numerous Canadians unconvinced that the raid was successful.

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Abbreviations

CCO.....	Chief of Combined Operations
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CGS.....	Chief of General Staff
CIGS.....	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CMHQ.....	Canadian Military Headquarters
CP.....	Canadian Press
CO.....	Combined Operations
COHQ.....	Combined Operations Headquarters
COS.....	Chiefs of Staff
DPR.....	Directorate of Public Relations
FMR.....	Fusiliers Mont-Royal
GHQ.....	General Headquarters
MoI.....	Ministry of Information
PR.....	Public Relations
PRO.....	Public Relations Officer
NDHQ.....	National Defence Headquarters
USAF.....	United States Air Force
VCGS.....	Vice Chief of General Staff
WIB.....	Wartime Information Board

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Dedication

To Col with all my love

Introduction

The smoke shrouded beaches of Dieppe were littered with the broken bodies of Canadian soldiers scattered among disabled tanks and abandoned equipment. The last landing craft had left, overcrowded with men desperate to escape imprisonment. The remaining Canadians, realizing the futility of continued resistance surrendered and marched away to imprisonment. The wounded lucky enough to be evacuated, faced a long voyage back to England and medical facilities, while those less fortunate were treated by the enemy. After evacuating the wounded, the Germans left the dead in place hoping that the tide would bring them closer and shorten the distance that they would need to carry them.¹ Dieppe once known as “poor man’s Monte Carlo” for its gambling casino had become the scene of fierce fighting. The biggest gamble in Dieppe’s history had wagered and lost, and the price was Canadian blood. It was 14:00 August 19, 1942.

A wide ocean away many Canadians knew little or nothing about what had happened to their sons, fathers, husbands, and friends on the ghastly beach. No one expected a day different from normal. Canadians had felt little impact of the war compared to other countries; the casualty lists were relatively short. The Army in fact had not seen combat apart from the two ill-fated regiments sent to Hong Kong. Canadians paid higher taxes, faced rationing, and were part of a war economy but the price in blood had been relatively small. Some Canadians had heard about the raid while it was in progress from the radio or early newspaper editions, but the details were scarce. Canadians craved information about what happened.

¹ Terence Robertson, *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), 381.

The Dieppe raid was the major Canadian news story of August and September 1942. The English Canadian press originally presented a picture of Dieppe as a success largely based on the COHQ (Combined Operations Headquarters) communiqués and Canadian official statements. When official sources left many questions about Dieppe unanswered, the press turned to the accounts of the war correspondents focussing initially on their own experience, then on heroic human interest stories. The war correspondents however, could not provide a coherent overview of the raid. At the same time, the official casualty lists gave an increasingly sombre tone to the tales of daring-do.

Beginning September 15, the revelations of the total casualties, an official explanation of the raid, and the 67% casualty total, gave the press coverage a much more controversial flavour. Muted criticism of the official version of the raid had begun earlier, but these disclosures led to open debate about both the raid itself and how Canadian authorities handled the information. The criticism or defence of Dieppe was in large part due to the individual newspaper's support or opposition to Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Liberal government but was also highly influenced by the public relations efforts of both Canadian and British authorities. The Canadian military and government consistently presented the Dieppe raid in its best light. This conformed to a public relations plan crafted by COHQ before the raid took place, which determined that in event of failure, it would distract the public by focussing the publicity on the experimental value of the raid and the heroism of the troops. In this endeavour, the military received assistance from war correspondents who so closely identified with the war effort they actively helped to sell Dieppe. The Canadian military did try to present a more honest account than British authorities did, but COHQ censorship prevented them.

Even without this revision, the Canadian military's version of Dieppe remained misleading. The motivations for this publicity campaign were to avoid an embarrassing inquiry as had happened after Hong Kong, and to protect the requirements of coalition warfare.

One of the related issues raised in 1942, although rarely discussed after the war, was the reason for withholding the names and number of the missing from publication for almost a month. Several newspapers suspected that this sudden change in policy was an attempt by the military to delay the bad news and reduce its impact. Nevertheless, an examination of the documentary record demonstrates that this resulted from an attempt by British authorities to get Canada to comply with British policies. Likewise, many observers felt that releasing of names of the dead and wounded over sixteen days following the raid might have been a military manipulation of the process. But, the records show that the Canadian Military put all possible haste into processing the names of the casualties but was unprepared to deal with the large numbers because of the raid's secrecy.

The publicity campaign was not entirely successful. Although many in the English speaking public, perhaps a majority, were convinced, many Canadians remained sceptical of the official story. Nonetheless, the government was able to use its official version of Dieppe to defend the raid in a bitter Parliamentary debate and prevent any further investigation of it. The reputation of the Senior Canadian Combatant in Europe, General A.G.L. McNaughton, however, suffered a blow because of the debates. The official version simply could not convince everyone because of the huge gap between the

claims of success and the disaster on the beaches. There was too much falsehood in the account. Neither the military nor the public in the end was well served by the deception.

We live in an information age where military and government manipulation of war news is a regular occurrence. Daily press briefings and “embedded journalists” with satellite communications have replaced the occasional communiqués and the cables of war correspondents. In the wake of the American attack on Iraq, there is again suspicion concerning the veracity of war news, the claims of the briefings by both politicians and generals. These are issues not only for the American military but also for all forces involved in active operations. The Canadian military has used the media to its advantage, as for example, in its masterful use of press briefings about *Operation Salon* during the Oka crisis.² The government and military contrived to keep reports of Canadian combat in the Medak Pocket from the media, fearful of negative public reaction.³ The Somalia affair certainly demonstrated that embarrassing failures could lead to deception by the modern military. Given Canada’s present and future likely involvement in the “war on terror,” war news will likely be an issue again. It is worthwhile then to examine how authorities handled the publicity of the most controversial event in Canadian military history, the raid on Dieppe.

² Claude Beauregard, “The Military Intervention at Oka: Strategy, Communication, and Press Coverage,” *Canadian Military History* 2, 19 (Spring 1993): 23-47.

³ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 272.

Chapter One:

Debating Disaster: The Historiography of the Dieppe Raid

On August 19, 1942, two brigades of the Canadian Second Division supported by British Commandos and Royal Marines carried out the disastrous raid on the French channel port of Dieppe. Designated *Jubilee*, the operation was planned under the authority of British Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) that envisioned the troops capturing the port, taking prisoners and destroying war materiel. Few of these objectives were met; the only success was that of the British Commando units, who silenced enemy batteries on the extreme flanks of the raiding force. At Puys, the Royal Regiment of Canada was slaughtered in the narrow space between the cliff and the sea, achieving nothing. On the main beach in front of the town, the force landed in the face of heavy fire, and only small groups of infantry managed to enter Dieppe where they achieved little. Most tanks never made it off the shingle beach; those that did could not cross enemy barricades into town. Only at Pourville did Canadians make any headway, the South Saskatchewan Regiment and the Winnipeg Camerons penetrated inland against light opposition, yet did not reach their objectives and lost heavily in the withdrawal. Under heavy fire, some of the force reembarked, but many were left behind to what became three years of captivity. The human cost was immense: of the 5000 Canadian troops involved, 3367 became casualties. Dieppe was a disaster.

The raid occupies a unique place in the consciousness of many Canadians. The volume of literature about Dieppe equals or exceeds that covering other Canadian battles more significant to the final victory over Germany. Why this focus on the Dieppe raid? It was the first time that the Canadian Army in Britain was involved in any serious

fighting after spending almost three years defending the island and engaging in endless training exercises. The raid was also the bloodiest single day of the war for Canada, and the worst disaster in Canadian military history. In addition, more than other operations, *Jubilee* was “a Canadian show;” with a mainly Canadian force commanded by a Canadian, John Hamilton Roberts. The raid and the horrible losses were thus a “common tragedy” shared by the nation.¹ The volume of literature suggests a search for an explanation of this tragedy, producing according to Desmond Morton, “myths” and “scapegoats.”² Thus, the central focus of the literature about Dieppe is controversy over its planning and execution; other aspects remain relatively unexplored.

Four major areas of controversy have dominated the historiography of Dieppe. The first concerns the reasons for the raid. Lack of documentation of the aims and origins of Dieppe has led to a variety of explanations of why the raid was first conceived as *Operation Rutter*, and why, after its cancellation in July, due to weather, it was revived as *Jubilee*. This was despite the fact that General Montgomery, a key military authority for *Rutter*, had advised total abandonment of the raid following the first cancellation. Historians have used four major theories to try to explain the origins and remounting of the Dieppe raid.

The first is that the Dieppe raid was a military necessity in order to practice invasion techniques and to test if it was possible to capture a port. This was the initial view of the Canadian Army’s official historian C.P. Stacey, other wartime accounts, and

¹ Béatrice Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe: Radioscopie D’ Un Mythe* (Montreal, VLB Éditeur, 2002), 21.

² Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 203.

the official histories and works influenced by Lord Louis Mountbatten.³ Mountbatten was head of Combined Operations (CO), charged with coordinating raids on German occupied Europe. Dieppe was planned under his leadership. In his later positions of authority in the defence and naval hierarchies, Mountbatten “was able to influence the way official history was written.”⁴ Thus, this emphasis on military necessity is understandable as it relates to the “lessons learned” justification for the raid found in the official histories.⁵ Nevertheless, this explanation cannot be simply dismissed because developing amphibious techniques was COHQ’s mandate.⁶ Many later works also reflected this emphasis to varying degrees.⁷

³ C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1948), 61; Quentin Reynolds, *Dress Rehearsal: The Story of Dieppe* (Garden City: Blue Ribbon, 1943); Wallace Reyburn, *Glorious Chapter: The Canadians at Dieppe* (London: Oxford, 1943), 9; A.B. Austin, *We Landed At Dawn* (New York: Harcourt, Bruce, 1943), 86; [Hilary St. George Saunders], *Combined Operations: the Official Story of the Commandos* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 110; Earl Mountbatten of Burma, “Operation Jubilee: The Place of the Dieppe Raid in History,” *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution for Defence Studies* 119 no.1 (1974): 27; J. Hughes-Hallett, “The Mounting of Raids,” *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* XCV (Nov. 1950): 581; S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office [hence HMSO], 1956), 239-240; J.R.M. Butler, *Grand Strategy vol.3 June 1941-August 1942* (London: HMSO, 1964), 639. Bernard Fergusson, *The Watery Maze* (London: Collins, 1961), 168.

⁴ Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action* (Toronto: Oxford, 1989), 41.

⁵ Department of National Defence, Directory of History and Heritage Archives, Canadian Military Headquarters Reports 1940-1948, Report 83, “Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee (19 September 1942), A-1. <<http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/dhh/downloads/cmhcq/cmhcq083.pdf>> (2 April 2003); Stacey, “Dieppe, 19 August, 1942,” *Canadian Geographic Journal* XXVII no.2 (August 1943): 62; Stacey, *Canadian Army*, pp. 84-86; Stacey, *Six Years*, 399-404; Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War Book VIII: The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassel, 1968), 91; Christopher Buckley, *Norway, The Commandos, Dieppe* (London: HMSO, 1951), 266-269; Roskill, *War at Sea*, 252; Fergusson, *The Watery Maze*, 181-184; Butler, *Grand Strategy*, 641-642; Mountbatten, “Operation Jubilee,” 30.

⁶ Barry Hunt and Donald Schurman, “Prelude to Dieppe: Thoughts on Combined Operations Policy in the Raiding Period 1940-1942,” in *Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century 1900-1945*. Gerald Jordan ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 202; Stacey, *Six Years*, 326.

⁷ Eric Maguire, *Dieppe August 19* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), 46; John Mellor, *Dieppe: Canada’s Forgotten Heroes* (Scarborough: Signet, 1979), 20, 25; Charles W. Schreiner Jr. “The Dieppe Raid, Its Origins, Aims and Results,” *Naval War College Review* 25 no.5 (1973): 86; F.H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol. 2: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (London: HMSO, 1981), 695; Phillip Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 107.

A second group of historians sees the raid as a response to the political situation in the summer of 1942. Churchill was under intense pressure from the British public, the Americans, and the Russians to launch a second front. Even the postwar authors who emphasised military necessity noted this political context.⁸ By the 1960s, more scholars began to speculate on the role of politics and recent authors place much more emphasis on it.⁹ For example, Denis Whitaker, a Canadian military historian and Dieppe veteran, argues that the purpose of *Rutter* was to minimize American and Russian anger over the cancellation of the proposed 1942 invasion, *Sledgehammer*.¹⁰

The third explanation is that the impetus for reviving *Jubilee* came from Mountbatten. In 1950, Hughes Hallett, Mountbatten's close associate and naval commander for *Jubilee*, revealed that COHQ pushed for the raid because of frustration at past cancellations of operations, including *Rutter*; this view eventually won over Stacey.¹¹ Hunt and Schurman further developed this approach arguing that it was critical for CO to "justify its existence" and *Jubilee* was the last opportunity in 1942 for a large raid.¹²

⁸ Reyburn, *Glorious Chapter*, 4; Reynolds, *Dress Rehearsal*, 108; Stacey, *Canadian Army*, 61; Hughes-Hallett, "Mounting of Raids", 581; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 91; C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 340-341; Roskill, *War at Sea*, 241.

⁹ Jacques Mordal, *Dieppe the Dawn of Decision* (Toronto, Ryerson, 1962), 87; Terrence Robertson, *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), 34-35, 164; Maguire, *Dieppe August 19*, 44-46; Schreiner, "The Dieppe Raid," 86-87; Hunt and Schurman, "Prelude to Dieppe," 205; Hamilton, *Monty*, 550; Ronald Atkin, *Dieppe 1942: The Jubilee Disaster* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 38; Villa *Unauthorised Action*, 234-236; Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992).

¹⁰ Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*, 87-88, 309.

¹¹ Hughes-Hallett, "The Mounting of Raids," 585; Stacey, *Six Years*, 340.

¹² Hunt and Schurman, "Prelude to Dieppe," 205.

In 1989, Brian Villa argued that Mountbatten launched *Jubilee* because of his personal ambition. Mountbatten, the King's cousin, had been rapidly promoted to CCO (Chief of Combined Operations) because of his dashing reputation.¹³ He knew that his superiors on the Chiefs of Staff (COS) committee desired a raid but feared they would not order it after *Rutter's* cancellation.¹⁴ Believing he was a candidate to be General Marshall's deputy for *Round-Up*, the proposed 1943 invasion of Europe, Mountbatten needed a successful large-scale raid to ingratiate himself to both the Americans and the COS committee. Since it was probable that the COS would reject *Jubilee*, he remounted the operation without their approval. Afterwards, the COS committee could not discipline Mountbatten for fear of scandal and arousing Canadian anger. In any case, Churchill had some awareness of the effort to remount the raid yet made no effort to prevent it.¹⁵

If Villa's theory is correct, why was this not discovered earlier? In 1950, while writing *The Hinge of Fate*, the lack of documented approval for *Jubilee* puzzled Churchill, who searched for answers. After a prolonged debate, Mountbatten, despite a lack of evidence or witnesses, persuaded Churchill that the raid received verbal approval. Churchill accepted Mountbatten's written version almost verbatim as the text for *Hinge of Fate*, including an admission of responsibility for ordering the raid.¹⁶

¹³ Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 164-165.

¹⁴ Brian Loring Villa, "Mountbatten, the British Chiefs of Staff and the Approval of the Dieppe Raid," *The Journal of Military History* 54 (April 1990): 214; Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 48.

¹⁵ Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 235-236, 238-239, 242-243.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-40.

Although it is difficult to accept, Villa has built an alternative theory that fits the holes in the records and has succeeded in convincing some historians.¹⁷ His controversial thesis has attracted critics, although none has fully countered his well-documented views.¹⁸ The best counter arguments are provided by Peter Henshaw, who contends that in July, Mountbatten got the COS committee to change the way raids were approved, transferring the final decision to himself.¹⁹ Furthermore, the process for approving raids was not very precise and “gave Mountbatten considerable leeway”; in fact, no rules existed in regards to remounting previously approved raids. Villa contends that these changes did away with the requirement that the COS consent to the final plans of already authorized raids, but did not give him the authority to approve raids on his own.²⁰

Henshaw proposes a fourth explanation, namely that the impetus for revival came largely from Canadian Generals Andrew G.L. McNaughton and Harry Crerar. They sought to establish control over “the military side of raids involving Canadian troops,” and managed to obtain a chain of command that eliminated any meaningful home forces oversight of the Canadian Army for *Jubilee*.²¹ Therefore, Canadian pressure was

¹⁷ Brereton Greenhous, *Dieppe, Dieppe*. (Montreal: Art Global, 1993), 64, 69, 152; David J. Bercuson, *Maple Leaf against the Axis: Canada's Second World War* (Don Mills, Stoddart, 1995), 68.

¹⁸ Philip Ziegler, “Comments by Phillip Ziegler” in Villa, “Mountbatten and the British Chiefs of Staff,” 219-221; Terry Copp, “Review of *Unauthorized Action*, by Brian Loring Villa”, *Canadian Historical Review* 72 (March 1991): 123-124; Whitakers, *Dieppe*, pp. 227, 282; Brian Loring Villa and Peter J. Henshaw, “The Dieppe Raid Debate,” *Canadian Historical Review* 79 no.2 (1998), 310 -313; Henshaw, “Misplaced Canadian Nationalism?” pp. 260-264; Henshaw, “Quest for Action,” *Queen's Quarterly* 101 no.1 (Spring 1994), p. 110; Hugh Henry, “A Reappraisal of the Dieppe Raid, 19 August 1942: Planning, Intelligence and Execution” (Ph.D. Thesis: Cambridge University, 1996), 23.

¹⁹ Peter J. Henshaw, “The Dieppe Raid: A Product of Misplaced Canadian Nationalism?,” *Canadian Historical Review* 77 no.2 (1996): 261.

²⁰ Henshaw, “Dieppe Debate”, p. 311; Villa, “Dieppe Debate,” 306.

²¹ Henshaw, “Misplaced Canadian Nationalism?,” 252.

essential for the revival of the raid; as McNaughton managed to gain almost full military control of *Jubilee*.²²

These explanations of the aims and origins of both *Rutter* and *Jubilee* are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Most authors base their views on multiple factors, but give some greater emphasis. The difficulty is linking these factors due to the almost complete lack of documentation on the origins and aims of the raid. As Hunt and Schurman observe, “no doubt the two scenarios (raiding policy and Alliance politics)... intersected. At the moment it seems impossible to say precisely where.”²³

The second major area of controversy in the Dieppe literature is the issue of responsibility. Villa clearly places the chief responsibility for the raid on Mountbatten, Henshaw on the Canadians; and those who see political aims behind the raid, on Churchill. Many others declare that many problems in the plan contributed to the defeat at Dieppe: lack of heavy naval fire support, poor intelligence, inflexibility, and dependence on surprise. Two aspects of the plan are particularly controversial: the decisions to launch a frontal assault and to cancel the preliminary air bombardment.

The frontal assaults on the main beaches and at Puys, in retrospect, seemed to have had little chance of success. American correspondent Quentin Reynolds was the first to assign responsibility for the planning the frontal assault. He blamed General McNaughton for changing Mountbatten’s alleged original plan, which called for flank

²² Ibid., 251, 263.

²³ Hunt and Schurman, “Prelude to Dieppe,” 205.

attacks.²⁴ The source of Reynold's information was probably Mountbatten or others at COHQ.²⁵ Although Stacey demonstrated that Canadians became involved in planning only after the frontal assault had been approved, this did not stop Mountbatten and British military historian M.R.D. Foot from later blaming them for it.²⁶

The accounts written during the first decade or so after the war usually claimed that two plans had originally been drafted, one calling for flank attacks only and one calling for a frontal assault as well. The latter was usually attributed to Home Forces planners without being specific as to who they were. Stacey later became sceptical of the idea of two original plans, because no contemporary records existed of the earliest planning stages.²⁷

Dieppe historian Hugh Henry argues that after Montgomery's *Memoirs*, published in 1958, criticized the deletion of heavy bombing and paratroopers from the plan,²⁸ Mountbatten ordered the admiralty *Battle Summary* rewritten to place blame for the decision for the frontal attack on Montgomery, despite protests from former COHQ planners that Montgomery was not involved. Mountbatten's attempt to shift blame away

²⁴ Reynolds, *Dress Rehearsal*, 263.

²⁵ Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 24; Stacey, *Date with History*, 95.

²⁶ Stacey, "Dieppe, 19 August, 1942," 49; *Canadian Army*, 56-57; *Six Years*, 329, 336; Mountbatten, 27; M.R.D. Foot, "Dieppe: Triumph out of Disaster," *History Today* 42 no.8 (August 1992): 10.

²⁷ Stacey, *Canadian Army*, 55, Hughes-Hallett, "Mounting of Raids," 585, Roskill, *War at Sea*, 241, Stacey, *Six Years*, 328.

²⁸ Henry, "Reappraisal of the Dieppe Raid," 35-38; Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1958), 76-77.

from himself succeeded because many subsequent accounts blamed Montgomery for the frontal assault.²⁹

The frontal attack might have worked had the heavy bombing not been cancelled on June 5. The earliest explanation for the cancellation of the preliminary air attacks was offered in 1943 by British correspondent A.B. Austin, who said that excessive French civilian casualties were feared.³⁰ Many later historians accepted Stacey's explanation that fears of inaccurate bombing and the blocking of the streets with rubble, led General Roberts and air force commander, Leigh Mallory, to cancel the bombing.³¹ Then, in 1961, Bernard Fergusson, influenced by Mountbatten, became the first of many writers to blame Montgomery who had chaired the meeting when the decision was made and, who, despite the claims in his *Memoirs*, was not on record as opposing it.³² Yet Villa noted that Hughes-Hallett later admitted that Montgomery had verbally complained to his superior Paget about the cancellation of the bombing.³³ Goronwy Rees, Montgomery's assistant during *Rutter*, and later Canadian military historians Whitaker and Brereton Greenhous,

²⁹ Fergusson, *Watery Maze*, 169; Robertson, *Shame and the Glory*, 50; Mellor, *Forgotten Heroes*, 18; Mountbatten, "Operation Jubilee," 25-26; Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*, 91; Phillip Ziegler, *Mountbatten* (London: Collins, 1985), 188; Foot, "Dieppe: Triumph out of Disaster," 10; Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*, 160.

³⁰ Austin, *We Landed at Dawn*, 208.

³¹ Stacey, *Canadian Army*, 56; Stacey, *Six Years*, 336-337; Buckley, *Norway, the Commandos, Dieppe*, 232; Roskill, *War at Sea*, 241; Schreiner, "The Dieppe Raid," 89; Mellor, *Forgotten Heroes*, 23; T. Murray Hunter, *Canada at Dieppe*. (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1982), 12; Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*, 28-29; Mountbatten, "Operation Jubilee," 27; John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy* (London: Penguin, 1982), 128; Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*, 143-144.

³² Fergusson, *Watery Maze*, 295; Robertson, *Shame and the Glory*, 97; Mountbatten, "Operation Jubilee," 27; Mellor, p. 24; Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*, 29; Greenhous, *Dieppe, Dieppe*, 54; Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 76.

³³ Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 294 n.11.

blamed Churchill for stopping the bombing for vague political reasons.³⁴ Terrence Robertson also argued that Air Vice Marshall Harris refused to supply the required number of planes and that this led to the cancellation. This argument first made in 1962 has recently gained support.³⁵

The controversy and uncertainty around the tactical plan demonstrate how the lack of documentation and the active efforts by participants to protect their reputations can be a launching pad for myth. The holes in the record have left ample room to allow people like Mountbatten to bend or even invent the truth.

A third controversial area in the historiography of Dieppe is the issue of German foreknowledge of the raid. Many Canadians initially believed that the Germans were ready and waiting for them. In contrast, Stacey's early "white paper" argued the Germans only had warnings of raids in general and had strengthened the channel defences accordingly but had no specific knowledge of *Jubilee*.³⁶ Stacey later refined this view and most later historians agreed with his conclusion.³⁷

³⁴ Goronwy Rees, *A Bundle of Sensations* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 145; Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*, 143; Greenhous, *Dieppe, Dieppe*, 10.

³⁵ Robertson, *Shame and the Glory*, 93-95; Mellor, *Forgotten Heroes*, 24; Villa *Unauthorized Action*, 152; Bercuson, 68; Henry, 40

³⁶ Stacey, *Six Years*, 355, DND, DHH, CMHQR 1940-1948, Report 83, "Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee" (19 September 1942), A-3(Online version).

³⁷ Ross Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord: The Story of the Canadian Army* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), 339; Stacey, *Canadian Army*, 68; *Six Years*, p. 355; Buckley, *Norway, the Commandos, Dieppe*, 249; Thompson, *At whatever Cost*, 192; Ferguson, *Watery Maze*, 176; Butler, *Grand Strategy*, 639; Robertson, *Shame and the Glory*, 183; Mordal, *Dieppe*, 111; Maguire, *Dieppe*, 155-158; Mountbatten, "Operation Jubilee", 29; Mellor, *Forgotten Heroes*, 28; Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, 695; Hunter, *Canada at Dieppe*, 45; Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 190-191; Nigel West, *A Thread of Deceit: Espionage Myths of World War Two* (New York: Random House, 1985), 99.

The contention that the Germans had foreknowledge of the raid is chiefly found in sensationalistic accounts of the raid or by works that mention it only in passing.³⁸ John Masterman's revelation in 1972 that the British had captured and controlled all German agents in Britain before the raid,³⁹ did not end all speculation about German agents reporting the raid. Cave Brown and Günter Peis argued that the British deliberately leaked information to cause a disaster that would silence demands for a second front.⁴⁰ These conspiratorial claims found little support, the official history of British intelligence denied any German foreknowledge, and others also rejected these claims.⁴¹

Although Villa rejects Brown's thesis, he came to believe that COHQ might have deliberately passed information to the Germans. In the second edition of his book, Villa argues that *Jubilee* was a deception plan, supposedly designed to feed false information to the Germans. The plan, cooked up by the executive committee of COHQ, was ostensibly to convince the Germans that an invasion was imminent; yet at the same time, Mountbatten was working on the actual launch of the operation. The CCO used the deception plan as a cover to hide his real intent to remount the raid from the COS committee. Although no direct evidence confirms that information about Dieppe was

³⁸ David Irving, "Dieppe: Hitler Knew it was Coming," *Evening Standard*, October 1, 1963, 7; David Irving, "Here is the Proof," *Evening Standard*, October 14, 1963, 7; David Irving, *Hitler's War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 407-408; Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 75, 80-81, 83; Günter Peis, *The Mirror of Deception* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 122-124; (Lt. Col. Haines), *Ultra and the History of the United States Strategic Air Force in Europe vs. the German Air Force* (Frederick: University Press of America, 1980), 6.

³⁹ Campbell, *Dieppe Revisited*, 22.

⁴⁰ Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies*, 75; Peis, *Mirror of Deception*, 122.

⁴¹ F.H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol. 2: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (London: HMSO, 1981), 702. Campbell, *Dieppe Revisited*, 50; Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 205; Henry, *A Reappraisal of the Dieppe Raid*, 70, 100.

leaked to the Germans as part of the deception plan, Villa claims that the German soldiers at Dieppe were not informed because their commander would have regarded the raid as a “training exercise” for his troops and would not have passed on any information to the garrison.⁴²

Villa’s contentions about deception are even more difficult to accept than his original thesis about the remounting of the raid. The obvious question is why Mountbatten would knowingly launch a compromised raid. It is equally difficult to comprehend why a German commander would then risk defeat in order to test his men. Henry admits that permission to leak *Rutter* existed, but found no indication that it ever was. Moreover, contrary evidence demonstrates that the Germans were not alerted.⁴³ As Campbell observed; “It is not enough for proponents of the breach of security... merely to uncover a possible leak; that leak must contribute directly to the defeat on the beaches.”⁴⁴

The final controversy in the historiography of Dieppe concerns the justification of the raid because of the “lessons learned” for future operations. This emphasis appeared in an official communiqué on the day of the raid, and continued in the published wartime accounts.⁴⁵ After the war, Stacey summarized COHQ’s “lessons learned”: no frontal

⁴² Villa, *Unauthorized Action, new edition* (Toronto: Oxford, 1994), 253-255, 257, 261, 265-266.

⁴³ Henry, “A Reappraisal of the Dieppe Raid,” 105.

⁴⁴ Campbell, *Dieppe Revisited*, 50.

⁴⁵ DND, DHH, 72/502, C.B.04244, Annex 14: “The Public Relations Aspect”, p. 199; DND, DHH, CMHQ 1940-1948, Report 83, “Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee” (19 September 1942), A-1 (Online version); Stacey, “Dieppe: 19 August 1942,” 62; Reynolds, *Dress Rehearsal*, 267; Reyburn, *Glorious Chapter*, 10; Austin, *We Landed at Dawn*, 206; Saunders, *Combined Operations*, 145; Hughes-Hallett, *The Dieppe Raid* (London: HMSO, 1947), 3823-3824 (sic.). This is a later published reprint of the August 30, 1942 report.

assaults without “overwhelming support;” the need for “permanent naval assault forces;” more “flexibility in the army plan;” and the need for “overwhelming fire support.”⁴⁶

Stacey also credited numerous improvements evident on D-Day to these lessons: heavy naval and air support, specialized landing craft and vehicles, and the Mulberry harbour.⁴⁷

Stacey’s arguments dominated Dieppe historiography into the 1980s.⁴⁸

Stacey’s thesis did not go unchallenged. In 1958, Montgomery was the first to question the “lessons learned thesis,” believing they came at too high a cost.⁴⁹ In 1962, popular historian, Eric Maguire accused Stacey of assuming rather than demonstrating the links between Dieppe and D-Day.⁵⁰ In the 1970s and 1980s, more scholars became sceptical of the “lessons learned.”⁵¹ In 1993, John P. Campbell presented the most developed arguments against the value of the “lessons learned”.⁵² Dismissing many of the justifications as “leaps of faith,” he demonstrates from documentary evidence that *Jubilee*

⁴⁶ Stacey, *Canadian Army*, 83-84.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁴⁸ Buckley, *Norway, the Commandos, Dieppe*, 266-269; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 91; Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London: Collins: 1952), 110, 181; Thompson, *At Whatever Cost*, 198-201; Roskill, *War at Sea*, 251-252; Ferguson, *Watery Maze*, 181-184; Butler, *Grand Strategy*, 641-642; Schriener, “The Dieppe Raid,” 95-96; Mellor, *Forgotten Heroes*, 106-107; Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*, 273-274; Foot “Dieppe,” 11; Daniel J. Webb, “The Dieppe Raid- An Act of Diplomacy,” *Military Review* (May 1980): 36-37; Hunter, *Canada at Dieppe*, 48; Patricia Giesler, *Commemoration Dieppe* (Ottawa: Veteran’s Affairs, 1982), 7; Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 191-192.

⁴⁹ Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 77.

⁵⁰ Maguire, *Dieppe*, 183-188.

⁵¹ Schurman and Hunt, “Prelude to Dieppe,” 207; Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy*, 124; Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 3.

⁵² Greenhous, *Dieppe, Dieppe*, 11; Campbell, *Dieppe Revisited*, p. 277; Henry, “reappraisal of the Dieppe Raid,” 175; J.R. Robinson, “Radar Intelligence and the Dieppe Raid,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 20 no.5 (1991): 41-42; Bercuson, *Maple Leaf against the Axis*, 73.

had much less influence on D-Day than later landings and large-scale exercises.⁵³

Following Campbell's lead, Henry argued that many of the alleged lessons were already contained in the CO manuals.⁵⁴ Campbell and Henry have demonstrated that the values of the lessons of the raid were greatly exaggerated to justify Dieppe.

Yet, some still argue that Dieppe was justified because of its lessons. The most vehement recent defenders of the "lessons learned" thesis have been veterans. Denis Whitaker and a War Amps documentary *Dieppe Don't Call it a Failure* uncritically list the differences between D-day and Dieppe, attributing each one to the lessons of *Jubilee*.⁵⁵ Quoting a widow upset at the questioning of the value of the raid, the documentary asks: "was nothing gained?"⁵⁶ The need for some veterans and their families to make sense of their sacrifice means that the "lessons learned" justification of the raid will continue, despite the evidence against it.

What is to be concluded from this review of the controversies in Dieppe literature? First, inadequate documentation plays an important role in many of the debates. Controversies over the questions concerning the raid's original purpose, the authority for remounting, and decision making during the planning process might have been largely avoided if proper records had been kept. Nevertheless, the actual launching of such an obviously flawed operation, probably would have led to suspicions of

⁵³ Campbell, *Dieppe Revisited*, 209-210, 215, 227.

⁵⁴ Henry, "A reappraisal of the Dieppe Raid," 187-188.

⁵⁵ Whitaker and Whitaker, *Dieppe*, 293-394; *Dieppe: Don't Call It a Failure*, War Amps of Canada, final script (12 September 2001), 8-17, <<http://www.waramps.ca/video/ddcf.pdf>> (30 March 2003).

⁵⁶ *Dieppe: Don't Call it a Failure*, 6.

irregularity even if it were fully documented. Proper documentation might have helped squelch some of the speculation sooner, but the myths might have persisted in any case.

Secondly, the issue of reputation has been a key factor in the controversies over Dieppe. This is most obvious in the case of Mountbatten, who not only sought to influence the writing of official history, but even ordered an historical document revised in order to deflect blame from himself. Mountbatten was not the only one to seek to protect reputations. Stacey, as official historian, always sought to deflect blame from the Canadian high command. Montgomery likewise sought to protect his reputation by distancing himself as much as possible from the stain of Dieppe. Together, the lack of documentation and the protection of personal reputation have been the key moulders of the historiography of Dieppe.

Compared to the focus on these historiographical controversies, other elements of Dieppe are relatively unexplored. In particular, the public relations of the operation, the topic of this thesis, have received scant attention. We must wonder about how the raid was communicated to the Canadian public; the nature of the press coverage; and the official explanation of the raid. While certain aspects of public relations have been discussed, generally these accounts are brief, with little detail or analysis. Four themes, however, have been explored in these brief investigations.

The first involves the propaganda war between Britain and Germany over the raid. Francis Williams, the British Controller of Press and Censorship, in 1946 explained that the communiqués released at the time of the raid were meant to make clear that it was not an invasion attempt. This would stop the Germans from claiming that they had repulsed an invasion and keep the French from rising and then suffering reprisals.

Williams considered Dieppe a decisive victory for British propaganda.⁵⁷ In contrast, in 1962, Terence Robertson argued that Dieppe was a German propaganda victory. British claims of success fell flat because there was little success to exploit and a seeming lack of clear purpose for such a large operation. COHQ placed great value on war correspondents accompanying the raid as independent eyewitnesses, yet this advantage was lost due to delays caused by COHQ. This allowed the Germans to take the initiative in the propaganda war. Jacques Mordal and Eric Maguire, writing around the same time as Robertson, came to the same conclusion.⁵⁸ Williams' claims of propaganda victory seem self-justifying, considering that he was personally involved in the publicity campaign.

Another shortcoming in the international press coverage of Dieppe was the lack of recognition of Canada's involvement. This is the second major theme of much of the writing about the public relations aspects of Dieppe. *Montreal Standard* correspondent Wallace Reyburn noted controversy over the emphasis in the American press emphasis on the role of the 50 U.S. Rangers in *Jubilee*, without mentioning Canadian involvement.⁵⁹ C.P. Stacey further examined elements of the foreign media's lack of recognition of Canada's involvement at Dieppe. The early communiqués on August 19th did not clearly state that Canadians were the majority of the force. Press guidance offered by the MoI, to clear up this misconception actually clouded the issue because it said Canadians made up only one third of the personnel involved. Subsequent announcements

⁵⁷ Francis Williams, *Press Parliament and People* (London: William Heinemann, 1946), 52-57.

⁵⁸ Robertson, *Shame and the Glory*, 156-157, 392-394, 396-397; Mordal, *Dieppe*, 258; Maguire, *Dieppe* 159.

⁵⁹ Reyburn, *Glorious Chapter*, 39-40.

made clear that Canadians formed the majority of the landing force, but the damage was done. Although the Canadian press realized Canada's leading role at Dieppe, the matter was not cleared until Churchill's speech on September 8.⁶⁰ Perhaps stereotypical Canadian insecurity caused this issue to be a major issue for Stacey and subsequent Canadian Dieppe historians.⁶¹

The third major theme concerns the role of the war correspondents themselves. In the years immediately following the raid, war correspondents Quentin Reynolds, Wallace Reyburn, A.B. Austin, and Ross Munro, wrote books focussing on their personal experiences. A number of later books studying war correspondents also focus on their experience with little analysis.⁶²

A few works have examined the role of the war correspondents at Dieppe more critically. In 1946, Gillis Purcell, the wartime head of the Canadian Press, briefly discussed how Ross Munro felt that military officials tried to soften Dieppe for the public through censorship of the news, especially the casualty figures.⁶³ Phillip Knightley's 1975 examination of the role of war correspondents in support of the government and military, also briefly discussed Dieppe. He states that the MoI hid the truth of Dieppe from the public, but does not provide any explanation or evidence for this statement apart

⁶⁰ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, 393-394.

⁶¹ Robertson, *Shame and the Glory*, 395; Maguire, *Dieppe*, 150; Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*, 259-260; Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe*, 62.

⁶² Quentin Reynolds, *Dress Rehearsal*; Wallace Reyburn, *Glorious Chapter*; A.B. Austin, *We Landed At Dawn*; Ross Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945; rpt. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1971); M.E. Nichols, *CP: The Story of the Associated Press* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948), 241-242; A.E. Powley, *Broadcast From the Front* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1975), 28-35; Richard Collier, *The Warcos: the Correspondents of World War Two* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 128-131; Robert W. Desmond, *Tides of War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1984), 257-258.

⁶³ Gillis Purcell, "Wartime Press Censorship in Canada," (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1946), 131.

from an archival reference. Citing an interview with Ross Munro, the CP reporter, Knightley argues that correspondents identified so strongly with the war effort that they tailored their stories to support it. Munro explained that despite censorship he could usually tell “the story honestly and validly” and “I never really felt, except maybe on the Dieppe raid, that I was cheating the public at home.”⁶⁴ Thus, according to Knightley, both the MoI and the correspondents deliberately deceived the public about Dieppe.

Knightley also mentions that Munro toured Canada to speak to the public about the raid several weeks after the raid, a point picked up by Ronald Atkin’s 1980 study of Dieppe. He emphasised that in his speaking tour Munro was unable or unwilling to portray Dieppe as the disaster he knew it had been. Béatrice Richard’s study of French Canadian newspapers notes that Ross Munro’s visit to Montreal was emphasized by the mainstream *La Presse*, but ignored in the anti-war *Devoir*.⁶⁵ These brief but important studies indicate the importance of the war correspondent who not only reported the raid, but shaped the story to further the war effort.

The fourth area of examination has been the press coverage itself, what actually was communicated in the news media about the raid and the public’s reaction. In his memoirs C.P. Stacey revealed that he wrote the “white paper” on Dieppe released to the Canadian press on September 18, 1942. It was delayed because the CCO insisted on changes, including deletion of the potentially embarrassing admission that the Germans

⁶⁴ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: the War Correspondent as Hero and Myth Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo* (Baltimore, John Hopkins, 1975, 2000), 347-349.

⁶⁵ Knightley, *First Casualty*, 349; Atkin, *Dieppe 1942*, 257; Richard, *Mémoire De Dieppe*, 61-62.

captured the operational plans during the raid. In retrospect, he felt that the paper, released just after the full casualty lists, seemed like “lame apologia.”⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Stacey’s main concern was not with how news of Dieppe affected the Canadian public, but how it affected McNaughton. Criticism arose in the Canadian press from Reynold’s 1943 claim that McNaughton had changed COHQ’s original Dieppe plans. Although encouraged by Ottawa to reply, McNaughton refused because he did not want to sour relations with the CCO. The Canadian press and public, shocked by the cost of the raid, discussed it for months. “Ill informed comment” led to criticism of the abilities of Canada’s generals in the press and damaged McNaughton’s previously sterling public reputation.⁶⁷ Stacey’s brief discussion of the press coverage was groundbreaking but not in depth.

Jacques Mordal briefly examined the British press coverage of Dieppe. Initially the press believed COHQ’s claims of success. By the end of August, the raid faced some negative scrutiny. In parliament on September 8, Churchill defended the raid as a necessary reconnaissance, but the Canadian government’s revelation of total casualties contradicted Churchill’s claim that most of the landing force had returned. The revelation of the casualties “shocked public opinion” and contributed to Hitler’s propaganda victory.⁶⁸ Surprisingly, relatively little else has been published about the British press coverage.

⁶⁶ Stacey, *A Date With History*, 90-93; *Six Years of War*, 394.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 395-396.

⁶⁸ Mordal, *Dieppe*, 256-258.

Atkin's whose examination of the Canadian press coverage is more complete than either Stacey or Mordal, portrays the press as initially viewing Dieppe as a great success. However, the gradual release of the casualties, followed by delay in the release of the final list, caused growing concern. The revelation of the total losses on September 15 stunned Canadians.⁶⁹ Atkins did not pursue the reasons for the delay. In Dieppe literature, only Purcell has questioned the reasons for the delay of the release of casualties.

Béatrice Richard's 2002 study of the collective memory of Dieppe in Quebec traces how Quebecois memory of Dieppe was affected by changing political winds in the province. She sees the initial newspaper coverage in Quebec as launching two conflicting memories of Dieppe: heroism and the deaths of French Canadians in a British imperialist war.⁷⁰ Although Richard believes that there was a coordinated attempt to sell Dieppe, the question is beyond the scope of her study. Nevertheless, she assumes the government controlled and manipulated the Dieppe information. The release of information was done in three stages. The first was the "strategic story," the first several days after the raid when newspapers were enthusiastic and the details sparse. The second stage emphasised the heroism of French Canadian troops. The strategy continued even into October when veterans returned to a public reception in Montreal. The third stage was the revelation of the extent of Canadian involvement and total casualties, from September 8 until the

⁶⁹ Atkins, *Dieppe 1942*, 254-257.

⁷⁰ Richard, *Mémoire De Dieppe*, 73.

publication of the white paper two weeks later. After this, the continued attempts to portray Dieppe as a victory met little success in the Quebec press.⁷¹

Richard's analysis of the press coverage is certainly the most thorough and thoughtful thus far, but it is restricted to Quebec and includes only three newspapers: *Le Presse*; *Le Devoir*, and *Le Canada*,⁷² and refers only to English language newspapers when they affected French coverage. Secondly, Richard did no archival research to determine if the government or military actually had a strategy of information management.

In conclusion, Dieppe literature focussed on controversial military aspects of the raid while comparatively ignoring the handling of public relations. Certain issues are well explored, such as the propaganda battle with the Germans and the ignoring of Canadian participation by the foreign press. Richard has also analyzed press coverage in French Canada. Nevertheless, questions are left unanswered. Was there a deliberate strategy on the part of the Canadian military and government to sell Dieppe to the public? If so, how coordinated was it? Was the truth about Dieppe deliberately hidden? Why was the final casualty list withheld from publication for a month? How did the English language press react to the revelations of September? All these questions have yet to be answered.

⁷¹ Ibid., 47-48, 50, 54, 58, 63-65, 69, 73.

⁷² Ibid., 22.

Chapter Two:

Dieppe and the Canadian Press

The August 19 raid was the biggest Canadian news story of the war to that date. For over a month, the unexpected news of Canadian soldiers landing in a large raid was almost daily front-page news. The three phases of the French Canadian press coverage described by Béatrice Richard: the strategic story, the heroic phase, and the revelation, are also identifiable in the English language press.¹ While these phases are generally accurate, they can also be analyzed by identifying the dominant sources of information on which the newspapers relied. These sources were highly important in influencing both the content and the tone of the Dieppe press coverage.

An August 16 public relations meeting at Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ), recognized the importance of war correspondents accompanying the force to counter enemy propaganda and to “ensure an unbiased report for the public,”² but despite this the first news reports of Dieppe relied on official communiqués and press releases. COHQ selected twenty-one correspondents and photographers to cover the raid but did not allow them to cable their stories until it had given them an overview of the operation and allowed them to compare stories. It was unable to assemble the required information until 1045 on August 20. Secondly, because COHQ insisted on censoring the stories before they were submitted to the normal cable censorship of the Ministry of Information (MoI), the first reports were delayed until 1805 August 20. COHQ took steps to avoid future delays, but believed that little harm resulted to public relations.

¹ Béatrice Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe: Radioscopie D’ Un Mythe* (Montreal, VLB Éditeur, 2002), 49.

² DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *The Dieppe Raid Combined Report*, 194, September 1942.

The lack of correspondents' stories forced the newspapers to rely on the initial COHQ communiqués, which portrayed Dieppe in the best possible light. Beginning at 0600 August 19, a series of four communiqués was released, each progressively longer and more detailed. The first merely revealed that a raid, not an invasion was underway. The second at 1258 gave a bare outline of the raid in progress, emphasising the success of the British Commandos on the flanks and mentioning the nationalities of the troops. The third at 2010 revealed the use of tanks, described friendly and enemy air losses, and, while admitting that, "casualties were heavy on both sides," claimed that "vital experience" was gained. The final communiqué, released at 2250 August 20, was much more detailed and confident of success, emphasising the alleged objectives achieved. For example, it claimed that some tanks had penetrated the town's defences. It explained that the encounter between the landing force and the German coastal convoy "only threw out the time schedule of this particular party by twenty minutes." While admitting that casualties were heavy, "they were not unduly so in view of the operation."³ The communiqués gave the distinct impression of a hard fought but successful battle

In addition, Francis Williams, Controller of Press Censorship for the MoI, issued three guidance statements on August 19 and 20; advising the press not to overemphasize the contribution of smaller Allied contingents at the expense of the Canadians who were said to be one third of all personnel. This was true if the naval and air forces were included but the guidance was misleading; the actual landing force was overwhelmingly

³Copies of all communiqués are in DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 199-200.

Canadian.⁴ Therefore, the foreign press continued to emphasise American or British troops, much to the consternation of Canadian authorities.⁵

The details of a statement issued by Canada's Minister of National Defence, Colonel James L. Ralston, did not differ much from the COHQ communiqués. It pictured Canadians "reaching objectives" and destroying "many of the enemy defence works before withdrawing." For domestic purposes, it exhorted the public to work hard at home to support those who had fought at Dieppe.⁶

Given the slow release of official casualty lists, the press gleaned some information from German and Vichy sources, mainly casualty numbers.⁷ CP cited German communiqués, which claimed 1500 Allied prisoners.⁸ Vichy sources reported 3500 "mostly Canadian" troops killed in the landings.⁹ These were labelled as "claims" and the press, in its initial evaluations of the battle, did not take them very seriously.

Minimizing enemy claims and accepting the information in official Allied communiqués and releases led the Canadian newspapers to portray the Dieppe raid as a success. Headlines proclaimed Canada's leading role in the great raid. "Canadians Spearhead Battle at Dieppe... Help Smash Nazi Opposition" declared the *Toronto Star*.¹⁰ "Canadians Lead Commando Raid on France- Objectives Gained after Day Long Battle,"

⁴ Ibid., 200-201.

⁵ National Archives of Canada (hence NAC), RG24, C-2, vol.12329, 4/Dieppe/1, Cable from Ralston to McNaughton, 27 August 1942.

⁶ *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 3.

⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 29 August 1942, 32.

⁸ *Calgary Herald*, 19 August 1942, 1; *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 19 August 1942, 1.

⁹ *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 21 August 1942, 1.

¹⁰ *Toronto Daily Star*, 19 August 1942, 1.

summarized the headlines of the *Victoria Daily Times*.¹¹ “Success of Operation Proves Jolt for Nazis,” claimed the *Montreal Star*.¹² The *Regina Leader-Post* announced that the “Allied Victory was Decisive.”¹³ These were typical of the flavour of front-page headlines and the tenor of the stories as well.

The editorial pages also reflected the optimistic tone of the headlines as they usually commented on the success of the raid in achieving most of its objectives as reported by the communiqués, and expressed great pride in the achievements of Canadian troops.¹⁴ The *Globe and Mail* however, was more cautious, observing that while the communiqués’ “authoritative statements that it achieved its chief objectives” were “encouraging,” the “full story” of Dieppe was “yet to be disclosed.”¹⁵

Editorial cartoons also communicated the initial belief in Dieppe’s success. In an obvious rush to beat deadlines the *Regina Leader-Post* had German troops fleeing past a small sign labelled “Dieppe,” pursued with tanks and infantry with bayonets. Since the soldiers were clearly in Russian uniforms, the sign was obviously added at the last minute to create a Dieppe cartoon.¹⁶ The fleeing Germans clearly implied the success of the landings. A favourite cartoon theme was gigantic Canadian soldiers threatening tiny

¹¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 August 1942, 1.

¹² *Montreal Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 1.

¹³ *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 August 1942, 1.

¹⁴ *Montreal Gazette*, 20 August 1942, 8; *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 21 August 1942, 8; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 20 August 1942, 6; Canadian War Museum Newspaper clipping collection, hence CWM *Hamilton Spectator*, 20 August 1942. <http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/newspapers/intro_e.html>; *Toronto Calgary Herald*, 21 August 1942, 4; *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 6; *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 August 1942, 11; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 20 August 1942, 13.

¹⁵ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 20 August 1942, 6.

¹⁶ *Regina Leader-Post*, 19 August 1942, 1

Nazis. The *Vancouver Province* had Hitler shivering in bed while a huge spectral Canadian soldier loomed out of the darkness.¹⁷ The *Toronto Star* featured a towering Canadian with a Tommy gun leaping across the channel to squash an unsuspecting occupier.¹⁸ The *Montreal Star* showed a tiny Hitler covered in European blood sheepishly looking behind him as a giant finger labelled “Dieppe raid” threatens to crush him from behind.¹⁹ These cartoons all demonstrate the view that the Germans had been soundly defeated at Dieppe.

The reliance on official communiqués and news releases led Canadian newspapers to portray Dieppe as a success. But the lack of detail in the official account led to speculation and some inaccurate reporting. Some papers that went to press before the third COHQ communiqué announced the withdrawal pondered the possibility that Dieppe could actually be an invasion.²⁰ In addition, some newspapers tried to speculate on the detailed nature of the fighting itself. Lacking eyewitness accounts the *Hamilton Spectator* imagined “leading raiders with knives and clubs” leaping on “German sentries.”²¹

Most of the speculation, however, concerned the composition of the raiding force and the number of casualties. W.R. Plewman, in the *Toronto Star*, estimated that the Canadians numbered one third of a force of 12,000 to 15,000, and that heavy casualties

¹⁷ *Vancouver Daily Province*, 20 August 1942, 4.

¹⁸ *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 6.

¹⁹ *Montreal Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 10.

²⁰ CWM, *Hamilton Spectator*, 19 August 1942; *Toronto Daily Star*, 19 August 1942, 7.

²¹ CWM, *Hamilton Spectator*, 19 August 1942.

meant a loss of ten percent, therefore, Canada had suffered “up to 500 casualties.”²² The *Montreal Star* reported that the Americans had contributed a Ranger battalion, but were later shown to have numbered only fifty. While most speculation was wildly inaccurate, the *Montreal Star* correctly guessed that the Canadian units involved were the same regiments reported to have received amphibious training earlier that year, this was confirmed the next day by the fourth communiqué.²³ This understandable speculation continued until Churchill revealed the composition of the force, and National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ), the total casualties in September.

Official announcements became relatively few and gave little new information following the end of the embargo on despatches from war correspondents on 20 August. Reporters continued to attempt to patch together a more complete picture of the raid, but human-interest stories were the main element of news coverage. The most important source was CP reporter Ross Munro, whose stories appeared in most Canadian dailies. His initial story related his personal experiences when he attempted to land with the Royal Regiment of Canada on Blue Beach, where most of the men in his landing craft were killed or wounded. For days following Dieppe, he wrote the story of each regiment. After returning home to Canada, he made a speaking tour of each unit’s hometown.²⁴ On August 20, Bob Bowman of the CBC twice broadcast his story of watching the battle from a tank landing craft.²⁵ The accounts of Fred Griffin of the *Toronto Star*, and

²² *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 7.

²³ *Montreal Daily Star*, 19 August 1942, 1, 11.

²⁴ NAC, McNaughton Papers, MG30, E133, vol. 135, PA 1-8-1, “CP Told the World... About Canada and Dieppe.”

²⁵ A.E. Pawley, *Broadcast from the Front: Canadian Overseas Radio in the Second World War* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1975), 29-34. Bob Bowman, *Dieppe*, (Ottawa: Wartime Information Board, 1942), 1.

Wallace Reyburn of the *Montreal Standard*, were published in both their own and other newspapers.²⁶

The correspondents had difficulty patching together a more complete story of Dieppe. First, while having been in or near the battle, they were not in a position to witness the whole operation. The confusion and disorientation of battle can make an accurate account difficult to produce for any individual witness and Dieppe was especially confusing. On the headquarters ship *Calpe*, General Roberts had very little idea of what was happening on the beaches because of obscuring smoke and a lack of communications.²⁷ The Canadian correspondents, who apart from Reyburn never actually set foot on the beaches, probably knew less than Roberts did. This did not stop them from trying to comment on parts of the battle they viewed from a distance. After pulling off Blue Beach, Munro transferred to another landing craft that failed to reach the main beach. Despite admitting the “smoke was so thick that one could not see much of the town,” Munro concluded that the Canadians “seemed to have the town well under control.”²⁸ The correspondents initially wrote about what they had personally seen and experienced. Later, they wrote stories based on interviews of other participants who were also ignorant of big picture and told sometimes-contradictory accounts.²⁹ Neither approach produced a complete overview of the raid.

²⁶ Fred Griffin, “I Am Bailing Out,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 August 1942, 1, 7.

²⁷ NAC, George Ronald Fond, MG 30, E507, Transcript CBC Close Up Interview File #2 General Roberts, 13, 17.

²⁸ Ross Munro, “Mid Shot and Shell on Dieppe Beach,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 August 1942, 2.

²⁹ Ross Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), 338.

Censorship also made it difficult for correspondents to produce a more complete picture. In his book and in several postwar interviews, Ross Munro said he could not write all he would have liked to because of censorship. Yet, apart from saying, that he could not describe Dieppe as a disaster, Munro did not say what was censored.³⁰ What sort of censorship did the correspondents face? What was subject to censorship?

The Public Relations section of the COHQ *Combined Report* does not specify what was censored, although it claimed, “correspondents were given every opportunity to write the raid as they saw it.”³¹ As usual, the MoI reviewed correspondent’s cables for information thought to be useful to the enemy and anything that would weaken British relations with its allies.³²

The Canadian censorship system was similar to that of Britain; before publication newspapers voluntarily submitted items they felt could violate the censorship regulations.³³ Censorship had its legal basis in the Defence of Canada regulations 15 and 16, which allowed the Secretary of State to prevent the publication of anything that “would or might be prejudicial to the safety of the State or the efficient prosecution of the war.” Nevertheless, these powers were never fully used, although twelve publications were banned early in the war for alleged communist content. The Chief Censor of Publications issued directives to publishers identifying illegal content. Most of these

³⁰ Munro, *Gauntlet to Overlord*, 339; NAC, George Ronald Fond, MG 30, E507, Transcript CBC Close Up Interview File #6, pt.2, Ross Munro, 12, 1962; Gillis Purcell, “Wartime Press Censorship in Canada,” (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1946), 131; Ronald Atkin,, *Dieppe 1942* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 257; Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*: (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1975, 2000), 348-349.

³¹ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 195-196.

³² Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), 246.

³³ Francis Williams, *Press Parliament and People* (London: William Heinemann, 1946), 15-21; Daniel German, “Press Censorship and the Terrace Mutiny: A Case Study in Second World War Information Management,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 31 no. 4 (Winter 1996-97), 125.

restrictions focused on military information such as the location of units, troop movements, convoy sailings and similar items. A censor could pass or recommend changes in questionable stories submitted to him. However, only the courts could determine if the item had violated the law.³⁴

The protection of military secrets was not the only concern of Canadian censors. Regulations 39 A and B prohibited material “intended to cause disaffection from His Majesty’s forces, to prejudice recruiting, the safety of the State, or efficient prosecution of the war.” This meant that expression of opinion could violate the law, although “it was frequently pointed out that these regulations did not restrict criticism in good faith” of the government. Predictably, editorial opinion led to three of the four charges brought against mainstream newspapers during the war. Both the *Vancouver Sun*’s criticism of West Coast defences and *Le Droit*’s disagreement with Allied air raids on Paris resulted in convictions and \$500 fines. Suggestions that mistreatment of returning veterans could lead to violence against politicians were not enough to convict the *Ottawa Citizen*.³⁵ The small number of prosecutions indicates that censorship was not draconian, at least for the mainstream press. Although editorial opinion on Dieppe became very critical in a number of newspapers, no charges resulted.

It is possible to piece together what some of the censored elements of the Dieppe story probably were. As already noted, Munro believed that mention of Dieppe being a failure would not have passed the British censors. COHQ had departed from normal practise by insisting it censor stories before the normal MoI procedure. If COHQ had

³⁴ Purcell, “Wartime Press Censorship in Canada,” 14, 18-19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-20.

been concerned only with censoring normal military matters dealing with security, the MoI alone could have been entrusted with the job, because it had advisors from all three services.³⁶ It seems therefore that COHQ's main concern was public relations. In fact, prior to the raid, COHQ planned that if the raid failed it would publicly portray it as a success.³⁷ This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. With this policy in place, COHQ would have prevented publication of material critical of the raid.

Censorship, both Canadian and British, would have precluded any mention of the numbers of casualties and troops involved.³⁸ None of the correspondent's reports mentioned either directly, although Munro's description of the carnage on Blue Beach would lead readers to believe that casualties were heavy. Gillis Purcell claims that journalists were told directly not to speculate on casualty numbers. The American Press reporter for the Dieppe raid, Drew Middleton, explained that the correspondents were not even aware of the total casualties.³⁹ Not until mid-September did NDHQ officially release the number of troops involved and the total casualties.

The MoI was particularly concerned about preventing the publication of the names of the missing, ostensibly to give any escaping personnel time to avoid detection, and censored any cables accordingly. Canadian censorship did not prohibit the publication of this information; but on August 25, Col. Oliver Biggar, Canadian Director

³⁶ Williams, *Press Parliament and People*, 21.

³⁷ NAC, RG 24, vol. 10708, 59-1-0-Int, Operation Jubilee Papers, "Memorandum for "Jubilee" Communiqué Meeting, 4-5.

³⁸ DND DHH, 111.6.003 (D1), Regulations for War Correspondents Canadian Army, May 1942, 16-17.

³⁹ Ross Munro, "Canadian Troops Fight Blazing and Bloody Battle at Dieppe," *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 20 August 1942, 12; Purcell, "Wartime Press Censorship in Canada," 151; Knightley, *First Casualty*, 348.

of Censorship, announced a new policy, directing newspapers to cease publishing the names of the missing, until an unspecified future release date.⁴⁰

Despite the veil of censorship, the war correspondents filled in some details. Ross Munro described the role of each regiment in the attack, for example, revealing that the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders penetrated four miles inland at Pourville.⁴¹ He even reported that General Roberts and Brigadier Churchill Mann planned the raid based on an outline plan by COHQ.⁴² While the correspondents were able to communicate some new information, only the military had access to the overall picture. Journalist William Stoneman concluded that the "whole story could not be told except in the most general terms and in dramatic, personal experience manner" until "the end of the war."⁴³

Being unable to tell the whole story of Dieppe, reporters emphasised human-interest stories and soon fulfilled Col. Ralston's promise of 20 August that "in the next few days there will emerge many stories of dauntless heroism."⁴⁴ Béatrice Richard characterises this period of the reporting as the "heroic story," where the French language press emphasised the courage of the French Canadian soldier.⁴⁵ Heroism was also the main ingredient of stories in the English language press. Munro and Griffin reported Col.

⁴⁰ DND DHH 112.21009 D209 Correspondence with other Services, Deputy Chief of General Staff to Col. Biggar, August 24, 1942, and Draft Directive, 24 August 1942.

⁴¹ Ross Munro, "Peg Regiment Battles 4 Miles Inland at Dieppe," *Vancouver Sun*, 22 August 1942, 17.

⁴² Ross Munro, "Canadian Staff Officers Planned Raid for Months," *Toronto Daily Star*, 25 August 1942, 10.

⁴³ William H. Stoneman "Full Dieppe Story Not Yet Revealed," *Winnipeg Free Press* 21 August, 1942, 10.

⁴⁴ *Toronto Daily Star*, August 20 1942, 3.

⁴⁵ Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe*, 54.

Merritt's actions at the Scie Bridge that would win him the Victoria Cross.⁴⁶ Also featured were the deeds of enlisted men. Anonymous soldiers carried their wounded sergeant major to a landing craft, under heavy fire, during the evacuation.⁴⁷ Twelve members of the Fusiliers Montreal escaped capture after clubbing their guard with a lead pipe.⁴⁸ Such stories filled the newspapers for weeks and revived in October after the announcement of the decorations from the Dieppe raid.

Heroism was not the focus of all human-interest stories. So inspirational was Bob Bowman's radio report of a chaplain reading the biblical exhortation to "put on the full armour of God" before the raid, that the Prime Minister noted it in his diary.⁴⁹ There were also unusual stories such as the CP account of a Canadian who took part in the raid by pretending to be a field ambulance member, only to die in a car crash a few days later.⁵⁰ One story, soon to be revealed as grimly ironic, described a Canadian soldier reading Zane Grey's *To the Last Man* en route to the raid.⁵¹ In the absence of the full story of Dieppe, the papers gave the public whatever information that was available.

⁴⁶ Ross Munro, "Colonel is Hero," *Montreal Daily Star*, August 22, 1942, p.2; Fred Griffin, "Wounded Give Griffin First-Hand Accounts of Heroism on Beach," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 24 1942, 2.

⁴⁷ Ross Munro, "Canuck Heroes Bring Sergeant Major Back", *Vancouver Sun*, 21 August 1942, 9.

⁴⁸ William Stewart, "Fusiliers See Captured Mates Slain by Enemy." *Montreal Daily Star*, 21 August 1942, 4.

⁴⁹ Bob Bowman, "Padre Reads Bible to Men in Barge," *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 August 1942, 9; NAC, *Mackenzie King Diaries*, August 19, 1942. <<http://www.King.archives.ca/EN/Default.asp>> (5 November 2003). There is a discrepancy in date here; the earliest King could have heard Bowman's account, which included this story, was during its broadcast on August 20, the diary entry was probably not written until after this.

⁵⁰ *Montreal Daily Star*, 24 August, 2003, 4.

⁵¹ Ernest G. Paine, "Ontarian Reads 'To Last Man' Ere Taking Part in Dieppe Raid", *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 August 1942, 3.

The correspondents' reports were the main source of information during this second period, but a few official releases continued to influence the Dieppe press coverage; most importantly, the official casualty lists. First published on the evening of August 21, they continued on a regular basis until September 4 when Adjutant General Harry Letson announced that all casualty records had arrived from overseas and the next-of-kin had been informed. The list numbered 170 dead and 626 wounded although Letson indicated, "there are much larger numbers listed as missing."⁵² How much larger these numbers were remained secret until the military finally released the information on September 15.

The growing casualty lists had several effects on the press coverage. First, the tone of the press became more sombre. The *Globe and Mail* observed; "Dieppe the name that thrilled the nation with high hopes scant days ago, has brought deep gloom to hundreds of Canadian homes."⁵³ Other papers also acknowledged the loss.⁵⁴ Pictures and stories of local casualties illustrated the cost to each community. A *Globe and Mail* editorial cartoon featured a group of civilians complaining about conditions on the Home Front; in the background was a shadow of a Canadian Soldier on a giant Dieppe casualty list.⁵⁵ Civilian sacrifice could not compare to the loss of life at Dieppe. Like the cartoon, the casualty lists began to cast a shadow over the story of Dieppe.

⁵² *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 4 September 1942, 1.

⁵³ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 24 August 1942, 6.

⁵⁴ *Toronto Daily Star*, 22 August, 6; CWM, *Hamilton Spectator*, 21 August 1942; *Vancouver Daily Province*, 31 August 1942, 4; CWM, *Toronto Telegram*, 24 August 1942.

⁵⁵ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 28 August 1942, 6.

The casualty lists not only gave the papers a more sombre tone, but also encouraged some doubt about the official version of Dieppe. Most newspapers still believed Dieppe to be the success portrayed in the communiqués, but some began to be critical. The *Ottawa Journal* was the first to question elements of the official version, objecting in particular to these comments made by Lt. General Kenneth Stuart, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) at NDHQ:

We walked into the Boche's parlour through the front door at a time we chose and we left by the same front door when we wanted to leave. We were able to test the Boche defences under actual combat conditions, kill Huns and destroy what we could.⁵⁶

Stuart's remarks seemed totally out of touch with the reality of the growing casualty lists. The *Ottawa Journal* complained that these comments gave a false picture of the battle. "Can we be expected to know the truth and act upon it if those who are leaders keep the facts from us and try to feed us on sugar-coated stories?"⁵⁷ The growing casualty lists did not fit the portrayal of Dieppe as a heroic victory.

Similarly, in the weekly magazine *Saturday Night*, Wilson Woodside raised similar questions calling Dieppe both a success and a failure. His article began to cast doubt on whether the Canadians had indeed captured the town or even intended to do so.⁵⁸ John Collingwood Reade of the *Globe and Mail* was the most critical. "Despite official protestations that the Raid on Dieppe was a startling success, there is little

⁵⁶ *Ottawa Journal*, 25 August 1942, 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Wilson Woodside, "Our Success and Failure at Dieppe", *Saturday Night*, vol.57 no.51 (29 August 1942); 12.

evidence to justify that conclusion.”⁵⁹ Reade’s scepticism became the *Globe and Mail*’s editorial position.

These criticisms, however, represent a minority. Negative editorials became common only after the release of the final casualty numbers. Most of the press continued to portray Dieppe as a heroic success albeit in a more sombre tone. Likewise, few papers criticized the government’s information policy.

In September, official releases provided the overview that the correspondents could not and again became the main source of the press coverage. Richard characterizes this third phase of coverage from 8 to 19 September as the “revelation.”⁶⁰ It is more useful to see this last stage beginning September 15, when NDHQ began releasing its information. Churchill’s revelation on September 8 that Canadians “formed five-sixths of the assaulting force,”⁶¹ seems to have had little impact on the press coverage and inspired no editorials. It was already widely understood in Canada that Canadians played the leading role at Dieppe.

The publication of the total casualties on September 15 had a much more profound effect. Until then, the total casualties released were 925, the publication of the missing tripled them to 3,350.⁶² This NDHQ release was 134 pages, the longest one day casualty list in Canadian history, so large that many papers published it in instalments.⁶³

⁵⁹ John Collingwood Reade, “Dieppe’s Lessons Being Studied,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 26 August 1942, 3.

⁶⁰ Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe*, 63.

⁶¹ *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 September 1942, 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 10 September 1942, 14.

⁶³ *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 15 September 1942, 12.

Editorials on this grim revelation almost uniformly expressed shock at the enormity of the losses. For example, the *Globe and Mail* observed, “the announcement... must have shocked and dismayed every Canadian.”⁶⁴ More newspapers began to criticize information policy. The *Regina Leader-Post*, while accepting the need for heavy casualties, was critical of the tendency to “soften the blow, to minimize the losses, and accentuate the ‘glory’ part” of Dieppe.”⁶⁵

The next revelation came on September 18, when Ralston released his official report on Dieppe. It gave a more complete overview than the communiqués and correspondents but provided little new information. The “white paper” claimed the main objective of the raid was to “gather information and experience vital to the general offensive program,” explaining in very general terms the planning, command structure and forces involved. It described how the chance encounter with the German convoy was a key element in the battle since it alerted the defenders. As a result, the Royal Regiment of Canada landed in daylight at Blue Beach and was unable to silence the batteries that could enfilade the main beach; this “affected the success of the landings.” Therefore, bad luck caused the heavy casualties. The paper also featured accounts of the gallantry of Canadian and Allied troops, retelling the heroism of Col. Merritt. It also highlighted the few tactical successes of the raid. Ralston assured the public that heavy casualties were to be “expected in amphibious operations of this type” and, while saying,

⁶⁴ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 16 September 1942, 6.

⁶⁵ *Regina Leader-Post*, 17 September 1942, 11.

“no public analysis of the lessons learned is possible,” concluded that the information gained by the raid was of great value.⁶⁶

Despite its obvious apologetic intent, the report clarified the overall operation and ended some misconceptions, especially the belief that Canadians succeeded in capturing Dieppe, when in reality only “small parties” penetrated the German defences and got into the town. Nevertheless, it had a number of errors, for example the claim that some tanks entered the town and that the Germans suffered heavy casualties. In reality, no tanks entered the town, and enemy casualties numbered 591.⁶⁷

The revelation of the number of Canadians involved in the raid soon followed. Although released to the press on September 18, it was not part of the “white paper.”⁶⁸ This permitted for the first time an accurate calculation of the proportion of casualties at 67% of the total Canadian landing force.

The last two official releases provoked more criticism of both the operation and government information. On September 19 *The Globe and Mail* complained that Ralston’s report did not provide more information, but created new questions, chiefly why a raid clearly dependant on surprise was not aborted after the convoy encounter, avoiding heavy casualties? John Collingwood Reade became even more critical of the raid, questioning whether it was “well conceived, adequately planned, and shrewdly

⁶⁶ The complete text of the “white paper” is in the *Toronto Daily Star*, 18 September 1942, 3.

⁶⁷ *Toronto Daily Star*, 18 September 1942, 3; Stacey, *Six Years*, 380, 390.

⁶⁸ *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 18 September 1942, 1.

directed.”⁶⁹ The gains were not worth the casualties, as any lessons learned were offset by knowledge that the enemy gained. He believed that the chief lesson of Dieppe was:

...that military commanders should have learned from their own mistakes and the inadequacy of their own equipment. No useful purpose is ever served by puffing up a doubtful experiment and magnifying it into a great victory.⁷⁰

Similarly, the *Ottawa Journal* observed that if the Germans raided an English port and experienced similar results it would be marked as a major allied victory and that the “effort to minimize the price paid has been rather painfully profuse.” Foreshadowing future controversy, the *Journal* echoed criticisms from the London *Evening Standard* suggesting that heavy bombers should have supported the raid.⁷¹

In spite of the increasing level of criticism, most of the press was either silent about or accepted these revelations. A number of editorials had already accepted the high cost of this type of raid.⁷² The *Winnipeg Free Press* felt Ralston’s statement to be “complete and candid” and refuted the critics of the raid, pointing to the value of the “lessons learned.” Furthermore, the report was much more honest than Gen. Stuart’s much maligned statement of the Canadians walking through the Germans’ front door.⁷³ The *Montreal Star* praised the report as revealing the whole story, especially the explanation of the effects of the convoy encounter, and that the raid was part of an

⁶⁹ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 19 September 1942, 6; John Collingwood Reade, “Many Grave Doubts Raised by Official Report on Dieppe,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 19 September 1942, 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 22 September 1942, 8.

⁷² *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 September 1942, 15; *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 16 September 1942, 24; *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 September 1942, 6.

⁷³ *Winnipeg Free Press* 21 September 1942, 15

“agreed offensive policy.”⁷⁴ The *Calgary Herald’s* editorial cartoon of September 19 demonstrated that the revelations did not change its view of Dieppe. The cartoon showed a surprised Hitler with a sign reading “Dieppe” on his back kicked in the buttocks by a giant foot labelled “Commando raids;” the force propelling him into the arms of an angry Russian bear.⁷⁵

The opposing responses to the September revelations were not necessarily the result of disinterested evaluation of the raid, but often mirrored the editor’s political stance. Richard demonstrated that the French-language press’ coverage of Dieppe reflected their politics. *Le Canada*, a pro-Liberal paper, used its Dieppe coverage to promote support for the war effort and national unity. *Le Devoir*, strongly opposed to both the war and King’s government used the raid to attack its policies, although it did not directly attack the military aspects of the raid.⁷⁶

The political situation in English Canada was more complicated. The major newspapers, like most English-speaking Canadians, fully supported the war. Yet at the same time, many opposed King’s government. Those critics had to walk a fine line between attacking King’s policy, while not appearing to undermine the war effort. Only those papers that were most hostile to the government, such as the *Globe and Mail*, openly attacked Dieppe. Well known for support of the Conservatives, it described itself as the “foremost newspaper critic of the government.”⁷⁷ Over time, its criticism of

⁷⁴ *Montreal Daily Star*, 18 September 1942, 10.

⁷⁵ *Calgary Herald*, 19 September 1942, 7.

⁷⁶ Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe*, 23, 72-73.

⁷⁷ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 27 May 1943, 6; W.H. Kesterton, *A History of Journalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 84.

Dieppe became blunter. In the spring of 1943, when Ralston defended Dieppe in Parliament from both CCF MP Tommy Douglas and the Conservative opposition, the *Globe and Mail* consistently attacked the Minister's explanations, calling the raid "a fiasco of the first order; a tragedy of military blundering without parallel in this war."⁷⁸ The *Ottawa Journal*, also a Conservative organ, was likewise critical of the raid and the government, but was less blunt than the *Globe and Mail*.⁷⁹ Most other Conservative newspapers did not attack the raid directly but used issues arising from Dieppe to attack King's reluctance to begin conscription for overseas service.⁸⁰ In April 1942 voters had released the King government from its promise not to conscript for overseas service, but he was reluctant to put it into effect, not wishing to alienate Quebec. After the release of the total casualties, the conservative *Toronto Telegram* declared that the government "could not through its opposition to conscription, leave our men unsupported in the field."⁸¹

Conversely, newspapers that tended to support the Liberal government were the least critical of Dieppe. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, a Liberal supporter, consistently backed the government's defence of Dieppe.⁸² The *Ottawa Citizen* and *Toronto Daily Star* also defended Dieppe. But, despite its usual strong support for the Liberals, the *Regina Leader-Post*, criticized the way "military authorities" had delayed reporting the

⁷⁸ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 27 April 1943, 6.

⁷⁹ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 96.

⁸⁰ *Montreal Gazette*, 17 September 1942, 8; *Montreal Daily Star*, 18 September 1942, 10; Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 90-91.

⁸¹ CWM, *Toronto Telegram*, 19 September 1942.

⁸² Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 97-98; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 September 1942, 15; 17 September 1942, 17; 21 September, 1942, 15; 19 May 1943, 15; 27 May 1943, 14.

cost of Dieppe, believing that the Canadian public could have handled the bad news. This probably had much to do with the pain caused by the casualties highly visible in the small communities of southern Saskatchewan. Nonetheless, the editorial was careful not to attack the Liberal government itself, only shadowy “military authorities.”⁸³

Many newspapers avoided taking a clear side in the debate. This by default would give tacit support to the official version of the story and its handling by government. It also was another way to avoid criticism of the war effort.⁸⁴ Therefore, partisan politics were important, but not always determinative of editorial positions on Dieppe.

The press coverage of Dieppe was highly influenced by the sources of information on which the media relied. The official communiqués portraying Dieppe as a success were initially almost the only source for news and the press coverage reflected this. War correspondents, because of a lack of full knowledge of the events and censorship, emphasised human-interest stories focusing on heroism. The press then mirrored this heroic emphasis; only the growing release of the casualty lists created a more sombre tone. The full disclosure of casualties and a fuller official overview of the raid broke the illusion of success created by the initial communiqués and continued by the correspondents. What had begun, as Canada’s first day of martial glory had become a day of grief, and in the opinion of some, a disastrous failure.

This press coverage not only informed the public, but also created the mould that would shape much of the future controversies of Dieppe historiography. Was the raid

⁸³ Kesterton, *A History of Journalism*, 113; *Regina Leader-Post*, 17 September 1942; 11.

⁸⁴ Newspapers that did not defend or criticize the government on Dieppe after September 18 include: *Vancouver Sun*, *Hamilton Spectator*, and the *Vancouver Daily Province*. The *Calgary Herald* did not express an opinion until it called for an end to the Parliamentary on the Dieppe debate May 29. It should be noted that even the *Globe and Mail* wanted an end to the controversy by this time (see the conclusion). The *Regina Leader-Post* apart from its September 17 editorial also remained silent.

justified by the “lessons learned?” Were the Germans surprised? Was the plan flawed?

All these questions, raised consistently in later literature, emerged in embryonic form in the initial press coverage of Dieppe. The question this raises is whether the press coverage was the result of a deliberate attempt to control, and even deceive, the press and public by the military authorities.

Chapter Three:

Selling Dieppe: The Information Campaign

The *Dieppe Raid Combined Report* observed: “the effect of a military operation upon public opinion is inseparable from the operation itself.”¹ During total war, the war effort depends not only on the high morale and confidence of the armies in the field, but also on the support of civilians at home who equip, feed, and pay for the soldier. Thus, the Army and the Department of National Defence conducted a campaign to sell the value of the raid to Canadians, consistently emphasising the alleged successes and courage of the troops. This campaign followed an apologetic pattern set by Combined Operation Headquarters (COHQ) in conjunction with other agencies, which downplayed or even denied negative factors, while placing Dieppe in the best possible light. Although McNaughton and the Canadian Army several times attempted to be more open about the raid, the COHQ publicity policy, with invaluable assistance from the press and war correspondents, dominated the discourse.

The *Combined Report's Public Relations Aspect* examined the planning of the communiqués, press arrangements, the execution of the plan, and lessons about publicity for future operations. Its three major emphases -- the propaganda battle with the Germans concerning the communiqués, press difficulties, and confusion over the size of the Canadian contribution -- dealt mainly with the problems encountered immediately after the raid.² Little was mentioned about what was released to the press after the initial

¹ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 194.

² *Ibid.*, 194-204.

communiqués, or even that a strategy to sell Dieppe to the British and Canadian public existed.

Despite Phillip Knightley's citation of the *Combined Report* as evidence that the Ministry of Information (MoI) wanted to hide the truth of Dieppe from the public, there is little evidence of public deception in the report, apart from the decision to withhold the exact number of American troops involved in case of heavy casualties.³ Furthermore, there is no reason to lay the blame solely at the feet of the MoI since numerous other organizations, including , "the Admiralty, Political Warfare Executive, the War Office, the Air Ministry, First Canadian Army and Headquarters (sic), European Theatre of Operations United States Army,"⁴ also took part. The pattern for Dieppe publicity was set at the "Combined Operations Communiqué Meeting," held three days before the raid.⁵ COHQ appears to have initiated the meeting as the coordinators of the raid. The MoI did not manage these meetings, in fact, until May 1942, they did not have to be informed about operations, which had caused an embarrassing lack of British information during the invasion of Madagascar. Following this publicity debacle Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information, lobbied successfully to have the MoI consulted about the publicity aspects of all operations.⁶ Therefore, the MoI acted as one consultant of many, but not the lead organization.

The *Combined Report* presented a sanitized version of the Public Relations plan. A surviving document *Memorandum for "Jubilee" Communiqué Meeting*, found in the

³ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1975, 2000), 345.

⁴ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 196, 194.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 69.

files of First Canadian Army, contains many of the planning considerations deleted by the *Combined Report*. The *Memorandum* gives no author or date, but its title and its inclusion of draft communiqués as appendices, demonstrate its COHQ origins as an agenda for the meeting. It argued that the communiqués should emphasise that the raid was not an invasion and stress the “objectives gained,” Canadian and American participation, and the gain of “valuable military information.”⁷ The fact that COHQ planned to appeal to “lessons learned” before any were actually obtained did not appear in the *Combined Report*. An even more potentially embarrassing deletion was an outline of the steps to be taken if the raid failed.

5. IN CASE THE RAID IS UNSUCCESSFUL:

a. The same basic principles must hold.

1. We cannot call such a large-scale operation a “reconnaissance raid.”

2. We cannot avoid stating the general composition of the force, since the enemy will know it and make capital of our losses and of any failure of the first effort of Canadian and U.S. troops.

b. Therefore, in the event of much failure, the communiqué must then stress the success of the operation as an essential test in the employment of substantial forces and heavy equipment.

c. We then lay extremely heavy stress on stories of personal heroism – through interviews, broadcasts, etcetera – in order to focus public attention on BRAVERY rather than OBJECTIVES NOT ATTAINED.⁸ (Emphasis in original document.)

This paragraph makes some startling revelations. First, COHQ planned to portray any failure as a victory. Second, the key to portraying Dieppe as successful was to emphasise its “dress rehearsal” aspects, the “lessons learned.” The actual communiqués virtually quote the memorandum, “vital experience has been gained in the employment of substantial numbers of troops in an assault, and in the transport and use of heavy

⁷ NAC, RG 24, vol. 10708, 59-1-0 INT. 215 C1 (D360) “Operation Jubilee Papers,” *Memorandum For “Jubilee” Communiqué Meeting*, 4 -5, [16 August 1942?].

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

equipment.”⁹ Third, if the raid failed, bravery was to be emphasised to distract public attention from defeat. While courage was mentioned only briefly in the communiqués, it became a major feature in the press coverage of Dieppe. These three emphases would set the pattern for the public relations campaign.

This memorandum also reveals that the raid was a failure by COHQ’s own standards, since the measure of success was capturing tactical objectives, most of which remained in German hands. Most of the elements of this “failure plan” were put into effect, further demonstrating that the raid was considered unsuccessful. The first point of the plan, avoidance of calling the operation a “reconnaissance raid,” at first glance might seem to militate against the raid being considered a failure, since the communiqués described Dieppe as a “reconnaissance in force.” This term, suggested by Churchill on August 20, addressed COHQ’s concerns regarding public scepticism about why large forces were involved in a raid with such limited objectives. Dieppe was not merely a “reconnaissance raid” by small numbers of troops, but a “reconnaissance in force” requiring strength.¹⁰

What was the motivation for deceiving both the public and the readers of the *Combined Report* by deleting any mention of the “failure plan?” Mountbatten had personal reasons to push for positive publicity. Villa argues that by mid-1942, he was becoming desperate because his record as Chief of Combined Operations (CCO) was not living up to his reputation. He then “succumbed to the temptations of public-relations manipulation,” including shameless involvement in the movie *In Which We Serve*, which

⁹ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 199.

¹⁰ Jacques Mordal, *Dieppe the Dawn of Decision* (Toronto, Ryerson, 1962), 256.

portrayed his bravery on HMS *Kelly*.¹¹ Any portrayal of Dieppe as a disaster would be worse for his reputation than not launching the raid in the first place. By emphasizing the “lessons learned” and the bravery of the troops, Mountbatten could protect his reputation as well as that of Combined Operations. The plan to call Dieppe a success, regardless of outcome, would also appeal to other agencies. The MoI knew British morale was relatively low in the summer of 1942, still recovering from the loss of Tobruk and the German advances in the east.¹² It was the MoI’s responsibility to raise public morale, and another disaster would be very undesirable. Each of the agencies involved in the communiqué meeting would certainly prefer a positive press. Nevertheless, as the Dieppe raid eventually showed, an intentional lie in public relations would be more damaging than what it covered up.

How much was the Canadian military in support of or even aware of the Dieppe publicity plan, especially the contingencies for failure? Major C. S. Wallace of First Canadian Army and Major Abel of Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ), Public Relations Officers (PROs), attended the communiqué meeting.¹³ What is less certain is if they played a role in formulating the “failure” plan, or agreed to it. Yet, it is clear that the PROs were aware of the memorandum, since it ended up in First Army files. While there is no direct proof that McNaughton knew about the memorandum, it is probable that his PRO informed him of the meeting, given the importance of the Dieppe raid to the Canadian army.

¹¹ Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action* (Toronto: Oxford, 1989), 186-187.

¹² Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), chart on inside cover.

¹³ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 194, 196; NAC, RG 24, vol. 10708, 59-1-0 INT. 215 C1 (D360) “Operation Jubilee Papers,” COHQ to McNaughton, 2, 18 August 1942.

How much did the Canadian releases follow the COHQ pattern? How were they formulated? How much did the military know? When did they know it? What information was kept from the public? Canadian generals received information about the Dieppe raid by radio intercepts and messages, and even carrier pigeons as the assault was in progress.¹⁴ General Crerar was with Mountbatten and Lee Mallory at 11 Fighter Group Headquarters in Uxbridge, when they received the information.¹⁵ McNaughton was at First Army Headquarters and followed the battle through communications from First Corp Headquarters and other sources.¹⁶

The initial messages led to confusion. For example, at 06:45 a report said the Blue Beach landing was unsuccessful and that the Royal Regiment of Canada was attempting to land on Red beach. However, a message received at 07:40 claimed that three companies had landed on Blue beach and it was “going well.”¹⁷ These messages probably inspired the second communiqué’s claim that “on the left flank one landing party was initially repulsed but reformed and later carried the beach by assault.”¹⁸ In fact, the Royal Regiment of Canada had landed on Blue beach in three waves, but suffered severe casualties, only twenty men managed to get off the beach.¹⁹ Crerar thought the messages

¹⁴NAC, RG 24, vol.10584, 215C1 (D233), “Log 18/19 Aug. 42, 98-110, 19 August 1942; “Pigeon Message”, 32, 18 August 1942 [sic].

¹⁵ Stacey, *Six Years of War* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1955), 335, 348.

¹⁶ NAC, A.G.L. McNaughton Collection, MG 30 E133 III vol. 248 “Personal War Diary of Lt. Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton”, 19 August 1942.

¹⁷ NAC, RG 24, vol.10584, 215C1 (D233), “Log 18/19 Aug. 42, 109, 110, 19 August 1942.

¹⁸ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 199.

¹⁹ Stacey, *Six Years*, 365-366.

were initially encouraging, but they grew “more and more depressing.”²⁰ By 15:05, Crerar reported to McNaughton that the operation was “sticky,” that the troops who landed at Blue beach were lost, and that the main beach had not been completely cleared. Furthermore, the “most we could expect to get back was 50% of the force engaged.”²¹

McNaughton in turn was cabling the news to National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ), through CMHQ. After despatching the first two communiqués to Ottawa, McNaughton at 17:10 informed Ralston and Stuart that the operation was “difficult from the start” because of the failure at Blue beach. A subsequent telegram advised, “Casualties were heavy.” McNaughton sent the day’s final telegram at 01:30 August 20 after a long night of meeting the troops returning to Portsmouth. It summarised the attack, emphasising the courage of the Canadians, and the personal risks taken by Roberts on *Calpe* during the withdrawal. It explained briefly the difficulties experienced during the raid, as well as the estimate of 50% casualties, although it was also a “heavy blow” to the enemy. McNaughton did admit a full picture would not be possible until the force commanders met.²²

Ralston’s initial Dieppe press release was based on these reports from McNaughton and the first three communiqués. Although not adding much to public knowledge of Dieppe, it emphasised the courage of Canadian troops, as was the pattern

²⁰ NAC, George Ronald Fond, MG 30, E507, Transcript CBC Close Up Interview file #4 ; General Crerar, 5, 1962.

²¹ NAC, RG 24, vol.10584, 215C1 (D233), “Memo of telephone conversation, Gen Crerar- Gen McNaughton 1505 hrs”, 32, 19 August 1942.

²² DND, DHH, 112.1 D66, *Dieppe Reports*, “GS 2945, CMHQ to NDHQ”, 19 August 1942, “GS 2945, CMHQ to NDHQ”, 19 August 1942, “GS 2951, CMHQ to NDHQ”, 20 August 1942; NAC, A.G.L. McNaughton Collection, MG 30 E133 III vol. 248 “Personal War Diary of Lt. Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton”, 20 August 1942.

suggested by COHQ and McNaughton's telegrams. This by itself is not necessarily evidence of conformity to the COHQ plan, since it would be natural to emphasise soldiers' courage especially after the CEF's first combat. In fact, Ralston's statement, although celebrating Canadian courage and alleged success, was more candid than the COHQ's communiqués when it came to the cost. "Casualties were severe"²³ had more emotional impact than the rather tame sounding "casualties are likely to have been heavy" the phrasing of the COHQ communiqué.²⁴

Neither McNaughton's cables nor Ralston's statement placed any emphasis on the value of the lessons of the operation. That only occurred after McNaughton attended the force commanders' meeting at COHQ. After that meeting, McNaughton quoted the CCO's justifications of Dieppe, that the raid was:

Necessary ...right,...well worth while,...and when the facts were known would be good for the morale of our two countries. The information gained would add inestimably to the knowledge required...for an invasion.²⁵

McNaughton was careful to identify these as Mountbatten's arguments, without explicitly supporting or disagreeing with them, but they are the first appearance of the "lessons learned" in a Canadian cable.

The following day, McNaughton replied to a congratulatory cable from Mackenzie King and claimed that the "results are clearly worth while" despite the casualties. Dieppe had damaged the enemy and opened a new phase in the war.

McNaughton also assured the Prime Minister that Canada could be "proud of the courage

²³ *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 August 1942, 3.

²⁴ DND DHH, 75/502, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report*, 199.

²⁵ DND, DHH, 112.1 D66, *Dieppe Reports*, "GS 2965 CMHQ to NDHQ", 19 August 1942.

and skill” of her troops.²⁶ This cable was more obviously an attempt to sell Dieppe than the earlier ones, as McNaughton had to convince King of the value of the raid. Here McNaughton, for the first time, seems in line with COHQ’s publicity plan, although he still did not specifically appeal to the “lessons learned.” This cable was released to the press the following day.²⁷

The COHQ pattern of justifying Dieppe is clearer in the work of the PRO’s and publicity units with the press. Public Relations were an integral part of the Canadian military, with PR units at CMHQ and Corps level. There was also a PRO attached to First Army. These units were responsible for managing war correspondents, providing photographers, dealing with public complaints and inquiries, and related publicity issues. The PR units hoped to encourage “respect and support of the Canadian Public” for the army, while avoiding “criticism of its leadership or administration.”²⁸ Yet, these PR units were not directly involved in managing the major press releases, which were handled by high-ranking officers and officials, although possibly with PRO assistance.

The PR units were influential in providing information to the press, especially by arranging interviews with the raiders. They made a special effort to accommodate the press, after British United Press reporter Francis H. Fisher published a story complaining that accredited war correspondents were unable to have immediate access to the men of the returning force.²⁹ To make up for this fiasco, the PR units strove to make

²⁶ Ibid., “GS 2973 McNaughton to Mackenzie King,” 21 August 1942.

²⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 22 August 1942, 4.

²⁸ DND, DHH, 312.013 (D11), *Public Relations Operations*, 4.

²⁹ DND, DHH, 112.1 D66, *Dieppe Reports*, “GS 2995 NDHQ to CMHQ”, 21 August 1942.

eyewitnesses and stories available.³⁰ These formed the basis of many human-interest stories.

These efforts at providing interviews with eyewitnesses were not only the result of PRO damage control. McNaughton himself actively encouraged interviews with participants in the raid.³¹ The PR units could have shaped the heroic focus of human-interest stories by choosing the right interviewees. Whether this emphasis on heroism was deliberate or not, it conformed to COHQ's "failure plan". McNaughton actually was more responsive than the British generals in making Dieppe raiders available for interviews. Correspondent A.E. Cummings credited this to McNaughton's greater understanding of the value of the press in wartime.³²

Although he ended up following the COHQ pattern, McNaughton attempted to release detailed information about Dieppe. On August 20, he expressed his desire to publish Robert's preliminary report although Mountbatten insisted it "should not be published as much information contained therein will be of great value to the enemy."³³ The report included references to planning, embarkation, and tactics. However, the enemy already had this information because of the capture of the operational plans on the beach.³⁴ What certainly was objectionable to Mountbatten was Robert's revelation that

³⁰ NAC, RG24 C-2 Vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, "Memorandum Re: GS2286 by Major Abel," 22 August 1942.

³¹ Ibid., "GS 3070 McNaughton to VCGS," 27 August 1942.

³² A.E. Cummings, "Gen. McNaughton Sees Value of Press in War," *Calgary Herald*, 5.

³³ DND, DHH, 112.1 D66, *Dieppe Reports*, "GS 2965 NDHQ to CMHQ", 20 August 1942; "GS 2984 CMHQ to NDHQ", 21 August 1942.

³⁴ Stacey, *Six Years*, 390.

the raid did not achieve its objectives, which would alert the public to failure.³⁵

McNaughton was obviously less concerned with portraying the raid as a complete success than Mountbatten, but he agreed to the CCO's request not to publish the report.

McNaughton also demonstrated a lack of concern for COHQ policy during an August 27 three hour press conference with Canadian reporters, when he answered every question about Dieppe "so far as security and obligations to Air and Navy permitted."³⁶ The general, tight lipped about his opinion on the success of the raid said, "I cannot claim to have formed my own opinion about Dieppe and I am not prepared to enunciate my opinions even to myself at this stage. I believe we all have to keep our minds open until all the facts are known." When asked if the raid was successful, he refused to make a conclusion because the lessons were still under study, but granted that the price paid was heavy. Nevertheless, he did admit that if not for the convoy encounter, the raid probably would have had total success.³⁷

While not strictly adhering to the COHQ party line, McNaughton did not contradict COHQ's claims. Possibly, he had doubts about the final verdict on the raid in Canada and was playing it safe to protect his reputation. In any case, the CP did not report McNaughton's comments about the success or failure of the raid, although the *Montreal Star* did.³⁸ Despite his refusal to take a position regarding the success of

³⁵ NAC, J.L. Ralston Papers, RG27, III-B-II, vol.74,, HQ S.8809, "GS 2966 McNaughton to CGS," 5, 21 August 1942.

³⁶ DND, DHH, 112.1 D66, *Dieppe Reports*, "GS 3070 McNaughton to VCGS", 27 August 1942.

³⁷ NAC, A.G.L. McNaughton Collection, MG 30 E133 III vol. 248 "Notes of an Interview of Lt.-Gen. McNaughton by Press Correspondents", 27 August 1942.

³⁸ Charles Bruce, "No Sitting Back Pledges McNaughton," *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 27 August 1942, 1; E.R. Irvine, "McNaughton Statement on Dieppe," *Montreal Star*, 28 August 1942, 2.

Dieppe, he shortly thereafter approved a “white paper” that justified the raid because of the valuable lessons learned.³⁹

On August 26, NDHQ asked McNaughton for a “white paper.” Its first concern, addressing the “slight uneasiness in the minds of the Canadian people” about Dieppe, reflected the beginnings of criticism in the newspapers, doubtless shared by many Canadians as the casualty lists grew. NDHQ also wanted information beyond the correspondents’ accounts of Dieppe, which were “nearly all confined to a description of the evacuation and fighting on the beaches... rather than the fact that our troops carried out an offensive attack and succeeded in penetrating the enemy defences.”⁴⁰ This statement raises doubts concerning how well NDHQ understood Dieppe, especially in light of CGS Stuart’s ridiculous August 22 comments about Canadians “walking through the Boche’s front door.”⁴¹ Stuart should have known better from the cables he received from CMHQ.⁴² A confirmation of Stuart’s lack of understanding was his September 24 memorandum to Ralston, defending the raid as a success while admitting he had “limited knowledge,” and was “not aware of the official purposes of the operation.”⁴³ Stuart and others at NDHQ were either overly influenced by the positive portrait of Dieppe in the communiqués and newspapers, or were being deliberately deceptive in proposing the

³⁹ NAC, RG24 C-2 Vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, “Memorandum by Brig. Young,” 23, 5 September 1942.

⁴⁰ Ibid., “GS 383 VCGS to McNaughton,” 9, 26 August 1942.

⁴¹ *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 25 August 1942, 10.

⁴² NAC, RG24 C-2 Vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1 “GS 383 VCGS to McNaughton,” 9, 26 August 1942.

⁴³ NAC, Ralston papers, MG27, III B II, vol. 24, HQ S.8809, “Memorandum Stuart to McNaughton,” 24 September 1942.

“white paper.” While penetration of defences did occur at Pourville and by very small parties on the main beach, such successes were not typical of the battle.

The third purpose of the “white paper” was to justify the cost of the raid. NDHQ wanted something that would “include some indication of the benefits gained from the raid,” thus counteracting the impact of the casualty lists. The paper was to demonstrate “casualties were not, repeat not, unduly high in view of the operations.”⁴⁴ The difficulty was that the casualties were much higher than anticipated, original estimates were 600.⁴⁵ Even so, there is no indication in the cables that NDHQ was aware of the pre-raid casualty estimates.

McNaughton agreed to the “white paper” and assigned it to historical officer Major C.P. Stacey.⁴⁶ After Stacy submitted it on September 4, Maj. Gen. Haydon of CO demanded its approval by COHQ PRO, Colonel Neville. Neville informed Stacey that much of the report had to be deleted. The next day Brig. H.A. Young of CMHQ confronted Mountbatten and complained, “that there was little purpose ...served by preparing despatches for submission to Canada if they were to be heavily censored.”⁴⁷ Stacey’s description of the events surrounding the “white paper” focussed on Mountbatten’s insistence that the capture of the operational orders should not be admitted and that the revisions made the paper “less informative” than the original draft.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ NAC, RG24, C-2, vol. 12468, 6/Dieppe/1, “1 CD Corps Adm. Instruction, Jubilee No.1”, 106, 19 August 1942.

⁴⁶ NAC, RG24 C-2 Vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, “McNaughton to VCGS,” 10, 27 August 1942.

⁴⁷ NAC, RG24 C-2 Vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, “Memorandum by Brig. Young,” 23, 5 September 1942.

⁴⁸ C.P. Stacey, *A Date With History* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1982), 91; Stacey, *Six Years*, 394.

However, Stacey's memoirs, greatly understate the changes demanded by COHQ. The conversation of Mountbatten with Brig. Young, and a comparison of the original to the published text of the "white paper," makes it clear that the CCO had many objections based on perceived deviation from the COHQ public relations plan.

What most upset the CCO was the inclusion of the raid's objectives from the operational orders.⁴⁹ Mountbatten felt that this would confirm that the Germans had captured the orders.⁵⁰ But, the Germans knew they had the captured orders, the public did not. Even if Mountbatten was genuinely concerned about not confirming the plan's authenticity, he did not insist on deleting references to objectives obtained; only those that were not. For example, he deleted an admission that the "complete capture of the planned objectives was now impossible." Yet there was no objection to the claim that the South Saskatchewan Regiment had "captured their first objectives."⁵¹ The Germans were certainly capable of deducing the genuineness of the plans from the objectives achieved. Yet deleting references to the mission's failed objectives served the COHQ goal of distracting the public from the raid's failure.

Mountbatten was concerned that the paper did not do "justice to the good fighting spirit displayed by the Canadians in the operation." Although Stacey's original version contained many references to Canadian courage, COHQ inserted more. That Mountbatten raised the issue about a report already replete with heroism, demonstrates his sensitivity

⁴⁹ DND, DHH, CMHQ 1940-1948, Report 83, "Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee"), p. A -1.

⁵⁰ NAC, RG24 C-2 Vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, "Memorandum by Brig. Young," 23, 5 September 1942; DND, DHH, CMHQ 1940-1948, Report 83, "Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee" (19 September 1942), 3.

⁵¹ In the following paragraphs all quotations from Stacey's original draft are from DND, DHH, CMHQ 1940-1948, Report 83, "Preliminary Report on Operation Jubilee." All references to the published "white paper" are from the *Montreal Daily Star*, 18 September 1942, 4.

to any perceived departure from the publicity plan, which hoped heroism would distract from failure.

In addition, there were changes to statements that could cast doubt on Dieppe's success. COHQ omitted a description of the pinning down of most troops on the main beach. Stacey concluded that the convoy encounter had "unquestionably warned [the Germans] of the approach of our force" and that the landing force was "dispersed" by the encounter. The COHQ revision softened the encounter to, this "may have afforded...warning of the approach of our forces" and portrayed it as a victory, with several enemy vessels being destroyed and the rest driven into flight. Rather than being dispersed, the landing craft were ordered to scatter to avoid fire. These changes, while not greatly altering the main narrative, certainly presented the operation in the best possible light.

The biggest change was the deletion of one of Stacey's concluding statements:

It is obvious from the above narrative that a great part of the limited and local objectives of the raid were not attained. The demolitions actually effected were on a much smaller scale than had been hoped for, although considerable damage was done.

The COHQ revised version, instead boasted that: "enemy batteries and a radiolocation station were destroyed, heavy casualties were inflicted ... prisoners of war were brought back, and one and possibly two armed vessels were sunk." COHQ saw the capture of objectives as the raid's measure of success; therefore, Stacey's relatively honest assessment of the mission's tactical accomplishments could not be permitted.

The original "white paper" was a largely detailed and frank account of Dieppe, COHQ's revisions certainly rendered it both less informative and more of a sales pitch. Nonetheless, even before its revision, the "white paper" was already an apology for

Dieppe, fulfilling the purposes suggested by NDHQ. Stacey claimed heavy casualties were expected in amphibious landings, citing Gallipoli as a precedent, although COHQ removed the battle's name, avoiding damning comparisons. Stacey also appealed to the "lessons learned" to justify the cost of the raid, although he claimed, "no public analysis of the lessons learned is possible without giving assistance to the enemy." This apologetic was part of the COHQ publicity strategy from the beginning. As McNaughton's interview on August 27 showed, he had not yet decided on the value of the lessons. When he approved the "white paper" on September 4, McNaughton probably had not yet received the COHQ report on the "lessons learned" or a Canadian study of Dieppe by Major Sucharov, completed September 23.⁵² Thus, McNaughton perhaps approved an explanation for the Canadian public of which he may have not yet been entirely convinced.

McNaughton and the Canadian military were willing to give a more detailed account of Dieppe than COHQ would allow. While attempting to put Dieppe in a good light, the "white paper" did not try to portray the raid as a tactical success. COHQ's changes made the report less informative and more blindly optimistic. Béatrice Richard rightly accuses the "white paper" of deliberately portraying disaster as victory⁵³ but she was examining its final form, after COHQ censorship and revision. The original draft, even though deceptive in several areas, was less of a whitewash than the version in the

⁵² DND, DHH, 594.013 (D 13), C.B.04244(1) *The Raid on Dieppe Lessons Learned*, September 1942. The date of the publication of the *Combined Report* and *Lessons Learned* are not in the documents but it would be more likely that these large reports were published later in September rather than early in the month. NAC, Ralston Papers, MG27, III-B-II, vol.74, HQ S.8809, "Memorandum re: "Report on Combined Operations at Dieppe"," 23 September 1942.

⁵³ Béatrice Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe: Radioscopie D' Un Mythe* (Montreal, VLB Éditeur, 2002), 65.

newspapers. McNaughton and CMHQ had attempted to follow their own path in selling Dieppe to the public, but in the end proved unable or unwilling to depart from Mountbatten's policy.

In contrast to the frankness of the original "white paper," McNaughton opposed revealing the size of the Canadian force at Dieppe following the release of the total casualties on September 15, despite requests from Canadian Press Censorship to curb speculation about the proportion of losses. A Conservative party speaker in Regina correctly estimated the Canadians' numbers at 5,000, but the censors rejected the story because they considered 67% casualties to be injurious to morale. Several newspapers still reported the speech, including the estimate of numbers. The next day, censors passed another report estimating Canadian losses at 50%. The Press Censors feared that continued speculation would damage morale, and only an official announcement could stop it.⁵⁴ Stuart attempted to contact McNaughton for advice about releasing the information. But McNaughton's negative reply was delayed in the cipher office and the information was inadvertently released to the press the same day as the "white paper" on Stuart's orders.⁵⁵

There is no record of why McNaughton objected to this release of information. Possibly, he felt it might damage morale, his reputation, or both. He may also have been concerned that knowledge of the total numbers involved might be of value to the enemy. Contemporary Vichy sources said that the Germans believed that 4,000 troops had re-

⁵⁴ DND, DHH, 1121.1D66, *Dieppe Reports*, "Memorandum H.G. Miller to CGS", 16 September 1942.

⁵⁵ NAC, RG24, C-2, vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, "GS 460 Stuart to Montague," 48, 18 September 1942.

embarked at Dieppe.⁵⁶ The Germans also thought, at least initially, that a second wave of Allied units was in reserve because a reconnaissance aircraft had misidentified an unrelated convoy as a second landing force.⁵⁷ Thus, knowledge of total size of the Allied force would have let the Germans discover that they had won an even greater victory than they believed. Nonetheless, they may have already known this from the operational orders. The motivation for McNaughton's opposition to the release of the Canadian strength at Dieppe is therefore unclear.

The effort to sell Dieppe to the public rested largely on the military, but they were not alone in their efforts. The war correspondents were also eager to promote the Dieppe raid in their effort to back Canada's war effort. The American attack on Iraq in 2003 aroused criticism of "embedded journalists" who identify too closely with the troops and their mission. This is not a new phenomenon; it has been the norm in most twentieth century wars. Charles Lynch, a Canadian war correspondent in World War Two and a renowned journalist, explained "combat correspondents were as much a part of the war efforts as the men with the guns, or those in the ships and the planes and munitions factories, we were the cheerleaders, the morale boosters...".⁵⁸ Similarly, Knightley considers the situation of the correspondents at Dieppe, particularly Munro, as illustrative of the problem that "confronted all Second World War correspondents." Munro recalled:

we felt the Germans were going to wreck this world of ours and that we would have to stop them. The troops were committed to it, and I think the

⁵⁶ *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 August 1942, 3.

⁵⁷ Stacey, *Six Years*, p.390; Hans J. Peterson, "The Dieppe Raid in Contemporary German View," *American Review of Canadian Studies* XIII, I (1983), 73.

⁵⁸ Charles Lynch, *You Can't Print That: Memories of a Political Voyeur* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1983), 62.

correspondents were-I certainly was. But it won't ever happen again. The war we were involved in was very clear-cut. It really was a crusade.⁵⁹

The Second World War correspondents identified so closely with the cause that they made no pretence of unbiased reporting. Thus, some readers learned they could not completely trust the veracity of their reporting.⁶⁰ The overwhelmingly positive correspondents' accounts demonstrate that they were actively selling Dieppe.

Ross Munro's tour of the hometowns of the Dieppe regiments is an example of the effort of the press to sell the raid to the Canadian public. The Canadian Press arranged the tour and local member newspapers sponsored it. The military had no direct role, although McNaughton did meet Munro for a half hour before the correspondent began his Canadian tour.⁶¹ There is no record of what transpired, but CP head Gillis Purcell hints that McNaughton may have discussed security restrictions.⁶² It is hard to believe that McNaughton would have missed this opportunity to influence Munro's message.

During the tour, Munro answered many letters from relatives of the troops, and delivered numerous messages from England, but his main task was speaking to large public meetings.⁶³ Most of these meetings occurred in arenas, but in small Weyburn, Saskatchewan, the anxious audience of 4,000 crammed into the Legion hall, with the

⁵⁹ Knightley, *First Casualty*, 348.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁶¹ NAC, McNaughton papers, MG 30, E-133 III, vol. 248, "Personal War Diary of AGL McNaughton", 25 August 1942.

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. 135, PA 1-8-1, "Purcell to McNaughton," 109, 28 September 1942.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, "CP Told the World... About Canada at Dieppe," 3.

overflow listening via loudspeakers in the street and a nearby church.⁶⁴ Munro focussed on the actions of the local regiment, emphasising their heroism, using many quotations from the local boys. He also highlighted Dieppe's alleged successes, especially damage to the enemy, claiming the Germans suffered 3000 casualties and the Luftwaffe lost a third of its western strength in the raid.⁶⁵ Munro also stressed that the important lessons that Allied leaders learned justified the raid.⁶⁶

Munro was doing more than selling Dieppe; he was the centrepiece of an event that allowed the community to grieve. A reporter in Weyburn noted the pain on the faces of many, some wept quietly throughout the meeting. Munro tried to comfort his audience by praising the nursing sisters' care of the wounded. The reporter described the crowd's reaction to Munro, "after he reached the street, they crowded around him, and for a moment he was a link, something to cling to, to throw across that awful gap in living since the day the cable came."⁶⁷ The claims of success, while not accurate, were a solace to many, demonstrating that the dead at Dieppe had not died in vain.

The Army considered Munro's tour a triumph and tried to emulate its success by sending fourteen Dieppe veterans to Canada for publicity purposes.⁶⁸ All took part in a public reception in Montreal on October 15, followed by smaller ceremonies for

⁶⁴ *Regina Leader-Post*, 8 September 1942, 19.

⁶⁵ *Calgary Herald*, 9 September 1942, 2

⁶⁶ *Regina Leader-Post*, 8 September 1942, 19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ NAC, RG24, C-2, vol. 12468, 6/Dieppe/1, "AG 286 Letson to Montague," 138, 6 September 1942.

individuals in their hometowns. The army's Directorate of PR staff, assisted by the Wartime Information Board (WIB), publicized the event.⁶⁹

The correspondents were the military's greatest allies in selling Dieppe because they were able to communicate their messages soon after the raid. Several government agencies also promoted Dieppe, but their message was late in coming. The WIB had the mandate of communicating war publicity to the public. Despite this, Charles Vining, head of the newly formed organization, believed that public information in Canada was best left to the domestic press, and he made promoting Canada's image in the United States his first priority.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Board failed completely in promoting Canada's role in the Dieppe raid to the American press.⁷¹ The Board's major publication, *Canada at War*, made only a short mention of Dieppe in September, and an issue selling the benefits of the raid appeared only in November.⁷² The National Film Board was also slow in getting out Dieppe information. Not until September did it produce, in co-operation with Associated Screen News, a newsreel with the headlines "The Return to Canada of the Heroes of the Dieppe."⁷³ American newsreels which emphasised the tiny role of the US

⁶⁹ DND, DHH 112.1 D66 Dieppe Reports, "Letter, Joseph W.G. Clark to Deputy Minister of Defence", 12 October 1942.

⁷⁰ William R. Young, "Academics and Social Scientists verses the Press: The Policies of the Bureau of Information and the Wartime Information Board, 1939-1945", *Canadian Historical Association: Historical Papers*, 1978, 227-228.

⁷¹ William R. Young, "Making the Truth Graphic" (Ph.D. Dissertation, UBC, 1978), 144-145.

⁷² *Canada and the People's War* (Ottawa: Director of Public Information, September 1942), 18; *Canada at War* No.18 (November 1942) 1-4. *Canada and the People's War* was a special edition of *Canada at War* for September and October 1942.

⁷³ Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board* (Toronto, U. of Toronto, 1984), 186.

US Rangers while mentioning the Canadians only once, had already hit the theatres, causing widespread outrage among viewers.⁷⁴

Only the Canadian military, with assistance from the correspondents, was able to sell Dieppe to the Canadian public while the event was fresh in the public mind and lasting impressions formed. Why did the Canadian military sell Dieppe to the public? In a 1962 interview for CBC's *Close Up*, McNaughton recalled the demoralizing effect of the Hong Kong inquiry of 1942 on the staff of NDHQ, which was responsible for that ill-fated expedition. He was concerned that a similar inquiry into Dieppe would "be destructive of morale" of those under his command in England. Hoping to head off potential inquiries, McNaughton admitted in an early cable his responsibility for the final approval of Dieppe.⁷⁵ Good public relations also served this determination to avoid an inquiry. If the raid was not a disaster in the public's opinion, there would be less likelihood of an inquiry. Therefore, McNaughton might have been motivated to sell Dieppe out of concern for the morale of his officers.

During total war, public faith in the military and its leadership is important, but this was especially important for Canada in 1942 because of the conscription question. If men feel that their lives would be squandered needlessly, they will be reluctant to enlist. King's government desperately needed voluntary enlistments, so that the conscription issue would not rend the country and the cabinet apart. McNaughton, like King, preferred a volunteer army; for this reason, he eventually replaced Ralston who supported

⁷⁴ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 9 September 1942, 9.

⁷⁵ NAC, George Ronald Fond, MG 30, E507, "Transcript CBC Close Up Interview File #1 General McNaughton Part 2", p. 11; DND, DHH, 112.1 D66, Dieppe Reports, "GS 2945 McNaughton to CGS," 19 August 1942.

conscription. If Dieppe was allowed to kill morale at home, it could hasten the conscription crisis that King and McNaughton were both eager to avoid.

In addition, military leaders naturally wished to protect their reputations and careers. Brian Villa argues that McNaughton had greater reasons for wanting a victorious raid than Mountbatten. McNaughton had not yet planned or led any operations. He had rejected the leadership of *Operation Jupiter*, a plan to seize German air bases in northern Norway, as far too reckless. Dieppe was McNaughton's only chance at a successful operation, while Mountbatten had credit for the raid on St. Nazaire, and was already involved in the planning for *Torch*.⁷⁶ If McNaughton had so much of his future invested in the raid, it was doubly important that it receive good publicity, especially since he had admitted to NDHQ his responsibility for Dieppe. Pressure from the CCO and NDHQ to sell the raid as a success would have only added to this motivation.

Despite this pressure, McNaughton did not blindly follow COHQ's extremely untruthful and optimistic approach when selling the Dieppe raid. On several occasions, he attempted to have reports published admitting that the raid was not a tactical success. McNaughton had a reputation for insisting on the rights of the Canadian army as an independent national contingent, making him unpopular with some of his British superiors. Henshaw argues that McNaughton's campaign to place Canadian forces under a Canadian chain of command for *Jubilee* was a key part of his struggle for the recognition of Canadian operational control.⁷⁷ In light of his usual insistence on Canadian independence, why did he submit to Mountbatten's censorship? McNaughton while

⁷⁶ Villa, *Unauthorized Action*, 230-231.

⁷⁷ Peter J Henshaw, "The Dieppe Raid: A Product of Misplaced Canadian Nationalism." *Canadian Historical Review* 77 no. 2 (1996), 257-260.

standing up for Canadian independence, realized coalition needs sometimes took precedence. For example, he refused to embarrass the British by responding to Quentin Reynold's accusations that he had changed COHQ's original plans. Stuart and Ralston urged a public reply, but McNaughton said that any "public discussion" would only be an accusation against the British, and imperil the Army's relationship with their allies.⁷⁸ In addition, as will be discussed in chapter four, McNaughton believed that in operations where British and Canadian units were operating together, there should be one publicity policy for security reasons.⁷⁹ For McNaughton, coalition needs were more important than independent publicity.

McNaughton may also have submitted to COHQ censorship because he could not afford to make an enemy of Mountbatten. COHQ support was necessary for any future Canadian participation in raiding, and this was the only way the Canadian Army could see action while remaining as an undivided national force under McNaughton's command. Secondly, McNaughton, already unpopular with many in the British military establishment, could not afford to make an enemy of a rising star like Mountbatten.

McNaughton's approach to the Dieppe publicity provided a more plausible long-term portrayal of Dieppe than COHQ's ridiculously optimistic account. In fact, the account of Dieppe found in the official histories, that the raid was a tactical failure redeemed by the "lessons learned," is closer to Roberts' report and the "white paper" than to Mountbatten's original version. Once Mountbatten's place was secure in the British military establishment, he was free to admit that Dieppe was a tactical failure, especially

⁷⁸ DND DHH 112.6 D66, *Dieppe Reports*, "GS 146 Stuart to McNaughton", 10 March, 1943; "GS 554 McNaughton to Stuart," 13 March 1943.

⁷⁹ RG 24, C-2, vol.12190, Reel 17483, 1/Casualty/1, "D.W. Cunningham to Montague" 6 July 1943, 30.

if he could blame others.⁸⁰ The propaganda that is usually the most effective is that which is most truthful.⁸¹ While what is truthful may be a question of perspective, COHQ's attempt to portray Dieppe as a success was too obviously a false claim. Knightley explains the principles of effective military public relations:

All the military manuals follow basic principles- appear open, transparent and eager to help; never go in for summary repression or direct control; nullify rather than conceal undesirable news; control emphasis rather than the facts; balance bad news with good; and lie directly only when certain that lie will not be found out in the course of the war.⁸²

The COHQ version of the events was so ludicrously positive that the claim of tactical success could not last a month, let alone until the war's end. While, both COHQ and the Canadian military tried to control the emphasis of the information, COHQ was more willing to cover up unpleasant facts about the raid. Nonetheless, even after COHQ editing, the "white paper" could not conceal the tactical failure of Dieppe from the critics. The "lessons learned" justification was much more effective since the nature of the lessons needed to remain secret until the war's end.

Although McNaughton and the Canadian publicity campaign may have attempted to portray Dieppe more accurately, it was still unrealistically positive. Heroism was emphasised to cover up failure. It claimed that heavy casualties were expected, when in fact they were not. The military kept the percentage of Canadian casualties a secret until speculation forced them to act; even then, the information was released accidentally. The

⁸⁰ NAC, George Ronald Fond, MG 30, E507, "Statement of Mountbatten in a filmed interview for CBC 'Close Up'", 4, 12 July 1962; Earl Mountbatten of Burma, "Operation Jubilee: The Place of the Dieppe Raid in History," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution for Defence Studies* 119 no.1 (1974): 29.

⁸¹ Joseph J. Matthew, *Reporting the Wars* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota, 1957), 175.

⁸² Knightley, *First Casualty*, 484.

difference between Canadian and COHQ public relations about Dieppe was of one of degree, not of kind.

Chapter Four:

Delaying Disaster? Holding Back the Casualty Lists

The casualties of Dieppe brought grief to all Canadian regions and social classes. In small-town Camrose, Alberta, messengers came to the doors of farming families with the grievous news of loved ones dead, wounded or missing on the beaches. CCF Member of Parliament J.A. Marshall recalled how the people of that small town “went about their business dreading what the hour or day might bring forth.”¹ Some families received more than one telegram; Mrs Elizabeth Murphy of Windsor, Ontario received four within 24 hours, each announcing a missing son.² The telegraph messenger also visited the homes of the elite of Canadian society. Famous Canadian names like Southam, Eaton and Labatt appeared in the casualty lists. The tragedy even touched Mackenzie King’s inner circle, as the fate of the son of Minister of Agriculture J.G. Gardiner was unknown.³ The newspapers announced the names under the heading “Canada’s Roll of Honour.”

Someone suspecting a conspiracy to deceive the public about Dieppe could not help but notice the delays in casualty reporting. The slow release of the casualties was suspicious enough, but delaying publication of the names of the missing for a month was worse. Seemingly, the military hoped to delay negative public reaction or to preserve public morale by softening the blow. Some newspapers, however, were already suspicious. On September 3, the *Ottawa Journal* warned that the slow release of casualty figures could lead to the “possible public impression – probably a wrong and dangerous

¹ *Debates of the Parliament of Canada, Vol. I 1943* (Ottawa: Edward Cloutier, 1943), 359.

² *Toronto Daily Star*, 25 August 1942, 2; 3 September 1942, 1. By December 1942, three of her sons were reported captured and one killed in action.

³ NAC, King Diaries, 17 September 1942, 766.

one – that the military authorities themselves were trying to cover up something.”⁴ On September 12, CP reported the complaints about the delay by W.D. Herridge, former Prime Minister R.B. Bennett’s brother in law, to the Ottawa Kiwanis Club.⁶ The release of the names of the missing on September 15 did not stop the criticism. The *Regina Leader-Post* accused the military of a “soft pedal” strategy to try to minimise the impact of the casualties.⁷ On September 26, the Nova Scotia Newspaper Association accused the government of covering up the Dieppe losses and demanded swifter release of information in the future.⁸ Criticism of the delays faded, and later works apart from Gillis Purcell’s 1946 thesis did not raise the issue. Purcell accused the military of abusing censorship to delay the casualty numbers to cushion their blow,⁹ but in September 1942 Purcell had written to McNaughton supporting the policy of withholding information from the press, even though he claimed to know the “inside” story of Dieppe directly from Ross Munro.¹⁰

This chapter will examine why the delays occurred, describing the initial reporting of casualties, and then the holding back of reports about the missing. Despite appearances, no sinister motive was involved. The original delay occurred because of the raid’s secrecy and the high losses that put the casualty reporting system under

⁴ *Ottawa Journal*, 3 September 1942, 8.

⁶ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 12 September 1942, 15.

⁷ *Regina Leader-Post*, 17 September 1942, 11.

⁸ CWM, *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 September 1942.

⁹ Purcell, “Wartime Press Censorship in Canada,” (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1946), 131.

¹⁰ NAC, McNaughton papers, MG 30, E-133 III, vol. 135, PA 1-8-1, Purcell to McNaughton, 28 September 1942.

extreme stress. This meant it took seventeen days to arrange the initial publication of the names of the dead and wounded. The secrecy surrounding Dieppe is well known and the discussion of the reasons for it provides the basis of Brian Villa's controversial theory. Many in high ranks, even within COHQ, were uninformed of the revival of *Rutter* as *Jubilee*. Colonel Walter Skrine, a key Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) staff member quipped, "I felt if we didn't know in ...Combined Operations the Germans weren't likely to know."¹¹ If that was the case, the lowly Canadian administrative troops of Second Echelon, General Headquarters received no advance warning of the operation. The earliest indication came at 0515, with the raid underway, at an administrative instruction conference at 0730, First Corps informed Second Echelon of the tasks to be done as the troops returned, including the preparation of casualty lists to send to records for processing.¹² This delay in communication between First Corps and Second Echelon negatively influenced the casualty reporting system.

Second Echelon, responsible for tabulating casualties, had no input into the procedure for compiling the embarkation lists, so the troops left for the raid without proper records that would allow for quick and accurate casualty tabulation. Many of the units arriving at the ports were unprepared to compile their lists, having left their nominal rolls behind. Consequently, Second Echelon worked with often-inaccurate embarkation lists. To make matters worse, many of the Corps staff who had helped compile the lists went on the raid, when they should have helped in the administrative preparation for the

¹¹ NAC, George Ronald Fond, MG 30, E507, "Transcript CBC Close Up Interview File #7 Col. Walter Skrine", 13.

¹² NAC, RG24, C-2, vol. 12468, 6/Dieppe/1, "Canadian Section GHQ 2nd Echelon, General Comment on Jubilee Force", 2 September 1942; "1 CD Corps Adm. Instruction Jubilee No. 1," 19 August 1942, 106.

return. The initial casualty rolls were created at the administrative checkpoints at Shoreham and Portsmouth by checking the names of returning troops against the embarkation lists. Sorting out the names took days. Numerous troops initially reported missing did not pass through the checkpoints, some because they landed at different harbours.¹³

In addition to poor embarkation lists, inadequate arrangements with British hospitals delayed the reporting of some casualties. Ambulances and a hospital train sent the wounded directly to medical facilities without informing the administrative control centres. Many hospitals, ignorant of correct procedure, did not inform the Canadian Army of these casualties, and that delayed the report of their status.¹⁴ Security precluded warning British hospitals to be prepared to process casualties correctly.

The secrecy of Dieppe slowed the reporting of casualties, but so did their sheer number. The Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) records office, which received the Second Echelon casualty reports, had not previously been busy, because the army had not been in combat. Suddenly, without warning, it was dealing with the bloodiest day for of the war for Canada. The administration was painstaking; each casualty card had to be processed, double-checked with the unit and against already completed records, before cabling to the records office at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ).¹⁵ Once the cable arrived at the Directorate of Records in Ottawa, the records were again processed and a

¹³ Ibid., "Major Moran to Deputy Adjutant General," 22 August 1942.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ DND DHH 39.009 (57) Office Instructions Issued Officer i/c of Records CMHQ, "Office Instructions No. 10: Casualty Records Overseas," January 1940.

telegram of notification sent to the next-of-kin; only after confirmation of its receipt was the name added to the publication list.¹⁶

Completing this paperwork was difficult because of the large number of casualties and the pressure to get the lists to Canada as rapidly as possible. The Records unit was urged to process the casualty cards quickly, because the men's families were feeling increased anxiety caused by the unusual publication of the units involved in the raid.¹⁷ For this, the blame lay with COHQ who had included this information in its last communiqué contrary to Canadian policy. As a result, CMHQ Records Office suspended normal administrative activities from August 20 to 23 and brought in extra assistance. Many of the staff volunteered their time to complete this task as rapidly as possible. During one fifteen-hour period, 3000 casualties were processed. The sheer number of casualties also likely swamped the Directorate of Records in Ottawa, further delaying communication to next-of-kin and to newspapers.¹⁸

The pressure to process a large volume of casualties quickly led to numerous mistakes. To speed up the process, Second Echelon telephoned casualties to Records "before they had been able to do a proper check."¹⁹ The information initially received

¹⁶ NAC, RG24, vol. 13305, Directorate of Records- Army folder #1, "Statement of Duties in Lieu of a Monthly War Diary, Directorate of Records (Army) September 1939-December 1943, 15 February 1944; *Montreal Daily Star*, 27 August 1942, 1.

¹⁷ NAC, RG 24, vol. 13528, Folder 22 Overseas Records Office, "War Diary of Records, CMHQ, August 1-30, 1942, 16-19, 21 August 1942; RG 24 vol. 12699 18/Dieppe/1, "GS 2287 NDHQ to CMHQ," 21 August 1942; NAC, RG24, C-2, vol. 12468, 6/Dieppe/1, "Canadian Section GHQ 2nd Echelon, General Comment on Jubilee Force", 2 September 1942.

¹⁸ NAC, RG 24, vol. 13528, Folder 22 Overseas Records Office, "War Diary of Records, CMHQ, August 1-30, 1942, 20-25, Appendix 17: Operational Casualties.

¹⁹ NAC, RG24, C-2, vol. 12468, 6/Dieppe/1, "Canadian Section GHQ 2nd Echelon, General Comment on Jubilee Force", 2 September 1942.

was based on inaccurate embarkation lists and sometimes on anecdotal information collected at the check posts, which resulted in reports of death based on “hearsay evidence” alone.²⁰ No formal courts of inquiry were held until nine or ten days later. Conducted by the individual units, with sworn eyewitness evidence, they provided more reliable answers about many casualties.²¹ Thus, many cables were despatched prior to confirmation of accuracy. The Records Office deliberately cabled the names to Ottawa, knowing that the status of some casualties would change. It was more important, in the light of the pressure from NDHQ, to get the names out quickly, with some errors, than to delay their transmission and insure accuracy.²² This did not prevent NDHQ from later complaining about changes in category causing grief to next-of-kin.²³

This departure from normal procedure resulted in the categories of some casualties changing two or even three times. The exact numbers of changes were described “as a small percentage” of the casualties, but they may have been as high as fourteen percent.²⁴ These changes in category doubtless led to unnecessary grief in many Canadian homes. For example, Mrs. R.W. Barton of Toronto was told her son was missing, the next day he was reported as safe, but several days later he again was missing.²⁵ The rush to get the casualties to next-of-kin doubtless was beneficial to those

²⁰ Ibid., “Major Moran to Deputy Adjutant General,” 22 August 1942.

²¹ NAC, RG24, vol. 10875, Operation Jubilee, 2D/ 5-4-2., “Court of Inquiry, Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada”, 28 August 1942; “Court of Inquiry 1 BN Black Watch”, 29 August 1942.

²² NAC RG 24, vol. 12699, 18/Dieppe/1, “A2728 CMHQ to NDHQ,” p.198, 8 September 1942.

²³ Ibid., “AG 283 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 197, September 1942.

²⁴ Ibid., “Lt. Appleford to ADAG (A)”, 213, 18 September 1942. This document contains a list of the numbers of changes in category. However, this document is a poor carbon copy that appears to have the last digits of every number cut off by the right hand border.

²⁵ *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 September 1942, 21.

who received correct information, but it caused more uncertainty for those who received inaccurate cables.

Some grieving next-of-kin received shocking news by unofficial channels, which was against regulations. There were numerous cases of soldiers from the units of missing men writing directly to next-of-kin and informing them of their deaths.²⁶ While these writers were no doubt well intentioned, they probably did not resolve the uncertainty; as long as no official word came, hope remained. Other next-of-kin were stunned when letters addressed to missing personnel returned, mistakenly stamped “deceased.”²⁷ This was a result of two foul ups, the unit prematurely labelling a missing man as deceased, and the letter being returned instead of sent to the dead letter office.²⁸ Others had the shock of reading of the death of their loved ones in the newspapers. During an interview by Fred Griffin of the *Toronto Star*, Colonel Menard of the Fusiliers Montreal (FMR) mentioned the death of Captain Alleyn, whose parents learned of his death when the story appeared in *L'Evènement*. This was a mistake on the part of Menard, Griffin and perhaps the censors, since it was illegal to publish names until next-of-kin had been officially informed.²⁹

The mistakes made in casualty notification resulted from the rush to notify the next-of-kin and the Canadian public, in order to shorten their period of worry and uncertainty. There is absolutely no evidence that there was any delay in the processing of

²⁶ NAC RG 24, vol. 12699, 18/Dieppe/1/2 “Letson to Montague,” 63, 10 November 1942.

²⁷ Ibid., “AG 862 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 46, 26 October 1942.

²⁸ Ibid., “Montague to HQ 1Cdn. Corps,” 47, 26 October 1942; “Col. A.M. Brown to DAG and CMHQ,” 54, 28 October 1942.

²⁹ NAC, RG 24, C-2, vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, “GSI 4548 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 51, 18 September 1942.

casualties to soften the effect of Dieppe on the Canadian public. In fact, the Records Office pushed itself beyond its capabilities to get the information back to Canada.

The delay of the publication of the missing until September 15 seems the more suspicious aspect of the casualty notification process. Until August 25, the names of the missing were published along with the other casualties. On August 27, newspapers announced a delay to allow those who had avoided the Germans to escape. The notice observed, "Any word getting through to the enemy that they are missing is of course a signal for a search."³⁰ On September 4, the newspapers printed the military claim that the procedure was "in accordance with agreed censorship practise of the United Nations."³¹ It seems no coincidence that the Army Council offered this further explanation on the same day as the *Ottawa Journal's* critical editorial about the delay.³²

These explanations, especially about escape, seem very far-fetched. Escape from Dieppe by anyone pinned down on the beaches and unable to get through impenetrable defences was impossible. Some Canadians did escape but this was during transportation after their capture. Secondly, the Germans were unlikely to assume that the missing had escaped because of the nature of modern warfare and amphibious operations. Men were blown to pieces by artillery. The sea carried out many of the bodies of those killed in landing craft or in the water. In fact, because the Germans left the dead in place, hoping the tide might wash them higher up the beach; more bodies might have been lost.³³ The

³⁰ *Montreal Daily Star*, 27 August 1942, 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4 September 1942, 1.

³² DND DHH 4112.1 (D145) CGS Office File of Meetings of Army Council, "Minutes of Meeting of Army Council," 3 September 1942.

³³ Terrence Robertson, *The Shame and the Glory: Dieppe* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), 381, 412.

idea that the Germans would go through the painstaking process of comparing the names of the missing to prisoner rolls, and use valuable manpower to search for them when they were probably dead, seems farcical. In fact, almost a year after the raid 246 Canadians remained missing.³⁴

Although some suspected this as an attempt by Canadian authorities to cover up the terrible casualty total as long as possible, the pressure for this decision originated in the British MoI. On August 22, CMHQ cabled NDHQ with a rather confused message: “as a result of a despatch from Adam Marshall, Montreal, to *Evening Standard* here, MoI request that names of officers and numbers of casualties be not ...released to press for time being.”³⁵ NDHQ requested specific information about the MoI’s concerns, explaining that they had already released casualty lists, although they had not given the total casualties.³⁶ On August 24, CMHQ, after a long discussion with the MoI, responded to NDHQ, explaining that the concern of the MoI was naming missing personnel. In earlier Commando raids some missing soldiers had been able to escape; therefore NDHQ was requested to withhold publication of the missing for three weeks to a month, although next-of kin could still be informed. There was also an appeal to alliance unity, since British and Americans were also missing, any publications of the names of the missing would jeopardize “the desired security for all concerned.”³⁷ How the publication of Canadian names would compromise the security of missing British and Americans

³⁴ CWM, *Hamilton Spectator*, 15 June 1943.

³⁵ NAC, RG 24, C-2, vol. 12329, 4/Dieppe/1, “GS 2996 CMHQ to NDHQ,” 3, 22 August 1942.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, “AG 151 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 4, 23 August 1942.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, “GS 3008 CMHQ to NDHQ,” 6, 24 August 1942.

went unexplained. NDHQ consented to the MoI policy on August 24.³⁸ The release date of the names for publication was set for September 15, in agreement with the British and Americans.³⁹

Was the MoI really concerned about the escape of missing personnel? There is some reason to suspect that this concern was secondary to the goal of adhering to the British policy of not releasing the total casualties of any action. On September 8 during his defence of Dieppe in Parliament, Churchill refused to give total casualties, reminding the House “it is not the practise to give exact figures of casualties in men or materiel suffered in individual operations.”⁴⁰ This policy was to keep the enemy from being able to deduce the effectiveness of their tactics and the strength of British units. The reporting of all casualties was delayed for up to a month , then divided up for publication so it was not apparent in which engagement they were incurred.⁴¹ This move by British authorities was the first in a long effort to get Canada to comply with their casualty reporting policies, as will be discussed below. If the MoI wished to conceal the extent of the Dieppe disaster from the British people, it had to convince Canada, not bound by British policy, to withhold the publication of missing personnel. Yet this only delayed the revelation and Churchill faced potentially embarrassing questions about discrepancies in

³⁸ Ibid., “GS 379 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 6-7, 24 August 1942.

³⁹ Ibid., “GS 3056 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 8, 26 August 1942.

⁴⁰ *Montreal Daily Star*, 8 September 1942, 15.

⁴¹ NAC, RG24 , C-2, vol.12190, Reel 17483, “ Letter from War Office to Gen. Montague, CMHQ re: the Reporting of Casualties,” 15, 10 February 1943.

his earlier claims about Dieppe following Canada's publication of the total casualty figures.⁴²

Was the Canadian military convinced of the necessity to protect the missing, or did they simply comply to allow them to keep the casualty total from Canadians for a longer period? Four factors indicate that the Army took the MoI's claims at face value. First, the "Roll of Honour" originally included not only the missing but also a running total of the casualties in the operation. This was not the action of an organization determined to conceal the losses. Only after the MoI request did the Army agree to halt publication, but this took three days of discussion. If the Canadian Army had been looking for an "easy out" on the casualties, it could have complied much more quickly.

Secondly, the Army took the MoI's claims at face value because it actually believed Canadians had escaped from the beaches, no matter how unlikely this might seem in hindsight. An October 16 statement made by Lt. Col. Menard during the "Heroes of Dieppe" tour, and the Army's reaction to it, demonstrate this belief. Menard mentioned that large numbers of FMR had escaped into France during the raid and that information received in Britain had confirmed this.⁴³ How Menard came by the information is unclear, although he may have been referring to four FMR members who escaped from a German train, two of whom had made it to Gibraltar by October 7.⁴⁴ The Army reacted swiftly to Menard's comments. Cable censors were instructed to hold all messages dealing with the remarks, killing the story.⁴⁵ NDHQ instructed both CMHQ and

⁴² *Montreal Daily Star*, 30 September 1942, 1.

⁴³ DND DHH 112.1 (D66) "GS 3656 CMHQ to CGS," 16 October 1942.

⁴⁴ NAC RG 24, vol. 12699, 18/Dieppe/1, "Col. Bostock, to BGS," p.240, 7 October 1942; Robertson, 412.

⁴⁵ DND DHH 112.1 (D66) "Memorandum: Major G.S. to Lt. Col. Cameron," 16 October 1942.

Commanders of all Canadian Home Forces Commands to prevent Dieppe personnel from making statements that could compromise the escape of Canadians at large.⁴⁶ The speedy and vehement warning to all commands makes clear that it was believed that many of the missing were still on the loose.

The third indication that the Canadian military accepted the MoI's explanation was the precedent set by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). The British Air Ministry had requested that the RCAF withhold the names of the missing for five weeks to allow downed aircrew the chance to escape. The RCAF adopted this policy July 29, 1942.⁴⁷ The newspapers were informed, "if only one of our men elude the enemy it will be worth the effort".⁴⁸ McNaughton probably knew of the RCAF decision, if not through official channels, because his own son, Squadron Leader Ian McNaughton, went missing in June 1942.⁴⁹

The fourth indication that the Canadian Army accepted the MoI's claims was its adoption of the practise of withholding the list of the missing, and later all casualties, for up to four weeks as standard policy.⁵⁰ For much of the war considerable British pressure and internal debate was necessary to persuade the Canadian Army to conform to this practise. In the year after Dieppe, NDHQ and the British War Office debated the casualty

⁴⁶ Ibid., "GS 546, NDHQ to G.O.'s, C-in-C, Atlantic and Pacific Commands, All District Officers Commanding, Commander Petawawa, Commander Camp Borden;" "NDHQ to CMHQ," 17 October 1942.

⁴⁷ NAC, RG 24, 1983-84/049, vol. 580, File 425-1, "Memorandum: Chief of Air Staff," 29 July 1942.

⁴⁸ Ibid., "Memorandum by Joseph W.G. Clarke," 29 July 1942.

⁴⁹ NAC McNaughton Papers, MG 30 E133, vol. 144, PA 3-7 vol.1, "Press Clipping, Obituary of Squadron Leader Ian McNaughton," 23 October 1942.

⁵⁰ NAC RG24 C2 vol. 12190, Reel 17483, 1/Casualty/1, "Letter Gen. Montague to Adjutant General NDHQ, Reporting of Casualties," 7, 19 October 1942.

issue with CMHQ as intermediary. The British insisted that Canadians wait a month before publishing any casualties because it would be potentially embarrassing if Canada published its casualties earlier in joint operations.⁵¹ NDHQ felt the British system would not work in Canada where there would be “violent protest from press and public opinion” regarding delays in publication.⁵² McNaughton, nonetheless, was convinced of the need to follow British procedures and to give security precedence over the public’s right to know.⁵³ After months of debate, NDHQ decided to follow British procedure but reserved the right to alter this policy if conditions changed.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, when NDHQ felt that conditions would allow faster publication of casualties during Sicily and Normandy, it butted heads with an intransigent War Office in frequent and bitter arguments. Despite this acrimonious relationship, the Canadians did stick to their agreement to withhold all casualties for thirty days.⁵⁵

That both NDHQ and CMHQ quickly agreed with British policy in the case of Dieppe, when it later took bitter prolonged debate, indicates that they probably believed the MoI argument about escaping personnel at Dieppe. Certainly, there was a very short period to make the decision in the case of Dieppe. The actions of NDHQ in particular, demonstrate that it normally would give in to British demands on publication of casualties only under great pressure.

⁵¹ Ibid., “GS 328 CMHQ to NDHQ,” 16, 13 February 1943.

⁵² Ibid., “AG 4009 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 22, 18 June 1943.

⁵³ Ibid., “GS 1488 CMHQ to NDHQ,” 23, 26 June 1943.

⁵⁴ Ibid., “GS 1592 CMHQ to NDHQ,” 31-32, 7 July 1943.

⁵⁵ Ibid., “AG 490 NDHQ to CMHQ,” 117, 1 August 1944.

In conclusion, the delay in the publication of the casualties, while seemingly an attempt by the Canadian military to manipulate public opinion, or conceal disaster, was in fact the result of pressure from British authorities. The suspicions of the *Ottawa Journal*, *Regina Leader-Post* and Gillis Purcell are incorrect, but understandable. Despite this suspicious facade, the Army went to great lengths to overcome an administrative nightmare and get the casualty lists to the next-of-kin and newspapers swiftly as possible. Only after the MoI protested, did the Army stop releasing the names of the missing in its official casualty lists. The Canadian military may have tried to sell the public an overly optimistic and at times dishonest version of Dieppe, but it did not try to manipulate the casualty notification system to its own advantage.

The controversy over the delay in casualties did not last for long; during the parliamentary debates about Dieppe in 1943, there was no mention of the issue. With the exception of Gillis Purcell, the controversy did not enter into Dieppe historiography, probably because delaying publication of all casualties became standard practise. Nonetheless, it caused contemporary controversy and suspicion. The delay in publication of the casualties, while not remembered specifically, contributed to the aura of suspicion that grew in the minds of many Canadians about the Dieppe raid.

Conclusion:

How Successful was the Public Relations Campaign?

The goal of the publicity campaign was to sell the official version of Dieppe to the Canadian people. Did the Canadian public buy the story? It is difficult to measure the level of public acceptance of the message accurately. There is evidence that many Canadians did believe the public relations version of Dieppe, perhaps even a majority. Nevertheless, it is clear that substantial numbers of Canadians remained unconvinced by the official claims. The campaign clearly succeeded in helping to avoid a Hong Kong type inquiry into Dieppe, one of McNaughton's fears. Nevertheless, the reputations of Canadian generals, including McNaughton, were tarnished by Dieppe, despite the publicity campaign. The Dieppe publicity was neither a total success nor failure; its mediocrity, the result of the high levels of falsehood in its apologetic formula

The reaction of Canadians to the Dieppe publicity campaign is impossible to measure precisely because there is no opinion poll directly concerning the raid. Richard, in her study of the press coverage in French-speaking Quebec, argues that the reaction to Dieppe was ambivalent. People took pride in the heroic sacrifice of French-Canadian troops, but also saw the raid as a symbol of British imperialism. As a military operation, Dieppe was perceived to be a disaster, indicating the message of the publicity campaign failed in French Canada.¹ There was also no unity of English-speaking Canadian opinion about the raid, but public relations were more successful than in Quebec and it is possible that a majority accepted the government version.

¹ Béatrice Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe: Radioscopie D' Un Mythe* (Montreal, VLB Éditeur, 2002), 72.

The first indication is that most newspapers appeared to support the official version of Dieppe. Richard argues that newspapers serve as “cultural vectors” and are involved in the creation of cultural memory and common cultural references.² Frances Henry and Carol Tator in their examination of the English-language Canadian press, argue that newspapers primarily reflect the views of their owners, and influence their reader’s opinions. Nonetheless, people also tend to read the newspapers whose positions they agree with. Thus the “relation between a particular medium and its audience is interactive.”³ The Dieppe coverage reflected the political views of the paper’s owners, influencing the Canadian public to accept their views, but it was also an indication of what Canadians believed. That the majority of newspapers actively supported the official portrayal of the raid, or at least did not question it, probably indicates that this was the opinion of most Canadians.

The second indication that most English Canadians may have accepted the official version of Dieppe is the result of a Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO) poll released September 19, 1942. The question asked, “are you satisfied that you are getting as much important war news as you should or do you think too much of this news is being censored?” Fifty-six per cent of Canadians considered themselves satisfied with the news, and only 36% were unsatisfied, although in Quebec, the majority was unsatisfied. A second question asked if enough information was given about the sinking of vessels in the St. Lawrence. In this instance, 44% were satisfied and 40% unsatisfied.⁴

² Ibid., 22.

³ Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Discourses of Domination: Racial Bias in the Canadian English-Language Press* (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 2002), 7.

⁴ *Toronto Daily Star*, 19 September 1942, 10.

Richard uses this to argue that French-Canadians were more sceptical of war news and therefore more suspicion about Dieppe.⁵

The poll would seem to confirm that most Canadians supported the government's version of Dieppe. Nevertheless, drawing a strong conclusion may not be justified. First, the date of the actual polling is uncertain. Typically, CIPO polls, while claiming to be current, were conducted between three to eight weeks prior to publication.⁶ Both the newspapers and *Public Opinion Quarterly* give only the date of publication.⁷ It is very likely that the poll was conducted before Dieppe. Furthermore, the response to the second question indicates less satisfaction with war news when the issue is a single controversial case rather than being framed in general terms. The poll is not an accurate measure of public opinion on Dieppe, although it does demonstrate a predisposition among English-speaking Canadians to trust war news.

Anecdotal information indicates that the public generally accepted the official version of Dieppe. One such case involves the use of Dieppe in a few commercial advertisements that companies ran to support the war effort and keep their names in the public eye even though they had few consumer goods to market. General Motors used an endorsement by Wallace Reyburn describing how he enjoyed riding in his "old faithful" Chevrolet after the raid. The large advertisement featured a tattered Canadian soldier

⁵ Richard, *La Mémoire De Dieppe*, 61.

⁶ Daniel J. Robinson, *The Measure of Democracy: Polling Market Research and Public Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 84.

⁷ *Public Opinion Quarterly* 6 (Winter 1942), 659. Unfortunately, the date cannot be determined because no CIPO poll records before 1945 are preserved. Association of Public Data Users, *Submission to the National Data Archive Consultation Working Group*, 17 September 2000, http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/assoc/capdu/ndac_sub1b.htm (8 January 2004).

striking a jaunty pose on a returning vessel with “Dieppe!” emblazoned across it.⁸ If the public reaction to Dieppe was overwhelmingly one of horror or disgust, General Motors would have been unlikely to use the raid in such a fashion. The advertisement actually acknowledged the cost of the raid in the text, but the graphics portrayed Dieppe as a “boy’s own” adventure story.

The surprisingly few letters to the editor also indicate public acceptance of Dieppe publicity. Most reflected a positive view of the raid, few were critical. One letter criticized the news coverage of Dieppe as being overly emotional and “too Hollywood” and the writer chastised the correspondents for acting like “sob sisters.”⁹ Other letters described the raid as a “splendid achievement,”¹⁰ “a very great success,”¹¹ and as a “victory...proving the second front is possible.”¹² The message of the Dieppe publicity certainly convinced the writers of these letters. It is possible, however, that concern about censorship regulations prevented the publication of hostile letters.

These indications of public support, while certainly not precise, show many in the Canadian public accepted the public relations portrayal of Dieppe. Probably more Canadians accepted the official version of Dieppe than rejected it, but it is impossible to determine the exact numbers by the limited contemporary evidence available.

Conversely, there are indications that a substantial minority of Canadians questioned or rejected the official story of Dieppe. While most newspapers supported or

⁸ *Toronto Daily Star*, 1 September 1942, 7.

⁹ L.H. “Battle Broadcasts,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 22 August 1942, 10.

¹⁰ R.B. Shaw, “Dieppe- and After,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 5 September, 1942, 6.

¹¹ George H. Stark, “Dieppe Points way to Victory,” *Calgary Herald*, 11 September 1942, 4.

¹² Lionel Edwards, “Canada’s Duty to its Allies,” *Calgary Herald*, 25 August 1942.

did not question the raid, the *Globe and Mail* and *Ottawa Journal* were very critical of the Dieppe publicity. Both newspapers also influenced and reflected popular opinion. The Gallup poll showed that 36% of Canadians were unhappy with the censorship of war news in general. When asked about specific controversial cases the level of scepticism increased. This number suggests that many Canadians also doubted the official version of Dieppe.

The perceived need for a “white paper” also demonstrates a substantial number of Canadians were unhappy with the official version of Dieppe. VCGS Murchie’s initial telegram to McNaughton concerning the “white paper” noted that, “there is bound to be a feeling of slight uneasiness in the minds of the Canadian people about Dieppe.” This was an understatement on Murchie’s part, as there would have been little urgent need to address these issues if the uneasiness was only “slight.” There was enough criticism of Dieppe, even in late August, that the military felt that that issues such as the value of the raid and the high casualty rates required attention.¹³

Observations of contemporaries also reveal questioning of the official version of Dieppe. In a letter to McNaughton, Gillis Purcell advised him not to be concerned with newspaper criticisms of Dieppe, even though they are “a reflection of comment on the street.”¹⁴ A *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial also condemned talk on the street, criticizing those who claimed that the British deliberately used the Canadians for this “stunt” to avoid casualties themselves.¹⁵ C.P. Stacey recalled in his official history that “Canadian

¹³ DND DHH 112.1 D66 “Dieppe Reports,” “GS 383 VCGS to McNaughton,” 26 August 1942.

¹⁴ NAC, A.G.L. McNaughton Collection, MG 30 E133, vol. 135, PA1-8-1, “Purcell to McNaughton,” 108, 28 September 1942.

¹⁵ Reprinted in *Ottawa Evening Citizen* 24 August 1942, 20.

civilians particularly those who had lost relatives, saw only the casualty lists and the failure.” He believed it might have been different had it been possible to inform the public more fully of the value of the “lessons learned.”¹⁶ However, this distrust of the official version of Dieppe was not limited to the “the street.” Mackenzie King, after reading aloud the “white paper,” questioned “if the information gained could begin to equal the heavy losses.”¹⁷

One of the most convincing arguments that many Canadians did not accept the official version of Dieppe was the continuation of the controversy. Parliamentary debates about Dieppe raged in spring 1943. The publication of Quentin Reynold’s *Dress Rehearsal* and Saunder’s *Combined Operations* helped fuel the controversy with additional, although not always accurate, information. In 1944, the *Toronto Telegram* addressing comments made by Minister of Agriculture J.G. Gardiner about Dieppe, noted, “a great deal of controversy has raged around the advisability of the reconnaissance.”¹⁸ Gardiner claimed that public opinion demanding a second front had driven Canada into the Dieppe raid. The *Globe and Mail* also used this occasion to attack the official version of Dieppe; since Gardiner clearly saw the raid as a disaster, the government had deceived the public.¹⁹ Even after VE day, The *Globe and Mail* remained eager to report controversial news about Dieppe. Returning Dieppe POWs were asked to comment on the success or failure of the raid: no one responded on record, but there were

¹⁶ C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1948), 83.

¹⁷ NAC, *Mackenzie King Diaries*, September 19, 1942, 769 <<http://www.King.archives.ca/EN/Default.asp>> (November 5, 2003). In subsequent years, Mackenzie King came to believe that the lessons of Dieppe were necessary for the successful invasion of France.

¹⁸ CWM, *Toronto Telegram*, 15 December 1944.

¹⁹ CWM, *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 12 December 1944.

many anonymous criticisms.²⁰ Interest in controversial aspects of Dieppe years after the event demonstrates that many Canadians continued to be sceptical of the official version throughout the war.

Do these slim indications of public reaction to Dieppe indicate a successful public relations campaign? War Correspondent Ralph Allen argued that the initial story of war events was the one that tended to stick with the public.

It may be that a conscientious reader who was willing to subject his impressions of the news to constant revision was able to catch up with the real story in a few weeks, a few months, or a few years... I read no story about Dieppe that satisfied me until Munro's book came out about three years later. Many people won't read Munro's book at all and I suppose- depending on the stage they quit reading the progressive censorship releases on Dieppe – they'll always believe Dieppe was an amphibious game of cops and robbers, a great achievement, a gigantic snafu, or a military landmark.²¹

The publicity campaign certainly dominated the initial press coverage when the story was “hot” and captivated the attention of the public. In this sense, it was not a total failure, as it probably convinced more Canadians than doubted it, but it certainly did not succeed in quelling all controversy about Dieppe.

One of McNaughton's concerns about Dieppe was that it could lead to a divisive and bitter public inquiry, as the Hong Kong disaster had done. Despite a sometimes-bitter debate in Parliament, the government was able to defend the official version of Dieppe and avoid an inquiry. The Liberals were able to prevent further investigation into Dieppe in part by appealing to security. Parliament had been in recess when Dieppe occurred and did not reconvene until January. On February 17, CCF MP T.C. Douglas initiated the debate by inquiring about unanswered questions surrounding Dieppe: the cancellation of

²⁰ Ibid., 23 June 1945, War Museum Newspapers.

²¹ Gillis Purcell, “Wartime Press Censorship in Canada,” (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1946), 132.

the aerial bombardment, the suitability of the beach for tanks, and the precautions taken to spare Canadian lives. He demanded an explanation of the “lessons learned” to the House in a more frank manner than the official pronouncements.²² Ralston did not respond until May 13, when he spoke at length on Dieppe, repeating the explanations of the “white paper.” He assured the House that the lessons were being carefully applied, but was unable to give more specific information because of security concerns.²³ Despite later pressure from both Douglas and the Conservatives, Ralston held firm. Nevertheless, Douglas later recalled in one impassioned moment Ralston, with reports in hand, shouted, “if you really want information on this, let me read,” but Mackenzie King restrained him.²⁴ Despite this incident, Ralston remained firm when the opposition demanded a secret session where this information could be shared openly with Members.²⁵

Secondly, an inquiry would have entailed recalling senior officers from England and Ralston was unwilling to “address interrogatories to officers who were very much engaged in what are most important matters.”²⁶ Ralston argued that it would be unwise for the amateur strategists of the Canadian House of Commons to sit in judgement over the professionals who had planned Dieppe. Although this led to protest about the supremacy of civil authority over the military, Ralston remained intransigent.²⁷

²² Canada, House of Commons, *Debate*, 17 February 1943, 504-505.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1943, 2671, 2689.

²⁴ T.C. Douglas, *The Making of a Socialist: the Recollections of T.C. Douglas*, ed. Lewis H. Thomas (Edmonton: U. Of Alberta, 1982), 137.

²⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debate*, 17 February 1943, 505, 24 February 1943, 672, 18 May 1943, 2796-2797.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 May 1943, 3008.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1943, 2689, 18 May 1943, 2786-2786,

Constitutional issues were also involved, as the planning officers were not only Canadian, but also British. Any investigation into the planning of Dieppe would have required information from the planners at Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) and Home Forces as well as the commanders of the three services involved; the House could not expect to sit in judgement over British officers.

In addition, all sides eventually lost stomach for continued debate on this issue after the most intense debates about Dieppe on May 25-27. The Minister of National Defence faced continued tough questions about Dieppe, but gave little new information. Prominent Tory Herbert A. Bruce attacked the Canadian's army's "battle honours" of Hong Kong and Dieppe, blaming them on "incompetent leadership in the high command."²⁸ This put the Conservatives on the defensive, the Liberals attacked Bruce, accusing him of "sneering" at the Canadian army. Bruce eventually claimed he was criticizing only the tactical errors of General Roberts rather than Montgomery, Mountbatten and McNaughton.²⁹ After two days of heated exchange, Dieppe was dropped, probably out of exhaustion on the issue. A press observer noted, "the House was beginning to show signs of frustration and impatience" over the prolonged debate.³⁰ It was clear that the opposition could not force a secret session. Even the *Globe and Mail*, the great opponent of the government, concluded, "further public debate would serve no useful purpose" and that a full assessment of Dieppe should wait for the war's end.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 25 May 1943, 3004.

²⁹ Ibid., 25 May 1943, 3008, 3100 -3101.

³⁰ Torchy Anderson, "House Bogs Down On Dieppe Debate," *Calgary Herald*, 28 May 1943, 5.

³¹ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 29 May 1943, 6.

The government's defence of the official version of Dieppe certainly did not end the controversy or satisfy critics. Yet it had been enough to prevent a secret session or the public inquiry that McNaughton feared would devastate army morale. However, the official explanations were unable to protect McNaughton's reputation. C.P. Stacey claimed that the fallout from Dieppe "did something to undermine the hitherto unassailable prestige of General McNaughton with the public."³² Bruce's later explanation that he was referring to Roberts when criticizing the "high command" seemed very unconvincing. A few weeks after Bruce's accusations, O.T.G. Williamson, writing in *Saturday Night*, reflected his criticisms. After a censure of the flawed plans, Williamson placed the blame squarely on McNaughton and questioned the quality of the Canadian "high command."³³ It is inconceivable that McNaughton's reputation did not suffer because of the criticism over Dieppe. While Dieppe was not demonstratively a factor in his removal from command of the First Canadian Army in December 1943, it certainly would have been one of the punctures deflating McNaughton's reputation.

From the perspective of the military and government, the Dieppe publicity campaign was neither a success nor a complete failure. It was unable to kill the controversy, but did convince many Canadians that Dieppe, while costly, was worthwhile. By maintaining the official version in Parliament, the government was able to weather the storm, avoiding a potentially awkward secret session or inquiry, but was unable to prevent an emotional debate that raised embarrassing questions and tarnished reputations.

³² Stacey, *Six Years*, 396.

³³ O.T.G. Williamson, "Responsibility for Dieppe," *Saturday Night*, 12 June 1943, 6-7.

Why did the publicity campaign achieve such mixed results? The basic problem was that it contained too much falsehood; Dieppe was a disaster but the publicity tried to paint it as a success. Michael Balfour in discussing British and German propaganda during the Second World War described different types of “falsehood in publicity.” Three of them were used in the Canadian publicity campaign. Least prevalent, although present, was the “deliberate lie.”³⁴ The most blatant example was the claim of expected heavy casualties at Dieppe when such losses were not anticipated. Still this was the exception rather than the rule and outright lies were few. Another type of falsehood in the Dieppe publicity was “suppressed truth.” This involves withholding information potentially of value to the enemy for security reasons.³⁵ It can be misused to keep the public in the dark, as it was with Dieppe. The most obvious example of suppressed truth was the frequent appeal to the “lessons learned,” which although purportedly valuable, had to be secret. While this satisfied many Canadians, to others it seemed suspiciously like an attempt to hide Dieppe’s failure behind claims that could not be evaluated. The third type of falsehood was “the slanting of news.” Balfour quotes Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels to explain this process: “be as faithful to the truth as necessary but omit and expand it as you think right in relation to your public.”³⁶ This was the main sort of falsehood in Canada’s Dieppe publicity. The emphasis on heroism, the few successes, and the alleged value of the raid, involved attempts to distract the public from the reality of 3350

³⁴ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 427, 428.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 429-430.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 430- 431.

casualties and tactical failure. This vast difference between the raid's portrayal and its results led many to doubt the veracity of the official story.

There were too many falsehoods to convince everyone, too much of a divorce between the reality of the disaster and the overly optimistic version of Dieppe sold to the Canadian public. While the Canadian Army tried to be more open in its publicity than the British authorities, nevertheless, too many elements in the story did not ring true. Even the delay in publishing the names of the missing, not meant to deceive the public, was perceived by increasingly suspicious minds as another government attempt to conceal information.

Was the falsehood in the Dieppe publicity necessary? Ideally, the expectation in a liberal democracy is that government officials and agencies should not lie to the public, as this undermines confidence in the system itself. In wartime, this line blurs, as there are often valid security reasons to withhold information. However, even then it is ultimately to the benefit of the government to release as much accurate information as possible. If official information is unreliable, people distrust it, and a critical public policy tool becomes weakened.

Balanced against the long-term benefits of wartime openness in publicity is the temptation for short-term gain by covering up or misrepresenting unpleasant items. Nonetheless, there is always the risk that the truth will emerge, doing damage to reputation and public trust. The bitter parliamentary debates of 1943 and the cloud of suspicion that developed about the raid, suggests that this was the case about the Dieppe publicity. The entry of Canada's Army into continuous action beginning in July 1943, certainly focussed the public's attention on other matters, yet the controversy still lurked

beneath the surface. As C.P. Stacey wrote in 1948, Dieppe remains “the most hotly-discussed operation of the war.”³⁷ Controversy set the dominant tone in Dieppe historiography.

One of the reasons for military publicity during total war was to maintain the morale of the home front. Was it necessary to portray the Dieppe disaster as a success to protect Canadian morale? In the words of the *Globe and Mail*, it was not necessary to “sugar the pill.”³⁹ Columnist J.V. McAvee observed, “the Canadian people are not children. They can accept Dieppe as the English accepted Singapore, but it is not made easier to accept when what was a failure is represented as a success.”⁴⁰ Most English-speaking Canadians supported the war effort, and though it would have been difficult to absorb another Canadian defeat after Hong Kong, the public could have done so. In fact, the large segment of the public who distrusted the Dieppe publicity did accept what they perceived as a defeat. Canadians, after all, were involved with a life and death struggle against the Axis and had suffered relatively little in comparison to the rest of the Commonwealth. Canada had experienced nothing approaching the horrendous casualties of the First World War, as a number of letters and editorials observed.⁴¹ The Canadian public’s morale could likely have handled the truth about Dieppe’s failure.

Canadian authorities faced a great obstacle in being more truthful about Dieppe; they were part of an alliance. In all its foreign wars, Canada has acted as a junior partner

³⁷ Stacey, *Canadian Army at War*, 83.

³⁹ *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 27 April 1943, 6.

⁴⁰ J.V. McAvee, “‘Circle- Bar’ Fourth Column,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 21 May 1943, 14.

⁴¹ “Backstage at Ottawa” *Maclean’s*, 15 October 1942, 15; *Toronto Daily Star*, 17 September 1942; R.B. Shaw, “Dieppe – and After,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 5 September 1942, 6.

in a larger coalition and this has always brought tension between the ability to act independently and the need to show solidarity with more powerful allies. British authorities set the pattern of falsehood that characterized the Dieppe publicity. For Canada to depart from this pattern would have embarrassed the British and strained the alliance. In particular, it would have alienated Mountbatten, who controlled the raiding program in which the Army wished to participate. McNaughton therefore submitted to COHQ's censorship of Robert's report and the "white paper." Short-term gain and alliance solidarity were chosen over providing an accurate account of Dieppe for the Canadian public.

During the Dieppe raid, smoke obscured the view of the battle for Roberts on the *Calpe*. This factor coupled with a communications breakdown, kept the commander from having an accurate idea of what was actually happening on the beaches. The Canadian public also faced a smokescreen when they were told about Dieppe. Stories of heroism, claims of success, and the lack of a timely overview of the raid, obscured the reality of the disaster. Like Roberts, Canadians had to squint through the smoke to get brief glimpses of what had happened to their boys on the beach. For weeks, they had to guess at what had transpired, and even when the "white paper" was released, many questions remained unanswered. Those who had lost family, who had to suffer for months waiting to hear the fate of the missing, certainly deserved a more open and honest explanation of what had happened and why.

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