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Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II

BY EDWARD A. SHILS AND MORRIS JANOWITZ

The title of this article may suggest to some that it is of interest only to the student of military affairs. But it is of a far wider scope. The public relations expert, the opinion analyst, the propagandist, the educator, and all those who are interested in relating attitudes to the psychology of the individual and the structure of the group will find it deserving of close attention. For the authors, in attempting to determine why the German Army in World War II fought so stubbornly to the end, have made an intensive study of the social structure of this army, of the symbols to which it responded, of the Nazi attempts to bolster its morale, and the Allied attempts to break it down. They have found a key to many of the behavior and attitude patterns of the individual infantryman in the interpersonal relationships within the company—his primary group. His relationship to this primary group goes far to explain why he responds to one appeal and not to another, why he fights, and why he surrenders. This study thus provides an example of the sociological and psychological analysis which the propagandist must make if he is to obtain maximal response to his communications.

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I. The Army as a Social Group

This study is an attempt to analyze the relative influence of primary and secondary group situations on the high degree of stability of the German Army in World War II. It also seeks to evaluate the impact of the Western Allies' propaganda on the German Army's fighting effectiveness.¹

Although distinctly outnumbered and in a strategic sense quantitatively in-

ferior in equipment, the German Army, on all fronts, maintained a high degree of organizational integrity and fighting effectiveness through a series of almost unbroken retreats over a period of several years. In the final phase, the German armies were broken into unconnected segments, and the remnants were over-

¹ For a further treatment of these problems see Dicks, Henry V., *Love, Money and War*, London: Keegan Paul Rutledge (forthcoming).

run as the major lines of communication and command were broken. Nevertheless, resistance which was more than token resistance on the part of most divisions continued until they were overpowered or overrun in a way which, by breaking communication lines, prevented individual battalions and companies from operating in a coherent fashion. Disintegration through desertion was insignificant, while active surrender, individually or in groups, remained extremely limited throughout the entire Western campaign.

In one sense the German High Command effected as complete a defense of the "European Fortress" as its own leadership qualities and the technical means at its disposal permitted. Official military analyses, including General Eisenhower's report, have shown that lack of manpower, equipment, and transportation, as well as certain strategic errors, were the limiting factors.² There was neither complete collapse nor internally organized effort to terminate hostilities, such as signaled the end of the first world war.

This extraordinary tenacity of the German Army has frequently been attributed to the strong National Socialist political convictions of the German soldiers. It is the main hypothesis of this paper, however, that the unity of the German Army was in fact sustained only to a very slight extent by the National Socialist political convictions of its members, and that more important in the motivation of the determined resistance of the German soldier was the steady satisfaction of certain *primary* personality demands afforded by the social organization of the army.

This basic hypothesis may be elaborated in the following terms.

1. It appears that a soldier's ability to resist is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group (his squad or section) to avoid social disintegration. When the individual's immediate group, and its supporting formations, met his basic organic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power and adequately regulated his relations with authority, the element of self-concern in battle, which would lead to disruption of the effective functioning of his primary group, was minimized.

2. The capacity of the primary group to resist disintegration was dependent on the acceptance of political, ideological, and cultural symbols (all secondary symbols) only to the extent that these secondary symbols became directly associated with primary gratifications.

3. Once disruption of primary group life resulted through separation, breaks in communications, loss of leadership, depletion of personnel, or major and prolonged breaks in the supply of food and medical care, such an ascendancy of preoccupation with physical survival developed that there was very little "last-ditch" resistance.

4. Finally, as long as the primary group structure of the component units of the Wehrmacht persisted, attempts by the Allies to cause disaffection by the invocation of secondary and political symbols (e.g., about the ethical wrongfulness of the National Socialist system) were mainly unsuccessful.

² Report by the Supreme Commander on operations in Europe by the Allied Expeditionary Force, June 6, 1944 to May 8, 1945.

By contrast, where Allied propaganda dealt with primary and personal values, particularly physical survival, it was more likely to be effective.

Long before D-Day in Western France, research was undertaken in the United Kingdom and North Africa on these social psychological aspects of the enemy's forces. These studies were continued after D-Day by the Intelligence Section of the Psychological Warfare Division of SHAEF. Although of course they are subject to many scientific strictures, they provide a groundwork for the evaluation of the experiences of the German soldier and for the analysis of the social organization of the German Army. Methods of collecting data included front line interrogation of prisoners of war (Ps/W) and intensive psychological interviews in rear areas. Captured enemy documents, statements of recaptured Allied military personnel, and the reports of combat observers were also studied. A monthly opinion poll of random samples of large numbers of Ps/W was also undertaken. This paper is based on a review of all these data.

Modes of Disintegration

Preliminary to the analysis of the function of the primary group in the maintenance of cohesion in the German Army, it is necessary to classify the modes of social disintegration found in any modern army:

1. Desertion (deliberately going over to the enemy lines)

a) by individual action

(1) after discussion with comrades

(2) without prior discussion with others

b) by groups acting in concert

2. Active surrender (deliberate decision to give up to the enemy as he approaches and taking steps to facilitate capture, e.g., by sending emissaries, by calling out, by signalling, etc.)

a) by single individuals

b) by group as a unit

(1) by mutual agreement

(2) by order of or with approval of NCO or officer

c) by plurality of uncoordinated individuals

3. Passive surrender

a) by individuals acting alone

(1) non-resistance (allowing oneself to be taken prisoner without taking effective steps to facilitate or obstruct capture; passivity may be a means of facilitating surrender)

(2) token resistance (allowing oneself to be taken prisoner with nominal face-saving gestures of obstruction to capture)

b) by plurality of uncoordinated individuals

4. Routine resistance: rote or mechanical, but effective execution of orders as given from above with discontinuance when the enemy becomes overwhelmingly powerful and aggressive

5. "Last-ditch" resistance which ends only with the exhaustion of fighting equipment and subsequent surrender or death. (This type of soldier is greatly underrepresented in studies of samples of Ps/W. Therefore the study of Ps/W alone does not give an adequate picture of the resistive qualities of the German soldier.)

A more detailed description of each

of the above classes will be useful in the following analysis:

Desertion involved positive and deliberate action by the German soldier to deliver himself to Allied soldiers for capture by crossing the lines, e.g., by planfully "losing himself" while on patrol and "blundering" into the enemy's area of control or by deliberately remaining behind during a withdrawal from a given position so that when the Allied troops came up they could take him.

In *active surrender* by the group as a unit, the positive act of moving across to enemy lines was absent but there was an element common with desertion in the deliberate attempt to withdraw from further combat. Like many cases of desertion, the decision to surrender as a group was arrived at as a result of group discussion and mutual agreement. The dividing line between active surrender and desertion brought about by lagging behind was shadowy. There were other forms of group surrender which were clearly different from desertion, e.g., the sending of an emissary to arrange terms with the enemy, the refusal to carry out aggressive orders, or to fight a way out of encirclement.

In *passive surrender*, the intention of a soldier to remove himself from the battle was often not clear even to himself. The soldier who was taken prisoner by passive surrender might have been immobilized or apathetic due to anxiety; he might have been in a state of bewildered isolation and not have thought of passive surrender until the perception of an opportunity brought it to his mind. Non-resistant passive surrender frequently occurred in the case of soldiers who lay in their foxholes or

hid in the cellars or barns, sometimes self-narcotized by fear, or sometimes deliberately waiting to be overrun. In both cases, they made only the most limited external gestures of resistance when the enemy approached. In the second type of passive surrender—token resistance—the surrendering soldier desired to avoid all the stigma of desertion or surrender but nevertheless showed reluctance to undertake aggressive or defensive actions which might have interfered with his survival.

An examination of the basic social organization of the German Army, in terms of its primary group structure and the factors which strengthened and weakened its component primary groups, is first required in order to account for the stability and cohesion of resistance, and in order to evaluate the impact of Allied propaganda.

II. The Function of the Primary Group³

"The company is the only truly existent community. This community allows neither time nor rest for a personal life. It forces us into its circle, for life is at stake. Obviously compromises must be made and claims be surrendered. . . . Therefore the

³ "By primary groups I mean those characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation . . . it is a 'we'; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which 'we' is the natural expression. One lives in the feeling of the whole and finds the chief aims of his will in that feeling" (p. 23). . . . "The most important spheres of this intimate association and cooperation—though by no means the only ones—are the family, the play group of children, and the neighborhood or community group of elders" (p. 24). . . . "the only essential thing being a certain intimacy and fusion of personalities." (p. 26)

Cooley, Charles Horton, *Social Organization*, New York, 1909.

idea of fighting, living, and dying for the fatherland, for the cultural possessions of the fatherland, is but a relatively distant thought. At least it does not play a great role in the practical motivations of the individual."⁴

Thus wrote an idealistic German student in the first world war. A German sergeant, captured toward the end of the second world war, was asked by his interrogators about the political opinions of his men. In reply, he laughed and said, "When you ask such a question, I realize well that you have no idea of what makes a soldier fight. The soldiers lie in their holes and are happy if they live through the next day. If we think at all, it's about the end of the war and then home."

The fighting effectiveness of the vast majority of soldiers in combat depends only to a small extent on their preoccupation with the major political values which might be affected by the outcome of the war and which are the object of concern to statesmen and publicists. There are of course soldiers in whom such motivations are important. Volunteer armies recruited on the basis of ethical or political loyalties, such as the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, are affected by their degree of orientation toward major political goals. In the German Army, the "hard core" of National Socialists were similarly motivated.

But in a conscript army, the criterion of recruitment is much less specialized and the army is more representative of the total population liable to conscription. Therefore the values involved in political and social systems or ethical schemes do not have much impact on the determination of a soldier to fight to

the best of his ability and to hold out as long as possible. For the ordinary German soldier the decisive fact was that he was a member of a squad or section which maintained its structural integrity and which coincided roughly with the *social* unit which satisfied some of his major primary needs.⁵ He was likely to go on fighting, provided he had the necessary weapons, as long as the group possessed leadership with which he could identify himself, and as long as he gave affection to and received affection from the other members of his squad and platoon. In other words, as long as he felt himself to be a member of his primary group and therefore bound by the expectations and demands of its other members, his soldierly achievement was likely to be good.

Modern social research has shown that the primary group is not merely the chief source of affection and accordingly the major factor in personality formation in infancy and childhood. The primary group continues to be the major source of social and psychological sustenance through adulthood.⁶

⁴ *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten*, 1928, pp. 167-172. Quoted by William K. Pfeiler, *War and the German Mind*, New York, 1941, p. 77.

⁵ On the relations between the *technical* group and *social* group cf. Whitehead, T. N., *Leadership in a Free Society*, Cambridge, Mass., 1936, Ch. IV.

⁶ Cooley, *op. cit.*, Part I, pp. 3-57; Freud S., *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Ch. IV; Mayo, Elton, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, New York, 1933; Wilson, A. T. M., "The Service Man Comes Home," *Pilot Papers: Social Essays and Documents*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Apr. 1946), pp. 9-28; Grinker, R. R. and Spiegel, J. P., *Men Under Stress*, Philadelphia, 1945, Ch. 3; Whitehead, T. N., *op. cit.*, Ch. I, X, VII; also Lindsay, A. D., *The Essentials of Democracy*, Oxford, 1935, 2nd ed., pp. 78-81.

In the army, when isolated from civilian primary groups, the individual soldier comes to depend more and more on his military primary group. His spontaneous loyalties are to its immediate members whom he sees daily and with whom he develops a high degree of intimacy. For the German soldier in particular, the demands of his group, reinforced by officially prescribed rules, had the effect of an external authority. It held his aggressiveness in check; it provided discipline, protection, and freedom from autonomous decision.⁷

Army units with a high degree of primary group integrity suffered little from desertions or from individually contrived surrenders. In the Wehrmacht, desertions and surrenders were most frequent in groups of heterogeneous ethnic composition in which Austrians, Czechs, and Poles were randomly intermixed with each other. In such groups the difficulties of linguistic communication, the large amount of individual resentment and aggressiveness about coercion into German service, the weakened support of leadership due to their inability to identify with German officers—all these factors hampered the formation of cohesive groups.

Sample interviews with Wehrmacht deserters made in North Africa in 1943 and in France and Germany in 1944 and 1945 showed an overwhelmingly disproportionate representation of elements which could not be assimilated into primary groups. A total of 443 Wehrmacht Ps/W captured toward the end of the North African campaign, consisting of 180 Germans, 200 Austrians and 63 others (Czechs, Poles, Yugoslavs, etc.), had very markedly different tendencies towards desertion: 29 per

cent of the Germans were deserters or potential deserters; 55 per cent of the Austrians fell into these two classes, as did 78 per cent of the Czechs, Poles, and Yugoslavs. Of the 53 German deserters, only one declared that he had "political" motives for desertion. In the Western European campaign, the bulk of the deserters came from among the "Volksdeutsche,"⁸ Austrians, Poles, and Russians who had been coerced into German military service. It was clear that in view of the apolitical character of most of the deserters, the grounds for their desertion were to be sought among those variables which prevented the formation of close primary group bonds, the chief of which were insuperable language differences, bitter resentment against their coerced condition, and the unfriendliness of the Germans in their units.

Among German deserters, who remained few until the close of the war, the failure to assimilate into the primary group life of the Wehrmacht was the most important factor, more important indeed than political dissidence. Deserters were on the whole men who had difficulty in personal adjustment, e.g., in the acceptance of affection or in the giving of affection. They were men who had shown these same difficulties in civilian life, having had difficulties with friends, work associates, and their own families, or having had criminal records. Political dissidents on the other hand, when captured, justified their failure to desert by invoking their sense of

⁷ German combat soldiers almost always stressed the high level of comradeship in their units. They frequently referred to their units as "one big family."

⁸ Individuals of German extraction residing outside the boundaries of Germany.

solidarity with their comrades and expressed the feeling that had they deserted when given a post of responsibility their comrades would have interpreted it as a breach of solidarity. For the political dissident, the verbal expression of political dissent was as much anti-authoritarianism as he could afford, and submission to his group was the price which he had to pay for it.

The persistent strength of primary group controls was manifested even in the last month of the war, when many deserters felt that they would not have been able to have taken the initial step in their desertion unless they had discussed the matter with their comrades and received some kind of legitimation for the action, such as a statement of approval.⁹ And, on the other hand, the same ongoing efficacy of primary group sentiment was evident in the statements of would-be deserters who declared they had never been able to cross the threshold because they had been told by their officers that the comrades who remained behind (i.e., the comrades of the men who had deserted) would be shot. Hence, one of the chief forms of disintegration which occurred in the last stages of the war took the form of group surrender in which, after ample discussion within the unit, the authorization of the leading personalities and often of the NCO's had been granted for the offering of token resistance to facilitate capture, or even for outright group surrender.

Factors Strengthening Primary Group Solidarity

The Nazi nucleus of the primary group: the "hard core." The stability and military effectiveness of the military primary group were in large measure a

function of the "hard core," who approximated about ten to fifteen per cent of the total of enlisted men; the percentage was higher for non-commissioned officers and was very much higher among the junior officers.¹⁰ These were, on the whole, young men between 24 and 28 years of age who had had a gratifying adolescence in the most rewarding period of National Socialism. They were imbued with the ideology of *Gemeinschaft* (community solidarity),¹¹ were enthusiasts for the military life, had definite homo-erotic tendencies and accordingly placed a very high value on "toughness," manly comradeliness, and group solidarity.¹² The presence of a few such men in the group, zealous, energetic, and unsparing of themselves, provided models for weaker men, and facilitated the process of identification. For those for whom their charisma did not suffice and who were accordingly difficult to incorporate fully into the intimate primary group, frowns, harsh words, and threats served as a check on divisive tendencies. The fact that the elite SS divisions and paratroop divisions had a larger "hard core" than other divisions of the army—so large

⁹ Approval of desertion by a married man with a large family or with heavy familial obligations was often noted near the war's end. For such men, the stronger ties to the family prevented the growth of insuperably strong ties to the army unit.

¹⁰ The "hard core" corresponds to opinion leaders, as the term is currently used in opinion research.

¹¹ Schmalenbach, Hermann, "Die soziologische Kategorien des Bundes," *Die Dioskuren*, Vol. I, München, 1922, pp. 35-105; and Plessner, Hellmuth, *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*, Bonn, 1924.

¹² Blüher, Hans, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*, Jena, 1921, Vol. II, Part II especially, pp. 91-109; pp. 154-177.

as to embrace almost the entire group membership during most of the war—accounted for their greater fighting effectiveness. And the fact that such a “hard core” was almost entirely lacking from certain *Volksgrenadier* divisions helped to a considerable extent to account for the military inferiority of these units.

One of the functions of the “hard core” was to minimize the probability of divisive political discussions. There was, of course, little inclination to discuss political matters or even strategic aspects of the war among German soldiers. For this reason widespread defeatism concerning the outcome of the war had little consequence in affecting behavior (until the spring of 1945) because of the near impossibility—objective as well as subjective—of discussing or carrying out alternative plans of action.

In contrast with the “hard core,” which was a disproportionately large strengthening factor in the integrity of the military primary group, the “soft core” was a source of infection which was by no means comparable in effectiveness. Unlike the first world war experience in which anti-war attitudes were often vigorously expressed and eagerly listened to by men who were “good comrades,” in the second world war the political anti-militarist or anti-Nazi who expressed his views with frequency and vigor was also in the main not a “good comrade.” There was a complete absence of soldiers’ committees and organized opposition, even in March and April 1945 (except for the Bavarian *Freiheitsaktion* which was constituted by rear-echelon troops). On isolated occasions, the Western Allies were able to exploit a man who had been a “good

comrade” and who, after having been captured, expressed his defeatism and willingness to help end the war; he was thereupon sent back into the German line to talk his comrades into going over with him to the Allied lines. Here the “soft core” man exploited his comradesly solidarity and it was only on that basis that he was able to remove some of the members of his group from the influence of the “hard core.”

Community of experience as a cohesive force. The factors which affect group solidarity in general were on the whole carefully manipulated by the German general staff. Although during the war Germany was more permeated by foreigners than it had ever been before in its history, the army was to a great extent carefully protected from disintegrating influences of heterogeneity of ethnic and national origin, at least in crucial military situations. German officers saw that solidarity is fostered by the recollection of jointly experienced gratifications and that accordingly the groups who had gone through a victory together should not be dissolved but should be maintained as units to the greatest degree possible.

The replacement system of the Wehrmacht operated to the same end.¹³ The entire personnel of a division would be withdrawn from the front simultaneously and refitted as a unit with replacements. Since new members were added to the division while it was out

¹³ This policy sometimes created a serious dilemma for the Wehrmacht. Increasingly, to preserve the sense of group identity and the benefits of solidarity which arose from it, regiments were allowed to become depleted in manpower by as much as 50 to 75 per cent. This, however, generated such feelings of weakness that the solidarity gains were cancelled.

of line they were thereby given the opportunity to assimilate themselves into the group; then the group as a whole was sent forward. This system continued until close to the end of the war and helped to explain the durability of the German Army in the face of the overwhelming numerical and material superiority of the Allied forces.

Deterioration of group solidarity in the Wehrmacht which began to appear toward the very end of the war was most frequently found in hastily fabricated units. These were made up of new recruits, dragooned stragglers, air force men who had been forced into the infantry (and who felt a loss of status in the change), men transferred from the navy into the infantry to meet the emergency of manpower shortage, older factory workers, concentration camp inmates, and older married men who had been kept in reserve throughout the war and who had remained with the familial primary group until the last moment. The latter, who were the "catch" of the last "total mobilization" carried with them the resentment and bitterness which the "total mobilization" produced and which prevented the flow of affection necessary for group formation. It was clear that groups so diverse in age composition and background, and especially so mixed in their reactions to becoming infantrymen, could not very quickly become effective fighting units. They had no time to become used to one another and to develop the type of friendliness which is possible only when loyalties to outside groups have been renounced—or at least put into the background. A preview of what was to occur when units became mixed was provided by the 275th Fusilier Battalion which broke up

before the First U.S. Army drive in November. Thirty-five Ps/W interrogated from this unit turned out to have been recently scraped together from fifteen different army units.

The most ineffective of all the military formations employed by the Wehrmacht during the war were the Volksturm units. They ranged in age from boys to old men, and were not even given basic training in the weapons which they were supposed to use. Their officers were Nazi local functionaries who were already objects of hostility and who were therefore unable to release a flow of affection among equals. They had moreover not broken their family ties to the slightest extent. They still remained members of a primary group which did not fuse into the military primary group. Finally, they had no uniforms. They had only brassards to identify them and through which to identify themselves with one another. The mutual identification function of the uniform which plays so great a role in military units was thereby lost. As soon as they were left to their own devices, they disintegrated from within, deserting in large numbers to their homes, hiding, permitting themselves to be captured, etc.

Factors Weakening Primary Group Solidarity

Isolation. The disintegration of a primary group depends in part on the physical and spatial variables which isolate it from the continuous pressure of face-to-face contact. The factor of spatial proximity in the maintenance of group solidarity in military situations must not be underestimated. In February and March of 1945, isolated rem-

nants of platoons and companies were surrendering in groups with increasing frequency. The tactical situation of defensive fighting under heavy American artillery bombardment and the deployment of rear outposts forced soldiers to take refuge in cellars, trenches, and other underground shelters in small groups of three and four. This prolonged isolation from the nucleus of the primary group for several days worked to reinforce the fear of destruction of the self, and thus had a disintegrative influence on primary group relations.¹⁴ A soldier who was isolated in a cellar or in a concrete bunker for several days and whose anxieties about physical survival were aggravated by the tactical hopelessness of his situation, was a much more easily separable member of his group than one who, though fearing physical destruction, was still bound by the continuous and vital ties of working, eating, sleeping, and being at leisure together with his fellow soldiers.

This proposition regarding the high significance of the spatial variable for primary group solidarity and the maintenance of the fighting effectiveness of an army is supported by the behavior of the retreating German Army in North Africa in 1943, and in France and Germany in September-October 1944 and March 1945. As long as a retreat is orderly and the structure of the component units of an army is maintained, strategic difficulties do not break up the army. An army in retreat breaks up only when the retreat is poorly organized, when command is lost over the men, so that they become separated from their units and become stragglers, or when enemy penetrations isolate larg-

er or smaller formations from the main group.¹⁵

Stragglers first became a moderately serious problem in the German Army in October 1944. On October 22, 1944, General Keitel ordered that a maximum of one to three days be allowed for stragglers to reattach themselves to their units. The previous limit had been five days. The aggravation of the straggler problem was further documented by General Blaskowitz's order of March 5, 1945, according to which the category of stragglers was declared to have ceased to exist. Soldiers who lost contact with their own units were directed to attach themselves immediately to the "first troops in the line which he can contact. . . ."

Familial ties and primary group disintegration. Prisoners of war remarked with considerable frequency that discussions about alternative paths of action by groups of soldiers who were entirely defeatist arose not from discussions about the war in its political or strategic aspects, but rather from discussions about the soldiers' families.¹⁶ The recollection of concrete family experi-

¹⁴ This proposition is in opposition to the frequently asserted view that social solidarity of an intense sort is positively and linearly related to fear of threat from the outside.

¹⁵ The Germans in the Channel ports were able to resist so long partly because the men remained together where they were constantly in each other's presence. Thus the authority of the group over the individual was constantly in play.

¹⁶ A 36-year-old soldier—a Berlin radio-worker—who surrendered prematurely, said: "During one month in a bunker without light and without much to do, the men often discussed capture. Conversation usually started about families: who was married and what was to become of his family? The subject became more acute as the Americans approached."

ences reactivated sentiments of dependence on the family for psychological support and correspondingly weakened the hold of the military primary group. It was in such contexts that German soldiers toward the end of the war were willing to discuss group surrender.

To prevent preoccupation with family concerns, the families of German soldiers were given strict instructions to avoid references to family deprivations in letters to the front. In the winter and spring of 1945, when Allied air raids became so destructive of communal life, all telegrams to soldiers at the front had to be passed by party officials in order to insure that no distracting news reached the soldiers. On the other hand, care was taken by party and army authorities that soldiers should not be left in a state of anxiety about their families and to this end vigorous propaganda was carried on to stimulate correspondence with soldiers at the front. For those who had no families and who needed the supplementary affection which the army unit could not provide, provisions were made to obtain mail from individuals (including party officials) who would befriend unmarried or family-less soldiers, with the result that the psychic economy of the soldier was kept in equilibrium.

There was, however, a special type of situation in which the very strength of familial ties served to keep the army from further disintegration. This arose towards the end of the war, when soldiers were warned that desertion would result in severe sanctions being inflicted on the deserter's family.¹⁷

Toward the end of the war, soldiers tended to break away from the army more often while they were on leave and with their families, and therefore

isolated from personal contact with their primary group fellows. When soldiers returned to visit their families, then the conflict between contradictory primary group loyalties became acute. The hold of the military primary group became debilitated in the absence of face-to-face contacts. The prospect of facing, on return to the front, physical destruction or a prolonged loss of affection from the civilian primary group, especially the family, prompted an increasing number of desertions while on furlough.

All of these factors contributed to loosen the solidarity of the German Army, especially when the prospect of physical destruction began to weigh more heavily. Severe threats to the safety of the civilian primary group created anxiety which often weakened the hold of the military primary group. When the area of the soldier's home was occupied by the enemy or when the soldier himself was fighting in the area, there was strong disposition to desert homeward. One such soldier said: "Now I have nothing more for which to fight, because my home is occupied."

The strong pull of the civilian primary group became stronger as the coherence of the army group weakened. But sometimes, the former worked to keep the men fighting in their units, i.e., when they reasoned that the shortest way home was to keep the group intact and to avoid capture or desertion. Otherwise there would ensue a long

¹⁷ This threat was never actually carried out. Furthermore, the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service) admitted the impossibility of taking sanctions against the deserter's family because of the difficulty of locating them in the disorder of German civilian life. As the German soldiers became aware of the impotence of the SD in this respect, this barrier against desertion weakened.

period in an enemy P/W camp. On the other hand, in event of the defeat of a still intact army, there would be only a short period of waiting before demobilization.

Demand for physical survival. The individual soldier's fear of destruction ultimately pressed to weaken primary group cohesion; nevertheless it is striking to note the degree to which demands for physical survival could be exploited by Wehrmacht authority to the end of prolonging resistance. Where the social conditions were otherwise favorable, the primary bonds of group solidarity were dissolved only under the most extreme circumstances of threat to the individual organism—in situations where the tactical prospects were utterly hopeless, under devastating artillery and air bombardment, or where the basic food and medical requirements were not being met. Although aware for a long time of the high probability of German defeat in the war and of the hopelessness of the numerous individual battles, very many German soldiers continued to resist without any serious deterioration in the quality of their fighting skill. But where the most basic physiological demands of the German soldier were threatened with complete frustration, the bonds of group solidarity were broken.

Concern about food and about health always reduces the solidarity of a group. Throughout the war, and until the period just before the end, German army medical services were maintained at a high level of efficiency; the decline in their efficiency coincides with the deterioration in the morale of the men. Special care was also observed in the management of the food supply and accordingly few German soldiers felt that the food supplies were inadequate.

Indeed, as late as October 1944, only 15 per cent of a sample of 92 Ps/W declared that they were at all dissatisfied with army food. By January, however, the situation changed and Ps/W reported increased preoccupation with physical survival, with food, and the shortage of clothing. Soldiers in certain units were beginning to "scrounge." The extreme cold of the winter of '44-'45 also began to tell on the men whose military self-esteem was being reduced by the raggedness of their uniforms and the failure to obtain replacements for unsatisfactory equipment.

Thus, to keep groups integral, it was necessary not only to provide positive gratifications but also to reduce to a minimum the alternative possibilities of increasing the chances for survival by leaving the unit. For this reason the Nazis sought to counteract the fear of personal physical destruction in battle by telling the men that accurate records were kept on deserters and that not only would their families and property be made to suffer in the event of their desertion, but that after the war, upon their return to Germany, they, too, would be very severely punished. They were also told by their officers that German agents were operating in American and British P/W cages in order to report on violations of security and on deserters. A Wehrmacht leaflet to German soldiers mentioned the names of two deserters of the 980th Volksgrenadiere who were alleged to have divulged information and stated that not only would their families be sent to prison and suffer the loss of their property and ration cards, but that the men themselves would also be punished after the war. In actuality, they were often punished in the P/W camps by the extreme

Nazis who exercised some control in certain camps.

For the same reason, as long as the front was relatively stable, the Wehrmacht officers increased the natural hazards of war by ordering mine fields to be laid, barbed wire to be set up, and special guards to be posted to limit the freedom of movement of isolated and psychologically unattached individuals who, in situations which offered the chance of safely withdrawing from the war, would have moved over to the enemy's lines. Although the number of avowedly would-be deserters remained very small until near the end of the war, even they were frequently immobilized for fear of being killed by the devices set up to prevent their separation from the group. The danger of destruction by the Allies in event of desertion also played a part in keeping men attached to their military units. As one P/W who had thought of desertion but who never took action said, "by day our own people shoot at us, by night yours do."

Another physical narcissistic element which contributed somewhat to resistance on the Western front was fear of castration in event of the loss of the war. (This was effective only among a minority of the German soldiers.) The guilt feelings of the Nazi soldiers who had slaughtered and marauded on the Eastern front, and elsewhere in Europe, and their projection onto the enemy of their own sadistic impulses, heightened their narcissistic apprehensiveness about damage to their vital organs and to their physical organism as a whole. Rumors of castration at the hands of the Russians circulated in the German Army throughout the last three years of the war and it is likely that they were large-

ly the result of ruthless methods on both sides.

The Nazis perceived the function of fear of personal destruction in the event of capture as a factor in keeping a group intact after the internal bonds had been loosened. There were accordingly situations in which SS detachments deliberately committed atrocities on enemy civilians and soldiers in order to increase the anxieties of German soldiers as to what would befall them in the event of their defeat and capture. This latter policy was particularly drastically applied by the Waffen-SS in the von Rundstedt counter-offensive. It appears to have been an effort to convince German soldiers that there were no alternatives but victory or resistance to the very end and that surrender or desertion would end with slaughter of the German soldiers, as it had in the cases of the Allied soldiers. This was not effective for the mass of the German soldiers, however, who were becoming convinced that the law-abiding British and Americans would not in most situations harm them upon capture.

The dread of destruction of the self, and the demand for physical survival, while breaking up the spontaneous solidarity of the military primary group in most cases, thus served under certain conditions to coerce the soldier into adherence to his group and to the execution of the orders of his superiors.

III. The Role of "Soldierly Honor"

American and British soldiers tend to consider their wartime service as a disagreeable necessity, as a task which had to be performed because there were no alternatives. For the German, being a soldier was a more than acceptable status. It was indeed honorable. The

King's Regulations which govern the British Army (1940) begin with the statement that the army consists of officers and men serving for various lengths of time. The German equivalent in the Defense Laws of 1935 opens with a declaration that "military service is a service of honor for the German people, the Wehrmacht is the armed barrier and the soldierly school of the German people."

Emphasis on the element of honor in the military profession has led in Germany to the promulgation of elaborate rules of conduct regulating the behavior of both officers and men in a great variety of specific military and extra-military situations.¹⁸ The explicit and implicit code of soldierly honor, regulating the responsibilities of officers for their men, determined behavior in battle and established conditions under which surrender was honorable. It also provided a very comprehensive body of etiquette. This elaborate ritualization of the military profession had a significantly positive influence on group solidarity and efficiency during periods of stress. "Honor" rooted in a rigid conscience (superego) served in the German Army to keep men at their tasks better than individual reflection and evaluation could have done. When the individual was left to make decisions for himself, the whole host of contradictory impulses toward authority of officers and of the group as an entity was stimulated.

Domination by higher authority was eagerly accepted by most ordinary soldiers, who feared that if they were allowed to exercise their initiative their *innere Schweinhunde*, i.e., their own narcissistic and rebellious impulses, would come to the fore. On the other hand, rigorous suppression of these impulses

constituted an appeasement of the superego which allowed the group machinery to function in an orderly manner.

The belief in the efficacy and moral worth of discipline and in the inferiority of the spontaneous, primary reactions of the personality was expressed in the jettisoning of the German Army Psychiatric Selection Services in 1942. When the manpower shortage became stringent and superfluities had to be scrapped, the personnel selection system based on personality analyses was one of those activities which was thought to be dispensable. Apparently taking individual personality differences into account was thought to be too much of a concession to moral weakness which could and in any case *should* be overcome by hard, soldierly discipline.

Strength as an element in honor. For persons who have deep-lying uncertainties over their own weaknesses, who fear situations which will reveal their weakness in controlling themselves and their lack of manliness, membership in an army will tend to reduce anxieties. Subjugation to discipline gives such persons support; it means that they do not have to depend on themselves, that someone stronger than themselves is guiding and protecting them. Among young males in middle and late adolescence, the challenges of love and vocation aggravate anxieties about weakness. At this stage fears about potency are considerable. When men who have passed through this stage are placed in the entirely male society of a military unit, freed from the control of adult civilian society and missing its gratifica-

¹⁸ Demeter, Karl, *Das deutsche Heer und seine Offiziere*, Berlin, n.d., Ch. 3 and 5; Broch, Hermann, *The Sleepwalkers*, London, n.d.

tions, they tend to regress to the adolescent condition. The show of "toughness" and hardness which is regarded as a virtue among soldiers is a response to these reactivated adolescent anxieties about weakness.

In the German Army, all these tendencies were intensified by the military code, and they accounted for a considerable share of the cohesion and resistance up to the very last stages of the war. Among those at the extreme end of the scale—the "hard core" of Nazi last-ditch resisters—in whom the preoccupation with strength and weakness is to be found in most pronounced form—this attitude was manifested in unwillingness of some to acknowledge defeat even after capture.

The honor of the officer. To control the behavior of officers and to protect soldierly honor, the Court of Honor procedure of the Imperial Army was reestablished when the Nazis came into power. Its function was to adjudicate disagreements and quarrels between officers in an authoritative way, and it did succeed in minimizing disagreements and unpleasant tensions among officers in both professional and private affairs which might otherwise have endangered solidarity of the group by division among those in immediate authority. The settlement, which was arrived at in secret by officers of the same rank as those involved in the dispute, was almost always accepted without a murmur by both parties. Its minutely detailed procedural and substantive rules reduced to a minimum the possibility that an officer might feel that the collective authority which ruled over him was weak, negligible, or impotent in any sphere. The code went so far as to empower the court to recommend

suspension from duty simply on the grounds of *unehrliche Gesinnung* (dishonorable attitude) derogatory to the status of the officer class. External discipline penetrated thus into even the most private sphere to give assurance that soldierly honor would be operative even in the recesses of the individual mind.¹⁹ The officers' court of honor not only served as an "external superego," but by its continuous emphasis on "honor" and "dishonor," it heightened the sensibilities of the officers to the demands of their own superego.

One of the most elaborated aspects of soldierly honor as related to combat behavior dealt with the conditions under which surrender could be honorably performed. In this respect, great stress was laid on the oath which bound soldiers not to desert or surrender, and much casuistical effort was expended to make surrender compatible with soldierly honor. In some cases soldiers arranged circumstances in such a way as would appear to others, as well as to themselves, that they had been captured against their will. In other cases, surrender was excused as legitimate according to accepted military standards. In a few cases, fortification commanders required that a token round of phosphorous shells be fired against their position in order to satisfy the requirements of their honor. Deserters often attempted to appease their conscience by ingenious arguments to the effect that the oaths which they took were signed with pencil, or that the sergeant who administered the oath turned his back on them, or that they had been

¹⁹ Indeed, a well known German general during the period of captivity felt so strongly the pressure of soldierly honor that he always went to sleep wearing his monocle.

forced into signing the oath which was incompatible with the "requirements of a free conscience."

The stout defense of the Channel ports, which denied vital communication centers to the Allies, was in large part the result of the determination of the commanding officers whose sense of military honor required them to carry out to the letter orders for resistance, regardless of the cost in men or of the apparent strategic futility of their operation.

Even after the extreme reverses in February and March of 1945, German colonels and generals sought to have their units captured and overrun in an approved manner. Captured German senior officers often declared that they had been aware of certain defeat in their sector but, despite this, they took little or no action to terminate hostilities. The most positive action some of them were able to take was to follow their instructions to hold fast in such a manner as to facilitate the capture of their own command posts when they were not able to retreat. But the various subterfuges to make their surrender or capture acceptable to their superiors were apparently insufficient, and after capture their sense of guilt for having infringed on the moral requirements of officership usually produced regressive manifestations in the form of elaborate self-justifications for their inadequacy. In some cases it went to the extreme form of imagining how they would justify themselves in the event that Hitler were to confront them at the very moment and were to ask them why they had allowed themselves to be captured.

The reluctance of senior and general officers to enter into negotiations to surrender on their own initiative was of

course not due exclusively to motivations of conscience; it was buttressed by the efficient functioning of the security system. The failure of the July 20 *Putsch* resulted in the carefully contrived isolation of senior commanding officers and their domination by Nazi secret police. The establishment of an independent chain of command for National Socialist *Führungs-offiziere* (Guidance Officers) was an additional technique established for spying on generals. Aside from their morale duties, which are described elsewhere, these fanatical Nazi Guidance Officers at higher headquarters busied themselves in reporting on German generals who appeared to be unlikely to carry out orders for final resistance.

Company grade and battalion officers on the whole behaved similarly to their superiors. The deterioration of their effectiveness which occurred was due in greater measure to the great reduction in their numbers rather than to any loss of skill or determination. At the end, the German Army suffered severely from being underofficered, rather than poorly officered. As early as January 1945, the ratio of officers to enlisted men fell to about 50 per cent of what it had been under normal conditions.

Tension between officer's honor and solicitude of men. There was, however, a difference between the behavior of junior and senior officers, which can in part be explained by the latter's closer physical proximity and more extensive contact with their men. The sense of obligation which the junior officer felt for the welfare of his men often tempered his conception of the proper relations between soldierly honor and surrender, especially when he was in a position to recognize that there was no military value in further resistance.

Nonetheless, desertion by German officers was extremely rare, and only occasionally did they bring about the group surrender of their men; more typically they protected their soldierly honor by allowing themselves to be overrun.

Senior non-commissioned officers displayed a sense of military honor very similar to that of junior officers, but even closer identification with their comrades precipitated a crisis in loyalties which weighed still more heavily on their consciences. Ordinarily, soldierly honor and primary group solidarity are not only congruous with one another but actually mutually supporting. In crisis situations, however, the divergence between them begins to appear and loyalty to the larger army group (the strategically relevant unit), which is an essential component of soldierly honor, enters into contradiction to loyalty to the primary group.

Until the failure of von Rundstedt's counter-offensive, soldierly honor on the part of senior NCO's tended to outweigh primary group solidarity wherever they came into conflict with each other. As the final Allied drive against the homeland developed, they became less disposed to carry out "last-ditch" resistance, but when captured they showed signs of having experienced guilt feelings for not having done so. The recognition of the overwhelming Allied strength in their particular sectors, together with physical absence from the immediate environment of their superior officers (which was a function of the decreasing ratio of officers to men) made it possible for them to offer only token resistance or to allow themselves to be overrun. They relieved

their consciences by declaring that further bloodshed would have served no further *military purpose*.

The infantry soldier's honor. The code of soldierly honor and its ramifications took a deep root in the personality of the German soldiers of the line—even those who were totally apolitical. Identification with the stern authority associated with the symbols of State power gave the ordinary German soldier a feeling that he became strong and morally elevated by submitting to discipline. For these people a military career was a good and noble one, enjoying high intrinsic ethical value. Even apathetic and inarticulate soldiers sometimes grew eloquent on the values of the military life.

The most defeatist soldier, who insisted that he longed to be captured and that he offered little or no resistance, was careful to point out that he was not a deserter, and showed anxiety lest the conditions under which he was captured might be interpreted as desertion. This was of course to some extent the result of the fear that German police would retaliate against his family if his company commander reported that he had deserted and that the Nazis would seek revenge against him, either in the P/W camp, or after the war in Germany. But at least of equal significance was his desire to maintain his pride in having been a good soldier who had done his duty.²⁰ Anti-Nazi German soldiers who

²⁰ Frequently German soldiers who were reluctant to desert separated themselves from battle by hiding in cellars or dugouts, waiting to be overrun. Such soldiers often thought it morally necessary to volunteer the explanation for their capture that they had been found by the enemy because they had fallen asleep from exhaustion and had been taken against their will.

went to some length to inform the interrogators of their anti-Nazi political attitudes felt no inconsistency in insisting that despite everything they were "100 per cent soldiers." Only a very small minority admitted freely that they deserted.

IV. Relations with Authority: Officer-Man Relations

The basis of the officers' status. The primary group relations in modern armies, especially in the German Army, depend as much on the acceptance of the various authorities to which the soldier is subjected as on mutual respect and love between individuals of equal rank. The non-commissioned and the junior officers are the agents on whom the individual soldier depends in his relationships with the rest of the army outside his immediate group, and in his relations with the outer world (the home front and the enemy). They have charge of his safety, and they are the channels through which flow food, equipment, and other types of supplies as well as chance symbolic gratifications such as decorations, promotions, leave, etc. For the German soldier, with his authoritarian background, the officer-man relation is one of submission to an overriding authority.

An exceptionally talented regular German Army officer, bred in the German military tradition, once tried to summarize to his interrogator what made the German Army "work": political indoctrination and "pep talks" were "all rot"; whether the men would follow him depended upon the personality of the officer. The leader must be a man who possesses military skill: then his men will know that he is protecting

them. He must be a model to his men; he must be an all-powerful, and still benevolent, authority.

He must look after his men's needs, and be able to do all the men's duties better than they themselves in training and under combat conditions. The men must also be sure that their officer is duly considerate of their lives: they must know that he does not squander his human resources, that the losses of life which occur under his command will be minimal and justified. In the training of NCO's for officers, the German Army acted on the basis of such maxims, despite the Nazi Party's propagandistic preoccupation with such secondary aspects of morale as political ideology.

The positions of the officer and of the NCO were dependent on discipline and on the sanctions by which discipline is maintained and enforced. During training the Wehrmacht laid down the most severe disciplinary rules. In combat, even before Germany's military fortunes began to contract, life and death powers over the troops were vested in lower commanders. At the same time elaborate precautions were taken to control and even to counteract their severity in certain spheres of behavior. Officers were warned against senseless and unnecessary insults directed against their men. Special orders were issued and particular attention was paid in the training of officers to fatherly and considerate behavior in relations with their men; the combination of sternness and benevolence was strongly counseled. Numerous small indications of affection such as congratulations on birthdays and on anniversaries, and fatherly modes of address, e.g., "*Kinder*" (chil-

dren), were recommended as helping to build the proper relations between officers and men.

The results of this approach to status relationships appear to have been good. Differences in privileges between officers and enlisted men in combat units almost never emerged as an object of complaint on the part of enlisted Ps/W. On the contrary, complaints of "softness" were more frequently directed against officers and enlisted men in the rear. The infantry soldier seldom attempted to attribute deficiencies in military operations to his immediate superiors. Spontaneous praise, in fact, was frequent.

German soldiers—both officers and men—greatly appreciated the ceremonial acknowledgment of hierarchical differences as expressed, for example, in the military salute. Captured Germans who saw the American Army in Great Britain before D-Day were often contemptuous of an enemy who was obviously so lax in dress and salute. Many of them said that the American Army could not be expected to fight well since the relations between officers and enlisted men were so informal. "This is no army." Such views of the value of the ceremonial aspects of discipline persisted in defeat. Ps/W taken late in the war, when they commented on American officer-man relations, often remarked with incredulous wonderment: "I don't see how it works!"

Not only was the position of German officers strengthened by their mixture of severe dominion and benevolence, but additional support for their authority came from the provision for the blameless gratification of primitive impulses and from the sanctioning of

all types of aggressive social behavior outside the army group. Private personal transgressions of "civil" ethics were regarded as of slight importance, since they were outside the limits of the "manly comradeship" of the military primary group. Drunkenness and having women in the barracks were crimes which the officers overlooked; in occupied and enemy countries the latitude in personal and private transgressions was even greater. Provision was made for official houses of prostitution in which soldiers could reassure themselves about their manliness without disrupting the disciplinary structure of the Wehrmacht. This combination of practices lowered the probability of tensions in officer-man relationships.

NCO's and junior officers. In battle, leadership responsibility devolved in actuality on the senior NCO's (the opposite numbers of American platoon sergeants) and on the company grade officers. Only seldom did a line soldier see his battalion commander and even less frequently was he spoken to by him. Thus battalion commanders and other higher officers played a less central role in the personality system of the German soldier. They were therefore less directly related to the solidarity of the military primary group.

Nearly all non-commissioned and commissioned officers of the company grade level were regarded by the German soldier throughout the Western campaign as brave, efficient, and considerate. It was only in the very final phases of the war that Ps/W occasionally complained that they had been abandoned by their officers, and there was reason to believe that such complaints were justified not by facts but

by the resurgence of uninhibited hostility against officers who, having been defeated, could now be looked upon as having shown weakness.

In addition, the slight increase in anti-officer sentiment which occurred during the last two months of the war, may be related not to the decline in competence, courage, or devotion on the part of the officers, but rather to the fact that the heavy losses of the Wehrmacht's trained junior officers had led to a large reduction in the ratio of the junior officers to men. In consequence, in order to use the available officers most economically, it was necessary to "thin" them out.²¹ This resulted in a reduction in the amount of face-to-face contact between officers and men and in reduced feeling of the officers' protective function. And this, in turn, sometimes tipped the balance of the submissiveness-rebelliousness scale, in the successful manipulation of which lay the secret of the effective control of the German Army.

The junior officers of the Wehrmacht were, in general, very well selected. They were better educated than the average German, and had received extensive preliminary training. Although Nazi Party politics played a role in the general selection of officers (despite the façade of a non-political Wehrmacht) the junior officer ranks never became a field of patronage. High technical and personality requirements were made of all candidates for officership, Nazi and non-Nazi.

These facts were appreciated by many of the more intelligent enlisted Ps/W who testified that the influence of highly placed friends or of Party connections had practically no effect on an

officer candidate's chances for selection, if he lacked the necessary qualifications for making a good officer.

Equally important in the provision of firm, "hard," and protective leadership, were the senior non-commissioned officers, who were everywhere appreciated as the most solid asset of the Wehrmacht. Until 1943, more than half of the NCO's who became Ps/W had belonged to the pre-1935 German Army. These men were neither very interested in politics nor very aggressive, but were thoroughly trained, solid men who were doing their job out of a deeply-rooted sense of duty to the soldierly profession.

As the war progressed, their numbers declined and less well-trained men took their place. In the last stages of the war, when the speed in reforming units was increased, the top non-commissioned officers often did not have sufficient time to promote the growth of strong identifications between themselves and their men. In February 1945, for the first time, Ps/W began to complain that "they didn't even have time to learn our names." The disintegration which set in in the Wehrmacht at this time was in part due to the declining value of the NCO as a cohesive factor in the military primary group.

Senior officers. The High Command and the senior officers, although gen-

²¹ The absence of officers relaxed disciplinary controls. Thus soldiers who lay in bunkers and who "didn't see any officers for weeks" were more likely to desert or to allow themselves to be captured. The presence of the officer had the same function as other primary group members—he strengthened the superego by granting affection for duties performed and by threatening to withdraw it for duties disregarded.

erally esteemed, were not directly relevant in the psychological structure of the military primary group. They were in the main less admired than the junior officers because their physical remoteness made it easier to express hostile sentiments against them; they stood between the Führer and the junior officers and NCO's. And while the latter three obtained a positive affect from the ambivalent attitude toward authority of so many of the soldiers, the general officers themselves were made to some extent into the recipients of the hostile component of the soldier's authority-attitude. The failure of the *Putsch* of July 20 served to lower the esteem in which the High Command was held, although in general there was not a very lively reaction to that incident. Stalwart Nazis viewed it as a case of treason, and for the time being the concentration of their hostility on generals whose names were announced in public increased their confidence in those generals whom the Führer left in charge. Other soldiers, less passionately political, were inclined to turn their backs on the unsuccessful plotters because of the weakness manifested in their failures. But the situation was only temporary, and in any case the officers on whom the men in the field felt they depended were but little affected. The loss of prestige of the immediate officers was too small to make any difference in battle behavior, while senior officers in whom confidence had declined to a greater extent were too remote in the soldier's mind to make much difference in his combat efficiency.

V. Secondary Symbols

From the preceding section it is apparent that the immediately present

agents and symbols of political authority—junior officers, NCO's, and conceptions of soldierly honor—were effective because of their consistency with the personality system of the individual soldier. In this section, we shall examine the effectiveness of the remoter—or secondary—agents and symbols of state authority.

Strategic aspects of the war. For the mass of the German Army, the strategic phases of the war were viewed apathetically. The ignorance of the German troops about important military events, even on their own front, was partly a result of the poverty of information about the actual course of the war—itself a part of Nazi policy.²² But the deliberate management of ignorance need not always result in such far-reaching indifference as the German soldiers showed. Deliberately maintained ignorance would have resulted in a flood of rumors, had the German soldiers been more eager to know about the strategic phases of the war. As it was, there were very few rumors on the subject—merely apathy. Three weeks after the fall of the city of Aachen, there were still many prisoners being taken in the adjoining area who did not know that the city had fallen. For at least a week after the beginning of von Rundstedt's counter-offensive, most of the troops on the northern hinge of the bulge did not know that the offensive was taking place and were not much interested when they were told after capture. Of 140 Ps/W taken between December 23-24, 1944, only 35 per cent had heard of the counter-offensive and

²² Nazi propagandists, with their hyper-political orientation, tended to overestimate the German soldier's responsiveness to politics.

only 7 per cent said that they thought it significant.²³

Some exception to this extensive strategic indifference existed with respect to the Eastern front. Although the German soldiers were extremely ignorant of the state of affairs on that front and made little attempt to reduce their ignorance, still the question of Russians was so emotionally charged, so much the source of anxiety, that it is quite likely that fear of the Russians did play a role in strengthening resistance. National Socialist propaganda had long worked on the traditional repugnance and fear of the German towards the Russian. The experience of the German soldiers in Russia in 1941 and 1942 increased this repugnance by direct perception of the primitive life of the Russian villager. But probably more important was the projection onto the Russians of the guilt feelings generated by the ruthless brutality of the Germans in Russia during the occupation period. The shudder of horror which frequently accompanied a German soldier's remarks about Russia was a result of all of these factors. These attitudes influenced German resistance in the West through the shift of soldiers from East to West and the consequent diffusion of their attitudes among their comrades. They also took effect by making soldiers worry about what would happen to their families if the Russians entered Germany. Of course, it should also be mentioned that this fear of the Russians also made some German soldiers welcome a speedier collapse on the Western front in the hope that a larger part of Germany would fall under Anglo-American control.

Before the actual occupation, only a small minority expressed fear of the

consequences of an Anglo-American occupation. The continuing monthly opinion poll conducted by the Psychological Warfare Branch, mentioned elsewhere, never showed more than 20 per cent of the prisoners answering "yes" to the question, "Do you believe that revenge will be taken against the population after the war?" Those who feared retribution were confirmed Nazis. Yet the general absence of fear of revenge did not cause a diminution of German resistance.

Neither did expectations about the outcome of the war play a great role in the integration or disintegration of the German Army. The statistics regarding German soldier opinion cited below show that pessimism as to final triumph was quite compatible with excellence in fighting behavior. The far greater effectiveness of considerations of self-preservation, and their vast preponderance over interest in the outcome of the war and the strategic situation, is shown by German prisoner recall of the contents of Allied propaganda leaflets (see Table 1). In the last two months of 1944 and the first two months of 1945, not less than 59 per cent of the sample of prisoners taken each month recalled references to the preservation of the individual, and the figure rose to 76 per cent in February of 1945. On the other hand, the proportion of prisoners recalling references to the total strategic situation of the war and the prospect of the outcome of the war seldom

²³ The fact that the High Command made no attempt to explain away the defeat of the counter-offensive may have been due, among other things, to its conviction of the irrelevance of strategic consideration in the morale of the ordinary soldier.

TABLE I

TABULATION OF ALLIED LEAFLET PROPAGANDA THEMES
REMEMBERED BY GERMAN Ps/W

	<i>Dec. 15-31</i> 1944	<i>Jan. 1-15</i> 1945	<i>Jan. 15-31</i> 1945	<i>Feb. 1-15</i> 1945
Number of Ps/W	60	83	99	135
Themes and appeals remembered:				
a. Promise of good treatment as Ps/W and self-preservation through surrender	63%	65%	59%	76%
b. Military news	15	17	19	30
c. Strategical hopelessness of Germany's position	13	12	25	26
d. Hopelessness of a local tactical situation	3	1	7	7
e. Political attacks on German leaders	7	5	4	8
f. Bombing of German cities	2	8	6	—
g. Allied Military Government	7	3	—	—
h. Appeals to civilians	5	4	2	—

(The percentages add up to more than 100% since some Ps/W remembered more than one topic. Only Ps/W remembering at least one theme were included in this tabulation.)

amounted to more than 20 per cent, while references to political subjects seldom amounted to more than 10 per cent. The general tendency was not to think about the outcome of the war unless forced to do so by direct interrogation. Even pessimism was counterbalanced by the reassurances provided by identification with a strong and benevolent Führer, by identification with good officers, and by the psychological support of a closely integrated primary group.

The ethics of war and patriotism. Quite consistently, ethical aspects of the war did not trouble the German soldier much. When pressed by Allied interrogators, Ps/W said that Germany had been forced to fight for its life. There were very few German soldiers who

said that Germany had been morally wrong to attack Poland, or Russia. Most of them thought that if anything had been wrong about the war, it was largely in the realm of technical decisions. The decision to extirpate the Jews had been too drastic not because of its immorality but because it united the world against Germany. The declaration of war against the Soviet Union was wrong only because it created a two-front war. But these were all arguments which had to be forced from the Ps/W. Left to themselves, they seldom mentioned them.

The assumption underlying these arguments was that the strong national state is a good in itself. But it was not, in fact, the highest good for any but the "hard core." In September 1944, for

example, only 5 per cent of a sample of 634 Ps/W said that they were worried about anything other than personal or familial problems, while in the very same survey, more than half of the Ps/W said they believed that Germany was losing the war or that they were at best uncertain of the war's outcome. In brief, fear for Germany's future as a nation does not seem to have been very important in the ordinary soldier's outlook and in motivating his combat behavior. As a matter of fact, as the war became more and more patently a threat to the persistence of the German national state, the narcissism of the German soldier increased correspondingly, so that the idea of national survival did not become an object of widespread preoccupation even when it might have been expected to become so.²⁴

Ethical-religious scruples seem to have played an equally small role. Although there were a few interesting cases of Roman Catholic deserters, Roman Catholics (except Austrians, Czechs and Polish nationals) do not seem to have deserted disproportionately. Prisoners seldom expressed remorse for Nazi atrocities, and practically no case was noted of a desertion because of moral repugnance against Nazi atrocities.

Political ideals. The significance of political ideals, of symbols of political systems, was rather pronounced in the case of the "hard core" minority of fervent Nazis in the German Army. Their desire for discipline under a strong leader made them enthusiasts for the totalitarian political system. Their passionate aggressiveness also promoted projective tendencies which facilitated their acceptance of the Nazi picture of an innocent and harmless

Germany encircled by the dark, threatening cloud of Bolsheviks, Jews, Negroes, etc., and perpetually in danger from inner enemies as well. But for most of the German soldiers, the political system of National Socialism was of little interest.

The *system* was indeed of very slight concern to German civilians also, even though dissatisfaction increased to a high pitch towards the end of the war. Soldiers on the whole were out of touch with the operation of the Party on the home front. Hence the political system impinged little on their consciousness. Thus, for example, of 53 potential and actual deserters in the Mediterranean theater, only one alleged political grounds for his action. The irrelevance of party politics to effective soldiering has already been treated above: here we need only repeat the statement of a German soldier, "Nazism begins ten miles behind the front line."

Nor did the soldiers react in any noticeable way to the various attempts to Nazify the army. When the Nazi Party salute was introduced in 1944, it was accepted as just one more army order, about equal in significance to an order requiring the carrying of gas masks. The introduction of the *National Socialistische Führungsoffiziere* (Guidance, or Indoctrination Officer), usually known as the NSFO, was regarded apa-

²⁴ The proposition often asserted during the war that the Allies' refusal to promise a "soft peace" to the Germans was prolonging the war, i.e., that German military resistance was motivated by fear of what the Allies would do to Germany in event of its defeat, scarcely finds support in the fact that in October 1944, when the German front was stiffening, 74 per cent of a sample of 345 Ps/W said they did not expect revenge to be taken against the German population after the war.

thetically or as a joke. The contempt for the NSFO was derived not from his Nazi connection but from his status as an "outsider" who was not a real soldier. The especially Nazified Waffen SS divisions were never the object of hostility on the part of the ordinary soldier, even when the responsibility for atrocities was attributed to them. On the contrary, the Waffen SS was highly esteemed, not as a Nazi formation, but for its excellent fighting capacity. Wehrmacht soldiers always felt safer when there was a Waffen SS unit on their flank.

Devotion to Hitler. In contrast to the utterly apolitical attitude of the German infantry soldier towards almost all secondary symbols, an intense and personal devotion to Adolph Hitler was maintained in the German Army throughout the war. There could be little doubt that a high degree of identification with the Führer was an important factor in prolonging German resistance. Despite fluctuations in expectations as to the outcome of the war the trust in Hitler remained at a very high level even after the beginning of the serious reverses in France and Germany. In monthly opinion polls of German Ps/W opinion from D-Day until January 1945, in all but two samples over 60 per cent expressed confidence in Hitler,²⁵ and confidence in January was nearly as high as it was in the preceding June. During this same period considerably more than half of the German soldiers in seven out of eight polls said they believed that it was impossible for the German Army to defeat the Allies in France. Only when the German Army began to break up in the face of overwhelming Allied fire power and

deep, communications-cutting penetrations, did confidence in Hitler fall to the unprecedentedly low level of 30 per cent. Even when defeatism was rising to the point at which only one-tenth of the prisoners taken as of March 1945 believed that the Germans had any chance of success, still a third retained confidence in Hitler.²⁶

Belief in the good intentions of the Führer, in his eminent moral qualities, in his devotion and contributions to the well-being of the German people, continued on an even higher level. This strong attachment grew in large part from the feeling of strength and protection which the German soldier got from his conception of the Führer personality.

For older men, who had lived through the unemployment of the closing years of the Weimar Republic and who experienced the joy of being reinstated in gainful employment by Nazi full-employment policies, Hitler was above all the man who had provided economic security. This attitude extended even to left wing soldiers of this generation, who denounced the National Socialist political system, but found occasion to say a good word for Hitler as a man who had restored order and work in Germany. For men of the generation between 22-35, who had first experienced Hitler's charisma in the struggles to establish their manliness during late adolescence, Hitler was the prototype of strength and masculinity.

²⁵ See Gurfein, M. I., and Janowitz, Morris, "Trends in Wehrmacht Morale," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1946), p. 78.

²⁶ Much of the reduction of trust in Hitler which occurred in this final period was simply a diminution in esteem for Hitler's technical skill as a strategist and as a diplomat.

For the younger Nazi fanatics, he was a father substitute, providing the vigilant discipline and the repression of dangerous impulses both in the individual and in the social environment; for them he had the additional merit of legitimating revolt against the family and traditional restraints.

Prisoners spoke of Hitler with enthusiasm, and even those who expressed regret over the difficulties which his policies had brought on Germany by engendering a two-front war and by allowing the Jews to be persecuted so fiercely as to arouse world hatred—even these men retained their warm esteem for his good intentions. They found it necessary to exculpate him in some way by attributing his errors to dishonest advisors who kept the truth from him, or to certain technical difficulties in his strategic doctrines which did not in any way reflect on his fundamental moral greatness or nobility.

It was difficult for German soldiers, as long as they had this attitude toward Hitler, to rebel mentally against the war. Time after time, prisoners who were asked why Hitler continued the war when they themselves admitted it was so obviously lost, said he wouldn't continue the war and waste lives if he did not have a good, even though undisclosed, strategic reason for doing so, or if he didn't have the resources to realize his ends. Nazis as well as non-Nazis answered in this way. Or else they would say, "the Führer has never deceived us," or, "he must have a good reason for doing what he does."

There was obviously a fear of rendering an independent judgment of events among the German soldiers and a desire for some strong leader to assume

the responsibility for determining their fate. American and British soldiers often complained that the complexity of the army organization and strategy was so great and their own particular part was so small that they could not see the role of their personal missions. Their failure to see the connection made them miserable because it reduced their sense of personal autonomy. In the German Army, on the other hand, there was no difficulty for soldiers who were used throughout their lives to having other persons determine their objectives for them.

It is also possible that the very high devotion to Hitler under conditions of great stress was in part a reaction formation growing from a hostility against lesser authorities, which emerged as the weakness of these authorities became more manifest. In the last year of the war, hostility and contempt on the part of the German soldiers toward Nazi Party functionaries and toward Nazi Party leaders below Hitler (particularly Goebbels and Goering) was increasing. After the *Putsch* of July 20, hostility toward senior Wehrmacht officers also increased somewhat, although it never reached the levels of hostility displayed by civilians against local civilian Party officials and leaders. It is possible, therefore, that guilt created in ambivalent personalities by giving expression, even though verbally, to hostility against subordinate agents of authority, had to be alleviated by reaffirmed belief in the central and highest authority.

Weakening of the Hitler symbol. As the integral pattern of defense was broken down, however, and as danger to physical survival increased, devotion to Hitler deteriorated. The tendency to

attribute virtue to the strong and immorality to the weak took hold increasingly, and while it did not lead to a complete rejection of Hitler, it reached a higher point than at any other stage in the history of National Socialism. The announcement of Hitler's death met an incapacity to respond on the part of many soldiers. There seemed to be no willingness to question the truth of the report, but the great upsurge of preoccupation with physical survival as a result of disintegration of the military primary group, the loss of contact with junior officers and the greatly intensified threat of destruction, caused a deadening of the power to respond to this event. For the vast horde of dishevelled, dirty, bewildered prisoners, who were being taken in the last weeks of the war, Hitler was of slight importance alongside the problem of their own biological survival and the welfare of their families. For the small minority who still had sufficient energy to occupy themselves with "larger problems," the news of Hitler's death released a sort of amorphous resentment against the fallen leader whose weakness and immorality had been proven by the failure of his strategy. But even here, the resentment was not expressed in explicit denunciations of Hitler's character or personality. The emphasis was all on technical deficiencies and weaknesses.

The explanation of the deterioration and final—though probably only temporary—hostility toward Hitler may in part be sought in the average German soldier's ambivalence toward the symbols of authority. This psychological mechanism, which also helps to explain the lack of a significant resistance movement inside Germany, enables us to un-

derstand the curve of Hitler's fame among the German people. Hitler, the father symbol, was loved for his power and his great accomplishments and hated for his oppressiveness, but the latter sentiment was repressed. While he remained strong it was psychologically expedient—as well as politically expedient—to identify with Hitler and to displace hostility on to weaker minority groups and foreigners. But once Hitler's authority had been undermined, the German soldiers rejected it and tended to express their hostility by projecting their own weakness on to him.

Thus the only important secondary symbol in motivating the behavior of the German soldiers during the recent war also lost its efficacy when the primary group relations of comradeship, solidarity and subordination to junior officers broke down, and with it the superego of the individual, on which the effective functioning of the primary group depends.²⁷

VI. Nazi Machinery for Maintaining Army Solidarity and Fighting Effectiveness

Administrative machinery and personnel. Even before the outbreak of the war, the Nazi Party took an active hand in the internal high policy of the Wehrmacht and in the selection of the

²⁷ The mixture of apathy and resentment against Hitler persisted through the first part of the demobilization period following the end of the war, but as life began to reorganize and to take on new meaning and the attitudes toward authority, which sustain and are sustained by the routines of daily life, revived, esteem for Hitler also began to revive. It is likely to revive still further and to assume a prominent place in German life once more, if the new elite which is being created under the Allied occupation shows weakness and lack of decisiveness and self-confidence.

Chief of Staff and his entourage. From September 1939 to the signing of the capitulation in May 1945 this process of Nazification continued steadily until the Wehrmacht was finally rendered powerless to make its own decisions. Nazi Party control over the Wehrmacht was designed to insure (1) that Nazi strategic intentions would be carried out (2) that capitulation would be made impossible and (3) that internal solidarity down to the lowest private would be maintained.

Most ambitious and successful of the early efforts at Nazification were the recruitment and training of the special Waffen SS (Elite) Divisions. These units initially contained only fanatically devoted Nazi volunteers and had officer staffs which were thoroughly permeated with Nazi stalwarts. They became the Nazi Party army within the Wehrmacht, and their military prowess greatly enhanced the prestige of the Nazi Party and weakened the position of the General Staff.

At the outbreak of the war, the domestic security and police services inside the Reich were completely unified under the command of Himmler. Although the Wehrmacht had its own elaborate system of security, elements of the *Sicherheitsdienst* operated in occupied areas, in conjunction with the Wehrmacht. As the fortunes of war declined, the Nazi Party accelerated the extension of its security and indoctrination services over the Wehrmacht. The security net around the German High Command was drawn most tightly in response to the 20th of July *Putsch*. In addition to those officers who were executed, a large number of doubtful loyalty were removed or put into com-

mands where they could be closely supervised.

As the German troops retreated into Germany, SS and state police units, instead of the Wehrmacht military police, were given the normal military function of maintaining the line of demarcation between the front lines and the rear areas. A captured order, issued by the CO of the SS forces in the West on September 21, 1944, indicated that these units would have the task of preventing contact between the civilian population and the troops, as well as the arrest and execution of deserters from the army.²⁸ In addition to these security procedures, the Nazis made effective use of exploiting the individual German soldier's fear of physical destruction as was described above in the section, *Demand for physical survival*.

But these measures were of a negative nature. In order to strengthen the traditional Wehrmacht indoctrination efforts, the Nazi Party appointed in the winter of 1943 political indoctrination officers, called *National Socialistische Führungsoffiziere* (NSFO), to all military formations. Later in September 1944, when the Nazis felt the need for intensifying their indoctrination efforts, the position of these officers was strengthened by the establishment of an independent chain of command which enabled them to communicate with higher headquarters without Wehrmacht interference.²⁹ The NSFO's were given the power, in cases of "particular political significance or where delay implies danger" to report immediately and directly

²⁸ Order of Commanding Officer of SS Forces in the West, September 21, 1944.

²⁹ This step was regarded as sufficiently important to be promulgated in an Order appearing over Hitler's signature.

to NSF officers of higher commands and upward to the highest command, irrespective of routine communication channels. To interfere with the NSFO chain of command was made a military crime. The NSFO "organization" came to publish or directly supervise most of the publications and radio stations for the troops, and to prepare the leaflets which were distributed to or dropped on the German troops. Their job also included periodic indoctrination meetings. The official publication for the indoctrination of the officers' corps, *Mitteilung für die Truppe*, which had been published throughout the war by the Wehrmacht, was also taken over by Nazi Party functionaries (*NS Führungsstab der Wehrmacht*) in November 1944.

The NSF officers, with their independent chain of command, also became security officers of the Nazi Party. They spent a great deal of time prying into the morale and political convictions of higher officers in order to warn headquarters of the need to replace men of faltering faith.⁸⁰ Captured German generals, perhaps motivated by a desire to exculpate themselves, told how during the closing months of the war, they came to feel completely subjugated by the indoctrination officers. They reported that these Nazi junior officers maintained an independent reporting system on senior officers and often said "You're done if he gives a bad account of you."

The final step in the Nazi Party encroachment on the administration of the Wehrmacht came when the *levee en masse*, the *Volkssturm*, was raised. Here, the Nazi Party assumed complete control of training and indoctrination and units were to be turned over to the Wehrmacht only for actual deployment. No doubt the Wehrmacht was glad to

be relieved of this unpopular task, as well as the even more unpopular task of organizing the Werewolf resistance, which the Nazi Party assumed for itself completely.

Propaganda themes. The most striking aspect of Nazi indoctrination of their own men during combat was the employment of negative appeals and counter-propaganda, which attempted less to reply directly to the substance of our claims than to explain the reasons why the Allies were using propaganda.

The Nazis frankly believed that they could employ our propaganda efforts as a point of departure for strengthening the unpolitical resolve of their men. They had the legend of the effectiveness of Allied propaganda in World War I as a warning from which to "conclude" that if the Germans failed to be tricked by propaganda this time, success was assured. A typical instance of this attitude was contained in a captured order issued by the Officer in Command of the garrison of Boulogne on September 11, 1944, in which he appealed to his men not to be misled by Allied propaganda. The German order claimed that the propaganda attack in the form of leaflets was in itself an expression of the weakness of the Allied offensive, which was in desperate need of the port for communications. During the same period, an NSF officer issued an elaborate statement in which he re-

⁸⁰ Numerous orders menaced officers who might become political dissidents. One such document circulated in Army Group B, dated January 21, 1945, stated that Himmler had drawn up a set of instructions concerning officer offenders which were to be reviewed at least once a month. Political divergences were to be harshly dealt with, regardless of the previous military or political service of the officer in question.

minded the garrison at Le Havre that the "enemy resorts to propaganda as a weapon which he used in the last stages of the first world war," in order to point out that German victory depended on the determination of the German soldier to resist Allied propaganda.

In the fall and winter of 1944, the campaign to counteract Allied propaganda by "exposing" it was intensified and elaborated. (This method had the obvious advantage that direct refutations of Allied claims could largely be avoided.) *Mitteilung für die Truppe* (October 1944), a newspaper for officer indoctrination, reviewed the major weapons in the "poison offensive." They included: attacks against the Party and its predominant leaders ("this is not surprising as the enemy will, of course, attack those institutions which give us our greatest strength"); appeals to the Austrians to separate themselves from the Germans ("the time when we were split up in small states was the time of our greatest weakness") sympathy with the poor German women who work in hellish factories ("the institution must be a good one, otherwise the enemy would not attack it").

Other themes "exposed" in leaflets were: the enemy attempts to separate the leaders from the people ("Just as the Kaiser was blamed in 1918, it now is Hitler who is supposed to be responsible"); the enemy admits his own losses in an exaggerated way in order to obtain the reputation of veracity and to lie all the more at the opportune moment.

Even earlier in the Western campaign, the Germans followed the policy of stamping Allied leaflets with the imprint, "Hostile Propaganda," and then allowing them to circulate in lim-

ited numbers. This was being carried out at the same time that mutually contradictory orders for the complete destruction of all enemy propaganda were being issued. The explanation, in part, is that the Nazis realized that it would be impossible to suppress the flood of Allied leaflets, and therefore sought to clearly label them as such and to employ them as a point of departure for counter-propaganda.

The procedure of overprinting Allied leaflets was linked with follow-up indoctrination talks. Such indoctrination lectures, which were conducted by the Nazi NSFO's, became towards the end of the war one of the main vehicles of Nazi indoctrination of their own troops. Ps/W claimed, although it was probably not entirely correct, that they usually slept through such sessions, or at least paid little attention, until the closing *Sieg Heil* was sounded. At this late date in the war, emphasis on oral propaganda was made necessary by the marked disruption of communications. Radio listening at the front was almost non-existent due to the lack of equipment; when in reserve, troops listened more frequently. Newspapers were distributed only with great difficulty. More important were the leaflets which were either dropped by air on their own troops or distributed through command channels.

"*Strength through fear.*" Major lines of the negative approach employed by these leaflets in indoctrination talks, in the rumors circulated by NSF officers, stressed "strength through fear," particularly fear of Russia and the general consequences of complete destruction that would follow defeat.

Because of the German soldier's concern about the welfare of his family

living inside Germany, Nazi agencies were constantly issuing statements about the successful evacuation of German civilians to the east bank of the Rhine.

Equally stressed in the strength through fear theme were retaliation threats against the families of deserters, mistreatment of prisoners of war in Anglo-American prison camps, and the ultimate fate of prisoners. The phrase *Sieg oder Sibirien* (Victory or Siberia) was emphasized and much material was released to prove that the Anglo-Americans planned to turn over their prisoners to the Russians. When the U.S. Army stopped shipping German Ps/W to the United States, Nazi propaganda officers spread the rumor among German soldiers "that the way to Siberia is shorter from France than from the United States."

Statements by Ps/W revealed that shortly before the Rundstedt counter-attack, speeches by NSFO's were increased. One of the main subjects seems to have been weapons. In retrospect, the intent of the directives under which they were working was obvious. Attempts were made to explain the absence of the Luftwaffe, while the arrival in the near future of new and better weapons was guaranteed.

Psychological preparation for the December counter-offensive was built around the Rundstedt order of the day that "everything is at stake." Exhortations were backed up with exaggerated statements by unit commanders that large amounts of men and material were to be employed. Immediately thereafter, official statements were issued that significant penetrations had been achieved; special editions of troop papers were prepared announcing that 40,000 Americans had been killed.

Such announcements received little attention among the troops actually engaged in the counter-offensive because of the obvious difficulties in disseminating propaganda to fighting troops.

Nevertheless, after the failure of the counter-attack, the Nazis felt called upon to formulate a plausible line to explain the sum total result of that military effort, especially for those who felt that better military judgment would have resulted in a purely defensive strategy against Russia. On January 25, *Front und Heimat* announced that the December offensive had smashed the plan for a simultaneous onslaught: "The East can hold only if the West does too. . . . Every fighting man in the West knows that the Anglo-Americans are doing all they can, although belatedly, to start the assault on the Fortress Germany. Our task in the West now is to postpone that time as long as possible and to guard the back of our Armies in the East."

Despite the obvious limitations on the efficacy of propaganda during March and April 1945, the Nazis continued to the very end to keep up their propaganda efforts. Due to the confusion within the ranks of the Wehrmacht and the resulting difficulties of dissemination, the task devolved almost wholly on the NSFO's who spent much of their time reading to the troops the most recent orders governing desertion. Leaflets called largely on the Landser's military spirit to carry on. One even demanded that he remain silent (*zu schweigen*). The Nazis taxed their fancy to create rumors as the last means of bolstering morale. Here a favorite technique for stimulating favorable rumors was for CO's to read to their men "classified" documents from official sources which

contained promises of secret weapons or discussed the great losses being inflicted upon the Allies.

VII. The Impact of Allied Propaganda on Wehrmacht Solidarity

The system of controls which the social structure of the Wehrmacht exercised over its individual members greatly reduced those areas in which symbolic appeals of the Allies could work. But the millions of leaflets which were dropped weekly and the "round-the-clock" broadcasts to the German troops certainly did not fail to produce some reactions.

The very first German Ps/W who were interrogated directly on their reactions to Allied propaganda soon revealed a stereotyped range of answers which could be predicted from their degree of Nazification. The fanatical Nazi claimed, "No German would believe anything the enemy has to say," while an extreme attitude of acceptance was typified by a confirmed anti-Nazi who pleaded with his captors: "Now is the moment to flood the troops with leaflets. You have no idea of the effect sober and effective leaflets have on retreating troops." But these extreme reactions of soldiers were of low frequency; Nazi soldiers might admit the truth of our leaflets but usually would not accept their conclusions and implications.

The fundamentally indifferent reaction to Allied propaganda was most interestingly shown in an intensive study of 150 Ps/W captured in October 1944 of whom 65 per cent had seen our leaflets and for the most part professed that they believed their contents. This was a group which had fought very obstinately, and the number of active deserters, if any, was extremely small.

Some forty of these Ps/W offered extended comments as to what they meant when they said they believed the contents of Allied leaflets.

Five stated outright that they believed the messages and that the leaflets assisted them and their comrades to surrender.

Seven declared they believed the leaflets, but were powerless to do anything about appeals to surrender.

Eight stated that they believed the contents, but nevertheless as soldiers and decent individuals would never think of deserting.

Twenty-two declared that events justified belief in the leaflets, but they clearly implied that this had been of little importance in their battle experiences.

In Normandy, where the relatively small front was blanketed with printed material, up to 90 per cent of the Ps/W reported that they had read Allied leaflets, yet this period was characterized by very high German morale and stiff resistance.

Throughout the Western campaign, with the exception of periods of extremely bad weather or when the front was fluid, the cumulative percentage of exposure ranged between 60 and 80 per cent. (This cumulative percentage of exposure was based on statements by Ps/W that they had seen leaflets sometime while fighting on the Western front after D-Day. A few samples indicated that penetration during any single month covered about 20 per cent of the prisoners.) Radio listening among combat troops was confined to a minute fraction due to the lack of equipment; rear troops listened more frequently. In the case of both

leaflets and radio it was found that there was widespread but desultory comment on the propaganda, much of which comment distorted the actual contents.

Not only was there wide penetration by Allied leaflets and newsheets, but German soldiers frequently circulated them extensively among their comrades. A readership study of *Nachrichten für die Truppe*, a daily newsheet published by the Allied Psychological Warfare Division, showed that each copy which was picked up had an average readership of between four and five soldiers—a figure which is extremely large in view of the conditions of combat life. Not only were leaflets widely circulated, but it became a widespread practice for soldiers to carry Allied leaflets on their person, especially the “safe conduct pass” leaflets which bore a statement by General Eisenhower guaranteeing the bearer swift and safe conduct through Allied lines and the protection of the Geneva convention. There is evidence that in certain sectors of the front, German soldiers even organized black-market trading in Allied propaganda materials.

It is relevant to discuss here the differences in effectiveness between tactical and strategic propaganda. By tactical propaganda, we refer to propaganda which seeks to promise immediate results in the tactical situation. The clearest example of this type of propaganda is afforded by “across the lines” loudspeaker broadcasts, which sometimes facilitated immediate capture of the prisoners of war—not by propaganda in the ordinary sense, but by giving instructions on how to surrender safely, once the wish to surrender was present.

No sufficiently accurate estimate is

available of the total number of prisoners captured by the use of such techniques, but signal successes involving hundreds of isolated troops in the Normandy campaign have been credited to psychological warfare combat teams. Even more successful were the loudspeaker-carrying tanks employed in the Rhine River offensive, when the first signs of weakening resistance were encountered. For example, the Fourth Armored Division reported that its psychological warfare unit captured over 500 prisoners in a four-day dash from the Kyll River to the Rhine. Firsthand investigation of these loudspeaker missions, and interrogation of prisoners captured under such circumstances, establish that Allied propaganda was effective in describing the tactical situation to totally isolated and helpless soldiers and in arranging an Allied cease fire and thereby presenting an assurance to the German soldier of a safe surrender. The successful targets for such broadcasts were groups where solidarity and ability to function as a unit were largely destroyed. Leaflets especially written for specific sectors and dropped on pin point targets by fighter-bombs were used instead of loudspeakers where larger units were cut off. This method proved less successful, since the units to which they were addressed were usually better integrated and the necessary cease fire conditions could not be arranged.

Less spectacular, but more extensive, was strategic propaganda. Allied directives called for emphasis on four themes in this type of propaganda: (1) Ideological attacks on the Nazi Party and Germany's war aims, (2) the strategical hopelessness of Germany's military and economic position, (3) the justness of

the United Nations war aims and their unity and determination to carry them out (unconditional surrender, although made known to the troops, was never stressed), (4) promises of good treatment to prisoners of war, with appeals to self-preservation through surrender.

Although it is extremely difficult, especially in view of the lack of essential data, to assess the efficacy of these various themes, some tentative clues might be seen in the answers given to the key attitude questions in the monthly Psychological Warfare opinion poll of captured German soldiers.³¹ Thus, there was no significant decline in attachment to Nazi ideology until February and March 1945. In other words, propaganda attacks on Nazi ideology seem to have been of little avail, and attachment to secondary symbols, e.g., Hitler, declined only when the smaller military units began to break up under very heavy pressure.

Since the German soldier was quite ignorant of military news on other fronts, it was believed that a great deal of printed material should contain factual reports of the military situation, stressing the strategical hopelessness of the German position. As a result, the third most frequently recalled items of our propaganda were the military news reports. It seems reasonable to believe that the emphasis on these subjects did contribute to the development of defeatist sentiment.

Despite the vast amount of space devoted to ideological attacks on German leaders, only about five per cent of the Ps/W mentioned this topic—a fact which supported the contention as to the general failure of ideological or secondary appeals. Finally, the presentation of the justness of our war aims

was carried out in such a way as to avoid stressing the unconditional surrender aspects of our intentions, while emphasizing postwar peace intentions and organizational efforts; much was made of United Nations unity. All this fell on deaf ears, for of this material only a small minority of Ps/W (about 5 per cent) recalled specific statements about military government plans for the German occupation.

As has been pointed out previously, the themes which were most successful, at least in attracting attention and remaining fixed in the memory, were those promising good treatment as prisoners of war. In other words, propaganda referring to immediate concrete situations and problems seems to have been most effective in some respects.

The single leaflet most effective in communicating the promise of good treatment was the "safe conduct pass." Significantly, it was usually printed on the back of leaflets which contained no elaborate propaganda appeals except those of self-preservation. The rank and file tended to be favorably disposed to its official language and legal, document-like character. In one sector where General Eisenhower's signature was left off the leaflet, doubt was cast on its authenticity.

Belief in the veracity of this appeal was no doubt based on the attitude that the British and the Americans were respectable law-abiding soldiers who would treat their captives according to international law. As a result of this predisposition and the wide use of the safe conduct leaflets, as well as our actual practices in treating prisoners well, the German soldier came to have

³¹ Cf. Gurfein, M. I., and Janowitz, Morris, *op. cit.*

no fear of capture by British or American troops. The most that can be claimed for this lack of fear was that it may have decreased or undercut any tendency to fight to the death; it produced no active opposition to continued hostilities.

As an extension of the safe-conduct approach, leaflets were prepared instructing non-commissioned officers in detailed procedures by which their men could safely be removed from battle so as to avoid our fire and at the same time avoid evacuation by the German field police. If the Germans could not be induced to withdraw from combat actively, Allied propaganda appealed to them to hide in cellars. This in fact became a favorite technique of surrender, since it avoided the need of facing the conscience-twining desertion problem.

As a result of psychological warfare research, a series of leaflets was prepared whose attack was aimed at primary group organization in the German Army, without recourse to ideological symbols. Group organization depended on the acceptance of immediate leadership and mutual trust. Therefore this series of leaflets sought to stimulate group discussion among the men and to bring into their focus of attention concerns which would loosen solidarity. One leaflet declared, "Do not take our (the Allies) word for it; ask your comrade; find out how he feels." Thereupon followed a series of questions on personal concerns, family problems, tactical consideration and supply problems. Discussion of these problems was expected to increase anxiety. It was assumed that to the degree that the soldier found that he was not isolated in his opinion, to that degree he would be

strengthened in his resolve to end hostilities, for himself at least.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the second world war, many publicists and specialists in propaganda attributed almost supreme importance to psychological warfare operations. The legendary successes of Allied propaganda against the German Army at the end of the first world war and the tremendous expansion of the advertising and mass communications industries in the ensuing two decades had convinced many people that human behavior could be extensively manipulated by mass communications. They tended furthermore to stress that military morale was to a great extent a function of the belief in the rightness of the "larger" cause which was at issue in the war; good soldiers were therefore those who clearly understood the political and moral implications of what was at stake. They explained the striking successes of the German Army in the early phases of the war by the "ideological possession" of the German soldiers, and they accordingly thought that propaganda attacking doctrinal conceptions would be defeating this army.

Studies of the German Army's morale and fighting effectiveness made during the last three years of the war throw considerable doubt on these hypotheses. The solidarity of the German Army was discovered by these studies—which left much to be desired from the standpoint of scientific rigor—to be based only very indirectly and very partially on political convictions or broader ethical beliefs. Where conditions were such as to allow primary group life to function smoothly, and where the primary group

developed a high degree of cohesion, morale was high and resistance effective or at least very determined, regardless in the main of the political attitudes of the soldiers. The conditions of primary group life were related to spatial proximity, the capacity for intimate communication, the provision of paternal protectiveness by NCO's and junior officers, and the gratification of certain personality needs, e.g., manliness, by the military organization and its activities. The larger structure of the army served to maintain morale through the provision of the framework in which potentially individuating physical threats were kept at a minimum—through the organization of supplies and through adequate strategic dispositions.

The behavior of the German Army demonstrated that the focus of attention and concern beyond one's immediate face-to-face social circles might be slight indeed and still not interfere with the achievement of a high degree of military effectiveness. It also showed that attempts to modify behavior by means of symbols referring to events or values outside the focus of attention and concern would be given an indifferent response by the vast majority of the German soldiers. This was almost equally true under conditions of primary group integrity and under conditions of extreme primary group disintegration. In the former, primary needs were met adequately through the gratifications provided by the other members of the group; in the latter, the individual had regressed to a narcissistic state in which symbols referring to the outer world were irrelevant to his first concern—"saving his own skin."

At moments of primary group disintegration, a particular kind of propa-

ganda less hortatory or analytical, but addressing the intensified desire to survive, and describing the precise procedures by which physical survival could be achieved, was likely to facilitate further disintegration. Furthermore, in some cases aspects of the environment towards which the soldier might hitherto have been emotionally indifferent were defined for him by prolonged exposure to propaganda under conditions of disintegration. Some of these wider aspects, e.g., particular strategic considerations, then tended to be taken into account in his motivation and he was more likely to implement his defeatist mood by surrender than he would have been without exposure to propaganda.

It seems necessary, therefore, to reconsider the potentialities of propaganda in the context of all the other variables which influence behavior. The erroneous views concerning the omnipotence of propaganda must be given up and their place must be taken by much more differentiated views as to the possibilities of certain kinds of propaganda under different sets of conditions.

It must be recognized that on the moral plane most men are members of the larger society by virtue of identifications which are mediated through the human beings with whom they are in personal relationships. Many are bound into the larger society only by primary group identifications. Only a small proportion possessing special training or rather particular kinds of personalities are capable of giving a preponderant share of their attention and concern to the symbols of the larger world. The conditions under which these different groups will respond to propaganda will differ, as will also the type of propaganda to which they will respond.