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SOME CIVILIAN ATTITUDES IN ONE RHINELAND CITY

A Survey of German Opinion in Krefeld

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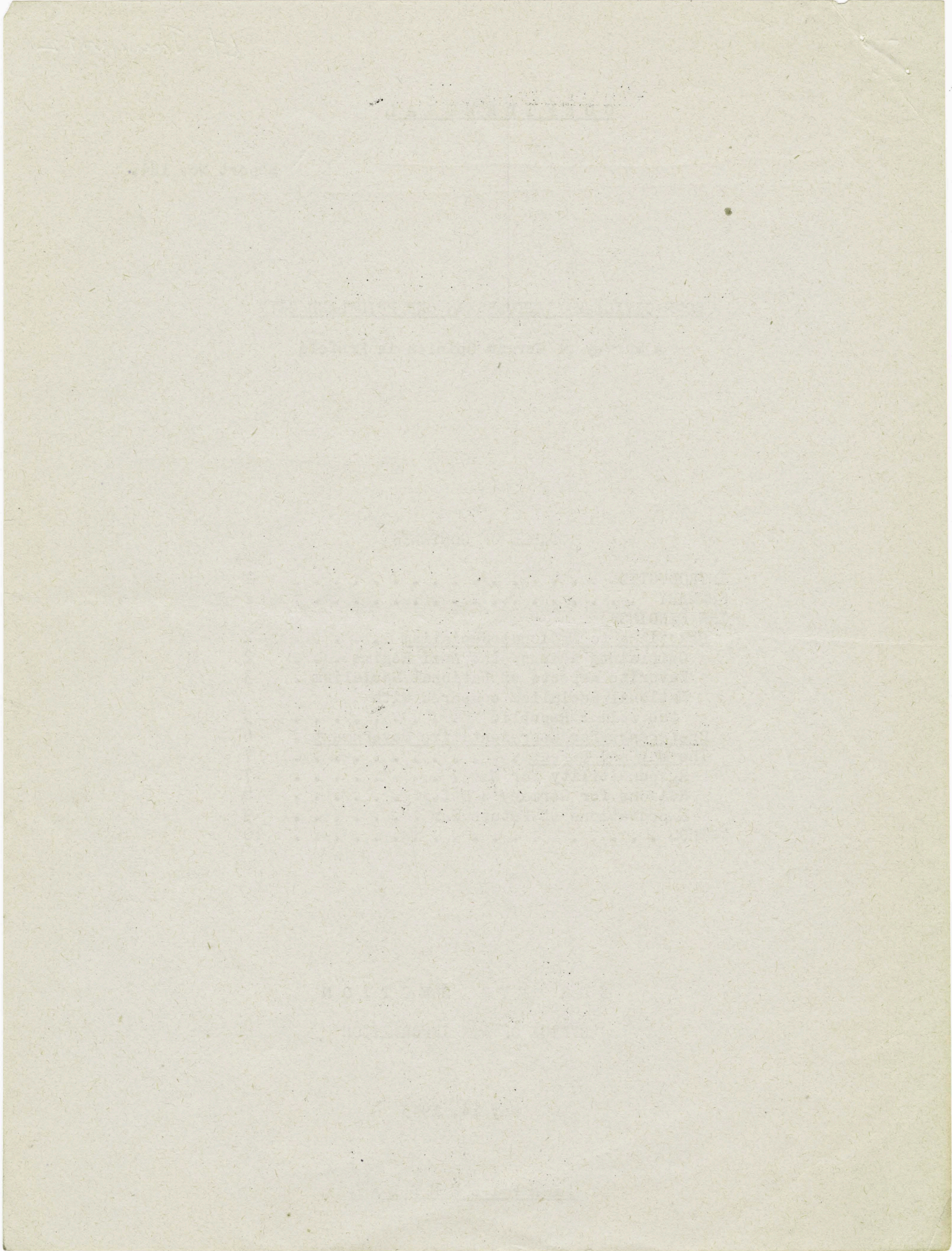
S U R V E Y S   S E C T I O N

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CONFIDENTIAL







## SOME CIVILIAN ATTITUDES IN ONE RHINELAND CITY

### A Survey of German Opinion in Krefeld

#### INTRODUCTION

The primary determinant in the program of re-educating the German populace will be what the Allies decide should be done, rather than any expression of opinion among the German people themselves. Yet such a program may perhaps be more effectively executed if it is founded on a picture of actual attitudes in the Reich toward some of the thornier problems involved in re-shaping the German mind.

The findings presented here report an attempt through a public opinion survey in Krefeld, Germany, to delve into the minds of average German citizens on such questions as their attitudes toward National Socialism, their feelings about the defeat, their sense of responsibility for the war and its loss, and the role which they see themselves playing in the community life.

Certain cautions must, however, be exercised in considering the data. Although a good deal of effort was made to build rapport with the 210 randomly selected individuals who were interviewed, and interrogators concurred in the feeling that these civilians showed little reluctance to express their views, it was not possible to establish procedures which would actually check the honesty of each response. It should be noted also that whereas considerable care was taken to assure the randomness of the sample interviewed, there were at least two important biasing factors: many of the more extreme and better known Nazis had fled the city ahead of the Allies' arrival, and the young men were virtually all away from home in the Reichswehr.

The town was 50% to 60% destroyed or damaged by bombing. Its normal population of 171,000 was estimated to be reduced to at least 100,000 at the time of the survey. In addition, Krefeld is a borderland community in which over 80 per cent of the inhabitants are Catholics.

Thus the characteristics of the population, while similar to the Rhineland in general, are in no sense typical of Germany as a whole. With these various qualifications in mind, then, the report may be regarded as offering clues to Rhineland thinking in an area fairly badly smashed by war, rather than as a definitive measure of German opinion as a whole.

The interviewing took place between March 27th and April 12th. The method employed and the characteristics of the sample are presented in detail at the end of the report.



## SUMMARY

1. Half the people interviewed in Krefeld, Germany, criticized as the most objectionable aspect of Nazism its coercion and continuous regimentation. But a solid majority recalled favorably the social and economic benefits acquired under Nazism. A comparison of attitudes in Krefeld and reactions of German prisoners-of-war reveal a marked similarity of sentiment on these questions.
2. A "democratic" or "republican" form of government would be preferred for Germany by a majority of the Krefelders if they had their choice.
3. On all questions of political import the replies of women differ markedly from those of men. Women's answers reveal disinterest, a reluctance to take part in the political life of the community, and a generally more conservative point of view.
4. The responsibility for starting the war is widely laid at the door of the Nazi Party or Party hierarchy. About a third of those interviewed blame the misjudgment of these same groups for the loss of the war, while a plurality (46%) believes that the material superiority of the Allies brought about the defeat of Germany.
5. Speculation about a future war calls to the minds of 57% of those sampled the possibility of Russia fighting against some combination of Western countries.

## THE FINDINGS

### REACTIONS TO NATIONAL SOCIALISM

#### Complaints against the Nazi Regime

The most frequent cause of complaint among the Krefeld people, when asked what they disliked most about the National Socialist regime, was the pressures it imposed on everyday life, the "musts" it prescribed to the population at large. Half the people in the sample said they found this principle of coercion the most objectionable aspect of life under the Nazis. Other objectionable aspects often mentioned were the attacks against the Catholic teachings, either directly or through the Nazi indoctrinization of youth; the persecution of Jews, the arrogance, corruption, and special privileges of the party bosses; the lies and deceptions practised by the regime; and the policy of exploitation upon which the social welfare and other publicized programs rested.

The above complaints were usually voiced as frequently by men as by women, by people under 40 as often as by the older group, by workers as by white-collar employees. Men, however, were far more likely to complain of the arrogance and greed of the Party bosses than were the women, possibly because the men had known them better. Twenty-five per cent of the men, but only two per cent of the women spoke of this.



# WHAT DID YOU LIKE LEAST ABOUT NATIONAL SOCIALISM?

	<u>Frequency of mention</u>
Coercion and regimentation in everyday life . . . . .	51%
Attacks against Catholic church and teachings . . . . .	20
Persecution of Jews . . . . .	20
Arrogance, graft and favoritism of Party bosses . . . . .	15
Exploitation through fines and collections . . . . .	10
Lies and deceits practised on the people . . . . .	7
Everything . . . . .	5
Miscellaneous . . . . .	2
Nothing . . . . .	2
No answer . . . . .	3
Total persons* =	210

## Favorable aspects of National Socialism

Although slightly more than a third of the people, chiefly workers, said there was nothing at all about the National Socialist government that they had liked, the rest pointed out various achievements of the regime which they regarded as constructive and meritorious.

Most often they mentioned the fact that it had provided steady and universal employment, had instituted a social welfare program for the under-privileged, had provided vacations for industrial workers, and had created unity and order within the Reich. A handful also mentioned the public works program and the policy of price control and rationing.

Whereas occupational status of respondents had no apparent bearing upon what they most disliked about life under the Nazis, it proved to be significant in determining what aspects of the regime they regarded with most favour. As was to be expected, it was the worker rather than the salaried respondent who most

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\* Total exceeds 100% because people often mentioned more than one dislike.



often mentioned the granting of vacations in industry and the Strength Through Joy movement as social achievements. On the other hand, the unification of the country, the Nazi solution of the unemployment problem of the 1920's, and its welfare programs for the needy were emphasized considerably more by the middle class than by the worker population. These differences can be seen in the following table:

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT NATIONAL SOCIALISM?

	<u>Worker- artisan</u>	<u>White collar</u>	<u>Total</u>
Employment for all . . . . .	15%	32%	23%
Welfare organizations . . . . .	7	31	18
Workers' vacations, KDF . . . . .	21	9	16
National unity, order . . . . .	4	19	11
Public works, roads . . . . .	2	7	4
Rationing, price control, and miscellaneous benefits . . . . .	3	4	3
Nothing at all . . . . .	46	23	36
No answer . . . . .	6	3	5
Number of persons <sup>a</sup>	114	96	210

<sup>a</sup>Columns add to more than 100% because some people mentioned more than one aspect they liked.

An interesting comparison of these Krefeld findings with the results of the same questions asked of German prisoners-of-war is possible.\* Inasmuch as very few of the men remaining in Krefeld were under 40 years of age, this furnishes not only a comparison of prisoners and civilians, but also helps fill the gap in the Krefeld survey caused by the absence of the younger men.

Although men and women and younger and older women in Krefeld differed somewhat in their attitudes, the fact that the employment and social security benefits of National Socialism made the biggest appeal to all classes in the population comes out clearly.

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\* "German Prisoner Attitudes to National Socialism," Surveys Section, OWI, Report No. 101, December 4, 1944. The questionnaire in this study was self-administered, which probably accounts for the large number of "no answers" among the prisoners as compared with the civilians.



COMPARISON OF FAVORABLE ATTITUDES TOWARD NATIONAL SOCIALISM  
AMONG KREFELD CIVILIANS AND GERMAN PRISONERS-OF-WAR

	PRISONERS		KREFELD CIVILIANS		
	21 to 39	40 and over	Men 40 and over	Women 21 to 39	40 and over
Equality, social and economic benefits . . . . .	58%	49%	59%	75%	62%
Ideology and national unity . . . . .	13	9	14	7	11
Like nothing . . . . .	15	26	35	31	40
No answer . . . . .	23	29	4	7	6
Number of persons <sup>a</sup> . . . . .	260	60	105	47	45

<sup>a</sup>Columns add to more than 100% because more than one response per person was possible.

It is also apparent that National Socialism made its greatest appeal to younger people — the older people, both among prisoners and civilians, invariably said more frequently that there was nothing that they liked about National Socialism.

National Socialism compared with the Weimar Republic

The majority of these Krefelders expressed outward preference for the Weimar Republic rather than the Nazi regime. How far these results can be credited is difficult to say, although they may not be far from the truth in Catholic Rhineland, at a time when the most Nazified inhabitants had undoubtedly fled before the arrival of the Allied armies.

The sentiment for the Weimar Republic was not as strong among the women as among the men. There was also some evidence that the Nazi government enjoyed greater prestige among the younger people, which previous studies made among prisoners have also shown. Part of this difference, however, is accounted for by the fact that many of the younger women (38%) were unable to give an opinion on the question.

HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE THE PRESENT GERMAN GOVERNMENT  
WITH THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC? IS IT BETTER, WORSE, OR ABOUT THE SAME?

(Proportion believing Nazi government worse)

Men 40 and over	87%	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px;"></div>
Women 40 and over	57%	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px;"></div>
Women under 40	40%	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 15px;"></div>



## PREFERENCE FOR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

In their present state of mind, a majority of Krefelders felt that a representative form of government under a republic would provide the best future for Germany.\* Disillusionment with the system which had brought them to defeat, a desire to toady to the thinking of their democratic captors may well be reflected in these attitudes.

What is significant, however, is that sentiment in favor of free government is much more pronounced among the men than among the women, for while three out of every four men interviewed said they favored a democracy for the Reich, only about three out of ten women seemed to be thinking in these terms.

Many women, particularly younger ones, said they did not know what to think, that they considered politics the proper sphere for men, or that they did not care what sort of government Germany might have, so long as they could live in peace. Besides expressing less faith in the republican form of government than did their men, the women were more inclined to hold other conservative views. People who favored a monarchy or Kaiserreich, though relatively few in number, were more likely to be women than men. Sentiment, however, probably colored this choice among women, especially among the older of them, who wistfully recalled the days of the Kaiser as the best they had known.

Whatever may have been their former attitudes toward National Socialism as a form of government, only a negligible minority now said they wanted to see it retained.

That the white-collar people appear to favour democracy most strongly may be in part explained by the fact that the workers, less articulate, mentioned "free" government and worker government more frequently.

### IF YOU HAD YOUR CHOICE, WHAT FORM OF GOVERNMENT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE BEST FOR GERMANY?

	<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>				
	<u>40 and over</u>	<u>40 and Under over</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>White collar</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Total</u>
Democracy, republic . . . . .	73%	36%	27%	66%	48%	56%
Monarchy, Kaiserreich . . . . .	8	21	13	8	14	12
Any "free" government, anything but Hitler's . . . . .	4	11	9	3	9	6
National Socialism . . . . .	2	2	4	3	2	2
Miscellaneous: worker, Christian . . . . .	8	4	2	2	8	5
Don't know and no answer . . . . .	5	26	45	18	19	19
Number of persons . . . . .	105	47	45	96	114	210

\*It is not possible, of course, to express in a word the real differences between the conceptions of "democracy" or "republic" of different peoples. One indication of the outlook of this Catholic population is found in the fact that 14% of the entire sample would like a republic with Zentrum (Catholic) party control.



### Political Apathy Among Women

Further evidence of the political conservatism and the lack of political interest among German women is brought to light by two questions:

Should the average person take part in the political life of the community?

Would you, personally, take part in it?

Whereas among the men, 84% thought the average person should take part in the political life of the community, only about half of the women shared this view. And still fewer women felt that they personally should concern themselves with political matters, with apathy particularly pronounced among the younger.

#### WOULD YOU, PERSONALLY, TAKE PART IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY?

Men 40 and over 82%

Women 40 and over 51%

Women under 40 33%

The most frequent objection raised by men to the average person participating in politics was that so many are uninformed on such matters. Among women, on the other hand, four out of ten actually said they were interested only in family life or took refuge in the answer: "I am only a woman."

### THE WAR AND DEFEAT

#### Responsibility for War

The population in Krefeld showed a strong inclination to hold the Nazi party and its leaders responsible for having started the war. There was absolutely no disposition among any of them to attribute the responsibility to the German people as a whole.

Most frequently blamed was the ambition of the Nazi hierarchy to dominate other lands and peoples, its drive toward world power. A third of the people interviewed took this view. Another fourth fixed the blame upon the Fuehrer himself, saying that his megalomania ("Grossewahn") had made the war inevitable. To the two foregoing groups can be added another tenth of the sample, who blamed such specific measures as the aggressive foreign policy Germany pursued, the persecution of the Jews, or the invasion of Poland. Taken together, about two-thirds of the people interviewed did not appear to regard either themselves or



the rank and file of the German people as directly responsible. Rather, in search for a chief cause of the conflict, they grasped at the most obvious factor - their leadership.

Contrasted to these, is a minority comprising about one-sixth of the sample (17%) which does not consider anyone or anything in Germany as chiefly responsible but follows the familiar line, blaming the economic jealousy of other nations, the injustices of Versailles, and the denial of Germany's just claims to colonies and Lebensraum, which they say left her no other course to follow.

Thirty persons (14%) were unable to give an opinion on the chief cause of the war, saying that it was too complex a matter and beyond their comprehension. Five out of six of these were women, chiefly younger ones.

Asked, "What do you think was the main cause of this war?" the people gave the following answers:

- ... 33% blamed the Party and its policies,
- ... 26% blamed Hitler himself,
- ... 17% blamed Germany's enemies,
- ... 10% blamed various other misdeeds, and
- ... 14% had no opinion.

Except for the fact that only 4% of the men, but 27% of the women, were without an opinion on this question, there were no significant differences with respect to age, sex, or occupation.

In not accepting any responsibility for the war, these Germans may well feel that they are being punished for something they did not do. It is likely also that a natural counterpart of such a feeling will be the growth of a desire for vengeance against the Allies.

#### Reasons for Germany's Defeat

A plurality of both men and women attributed the material superiority of the Allies as the basic reason for Germany's defeat. Another 20 per cent laid the responsibility on the Government, "the Nazis," "the Party." Hitler himself was named by 9 per cent as responsible for Germany's disaster.

IF GERMANY SHOULD LOSE THIS WAR, WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE  
WOULD BE THE CHIEF REASON?

	Total
Material superiority of the Allies . . . . .	46%
Government, Nazis, Party . . . . .	20
Hitler . . . . .	9
Foreign policy; Nazis not accepted by conquered peoples . . . . .	5
God not with us; unrighteous cause . . . . .	5
Traitors . . . . .	4
Other miscellaneous . . . . .	10
Don't know . . . . .	6

Number of persons<sup>a</sup> 210

<sup>a</sup>Columns add to more than 100% because some respondents gave more than one reason.



A survey of 344 German prisoners, made in January of this year, in which this same question was asked, affords some interesting comparisons. Fifty-five per cent of these prisoners-of-war advanced the superiority of the Allies as the reason why Germany might be beaten. The second biggest category of responses from the Wehrmacht men, however (35%), was "desertion of Germany by her allies." Thirty-one per cent of the soldiers thought that political interference in military affairs by Government leaders would be the cause of Germany's downfall if she were defeated, and another 26% mentioned bad leadership in general. Only 6 per cent thought that home front failures on the part of the civilians would be responsible.

Thus, both among the Krefeld civilians and in the Wehrmacht there seem to be large numbers who are already explaining away their defeat on the basis of someone else's inadequacy or lack of devotion to the cause. This fact, taken in conjunction with the additional indications that there is virtually no disposition at all to blame the German military leadership, would appear to offer a foundation on which may be built again the legend of the "stab in the back." If this legend finds fertile soil in Krefeld, with its acres of damage pointing concretely to Allied might, it will doubtless be stronger in the unblitzed parts of Germany.

#### Expectations of Future War

Replies to the question, "If a war should take place again within a few years after the end of this war, between which nations would it occur?" provide some measure of the impact of war upon this population. About two in five Germans in this town are unable to conceive such a situation, say that nobody wants any more war or that they can't believe there will be another war. And there are virtually no differences between the attitudes of men and women, or between the young and the old, toward the future prospects of war and peace.

To some extent some of these replies indicate a failure to conceive that Germany will again be able to fight a war in a few years. But the time bomb of Goebbel's constant hammering on the theme of the Soviets as the "menace to Western civilization" is apparent in the fact that nearly all the replies of those who can foresee a future conflict include some mention of Russia as one of the opponents.

#### IF A WAR SHOULD TAKE PLACE AGAIN WITHIN A FEW YEARS AFTER THE END OF THIS WAR BETWEEN WHICH NATIONS WOULD IT OCCUR?

U.S. and England (Allies) vs. Russia	29%	}	57%
The West vs. Russia	4		
U.S. vs. Russia	17		
England vs. Russia	7		
Asia vs. Whites; East vs. West			2
Same as now			2
Don't know, can't say, nobody wants more war, can't believe there will be another war, depends on the peace			39
Total persons . . . . .	210		



## METHOD

Personal interviews were conducted with a sample of 210 inhabitants of Krefeld between March 27 and April 12. All interviews were made by trained, German-speaking personnel of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. Individual interviews averaged an hour and a half in length. The questions forming the basis of this report were asked toward the close of the interview, at which time rapport between interviewer and respondent had been reasonably well established. On the whole, these civilians showed little reluctance to express their views.

With the aid of the up-to-date family information on file in the city rationing office, it was possible to select at random names and addresses of individuals to be interviewed. Within certain scattered geographical areas in the city, names were selected to give large enough numbers of white-collar and worker families to be able to look at the two groups separately. Thus the total sample does not represent a cross-section occupationally. An attempt was made to interview half men and half women, but in a few instances sent their husbands in their places, thus slightly overweighting the number of men interviewed. Inasmuch as there are probably more women than men in most places in Germany at the present time, the sex distribution of the sample is not representative. There were very few men under 40 contacted, as might be expected, but the women were about evenly divided under and over 40 years of age. The characteristics of the sample interviewed are shown in the following figures:

### SEX AND AGE

Men:	Under 40	6%	
	40 and over	<u>50</u>	56%
Women:	Under 40	21%	
	40 and over	<u>23</u>	<u>44%</u>

### RELIGION

Catholics . . . . .	82%
Protestants . . . . .	14
Other . . . . .	<u>4</u>

### EDUCATION

### OCCUPATION OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Workers-artisans . . . . .	54%
White-collar people . . . . .	<u>46</u>

Volkschule . . . . .	76%
Mittelschule and	
University . . . . .	<u>24</u>

Total persons interviewed - 210