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MORALE OF THE WEHRMACHT
Trends in German Prisoner Attitudes

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JANOWITZ

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SURVEYS
Intelligence Section
Psychological Warfare Division

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

August 7, 1944

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MORALE OF THE GERMAN WEHRMACHT

M JANOWITZ

Objective

This study was undertaken to reveal directives for guidance in preparing leaflets, radio programs, and other types of psychological warfare intended for German troops and civilians.

Method

Four batches of German prisoners-of-war, assembled in groups, at the Bourton cage were administered written questionnaires. The first group was interrogated July 9; the most recent August 3. Prisoners were asked to fill out answers to questions appearing on formal schedules, and were assured that their responses were strictly anonymous. Results obtained from these groups were compared not only with each other, but with earlier findings obtained from similar interrogation of prisoners in the Italian theatre.*

Conclusions and
Recommendations:

- (1) 1. [There has been a definite and precipitate lowering of German troop morale in terms of such measures as their willingness to continue fighting, their confidence in ultimate victory, and their trust in Hitler.] Our propaganda should take advantage of these trends in every way possible.
- (1) 2. [The decline is particularly notable since it occurs among the younger prisoners, hitherto the hard core of Nazi fanaticism, as well as among those over 30.]
3. A significant observation is the fact that the support for the officers who attempted to kill Hitler was much higher among the most recent batch of prisoners. This group heard of the putsch before their capture, while the prisoners interviewed July 28, heard of it in captivity. This suggests that the effect of the plot on the soldiers in the line must have been very strong. It suggests also that the theme of the putsch should be kept alive and played up in psychological warfare in anticipation of further defections.
5. Despite the evidences of deteriorating morale on other factors, confidence in commanding officers and NCO's remains high. Attempts to drive a wedge between officers and men would appear to be doomed to failure, and probably should not be attempted at this stage.

* These procedures were first employed in Italy by Captain Martin F. Herz, PWB, 5th Army.

STANOWITZ

MORALE OF THE GERMAN WEHRMACHT

Objective

This study was undertaken to reveal directives for guidance in preparing leaflets, radio programs, and other types of psychological warfare intended for German troops and civilians.

Method

Four batches of German prisoners-of-war, assembled in groups at the Houston cage were administered written questionnaires. The first group was interrogated July 9; the most recent August 3. Prisoners were asked to fill out answers to questions appearing on formal schedules, and were assured that their responses were strictly anonymous. Results obtained from these groups were compared not only with each other, but with earlier findings obtained from similar interrogation of prisoners in the Italian theatre*.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. There has been a definite and precipitate lowering of German troop morale in terms of such measures as their willingness to continue fighting, their confidence in ultimate victory, and their trust in Hitler. Our propaganda should take advantage of these trends in every way possible.
2. The decline is particularly notable since it occurs among the younger prisoners, hitherto the hard core of Nazi fanaticism, as well as among those over 30.
3. A significant observation is the fact that the support for the officers who attempted to kill Hitler was much higher among the most recent batch of prisoners. This group heard of the putash before their capture, while the prisoners interviewed July 28, heard of it in captivity. This suggests that the effect of the plot on the soldiers in the line must have been very strong. It suggests also that the theme of the putash should be kept alive and played up in psychological warfare in anticipation of further defections.
4. Despite the evidences of deteriorating morale on other factors, confidence in commanding officers and WCO's remains high. Attempts to drive a wedge between officers and men would appear to be doomed to failure, and probably should not be attempted at this stage.

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MORALE OF GERMAN PRISONERS HAS DROPPED DECISEVELY* . . .

From July 28 to August 3, a marked drop in morale was found on several different issues:

	<u>July 28</u>	<u>Aug. 3</u>
Proportion believing that it is still possible to drive the Allies from France	45%	16%
Proportion who would have preferred to continue fighting when captured	39%	16%
Proportion on Hitler's side in the recent putsch	39%	16%
Proportion believing Germany will win the war . .	32%	6%
Total number of prisoners	100	165

Confidence in Hitler also fell off decidedly, as indicated in the figures below:

	<u>March**</u>	<u>July 9</u>	<u>July 21</u>	<u>Aug. 3</u>
Proportion placing "their trust in the Führer".	82%	67%	57%	36%
Total number of prisoners	311	363	155	165

THE DECLINE HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY GREAT AMONG THE YOUNGER PRISONERS*** . . .

The group 30 years and less was always higher in morale and is still higher than the older men. Nevertheless, it would appear that the gap between the age groups is rapidly narrowing.

	<u>30 and under</u>		<u>Over 30</u>	
	<u>July 28</u>	<u>Aug. 3</u>	<u>July 28</u>	<u>Aug. 3</u>
Proportion believing it is still possible to drive the Allies out of France	61%	25%	19%	1%
Proportion who would have preferred to continue fighting when captured	54%	22%	10%	9%
Proportion on Hitler's side in the recent putsch	53%	37%	19%	13%
Proportion believing Germany will win the war	48%	6%	6%	1%
Total number of prisoners	61	95	31	70

* See Appendix I for complete figures and questions asked.

** High point in morale based on interrogation in Italian theatre.

*** See Appendix II for complete figures and questions asked.

From July 28 to August 3, a marked drop in morale was found on several different issues:

July 28	Aug. 3
42%	16%
39%	16%
39%	16%
32%	6%
100	16%

Confidence in Hitler also fell off decidedly, as indicated in the figures below:

March**	July 2	July 21	Aug. 3
82%	67%	27%	36%
311	363	122	162

THE DECLINE HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY GREAT AMONG THE YOUNGER PRISONERS*** . . .

The group 30 years and less was always higher in morale and is still higher than the older men. Nevertheless, it would appear that the gap between the age groups is rapidly narrowing.

Over 30	July 28	Aug. 3	30 and under	July 28	Aug. 3
1%	19%	1%	61%	25%	1%
2%	10%	2%	24%	22%	2%
13%	19%	13%	23%	37%	13%
1%	6%	1%	48%	6%	1%
70	31	70	61	22	70

* See Appendix I for complete figures and questions asked.
 ** High point in morale based on interrogation in Italian theatre.
 *** See Appendix II for complete figures and questions asked.

TRENDS ARE APPARENT EVEN IN CLOSELY MATCHED GROUPS . . .

It must be remembered that the groups of prisoners interrogated at different times usually differ in ways which may make dependence on the reliability of such differences tenuous. The July 28 and August 3 groups differed in the following ways:

1. Interval between capture and interrogation.
The July 28th group was questioned about 3 weeks after capture; the August 3rd group was interrogated about 1 week after capture.
2. Previous interrogation.
The July 28th group had been interrogated before; the August 3rd group had not been interviewed previously.
3. Proportion of N.C.O.'s.
The July 28th group was made up of approximately half N.C.O.'s; the August 3rd group was made up entirely of privates.
4. Fighting units.
The July 28th group was made up of 66% combatant troops; the August 3rd group was 87% combatant troops.
5. Proportion of Reichsdeutsche.
The July 28th group included 69% Reichsdeutsche, and 16% whose origin was unknown; the August 3rd group was composed entirely of Reichsdeutsche.

In view of these differences, steps were taken to verify the drop in morale in fairly comparable groups. It was possible to match 46 cases on the basis of age, type of unit, and place of origin. Although the groups are small, figures are shown in percentages for comparison purposes. It is significant that the downward trend in morale is almost as striking in these matched cases as in the unmatched comparisons.

	<u>Matched groups</u>	
	<u>July 28</u>	<u>Aug. 3</u>
Proportion believing that it is still possible to drive the Allies from France	63%	26%
Proportion who would have preferred to continue fighting when captured	57%	22%
Proportion on Hitler's side in the recent putsch . . .	57%	35%
Proportion believing Germany will win the war	43%	9%
Total number of prisoners	46	46

970 of 46 means 4.2 people
hardly a "result"

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The July 28th group was made up of 66% combatant troops; the August 3rd group was 87% combatant troops.
5. Proportion of Reichsdeutsche.
The July 28th group included 62% Reichsdeutsche, and 10% whose origin was unknown; the August 3rd group was composed entirely of Reichsdeutsche.

In view of these differences, steps were taken to verify the drop in morale in fairly comparable groups. It was possible to match 46 cases on the basis of age, type of unit, and place of origin. Although the groups are small, figures are shown in percentages for comparison purposes. It is significant that the downward trend in morale is almost as striking in these matched cases as in the unmatched comparisons.

Matched groups		
July 28	Aug. 3	
62%	26%	Proportion believing that it is still possible to drive the Allies from France
27%	25%	Proportion who would have preferred to continue fighting when captured
27%	32%	Proportion on Hitler's side in the recent push
42%	9%	Proportion believing Germany will win the war
46	46	Total number of prisoners

900 of 46 matched cases
people
travelled

BUT CONFIDENCE IN OFFICERS AND NCO'S REMAINS HIGH* . . .

With all the evidence pointing to lowered morale in the Wehrmacht, there are no signs that German prisoners are increasingly dissatisfied with their officers. Prisoners were asked:

"Was you former company leader the kind of man who risked his men's lives to hold a position or was he more inclined to lay down arms to spare lives?"

26% of the July 28 group, and only
18% of the Aug. 3 group, said that their commanding officer was inclined to risk lives to hold a position.

And the majority of men said that they agreed with their commanding officer's policy:

55% of the July 28th group, and
59% of the Aug. 3 group thought that their commanding officers had the right idea, regardless of which stand they thought he took.

Furthermore, 53 per cent of the second group said they had confidence in their immediate superior officers. And there were only small age differences in attitudes toward officers. Even the usually low-morale older men were quite favorably disposed toward their officers in the second group.

	<u>Interviewed August 3</u>	
	<u>30 and under</u>	<u>Over 30</u>
Proportion agreeing with commanding officer's policy toward risking or saving human lives	61%	57%
Proportion having full confidence in their immediate officers	59%	46%
Total number of prisoners . . .	95	70

Propaganda attempting to estrange men from officers is not likely to be successful when the general level of confidence in officers is so high throughout all age groups in the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, it has not dropped with the general drop in morale on other issues.

* See Appendix III for full figures and questions asked.

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With all the evidence pointing to lowered morale in the Wehrmacht, there are no signs that German prisoners are increasingly dissatisfied with their officers. Prisoners were asked:

"Was your former company leader the kind of man who risked his men's lives to hold a position or was he more inclined to lay down arms to spare lives?"

50% of the July 28 group, and only 18% of the Aug. 3 group, said that their commanding officer was inclined to risk lives to hold a position.

And the majority of men said that they agreed with their commanding officer's policy:

52% of the July 28th group, and 52% of the Aug. 3 group thought that their commanding officers had the right idea, regardless of which stand they thought he took.

Furthermore, 53 per cent of the second group said they had confidence in their immediate superior officers. And there were only small age differences in attitudes toward officers. Even the usually low-morale older men were quite favorably disposed toward their officers in the second group.

Interviewed August 3
30 and under Over 30

Proportion agreeing with commanding officer's policy toward risking or saving human lives	61%	57%
Proportion having full confidence in their immediate officers	52%	46%
Total number of prisoners	92	30

Propaganda attempting to estrange men from officers is not likely to be successful when the general level of confidence in officers is so high throughout all age groups in the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, it has not dropped with the general drop in morale on other issues.

* See Appendix III for full figures and questions asked.

APPENDIX I

Trends in Morale of the Wehrmacht

Date of poll:		Nov. 1943	March 1944	July 9	July 21	July 28	August 3
Captured at:		After German retreat up to Cassino (low point in Italian morale)	Anzio and Cassino during attrition warfare (high point in Ital. morale)	Cherbourg	Carentan	American sector	St. Lo
		Date of capture					
				June 26-28	July 1 - 17	July 1 - 13	July 27
Places his trust in the Führer	Yes	57%	82%	67%	57%	--%	36%
	No	36	12	18	27	--	43
	N.A.	7	6	15	16	--	21
Would have preferred to continue fighting	Yes	42%	66%	24%	30%	39%	16%
	No	50	25	59	67	42	77
	N.A.	8	9	17	3	19	7
Believes Allies can be driven out of Italy (France)	Yes	--	54%	42%	37%	45%	16
	No	--	33	38	49	33	63
	N.A.	--	13	20	14	22	21
Believes in secret weapon (other secret weapons)	Yes	42%	72%	37%	44%	--	21%
	No	47	19	35	37	--	56
	N.A.	11	9	28	19	--	23
Believes in German victory	Yes	--%	--%	--%	--%	32%	4%
	No	--	--	--	--	14	26
	N.A.	--	--	--	--	54	70
Plot of the officers	for Hitler	--%	--%	--%	--%	39%	27%
	for plotters	--	--	--	--	21	42
	N.A.	--	--	--	--	26	31
Agrees with company commander on degree of resistance	Agrees	--%	--%	--%	--%	56%	59%
	Disagrees	--	--	--	--	12	19
	N.A.	--	--	--	--	32	22
Number of prisoners		Not ascertainable	311	363	155	100	165

APPENDIX I

Trends in Morale of the Wehrmacht

Date of poll:	Captured at:	Date of capture					
		Nov. 1943	March 1944	July 9	July 21	July 28	August 3
		After Ger- man retreat up to Cassino (low point in Italian morale)	Cassino during at- tention war- fare (high point in Ital. morale)	Cherbourg	Germanen	American sector	St. Lo
Places his trust in the	Pincher	Yes No N.A.	82% 12 6	82% 18 12	82% 21 16	82% 21 16	82% 21 16
Would have preferred to continue fighting		Yes No N.A.	42% 50 8	66% 52 9	30% 57 3	30% 42 19	16% 17 7
Believes Allies can be driven out of Italy (France)		Yes No N.A.	-- -- --	24% 33 13	42% 38 20	37% 49 14	42% 33 22
Believes in secret weapon (other secret weapons)		Yes No N.A.	42% 47 11	12% 19 9	37% 32 28	44% 31 19	27% 26 23
Believes in German victory		Yes No N.A.	-- -- --	-- -- --	-- -- --	-- -- --	4% 26 10
Plot of the officers for Hitler for ploters		-- -- N.A.	-- -- --	-- -- --	-- -- --	-- -- --	27% 42 31
Agrees with company commander on degree of resistance		-- -- N.A.	-- -- --	-- -- --	-- -- --	-- -- --	27% 19 24
Number of prisoners . . .	Not ascer- tain- able	311	363	122	100	162	

APPENDIX II

Trends in Morale in Different Age Groups

			<u>30 and under</u>		<u>Over 30</u>		<u>Total</u>	
			<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>
			<u>28</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>3</u>
1. Do you believe that it is still possible to drive the Allies from France?	Yes		61%	25%	19%	1%	45%	16%
	No		23	59	55	70	33	63
	No answer		16	16	26	29	22	21
2. When captured, would you have preferred to continue fighting?	Yes		54%	22%	10%	9%	39%	16%
	No		28	70	77	86	42	77
	No answer		18	8	13	5	19	7
3. Are you yourself for the officers who planned the attempt (on Hitler's life) or for Hitler?	Hitler		53%	37%	19%	13%	39%	27%
	Officers		13	38	39	49	21	42
	No answer		34	25	42	38	26	31
4. Do you believe that Germany will win?	Yes		48%	6%	6%	1%	32%	4%
	Doubt		33	64	48	52	35	58
	No		8	21	26	30	14	26
	No answer		11	9	20	17	19	12
Total number			61	95	31	70	100	165

APPENDIX II

Trends in Morale in Different Age Groups

	30 and under		Over 30		Total	
	July	Aug.	July	Aug.	July	Aug.
1. Do you believe that it is still possible to drive the Allies from France?	61%	53%	19%	22%	42%	53%
Yes	16	29	28	33	21	31
No	10	16	29	22	22	21
No answer	10	16	29	22	22	21
2. When captured, would you have preferred to continue fighting?	54%	58%	10%	8%	39%	42%
Yes	18	10	13	8	19	17
No	18	10	13	8	19	17
No answer	18	10	13	8	19	17
3. Are you yourself for the officers who planned the attempt (on Hitler's life) or for Hitler?	53%	53%	19%	19%	39%	42%
Hitler	13	13	19	19	21	21
Officers	34	34	42	42	26	26
No answer	34	34	42	42	26	26
4. Do you believe that Germany will win?	48%	33%	6%	48%	32%	32%
Yes	11	8	17	20	19	19
Doubt	11	8	17	20	19	19
No	11	8	17	20	19	19
No answer	11	8	17	20	19	19
Total number	61	52	31	70	100	162

APPENDIX III

Attitude Toward Officers

		<u>30 and under</u>		<u>Over 30</u>		<u>Total</u>	
		<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>
		<u>28</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>3</u>
Was your former company leader a man who risked the lives of his men to hold a position or was he inclined to cease fighting in order to save human lives?	Risked lives	33%	21%	16%	13%	26%	18%
	Saved lives	36	68	55	64	39	67
	No answer	31	11	29	23	35	15
In your opinion, was he right?	Right	57%	61%	56%	57%	56%	59%
	Wrong	7	23	22	14	12	19
	No answer . . .	36	16	22	29	32	21
Did you have confidence in your immediate superior? (not asked July 28)	Full confidence		59%		46%		53%
	Doubt		26		32		28
	No confidence .		9		11		11
	No answer . . .		6		11		8
Total number		61	95	31	70	100	165

APPENDIX III

Attitude Toward Officers

Total		Over 30		30 and under			
Aug.	July	Aug.	July	Aug.	July		
3	28	3	28	3	28		
182	262	132	162	212	332	Risked lives	Was your former company
61	32	64	22	68	36	Saved lives	leader a man who risked
12	32	23	29	11	31	No answer	the lives of his men to
							hold a position or was
							he inclined to cease li-
							ghting in order to save
							human lives?
292	262	212	262	612	212	Right	In your opinion, was he
19	12	14	22	23	7	Wrong	right?
21	32	29	22	16	36	No answer	
232	462	262	222	222	222	Did you have confidence in	your immediate superior?
28	32	32	26	26	26	Doubt	(not asked July 28)
11	11	11	9	9	9	No confidence . .	
8	11	11	6	6	6	No answer	
162	100	70	31	92	61	Total number	

EXPOSURE TO ALLIED LEAFLETS

Date of Capture	Place of Capture	Percent who saw leaflets	Total Number of M/D	Percent believing contents of leaflets (Based on number who saw leaflets)
June 26 - 28	Charbourg	77	363	
July 1 - 17	From Carenton to St. Lo	69	155	
July 26 - 28	St. Lo	84	165	76
Aug 1 - 10	From St. Hela to Le Mans	24	160	37
Sept	Western Front	30	634	45
Oct 15 - 19	Aachen	64	603	63
Early Nov	1st U.S. Army Front	80	315	
Dec 15 - 31	1, 3, 9, US Army Fronts	66	108	78
Jan 1-31	"	69	312	75
Feb 1 - 28	"	87	328	72
March 1 - 15	"	90	110	79

REPORT TO ALLIED STATES

Percent of
the contents of
the (Base)
on number who
are (Base)

Date of Capture	Place of Capture	Percent who are (Base)	Total Number of (Base)
June 26 - 28	Charbourg	77	263
July 1 - 17	From Garenen to St. Lo	69	152
July 26 - 28	St. Lo	84	162
Aug 1 - 10	From St. Hilaire to Le Mans	24	160
Sept	Western Front	30	624
Oct 12 - 19	Amiens	64	603
Early Nov	1st U.S. Army Front	80	212
Dec 12 - 21	1. 2d U.S. Army Front	66	168
Jan 1 - 21	"	69	219
Feb 1 - 28	"	87	328
March 1 - 12	"	90	210
			76
			27
			45
			63
			78
			72
			72
			72