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SOVIET INDOCTRINATION OF GERMAN WAR PRISONERS

1941 - 1956

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ABBREVIATIONS

PW(s)	Prisoner(s) of War
NKFD	National Komite Freies Deutschland (National Committee Free Germany)
BDO	Bund Deutscher Offiziere (League of German Officers)
A-schools	Anti-Fascist schools
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (Communist East Germany)

## I. INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The following brief essay was written at the request of the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for the purpose of comparing Soviet techniques of political indoctrination with those of Communist China, specifically as applied toward prisoners of war. Although many of the findings, outlined in the following pages, will universally apply to all PWs that the USSR has held during and after World War II, investigation has been concentrated primarily on the experiences of German PWs.

The method used has been a combination of field interviews and library research. With regard to small elite groups, such as the NKFD or the EDO, the object was to obtain as large a sample as possible to permit quasi-quantitative analyses. In the case of the labor camps, the object was to obtain a representative random sample. A number of ex-prisoners, now residing in the German Federal Republic, had written autobiographical accounts which served as a good starting point, both for the location of subjects and for procuring some background material. Interviews with these subjects served the double purpose of filling in on information not covered in their written accounts and on comparing the latter, usually written shortly after their release from captivity, with their present recollections. In addition, most of these subjects proved useful in discussing and locating other ex-fellow prisoners. The German Red Cross and a number

of West German federal agencies were helpful in providing other contacts. The sample also includes a few ex-prisoners, now in the service of Communist East Germany.

Interviews would range from two to four hours, using the method of free association. The interviewing phase was begun only after the writer had conducted the necessary library research on the historical events surrounding the prisoner of war issue.

Except for the few subjects serving with the East German regime, the overwhelming majority of the sample is now gainfully employed in West Germany in business, industry, and the professions. The few exceptions are retired professional soldiers (Gen. v. Seydlitz successfully fought a court action for his pension in West Germany following his return from the USSR), individuals with independent means of income (Count v. Einsiedel is now married to a well-known German actress), or an occasional free-lancer.

With the exception of crimes involving bodily harm to fellow-prisoners or causing war crimes sentences as a result of false accusations, collaboration per se has not been a punishable offence in West Germany. Thus, returning collaborators faced no legal bars in finding employment in commerce or private industry, or in practicing a trade. Limited social discrimination would seem to have occurred only in a few well-known cases. Former Nazi affiliations were much more likely to be responsible for enforced changes in occupation in some subjects.

A large percentage of the sample had been too young for any occupational experience prior to captivity, except military service. Of those who returned to their previous occupations, the percentage of professional people was particularly high.

From the outset the reader should bear in mind certain fundamental differences between the situation of American PWs in Korea and German PWs in the USSR:

1. The overwhelming majority of American PWs had no basic quarrels with either their government or American political and social institutions. The few exceptions comprised some members of racial minority groups, especially negroes, a few elements of low-level income groups, and social misfits. In contrast, there were, amongst German PWs, distinct groups opposed to their political regime at home, or at least to certain aspects of that regime.

2. Both Germany and the USSR were engaged in a life-and-death struggle, defeat, to whomever it came, being synonymous with the collapse of the political regime at home. To the United States and the Chinese People's Republic, the Korean War remained throughout a localized conflict that did not require total employment of all their human and material resources (even though China had to accept certain aid from the USSR). Such major differences in the waging of war obviously would, among other things, influence the treatment of PWs and their utilization. It meant to the individual prisoner that, if and when he would be repatriated, he would either return to a country

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in which the political and social system had remained intact (as was the case with American PWs returning to the United States, or Chinese PWs returning to the Chinese People's Republic), or he would return to a defeated country in which the political and social system had collapsed. As the fortunes of war progressively turned against the Axis powers in World War II, it was the German soldier whose ultimate fate became increasingly uncertain and who was likely to return to a very different Germany from the one he had left.

3. The American soldier who collaborated with the enemy had to accept full responsibility for his actions after repatriation; his only alternative was to remain in an alien environment: his German counterpart would automatically be repatriated to Communist-controlled East Germany, if he originated from that part of the country, or could choose to be sent there, if his last domicile had been in West Germany. The American, then, who collaborated with the enemy and was unwilling to accept responsibility at home, had to make a complete break with the past, whereas the German was not necessarily faced with that predicament, something which in the early years, however, he could not foresee, for as long as the USSR might be defeated, his predicament would be worse than that of the GI, as he would have no haven to go to.

4. The American PW, once repatriated, no longer found himself in an environment that was manipulated, whereas the German PW who was returned to East Germany continued to live in rigidly controlled surroundings.

5. Finally, there were the differences resulting from the different types of conflict fought. The Soviets held hundreds of thousands of German prisoners during the war--a figure that went into the millions after the total German collapse. It was clear that the kind of intensive indoctrination carried out by the Chinese of American soldiers in Korea, could not be introduced on the same scale by the Soviets toward German PWs in World War II.



II. SOVIET INDOCTRINATION OBJECTIVES

In its political indoctrination program directed at PWs, the USSR pursued a number of objectives, some of them simultaneously.

1. Fulfillment of Ideological Legacy

Soviet writers and theoreticians in the early years of the regime had evolved basic tenets governing the treatment of PWs, derived from Marxist-Leninist concepts of war, revolutionary war, and wars to which the Soviet peoples were a party. These concepts are sufficiently well known not to need any elaboration here. From them it seemed to develop logically that in any war to which the RSFSR or later USSR was a party (the latter by definition representing the interests of the working class) the bulk of the enlisted men in the enemy's army ought to be considered brothers of the Soviet people, since they too would have a working class background. They only had to be liberated from the exploitation of their capitalist bosses, who were represented in the army by the officer class. Consequently, the Soviet authorities separated officers from enlisted men in the PW camps which they took over from the authorities of the provisional government in World War I, placed only the officers behind barbed wire and had them guarded by their own men. This practice was continued with Polish PWs during the campaigns of the twenties.

Consistent with these concepts, the Soviets advocated the doctrine of voluntary repatriation of PWs in the area of international

law, an attitude from which they radically departed in later years. Yet, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that certain routinized behavior toward PWs, as learned during the early years of the regime, continued to be practiced up to recent times, sometimes to the detriment of other competing objectives.

## 2. Prisoners-of-War as Propaganda Instruments

The Seventh Division of the Red Army (Propaganda) utilized individual PWs for the production and dissemination of propaganda leaflets and radio broadcasts long before the formation of the NKFD, and, indeed, continued these activities even after the establishment of the latter, with little or no coordination except on the highest policy-making level.

PWs might be persuaded to render such services almost immediately after their capture and prior to their being sent to permanent camps, or they would be graduates from an anti-Fascist school and assigned to the Red Army for psychological warfare duties. The latter procedure was obviously the more desirable from the point of view of the Soviet authorities but the exigencies of war made improvisation a frequent and necessary evil.

Although the NKFD, set up in July 1943, served more than one purpose in the Soviet scheme of things, one purpose clearly was to undermine the morale of the German fighting man. Its regular broadcasts over Radio Moscow, but under its own identity, its occasional

loudspeaker propaganda at the front, and its production of leaflets dropped over the German lines were designed to explode the Nazi myth that the Soviets made no prisoners, to reduce the fighting spirit of the German soldier and, wherever possible, to induce him to surrender to the Red Army.

Similarly, NKFD broadcasts beamed to the German home front aimed at dividing the German people and, thus, at breaking its will to resist. As distinct from the direct use made of PWs by the Red Army for psychological warfare purposes (which was confined to the utilization of the prisoner's linguistic skills and his cultural background), the prisoner who spoke on behalf of the NKFD assumed, in addition, a symbolic significance, for the NKFD ostensibly was, not the mouthpiece of the enemy, but professed to speak on behalf of the German people.

### 3. Prisoners of War as Political Instruments

If the utilization of the NKFD for purposes of psychological warfare had been one reason for its inception,<sup>\*</sup> political considerations were another. In the summer of 1943, despite the spectacular success of the Red Army at Stalingrad, Stalin did not yet feel certain of

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<sup>\*</sup>This coincided with the realization on the part of the Soviet leadership that the pre-1933 Communist line adopted by German emigres in the USSR in their attempt to indoctrinate PWs had been totally ineffective and that, hence, propaganda addressed to the German soldier and civilian would be equally ineffective, unless a more patriotic and less Communist line was taken.

victory, especially as he continued to suspect the intentions of the Western Allies. The Allied landings in North Africa and the planned and rumored invasions of Italy and the Balkans seemed to him as much directed against Soviet influence in Eastern Europe as against the Axis powers. The spectre of an understanding between Nazi Germany and the Western Allies was a constant nightmare. The latter was all the more real to him, as he himself made overtures in this direction. There is evidence that, beginning with the late fall of 1942, he repeatedly established contact with Nazi Germany in an effort to explore the possibilities of a separate peace.\*

When these efforts remained unsuccessful, a new approach was sought in which the NKFD was to play its part. Its establishment was to serve two purposes. Firstly, it would create inside the USSR a group of anti-Nazi Germans of diverse political beliefs and friendly to the USSR, which could either be the nucleus of a future German government, or through which the USSR could exert influence in the event of a successful coup d'etat within Germany. Secondly, its existence could be used as a means to blackmail the Western Allies and to make them more amenable to Soviet wishes. Characteristically, the NKFD ceased to serve the latter purpose after the Teheran Conference in December 1943 which assured the Soviets of the "loyalty" of the Western Allies. Consequently, all Soviet overtures toward Germany ceased after that date.

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\*See Boris Meissner, Russland, Die Westmächte und Deutschland: Die Sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik 1943-1953 (H.H. Nölke Verlag: Hamburg, 1954), pp. 13-21.

The NKFD as a means of exerting influence upon a new revolutionary government in Germany lost its meaning with the failure of the assassination attempt upon Hitler in June 1944. This would have left the NKFD with only one of the original functions for which it was created--to provide the leadership for a new post-war Germany. But by now the tide of the war had turned so much in favor of the anti-Axis camp that the Soviets no longer had need to engage in political compromises. Subsequent agreements\* with the Western Allies called for separate occupation zones within a defeated Germany so that it was no longer necessary to provide for the leadership of a pro-Soviet "bourgeois" government in Germany. Henceforth the task was to train the personnel for a Communist-dominated East Germany.

#### 4. The Training of an Elite

Although contractual arrangements about the occupation of Germany among the Allies did not exist until September 1944, the principle of occupation by zones, rather than joint occupation, had been visualized for some time. Thus, there was good reason for the Soviets to select from among the large numbers of PWs at their disposal men who could be expected to play the Communist game in post-war Germany and to train them for that purpose. However, even before the pattern of post-war Germany began to emerge, the Soviets were interested in selecting potential opinion leaders who could be trained as propagandists

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\*The Protocol of September 12, 1944, signed at Lancaster House, London.

and agitators. Such men would be sent to anti-Fascist schools, where they would be exposed to a program of rigid Communist indoctrination. Following their graduation, they would be returned to PW-camps to work as "activists", or they would be attached to Red Army units as propagandists. After the war they were mostly transferred to East Germany to occupy key positions in the administration, the party bureaucracy, and the different media of mass communications. Some were sent to West Germany, either to work openly for the Communist Party, as long as it was permitted to operate in the German Federal Republic, or to engage in sub rosa activities.

### III. SOVIET TREATMENT OF GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR - A SURVEY OF EVENTS

Time, location and circumstances under which capture took place played a significant part in determining the individual prisoner's vulnerability to indoctrination attempts. The year of capture would materially affect the prisoner's assessment of Germany's chances of victory, and consequently his fighting morale, as well as his willingness to accept the risks of collaboration; the season and climate of the region would have a direct influence upon his chances to survive the physical hardships of captivity and his will to resist the temptations of collaboration; his physical and mental condition would depend in large measure upon the action he had been engaged in prior to his capture--whether he had belonged to a rested, well-supplied unit that was advancing, or whether capture had come after weeks of hard defensive battles, or whether it coincided with the collapse of Germany and the end of the war, as was the case with the largest contingents of prisoners.

Variations of the above situations existed throughout the Soviet-German campaign; however, for the purposes of this investigation the period will be broken down into four major phases.

#### 1. 1941-1942, the pre-Stalingrad Period

It is estimated that the USSR captured between 80,000 and 100,000 German PWs up to the battle of Stalingrad. In the beginning, this included men who had been cut off from their units in the course of

rapid advances, surviving crews of aircraft and tanks put out of action behind the Russian lines, wounded who had remained on the battlefield when their units were forced to withdraw, paratroopers who had been unable to maintain their positions until the ground forces had made contact with them, deserters, and, beginning with the winter of 1941-42, increasing numbers of soldiers whose positions had been overrun in the first major counter-offensives of the Red Army. In view of the precarious situation in which the USSR found itself during that phase of the war, physical conditions were particularly severe and not more than 8 to 10 per cent of the prisoners are believed to have survived captivity.

The first twenty-four hours in a prisoner's life were mentally the most taxing. The prisoner had been led to believe by persistent Nazi propaganda that the Soviets would not make prisoners and, therefore, expected execution upon or immediately after capture. Hitler's own notorious "Commissar-decree" which called for the execution of all captured Soviet commissars lent but added credibility to these fears. But even the realization that captivity did not inevitably mean death made the first twenty-four hours the most traumatic single experience. The sudden and complete separation from one's next of kin, the breaking up of all formal group ties, the uncertainty of the future, and the prospect of slave labor in Siberia or the Urals called for an unparalleled adjustment.

Detailed and frequent interrogations by Red Army officers were standard procedure. Before being taken to collection centers, PWs might be employed as labor gangs with Red Army units (e.g. for transporting ammunition, road and bridge building, or as truck drivers).



An especially critical phase in the prisoner's capacity to survive came during the marches to collecting centers or transit camps. Similarly, the mortality rate of PWs on rail transports from the collecting centers to permanent camps was always high (in November 1941, 1,500 PWs out of a total of 3,500 died on a transport from Jawas to Karaganda\*). Frequent epidemics, in addition to malnutrition, etc., caused the death of many others, both in transit and in permanent camps. Of a total of 700 PWs in Jawas, 400 perished from December 1941 to June 1942, whereas out of 3,000 PWs in a camp in the Urals, 2,500 died from typhus between May 1942 and Fall 1943.\*\*

The majority of the permanent camps during this early period were located in Southern Siberia and the Urals. On the one hand this was done to discourage the escape of PWs, on the other, to ease the Red Army's supply problems. Officers were usually separated from the men and sent to Krasnogorsk, Gorki-Oranki, and Jelabuga (these remained the principal officers' camps throughout the war and after).

It is interesting to note how much the Soviet attitude toward officers had changed since the early days of the Revolution. Consistent with the radical changes that had been introduced within the Red Army and with the elevated positions that Red Army officers had assumed, captured enemy officers were not compelled to work outside their camps but merely responsible for the upkeep of their camps (in conformity with the Geneva Convention), and received better food rations.

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\*Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Zur Geschichte der Kriegsgefangenen im Osten Part I (1954), p. 28.

\*\*loc. cit.

Because officers had the necessary leisure, and were, moreover, past and potential future opinion leaders, they became primary targets for indoctrination attempts.

Political instructors soon descended upon the camps. They came from the ranks of German emigrees who had been one-time members of the German Communist Party in the days of the Weimar Republic. Most of them had by now become Soviet citizens. Their formal lectures and informal discussions were exact replicas of the type of dogmatic Communist propaganda that had characterized party rallies in the twenties or early thirties. They had been in exile for ten years, had only very vague ideas of life within Nazi Germany, and no longer spoke the language of the German laborer. Slogans, such as "German workman, you commit murder against your own brother by fighting against members of your own class" no longer were the cues for learned responses, but caused either amusement or irritation among PWs. This direct and crude attack upon their belief system largely failed, for the German soldiers had seen enough of life in the Soviet Union to appreciate the gulf between prophecy and reality. Moreover, whether or not they saw eye to eye with their regime at home, the majority of German PWs still believed in a German victory at that stage of the war, and hence the consequences that might result from collaboration acted as a powerful deterrent.

But dogma is not easily changed and although the emigree group realized that different tactics were needed (they seemed nevertheless

less flexible than the Russians in that respect), only a policy decision on the highest level could bring about such a change. In the meantime the inadequate old methods continued to dominate the approach. Communist cadres were formed among the small number of collaborators--few enlisted men, and even fewer officers.

The first anti-Fascist school was established in Zone 3 of the officers' camp at Krasnogorsk. Living conditions for students were better than in the other zones of the camp, but they were not allowed to become too markedly different at that time. The number of participants during this early phase was relatively small, not exceeding two hundred for the German nationality division. Upon graduation the following oath had to be taken:

I, a son of the German people, hereby swear in undying love to my people, my country and my family, to fight on until Fascism and Militarism have been uprooted and destroyed, until the shame of Hitlerite barbarism has been wiped out and my people are thereby made free and happy again.

I swear to fight unconditionally for this aim, to devote all my energies to it and to sacrifice if necessary even my life itself, to remain loyal to the cause of freedom and of the people to the last breath in my body, and to work tirelessly to fit myself to fight this struggle successfully.

This oath binds me fraternally to all other anti-Fascists in fighting loyally for the final and complete victory of our holy cause.

I swear to proceed ruthlessly against anyone who may break this oath.

Should I break this oath and become a traitor to my people, my country and my family, may the just anger of the people

fall on me. May my comrades in the struggle judge me and condemn me as a traitor and an enemy of the people, an enemy of progress and an enemy of peace.\*

Graduates would then be attached to Red Army units at the front for psychological warfare duties, or they would be distributed among PW camps, where they became "activists".

At the time of the encirclement of the German armies at Stalingrad, some of the most promising graduates of the school, among them an ex-captain and an ex-lieutenant of the Wehrmacht, were selected by Manuilski, one-time chairman of the Comintern and then Head of the Political Administration of the Red Army (to be succeeded by General Shcherbakov) and proceeded with some of the prominent emigre leaders to the pocket, where they addressed via loudspeakers the encircled German forces. When they utterly failed in their mission under circumstances which scarcely could have been more favorable, it revised Soviet thinking, and henceforth a new approach was adopted. Communism and Internationalism was to be de-emphasized, and instead, German nationalism was to be given full range.

## 2. 1943-1945 from Stalingrad to Capitulation

When the Red Army completed the encirclement of Axis troops of some 22 divisions in the Stalingrad area on November 9, 1942, there were an estimated 223,000 men inside the pocket. The last resistance

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\*Fritz Löwenthal, News from Soviet Germany (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), p. 37.

of the defenders ceased on February 2, 1943. About 30,000 wounded had been evacuated by air, about 100,000 died in battle, and approximately 93,000 were taken prisoner. The temperature in the Stalingrad region at the time was sub-zero, and the majority of the troops suffered from exposure and semi-starvation prior to capture. As a result, the mortality rate during marches to collection centers was particularly high. Many men died from exposure, others broke down on the roadside and were shot by Soviet guards.

The Russians were totally unprepared for such large numbers of PWs so that food, sanitary conditions, and even the most primitive type of shelter were lacking in collection centers. Epidemics which had already begun inside the pocket quickly spread and also took a heavy toll in lives.

Approximately 40% of surviving PWs were sent to permanent camps in the European portion of the Soviet Union; 60% to its Asiatic portion. Losses in lives during these transports amounted to 35-40%. A mere 18,000 reached their destination, i.e., 54.5% of all those who were placed on transports. Of the survivors 12,000 subsequently perished, so that only 6,000 PWs of the 93,000 taken at Stalingrad survived captivity and were returned to Germany after the war.

Apart from the 93,000 men captured at Stalingrad, an additional 400,000 to 500,000 fell into Soviet hands by the end of 1944. These comprise:

- (a) approximately 90,000 - 100,000 prisoners taken between the winter of 1942-43 and spring of 1944 (outside Stalingrad), mostly in defensive battles on the northern front and on the Crimea, as well as at the Cherkassy-Korsun pocket. Between 10% and 50% of these PWs survived captivity;
- (b) some 30,000 PWs taken in the so-called Brody pocket in June-July of 1944 of whom approximately 80% survived captivity;
- (c) 150,000 men captured at the time of the collapse of the central front also in June-July of 1944, who suffered 20-25% losses during marches and in collection centers prior to reaching permanent camps; and
- (d) approximately 200,000 PWs taken in the Roumanian theater of war of whom about 60% reached camps within the USSR alive.

Despite the heavy losses suffered by any one of these groups, it is obvious that none paralleled the statistics of the Stalingrad PWs.\*

The above figures describe better than anything else the fate of the average Stalingrad prisoner and his exceedingly small chances of survival. But this group also included a group of general and staff officers, for whom the Soviets had special plans and who, therefore, led a very different life. In the latter weeks of the Stalingrad drama there occurred scenes unprecedented in the history

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\*Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Zur Geschichte der Kriegsgefangenen im Osten Part I (1954), throughout.

of the German army. When the defenders of the pocket realized that they were being sacrificed by a ruthless and megalomaniac leadership, many openly condemned Hitler.\* Some of his most ardent followers committed suicide, others became his bitter enemies. The Soviets were quick to exploit this situation, sent a special train with sleepers, diners and friendly nurses to the scene, and transported in comfort and relative elegance 22 generals and a large number of staff officers to Camp 27 at Krasnogorsk. Having been feted on caviar and vodka, they made a majestic entry into Zone 1 to the disbelieving eyes of their fellow-prisoners. The privileged treatment, however, did not turn these officers into collaborators by any means. Known anti-Fascists were ostracized by them and even those officers who severely criticized Hitler never considered the possibility of turning against him at that time. The crude approach of some of the anti-Fascists merely reinforced this attitude. An obvious lack of management was evident if it was possible for the students of the A-school in Zone 3 (who were allowed to enter Zone 1 once a week to take showers) to march past the generals singing the

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\*The German public was given vivid descriptions of how the generals, shoulder to shoulder with their men, had fought to the last. When in spring 1943 the first bags of mail from Stalingrad PWs had reached Germany via Turkey, Maj.-Gen. v. Weichs, visiting Hitler at his headquarters, expressed the hope that this mail would be delivered to relatives without delay. Hitler put down his knife and fork, looked around the group until everybody was silent, then he declared: "The men of Stalingrad have got to be dead." (See Heinrich Gerlach, Die Verratene Armee (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlags-Handlung, 1957), p. 560).

"Internationale" and yelling wild abuse. Here was part of that legacy that also made it extremely difficult for the old Communist emigres to adopt the new tactics and not to consider officers their natural class enemies. Most of the Stalingrad group of officers were transferred to Susdal monastery, about 180 miles from Moscow in the middle of May.

The Soviets started a new drive by publishing in Das Freie Wort, a newspaper printed for use in German PW camps, a report of a clandestine meeting allegedly held in the Rhineland by opposition groups of all types that had decided upon joint action against Hitler--an apparent invention by Moscow. The purpose was to use this event as a discussion subject in all the camps. By the beginning of June, it became obvious that there were other reasons besides the desire to make converts, which prompted the Soviets to stage the formal setting up of a Free Germany Committee at a time when very few of the prominent PWs were ready to join. This was the moment when the committee was to be used as a political instrument against the Western allies, and apparently there was some fear in Moscow that London or Washington entertained the same idea and would precede them.

Thus, on June 12, 1943 the establishment of the National Committee Free Germany was proclaimed at Krasnogorsk, composed of 11 Communist emigres, among them the former members of Parliament Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht (now President and SED Party Secretary in East Germany respectively), 16 enlisted men and NCOs and 11 officers,



including 3 staff officers. The PW-group included several graduates from the A-school, some so-called delegates from the soldiers' camps who, in view of the catastrophic conditions there had been willing to sign or do almost anything that would get them out of the epidemic-ridden camps (many of these were leaders of labor battalions), and several majors and captains from the officers' camps. (2,500 officers of the Stalingrad army had been sent to Oranky and Yelabuga where typhus had raged for months and reduced the number of inmates by 50%, despite the better rations and general living conditions in these camps).

At Oranky feeling against the anti-fascist movement ran high because of the corruption and terrorism of the local polit-instructor. In Camp 97 at Yelabuga only a few dozen out of approximately 800 officers joined the local anti-Fascist group. In Susdal, where the generals had been sent, wild arguments were fought between pro- and anti-Hitler groups; but all turned a cold shoulder toward the NKFD.

The choice of the imperial German colors as a symbol, rather than those of the Weimar Republic, could delude nobody that, so far, the complexion of the NKFD strongly favored the Communists, with Center and Right being scarcely represented. The few officers, being unknown to the German soldier and public, were hardly in a position to act as focal points around which anti-Hitler forces would rally, and the only name that lent itself for some propaganda was that of Count Heinrich von Einsiedel, a 22-year old fighter pilot, shot down over Stalingrad,

who was the great grandson of Bismarck and had been induced almost immediately after capture to write an anti-Hitler leaflet as a means of letting his family know that he was alive. Einsiedel came from a Junker family which had considered the Nazi movement as one that had risen from the gutter, and thus the break with Hitler was not too difficult. As a young, successful fighter ace, he had given little thought to the war and experienced few hardships. Captivity abruptly ended a rather pleasant and carefree, if dangerous existence. He was mentally alert. Having grave doubts about a German victory, he eagerly studied Marxist-Leninist literature when it was placed at his disposal. Soon afterwards he declared himself an anti-Fascist. He suffered mentally when he was ostracized by the Stalingrad generals, but his ego was flattered by the many friendly interviews that high-ranking Russian Polit-officers conducted with him, and while he had immediately clashed with the notorious polit-instructor at Oranky (Wagner), he had been influenced by Captain Hadermann, a very different type of anti-Fascist leader at Krasnogorsk and an officer and PW like himself. When he was offered the chance to serve on the executive of the new Committee, he could not resist the temptation.

Aware of the lack of attraction that the NKFD would have to the German soldier and the generalty, the Soviets now began a drive to make it more representative. A delegation from the NKFD, including Einsiedel, visited the officers' camp at Yelabuga, where they wisely asked the Russians to make attendance of the meeting to be called

compulsory, as they knew that attendance alone would be interpreted as collaboration by the resister group. Some 50 officers, out of a group of approximately 800, were ready to join after the meeting was over, but by the next day they had changed their minds under the pressure and arguments of the resisters.

The carrot that was offered next to the officers to make collaboration more palatable was an officers' league, separate from the NKFD. This coincided with a move among some officers to band together in some form of organization that would be recognized by the Russians.

The active group of the NKFD had meanwhile moved to a former rest home at Lunovo, outside Moscow. Early in September up to 100 officers arrived from various PW camps, willing to join in an officers' league. Another group, composed of six generals, led by Walter von Seydlitz, CO of the 51st army corps, also arrived. They had been selected from among the other generals and brought to Lunovo by the Russians at the advice of officers who knew them personally on the assumption that they might be won over in time. As they entered the house, they refused to return any of the greetings, except those from the officers they knew. But by September 7, this group too gave in and declared its willingness to participate in the formation of the projected officers' league. The rationalization behind their decision was largely that the NKFD was a fait accompli anyway, and the only way to prevent the committee from having all the say was by creating a

balancing force on the Right. The executive of the "Bund Deutscher Offiziere" (BDO), set up on September 12, numbered about 30, with Gen. v. Seydlitz as chairman. The BDO acceded to the principles of the NKFD manifesto of July, and several officers, including Seydlitz, ended up joining the NKFD (largely involuntarily and against their better judgment), by some ingenious trick which amalgamated the two organizations in a loose fashion and automatically appointed some officers of the executive of the BDO to that of the NKFD. Thus the latter at last assumed the representation that the Soviets had desired.

For the characterization of Seydlitz, it should be added that he was a man who had been opposed to the Nazi regime long before his captivity. At Stalingrad he had demanded in writing a breakthrough of the enclosed forces "if necessary against the will of the Führer and only responsible to the German people." At Lunovo, prior to joining the NKFD he had indignantly refused to sit down at one table with deserters like the two old-time Communists Zippel and Gold.

As for the other generals who participated in the BDO, Major-Gen. Martin Lattmann, CO of the 14th Panzer Division, was a confirmed Nazi who in earlier days at the artillery school at Jüterbog had been known to rebuke officers in his classes for not having read Hitler's Mein Kampf. At Camp Susdal, he had been one of the most vociferous men in opposition to any collaboration with the Russians. Lt.-Gen. Edler v. Daniels, CO of the 376th Infantry Division, was a controversial figure, known for his addiction to alcohol and sex. In addition to participating

in the BDO, he became a Vice-President of the NKFD, who later was said to have signed anything unseen. Dr. Otto Korfes, Maj.-Gen. and CO of the 295th Infantry Division, had been a one-time member of the right-wing veterans' organization "Stahlhelm". He had been critical of Hitler's policies at Stalingrad. Lt.-Gen. Schlömer, CO of the 53rd Army Corps, had been a respected and popular man who only participated in the BDO.\*

Shortly after the establishment of the BDO, a delegation, headed by Seydlitz, left for the generals' camp No. 48. There were tumultuous scenes with cat-calls and hissing, as Seydlitz and his companions spoke, and their recruiting drive ended in total failure.

Lunovo became the permanent seat for the executive committees of the NKFD and the BDO, as well as for a number of experts in economic, cultural and church affairs, numbering altogether approximately 50. It housed the editorial offices of what became known as the sender "Freies Deutschland" (broadcasting over Radio Moscow), and the newspaper Freies Deutschland which became the successor to Das Freie Wort and constituted the only link between Lunovo and the other camps.

In the latter it became the task of the "activists" to recruit new members for the NKFD. Recruitment simply took the form of getting a man to sign his name on the appropriate lists. Independent selection

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\*Among the 11 members of the BDO who had joined the NKFD were also two army chaplains, one Protestant, one Catholic. In June 1944, the Soviets organized a meeting of 30 army chaplains near Moscow at which only two refused to sign a memorandum prepared by the two NKFD chaplains.

of suitable students for the A-schools continued, as it had prior to the establishment of the NKFD. Thus, the NKFD in the average camp had no particular functions, except for the signing of occasional resolutions, and to satisfy the "norm-filling" mania of the Soviet system--it was important for the polit-instructor to be able to report that a high percentage of camp inmates had become members of the NKFD and thereby anti-Fascists.

Liaison between Lunovo and the Soviet authorities was provided by the emigres, who had established themselves in a villa in Moscow which to all intents and purposes was the true headquarters of the organization. There were parallel offices for the sender "Freies Deutschland" and the newspaper, and it was here that the real editing was done. Even then, final censorship was exercised by an outside agency.

The so-called "front-representatives" of the NKFD were graduates from A-schools who thus merely continued, using the symbols of the NKFD, the activities of those earlier graduates who had been attached to Red Army units as propagandists.

It lies outside the scope of this report to examine in detail the aims and activities of the NKFD. Therefore, it will be discussed only to the extent needed for an understanding of the attitudes of supporters and opponents. At the time of its establishment and during the early period of its existence the NKFD called for the removal of Hitler and the Nazi leadership and for the substitution of a democratic government, and directly appealed to army commanders in the field to

lead their forces back to Germany's pre-war frontiers. Unlike Red Army psychological warfare, it did not call for the surrender of German troops, in view of the objections of the generals and higher officers who were unwilling to lend their support to "disruptive" propaganda techniques. It was to be foreseen that this approach, while soothing the sensibilities of the higher-ranking officers, would serve no practical purpose, for to the German soldier on the other side, it was an impossible task to differentiate between the "noble" and "honorable" objectives of the NKFD and the conventional propaganda of the Red Army. Thus the latter merely helped to discredit the Committee.

The Russians were, of course, not willing to put up indefinitely with such an ineffective operation. As long as the NKFD served a political purpose, they had been ready to go a long way toward meeting the demands of the right wing for the sake of winning over as many prominent names as possible; but once this purpose had largely been fulfilled (at the time of the Teheran Conference), the Committee's remaining usefulness lay only in the area of front propaganda.\*

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\*In a statement made to Dr. Benes in December 1943, Molotov declared: "Germany must be carved up; but at the present time we must not disclose our intentions, as otherwise we would only aid Hitler's cause. We must do everything in our power in order to relieve the pressure upon the Soviet armies. Seydlitz makes excellent propaganda. We shall employ the German Communists for the same purpose: to split the Germans and thereby facilitate the tasks of the Soviet army." Conveyed by Eduard Taboraky, Benes' secretary, to the Manchester Guardian, as reprinted by Ost-Probleme, Nr. 38, September 23, 1955, p. 1453.

Here then was an impressive example demonstrating the futility of "limited collaboration". Even without Soviet prodding, it soon became clear to members of the NKFD that the lofty appeals to the commanding generals to lead their armies back to Germany's pre-war frontiers did not meet the needs of the frontline soldier who found himself encircled by Russian forces. The only effective appeal that could be made to him was to surrender. The generals were first horrified when the suggestion was made to use disruptive propaganda; but by now they were split within their own ranks and eventually had to agree to the new course. Thus, a delegation, headed by Seydlitz and Dr. Korfes, went in February 1944 to the front at Cherkassy, where several German divisions had been encircled. Direct appeals by letter and loudspeaker were sent to two commanding German generals inside the pocket, but remained unanswered, although their receipt had been confirmed. Part of the encircled forces managed to break out, and the others were taken PWs after suffering heavy losses. The first attempt of the NKFD had proved a dismal failure. Similar efforts were continued by prominent officers of the NKFD until the end of the war with no better results. It was clear that the NKFD operations were successful only among PWs; i.e., in order to make any inroads, it required the changed environment of captivity.

Meanwhile, the Nazi authorities had been forced to change their policy toward the NKFD which, in the beginning, they had simply ignored, partly because it was largely composed of Stalingrad fighters who



allegedly were all dead. Seydlitz was sentenced to death in absentia by a military tribunal; the same fate befell all other members of the NKFD who had belonged to the German armed forces. These developments, in turn, could not fail to reinforce identification with the Soviets on the part of those concerned.

The unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944 had two direct consequences for the NKFD. The fact that there had been an actual German resistance group to which a number of prominent military and civilian leaders belonged seemed to make opposition to the Nazi regime less treasonable, and hence more acceptable to many PWs\* (to those who had already become collaborators the event was welcome as a rationalization that they had done the right thing). The brutal measures with which the Nazi regime suppressed the revolt, and especially the fact that they seized the opportunity to blacken the record of the entire officers' corps and the nobility, induced 30 out of 70 captured German generals to join the EDO. By mid-August even Field-Marshal v. Paulus, the German Supreme Commander of the Stalingrad Army, whom the Soviets had hoped to win over from the day of his capture, declared his entry into that organization. \*\*

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\*Twenty German generals captured at the time of the collapse of the central front and without prior communication with the NKFD, addressed a joint appeal to the Wehrmacht to end the war through the removal of Hitler's dictatorship.

\*\*v. Paulus subsequently appeared as a Soviet witness at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial.

The climax was reached in a proclamation signed on December 8, 1944 by 50 generals in which, evoking the image of Hindenburg and Ludendorff who demanded a cease-fire in 1918 from the Imperial German Government (when further fighting seemed senseless), they called for an immediate armistice and the removal of Hitler, Himmler, and their system.

Ironically, whereas the assassination attempt had increased the number of followers of the NKFD and EDO respectively, it decreased the significance of the movement. For the failure of the revolt inside Germany eliminated one of the purposes for which the NKFD was created--to provide a link through which the Soviets could have exerted influence upon the leaders of a successful military coup d'etat.\* The Soviets lost no time in adjusting to the new situation. The unsuccessful plotters were quickly branded as "reactionaries" and shortly afterwards certain elements at Lunovo, known within the NKFD as a right wing who had resisted the influence of the emigres and left-wing PWs, were, at the behest of Ulbricht, removed from Lunovo and transferred to other camps, where they were first to show that they were

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\*That Soviet calculations were not unjustified may be seen by the influence that the NKFD exerted upon certain groups among the German resistance movement. See: Bernd Gisevius, Bis zum bitteren Ende. There were other members of the resistance movement, however, who apparently considered the activities of the NKFD treasonable. Thus, Ulrich v. Hassel wrote in his diary on February 6, 1944: "The mental confusion and moral decline produced by Hitler has been illuminated by two things in recent times: Seydlitz, Daniels, Czimatis, whom I know from the OKW (he made an excellent impression) have made a tempting appeal to the encircled forces at Cherkassy to surrender via the Russian radio."

were true anti-Fascists. The group at Lanovo was simply told that those transferred had left for other camps on a recruiting drive for the organization.\* They were gradually replaced by graduates from the A-schools.

This was not the only blow which the right wing, mostly grouped around Seydlitz and the BDO members, suffered. Among the officers at Yelabuga who, beginning with the first Communist propaganda drive, had maintained close contacts with the polit-instructor, was a Lieutenant Huber, an SS officer and section leader in the German Ministry for Education. He subsequently joined the group at Lanovo, where, one day, he was arrested by the NKVD when it leaked out that he was working for the Gestapo and had specifically joined the NKFD to work against it from within. He had succeeded in driving a wedge between left and right wings and in discrediting the latter in the eyes of the Soviets.

Scarcely less perturbing was a special request submitted to the Soviets by Generals Arno v. Lensky and Vincent Müller, who had joined the Lanovo group some time after its inception, to attend the A-school. After some hesitation, the Soviets agreed. When the two graduated, they had become convinced Communists.

The fact that the movement had outlived its political usefulness was also symbolized by the fewer visits that high-ranking Soviet officers would pay to Seydlitz and the generals on the NKFD.

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\*The group was led by a certain Dr. Wieder.

The new line was formalized in an article that Erich Weinert, the poet-chairman of the NKFD, wrote in September 1944 on the new tasks of the Committee. These were (1) to prevent further bloodshed (meaning surrender of German forces to the Soviets); (2) to assist the Soviet authorities in the establishment of a new Germany (which meant the training of anti-Fascists who would carry out Soviet orders in postwar Germany).

With the unconditional surrender of Germany in May 1945 the question arose: what would become of the NKFD and its members? Having failed in making any significant contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany, it had, as an organization, forfeited its claims for the management of affairs in postwar Germany. This was the assessment of the more sober members of the NKFD, and that was exactly the line taken by the Soviets to rid themselves conveniently of an organization that no longer served their purposes. However, this did not rule out the utilization of individual members of the NKFD and the BDO in East Germany. At the very least all were convinced that after having collaborated thus far, they would belong to the first to be repatriated to Germany after the war. These hopes, however, remained unfulfilled and nervousness soon began to settle upon the group. The Soviets had no intention of prematurely releasing and trying to use anybody of whom they felt uncertain as to whether he would play their game in East Germany or not. But as some of these doubtful elements happened to be experts in certain areas, they might still be

put to good use within the framework of the NKFD. Thus, a number of working teams were formed that devoted themselves to such matters as school reform, history text books, or church affairs. The finished reports were submitted to Ulbricht and have indeed formed the basis for a number of institutions introduced in East Germany since.

On November 2, 1945 the NKFD and the BDO were formally dissolved in a plenary session presided over by Weinert and Seydlitz. Approximately half the members of the group were repatriated within the next few months. The others, mostly members of the BDO, but also others, including graduates from the A-schools, had to leave Lunovo and were distributed among the generals' camp No. 48 and Susdal monastery.

A closer look at those repatriated showed that, with the exception of the army chaplains, they comprised those considered by the Soviets to be reliable Communists or fellow-travellers. The clergymen, although some of them had collaborated extensively, had served a useful propaganda purpose and by their repatriation might continue to serve the same purpose within Germany.

Those who had to remain in Soviet camps were composed of the "right wing", i.e., most of the BDO members, but also such A-school graduates as Count v. Einsiedel or Capt. Fleischmann who, their collaboration notwithstanding, had demonstrated time and again with their independent action that they were unwilling to carry out Soviet orders without raising questions. The two generals, Mueller and Lensky, likewise graduates from the A-school, were not yet repatriated either, though

for different reasons. With demilitarization being one of the principles that the occupation powers carried into effect in post-war Germany, the appearance of two Communist generals seemed somewhat premature.

In Camp 48, all members of the group were ostracized by the generals who lived there, despite the fact that many of them had signed the anti-Hitler proclamation of December 1944 and become members of the BDO. By now they had renounced all such activities and submitted themselves to so-called "courts of honor", formed by those generals who had not wavered, asking for forgiveness and reinstatement into the "fraternity". This by no means, however, meant the end of all collaboration. Inside the camp they would do everything to conform to the expected group norms; but at interrogations outside the camp, many of them would yield to Soviet pressures and supply information relevant to the preparation of the war crimes trials of members of their fraternity. Some served as NKVD informants. The fate of NKVD members in this camp, as well as at Susdal differed greatly. Some were repatriated within a year, others spent several more years in labor camps and returned to Germany only with some of the last returning PWs.

### 3. 1945-1949 From capitulation to the "war crimes trials"

During the last months of fighting and with the unconditional surrender of Germany in May 1945, several million German soldiers fell into Soviet hands. Only a very small percentage of these were released shortly afterwards; the bulk was transported to the USSR for construction

work. Once again it was in the early phase of captivity that the mortality rate was particularly high, for the concentration of tens of thousands of PWs at collection centers created baffling and insurmountable administrative difficulties. Adequate food and shelter simply did not exist and many perished within the first months of their captivity.\*

The chief purpose of this large group of PWs, as it had been throughout the war, was to perform manual labor. Officers continued to receive better food rations and to be responsible only for maintenance work within their camps. However, in some localities so-called "voluntary anti-Fascist officers' labor brigades" were formed under Soviet pressure. After April 2, 1946 labor became compulsory for all officers up to and including the rank of captain. Officers in labor camps lived in separate huts but were otherwise not barred from contact with the enlisted men and NCOs. In the beginning, officers were often in charge of labor brigades; later, brigade leaders were largely NCOs. In the event of strikes the Soviets would round up the ring leaders and transfer them to special disciplinary camps.

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\*Approximately 55-60% of the fatalities occurred within the first year, 30-35% in the second year and 5-15% later. By comparison, of the 1944 PWs 60-65% died within the first year, 25-30% in the following year and 5-15% later. In contrast, the Stalingrad group of PWs suffered 90-95% of its fatalities within the first year and approximately 5-10% in the following year. Although the number of deaths among PWs in the year 1945-46 is higher than at any other time, the mortality rate of the Stalingrad group was about three times as high, i.e., whereas out of 100 prisoners taken in 1945, 30 did not survive captivity, only 10 out of 100 of the Stalingrad PWs survived.

The political work within the camps pursued two objectives: (1) to aid the Soviets in their endeavor to get the most work out of the PWs; and (2) to select and train suitable personnel for a political and later even military elite in Germany. It was the task of the "activists"\* in camp to promote propagandistically the output of work of the labor brigades. Thus, they constantly harped on the theme that true anti-Fascism could only be proven by a maximum of reconstruction work ("Wiedergutmachung"), and genuine anti-Fascists would be repatriated sooner. They also would keep an eye on likely candidates for the A-schools among their fellow-prisoners. There were the usual lectures and discussions, or "Marxist-circles", which were on the whole voluntary, although PWs were frequently pressured into attendance. Another task of the activist was to spot "war criminals" among the PWs and to encourage the other prisoners to denounce known war criminals. Failure to name any war criminal was often interpreted as siding with them.

The number of activists per camp depended upon the number of its inmates and varied from 3 to 10, or more. They lived in a separate hut and were freed from manual labor. Ostensibly they were responsible for the cultural activities in camps and frequently received a salary (in some camps 100 Rubles per month). Most of them were A-school graduates, occasionally physically disabled men. Beginning with 1948 they were "elected" in certain camps. They were normally distinct from the camp administration which was appointed by the Russians.

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\*In some camps they were called "propagandists".



In addition to these full-time activists, there were other activists in each hut or dwelling who provided liaison with the activists' headquarters, but who were not freed from work. They would occasionally contribute an article to the wall paper, or engage in other types of collaboration. They also served as direct channels of information.

The emphasis on work performance was such that frequently the political work was considered nothing but a necessary routine. There were none of the ideological battles that were still raging in the officers' camps, or that had been so characteristic of Lunovo. Collaboration in the average labor camp was mostly confined to signing one's name to resolutions, thanking the Soviet people for their hospitality, or brandishing Nazi war guilt. Being pressured into "spying" was certainly something else, but a good worker could escape many pressures, without serious consequences. It was different with those who had been guilty of some war crime and over whom the Soviets consequently had a constant hold. Among those who participated in "Marxist-circles", etc., there were those who were genuinely eager to learn something about Marxist-Leninist theory, but there were many more who, in view of the catastrophic conditions in these camps, participated in the hope of thereby increasing their chances of survival or repatriation.

The history of the A-schools began early in World War II. Prior to Stalingrad and again after 1946, they were Communist cadre schools,

both in terms of the selection of students and the study plan. In the years between they might be termed training schools for Communists and fellow-travellers. For during these years, which broadly coincide with the life span of the NKFD and the stress on "nationalism", the Soviets used for the admission of undergraduates the same "key" that had determined the composition of the executive council of the NKFD when it was amalgamated with the EDO, and which was also used for the setting up of "Aktivs" in the camps. The "key" referred to the desired distribution of political affiliations which up to 1945 consisted of

25% Communists

25% Social Democrats

10% Catholics

10% Liberals

30% Ranging as far to the right as the "German Nationals"

The "key" was altered with the introduction of the so-called "bloc-policy" in East Germany and hereafter was composed of

60% Communists and Social Democrats

40% Catholics and Liberals

with no more right-wing elements. The Catholics became increasingly unacceptable following Mr. Churchill's speech at Fulton and Secretary of State Byrnes' speech at Stuttgart, but it resulted in no new alteration of the "key" as yet. This came only at the end of 1947 with a famed speech by Zhanov which constituted a major turning point in Soviet

policy. Henceforth only working-class elements were to be trained at the A-schools, and favoritism was shown toward industrial workers as distinct from small peasants or agricultural workers, and even more so as compared to intellectuals. This took the form of simplifying and rigging the examinations of industrial workers.

The two central schools were located at Krasnogorsk and at Talizi, near Gorki. Up to 1946 Krasnogorsk had the more advanced program and the most promising graduates from Talizi would continue studies at Krasnogorsk. From 1946 on the two schools had the same program and became training centers for Communist cadres.\* At the same time preparatory schools were established in all capital cities of the Soviet Republics, where students would attend 4-6 weeks courses. Only the most successful graduates from these preparatory schools would then be admitted to either Talizi or Krasnogorsk. The latter school was subsequently dissolved and a substitute was set up at Riesa.

The schools were organized according to nationality sectors-- German, Austrian, Italian, Hungarian and Rumanian. The directors of the schools were Russians, the instructors until 1947 exclusively emigres; after that date some PWs who had successfully worked as "assistants" also became instructors. All assistants were PWs. Subjects taught included dialectical and historical materialism, political economy, philosophy, Russian history, German history, the history of the labor movement, etc.

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\*The length of terms at the two central schools was extended after Zhanov's speech from three to six months.

There were not more than 400 students, including 200 Germans at Krasnogorsk in 1944. Half of the German students were officers. Students were divided into groups of 30. There were ten hours of formal studies per day, including 4-6 hours of lectures and seminars; the remainder was devoted to individual readings.

With the changes introduced in 1947, discipline became much stricter and the many sessions of self-criticism, culminating in an autobiographical report, became genuine traumatic experiences. The number of students also increased to about 2000 per year. Approximately a total of 7000 graduated from Talizi alone. For a relatively short period in 1947 a large number of West German PWs were trained, whereas from 1948 on only PWs whose domiciles were located in East Germany were admitted.

The A-schools were the centers for political "re-education" and the training of an administrative and communications elite. But the Soviets did not neglect to create the nucleus of a Communist-oriented military elite as well. In 1948 specially selected PWs began training for service in the planned para-military police force for Eastern Germany. Following their training these PWs were transported to East Germany, beginning with 1949, where they primarily assumed positions in the lower and medium ranks of the new force. Of the latter's 1500 staff officers, 501 were former PWs in the USSR. The higher ranks were filled from graduates of the war academy at Privolsk, near Saratov, and included several ex-members of the NKFD and its executive council.

Most of the latter had been early repatriates and served in prominent positions in the DDR prior to their attendance of these courses.

4. 1949-1956 From the "war crimes trials" to final repatriation

The Soviets began as early as November 1941, a few months after the German invasion, to set up a "Commission for the Investigation of Fascist Atrocities". A number of trials were already held in war time, such as the one at Charkov in 1943. A whole series of public trials followed in the years 1945-1946, notably against German generals and their staffs. There were 18 generals among those tried during this period. In November 1946, the USSR abolished the death penalty, and many of those who had received the death sentence had these sentences commuted into 25 years of hard labor.

Two waves of trials on a much larger scale occurred in 1949. Preparation for these trials had been going on for several years. Thus, members of the NKFD and the BDO had been pressured into informer services and helped to prepare lists of "war criminals". Some anti-Fascists "distinguished" themselves through adding more and more acts which, under Soviet law, were criminal offences, but which included many normal wartime practices of any army and the legality of which is fully recognized under international law.\*

Whereas the first trial wave of 1949 still had a semblance of legality, the second wave largely became a farce in which minor in-

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\*E.g., the quartering of German troops in Russian dwellings, the requisitioning of food, or the felling of trees.

fractions led to the maximum penalty. The Soviets, furthermore, introduced the principle of collective guilt. Membership per se of some 120 German divisions and special units, such as the Division "Brandenburg", the 13th Panzer Division, Division "Grossdeutschland", Division "Feldherrnhalle", all the SS divisions, "Landschützen" units, field police, etc., was enough to be tried, regardless of whether the accused had been with the particular unit when it was supposed to have committed certain war crimes. On the other hand, the very principle of collective guilt was violated by the fact by no means all members of the black-listed units were ever tried.

In May 1949, MVD commissions, composed of 20-40 interrogators, made their appearance in all the camps. Often they were followed almost immediately by a tribunal. To extract confessions, solitary confinement, the withholding of food, and other devices were used. As soon as a prisoner had signed a confession, he would be rewarded with better food and better general living conditions.

Proceedings before the MVD tribunals began about 3-14 days after the prosecution's announcement, and in most cases were a mockery of accepted legal practice.

In retrospect, there can be little doubt that the unusually late trial waves of 1949 served but one major purpose--to justify the retention of tens of thousands of PWs so many years after the end of hostilities and after repeated representations of the Western powers. They permitted TASS to announce on May 4, 1950 that the repatriation

of German PWs had been completed and that only "war criminals" remained in the USSR to serve their sentences. A detailed discussion as to how those remaining PWs were used as a political weapon by the Soviet authorities in their negotiations with the representatives of the German Federal Republic cannot be attempted here.

With the trials of "war criminals" in 1949 practically all political activity in the camps ceased.

##### 5. Summary

Summarizing Soviet handling of German PWs during the 16-year period from 1941-1956, the following facts emerge. In terms of sheer numbers, manual labor was the chief purpose for which PWs were used---from 1941-1945 to bolster the Soviet war effort; from 1945-1956 to assist in the reconstruction of the USSR. Political activities in labor camps, centering around the "Aktiv", played a subordinate role and were canalized (a) to promote maximum labor output; (b) to select suitable personnel for more advanced political indoctrination. Interrogations, autobiographies, informer services, and participation in Soviet-sponsored political activities aided the latter process.

Maximum political indoctrination was reserved for the officers' and recreation camps, as well as the A-schools. It served a host of political and propaganda purposes. The NKFD and the EDO both were short-term instruments of wartime propaganda and political expediency. "Conversion" to Communism of its members originally was not contemplated as an end in itself, but occurred by a process of osmosis. In order

to win initial support for the two organizations, the Soviets exploited anti-Nazi sentiment, utilized the symbol of German nationalism, de-emphasized Communism and permitted a maximum of free expression.

As the short-term goals of the NKFD and the EDO either were attained or became obsolete, both organizations became ideal breeding grounds and screens for further political indoctrination. Many of its members subsequently attended A-schools. The height of activities of the NKFD/EDO occurred in the years 1943-1944. Both organizations were officially dissolved in 1945.

The A-schools served the purpose of training a Communist elite. Their students were selected from among promising collaborators in all PW-camps. Advanced lectures in Marxist-Leninist doctrine, group discussions, self-criticism, autobiographical critiques and a rigid discipline were the techniques employed. Graduates would return to PW-camps as "activists", or be attached to Red Army units as "propagandists" in war-time and placed into key positions in East Germany after the war.



#### IV. SOVIET INDOCTRINATION TECHNIQUES--AN ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

##### 1. Basis for Recruitment

The selection of suitable subjects from among PWs for indoctrination purposes ideally depended upon the future role to be assigned to each subject. It is, of course, not suggested here that the Soviets approached each subject with a detailed and ambitious plan, although there are a number of prominent prisoners where this was the case. It does, however, suggest, that selection proceeded according to major purpose groups. Three such groups can be distinguished:

(1) For the purposes of training a political elite (responsibility of the A-schools) dependability, unquestioned allegiance to the Communist cause, a sound knowledge of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and preferably a working-class or intelligentsia background were the required characteristics of each subject;

(2) For the purpose of training a military elite, it was expert knowledge in military affairs, linked with a minimum of dependability that was sought in potential subjects;

(3) For the purpose of utilizing PWs as instruments of propaganda and international politics (primarily the responsibility of the NKFD and the BDO), it was desirable to secure the collaboration of a broad and representative sample that contained as many prominent names as possible. "Conversion" to Marxism of some of these subjects\* was never visualized, although indoctrination in general remained a desirable

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\*E.g., the clergymen.

goal. The latter was all the more true since "membership" in any of the three purpose groups was not exclusive and a certain amount of mobility from group to group could be anticipated.

These were the desired groups of subjects in theory. The next step was to establish criteria that could be used for locating potential collaborators in the above categories. The first of these consisted in the location and determination of "areas of discontent" that the subject harbored toward the Nazi regime; the second consisted in the ruthless exploitation of weak characters and such subjects over whom the Soviets had a particular hold. To the latter group belonged deserters, "war criminals", members of the SS and certain other organizations, informers, etc.

In their systematic and frequent interrogations of PWs, often aided by the writing or reciting of autobiographies, the Soviets at all stages of the war were anxious (apart from obtaining intelligence on military affairs and conditions inside Germany) to obtain a mental picture of the subject's background and personality and to probe into the possible areas of discontent with the existing regime in Germany. Being prisoners of their own ideology, they, and especially their agents, the German emigres, first and foremost suspected that they would find such discontent among the German workers. They were greatly disappointed when, with the exception of a few old-time Communists who, because of their known affiliation had suffered under the Nazi regime, there was little or no response in the beginning, largely because the German

worker had been relatively well off, frequently had become a petty-bourgeois who lacked all "class-consciousness". This realization, however, did not prevent the Soviets from spending much time and effort on that group. Their later temporary preoccupation with the generals and prominent "bourgeois" elements, mostly for propaganda purposes, should not becloud the fact that for the selection of students for the A-schools the worker group consistently provided a major pool--from late 1947 on the almost exclusive pool--from which the Soviets drew their personnel.

In their initial attempts to locate areas of discontent, the Soviets were more successful as they examined the intellectual and the clergyman, for many of both these groups would voice the dissatisfaction that results from the restrictions that any totalitarian regime imposes upon their activities. Evidence of success was the participation of several army chaplains in the propaganda work of the NKFD, culminating in the meeting of thirty army chaplains at Lunovo in 1944.

The intellectual's professional curiosity made him another promising target. He would be the most diligent reader of the classics of Communism, whenever the opportunity was offered to him (especially as it had been denied to him in his former environment). Somewhat naively he thought he could accept or reject Marxism as he saw fit, often to find out when it was too late that by this act alone, he had initiated a chain of behavioral changes vis-a-vis his environment that

had nothing to do with the merits of Marx or Lenin. High school teachers, journalists and doctors were among the collaborators as early as 1941. The intellectual had the added advantage that he was a natural opinion leader; nevertheless, he began to be discriminated against after the introduction of the new policy in late 1947.\*

Interrogations of the Stalingrad PWs revealed other areas of discontent that could be exploited. There were those Junkers who, despite the fact that they owed their careers to the Nazi policy of rearmament and war, had, for reasons of caste snobbism and because of the subscription to a different code of ethics, never been able to stomach the Nazi movement and its leaders. When Hitler sacrificed them at Stalingrad, their latent hostility came into the open and made some of them subject to manipulation.

Stalingrad produced the most drastic changes in some typical products of the Nazi regime. These were frequently young officers, ex-Hitler Youth members, whose world broke asunder at Stalingrad. Some, as mentioned earlier, rather than surrender had committed suicide. The others emerged from their shock as some of the most bitter enemies of the Nazi regime. They sought advice among their elders, and as this was not forthcoming, the Soviets stepped in to fill the vacuum.

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\*This must be seen as part of an overall policy-decision, extending beyond the PWs population--part of the fluctuating fortune of the intellectual in the USSR which normally seems at their lowest ebb whenever tensions with the capitalist world outside are on the increase. Such was the situation in 1947 which marked the beginning of the cold war. Fears of unreliability of all elements lacking a working-class background would seem to be at the root of these trends.

## 2. Manipulative Devices

The Soviets fully exploited their monopolistic position as captors to manipulate PWs and their environment in an effort toward furthering their own goals. The method and intensity of manipulative devices varied from camp to camp and from purpose group to purpose group. Not all may have been intentional which, however, is irrelevant for the purposes of this discussion.

### (a) The breaking-up of formal and informal groups.

Sometimes officers would be relieved from command of their units immediately upon surrender; often, however, they retained command up to the time when collection centers were reached. Their subsequent removal broke up the internal structure of the larger units. Unlike in the Korean War,\* NCOs were not segregated from the enlisted men and frequently assumed command of labor gangs. Thus, in the labor camps, the internal structure of the smaller units was frequently retained and the Russians made no attempt to break down these groups as long as cohesiveness was canalized in the direction of work performance; but they stepped in immediately, if and when it was used for political purposes. The informer system usually provided timely warnings against the latter. The segregation of officers was only complete in the cases of those who were transferred to special officers' camps. A large percentage of the lower ranking officers remained in the same

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\*Schein, E.H., The Chinese Indoctrination Program for Prisoners of War, Psychiatry, 1956, Volume 19.

camps with the enlisted men and were merely separately quartered. Unlike the enlisted men and NCOs they were at least up to 1946 not forced to work, except for the maintenance of their camps, and received better food rations.

With minor exceptions (e.g., at certain periods at Krasnogorsk or Yelabuga), PWs were also segregated by nationality. This segregation was strictly enforced at the A-schools.

Spontaneous groups that formed around effective resisters to prevent collaboration and/or planned escapes would be broken up after ring leaders had been rounded up (after being identified through the spy and informer system), and transferred to isolation blocks,\* disciplinary camps, or prisons.

The planting of a large-scale spy and informer network among PWs had the secondary effect of breaking up informal group ties and leading to social withdrawal. However, the group destruction was decidedly less complete than in Korea.\*\*

Also in contrast to the Korean situation, army chaplains were often permitted to hold services and to administer last rites. Among the

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\* Whereas solitary confinement was a frequent form of punishment, there is no evidence of Soviet use of the group techniques employed in Chinese Communist prisons. The only comparable situations in the USSR were the sessions of self-criticism and autobiographic reports at A-schools which, at least in the later years, seemed to elicit responses very similar to those described by veterans of the Chinese prisons. For a discussion of Chinese Communist techniques see Schein, op. cit. and Lifton, "Thought Reform" of Western Civilians in Chinese Communist Prisons, Psychiatry, 1956, Volume 19.

\*\* Schein, op. cit.

chaplains, there were those who cooperated, either because of their anti-Nazi sentiments, or because they lacked the courage to resist. Others, aware of the informer system, had to move with extreme caution and delicacy, lest they be removed. Thus, they mostly restricted their activities to improving morale among the men struggling for biological survival. In other words, while chaplains retained some of their positions of authority and influence, such influence could be exerted in either direction.

(b) "Shock treatment" and physical torture.

A frequently reported, but not universally applied practice was the simulation of planned execution. German PWs were an easy prey to the staging of these situations, as Nazi propaganda had spread the myth that the Soviets took no prisoners. Thus, PWs expected execution almost any time after their capture. In each of these instances to face what was believed to be certain death initiated a process of psychological preparation for the ordeal, the degree of composure obviously depending upon the personality structure of the individual. It was occasionally accompanied by such symbolic acts as the tearing up of snapshots of loved ones and letters. All those situations occurred shortly after captivity when the will to survive was strong and apathy had not yet set in. The realization that life would continue usually caused relief but also the expressed reaction on the part of some subjects that they would rather be dead than go through a similar experience for a second time.

Physical torture was not unknown, although rarely practiced. PWs during their initial marches, or immediately upon capture (notably flyers) might be manhandled, or beaten up. These were, however, spontaneous, unorganized and unintended\* events. Even known cases of extreme violence against obstructionists must be seen as individual trespasses and not as part of a deliberate scheme. More typical, and used as a punishment to induce collaboration were such practices as letting PWs stand barefooted in the cold for hours, placing them into standing cells, etc.

(c) Searches and strippings.

Repeated bodily searches and the confiscation of the last preserved letters or photos of loved ones removed the last visible ties with the outside world. PWs who were uncooperative at interrogations frequently would be stripped of all their clothes in the presence of women interpreters. This again had the effect of removing the last vestiges of privacy and symbolized the prisoner's complete dependence upon his captor.

(d) Information control.

Cut off from the rest of the world, the prisoner's only information about the war and world events came from whatever his captor wanted him to know. He could disbelieve Soviet propoganda but he had no means of checking, except in the rare instances when a more recent prisoner would join a group of older ones. Until 1943, the PW newspaper Das Freie Wort

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\*Unintended in the terms of this essay; not unintended, of course, from the point of view of internal hate propoganda.



was his major source of information to be superseded during the days of the NKFD by Freies Deutschland. In the later postwar years, Communist-controlled East German newspapers were admitted in PW camps.

An exchange of mail did not exist during the war years because of Nazi policy;\* in the postwar years the Soviets manipulated mail to serve their ends. They might withhold letters containing favorable news, and distribute those containing unfavorable news. They might hand a photo attached to a letter to the recipient but withhold the letter. Or, they might merely delay distribution for several months to coincide with a Soviet holiday.\*\*

As in all communities in which information is meagre and rigidly controlled, there was a fertile ground for the spreading of rumor.

(e) Rewards and punishment.

Food and physical comforts were intensely used for manipulative purposes. In the labor camps they were so completely substandard that the offer of any extra food was a powerful motivating force. It was used to induce PWs to become informers, to engage in other acts of collaboration, or to increase their work output (Prämienreiz). During the recruiting drive for the NKFD, meat dishes, unknown to the average prisoner at Yelabuga, would demonstratively be carried past all other tables to the last one in the mess hall around which members

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\* This permitted the Soviets to induce PWs to write messages to their families on leaflets which were naturally infiltrated with propaganda material.

\*\* These techniques are strikingly parallel to those used by the Chinese Communists in their handlings of American PWs, Schein, op. cit.

of the NKFD were gathered and above which it read in big letters: "Join the National Committee." Food and cigarettes would regularly be used during interrogations, and the state prisons at Moscow, the Lubianka and the Butyraska, to which many prominent PWs were taken for weeks and months (in some cases even years) of interrogation and "softening-up" periods, maintained a system of dozens of different diets for manipulative purposes, from the withholding of all food and water or the serving of obnoxious food, to boxes of chocolates.

The latter two prisons also had a great variety of cells, ranging from single standing cells, or vermin-infested holes, to comfortable rooms, both for solitary or group confinement. Solitary confinement, or the segregation of rebellious groups in isolation blocks was common practice in all camps as a punishment. Vermin in barracks, but also deliberately planted vermin in certain solitary confinement cells\* proved for some of the most courageous resisters more difficult to endure than extreme physical violence.

There is no evidence that sex was used to induce collaboration.\*\*

The struggle for sheer survival in the labor camps precluded all talk

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\* I have no evidence that vermin was deliberately planted in so-called "holes" in camps; but the fact that it existed in the Soviet state prisons mentioned here, with their large variety of different accommodations, suggests by implication that here at least it was not accidental and that there was method. The German habitually complains about alleged filth in other European countries, notably all Latin, Balkan and East European countries, and obviously attaches a symbolic value to cleanliness. My personal impression is that he is only slightly less vulnerable than the American to being made dirty.

\*\* A few incidents are known of "activists" being degraded and transferred to disciplinary camps for illicit affairs with Russian interpreters.

on sex among PWs until 1949-50, when general conditions improved.\* Instead, food was the unending subject of conversation. PWs would discuss in detail the miserable dishes they received and engage in day-dreaming about the most elaborate menus they would have after their release.

The use of threats and promises was a frequently practiced device. The threat of being sent to prison, or disciplinary camp, or to be returned to a labor camp, when one had successfully escaped its hardships, acted as a powerful deterrent. Likewise, the promise of early repatriation, or, contrarywise, the threat of no or late repatriation were very meaningful to prisoners, since no lists of captives had been exchanged in wartime, and since, after Germany's collapse, there seemed to be no outside power that would look after their interests and act as a check on the Soviets' arbitrary handling of the PW question.

Black-listed PWs were easily pressured into informer services, or other forms of collaboration, in the hope thereby of escaping war crimes trials, or at least of being let off with a milder sentence. Once a prisoner had allowed himself to become an informer, it was a relatively simple matter to blackmail him into further collaboration.

Nor did the use of threats cease at the level of the A-school student or activist. For example, the former would be threatened with

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\*An exception were the generals' camps, where relatively normal conditions prevailed, and much boasting was going on as to one's experiences at the Folies Bergeres, etc.

immediate transfer to a labor camp if he refused to take the anti-fascist oath on graduation, while the latter could never be certain of not sharing the same fate if he failed to conform to the official line, whatever that might be at the particular moment. Members of the executive of the NKFD, whose unquestioned loyalty was in doubt, would be reminded at the time when "loyalists" were being repatriated to Germany that "trains were also going East", meaning Siberia.

Certain collaborators, repatriated to East Germany, were forced to divorce their wives if the latter were considered unreliable; others whose wives resided in West Germany were given the alternative of arranging for their wives' transfer to East Germany, or of obtaining a divorce. Refusal to do either resulted in the immediate transfer of subjects to labor camps and several more years of captivity.

Toward PWs, in whose collaboration the Soviets were particularly interested, yet who were recalcitrant, the threat of reprisals against their families inside Germany was even used in wartime, with the meaningful remark that the NKVD had a long arm. Threats of death were not infrequent in such cases either.

(f) Direct and indirect attacks on belief systems.

Collaboration is used here in the sense of engaging in acts that give aid and comfort to the enemy above and beyond what is permissible under the Geneva Convention. Whereas the attendance of "Marxist-circles" in itself would at first glance not seem to fall under that category, it does in the sense that each additional attendant

undermined the position of the resisting PWs; rewards offered to attendants can be construed as being possible only at the expense of the other PWs; and worst of all, it permitted the Soviets to blackmail participants, once they had aroused the suspicions of their fellow prisoners by this initial act.

The most intensive efforts to influence directly the beliefs, attitudes and values of PWs occurred in the officers' camps, or the so-called "recreation"-camps. These were the "political" camps, as distinct from the labor camps in which indoctrination always played a secondary role. The latter consequently contained fewer well-stocked libraries, and fewer political meetings, lectures and discussions would take place in the evenings, when the average prisoner was much too tired for any serious study. The prisoner who joined a "Marxist-circle" would soon be ostracised by the non-collaborators which, in turn, pushed him further into the camp of the collaborators. There are few cases who, after engaging in minor collaboration for some time, withdrew from it completely and were fully accepted by their fellow prisoners. Discussions in the more loosely organized "Marxist-circles", just as in the highly structured meetings at the A-schools, were conducted in a manner in which predetermined conclusions would be rationalized in the course of the discussion. It was a kind of role-playing and the Soviets seemed to place much stock in its effect. Below are some of the topics frequently used:

- (1) Why are wars inevitable under imperialism?

- (2) Why was the German November revolution a bourgeois revolution and not a socialist revolution?
- (3) Describe the process of capitalist exploitation;
- (4) Why is it in the vital interests of the German people that the Potsdam decisions should be carried out to the letter?
- (5) Why is it one of the most important tasks of the German people to pay reparations?

To induce PWs to write articles for wall papers, to produce leaflets, to sign resolutions, etc., were other favorite devices.

Success and failure of Soviet efforts in large measure depended upon the caliber of polit-instructors and activists in camps, or of lecturers at A-schools. An unscrupulous polit-instructor who instigated a reign of terror in his camp might be highly successful in enlisting the services of some of the worst elements, but at the same time, would strengthen the camp of the resisters; on the other hand, a seemingly upright and highly intelligent polit-instructor may have had a special appeal to many well-meaning but misled individuals. Each served a definite purpose in the Soviet scheme, although there were, of course, also a series of wholly ineffective types. In contrast to the Chinese situation, language was much less of a barrier to indoctrination efforts. Many Russians spoke German and there was also the fairly large number of German emigres who formed the majority of polit-instructors.

Visits of prominent Communist emigres, including former members of Parliament, who would hold speeches and conduct informal talks with prisoners was another form of attacking beliefs. The same

prestige effect was later used by certain prominent collaborators, notably some generals, popular air aces, etc.

The holding of ceaseless interrogations and the manner in which they were conducted constituted another kind of attack. Methods would alternate from threats and cajoling to the most friendly and informal conversations. The same friendly interrogator sometimes saw a subject repeatedly for weeks and months, or practically lived with him. Statements made in each successive interview would be checked against those made earlier. A familiar method to break the resistance of subjects was to ask them about matters on which the Soviets were well informed anyway. Upon subject's refusal to supply the information, or upon the submission of misleading information, punishment would follow immediately, and subject would then be shown that the Soviets had the answers all the time. This obviously was designed to create the impression that the Soviets had all the answers and that it was, therefore, not worth while to continue resistance and inflict punishment.

## V. EFFECTS OF SOVIET INDOCTRINATION EFFORTS

The non-existence of official German records relating to the fate of members of the Wehrmacht fighting on the eastern front (e.g., lists of prisoners\*), and the absence of a meaningful sample of interviews with repatriated PWs foredooms any statistical effect analysis. An overall assessment must, therefore, be based on a series of cautious estimates that come from PWs themselves (some of whom had gone through as many as 30 prisoner-of-war camps) and which have been carefully checked against each other.

At the height of the "Free Germany" movement between 35% and 45% of the officers and approximately 75% of the enlisted men identified themselves with either the NKFD or the EDO. (This does not include such acts as the generals' proclamation of December 1944 in which a much higher percentage of the captured total participated.) The greatest increase came in the year 1944 after the collapse of the central front and the assassination attempt upon Hitler. It would seem that among the enlisted men and officers residing in labor camps membership figures further increased well into 1945, whereas in the officers' and especially the generals' camps they dropped after having reached a peak in the second half of 1944. By the time the capitulation generals had reached the camps, all the generals who had joined the movement more recently, except two or three, renounced their membership.

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\*Wehrmacht records were not kept up to date during the chaotic last phase of the war and existing ones were in part destroyed. Lists of PWs were never exchanged between the USSR and Nazi Germany.



This, as has been pointed out earlier, however, did not necessarily mean that all collaboration would cease. Within the camps they conformed with the then overriding opinion of the "resisters"; outside the camps at least some of them conformed with Soviet wishes from fear of being tried as war criminals. That their fears were not unfounded was shown by their later fate. Of a total of 480 German generals that fell into Soviet hands, 20 were executed, while 227 were either released after trial, or died while serving their sentences.\*

As the statistics of the generals, though far from complete, are nevertheless more complete than those of any other group, it may be worth while to examine them further. The 480 captured generals include 12 who, after prolonged captivity, obtained key positions in East Germany. Five of them were captured in 1943 (Stalingrad), three in 1944, and four in 1945. Ten of the twelve have been identified with the NKFD/EDO. Two of the four taken in 1945 and not identified with the NKFD/EDO were kidnapped by the Soviets in their homes. Fear of an unknown future would seem to have converted these two men into Soviet tools. Since all others of the original twelve were identified with the NKFD/EDO, it might be suggested that the activity within the organizations constantly reinforced collaborative habits. Before such a conclusion may be drawn, however, it will be necessary to look at the record of all the generals associated at one time or another with

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\*The fate of some of the 480 is unknown, hence, the total number of those released without trial cannot be ascertained by simply deducting 247 from 480.

those organizations.

Following the collapse of the central front a total of thirty out of seventy captured generals were members of the EDO. The majority of these had merely joined the organization in their respective camps, without performing any propaganda work, as did the group at Lunovo. All the generals who had been "inactive" EDO members in the generals' camps renounced membership after Germany's collapse. Nine of the "active" members at Lunovo are identical with nine out of the twelve who later served the Soviets in East Germany. It would seem fair to conclude, therefore, that membership per se did not constitute an irrevocable act, but that it was the "active" member who became hopelessly trapped (a) because the repetition and greater intensity of his collaborative acts reinforced the habit; and (b) because he found himself in an environment that consisted of "collaborators" only (though of very different shades and degrees of intensity). The "inactive" member, in contrast, lived in an environment that was dominated by the non-collaborators.

Another even more striking variable that warrants special attention is the time and circumstance of capture. As mentioned above, five of the 12 "permanent" collaborators were captured at Stalingrad. The total population of Stalingrad generals was 23. The number of "permanent" collaborators among the total population of 480 was twelve, which means that outside the Stalingrad group only 7 "permanent" collaborators came from a population of 457.\*

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\*Of the 20 generals captured at the central front in 1944, all of whom called for the removal of Hitler in a joint appeal, only one has become a "permanent" collaborator.

In the light of some of the figures of the other officers which, unlike the generals, have to be based on estimates, it would seem that it was not their longer captivity but, rather, their unique and traumatic experience which made the Stalingrad group particularly vulnerable.

Since the initially quoted estimates of 75% NKFD adherents among the enlisted men and 35-45% of BDO members among the officers at the peak of the "Free Germany" movement are not very meaningful in view of the different levels of collaboration expected (the mass entry into the NKFD in labor camps\* could almost be compared to the signing of "peace petitions" in Korean camps), the remainder of this inquiry will be addressed to the more serious collaborators, i.e., the Executive Council of the NKFD/BDO and the A-schools.

Of the Lunovo group of some 50-55 members\*\* about 40 attained prominent positions in East Germany after their repatriation. Two of these did not remain "permanent" collaborators, but have fled to West Germany since. Another three, including two old-time Communists and a former member of the SS, were either tried or removed from their positions. Seven or eight were returned to West Germany, and the fate of 2-7 remains uncertain. At least one died in captivity.

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\* A veteran of 30 Soviet PW camps has estimated that only 5% of inmates of labor camps were more serious collaborators, whereas that figure climbed to approximately 30% in "recreation" camps.

\*\* This examination considers the group after the removal of Dr. Wieder and his associates and the discovery of the Hubert affair.

Approximately 50% of the Lunovo group were graduates of the A-schools. All of these received trusted positions in East Germany, two subsequently escaped to West Germany, two or three were later ejected from positions of influence. They comprised two generals, twelve or thirteen other officers, and 10 or 11 enlisted men or NCO's. They also could be broken down into 5-6 professional soldiers, 2 fliers, 4-5 teachers, or intellectuals (including one ex-Communist), 1 or 2 ex-SS members, and 7 or 8 working class elements, including ex-Communists.

The group that was returned to West Germany included the clergymen, one general, and about 3 other officers, including one ex-Nazi who had held a key position in the Ministry of Education and an army G-2 officer who was a high school teacher in private life, and the son of a well-known general.

The above figures demonstrate the significant role assigned to the A-schools which, as far as the Lunovo group was concerned, produced only two non-permanent collaborators (the expulsion or demotion of the three other cases mentioned above were the result of corruption, or the withholding of information from their past history, rather than disloyalty to the Communist cause). Outside the Lunovo group, it has been estimated by a former teacher and assistant of Talizi and graduate from Krasnogorsk that 90% of all A-school graduates,\*

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\*The same source estimates the number of old-time Communists among the graduates at Talizi at about 30%.

repatriated to East Germany, are in responsible positions there now, while about 10% have escaped to West Germany, since mere withdrawal from politics would be interpreted as opposition. Of those A-school graduates repatriated to West Germany, including agents, one out of every five or six is believed to have remained an active Communist, whereas the others either quickly withdrew from politics, or broke with Communism after a struggle.\*\*

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\*\*The striking percentage of successful indoctrination, if indeed it reflects ideological change rather than mere behavioral compliance, must be attributed both to the initial selection procedures and to the teaching methods of the A-schools. Of course, the A-school graduate also anticipated immediate rewards for his allegiance to Communism and often found himself in a position of being committed to a course of action from which he could not retreat.

## VI. SOME EXPLANATORY HYPOTHESES

As one examines the sketchy record of experiences of German PWs in the USSR between 1941-56, as outlined in the preceding pages, it becomes apparent that changes brought about in the overt behavior and beliefs of certain prisoners were the result of a peculiar combination of (1) conscious Soviet efforts to manipulate the prisoners' environment, (2) direct attacks upon the prisoners' belief systems, and (3) the general physical and sanitary conditions of captivity which in large part were "unintended" and the direct result of the war, or living conditions inside the Soviet Union. The following pages will present some hypotheses concerning the conditions under which these changes occur and on their permanence.

Under conditions of extreme physical and mental stress accepted group norms tend to break down and the ensuing situation may best be described as one of "everyone for himself". The Soviets fostered and accelerated this process by breaking up formal and informal groups, and by segregating prominent resistance leaders who otherwise might have enforced compliance with previous group norms.\* By introducing a system of rewards and punishment the Soviets channeled changed behavior in the direction of collaboration.

As changes in overt behavior became more pronounced, they became increasingly less consonant with basic beliefs and values,

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\*In the isolation block at Yelabuga, e.g., such compliance was rigidly enforced.

leading to conflict or dissonance.\* As Leon Festinger has pointed out, dissonance is a powerful motivating force in itself, aimed at dissonance reduction.\*\* There were a number of ways in which subjects under consideration here could seek reduction of dissonance. They could attempt to check their new behavior, reverse it, and bring it once again into line with their basic beliefs. This, however, was no easy task. Their fellow-prisoners who had contributed toward increasing dissonance by ostracizing them would be most skeptical of a "reformed" collaborator, which was not surprising in an atmosphere poisoned by the activities of informers. It worked best in those rare instances where informal groups and group norms continued to exist so that "rehabilitation" could be effected through an initiation procedure.\*\*\*

Nor was this method capable of solving the problem in those cases where changes in overt behavior had been induced by extreme physical conditions, and the threat to survival, thus a powerful motivating force to avert death, persisted.\*\*\*\*

Another way by which dissonance could be reduced was to change one's environment, or to make the environment fit the new behavior.

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\*L. Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Evanston, Ill., Row, Peterson, 1957).

\*\*Ibid.

\*\*\*E.g., the submission of several generals to "courts of honor" in the generals' camps at Voikova and Susdal.

\*\*\*\*This obviously did not apply to the cases of the generals.

This, for some time at least, seemed to be the process that could be detected among certain elements of the right-wing group at Lunovo. They had engaged in various acts of collaboration out of opposition to the Nazi regime---acts which many of their fellow-prisoners in the officers' camps would consider treasonable. The resulting dissonance was reduced with their transfer to Lunovo, for in this new environment they were no longer a minority ostracized by the resisters; on the contrary, interaction with other collaborators confirmed and reinforced the "correctness" of the path they had chosen.\* With the establishment of the NKFD/EDO they had created an instrument that fitted their behavior and yet seemed consonant with their beliefs.

As hope faded that the NKFD/EDO could act as an independent, nationalist body (and it became clear that the Communist emigres were the true decision-makers), dissonance inevitably reappeared. There were those who chose alternative no. 1, adopted a firm attitude toward further Communist encroachments and accepted the consequences of being ousted,\*\* thereby making certain that their overt behavior would not hopelessly depart from their beliefs.

Others\*\*\* chose a third alternative of dissonance reduction which was to change their beliefs and to bring them into line with their

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\*In the case of Gen. v. Seydlitz only the mass movement of generals into the EDO almost a year later, and particularly the eventual entry of Field Marshall v. Paulus, the C-in-C of the Stalingrad forces, in August 1944 relieved him (temporarily) of serious scruples.

\*\* Dr. Wieder and his group.

\*\*\*E.g., the generals Müller and Lenski.



new behavior. This was successfully done by most of the A-school graduates.

The question of the permanency of such "conversions" obviously depends in large measure upon existing controls. The estimated 90% of all A-school graduates who have gained key positions in East Germany continue to live in an environment that demands overt Communist or neo-Communist behavior, that offers major rewards for continued allegiance to the Communist cause, and threatens severe punishment to defectors and their families. Serious doubts in one's new values would once again create dissonance, termed "political bellyaches" in East Germany which, if unchecked, could only be reduced by escape.\*

"Converts" who were repatriated to West Germany upon re-entry into their new environment are assumed to undergo the same processes of change, if in a less dramatic and intense manner, that they had experienced in the early phase of their captivity. The need to yield to group pressures and to comply with group behavior will gradually cause subjects to modify their overt behavior.\*\* The resulting dissonance will (on the basis of the estimate that only every fifth

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\*E.g. Count v. Einsiedel and Capt. Fleischer.

\*\*Gen. v. Seydlitz, upon his return to West Germany on October 8, 1955, attacked the policies of the Bonn Government, blamed them for the re-arming of both Germanys and propagated a policy of greater friendship with the Soviet Union. Two days later he repudiated the statement which, he said, had been made as part of a shock reaction and declared that he would not engage in politics. (Die Welt, Hamburg: October 8 and 10, 1955).

or sixth returnee remained a Communist) in the majority of cases be reduced after examination and readjustment of one's values with the new behavior. This should not be looked upon as a chronological process in which behavioral changes must precede changes in beliefs—the opposite may occur in certain cases, and generally speaking, it would appear that simultaneous attacks upon behavior and beliefs are the most effective, especially during original indoctrination.

This does not, of course, account for the few subjects who, upon repatriation to a non-Communist society, remain Communists. In the case of "converts" returned to West Germany most of those who had occupied prominent positions in the Communist Party of West Germany pending its dissolution left for East Germany after the war. The others were mostly agents. The first of these two groups, by virtue of their activities in the Communist Party, continued to engage in overt behavior that was consonant with their belief systems. Voluntary exposure to Communist news media and regular contacts with Moscow reinforced their beliefs, despite the accessibility of other sources. Thus, dissonance was not created. The agents, on the other hand, by their very activities (and presumably by earlier activities as well) had committed themselves irrevocably, i.e., they had engaged in behavior that could only be justified in terms of the belief system and values of those to whom they owed allegiance. Courting of a different belief system threatened self-effacement.\*

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\*The same phenomenon is believed to explain the hold over informers, deserters, etc.

So far changes in overt behavior and of beliefs have been discussed in terms of dissonance and dissonance reduction, as induced by external forces, such as the manipulation of the environment, direct and indirect attacks upon belief systems, etc. Such changes also depended, of course, upon the character traits of the individual target and his previous environmental conditioning.

It is in the nature of totalitarian societies, such as the Nazi state, to foster opportunism, for whereas only a fraction of the population can be expected to accept the ideology of the regime, its intolerance toward opposition of any kind forces the rest to render lip-service to the ruling circles. This ready opportunism would seem to have been partly responsible for the willingness of many PWs to engage in some form of collaboration.

In contrast to Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, German national character generally has been characterized by a greater affinity with ideological movements. Thus, Communism aroused curiosity and a certain attraction among some PWs, especially as, like Nazism, it permitted identification with strength. The conflicting reality of Soviet village life which generally appalled German soldiers affected these subjects only insofar as it made them critical of the Russian application of Communism, but not of Communism itself.

Finally, identification with the captor would seem to have provided relief to those PWs who had developed guilt complexes over their previous involvement with Nazi operations.

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