

ON LUFTWAFFE MORALE TODAY

Flyers Still Have the Will to Fight,
But it is Based Mostly on Blind Faith

The same fighter group planes which attacked the area. Total combat casualties.

5. p reporting encounters with 15 Me-109s flying top cover east of Berlin, headed toward the city force was described as indicated successful engagements.

group had a slight brush with the emnitz area, returning with the likelihood that these encounters the concentration heavily in the same vicinity. They clouds to evade further

ed sightings were reported the strategic operation. They sed to deck by P-51s southerly sighted eight Me-109s over at 15,000 feet which

re. aft were also sighted. On entered near Strasbourg drawing P-51s, and a few reported. P-51s on photographs being shadowed by hits of four enemy aircraft t-propelled.

generally nil to meager and concentrations described as suffered by 21 bombers in category "E."

tched 780 heavy bombers on targets in Austria and in the Vienna area. GAF ally enemy fighters sighted in en route by bombers.

Of these, three were This force and the one were attacked by small near Lake Balaton, but no his action.

neager to moderate and Florisdorf, intense and sbierbaum. At Zagreb sed a high proportion of

the GAF to large-scale at Magdeburg, Dresden nil. One lone enemy er crews, and this may

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FROM interrogation of 246 Luftwaffe prisoners, all of them flying personnel, and the majority day and night fighter pilots, ADI(K) has prepared an analysis of the evaluation of morale in the GAF covering the five-month period from August, 1944, to January, 1945. In many respects, the findings agree generally with those of the report issued at the beginning of the period and published in SUMMARY No. 42 (page 14), but interesting variations and developments appear.

It is to be borne in mind that throughout this report the word "morale" is considered to mean "fighting spirit," and that this attribute quite frequently bears only a slight relationship to belief in a German victory in this war.

The majority of these prisoners have been tough and well drilled in security; at no point did the proportion with high morale fall lower than 51 percent and, as may be expected, the period when it reached this lowest ebb was during the German withdrawal in August. Since then, the proportion of high morale among all airmen has steadily risen until, in December, it was believed to stand at 64 percent, with day fighters as a class even higher at 74 percent.

It should be noted that the present report deals throughout solely with aircrew morale and that ground personnel are not taken into account. The morale of ground personnel, judging from recent samples, is just the same as it has been for a long time—bad.

The Basis of Morale in the GAF is reported to be very much the same as before, and can be said to consist of a mixture of the following factors: the natural discipline of nearly all Germans, youth, love of flying, patriotism and a general ignorance of the real facts of the war. It is true that GAF airmen have very few amusements and almost no time off, but they continue to live fairly well; in fact, better than any other section of the population. They experience no hardship comparable to that of the front-line soldier, and they receive on the whole less bombing than either the army or civilians.

Expectations and promises for the future play a large part in maintaining morale and still continue to be believed. As one fighter pilot said, "In the Autumn we were guaranteed 2,000 new fighters. They have turned up, and this makes me prepared to believe that the other weapons and aircraft promised will also turn up." However small the come back of the Luftwaffe might seem to the Allies, it has helped the ordinary German pilot to believe that German inventors and technicians still have the situation in hand. The promise of large numbers of jet aircraft for the Spring of 1945 has had the same effect.

Many, though a decreasing number, of the younger prisoners still profess belief in ultimate German victory, a belief which is quite unconnected with any logical process of thought whatever, but depends on what can only be termed a mystic belief in German invincibility. This faith is no doubt fostered by the good fight they are putting up in spite of the enormous difficulties caused by bombing and the shortage of so many necessities inside Germany.

It cannot be said there is much desperation in their courage. Rather is it a quiet resignation to the fact that they have no alternative to fighting on. Certainly the impetus derived from fighting on German soil against unconditional surrender helps to counteract strain and war-weariness; but although attempts have been made by German propaganda to instill a kind of "Battle of Britain" spirit, it is doubtful whether it has succeeded.

One of the smaller props to morale has gradually been upset. When the Luftwaffe was in its prime, outstanding aces were carefully built up as heroic types, an example to others. This hero-worship, to which the Germans are so addicted, was encouraged to what we would consider an inordinate degree. But by now most of the aces have been killed and others, like Galland and Pelz, no longer fly on operations and are even accused of becoming out of touch with operational personnel. At the same time, camaraderie between officers and men has become less.

The new appeal is based more on simple patriotism and fear of the consequences of defeat. A frequent propaganda theme is: "Life will not be worth living after the war." A horrific picture of a conquered Germany, easily concocted by Goebbels from unofficial Allied pronouncements, is well calculated to make men fight to the bitter end.

Much greater than fear of defeat at the hands of Britain and America is dread of Russia. "*Sieg oder Siberien*"—victory or slavery in Siberia—is a slogan which has a considerable effect, an effect not unconnected with a sense of guilt for what Germany has done above all to the populations in the East. Many realize that such wrongs avenge themselves, but nevertheless justify their conduct by persuading themselves that they are upholding a higher civilization.

Among airmen, less resentment of our bombing policy is felt than might be expected. The destruction of so much of both private and public property and fine cities, however, not to mention the casualties involved, helps to foster a certain feeling of futility about the future, and even a wish to escape it. Thus in some ways continued resistance is putting off an evil day—with the small, but to them worthwhile,

chance that the Allies might quarrel, the German technicians produce a trumph, and defeat might be avoided in a triumph of defensive warfare.

Analysis of Morale : Assessment of the morale of a prisoner is generally made at the outset of his initial interrogation, and almost always differs from an assessment made after the first or a series of interrogations. Weaknesses will develop under questioning which do not appear at the time of capture, and before the individual is isolated from the sustaining effect of his fellows.

During the period from August to November, 1944, which included some catastrophic days for the Luftwaffe, slightly more than 50 percent of airmen captured showed good morale, and of the rest, 35 percent could be said to have fair morale. The total number of personnel captured and interrogated during this period was 88, of which only 24 were day-fighter pilots. The morale of this category was distinctly better than that of the rest, taken on a numerical scale. As an example, only three of 24 fighter pilot prisoners were rated as having poor morale, and 13 of them displayed high morale, or fighting spirit.

There was a notable absence of any defeatism in captured GAF personnel after the attempted coup of 20 July and the Army's defeats in France. A definite *esprit-de-corps* was evident among the Luftwaffe, which tended to overcome any tendencies to disloyalty. The flying personnel, though educated almost completely within years of the Nazi régime, are not very politically minded. There is, furthermore, no substantial substitute in their minds for the system which has done them no apparent harm.

The Luftwaffe's defeats in the air over France and the Reich during the same period had a depressing effect, but there was always the excuse of Allied air superiority to fall back on as an "out."

By the end of November, the Luftwaffe was apparently considered to have been sufficiently nursed back to operating health to be employed on a large scale in support of the Army. At the same time, in the absence of an adequate bomber force, night fighters were sent over the Allied lines at night in considerable numbers. The result was the largest batch of aircrew prisoners since the Battle of Britain.

Of 158 prisoners taken during December, 64 percent showed high morale, with 74 percent of the 80 day-fighter pilots so rated. Night-fighter pilots captured were very much lower on the same basis.

The statistics indicated a marked improvement in morale of day-fighter pilots, believed to be due to the careful husbanding of strength in this category for a major effort, the maintenance of fighter production despite bombings, and the successful defense, until then, of the frontiers of Germany.

At the same time, the morale of night-fighter pilots has shown a definite decline. Although better trained and more carefully selected, and not long ago were the

most successful branch of the Luftwaffe, they show an inferior spirit than the day fighters. Frequent abortive missions, often caused by jamming, spoof attacks, and equipment malfunctions, seem to have produced a sense of frustration among these crews. They show a general high intelligence—which in the case does not help morale. They may fly blind, but they seem to think less blindly about the war.

The majority of the prisoners in the December group were captured during the Rundstedt offensive and before they were clearly aware of its strategic failure. That it could have been laid on at all provided a stimulus to fighting spirit. It was found that, regarding units, the most consistently good morale was shown by individuals from JG 4, with those from JG 2 running second.

It would be misleading to consider all GAF flyers with morale assessed as fair or even low to be only fair fighting men. In a unit with a high spirit—which is true of most—they would be carried along with the majority, and would hardly be aware themselves of their own weakness in this respect.

Eventual Undermining of Morale : Interrogators on the Continent who see GAF prisoners in the first days after their capture have found them extremely tough almost without exception. Insofar as the time taken to break down a man's security is an indication of his fighting spirit and not of improved instruction, morale is higher lately than it has been for some time. It is, however, not so deeply ingrained. Prisoners today are not only slightly younger than in the past, but each time they come from a later annual age-group. This means they are more immature. Fewer are intelligent and more are bone-headed, and the eventual undermining of security (and later of morale) is made easier by that fact. With them security is often merely an induced state with automatic reactions rather than intelligent attempt to continue fighting although a prisoner of war. Once it breaks they tend to talk freely. This applies chiefly to NCOs and other enlisted grades.

With most younger officers the basis of the high morale is somewhat different. They attempt to explain their professed faith in victory, which for them amounts simply to avoiding defeat, on the score of superior fighting ability, V-weapons, etc. But they also tend to be less fact-proof and easier to reach with argument, though only with much time and trouble. Older, or senior officers, who know more facts, are nearly always prepared to admit that Germany has lost the war, but their discipline and sense of responsibility clearly keep them from showing any defeatist spirit to the men under their command.

It is nevertheless startling to find how different is the attitude of most prisoners after a week or so of being moved from place to place and being interrogated. During this time they learn from their own observation or from the people they meet a great many enlightening facts and home truths ; they have

Luftwaffe, they should reflect on the tremendous material superiority of the Allies which they see behind our lines. If by jamming, spy planes happen to pass through London, this especially brings home to them the swindle of their own propaganda.

The young generation in Germany has for so long been denied the possibility of finding out the other side of the coin's point of view that when he gets the chance of doing so he frequently discovers he cannot answer it. This is a weakness of which interrogators have learned to take advantage. If a patient and serious attempt is made to open a prisoner's eyes to the facts he has been denied, the Goebbels machine begins for him to operate in reverse.

This very susceptibility of Germans to propaganda might suggest that their re-education after the war may not be so difficult, but it should be remembered that interrogators achieve little more than a rather static "deconditioning," and with the assistance of depressing circumstances. Any eventual "recon-

ditioning" must depend on a new dynamic of ideals, and social and political loyalties, which are at present all too painfully absent.

Conclusions: It would seem that since GAF morale is not built on reason, but on blind faith, loyalty and patriotism, it will only break down when facts, or a conflict of ideas, successfully undermine the original basis. Insofar as these destructive influences operate at all in the field, the whole of German propaganda is working, not unsuccessfully, to exclude them. As a result German airmen on capture continue to show good fighting spirit.

Morale did not slump seriously during the disastrous days of the summer, and does not become unduly depressed by failure or heavy losses, or even as a result of land reverses. This suggests the conclusion that, taking flying personnel in the Luftwaffe as a whole, morale will not break as long as they have aircraft and gasoline, the Army continues to resist, and they themselves are told to go on fighting.



Notes on German Morale in General

FACTORS affecting the will to fight, among the German population and also among the armed forces, are based on numerous premises and promises, complicated by so many officially-fostered untruths, that it has evidently been very difficult for some Germans to comprehend the hopelessness of the war for them.

A Luftwaffe officer prisoner who recently had an opportunity to see something of London was astonished at the amount of traffic in the streets. The sight of more or less normal commercial and military activity convinced him, more than anything else had done, of the impossibility of Germany's situation today. He went on to say that he had never felt this sense of hopelessness while he was still in the Reich. There was always some new hope, some promise of eventual superiority, to believe in. Even the scope of the Russian attacks beginning in January had not impressed this individual as much as the sight of loaded buses, numerous taxicabs, lorries, trucks, and busy pedestrians on the streets of London.

Another prisoner reported a significant sidelight on the civilian situation inside Germany. During air raids, when the public shelters are packed with people, remarks were often made that were not complimentary to the government, Hitler, and the High Command. Words were spoken, sometimes seriously and sometimes jokingly, which showed very little enthusiasm for the Nazi party and the government in general. The official reaction to this was to plant party spies to listen for such talk and report the offenders. More recently, after arrests for disloyalty of this kind became noticed, people are inclined, according to the report, to suffer in silence during their uncomfortable hours in shelters.

Fear of the consequences of widespread listening to Allied radio stations has evidently prompted the GAF High Command to take measures formerly applied only to civilians. In November, 1944, according to a prisoner, red stickers were issued to everyone in possession of a radio at his airfield, with orders to paste one on each set. The radio was to be confiscated if this was not done. On the sticker was a warning stating that listening to enemy stations was treason and would be punished by death.

Morale of German civilians was recently at its lowest, according to reports, among the population of Western Germany, especially the Rhineland. Allied occupation after the last war, the much longer time that they have been subjected to air attack, the frenzied military movements to back up the line after the liberation of France and Belgium, and many other factors, have combined to make most of the people thoroughly depressed and sick of the war. This is true to some extent all over the Reich, and doubtless is intensified this month in Eastern and Central Germany.

An interesting highlight is mentioned by the prisoner who contributed the above observation. He said that when Berlin was first bombed in strength the people of the Rhineland were almost openly pleased, because those who kept shouting from the rear areas for "total war" were finally sharing in it more directly.

Very few soldiers are fighting for Nazi ideals, one prisoner stated. Only exception, he thought, might be the SS troops who have been drilled and drilled in party doctrine since their early youth. Men of the SS, according to this individual, are violently hated by many in the regular army because of their brutal treatment of prisoners, among other reasons.

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