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"The POW Will Safely Return!" Second World War Allied and German Propaganda Leaflets

Amber Lloydlangston and Tracy Lo

During the Second World War, both the Allied and Axis governments expended significant resources in the production and dissemination of propaganda. Directed at their own people, the propaganda of these governments fostered correct thinking, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours. Directed at military personnel of enemy nations as part of psychological warfare operations,

this propaganda was far more subversive. Its goal was to undermine the efficiency and coherence of enemy forces and, ultimately, to weaken their will to fight. Among the different media harnessed to achieve this end, aerial leaflets hold a unique place in the history of psychological warfare operations. Their efficacy was debated during and after the war yet these leaflets were disseminated in the millions and collected by soldiers of both sides.1 It is for this reason, among others, that although inherently ephemeral, Second World War leaflets have been preserved in archival collections, including the George Metcalf Archives of the Canadian War Museum.² In the following pages, we will highlight 12 leaflets from this collection, six produced by the Psychological Warfare Division, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (PWD)3 and six by the SS Standarte Kurt Eggers of the German Waffen SS (SKE),4 all of which encourage enemy combatants to surrender. But what arguments did the psychological warriors of the opposing sides think would convince their target audiences to take this step? What inducements did they offer? What justifications did they provide? And in what ways were the leaflets produced by the opposing sides different or the same?



This exercise is undertaken less to compare the efficacy of the leaflets, although we will address this issue in our conclusion, and more to explore the variety of considerations that both sides attempted to balance in their efforts to induce surrender. We offer this analysis with due caution for we recognize that our sample is incomplete. While the George Metcalf Archives holds

35 PWD leaflets which promote surrender, its collection of corresponding German leaflets is significantly smaller. Indeed, we show here the six that are the least damaged. We also acknowledge that we employ the English translations of the original German leaflets that were prepared by PWD in an effort to overcome the reluctance of operational personnel to deliver, via aircraft and artillery, what some referred to as "bumpf" or "confetti" and others, slightly more colourfully, as "bumwad." We cannot, therefore, make definitive statements about the language use and tone employed in these PWD leaflets.⁶ And yet the similarities and differences are nonetheless striking, indicative not only of certain shared philosophies about propaganda techniques but also of different attitudes toward the enemy audience. Before turning to a detailed exploration of the individual leaflets, we will first outline in general terms their similarities and differences.

Whether Allied or German, both psychological warfare organizations anticipated that soldiers, not knowing how they would be treated as prisoners of war, might be afraid to surrender. To assuage this fear, two themes were stressed: 1) respect for the terms of the Geneva Convention,

and 2) the good conditions enjoyed by prisoners of war. Recognizing that a sense of honour might deter a soldier from surrendering, both sides also emphasized that this act did not sully his honour. To surrender did not imply cowardice but rather was a step forced upon a soldier for whom the alternative was, at worst, death and, at best, permanent disablement. To increase the leaflet's persuasiveness, both sides featured not only photographs of prisoners of war enjoying comfort and security in their camps but also quotes in which prisoners often express surprise at, and always satisfaction with, their treatment. Very simply, all 12 leaflets told their enemy audience that the POW would be sure to return home safely whereas the same could not be said of the fighting soldier.

Although the leaflets evince some similarities in theme and technique, they also manifest certain differences. The CWM sample suggests that PWD presented more inducements and justifications in advocating surrender to the German soldier. Leaflets reminded him of Allied material superiority, explained the meaning of capitulation on a personal and national level, and declared that desertion, requiring a particular kind of courage not held by all soldiers, was an acceptable route to a prisoner of war camp.⁷ The leaflets produced by PWD and SKE also employ a different tone. PWD leaflets attempted to reach German soldiers by addressing them as rational individuals capable of thinking for themselves and of making sensible decisions once presented with the truth.8 Truth, it must be noted, did not dictate honesty; PWD adopted the axiom of propaganda that to be persuasive, leaflets had to be credible. In contrast, leaflets generated by the propaganda units of the SKE were generally more strident in tone. German propagandists used language rich in superlatives and attempted to play on the emotions of their

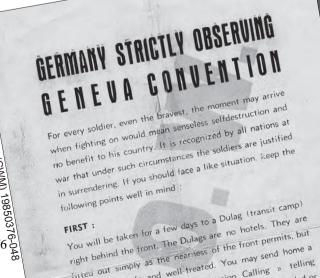
audience. That they chose this technique does not necessarily imply a lesser commitment to the truth. Indeed, PWD experts have argued that "Nazi propagandists had to observe the rules of accurate

reporting, when they wanted to believed, just as carefully as the Allies."¹⁰ And yet at the same time, one of these same experts noted that, according to the Nazis, the job of propaganda was to "persuade people to accept any given view favourable to policy, irrespective of its truth or falsity."11 For the Nazis, truth as well as lies had a role to play. The tone of certain SKE leaflets also suggests that German propagandists attempted to establish a sense of camaraderie with the enemy, an effort which our sample indicates was not made by PWD. While leaflets of the latter organization promised good and fair treatment for POWs and for Germany at war's end, they did not suggest that German and Allied soldiers should become friends nor employ a tone which suggested a kind of fellow-feeling as certain of the SKE leaflets did. We will now turn to a detailed exploration of the 12 leaflets beginning first with the six produced by the SKE and then turning to the six produced by PWD.

German Leaflet Propaganda Directed at the Allies

Termany strictly observing Geneva \mathbf{J} Convention" (AI - 069-7-4 $\mathbf{4}^{12}$) was a propaganda leaflet first distrubed in July 1944. It states that even the bravest soldier may reach a point where continued fighting would lead to pointless self-destruction. ¹³ A justifiable response in such circumstances, and one that all nations accept, is surrender. Should a soldier reach this point, the leaflet continues, he should know what will happen to him. First, he will be taken to a Dulag, which although "no hotel," is nonetheless as comfortable as nearness to the front permits. Here he will receive medical care, if needed, and

> be given the opportunity to send a message home. Second, the soldier will be transferred to a Stalag, a permanent camp, up-to-date, and with all the conveniences. These include: modern kitchens in which to prepare the ample and high quality food with which POWs are provided; clean and airy rooms, which soldiers can



will

and well treated. You may send home a

ion Calling » telling

Lloydlangston and Lo: "The POW Will Safely Return!"

"The P.O.W. will safely return!" contains the

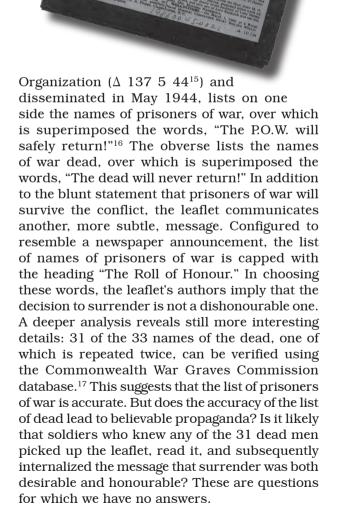
THE ROLL OF HONOR

decorate to their taste; lavatories and toilets of high sanitary standard; and, athletic fields, complete with sporting equipment. Moreover, while imprisoned in a Stalag, prisoners will be given an prisoners wi

Perhaps anticipating that some Allied soldiers might remain unmoved by the blandishments of leaflets in which the German voice predominates,

another leaflet, "Excerpts from recent letters from P.o.W's." (AI - 082-7-44), also disseminated in July 1944, uses the voice of Allied personnel, all identified by name and all but one by service number. 14 Supporting the leaflet's central message that wounded "P.o.W's. are well treated," these excerpts all speak to the high quality medical attention that these injured prisoners received from the Germans. Like all of the leaflets, this one also stresses that POWs "will return home after the war." It does, however, have yet another more subtle message to communicate. The following sentiment, purportedly penned by Sapper K. Thompson, is the clearest expression of this message: "[I]t seems so terrible that we are fighting against one another." Addressing the sense of camaraderie that developed between the supposed enemies, Rifleman H. Kidd wrote: "We have made friends with lots of German chaps, we have fine times trying to teach each other our different languages." Reinforcing the idea of the links of friendship, brotherhood, and camaraderie that could and should flourish amongst Allied and German forces is the photograph concluding the leaflet, showing two German soldiers carrying a wounded American soldier to a First Aid station. On another level, this image also highlights the humanity of the German soldier as proof of the fact that Allied personnel, upon laying down their arms, would have nothing to fear.

Stark in its simplicity, one of the leaflets produced by the Propaganda-Einsatz-Fürher



subtle message that there is no dishonour in surrender. The German propagandists'

attempted to enhance the leaflet's credibility

and impact by featuring on its obverse a list of

33 dead, superimposed over which are

the words: "The Dead Will

Never Return!"



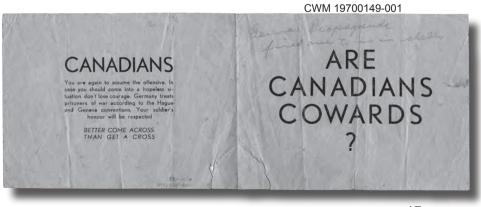
In terms of the number of photographs and the amount of text that it features, "Men in the Shadow? No—Men in the SUN!" (Δ 140/8 44), disseminated in August 1944, is unique. 18 While only one of the other five leaflets includes a photograph, this one has 21. It also features more text than the other five leaflets, much of it recycled from the others. As such, it states that those who became POWs surrendered to avoid "senseless self-destruction." This choice was no reflection on their bravery but rather evidence of their good sense. The leaflet also includes the five "Excerpts from recent letters from P.o.W's" (AI - 082-7-44). As well, the leitmotif of German leaflets promoting surrender is featured prominently as the leaflet's concluding line: "...[A]nd they all will safely return!" The principle point of the leaflet, however, is that Germany respects the terms of the Geneva Convention. Using the text from the leaflet entitled, "Germany strictly observing Geneva Convention" (AI – 069-7-44), it discusses the high quality living conditions, the abundant and excellent food, and the opportunities for self improvement and healthful exercise. The 21 photographs, from which healthy, active, vital men smile at the viewer from the page, are intended to illustrate the superior standard of living enjoyed by Allied prisoners-of-war. Of course, these images also are supposed to serve as incontrovertible proof of Germany's adherence to the terms of the Convention.

The final two SKE leaflets to be considered here are unique in that they were directed specifically at Canadian soldiers. The first, asking "Are Canadians Cowards?," answers: "Never has anybody dared to assert that. Even Canada's enemies rank Canadians among the world's best soldiers." Why, then, did the leaflet pose the question? The answer is found in another passage, which states that official sources quote the minister of defence, A.G.L. McNaughton,

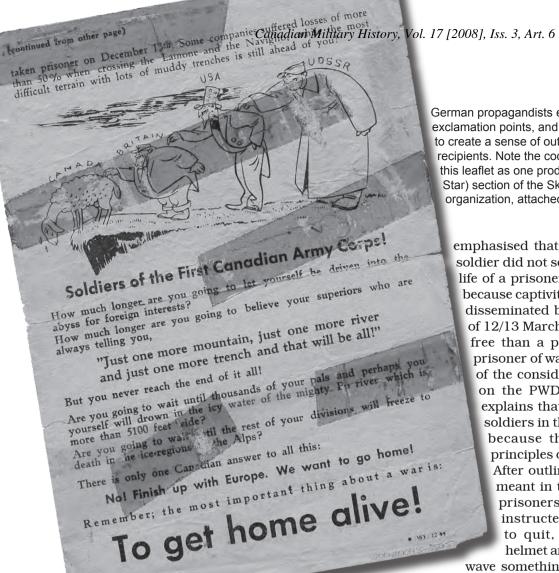
as saying that more than 6,500 out of 16,000 newly-drafted Canadians deserted. These men were not cowards, the leaflet asserts, but simply sensible individuals who saw no point in fighting in Europe, allied with Bolsheviks, when there was work to be done on Canadian farms and in Canadian industry. Somewhat incongruously, the leaflet also notes that "men [were] wanted to use dynamite for peaceful purposes," describing how this explosive was employed in the lumber industry. Addressing Canadian soldiers directly, the back of the leaflet declares: "You are again to assume the offensive. In case you should come into a hopeless situation don't lose courage. Germany treats prisoners of war according to the (sic) Hague and Geneva Conventions. Your soldier's honour will be respected." Its final shot: "Better come across than get a cross."

The final leaflet, disseminated in December 1944 and entitled "Soldiers of the First Canadian Army Corps!" (* 383/12 44²⁰), is more subtle in that it does not explicitly call on Canadians to surrender.21 It does, however, imply that surrender is the only way to survive the war. Employing at first a wry, somewhat conspiratorial tone, suggesting fellow feeling, it reminds Canadians that "[f]or over a year you have been in Italy and for more than a year you have been travelling up and down this damned Italian boot. You have fought one battle after another with ever increasing losses." Becoming sympathetic in tone, it then reminds Canadians of the misery of that past year of fighting, making specific reference to particularly costly Canadian battles: "Remember Ortona? You were ordered to take it and in the course of bitter street fighting you suffered **ENORMOUS** losses." Switching to outrage, the leaflet continues, "You were called again when without regard for losses you were ordered to break through German defences. Whenever big losses were the order of the day the cry was:

The unknown Canadian who preserved this leaflet, noting on its face, "German propaganda fired over to us in shells," apparently viewed it more as a curiosity to be saved as a souvenir than as an inducement to surrender, despite its avowal of German respect for The Hague and Geneva conventions.



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CANUCKS TO THE FRONT" And all of this

for "foreign interests!" As an accompanying cartoon clearly illustrates, Canadians were sacrificial lambs, forced to fight when the British, the Americans, and the Soviets each passed the proverbial buck. The leaflet ultimately asks: "Are you going to wait until thousands of your pals and perhaps you yourself will drown in the icy water of the mighty Po river (*sic*) which is more than 5100 feet wide? Are you going to wait until the rest of your division will freeze to death in the ice-regions of the Alps?" The "only one Canadian answer to all this": "No! Finish up with Europe. We want to go home. Remember; The most important thing about a war is: **To get home alive!**"

Allied Leaflet Propaganda Directed at the Germans

Leaflets issued by the Allied Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) repeatedly

German propagandists employed a cartoon, bolded text, exclamation points, and emotional language in an effort to create a sense of outrage in this leaflet's Canadian recipients. Note the code * 383 / 12 44, which identifies this leaflet as one produced by the Sudstern (Southern Star) section of the Skorpion South Propaganda organization, attached to the German 10th Army.

emphasised that captivity was no joke. A soldier did not seek captivity "because the life of a prisoner appealed to him,"22 but because captivity meant safety. A pamplet disseminated by the RCAF on the night of 12/13 March 194523 declared: "Better free than a prisoner of war. Better a prisoner of war than dead."24 Indicative of the considerable overlap in themes on the PWD leaflets, this one then explains that the "1,000,000 German soldiers in the West are now in safety" because the Allies adhere to the principles of the Geneva Convention. After outlining what this adherence meant in terms of the treatment of prisoners of war, the leaflet then instructed soldiers: "If you have to quit, remove your weapons, helmet and belt. Raise your hands.

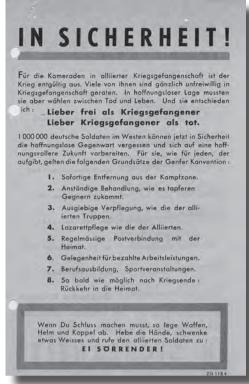
wave something white and shout to the Allied soldiers Ei Sörrender!" Use of the phrase "if you have to quit" is interesting for it subtly suggests that German soldiers could be forced to surrender by circumstances beyond their control. In such cases, being taken prisoner was not dishonourable but an unfortunate necessity. It reinforces the more direct statement: "Many [of your comrades] came into captivity quite against their will, but in a hopeless situation they had to choose between death and life." The reader of the leaflet, it is inferred, must make a similar decision. Equally interesting is the German phonetic spelling of the English phrase "I surrender," which was included for two reasons: 1) to respond to the fear of the German soldier that he would be killed trying to surrender²⁵; and 2) "to make the German familiar and at home with the idea of surrender, so that the switch-over to action (would become) that much easier."26

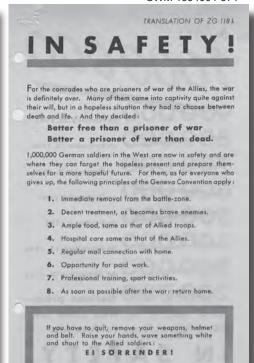
Many of the leaflets in the ZG series emphasized the good treatment received by German prisoners of war. Like the German leaflet, "Men in the Shadow?," the PWD leaflet

Like other Psychological Warfare Division leaflets, "In Safety!" recapitulates the main points of the Geneva Convention so that German soldiers would not be afraid to surrender. To help them still more, the leaflet includes the phrase "Ei Sörrender!," the German phonetic spelling of the English, "I Surrender!"

> entitled "What does the other side look like? (ZG 113)"27 and disseminated the night of 22/23 February 1945 over Losheim, Lebach, and Saarbrucken.28 uses photographs to provide visual support to the words and so make its written assertions more credible. First noting that German POWs had not fought any less courageously than those still fighting, it maintains that

they had been faced with a hopeless situation and, as such, recognized that there was nothing to be gained by continued fighting. Stating that the Allies respected the Geneva Convention, the leaflet continues: "The following series of pictures gives a sober and factual description of the life of captured German soldiers during the first days of captivity." The first photograph, showing a line of captured German soldiers and captioned "This can happen to anyone," constitutes yet another effort by PWD to accustom German soldiers to the idea of surrender by implying that there was no dishonour in it. The next five photographs show men being fed their first meal in captivity,





receiving first aid, being transported to a transit camp, undergoing processing as prisoners of war, and busily writing letters to loved ones. But it is the final graphic on the leaflet, a Red Cross card and its accompanying caption, which are particularly striking. Noting that a card is sent to the Red Cross in Geneva and also to prisoners' families, the final statement reads: "The card contains nothing about the circumstances of capture." The underlying message of this leaflet?: a German soldier and/or his family might consider surrender to be shameful but official Red Cross documents would not divulge how he entered captivity.

FOR EVERY GER. AN SOLDIER

who is now still fighting in the West, there is at least one other German soldier on the "other side"—as a prisoner-of-war of the Allies. These comrades did not fight any less courageously, but in hopeless circumstances they had to recognize that nothing was to be gained by fighting on. As prisoners-of-war they are protected by the Geneva Convention of 1929, according to which they are to be repatriated as soon as possible after the war. The following series of pictures gives a sober and factual description of the life of captured German soldiers during the first days of captivity. of captivity.



First Aid for the wounded is immediately given at the aid station. Gravely wounded men are rushed to the hospital.



This can happen to anyone. In a hopeless situation and in the face of overwhelming enemy superiority, a platoon surrenders to the Allies.



4. Transport to Transit Camp. According to the Geneva Convention, the prisoners are immediately removed from the danger zone.



The first meal in captivity consists usually of a can of meat (C-ration) and another can with biscuits and candy.



Processing of prisoners is done by other German soldiers. Wherever possible, the prisoners administer themselves.

This "sober and factual description of the life of captured German soldiers" also features a facsimile of a Red Cross Card, which the leaflet helpfully points out "contains nothing about the circumstances of capture." Clearly marked as a translation of ZG 113, the Psychological Warfare Division translated leaflets like this to overcome the reluctance of operational personnel to disseminate them instead of explosives.

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that the Allies respected the terms of the Geneva Convention. Of the leaflets featuring this theme, however, "Safe Conduct (ZG 76),"29 disseminated at the end of October 1944,30 is unique. Crafted and reworked over time in response to comments from newlycaptured German soldiers, the "Safe Conduct" pass was considered to be one of PWD's most effective leaflets.³¹ To make it appear official, the leaflet was stamped with the seals of the British and American armies along with a facsimile of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's signature. This signature, historian James Erdmann maintains, "transformed the leaflet from a simple appeal to surrender into an official contract of conditions binding both the soldier giving himself up and those taking him captive."32 Equally important the moment of surrender, German soldiers are regarded as prisoners of war; 2) Prisoners are taken to assembly points away from danger; 3) Prisoners receive the same quantity and quality of food as Allied soldiers and the same hospital care; 4) Prisoners' valuables and decorations are not taken from them; 5) Prisoners are accommodated in facilities equal to that of Allied garrison troops; and 6) Prisoners are subject neither to reprisals nor to public curiosity. Reflecting feedback from German POWs that they had been uncertain how to surrender safely, the leaflet concludes with "Rules for Surrender": "To prevent misunderstandings when surrendering, the following procedure is advisable: Lay down arms, take off helmet and belt, raise your hands and wave a handkerchief or this leaflet."

As we have seen, PWD leaflets repeatedly suggested that surrender could be forced upon a soldier, that it could happen to anyone, and that it was not something about which a soldier should be ashamed. In addition to advocating surrender, however, PWD leaflets also presented desertion as an option for the German soldier to consider. But how did the leaflets make this option palatable? If surrender could be interpreted as not sullying a soldier's honour, could desertion also be so interpreted? One leaflet purporting to use the voice of a deserter. "A So-Called Austrian Troublemaker," reads: "Yes, I am a deserter, but I claim that a man sometimes needs a lot more courage to desert than to keep sitting in his fox hole."33 The leaflet entitled, "In the North it Might Have Made Sense (ZG 109),"34 highlights Allied material superiority as a reason for wanting to stop fighting and desert. Declaring "YOU TOO CAN BECOME A PRISONER OF WAR," it lists the different routes to achieving this status: 1) in an enemy counter-attack; 2) by a counter-attack of one's own; 3) while scouting on combat patrol; 4) by an enemy flank attack; 5) by being cut off and separated. Still another way was by "so-called desertion: That is not something for everybody," the leaflet declares. "There are soldiers who decide that by fighting on they cannot help Germany and that post-war Germany will need them for the job of reconstruction. But to desert, one needs courage, iron determination and—a proper opportunity." The leaflet concludes with the assertion: "Prisoners of war return home safely when the war is over."

While leaflet ZG 109 touched upon the fact of " Allied material superiority, the

With its emotion-laden language, this Psychological Warfare Division leaflet emphasizes what Allied material superiority would mean to the poorly equipped German soldier: death, permanent disability, or capture. The smart soldier would accept that conditions forced his surrender.

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implications of this superiority for the individual German soldier was hammered home in "When All Hell Breaks Loose (ZG 82)," which was disseminated over Dunkirk on the night of 13/14 November 1944.35 It tells him: "Today you are still alive. You fight with insufficient weapons, poorly equipped, surrounded by halftrained units. But-you are alive." Pointing out to the German soldier that "thousands of your comrades, many of your own friends, have died," the leaflet reiterates three more times that the soldier reading the leaflet was still alive. But for how long? In the most emotion-laden language of any of the PWD leaflets considered in our sample, it continues: "Tomorrow all hell may break loose...Tomorrow: sudden uninterrupted barrages from guns of all calibres, continuous dive-bombing, thousands of flying fortresses and carpets of bombs; tanks, anti-tank rockets, and the new flame throwers. Everything you have seen

> so far was child's play compared with that. Tomorrow: Hell." And what of the day after

LEBST DU NOCH. Du kämpfst mit unzureichen-

affen, mit mangelhafter Ausrüstung, von halbge-

ameraden, viele Deiner eigenen Freunde

tomorrow? The leaflet states: "Day after tomorrow it will be over and you will be either dead, a cripple, or a prisoner of war. The decision about that is perhaps in your own hands...WHAT IS YOUR CHOICE?" The obverse of the leaflet asks the soldier: "WHAT IS TO BE DONE?" Instructing him to study the options in advance of battle so that he will be prepared to make an instantaneous decision, the leaflet outlines steps to follow for individual and group surrender, noting that "to avoid dangerous misunderstandings, the white flag should be waved clearly." It concludes by outlining the treatment accorded to prisoners of war by the Allies, a repetition of the main points of the Geneva Convention.

As Allied forces moved into Germany, PWD prepared leaflets that addressed both soldiers and civilians. "What Capitulation Means (ZG 97)," disseminated over Saarbrucken and Borken areas the night of 14/15 January 1945, and which outlines what this act meant and what it did not mean on both a small and large scale, is an example of this type of leaflet.³⁶ On a small scale, the leaflet explains, capitulation meant that German soldiers recognized "the hopelessness of the local situation" just as Allied commanders had done in Singapore, Tobruk and on Corregidor. For this same reason, German surrenders had taken place "in the East and West where it was recognized, strictly for military reasons, that further loss of life was no longer justified." At the same time, a small scale capitulation did NOT mean that the soldier "will be subject to the enemy's whim," for "he is protected by the Geneva Convention which contains detailed instructions regarding his treatment, food, shelter, etc. and provided...that prisoners of war must be returned home as soon as possible after the peace has been signed." On a large scale, capitulation meant that the "hopelessness of the overall situation is being recognized." This section also served as an opportunity to declare in no uncertain terms the war aims of the Allies: unconditional surrender and "No promises and no dealings with the Nazis!" On a large scale, capitulation did NOT mean mass retaliation against all Germans. Quoting President Roosevelt, the leaflet reads:

"The United Nations do not intend to enslave

the German people. It is our desire to give the German people an opportunity to become useful, and respected members of the European community of nations." While the front of the leaflet notes that soldiers who capitulate will be treated "with full honors (sic)," the obverse is photographic proof of this statement. It is captioned: "With full military honours the surrender of 19,000 German soldiers took place in Central France on 17th September 1944. The picture shows (right) an American Major-General returning the salute of a German Major-General and an American Colonel. The German staff is in the foreground." The reverse of subtle, this leaflet and others like it constituted a response to Goebbels' propaganda, which told the German people that "defeat meant total physical destruction of Germany, the total impoverishment of its economic life, and the total reign of unrelieved terror for its inhabitants."37

Conclusion

bjects of curiosity to the social historian today, were the 12 leaflets studied here viewed in the same light by the soldiers who picked them up during the Second World War? Or did they play the subversive role for which they had been designed? And can we determine if Allied and German soldiers responded similarly or differently to them? Although such questions spring immediately to mind in any exploration of leaflets, we recognize that we can offer only tentative answers for analyses conducted at the time and subsequently are themselves inconclusive. While some respond with a resounding yes, others disagree, and still others withhold judgment, citing lack of adequate evidence. Fully cognisant of the limitations of the exercise, we nonetheless conclude with a brief exploration of the variety of attitudes concerning the efficacy of aerial leaflets, including the twelve

advocating surrender.



erit vollen militarischen Ehren erfolgte die hier abgebildete Übergabe von 19 000 deutschen Soldaten in Mittelfrankreich, am 17. September 1944. Die Abbildung zeigt (rechts) einen amerikanischen Generalmajor, der die Ehrenbezeugung eines deutschen Generalmajors und eines amerikanischen Obersten erwidert. Im Vordergrund der deutsche Stab.

In hoffnungsloser Lage mussten sich bisher im Westen ergeben; Gen.d.Pz.Tr. Eberbach, Gen.d.Fallsch.Tr. Ramcke, die Generäle d.Inf. v.Choltitz, Neuling und v.Vierow, die Generalleutnants Badinski, Elfeldt, Eberding, Heinrichs, Kittel, Rauch, Schaeffer, v.Schileben, Scholz, Spang, die Generalmajore v.Auloch, v.Bock, Boje, Bieringer, Bruhn, Daser, Elster, v.Felbert, Gutknecht, Heim, Menny, Mosel, Richter, Sattler, Schramm, Schubert, Schmidt, Vaterrodt, Wahle und SS-Brigadeführer und Genmaj.d.Pol. Dunckern,

Those who argue that PWD leaflets were effective rely on a number of different sources of evidence, one of which was the Nazi response to the Allied leaflet campaign. The threats and punishment meted out to those soldiers found harbouring leaflets proved, as an Office of War Information indoctrination pamphlet entitled "Leaflets—Propaganda in Battle Dress" declared, that the "Hun didn't regard leaflets as harmless. He hated and feared leaflets. Indeed he threatened, cajoled, punished and generally went to a great deal of trouble to try and prevent them from being read. And why? Because he knew that one single leaflet falling into the right hands may do large and lasting damage." 38

The efficacy of PWD and SKE leaflets can be demonstrated sufficiently, some argued both during and after the war, through anecdotal evidence. For example, James Erdmann maintains that comments made by Obergefreiter Erwin Griesbach, an "unimportant Wehrmacht soldier" who surrendered voluntarily on 26 February 1945, proved that tactical and strategic leaflets were effective in combination. Griesbach reported that he "had been impressed with the Ei Sörrender' leaflet, the English phrases of which he had been practising against the possibility that his unit would be surrounded." He also informed his interrogators that "[t]he leaflet helps the Landser to cross the bridge between wanting and not wanting to. It makes the decision

easier for him by showing him the way."39 For his part, German propagandist SS Obersturmfuerer Fernau, responding to criticisms of the work of Skorpion West, 40 wrote on 15 November 1944 that "[t]he success of our work is beyond question and has been confirmed from the highest authorities, whilst recently some Ic's have confirmed it by advising us of their suspicion that some enemy units have been withdrawn temporarily or permanently from the front-line as a result of our propaganda."41 In the same vein, assessing in 1954 German propaganda directed against the French, Paul Leverkuehn concluded that leaflets had been successful: "[I]t was confirmed by the interrogation of prisoners and from other sources that these subversive pamphlets had, in fact, found their way to the troops; many of the prisoners still had the leaflets in their possession and produced them in support of their claims for preferential treatment."42

But not all authors agree that the aforementioned evidence was sufficient to prove the efficacy of propaganda leaflets. For example, addressing the Nazi response to Allied leaflets, professor Edward A. Shils, who served with the American Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War, suggests that it should be attributed "more to the hypersensitivity of the Nazis, who themselves greatly overemphasized the importance of propaganda, than to the actual responsiveness of the miserable Germans

to whom they were addressed."43 Rejecting prisoner of war feedback as adequate proof of the effectiveness of Allied leaflets, Charles Cruickshank argues in The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare, 1938-1945 that to have asked captured German personnel if they had been affected by propaganda likely would have only elicited the response that the prisoners believed their captors wished to hear.44 For his part, SS Obersturmfuerer Fernau, selective in his acceptance or rejection of anecdotal evidence depending on whether it proved the efficacy of German leaflets or not, similarly distrusted prisoner of war comments. He maintained that, rather than eagerly providing the desired response as the German POW was believed to have done, the Allied prisoner of war scornfully denied being affected by "Nazi propaganda."45

Arguments for and against the efficacy of leaflet propaganda are plentiful. Equally numerous are those who argue that it is impossible to conclude whether or not leaflets were effective. Thus, Anthony Rhodes in *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion in World War II*, maintains that for propaganda to have been effective, affected individuals should not have realized that they had even assimilated the message. ⁴⁶ Determining the efficacy of such propaganda would have been impossible. For his part, Daniel Lerner argues that there simply is insufficient evidence to prove the efficacy of leaflets. He also maintains, however, there is equally insufficient evidence to disprove their efficacy. ⁴⁷

In our assessment of leaflet efficacy, however, we accept that argument which holds that although difficult to measure, leaflets likely had "some demonstrable and helpful results if the surrounding military circumstances were favorable."48 Even when bolstered by military successes, propaganda leaflets would not have spurred immediate action. Instead, they operated through a process of gradual attrition of the opponent's morale. For this reason, some argue, German propaganda enjoyed success in France in 1939 and early 1940.49 Similarly, there is reason to believe that PWD leaflets played a role in encouraging Wehrmacht soldiers to surrender in the final months of the war. And it is for this reason that we suggest that SKE leaflets very likely had only limited impact on Allied personnel in 1944-45. Vicious as the fighting was during the last year of the war, the Allies achieved success

after success, and the anecdotal evidence which records Allied scepticism seems tenable. While the leaflets were often read, particularly if they were amusing, the majority of them probably did end up as toilet paper. ⁵⁰ "Bomber" Harris may not be the most representative Allied serviceman but his comments regarding German leaflets are still worth quoting: "Our reaction to pamphleteering had always been to jeer and at the most to keep some of their leaflets as souvenirs." ⁵¹

Notes

- An unknown recipient wrote "German propaganda fired over to us in shells" on the leaflet entitled "Are Canadians Cowards," and which was subsequently purchased by the Canadian War Museum. See, 19700149-001, George Metcalf Archives, Canadian War Museum (CWM). For his part, artillery officer Captain James R. Barker collected "Germany Strictly Observing Geneva Convention." See, 19850376-048, George Metcalf Archives, CWM. Evidence that German soldiers were equally inclined to save leaflets is provided by James Erdmann who notes that captured documents of the German Army postal censors record their complaints that "too many German troops were putting leaflets into the letters they were sending home." See, James Morris Erdmann, Leaflet Operations in the Second World War: The Story of the How and Why of the 6,500,000,000 Propaganda Leaflets Dropped on Axis Forces and Homelands in the Mediterranean and European Theatres of Operations (Denver: Denver Instant Printing, 1969), p.39.
- Dr. I. Tucker Burr, an American who joined the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa on 5 September 1939 and who served as an intelligence officer with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Canadian Divisions, and the 1st Canadian Corps, collected the German leaflets entitled "Excerpts from recent letters from P.o.W's.," "Men in the Shadow?," and "The P.O.W. Will Safely Return!" See, 19880045-002, George Metcalf Archives, CWM. According to Royal Canadian Air Force Document Transit and Receipt forms, copies of Psychological Warfare Division leaflets were transferred, by bomber mail, from the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Royal Canadian Air Force Overseas, to the Secretary, Department of National Defence for Air, the Lisgar Building, Ottawa, between 19 December 1944 and 5 April 1945, and marked to the attention of the Historical Section, an eloquent indication of the value assigned to the leaflets by those responsible for their dissemination. See, "Document Transit and Receipt," 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 3. Allied propaganda for dissemination amongst the enemy was produced by a number of different organizations. For example, the British and the Americans had independent civilian psychological warfare agencies, the Political Warfare Executive and the Office of War Information, respectively. In the fall of 1942, General Eisenhower established the Psychological Warfare Branch, the only psychological warfare organization under military control, to generate leaflet and other forms of propaganda

- for the North African campaign. It was upgraded to the Psychological Warfare Division, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (PWD), in April 1944 for the Normandy invasion. Its mission: "to destroy the fighting morale of our enemy, both at home and on the front. The six leaflets presented here, all produced by the PWD and all beginning with the code "ZG," were directed at the Wehrmacht across the entire Western Front. Daniel Lerner, Psychological Warfare against Nazi Germany: The Sykewar Campaign, D-Day to VE-Day (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1971), first published in 1949, pp.42-66. See also, Philip M. Taylor, Munitions of the Mind: War Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Nuclear Age (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, Patrick Stephens Limited, 1990), p.206; Allan M. Winkler, The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p.125; Erdmann, pp.169-70; 194-225.
- Initially the responsibility of propagandatruppen or propaganda units of the German Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW - High Command of the Armed Forces), units of the Waffen SS produced and disseminated battlefield propaganda from 1940. By 1943, these units were formed into an independent regiment, the SS Standarte Kurt Eggers, which, from 1944, entirely took over the initiative in battlefield propaganda. See, "Skorpion Leaflets," The Psywar Society 9 (March 1960), pp.3-4; Max Kronstein, "Small-Rocket Leaflets at the Italian Front of the Second World War," The Psywar Society 18 (June 1962), p.31; Herbert A. Friedman, "Axis Propaganda Currency of WWII," http://www. psywarrior.com/WWIIGermanBanknotes.html>, accessed 18 July 2008; "German Army Propaganda Units in WWII," Tactical and Technical Trends, 30 (29 July 1943), reproduced online at: http://www. lonesentry.com/articles/ttt/german-army-propagandaunits.html>, accessed 18 July 2008. The Psywar Society, now called The Falling Leaf, is the journal of the Psywar Society, which was founded in 1958 by and for leaflet collectors, historians of psychological warfare, and military personnel. Sergeant-Major Herbert A. Friedman, a veteran of American psychological warfare operations, has written over 100 print articles on the subject in addition to those posted on the world wide web.
- Lerner, Psychological Warfare against Nazi Germany, p.233; Erdmann, p.158.
- 6. For example, Daniel Lerner, chief editor of PWD, 1944-45, states that the tone of the leaflets was objective, addressing the German soldier as a rational, thinking individual. James Erdmann, for his part, states that the leaflets adopted "a slightly mocking tone for describing the plight of German forces." In our opinion, the English translations reflect Lerner's position but perhaps the German originals read differently. See, Lerner, pp.200, 210; Erdmann, p.273.
- Lerner identified 12 themes in his analysis of 84 ZG series leaflets held in The Hoover Library collection:
 1) Inevitable German defeat; 2) West front defeats; 3) Save yourself!; 4) Good treatment of POWs; 5) You are cut off; 6) East front defeats; 7) SHAEF notices and instructions; 8) "Schluss machen!" (Make an end!); 9) What capitulation means; 10) Allied strength; 11) Landser vs High Command; 12) Destruction of German towns. See Lerner, pp.185-6.

- 8. That PWD propaganda adopted this tone was dictated by Section 18 of the Standing Directive for Psychological Warfare against members of the German Armed Forces, which reads: "Throughout this phase [long-term tasks post-D-Day] all psychological warfare in all media, whether tactical or strategic, will remain factual and objective, avoiding terms, phrases, or pictures which the German soldier will dismiss as 'propaganda,'" Lerner, pp.200, 360-1.
- Martin F. Hertz, chief leaflet writer at PWD, recounted the fact that "although some prisoners got eggs for breakfast, we did not mention it in leaflets after it was found that the balance of the leaflet was disbelieved because our assertion seemed too incredible." Lerner, pp.28, 198.
- 10. Lerner, p.28. For his part, Richard H.S. Crossman, brought to PWD from the British Political Warfare Executive to direct psychological warfare operations policy, states that "[Goebbels] understood that, if you want to put over the big lie, the way to do it is to be as scrupulously accurate as possible about small facts." See, Crossman, "Supplementary Essay," in Lerner, p.334.
- 11. Lerner, p.165.
- 12. Leaflets whose identifying code begins with the letters "AI," were produced by the Propaganda-Abschnitts-Offizier Italien unit. This unit has not been linked to a particular army group but it produced material in Berlin and Italy for dissemination in Italy. See, "Skorpion Leaflets," *The Psywar Society* 9 (March 1960), pp.3-4; Kronstein, "Small-Rocket Leaflets at the Italian Front of the Second World War," 31; Herbert A. Friedman, "Sex and Psychological Operations," http://www.psywarrior.com/sexandprop.html, accessed 18 July 2008; "German Army Propaganda Units in WWII," *Tactical and Technical Trends* 30 (29 July 1943), reproduced online at: http://www.lonesentry.com/articles/ttt/german-army-propaganda-units.html, accessed 18 July 2008.
- "Germany Strictly Observing Geneva Convention (AI 069-7-44)," 19850376-048, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- "Excerpts from Recent Letters from P.o.W's (AI 082-7-44)," 19880045-002, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 15. Leaflets beginning with a delta or triangle symbol (Δ) were produced by the Propaganda-Einsatz-Fürher Organization, which was part of the German 14th Army. See "Skorpion Leaflets," *The Psywar Society* 9 (March 1960), pp.3-4; Kronstein, p.31; Friedman, "Sex and Psychological Operations," http://www.psywarrior.com/sexandprop.html, accessed 18 July 2008; "German Army Propaganda Units in WWII," reproduced online at: http://www.lonesentry.com/articles/ttt/german-army-propaganda-units.html, accessed 18 July 2008.
- 16. "The P.O.W. Will Safely Return! ((Δ 137 5 44)," 19880045-002, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 17. Douglas Cameron Price Cunningham and Theodore John Hardinge could not be found in a search of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database. All British, six were killed in Italy, five in the Pacific Theatres (Singapore and Burma), one over Germany, and one in South Africa. See http://www.cwgc.org/, accessed 16 July 2008.
- "Men in the Shadow? No—Men in the Sun! (Δ 140/8 44),"
 19880045-002, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- Of the six German leaflets studied here, this is the only one that has no identifying code linking it to a particular propaganda unit. "Are Canadians Cowards?" 19700149-001, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.

- 20. Leaflets beginning with an asterisk (*) were produced by the Sudstern (Southern Star) section of the Skorpion South Propaganda organization, which was attached to the German 10th Army. See, "Skorpion Leaflets," *The Psywar Society* 9 (March 1960), pp.3-4; Kronstein, p.31; Friedman, "Sex and Psychological Operations," http://www.psywarrior.com/sexandprop.html, accessed 18 July 2008; "German Army Propaganda Units in WWII," reproduced online at: http://www.lonesentry.com/articles/ttt/german-army-propaganda-units.html, accessed 18 July 2008.
- "Soldiers of the First Canadian Army Corps! (* 383/12 44)," 20020045-2505, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 22. "Wilck/No Joke (ZG 89)," 1994004-376, and "Lost! (ZG 100)," 1994004-377, George Metcalf Archives, CWM, ZG 89 was disseminated by the RCAF over Heinsberg, Baal, Mersch, Setternich, Lebach, and Dilsburg the night of 18/19 December 1944 and ZG 100 in the Salient, St Vith, and Witz, the night of 11/12 January 1945. "Document Transit and Receipt," 8 January 1945 and 19 January 1945, 19940003-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 23. This leaflet was disseminated over Menzig, Losheim, Lebach, Dilsburg, Saarbrucken, Konigswinter, Elsafthal, Duisdorf, Koblenz, Trarbach, Kirchenberg, Summern, Bacharach, Neuwied, and Bendorf. "Document Transit and Receipt," 5 April 1945, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- "Am 7. März 1945, In Safety! (ZG 118k)," 19940004-371, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 25. Lerner, p.216.
- The Psychological Warfare Division, SHAEF. An Account of its Operations in the Western European Campaign, 1944-1945, p.130, quoted in Lerner, pp.216-17.
- 27. "What does the other side look like? (ZG 113)" 19940004-372, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 28. "Document Transit and Receipt," 2nd March 1945, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- "Passiercshein/Safe Conduct (ZG 76)," 19940004-370, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 30. The RCAF Document and Transit Receipts make no mention of ZG 76 but they do indicate that ZG 74 was disseminated on the night of 27/28 October 1944 and ZG 78 on 30 October 1944. See, "Document Transit and Receipt," 2 November 1944 and 14 November 1944, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 31. Lerner, p.213. While our example is orange, green was ultimately chosen as the most effective colour. R.H.S. Crossman suggests that it made the Safe Conduct pass look like a "greenback" and, therefore, more official. See, "Supplementary Essay," p.340.
- 32. Erdmann, p.222.
- 33. "German Soldiers Have Their Say, westfront, issue 2 (ZG 83)," 19940004-376, George Metcalf Archives, CWM. The RCAF disseminated this leaflet over Rustenhart, Regisheim, Suiz, Bitsch, Roerbach, Sarrgemund, Suchlen, Kemper, and Gildern the night of 2/3 December 1944. "Document Transit and Receipt," 19 December 1944, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 34. "In the North it Might Have Made Sense (ZG 109)," 19940004-373, George Metcalf Archives, CWM. This leaflet was disseminated at some point between 15/16 January and 22/23 February 1945, the former the date of dissemination of ZG 103 and the latter the date of dissemination of ZG 113. See, "Document Transit and Receipt," 30 January 1945 and 2 March 1945, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.

- 35. "When All Hell Breaks Loose (ZG 82)," 19940004-374 and "Document Transit and Receipt," 24 November 1944, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 36. "What Capitulation Means (ZG 97)," 1994004-369 and "Document Transit and Receipt," 19 January 1945, 19940004-378, George Metcalf Archives, CWM.
- 37. Lerner, p.177.
- 38. Cited in Erdmann, p.189.
- 39. Erdmann, p.280.
- Skorpion West was another propaganda unit of the SS Standarte Kurt Eggers.
- 41. SS Obersturmfuehrer Fernau, "The German Skorpion—Criticism of the Critics, 15 November 1944," *The Psywar Society* 8 (December 1959), p.4. According to an editorial note, this is a translation of an original document prepared by the German propaganda unit, Skorpion West.
- 42. P.H. Leverkuehn, German Military Intelligence (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1954), p.110.
- 43. Letter from Shils to Lerner, quoted in Lerner, p.300.
- Charles G. Cruikshank, The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare, 1938-1945 (London: Davis-Poynter, 1977), pp. 186-7.
- 45. SS Obersturmfuehrer Fernau, "The German Skorpion," p.4.
- Anthony R.E. Rhodes, Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion in World War II (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p.119. See also Cruikshank. p.187.
- 47. Lerner, p.301.
- 48. Erdmann, p.377. See also, Winkler, p.118.
- 49. See, for example, Stanley Newcourt-Nowodworski, *Black Propaganda in the Second World War* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), p.207; P.H. Robbs, "The Second World War Leaflet Evaluation," *The Psywar Society* 6 (June 1959), p.9; Robbs, "The Second World War Leaflet Evaluation," *The Psywar Society* 7 (September 1959), p.6; Cruickshank, p.187.
- 50. Matthew Parker, Monte Cassino: The Hardest Fought Battle of World War II (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p.263.
- 51. Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (London: Collins, 1947), p.36.

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