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[S.S. 737.]

Estado Maior do Exercito

BIBLIOTECA



Ia/54182.

TRANSLATION OF A GERMAN DOCUMENT.

WYTSCHAETE GROUP,
Section Ic.

BIBLIOTECA DO EXERCITO
(Biblioteca do E. M. E.)
N.º 905 Custo.....
Aumentado em 17-9-19
Livro N.º July, 1918

INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES OF GUIDANCE FOR THE CONDUCT OF EVERY GERMAN SOLDIER WHO IS TAKEN PRISONER.

(Not to be taken into the Front Line.)

To be issued to the Rank and File by Companies for perusal, then collected again and filed by Regimental Staffs for occasional re-issue and collection.

For a man to allow himself to be taken prisoner by the enemy without having defended himself to the utmost is a dishonourable act equivalent to treachery.

Capture at the hands of our inhuman foes, in view of their unexampled brutality of treatment, which is now proved beyond question in so large a number of cases, merely means being slowly tortured to death.

Should, however, a man be captured in spite of all his bravery and without its being his fault, even then the soldier still has sacred duties towards his comrades, towards his Commander-in-Chief to whom he took the oath of fealty, and towards his country. It is an easy duty for him to fulfil; he has only to preserve in his captivity the same courage which he has so often shown in the face of the enemy. The first thing suggested to prisoners in the enemy's camp, after their confidence has been gained by stimulating drinks and the best of fare, is nothing less than the betrayal of their country. Afterwards, when the object is attained, follows the usual meagre prisoners' fare and hard work, with the most brutal treatment.

A prisoner is submitted to an examination in which, by cleverly framed questions, insincere promises, or even by threats of every kind, attempts are made to cause him to give away military secrets, such as the order of battle, the strength with which a front is held, intentions and plans for attack, measures for defence, concentrations or movements of troops, the exact condition of his own unit, strength of units, events taking place behind the front and in Germany, rest billets of his comrades and other matters.

It is regrettable that this war has provided many instances where the statements of a man *without honour*, which unfortunately have often been only too accurate, have been proved have had disastrous effects for *his own comrades*. How many brave soldiers have lost the lives through this cause?

The success of our attacks and enterprises is also imperilled in this way, and the successful issue of the war may thus be to a great extent jeopardized, and the whole Fatherland receive the gravest injury.

It is just now, at the decisive point of the final struggle, that every soldier must feel more than ever the shame and infamy of such unprincipled conduct.

Again and again do prisoners captured by *us* give confirmation of the fact that those German soldiers, no matter to which State they belong, who allow themselves to be pressed under examination into making all kinds of statements, in the idea that they will receive better treatment, have had afterwards a much harder time than those who refused to say anything. For even among our enemies, the soldier who consciously betrays his country and puts his own comrades in danger ranks as a man without honour.

On the other hand, even the enemy invariably respects the German soldier who remains steadfast and refuses to make statements, even in the face of threats, or by a clever answer makes from the start all further questioning useless. Thus, Private Wiegand, of the 3rd Company, 60th Infantry Regiment, who pleaded his soldier's oath and refused to make any statements, received full recognition in the Army Orders of the enemy.*

* NOTE BY G.S.I.—Further reference to this incident is contained in the following extract from an order issued by the Second German Army on 16-4-18:—

"2. Amongst the documents captured from the enemy, there is a report, dated 10th August, 1917, of the examination of Private Wiegand, 3rd Company, 60th Infantry Regiment, 121st Division, which, literally translated, runs as follows:

"The prisoner, a Roman Catholic, stated that on entering the German Army he had taken an oath that, in the event of his being taken prisoner, he would give no information of any kind whatsoever which might endanger the safety of his comrades. *His attitude commanded respect and is completely in accordance with the best traditions of military honour.* As a matter of fact, no information of any kind could be obtained from the prisoner, who is 19 years of age."

"This splendid example of soldierly conduct under imprisonment should be published to the troops, especially as several other records, also captured from the enemy, concerning the examination of German prisoners, contain precisely such statements (e.g., as to billets for troops, battle H.Q., communication trenches, etc.) which are calculated to endanger the lives of comrades in a high degree.

"In view of the above-cited example, it should be continuously impressed upon troops that under examination only the name, and nothing further, need be given to the enemy, and that a prisoner who declines to make any further statement not only does not render his fate worse, but on the contrary exacts respect from the enemy."

[P.T.O.]