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[S.S. 737.]

Estado Maior do Exercito

BIBLIOTECA



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TRANSLATION OF A GERMAN DOCUMENT.

BIBLIOTECA DO EXERCITO
 N.º 905- CUSTO
 Aumentado em 17-9-19
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WYTSCHAETE GROUP,
 Section Ic.

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 to have had disastrous effects for *his own comrades*. How many brave soldiers have lost their 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."

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If questions are asked about military or other dangerous subjects, there are many answers by which a man can escape further questions or at any rate parry them, *e.g.* :—

“Only joined the unit a few days ago as a reinforcement.”

“Just back from leave.”

“Have been sick in quarters, or have just come out of hospital a few days ago and therefore have no information.”

“Was on special duty (forestry, collieries, road construction, production of trench materials, etc.).”

“Accommodation under canvas in a wood, the name and exact location of which I cannot give. Have observed nothing there. Have seen no other troops beyond men of the detachment, or any artillery positions: have seen no transport to or from batteries or single guns, or movements of troops.”

If further questions are asked, always repeat the same answer: “I was not there”: “I do not know”: “Am not acquainted with the sector”: “Do not know the flanking units”: “Have seen no artillery, as visiting artillery positions is strictly forbidden”: “Do not know the positions of sentries or machine guns, or their number”: “Know of no plans for attack”: “Know nothing of the relief of the Division”: “Do not know the lines of approach to and departure from the position, as I went in at night”: “No work of any consequence in progress in the trenches or behind the front”: “Trenches, rations and *moral* good.”

It is naturally no less important to be circumspect in conversation with countrymen or fellow-prisoners in the camp later on, and not to tell them the *opposite* story to that told shortly before at the cross-examination.

Never forget that a prisoner is subject to continual observation and eavesdropping. In many cases, he is even pumped without being aware of the fact by confidential agents (his own countrymen, who have taken on themselves this despicable rôle). Further, *it is of the greatest importance* that every soldier should burn all letters and other written communications immediately after he has read them; by so doing, he renders a great service to himself and to his country. Should he have any special interest in these letters, he can send them home again or tie them up in a parcel and hand them in to the company orderly room, which, provides for their safe keeping.

It will thus be impossible for the enemy to receive or confirm any information by means of letters, note-books, or more particularly diaries and address-books.

Even long after capture, in the prisoners of war camp behind the front or in the labour camp, there are still dangers of many kinds which threaten the unwary man. *Seeming* comrades come up to him confidentially and induce him to relate his recent experiences, and ply him with questions; these men are naturally acting under the enemy's orders, according to precise instructions. The seeming comrades are simply members of the enemy forces who speak good German and are put into German uniform (often even in German officer's uniform). Therefore, use the greatest caution in conversation; if you have no previous knowledge of the man in question, give him no information about military affairs, say nothing about home circumstances, and tell him none of your experiences; your lot will not be improved by doing so.

Beware of the so-called senior N.C.O.s of the camp, or of quartermasters and such men apparently Germans, as are responsible for your comfort in camp, and receive complaints and requests.

When talking in camp, dormitory or mess-room, speak only in a low voice, *for walls have ears!* Everywhere an apparatus is installed by which every word is heard, even through the thickest walls, and is written down and afterwards turned to account. In a word, even a prisoner must never forget that he is a German and that even he can still bear his part in helping to win victory over the enemy.

A warning in conclusion.

Our enemies, in their examinations of prisoners, usually record the name of the man examined; even where this is not the case, we on our side can always ascertain from the records of the platoon, company and regiment, together with the date, hour and place of capture, who the prisoner was who made the statement in question. If such an examination, containing matter damaging to us, falls into our hands, criminal proceedings will invariably be instituted against the man who has forgotten duty and honour; this entails in the first instance great unpleasantness for his relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, wife and child), and apart from this, after the war, the heaviest penalties for himself. There is no question of a remission of punishment or amnesty for such traitors, any more than for deserters. They and their names are branded, their home and property lost for ever!

(Translation ends.)

Note by General Staff.

The above document calls for no comment. It is obvious that the Germans, in their efforts to extract information, will apply to Allied prisoners every one of the methods against which they warn their own soldiers. This German document should be read in conjunction with G.R.O. No. 4791 and S.S. 730, “Leakage of Information through Prisoners of War.”

GENERAL STAFF (INTELLIGENCE),

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

2nd September, 1918.

Issued down to Battalions.