

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION HAS BEEN OBTAINED FROM P/W AS THE STATEMENTS HAVE NOT AS YET BEEN VERIFIED, NO MENTION OF THEM SHOULD BE MADE IN INTELLIGENCE SUMMARIES OF COMMANDS OR LOWER FORMATIONS, NOR SHOULD THEY BE ACCEPTED UNTIL COMMENTED ON AIR MINISTRY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARIES OR SPECIAL COMMUNICATIONS.

LUFTWAFFE MORALE.

(August to December 1944)

1. This report is an endeavour to assess and analyse Luftwaffe aircrew morale in the period of five months from 17th August 1944, on which date a similar assessment was made in A.D.I.(K) 473/1944. The number of aircrew prisoners interrogated for the present review, amounting to 246, comprises the largest sample since 1940.
2. 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% 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 amongst all aircrew has risen steadily until, in December, it was found to stand at 64%, with day fighters even higher at 74%.
3. 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 the ground personnel, judging from recent samples, is just the same as it has been for a long time - bad.

THE BASIS OF MORALE.

4. The basis of G.A.F. morale remains 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 aircrew 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 the civilians.

5. 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 new 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 the inventors and technicians still have the situation in hand. The promise of large numbers of jet aircraft for the spring has had the same effect.

6. Many, though a decreasing number, of the younger P/W 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 as 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.

7. 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 instil a kind of "Battle of Britain" spirit, it is doubtful whether it has succeeded.

8. 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 G GALLAND and PELZ, no longer fly on operations and are even accused of becoming out of touch with the operational personnel. At the same time the camaraderie between officers and men has become less.

9. The new appeal is based more on staple patriotism and fear of the consequences of defeat. A frequent propaganda theme is: "Life will not be worth living after the war". The 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.

10. Much greater than fear of defeat at the hands of Britain and America is dread of Russia. "Sieg oder Sibirien" - 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. Manly realise that such wrongs avenge themselves, but nevertheless justify their conduct by persuading themselves that they are upholding a higher civilisation.

11. Among aircrew 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 a putting-off of an evil day - with the small, but to them worthwhile chance that the Allies might quarrel, the German technicians produce a trump, and defeat might be avoided in a triumph of defensive warfare.

A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF MORALE.

12. The three tables presented below show morale at time of capture; the assessments are those made by the original interrogators on the Continent, and differ slightly - almost always for the better - from the assessments given at the end of A.D.I.(K) reports in which allowance is not always made for the weaknesses which develop under prolonged interrogation and in the isolation of theme from the sustaining effect of his group.

(a) Period August - November 1944.

August Morale.

Type of Unit.	No. of P/W	High.	Fair.	Low.
Bomber	22	12=55%	6=27%	4=18%
Day Fighter	14	6=42%	6=42%	2=16%
Others	7	4		-
Total	43	22=51%	15=35%	6=14%

Average age - 23.3 years.

September - November Morale.

Type of Unit.	No. of P/W	High.	Fair.	Low.
Bomber and transport	18	11=61%	2=11%	5=28%
Day Fighter	10	7=70%	2=20%	1=10%
Night Fighter and N.S.G.	15	8=54%	2=13%	5=33%
Others	2	2	-	-
Total	45	28=62%	6=13.5%	11=24.5%

Average age - 23.3 years.

+ This figure includes the only bomber crew captured between 16th August and 18th December; this crew comprised the three survivors of a V-1 launching He.111 which ditched in the North Sea on 6th October.

Notes on the above Tables.

(1) Even in the catastrophic days of August, 51% of the Luftwaffe aircrew captured showed good morale, and of the rest 35% could be said to have fair morale.

2) Although the sample is too small to be satisfactory, it is perhaps significant that the morale of the crews of heavy aircraft retrained steadier than that of the fighter pilots which, however, recovered more quickly.

(3) The absence of any marked defeatism in the Luftwaffe directly after the attempted Putsch of 20th July and the catastrophe in France indicates the extent to which its personnel are imbued not only with a sound fighting spirit but with esprit de corps. Though of an age which has only known a Nazi upbringing, flying personnel of the G.A.F. are not very politically minded. Loyalty to the regime which has done them personally no apparent harm, and which has often benefited them, is strong, as there is no substantial alternative.

(4) The fact that there was a virtual debacle in the air at the same time certainly had a depressing effect, but there was always the excuse of overwhelming superiority on the Allied side. Furthermore, promises were made that a great new fighter force would be formed and a new training programme was put in motion. It was believed by many that the new jet-propelled aircraft would enable the Luftwaffe to make a startling come-back with qualitative superiority. In fact the O.K.L. reacted to the new situation with vigour which gave a new hope to a depressed but eager-body of young airmen; whose mental horizon is as limited by flying as it is by propaganda and education.

(b) Period December 1st 1944 - January 1st 1945.

14. By the end of November 1944 it seems that the German Air Staff considered that the Luftwaffe had been sufficiently nursed back to health to be employed on a large scale in tactical support of the Army. At the same time, in the absence of an adequate bombing force, night-fighters were sent in considerable numbers in an attempt to cause dislocation over the Allied lines at night. The result has been the largest batch of aircrew prisoners, since the Battle of Britain.

15. The morale of the 158 P/W, assessed as before at time of capture, is analysed as follows:-

State of morale

Type of unit	N° of P/W	High	Fair	Low	Average Age
Day Fighter	80	59=74,5%	14=17%	7=9%	22.9yrs
Night Fighter	54	28=52%	19=35%	7=13%	
Others, incl. Bombers, transport and recce crews	24	14=58%	8=33.5%	2=8.5%	23.2yrs
Total	158	101=64.6%	41=26.5%	16=10%	23.0yrs

Notes on the above Table

(1) The over-all improvement in morale seems very slight against the previous three months. This steadiness is in contrast to the fluctuation noticed in 1943 during the same period, i.e. between the low point reached with the landings in Italy and the defection of BADOGLIO, and the recovery connected with the bogging-down in Italy and the beginning of reprisal raids on England. Unfortunately the method of assessment was not identical with the present one and the samples much smaller but it is interesting to note that in the period September to mid-November 1943 the percentages of high, fair and low morale were found to be 61% 31% and 5%, while in the period mid-November to January 1944 they were 83%, 17% and nil.

(2) The only marked improvement is among day fighter pilots, whose morale has jumped from 42% high in August to 74% high in December. This has been due (a) to careful husbanding of strength for a big effort. (b) the maintenance of the fighter aircraft industry in spite of Allied bombing and (c) the successful defence of the frontiers of the Reich.

(3) While these three factors also apply to the whole of the Reich defence force, the morale of one branch, the night-fighters, has noticeably declined although they are better trained and more strictly selected, and not long ago were the most steadily successful part of the Luftwaffe, they show an inferior spirit to the day-fighters. One reason for this is that they have an increasing sense of frustration, caused by jarring of signals channels and interception equipment and frequent failure owing to "spoofery" to contact bombers at all. They also show a high level of intelligence, which does not help morale. They may fly blind, but they think less blindly about the war.

(4) The majority of these P/W were captured during the RUNDSTEDT offensive and before they were plainly aware of its failure. That it could be launched at all gave, a certain fillip to morale.

(5) The fighter unit showing the most consistently good morale is J.G.4, with J.G.2 coming second.

(6) It would be wrong to consider all those with morale assessed as fair to be only fair fighting material. In a unit with a high spirit - which applies to most - they would be carried along with the majority, and would hardly be aware themselves of the chinks in their armour.

(7) Fewer P/W are found to have listened to Allied broadcast propoganda than at any time during the last 18 months. This is partly due to the fact that most are fighter pilots, as opposed to bomber crews as in the past, and live in less permanent quarters, and partly because morale itself is higher.

THE EVENTUAL UNDERMINING OF MORALE.

16. Interrogators on the Continent who see P/W in the first days after their capture have found them extremely tough almost without exception. In so far as the time taken to break down a man's security is an indication of his fighting spirit and not of improved security instruction, morale is higher than it has been for some time. It is, however, not so deeply ingrained. P/W to-day are not only slightly younger than in the past, but each time they come from a later age-group. This means they are more unformed. Fewer are intelligent and more are bone-headed, and the eventual undermining of security, and later of morale, is made easier by this fact. With them security is often merely an induced state with automatic reactions rather than intelligent attempt to continue fighting although a prisoner or war. Once it breaks they tend to talk freely. This applies chiefly to N.C.O.'s and other ranks.

17. 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 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 keeps them from showing any defeatist spirit to the men under their command.

18. It is nevertheless startling to find how different is the attitude of most P/W after a week or so of being moved from place to place and being interrogated. During this time they learn with their own eyes or from the people they meet a great many unlightening facts and some truths; they have time to reflect on the tremendous material superiority of the Allies which they see behind our lines; if they happen to pass through London, this especially brings home to them the swindle of their own propaganda.

19. The young generation in Germany has so long been denied the possibility of finding out the other man'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 learnt to take advantage. If a patient and serious attempt is made to open a P/W's eyes to the facts he has been denied, for him the GOEBBELS machine begins to operate in reverse.

20. 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 the interrogators achieve little more than a rather static "deconditioning and with the assistance of depressing circumstances. Any eventual "reconditioning" must depend on a new dynamic of ideals, and social and political loyalties, which are at present all too painfully absent.

CONCLUSION.

21. It would seem that since 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. In so far 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 aircrew on capture continue to show good fighting spirit.

22. 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 petrol, the army continues to resist, and they themselves are told to go on fighting.

A.D.I.(K)&
U.S. Air Interrogation.
8th February 1945

S.D. Felkin,
Wing Commander