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Translation of report received from Philip Bastedo, Strategic Services Unit, Berlin, 16 October 1945. Prepared for Maj. Gen. W. J. Donovan by Capt. Nordon.

Draft - *translation*

Subject: Treatment of Prisoners of War

A conference was held today in the Propaganda Ministry under the Presidency of Party Comrade Gutterer. The subject of the conference dealt with questions relating to the treatment of Prisoners of War and had for its purpose to lay down the proper propoganda directives. Prior to this meeting, Gen. von Gravenitz had had a conference with Dr. Goebbels.

Party Comrade Gutterer pointed out that at this conference only those questions would be considered as were important for propoganda purposes. Any other questions touching the Prisoner of War problems were not to be considered at this time.

Gen. von Gravenitz divided his discussion as follows:

1. The number of Prisoners of War;
2. The treatment of Prisoners of War - especially Soviet prisoners;
3. Demoralization (loosening up) in the treatment of the French.

The Fuehrer has announced that 3,800,000 Soviet Prisoners of War have been made. A check-up reveals a number of but 3,400,000.

The numbers as of 1 February 1942 are as follows: In the zone of operation 587,000 Soviet prisoners died; 364,000 Soviet prisoners are still present in the zone of operation; 280,000 Soviet prisoners have been released.

Furthermore, the OKW counts 1,900,000 Soviet Prisoners of War in the zones of interior and in other occupied areas. As of 1 February 1942, the OKW, according to their tabulation, had available

685,000 Soviet Prisoners of war, and of those
323,000 were present in the Reich.

He gave the following reasons for the high mortality: In the great "Kessel" (kettle) battles, the Soviets were contained up to 22 days without any supplies whatsoever. The German armies stormed forward, covering incredibly large distances. The German supply could bring up to the front only the most necessary ammunitions and living necessities of the fighting troops. Thus, it would have been necessary to feed the Soviet Prisoners of War from supplies of the country side. However, these supplies had been totally destroyed by the Soviets during their flight-like retreats. The early and abnormal winter did the rest. Accordingly, it is not true that the prisoners died as a result of epidemics or similar conditions, but rather perished out of exhaustion. The incident of spotted fever cases was very small; there were only 1,300 deaths in the month of February 1942.

The speaker gave the numbers of Prisoners of War forming the labor contingent.

The effective date, 1 March 1942:

Frenchmen	1,012,000	(Of those, 350,000 assigned to military tasks, 658,000 civilian labor contingent.)
Englishmen	68,000	(Of those, 49,000 labor contingent)
Belgians	76,000	(Of those, 65,000 labor contingent)
Poles	60,000	(Of those, 39,000 labor contingent)

Southeast Prisoners (Jugoslavia)	149,000	(Of those, 123,000 labor contingent)
Soviet Prisoners	392,000	

Accordingly, a total of 1,700,000 are present in the OKW realm and of those 1,400,000 represents the civilian labor contingent.

Gen. von Gravenitz made the point that the propaganda should stop referring to the great numbers of Prisoners of War in order not to create a false impression among the public. He quoted the order of the Fuehrer of September 1941 to the effect that Soviet Prisoners of War should be kept in condition to enable them to work. The slogan, "der Russe sei eine Bestie, er muesse verrecken" (the Russian is a Beast, he must croak) must, therefore, be eliminated. The treatment of Soviet Prisoners of War must, therefore, be dictated by the necessity of keeping Soviet prisoners available for the labor contingent. With regard to the treatment of French and Belgian Prisoners of War, a command of OKW has just gone out for the attention of the proper Government and Party officers.

Party Comrade Gutterer stated that at one time it was politically absolutely good and proper that the German people reacted considerably to this slogan, "the Soviet is a Beast." The consequences must now be drawn from present conditions and he suggested that Gauleiters be instructed and all speakers of the Party informed.

Gen. von G. mentioned a draft of an information sheet, against which no fundamental objections were offered. However, Party Comrade Gutterer considered it necessary that it be changed in matters of form. It is now being recast and a further vote will be taken later on. Immediately after the conference, I informed Party Comrade Passe of this matter.

Party Comrade Gutterer stated that he had no jurisdiction to take a position with respect to the wishes of the Ministry of Munitions, German Industry, the DAF and the Ministry of Economics concerning improvements in nutrition, clothing, and wage scale. The task of propaganda consists merely in making such improvements acceptable to the population.

The speaker from the Ministry of Food Supply stated that negotiations were pending respecting an increase in the food rations for the Soviets. The issue of the proposed information sheet should, therefore, be delayed until details had been worked out.

Party Comrade Gutterer pointed out, with the approval of all present, that it was necessary to commence immediately the sentimental aspects of the propaganda work and not to wait until all details had been worked out.

Gen. von Gravenitz added that Reich-Commissar for Labor Contingents, Gauleiter Saukel, wanted the removal of barbed wire enclosures for Soviet civilian workers.

The representative from the Ministry of Food Supply asked that in the proposed propaganda respecting the attitude of the German towards Prisoners of War, the reversal in policy be not carried too far. The work functionaries among the peasantry would need time to penetrate, and a simple friendly talking to does not always produce results.

Gen. von G. thereupon referred to deliveries to Prisoners of War by the Red Cross, especially the abundance of foodstuffs to prisoners from America and England. It is perfectly clear that all that is done exclusively for propaganda purposes. There also

have been many cases of German Guards buying chocolate, fats and other foodstuffs from the prisoners, with German money. Party Comrade Waechter suggested that prisoners be ordered to eat in camp and not in their place of work, all foodstuffs received through the Red Cross. Gen von G. said that he would issue an order to that effect.

The representative of the Ministry of Economics pointed out that according to latest reports, the breakdown in discipline among French Prisoners of War had greatly increased. He read excerpts from a report of the Superior President of Hessen, that whole units of French Prisoners of War had gone on strike. Respecting the religious care of Prisoners of War, it has been noticed that same produced a negative effect. In this connection, I asked Gen. von G. whether it was absolutely necessary that French Prisoners of War, most of whom are Catholic, would need clerical care. Owing to mouth-to-ear confession, it was impossible to control how clerics influenced individual prisoners. Gen. von G. stated that he would check the possibilities of remedying these conditions.

Gen. von G. finally pointed out that it was intended to punish French Prisoners of War for infractions of discipline by transferring whole units into the "General-Gouvernement." This is a very effective method of bringing them back to reason.

Apart from the information sheet relating to Prisoners of War, consideration was given to the publication of an information sheet for Soviet civilian workers.

Berlin, 27 March 1942
Ti/Kr/Ad.

THE END