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SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR: PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVAL

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Abstract. Captivity for an individual is a complex moral and psychological phenomenon which goes beyond the usual experience. The article deals with the complex phenomenon of military captivity in terms of the moral and psychological experience of Soviet prisoners of war in German detention facilities on the Eastern Front during the Second World War. The author analyses the moral and psychological impact of the Soviet state on its own soldiers, in order to prevent them from capitulating; the activities of German military intelligence and camp administration related to the impact on captured people. The article also reveals the methods of indoctrination and recruitment of the Red Army soldiers and importance of leadership among prisoners of war. Although general patterns of behavior during interrogation and detention have been identified, special attention is paid to unique perception of captivity for each individual prisoner of war. It depended on the circumstances of capture, the attitude of the German authorities, the conditions of detention and duration of captivity.

Key words: prisoners of war, Second World War, captivity, camps, Red Army, propaganda, indoctrination, collaboration.

Introduction. The genesis of the war captivity in the history of wars is not linear. The concept of «captivity» is etymologically close to the concepts of a «lack of freedom», «slavery», «dependence on someone». In the context of the military history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries military captivity has acquired clear association with such concepts as «violence» and «fear» (Shyrobokov, 2018: 149).

At the time of the Napoleonic Wars, despite of the size of armies and the number of prisoners of war, there was no international practice of establishment of special detention camps, instead, in order to exclude a prisoner of war from further participation in hostilities, he was bound in honour not to fight again (Shyrobokov, 2019: 185). It was after the conflicts of the nineteenth century when international law was set in and became a ground for modern rules for prisoners of war handling. During the First World War captivity took on the form and meaning that we have nowadays. The phenomenon of «camps for prisoners of war» appeared – they were places to keep a significant number of captured people from further participation in the struggle.

In 1914–1918 the first mentions of psychological problems, experienced by prisoners of war, also appeared. A mental disease called «Der Stacheldraht-Psychose» in Germany – barbed wire psychosis – became widespread among prisoners of war. In the opinion of researcher T. V. Minaieva, it was caused by detention of large groups of people together, uncertainty about the duration of their captivity and restriction of space by barbed wire that led to a significant number of mental disorders, hallucinations and aggressive behaviour among captured people (Minaieva, 2013: 26).

In the Russian army during the First World War the representatives of the General Administration of the General Staff tried to identify the reasons for mass abandonment of the battlefield and develop active countermeasures with this regard. Insufficient training of soldiers, active actions of the enemy and the lack of an effective propaganda system were given as causes for capitulation. It was proposed

to resist the mass escape through «[...] *destruction of those who capitulate with the fire of their own machine guns*» (Shyrobokov, 2019: 184). The so-called «civil war» within the territories of the former Russian Empire changed the conventional attitude towards captured people – executions and abuse were typical for all parties to the conflict. However, the Red Army soldiers who managed to escape from the White Guardists' captivity immediately returned to the ranks of the army without any difficulties. It was due to the limited human resources of the Bolsheviks as well as the practice of application of former prisoners' experience on the battlefield. Over time the attitude of the Soviet state towards its own prisoners of war has significantly deteriorated. In particular, it was legally formalized that the families of the Red Army soldiers who capitulated were not entitled to any material support from the state, and all officers who allowed the capture of their subordinates had to be brought to criminal liability (Criminal Code of the RSFSR, 1926).

Main part. The Second World War was cruelly done – to destroy armies and nations. On the Eastern front totalitarian states opposed each other, where terror was the standard for their own citizens, so it was not surprising that captured people from any other countries were treated terribly during their captivity.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the peculiarities of moral and psychological detention of Soviet prisoners of war in German camps during the Second World War, to study psychological reactions of prisoners of war and to project them onto the historical reality of German captivity.

Research material and methods. The purpose of research was achieved with the use of generally accepted scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, hypothesis as well as special historical methods: historical and comparative, historical and typological, historical and systemic, and elements of historical anthropology and psychohistory.

We know very little about the behaviour of Soviet prisoners of war under such conditions. During the war and over a protracted period afterwards only official assessments of all events and actions of captured people have been recognized. In Soviet times the topic of captivity was a taboo not only within the framework of historical or psychological researches, but also in memorial literature.

The Soviet scientific community did not study the moral and psychological aspects of detention of captured people in terms of the experience of the Second World War. The first special works on military psychology appeared in the USSR only in the 1950s and 1960s. The problems of post-war researches demonstrate that the Soviet authorities were not interested in research of the psychoemotional experience of captured people in order to prevent psychological trauma during subsequent conflicts. In particular, in the opinion of psychologists of these times, the main motivational factors of the Red Army soldiers were to be: love and devotion to the Motherland, hatred of enemies and comprehension of the justice of social ideals (Osiodlo, 2016: 95). There was no sign of any personal feelings of an individual concerning retrieval of his or her own life. Moreover, the Soviet propaganda disseminated the thesis that suicide was advisable as an alternative to capitulation. A good example of such psychological programming is the brochure by M.F. Brychev «*A Soldier of the Red Army does not capitulate!*», which called for: «...*fight until your last breath, die for the Motherland, but do not succumb to the enemy alive!*» (Brychev, 1941: 26).

In contrast to Soviet researchers, the Western explorers in the field of war psychology paid considerable attention to the peculiarities of an individual's mentality under conditions of forced detention. After the war there were several in-depth studies, based on the research of practical experience of detention of prisoners of war. The significant contribution to the study of the psychology of captivity, in reliance on the examples of the Second World War and the Korean War, was made by neurophysiologist J. Kornhuber (1961) and professor of sociology V. Landen (1949).

The national scientific heritage in the field of captivity psychology is represented by the works of Yu. M. Shyrobokov (2020) and V. V. Apalkov (2023), who, in addition to historical examples, use the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014–2024. Unfortunately, there is currently no compre-

hensive psychohistorical research which would reveal psychological characteristics of the detention of the Red Army soldiers in German captivity during the Second World War.

The source base of the research is the minutes of interrogations of Soviet prisoners of war by the German military intelligence (hereinafter referred to as – Abwehr) as well as minutes of interrogations of repatriates by the Soviet security, defence and law enforcement agencies. Important information about the moral and psychological state is contained in such sources of personal origin as memoirs of former captured people: P. M. Palii, V. M. Vashchenko (Palii & Vashchenko, 1987), V. A. Novobranets (2009), F. Ya. Cheron and I. A. Luhin (Cheron & Luhin, 1987). The attitude toward the sources of personal origin should be objective – in recorded testimonies for the German intelligence agencies all captured people often tried to demonstrate loyalty to their captors, and for the Soviet ones – to represent themselves as victims of circumstances. In the memorial literature the authors who survived captivity tried to represent themselves as captured by the enemy and trapped in a bind. However, subject to all of the above mentioned peculiarities, these sources allow us to stray away from a macrohistorical view of this issue and get unique evidence that allows us to humanize the history of military captivity during the Second World War.

Results and their discussion. At first glance, captivity is very similar to imprisonment or any other restriction of freedom of movement. However, a closer look reveals certain peculiarities. Military captivity is a legal, internationally recognized method of detention of captured people that occurs as a result of military actions, not according to judicial sentence. Prisoners of war are protected by the status of “combatant” and should not be prosecuted for violence, committed on the battlefield. Prisoners of war are permanently kept either within the occupied territories of their country or within the territory of the country which detain them. A typical feature of POW camps is the throngs of people that makes it impossible to hold any captured person alone. Another characteristic is an organization of a self-governing administration which is usually agreed with the camp administration rather than appointed. The most important difference of military captivity is the absolute uncertainty of its duration. Usually, for the vast majority of military personnel, captivity ends only after cessation of hostilities.

German captivity, which held, according to various estimates, from 2.8 to 5.7 million Soviet citizens (Otto & Keller & Nagel, 2008: 558), was characterized by cruel treatment of captured people, «justified» by racial theories and relevant regulatory enactments; the targeted policy of indoctrination and forced labour. The peculiarities of detention of prisoners of war in Germany were determined by the governmental policy of the Third Reich – the war for survival, declared by A. Hitler; the activities of the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Education, headed by J. Goebbels; the activities of the special unit «Vineta» (the organization was specialized in sabotage and propaganda operations within the occupied Eastern territories); the excessive demand for labour force for German enterprises since the end of 1941 and inaction of the Wehrmacht High Command regarding Soviet prisoners of war (Dolhoruchenko, 2021).

It was this kind of military captivity into which large numbers of Red Army soldiers were taken as prisoners. Researchers determine miscalculations of the military and political leadership of the USSR, the low level of training of servicemen, powerful German propaganda and the depressed morale of soldiers and commanders to be the reasons for mass capture of the latter (Pastushenko, 2021).

In order to ensure that the Red Army soldiers acted according to the algorithm «*to die, but not to capitulate*», the Soviet state took a number of measures. Firstly, before the war, Article 193 was included in the USSR Criminal Code, which declared the punishment for capitulation as «*the highest measure of social protection*», which was translated from NKVD euphemisms and meant execution with confiscation of all property. In the Soviet propaganda captivity was equivalent to high treason (Brychev, 1941: 26). This article was massively applied after the end of the Soviet-Finnish war. As a result of repatriation 5.5 thousand servicemen were returned to the SSR, 5.1 thousand soldiers of

whom were convicted according to the above mentioned article. The Soviet state escalated punishment to the greatest extent after the tragic events on the Eastern Front in the summer of 1941. Infamous order No. 270 not only provided for punishment for the officers, mentioned in it, but also authorized any Red Army soldier to «*destroy by all means*» those who wanted to capitulate («Order No. 270 of the Supreme High Command General Headquarters of the Red Army dated 16 August 1941», 1988: 26-28).

The Soviet government also openly gave the idea of captivity: «*Those who are captured will suffer, be tortured and possibly die!*». As General M.D. Borysov testified: «*The senior Russian officer corps does not believe in propaganda stories about the abuse of Russian prisoners of war by the Germans. Ordinary soldiers, who are fed with this propaganda, believe in it*» (Vernehmung des Kommandierenden Generals des VII Garde-Kav. Korp., 1943). The USSR did not take any steps to improve the situation of its citizens in any manner. According to the reports of the International Red Cross, the USSR did not even organize a commission to exchange data on how many Red Army soldiers had been captured (Report of The International Committee of the Red Cross on its activities during The Second World War, 1948: 116-118).

In the 1930s Germany's political leaders negotiated with the army command concerning the specifics of the military propaganda, both within its own armed forces and against enemy armies. In 1938 the Ministry of Public Education and Propaganda, headed by P.-J. Goebbels, agreed to cooperate with the Wehrmacht High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, hereafter referred to as – OKW) that included training of the relevant propaganda groups. In 1940 the agency began preparations for the war against the USSR – the main tasks of the information and psychological influence were defined as follows: intimidation of the enemy, increase of anxiety for the fate of the relatives, intensification of the mood of defeat of the Red Army, creation of a positive image of captivity, incitement to voluntary capitulation and desertion.

The German propaganda agencies were entrusted with the task of using all available means to influence the enemy's consciousness and will, applying lies and provocations. In particular, the "Suggestions of compiling leaflets for enemy troops" stated: «*If we succeed in gaining the enemy's trust by throwing mud on our Führer and his associates [...], and if we succeed in penetrating [...] the souls of the enemy soldiers, [...] this will be more than the most convincing sermon about the Bolshevik danger [...], which will not be perceived by the enemy soldier*» (Qualter, 1962: 113-114). Germany successfully made a psychological play before the outbreak of hostilities and later only improved its best practices.

Capture is the first stage of captivity. The peculiarity of this process on the Eastern Front was that capture was preceded by a long encirclement with frequent air raids. During active military actions, especially during offensive operations, soldiers and officers usually think little about captivity, although it is included in the triad of the greatest fears of military personnel «injury-capture-death» (Apalkov, 2023: 68). This is due to the peculiarity of the human mentality: to displace unpleasant possibilities of the future from the mind. We find evidence of this in papers of F. Ya. Cheron: «*...I never had a thought of capitulation. I think that others of my age, that is, under 25 years of age, did not have a deliberate decision to capitulate. [...] neither soldiers nor commanders knew what to do. The only order was: a Soviet soldier must fight to the last bullet and keep the last one for himself. No one ever dared to think about capture*» (Cheron & Luhyn, 1987: 29). For many military personnel, captivity was a surprise and they were not mentally prepared for it. An example of such a state of shock can be the moment of capture of Colonel V. M. Vashchenko, who suffered a plane crash and was discovered by Waffen SS units immediately after landing (Palyi & Vashchenko, 1987: 245).

Only during the long encirclement and before capitulation there were talks about captivity and decisive individuals made appropriate decisions, as at the time of shock a significant number of soldiers were in a state of stupor and apathy and preferred to leave their fate to someone else.

Unfortunately, active propaganda of suicide as the only solution in a situation of imminent captivity led to suicides among Soviet military personnel at the first stage of captivity. Confirmation of this fact can be found in the interrogation of Colonel F. H. Havrylov: «...*The entire regimental headquarters was captured. [...] The commander of the front, Kyrponos, shot himself on 19 September 1941*» (Artyzov, 2015: 216) and Major General O. Ye. Budykho: «*Major General Podlas, the commander of the 43rd or 53rd (actually 57th) Army, shot himself during his capture, along with the chief of staff*» (ib., p. 524).

The main motivation for capitulation was a direct threat to life, in a small percentage of cases, capture was caused by an inability to resist due to injury, and a significant number of captured people indicated a despair and lack of self-confidence in a hopeless situation as a reason for capture (Shyrobokov, 2016: 315). Capture in a battle, after several days of wandering around or being wounded, led to the fact that the prisoners were at the limit of their physical abilities. The very act of capitulation is a shock that often forced soldiers to become submissive in the hands of their captors. This stage of captivity is characterized by a lack of time for reflection, as the enemy was disarming the prisoners and escorting them to assembly facilities. Anyone who showed signs of hesitation or delay could be shot onsite (Lunden, 1949: 725).

Perception of captivity depended: firstly, on the soldier's expectations and attitude toward the war; secondly, on the specific situation. Here are polar examples of psychological reactions of Soviet servicemen. A former Red Army soldier, who hid himself under the pseudonym I. A. Luhin, who was captured during an unsuccessful attack in Kharkiv Region in 1942, described his feelings as follows: «*When the excitement of the first hours of captivity subsided a little, an unexpected reaction occurred – everyone was overcome with a sense of relief. It seemed as if the enormous weight that had been pressing on our shoulders for many years had finally disappeared, and we squared our shoulders for the first time in our lives*» (Cheron & Luhyn, 1987: 298). On the other hand, P. M. Paliy experienced completely different emotions: «*There is a huge difference between the feelings of a person, captured in a large mass, when hundreds or thousands of soldiers, being in a desperate situation, throw down their weapons and raise their hands, and the feelings of one person [...] In any case, transition of a soldier to the position of a prisoner is accompanied by a psychological shock, but this shock is much more tangible and painful for a loner than for «one among many*» (Palyi & Vashchenko, 1987: 68-69). The active influence of Soviet propaganda can be traced in V. M. Vashchenko's reaction: «*I only asked to be shot as soon as possible so that I would not suffer. I was afraid that I would be tortured, because when I saw the SS signs on the soldiers and officers, I decided that I would certainly be shot because of my refusal from provision of answers to military questions*» (ib: 246).

The second stage of captivity was transportation of the prisoner to the place of detention. According to V. Lunden's observations most prisoners at this stage hid their main fear of unknown things and what would happen next. They remained silent, showing no interest in anything (Lunden, 1949: 726). According to former combatants, prisoners of war were always a problem for any unit, especially during manoeuvres for further deployment of hostilities. The presence of prisoners required a large number of guards, but taking advantage of the shock and physical fatigue of the prisoners, German troops reduced the number of security teams to a minimum. At the stage of transportation, excessive cruelty towards prisoners (officially defined by the OKW directives (Anordnungen des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht für die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener, 1941a), which the escorts did not hesitate to demonstrate, created an atmosphere of fear and tension. The places of permanent detention, where prisoners of war were sent after their collection and initial segregation of the sick ones, Jews and commissars from the bulk of the prisoners, could be located at considerable distances from the line of combat, so the way to them was often called the «death march». In many cases, during transportation of prisoners, they were not provided with food and water, were not

allowed to rest for long periods of time, and those who wandered behind or broke ranks were shot. The consequences of violence at the second stage of captivity with regard to the moral and psychological aspect were loss of confidence in future, chaos of consciousness and lack of self-confidence. Creation of an environment of fear and dependence on convoys was typical of the initial stages of military captivity that was used to facilitate control over a significantly larger number of prisoners (Shyrobokov, 2018, p. 151).

The next stage of captivity was the first interrogation of a prisoner of war, during which Abwehr representatives, who were present in every POW camp, usually tried to receive operational information, military secrets and compromising materials concerning the Soviet military and political leadership or other captured people. It was at the moment of interrogation when the maximum psychological pressure was exerted and various approaches were applied: disarming friendliness, an atmosphere of relaxation, gradual transition to conversation and skillful use of available information.

For example, according to the interrogation report of General P. P. Ershakov, during the interrogation the latter «[...]has repeatedly tried to establish trust in his words, tried to make an impression of a kind and friendly person, and even managed to make himself cry, taking advantage of the influence of alcohol» (Vernehmungs-Ergebnisse, 1943). In such a case, Abwehr representatives obviously used a relaxed atmosphere as an interrogation method. The notes to the interrogation report of General M.T. Romanov state that he «[...] made a pleasant impression, behaved with dignity during dinner and looked like a well-groomed man» (Vernehmung des russischen Generals Michael Timofejewitsch Romanoff, 1941) that also hints at the relatively positive atmosphere in which the prisoner was given an opportunity to eat. Major General M. D. Borysov was another prisoner who was clearly not intimidated during the interrogation by German military intelligence. According to the interrogation report, the general «[...] made statements without any restraint, his manner of behaviour was self-confident, he spoke with particular pride about his promotion and the achievements of the units he commanded» (Vernehmung des Kommandierenden Generals des VII Garde-Kav. Korp., 1943).

Interrogations of Soviet generals contain information about how they perceived captivity. Since the Soviet government considered all prisoners to be traitors, a large majority of prisoners felt disappointed and ashamed for a desire to save their own lives. General M.T. Romanov, after encirclement of Mohyliv, was wounded and spent some time in Borsuki Village in civilian clothes. According to the orders of the German administration, all military personnel had to come to the local commandant's office. Concerning the question of a representative of the «Center» Army Group why the general had not done so, he answered: «Would you have capitulated as an officer? Generals do not capitulate» (ib.). General K. Ye. Kulikov gave a transparent answer about the attitude of the Soviet authorities towards captured officers and his own feelings about captivity: «[...] Previously, in the tsarist army, an officer could receive a reward for escaping from captivity, but now officers who return, such as two of his friends, are sentenced to 10-year imprisonment for staying within the enemy territory and this is presented as a reward! Since he was captured, there is no hope for him anymore» (Vernehmung des Generalmajors Kulikow, 1941).

In view of the interrogation records of some prisoners of war, it can be concluded that the interrogators were, among other things, interested in the morale of the Red Army soldiers. Questions of this nature are contained in almost all interrogation records of high-ranking Soviet officers. Most information about this issue can be found in the interrogation of Colonel N. T. Tikhomirov. In addition to information about depression among the military community as a result of the defeats of 1941, we can find an interesting statement: «There is an unofficial order according to which officers should not move on the frontline during the battle, but only move in marching ranks in order to preserve the officer corps. The modern commander uses this order for his own benefit, staying behind, that is noticed by every soldier, causing a decrease in morale» (Beilage Nr. 2 zu Bericht Nr. 104 – Gr. Schattenfroh,

1941b). A breach of such ties is a special feature of captivity and prolonged stay in detention facilities, that is the fourth stage – adaptation in a POW camp.

Arrival at the camp was a kind of transition from bad things to worse ones. At this stage all captured people experienced a crisis of faith, loss of reputation and prestige. The psychological effect of Bolshevik propaganda was coming to an end, and the prisoners began to realize the level of power of the German administration. Sometimes, military subordination collapsed on the battlefield, but mostly the hierarchy of commander-soldier relations disappeared in places of detention. This is due to the fact that many soldiers accused their commanders of becoming prisoners of the enemy. For example, V. A. Novobranets thought so about Commander I. M. Muzychenko: « [...] *I could not forgive him for running away before the decisive battle for the breakthrough. He fled in one of the last tanks which would have helped the soldiers to a certain extent during the attack. [...] When I met him, I had a great temptation to express my opinion with regard to him as a person and a commander*» (Novobranets, 2009: 314).

The best situation in captivity is when formal and informal leaders are the same. Unfortunately, it was extremely difficult to preserve such a division of responsibilities in German captivity. We can distinguish a number of reasons for such a situation. Firstly, one of the OKW directives stipulated mandatory separation of officers from ordinary soldiers (Anordnungen des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht für die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener, 1941a). Secondly, the apathy of commanders due to stress after capture. Thirdly, representatives of the command staff could receive better conditions in the officers' camp (Betr.: Behandlung sowjet. angeblicher Offiziere ohne Ausweis, 1943). Fourthly, the unwillingness of the senior command staff to cooperate with the camp administration.

In captivity the boundaries in the system of relations between an officer and soldier are smoothed, and many conflicts are violently resolved by prisoners. The refusal of the Red Army generals to participate in administration of prisoners' lives had its reasons. Such leadership was supposed to be a link between the prisoners' collective (expecting lenient treatment and improved conditions of captivity) and the administration (expecting its demands to be met). The situation becomes very difficult when the leadership is expected to implement harsh and inhumane measures. The refusal to implement such decisions of the German administration led to the replacement of disobedient prisoners, while complete obedience also did not yield positive results for most prisoners. Researcher P. M. Palii stated: «*If in the autumn of 1941 they [generals] had not been confused, had not hidden behind their ranks like snails in shells, but had resolutely and persistently started talking to the German camp administration, using the authority of great military leaders, recognized by the Germans as well, it is likely that the conditions of existence of captured people in many camps could have been improved. In any case it would have been possible to prevent the internal administration of these camps from falling into the hands of adventurers and scoundrels...*» (Palii & Vashchenko, 1987, p. 168). In the light of the foregoing, this consideration is only an assumption. Instead, the content of the researcher's statement confirms the thesis that under difficult conditions of survival there are often people who, for their own benefit, seek to become a leader and defend it by all means, including denunciation or transfer of opponents to dangerous work. The captors also practiced changes in the place of detention of prisoners of war to prevent generation of comradeship and to put captured people against each other.

Under difficult conditions of military captivity, when the vast majority of Red Army soldiers were prone to infantile dependence and willingness to obey authority, leadership played a crucial role in the lives of captured people. A positive example of preservation of formal and informal leadership is General D.M. Karbyshev, who supported prisoners in the camps and did not defect to the enemy's side, although he has repeatedly received such proposals. «*Karbyshev enjoyed great respect, authority and love in the camp. When he was walking through the camp, he was greeted by standing at atten-*

tion» (Novobranets, 2009, p. 362). The opposite example can be brigade commander I. H. Bessonov, who, while staying in the Hammelburg camp, where high-ranking Soviet officers were kept, organized the «Anti-Bolshevik Political Center», i.e. became an informal leader for Red Army soldiers who had anti-Soviet sentiments.

It was collaboration and indoctrination that became the focus of the German administration's actions in the POW camps. The variety of methods to influence Red Army soldiers was considerable.

Hunger is a strong life instinct which overrides moral and social values. The German administration used it as the easiest way to subdue the masses of captured people. Due to their dystrophy they were unable to show active physical resistance, and a promise to give food encouraged collaboration. Physical violence, explained by both the fact of war and hate propaganda, served as punishment and intimidation as well as made captured people want to avoid it by all means. Soviet prisoners were planned to be detained according to significantly lower standards compared to Western prisoners. The number of camps, prepared for detention of Red Army prisoners, was much smaller than the number of prisoners required. The threat to life and health due to unacceptable climatic and sanitary conditions caused an expected desire to offset the above mentioned factors. The use of Soviet prisoners of war for labour was different: involvement in agriculture, military industry or enterprises with difficult working conditions. Being engaged in work could either provide opportunities for survival or condemn them to a brutal death. Cooperation with the administration gave hope that the prisoner could be engaged in light types of work that could help him survive.

The natural reaction of mentality to any physical abuse is emotional dullness. Such a specific adaptation of the mental system is, to a certain extent, a correct reaction which allows to avoid exhaustion. However, prolonged dulling absorbed the personality of captured people: feelings in such cases were dulled as well as suffering and inflicting pain on other prisoners had no limits that led to moral degradation.

The analysis of psychological impacts demonstrated the reasonableness of psychological treatment in the forms of indoctrination and political re-education (Apalkov, 2023, p. 75). The consequence of such actions was a change from a hostile attitude towards Germany to a neutral or even favourable attitude towards their own enslavers. We distinguish the following psychological means of influence:

1. Organization of lectures among captured people with proposals of collaboration. This type of influence was successful, as the lecture material contained a lot of anti-propaganda/propaganda stock phrases. It is worth noting that resistance to such agitation was easier to implement due to the fact that the lectures were held in front of a large number of prisoners of war and group resistance was easier to be organized. Generation of a resistance system during such lectures in the Hammelburg camp was mentioned by V. A. Novobranets in his memoirs (Novobranets, 2009, p. 354).

2. The technique related to a search for weaknesses in the system of beliefs, intimation of the necessary participation in mental activity which does not contradict the moral principles of the prisoner. Such an impact began with minor demands with their gradual increase as the prisoner started to cooperate. A spectacular example of this technique application was the so-called historical office, in which Soviet military commanders were proposed to describe the campaign record of their unit.

3. Information isolation is one of the easiest methods to influence the mentality of captured people. The arrival of new prisoners to the detention facilities caused an outbreak of inquiries about the state of the front. The defector M. T. Tikhomirov stated that the news about their home, rather than agitation, had the greatest impact on the morale of the Red Army soldiers. If a soldier's home was occupied, he no longer feel a need to resist (Beilage Nr. 1 zu Bericht Nr. 104 – GH Schattenfroh, 1941). A yen for home and family as well as a lack of an opportunity to notify relatives of their fate caused intense emotional stress.

A lack of information about the Soviet victories also increased despondency and encouraged soldiers to collaborate. A lack of reliable information about the date of their release was a huge burden for prisoners of war. The terrible result of the information vacuum was an act of resistance in the Mauthausen death camp. On 2 February 1945 an escape attempt was made by 419 Soviet prisoners of war, 300 of whom were returned after the end of the search operation and only 57 of them were alive. The desperate prisoners had no information about the approaching end of the war and their relatively imminent release from the camp on 5 May 1945 (Kaltenbrunner, 2012, p. 448).

The Third Reich successfully used the totalitarian nature of the regime to monopolize propaganda in the country, and even more successfully – in places of detention of captured people. The most effective system of propaganda during the war on the Eastern Front was indoctrination through collaborator prisoners. They created pro-German organizations in the camps, showing by their own example that adhering to the enemy would save them from the danger of dying in captivity and make sense of their continued existence. A spectacular example of successful indoctrination is M. T. Tikhomirov (former commander of the 1281st Battalion), who, according to the German documents, managed to transfer 1,500 Red Army soldiers to the enemy during one raid behind the front line. Such methods were applied, firstly, because the language barrier between the propagandist and the target audience disappeared; secondly, the credibility of such an agent was much higher than that of the German security agencies, and thus, anti-Soviet agitation was more effective. The German intelligence made the following conclusion: «*This serves as proof that even senior Soviet officers can be recruited by the German people, despite the fact that they were previously members of the All-Russian Communist Party and supporters of the Stalinist regime*» (Beilage Nr. 3 zu Bericht Nr. 104. Vernehmungsergebnisse, 1941).

The ultimate goal of all methods is to force people to commit actions which are beneficial to the country of the enslaver. Academician M. M. Burdenko, a colonel general of the medical service, described his experience of meeting liberated Soviet prisoners of war in the following manner: «The enjoyment of seeing liberated people was overshadowed by the fact that there was a numbness on their faces [...] the suffering they had experienced had put a sign of equality between life and death. I had been keeping an eye on those people for three days – the psychological stupor has not changed» (Shyrobokov, 2016, p. 90).

Discussion. There can be no objective assessment of the behaviour of captured people. The psychological resilience of captured people depended on their individual characteristics, duration of their captivity and intensity of their reactions to the circumstances of captivity. The vast majority of Red Army soldiers remained loyal to their oath and survived captivity with exemplary moral fortitude – they deserve respect and thorough research, as the experience of such individuals will be useful for the soldiers, defending Ukraine nowadays. On the other hand, the fighters of the Red Army who, to various extents, helped the Nazi regime and embarked on the path of collaboration deserve to be understood. The extremely difficult moral conditions of German captivity and skillful use of psychological pressure could break the frustrated and tired Red Army soldiers. Such cases shall also be studied in order to understand the processes that can take place among captured people, kept by a totalitarian state with absolute disregard for international law.

Conclusions. Military captivity is a complex multifaceted phenomenon, one of the components of which is the moral and psychological impact on prisoners of war. Our research demonstrates that not only good physical condition was an important component for survival. The behaviour of captured people at different stages of captivity was determined by their personal beliefs and the influence of propaganda from both the Soviet Union and the Third Reich. Captured Red Army soldiers developed psychological survival strategies: apathy, adaptation or collaboration.

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