AFOSR 65-0577

AD615363

ALBERT D. BIDERMAN

CAPTIVITY LORE AND BEHAVIOR IN CAPTIVITY*

Introduction

Largely impressionistic observations from a number of documentary and interview studies of the subject of captivity suggest hypotheses concerning relationships between precapture exposure to cultural lore about captivity and behavior as a captive. The present discussion focuses, as has the writer's research, on the prisoner of war, particularly on studies of survivors of captivity in Korea and China. The writer has also drawn upon information concerning other captivity statuses, however, including civilian internees and political and concentration-camp prisoners.

Anticipations

Very few former prisoners of war report that they had seriously considered the possibility that they might be captured prior to the event and had mentally rehearsed the prospect. This was true even of those 137 Air Force prisoners in the Korean War (about 54 per cent of the 235 surviving Air Force prisoners) who had received some special training regarding the event of capture. In most of these cases, the training had been limited to "resisting enemy interrogation"

* The research reported in this paper was supported in part by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research under Contract AF 49(638)727 and by the Inter-University Seminar on Military Organization of the University of Chicago.

and "escape and evasion" (Biderman, 1956*b*). Anticipation of the event is more common among political and concentration-camp prisoners, but even more among these people, unrealistic denial of the prospect of imprisonment has been quite common, if not the rule (see Jacobson, 1949).

Air Force ex-prisoners of war who were interviewed intensively reported that, during combat in the Korean conflict, conscious anxieties about the possibility of being killed (with some mental rehearsal of fatal situations, planning to insure that one's "affairs were in order," and even banter about "buying the farm"*) were much more common than equivalents involving the prospect of being captured. Although casualty figures show that the risk of being killed or wounded in action was considerably greater than that of being captured, the latter was nonetheless a significant possibility. Even late in the war when prisoner-of-war matters, such as the extortion of "confessions" from captured airmen, were receiving intense publicity, few of the men flying combat missions behind enemy lines had conscious anxieties about their falling into a similar fate. This was true even among air crews who "flew cover" over their own comrades who were downed behind enemy lines while attempts were made to rescue them by helicopter, and of those who had close personal friends known or believed to have been taken prisoner.

In research interviews after repatriation, it was difficult to get ex-prisoners to state detailed or explicit recollections of information or beliefs they had held prior to capture about what being a prisoner of the Communist Chinese might be like. Typical responses were: "They once showed us a World War II training movie about interrogation"; "We used to joke about Siberia and the salt mines"; "A briefing officer told us that the Communists had ways of getting almost anything we knew out of us"; "I knew we were supposed to tell them nothing but our name, rank, and number."

* Euphemism for "getting killed."

REPRODUCTION QUALITY NOTICE

This document is the best quality available. The copy furnished to DTIC contained pages that may have the following quality problems:

- Pages smaller or larger than normal.
- Pages with background color or light colored printing.
- Pages with small type or poor printing; and or
- Pages with continuous tone material or color photographs.

Due to various output media available these conditions may or may not cause poor legibility in the microfiche or hardcopy output you receive.

If this block is checked, the copy furnished to DTIC contained pages with color printing, that when reproduced in Black and White, may change detail of the original copy.

Extensive attention to prisoner-of-war matters in the press and in armed-forces indoctrination presumably has made for far greater consciousness, and perhaps anxiety, about capture among combat personnel today than existed at any time during the Korean conflict.

Unpreparedness

The most frequent type of complaint of American prisoners captured during the Korean conflict was: "We were not told what to expect." The most frequent type of recommendation that repatriates made when asked what lessons the armed forces should learn from their experiences was that soldiers should be given some knowledge of what life in captivity might be like.

Postwar discussions by social scientists and military experts also cite the element of unpreparedness as a major explanation for the allegedly poor manner in which most American POW's coped with the problems of captivity (see U.S. Department of Defense, 1955; U.S. Senate, 1956). But some of these expert judgments point to the lack of preparedness of the Americans for harsh treatment; others to their lack of preparedness for good treatment, or for treatment that was at least only subtly bad.

In a way, there was also a contradictory element in the testimony of the typical repatriated prisoner. On the one hand, he would say that he had never seriously thought about what being captured by the Communists would be like, nor had he seriously entertained the thought that he might be captured, and further, that he had read or heard very little about the matter. On the other hand, he would constantly report his surprise at what he did indeed encounter. That he was continually encountering experiences that differed from his expectations indicated that he must have had expectations from which experience differed.

Bad Treatment, Expected and Experienced

In anonymous responses to a questionnaire mailed to Air Force repatriates after their return, more than two-thirds of the repatriates indicated on a multiple-choice scale that their treatment had differed markedly from what they had expected before they were captured, although one-third indicated that it had not been *as bad* as they had expected and an almost identical number checked that it had been *worse or much worse*. Only one out of five indicated that what they encountered was neither better nor worse than they had expected. (Another 10 per cent refused to check a general answer and wrote that it had sometimes or in some respects been better and at other times or in other respects been much worse.)

When asked to rate their treatment separately with respect to food, medical care, sanitation, shelter, and "humaneness and consideration" on a five-point scale ranging from usually good to usually bad, in none of these respects did so much as 1 per cent of the survivors check the rating "usually good," and for none of these items did as many as 4 per cent of the repatriates check ratings on the "good" side of the scale. By objective indicators as well, these men had been treated quite badly. This they had expected. But for some, their pre-existing image of "bad treatment" was somehow worse than the reality they had encountered; for others the reality had been worse than their imaginings.

This would be the case if the questionnaire items and responses could be taken as showing genuine contrasts of prior expectations and experiences. That the questionnaire items tapped something other than how bad their treatment had actually been is indicated by the very different distribution of the direct evaluations of their treatment in terms of goodness and badness, and by the low correlation between the responses contrasting experience with expectation and other indexes of treatment received, such as date of capture and involvement in "confession"-extortion efforts. It is quite clear, however, that a number of different kinds of thought proc-

esses were responsible for the different kinds of responses.

One factor at work among those who said that their treatment was better than they had expected (even though they said they were treated very badly) was their surprise at being shown any consideration at all by the enemy. Under the conditions that prevailed in North Korea during the conflict, even the simple preservation of the lives of an appreciable number of captives could be accomplished by the captor only by quite considerable and obvious effort (Biderman, 1963). It is well to remember in this context that the interviews were confined to a very biased sample of the prisoner population – namely, the 50 per cent (approximately) that survived.

A related consideration which apparently entered ex-prisoners' contrasts of their expectations and experiences was a precapture image of a nakedly malevolent captor – images of torture and sadistic atrocities that did not fit anything in the personal experience of the majority (but far from all) of the survivors.* Only rarely, moreover, was contact with the captor characterized exclusively by unalloyed oppression.

Some of those who checked answers indicating that they had expected the worst and found the reality even worse than expected may have been merely using this means of emphasizing their indignation at how badly they had been treated. Others may have been venting self-vindication – they emphasized how badly they had been treated to cancel out qualms about how badly they had behaved. A remark of one of the men who checked this alternative suggests that another consideration may have been influencing these replies. After checking the response, "[My treatment by the Communists] was much worse than I expected," this repatriate scrawled in explanation: "I expected to be killed!"

This ex-prisoner's comment may be merely a dramatic variant of an almost universal type of remark in memoirs of per-

* This was not true of the nonsurvivors, however. The Army estimates that over 5000 American soldiers were killed in atrocities (U.S. Department of the Army, 1953).

sons who have survived extremely oppressive captivity. There is scarcely a preface to a book relating such experiences that does not make a comment similar to: "No one who has not actually lived through it can appreciate what it was like."

Affliction and Endurance

Both classes of responses that have been mentioned reflect the surprise experienced by people who have encountered extreme hardship at discovering what men can endure. One of the types of responses emphasizes the failure of imaginings to encompass the magnitude of how terrible things can get – a new realization of what degrees of wretchedness, starvation, degradation, exhaustion, and torment are possible. The other type of response, at least sometimes, emphasizes surprise at the human capacity to endure these things – "I never believed I could live through such hardships."

Unfortunately, the analyses of Korean conflict data do not permit going much beyond this to say anything about the personalities or differences in the experiences of those survivors whose reflections after the event have the former or latter emphasis, or indeed, whether these are the kind of mutually exclusive sets that would usefully discriminate among survivors.

Popular Culture Themes

The same two themes run through a great deal of popular culture about extreme situations. It seems to be difficult for any member of the public to escape some exposure to both of them. On the whole, it appears that popular culture communicates more and better about the kinds and degrees of suffering that are inflicted on men than about the ability of the ordinary human being to remain more-or-less intact through the suffering. The reason for this is that the usual story about incredible captivity hardships that is conveyed in popular culture serves one of two purposes: either to portray the extraordinary evil and hatefulness of some enemy, as

in wartime atrocity propaganda, or to portray the heroism of some individual or group. The former tends to dwell on the terrible effects on victims, as well as the terrible causes. The latter is implicitly premised on the extraordinariness of the capability or endurance of the glorified hero.

As a consequence, the ordinary American who has experienced oppressive captivity seems to have entered the situation with a general underestimation of his ability to "take it." (Again, the caveat is necessary that among those who greatly overestimate their abilities may be those who do not survive to be interviewed or to write memoirs. There is, however, the somewhat inconsistent proposition that underestimation of one's capacity to endure hardship may be, by itself, a fatally demoralizing expectation and that confidence in one's ability to endure is a prerequisite of survival.)

Modern-day "Softness"

The modern-day Westerner has also been bombarded by another type of minimization of his ability to endure adverse circumstances. The Korean prisoner-of-war case provided a springboard for a considerable amount of propaganda of this type. This is the view that the luxuries of modern, affluent, mechanized society are making men soft, both physically and mentally, and are leaving them progressively less adapted to enduring hardship. Popular writing on the Korean conflict POW's purported to describe how readily American prisoners succumbed to minor hardship (e.g., Kinkead, 1957). That a considerable proportion of Americans seem to suffer from some guilt about their "softness" may explain the great appeal and credibility of the many patently distorted writings in this vein that circulated after the conflict (see Biderman, 1963). If by some miracle of communication they could experience vicariously the day-by-day details of what each of these captives had lived through, readers who were very receptive to this theme of weakness would be amazed that so many of the prisoners survived at all.

It is, of course, foolish to deny the significance easy living has for both physical and mental inadequacies in coping with severe demands. There is excellent and growing scientific evidence on the importance of acclimatization; on the role of training in increasing the capabilities of the involuntary as well as the voluntary systems of the organism for meeting sudden demands, and so forth. It does not appear that our loss of physical capacity to cope with adversity, however, has proceeded nearly as rapidly as the dwindling of everyday familiarity with adversity. One reason for this is that, in recent years, there has been largely lost from our *visible* midst the terribly poor who heretofore served as models of the wretchedness and oppression that could be borne by man.

Underestimation of Human Tolerance

In a somewhat related vein are observations made in a review of historical literature on extreme situations conducted for the Defense Department (Biderman, Louria, and Bacchus, 1963). If the historical literature can be accepted as accurate, many currently accepted estimates of the limits of human tolerance for deprivation and environmental extremes are inaccurately conservative. The heat, crowding, water privation, and lack of ventilation and sanitation below decks in slave ships of the Middle Passage or in the British convict transportations to Australia were fantastically more extreme than the levels assumed, for example, in setting minimum standards for fallout shelter occupancy.

At the same time, we tend to underestimate the fact that what to us is routine may have been taxing or frightening for a person of former times. We have in our language the phrase "within inches of death," but we daily hurtle in automobiles separated only from others hurtling in the opposite direction by a few inches of yellow line on the pavement. Whether our risk in probability terms is greater or less than that of the pioneer facing the prospect of Indian raids on his wagon train is objectively unimportant. Consider the Manhattan

office worker who packs himself twice each day, including those of the torrid month of August, into a subway car with some 260 other souls (allowing a space of perhaps less than 2 square feet per person*) for a 45-minute ride to Bensonhurst or Jackson Heights. I am not at all sure that he is not undergoing inuring and training as potentially valuable for many situations of harsh captivity as is the daily experience of the plowhand. The human engineer presumably would be hard put to explain how the rush-hour subway riders manage this trip without casualties and while reading their evening newspapers. Such illustrations can be compounded by the imaginative.

Captivity Lore

To return from the subway, let us consider more generally common lore about captivity that presumably shapes conceptions that a person carries with him into a captivity situation – conceptions of what is in store for him and how he should behave. Similar cultural elements also influence the definitions of captor personnel and thus enter into the interactions of captive and captor that fashion the role of the prisoner in the situation.†

Evolutionary Perspectives

It was not long ago that writers on the history of the prisoner of war could view the past as a record of progressive evolution of more enlightened and humane concepts of the status of the war prisoner. The scholar's view of prisoner-of-war problems, as reflected in encyclopedias until World War II, were of this kind until they were disturbed by the events of the Second World War. Spaight (1918) and Trimble (1937) are representative.

The humaneness of prisoner treatment is the central organ-

* The legal limit of loading provides about 2 square feet per person.

† A more extensive version of the following exposition of culture concerning the captive is given in Biderman (1961).

izing concept of Trimble's discussion. He traces a development from Roman times in which the prevalent practice changed successively from extermination to enslavement to ransom to exchange and parole. The final development of what three decades ago he could call the "modern view" is attributed to the influence of Montesquieu and Rousseau.

These views became increasingly incorporated and elaborated in legal theory and in agreements between nations, beginning in 1785 with a treaty between the United States and Prussia. A series of international conventions embodied developing versions of these doctrines. These were formulated by conferences at Brussels in 1874, The Hague in 1899 and 1907, Copenhagen in 1917, and Geneva in 1929 and 1949. The major principles of these agreements were as follows:

1. The prisoner was defined as in the power of the government that held him, rather than of the individuals who were his immediate captor;
2. The captor government was responsible for the safety, humane treatment, food, quarters, clothing, etc., with the standards of well-being of the captor nation's own troops being the measure of adequacy of provisions;
3. The prisoners were to be insulated from participation in the war, by guarantees against their exploitation by the captor for war-related functions, and by the detention of prisoners or their parole under obligation not to reassume arms. The prisoners also were assigned certain duties to the captor, including providing true identification of themselves and their rank (age being added by the 1949 Convention) and to abide by laws and rules for their detention established by the captor power.

Some ambiguity remained in the area of the assumed patriotic duty and motivation of the captive. Two major areas of continuing conflict were recognized. The first was the prisoner's obligation to escape and rejoin his own forces if he could. This right was recognized, and the punishment for recaptured escapees was restricted by these agreements. The

agreements also recognized that a similar game would be played in the area of interrogating prisoners for military information. It was regarded as unrealistic to attempt to prohibit the captor from questioning prisoners for intelligence purposes, but all forms of "mental and physical" duress to elicit intelligence information were forbidden (see Prugh, 1956).

In recounting the history of actual prisoner practices, the articles and books during the century which saw the development and acceptance of these legal doctrines were largely records of the deviation of practice from these theories. Public attitudes toward the enemy of the moment in almost all wars were not as benign as they were to the symbols of humanity that were considered in formulating these international doctrines. The urgencies, disorganization, shortages, and emotions of warfare made deviations the rule, rather than the exception, even when governments felt that both morality and self-interest urged abiding by the legal doctrines.

Sociological Types of War and Prisoner Treatment

Two types of factors account for the extent and nature of the deviations from humanitarian practice that characterized prisoner treatment in recent warfare. One of these is, essentially, the fortunes of war; the relatively unpredictable outcomes of the applications of strategies and resources in conflict that determined how many prisoners were taken by a particular power at a particular time and place. In most of the extreme situations that have occurred, the severities of climate, the lack of logistical preparation and resources, and the disorganization of supplies by highly mobile or destructive combat conditions have had a greater role than the malevolence of the capturing troops or government. More benevolent intents on the part of the captor might have tremendously ameliorated but would not have entirely precluded conditions such as occurred during the U.S. Civil War, or during World War II in southeast Asia or at Stalingrad.

This matter of intent is a vital factor, however. A possibly broader way of considering it is in terms of how the captor defines the prisoners he captures and the determinants of his conceptions of what activities toward his prisoners are appropriate. Although peculiar features of the national culture of the capturing country account for some of these conceptions, many of them follow from the particular sociological type of war that is taking place. Speier (1941) has presented a typology of social types of war in which he suggests that major varying features of warfare can be distinguished according to the social definition of the enemy:

> The three pure types of war may be called absolute war, instrumental war, and agonistic fighting. . . . Absolute war may be characterized, negatively, by the absence of any restrictions and regulations imposed upon violence, treachery, and frightfulness. . . . The opponent is an existential enemy. Absolute war is waged in order to annihilate him. . . . The absolute enemy is not a subject of predatory interests but rather a symbol of strangeness, evil, and danger to the community as a whole.
>
> Instrumental war is waged in order to gain access to values which the enemy controls. Thus it is defeat of the enemy – not necessarily his annihilation – which is desired in instrumental war. . . . Violence in war is restricted for expedient reasons because the defeated and captured enemy himself becomes an immediate source of gain.
>
> The extreme opposite of absolute war is the fight waged under conditions of studied equality and under strict observance of rules. Measured in terms of destruction such a fight is highly inefficient and ludicrously ceremonious. However, the agonistic fight, as we know it from ancient Greece and also from other cultures, is not oriented toward the destruction of the enemy, although his death may, of course, ensue. Nor is it directed toward the acquisition of wealth or other useful ends. It is fought for a prize, *i.e.*, for a symbolic value attached to victory (glory). Victory . . . is a fateful, symbolic revelation of justice, provided that the sacred rules according to which justice has to be sought were meticulously respected. The regulations in agonistic fighting are not rooted in expediency as are the restrictions possibly imposed upon instrumental war. Rather they are the quality of norms.

Rarely has a war accorded with any degree of completeness

to one or another of the ideal types of Speier's typology. How close the nature of the social conflict and the objectives were to Speier's models, however, has been an important determinant of the conception of the enemy and the general orientation to prisoner treatment during that war.

Total War and the Prisoner

Contemporaneous with the growth of international law concerning prisoners was the accentuation of nonrational elements in international conflict. Both nationalistic and political ideologies became more dominant as issues relative to "instrumental" and "agonistic" components. With the present century, wars became more "absolute" or "total" with sharpened "out-group" images of the opponent.

These definitions reached singular intensity during World War II, particularly in the German-Soviet and American-Japanese conflict.

The emergent form of war was "total" in an additional sense – there was a pervasive rationalization of potential means in the service of nonrational nationalistic and political ideologies. The entire physical and social environment of both one's own and the enemy's society in rationalized total war becomes open to attempted manipulation or elimination in accordance with the doctrinaire objectives of the ideology.

Restrictions of a sacred, sentimental, legal, or traditional nature which previously immunized persons, institutions, or physical objects from the war, or made particular practices unthinkable, lost much of their force. These developments were epitomized by the totalitarian state.

The absolute concept of warfare also provided the basic operating and organizational principle of these societies even in time of peace – for both Nazi and Soviet doctrine embraced the concept of the nation as at permanent war against hostile elements at home and encircling, hostile powers abroad. A product of this last element of totalitarian doctrine was the concentration camp – in conception, much like

the extension of the prisoner-of-war concept to the permanent, civil, absolute war (cf. Abel, 1951; Adler, 1958).

The distinctive features of recent prisoner-of-war history have reflected both forms of "totalism" that have been discussed; the nonrational and the rationalistic. On the one hand, there has been the accentuation of the image of the foe in total conflict as an individual of another antagonistic world; a nonperson meriting extermination, retribution, or, at best, reformation. On the other hand, there has been the rationalistic view of prisoners as an exploitable resource toward the total objective and the consequent attempt at rational exploitation of prisoners toward all conceivable war objectives: economic, political, and military (cf. Cohen, 1953, Kogon, 1950).

Though epitomized by totalitarian, particularly Communist, practice, observers see the same influences as affecting prisoner doctrine of the democratic nations. The notion of progress that formerly organized historical accounts of captivity has been largely replaced in the post-World War II world by one that implicitly or explicitly chronicles an "Advance toward Barbarism" (Veale, 1953).

Atrocity Concepts

Few captives possess much detailed knowledge of the elaborate doctrine that has been discussed. Newly captured prisoners are not completely devoid of concepts regarding captivity in general, or their particular captivity status, however. As mentioned earlier, song and story in all cultures, if not the more formal media of information and entertainment, expose even the most unsophisticated persons to some of the lore concerning captives. The basic images developed by these general cultural productions is that of the suffering and heroism of the captive at the hands of an oppressive, inhumane enemy.

In the post-World War I period, there was a reaction against war propaganda in general and against atrocity

propaganda in particular. A propaganda consciousness arose permeating most strata of Western countries that inclined people to discount tales of atrocities (Kris and Leites, 1949). Consequently, the organized barbarity on an unprecedented scale that characterized the Nazi concentration camps only slowly registered on public consciousness. Indeed, a realization of public distrust of atrocity propaganda led the Allied nations in World War II to adopt a deliberate policy of underplaying Nazi atrocities in order to insure credibility for their output. Allied propagandists recognized that:

> Because people now expect war to be horrible, it is not so easy to shock their sensibilities. An incident must be more intense than ever to qualify as an effective "atrocity." On the other hand, in the face of widespread consciousness and of resistance to propaganda in particular, the task of establishing belief is much harder. Many of the requirements of credibility, furthermore, conflict with those of intensity, creating an added dilemma (Jacob, 1942).

As a consequence, only in the postwar world did the events of the Nazi era penetrate public consciousness and then only dimly.

Nonetheless, the Nazi concentration camps have left a lasting association of captivity with unspeakable horrors that has shaped the cultural concepts of captivity of the present day. In wartime Germany, there was also an overlapping of the prisoner-of-war and the concentration-camp systems, which particularly affected the fates of French, Russian, and Polish prisoners of war.

For Western peoples in the postwar world, Communism became defined as an even more inhumane and dangerous foe than Nazism had been. Although there were distinctive aspects to anti-Communist atrocity reports and to reactions among Westerners to Communism as an enemy, there was a generalized identification of the horrors which totalitarian regimes inflicted on captives.

Although these developments of public attitudes involved a hardening of public response to reports of atrocities against others, the effect on those who became captives was different.

Expectations involved to a greater extent the fear of being subjected to unspeakable horrors – the terrorization toward which at least some atrocities have been directed (Biderman, 1956 *a*, *b*). The repression that characterized typical responses to news of atrocities has been further suspected of intensifying the anxiety element in these anticipations. At the same time, the characteristic skepticism of atrocity propaganda left the new captive with some element of hope that his fears were the result of his having been tricked by his own propagandists into thinking the worst of an enemy who was actually much more benign than he had been portrayed. Horror was expected as characteristic of the enemy whom the prisoner had been fighting and hating, but there was also the unsettling hope that the enemy would prove to be humane. The prisoner's hopes for his future thus involved a denial of his immediate past.

The Heroic Concept

In mass media and folklore, second only in prominence to depictions of the barbarity of captors toward prisoners, is the theme of the heroism of the prisoner. With surprising frequency, the ordinary man feels under some obligation to play the hero's part in extreme captivity situations, but much rarer are opportunities for playing the heroic role with any degree of visible success. This is true, at least, in the retrospective examinations of the event by survivors. Controls imposed by the captor, and the limited control the prisoners can exert over their environments, restrict greatly the scope of possible actions according to heroic models. In addition, the demands of the situation frequently require almost total concentration of energy on meeting one's own bodily requirements for survival.

Nevertheless, former prisoners writing on their own behavior and the behavior of others feel that vindication is necessary where their behavior was other than a model of heroism. Writings by nonparticipants also implicitly involve nor-

mative expectations that persons in extreme situations will accept far greater risks and greater altruistic subordination of the self than in ordinary life situations. This is particularly true with respect to attitudes toward military prisoners.

The Escape Tradition

The most highly developed aspect of the heroic model of captivity behavior is the escape story. Escape is reported to be the most precious of captive dreams. In recent wars, including the Korean, it has been the primary objective for which prisoners of war organized secretly among themselves. Although the escape tradition is possibly not as highly developed in the United States as in England, where it rivals detective and spy stories as a category of popular literature, it is nonetheless a prominent theme in American heroic lore.

In many British escapees' tales from World Wars I and II, captivity is treated as a setting for the game of escape. It is written about as a sport. There have been captor personnel who have approached the prisoner-of-war situation with a somewhat similar sporting conception. Their role in the game was conceived as something like that of a goalkeeper – a much duller position than that of the escapee's but still an exciting one to be played according to the rules and with mutual respect among the antagonists (see Reid, 1952, 1953).

These attitudes are characteristic of agonistic conceptions of war that were discussed earlier. There have been extensions of the idea of the "escapees' club" to more total conflicts, however, where captors had less sporting notions of their role and that of the prisoner. In part, this stems from there having been considerable continuity through successive wars in the escape tradition, especially among professional military personnel, with successful escapees from one war being prisoners in the next and passing along much of the lore to their younger fellows.

The escape tradition, and the many stories of successful World War II escapes, provided the setting for some people

to regard the record of American prisoners of war in Korea as shameful in that it was reported that none had escaped "from an organized POW camp."

Military forces foster escape activities among their members who become prisoners of an enemy for reasons beyond the obvious significance of the number of men who may effect a safe return to their own lines. Even when unsuccessful, it is frequently pointed out, escape attempts function to divert the attention and resources of the enemy from other war pursuits. More fundamentally, escape activity is regarded as the keystone upon which organization, discipline, and morale of prisoners have frequently been built (see Hall, 1954; U.S. Department of Defense, 1955). This has been the case even in situations where escape was possible at best for only a tiny fraction of the men confined.

This view of escape activities is similar in some respects to the concept of the "heroic myth" of Sorel (1950), which he analyzed with particular reference to the role he advocated for the general strike in a socialist revolution. While regarding the general strike itself as unrealizable, he saw in it a heroic objective with capabilities of evoking fervent shared images and an intense solidarity. He also saw it as constituting a basis for discipline and training that was directly tied to the immediate problems, grievances, and natural groupings among the classes that would compose the ranks of a revolution.

Escape has functioned as the "heroic myth" among many groups of prisoners.

Resistance to Interrogation

A second well-developed theme in the tradition of the heroic prisoner is resistance to the captor's efforts to wrest information from the captive. To the extent that armed forces have given recognition to a need for preparing troops for the event of capture, it has been in the area of indoctrinating personnel to divulge no information to an enemy beyond the

minimum demanded by international law – name, rank, serial number, and date of birth. This was the only aspect of captivity regarding which any significant number of Americans captured during the Korean conflict had any official instruction.

Other Heroic Models

Beyond escape and resistance to interrogation, there appears to be little specific content in popular images of the heroic role appropriate to the prisoner.

Another fairly frequent theme in writings by survivors of the more extreme situation, however, is the heroic portrayal of the feat of survival itself, and survival with the maintenance of the integrity of one's personality.

Comment has already been made on the more recent conception of the obligation of the prisoner "to resist by every means available" – the extension of the battle to the prisoner camp. Various accounts have glorified acts of harassment and sabotage against captors, and vigilante activity against fellow prisoners who deviate from the patriotic, political, or social code of the dominant prisoner group. In Korea, anti-captor acts extended from petty, schoolboy-like anti-authoritarian acts, such as taunting guards or chalking patriotic slogans, to the murder of captor personnel (Biderman, 1963).

Moral Lore of Remote Events

Two aspects may be noted of the culture products discussed here that predefine captivity situations for those who come to experience them directly. First, they do not involve the kind of communication that takes place among common participants in some immediate situation, but rather communication that allows the assimilation of meanings of the events by people remote from them – i.e., "back-home" meanings. Second, and as a result of this function, this culture constitutes more a moral lore than one of situational adaptation and practicality (cf. Schein, 1959, 1960).

From a functional standpoint, such lore has qualities noted by students of myth, propaganda, and "human interest" news. It serves such functions as testing and elaborating the moral values of a society, defining the group by symbolic incorporations and ostracisms, reaffirmations of solidarity, and so forth (cf. Merz, 1942; Hughes, 1939). Only vaguely and remotely does it reflect those adaptational demands that are experienced most acutely in the immediate situation by captives.

In the immediate situation, pre-existing expectations and role definitions are usually experienced by participants as having a highly unreal quality. Though they are rapidly modified by experience, however, these early conceptions continue to influence definitions of the situation by the captive.

Distinctions between Moral Lore and Operative Prison Culture

The disjunction between the moral lore about captivity and the operative culture of the prison camp accounts for some of the difficulty that was discussed at the outset of this paper – the difficulty that ex-prisoners have in relating their experiences in interviews and in answering meaningfully questions that ask them to contrast their precapture expectations and their actual experiences. One illustration is the problem some former prisoners have in expressing in the back-home context the rather complicated tacit fictions that captor and captive came to share in their everyday relations. More frequently than not, interactions between captor and captive maintain some overt pretense that captor and captive are not in conflict in the matter at hand at any given moment, with both parties conscious of the pretense and both aware that the other party recognizes it as a pretense. A number of sociological reasons make such an "etiquette" the rule in situations such as this, in addition to factors, specific to prisoner-of-war situations, that make it to the interest of both parties to adhere to these fictions.

Some cloaking of the area of conflict is characteristic of the kind of situation which has sometimes been called "antagonistic cooperation." In antagonistic cooperation, conflict is the dominant aspect of the relationship, but some degree of mutual dependence is also present. Illustrations are the relationships which frequently hold between buyer and seller, militant union and management, executioner and victim, and so forth. The elements of conflict in the situation are particularly likely to be submerged or cloaked when the outcome is largely or completely predetermined with respect to the major values in conflict.

The typical prisoner's definition of most of the immediate situations he encountered during his captivity was more of this nature than it was in accord with the image one would be likely to have of parties at war with one another. It is also decidedly different from the picture which has frequently been painted of POW behavior in Korea as "collaboration."

Some degree of antagonistic cooperation was present in the behavior of all Air Force POW's, including those who did most to thwart and harass the Chinese, as well as those who went furthest in doing their captor's bidding. To take an illustration from the autobiography of a soldier captured in Korea:

> ...[By the second day of the march] we were carrying the Chinks' food and their ammo. A lot of the guys were even carrying their guards' weapons.... I had nicknamed my guard Slim and I was carrying all of his equipment (Pate and Cutler, 1956).

The quotation is from the memoirs of one of the most celebrated Army "reactionaries." Although part of the accommodation of the prisoners and these guards included the prisoners' helping the guards carry their equipment, according to this soldier, it did not exclude their killing each other when the circumstances were favorable. This former prisoner claims to have pushed "two or three" of his guards to their deaths over cliffs during this march and claims that one of this party thus dispatched "about 20 of them" (Pate and Cutler, 1956).

The relationships of prisoners to their guards and others among their custodians raise some interesting problems both practical and moral. Only the most fanatical or pompous guards can continue strict adherence to the rules of nonfraternization and vigilance to which they are supposed to adhere in their relationships with prisoners. Over a time, a degree of unarticulated understanding tends to arise between the prisoners and their custodians. The latter relax some of the more irksome security restraints, are sociable, and render small favors. In exchange, the prisoners accept the tacit duty of not taking undue advantage of the lowered guard of the former and of protecting them against the detection of the security breach by superiors.*

Prisoners can and do cultivate this tendency on the part of guards and others with the hope of exploiting it for some major objective (e.g., escape) in the future as well as for the moderate ameliorations of the immediate situation it provides.

These almost inevitable working agreements between prisoners and their custodians may give rise to several kinds of problems. One of these is that the implicit moral accommodations may develop so fully that the POW's may come to regard all the possible ways of fulfilling various obligations to their country as involving a "breach of faith" or a "dirty trick," considering their relationship with their captors. Escape, sabotage, and other circumventions of the captor's controls may come to conflict with the relationship built up between POW's and guards.

Another eventuality that sometimes arises is that an individual prisoner or POW group may take advantage of the trusting attitude of the guards prematurely or for a relatively insignificant objective, thus precluding more important exploitation at some time in the future. Thus a relaxed and moderated attitude toward the POW's may be replaced with

* Parallels with the literature on social relationships in American civil prisons are apparent here (cf. Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Korn and McCorkle, 1959).

one of hostility and vigilance to the detriment of the prisoners' welfare.

Considered from a purely moral aspect, the violation of "working understandings" deliberately developed by prisoners with individual guards may involve wrongs which the POW's will regret. An example of such a violation resulting from thoughtlessness is given by General Dean's (1954) account of seizing a submachine gun from a sleeping guard in an unsuccessful attempt to murder one of his hated interrogators and then to commit suicide. The trusting guard from whom he had seized the weapon had previously taken risks to ease General Dean through one of the most difficult periods of his captivity. As Dean concludes the story: "I can only presume that he, my friend, was shot for being asleep" (p. 161).

Requirements of a Viable Role

The normal human being may be incapable of undiluted, overtly hostile interpersonal interaction over long periods of time without seriously destructive emotional consequences and associated physical consequences, particularly if this hostility is on the part of the underdog in the situation. A possible reason for this is the automatic mobilization of the body that is attendant to hostile interpersonal activity. One would assume that these responses are particularly intense when anxiety and frustration are associated with acting in accordance with the hostile attitude. Even in relatively "low-key" interactions, exhaustion might occur if such behavior were to be sustained over a long period. The "extreme apathy" which was frequently characteristic of POW behavior in Korea (Strassman, Thaler and Schein, 1956; Segal, 1954), as well as in the period of adjustment of inmates of Nazi concentration camps (see Cohen, 1953) in some cases may have involved defense against sustained overmobilization. Another type of defense is the restriction of the areas and conspicuousness of conflict through a *modus vivendi* based upon an

"etiquette" of antagonistic cooperation (cf. Cantine, 1950; Goffman, 1957; Biderman, 1960).

There is a simpler factor precluding behavior by POW's toward their captor in a manner completely consistent with our stereotyped image of people at war with one another. The "socialization process" has ingrained ways of reacting to various common types of acts of others. With a view to the larger context of the situation, the individual is capable of departing from his usual mode of response toward a given type of act and of improvising a more appropriate response; e.g., knocking a proffered cigarette from the hand of an interrogator, rather than nodding "No," or saying "No thanks." Such innovations require considerable effort, not only the mental effort required to continue inventing and improvising modes of response, but also the effort of doing this while at the same time repressing more automatic, overlearned responses.

Constant improvisation of each successive act is, of course, not the manner in which human behavior in any social situation can best be described. The idea of the individual's adopting and playing a more-or-less coherent pattern of roles — that differ from situation to situation but have considerable consistency within each situation — describes behavior far more accurately.

Unlike the situation encountered in the prisoner-of-war camp, there is a highly developed lore in the underworld regarding prisons and prisoners, with which many if not most offenders who enter prisons have had contact. Furthermore, there is a great continuity that extends back at least two centuries in the culture of the penitentiary and the underworld culture of which it is a part. For want of a coherent concept for structuring the unfamiliar situation, the better known model of the penitentiary is applied to the prisoner-of-war situation by both captives and captors. Traditional prison slang has frequently come to be used by prisoners of war, even among such unlikely groups as the highly gentlemanly Union officers imprisoned during the Civil War at Belle Is-

land in Richmond who, for example, referred to new prisoners as "fresh fish" (di Cesnola, 1865).

The lack of cultural continuity among war prisoners, and the limited acquaintance new prisoners have with the elaborate culture that does exist concerning the war prisoner, are sources of basic problems in their existence: the demands for behaving in an incompletely defined situation. In most situations of ordinary life, familiar, well-rehearsed roles exist for the individual which guide him to appropriate and effective conduct in the situation. Much of the strain that individuals experience in captivity derives from the lack of such patterns and from the labor, anxieties, and errors involved in improvisations to meet this lack.

These demands on the prisoner are aggravated by the fact that captor personnel who are the im[illegible]e authorities in the situation are handicapped similarly [illegible] too frequently possess no experience and no adequate [illegible]ural models for guiding their behavior vis-à-vis the captives (Biderman, 1961).

These problems are likely to be less severe in a prisoner-of-war system like that of the Soviet Union in World War II which was characterized by greater continuity both with the past and with other institutions of incarceration of the country. Except where great masses of prisoners were taken and had little contact with older groups, there was in Russia a developed, pre-existing culture and social system into which war and political prisoners were integrated and could integrate themselves (see Kropotkin, 1887; Ciliga, 1940; Gollwitzer, 1953).

Commitment to the Immediate Situation and Continuity of Role

Adaptation to a stressful captivity situation is usually dependent upon a high degree of commitment to the immediate situation. This involves sharp breaks with previous definitions, identifications, and motivations.

The need for change varies somewhat with the extent to which there is a role available for the individual within the camp society that has some continuity with precapture roles. This has contributed to an overemphasis of the functionality for prison-camp adjustment of self-maintenance as opposed to change. Certain survivors record in books and articles their descriptions of and prescriptions for captivity behavior. Among these individuals are likely to be those for whom unusually great opportunities existed for playing roles in imprisonment that had high congruity with their precapture roles, e.g., physicians, clergymen, politicians, and, to an extent, those who, like Bettelheim (1960), could view their experience at least partly as instructive participant observation.

Prescriptive Comments

A general synthesis of the recommendations that are given by survivors for "ideal adjustment" involves some balance between (1) personal change and involvement in the immediate situation, and (2) self-maintenance and continued identification with "the outside." Illustrations of adaptive failures that are given involve overemphasis on behavior in both these directions. On the one hand, a failure of the individual to change from precapture modes makes him prone to complicate the problems of the immediate situation and to fail to cope with them adequately, and, on the other, overimmersion in the immediate situation can eventuate in anomic crises, social disorganization, and psychological problems of guilt in and after the experience from violations of norms and expectations of the larger society.

References

ABEL, T. The sociology of concentration camps. *Social Forces*, 1951, *30*, 150–155.

ADLER, H. G. Ideas toward a sociology of the concentration camp. *Amer. J. Sociol.*, 1958, 63, 513–522.

BETTELHEIM, B. *The Informed Heart. Autonomy in a Mass Age.* Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960.

BIDERMAN, A. D. "Communist Techniques of Coercive Interrogation." Lackland Air Force Base, Texas: Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center, December 1956a. *AFPTRC Developm. Rep.* TN-56-132.

BIDERMAN, A. D. "The Objectives of Training for the Event of Capture." Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center, Intelligence Methods Branch, Jan. 5, 1956b. Unpublished.

BIDERMAN, A. D. Social psychological needs and "involuntary" behavior as illustrated by compliance in interrogation. *Sociometry*, 1960, 23, 120–147.

BIDERMAN, A. D. "Cultural Models of Captivity Relationships." Washington, D.C.: Air Force Office of Scientific Research Report AFOSR-452, 1961.

BIDERMAN, A. D. *March to Calumny: The Story of American POWs in the Korean War.* New York: Macmillan, 1963.

BIDERMAN, A. D., LOURIA, MARGOT, and BACCHUS, JOAN. "Historical Incidents of Extreme Overcrowding." Washington, D. C.: Bureau of Social Science Research Report *BSSR* 354-5, 1963.

CANTINE, H. R. *Prison Etiquette*. Bearsville, N. Y.: Retort Press, 1950.

CESNOLA, L. P. di. *Ten Months in Libby Prison*. Philadelphia, 1865.

CILIGA, A. *The Russian Enigma*. London: Labour Book Service, 1940.

CLEMMER, D. *The Prison Community*. Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1940.

COHEN, E. A. *Human Behavior in the Concentration Camp*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1953.

DEAN, W. F. *General Dean's Story*. New York: Viking, 1954.

GOFFMAN, E. Characteristics of total institutions. In *Symposium on Preventive and Social Psychiatry, 15-17 April 1957, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research*. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1957.

GOLLWITZER, H. *Unwilling Journey*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1953.

HALL, D. O. W. "Escapes." Wellington, New Zealand: War History Branch, Department of International Affairs, 1954.

HUGHES, H. M. *News and the Human Interest Story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.

JACOB, P. E. Atrocity propaganda. In H. L. Childs and J. B. Whitton, *Propaganda by Short Wave*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1942.

JACOBSON, EDITH. Observations on the psychological effects of imprisonment on female political prisoners. In K. R. Eissler (Ed.), *Searchlights on Delinquency*. New York: International Universities Press, 1949.

KINKEAD, E. A Reporter at Large: The study of something new in history. *The New Yorker*, October 26, 1957, pp. 102–153.

KOGON, E. *The Theory and Practice of Hell*. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1950.

KORN, R., and MCCORKLE, L. W. *Criminology and Penology*. New York: Holt-Dryden, 1959.

KRIS, E., and LEITES, N. Trends in 20th century propaganda. In G. Roheim (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences I.* New York: International Universities Press, 1949.

KROPOTKIN, P. A. *In Russian and French Prisons.* London: Ward & Downey, 1887.

MERZ, C. The editorial page. *Ann. Amer. Acad. Polit. Soc. Sci.*, 1942, *219*, 139–144.

PATE, L. W., and CUTLER, B. F. *Reactionary.* New York: Harper, 1956.

PRUGH, G. S., JR. Prisoners at war: The POW battleground. *Dickinson Law Rev.*, 1956, *60*, 123–128.

REID, P. R. *Escape from Colditz.* New York: Berkley, 1952.

REID, P. R. *The Colditz Story.* New York: Lippincott, 1953.

SCHEIN, E. H. Brainwashing and totalitarianism in modern society. *World Politics*, 1959, *11*, 430–442.

SCHEIN, E. H. Interpersonal communication, group solidarity, and social influence. *Sociometry*, 1960, *23*, 148–161.

SEGAL, H. A. Initial psychiatric findings of recently repatriated prisoners of war. *Amer. J. Psychiat.*, 1954, *3*, 358–363.

SOREL, G. *Reflections on Violence.* Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950.

SPAIGHT, J. M. *War Rights on Land.* London: Macmillan, 1918.

SPEIER, H. The social types of war. *Amer. J. Sociol.* 1941, *46*, 445–454.

STRASSMAN, H. D., THALER, MARGARET B., and SCHEIN, E. H. A prisoner of war syndrome: Apathy as a reaction to severe stress. *Amer. J. Psychiat.*, 1956, *112*, 998–1003.

SYKES, G. *The Society of Captives: A Study of Maximum Security Prison.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958.

TRIMBLE, E. C. Prisoners of war. In E. R. A. Seligman and A. Johnson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 12. New York: Macmillan, 1937.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Government Operations. *Communist Interrogation, Indoctrination and Exploitation of American Military and Civilian Prisoners. Hearings before Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.* 84th Congr., 2nd Sess., June 19, 20, 26, & 27, 1956. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1956.

U.S. Department of the Army. *Handling Prisoners of War.* Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1952. *Dept. of Army Field Manual*, FM 19-40.

U.S. Department of the Army. "Extract of Interim Historical Report." War Crimes Division, Judge Advocate Section, Korean Communication Zone, June 1953.

U.S. Department of Defense. *POW: The Fight Continues After the Battle. The Report of the Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, Aug., 1955.* Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1955.

VEALE, F. J. P. *Advance to Barbarism.* Appleton, Wis.: C. C. Nelson, 1953.