

# SECRET

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

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October 18, 1950

Mr. Jack Alberti  
O. N. R.  
Navy Department  
Washington, D. C.

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T-35

Dear Mr. Alberti:

In accordance with our discussion the other day, I am sending you herewith the main material I have on the interrogation of Russian Naval Prisoners of War.

First of all, I include a complete interview with the German called Dettmann. This was the interview I read to you at our last meeting. It is the best statement on interrogation methods that I have encountered. I am enclosing also excerpts from other interviews that bear on the problem. These excerpts are from interviews with the following people: (1) A former Chief of Staff of the Russian Baltic Fleet whose cover name is Ivanov; (2) A man called Reinzeke who was an administrative officer of the German Admiralty and was connected with Russian Intelligence during the war; (3) Von Baumbach, whom you know. It is interesting that in their general ideas of the proper approach to Russian Prisoners of War, all of them were in substantial agreement. I read the Dettmann interview to Rychly and Ivanov at Munich and asked for their ideas. They concurred completely.

I am afraid that, though these interviews will give you a general plan of attack, they will not give you all the details that you may want. For instance, you asked about the white bread information in the Dettmann interview. From another interview I have established that though the Russians don't get white bread, it does have a high value for them and could probably be offered to advantage. Another food matter - don't be confused by the American attitude toward steak. The Russian Submariners got plenty of steak meat from us at Dutch Harbor, but cut it up and made stew out of it. They also think our soup is too thin. I mention these facts to indicate to you that if you have specific questions on any important details of Russian attitudes that might influence your treatment of prisoners, I can probably supply some of the information from my interviews.

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Rychly at Munich had what I thought was a good idea. If you want to train Personnel in interviewing Russians, why not send them for practical experience in interrogation to Rychly's office in Munich? As you know, the sources he has are not Prisoners of War, but they are the nearest thing to it that we can provide at the present time. But I suppose this has already occurred to you.

Yours sincerely,

*George C. Homans*  
George C. Homans

GCH:phz

Enc: 1 Int.  
3 Exept.'s

*P.S. I am sorry I have so little information to offer you. Most of my informants were neither Russians themselves nor experienced in interviewing Russians. Their ideas on interrogation were not very interesting from your point of view.*

*G.C. H.*

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Interview with a German called Dettmann at the Joint  
Intelligence Center above Oberursel - July 20, 1950

Dettmann is now engaged in interviewing Germans who have come back from Russia. In the war he interrogated 3 or 4 hundred Russian officers captured by the Germans. He interviewed them on cryptographic matters. He speaks Russian fluently, and the conversation centered on the best methods of interrogating Russians.

Native Germans of high rank never had any success in interrogating Russians. Only those Germans who understood Russia and had been there had some success. Interrogation by interpreter was useless. D had dealt only with Russians of high rank who were specialists and had some knowledge of cryptography.

Do not rush the Russians. Begin by talking to them about their families, literature, and music. Later you will be able to talk to them about politics, and ultimately about technical matters. You must not approach the Russians in a rough manner or even talk to them about threats and reprisals. Ask them what they think we feel about them. You must treat them <sup>n</sup>naturally, like a human being. You must establish what the Russians call "living contact." After all, the only persons they feel safe to talk to even in Russia are the persons with whom they feel they are close personal friends.

D remembers talking to one colonel. D offered him a smoke, a drink, and some food. He refused each of these things. But when he was asked if he would have a drink with the interrogator, he said he would be glad to accept. In short, you must approach them on the basis of full equality. This approach would be even easier with the simple soldier than with an officer.

D had an interesting experience with a Lieut. Colonel. He was put in a well furnished room, which contained a bookcase, which he could

It contained some soviet propaganda literature, some good classical Russian literature, some light literature, and some anti-soviet literature. He at once went for the anti-Soviet literature and the classical literature.

The Russians have an inferiority complex in regard to the west in such matters as clothing and the other amenities of civilization. They don't want to admit their inferiority. Therefore it is very important to offer them clothing and other amenities on a par with ours, and offer these things to them quite naturally, as things that they would of course expect. Offer them a chance for a bath or a shave, just as you would offer them to one of your own guests. They will appreciate this kind of treatment more than offers of money or even a job. Offer them a chance to see concerts and movies, a chance to ski, a chance to meet foreigners. They will love it, and after they have had this kind of treatment, they will be much more willing to talk.

It is very important, if their uniforms are still with them, to keep them in their uniforms, allow them to wear all their medals, and to address them carefully by their proper rank. They are very proud of these things.

Incidentally, if they are offered cigarettes of Western type, they will cut them open, take out the tobacco and roll their own cigarettes. Give them cigarettes with a mouthpiece like the ones they are used to.

If properly treated, the Russians would quickly cooperate with the Germans in the last war. Russian auxiliary troops worked in German motor pools, etc. They would even fight to protect the German withdrawals. D mentioned the Vlasov army, as all Germans do. The later partisan activities behind the German lines, and the strong resistance of the Russian armies to the Germans were due to the way the

Germans treated the prisoners of war and the civilian population.

You must be patient with the Russians, and take a long time with them. You never know when they will start talking. You can't push them. Leave the time for talking up to them. In the evening say, "I don't want to push you. We are fighting against the regime and not against Russia. If you talk you will be helping to overthrow your regime and helping in the liberation of your nation. I will talk to you later."

Try to penetrate the attitudes of the simple soldier. Bring soldiers of the most varied units together, and put plants dressed in Russian uniform among them. This is the best way to penetrate the ordinary soldier's attitude. When this was done, it was found in the last war that many soldiers wanted to stay in Germany, and they wanted a chance to do work, even against the Russians. Once they have decided to come over, it is very important to give them something to do that will help our cause, even if only in a small way. In the last war, many Russians of this sort were sent to training schools and dropped behind the Russian lines. They did good work in the fight against the partisans. Some 5 - 10,000 agents were so trained. (?) Once they have come over, it is also important to give them a certain amount of freedom, and make them feel on an absolutely equal basis with us. They were always interested in being taken into German cities and shown just what they looked like.

The Russians are always afraid of the Communist Party, and they have exaggerated ideas of what the party is able to do and discover, even in Western countries. The Russians liked the ordinary German soldiers, and were able to work with them even against their own regime. But when the Nazi party men came in they felt quite

differently. The Russian soldier disliked dealing with and was afraid of civilians. He knew the men in his own unit, but with civilians he did not know who was the MVD plant and spy.

The Chief of Staff of the Vlasov army was a 100% communist when he was captured. As his attitudes changed, he did not embrace National Socialism but became an outspoken democrat. This was accomplished by friendly and equal treatment. A very bad point in dealing with the Russians was to let them read the German press. There they would read about the Master Race and the inferior races, including the Russians. One Russian said, "You have got the same system as ours. It is like a ring that doesn't meet. At one end is a National Socialist German System and at the other there is an International Socialist Russian System." It was always effective for Germans to compare the state of their workers with that of the Russian workers. In dealing with Russians, it is important:

- a. To give them good and equal treatment.
- b. To allow them to compare the results of their system with those of our system.

The Russians like a drinking party, especially the lower ranks. Alcohol as a method of making people talk is more useful the lower down in ranks you get. But don't try to compete in drinking with higher rank Russians. They will drink you under the table. When a Russian gets enough liquor, he will sing and become very brotherly and sentimental. Even in this stage you may be able to get a lot of information out of them. They are not connoisseurs in drinking, their only attitude is: the more alcohol in the drink, the better the drink.

Do not shout at the tough cases, but treat them with complete calmness. Adopt an attitude of mental superiority, so that the

Russian feels of his own accord that you are superior. If he starts running up and down and getting excited, treat him absolutely calmly. Say, "Why do you get so excited? I want nothing out of you." But never show the superman attitude.

D. never threatened to turn prisoners of war back to the Russians. But he did sometimes threaten to reduce people who had been given good treatment back to the ordinary prisoner of war status. This was often effective, as they knew what the ordinary German prisoner of war camps were like.

The great mistake that the Germans made in Russian territory was to overestimate the men and underestimate the women. It was impossible to get anything by interrogation of women partisan leaders. They were fanatic communists. It was impossible to recruit Russian women for whore houses. In fact in all sexual matters the Russian is wholly natural. He doesn't react to make up or fine dresses on girls. In fact, D. thinks that you wouldn't get far with the Russians by approaching them through women.

Give the Russian a picture of ordinary life in America. Give them things to read about America. They are much interested in the way life is lived on our side of the Iron Curtain. Show him also what other people think about him and his regime. It should be the ordinary stuff that Americans read, except that it should be in Russian.

The interrogator must know something about Russian literature, songs, Russian life and history.

D. didn't know much about the Russian navy, but had the opinion that Russian naval officers of high rank were stubborn and self-confident. They think they are always right.

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1. It is not enough to announce to Russian soldiers by loud speaker that they will get good treatment when they come over. They must actually be treated well. If they are, the news will be all over Russia in two weeks. This kind of news travels fast, even across battle lines. In two weeks, soldiers would begin to surrender by regiments.
  2. Offer them schnapps, white bread, women, and freedom to live their lives in the future. But above all offer them good treatment. This would prove that you are fighting the system and not the men.
  3. Offer the erection of a new fatherland, and new system, but you must say what kind of system it is going to be. Don't talk as the Germans did about colonies and partitions. Don't talk about Unconditional Surrender -- ever. Make the Russians feel that they, and not foreigners, are to be allowed to run Russia. Keep up their self respect.

This was D.'s idea of a PW campaign. As for the Russian navy, they are proud of it. One of their destroyers was the fastest in the world at the time of the 1st World War. They haven't forgotten about this even yet. The Russian navy doesn't get a chance to go far away from their own coasts. Offer them a chance to see the world if they will come over with us.

D. said I should speak to a certain Von Taube, whose address he knows, in the British zone. I have no record why I should speak to this man.



In dealing with prisoners and defectors, source is in favor of the system of good treatment. They are pathetically grateful for it, for they have had so little of it. Try to give them confidence in their future in a conflict whose issue is still doubtful. Remember that it is difficult to get full cooperation from people who have left their families at home in Russia. Remember that the Russians go on two sides and not one. <sup>A Russian</sup> He may be your friend at one moment and your enemy the next. They are not trustworthy. They are largely influenced by feeling and not by logic. This has always been true.

Harshness is not the right way to treat Russian prisoners. They will always be asking themselves, "What will happen in the future if I go back to Russia?" They may be punished for the mere fact of having been a prisoner, and this of course is an advantage for us. "I may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb." In the late War 90% of the Russian prisoners actually tried to help the Germans. A Russian naval lieutenant even offered to be an agent to be put in jail with Russian prisoners and provoke them, in the period when the Germans were occupying Russia. The Russians have little loyalty to their comrades.

If you should conquer any part of Russia, do not allow Russian emigres in the occupied zones. They have too much hatred against Bolshevism. They will take their revenge on anyone, even the most innocent people.

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