Psychological Profile of the War-Captive

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Abstract

Being a war of prisoner is a horrible experience. In a war prisoner camp, one is usually alone within the very midst of the crowd. Only group cohesion and continuing discipline can soften this horrible feeling as well as attempts for the betterment of life conditions or determined, resolute preparations for an eventual escape. This ideal of escape is an immense source of motivation for survival and perseverance. Turkish prisoners in Korea prison camps constitute a fantastic example of good morale and comrade-like solidarity, in this respect; as acknowledged by many military sociologists.

Keywords: Prisoner (of war); Morale; Discipline; Comrade; Fraternity

Introduction

Being enslaved means waging a war of nerves, above all. The biggest spiritual weapon of a prisoner of war (Gefangene) is his patience along with his high morale and ever-flourishing hope, in the line of a probable escape. He should be committed to the unwavering belief that someday, liberation is indeed bound to be a reality.

Famous Ottoman mariner Dragut got busted in the island of Corsica while taking some respite with his tiny navy. He got enslaved. He worked as a galérien/rower in enemy ships for three long years. In 1543 (chief Ottoman admiral) Hayreddin Barbarossa besieged Genoa and saved his good friend (Figures 1-3).

The famous Ottoman sailor mentions in his memoires about his encounter with the knight named la Valette, who had been a slave in Ottoman war ships for a time, until his ransom had got paid by his associates. Dragut thinks: "He, indeed, was an instructed man. Next to his mother tongue French; he used to speak Greek, Spanish and Italian; and I now infer that he had captured Turkish and Arabic during slavery". He addresses the knight from his seat:

-Well, it seems that slavery added to your immense treasure of languages. Now, we might as well engage in a repartee of swearing and insulting each other in the languages of the great Islamic poets!

The Knight replies:

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-In whatever language you wish! I would be delighted, maestro!
-looking at his chains- but in your present situation, it may not fall very appropriate.

Dragut:

- What can I say? A joke of the fate!

(Extrait du journal de Dragut Raïs, aux archives navales de sérail de Topkapi) [1].

High morale comes above all in days of captivity. An American captain [2] returning from Vietnam after years of imprisonment relates in his memoirs that upon arrival in Florida, at the church ceremony organized in his honor, he emphasized his strong faith. He said that he survived thanks to his creed; he never forgot his acquaintances and compatriots; fortunately, he had some trustworthy friends; he never lost his belief in himself, his duty and country and of course in God-Almighty.

Literature Review

Comments of relevant scholars

Camp Blues or the prisoner psychosis or the barbed wire syndrome was mentioned as early as 1916 among the terms of La Haye Treaty between England and Germany [3]. Lack of affective and impulsive ties among the inmates and the obligation of living in promiscuous conditions in mobs are the main grounds for developing such psychological disorders (ibid).

Here, the adjective "impulsive" indicates "a spontaneous life drive orienting the individual towards survival" [4].

Reiwald [3] considers it worthwhile to narrate some lines from the diary of a French soldier, who spent time in a prison camp in Germany in 1916: "Waking up in an environment which has nothing to do with the concept of nobility; hearing the same banale swearing words all around; the same stuffy, smoky air all give a sense of strong nausia. The insipid stink of the crowd was infiltrating onto the depths of my soul from the 'herd' of human beings! A sheer male company3 devoid of women! This was another kind of loneliness, a scene from the hell!"

Reiwald [3] also notes that during World War Two; Swiss refugee camps were relatively more orderly, free and cleaner than all the other counterparts; but still the feeling of being abandoned persisted even in those places. He asserts that the solidarity among the British inmates used to constitute a certain exception. He also underlines the internal severe hierarchy of Nazi prisoners (Figure 4), who even did not refrain from arranging some executions in case of "need".

The special case of Turkish prisoners in the Korean war

If scholar-Reiwald had experienced the Korean War (Figures 5-8) and had witnessed the Turkish War Prisoners, at the time; he would have been more impressed, no doubt! There, Turks displayed a fantastic cohesion! A program broadcasted in the Turkish official television in 1990 compared the Turkish prisoners with other nationalities:

With times discipline deteriorated in all groups and physically fit

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3Years ago, I was working for a state-owned pulp-and-paper plant in Anatolia. At one time a German specialist-engineer was fetched to remove certain technical problems. Herr Schreiber once made a grimace as we entered the company social facilities for dinner. He said "I hate this male company!". He then decided to drive to a hotel's restaurant within the nearby city, to get the same-quality meals at an enormously higher price, just for the sake of ambiance. I later narrated the incident to a Pharmacology professor while in Çukurova University. The faculty member reacted with the words: "He must have had a lot of money!" The Author

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Later, the soldiers began persecuting the weaker ones. Incidents were breaking out often. The chaotic situation was being enjoyed by the Chinese "hosts". One exception prevailed. Among Turks the superior-subordinate relations were still observed. Food was shared equally and fairly. The secret simply lays in strong traditions. Ranks had internalized values. Among plain soldiers, the better educated ones were naturally respected by the others.

Eventually the jealous jailers came and asked the secret formula openly. They got their answers, right away. If levels of education were equal the more elderly one had his say. The secret of the admired situation was summarized in those terms.

Here at this point, it should be pointed out that Turks were used to live in small communities (Gemeinschaft) rather than city environments (Gesellschaft). Privacy was not such a desired virtue. The worst sanction was getting "ostracized" from one's community.

A more interesting aspect of the issue is the genuine fraternity of the officers with the rank-and-file, despite the hierarchy! This paradox is best explained by a British journalist during the Balkan Wars in late Ottoman era. James [5] mentions about the brotherly attitude of officers towards the plain soldiers. He bases it on Mohammedan (Islamic) faith about the equality of all human beings in the eyes of Allah. He asserts that those used to the European way of forced discipline can never properly understand this topic.

Turkish soldiers fighting in Korea disregarded Poet-Nazim's letter inviting them to surrender. In 1953 armistice got signed in Korea. Exchange of prisoners started. Released prisoners were questioned in American Headquarters in Tokyo and meanwhile Colonel Perry obtained important knowledge and came up with inferences of his own. It is based on data provided by him that Eugene Francis Kinkhead wrote his book about the "enemy collaborators" [6].

The Chinese told them that ranks are not valid any more. An American soldier once patted the nape of his officer and asked: Joe, where the hell have you been?" A Chinese authority watching the scene smiled delightedly. But the Turkish-Johnny was still loyal to his father, his government, his army-superiors. He would not take a bath all-naked. When Talk was heard about venereal diseases he would ask his father, his government, his army-superiors. He had always obeyed his father, his government, his army-superiors. He would not take a bath all-naked. When Talk was heard about venereal diseases he would ask his father, his government, his army-superiors.

In his great novel, Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck in one episode mentions the new comers who escape or surrender is bigger than those who got killed or wounded. One can deduce, he reasons, that the basic phenomenon is the loss of trust in the general ambiance.

Further facts and a famous social-psychology-experiment

Morali-Janinos [11] notes that in most battles the number of ranks and files who escape or surrender is bigger than those who got killed or wounded. One can deduce, he reasons, that the basic phenomenon is the loss of trust in the general ambiance.

A researcher named Bettelheim studied the reactions of inmates in difficult circumstances it mostly outweighs kinship. It is convenient to the character of the Anatolian boy and is further reinforced by the indoctrination provided by the officers, who are well-raised educators [7].

The link connecting fellow conscripts in the army is so strong that in difficult circumstances it mostly outweighs kinship. It is convenient to the character of the Anatolian boy and is further reinforced by the indoctrination provided by the officers, who are well-raised educators [7].

Other "scenes" from battles in closer times

One can see that in the Korean War ideology came into play often. The zeal of the fresh Chinese revolution did not subside yet: Chinese communists brainwashed American prisoners, thereby diminishing their resistance and also helping the process by dismissing primary groups. They succeeded in obtaining a certain degree of cooperation, in this manner [8].

As Meyers and Bradbury [9] inform us that; in the Geoje camp, Chinese prisoners did not display animosity against their American jailers, as civilians would do so. The difficulties they caused were far from being emotional. On the contrary; they were disciplined, planned, purposeful activities. Moreover; the communist leaders were easily organizing discontent into rebellion.

Bradbury and Kirkpatrick [10] notify us that during the Korean War; among nationalist Chinese soldiers one could talk about (naturally growing) feelings of amity and loyalty. Leaders of Red China; on the other hand; were trying to build up a morale upon political convictions. They were condemning all individual acts (like concealing the booty, personal bargains or fraternity, and all menace aiming the party's superiority). This constant criticism and vigilance would in actuality contribute to loss of trust in the general ambiance.

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to stressful circumstances in Nazi concentration camps in 1943. He concluded that some of them were assuming the airs of their very oppressors, following the violence and persecution they had undergone.

As Bettelheim puts it: Nazi jailors inflicted demeaning physical and psychological torture to render their slaves infantile in mentality. They themselves appeared as figures of stern parents. Eventually the prisoners stooped to flattery for the sake of privileges. They started imitating the attire and speech style of their oppressors. They started warning one another to comply with the rules [14].

Discussion

Impressions from a museum in America

Purposeful efforts to improve the existing conditions or attempts or at least hopes to evade can lead to very productive activities. Similar preoccupations are bound to be extremely health-provoking. As a matter of fact, is not occupation by itself a psychiatric therapy and rehabilitation method, after all?

Years ago, I was lucky to visit the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio. In a section, products realized by the inmates of prison camps were displayed behind glass panes. It was amazing to see their multitude and versatility: A compass made of a half-razor-blade mounted on a cork-bedding; a pistol carved out of wood and dyed black by shoe polish to render a realistic appearance; bellows made of leather boot legs in order to blow air into a prospective tunnel; a heating stove made by adding together the lateral faces of tin cans got embedded in my memory.

Utilitarianism can make people produce wonders especially in life and death situations. There is an anecdote: They asked a literary figure which book he would like to read in a deserted island. The scholar said: “The art of building a bateau!”

1. North African Arab Muslim historiographer Ibn Khaldun asserted way back in the fourteenth century that; the defeated tend to emulate the attire, the weapons and the horse of the victorious. The Author.

2. It is known that in prisoner camps opened for German captives in America during World War II, educative activities were prominent. As Wikipedia notes with reference to G. Sytko; “the systematically taught courses [at some of those camps] were so successful that in May 1944 the German Ministry of Education and the OKW/Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (“Supreme Command of the Armed Forces”) sent through the Red Cross detailed procedures for students to receive credit at German high schools and universities”.

Conclusion

Being a war-captive could be the lot of any military person indulged in fighting with the enemy. Despite international conventions signed by statesmen, which stipulate good-treatment of prisoners (Figure 9); there is no de-facto-guarantee for the well-being of a prisoner of war.

Conditions may be too harsh and one’s mind may work solely in the line of alleviating the endured pain, for the time being, like Colonel Nicholson in the novel by Pierre Boule, the Bridge over the River Kwai. The captive colonel goes ahead and builds the best possible bridge for his very jailers, the Japanese!

Asceticism induced by high morale and will-power appears to be the only spiritual support for the enslaved soldier to resist for the sake of liberation.

References