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# American Psychologists and Wartime Research on Germany, 1941–1945

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*During World War II, behavioral scientists working for several U.S. agencies—principally the Office of Strategic Services, but also the Office of War Information, the Strategic Bombing Survey, and military authorities—advanced personality and social psychology through their investigations of the nature of Nazism, Adolf Hitler's personality, the German national character, and Germans' reactions to the war. Studies by Erik Erikson, Walter Langer, Henry Murray, and others illustrate psychologists' efforts to meld professional and patriotic interests. Although not uniformly successful, and apparently without influence on the conduct of the war and occupation, these works were sometimes innovative and generally anticipated psychology's increased status, influence, and interaction with other disciplines and with the government after the war.*

Some day psychologists are going to develop a technique for achieving insight into their own social values. When they do, better books . . . will be written.

—R. Stagner (1944, p. 495)

Psychologists who wish to follow Stagner's advice might reflect on the psychological research conducted during the Second World War—particularly that of government-sponsored investigators who tried to meld the disparate, often divergent values of exigent national interest and scientific inquiry. Their inquiries raised many important issues, as a war of unprecedented scope required entire societies to mobilize. Their struggles, successes, and failures, far from being mere historical curiosities, are still pertinent to those who consider today's even more extensive involvement of the psychological profession with official institutions, governmental policy making, and intelligence.

Behavioral scientists began mobilizing even before the United States entered the war, not only for patriotic reasons, but also because they perceived an opportunity to demonstrate their expertise and claim significant professional authority in the public arena (Marquis, 1944). American psychologists organized early and effectively for war work, and simultaneously prepared for the postwar period, in ways that profoundly influenced the discipline (Cappshew, 1986). This was not, of course, the first occasion for such assertions of professional maturity. For example, physicians in the 19th century had claimed competence to diagnose and treat criminals and other

social deviants (Nye, 1984). Psychologists themselves had made notable if limited contributions to the American effort in the First World War, developing and administering intelligence and aptitude tests to military candidates (Kevles, 1968; Samelson, 1977; von Mayrhauser, 1989; Yerkes, 1918). This work continued and became more sophisticated in the 1940s, as seen in the work of Harvard psychologist Henry Murray and his associates on the psychological assessment of potential intelligence operatives for the Office of Strategic Services (Murray, 1946).

This discussion addresses the work of another, smaller group of behavioral scientists employed either directly or as consultants by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Office of War Information (OWI), the Strategic Bombing Survey (SBS), and the military. Although the majority focused on testing, assessing, and training military personnel and measuring attitudes of populations at home and abroad, the minority discussed in this article took a different direction, broadly subsumed under the categories of personality research and social psychology.

Even at the time, some psychologists anticipated that the war would stimulate research in these areas; as E. G. Boring and his colleagues on the Subcommittee on Survey and Planning for Psychology observed, "It seems probable that the present conflict will do for social psychology, in the broadest sense of that term, what the first World War did for intelligence testing" (Boring, 1942, p. 620). The psychologists discussed in this article investigated the mentality of Adolf Hitler, Nazism's appeal to Germans, and the probable response of Germans to particular types of propaganda and occupation policies. Their work—

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sometimes stereotypically anti-Nazi or anti-German, sometimes remarkably prescient—had little if any direct effect on the conduct of the war, but it was sometimes innovative and anticipated important directions for postwar research.

Because this wartime research was inherently interdisciplinary in its organization (Winks, 1987), one must to some extent ignore disciplinary boundaries in order to understand it (Capshew, 1986). The researchers came from a number of fields: psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and related areas. Many were Americans; others were German emigrés, reflecting the effect of the “intellectual emigration” on the U.S. academic and scientific world (Fleming & Bailyn, 1969; Hughes, 1975). As the emigrés were technically enemy aliens, they could not obtain security clearances needed for direct employment in government agencies, but they nonetheless made contributions as consultants. Such arrangements were advantageous to the agencies (especially the OSS) because they allowed for a wider sampling of expertise than was present in their own staffs and for projects such as Walter Langer’s (1972) famous study of Hitler that were on the fringes of “respectability” at the time.

Reconciling the demands of patriotism, principle, pragmatism, professionalism—and, sometimes, personal experience of persecution—was especially challenging to psychologists confronting Nazi Germany. The so-called “German question,” a politically charged issue since the First World War, became even more urgent during the Second. For no one was it more important than for psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts, who were refining their disciplines and extending their clinical and scientific expertise into wider social realms. Many of them were of Jewish or German descent, or both, and many had fled fascist regimes in the 1930s. Nazism seemed to defy conventional political analysis and engaged scholars from a wide range of disciplines (Hughes, 1975). Its apparent irrationality had already attracted special attention from behavioral and social scientists in Europe and the United States (e.g., Fromm, 1941; Lasswell, 1933b; Reich, 1933; Schuman, 1935).

## The Office of Strategic Services

The OSS, the wartime predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was a haven for scholars from many disciplines. Unlike the intelligence staffs of the various armed services, diplomatic corps, and other prewar agencies, whose members were military officers or diplomats, the innovative OSS was a centralized agency employing experts to gather, analyze, and disseminate information from foreign sources. Its head, William Donovan—a gifted man with experience as a soldier, politician, and lawyer and the confidence of President Roosevelt—first envisioned the agency and persuaded the president to establish it, over stiff opposition from many others in the government and military. As a Wall Street attorney, Donovan had acquired respect for academic experts, including psychologists—a most unusual view at the time. First as Coordinator of Information (COI) and, after June 1942,

as head of the OSS, he recruited prominent specialists in history, economics, sociology, geography, and psychology (Ford, 1970; Katz, 1989; B. F. Smith, 1983; R. H. Smith, 1972; Troy, 1981).

By autumn of 1941, Donovan had created the Research and Analysis Branch (R&A), which included divisions of psychology, economics, and geography to supplement the staff of regional specialists working at the Library of Congress (Roosevelt, 1976). Although public attention has focused on the cloak-and-dagger exploits of OSS operatives, scholars have argued that R&A was the true heart of the agency (Ford, 1970; Katz, 1989). Indeed, the R&A research mode—teams of experts in several fields collaborating to compile and evaluate information—became the model for postwar regional and interdisciplinary studies programs in American universities (Ford, 1970) and for the CIA.

### The Psychology Division

The OSS Psychology Division (OSS PD), headed by Robert C. Tryon from the University of California, included 16 staff psychologists, primarily social psychologists, by the middle of 1942 (Marquis, 1944).<sup>1</sup> Its broad mandate was “to collect and correlate all available data pertinent to psychological factors operative in the national and international scene” (OSS PD, Box 1, Folder 42).<sup>2</sup> Three sections were planned: Social-Psychological, Attitudes and Morale, and Abnormal and Clinical. Initially concerned mainly with domestic morale and attitudes, the division shifted its focus to foreign concerns after Pearl Harbor. Much of its work was psychological only in a broad sense, providing sociocultural background for agencies concerned with morale and psychological warfare. The projected Abnormal and Clinical Section never materialized; the staff included only social psychologists, and no clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, or psychoanalysts (OSS PD, Box 1, Folder 42, and September and October 1942 correspondence folders).

Despite these limitations, in January 1942 Tryon proposed an ambitious program for the division—a systematic social-psychological study of belligerent nations, particularly the Axis powers. He argued that psychological understanding of social and historical experiences, common patterns of child rearing and personality development, and similar topics would be important in conducting morale research and other pragmatic wartime

<sup>1</sup> Division psychologists at this time were Donald K. Adams (Duke University), Edward W. Arluck (New York City), Edward N. Barnhart (Reed College), Urie Bronfenbrenner (University of Michigan), John W. Gardner (Mt. Holyoke College), J. A. Gengerelli (UCLA), James A. Hamilton (University of California), Robert H. Knapp (Harvard University), I. Krechevsky (Chicago), Robert B. MacLeod (Swarthmore College), J. B. Maller (U.S. Housing Authority), Donald V. McGranahan (Harvard University), and Carleton F. Scofield (University of Buffalo).

<sup>2</sup> The surviving records of the OSS, its Psychology Division (OSS PD), the OWI, and the SBS are in the U.S. National Archives. All citations to archival materials will identify the entry, box, and folder in the text, the record group and location in the reference list. A list giving full identification of documents cited throughout the article is available from the author.

projects. He likened the approach to comparative national psychology and suggested as consultant Geoffrey Gorer of Yale University's Institute of Human Relations, a specialist in national character studies. Tryon also persuaded Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport to coordinate civilian research assistance (OSS PD, Box 1, Folder 43). Tryon had in mind not only the project's immediate use to the war effort but also long-term scholarly interests, including the encouragement of interdisciplinary cooperation. Whether or not he knew of the Boring subcommittee's views on the war's possibilities for social psychology, which were published later in 1942, he seems to have perceived similar opportunities.

Ultimately, Tryon's plan was stillborn, with the possible exception of one study by Erik Erikson, discussed below. The division's staff was never large enough to support such a massive undertaking, other agencies were not receptive to it, and other assignments intervened. More immediate military needs prevailed over intellectual aims. Instead, the division staff was assigned, with geographers and regional specialists, to produce a series of Soldier's Guides—basic, pocket-sized surveys of individual countries intended for the troops who would invade or occupy them (OSS PD, Box 1, Folder 42). However useful these works proved to be, they were hardly innovative investigations, and their psychological content was negligible. The unit's sole Central European specialist, E. Y. Hartshorne, apparently carried out mainly routine assignments such as these, despite his prewar experience in social-psychological studies of German emigrés (Cantril, 1941).

In early 1943 the OSS PD was disbanded and most of its staff reassigned to the OWI as part of a reorganization of R&A (OSS PD, Box 1, December 1942 correspondence folder). The very qualities that made the OSS, especially R&A, innovative also generated interagency turf battles. Most of the division's work, apart from the Soldier's Guides, had to do with morale—the province of OWI, which emphasized practical recommendations for propaganda and psychological warfare. The exigencies of war favored an organization that mirrored the regional theaters of operations rather than the traditional academic disciplines. Thereafter interdisciplinary cooperation increased, “with dazzling results” (Katz, 1989, p. 22). Although this change increased psychologists' contributions, because they were no longer segregated, those contributions became less distinctive and more difficult to discern.

### *Consultants' Studies*

Robert Tryon and others had already realized that the work of governmental agencies would need supplementing by civilian scholars. In November 1940, the National Research Council (NRC) called 25 social psychologists to Washington to consider psychological factors in morale and to recruit academics as potential collaborators with government researchers. In late 1941, Tryon met to discuss these interests with the NRC's Emergency Committee in Psychology, which then established a Subcom-

mittee on Defense Seminars to organize meetings on various topics at universities across the country. Reports from these seminars went to the appropriate governmental agencies and to private organizations responsible for morale building. A few can be found in OSS files, and some seminars yielded conventional publications (Allport & Schmeidler, 1943; OSS, Entry 146, Box 150, Folder 2278, and Document 23886; Vernon, 1942).

The OSS did nonetheless sponsor some studies of both national psychology and the psychodynamics of enemy leaders. The most interesting of these concerned Germany and were written by external consultants to the agency—scholars such as Walter C. Langer, who were unwilling to abandon their civilian careers, or who like Erik Erikson were refugee aliens and who offered perspectives, most often psychoanalytic, different from those of most federally employed psychologists.

Apparently at General Donovan's request, in early 1942 Erikson wrote an evaluation of German and Nazi mentality that led directly to his subsequent initial publications in psychohistory (“On Nazi Mentality,” OSS PD, Box 1, July 1942 correspondence folder; Erikson, 1942). In this 31-page study, Erikson applied recent approaches in ego and social psychology and psychoanalytic cultural anthropology to analyze Nazism's appeal to Germans and to suggest ways of promoting democratic attitudes after the war. The result is an amalgam of national character concepts refined by psychoanalysis and anthropology, in which social behavior is linked with Hitler's personality and motives. National character, Erikson maintained, does indeed exist but not as an absolute entity; rather, it derives from specific historical and geographic experiences, transmitted through child-rearing practices. Erikson's approach strongly resembled Robert Tryon's proposal for a social-psychological survey of belligerent nations.

In Erikson's view, Nazism's success depended on the crisis in German society after World War I, on the Nazi party's ability to generate attitudes and symbols responsive to that crisis, and most of all on the embodiment of widespread anxieties and desires in the person of Hitler. Far from demonstrating German strength, the Nazi regime's aggression betrayed “a morbid suggestibility and a deep insecurity” that sought “undoing” and repression in aggressive warfare (“On Nazi Mentality,” p. 3). This view, similar to Erich Fromm's (1941), must have been a hopeful thought at a time when Nazi Germany was at the peak of its power.

Looking mainly to *Mein Kampf* (Hitler, 1925–1927) for evidence of Hitler's personality, Erikson found an oedipal fairy tale in which “the beloved mother betrays the longing son for an unworthy, senile tyrant,” and the son retaliates through unceasing rebellion against adult authority. Rather than a surrogate father, Hitler was an eternal adolescent, an older brother or gang leader. The legend's wide appeal, Erikson said, meant that its creator, Hitler, “primarily reveals the German national character, himself only incidentally” (“On Nazi Mentality,” pp. 6, 8).

Erikson used his analysis of Germans and Nazis to suggest propaganda strategies the Allies could use to reinforce psychically mature (meaning democratic) attitudes among Germans during and after the war. There is no evidence that those responsible for American psychological warfare ever knew of his study, much less found it useful. Despite its other merits, Erikson's prediction of Hitler's fate proved faulty: "Some day it may be his worst fate and punishment that with all his hysterical gifts he cannot become insane or commit suicide when it would be most appropriate to do so" ("On Nazi Mentality," pp. 6-7). Stripped of its more egregious stereotypes, however, this study did lead directly to Erikson's published work on Hitler and the Germans and exemplified his emerging emphasis on social identity, a concept that was later applied extensively in psychological literature (Erikson, 1946, 1950).

A more accurate psychological prognosticator was psychoanalyst Walter C. Langer, who with several collaborators undertook a much more extensive and systematic study of Hitler for the OSS. He was not the only one to propose such an investigation. Among the Defense Seminars held in 1941 and 1942 under the aegis of the NRC's Emergency Committee in Psychology was one on "Hitler's Mentality and Personality," directed by L. M. Terman of Stanford (Dallenbach, 1946). In November 1941, Arthur Upham Pope and the Committee for National Morale had proposed to Donovan a "psychological offensive against Hitler" to be based on a thorough study of Hitler's personality and intended to "fatally weaken the Führer principle and . . . undermine public confidence in any related regime" (OSS, Entry 146, Box 150, Folder 2278).<sup>3</sup>

Walter C. Langer (brother of William L. Langer, chief of R&A) swiftly reacted to this proposal. Agreeing that "A thorough psychological and psychiatric study of the structure of Hitler's personality, as well as that of other Nazi leaders, is not only desirable but is almost a prerequisite to any sound psychological offensive against Germany," he nevertheless argued that the Pope committee's approach was unsound and unrealistic, "loaded with dynamite." He did, however, emphatically urge "that we try to purchase for our own use whatever information Pope may have on Hitler's personality and background" (OSS, Entry 146, Box 150, Folder 2278).

This letter, written on stationery headed *P. A. Field Unit*, asserted that "one of the volunteer groups of psychoanalysts collaborating with the Field Unit is working on this very problem." The Hitler investigation grew out of conversations between Walter C. Langer and Donovan beginning in August of 1941. According to Langer, Donovan suggested that he establish a psychoanalytic field unit in Cambridge to explore such issues, but the Bureau of the Budget refused funding, observing that the OSS already had a Psychology Division (W. C. Langer, 1972). Still, Donovan wanted the study to proceed, and what Donovan wanted, he found a way to achieve. It appears that, in early 1942, \$17,000—a significant proportion of the Psychology Division's funds—were earmarked for the "Psychoanalytic Section." Division staff complained re-

peatedly about the sudden shortage of travel funds because of this creative financing (OSS PD, Box 3, Folder 81). Langer's status was ambiguous; later he claimed to have stayed on "as a kind of free-lance psychoanalytic consultant" (W. C. Langer, 1972, p. 18), but his generous funding and close ties to R&A bespeak a closer link than that.

Langer began his project with several collaborators, including Henry Murray (who later withdrew for unspecified reasons but submitted his own study of Hitler, discussed below), Ernst Kris, and Bertram Lewin (both unnamed in the published version of the work). Langer evidently did the writing. It was based on a comprehensive survey of available sources on Hitler, including works by Hitler and interviews with people who had come into contact with him, just as the Pope committee had proposed. The effort was necessarily flawed, as several historians later observed, but it was the most systematic of its time and unprecedented in its scope (Cocks, 1973; Gatzke, 1973; W. C. Langer, 1973; W. L. Langer, 1973; Waite, 1972, 1973).

As might be expected of a practicing psychoanalyst, Langer's approach to his subject was diagnostic. Thus, despite his expanded data base, his portrait of Hitler continued in the tradition of psychopathological studies in biography (Hoffman, 1984). Unlike Erikson, he offered only the sketchiest explanation of Hitler's influence: "It was not only Hitler, the madman, who created German madness, but German madness that created Hitler." The madness, however, was not uniquely German, as Nazism expressed "a state of mind existing . . . not only in Germany, but to a smaller degree in all civilized countries" (W. C. Langer, 1972, pp. 144-145). Lacking historical context or analysis, however, these assertions meant little.

The strength of W. C. Langer's (1972) study, evident only later, was its assessment of Hitler's probable actions should the war turn against Germany. So much attention has focused on Langer's inferences about Hitler's sexual pathology that his predictive success, an important test of any scientific study, has often been overlooked. Langer foresaw Hitler's suicide as "the most plausible outcome. . . . In all probability, however, it would not be a simple suicide. He has too much of the dramatic for that." In the mean time, he "will become more and more neurotic"; "his rages will increase in frequency"; his "public appearances will become less and less"; and "in the end he might lock himself into this symbolic womb [the Eagle's Nest near Berchtesgaden] and defy the world to get to him" (pp. 215-216). Substituting the even more womb-like Chancellery bunker for the Eagle's Nest, these prognoses proved correct—a strong if not definitive argument for the value of Langer's research.

Langer's intensive case study method and focus on

<sup>3</sup> Psychologists Gardner Murphy, Henry Murray, Goodwin Watson, and Robert Yerkes sat on the executive committee of the Committee for National Morale. Its Psychology Subcommittee also included Gordon Allport, Walter Bingham, Geoffrey Gorer, Ernst Kris, and Kurt Lewin, among others (OSS, Entry 146, Box 150, Folder 2278).

Hitler exclusively may have reduced the usefulness of his work for wartime policymakers, if indeed they ever saw it. As the study remained classified long after the war, and as Langer himself did not pursue this line of research, his report had no immediate scholarly sequels as Erikson's had. It did help to convince his brother, an eminent historian, to argue for psychological interpretation in history in his 1957 presidential address to the American Historical Association, and it eventually contributed to Robert Waite's explanations of Hitler's career (W. L. Langer, 1958; Waite, 1971a, 1971b, 1977). Thus, although its impact in the profession was small, it contributed to the spread of psychology's influence and to the postwar boom in interdisciplinary research that the organization of R&A had foreshadowed.

Henry Murray withdrew from participation in Walter Langer's study of Hitler, but in October 1943 he submitted his own 227-page "Analysis of the Personality of Adolph [sic] Hitler, With Predictions of His Future Behavior and Suggestions for Dealing with Him Now and After Germany's Surrender" (OSS Entry 139, Box 188, Folder WASH-MO-RES-10). Murray also had begun to address this topic in 1941; in his Foreword, he alluded to "the ideas of Professor G. W. Allport and myself on this topic as they were crystallized in the fall of 1941" and summarized in a paper by W. H. D. Vernon. That paper appeared as a chapter in Murray's report and was soon published separately ("Analysis," p. 3; Vernon, 1942). The title of this paper—"Hitler the Man: Notes for a Case History"—is identical to that of a 1941 morale seminar held at Harvard by Murray and Allport (OSS, Entry 146, Box 150, Folder 2278). Evidently the morale seminar, a private activity, had by virtue of its director's governmental connections fed directly into Donovan's project. This is another indication among many that the line between governmental and private research in this period was blurred, especially when the private researchers were as intimately connected to federal agencies as were Allport and Murray.

Murray's study addressed the same issues as Langer's and seems to have been based on the same sources, but it was even more faithful to traditional notions of German national character. Whereas Langer focused on Hitler's personality and possible actions during the war, Murray was most concerned with postwar policy:

The attainment of a clear impression of the psychology of the German people is essential if, after surrender, they are to be converted into a peace-loving nation that is willing to take its proper place in a world society." ("Analysis," p. 2)

Langer's study was discursive and academic, concise only in the last section predicting Hitler's actions; Murray began with a summary and often used outline form and underlining of key concepts for rapid scanning by busy nonspecialists. Vernon's chapter was followed by "A Detailed Analysis of Hitler's Personality (written especially for psychologists and psychiatrists)," then "Predictions of Hitler's Behavior in the Coming Future," "Suggestions for the Treatment of Hitler, Now and After Germany's

Surrender," and finally "Suggestions for the Treatment of Germany."

Neither study included references to psychological or psychiatric literature; both were heavily psychoanalytic, with Murray using Adlerian concepts (especially the inferiority complex) as well as Freudian ones. Although Murray, like Langer, diagnosed Hitler's psychopathology, calling him a "paranoid type with delusions of persecution and of grandeur" ("Analysis," p. 77), like Erikson he noted positive qualities in Hitler's personality, such as "a deep valid strain of creativeness (lacking, to be sure, the necessary talent)," and dramatic flair ("Analysis," p. 17). Murray concurred with other observers in labeling Hitler a paranoid schizophrenic, but differed from most of them in stressing Hitler's capacity to control his own hysteria and use it effectively in attracting the support of Germans.

Murray's predictions of Hitler's future behavior were essentially similar to Langer's, but more cautiously phrased. The only certainty, he said, was that Hitler's neurotic symptoms would increase and his leadership capacity would decrease. Murray listed several outcomes as most probable: Hitler's death in battle, his complete insanity, or suicide "at the last possible moment and in the most dramatic possible manner" ("Analysis," pp. 31-32), after having retreated (perhaps) to the Eagle's Nest. The force of these predictions is vitiated by Murray's restraint and the multiplicity of possibilities he conjures up, refusing to cast his lot with any particular one.

Murray's study differed from Langer's in its anticipation of the postwar period and its suggestions for treating the German population at large. Langer, as a psychoanalyst, was interested in Hitler as a fascinating case study. But Murray was head of the OSS assessment staff as well as a personality psychologist; hence, in addition to Hitler's individual psyche, he addressed governmental, military, and legal policy considerations for the remainder of the war and postwar period. Whereas Langer made Hitler's sexuality a focal point of his analysis, Murray omitted a section on "Development of Hitler's Sex Complexes" from the study he submitted to the OSS, explaining that

Although the discovery of these sexual patterns is helpful to a psychiatrist in arriving at a complete formulation of Hitler's character and therefore indirectly pertinent to the final diagnosis and the predictions of his behavior, it has no bearing on the political situation. ("Analysis," p. 210)

Arguing that Germans had allowed Hitler to substitute for their own superegos (an element of Erikson's argument and common coin in the psychoanalytic literature of this time), Murray offered various suggestions for "hastening the breakdown" ("Analysis," p. 38) of this faith.

Murray expressed a traditional view of German national character as "marked by a strong need to worship, obey, and sacrifice" ("Analysis," p. 41); hence, Germans would need an alternative source of authority after the war. Because they were likely to resist a value associated with their enemies, this authority must transcend nationality: "Against Hitler, the False Prophet, the propa-

gandists should speak of the *World Conscience* . . . and should speak of the forces of Russia, Great Britain, France, and the Americas as the *World Army*" ("Analysis," p. 41). Naïve as this view may seem today, it was responsive to pragmatic wartime interests. Diagnosis of Hitler's personality, however interesting, was useless without understanding his appeal and providing further guidance for Allied policy toward him and his country.

Some of Murray's postwar policy suggestions reflect lessons drawn from the aftermath of World War I. For example, he suggested that war criminals should be tried by a world court drawn from members of neutral nations, and that Germany must be demilitarized. But he argued that such measures alone would be inadequate and purely temporary in effect. "What is required is a *profound conversion of Germany's attitude*" from belief in German superiority. "We must realize that we are dealing with a nation suffering from paranoid trends: delusions of grandeur; delusions of persecution; profound hatred of strong opponents and contempt of weak opponents; arrogance, suspiciousness and envy—all of which has been built up as a reaction to an *age-old inferiority complex and a desire to be appreciated*" ("Analysis," p. 47). An Adlerian element is evident, along with the comforting notion that Germany's apparent strength was really a sign of inner weakness.

Murray confessed that "the therapy of a single paranoid personality fails as an analogy" for treating a nation, because Germans would resist reeducation by the victors. The most difficult problem, he anticipated, would be dealing with Nazi youth; the Allies might promote the value of fair play by sponsoring sporting events, for instance, but only German educators could carry out the reorientation of German youth. The daunting task of Germany's postwar reformation preoccupied many both in and out of government, especially from 1943 onward (e.g., Allport, 1943), but Murray's was the only government-commissioned study that I have found that transcended condemnations of German national character or Nazi psychopathology to argue forcefully for postwar internationalism. Without an effective world federation after the war, Murray believed, "the Allied victory will have no permanently important consequences" ("Analysis," p. 53). His fears were justified: As the occupation unfolded, U.S. authorities pursued occupation and propaganda policies that were psychologically obtuse and politically ineffective, ostensibly idealistic but actually nationalistic (Hartenian, 1987).

## Other Agencies

### *The Office of War Information*

Like the OSS, the OWI was established outside the cabinet departments to coordinate their work. It descended from the COI and from the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, a cooperative venture of the State Department and the Federal Communications Commission which had employed several psychologists to analyze foreign propaganda. These included Donald V. McGranahan (later

of the OSS Psychology Division), Jerome Bruner of Harvard University, and Goodwin Watson and Otto Klineberg of Columbia University (Marquis, 1944). Unlike the OSS, the OWI was not glamorous, and its director did not report directly to the president. It oversaw the dissemination of information in all media at home and abroad (OWI, Entry 6H, Box 4, Executive Orders folder; Entry 6E, Box 13). Its business was psychological warfare, propaganda, news management, and censorship (Winkler, 1978). Most of its staff and consultants were journalists, photographers, advertising specialists, other media practitioners, and social scientists adept in opinion survey procedures; few were behavioral scientists. Neither its German desk (specializing in German-language materials and operations) nor its German committee (an oversight board implementing OWI policies and choosing strategies for propaganda and information distribution in Germany) was given to theoretical or academic studies or to psychology per se—their focus was more immediate and practical (OWI, Box 803, Item 415).

Nevertheless, the same impetus to understand Germany and Nazism that stimulated the OSS studies appeared occasionally in the OWI. In 1944, an extensive and detailed exercise in cultural and linguistic analysis—a social-psychological parallel to Langer's study of Hitler—was carried out by the OWI's Experimental Division for the Study of War Time Communications, headed by political scientist Harold D. Lasswell, author of pioneering studies on political psychology (1930, 1933a, 1933b, 1935). Using the interdisciplinary approach modelled in the OSS, Paul Kecskemeti and Nathan Leites collected German press and radio materials and analyzed them to produce *Some Psychological Hypotheses on Nazi Germany* (1945, 1946). This study, unlike Langer's and Murray's, was not classified, although it was published only after V-E Day. Like the others, though, it was a wartime project pursued in haste and very much *parti pris*, despite its cautious phrasing and qualifications.

Kecskemeti and Leites (1945) found in German culture a series of characteristic dichotomies—revolt and submission, hardness and softness, guilt and self-righteousness, and so on—typical of disturbed personalities, and unusually strong in the German social character. They argued that "a distinctive type of character structure in the Nazi variant of German culture approximates or falls under the 'compulsive character' of psychoanalytic theory" (p. 1). Although not uniquely German, "it played an unusually prominent role in that culture" (p. 3). They applied this characterization primarily to the Nazi period and to specific social groups (i.e., the lower middle classes, men, the young, Protestants) and recited what had become the psychoanalytic litany of Nazism's psychic motives and mechanisms: oedipal rebellion, identification, regression, homosexual and anal-sadistic tendencies, reaction formations, and projection.

Kecskemeti and Leites's (1945) presentation was clear, their psychoanalytic theory orthodox, their sources diverse, and their phrasing careful; however, their categories now seem strikingly dualistic, arbitrary, and a



priori. Because they stressed unconscious libidinal conflicts, which are essentially private, rather than more socially oriented ego and superego functions (as Erikson did), they had difficulty integrating their psychological analysis with the historical context, the arena of public action. They gave the impression of circular reasoning: German culture, they said, emphasized certain psychological tendencies which in turn accounted for the qualities of German culture.

Kecskemeti and Leites (1945) seem to have intended the sort of investigation that Robert Tryon had proposed for the OSS Psychology Division in 1941. Certainly their focus was broad, encompassing much of the German population rather than Hitler only and stressing the social dynamics of behavior rather than the private pathology of one individual. Of the OSS studies, only Erikson's took a similar stance. Their reliance on psychoanalytic theory was also unusual among governmental projects; the OSS, despite Donovan's receptivity, had to resort to external consultants to acquire this perspective. Unlike the OSS studies, Kecskemeti and Leites's was purely analytical, offering no recommendations for wartime or postwar propaganda or policy. Perhaps it came too late to affect wartime actions, but the occupation period was already beginning. In failing to address its demands, Kecskemeti and Leites affirmed the values of academe but virtually ensured their study's irrelevance to policy making. It was in any event exceptional in OWI.

### *The Strategic Bombing Survey*

Strategic bombing—"daylight, high altitude, precision bombardment of selected targets" of economic and military significance—was one of the war's notable innovations in U.S. military doctrine (MacIsaac, 1986, pp. 634–635). Effective target selection required much skill and knowledge, for which the SBS employed many historians, economists, geographers, other social scientists, and engineers. Behavioral scientists worked in its Morale Division, staffed mainly by sociologists and headed by Rensis Likert, a specialist in public opinion sampling who had earlier been considered for employment in the OSS Psychology Division (OSS PD, Box 1, folder 42; SBS, Entry 36, Box 167, Folder 329).

Studying enemy morale made demands on scholarly method that the disciplines were not always prepared to meet. Later it seemed that the SBS findings were self-evident or predictable (MacIsaac, 1976). Nevertheless, the principal SBS study of German morale is interesting as an application of empirical social and behavioral science research methods to complex contemporary situations, and it yielded at least one finding of real military value. *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale*, a two-volume analysis published in 1946–1947, was based on surveys completed between March and July 1945 (SBS, Entry 2, Box 12, Envelopes 64b). The first volume summarized the results of interviews with thousands of German civilians, interrogations of selected military officers and civilian leaders, and scrutiny of captured German documents. The interviewers were mostly German-

speaking American psychologists or social scientists, with some interrogators from Army Intelligence who had been specially trained for this task. Their reports contained no psychological theorizing. Rather, the investigators recorded what their German subjects said about the effects of bombing and compared the responses of those who had suffered various degrees of bombardment (none, light, medium, and heavy), of Nazis and non-Nazis, and of people from different geographical areas.

If any theoretical approach is discernible, it is behavioral. For example, the study differentiated *psychological morale* (reports of subjective or affective states, such as an individual's willingness to surrender) from *behavioral morale* (activities such as absenteeism, crime, and black marketeering) and combined them to obtain an index of *general morale*. The criterion for inclusion was that the reaction be measurable, either by adding up results of individual reports or by using collective yardsticks such as crime rates. This approach exemplifies Marquis's (1944) description of American psychologists' eagerness to apply their empirical techniques in war research. The study's purpose was not to influence wartime strategy, but to evaluate the effects of strategic bombing as a guide to future military actions.

Because of its empirical, behavioral orientation this report did not reiterate stereotypical images of the German national character. Indeed, from the investigators' standpoint it was almost irrelevant that their subjects were Germans. They did produce one militarily useful counterintuitive finding: Morale was disrupted most not by regular heavy bombing, but by irregular moderate bombing. Heavy bombing stimulated the will to resist, at least in some proportion of the population, and regular bombing allowed societies to reorganize to accommodate it. Moderate bombing inflicted enough destruction to be disruptive and disheartening, and irregularity prevented the development of new patterns of life.

The SBS evidently made little use of external consultants. One exception occurred in late November 1944, when Gordon Allport was "officially asked . . . to assemble 'a priori analysis' from psychologists on the probable effects of strategic bombing upon civilian morale in enemy countries." He wrote to his former colleagues in the 1940–1941 Harvard morale seminars, enclosing a list of questions pertaining primarily to German reactions (SBS, Entry 6/7, Box 70, Folder 64 b q 1, Allport letter). He submitted nine responses, one of which was lengthy and reflective—from psychologist Franklin Fearing, who had a long-standing interest in psychological interpretation of historical events (Fearing, 1927). But this was an exercise in sheer speculation, not remotely scientific: The respondents lacked access to official information, and Allport enjoined them to reply within a few days. Indeed, he was willing to accept the result of "an evening's discussion with a seminar group" or "a more informal chat with colleagues" (Allport letter, p. 2). This consultation amounted to little except an indication that the SBS had inadequate sources in Germany at that time and so was eager for even off-the-cuff hypothesizing.

### *Military Studies of German Prisoners and Civilians*

While the war continued, research on Germany was often speculative. Opportunities for direct empirical or clinical study were rare; but the armed services did conduct numerous psychological surveys of German prisoners of war (POWs), and later of German civilian populations. During the First World War, military psychiatrists had treated casualties while psychologists administered intelligence tests; by the end of the Second, some of both were evaluating captured enemies. The most famous such case from the early war years was Rudolf Hess, who flew almost literally into the arms of the British Army, which then provided him with a host of physicians and psychiatrists to enliven his captivity (Rees, 1948).

Hess's case was newsworthy but unproductive of larger understanding. More important work, such as administration of questionnaires and psychiatric interviews to groups of ordinary POWs, received less attention. Primitive by later standards, these instruments nonetheless allowed investigators to gauge the frequency, depth, and distribution of particular attitudes and to correlate them with basic demographic data and environmental circumstances, such as the current war situation.

One such study commenced in late 1943 in Italy and continued in Great Britain and France after D-Day. Initiated by the Psychological Warfare Branch of the U.S. Fifth Army, it was extended by the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) with staff from OWI's Overseas Branch, including psychologists Jerome Bruner, Donald McGranahan (formerly of the OSS Psychology Division), Morris Janowitz, and Heinz L. Ansbacher, who published the results (Ansbacher, 1948). This and similar studies were intended not only to help propaganda intelligence officers undermine enemy morale, but also to prepare the way for remolding German collective psychology after the war. Psychological understanding of widespread social attitudes in their historical context was to assist Allied authorities in projecting and controlling future events and so transform German history.

POWs were not the only subjects of these studies. Young people were a special concern to Allied authorities, as they had been to Erikson. Adolescents were the focus of a survey conducted in western Germany after V-E Day by Donald McGranahan and Morris Janowitz (1946) with the Intelligence Section of the Information Control Division of the U.S. Armed Forces, European Theatre (USAFET). As in the POW study, McGranahan and Janowitz focused on the values underlying their subjects' behavior and the possibility of reeducating German young people to instill democratic and tolerant views. Their explanation of antidemocratic attitudes owed little to concepts of German national character; instead they blamed Nazi ideology and German inexperience with self-government. They recognized rampant confusion, fear, and disengagement among their young subjects, but they also took note of more hopeful signs, particularly a group of anti-Nazi girls educated at a private school (McGranahan & Janowitz, 1946).

Also in 1945, unnamed members of SHAEF's Psychological Warfare Division interviewed a sample population of about 100 in southern Germany to "pretest German civilian reactions to a proposed picture booklet entitled *KZ*, dealing with five concentration camps" and to reveal "the broader attitudes of the German population to the problem of atrocities" ("Atrocities: A Study of German Reactions," OWI, Entry 367, Box 294, Folder E: Germany 1.20.22). This study, whose design and wording suggest the participation of one or more behavioral scientists, concluded that most Germans did not feel guilt for activities in the concentration and death camps, but it did not invoke German national character to explain this reaction. In fact, the study did not attempt to penetrate beneath the surface of its subject. What is striking is its insensitivity in applying the methods of psychological interviewing, public opinion, and market surveys to scrutinize the test sales of a pamphlet on the Holocaust. Empirical research methods had found their ridiculous—and frightening—extension, as the war and its aftermath pushed investigators to quantify the unmeasurable.

### **Conclusion**

Most wartime behavioral research was narrowly focused, educational or empirical or behavioral, and pragmatic (Britt & Morgan, 1946; Dallenbach, 1946; Hunter, 1946; Lepley, 1947). Much of it repeated standard stereotypes of German national character. Some of it, like the pretest just discussed, simply applied existing methods to new topics. Some researchers, however, did find opportunities for innovation: Erikson developed his concepts of social character and identity; Langer refined the methods of psychobiography; Murray explored psychology's potential contributions to propaganda and occupation policy; Army interview teams studied how social groups manifested shared values and how their evolution might be shaped. These investigators adhered to no single theory or method, and they usually operated on the periphery of their agencies. Whether speculative or empirical, the strength of their work was openness to a variety of concepts and evidence and resistance to pejorative stereotypes. These studies could have been valuable even in the short term. Policymakers, if they had heeded them, might have dealt with Germany somewhat differently, especially after the war. However, there is no evidence that these works were even seen by high-level leaders, much less influenced their decisions, so their significance lies more within the profession and its long-term development and relations with other disciplines.

More of these studies emanated from the OSS than elsewhere, perhaps because of its novelty and unconventional status among government agencies. Donovan's approach to intelligence gathering transcended the military and diplomatic traditions of the field, he respected psychology and psychoanalysis, and his imaginative use of academic experts created opportunities for interesting research. In agencies whose mission was more strictly defined and whose leaders were more orthodox and task



oriented, behavioral scientists found less scope for such work.

Even in the OSS, however, pragmatism eventually prevailed. As Robert Tryon wrote to William Langer in 1941,

This is no time to engage in psychological theorizing. . . . Our important task is to discover what are the important social ways of people and the techniques for modifying or fostering them. To squabble, or to be preoccupied by, theoretical "explanations" will result in a great loss of time and energy. (OSS PD, Box 1, Folder 42)

In downplaying the important underpinnings of practical tasks, he and his colleagues implied that theory is not necessary to arrive at the truth—a view that thoughtful practitioners and historians of psychology would repudiate today. Nevertheless, the results of wartime research continued to infuse postwar scholarship in ways that have had profound effects on the discipline (Caphshew, 1986; Gilgen, 1982; Katz, 1989).

Wartime agencies, and the broader issues raised by the war, stimulated research in psychology, particularly social psychology and related areas, and especially research that crossed disciplinary boundaries. Many wartime investigators returned to influential academic or clinical positions after the war, and many of them pursued or inspired continuing study of Germany. In 1947, Geoffrey Gorer praised these researchers for having been "willing to risk their scientific reputations in an attempt to give an objective description of the characters of our enemies" (cited in Dicks, 1950, p. 196). In fact, the best of them found that their wartime efforts enhanced their work and their postwar reputations, not only because of its content, but because of the strong bonds forged among the Ivy League "old boys" of the war agencies and between them and the postwar federal government, think tanks, and universities (Winks, 1987). This expanded influence may be the most important—and problematic—long-term legacy of wartime psychological research on Germany.

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