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THE GERMAN SOLDIER

Fanatic or Weaking?

The German soldier who faces the Allies on the home fronts in 1945 is a very different type from the members of the Army of 1939 which Hitler called "an Army such as the world has never seen". The German soldier is one of several different types depending on whether he is a veteran of 4 or 5 years, or a new recruit. The veteran of many fronts and many retreats is a prematurely aged, war weary cynic, either discouraged and disillusioned or too stupefied to have any thought of his own. Yet he is a seasoned campaigner, most likely a noncommissioned officer, and performs his duties with the highest degree of efficiency.

The new recruit, except in some crack SS units, is either too young or too old and often in poor health.

He has been poorly trained for lack of time but, if too young, he makes up for this by a fanaticism bordering on madness. If too old, he is driven by the fear of what his propagandists have told him will happen to the Fatherland in case of an Allied victory, and even more by the fear of what he has been told will happen to him and his family if he does not carry out orders exactly as given. Thus even the old and sick perform, to a certain point, with the courage of despair.

The German High Command has been particularly successful in placing the various types of men where they best fit, and in selecting those to serve as cannon fodder, who are told to hold out to the last man, while every effort is made to preserve the elite units, which now are almost entirely part of the *Waffen-SS*. The German soldier in these units is in a preferred category and is the backbone of the German Armed Forces. He is pledged never to surrender and has no moral code except allegiance to his organization. There is no limit to his ruthlessness.

The mentality of the German soldier of 1945 is the final result of that policy of militarism which, even in the 19th century, caused a famous German general to recommend that soldiers should be trained to ask of their superiors: "Master, order us where we may die."