

## MALINGERING PSYOP CAMPAIGN – WORLD WAR 2



A WWII Medical Station

Certain psychological warfare themes are so popular that they are used over and over again. We mention some of them in our other articles; reward leaflets for weapons, the threat of aerial bombing, and mine awareness leaflets to give just a few examples. Another leaflet theme that is popular is the attempt to convince an enemy that through malingering, pretending to be ill or causing an injury to yourself, you can survive the war in a comfortable hospital while your buddies fight and die at the front. This theme first became popular during WWII when all the warring sides prepared leaflets telling the enemy how to feign sickness. The Axis powers were open about their propaganda and dropped them from aircraft over Allied troops, while the Allies were more circumspect and most of their malingering leaflets were “Black” leaflets or brochures that pretended to be something else, usually an informative or patriotic publication. This camouflage allowed the German soldier to carry the enemy propaganda without the danger of being caught and possibly charged as a traitor.

The combat medic is required to get injured personnel back on the firing line as soon as possible. Whereas the civilian medic is expected to treat the most severely injured victim first, in combat situations the military medic needs to treat the lesser injured soldier and put his weapon back in action. The malingering leaflet does just the opposite. It attempts to convince the healthy soldier that by using a trick to infer illness he can take his rifle off the line and be sent to the rear. It is obvious that this is an extremely dangerous type of PSYOP, and if successful, could strip the front line of its fighting forces.



U.S. General Patton Slapped a Soldier  
he thought was Malingering during WWII

Combat psychological symptoms have been called shell shock, battle fatigue and PTSD, and they are just now beginning to be fully understood.

It is import to understand that this type of propaganda is a two-edged sword. The primary emphasis is to get the enemy to malingering. However, even if does not, the enemy doctor, knowing about the leaflets and their message is liable to consider an individual that is actually injured to be a malingerer. The lack of medical attention or the forcing of a sick soldier back to the front line will cause a collapse in morale that could be just as valuable as if the soldier followed the suggestions of the leaflet.

The propagandists does not care if the enemy malingers or is sent back to the lines untreated and rails against his own commanders and officers for their lack of care about his health. For the propagandist, it is a win-win situation.

U.S. Army Major Alfred O. Ludwig discusses the problem of malingerers in "Malingering in Combat Soldiers."

*From the military-legal point of view, malingering is punishable under the 96th Article of War. It is usually difficult, if not impossible, to furnish unassailable proof of guilt in such case, and even when the malingerer is convicted and punished he succeeds in his purpose, the evasion of dangerous duty. Practically, the major object in dealing with such cases is to return the malingerer to duty...For the military psychiatrist the detection and management of malingering has an importance much greater than its actual frequency would seem to justify. A few undetected instances of malingering can be highly demoralizing to the troops and destructive of the psychiatrist's prestige and effectiveness.*

*The first requisite for the correct diagnosis of malingering is a high degree of alertness. Since psychiatric syndromes are occasionally simulated, it is necessary to be familiar with the various components of the combat neurosis. With sufficient experience it is usually not difficult to differentiate between the atypical behavior of the simulator and the sometimes bizarre reactions of patients with severe anxiety states or hysteria. The simulator is constantly on guard against detection. He makes false or contradictory statements or resorts to easily refuted lies. Sometimes he overplays his hand in an attempt to convince observers that he is really ill. The alarming nature of his actions may sometimes trick the unwary. The patient who is obviously dramatizing should always be suspected. The malingerer is prone to feign emotional disorder, perhaps because he thinks that detection by objective methods is difficult. Amnesia is the most frequently simulated symptom. We have come to look with great suspicion on patients who present themselves with it story of complete amnesia, especially when the usual signs and symptoms of the severe anxiety state are lacking.*

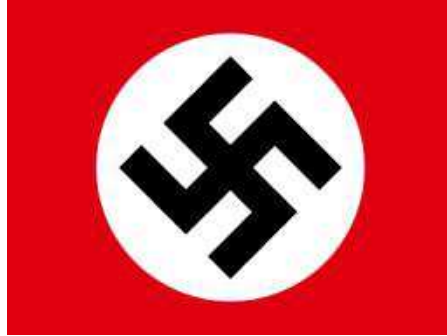
The British medical Journal *Lancet* mentions a German malingering leaflet to British troops<>

*In general, the pamphlet advises, a man must act as if he hated to be ill, stick to one set of symptoms, and "Don't tell the doctor too much!"*

*Recipes for twelve diseases follow. Samples: "Artificial skin inflammation...Take three times daily...one teaspoonful of a 10% solution of iodine potassium in a glass of water...until a scarlet-like affection of the skin results...Iodine potassium is a completely harmless medicine...*

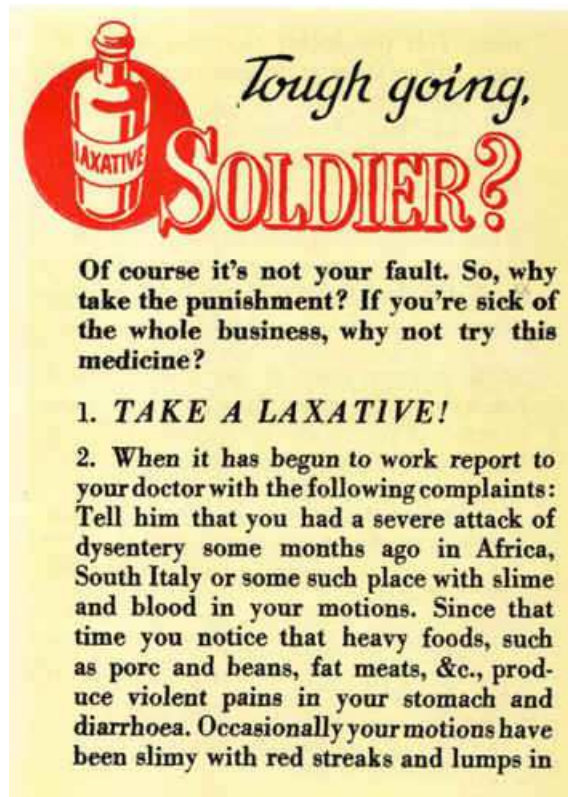
*Stomach ulcer. For a number of months you have been suffering of gnawing and burning pains...especially violent 15 to 30 minutes after meals. Heavy foods...fatty meals and greasy foods do not agree with you...The doctor will probably send you to hospital for observation. Very important...At the hospital, take a portion of dried blood powder every evening. The blood test in your stools will be positive.*

*Heart disease. Smoke 20 to 30 cigarettes a day. But if you normally smoke as much, then you might double that number...Take four [digitalis] tablets daily for one or two weeks... Report to the doctor with the following complaints: You do not feel well and are short of breath after exertions...Occasionally you have attacks of pain in the heart region...There was cold sweat on your forehead during the attack and you had a feeling as though you were going to die...*



### German Malingering Propaganda

An entire series of German leaflets used this theme of faking sickness to avoid combat. The German “AM” leaflets were dropped on American troops in Italy starting about January 1945. There are at least thirteen such “AM” leaflets, and there could be more. It is believed that the code stands for *Amerikaner medizinische Ratschlage* (American addresses, medical advice). In general the leaflets are black text with a bit of bright red color to catch the attention of the American soldier. We will illustrate a few of them and briefly discuss the types of propaganda that is found on others leaflets of this series.



Leaflet AM1

AM1 depicts a bottle labeled “Laxative” on the front and the text in part:

*Tough Going Soldier?*

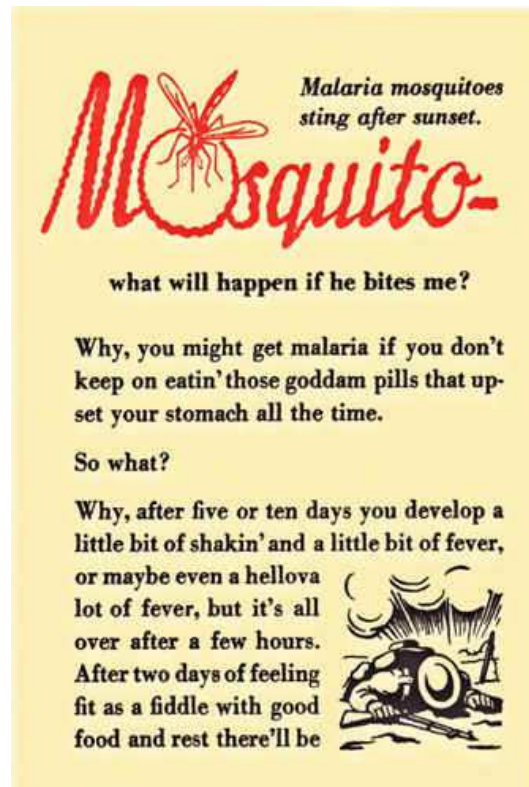
*Of course its not your fault. So, why take the punishment? If you're sick of the whole business, why not try this medicine?*

*TAKE A LAXATIVE!*

*When it has begun to work report to your doctor with the following complaints: Tell him you had a severe attack of dysentery some months ago in Africa, South Italy or some such place with slime and blood in you motions...*

*Stick to your story at the hospital, and don't forget to take a laxative from time to time. If you're clever, you can keep up the game for weeks and months...*

*The disease is amoebic dysentery; but for Pete's sake, don't tell the doctor that, let him find out for himself.*



Leaflet AM2

Leaflet AM2 depicts a mosquito on the front and the text is part:

*Malaria mosquitoes sting after sunset.*

*Mosquito – what will happen if he bites me?*

*Why, you might get malaria if you don't keep on eatin' those goddam pills that upset your stomach all the time.*

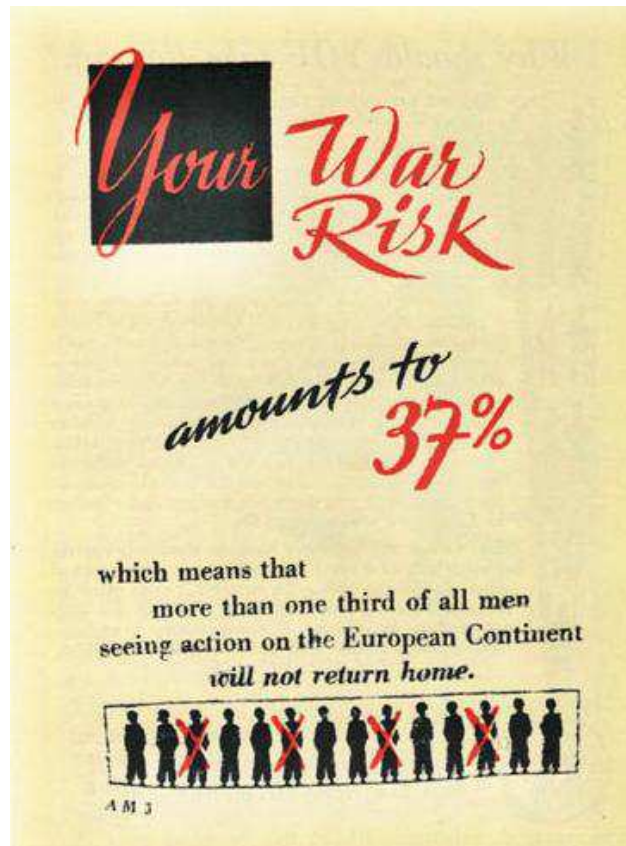
*So what?*

*Why, after five or ten days you develop a little bit of shakin' and a little bit of fever...*

*How often are you gonna repeat that?*

*Oh, two, three, five, six times, well, until the doctor cures you with his qui-nine or ten tablets...*

One of the interesting aspects of this mention of quinine is that there were also black leaflets that implied that quinine would destroy the soldier's sex urge forever. It was hoped that in order to preserve their libido, some soldiers would refuse to take their issued pills, thus making them susceptible to malaria.



Leaflet AM3

AM3 is one of the most interesting leaflets considering the current attack on smoking across America and the Western world. Fourteen soldiers are depicted on the front of the leaflet with four being covered by a red "X." The text is in part:

*Your war risk amounts to 37%, which means that more than one third of all men seeing action on the European Continent will not return home.*

The back gives some hints about how the soldier might avoid combat:

*Smoke 20 to 30 cigarettes a day. Get hold of digitalis tablets...and take four tablets daily for 1 to 2 weeks...Report to the doctor...you do not feel well and are short of breath...you have attacks of pain in the heart region...the doctor will probably have an electrocardiogram done, which as a result of digitalis will show typical signs of disease...*



Leaflet AM4

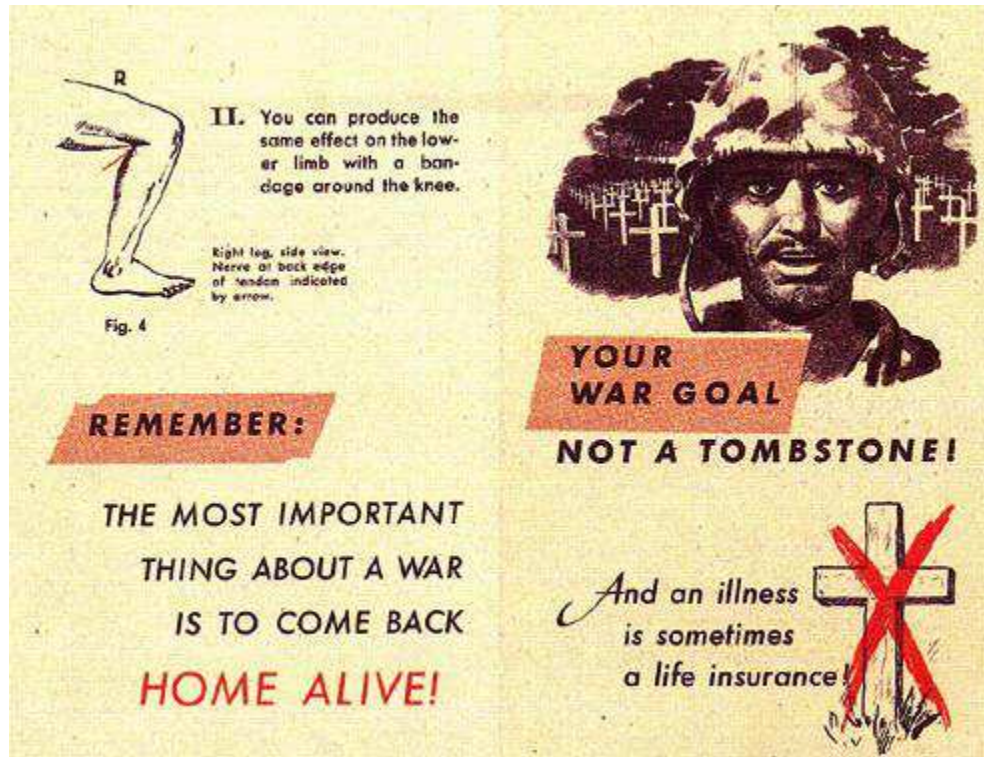
AM4 depicts a man driving a woman in car (curiously, the man drives from the right side so the Germans might have got confused and thought of a British highway). The text is in part:

*Death or Life – which is your way?*

*The following suggestions may help you avoid becoming a dead hero!*

*Directions for producing the symptoms of yellow jaundice.*

*Get hold of 30 to 40 digitalis tablets...eat a lot of chocolate...do not clean you teeth or rinse your moth for a number of days...take one gram of picric acid...the skin and white or your eyes will become yellow...*



Leaflet AM5 front

Leaflet AM5 depicts and American soldier on the front. The text is in part:

*YOUR WAR GOAL – NOT A TOMBSTONE*

*And an illness is sometimes a life insurance.*

The leaflet has been folded to make four sides. It opens to depict three illustrations of arms and legs and various places where pressure can cause a temporary paralysis. Examples are:

*Before going to bed wrap a round stone, eraser or short piece of rubber tubing in gauze tissue and fasten firmly to exert pressure on spot "X" (where your funny bone is located...when a sufficient degree of paralysis has resulted report to a doctor*

# How to produce a temporary paralysis:

I. 1) Before going to bed wrap a round stone, eraser or short piece of rubber tubing in gauze tissue and fasten firmly to exert pressure on spot x (x is the spot where your "funnybone" is located) with tight bandage and allow to remain over night. Take bandage off in the morning.

2) Repeat for several days in succession until there is a numb feeling in your forearm and hand. The numbness and lack of strength which remains for only a few minutes after the first treatments, will last for an increasing length of time in the course of further treatment.



Fig. 1

Right arm.  
x marks nerve at location of "funnybone".



Fig. 2  
Left arm.  
rear view.

3) When a sufficient degree of paralysis has resulted report to doctor. Describe exactly what you feel; tell him that the condition which started suddenly is becoming worse and worse in the course of time.

4) Continue bandaging your arm from time to time to keep up paralysis, but under no circumstances let the doctor find any traces of the bandage. If there are bandage marks on your arm better not report until they are gone which is usually the case after 24 hours at the latest.



Fig. 3

Right leg.  
rear view. Nerve  
coloured red.

Leaflet AM5 back


The back page depicts a bended leg and the text in part:

*You can produce the same effect on the lower limbs with a bandage around the knee...*

*Remember: The most important thing about a war is to come back home alive!*



**WORLD  
WAR  
No. 2**



**IS ALMOST OVER!**

**ARE YOU GOING TO BE  
ONE OF ITS LAST VICTIMS?**

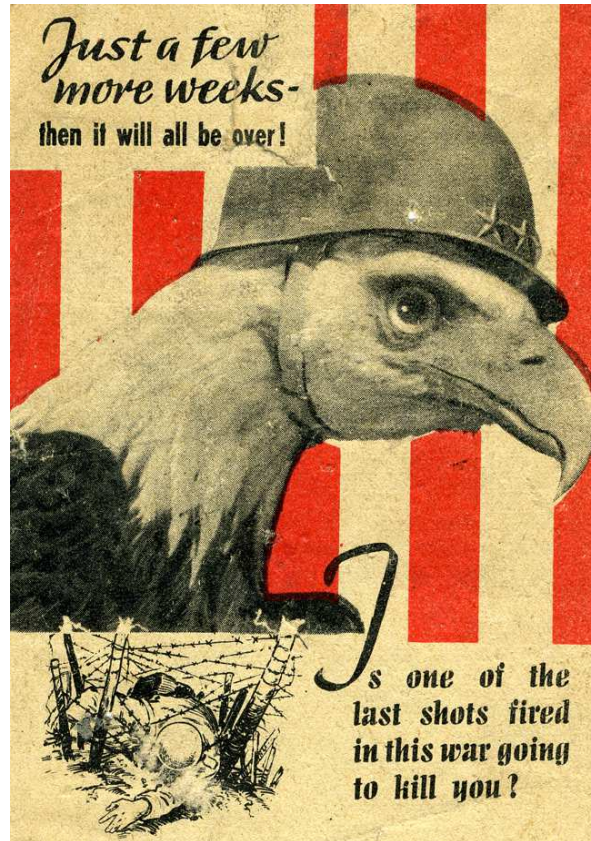
Here is one way of **reducing your risk**:

- 1** Take a silver nitrate stick and rub a small area of your tonsils with the tip of the stick.
- 2** Dissolve a small quantity of yellow mustard or ginger in water. The solution is strong enough when it produces a burning sensation on the tip of your tongue.

**→ 3**

Leaflet AM6

Leaflet AM6 Depicts a clock on the front and an open mouth on the back. This leaflet explains that by putting silver nitrate, yellow mustard and a pinch of gunpowder in your throat you can show all the signs of a sore throat.



Leaflet AM7

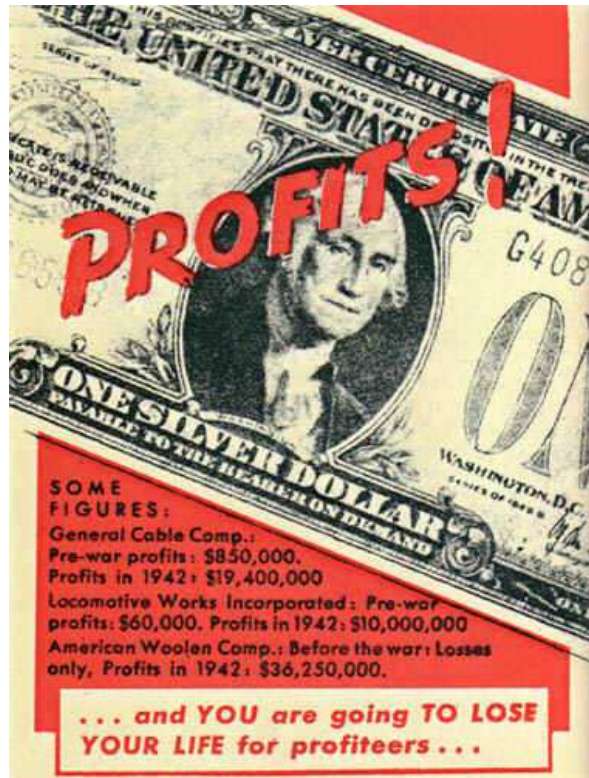
Leaflet AM7 depicts an American Eagle wearing a helmet on the front and the text in part:

*Just a few more weeks - then it will be over!*

*Is one of the last shots fired in this war going to kill you?*

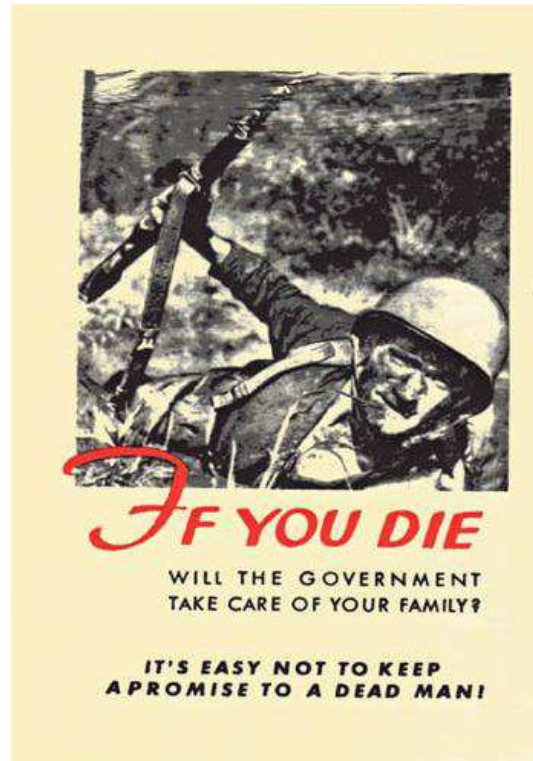
The text on the back tells the American soldier to find "Thyroxine" tablets which will push the pulse rate up to over 100 beats a minute. Tell the doctor of nervousness, weight loss, inability to sleep and sudden temper tantrums and you will be taken off the front lines.

Leaflet AM8 depicts the Statue of Liberty and instructions on how a soldier can use animal blood mixed with his food to cause major stomach problems.



Leaflet AM9

Leaflet AM9 depicts an American dollar bill on the front and mentions how much money the profiteers are making at home. It advises soldiers to develop a cough by smoking 20-30 cigarettes a day that simulate tuberculosis. If asked for a sputum sample, the soldier is advised to mix in a drop or two of his own blood.



Leaflet AM11

Leaflet AM11 depicts a soldier on the battlefield holding what looks like an M1 carbine. This leaflet advises the American soldier how to simulate eczema. Some of the text is:

*Scratch surface of skin with edge of a piece of glass so that red lines and scratches , but no bleeding results...grind up roots and bark of daphne tree(see illustration below) and extract juice by pressing out thoroughly...report to doctor when skin affection has developed sufficiently...*



AM12 front

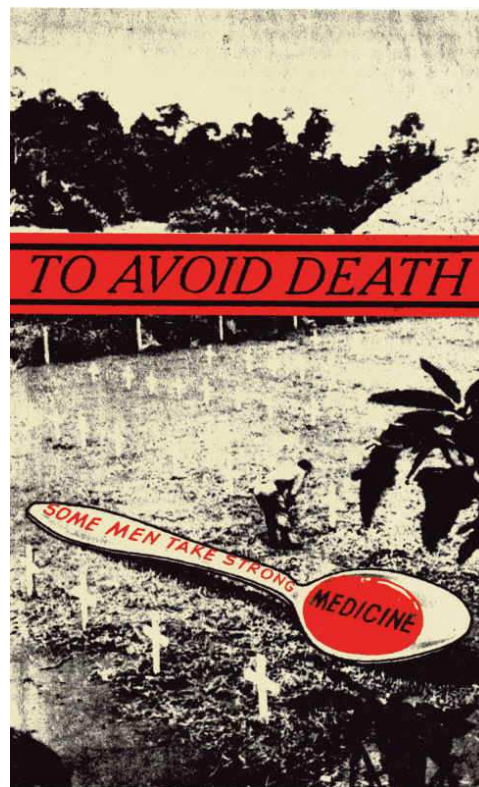
Leaflet AM12 depicts an American soldier with his M1 rifle over his shoulder. The text on the front is:

*YOU HAVE DONE YOUR PART - BUT MILLIONS OF MEN FIT FOR SERVICE ARE STILL AT HOME - WHY SHOULD YOU TAKE THEIR RISK ALSO?*



AM12 back

The leaflet opens to depict a syringe and instructions on how the soldier can give himself a urinary infection.



Leaflet AM13

Leaflet AM13 depicts a spoon full of medicine on a cemetery covered with crosses. The text is:

*TO AVOID DEATH SOME MEN TAKE STRONG MEDICINE*

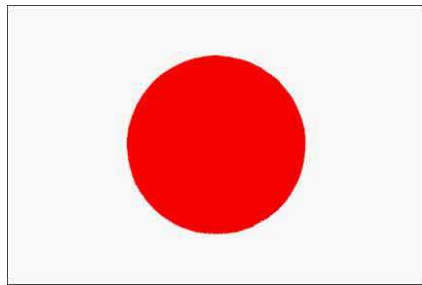
When opened, and on the back page, the leaflet depicts various places that a soldier could shoot himself with the least chance of doing permanent damage. There are narrations of six alleged soldiers who used this means to avoid combat. An example is:

*N. N. shot himself through the muscle group of his right shoulder 2 – 3 inches below the bony ridge of the shoulder bone...he used a regulation German Army pistol and German ammunition...*

The Germans also used matchbooks to disseminate malingering propaganda. Issy Pilowski says in *Abnormal Illness Behavior*, John Wiley & Sons, 1997:

*The information was dropped in what appeared to be books of matches but which actually contained information printed on a long strip of thin paper, which folded up concertina-style into the covers of the match book. On this strip were found detailed instructions on how to simulate conditions such as angina, active pulmonary tuberculosis, and a neurological lesion causing “foot drop”...produced by placing a small stone or pebble over the neck of the fibula and tying it firmly in place with a rolled up handkerchief or some other piece of cloth.*

Pilowski mentions one case where a number of tankers showed up at “sick call” with a condition similar to the “foot drop” symptom; a weakness in the right foot. The doctor’s immediately suspected malingering knowing of the information that had been dropped on the troops. Further investigation determined that all the men were tank gunners who sat in a cramped position with boxes of ammunition pressing against their leg. The soldiers were found to have an injury caused by their duty, and were medically treated rather than charged as malingerers.



Japanese Malingering Propaganda



It is Dangerous to Read the Following

Paul Linebarger mentions Japanese malingering propaganda in *Psychological Warfare*:

*One of the favorite targets of black propaganda is the malingerer. Suspicion of successful malingering inevitably hurts the morale of a unit. Even if the enemy's instructions are not followed, the troops may suspect genuine psychoneurotics of having faked their troubles. Almost all participants in World War II issued such instructions. This is a Japanese leaflet from the Philippines, 1944-1945.*

The front on the folded leaflet depicts a beautiful girl reading a letter and the text: *PLEASE DO NOT OPEN*. The back depicts a claw-like hand. When opened, the leaflet is entitled: *IT IS DANGEROUS TO READ THE FOLLOWING*, and contains 13 paragraphs that contain various hints on how one might be medically diagnosed as neurotic. Curiously, the Japanese never tell the soldier to use any of the methods or even recommend that the soldier act in a cowardly way. The paragraphs tell him what not to do. Of course, they hoped that the finder would realize that by reversing the message and acting in the ways identified, the soldier might be hospitalized and be one less that the Japanese would have to face on the firing line. Five of the thirteen Japanese hints are:

*Don't pretend lunacy. Your surgeon will detect such deception and you are sure to be tried by court martial. Or, if you succeed in passing as a lunatic, you will be invalidated home without any more chance to rejoin your comrades at the front.*

*Don't fall into the habit of glancing sideways at your comrades-in-arms. Your surgeon dislikes such a habit, as it predicts the approaching menace of neuroses.*

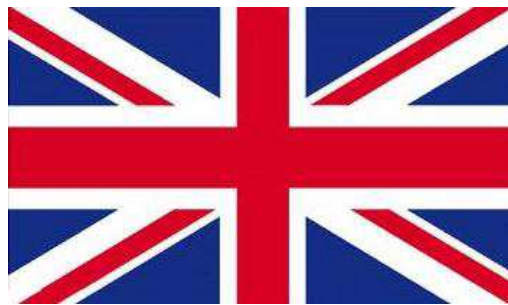
*Don't eat your own excrement or drink your own urine in the presence of others. If you do, you are sure to be branded as a lunatic, however warmly you may protest.*

*Don't mumble the same words immediately after you have spoken them. If you practice it repeatedly, your surgeon's verdict will inevitably be neurosis.*

*Don't imitate an epileptic fit. If you practice it for three days you will certainly have a real one. Then you are on your way to lunacy.*

The same leaflet is mentioned by Barak Kushner in *The Thought War – Japanese Imperial Propaganda*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2006. I suspect that Kushner never saw the actual leaflet because he says in part:

*Americans caricatured Japanese wartime propaganda...They considered the English language propaganda the Japanese produced as inept...One Japanese leaflet, for example, had a beautiful nude woman on one side and on the other listed thirteen "dangerous action." The leaflet had such outlandish content and so many grievous spelling errors that it probably became the butt of many platoon jokes...This leaflet was directed toward Allied soldiers in Southeast Asia and Australia.*



British Malingering Propaganda

The British produced a great deal of malingering propaganda booklets and brochures. They were usually disguised so that officers and non-commissioned officers would not identify them in the hands of their troops.

I am going to illustrate a few such items but should point out that the expert in this area of British black propaganda is my good friend Lee Richards. Lee is in the process of writing a book on the subject and already offers a booklet that depicts and translates some of the British malingering propaganda. He says:

*In 1942 the "black" propaganda section of the British Political Warfare Executive (PWE) produced the first in a range of disguised booklets designed to assist would be malingering German soldiers and munitions workers to fake illness to avoid military service or compulsory factory work. The most famous version was called Krankheit rettet – "Illness Saves by Doctor Do-Good." The booklet informed its reader how to simulate a multitude of illnesses and diseases from a simple throat infection to life-threatening tuberculosis. It has been translated and reproduced for readers and historians with 21 illustrations. More information on this booklet is available at [www.lulu.com/content/320613](http://www.lulu.com/content/320613).*

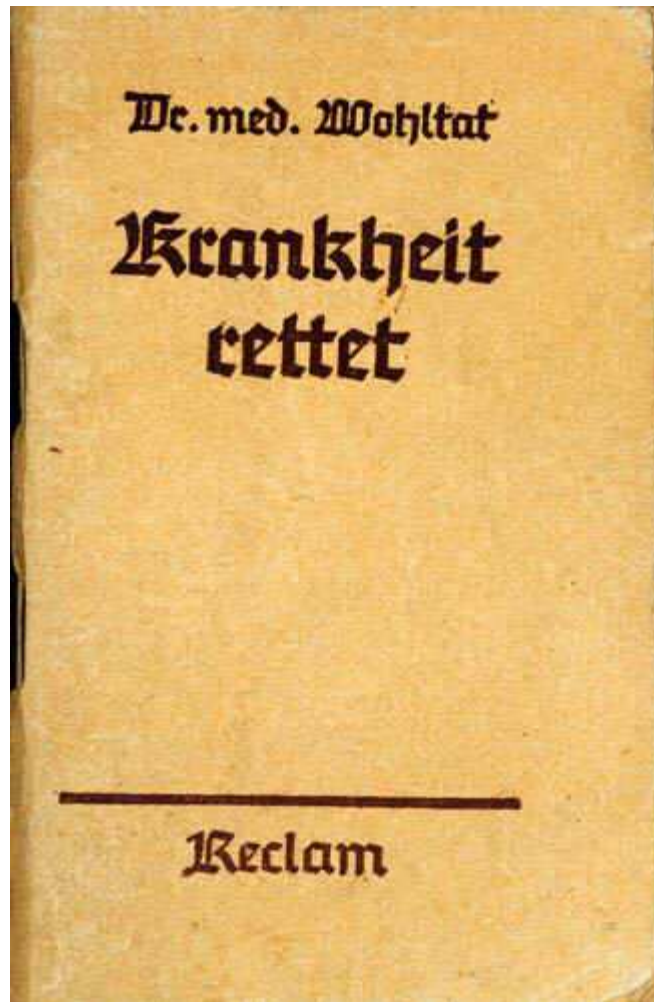


Disguised British Malingering Booklets  
(Courtesy Lee Richards – [www.Psywar.org](http://www.Psywar.org))



Sefton Delmer was one of the stars of Britain's propaganda campaigns. After leaving university he was recruited by the Daily Express to become head of its new Berlin Bureau. While in Germany he met and became the first British journalist to interview Adolf Hitler. In the 1932 German election Delmer traveled with Hitler on his private aircraft. During this period Delmer was criticized for being a Nazi sympathizer and for a time the British government thought he was in the pay of the Nazi regime. The Nazi leaders were convinced that Delmer was a member of the British Secret Service. He reported on the German western offensive in 1940.

Delmer returned to England and worked, for a time, as an announcer for the German service of the BBC. In September 1940 he was recruited by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) to organize black propaganda to Nazi Germany. Delmer said about malingering leaflets:

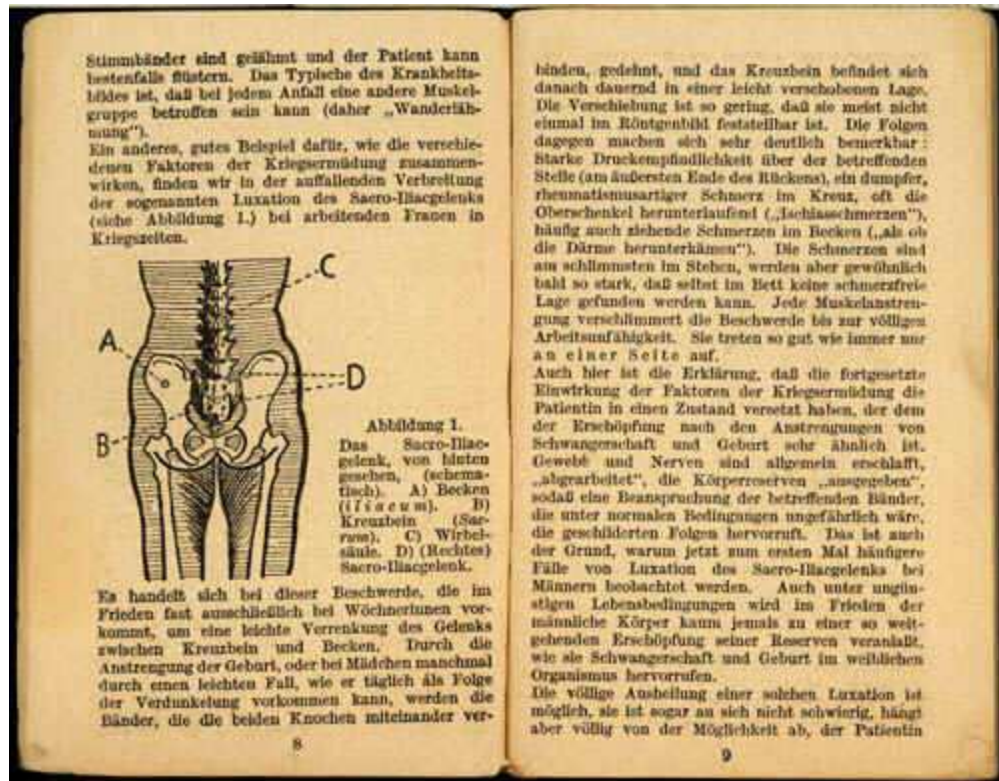


Krankheit rettet  
(Courtesy Lee Richards – [www.Psywar.org](http://www.Psywar.org))

*Similar thinking underlay our handbook teaching Germans how to malingering and trick their doctors into granting them a spell of sick leave. We had got this up in a number of different disguises, as a German Navy handbook on Physical Training, as a Hymn book, as a railway time-table, as an almanac and even as a straightforward paperback with the title *Krankheit rettet . . . von Dr. med. Wilhelm Wohltat* ("Sickness Saves you by William Benefactor, M.D.").*

*One disguise which appealed to me-as a non-smoker was a wafer-paper version which was packed inside a well-known German make of cigarette papers for smokers who "rolled their own." In the P.T. handbook, as in the Hymn book and the time-tables, the first few pages were identical copies of the German original. In the cigarette packets*

too, the first papers were genuine cigarette papers. It was only when you got further inside all of these "covers" that our "health instructions" made their appearance.



Krankheit rettet – Inside pages  
(Courtesy Lee Richards – [www.Psywar.org](http://www.Psywar.org))

*The techniques for malingering which we recommended had been specially devised by the late Dr. J. T. McCurdy of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a wise old one-eyed Canadian. McCurdy's peace-time job was to practice and teach the healing of mental illness. Now he reveled in applying his expertise against Hitler's Germans in the reverse.*

*Dr. McCurdy laid down two fundamental rules for malingerers. Firstly "the malingerer must give the physician the impression that here is a patriotic citizen, dedicated to his duty, who has the misfortune to be ill, despite himself." Secondly the would-be malingerer must never tell the doctor that he is ill, that he is suffering from some specific disease, or volunteer symptoms.*

*"One single symptom," said the handbook, "which the doctor has discovered by his own questions, is worth ten which the patient has volunteered." Then the booklet proceeded to enumerate the symptoms the patient should allow the doctor to discover in examination. It classified these symptoms not by illness, but by what kind of a leave was desired by the patient, whether he wanted a short respite from duty, a longer one, or whether he wanted to be exempt for the duration of the war.*

*"Our purpose in preparing this little booklet," I explained to the officers "is twofold, as in the case of the sabotage stickers. On the one hand I hope it will stimulate malingering among the Germans, on the other hand I hope it will cause German doctors who are warned about the handbook, as they are bound to be, to suspect malingering where there is in fact no malingering. I have high hopes that right now they are sending genuinely sick men and women back to duty, possibly even to spread infection, because they believe their symptoms have been faked up with the aid of this unspeakable fellow Dr. med. Wohltat.*

*My underground clients loved it. Alas, things did not turn out altogether as I had intended. For the German authorities were so impressed with the potentialities of Dr. McCurdy's handbook that they had it translated into English and shot it into the British and American lines. This German-made English version of our opus even*

outlasted hostilities. Copies of it were fetching a good price in London's Soho right up to 1952. For Britain's new Welfare State had put a premium on the wisdom it purveyed.

Ellic Howe, the PWE forger who actually produced most of the malingering booklets for Sefton Delmer talks about them in *The Black Game*, Michael Joseph, London, 1982:

*H.312 – Malingering booklet (ballistics edition). It was originally published as H.270 “Instructions for Sport in the German Navy.” There were at least 20 other “editions,” each with its own deceptively innocent cover design: miniature hymn books for Roman Catholic and Protestant soldiers, Belgian railway timetables, pocket guides to Oslo, short stories by well-known authors, etc. The text was translated into French, Flemish, Italian and Norwegian. It was also printed as single sheets on very thin Bible paper which were inserted into “Efka” and other cigarette paper packets and in a different and larger format for insertion into a forgery of the envelope for the official Reich lottery tickets. From the last summer of 1942 onwards the “Malingerer” reached members of the German armed forces all over Europe and occasioned countless denunciations on the part of the military and civilian authorities.*

*The “Malingerer” concept was originated by Dr. John McCurdy, Delmer’s psychological advisor, although much of the text appears to have been written by Rene Halkett, who had at one time briefly studied medicine. He tested many of his prescriptions for simulating illness on long-suffering guinea-pigs...The text was gradually expanded from 64 to 104 pages and eventually included useful information for foreign workers, such as advice on how to buy drugs at pharmacies without attracting attention, how to alter doctor’s prescriptions and how to forge rubber stamps ...also how to distil herbs for producing strange symptoms and so on.*

Howe mentions that in 1980 the booklet was reprinted again in Germany and sold to individuals who wanted to make false medical claims for financial support. About 6,000 copies were sold in left-wing bookshops. Since the British had originally prepared the book as a black operation and nobody took credit for authorship, no copyright laws were broken.

Stanley Newcourt-Nowodwoski mentions the booklet and discusses self-inflicted wound in *Black Propaganda*, Sutton Publishing, UK, 2005:

*An extreme option for soldiers was the self-inflicted wound...Dr. Wohltat gave advice on how to do it without leaving the tale-tale powder burns (fire the shot through a loaf of bread). Judging from the numerous Wehrmacht reports and orders on this subject, malingering, and especially self-mutilation, was quite a problem in some units, in spite of an automatic death penalty for the latter.*

Charles Cruickshank mentions malingering propaganda in *The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare 1938 – 1945*, Davis-Poynter, London, 1977. He says in part:

*Handbooks for the use of would-be malingering German soldiers had innocent titles on the outside covers, for example, “Pocket Guide to Oslo,” “The Soldier’s Songbook,” and “Ballistic Tables.” Some of these contained phonetic instructions in ten languages to enable the soldier to ask in every occupied country from Finland to Greece for the things needed to fake the malady of his choice...*

*An order by von Rundstedt said “Recently cases of self mutilation have been increasing on a scale that cannot be tolerated. In future, in all wound cases it must be established whether there is any question of self-mutilation...Moreover, an increasing number of soldiers are suffering from skin diseases. It is learned from enemy propaganda and confirmed by medical specialists that these are caused by injecting petrol which leads to a persistent skin disease. In both types of case the strictest examination must be made; and men found guilty should be summarily tried and shot.”*

Lee Richards discusses the malingering booklets in depth in his article at <http://www.psywar.org/malingering.php>". Some of his comments in regard to the various booklets are:

*These manuals were produced in a wide range of disguises and forms. The first edition, (H.270), Sportvorschrift für die Kriegsmarine initially appeared to be a German navy manual of sports hints. The first few pages contained legitimate sports text but then the manual diverted into its more seditious content. Five thousand copies were sent to the Free French for distribution in December 1942 and were soon scattered across most of Europe.*

A second version followed in January 1943 with the printing on fine, thin Bible paper of 10,000 copies of a small booklet purporting to be a ballistics manual published by the German firm of Actien-Gesellschaft of Nürnberg, (H.312). Then came a mock French-German phrase book titled 1,000 Words of French with 72 pages of malingering tips, (H.363). Various other booklets with camouflaged covers were produced throughout the war including soldiers' Catholic Hymn books, (H.547 and H.691); facsimiles of Winterhilfswerk charity songbooks, (H.436 and H.437); a military manual on Troop Hygiene, (H.1298); a Grieben guidebook to the city of Oslo, (H.690), and a Norwegian medical booklet on the prevention of Venereal Disease, (H.1105). SOE's agents were hugely impressed with another edition in the form of a Yearbook for German Soldiers in the North, (H.766).



Efka – Pyramiden Cigarette Paper

I depicted this illustration of forged cigarette paper in my article “Strange Gifts from Above.” My explanation was:

*During WWII the British forgery section run by Ellic Howe produced cigarette paper to be dropped on Germany on a number of occasions. These black items were given "H" numbers. Some of those known are H.329 (5000 packs of EFKA cigarette paper), H.381 (EFKA-PYRAMIDEN cigarette paper), H.443 (GIZEH cigarette paper), and H.446 (GIZEH cigarette paper). It is known that in some of these cigarette paper packs, of the 50 sheets, at least 10 were printed with malingering instructions. The British prepared a many such malingering documents telling the German worker or serviceman how to feign illness and avoid work or front-line duty.*

Richards continues:

*The production of the Efka cigarette paper malingering packet, (H.381), was one of the most awkward and time consuming jobs for Howe [Ellic Howe - PWE Forger and Printer] but particularly appealed to Delmer being a non-smoker. These tiny colorful Efka-„Pyramiden“ packets, illustrated with camels standing in front of the Egyptian pyramids, should have contained fifty sheets of cigarette paper for the German soldier who preferred to smoke a “roll-up”. Instead the packs contained ten sheets of tightly hand-folded Bible paper reproducing the complete malingering text. Delmer originally had the idea in December 1942 of using cigarette packets and cigarette paper packs as camouflage for propaganda and asked SOE to procure examples for Howe to duplicate. By mid March 1943 he had produced 5,000 copies of the Efka pack. These were a perfect item for covert dissemination. Being so small an agent could transport them easily and drop them into the coat pocket of a German soldier or leave on a restaurant table or the seat of a train or tram.*

*Another disguise concealed the malingering sheets in a Reichslotterie envelope which should have contained State Lottery tickets, (H.542). The front of the envelope boasted the chance of winning 1,000,000 Reichsmarks but potentially something a great deal more valuable was found within.*



H-47 (A/B/C) - Fighting Songs of the R.W.A.

It wasn't just personal injuries that were a form of malingering. It was also possible to sabotage your aircraft, vehicle or ship so that you could not go to war. The British prepared a postcard that appears to be a regular German patriotic song card, but instead gives malingering instructions. They produced about a dozen different black propaganda postcards during WWII. This card is one of three black British sabotage postcards featuring pictures of marines or sailors accompanied by the text of a song. Each card has a different song but all are headed *Kampflied der R.W.A. / Text H. Nackers, Musik Prof Walther Brandt.* (The RWA was the *Reichsamt für Wirtschaftsausbau*, an authority that supported research & development of chemical technology in Germany. In 1938, the RWA strongly recommended the use of poison gas in a coming war). 700 copies of each card were delivered on 9 April 1942 for dissemination to the enemy. The text is:

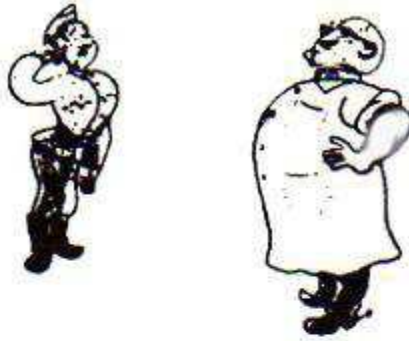
Fighting Song of the R.W.A.  
 Text: H. Nackers  
 Music: Prof. Walther Brandt

*Put sand or water into the lubricating oil.  
 Mix oil or sea water into the batteries.  
 Put sand, lubricating oil or steel chips  
 into the high compressed air equipment.  
 Put bolts or pieces of metal in the main engines  
 And forget to fasten the screws.*

Refrain:

*Save the U-boat comrades from certain death!!  
 Make sure that no submarine will be able to put out to sea,  
 Or, if this is not possible, force its quick return!*

*Put needles into the main engines  
 And make sure that the splint pins get lost  
 Throw cotton waste into oil tanks and pipes>  
 And spread sand into them.  
 Mix the colors in a way that they will not quickly dry  
 But block up the safety valves.*



Als nach Ablauf von acht Tagen  
mit genau den gleichen Klagen  
Gustav Lehmann wiedertam,  
Himmelkloss die Müß' sich nahm,  
seines Leidens Ursach zu ergründen.

Bersessen drauf, etwas zu finden,  
sah unser Stabsarzt bald das Leiden,  
wobei ihm Gustav hübsch bescheiden  
arglistig bot die Vorgeschicht,  
die ihm der Pikkottbösewicht  
nebst den Symptomen hatt' verraten.

American OWI Black Malingering Leaflet

The Office of War Information in Berne produced a black malingering booklet for the Germans. William Warren Wertz Jr. mentions this malingering booklet in his Master of Arts in Political Science thesis entitled *Clandestine Propaganda from Berne (1942–1945): United States Leaflets Subverting Hitler*, and says that the OWI used a light, erotic touch in the invitation to malingering. The booklet contains 14 cartoon panels where a young soldier named Gustav Lehmann meets his girl, dreams of her, kisses her, is assisted in malingering by Medical Infirmary Assistant Neumann, fools his doctor and eventually finds heavenly bliss in the arms of his Paulinchen. The story starts with a warning about Private Müller, who faked an illness, was caught and sent to prison. We are told that Müller was stupid, but Gustav is much smarter. He knows “the great crab louse killer” Neumann for many years and goes to him for help. They sit together over pipes and Neuman explains how to fool the doctor, what to say, and recommends that Gustav rehearses. Some of the long and poetic text is:

*Gustav Lehmann goes on Vacation*

*When Gustav Lehmann returned  
with identical complaints  
eight days later,  
Dr. Himmelkloss tried hard  
to discover the reason for his misery.*

*Keen to solve the mystery,  
our captain in the medical corps soon discovered the misery,  
while Gustav quite modestly and craftily offered*

*the past history of his symptoms  
the piss-pot villain had told him.*

So, Gustav fools the medical Doctor with the resultant moral of the story:

*The moral of the story is that  
when the individual is a villain  
he doesn't need to be really sick  
to get his medical leave certificate*

### Conclusion

These attempts to convince enemy troops to malingering have gone on since WWII. In almost every major war since, leaflets and broadcasts have targeted the enemy and encouraged them to stay home from work and pretend to be sick or to go to work but work more slowly than usual. And what of today? Is malingering still a problem of the military services? The United States Manual *for Courts-Martial* says in part in regard to malingering:

#### *Article 115—Malingering*

*Any person subject to this chapter who for the purpose of avoiding work, duty, or service feigns illness, physical disablement, mental lapse or derangement; or intentionally inflicts self - injury; shall be punished as a court-martial may direct..*

*That the accused feigned illness, physical disablement, mental lapse or derangement, or intentionally inflicted injury upon himself or herself; and That the accused's purpose or intent in doing so was to avoid the work, duty, or service, the punishment shall be:*

*Feigning illness, physical disablement, mental lapse, or derangement. Dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for 1 year.*

*Feigning illness, physical disablement, mental lapse, or derangement in a hostile fire pay zone or in time of war. Dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for 3 years.*

*Intentional self-inflicted injury. Dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and confinement for 5 years.*

This is just a very quick look at the theme of malingering on propaganda leaflets. There are certainly many more such leaflets and publications. As always

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Black Propaganda - The British Malingering & Desertion Campaign against the Third Reich by Lee Richards

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22 March 2004

*An extract from The Black Art - British Clandestine Psychological Warfare against the Third Reich*

...For both PWE [Political Warfare Executive] and SOE [Special Operations Executive] the promotion of malingering and desertion were major goals of their subversive propaganda campaign against the enemy. Thornley [Head of SOE German Section] stated:

It has always been the firm conviction of this Section that the main "self-interest" lines on which German troops can be subverted are:

- (1) Detailed instructions on malingering (to enable them to evade front line service);
- (2) Black incentives and aids to desertion to help them over the various neutral frontiers;
- (3) Accurate information (in black form) on the bombing of German towns and the activities of vast quantities of foreign workers inside Germany. 1

## Malingering

Malingering, shirking, feigning illness could be a very tempting way of encouraging a soldier to get himself off active duty or a worker out of the munitions factory. Delmer [Denis Sefton Delmer - Head of PWE Black Propaganda Section] wanted to appeal to the “inner *Schweinhund*” of the German mind. He wanted him to act in a way that would make his own life more comfortable, a little easier, and less dangerous but in a way that a soldier could consider morally acceptable. If he did not have the opportunity to desert, or would not undertake something so dishonourable, he might think differently about arranging for a few days, or even weeks, in a warm, peaceful hospital bed far behind the frontline. A worker on long, tiring, and dangerous night-shifts in an explosives factory might also welcome a few sick days. To encourage absenteeism and to give potential shirkers the means of putting it into practice, Delmer produced ingenious manuals with step-by-step instructions to fake a wide range of illnesses and ailments from a simple throat infection to a life-threatening disease such as Tuberculosis.

These manuals were produced in a wide range of disguises and forms. The first edition, (H.270), *Sportvorschrift für die Kriegsmarine* initially appeared to be a German navy manual of sports hints. The first few pages contained legitimate sports text but then the manual diverted into its more seditious content. Five thousand copies were sent to the Free French for distribution in December 1942 and were soon scattered across most of Europe. The German High Command was not amused by Britain's latest propaganda innovation. *Wehrmacht* officers were warned about this “devilish” sports manual circulating around the Reich:

In several ways the enemy tries to induce a soldier to simulate ailments... Naturally the enemy knows that decent soldiers do not respond to such smart and mean invitations; he is only concerned with the scallywags who are to be found everywhere. None the less, it is a good thing for Section Officers to keep a careful look out for this sort of poison... 2

A second version followed in January 1943 with the printing on fine, thin Bible paper of 10,000 copies of a small booklet purporting to be a ballistics manual published by the German firm of *Actien-Gesellschaft* of Nürnberg, (H.312). Then came a mock French-German phrase book titled *1,000 Words of French* with 72 pages of malingering tips, (H.363). Various other booklets with camouflaged covers were produced throughout the war including soldiers' Catholic Hymn books, (H.547 and H.691); facsimiles of *Winterhilfswerk* charity songbooks, (H.436 and H.437); a military manual on Troop Hygiene, (H.1298); a *Grieben* guidebook to the city of Oslo, (H.690), and a Norwegian medical booklet on the prevention of Venereal Disease, (H.1105). SOE's agents were hugely impressed with another edition in the form of a Yearbook for German Soldiers in the North, (H.766). Thornley told Delmer, “They consider it an excellent *Multum in parvo* and are going to split their guts to get it around.” Malingering texts for Italian troops were prepared as well. Due to temporary supply difficulties from London, SOE Switzerland also printed locally their own version titled, *Wie erhalte ich mich gesund? Wegweiser für Junge und Alte* (“How do I Keep Healthy? A Guide for Young and Old”).

The production of the *Efka* cigarette paper malingering packet, (H.381), was one of the most awkward and time consuming jobs for Howe [Ellic Howe - PWE Forger and Printer] but particularly appealed to Delmer being a non-smoker. These tiny colourful *Efka*-„*Pyramiden*“ packets, illustrated with camels standing in front of the Egyptian pyramids, should have contained fifty sheets of cigarette paper for the German soldier who preferred to smoke a “roll-up”. Instead the packs contained ten sheets of tightly hand-folded Bible paper reproducing the complete malingering text. Delmer originally had the idea in December 1942 of using cigarette packets and cigarette paper packs as camouflage for propaganda and asked SOE to procure examples for Howe to duplicate. By mid March 1943 he had produced 5,000 copies of the *Efka* pack. These were a perfect item for covert dissemination. Being so small an agent could transport them easily and drop them into the coat pocket of a German soldier or leave on a restaurant table or the seat of a train or tram. In May and June the Admiralty launched aerial bombing attacks on the U-boat pens in the Northern French ports of Brest, La Pallice, Lorient, and St. Nazaire. As part of Operation Bracknell, they wanted subversive propaganda to be dropped on the ports as well to damage U-boat crew's morale and thought the cigarette paper pack malingeringer was the perfect item. 3

Another disguise concealed the malingering sheets in a *Reichslotterie* envelope which should have contained State Lottery tickets, (H.542). The front of the envelope boasted the chance of winning 1,000,000 *Reichsmarks* but potentially something a great deal more valuable was found within.



One of the most widely distributed booklets was titled *Krankheit rettetby Dr. med. Wohltat*. This translates to *Illness Saves by Do Good* and was first produced in this form in May 1943, (H.391). Expanded versions followed, (H.457, H.509, and H.640), and was not only distributed by SOE agents but more extensively by balloon. An enterprising agent in the Middle East came up with a novel method of circulating them. Using a middleman he sold copies of *Illness Saves* to unwilling Axis conscripts with the story that the booklet had actually been produced for the benefit of cowardly Nazi Party members wanting to evade their military duty. Socialists had stolen and smuggled a quantity of the booklets out of Germany, as they did not see why Nazi Party members should be the only ones to enjoy the advantages of this knowledge. 4 As copies spread across Europe the German authorities became worried about its effect on morale. The *Kriegsmarine* had this to say to their troops about it:

The enemy is staking his hopes here on man's baser self, on that moment when, finding himself in a difficult situation, his power of moral resistance has been sapped and he may threaten to weaken... This is the enemy's chance. He does not say: 'Desert, then you will be out of all this', but concentrates on those who, lacking in courage or resolution, do not actually become deserters, but only seek to shun their present duties by simulating illness... Delmer could not have explained his intentions any better. But, the German navy, to scare their servicemen from actually making use of the information, added:

What the enemy does not say and what the victims do not realise is that, quite contrary to the philanthropic pretence, the suggested methods may often produce fatal results. 5

Delmer also had a second objective, regardless of whether potential "skivers" actually carried out the instructions and tried to simulate illness, the German High Command would become suspicious of their own troops and workforce, accusing truly sick people of malingering and therefore increasing friction between the authorities and the people. To some extent this must have happened as military physicians were warned about the contents of the booklets and to be on watch for prospective shirkers. It is possible, as Delmer hoped, that genuinely ill men were sent back to the front certainly resulting in another soldier disenchanted with the Nazi regime; even better if the soldier was returned to active duty with a contagious disease to spread amongst his comrades.

Encouraged by the evident success of the malingering campaign, Thornley thought of a new twist to take the operation a step further. Why not produce a "neat little malingerers' kit" he suggested to Delmer, containing some of the important items needed to fake illness, a tiny gelatine capsule of turpentine, a little picric acid, a few squares of dried foxglove leaves or anything else suitable. With suitable instructions, all could be concealed in what appeared to be a bag of sweets, he recommended. 6

The malingering text was written by PWE's Canadian, one-eyed, resident psychopathologist Dr. John T. MacCurdy. According to Howe, a German refugee, René Halkett, also contributed and even tried out some of the potions and procedures on fellow members of Delmer's staff – fortunately without killing them. 7 The final malingering booklet began with an introduction warning the reader of the dangers of *Kriegsermüdung* (war strain). As a result of total war, the cumulative effect on the body over a number of years of insufficient nourishment, lack of vitamins, physical overexertion, little rest or relaxation, and nervous tension can result in a condition called war-strain, Dr. Wohltat alleged. Due to all these pressures caused by the war, the body can no longer cope, he warned, resulting in a complete breakdown. Unfortunately doctors as well are under physical and political pressure and many fail to notice, or deliberately ignore, the early signs of war-strain in a patient. Consequently it was up to the individual to act in his own self-interest to find a way to get enough rest and to get away from the stress of war before it is too late. "The Saving Illness" is suggested as the way to prevent a total collapse

Sufferers from "war-strain" who are tired, run-down, overworked, who complain about continuous headaches, indigestion, loss of sleep and nerves, are often saved from total breakdown if at the right moment a "proper disease" forces them to relax.

In the same way a small accident, which forces an industrial worker to rest for awhile, will often prevent that person from later becoming the victim of a dangerous accident as the result of over-tiredness.

With this booklet you can find a way of safely simulating an illness and guaranteeing you being put on the sick-list, Dr. Wohltat assures. He continues by persuading the prospective malingerer not to worry about being caught out by a doctor's examination, as long as you follow his medical advice you will be safe. The right attitude is essential when consulting the doctor, "which gives the doctor the impression: Here is a willing worker or good soldier who has the misfortune to be ill very much against his will." Points to follow are: you must not tell the doctor too much; you must clearly show that you have no wish to be ill, and you must make it easy for the doctor to believe there is something wrong with you. The "patient" is encouraged to select an illness from the subsequent chapters, following the

procedures described to the letter and not to make up any erroneous symptoms, else you are asking to be caught out. Generally the patient is not told the name of the illness he has selected. A doctor would become suspicious if the patient suggested that “such-and-such” might be their problem thereby revealing intimate knowledge of the medical profession.

Chapter I – “Help for All” gave advice on a range of diseases useful for escaping any type of factory work or military service. How to fake a severe back pain was the first debilitating health problem illustrated. The prospective patient is advised to place a small walnut or large hazelnut against the large muscles to the left and right side of his spinal column. The nut is held in place by the waistband of his trousers. He then practices movements remembering how the nut causes pain by its pressure on his back. He must learn how to move by not using his back muscles so preventing the discomfort, as he would do if in reality suffering from a severe back problem. Once he has learnt this technique without the nut in place he is ready to visit the doctor to complain of terrible sharp pains in the back. He should be guaranteed a few days sick leave, possibly even weeks and whenever resuming heavy work in the future the back problem can recur. “Beware”, the advice continues, “Don’t be caught off guard. It might be that the doctor tries to trick you into an involuntary movement, by letting something fall to the floor, perhaps, whereupon, as a well-mannered person, you would stoop to pick it up. Never forget that you can only bend over with the greatest difficulty and straighten up again with even more effort.”

The next ailment describes how to produce short-lived partial paralysis by the repeated strapping of a piece of rubber to certain nerves in the arms or legs. It is cast-iron way to make you “*hors de combat*”. But do not worry, no lasting damage will be done, or so you are led to believe.

For people over forty years of age a pain in the chest is an excellent illness to falsify, the text recommends. Precise instructions to explain this problem to a doctor are given, whenever you over-exert yourself you get a dreadful pain in the central part of your breastbone – the exact place is identified in a diagram. This pain is so bad you feel as if you are dying and are totally disabled by it, it becomes impossible to do any physical activity. To guard against exposing your lie, a cautionary note says:

You cannot be found out unless you forget that you cannot exert yourself.

A fellow worker in Brunswick used this complaint with great success. He was dismissed as totally unfit for work and went back to enjoy life (As far as life can be enjoyed nowadays!). Then suddenly, in September, there was an air raid and the man got such a fright that he rushed about 200 metres down the street to get to the nearest shelter. Of course some dirty dog was watching and reported him.

So do not attempt the “pain in the chest” unless you are quite sure you have enough strength of will to stay the course. The next sickness advised is more serious and could result in hospitalisation followed by surgery. Do not worry; a short, painless operation under anaesthetic is much more desirable than being in the firing-line, the patient is consoled. Outlined are the exact things you need to tell your doctor for him to believe you have severe digestive trouble. This procedure also requires the patient to swallow dried blood when the physician puts him on a meat-free diet. Obtaining it is not a problem, he is told, as you can prepare dry blood drawn from a small self-inflicted wound.

If you are a little squeamish but have some acting ability an alternative medical problem is described. With a little practice it is easy to pretend to be suffering from absent-mindedness and is ideal for a factory worker who has to give his undivided attention to a machine. This is simple to achieve, you are told:

In the strictest privacy, practice the following symptom: for one second you should suddenly become “absent minded”.

You simply do not know what happens in this short moment. If, for example, you are holding a glass in your hand, or any other object, you let it fall and cannot yourself explain how and why it happened, the thing simply fell out of your hand for no reason at all. Funny wasn’t it?

... Or: You want to light a cigarette, and instead you just let the match fall – not because you were holding it clumsily, but because you suddenly were “not there”.

Other than these short periods of blackout the patient is perfectly normal but should lead to him being permanently unfit for work or active duty.

A disease that fits nicely into Delmer’s plague campaign is now examined. Tuberculosis is so widespread across Germany, the text begins, you will only be listed as temporarily unfit for work but will get a long holiday plus extra rations. To fool a doctor into believing you have it, the first sign is a genuine cough which brings up a lot of mucous.

To do this is simple, mix paper with your tobacco and smoke it, alternatively roll your cigarettes with regular paper. After sometime you will develop a nice cough, it is claimed. If you work in a munitions factory it may be possible to obtain a little dinitrophenol. A tiny amount of this chemical, used in explosives manufacture, taken orally every day will cause weight loss and a high temperature.

Now visit the doctor, tell him you had the flu some months ago but the cough has persisted since then. Recently it has got worst and you notice blood in the mucous that you bring up in the mornings. The doctor will want to analyse a sample of the mucous. To persuade him you have the disease it must contain a little blood and the tuberculosis bacilli. Providing the blood is easy by making a small cut on your finger then sucking and mixing it with the mucous. Supplying the tuberculosis bacilli, actually substitute bacilli, is not for the weak-stomached. The patient should not wash for a few days, allowing for a cheese-like deposit to form under his foreskin, a small amount must be combined with the mucous in the mouth. This substance to an over-worked doctor can easily be mistaken for tuberculosis bacteria under a microscope. Following these instructions will soon lead to your hospitalisation with very good rations, is the promise.

Alternatively an infectious inflammation of the throat is another illness worth faking, particularly if a group of soldiers or workers want to appear ill. All patients must still have their tonsils, as the procedure requires administering silver nitrate directly onto them. After applying the silver nitrate onto the tonsils, gargle with mustard or ginger dissolved in water. Half an hour before visiting the doctor, the patient must swallow a small quantity of gunpowder or other explosive material. This really will make you ill, the instructions warn. Following this technique should result in a week in hospital and can be extended by the occasional gargling with mustard.

Chapter I ends with advice on contracting violent diarrhoea. The introduction begins:

Various kinds of severe, often bloody diarrhoea (dysentery) are now so prevalent in Germany, indeed all over Europe, that it would be sure not to attract attention if you were to go to the doctor with similar symptoms. The symptoms can easily be simulated by digesting a small quantity of dried seeds from the *corn cockle* flower that can be found growing wild in cornfields. Mixing the seeds in with your morning coffee is suggested as the perfect way of taking it. An additional devious idea is planted in the malingerer's mind:

The effect on the doctor will be greatly heightened if several of the men in the same unit or factory fall ill as well. This is naturally very easily done, especially if they all take their coffee in the same canteen.

Chapter II of the manual is mainly for workers in chemical and explosive factions. It explains methods of faking numerous types of skin diseases that are likely to be developed when working with hazardous chemicals. It begins by pointing out the dangers of poisoning caused through the handling of the explosive TNT which eventually leads to skin irritation. Frequently washing your hands is no longer any protection because the poor quality wartime soap has too many abrasives in it. The soap actually promotes the skin disease dermatitis, just as the whole grain wartime bread contributes to it too, (See above H.174, Bread booklet).

Guidance on the wrong way to fake skin complaints follows. Causing cuts, scratches, and bruises can be easily detected as self-inflicted. Using acid to burn the skin is also a bad idea because the acid, being liquid, leaves marks were it flows across the skin. An amateur malingerer also tends to only treat skin in easily accessible parts of their body, he will easily be caught out by these non-professional techniques. An example is given illustrating how several Ukrainian female workers were exposed self-inflicting skin blisters by using the juice of the crowfoot plant. The doctor was suspicious because the women only ever had one blister, always on an easily accessible part of the body, where it should not be. The blister was also regular in shape. A naturally occurring one would always be irregular. To give this story credence it was previously broadcast on the black radio station *Kurzwellensender Atlantik* in July 1943. 8

The text continues to explain methods of reproducing a variety of skin complaints including Oil dermatitis, TNT poisoning, skin blisters on the head and body, shingles, jaundice, and leg ulcers. Each technique involves applying the roots or seeds of various plants and herbs on to the body as well as swallowing other more dangerous substances like picric acid to cause yellowing of the skin and digitalis, a highly dangerous and unstable chemical extracted from the foxglove plant to slow the heart beat. A slight overdose of digitalis could easily kill.

The Appendices show a variety of suitable plants useful for developing skin complaints, with diagrams to aid identification when searching for them in the wild. Help to acquire some of the more specialised medicines are given with details to forge a doctor's prescription by erasing ink if necessary. And if a fake prescription needs a rubberstamp then it can easily be transferred from another genuine document using half of a moist potato.

Perhaps the success of this inventive booklet can be measured by the German reaction to its publication. In retaliation they printed leaflets containing the same malingering instructions translated into English and dropped them from the air over British and American troops in Italy. Also they produced their own disguised miniature version in the form of a book of matches with a letter "V" for "victory" on the cover with the text tightly folded in concertina fashion inside. These books of matches were shelled fired over the British Eighth Army in February 1945. All Divisional and Field Ambulance Medical Officers were warned about its contents. 9 Delmer considered this the ultimate complement.

Another exceptionally clever pamphlet, (H.290), *Die NSV heilt... Bombenschock*, ("The NSV heals... Bomb Shock"), discussed the effect and treatment of "Bomb Shock" on air raid victims. It appeared to be a publication of the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV), the National Socialist People's Welfare organisation, supposedly written by Doctor Otto Walter. It is subtitled "Bomb Shock – The wartime disease of the home front and how it is fought successfully in the rest homes of the NSV".

The pamphlet begins by explaining the meaning of "Bomb shock":

Medically speaking, bomb shock is a disease of the sympathetic nervous system caused by the detonation of bursting bombs, the impact of their air pressure and the nerve-wearying noise of the anti-aircraft guns. The first signs of this disease are similar to the nervous system problems suffered by soldiers at the front due to near misses by shells, ongoing barrage fire and being buried by explosions.

It claims that there are two types of Bomb shock, acute and latent. The acute form usually occurs during an "enemy terror raid" or shortly afterwards. Its symptoms are unmistakable, the victim becomes unconscious or vomits, his breath becomes shallow, he has cold sweats, a weak pulse, his hands and feet tremble, his eyes are dilated, he is indecisive, and has an inability to think or reason. It also points out that bomb shock is contagious through suggestive transference, therefore victims with the acute form should be isolated from others immediately. The latent form of bomb shock is not so easy to diagnose, the symptoms are less apparent, it is an "insidious and progressive disease". The signs to be on guard against include irregular or rapid pulse, light trembling of the hands or feet, low body temperature, paleness, loss of appetite, heightened nervous sensibility, elevated blood pressure, confused thinking, and indecisiveness. All the sorts of things that would affect anybody subjected to prolonged bombing, poor diet, and long working hours. It claims that if latent bomb shock goes untreated it can result in a person being plagued by nightmares, being frightened by noise, it can cause constipation in the victim leading to nervous indigestion and stomach ulcers, it can cause impotence, and can upset a woman's monthly cycle. To reinforce the message the text is illustrated with photographs of dead bomb victims, of dazed survivors, and of the destruction caused to German cities.

It is essential for the welfare of the nation that suspected cases of bomb shock are treated as soon as possible, it continues. Bomb shock is a disease that can infect anybody and more likely the most energetic and hardworking people become victims, it is not a disease of just the feeble-minded and cowardly. There is a simple cure for bomb shock once it has been diagnosed; a course of treatment at a NSV rest home located in idyllic countryside far away from the bombing. Here the patient receives professional medical care and increased rations of milk, butter, and freshly baked bread. All treatment and food is free of charge and patients have full use of the gymnasium, library and other facilities these rest homes have. The patient can stay until they are fully recovered, which generally speaking takes from four to six weeks. The text concludes by pointing out that any citizen who has been affected with bomb shock during an air raid is entitled to stay at a NSV rest home. It is their duty to the nation to make sure they are cured.

The propaganda effect of the pamphlet worked on multiple levels. Its main purpose was to appeal to the self-interest instincts of the German population. It described in minute detail the symptoms of latent bomb shock, just the information needed by a malingerer who would welcome a pleasant vacation in a NSV rest home. Alternatively it might provoke hypochondria in civilians fearing air raids, for a German soldier it could increase his anxiety over the well-being of his family back home, and more importantly the Nazi administration might, as a result of the

distribution of this pamphlet, falsely accuse genuinely shell-shocked air raid victims of malingering. Of course those applying for a course of treatment at a rest home will be sadly disappointed when their application is rejected.

As the Allies encircled the German homeland in the closing months of the war, a major goal of black propaganda was to cause as much chaos and dislocation as possible within the Nazi administration. With this in mind, Delmer thought up a rather nasty but humorous operation to assist German civilians to disobey official instructions, for example not to observe orders to evacuate areas of the country threatened by imminent Allied attack. He asked Dr. MacCurdy to find a suitable substance which a person could use to make himself seriously ill by causing violent diarrhoea. Delmer amusingly dubbed this operation the "Evacuation against Evacuation" campaign! He outlined its objectives as, to strain the German administrative machine; to make large numbers of Germans temporarily unfit for service; to provide the German population with a physical pretext for disobeying the authorities, especially to avoid compulsory evacuation and the call-up for military or labour service; to provide soldiers and workers with a physical pretext for absenteeism and general derelictions of duty, and finally to create a neurosis about food.

To carry out this plan, Delmer recommended, SOE should prepare small packets containing a fifty percent mix of ordinary table salt with a chemical recommended by Dr. MacCurdy called Carbachol. One gram of which could cause diarrhoea of "epidemic proportions among 200 people". PWE would supply instructions for its use on the same lines as the malingering handbook, "explaining to the Germans how diarrhoea will help them to avoid evacuation, call-up, factory work, fighting or any other unattractive assignment". These packets would be disseminated by SOE agent and/or by air. Delmer suggested that SOE agents would have two duties, firstly to leave the packets in suitable places to be found by potential German users. "... One man anxious to mangle can put a whole group out of action by adding salt to the 'Eintopf' stew", he speculated. Secondly agents could themselves empty the contents in the cooking pots of communal soup-kitchens and military canteens. Indiscriminate aerial distribution across Germany would also cause huge trouble for the administration. There is no evidence that this nefarious operation ever got past the planning stage, with the German surrender impending it was formulated too late to be put in operation. If it had been carried out it may have been as successful as when, during the First World War, British Intelligence caused mayhem after adding Croton Oil to tins of Norwegian sardines destined for German troops on the Western Front. 10

Apart from encouraging malingering Delmer was also keen to point out the shirking of Nazi officials back home. With this in mind he developed a leaflet titled *Drückeberger an die Front*, meaning *Shirkers to the Front*, (H.129). He described to Colin Wintle [Major Colin Wintle, deputy head of SOE D/Q Section] its purpose in depressing the morale of the troops:

It stimulates hostility and contempt for members of the civil service and the party administration, all of them in reality very essential to the sound functioning of the German war machine, and it also stimulates contempt for members of the Propaganda Ministry as unessential slackers. 11

The small four-page leaflet began by calling attention to the new call-up of German women, girls, and mothers to work in the war industry. The hard manual work they are expected to do will result in premature aging and infertility, the leaflet explains. Meanwhile four and half million Party "drones" evade military service and stay at home. It reproduces, as "incontrovertible evidence", two secret regulations formulated to protect "these sacrosanct, high-minded malingerers" from being called-up. The leaflet not only draws attention to these Nazi shirkers but also encourages the belief in the soldier's mind that his wife's, or girlfriend's, health will be ruined as a result of heavy labour in the factories. This line of propaganda was reinforced in GS1 broadcasts and other black leaflets like the Sauckel Wanted Poster (examined later in the book). Delmer considered *Drückeberger an die Front* a top priority leaflet and pushed SOE for widespread distribution, going as far as requesting Thornley to arrange for one to be posted inside Germany to a specific recipient, Frau Hanna Solf of Partenkirchen, after he obtained her address from a censor report.

## Desertion

For a soldier to give up fighting and desert his duty is, no doubt, the most successful conclusion of a propaganda campaign but conversely one of the hardest objectives to accomplish. Generally even a non-willing conscript will not contemplate desertion until he is in mortal danger and has an opportunity to do so. A soldier still loyal to his government and country is much harder to break through psychological warfare. Despite this difficulty, sponsoring desertion was a key aim of British black propaganda. Long before the Allied invasion of Western Europe desertion propaganda was disseminated to persuade German troops to escape the approaching battle.

The first signs appeared at the end of 1942 of the possibility that the Allies may defeat Germany. From Norway a trickle of deserting German soldiers attempted to cross the border into Sweden. Previously these deserters were prohibited from entering the country and faced certain death when returned to the German authorities. The Swedish administration reversed its policy and gave asylum to the absconding soldiers. When news of this change of heart reached SOE Stockholm, they suggested a pinprick operation to publicise in Norway the Swedish government's new attitude.

In April 1943 PWE prepared a proclamation notice allegedly in the name of General von Falkenhorst, commander-in-chief of the German occupational forces in Norway, (H.373), but was cancelled because of a "technical"itch".<sup>12</sup> A new version was printed by Howe at the end of May (H.448). The notice, addressed to German soldiers, denounced in the strongest terms the disgraceful increase in incidents in which enlisted men and even officers of the units under Falkenhorst's command renounced their military obligations by crossing into Swedish territory. Falkenhorst continued:

Unfortunately, the Swedish government no longer recognises its agreement with our government regarding repatriation of deserters, which had been in force hitherto. Making reference to irrational regulations of international law, members of the German Armed Forces who have deserted are now offered right of asylum in Sweden, even if they cross the Swedish border in uniform.

I am confident that this incomprehensible attitude of the Swedish government will not be a temptation for honourable German soldiers to commit the shameful crime of desertion.

The notice was signed, dated, and rubberstamped. Copies were sent from London to SOE Stockholm and then smuggled across the border by the Norwegian resistance. The resistance proceeded to post-up the notice around Oslo and other parts of the country on the required date. The press reaction was immediate and many newspapers in both Sweden and Norway, believing it to be genuine, reproduced the proclamation in full. The next day the Germans fuelled its public debate by feebly condemning the proclamation as a forgery. The Swedish authorities also got themselves in a muddle. Their Foreign Office claimed that the Swedish government gave asylum to refugees but not deserters. This was contradicted by the Social Affairs minister who maintained that no deserters had been refused entry since December 1942 and that a camp had been established for their reception.

SOE were extremely pleased with the success of the operation as not only had it put "desertion on the map" but embroiled the German and Swedish authorities. When other regional sections of SOE learned of the operation's success they were enthusiastic to try the same ploy. Thornley requested PWE to produce versions of the proclamation suitable for France and Belgium. "I do not think we have got anything to lose, do you, if we develop this desertion drive and force the Germans to come out with a whole series of denials stating that the proclamations are forgeries, etc.", he asked Delmer. A version for German forces in France signed by General Field Marshal von Rundstedt was produced which condemned the "shameful" desertions into Spain, (H.504 and H.549). The French resistance were entrusted to distribute it on 4 September. At least one example was pasted-up on the Town Hall at Tournus in the Saône and Loire district of France but it did not generate the same controversy as the previous operation. A Belgium version was never printed.

As a companion to the Falkenhorst proclamation, Howe produced a leaflet, (H.449), instructing German soldiers on the procedure to adopt when deserting from Norway to Sweden. This was the first of a large number of leaflets that would follow informing German troops on how to escape to neutral countries. The leaflet appeared to have been created on a typewriter by a fictitious German anti-Nazi resistance organisation known as the Red Circle. Howe joked that he was the President of the "Red Circle Society", his assistance Kitty was the Secretary, and Elisabeth Friedlander the Treasurer.<sup>13</sup>

Other versions invited Germans to desert from France to Switzerland and Spain, from Norway and Finland to Sweden, and from Italy to Switzerland. Sometimes the leaflets would carry the Red Circle rubberstamp, other times their origin was anonymous. The text of a desertion leaflet for forces stationed in France gave advice and encouragement for a successful getaway to Switzerland, (H.520). It began:

Comrade!

You needn't worry any more that the Swiss will send you back. Switzerland is not giving up any more German deserters, whether they are in uniform or not.

If you, as many others, have no desire to remain a corpse-aspirant in France, then you have only one trouble: how to get yourself over the frontier with the least trouble. As soon as you are in Switzerland, everything will be all right and you can peacefully and comfortably wait for the end in a respectable Swiss internment camp.

The leaflet continues with three rules for a successful desertion, firstly after crossing the frontier give yourself up to the nearest Swiss police or army post. Do not hang about the countryside. Secondly, state simply and clearly why you have come, "because you have no desire to sacrifice your life for Hitler's last and useless struggles". And lastly make sure you are unarmed and show your papers to prove you really are a German soldier.

The final paragraphs reassure the deserter that his family back home will be safe from Gestapo reprisals, simply because the German authorities have no idea which soldiers have been murdered by the French resistance, and which ones have slipped away. The Swiss will keep your name secret if you desire. "When you come to us you will be amazed at the number of "living corpses" residing perfectly happily in Swiss internment camps", he is told. This reinforced the rumours circulated by Operation Tuckbox that a large number of German soldiers listed as being killed in action were actually alive and well having a peaceful and prosperous existence interned in a neutral country.

The advice for deserting to Spain was quite different. The deserter should only wear old, worn-out civilian clothes and carry no identification papers. He should get as far into Spain as possible and when picked up by the Police claim he is an Alsace-Lorrainer who can only speak German. He should refuse to see any German official.

The leaflets as well as being covertly distributed by SOE were given much wider dissemination by the RAF. Nearly 1.3 million copies of the Swiss version for German forces in France, discussed above, were dropped between November 1943 to December 1944. It was disseminated both by RAF aircraft and the "M" Balloon Unit. Such wide scale distribution caused problems keeping the real origin of the leaflets secret. In February 1945 PWE received a half-hearted complaint about the leaflet from the Swiss Minister to the United Kingdom, protesting that his Government very much objected to large numbers of German troops entering Switzerland. The Foreign Office wanted to know how the Swiss Minister knew the leaflet was British, considering its secret nature. PWE had to admit that due to faulty balloons accidentally releasing leaflets over Britain it was not hard to discover the true source of the leaflet. Especially because in the past the Spanish version of the desertion leaflet had been accidentally dropped in the Spanish Ambassador's London home by a malfunctioning balloon! 14

Later Howe developed Desertion Packs containing all the necessary forged documents to assist deserters to travel. The paperwork, for example, might be contained in an innocuous envelope appearing to be a loving gift from home, (H.1209). Inside was a fake travel warrant, train tickets for military personnel, and ration coupons, all of which had been pre-rubberstamped and signed. The deserter just had to fill in his details using the enclosed instructions so he could travel anywhere he wanted across the Reich. These were then dropped by the US air force packed with *Nachrichten für die Truppe*.

Bombed Towns Lists, (H.489, H.600, H.697, H.693, *et al*)

According to Delmer, listeners of GS1 were enormously impressed by one of the stations regular features, the fast and accurate reporting of which streets in major German towns and cities had been destroyed or severally damaged by the Allied bombing raids of the previous night. Apparently so precise and swift were these reports, the German intelligence service concluded the British must have agents in the cities covertly transmitting back the results of the bombing. The truth, however, was much more prosaic. Delmer's intelligence section, headed by Clifton Childs, liased with the RAF to obtain details of their raids over Germany, how many bombers had dropped what tonnage of high explosive or incendiaries on which cities. As soon as the aerial reconnaissance photographs, taken by the special squadrons of fast flying Spitfires and Mosquitoes, had been processed copies were rushed to Milton Bryan. On the photographs' arrival at MB, they were analysed by Peter von Schlabrenhorst, a German émigré and Rhodes scholar specially trained by the RAF to read them. On his insistence, he then broadcast the list on GS1.15

Howe's Unit also reproduced the lists as multi-folded leaflets, with the Red Circle resistance group claiming to be its author. Marion McFadyean [Later Mrs. Whitehorn - Graphic Designer in Howe's Unit with Elizabeth Friedlander] recalls the dreadful time she had proofreading them because of the tiny typeface used. The leaflets began by reminding German soldiers of the Armed Forces High Command order, dated August 1942, that states:

Home leave of ten days, or in special cases up to twenty days, is to be granted to all members of the Armed Forces whose homes or families have been subject to enemy bombing.

Around a dozen different editions were produced in large quantities from September 1942, (H.489) until the end of war, several being disseminated by the "M" Balloon Unit. Their purpose was to show German soldiers the terrible extent of bomb damage to the homeland, to stimulate fears for the safety of their family, and also to give soldiers reason to demand home leave. If the home leave was denied, then one more soldier potentially becomes disaffected with the war and might consider malingering or desertion.

SOE considered the Bombed Towns list to be of immense value:

This item has been a great inducement to desertion and has been found in the possession of deserters crossing into neutral countries. German troops, who were not allowed to listen to Allied wireless reports, were thirsting for real news of their homes and it is only reasonable to suppose that once one of these leaflets came into their possession, they did not hand them in or destroy them until they had glanced through to see if their own towns and streets were damaged and if they could therefore claim compassionate leave. 16





*The range of disguised malingering booklets produced by the Political Warfare Executive and covertly disseminated by agents of Special Operations Executive.  
 Written by Dr. John MacCurdy under Sefton Delmer's supervision  
 and printed by Howe's Unit, 1942-1945.*

A full English translation of *Illness Saves* is available <[here](#)>