

## SOCIOMETRY AND THE PRESENT EMERGENCY IN THE EUROPEAN PEACE

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### INTRODUCTION

The eyes of all the world are focussed at this moment upon armies of the United Nations occupying German territory. Among them, thousands of sociologists, social psychologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists are looking on, with more or less complete passivity. Social scientists are powerless, but if they would have the authority to determine social policy, would they have any notion or plan to offer?

This passivity seems to be in contradiction with the public debates on peace and post war plans. One cannot deny the noble character of the Atlantic Charter or underestimate the clever schemes as to how to deal with Germany in order to prevent its resurgence to military power. But their architects built the House of Man from the top down instead of from the bottom up. As we have occupied Germany, the problem of how to treat its population becomes a social issue of first rank. Let us quote here some of the points of the Potsdam agreement\* on Germany: a) turning the German people from an industrial to an agricultural nation; b) dismantling all the potential war-making industries; c) forbidding the re-armament of Germany.

Besides the rules of the agreement now enforced which are influenced by the idea that the problem can be solved by technological shifts in power, there were proponents who suggested plans which were based on gross sociological changes: a) the transformation of Germany into a concentration camp, a nation of paranoiacs treated by psychiatrists, or a nation of misfits re-educated by psychoanalysts; b) the break-up of Germany into as many provinces as there were before Bismarck united them; c) giving the power of government to the anti-nazi Germans, the social democrats and liberals; d) giving the power of government to the catholic and protestant churches; e) giving the power of government to a committee formed by German prisoners in Soviet Russia to form German Soviets, or to be at least under remote control of Soviet rule; f) forcing the migra-

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\**New York Times*, August 3, 1945.

tion of millions of Germans away from Germany, especially of its technological and militaristic nazi components, reducing it in size and character. All these plans are projections of the anxiety which this war has produced, but they have little value in themselves. They have in common that *the social dynamic factors operating in the inter-individual and inter-group relations of the German population itself are left out of consideration.*

Now let us examine how sociologists, social psychologists, psychologists, psychiatrists are approaching this emergency. Some of the researches made in the fields of social organization, social stratification, propaganda analysis, measurement of morale, the study of minorities, of racial and religious tensions, etc., are invaluable. The trouble with these studies is that they are carried out in a comparative vacuum, at too great a distance from the situations which are in immediate need of adjustment and to which the findings could be applied. Social research for its own sake is useless except to a diminutive minority of social science readers. Social action for its own sake is equally useless. One should work hand in hand with the other. It is deplorable that thousands of commendable fact-finding social researches currently published and daily buried in the morgues of our libraries, will be unknown a few years hence except to one or two historians. Who will ever be able to resuscitate these masses of data from their ashes and give meaning to them? The probabilities are that they will perish like the many lives that have been lost on the battlefields.

The approach of sociometrists to the present emergency is, however, more satisfactory and related to the strategic situation. Generalizations on the basis of findings in one community cannot be mechanically applied to another. But all the one hundred or more sociometric studies made in the United States bring us closer to the problem on hand, that of the German population, itself.

#### SOCIOMETRIC ORGANIZATION OF GERMAN COMMUNITIES

What do these reflections mean, in terms of the event of the armies of the United Nations occupying Germany? We heard a few months ago that allied troops entered Beggendorf, a German community near the Dutch border, so and so many were taken prisoners—because of their nazi affiliation. We heard that a certain man was appointed burgermeister, another was made chief of police, or that some of the old functionaries were permitted to continue in office. It is immaterial whether such reports were accurate, but it is here that sociometric procedures should have been applied. Each community must be investigated in its concreteness and not as a symbol or a mass.

The instruments of investigation to be used should be sociometric and allied procedures. The first step is that each individual is required to choose or reject his associates on the basis of all criteria operating in the community.

This is the key situation for the sociometric scientist: the first community into which the allies enter should be sociometrized on the spot. The total population, as it breaks up into factories, agricultural farms, churches, schools, recreational units, not leaving any person out, and not including any person who is not a part of the community, selects, on this basis, the burgemeister and the chief of police, the leaders and the sub-leaders of the community, the ministers of the churches, the teachers in the schools, thus breaking up political gangs as soon as they are uncovered. The repetition of sociometric tests at regular intervals is essential to follow up the constant process of regrouping in the community and to select new leaders and sub-leaders in accord with the findings. All cultural, political and social institutions can become, by such means, true expressions of the population tested, as the factors of tradition are bound to emerge and to be reflected in the findings. They become open to correction and to revision from the point of view of a system of values which seems to be imperative to the conquerors as to the supreme interest of the world at large, and to the best interest of the German population itself. The supplementing of the local sociometric findings in Germany with sociometric data in this country, and combined with data on morale, propaganda, public opinion, etc., obtained by other methods, should produce a formidable index of reference for actual application.

#### ROLE TRAINING OF POTENTIAL LEADERS

But spontaneity of the choice process can become deteriorated to a degree that the natural process of regrouping takes a pathological turn or comes to an apparently incorrigible, dead end. Sociometric tests executed in prisons and reformatories revealed that the highest number of choices were regularly given to individuals who had made an outstanding record in anti-social activities (as sexual delinquents, thieves, burglars, etc.) and that individuals who had reformed or wished to reform remained unchosen or were rejected by the majority. It became clear to sociometrists that unless this process could be reversed, the introduction of the values cherished in the outside community would be an impossible task. As a solution to this dilemma, as demonstrated in *Who Shall Survive?*, regrouping and retraining of individuals have to go hand in hand. Regrouping and retraining of key individuals became a *conditio sine qua non*, especially in

communities where the process of regrouping had come to a comparative standstill. As these key individuals already in a position of power were non-cooperative and deceitful, efforts made with their retraining had to be abandoned in many cases. It was the retraining of the *non* leader, the sociometric isolate, or the potential leader who is found sociometrically rejected, which offered a methodical alternative. The individual to be retrained was first placed in a series of situations and roles in which he portrayed on the psychodrama stage the experiences which ultimately landed him in prison, and second a series of situations and roles which brought about a craving for reorientation of values and a desire to reform. As soon as the diagnostic facts about him were established a program of retraining could be formulated. The situations and the roles for retraining were selected from the community in which he lived at the time, situations which were crucial in the reformatory and which determined the influence he could exercise upon others. The retraining was carried out in a group, all the individuals who appeared to be sensitive, potential material, forming it. Parallel with their retraining sociometric tests were given at regular intervals. It was possible to discover changes in structure, the isolates and rejected ones ascending gradually to better sociometric positions, the former key individuals losing in status and moving towards the periphery positions in the sociogram.

The project of transforming a reformatory into a socialized community has many parallels to the political education for democratic process of an autocratically ruled population like the German.

#### REVERSAL OF THE QUISLING TECHNIQUE

We sociometrists have frequently pointed out that sociometric principles have been used intuitively by practical statesmen and political leaders without any knowledge of sociometry as a method for social investigation. A typical example is the phenomenon of the *quisling*. The quisling fulfilled a function in the group which was of sociometric significance. On the surface it seemed that the quislings were merely individuals in sympathy with the nazi system of values. It was logical therefore that they would be chosen as nazi representatives. However, in the communities into which the nazis entered in their victorious march were many more individuals than the chosen ones who sympathized with the nazi system. The question is: what made the individuals actually selected for the role of quisling particularly fit for the task? It is interesting to note that the nazis, as if endowed

with a keen sense for sociometric verities, chose individuals who were often comparatively political nonentities, disliked and rejected by the regular members of the community. The choice of the quisling was therefore justified from the point of view of sociometric effects. The regular burghers in Norway, the Netherlands or Belgium would have been unwilling to cooperate with the nazi rulers and therefore were unsafe associates. In the reformatories above we had a similar problem to face, although in *reverse*. The psychological power was in the hands of the irregulars, the persistent deviates and chronic delinquents. It is among the isolated and rejected ones that we occasionally found an individual who wanted to reform. Just as the nazis, although for opposite reasons, we turned to the powerless and rejected idealists in the group. What the quislings and they have in common is the *same sociometric status*.

There are many current problems which sociometric studies as presented in this paper can elucidate. Allied armies have entered German communities which are entirely or largely indoctrinated by nazi principles and sentiments. Is there any sociometric or psychodramatic instrument available which could be used in an effort to change their attitude? Every effort is faced with an iron set of roles cast to order. Every sociogram of these communities would probably show a persistency of psychosocial structure towards Nazism from retest to retest. But *the quisling technique can be reversed*. There may be in every German community a number of individuals, Germans who crave for a style of living in total contrast with that of the nazis. Men who have lived in hiding, in contact with underground groups, but who might appear in a sociogram as non-leaders, isolated and rejected. It is with the aid of such men that a rejuvenation of the German community could begin.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The question may be raised: "Beggendorf is a single community. There are perhaps one hundred thousand of such communities in Germany. Each community has some invisible cultural bonds relating it to thousands of other communities. There are some communities which are far more complex than others. Huge industrial plants and cultural organizations can not be easily analyzed on the spot. And lastly, there is an existing, deeply-entrenched psycho-social structure which the nazis have built in their years of prosperity. How does one break these up?" There are many other questions like these. Some questions no one can answer. Of one thing I am certain, to let things happen in a fatalistic fashion, as if nothing can be

done and Nature must take its course, is bound to encourage the recapitulation of a similar chain of events in Germany as heretofore. A well calculated system of social action operated with discretion cannot be but of advantage. Parallel with taking one community militarily, it should also be organized sociometrically. Like a General who has his plan of battle prepared and moves from point to point unflinchingly, we can make our plan of battle. Here is the geographic map of Germany. Federal sociometrists could work hand in hand with the military authorities, and map out psycho-geographic charts of every community under allied control. A few years ago\* we examined in behalf of a similar plan, the socio-geographic map of the United States and said: "A method which has proved of invaluable usefulness in one hundred specific situations may reasonably be expected to be equally useful—or more so—in one million specific situations of the same kind. Even as large a population as that of the United States consists of nothing but millions of small groups, each with a definite atomic structure, and each as open to direct sociometric attack as the hundred situations already profitably studied. The educational enlightenment which has without exception resulted in the members of every group which has to date been sociometrized—an awareness of the structure of the immediate group to which each member belongs and his position with regard to it—is an important first step towards gaining mastery and control of the invisible, subversive, forces which hypnotize and befuddle the populations in every part of the world."

We have found that the maximum group which can efficiently be handled by one full-time sociometric worker is 1,500 to 2,500 people. This figure may represent the entire population of a given village, or merely a fraction of a metropolitan district, the personnel of a factory or the population of a public school. This apparently large coverage on the part of a lone sociometric worker is the result of one of the cardinal sociometric experiences: the sociometrist almost automatically finds himself in every group with volunteer assistants sufficient to lighten his work greatly and increase his range of effectiveness, in proportion. The probability of resistance coming from certain fractions of the German population in each community would recommend a considerable increase of sociometrists per capita, one worker to 500 or 600 people. Therefore, an army of at least 100,000 sociometrists should be formed to meet the requirements of the size of the present German population. The method is easily teachable. The large contingency of

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\**Sociometry*, Vol. V, No. 2, p. vii.

social workers from which we can draw could be made the kernel. They would have to speak the German language and besides having the knowledge of sociometric and psychodramatic procedures, would have to be imaginative and bold individuals, ready to extend the technique to the demands of a situation and, if necessary, to invent new techniques, as long as they are in the spirit of sociometric theory. The largest number of workers should be drawn from the German population to which sociometric and psychodramatic methods are to be applied. Sociometry is an objective approach to community organization. But such an objectivity can only be obtained if the social resources of restoration of the German population itself are utilized to the maximum. The preponderance of imported social workers might easily encourage autocratic and police-like behavior and distort the principles upon which sociometric methods are based.

It is not yet too late. The remarkable and almost miraculous energy of the American democracy may again surprise the world in turning blueprints like this plan into a living reality.

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