

WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS

A Monthly Digest of War Department Studies on the Attitudes of American Troops



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WAR DEPARTMENT,

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COMBAT TIME AND COMBAT EFFICIENCY

Most combat soldiers seem to reach their efficiency peak in seven months or less

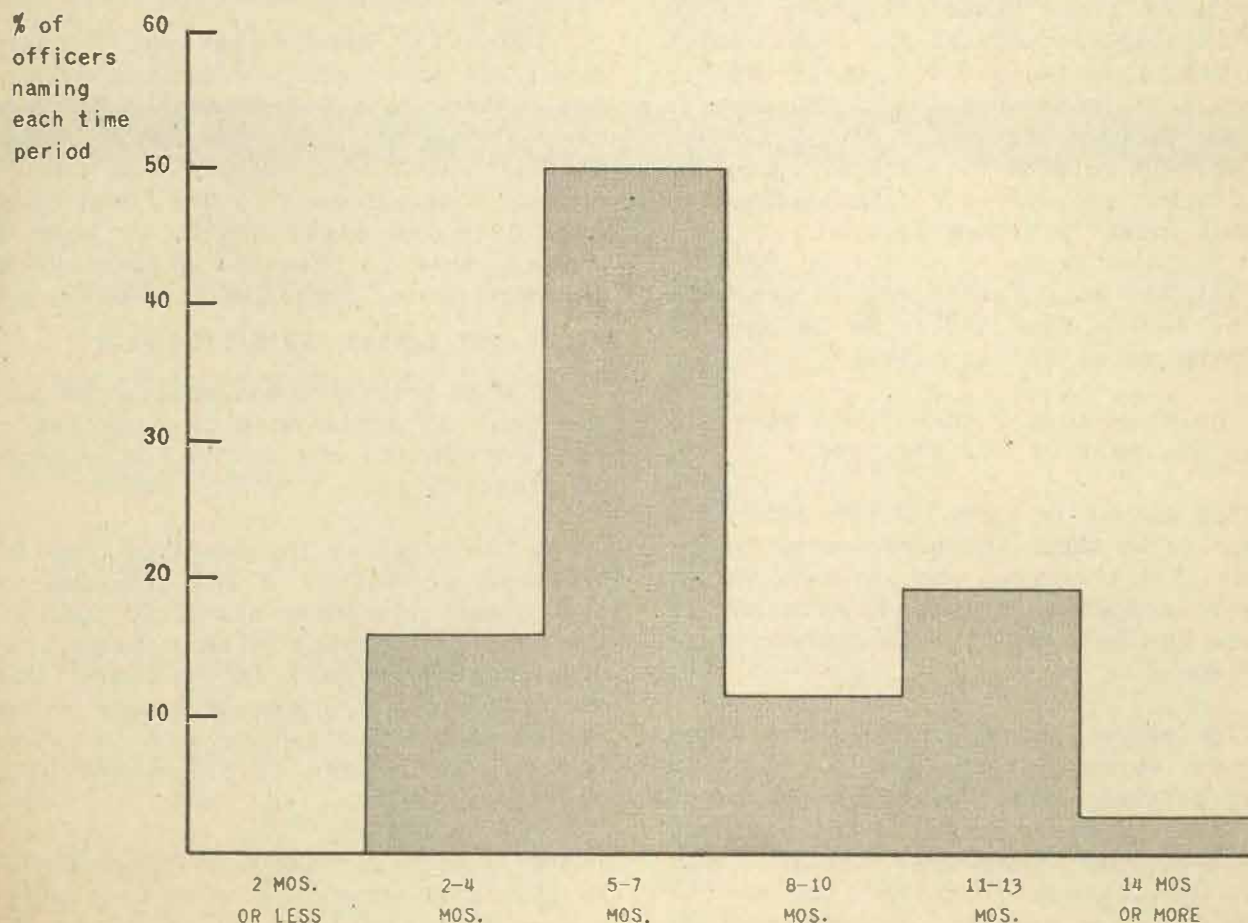
Source: Study of a representative sample of Platoon Leaders in 90 rifle platoons in two combat divisions in ETO.

The findings reported here should prove of particular interest to combat officers in command of Infantry rifle companies and platoons, as they relate to two all-important questions many officers are now asking:

How long does it take an Infantry combat soldier to acquire the know-how to become a fully satisfactory substitute for a battle-tested veteran?

Once having acquired such know-how, how long can he be expected to remain at his peak of efficiency as a combat soldier?

WHEN DO COMBAT SOLDIERS START TO PASS THEIR PEAK OF EFFICIENCY?



MONTHS OF COMBAT TIME

	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 +
"BEST" MEN	33%	42%	11%	15%
ALL OTHERS	56%	25%	13%	6%

In May of this year, the Research Branch, Information and Education Division, ETO, interviewed a representative sample of rifle Platoon Leaders in two battle-toughened divisions, each of which had more than two years of combat experience. The interviews sought the answers to the following two-fold question which is closely related to the whole question of finding satisfactory replacements for combat Infantry veterans:

(a) How long does a combat man have to be in the line before he becomes of maximum value to his outfit?

(b) When does a combat man start to pass his peak of efficiency?

The answer to part (a) may come as a surprise to those who have tended to believe that those men who are most valuable to a combat outfit are necessarily those who have had the most combat experience.

The rifle Platoon Leaders were asked to name three riflemen (745's) in their outfits they would "hate most to lose" in terms of their value to the platoon. The names of these most valuable men were then checked against the months they spent in combat. As the chart at the top shows, fully three-fourths of the best men had been in combat less than eight months, and over-all, they have

only slightly more combat experience than the rest of the riflemen in their outfits.

(When the same question is asked about the three most valuable non-coms, the latter are quite naturally found to have a somewhat longer average length of time in combat than the riflemen charted above. Although half of the "best" non-coms have had eight months or more of combat, this is the same percentage as is found among non-coms in general.)

THE COMBAT EFFICIENCY PEAK

At what point a combat soldier attains his peak of efficiency is a matter of real concern to any officer in command of line troops.

As the graph on the previous page indicates, two-thirds of the officers say that a combat soldier starts to lose his peak of efficiency within less than eight months of duty in the line. Only one officer in 30 names 14 months as the period when efficiency starts to deteriorate, while one in six names four months or less.

It is evident that mere longevity is in itself no guarantee of combat efficiency. On the contrary, most men are thought to pass their peak after taking less than eight months of combat pounding.

THINGS WHICH TEND TO MAKE OR BREAK MORALE

A study of enlisted returnees throws light on an all-important command problem

Source: Studies of samples of overseas enlisted veterans upon their return to the United States.

When a soldier says his outfit has high morale, what is he talking about?

Conversely, when he says the morale of his outfit is low, what does he mean?

These are not rhetorical questions. To get at the answers to them is to get closer to the factors of morale itself. The opinions of enlisted men reported here are loaded with meaning for any officer whose job it is to command troops, whether in the field or on the job.

Samples of overseas veterans from all theaters of war and representing ASF, AGF, and AAF branches were asked to rate the morale in their overseas outfits. (The distribution of their responses is charted on the following page.) Once having rated their overseas outfit's morale, the men were then asked to give the reasons for their answers.

The chart below lists the things they mention as reasons why they say the morale of their outfits overseas was *high*. The reasons are listed in order of the percentage of mentions.

THINGS WHICH TEND TO MAKE MORALE

PERCENT OF FAVORABLE MENTIONS

Teamwork, pride in outfit

30%

Good officer-EM relations

20%

Friendliness among EM

14%

Physical comfort (food, housing, etc.)

11%

Rest, recreation, entertainment

10%

Belief in mission

2%

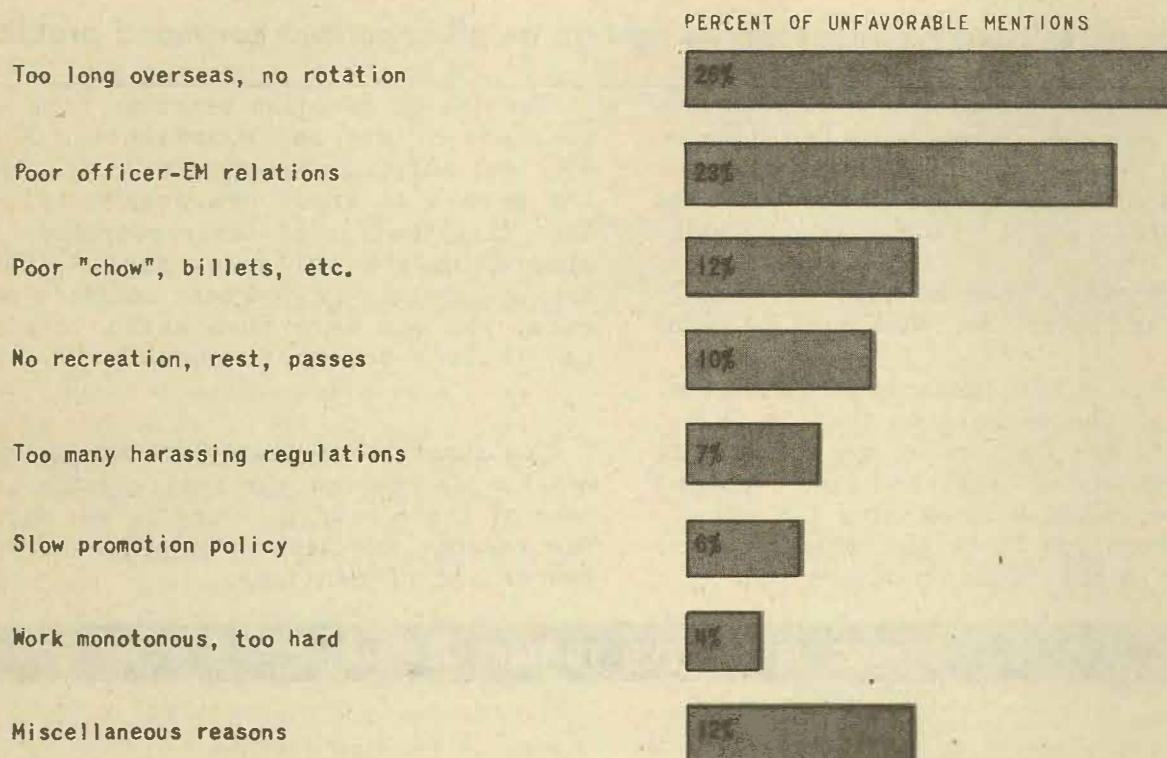
Keeping busy

2%

Miscellaneous

11%

THINGS WHICH TEND TO BREAK MORALE



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOLDIERS

The figures presented in the body of this report are over-all figures based on the responses of samples of GI's from ASF, AGF and AAF outfits. Making up the samples are men with varying lengths of service overseas, combat men, men who have been under enemy fire, and men who have seen no combat and no enemy fire.

When the figures are broken down by types of men, the only noteworthy variation which appears is that men who saw actual combat while overseas are more likely than men who did not to say the morale of their outfits was high.

Perhaps one of the big reasons why combat outfits seem to have higher morale than non-combat outfits is that in combat there is both an intensification of

mass effort and a direction of that effort toward a definite, immediate goal.

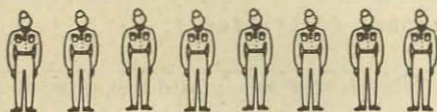
Leaders of non-combat troops can learn from the example of combat officers. Troops to the rear should never be allowed to lose sight of the big goal toward which they are working. They should be encouraged to work as teams, to cooperate in the interests of the over-all job.

In some ways the commander of service troops has as tough a leadership assignment as the CO of a rifle company. Since his outfit does not come to grips directly with the enemy, his men often need the strongest sort of motivation to keep them working at their best. He must be a living example to them at all times, encouraging and maintaining the teamwork, the pride, and the smooth officer-EM relations which make for high morale.

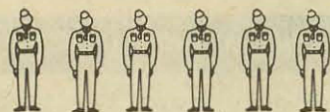
WHAT RETURNEES SAY OF THE MORALE OF THEIR OUTFITS OVERSEAS

QUESTION: "In general, how would you say the morale was in your overseas outfit?"

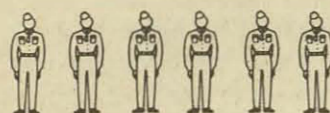
Out of every 20 returnees...



EIGHT say "Very" or "Fairly high"



SIX say "Just so-so"



SIX say "Very" or "Fairly low"

THINGS WHICH TEND TO MAKE MORALE

Fully *half* of all the reasons the men give for saying the morale of their overseas outfit was high are concerned with the following two factors:

1. Teamwork and pride in outfit.
2. Good officer-enlisted men relations.

It is significant that the men themselves recognize the tremendous morale effect of teamwork and that they thus endorse the Army's own emphasis on the importance of the individual soldier's subordinating himself for the good of the unit.

The men's comments are very revealing of their support of teamwork as a factor in morale. The following are typical:

"Because all men regardless of rank worked together all the time."

"We had the best group in the ETO. Fine cooperation between officers and EM, flight and ground personnel."

One of the outgrowths of teamwork--and at the same time a factor which tends to make men work together--is pride in outfit. One Infantryman ex-

presses his pride in the following manner:

"Because we had a swell Div. and Gen. _____, _____ was smart."

The same sort of sentiment is echoed by a gunner who says:

"The _____ Bomb Sqd. is Damn Good."

"Everyone was equally proud of the record our outfit had scored in combat and did their job well to keep it up."

OFFICER-EM RELATIONS

Nothing builds and sustains high morale like good relations between officers and the men they command. When men respect their leaders and feel that their welfare is being looked after, they respond to such leadership by loyalty and better performance.

"(Morale was high) because we had a damn good Company Commander and a fine 1st Sergeant," says an Infantryman.

"Cooperation between officers and EM. Good cooperation between air and ground crew. Only usual Army gripes."

"All CO's (except one) were good to the men and as long as each man did his work well, he wasn't bothered. This added up to a closely knit team with all men sharing responsibility."

FRIENDSHIP, LIGHTHEARTEDNESS

The GI's gift for kidding himself through a tough situation has long been recognized and many officers have made a practice of encouraging a certain amount of joking and horse-play.

Many men cite the fact that their outfit was a lighthearted group which kept its morale up by kidding around when things looked bleakest.

"We always made fun of something hard and tough."

"Not much bitching and the fellows were always singing and joking."

"The boys were always kidding and joking about one thing or another. It helps a lot when the CO of an outfit is cheerful going and cracks jokes now and then."

"Due to the friendliness and comradeship within our particular Bomb Sqdn..."

PHYSICAL COMFORT AND RECREATION

"Chow"--the old reliable way to a soldier's heart--still goes a long way toward keeping morale high. Fourth on the list of factors the men mention are such living comforts as food and billets.

"Good living quarters, food... and working conditions," says a gunner.

"The food was pretty good and the mess hall well kept. All in all it was a well run base."

Closely related to such factors as good food and comfortable surroundings are such things as rest, recreation and entertainment. These things tend to increase in importance as morale factors among men overseas. One man attributes the high morale of his overseas outfit to:

"Packages from home, movies at night when in a rest area, USO shows once in a while, and soft ball fields."

"The men were given passes and we were not more than a mile from town. We also had good recreational facilities."

"As long as the men could get plenty rest and do what they wanted while not on a mission, they were plenty happy."

BELIEF IN MISSION AND ORIENTATION

The soldier who knows the importance of his assigned task and is kept informed on matters that affect his job is well on the way to achieving a high level of morale. This fact is brought out in the remarks of some of the men questioned.

"Morale was good. Not that men enjoyed being overseas but they were content to see the job through."

"We were kept informed on world events and also the daily results of our own efforts."

"The men seemed to know they were doing some good for their country and didn't gripe too much."

THINGS WHICH TEND TO BREAK MORALE

As might be expected, the reasons men tend to give to explain the *low* morale in their outfits are often the "negatives" of the reasons others give to explain the *high* morale in theirs. The major exception to this rule is the emphasis many men place on long overseas service as a cause for declining morale. (See chart on next page.)

Slow rotation is a matter the company commander has no control over. But some of the other factors which lower morale --poor officer-EM relations, for example --are matters which fall directly in his province. They reflect on the effectiveness of his leadership; in many instances, they are the direct outgrowth of failings in his ability to inspire loyalty, respect and cooperation in his command.

HOW WACS VIEW THEIR OFFICERS

Source: Study of a cross section of WACs in continental U. S.

NOTE: The following report on attitudes of enlisted WACs toward their leaders is included in *WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS* not alone because the WAC is an important part of the Army team. As officers will recognize, the report reveals that enlisted personnel, whether male or female, tend to value many of the same sorts of characteristics in their officers. One important group of these characteristics has to do with *demonstrating concern for the welfare of enlisted personnel*. Such concern has been found to pay dividends in any command.

The chart below illustrates how WAC enlisted women in 44 companies throughout the United States view their Commanding Officers with respect to this group of characteristics.

The ratings by which the various CO's were charted are based on the responses of the enlisted women under their command. Naturally, this group of factors which enlisted personnel tend to emphasize as important in leaders, is not all that is required for successful leadership. But these factors are of great importance because the way enlisted women rate their officers with respect to them tends to color the WACs' outlook on their Army life generally. (See discussion on page 9.)

HOW THEY RATE THEIR OFFICERS

The ratings charted at the bottom of the next two pages are based on WAC responses to five questions about their WAC CO:

1. "How interested is your WAC CO in your living conditions?"

2. "How interested is your WAC CO in your working conditions?"

3. "How interested is your WAC CO in your recreational facilities?"

4. "Do you feel that your present WAC CO recognizes your abilities and what you are able to do?"

5. "Is your WAC CO the kind who would go to bat for the WAC?"

Individual enlisted women were rated according to the following scale:

If they answered at least *four out of five* "favorably" they were scored as having *relatively favorable* attitudes.

If they answered *four or more* questions "unfavorably" they were scored as having *relatively unfavorable* attitudes.

All others were scored as having "mixed" attitudes.

Wide variations were found between the top and bottom companies on the percentage of women in each having relatively favorable attitudes toward their WAC CO. As the chart shows, the range from the top company to the low company is 82%. Conversely, the range on the percentage of enlisted women having relatively unfavorable attitudes toward their CO's is from 81 percent in the low company to only 6 percent in the high company.

That the extreme differences between companies is not due to individual or peculiar circumstances within the companies is apparent when the following similarities are considered:

The A and C companies (see chart) are both scattered throughout the country and there is about the same proportion of isolated camps in each group.

The proportion of AAF outfits is about the same in each group.

The distribution of WACs by age, education, and marital status is almost exactly the same in the two groups.

ATTITUDES TOWARD OFFICERS AND MORALE

The present study re-emphasizes an all-important fact which previous studies have brought out: *There is a positive relationship between leadership and morale.*

The following quick run-down of some morale findings demonstrates how striking that relationship can be:

Fully *half* of the women in the A companies say the morale of their outfits is high. This compares with only a

sixth of the women in the C companies who say the same.

Two-thirds of the women in the A group score high on a scale of adjustment

CHARACTERISTICS ENLISTED

What do enlisted women like best in their Commanding Officers?

To find the answer, a cross section of WACs were asked the following questions:

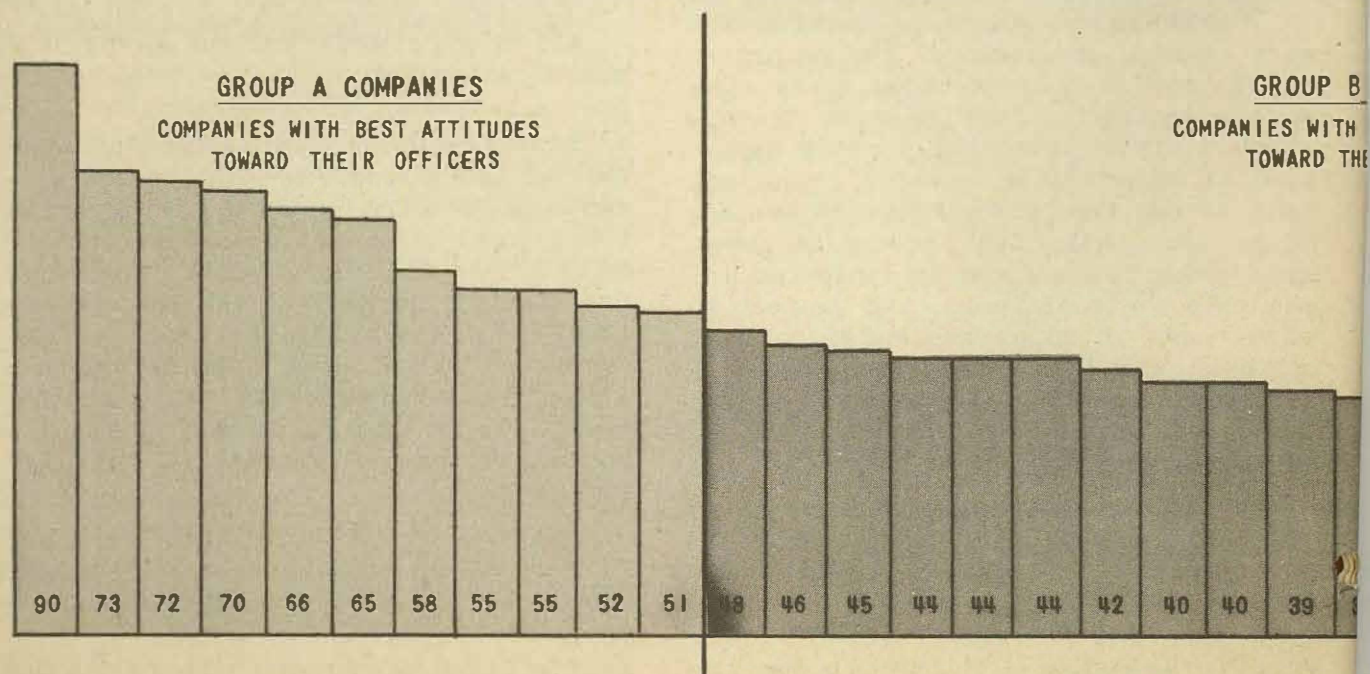
(a) Regardless of your overall opinion of your WAC CO, what are the two things you like *best* about her?

(b) What are the two things you like *least* about her?

The list following shows the dis-

HOW 44 WAC COMPANIES IN THE

PERCENTAGE OF ENLISTED WACs IN EACH DETACHMENT HAVING



to the Army as compared with only two-fifths of the women in the C group. A group women also tend to have higher pride in outfit and more interest in their Army jobs.

WOMEN LIKE IN WAC OFFICERS

tribution of characteristics enlisted women like *best* in their WAC officers. The characteristics are listed in order of their apparent significance to enlisted women in companies with favorable attitudes toward their CO's.

1. Justice
2. Friendliness
3. Concern for enlisted personnel
4. Good judgment
5. Good appearance
6. Administrative ability

The characteristics liked *least* were the "negatives" of this same list.

Women in the A companies are also much more likely to have favorable attitudes on such things as the following:

1. Medical service at their post
2. Housing and sanitary facilities
3. Recreational facilities
4. Their working conditions

MORALE -- A FUNCTION OF COMMAND

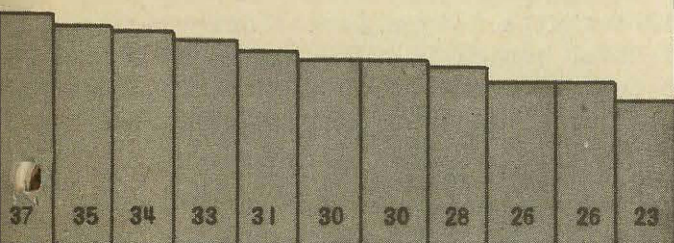
In fact, on almost every question concerning their physical surroundings women who think highly of their officers are more likely to have favorable attitudes. And this despite the fact that investigation reveals substantially no difference in the actual facilities available to them! Here is another striking demonstration of how attitudes toward officers color the thinking and general morale of enlisted personnel--dramatic proof that morale is truly a function of command.

U.S. VIEW THEIR WAC OFFICERS

RELATIVELY FAVORABLE ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR OFFICERS...

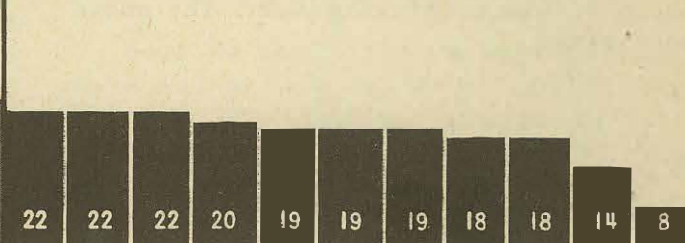
COMPANIES

AVERAGE ATTITUDES
TOWARD OFFICERS



GROUP C COMPANIES

COMPANIES WITH WORST ATTITUDES
TOWARD THEIR OFFICERS



WHAT SOLDIERS THINK ABOUT OUR ALLIES

Source: Survey of a cross section of recent overseas returnees now in the United States.

We have shown, in the course of this war, that we can work and fight together with the other free nations of the world against a common enemy. To keep this co-operation going in the cause of world peace will be a major objective of our postwar foreign policy. An important say in the shaping of that policy will someday belong to the millions of Americans who are now in uniform.

The direction our international relations take after the war may therefore be swayed by the present attitudes of soldiers toward our wartime Allies.

All the enlisted men who were questioned in this survey are veterans of overseas service, recently returned to the United States. Many of them have seen at first hand some of the suffering and destruction that war brings.

This study was designed to outline their feelings toward our four major Allies:

Russia	China
Britain	France

The attitudes of these returnees are measured in connection with three aspects of their thinking about the above countries:

1. Are they doing their share in the war?
2. Opinions about their peoples.
3. Prospects for future co-operation with them.

ARE ALLIES DOING THEIR SHARE?

A key factor in the attitude toward a wartime ally is evaluation of the contribution it is making toward victory. As this survey was conducted before VE-Day, the men were undoubtedly considering the war effort of Britain, Russia and France primarily in terms of the fight against Germany, while Chinese activity was weighed in relation to the Pacific phase of the war.

On this basis, Russia comes off best in the views expressed by returnees, with nine out of ten saying that she is doing her share, or more than her share, in helping to win the war. Similarly favorable opinions about other Allies are held by 45 percent of the men in the case of France, by 50 percent with respect to China and by 60 percent regarding England.

MANY MEN UNCERTAIN

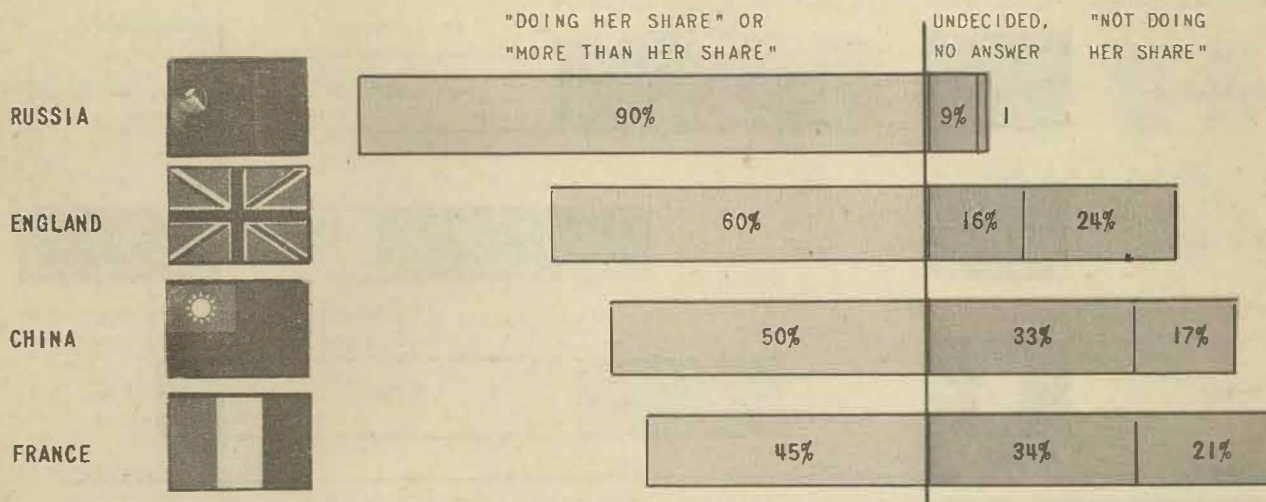
In many instances men who are unwilling to credit a particular nation with doing its part are undecided, rather than flatly negative, in their attitude. The extent of indecision on this question may be seen in the table on the following page.

The proportion of men who say outright that a nation is *not* carrying its rightful burden is highest when it comes to England—one out of four taking this position regarding our British Ally.

Only one man in a hundred, however, feels that Russia is not making its proper contribution to victory, a striking tribute to the record of the Red Army.

HOW RETURNEES RATE THE WAR EFFORT OF OUR ALLIES

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO SAY...



VIEWS ON ALLIED PEOPLES

What the soldier thinks about any foreign country reflects how he feels about the general run of its people, as well as the way it is waging the war. What conclusions have U. S. soldiers reached about the men and women of some of the United Nations who were ranged on our side in a global war?

The balance sheet of favorable and unfavorable views on Allied peoples is pictured in the table on the next page. In the case of each country, a noteworthy proportion of men did not express themselves one way or another, and this figure should be borne in mind when examining attitudes toward Allied nationals.

Of the three peoples about whom men were questioned, the Russians appear to be tops--with the goodwill of more than nine out of ten returnees who have arrived at a decision in the matter. The French are second and the British third. Although both the latter groups are rated favorably by a majority of men whose opinions were learned, a significant number eye them with some hostility.

Dislike of the English takes many

forms in the comments written on questionnaires. Criticisms vary from British policy toward colonies to a distaste for English tea and beer. Perhaps the most frequent complaint is that the British "seem to think they are winning the war." The British are also chided for their "backwardness" and their class distinctions.

Resentment against the French is often explained on these grounds:

"They quit on us in this war, and now they want to be reinstated as a leading nation."

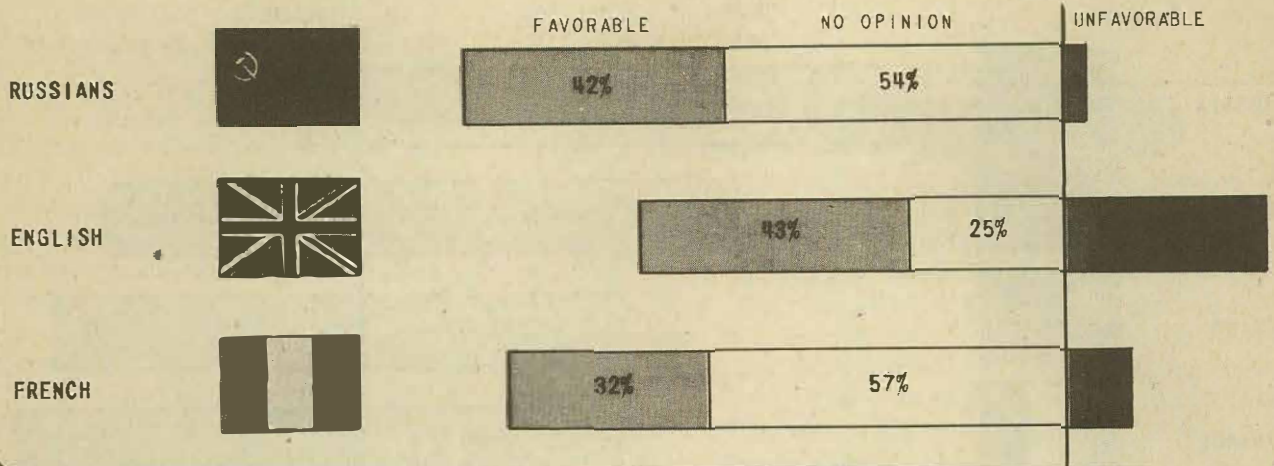
The French people are also charged with "greed for the American dollar."

Men who give vent to antagonism toward Russians generally refer to their communistic form of government.

Some of the veterans in the sample have had actual personal contact with soldiers and civilians of the countries mentioned in these questions. The views of such men do not seem to differ markedly, however, from those of men who formed their judgments solely through what they have heard or read about these various peoples.

OPINION ON ALLIED PEOPLES

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHOSE OPINIONS ARE...



POSTWAR CO-OPERATION

The bonds which tied the major Allies together during the war were formed under the stark necessity of battle. But what about after the war? How will we get along with the other major powers when the urgency which cemented our alliance has disappeared, when differences of viewpoint buried for the duration will come to the surface?

Varying shades of optimism and pessimism on postwar relations with our Allies are found among the returnees surveyed. Most of the men appear to be realistic in their appraisal of our future international dealings. They recognize that problems will inevitably crop up, but generally feel that a solution will be worked out without recourse to war.

A small group of men, however, go so far as to predict that controversies with some of our former Allies will lead us into war with them.

Looking ahead at our peacetime relations with Russia, a majority of overseas returnees declare that we will get along without fighting each other. Disagreements with the Soviets are freely pre-

dicted, however, with one out of five men foreseeing war between us sooner or later.





Few men see the United States settling its differences with any of our other Allies by force of arms. A significant proportion, nevertheless, forecast serious obstacles in the path of international collaboration after V-Day. With respect to Anglo-American affairs, almost two out of every five returnees expect strong disagreements to develop. This figure includes 11 percent who see armed conflict between us resulting eventually.

Replies to the question on postwar relations with our Allies are tabulated on the following page. A revealing point to note is the substantial percentage of men who picture themselves as undecided on this issue, or who refrain from answering.

An identical question was asked overseas one year ago. Comparison of the responses to the two surveys fails to indicate any clear-cut trend in soldier opinion.

Sizing up the overall prospects for a lasting world peace, 41 percent of the men assert that there will be another

POSTWAR RELATIONS

PERCENTAGE WHO SAY U.S. WILL...	WITH RUSSIA 	WITH ENGLAND 	WITH CHINA 	WITH FRANCE 
Get along very well	14%	9%	34%	22%
Disagree about some things but manage to get along	24%	37%	26%	36%
Have some serious disagreements but won't fight each other	16%	27%	11%	16%
Very likely fight each other sooner or later	19%	11%	3%	1%
No answer, undecided	27%	16%	26%	26%

war within the next 25 years or so, and an equal proportion are undecided. Only one man in eight is convinced that the coming peace will last for at least 25 years.

If another war does break out, who will be at fault? Among the men who prophesy another conflict, the blame is most frequently laid at the door of England (38 percent), closely followed by Russia (35 percent). Asked to name the countries which would be involved, these men generally line up America or England against Russia.

* * *

To the Army will fall the responsibility for mustering out seven or eight million men to civilian life as good citizens. The findings of this survey therefore carry important implications for all officers.

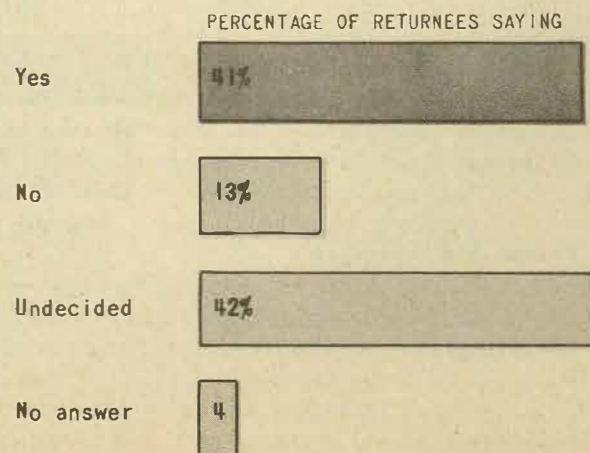
Research among military personnel has indicated that hostility toward foreign countries is frequently the product of rumor, half-truths and lack of knowledge. It has also been previously demonstrated that proper information can bring an improvement in the outlook of men toward the war and our Allies. In addition, this survey reveals that a large number

of men still have open minds on many international issues and such men constitute an especially important audience for Orientation.

Insofar as the unfavorable attitudes disclosed here are founded upon misinformation, they represent an Orientation challenge which must be met in the interests of smooth relations with our neighbors for the future.

PEACE OR ARMISTICE?

QUESTION: "Do you think there will be another war in the next 25 years or so?"



OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A POST-HOSTILITIES TRAINING PROGRAM

Source: Studies of selected samples of returnee officers of field and company grade.

According to the program outlined in the War Department's "Readjustment Regulations" (RR 1-1), non-military education and recreation will be the keynotes of the Army's post-hostilities program in inactive overseas theaters.

A survey recently completed among selected samples of field and company grade officers reveals that officers are overwhelmingly in agreement with RR 1-1 in advocating a stepped-up program of non-military education and recreation for troops kept in service following the cessation of hostilities.

GREATER MORALE PROBLEM ANTICIPATED

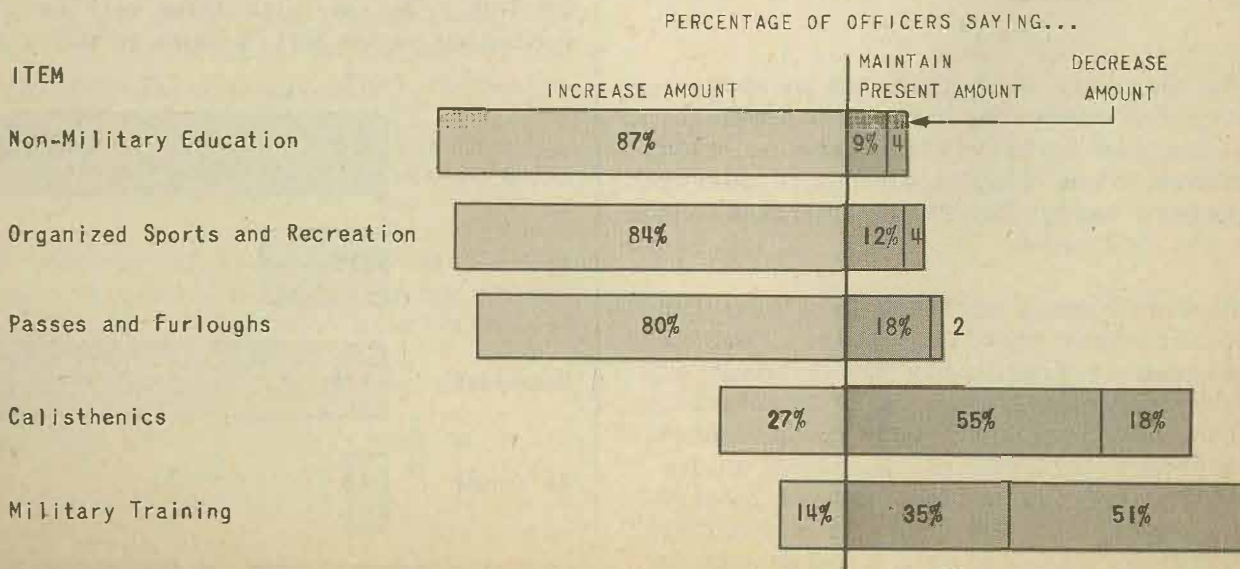
The post-hostilities education and

recreation program is specifically designed "to assist in the maintenance of discipline and morale and be of maximum future benefit to military personnel." (See statement from RR 1-1 on following page.)

In this respect, it is interesting to note that fully two-thirds of the officers foresaw a mounting morale problem after the defeat of Germany when questioned in March, and that three-fourths anticipate a mounting morale problem following the cessation of hostilities with Japan. It is evident that these officers favor increased emphasis on such things as non-military education and recreation which are outlined in RR 1-1 as activities which will have morale-building effect.

As the chart at the bottom of this page illustrates, an item which receives

QUESTION: "At the end of all hostilities the work load in your outfit may be reduced a great deal without an accompanying reduction in your present strength. In such an event, what do you think should be done with each of the following?"



almost as much support as education and recreation after the war's end is *passes and furloughs*. This finding reflects officers' concern that there will be some difficulty in keeping men busy while they await demobilization. Previous studies have shown that enlisted men themselves strongly resent having to do "busy work" which has no apparent practical value. (See WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS, Issue 10.)

ARMY EDUCATION AND RECREATION PROGRAM

Quoting from RR 1-1:

At such time as the military situation and mission of any element in theaters permit, purely military instruction will be re-

duced to that necessary for the execution of the mission and the maintenance of military proficiency, orientation, discipline, and health. That part of the training day not required for these purposes will be devoted to a program of educational and recreational activities which will be conducted in a manner that will require the full effort of the personnel during the time allotted. When the commanding generals concerned determine that this program is to be applied, all personnel of the organization will be required to participate. However, each individual will be permitted to choose whether he will participate in the educational or recreational aspects. The purpose of the program is to assist in the maintenance of discipline and morale and be of maximum future benefit to military personnel.

A SHIPBOARD ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Source: Study of samples of Infantry reinforcements aboard ship en route to an overseas combat theater.

A study recently completed on the effects of a shipboard orientation program sheds light on an important orientation problem--motivating soldiers so as to get their all-out *cooperation* in the Orientation program.

Two different samples were selected among groups of Infantry reinforcements aboard ship on their way into combat overseas. The men in one sample had been given an intensive Orientation program on the way over. The men in the other sample--who matched the first in background and other respects--had not had any orientation whatsoever aboard ship.

Immediately on debarkation in the theater, both groups of men were given questionnaires which tested their level of factual knowledge on topics covered by the Orientation program.

The test results revealed that the oriented group scored consistently higher on various items included in the information quiz. The gains attributable to

Orientation were highest in those areas which had *important personal implications to the men*. In other words, the men learned best that information which they were most highly *motivated* to learn and did not do as well on other information. For example:

While 35% more of the oriented men than the non-oriented men knew that one should "take sulfa when wounded, even without water"--only 3% more could locate certain geographic places on a map. Again:

While 23% more of the oriented men than the non-oriented men knew that one should not dig foxholes near trees--only 4% more could identify the commanding generals of major commands in the theater to which they had sailed.

The shipboard program studied demonstrated conclusively that orientation aboard ships can accomplish a useful purpose. In addition--and perhaps most important--it demonstrated that *personal motivation* can make a smashing success of an Orientation program which might otherwise fall short.

A NOTE ON ATTITUDE SURVEYS

Since Pearl Harbor, the Research Branch, Information and Education Division, and its overseas counterparts have queried anonymously more than half a million officers, enlisted men, and WACs about their attitudes toward problems of concern to the Army.

The results of this research have been reported in more than 300 reports on scores of different topics. Many Army policies--for example, the plan for redeployment after V-E day--have been based on these reports. While most of the studies have been confidential analyses for use in higher staff planning, some of them have been made available in restricted form to officers generally through publication in *WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS*. Still others have been used as teaching aids in officer training classes. For example, the story about attitudes toward WAC leadership appearing on pages 7-9 of the present issue is an excerpt from a longer report now being used in a special leadership training course for WAC officers.

DO STUDIES AFFECT MORALE?

From time to time the question has come up as to how the conduct of research surveys affects the morale of the soldiers surveyed. Such a question is not especially important, as the sample on any particular survey is such a small fraction of the total Army population that any direct influence on the men surveyed can hardly have an appreciable effect on the men of the Army as a whole. Nevertheless, the question may be of some interest to commanding officers whose troops happen to be included in a particular sample.

There are two schools of thought on the question. The first school holds that filling out questionnaires has a *positive* morale building effect, since it serves as a catharsis--enabling men to express themselves freely and anonymously on matters that concern them. Conversely, the second school holds that it has a *negative* morale effect, since it encourages expression, pro and con, on topics which may trouble the men and hence brings the trouble into the open.

That men really welcome the opportunity of free expression under the protection of anonymity is substantiated by the fullness with which they write out free answers and the tone in which they write. In addition, fully seven out of eight men are strongly in favor of such surveys and not one in a hundred is strongly opposed. But this alone does not prove that the effects are good or bad.

The fact is that systematic study has demonstrated that there is no evidence to support either of the above theories. The actual filling out of questionnaires seems to have no appreciable effect on the men's morale. For example:

Two groups of men selected at random from the same companies were given questionnaires which were alike except for the order in which questions were asked. Group A was deliberately given a list of the supposedly most "psychologically upsetting" questions which could be devised--questions about their worries, about their discipline, about their leadership--ending with a series of standard questions designed to measure their general morale. Group B was given the same questionnaire, but with the standard morale questions coming first.

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The men in Group A who had first been exposed to the supposedly upsetting questions showed slightly better attitudes on the general morale items than the men in Group B, but the differences were never more than two or three percent and easily could have been attributable to chance.

Other experimental studies have shown that men resurveyed after a few weeks show no better or no worse attitudes than matched groups of men studied for the first time.

The conclusion is that filling out questionnaires seems to have no effect whatsoever on men's morale, in spite of the fact that most men appreciate a chance to "speak their piece." However this conclusion should not encourage the indiscriminate use of questionnaires. The special methods and techniques developed and employed by the Research Branch of the Information and Education Division to establish rapport and to guarantee absolute anonymity in the administration of questionnaires assure a spirit of cooperation which might be disrupted if the atmosphere were different. This is one of the reasons why the Research Branch has been designated as the sole War Department agency authorized to conduct opinion and attitude research studies in the Army.

HOW THE STUDIES ARE MADE

The articles in this bulletin are based on attitude surveys conducted by the Research Branch, Information and Education Division, and the research units reporting to the commanding generals of the several theaters.

The staff of the Research Branch is composed of Army officers who are experienced in the field of surveys, together with a number of civilian specialists. Techniques have been developed, tested and adjusted to fit the Army's problems.

The basic steps in conducting a study are as follows:

1. The questionnaire is prepared in consultation with the War Department branches, or the theater command immediately concerned. Questions are carefully chosen to provide the exact type of information desired.
2. The questionnaire is pre-tested. That is, the questions are tried out on small groups of men to determine whether they are meaningful and understandable to the type of men or officers to be studied.
3. The project is cleared for action with the commands in which the study is to be made.
4. The number of men to be surveyed is set sufficiently large to insure statistically reliable findings.
5. The men to be surveyed are selected to insure as true a cross section of the group to be studied as possible. A cross section of enlisted men in the United States, for example, is so drawn as to give proper proportionate representation to each branch of the Army, to men in each stage of training, and to men stationed in the various sections of the country. It is, of course, possible to get cross sections of a single branch, of a division, of Negro troops, or any other portion of the Army desired.
6. The men complete questionnaires under conditions of absolute anonymity. They are assembled in small groups, and hear a short introduction given by a specially trained class leader. This introduction makes it clear to the men that only their frank opinion is wanted, and that they are not being tested or spied on. No names or serial numbers are placed on the questionnaires. Ordinarily, illiterates or men of very low intelligence are interviewed by specially trained enlisted men.
7. The data are analyzed by specialists in attitude research analysis. Reports of these analysts are released to agencies concerned, and also form the basis for the material presented in this bulletin.

The procedure outlined above is that followed in the typical cross section survey. Other techniques, of course, are employed from time to time in special situations.