

M O R A L E

(By Lieutenant John H. Thornton, Jr., Coast Artillery Corps.)

Good will has been defined as the "sum of an infinite number of favorable impressions." The problem, then, for the young officer, is how to build up "favorable impressions" in the minds of the men of the command. Many approaches to the problem have been suggested.

The British, for example, urge young officers to remember the following eight commandments:

1. Give the men a sense of unity, all for one, one for all.
2. Put the men's interest first at all times.
3. Explain things to the men.
4. Do things with them. (British officers always take part in athletics with the enlisted men. One of the guiding principles of their leadership is the development of the spirit of the team.)
5. Be the champion of the men; fight for them; defend them always.
6. Know the men's names.
7. Make the salute a greeting between comrades and practice it religiously.
8. Be friendly with the men without being familiar.

Young officers find it most difficult in improving the morale of an organization to remember the paternalistic attitude which they must adopt; the same position as a stern father with his children. In this role they must be the father confessor of enlisted men. It is all-important that they be urged to come to their officers with important personal problems, knowing they will be guaranteed a sympathetic reception.

In the same respect, enlisted men must be instructed not to be afraid to bring other complaints freely to their officers. Naturally, noncommissioned officers should weed out the complaints which are not important. But it is vital to the morale of any unit that the enlisted men know that they have a means of redress in matters of importance if they feel that they have been dealt with unjustly.

Orientation has come to be regarded as highly important in the maintenance of morale in the American Army, stemming from the natural questioning in the mind of a democratic citizen to know the reason "why" for everything he does. Frequent talks about "why" the fighting takes place, war aims, plans for a post-war world, are "musts" in any organization with a high morale.

In garrison and in the field, officers must fight continually to secure prompt deliverance of mail. No other factor in a soldier's existence is so important as the prompt receipt of news from home. Officers often order hometown papers when a substantial number of men come from a particular community. In the field it is a great help if officers contact friends and relatives of men who are not receiving mail, and request them to write.

After hours, the chaplain and special services officers should be utilized. An occasional party, social occasions where feminine companionship is provided, informally organized musical entertainment are morale builders. The discovery of an enlisted man who can play a musical instrument or is possessed of theatrical talent is a gold mine to a young officer.

Athletic teams are always aids to the preservation of morale. Americans are the most sports-minded people on the earth. This quality is a godsend to officers confronted with a morale problem. The equipment for softball or football is inexpensive and can be improvised if necessary. One over-zealous special services officer suggested the jawbone of an ass for a baseball bat, if things got too tight.

Insistence by young officers that enlisted men present a good appearance at all times is also a definite morale booster. They should require that the men look like soldiers, with brass polished, hair cut, shoes shined; to work on postures. It is no idle phrase that a good posture adds immeasurably to self-respect.

It is important that each officer guard the health of his enlisted men. Particularly stringent inspections must be made when the unit is in the field. Officers must not permit the enlisted men to go "to seed" once an outfit has moved into active position. Neatness, haircuts, daily shaving, regular bathing, must be insisted upon, if at all possible. Any detractions to self-respect will inevitably result in a lowering of morale.

Religious preferences of enlisted men will also be honored and facilities provided for their worship when possible. Officers must get to know and use the chaplain.

Like the sad clown, Pagliacci, it is always "smile, damn you, smile" for a junior officer. No matter how tough the going, or how hopeless the position, junior officers can exude nothing but cheerfulness and optimism under any circumstances. It remains for their spirit to "carry" the outfit along when the night is the darkest and the mess truck is stuck in the mud ten miles to the rear.