INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6” x 9” black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700  800/521-0600
MORALE IN THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
DURING WORLD WAR I

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
James Tyrus Seidule, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1997

Dissertation Committee
Allan R. Millett, Advisor
John F. Guilmartin
Warren R. Van Tine

Approved By
Allan R. Millett
Advisor
Department of History
ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the morale of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I to determine its competence. When examining morale military psychologists cite the importance of three factors: cohesion, esprit de corps, and biological and psychological needs such as health, rest, and nutrition. Morale, however, has more to it then the battlefield determinants, particularly in World War I. Societal values also played a key role. Officers and soldiers came into the army with idealistic and romantic expectations of war and service. Those expectations were particularly strong because the army used conscription without sufficient training to overcome prewar perceptions.

This dissertation attempts to answer the question: how was the morale of the AEF? The morale of the AEF was poor. Most of this dissertation examines the causes for poor morale. Chapter 2 discusses the AEF's poor unit cohesion caused by a host of different factors. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the poor relations among officers caused by the rift between citizen-officers and professionals that
contributed to poor officer leadership. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the poor health of the AEF and the problems the medical system had in dealing with casualties. Finally, Chapter 7 describes the AEF’s poor condition in the Fall of 1918, when it tried to launch the largest offensive in American history.

This dissertation also describes the effect of poor morale on the AEF. Poor morale served as both an indicator of inferior battlefield performance and a factor in the Americans’ tactical problems. The sorry state of the AEF in November, 1918 would probably have precluded it from continuing to fight into Germany in 1919. That is why studying morale is important. It provides an evaluation of an army at the tactical level by assessing more than just tactics. In the case of the AEF, poor morale was a cause and a symptom of tactical ineffectiveness.
Dedicated to Shari
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation benefited from the input of many professors, colleagues, and graduate students. They helped me spot errors of fact as well as interpretation. My greatest thanks goes to Dr. Allan R. Millett who shepherded my progress through a thesis and a dissertation. As an advisor, scholar, and leader, he taught me how to teach, write, and most importantly how to think critically. I am a historian because of him and a much better army officer and leader. Despite a demanding schedule, he always found time to see me, and our discussions helped me clarify key issues.

I learned much from the stellar professors at Ohio State, among them Dr. Williamson Murray, Dr. John Rule, Dr. Warren Van Tine, Dr. John Guilmartin, and Dr. Mark Grimsley. They taught me how to think and write more clearly and their unique presence in the classroom helped me develop my teaching style.
I wrote much of this dissertation while teaching at the United States Military Academy (USMA). Blending the demands of teaching with research and writing is always a difficult task, but the members of the Department of History at USMA made it easier. The Department Head, Colonel Robert A. Doughty, a brilliant World War I historian, provided an atmosphere that allowed for both teaching and scholarship. He also gave me valuable French language sources and shared his manuscript on the French Army in World War I. My bosses in the Military History Division also supported my dissertation. Colonel James Johnson told me that a Ph.D. was possible and gave me frequent encouragement. Colonel Cole Kingseed smartly had me map out a timeline to finish my dissertation and demanded frequent updates that help me keep it a priority. As a boss and a mentor he provided me with a true example of how to “take care of your soldiers.” Towards the end of my dissertation process, I was scheduled to teach an intensive two week course; instead, Colonel Kingseed taught it for me, freeing me to write and edit uninterrupted. Lieutenant Colonel Conrad Crane also sacrificed a month to teach that course so that I did not. He also shared his grandfather’s diary with me as well as giving me encouragement.
The administrative staff in the Department of History led by Mrs. Anne Lamb is extraordinarily efficient and allowed me to concentrate on the dissertation instead of other duties. Of particular note was Melissa Mills who kept me from missing deadlines and shepherded me through the sometimes strange processes at the Military Academy. I found the same efficiency at Ohio State as well. I would not have completed the administration requirements for the dissertation were it not for Beth Russell and Joby Abernathy.

The staffs of the National Archives, the USMA library, the Military History Institute, and USMA archives gave me valuable assistance. Of particular note was Dr. Richard Sommers of the Military History Institute and Alan Aimone of the USMA Archives.

Mentors are a rare breed, and I feel lucky to have had so many during this process. Two deserve special mention. Lieutenant Colonel William O. Odom took me under his wing before I arrived at USMA, and even though he left to command an infantry battalion, I still find advice and tutelage whenever I need it. He showed me the process, the timeline, and the determination to finish a dissertation. In addition to his prodigious intellectual talents, he is
the finest military officer I know. My other mentor is Dr. John M. Gates, who edited much of this dissertation and will probably see the rest of it soon. He sees through the chaff on most issues, and I value his counsel immensely.

My colleagues from Ohio State and USMA have helped me during all phases of the graduate student experience. Major Verb Washington’s computer guidance saved me in several instances from disaster. I value his friendship and his expertise. Captain Kelly Jordan read and edited parts of this dissertation. He has a first-rate mind and uses red ink well. Ron Kyle and Mark Jacobson provided me with friendship and facilities in Columbus. Captain Shawn Faulkner, an AEF scholar, shared his knowledge and sources with me. Our conversations honed my thinking.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My father has taught history for forty-three years and is still the best teacher I have ever seen. My mother has continued to cheer for me even when I did not deserve it. I especially appreciate her frequent visits to care for “her boys” that allowed me to continue work on this dissertation. Peter and Wade, my two sons, have provided me with more then they will ever know. I learned time-management through them. If I wanted to spend time on this dissertation and play
with them, I had to figure out how to use my time more wisely. I hope I did. My greatest debt goes to my wife, Shari, for keeping the rest of my life in order while I worked. She is a superb mother and a wonderful wife. I am a better person for knowing her. Since I began this dissertation, she gave birth to our two sons, bore the majority of the parenting responsibility, and still gave me the encouragement I needed. She always did her best. Her morale never failed.
VITA

July 3, 1962

Born - Alexandria, Virginia

1984

B.A., Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia

1984-Present

Officer, United States Army

1994

M.A., The Ohio State University

1994-Present

Assistant Professor, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History

Studies in Military History with Dr. Allan R. Millett and Dr. Williamson Murray

Studies in Modern American History with Warren Van Tine

Studies in Early Modern Europe with John Rule
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ............................................. ii
Dedication ............................................. iv
Acknowledgments ...................................... v
Vita ................................................. x
List of Pictures ..................................... xiii

Chapters

1. Introduction........................................ 1
2. Cohesion in the AEF............................... 13
   Straggling........................................ 15
   Military Justice.................................. 26
   Transfers and Replacements...................... 37
3. Esprit de Corps Among Officers: The Regulars..... 58
   Regular Army Culture............................ 62
   Army Policy--Training........................... 72
   Army Policy--Assignment......................... 85
4. Esprit de Corps Among Officers: Citizens......... 90
   Business Values.................................. 91
   Sports Values.................................... 103
   Civil War Brotherhood........................... 114
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian Values</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Health of the AEF</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Load and Clothing</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Medical System of the AEF</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. &quot;Ass End First:&quot; The AEF in the Fall of 1918</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoration, Pay, and Promotion</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Conclusion</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Discipline of soldiers in the 82nd Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The rear view of an AEF infantryman with heavy marching equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Navy corpsman conducting first aid on a Marine’s foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Soldier suffering from combat exhaustion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>American soldiers attack Germans infantry in the woodlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Soldiers hauling a cart to the front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Quartermaster Corps soldiers toss bread into a train for distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>American soldiers unloading beef into a mule wagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>A Magor Rolling Kitchen designed to feed 250 soldiers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why was morale in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) significant? Participants thought it important. Officers of the day liked to quote Napoleon's famous maxim: "The moral is to the physical as three is to one." One officer wrote shortly after the war that army success "depends most largely upon the factor of morale." Senior officers including General John J. Pershing and many high ranking commanders equated morale with competence. Every unit assessment conducted by an inspector general ended with an evaluation of morale. The inspectors and

---


commanders used it as the final indicator of future combat effectiveness.\(^3\)

Importance to the participants is only one reason to study morale. The historian can use morale as a means to understand other aspects about the AEF, particularly military effectiveness. In this case, the morale of the AEF was both a cause and a result of poor military performance. Social scientists have made a strong case over the last fifty years for the importance of morale as an indicator of military performance by concentrating on determinants such as small unit cohesion and food consumption.\(^4\) The historian can show that morale does affect performance not only through military determinants but also through societal and institutional values.

By studying morale the historian can also gain a different perspective on the workings of an institution from the attitudes of those inside the institutional framework. Studying morale during war provides additional insights because the stress of combat brought problems to the forefront quickly and painfully. Those problems and the reaction to them reveal how the army worked, its

\(^3\)All Inspector General Reports of units conclude with a subjective assessment of morale. See Box 5, Entry 797, Record Group 120, National Archives for examples.

attitude toward change, and its competence. Morale can also provide a measure of the society the army represents. When a military institution grows exponentially, it tends to reflect the character of civilian society at the very time its institutional practices come into conflict with that same character. This was especially true during World War I because massive numbers of citizen-soldiers entered the army in a very short period. The mixture of civilian, Progressive era values with the values of the professional military officer in the army’s institutional setting brought conflict that affected morale. By studying morale, the historian can look at the friction between different factions within a military institution.

Discussing the importance of morale both for the participants and the historian begs the question: What is morale? One military officer in August 1918 found this question difficult to answer.

All attempts at definition go to show how intangible and hard to define is the quality called military morale. But the quality is nonetheless recognizable for being elusive. When we see it, we know it, and we recognize equally the tragedy of its absence.\(^5\)

No one understood the nebulous term -- morale, but one group was willing to try: psychologists who joined the army

to further their nascent profession studied morale and tried to make it a more scientific enterprise. They gave morale classes in camps and even formed a Morale Branch to promote good morale in the service. The definition of morale still proved elusive. Most psychologists prefaced any definition with a metaphor. A Yale psychology professor explained morale with a sports analogy: "What condition is to the athlete's body, morale is to the mind." Brigadier General Edward Munson, a trained psychologist and the Chief of the Morale Branch, War Department General Staff during the First World War, wrote that "good morale in an army may be likened to temper in a Damascus blade. It combines a hard 'fighting edge' with the resiliency that no shock can crack." Brigadier General Munson defined morale as "that mental training and mental hardening which, in a body of troops, continue to function

---


9 Nature and Importance of Morale, Morale Circular no. 1, October, 1918, Morale Branch, War Plans Division, General Staff, Box 18, Entry 376, Records Group 165, National Archives.
after all else has broken." Another officer called morale "collective strength of character."

More important than the definition of morale is its determinants. Modern military psychologists cite the importance of three factors: Cohesion, which is the solidarity of the group and its leaders. Organizational commitment or esprit de corps, which is the pride and devotion to a larger organization; and third, biological and psychological needs such as health, rest, and nutrition, and a sense of physical well-being. Psychologists, led by Samuel Stouffer's extensive study of World War II combat, found that soldiers' attitudes affected their combat performance. While psychologists

---

10 Nature and Importance of Morale, Morale Circular no. 1, October 1918, Morale Branch, War Plans Division, General Staff, Box 18, Entry 376, Records Group 165, National Archives.


have a huge repository of information on which to base their findings, they have often ignored the cultural and social ramifications of morale. Historian Roger Spiller notes "dissected" morale would reveal "a mixture of ancient tradition, chivalry, and unapologetic romanticism." Morale has more to it then battlefield determinants. Societal values also play a key role. Officers and soldiers came into the army with idealistic and romantic expectations of war and service. Those expectations are particularly strong if the army uses conscription without sufficient training to overcome prewar perceptions. The methodology for this dissertation combines officer, soldier, and historical perceptions of battlefield conditions using the determinants listed by military psychologists while incorporating the societal values of the participants.

This dissertation attempts to answer the question: How was the morale of the AEF? The morale of the AEF, I found, was poor, particularly by the Meuse-Argonne Campaign. The second question then becomes: why was the AEF's morale poor? Chapter I discusses the poor unit cohesion at all levels of the AEF caused by a host of different factors.

---

Chapters II and III describe the poor esprit de corps among officers caused by the rift between citizen-officers and professionals that contributed to poor officer leadership. Chapters IV and V discuss the poor health of the AEF and the problems the medical system had in dealing with casualties. Finally, Chapter VI describes the AEF’s poor condition in the Fall of 1918, when it tried to launch the largest offensive in American history.

This dissertation also describes the effect of poor morale on the AEF. The poor morale served as both an indicator of poor battlefield performance and a factor in the Americans’ tactical problems. That is why studying morale is important. It provides an evaluation of an army at the tactical level by assessing more than just tactics. In the case of the AEF, poor morale was a cause and a symptom of tactical ineffectiveness.

The historiography on American morale in World War I is slight except for journalists and senior army commanders writing after the war. Most American commentators gave the AEF high marks for morale. Professor R. M. Johnston, the nation’s first academic military historian, wrote soon after the war that the doughboys’ morale was
"extraordinarily high." The journalist Frederick Palmer, who wrote on the war before the American entry and who served on Pershing's staff, criticized parts of the American war effort but always gave the AEF high marks for "spirit." Senior American commanders such as Pershing, Hunter Liggett, and Robert L. Bullard all gave varying critiques without questioning morale. They equated the high enthusiasm with which America and American soldiers went to war with high morale.

Although many recent scholars have looked at the problems within the AEF, there is no study on its morale. Many historians have written critically about various aspects of the AEF but praised the morale of the army. The dean of historians on the American military experience in World War I, Edward M. Coffman, has written about problems

15 R.M. Johnston, First Reflections on the Campaign of 1918 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 34-35. Johnston wondered, however, how the AEF morale would have fared under continued pressure or defeat.


the AEF suffered between the Leavenworth trained officers and others as well as clash between the commander of the AEF, General John J Pershing, and the chief of staff, Peyton March. David Trask cites the senior leadership of the AEF for the greatest share of the American army's failures. Timothy Nenninger notes the tremendous problems the AEF had at the tactical level as does James Rainey. Paul Braim's book on the Meuse-Argonne does mention the morale problems of the AEF in that campaign. Donald Smythe's biography of Pershing sheds light on the AEF

---


problems as does Allan Millett's biography of Robert Bullard. None of these works specifically tackle morale.

Most of the work on World War I morale comes from the European perspective, a military perspective that included large numbers of soldiers shot for crimes such as desertion and mutiny. The classic and influential study of Great War morale is by the English author and soldier John Baynes. Written in 1967, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* evaluates the 2nd Scottish Rifles (Cameronians) in the Battle of Neuve Chappelle in 1915. Baynes served with the unit after the Second World War and his father commanded the 2nd Scottish Rifles in the interwar period. While it is a wonderful regimental history, it suffers from that point of view as well, because it covers only the regular army in its first days of battle. During the battle the unit suffered seventy percent casualties and was never the same. Baynes argues convincingly that regimental loyalty, good officer-enlisted relationships, a strong sense of duty, discipline, and sound administration brought the

“Cameronians” their success, but in many ways his book is a homage to a romantic way of war that died by 1916. He argues that the British regulars’ amateurism was “an asset” because officers that failed to think about warfare would not succumb to the militarism that befell the Germans. Baynes scolds the current “9 to 5” professional officers for their careerism and, petulantly, for marrying too early forcing them to spend time with their families instead of the regiment -- a fault he finds “disgraceful.” The tone throughout Baynes’ book is a reactionary one, looking back to the good old days of the colonial army. He confirms Spiller’s insight on the link between morale and romanticism.

Better than Baynes is Lord Moran’s classic Anatomy of Courage. Moran, a British regimental surgeon in World War I, wrote one of the earliest and most influential studies on the inability of the human mind to sustain combat operations for an indefinite time. Using his notes from the war and a lucid writing style, Moran captures the

intensity of war and, ultimately, the breaking point of the human mind in combat.\textsuperscript{23}

While more scholarship has focused on the British experience, there are several works on other European nations. Perhaps the best is Allan Wildman's two volume study on the collapse of the Russian army, but there are others as well.\textsuperscript{24} Daniel Horn has written on the mutinies in the German navy, and Robert Walker wrote a fine master's thesis on the German army's morale in 1918.\textsuperscript{25} Leonard V. Smith recently published a monograph on the French mutinies of 1917.\textsuperscript{26}

This study hopes to fill an historiographical gap on the morale of the AEF. By searching for morale in an army, the historian must rate different aspects of fighting capability that other studies often miss. This

\textsuperscript{25} Daniel Horn, \textit{The German Naval Mutinies of World War I} (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969); Robert Walker, "Morale in the German Army on the Western Front in 1918" (Master's Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1966).
dissertation looks at those factors. This study also attempts to shed important light on whether the AEF could have continued the offensive into Germany, as Pershing wanted to do, in the winter of 1918-1919
CHAPTER 2

Cohesion in the AEF

Lieutenant General Hunter Liggett, commander of the 1st Army, estimated that by the November 1918 Armistice, over 100,000 stragglers from his army occupied the battle zone.¹ These straggling soldiers hid in abandoned German dugouts by day, and by night they scurried out of their holes like some nocturnal scavengers seeking food. In an effort to stop their hemorrhaging field army, officers authorized harsh disciplinary measures.² Another commander, Brigadier General Preston Brown of the 3rd Division, authorized his officers to hurl bombs into

¹ Hunter Liggett, AEF: Ten Years Ago in France (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1928), 207-208.

dugouts if soldiers refused to come out.¹ By the Fall of 1918, the AEF had great difficulties maintaining order.

One reason for the AEF's condition was poor unit cohesion. Cohesion in the military is group solidarity in training and combat. Until the nineteenth century, cohesion meant actual physical unity in battle formations such as the phalanx, the infantry square, and the line. The repeating rifle and other technological innovations created tactical changes that placed more emphasis on psychological unity. Colonel Ardant DuPicq called this "moral cohesion." He wrote in 1865 that "as the ranks become more open, and the material cohesion of the ranks [fail to give] confidence, it must spring from a knowledge of comrades, and a trust in officers."² Too many AEF soldiers lacked confidence in their units and their leaders. Organizations that lack confident soldiers lack cohesion and without cohesion units do not last long on the battlefield. This chapter details the extent of the cohesion problem in the AEF as well as its causes.

---


Stragglers

The greatest evidence for poor cohesion in a fighting outfit comes from comparing the numbers of soldiers who fight and those who choose flight. In the Civil War, units received nicknames for their abilities to stay and fight under the most arduous of circumstances. Nathan Kimball's Brigade in II Corps of the Army of the Potomac earned the name "the Gibraltar Brigade," while John Gibbon's Brigade in I Corps was called the "Iron Brigade." Units in the AEF had fewer nicknames because of the huge number of stragglers -- those soldiers who shirked fighting by hiding or returning to the rear and safety. The lack of cohesion, discipline, and training made straggling endemic in the AEF during the last three months of the war. These men would not stand by their fellow soldiers and fight; instead, they chose flight. The Inspector General (IG) of the AEF reported: "Stragglers in some organizations were so numerous that ultimately there remained only those soldiers who possessed the highest physical and mental qualities."^5

Divisions that received less training tended to have more stragglers, but the problem confronted all units in

^5U.S. Army War College, G-1 Course, Committee No. 7, 1933-34, Army War College Curricular Archives, File #401-7, appendix 2, p. 28.
the AEF. The IG reported that one unnamed division during
the Meuse-Argonne campaign in the Fall of 1918, possibly
the 35th Division, had only 1,600 men at the front,
including an engineer battalion. Soon after that report
another division took its place in the line. After
arriving in the rest area, the infantry regiments alone
reported 8,418 men, which did not include the engineer
battalion counted in the original 1,600.⁶

Soldiers showed great flair for avoiding combat. One
common method for evading front line action involved the
practice of sending back four healthy men with each wounded
man. Two soldiers would carry the litter, one would carry
the rifles, and one led the way to the rear. The AEF IG
stated the problem: "One wound inflicted by a German
reduces our effectives by five, whereas one bullet which
causes death reduces our effectives by one. This is
because the litter bearers do not return promptly."⁷
Another account described men that "seized upon litters as
a means of bearing their own whole, though trembling

⁶Extract of the report of the Inspector General, AEF on
straggling, sent to all corps in 1st Army, 11 November
1918, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box
5.

⁷Extract of the AEF, IG on straggling, 11 Nov., 1918,
National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5.
carcasses to the rear, whence they never returned."
Soldiers hid in abandoned French and German dug-outs by day and would come out at night seeking rations at any available kitchen. They also feigned injury by gas as another way out of the battle area. When a soldier claimed an injury by gassing he had only to cough strenuously to convince his officers he needed evacuation. Once in the rear areas the "gas victim" would join the mass of men at casual camps or hide in various units away from the front.

The AEF inspector general, Major General André Brewster, an expert on the straggling problem, reeled off several reasons for the "excessive straggling." A lack of discipline and leadership at the platoon, company, and battalion level topped the list. These problems plagued the AEF throughout the war and even after the Armistice. Other more easily remedied shortcomings afflicted units at the front. The army suffered from poor soldier accountability. "There does not exist in the entire army such a thing as a check of the men at a stated hour each day. Platoon leaders do not know where their men are.

---


9 See Chapter Four for more on false gas cases as they relate to combat exhaustion.
Regimental and higher commanders have no idea where there men are." When units moved forward, commanders failed to utilize roll call procedures or personnel reports to keep up with their commands.

Logistical problems also contributed to straggling. Short of supplies, officers would send men to the rear for ammunition, rations, or water, and the men would often fail to return. Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence, a platoon leader in the 29th Division during the Meuse-Argonne campaign, sent two runners to communicate with battalion headquarters. When the message failed to arrive, he went in search of his runners. He found them hiding in an abandoned German dugout. Lawrence described another instance where two soldiers volunteered to go back and retrieve some grenades to take out a German machine gun nest. The soldiers promised to return in two minutes; they never did, but others offered to look for more grenades to escape the front. Thirsty and hungry, soldiers would wander off in

---

10 Extract of report of the Inspector General AEF on Straggling, published by 1st Army, 11 November, 1918 National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5.

search of rations, never to return. Sergeant Elmer Jacobson, a Swedish immigrant and a member of the 82nd Division, left the front lines whenever he could to fraternize with the local populace. He never feared punishment.

Divisions instituted numerous policies to try to cut back on the number of stragglers. At Pershing's insistence, division commanders talked to their junior officers and non-commissioned officers. The 2nd Division commander, Marine Corps Major General John Lejeune, told his officers that preventing straggling was their duty. Major General William Wright, the 89th Division commander, told his non-commissioned officers "that they were depended upon for holding squads together, thus preventing stragglers." These divisions also set up a cordon of military police at roads, towns, and dressing stations in an attempt to prevent stragglers from fleeing to the rear.

---


13 Elmer Jacobson, 82nd Division, World War I Survey - 2152, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

14 Report of 1st Army Inspector General to 1st Army Chief of Staff, 4 November, 1918, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5.
Unfortunately, stragglers easily avoided stationary checkpoints. "The straggler patrols which have been instituted have generally been posted as three lines of stationary posts. Any quick witted straggler can get through these lines especially at night."\(^{15}\)

Another division used a more intricate plan to curb straggling. The effort and planning that went into straggler control suggest the great problem the AEF had with this issue.

The line of military police, or better "battle police," followed the firing line at a distance of 100 to 200 yards and by routing out of shell holes and ditches men who were just making up their minds to skulk and who had started to hide, they were able to send them forward while their organizations were still in sight. This plan in addition to straggler posts following on the roads at a distance of two kilometers from the front line seemed to check straggling very effectively as it took from the intended stragglers the excuse that he always gives, that he does not know where his company is.\(^{16}\)

The use of military police became a doctrinal part of the Meuse-Argonne offensive as the need for more straggler patrols became clear. Military police units grew

\(^{15}\)Extract of Inspector General AEF, published by 1st Army, 11 November, 1918, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5.

\(^{16}\)Extract of Inspector General AEF, published by 1st Army, 11 November, 1918.
exponentially as "an unbroken line of them followed our attacks." Major General Robert L. Bullard, a division, corps, and finally an army commander, noted that the hardest job in France was preventing soldiers from fleeing the battle front. He ordered the provost marshal to start searching the French villages for stray Americans. Their search netted "great numbers" of men whom Bullard called "dead-beats, deserters, evaders of battle and danger." Hunter Liggett called them "thirty-third degree brothers in the ancient order of the AWOL men who had shirked every possible duty." Liggett went so far as to say that the common characteristic of the American soldier is to "scatter the moment he breaks ranks." The army was melting into the French countryside.

Small unit leaders lacked the policing resources of an army commander; instead, lieutenants and captains relied on personal intervention. Platoon leader Joseph Lawrence spent nights at the front during the Meuse-Argonne campaign


patrolling the lines ensuring his men did not flee. It was a full time job. "I would drive one back to his position and another would try to slip by."\(^{20}\) Deserters came from all ranks. Lawrence said his first sergeant fled. A soldier from the 82nd Division, Ernesto Biogno said his battalion executive officer "ran away in the Argonne Forest." Biogno said his officers "ran like sheep."\(^{21}\)

Pershing issued more draconian measures to halt the growing straggler epidemic. In late October, he wrote his division and corps commanders to sanction the ultimate penalty. "When men run away in front of the enemy, officers should take summary action to stop it, even to the point of shooting men down who are caught in such disgraceful conduct. No orders need be published on the subject, but it should be made known to younger officers that they must do what ever is required to prevent it."\(^{22}\)


\(^{21}\)Ernesto Biogno, 82nd Division, 328th Infantry, World War I Survey-1075, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

A letter to the *Infantry Journal* also sanctioned the death penalty because soldiers robbed the dead with frequency.\(^{23}\)

The AEF Inspector General issued more specific orders. Commanders should march all stragglers caught near the battle zone to the front line and "placed in front of the men who stuck and did not straggle." This policy failed to consider the effect on the men who stayed in battle. Placing men who had run next to those who had not ruined the cohesion and morale of all soldiers on the front. The IG also recommended that patrols map and check all dugouts in each sector to take away the stragglers best hiding spots.\(^{24}\) If all else failed and a "skulker" committed the offense a second time, the IG endorsed a "court-martial and sentence of death."\(^{25}\)


\(^{24}\) Joseph D. Lawrence, "Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, unpublished manuscript, 32, World War I Survey - 561, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

\(^{25}\) Extract of the Inspector General, AEF Report on Stragglers, published by 1st Army, 11 November, 1918. Fewer than ten soldiers were executed in the AEF, all for rape or murder.

24
While no executions occurred for military offenses, a vast system of informal measures took root in the AEF. After the war Congress looked into allegations that officers shot men to prevent them from fleeing the battle scene. The case of Major George Opie, commander of 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry, 29th Division received detailed investigation. A dozen witnesses testified before Congress that Major Opie borrowed a sentry's rifle and shot a retreating soldier to stop a panic. Other witnesses and the major himself testified that while he did take a rifle and fire it in the direction of fleeing soldiers, he aimed high and low to force the soldiers to stop and regroup. One soldier in the regiment testified that "it looked to him [Major Opie] like a general retreat. That is what I thought it was." The army and Congress concluded that Opie had not hit anyone. While the evidence was inconclusive on Major Opie, it did show that trying to halt a retreat was not unusual. Frank Bondurant, an infantry captain, testified that "on more than one occasion men were coming back from the first line, and that Opie halted them and reformed them and sent them back." Bondurant said he "supposed a great many officers did the same thing, that
Opie did it on more than one occasion, that he was continually doing it."\textsuperscript{26}

Immediately after the Armistice the straggling problem continued unabated. The IG for the AEF, Major General André W. Brewster, noted the problem in the 7th Division sector the day after the Armistice. "There is much straggling along the roads in this sector. One continually passed men alone, or in groups with no semblance of military formation."\textsuperscript{27} In a desperate measure to gain control of his army, Lieutenant General Liggett issued orders on November 14, 1918, requiring that all officers and men wear insignia on their shoulders by November 20. "After that date, those men who do not have this insignia will be arrested as stragglers."\textsuperscript{28} The senior AEF officers worried about the overall control of their army for good reason. The American Expeditionary Forces showed signs of cracking under the pressure of the Meuse-Argonne campaign,

\textsuperscript{26}Report of the Judge Advocate General to the United States Congress on Major Opie, 22 October, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 165, Entry 27, Box 11.

\textsuperscript{27}Memorandum from Major General Brewster to the Inspector General AEF, 12 November, 1918. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 16, Box 101.

\textsuperscript{28}Memorandum from Commanding General, 1st Army to all army troops, 14 November, 1918. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 24, Box 3453.
and the Army could not march into Germany until officers restored order.

Military Justice

Soldiers went Absent Without Leave (AWOL) before, during, and after their service in France.\(^{29}\) In training camps and at ports of embarkation the problem of soldiers leaving their unit without permission was endemic. Major General Henry C. Hodges, commander of the 39th Division, wrote to the Adjutant General in Washington on March 18, 1918, prior to his division's departure for France. "It is my opinion that the offense of AWOL is going to be very serious in the war zone and is in fact a serious situation at the present time." He suggested amending the Articles of War to include the sentence of death for AWOL during wartime, regardless of the soldier's location. Hodges claimed this would "have a good effect throughout the army."\(^{30}\)

\(^{29}\) Journalist Mark Sullivan writing in 1933, cites World War I as the first use of the term AWOL. Paul Dickson in his recent book entitled *War Slang* dates the use of the term to the Civil War but contends that soldiers first pronounced AWOL as "a wall" in World War I. Paul Dickson, *War Slang: Fighting Words and Phrases of Americans from the Civil War to the Gulf War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), 39.

\(^{30}\) The War Department considered Hodges proposal but the Judge Advocate ruled against trying to amend the articles
Hodges proposed drastic measures, but the problem was real. Soldiers would leave their units prior to overseas shipment to carouse, see their families, or shirk. The unit would depart for Europe without those AWOLs, creating soldiers known as casuals. A casual had no unit affiliation and would join the pool of replacements at a camp for assignment to any division. Commanders at the ports of embarkation would collect sixty-six of these AWOL soldiers, attempt to complete their records, equip them, and ship them overseas as a casual company sometimes under armed guard. Pershing requested that the War Department ship all deserters and AWOL soldiers to France for use as replacements. These men further eroded the cohesion of the units they joined in France.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{31}Commanders from a regulating station in Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina and a Recruiting station in Providence, Rhode Island both asked the Adjutant General for disposition instructions for AWOLs and deserters in July, 1918. The AG told the Commander at Wadsworth to ship the soldiers overseas and told the recruiting station to send the men to a casual company under armed guard for shipment overseas. Robert Humber, "AWOL at Points of Embarkation," Army War College Historical Section, February, 1943. National Archives, Record Group 165, Entry 376, Box 7200.
The commander of a casual company at Camp Merritt, New Jersey reported that of the 141,773 men who passed through his camp from January 1, 1918 to August 1, 1918, as replacements, over 15% (21,820) were AWOLs or deserters.\textsuperscript{32} He also reported that deserters and AWOL cases overflowed his first stockade, forcing him to build a second one. Yet, during the same period the army's Judge Advocate General charged only 2,616 soldiers with desertion and convicted only 1,253 in the entire army from 1917 to 1919.\textsuperscript{33} After the war the army bragged that fewer men went AWOL and deserted during the war (as a percentage) than before the war. In the AEF the number of trials by general courts-martial was one quarter of one percent compared to the five year prewar average of five percent.\textsuperscript{34} The army should have said fewer soldiers received general courts-martial convictions.

\textsuperscript{32}Robert Humber, "AWOL at Points of Embarkation," Army War College Historical Section, February, 1943. National Archives, Record Group 165, Entry 376, Box 7200.

\textsuperscript{33} Robert Humber, "Absences and Desertions during the First World War," Army War College Historical Section, November, 1942, National Archives, Record Group 165, Entry 376, Box 7200.

Tens of thousands of AWOL and desertion cases went untried in both the United States and France as a matter of policy. In April 1918, senior officers in the AEF believed that soldiers tried to commit crimes that would dishonorably discharge them and send them home. To correct this problem, the Judge Advocate General in the AEF, under GHQ guidance, prepared General Orders 56 to change the punishment for breaking the law in the AEF. The basis for the order was "that a soldier should not escape dangerous service by commission of a crime." Only "extraordinary cases" should receive a dishonorable discharge. To prevent dishonorable discharges and the loss of manpower that went with it, the order specified that courts-martial "should not be resorted to when other measures are adequate." If that guidance failed to clarify the policy, there was more. No general courts-martial should convene unless the commander wanted the offending soldier to serve a prison term of at least ten years. The judge advocate ordered commanders serving as the reviewing authority to keep soldiers serving less than a ten year term with their units. Each unit down to battalion would form a
“disciplinary detachment” for soldiers, creating a festering problem in each unit.\(^\text{35}\)

Some commanders failed to understand the direct nature of this order and felt they could still give general courts-martial for offenses involving “moral turpitude.” General Order 78, issued on May 25, 1918, definitively cleared up any vagaries of the previous order. “The award of dishonorable discharge to soldiers who have been convicted of an offense involving moral turpitude is not contemplated, except in the most serious cases.”\(^\text{36}\)

Commanders got the message. Hunter Liggett remarked in his memoir that “it took a grave offense to send a man to a military prison in the rear.”\(^\text{37}\) Commanders would handle almost all offenses short of rape and murder themselves. Junior officers understood the orders and disliked them.

\(^{35}\) General Orders 56, April 13, 1918; “A Study on Court-Martial Cases of Men in Combat, American Expeditionary Forces, 1917-1918,” Historical Section, July, 1942, Army War College Historical Section, no. 7, Army War College Curricular Archives.


One lieutenant complained that “desertion in the AEF could not exist.”

Soldiers also understood the implications of this brand of justice. Elmer Jacobson of the 82nd Division said he went AWOL from the front whenever he could and never feared court-martial. When his regiment caught him, the commander put him on patrol duty at the forward war zone. Soldiers knew that the worse that could happen to them was combat duty or fines. In the 113th Infantry, 29th Division, the regimental commander ordered deserters to perform latrine duty. Ernesto Biogno of the 82nd

---

38 Memorandum from Chief, Morale Branch, War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, 5 November, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 165, Entry 378, Box 6. The Morale Branch of the War Plans Division submitted a memorandum to the Chief of Staff on 5 November 1919, summarizing the confidential responses of 2,000 discharged officers, ninety percent of whom served in the AEF. The officers had replied to a questionnaire given to them by the Morale Branch prior to demobilization. I found about three hundred pages of the memorandum that possibly was several hundred pages longer. The compilers listed the age, education background, and job description of each respondent. They asked ten questions; I used the answers to two those questions extensively in this chapter. Question 2: “What do you consider fair criticism of the service?” and Question 3: What specific suggestions have you to make for general improvement?”

39 Elmer Jacobson, 82nd Division, World War I Survey - 2152, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

40 Joseph D. Lawrence, Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, 32
Division had to dig latrines and bury the Meuse-Argonne dead as punishment for going AWOL.\textsuperscript{41}

With little chance of shipping their problem soldiers out of their units, commanders resorted to a variety of methods for dealing with deserters. One favorite was humiliation. III Corps issued General Orders 35 as a letter that stated: "This soldier absented himself from his organization in time of battle or impending battle, with no apparent cause other than fear."\textsuperscript{42} Corps Headquarters would send this letter to the father, mother, or nearest relative; copies would go to the postmaster and the mayor of the soldier's hometown. The last copy would sting the most -- a special delivery to the soldiers "sweetheart."\textsuperscript{43}

The 82nd Division used a more local humiliation -- an updated, military version of the scarlet letter. Soldiers

\textsuperscript{41} Ernesto Biogno, 82nd Division, 328th Infantry, World War I Survey-1075, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{42} I found no evidence of anyone having actually received this letter. Will Judy, A Soldier’s Diary: A Day-to-Day Record in the World War (Chicago: Judy Publishing Company, 1930), 150-151.

\textsuperscript{43} Will Judy, A Soldier’s Diary: A Day-to-Day Record in the World War (Chicago: Judy Publishing Company, 1930), 150-151.
awaiting trial for AWOL would wear a placard that resembled a sandwich board on their back that stated, "Straggler from the Front Lines." After their sentencing they donned a different poster that read: "Deserter." Each unit set up disciplinary outfits to deal with miscreants and AWOLs. Another punishment was a lesser court-martial such as summary court. Demotions, fines, and all the informal punishments used by commanders to punish and stem the hemorrhaging of the army during the Meuse-Argonne went unrecorded. Pershing and the War Department had impressive statistics to back up their claim that they had fewer deserters than before the war, but it was untrue. Very few of the AWOL and deserter cases made the post war statistics.

---

44 Picture 111-SC-31520, National Archives.
PICTURE 2.1: Discipline of soldiers in the 82nd Division. Still Picture Branch, National Archives, 111-SC-31520.
The large numbers of AWOL soldiers continued after the war. In June of 1919, the surgeon general listed 12,000 soldiers as still missing, most of whom were alive but AWOL. To prevent detection, soldiers exchanged their identification tags to "escape future consequences." Others went AWOL and hid in "secluded villages." The surgeon general estimated only a few among the 12,000 had died in combat. In those cases, direct hits from artillery shells had obliterated any identifiable remains. Two years after the Armistice the American Legion in Paris reported the number of American deserters in Paris still hovered between two and five thousand. Writing in 1928, Hunter Liggett said soldiers were still in Europe. "Men wandered all over France, and we had to wink more or less at the practice; they straggled back home for two or three years afterward and a handful of strays are still in Europe."  

46 "Stranded Ex-soldiers in France," Infantry Journal 17, no. 6, (December 1920), 616.  
47 Hunter Liggett, Ten Years Ago in France (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928), 246.
The AWOL problem extended to the points of embarkation, causing shortages of men overseas that further taxed an already overextended replacement system. Divisions arrived in France short several thousand men. The AEF attempted, unsuccessfully, to bring units up to their full strength. In an attempt to curtail AWOL, the War Department launched a vigorous campaign to pressure families about their AWOL sons and husbands. The Morale Branch wrote an article that appeared in many newspapers and magazines in late October and early November 1918 that pleaded for mothers not to keep their sons past their leave date. The article "estimated that at least 50% of the cases of absence without leave are due to persuasive powers of the 'folks back home.'" The author quoted an officer at one of these embarkation ports. "It is more trouble to send to France one absent without leave man who thus becomes an overseas casual, than it is to transport a regiment."

The AEF replacement camp at St. Aignan-sur-Cher grouped soldiers from recently stripped divisions. These soldiers, already disappointed by the deactivation of their

---

48 Red Cross Bulletin vol. 11, no. 44, (October 28, 1918), 9.
own units, had to suffer the ignominy of sharing a camp and a unit with AWOLs. These casual camps had few officers or non-commissioned officers and bred discontent. One infantry captain described them this way:

Some AEF casual camps were nothing but 'tales of disgrace' to the U.S. Army and to the great American Republic. I believe it true that 'once a casual all enthusiasm and spirit gone.' I had command of two thousand casuals for a short period while in France and was in a position to observe how low the morale of American officers and men could get.49

The casual had no sense of unit cohesion or esprit de corps that came with prolonged training or shared experience. The casual's morale suffered because of his isolation, while the unit to which he reported suffered by receiving an unhappy and unwilling soldier.

Transfers and Replacements

Soldiers must spend time to together to accumulate common experiences. Common experiences, say military psychologists, create a group history that will help keep units together under duress.50 Stable leadership is

49 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 43.

important as well. The longer the group stays together under the same leadership the more likely it will hold together during combat.\textsuperscript{51} Unfortunately, the race to fill divisions and send them overseas caused frequent transfers of officers and soldiers from one division to another that destroyed the integrity of units. One infantry colonel lamented that there was “too much transferring and breaking up of organizations, resulting in injury to morale and discipline.”\textsuperscript{52}

Certain National Army divisions training in America lost thousands of men to other Regular, National Army, and National Guard units that were higher on the priority list for overseas duty. After training together for more than six months, the War Department ordered the 39th Division to send five thousand of its men overseas in May 1918, leaving only “limited cadres and ineffectives” in the infantry regiments. One month later the Division received between nine and ten thousand replacements from the second draft

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{52}Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 73.
\end{flushright}
with orders to ship out for Europe. Brigadier General Wilds P. Richardson, a brigade commander in the division, called this replacement system "a great mistake and one of the most unjust things of the war." The 78th Division went from an average company strength of one hundred and seventy-five soldiers in November 1917 to less than fifty by January 1918. In a period of less than two months the division went back to full strength and sailed for France. This indiscriminate transfer of soldiers created the impression of a mismanaged, shortsighted army and destroyed the unit cohesion of two divisions. The divisions that received the transfers also suffered because they had no opportunity to assimilate the new soldiers before they shipped overseas. Even worse, the officers transferred as often as the enlisted, creating units with unfamiliar leadership.

The War Department continued to transfer soldiers once units arrived in France. The IG of First Army reported the frustration of the 82nd Division in September 1918.

---


"Regiments have lost many of their best officers, NCOs, machine gun men and other specialists, who have been taken from them and sent to the United States for new divisions being formed."\textsuperscript{55} The IG of I Corps illustrated the problem and the consequences that befell the 78th and the 82nd. "Divisions in the United States received numerous replacements shortly before sailing and upon arrival in France went directly into major operations. This resulted in a lack of confidence in the command, a lack of cohesion and subsequent loss of morale and drive."\textsuperscript{56} Men did not know their officers; officers had not trained with their men, leaving units to forge bonds during battle. The strain of combat on units without proper cohesion resulted in poor morale and poor fighting capability.

The AEF's replacement system destroyed unit cohesion in France just as much as the War Department's personnel policies. Army Chief of Staff Peyton C. March and his staff failed to deliver enough soldiers to replace the tremendous casualties incurred during the bloody fighting

\textsuperscript{55}Memorandum from 1st Army Inspector General to Chief of Staff, 1st Army, 1 September 1918, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5.

\textsuperscript{56}Memorandum from 1st Corps Inspector General to 1st Army Inspector General, 27 March, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5.
of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, leaving General Pershing with two choices. He could take divisions out of the line to rest and refit, replacing them with fresh but untested units; or he could "skeltonize" newly arriving divisions to create replacements. The Commander-in-Chief chose the latter primarily because of the Civil War experience where divisions became depleted through attrition almost to extinction. Pershing wanted to keep the pressure on the Germans without taking the chance of sending in green divisions. He felt obliged to strip divisions recently arrived from the United States to restore the fighting divisions on the line to combat strength. An infantry lieutenant plaintively asked just after the war: "Could not some other means than that of breaking up a complete division of well trained troops for replacements be found?"


58 Pershing sent an urgent message to Chief of Staff March on October 3, 1918. "Over 50,000 of the replacements requested for the months of July, August, and September have not yet arrived. Due to extreme seriousness of the replacement situation it is necessary to utilize personnel of the 84th and 86th Divisions for replacement purposes. Combat Divisions short over 80,000... If necessary some divisions in the U.S. should be stripped of trained men and such men shipped as replacements at once." National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 16, Box 101.
The break-up of the 41st Division brought bitter
disappointment to all ranks, including the commander Major
General Robert Alexander. The morale of the remnants of
the division was at the "lowest ebb."\(^{59}\) Thousands of
soldiers who trained with a particular unit for up to
eighteen months found themselves fighting in a unit for
which they had no bonds. The result, as one officer stated,
was "injury to Esprit de Corps, by the obliterating of the
organizations."\(^{60}\)

By the Armistice, General Headquarters had ordered
nine complete divisions, the 31st, 34th, 38th, 39th, 40th,
76th, 84th, 85th, and 86th and three pioneer infantry
regiments, the 4th, 5th, and 57th, stripped of all men but
one first sergeant per company and one adjutant and
sergeant-major per regiment. In addition to these units
the 41st and 83rd received orders as depot divisions, which
meant that they provided replacements and processed
replacements from the United States. Had the war


\(^{60}\) Memorandum from Chief of Morale Branch, War Plans
Division to Chief of Staff, USA, 5 November, 1919, National
Archives, 165, Entry 378, Box 6, 109.
continued, General Headquarters planned to strip three more divisions for use as replacements.\(^6\)

Even this wholesale destruction of cohesive divisions failed to satiate the appetite for replacements. On October 22, 1918, the Army Chief of Staff, General Peyton March told the First Army commander that the extreme shortage of replacements forced the reduction of the average strength of each division by 4000. On November 2, 1918, Pershing cabled March that First Army was "short over 72,000 replacements" and by the end of November the shortage would reach almost 150,000. Pershing's lament sounds much the same as that of a lieutenant at the front.

To send over entire divisions which must be broken up on their arrival in France so we may obtain replacements that have not been sent as called for is a wasteful method and one that makes for inefficiency but as replacements are not otherwise available there is no other course open to us... Cannot this matter be given the consideration its importance deserves?"\(^6\)


\(^6\)Chief of Staff to 1st Army, October 22nd, 1918; 1st Army to Chief of Staff, November 2, 1918, quoted in "Final Report of Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1" United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919, vol. 12, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1948), 149.
Stripping divisions for theater replacements did have one advantage -- usually the troops from formed divisions had received at least nominal infantry training. Most replacements had received little training and in some cases were incapable of learning. In messages to the War Department, Pershing outlined the problem. "Seventy-five percent of all replacements for combat troops which have arrived have practically no training." Replacements were "frequently unfit for combat," and there was a "prevalence of mental disorders in replacement troops."^{64}

Brigadier General William Johnson of the 154th Infantry Brigade, 77th Division received 2,100 replacements on October 4, 1918. He reported to his corps commander that most of them had received no training prior to their assignment to the 77th. Investigating the situation, the First Army IG found this "a very serious aspect that should

---

^63 Not all replacements from stripped units had received training. The 4th, 55th, and 57th Pioneer Infantry regiments which became the nucleus of the 96th, 99th, and 100th Divisions had no soldierly training at all. "Report of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1," United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919, vol. 12, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1948), 148.

^64 Pershing to Chief of Staff, April 3, 1918; Pershing to the Adjutant General, Aug 24, 1918; Pershing to Chief of Staff, July 16, 1918, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 16, Box 101.
be remedied." He interviewed the commander of the 307th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Eugene Houghton. "I received a draft of between 850-900 men. It was reported by the company commanders and the battalion commander that approximately ninety percent of these men had never thrown a grenade, fired a rifle, nor had they had ordinary close order drill." A battalion commander in the same regiment reported that "it was practically impossible to handle these men in the present terrain... they were continually getting lost and straggling, and as their officers and non-commissioned officers were practically strangers to them, it made it very difficult to handle them."65 The morale of the unit suffered because of the incompetence of the replacements and the seeming incompetence of the army in sending such men to the front. The experienced men of the unit realized that these replacements not only were a danger to themselves but put the entire unit in peril.

A young infantry lieutenant put the problem in perspective. "Men were sent to the front with insufficient

65Memorandum from Assistant Inspector General, 1st Army to Inspector General 1st Army, 8 October, 1918. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5. The 32nd, 80th, and the 3rd Divisions complained of receiving inadequately trained replacements see AEF GHQ AG files 15538 and 15360 for more information on poor training of replacements.
training. Men who had never shot a rifle, men who had never used grenades, were sent to fighting divisions as replacements and paid the price for the lack of training." Division commanders tried to emplace a system of training replacements at the unit level, but the high casualty rate and the continuous push during the Meuse-Argonne campaign forced them to give up any training attempts and stick the raw recruits on the line. Pershing had warned the War Department earlier: "There will be little time to train recruits here."

These replacements would most often arrive at the division headquarters by the hundreds accompanied by only a handful of non-commissioned officers. The replacements' morale fell because their NCOs remained in training depots to form new bands of replacements, while the divisions combat efficiency and cohesion would decrease as they lost

---

66. Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 65.

67. See the 1st Army Inspector General reports for October, 1918, National Archive, Record Group 120, Entry 797, Box 5 and Box 1459.

68. Pershing to Chief of Staff, April 3, 1918, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 16, Box 101.
NCOs to newly formed units. An officer in a machine gun battalion said:

The replacements sent to the Argonne were unaccompanied by any of their non-coms. Non-commissioned officers were needed in that fight and I think that better results could have been obtained from these half-trained men if their non-coms had been taken directly into battle instead of keeping them behind for training purposes. 69

The AEF's training system in France exacerbated the cohesion problem. Rather than training a division or regiment as a unit, the architects of the school system took key officers, non-commissioned officers, and technical specialists out of their units for separate schooling. During the train-up period, most units were missing key officers at all levels to satisfy the massive school requirement demanded by the AEF. Pershing and his like-minded, Leavenworth-trained, staff realized the importance of training, but they overemphasized the need to train officers at the expense of training units. 70 This requirement left officers unfamiliar with their units at

---

69Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 78.

70For more on the AEF school system see Chapter II.
best; and at worst, officers were absent when units needed them most.

Another aspect of the replacement problem involved draftees. While most of the AEF's first divisions in France had volunteers, the replacements were often draftees. The replacement draftees met for the first time at casual camps or on the way to the battlefield. Drafted replacements had no time to form cohesive groups with either their gaining units or themselves. Although the draft worked well in the states, there were cohesion problems between the original volunteers and the new drafted replacements in combat units. Despite the overall success of the draft, feelings about draftees ran deep and mostly negative. Missourian Champ Clark, the Speaker of the

---

71 The official statistics show sixty percent of the four million men in uniform were drafted. See Leonard P. Ayres, The War with Germany: A Statistical Summary, Second Edition, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 17. Another source went into greater detail. 1.6 million volunteered; 606,000 of whom were Marines and sailors. 2.8 million men were drafted. Of the 1.25 million who saw combat fully half were volunteers. This split would probably have initially been in favor of the volunteers and then with the casualties of the Meuse-Argonne, strongly toward draftees. See The Fourth Division (Published by the Division, 1920), 261.
House, went on record as saying "a conscript and a convict were synonymous terms."\textsuperscript{72}

Officers and volunteers felt hostility toward the drafted men as well.\textsuperscript{73} Amos Wilder quoted a regular army orderly who said, "a man that has to be drafted ain't good enough for this army."\textsuperscript{74} Wilder himself called the drafted soldiers he saw at a replacement camp "cowards" because they hoped to avoid the front.\textsuperscript{75} He was not alone. Frederick Pottle described his treatment of new draftees as

\textsuperscript{72}Quoted in Peyton C. March, The Nation at War (New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1932), 233.

\textsuperscript{73}The General Staff's final statistical summary of the war stated that the "standing of the drafted soldier was fully as honorable in the estimation of his companions and his country in general as that of the man who enlisted voluntarily." Leonard P. Ayres, The War with Germany: A Statistical Summary, Second Edition, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 17. That statement was not true. There was a marked difference in acceptance of drafted replacements. One officer decried the excessive propaganda that went toward trying to make the draft popular. Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 78.

\textsuperscript{74}Amos N. Wilder, Armageddon Revisited: A World War I Journal (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 60

"cruel." Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence also talked about the problems with the "draft men." Part of the draftee problem came from the lack of training and, commented an officer, less discipline. The draftees had considerably less training than the volunteers, but training was not the only reason. Volunteers took great pride in pointing out their status. Many soldiers made sure that everyone knew that they enlisted because the status of volunteers was much higher. At the beginning of the war each soldier wore a collar emblem that signified his the source of his enlistment, regular army, National Guard, and National Army. The War Department ended this practice before the war ended but the soldiers retained their distinction. After the war, soldiers started wearing a silver star to

76 Frederick A. Pottle, Stretchers: The Story of a Hospital Unit on the Western Front (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), 1.

77Joseph D. Lawrence, Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, unpublished manuscript, 7, World War I Survey - 561, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

78 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 75.

79 Robert J. Jones, 29th Div., 115th Inf., World War I Survey-2199. United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.
denote their status as a volunteer rather than a draftee. One officer pointed out that "volunteers do not like to be mixed with inducted men." William Parker enlisted as a private in the 4th Division and later became an officer. Seventy years later he wrote on a survey that "I went into the war of my own choice" to ensure no one confused him with a draftee. The author of the 168th Infantry's regimental history credited volunteerism as the key. "It is to be remembered that every man in the organization was a volunteer, and all of the foundations upon which a soldier's training maybe based there is none so promising of success as the spirit of the volunteer." The message went out clearly to the draftees who felt the scorn of the volunteers. Private Charles Minder wrote in his diary on September 23, 1918, that his comrades in the 77th Machine Gun Battalion "seem to despise us because we were

---

80 Stars and Stripes, 23 May 1919.

81 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 78.

82 William S. Parker, 4th Division, 59th Infantry, World War I Survey - 3646, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Drafted.° Drafted American soldiers from the 42nd Division taken prisoner told their German captors that they resented the volunteers in the Division for treating them poorly.°

The draftee had an additional problem to overcome. Despite the redesignation of state regiments to numbered national ones, most platoons and companies retained their regional flavor -- initially, but combat losses soon produced the need for massive replacements.° Replacement

°°Charles F. Minder, This Man's War: The Day-by-Day Record of an American Private on the Western Front (New York: Pevensey Press, 1931), 307


°° Many organizations had proud lineage going back more than fifty years to the Civil War; soldiers' fathers and grandfathers fought for those outfits. The organization and formation of divisions and regiments ignored the past lineage of these once proud units and ruined their regional affiliation. One prominent British military writer called the American regiments "soulless things known by letters and numbers." The 3rd Iowa Infantry, for example, became the 168th Infantry regiment when it fused with another outfit from outside the state. These state-affiliated regiments lost their old unit identity when they merged with other units. As one infantry captain explained: "The manner in which divisions were formed was not satisfactory i.e. taking two regiments of peace strength, consolidating them and making one regiment of war strength and especially where one regiment was from one state and another from another state." Shelford Bidwell, Modern Warfare, (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 74. Australia and Canada also had numbered regiments with little hometown or province affiliation; Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the
centers sent drafted soldiers to units regardless of their state, creating even more difficulties for the new replacements' integration into the unit. Sergeant Russell Adams of the 26th (Yankee) Division returned to his unit after attending a school and found his division filled with replacements from Texas and Pennsylvania. New soldiers had to overcome their status as a "rookie," in addition to their status as a regional outsider.\(^\text{87}\) The American "assembly-line individual replacement system" stressed stable unit strengths instead of stable units.\(^\text{88}\) An infantry captain said: "The practice of sending in replacements indiscriminately of what district or state they were from is bad, and I think an organization should have local spirit and pride and get its replacements from its own state or city."\(^\text{89}\) By the Fall of 1918, straggling,

---


\(^\text{89}\) Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 47.
casualties, and replacements had changed the composition of volunteer hometown outfits to drafted national ones without regional affiliations.

The slightly wounded and sick call cases provided yet another problem that the AEF could not handle. Medical personnel evacuated many of the slightly wounded soldiers or sick call cases from the front lines; these soldiers would never return to their original unit. One engineer major complained: "After serving many months in a company it was a real loss if a NCO went to the hospital for three days with a sore toe, and never returned to his old outfit." The replacement system put these sick call cases back in the general pool of qualified replacements and sent them to whatever unit needed them. After the war, a committee of officers found that "with the constant movement of divisions and the lack of advanced replacement depots, there was no adequate machinery for returning to their own organizations the sick and wounded evacuated from the hospitals." The cohesion of units further

90 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 78.

91 Course at the Army War College, 1928-1929. G-1, Report of Committee No. 6, Subject: Morale in Armies: Deductions from History, October 24, 1928, Army War College Curricular
deteriorated as the injured and the sick failed to return to their units, creating the need for more replacements.

Once the soldier left his original outfit, that unit had no idea of his status. Some divisions carried these men as losses. Others carried them on the roster as sick, but no one could properly account for the men. An infantry first lieutenant shared his frustration: "A man absent sick carried on our roster was nil to us. We had no trace of him and his location and were unable to give the needed information to relatives at home in this regard. There was absolutely no system of check and I consider it a deplorable condition."92 This system damaged not only the cohesion of the unit, but damaged the morale of the men who questioned whether the army could notify loved ones of wounds or death.

Some evacuated soldiers did return to their original units but rarely alone or properly equipped. The commander of the 26th Division, Major General Clarence R. Edwards,

---

92Course at the Army War College, 1928-1929. G-1, Report of Committee No. 6, Subject: Morale in Armies: Deductions from History, October 24, 1928, Army War College Curricular Archives, File No. 350-6, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.
wrote a scathing letter to 1st Army in October 1918
complaining that of the twenty-nine men he received from a
replacement depot only fifteen belonged to him. The rest
were not new replacements, but men from other divisions
trying to find their old units. The depot had ordered them
to the 26th Replacement Battalion. Unfortunately, there
was no such unit. The soldiers had arrived at the front
without helmets, gas masks, rifles, blankets, rain
slickers, or reserve rations. Moreover, none of the men had
eaten in thirty-six hours.93

Senior officers of the AEF received an army from the
United States that had poor cohesion, but faulty policies
in the AEF made cohesion even worse. The training system
separated leaders from their units, while the replacement
system further eroded the morale of the soldiers in
stripped divisions. Soldiers in the gaining divisions had
no time to rest, refit, and integrate these soldiers into
their units. These problems manifested themselves in poor
unit cohesion from squad to army that led to AWOL and
straggling. The straggling placed even greater
requirements on a replacement system that could not handle

93 Memorandum from MG Edwards to Commanding General 1st
Army, 16 October, 1918, National Archives, Record Group
120, Entry 797, Box 5.
the massive numbers of men needed to replace casualties and deserters. The AEF's senior leadership, desperate for more replacements, stripped more arriving divisions, further damaging unit cohesion. By the end of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign, units consisted of poorly trained draftees rather than the better trained and motivated volunteers. The AEF was not becoming better, despite Pershing's insistence; it was losing effectiveness. Pershing was fortunate the German army was in such desperate straits because his army had debilitating problems as well.
CHAPTER 3

Esprit De Corps Among Officers: The Regulars

After the Armistice, a French captain discussed the problem of officer accessions with an AEF officer. The number of officers commissioned by the Americans amazed him. "I know you recruited over 3,000,000 men in 19 months. That is very good but not so difficult," said the French officer, "but I am also told that, although you had no officers' reserve to start with, you somehow found 200,000 new officers, most of them competent. That is what is astonishing and what is impossible. Tell me how that was done."¹ The French officer exaggerated the competence of the officer corps, if not the miraculous feat of commissioning 200,000 citizens. Before Congress declared war in April 1917, the peacetime officer corps numbered fewer than 6,000 regulars and 3,200 National Guard

officers. By the Armistice the army had increased a whopping two thousand percent in thirty months. Yet the number of regulars stayed about the same, while the National Guard increased only fourfold. The great majority of these officers were "temporary" or "emergency officers" commissioned in the National Army. The War Department granted or recognized commissions to officers in one of three distinct categories — Regular Army, National Guard, or the newly created National Army. To accentuate the differences in commissions between the Regular Army, Guard, and National Army, each type of officer wore a distinctive insignia. One artillery second lieutenant complained that there were "too many different kinds of soldiers, i.e., National Guard, Reservists, Regular Army." An infantry officer of the same rank lamented the lack of "cooperation between the National Guard and Regular army officer."

---


³Officers in the National Army were often called reservists.

⁴Much of the primary research for this paper comes from a 500 page memorandum entitled "Replies to Officers' Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6. The Morale Branch interviewed over three thousand officers returning from France in 1919.
Both attitude and policy reinforced the message that the army consisted of distinct castes of officers. Instead of directing their hostility to the German enemy, they saved enough rancor for the members of their own officer corps to disrupt esprit de corps and with it morale.\(^5\)

The officers of the AEF suffered from a poor esprit de corps because of the conflicts between two groups: regular army officers and citizen-officers serving only for the war's duration. The reason for this hostility was twofold. First, regular officers' occupational culture clashed with the civilians' cultural values. Regular army officers had an occupational culture of professionalism rooted in the army reforms of the preceding forty years. Civilian officers had an ethos based on the cultural values prevalent at the time. The first was a historical animosity to regular soldiers based on a belief that any

---

This memorandum details the background, training, and criticisms of almost 1700 of those officers.

\(^5\)The American Heritage Dictionary defines esprit de corps as the "spirit of devotion and enthusiasm among members of a group for one another, their group and its purposes." The latest literature on military morale defines morale as the function of cohesion and esprit de corps. Cohesion is the group solidarity that makes for effective military performance. see Frederick J. Manning, "Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps," in Reuven Gal and A. David Mangelsdorff, eds., Handbook of Military Psychology (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1991), 453-460.
patriotic American with the right moral values could become an officer. The second, related to the first, was a progressive era culture that emphasized egalitarianism, patriotism, commercial values, and morality. These values clashed within the institutional culture of military professionalism.

The second reason for hostility involved the policies instituted by regular army officers to protect their profession from citizens-officers who did not share their beliefs or their competence. The regulars attempted to inculcate in the civilian-officers the values of the institution while attempting to hold down their influence. Like many other nascent professions, regular army officers zealously guarded their societal niche. Regulars worried that the large influx of civilian-officers would halt the progress toward professionalization and wrest control of the profession both from the bottom by internal promotion and from the top by political subterfuge. Citizen-officers, with their ambition thwarted and their egalitarian pride wounded, lashed out at the seemingly autocratic methods of the regular army. Despite victory on the battlefield, the war ended with a divided and

6 The citizen-officer is discussed in Chapter III.
disgruntled officer corps. This chapter deals with the culture of the professionals and their reaction to the threat of so many officers joining their domain.7

Regular Army Culture

The institutional culture of the regular army began evolving with the professionalization of the officer corps after the Civil War; a process mirrored in other segments of American society during the Progressive era to include the social sciences, engineering, accounting, medicine, and law. The oldest definition of a profession lists three attributes: expertise, social responsibility, and corporateness.8 The professional performs a job of societal relevance that requires extensive theoretical knowledge and practical training. Because the professional alone can perform this function, he or she has a societal responsibility to perform capably when called upon. This

7I define culture as the world view, or Weltanschauung of a particular group. In this definition the Professional Army had its own culture, by no means superior to that of the citizen-officer, but decidedly distinct. As the well-known anthropological historian, Clifford Geertz wrote, everyone is “suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.” In this metaphor webs are culture which allows the individual to survive, yet prevents him from escaping. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

expertise and societal responsibility create a sense of distinctiveness that separates the professional from society. This sense becomes inculcated in the professional by the common experience of training, hardship, and commitment.  

Several authors have provided us with a detailed picture of the professional army officer corps before and during the First World War. The Regular Army officer saw war as too important to leave to the incompetent, part-time, or no-time citizen-officer. He believed that the complexity of modern war demanded practitioners who devoted their lives to its systematic study. The object of the peacetime professional army was not to build bridges or police Indian reservations but to prepare for European

---

9 For a more in depth definition of professionalism see Allan R. Millett, "Military Professionalism and Officership in America," Mershon Briefing Paper no. 2, (Columbus: Mershon Center of the Ohio State University, May 1977).

style warfare. Only army schools such as West Point, the
School of the Line and Staff, and the Army War College,
augmented by rigorous training could produce a competent
officer capable of leading America's youth into battle. A
citizen-officer could not train quickly enough to equal any
regular army officer. General Francis V. Greene, USMA
class of 1870, wrote a widely admired book in 1918 called
Our First Year in the Great War. He admitted that the
citizen-officer played an important role in the previous
American wars; however, the "rough rider idea ... is out of
date in this terrible struggle." Instead, General Greene
believed "the present war is a professional soldier's job
and not one for a man who has not all his life been trained
in the profession of arms."\(^{11}\) World War I became the
proving ground for regular army professionalism.\(^ {12}\)

The professional culture of the regular army officer
began with the West Point experience. Not all regular army
officers were West Point graduates, but the values of the
Military Academy pervaded the prewar army. The experience

\(^{11}\) "General Greene on War and Politics, Army and Navy
Journal 56, (October 19, 1918), 7.

\(^{12}\) See Allan R. Millett, The General: Robert L. Bullard and
Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925 (Westport,

65
of the Academy was important to these officers, and they tried to instill the same spirit in the AEF. General Pershing clearly articulated his view of the AEF's values to the War Department in 1917. "The standards for the American Army will be those of West Point. The rigid attention, upright bearing, attention to detail, uncomplaining obedience to instructions required of the cadet will be required of every officer and soldier of our armies in France." Pershing like most regular officers wanted to ensure that the values of the AEF reflected those of the regular army rather than those of civilian society. The officers of the AEF took Pershing at his word. Lieutenant Colonel S.L. Pike, commandant of the AEF's officer candidate school reported that his course tried to "attain the standard of the corps of cadets at the United States Military Academy at all times." The candidates agreed. Officer Candidate Joseph Lawrence wrote in his

---


14 Report from the Director, Army Candidates School, Langres to Commandant, Army Schools, AEF, 15 February, 1919, Final Report of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5, GHQ, and AEF, and Schools, United States Army in the World
memoirs that everyone called it "Little West Point," and the standards of discipline were rigid and unforgiving.\(^{15}\)

West Point did have cadets who stood ramrod straight, looked neat, and generally behaved themselves, but they were carefully selected, well-motivated students whose high standards came after a year of hazing and three additional years of intensive regimentation. Pershing and other regulars routinely found reservists wanting because they applied the standard of West Point to a poorly trained army. The West Point standard was unrealistic and counterproductive, but regulars raised on the Academy's motto of "Duty, Honor, Country" believed it was the only way to make an officer. Using the West Point model unnecessarily widened the gap between citizen-officers and regulars. Regular officers found citizens unworthy if they did not adhere to the regulars' conception of the West Point officer. One infantry lieutenant criticized "the influence of the civilian officers and their

---

\(^{15}\) Joseph Douglas Lawrence, Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918 (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 54.
misunderstanding of duty (which) caused most of the hardship to the men and general injustice."\(^{16}\)

The other institution that set army values was the School of the Line and the Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A postgraduate army school, the staff college paralleled the growth of American higher education during the Progressive era. Leavenworth graduates learned systematic approaches to operational problems while making important professional and social contacts. The educators at Leavenworth stressed planning, scientific soldiering, and a common operational technique to produce leaders who used a similar framework in battle.\(^{17}\) The Leavenworth graduates excelled in the AEF and set the standard for regular officers.

While few in number, the Leavenworth graduates held key positions in the AEF. Pershing, who had audited a Leavenworth course by mail, realized that "our most highly trained officers as a rule came from the Staff College at

\(^{16}\)"Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 27.

\(^{17}\)Timothy Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools And the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 9 and 84.
Fort Leavenworth." During the war nine of the twelve officers who formed Pershing's primary staff had attended the Staff College as well as most senior staff officers at army and corps level who planned, coordinated, and supervised American operations. Some regular officers, such as Major General Hunter Liggett and Major General Robert Lee Bullard, and most senior civilian-officers called this group the "Leavenworth clique" or the "Chaumont crowd." They feared the Leavenworth men's power because they held the ear of Pershing. One historian described how the officers outside the clique felt: "Pershing was a military Torquemada, his staff the Inquisition, and they the heretics." Although the army was moving rapidly toward the Leavenworth model, there was internal dissension


^19Chaumont was the site of the AEF General Headquarters.

about the worth of postgraduate military education and internal bureaucratic tension over the promotion of Leavenworth graduates. That dissension melted in the face of an external threat to the regulars -- 195,000 citizen-officers.

The unifying aspect of regular army culture during World War I was its hostility to non-regular officers. Regular officers had their own internal dynamic of competing groups, but the threat of so many officers from outside the institution united the regulars. Frederick Palmer, a respected war journalist before America’s entry into the war and Pershing’s chief censor in France, described the regulars’ unity as the spirit of a secret society or trade-union, “united in the common fealty of self-protection.” While citizen-officers lacked the corporateness that came through professional military education and the rigors of apprenticeship, their great numbers and political influence threatened the regulars. The professionals had fought a rearguard action throughout the Progressive period to limit the influence of civilians in the management of violence. World War I brought

tremendous opportunity for promotion and power among the regulars, but it also meant competition from citizen-officers. This competition created hostility and institutional protectiveness by the regulars.

The attitude of regular officers toward emergency and Guard officers centered on competence and politics. Regulars felt the citizen-officers were often incompetent because they lacked the training and values of professionals. A citizen-officer could only achieve competence by extended training in the regular army. Brigadier General Harold B. Fiske, Pershing's G-5 (Training), and Brigadier General Avery Andrews, Pershing's G-1 (Administration), agreed that it took a minimum of three years training with the regular army before an officer was competent. Since no officers outside the regular army had this amount of training, regulars saw citizen-officers as incompetent. One infantry major said that "National Guard officers are not capable." The citizen-officer, regulars felt, could not handle field grade (major and above) positions and had trouble handling

---

platoon and company commands. A regular army artillery major lamented the "lack of experience with troops of citizen-officers and some National Guard officers of high rank." Pershing made his view of non-regulars, especially those in combat units, clear. "I believe it contrary to the best interests of the service to promote citizen-officers to field rank, or to promote to higher grades those already holding field rank, except in special cases until they have had further opportunity to demonstrate their efficiency in the military service."

Regulars also felt that citizen-officers, especially Guard officers, relied on politics to run their divisions. By politics, regulars meant that among citizen-officers the values of the civilian and the civilian's status in the community accounted for promotion decisions instead of the occupational values of the military. Military competence came after postwar political futures and business and

23"Replies to Officers' Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 66.

social connections. The General Staff convened a board to look at personnel problems in August 1918. The board found that: "The greatest single influence against efficiency in the militia divisions lies in politics and local affiliations with which all are infected." Many temporary officers agreed with the regulars that National Guard divisions suffered from too much hometown politics. One lieutenant complained of the Guard's "political officers." Despite the regulars' agility at internal army politics, the citizens' use of hometown politics infuriated the regulars who, often incorrectly, assumed the citizen officer sought to pursue a postwar civilian career while in the army.

**Army Policy -- Training**

While competing views for the soul of the officer corps had a cultural and institutional heritage, army policies exacerbated those differences. If the regular army had tried to minimize the difference between the

---


26 "Replies to Officers' Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 66.
officers instead of magnifying them, the officer corps would have had fewer problems developing a united esprit de corps. Professional army officers had not won the battle to control the management of violence, and they felt threatened by the massive influx of civilians in their domain. Army policies instituted during the war helped the regulars gain further control over the officer corps. The policies started with training in the United States and continued in France with training, assignment, promotion, and the relief of officers.

A large measure of the problem came from inadequate training. The AEF's Inspector General wrote shortly after the Armistice: "In this war, officers and men alike were neither sufficiently trained nor disciplined to meet the task that confronted them." He called this lack of officer training the greatest "evil" of the war.\textsuperscript{27} George Marshall lamented the insufficient training of infantry commanders from platoon through Brigade.\textsuperscript{28} The enormity of the mobilization and the dire situation of the Allies required


\textsuperscript{28} Report of Officers Convened by Special Orders NO. 98, GHQ, AEF, 8 April, 1919 (Lewis Board), U.S. Army Military History Institute.
an infusion of manpower inconceivable before this time. The army lacked the foresight, structure, and skill to train 200,000 officers both competently and quickly.\textsuperscript{29}

The AEF's ill-trained officer corps also lacked the institutional inculcation of values so important to the esprit de corps of a group. The military, like other professions, has a code of conduct that it tries to instill in new members of the profession. This was not possible in 1917 because of the rapid build-up of forces. Most officers had short training stints or none at all. Such short training rarely prepared an artillery officer to fire a howitzer or gave a battalion commander the tactical knowledge to use machine guns. That same lack of training failed to provide the officer with the values considered vital to the military profession.

To fix what he considered poor training in the United States and an officer corps that lacked professional values, Pershing set up dozens of schools to teach officers in France. The architects of the school system, the G-5 section (Training), transplanted the professional reforms

\textsuperscript{29}For an in depth look into the training problems of the AEF see James Rainey, "The Questionable Training of the AEF in World War I," \textit{Parameters,} 22, No. 4, (Winter 1992-93), 89-104.
of the Leavenworth schools into the AEF. The two chiefs of the system, Paul Malone and Harold Fiske, the commandant of the AEF schools, James McAndrew, and the director of the AEF Staff College, Alfred Bjornstad, were graduates of Leavenworth. At the top of school system was the General Staff College at Langres, a three-month imitation of Leavenworth. The Langres school even named its main building Sherman Hall, after the primary academic structure at Leavenworth.  

Below the Staff College was the Army School of the Line designed to teach company, battalion, and regimental commanders battlefield competence. This school should have helped units by sending back trained staff officers; instead, the G-5 assigned the top one hundred graduates of the Line school to attend the General Staff College, keeping them out of combat units for most of the war. Both courses lasted three months and continued even during the worst fighting in the Fall of 1918. The Leavenworth officers that headed the AEF staff tried to build a

---

30 Nenninger, The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army, 137.

31 Memorandum From the Adjutant General to Commandant, Army Schools, Subject: The Army Line School, January 15, 1918 in United States Army in the World War, Reports, Vol. 14, 337.
professional military education system during the middle of a war.

In early 1918, unit commanders sent good officer material to the candidate schools, but by the time the fighting turned fierce the commandant reported receiving soldiers "lower in quality." He attributed the change to high casualty rate among officers at the front and the selection of poor candidates by commanders. He was right. The AEF forced commanders to send a certain quota of officers to schools. By the Meuse-Argonne campaign, commanders could not afford to send their best men and instead sent their troubled soldiers and officers. Some commanders sent candidates for officer's commission to school "positively against their will." Another course director reported his candidates in the Fall of 1918 were

\[\text{\textsuperscript{32}}\text{"Replies to Officers' Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 339-342}\]

below average mentally and physically.\textsuperscript{34} The commandant of II Corps schools, Colonel H. L. Cooper, quoted Colonel A. F. Prescott who said "there was a tacit agreement among regimental commanders not to send their best men to the schools" because "they would probably be lost to the regiment by being detailed as instructors." The "main reason" commanders sent poor officers to school was the "danger to themselves of being relieved from command for some error made by the less efficient officers." Cooper believed "this attitude extended throughout the army."\textsuperscript{35} Joseph Lawrence told the story of an officer relieved of his command and commission at a stateside training camp for gross incompetence. The man, Captain Wilkinson, later enlisted and served in the 29th Division. His commander


had sent him to Officers’ Candidate School to get him out of the unit.\textsuperscript{36}

In addition to the army schools, artillery, infantry, engineers, trench mortars, intelligence, gas, tanks, antiaircraft, signal, and service supply all ran their own branch schools and demanded that units fill the student slots with thousands of officers.\textsuperscript{37} The number of schools increased throughout the war to accommodate increasingly specialized tasks.\textsuperscript{38} By the beginning of 1918, the AEF had created a monstrous school system that demanded students no matter what the tactical situation. An infantry lieutenant complained: “Once I was sent from the line to school when the regiment needed officers badly.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} This man eventually returned to South Carolina wearing unauthorized captain’s bars and a Croix de Guerre. Lawrence said Wilkinson’s division never made it to the front before the Armistice. The Joseph Douglas Lawrence, Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918 (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 155.


\textsuperscript{38} “The Training of the AEF,” Infantry Journal, 15, no. 6, (December 1918), 491.

\textsuperscript{39} “Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire” from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the
Argonne campaign, divisions desperately needed officers. Major General John F. O’Ryan of the 27th Division blamed his units poor showing on September 27, 1918, on the lack of officers. The 106th Infantry had only eighteen officers in its twelve companies. O’Ryan blamed the shortage on the school system which GHQ required commanders to fill.  

The Infantry Specialist School alone ran eight different courses. By December 23, 1918, the school had completed 102 courses, graduating 3,277 officers. Most of these courses lasted a month and officers might take several courses, staying at Langres for months. One infantry captain complained that he had to send two lieutenants to school for over three months from October 8 to December 15, leaving his company with only one officer. This captain eventually had his lieutenants

---


41 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 347.

42 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of
returned; others were not so lucky. Often schools retained the best students as instructors. An infantry lieutenant complained that “junior officers showing ability in AEF schools were held in schools as instructors.” Lieutenant Colonel Pike of the Langres candidate school bragged that he kept the “smartest and most enthusiastic graduates” for duty as instructors. No wonder commanders chose to send their worst soldiers to school. That was where they would stay — in the school system. Incredibly, the primary mission of the branch schools was not to train officers and send them back to their units; instead, these officers were to instruct others at the next rung in the army school system — the corps schools.

---

Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 54.

43 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 44.


The first three corps had their own school systems. I Corps originated the program at Gondrecourt with eight schools — infantry, artillery, engineer, signal, anti-gas, sanitary, aeronautical and field officers' school. The II and III corps school systems followed the I Corps model. Up to the Armistice, these schools continued to divert officers from desperately undermanned front line units. In addition to the students, these schools wasted badly needed officers and supplies on training instead of fighting. III Corps had a two week course on how to throw a grenade, followed by a two week course on the machine gun.

Another lieutenant attended three machine gun schools. One infantry lieutenant correctly observed the problem.

Specialty schools were overdone. Three week courses were given in courses that any reasonable man ought to learn in three days. If he couldn't learn grenade throwing, for instance, in three

---


days, he ought not to be an officer when there are so many really capable men available. 48

These schools had three overwhelming problems. First, qualified instructors simply did not exist for so many schools. Inevitably, graduates would exchange their students' seat for instructors' chalk with no additional training. The director of the officer candidates' school at Langres wrote that his instructors, all captains, "had never received any tactical instruction and many had received little serious military instruction of any character." 49 The schools provided only limited value, except at the Langres, because the instructors concentrated on what little they knew -- drill and bayonet fighting. One engineer lieutenant complained that his instructors taught "guard mount." Another said his teachers were second lieutenants from the previous class. "It wasn't

48 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 54.

their fault that they didn't know, but it was a joke."  

Brigadier General B.A. Poore, commander of the 7th Infantry Brigade, commented that too much time went toward bayonet training to instill the offensive spirit rather than technical and tactical competence. Second, the schools taught individual skills rather than the more important unit skills. This emphasis on basic technical skill highlighted the gross inadequacies of the individual officer and soldier. Rather than concentrate on learning to fire and maneuver their platoons and companies, officers and non-commissioned officers had to learn how to fire a machine gun or a howitzer, even how to throw a grenade. Finally, there was the war. These schools, while theoretically of value, took officers away from their units. They failed to provide enough trained men to overcome the damage they created.

The regular officer sought to fix the problem of a citizen army by professionalizing the officer corps during

50 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 54.

51 Report of Officers Convened by Special Orders NO. 98, GHQ, AEF, 8 April, 1919 (Lewis Board), U.S. Army Military History Institute.
war. Effective training should have emphasized unit skills at the squad, platoon and company, but that did not address the fundamental fears of the regular officers. Regulars wanted to change the culture and loyalty of citizen officers more than they wanted to improve the tactical proficiency of units. As an infantry lieutenant perceptively said: "Somebody's obsession regarding the necessity of schools kept about 50% of the officers away from their units all the time, when they ought to have been giving their time to their men."^52

The training policy of the AEF sought to correct the problems of a wartime army with the same solution reforming regular officers had used in peacetime — professional military education. This education, the regulars hoped, would make for competent, professional soldiers. Unfortunately, the AEF had no doctrine, few competent instructors, precious little time, and a war that was killing infantry officers at an alarming rate.53. A unit

---

^52 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 54.

^53 Lawrence tallied the survival rate for his fellow lieutenants from candidates' school. Of the eight officers who became friends at school four died in action, two suffered serious wounds, and two escaped injury. Joseph
commander could not commission or temporarily commission an enlisted soldier for potential without sending the soldier to an Army Candidate School first. Pershing and Fiske instituted this policy to prevent political commissions in the National Guard and National Army divisions. The result, however, was an army that desperately lacked junior officers in line units. The reform solution that worked over a twenty-five year period in the peacetime army could not work during the stress of war. Professional military education had become a cultural obsession that hurt and divided the officer corps.

Army Policy -- Assignment

The AEF's policy of assigning regular officers also caused ill will among citizen-officers. In an effort to increase command and staff expertise, the AEF high command wanted to place regulars in each regiment. This


"Replies to Officers' Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 335.

86
patronizing attitude infuriated citizen-officers. Often regulars would join units after training was complete, disrupting the cohesion of units. As a further consequence of this policy, regulars transferred more than other officers. A lieutenant colonel in the adjutant general department decried the "constant transfer of regular officers from one duty to another." The leadership of the AEF wanted regulars in Guard and National Army divisions to oversee citizen-officers. The G-1 (Personnel) section of the General Staff continually debated the proper number of regulars for each organization and tried to have several regular staff officers in each division.

The reassignment of the regular army Quartermaster Corps provides a policy example of the army following its professional culture. A regular army committee met to discuss officer selection. They concluded that the army needed more regular officers because "the indubitable fact remains that extensive service in the Regular Army is the

55Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 38.

only means for developing a completely trained officer.”
Thinking that any regular officer is better than any
citizen-officer, the committee ordered all division
commanders to release their regular army quartermaster
officers for reassignment as infantry and artillery
officers in National Army and Guard divisions.\textsuperscript{57} While
highly competent in the Quartermaster Corps and other
combat service support branches, these officers were a bust
as infantrymen. They disrupted the cohesion of the gaining
units, as well as creating a vital hole in their old
outfits that unqualified infantry officers had to fill. A
lieutenant colonel commented acidly.

Line officers should not be transferred to
the Quartermaster Corps and other branches or
vice versa. A line officer might as well be
transferred to the Medical Department as to the
Quartermaster Corps. He has as much knowledge of
cutting out appendices as he has of buying
shirts.\textsuperscript{58}

In addition to the logisticians assigned to infantry
branch, Brigadier General Robert E. Wood, the acting AEF

\textsuperscript{57}Final Report of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, GHQ,
1948), 266.

\textsuperscript{58}Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale
Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of
Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National
Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 38.
Quartermaster General, alerted his division chiefs to put all able bodied officers on the front lines and replace them with officers unfit for combat duty. While the infantry was chronically short of experienced leaders, the Services of Supply were equally short of competent officers. The constant switching of officers disrupted everyone.59

Transfers provided regulars an opportunity to "ticket punch," as a later generation of officers would call it. Most regulars usually held staff positions where their training could help the army most, but they knew glory and promotion rested in command. From his position as one of the few citizen-officers on Pershing's staff, Frederick Palmer had a clear view of this problem, which he related sardonically:

No army staff was more given to the policy of alternating between line and staff than ours. Every officer on the staff felt that he had a right to lead a regiment or brigade before the war was over. Transfers were frequent. The result was gratifying to individual ambition. A line officer who had just learned a field command took the place of a staff officer who was just becoming an expert in his branch of staff work.60

59 Army and Navy Journal, vol. 56. no. 2, (September 14, 1918), 49.

60 Frederick Palmer, Our Greatest Battle: The Meuse-Argonne (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 437.
The AEF’s policies in training, promotion, and assignment show a regular officer corps attempting to control civilian-officers during the war. Ineffective, the policies caused deep resentment among officers. The regular army was trying to make temporary officers more effective while retaining power over them. Regulars wanted competent junior leaders without aspirations to high command and staff positions. That was impossible. The regulars' culture of institutional professionalism emerged victorious from the World War I experience, but their effective bureaucratic fighting caused poor esprit de corps among the AEF's officers. An artillery captain stated just after the war, “The morale could have been better among officers.”

---

61 “Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire” from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 234.
CHAPTER 4

Esprit de Corps Among Officers: Citizens

While the regular officer saw war from an institutional perspective, the citizen-officer had a more romantic notion of war and the warrior. The temporary officer, without the benefit of institutional inculcation, saw the peacetime officer corps as a small, insignificant group that was necessary for frontier fighting, but in any serious warfare the citizen soldier would assume important positions of command. Part of this conception rested on the perceived role of the citizen in American martial history. From Daniel Morgan, the Revolutionary War hero, to Andrew Jackson, the conqueror of the British at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, to Joshua Chamberlain of Gettysburg fame, to the Rough Rider himself, Theodore Roosevelt, conqueror of San Juan Hill, the American military amateur had a publicized history of success. Citizen-officers expected that heroic legacy to continue in France. Raised on a steady diet of business and sports
values, as well as Civil War stories, Citizen-officers had a fundamentally different belief in what made an officer as well as a different expectation of war. Citizens believed leaders were born, not taught. Some men had the God-given ability and some did not, but peacetime army experience counted for little. This different set of beliefs clashed with the regulars in the army's institutional setting causing much animosity. This chapter discusses the values and expectations of the citizen-officer and their reaction to the regular army.

**Business Values**

Without West Point and regular army experience, citizen-officers came into the service with a system of societal values unfettered by army institutional inculcation. The new officers had their own values, predicated on business and the new professions. In their civilian experience, these officers had participated in a variety of occupations. The Morale Branch questionnaire asked officers their civilian occupations. Fully one-third (35%) of the officers had backgrounds in business. They classified themselves as advertisers, bankers, salesmen, business executives and even a few that said they were “business experts.” Another third (36%) held professional
jobs, the greatest number of which (17%) called themselves engineers. Many were electrical, civil, and mechanical engineers, but the prestige of the label "engineer" led other less recognized fields to claim the name, such as "municipal engineers, valuation engineers, and efficiency engineers." Of the remaining officers, only 16% were students at universities prior to commissioning. More lawyers (8%) received commissions than farmers and ranchers (7%).\(^1\) As these figures show the criteria for officership in America rested on educational standards and class rather than an aptitude for leadership.

Almost three-quarters (71%) of the AEF officer corps, as represented in this substantial survey, worked in

---

\(^1\)Total respondents 1616; officers with civilian business experience -- 543. Officers with civilian professional experience -- 587; students -- 223; lawyers, 136; farmers, ranchers, and stock breeders -- 82. Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 4-c. Another source confirms the business and professional background of the army. All the officers of the 20th Infantry Regiment signed a letter to the Infantry Journal about the strengths of Regular Army officers. Each officer gave his prewar job description. Of the ten officers, only the two second lieutenants that came into the army after the Armistice came directly from college. The rest had professional or business background. The only exception was an immigrant from Austria who enlisted in 1898 and later became an officer. Open Letter, Infantry Journal, 16, no. 1, (July 1919), 59.
businesses or professions prior to commissioning. If these officers had spent only a short amount of time in civilian life, the effects would be small, but that was not the case. The average age of a lieutenant in 1919 was twenty-eight, a captain thirty-four, and both majors and lieutenant colonels averaged thirty-six years of age. The officers' older age meant that they had gained the values of their prior occupation before entering the army.

Officers expected a business-like army. Calvin Coolidge would say in the 1920s that the "business of America is business," but in 1917 and 1918 citizen-officers thought they were in the business of war. The success of American business during the Progressive era combined with the rags to riches' tales of millionaires such as Andrew Carnegie to give many businessmen profound respect in

^Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 4-c.

^Some regular army officers agreed that the experience of the civilian-officer helped their leadership abilities. A letter to the editor of the Infantry Journal in May 1920, by a regular, described the civilian officer as "a successful business or professional man" who knew how to "handle men" from his prior training. "The Truth," Letter to the Editor, unsigned, Infantry Journal, vol. 16, no. 7, (Jan. 1920), 585.
America. Americans believed that their army would follow the concepts of big business to success on the battlefield.

For many this meant that war was a business. While covering the Balkan War of 1913, Frederick Palmer, then the foremost military correspondent of the European War in America, wrote an article entitled, "The Most Up-To-Date Business -- War." "An army," wrote Palmer, "is a great industrial corporation which moves most of its plant on wheels and legs. War has become a business as matter-of-fact as a department store." A letter to the editor of the New Republic went even further. "The difference between life in the industrial world and war is one of degree." After the war, army leaders agreed. Hunter Liggett, First Army Commander, wrote in his memoirs.

In organization an army is essentially no different from such industrial corporations as the United States Steel Corporation, the General Motors Company or the Pennsylvania Railroad, except that a modern army is larger and more ramified.... An army's business is to make war.

---

4Frederick Palmer, "The Most Up-To-Date Business - War" McClure's, vol. 41, no. 5, (September 1913), 98.

5"Correspondence," The New Republic, vol. 5, no. 54, (November 13, 1915), 44.

6Hunter Liggett, AEF: Ten Years Ago in France (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1928), 280.
The analogy went the other way as well. Edward D. Jones, professor at the University of Michigan, wrote an article extolling business as the "new profession." He argued that the business executive should take the role reserved in history for the military leader:

Why should not the business executive practice Caesar’s leniency, and his art of making common cause with his men, or endeavor whether Napoleon's celerity may not be used in the bloodless battles of economic service?°

Citizen-officers perceived war as a natural extension of business and vice-versa. An understanding of one should translate to the other. American officers believed they would do well in battle because of their business and technical acumen. Palmer told his audience to have faith in American forces because during peacetime citizen soldiers had "built our skyscrapers, our factories."® Business became a way of measuring a soldier. Those that acted as businessmen were the best America had to offer. Corporal Amos Wilder described his units' adjutant as "a big fellow, a kind of business-man soldier."® America's

®Frederick Palmer, America in France (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1918), 4.
best officers mirrored what was best in America, and that was business. Business set the model for war. Americans believed war should follow the recipe of business success. Palmer described the relief of one unit in business terms. It was "like a change in shift in a factory -- all as business-like as possible." The country believed that war should adhere to basic business practices, and that army leaders should have the foresight and planning that the captains of industry mustered. Citizen-officers quickly found themselves disappointed. This disappointment had a profound impact on American officers' view of the army.\(^{11}\)

Citizen-officers compared the army to their experience and perceptions of business life and found the army wanting. Several officers echoed an infantry captain who said he was in the "business of war." These officers saw war as a business that should adhere to rational, scientific precepts. An engineer major claimed that only by using "business methods" of the citizen-officer did the army accomplish as much as it did. Citizen-officers wanted

---

\(^{10}\)Frederick Palmer, *Our Greatest Battle: The Meuse-Argonne* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 492.

\(^{11}\)See Chapter 2 on Esprit de Corps for more on the impact of business on the AEF.
the army to run on a "business basis -- using the methods of great corporations," which they considered the highest praise for any organization. Another suggested that to stop wastage the army should "inspect a business." An Air Service lieutenant said "the army is not a business organization, [but it] should be organized upon business principles."\textsuperscript{12}

The problem, according to the citizen-officers, started with regular army officers who were not businessmen. One lieutenant complained that the army lacked "business courtesy." Frederick Palmer wrote that fifty percent of all regulars were unfit to serve as "lawyers or doctors, railroad men or mechanics." Claiming that these regulars would have failed in civil life; only in the army could they have found a paying job.\textsuperscript{13} An artillery captain pointed out: "There were not enough big gauge American business men in our larger and more responsible positions and [these positions] should have

\textsuperscript{12}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 59, 47, 215, 230.

\textsuperscript{13}Frederick Palmer, Our Greatest Battle: The Meuse-Argonne (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 425
been filled by big business men who have proved themselves capable of handling big affairs." This officer felt that the myriad of problems that the AEF suffered would have ceased had regulars used the proper business methods. An artillery lieutenant recounted that citizen-officers had tried to bring "this business ability into the army," but regulars would not allow them to fully implement it. This religious-like faith in the power of business and the scientific methods of business was a hallmark of the Progressive era. Those attitudes died during the Great Depression; but in 1918, the remedy for the army's inefficiency was business.\(^\text{14}\)

If the faith was business, the liturgy preached efficiency. This emphasis was a byproduct of the "efficiency craze" started by Frederick Winslow Taylor in 1911 with the serialization his essay, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, in the progressive *American Magazine*.\(^\text{15}\) When civilian-officers talked of business

\(^{14}\text{Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 23, 41, 59.}\)

\(^{15}\text{The craze spread after Louis Brandeis, the lawyer in the well-known Eastern Rate Case used Taylor's efficiency issue to fight a railroad rate increase. This work can be found in a reprinted collection of Taylor's works. Frederick}\)
methods and efficiency, they meant the scientific management of Taylor and his disciples. Samuel Haber, one of the first serious scholars of scientific management, attributed four different meanings to the word efficiency.\(^{16}\) Each meaning found its way into the rhetoric of civilian officers and their frustrations with the army.

The first definition was a personal attribute. "An efficient person was an effective person" that used hard work to secure advancement.\(^{17}\) One entry with dozens of comments on the Officers' Questionnaire dealt with the "inefficiency of higher officers" who relied on politics and favoritism instead of hard work and competence. Another civilian-officer wanted commissions and promotions based on an efficiency test.\(^{18}\)

---


\(^{18}\)Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of
Haber's second definition, the output-input ratio of the machine, and his third definition, the commercial efficiency of the organization, became one common complaint in the army -- the inefficiency of the army as an organization. An artillery lieutenant complained about the "lack of efficiency in the methods of handling material and supplies." The army did not run as a well-oiled industrial machine and many officers complained of the "wastage" in both material and men.\(^{19}\) Citizen-officers linked poor tactics that killed men to poor supply practices that wasted food and equipment. Both resulted from a lack of business methods.

The final definition was the most important for the Progressive era and the poor esprit de corps among officers. Efficiency signified the relationship between men. Haber says this meant "social harmony and the leadership of the "competent."\(^{20}\) This definition used by

---

Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 60.

\(^{19}\)Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 73.

civilian officers became a negative moral judgment on the competence, sincerity, and harmony of army leadership. An engineer major called for "true efficiency," which he contrasted with the "false efficiency" of military discipline. An air service officer complained of "the lack of efficiency and decency of superior officers." An infantry major complained that "advancement comes only to those who follow the hidebound precepts of inefficiency." Efficiency for many officers became a moral judgment, not on competence, but on the officers' relationship to superiors and subordinates.  

Taylorism's emphasis on moral efficiency used the language of business pacifism and anti-military attitudes that were prevalent during this time. The greatest hindrance to efficiency, Taylor wrote, was "soldiering," which he defined as "underworking," "lazy," and "loafing."  

21 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 52, 73, 24.

22 Attitudes on war were often positive, but attitudes on the peacetime army were generally negative. For more on business pacifism see James Abrahamson, America Arms For A New Century: The Making of A Great Military Power (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 147; Samuel Huntington, Soldier and the State, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 222-225.
Taylor also defined soldiering as "a deliberate attempt to mislead and deceive." Captain Tibout of the 305th Infantry reported that an inspector relieved an officer because troops in the unit were "'soldiering' - lying down on the job." Adopted by the civilian-officers, "soldiering" became a moral reproach on regular army culture. Civilian-officers repeatedly used adjectives such as "lazy" to criticize the efficiency and moral fiber of the regular officer. Other Taylor language appeared in the officers' criticisms. Taylor described one cause of "soldiering" as the "ignorance of employers" to proper management techniques. The civilian-officers frequently complained of the "ignorance" of regular army and general officers. Civilian officers saw the regulars as having the

---

\[23\] Taylor's ideas on "soldiering" are in Shop Management, 30-34 and The Principles of Scientific Management, 10-14, in Frederick Taylor, Scientific Management (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972).


\[25\] See Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6 under heading "Regular Officers" and "Inefficiency of Higher Officers," 24 and 58-64.
laziness of the worker along with the ignorance of the old style employer. Yet another common complaint focused on the selfishness of regular officers. This again fits in with the moral judgment rendered against the army organization suffering from poor “management.” Officer esprit de corps suffered because of the clash of Taylorism's business ideals with the army system.

**Sports Values**

The business ideal was not the only expectation of citizen-officers. They also thought that warfare and the army would adhere to conceptions of sports prevalent in the first two decades of the twentieth century. American officers and soldiers referred to the war as a game. When discussing their conduct, their aspirations, and most significantly, their disappointments, citizen-officers used metaphors that related war to sports and business.\(^{26}\)


\(^{27}\)See Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6 under the heading, “Selfishness,” 25.

During the decades preceding World War I, writers had done their best to portray sport as the closest a man could come to war. This continued equation of war with sport created the false impression that officers understood combat because they understood sports.

Americans began equating sports with war after the Civil War when games such as baseball and football were organized into professional and amateur leagues. The sports founders, particularly in football, equated the sport with war. Walter Camp, the father of modern football, and an insurance salesman from New Haven, wrote at the turn of the century about the "remarkable and interesting likeness between the theories which underlie the great battles and the miniature contests of the gridiron." Historian Gerald Linderman cites an excellent example of equating war and sports in a conversation between the poet Hamlin Garland and Stephen Crane the author of The Red Badge of Courage. Asked by Garland how he could understand war despite never seeing action as a soldier, Crane answered that the enemy and psychology of football, which Crane had played, was much the same as

---

war. Even the brutality of the game gave the impression of war. One article in Outing Magazine scrolled the names of thirty-one football players killed in 1909, their cause of death, position, and their high school or college; the list looked eerily like a casualty report with only one difference — the school substituted for the regiment. The "Honor List," a precursor to All-American status in football, looked much like Civil War dispatches that mentioned soldiers' gallantry. School affiliation also modeled itself on war, trying to match the camaraderie of the regiment and attachment to the "colors."

By emphasizing teamwork, self-sacrifice for others, a hierarchy of roles, and intricate game-plans, football did have a passing semblance to war; or more accurately to what men thought of war. It took on the language of war, as well. Every coach had a "strategy" or a "plan of attack" led by the "field marshal" or "field general." Herbert Reed, a popular sportswriter for Harper's Weekly wrote articles on "Football Generalship," "Field Marshals of the

---


Gridiron," and "Football Artillery." In the latter article Reed leads his story off with this comparison: "Kicking bears the same relation to football as artillery does to warfare with the exception that it is possible in football to deliver the final stroke with kicking." In another article, Reed wrote as though he was a war correspondent that found a ball on the battlefield. "Driven back into their own territory by the superior attack of their opponents, they obtain possession of the ball only by [a series of] last stands."

Even those who argued against football used warfare to prove their point that politicians and college presidents should outlaw the game. Professor David Potter argued that football was neither a game nor a sport; instead the long hours devoted to "systematic drill" made the athletes seem more like soldiers. He concluded by describing the scene of a losing team. "If a game is lost, a long list of unnamed coaches arrive like reinforcements to a routed brigade. The more football becomes work, the more it

---

becomes war." Potter tried unsuccessfully to persuade Americans in the educational hierarchy that because football was like war, Americans should not play it. Most, however, felt that football's similarity to war was the best reason to play the game. While many disagreed over football, no one disagreed that football mirrored warfare. Many thought football would prepare Americans for war by teaching discipline, organization, and commitment.

By the beginning of World War I, football used the vocabulary of warfare, but Americans and American soldiers returned the favor. They used the language of sports to describe their participation and their expectations. The war, as Frazier Hunt described it in the New York Sun, became the "great game." Frederick Palmer again said it most clearly: "'Play the game!' No phrase better expressed their [AEF] attitude than this. It was a wicked filthy,

34"Football Neither a Game Nor a Sport," Review of Reviews 44, (October, 1911), 481-482.


dangerous game." He quoted an unnamed army officer as saying that "war is the greatest game on earth." The Stars and Stripes published an article in the Spring of 1918 that proclaimed: "What works in the game of football will work in the game of war." One letter from an American officer in March of 1918, described the lull in fighting caused by heavy rain. "It has been raining since we got here, and each side has put out the sign, 'game called on account of rain,' or at least it seems that way." One Stars and Stripes poet clearly articulated that war was still a game.

This game is not the game they knew
Before they faced the guns;
The game that called for tackle drives,
Or cracking in the runs;
The game they played on friendly sod
Beneath a friendly sky,
To poke a double down the line,
Or snag the winging fly,
A new game? Yes, but still a game
For those who had the heart
To crack a line or spill an end

---

37 Frederick Palmer, Our Greatest Battle: The Meuse-Argonne (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 482.


Along the sportive mart;
And so the slogan, born of old,
Shall be their final aim—
"Come on, and show me something, kid;
Heads up -- and play the game!"  

War as a game had several connotations that set

citizen-officers up for disappointment. Officers felt, erroneously, that because Americans played more competitive athletics than the rest of the world, Americans would make better fighters. Palmer wrote that because of the "team-play of our sports" that emphasized self-sacrifice for the team and victory, Americans more readily obeyed orders. Captain C.I. Weikert gave a class entitled "The Spirit of the Bayonet and Bullet" to a class at Gondrecourt, part of I Corps school system. In the class, Weikert argued that Americans had better natural preparation for bayonet fighting than Germans because Americans were physically

---


42 Team sports at this time were mainly the province of officers. Many soldiers had not played competitive team athletics before their entrance in the service. This was not true of officers who played and watched games in college. See Steven W. Pope, "An Army of Athletes: Playing Fields, Battlefields, and the American Military Sporting Experience, 1890-1920" The Journal of Military History 59 (July 1995), 446.

bigger and used to personal contact from football and baseball. Bayonet fighting was "our game," he said. The Germans on the other hand were "not naturally athletic." "An article in the *Stars and Stripes* in March 1918 noted that "it will be very bad for the Boche to face an army of baseball-trained, grenade and bomb-tossers." An erstwhile poet wrote in the February 1918, wrote about this direct link between war and sports.

> He's tossed the horsehide far away to plug the hand grenade;
> What matter if on muddy grounds this game of war is played?
> He'll last through extra innings and he'll hit as well as pitch;

---

44 C.I. Weikert, "The Spirit of Bayonet and Bullet," Musketry, Bayonet, and Sniping School, I Corps Schools, AEF. Located in the Bird S. Newman Papers, 29th Division, 113th Infantry Regiment, World War I Survey -- 6940, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The great irony of Weikert's argument that American's are more fit than most nations, was the numbers of men declared unfit for service. The percentage was upwards of one-third and the location of most unfit was in the Northeast, which, again ironically, had more competitive athletic teams than any other area of the country. Leonard P. Ayres, The War with Germany: A Statistical Summary (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 20-21.

45 Alfred E. Cornebise, The *Stars and Stripes*: Doughboy Journalism in World War I (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press), 138. A contemporary picture showing Americans throwing practice hand grenades commented that "experience in baseball will give the American grenadiers an advantage." Collier's New Photographic History of the World's War (New York: Collier, 1918), 106
His smoking Texas Leaguers'll make the Fritzies seek the ditch. 46

Another officer wrote home, they "know the game better than we do, although man for man we can lick the spots out of them."47 American skill on the burgeoning playgrounds and the packed intercollegiate and high school stadiums would translate into martial ability.48 The United States and her officers were sure of it.

Equating war to sport also meant that Americans expected that the army would be the home team with a sense of fair play extended to all. The best would "play" first string and the next best the second string. Everyone would follow the rules to promote the common good, rather than succumb to selfish behavior that would hurt the team's chances of success.49

---


49 Frederick Palmer, Our Greatest Battle: The Meuse-Argonne (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 430.
By seeing war as a game, officers demanded that everyone in the army act as though they were on the same team and should, therefore, act with a sense of selflessness and camaraderie that existed on the playing field. When regulars acted in the best interests of the army and themselves, citizen-officers saw this as evidence of poor teamwork. Some saw these problems as the "little ups and downs [of] the game," but many others felt that regular officers failed to abide by the rules of fair play and sportsmanship. Rarely did their expectations change; the army, for many, was a four million man team and when they realized there were differences between an army and a team, many officers became embittered toward regulars and the army.

The army disappointed one infantry lieutenant because he found "jealousies and discord when all should be team work and cooperation." His expectation of the army centered on his conception of team sports. This idea of

---

50 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 21.

51 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 108.
selfishness in the army was a crucial complaint of the doughboys.\textsuperscript{52} Another officer who identified the problem as the regular army officers, attributed their failure to "playing the peace time game too long."\textsuperscript{53} The regulars' preparation was faulty, because the game they played was faulty. For this officer, football and baseball trained civilians better for war than peacetime army maneuvers, because warfare mirrored sports. The civilians' games were better than Army's war-games. The army failed said another officer, because it did not understand war, its own game.\textsuperscript{54}

Army discipline, training, and leadership all failed to meet the expectations of civilians raised on sports. One officer offered this suggestion to improve discipline. "Explain to the average enlisted man that discipline is teamwork as in a baseball game." Another infantry lieutenant found "team work missing between the different

\textsuperscript{52}See Chapter 3 on selfishness and its impact on morale.

\textsuperscript{53}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 58.

\textsuperscript{54}There should have been enough army men who knew the game sufficiently well, Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 220.
branches of the service, particularly between the infantry and the artillery and air service." A regular officer might have expected some branch parochialism and discord; instead officers raised on sports saw the problem in terms of teamwork. Because sports help set views of war, citizen-officers set unrealistically high expectations of the army and of warfare. The boredom and random nature of war combined with the perceived self-interest of regular army officers left many feeling betrayed.

Civil War Brotherhood

While business and sports ideals influenced the citizen-officer, so to did societal views of warfare, particularly the Civil War. The Civil War had ended only fifty years before, and hundreds of thousands of Civil War veterans still lived and passed their stories of Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chancellorsville to their sons and grandsons. While the Civil War had occurred a half century ago, it retained its central role in the minds of

---

55Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 65 and 214.

56The World War II GIs are the same distance from today's youth as the Civil War veterans were from the young men preparing to fight the Great War (1865 to 1917 and 1945 to 1997).
Americans, even if the picture had become fuzzy over time. Visceral images of blood and lost loved ones had yielded to hazy sentiment expressed in parades by the Grand Army of the Republic and the United Confederate Veterans. As one historian noted, the veterans had forgotten their nightmares. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.'s trauma on the Fredericksburg battlefield, that he described as "an infamous butchery in a ridiculous attempt" had mellowed over a period of thirty years. His exhortations to the young men of America through rose-colored rather than blood-spattered glasses encouraged American men to think of war as adventure and as a rite of passage, both for themselves and their nation. War, Holmes explained to the Harvard class of 1895, was horrible when you were in it, but looking back "you see that its message was divine." Men such as Holmes provided younger Americans with an example that proved irresistible. War would test their moral virtue.

57 Paul H. Buck, Road to Reunion, 1865-1900 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), 256
By World War I, the image of the Civil War had transformed from savage fighting to an era of good feelings among old enemies. Billy Yank and Johnny Reb had reconciled almost completely, sharing the same parades and reunions.60 In 1915, Woodrow Wilson gave a speech to the Grand Army of the Republic that made the two sides brothers: "You feel, as I am sure the men who fought against you feel, that you were comrades even then, though you did not know it."61 Memoirs of soldiers published during this time suggested that the old enemies had really loved each other. The public idolized Grant and Lee as the incarnation of fraternity. The Spanish-American War confirmed the harmony of the old enemies as former Confederate general Fighting Joe Wheeler took his commission to fight the Spaniards. General John B. Gordon wrote in his 1903 memoirs of his enduring life-long friendship with Union general Francis C. Barlow forged on the Gettysburg battlefield, when Gordon aided the wounded

60 Paul H. Buck, Road to Reunion, 1865-1900 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), 256.
Barlow. Gordon called this relationship "the truest indices of the American soldiers' character."62

From the Civil War example, the officers of the AEF naturally thought that the character of their military experience would follow the uplifting example of Civil War brotherhood. The concept of brotherhood consistently appeared in Civil War memoirs and speeches after 1885, providing an unattainable but powerful ideal. Officers would fight together, putting aside regional differences as their grandfathers had done. Instead, they found regular officers holding them to an artificial cadet standard, berating their lack of discipline, and treating them unequally. One citizen-officer complained that regulars failed to welcome the new officers as "brother officers."63 Regulars made overt distinctions between officers throughout the war. A Regular officer after the war agreed with the civilians' criticism. He said that Regulars

62 For more on American veterans and societal perceptions of the Civil War prior to World War I, see Paul H. Buck, Road to Reunion, 1865-1900 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937); Thomas Leonard, Above the Battle: War-Making in America from Appomattox to Versailles (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

63 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 29.
failed to act as "'elder brothers.'"64 Citizen-officers could not accept regular officers who showed more allegiance to the institution than to the ideal of American brotherhood.65 Their war compared unfavorably to the Civil War experience that they had heard from so many veterans in town squares across America.

After the war several regular general officers succumbed to the same revisionism as their Civil War counterparts, insisting that the war experience was an exercise in harmony. Usually sharp-eyed in his assessment of the AEF, Robert Bullard characterized the Second Army as full of harmony. "There was no dissension."66 Lawrence Tyson, an 1883 graduate of West Point and commander of the 59th Infantry Brigade during the war, criticized the citizen-officers in his brigade often. March discipline particularly vexed Tyson; he berated his officers for their

---


failure to "march as well as the West Point cadets." After the war he recalled "nothing but loyalty and cooperation and courtesy from each and every officer." The citizen-officers of the AEF did not buy it. The harmony that characterized Civil War reunions and memoirs failed to materialize in the World War.

Egalitarian Values

Societal values created a notion of officership that seemed different from the regulars. In the view of the citizen-officer, the most important quality for leadership was patriotic American fervor — a form of social, not rank-based leadership. These officers saw themselves as a band of brothers; the first among equals in an egalitarian army, united by their patriotic commitment to state and country. They wanted the army to reflect the attributes they believed America stood for — egalitarian democracy. The army like American society should base its deference on


68 Robert Lee Bullard, Personalities and Reminiscences of the War (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1925), 333; For more comments on the lack of brotherhood and courtesy see Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6.
merit, not an artificially induced rank system. In their view, a war for democracy was too important to leave to autocratic, regular army officers who controlled the AEF.

Many citizen-officers came to identify the problem as an "autocracy created by West Pointers." West Point was undemocratic because it harbored elitist sentiment. An officer criticized West Point and the regulars because of their "cliques, scandals and snobbishness." One infantry captain complained that there was "the Spirit of West Pointers First -- regardless." Citizen-officers believed that West Pointers had a much higher opinion of themselves than anyone else did. A second lieutenant expressed his opinion: "All West Point graduates had an exaggerated idea of the importance of that institution." West Point became a lightning rod for the feelings of citizen-officers toward the regulars and staff officers. They used West Point as a totem of alienation because it highlighted for them the elitist, undemocratic nature of the officer corps. 69

Citizen-officers felt the regulars were more than just unfair; they were undemocratic and un-American. Several

69 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 61, 61, 67, 63, 64.
officers raised the point that Americans were fighting for
democracy, but regular officers acted more like the
Kaiser's minions. A second lieutenant decried the regular
officers' "tendency toward Prussianism." Another
complained that the "regular army had been too much
influenced by Prussianism." The Prussian General Staff
had greatly influenced the regular army because most of the
training at Leavenworth centered on German practices. Some
Staff College graduates openly admired the Germans. The
citizen-officers used the term "Prussian" to contrast the
regular army's autocracy with their own supposed American
egalitarian values.

The egalitarian impulses of the citizen-officers ran
into the hierarchical structure of the military
organization. Temporary officers blamed regulars for the
formality and rank structure of the army, believing,

70 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale
Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of
Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National
Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 29.

71 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale
Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of
Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National
Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 61.

72 Allan R. Millett, The General: Robert L. Bullard and
Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925 (Westport,
correctly, that the differences in rank were undemocratic. One lieutenant described his regimental commander as a "czar." The AEF, like most military organizations, was a hierarchical institution with very distinct gradations of rank, but to the temporary officer these gradations were too great. Citizen-officers understood the need for rank, but they thought the regular army put too much stock in it. One infantry lieutenant recommended that "rank cease off duty." Another claimed that there was "too much importance given rank, among officers and men when off duty." Citizen-officers complained about the way regulars in the higher ranks treated those in the lower ranks. An artillery lieutenant complained that regulars treated citizen-officers as "recruits."\(^{73}\)

The galling structure of rank also applied to relations between officers and soldiers. An infantry lieutenant complained that there was "too large a gulf between officers and enlisted men." He described this gulf as "feudal and undemocratic." Another condemned "the prohibiting of comradeship between officers and men."

\(^{73}\)Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 48, 34, 22, and 59.
Several officers complained that regulars treated enlisted soldiers as "slaves," while another citizen-officer said that his regular army instructor told him to "treat enlisted soldiers as dogs." The temporary officer found the army more representative of the hated "Huns" than of America. One officer complained that troops waiting for transportation stayed "in a wire cage much like a German prison pen." Citizen-officers had trouble adapting to a rank structure that they found un-American.\footnote{Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 27, 74, 26, 64, 61, and 64.}

The citizen-officers' antipathy to the formal rank structure carried over into important military functions as well, especially discipline. Many citizens saw discipline as unfair and even cruel. An infantry captain complained that there was "too much stress on obedience as the result of fear." Another captain wished for "a strict line ... between proper disciplinary measures and those which cause unnecessary humiliation." This breach between the regulars' version of discipline based upon the example of West Point and the citizen-officers' vision based upon civilian mores highlighted their cultural differences. An
infantry major described the regular army as dedicated to the "Prussian system of discipline." One artillery captain felt that this discipline was unfit for Americans. "I consider our standards of discipline incompatible with the natural pride and self-respect which is the heritage of every true American." This was a common theme; that Americans reacted best to American discipline that emphasized reasoning instead of dictatorial orders.\(^7^5\)

One manifestation of the civilians' deep distrust over the methods of the regulars involved the salute. Citizen soldiers saw the regulars' concern with saluting as an anti-democratic fetish. Many regular officers did have an obsession with proper saluting as a sign of discipline and morale. Lieutenant Colonel Dan Morgan Smith who, despite his name, was a regular officer and a member of the 90th Division, felt that soldiers fought as they saluted. "Snap, precision, and correctness" in saluting, Smith argued, "unquestionably greatly sustained their morale."\(^7^6\)

\(^7^5\)Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 73, 75, 74.

Citizen officers often saw the issue as a red herring that detracted from the unit’s ability. One engineer officer complained that “too much attention is paid to the snappy salute and not enough to real leadership.” Another complained that regulars failed to follow “common sense” when demanding saluting.

Citizen-officers felt regulars failed to understand civilians. An artillery major complained: “Regular army officers [were] too slow to realize that they were dealing with a citizen soldier.” This sentiment, that the citizen soldier was much different from the professional peacetime soldier, was a common complaint. An artillery colonel underscored the “failure of the professional officer to understand and appreciate the difference between the civilian soldier of the present, and the professional soldier of the prewar days.” The citizen-officers said that there was a difference between soldiers and citizen-soldiers that regular officers ignored.

Nor were the citizen-soldiers alone in their feelings. Douglas MacArthur discussed the matter with West Point

---

77Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 57.
graduates after he returned to the United States Military Academy in 1920 as Superintendent: "The type of West Pointer that we are developing is not the type well-suited for the training and leadership of civilians." 78 MacArthur thought West Point graduates handled citizens straight from civilian life incorrectly. Instead of treating them as soldiers who had the "highest physical and educational standards," Academy graduates treated citizens as if they were "the scurvy soldiers of professional armies of old" that required the "severest form of discipline." 79

This assumption that the new citizen needed different treatment undergirded much of the citizen-officers' beliefs. In this view, regulars had experience dealing with old army soldiers and officers who, in the citizen-officer view, were not "modern" men. Many officers used the word "modern" and "new" to describe themselves because they equated "new" with "better." These modern officers differed from the "old army," which was "handicapped by hidebound traditions," as an artillery lieutenant called it. This officer said the citizens threw "off the shackles

of traditions and gradually some of the old timers began to see the light." They felt regular officers were "old," "narrow," and "narrow-minded," which implied the regulars' methods were antiquarian and therefore useless. The old methods would not work on the new officers.\textsuperscript{80} An Air Service captain claimed that reserve officers understood "human nature better than professional soldiers, due to professional soldiers' lack of experience dealing with men." Many officers commented on human nature. Most felt citizen-officers understood it better than the regulars and a few even identified this human nature as psychology. An artillery major said: "a greater degree of efficiency could be attained by the application of psychology and every officer should know wherein his men are weak and strive to develop them." Some citizen-officers used the social science notions of human nature and psychology to imply that reserve officers saved the army from itself because of the concepts they brought from civilian life.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 62, 61, 60.

\textsuperscript{81}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 58 and 74.
Uniting the business, sports, and egalitarian values brought to the army by citizen-officers was the conception of harmony and selflessness. Officers expected the most important event of their lives to be an uplifting one based on patriotism and fellowship. These attitudes by business and professional men were hallmarks of the progressive era. Romantic expectations of war created disappointed and disaffected citizen-officers. Officers newly commissioned from civilian life found army life reactionary, anti-business, unsportsmanlike, and un-American. The rigid hierarchy of the regular army seemed contradictory to the egalitarian and progressive qualities that the country was fighting for. Since they were fighting and dying for democracy, the American army ought to show a more democratic and harmonious nature. The clash between citizen officers and regulars resulted in officers with poor esprit de corps.
CHAPTER 5

The Health of the AEF

Sandwiched between the Civil War and World War II, doughboy casualties seem dwarfed by both the Yanks and the GIs. The short period of sustained ground combat and the prism of both the Civil War and World War II obscure the heavy price American soldiers paid in the Great War. Doughboys fought in France for only eight months; yet on a monthly average, the Americans suffered almost twice as many casualties in World War I as they did in World War II, and three times as many as Union forces did in the Civil War. In a six month period of sustained ground combat the Americans averaged 43,416 casualties (killed and wounded) a month compared to the monthly bill for World War II that averaged 23,959 and the Civil War (Union) that averaged 13,052. The World War I figures also dwarf those of the
Korea and Vietnam. Although the fighting was relatively short, it was bloody.²

The AEF attacked a determined but damaged foe who had spent years perfecting the defense-in-depth. Those attacks led to large casualty bills. While the enemy killed great numbers of Americans, there were other factors such as disease, malnutrition, inadequate clothing, and exhaustion that affected the physical and mental well-being of the soldier. This chapter discusses the factors that led to the poor health of soldiers in the AEF.

**Influenza**

Through the nineteenth century disease remained the great wartime killer. Even in World War I more American

---


² Deaths from other causes in World War I were much lower than the Civil War or the Spanish-American War except during the Meuse-Argonne campaign when the influenza epidemic hit with full force. Ayres, *War with Germany*, 124.
soldiers, sailors and Marines died from bacteria and virus than from bullets and shrapnel. In late September 1918, the American army launched its largest offensive during the worst outbreak of a communicable disease since the plague. The influenza pandemic of 1918 killed approximately twenty-seven million worldwide; the battlefields of the Meuse-Argonne were part of this global dying field.\textsuperscript{3} By sheer chance, the mortality rate from the pandemic reached its peak during the Autumn campaign of 1918.\textsuperscript{4}

The origin of this malady remains unclear. The disease became known as the "Spanish" influenza because the French believed it originated there, but the Spanish argued just as forcefully that it had started in France. Another contemporary theory blamed the influx of Chinese immigrant labor on the Western Front. A more recent author argued


that the pandemic originated in an unnamed Kansas army camp on March 11, 1918, when one hundred and seven soldiers reported to the camp hospital suffering from a "severe attack" of an unknown disease.\(^5\) Most diseases mainly afflict the very young and the very old -- not this one. The influenza strain of 1918 hit men and women from age twenty to forty the hardest.\(^6\)

Whatever its origins, this influenza strain proved extraordinarily difficult to combat. To fight the disease medical authorities had to first decide the cause. There was no clear favorite. Some doctors thought it was a bacterial infection, while others thought it a virus. It took until 1933 to prove the virus hypothesis correct. Even if they had come to a consensus, it would probably have had little effect. Medicine could do little against this killer.\(^7\)


Doughboys in stateside training camps suffered terrible casualties, but troop transport ships bore the full brunt of the disease. One hundred soldiers died on the Ostia before she reached England. A tank corps lieutenant claimed his ship, which left New York September 26, 1918, lost six hundred men to the flu. The casualty rate on ships forced the War Department to curtail the number of transports and the density of soldiers on each one. High death rates continued at the main replacement camp at St. Aignan sur Cher, which soldiers nicknamed "St. Agony." During the Meuse-Argonne campaign twenty soldiers a day died there of the flu and flu-related pneumonia. Death proved easier to deal with than the hundreds of thousands of sick soldiers. The sick required care from those not afflicted, further decreasing the number of replacements. Replacement soldiers arrived at the front


9Although probably an exaggeration, this figure shows the dramatic effect of the disease on soldiers. Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 107.

sick and exhausted from their journey. They were in no condition to fight; instead, they sapped the strength of the unit that had to care for them.

Replacements fell victim to the flu virus in great numbers. One detachment departed St. Aignan with five hundred men; the flu thinned their ranks to only two hundred and seventy-eight by the time they arrived at the front. The 91st Division lost five thousand replacements to quarantine that should have arrived to strengthen their position at the front.11 The front line soldiers seemed to show more immunity to the disease than those in the replacement camps and the transports for two reasons. First, they had endured a milder wave of the flu that had peaked over the summer, building their immune systems; and second, the ventilation at the front was much better than the cramped tents at the camps. Despite their greater resistance, the flu still hit the front line troops ferociously. Commanders reported 16,000 new cases of the flu for the week ending October 5. Pershing cabled back to Washington on 3 October 1918, about the serious nature of the flu in the AEF: “Influenza exists in epidemic form

---

among our troops in many localities in France accompanied by many serious cases of pneumonia."^{12}

No unit was exempt from influenza. The disease hit the 26th Division while it prepared to move into a front line position in the Argonne. The 51st Brigade commander, Brigadier General George H. Shelton, became so sick he gave up command days before the fighting started. Every battalion lost irreplaceable officers and soldiers just before they went into battle, damaging the units' cohesion and its effectiveness. Father Frances Duffy, the famous chaplain of New York's "Fighting 69th," (the 169th Infantry Regiment) reported that his flock came out of the line at the end of October "dirty, lousy, thirsty, often hungry; and nearly every last man is sick. Rheumatism, colds and fever. Many who should be evacuated aren't, because that would deplete our fighting strength even more."^{13} During the last half of October 1918, the 3rd Division evacuated

---

^{12}Cable 1744, To the Adjutant General, Washington, D.C., 3 Oct. 1918, Office of Surgeon General, Medical Department of the U.S. Army, vol. 6, 362-363.

more casualties for disease than wounds. Even Pershing came down with the flu during this time.\textsuperscript{14}

The flu epidemic hit the AEF in secondary ways as well. Service of Supply (SOS) soldiers caught the flu bug in mass, probably because of their shared billeting. This left fewer SOS soldiers to handle an already chaotic logistic situation. Key officers and soldiers went to the hospital; men that the SOS desperately needed to send food, fodder, and ammunition to the front. Because of the even worse logistical situation, front line soldiers received inadequate food and water, weakening their ability to ward off the disease. Other soldiers unaffected by the flu had to care for the sick, further depleting the ranks. Those front line soldiers often fought at a considerably lower capacity and were more prone to exhaustion.

The complete casualty figures for flu related illnesses were incomplete. Official records listed one man in five as contracting influenza during his army service, but the evidence suggests a much higher incidence. Byron Lightner of the 115th Infantry, 29th Division reported that

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Alfred W. Crosby, America's Forgotten Pandemic}, 158-162.
\end{quote}
everybody in his regiment had it. The 351st Infantry, 88th Division reported 1370 cases for one week alone. The reported cases of flu for the month of October were extraordinarily high — four in ten, but even that number was probably low. Doctors underreported flu cases during the Meuse campaign, while many ill soldiers never went on sick call. Some officers felt that doctors sent sick men back to duty to keep unit strength high. An infantry lieutenant complained that "our men [were] marked 'Duty' when they should have been marked hospital or sick in 'quarters.' This was done to make a good record for the medics." A lieutenant colonel reported that "officers and men [were] returned from the hospital too soon."

15 Byron Lightner, 29th Division, World War I Survey-3074, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.


17 For the month of October, 1918 the number of admissions for influenza hit almost forty percent of strength. 397 admissions per 1000 men. The Medical Department of the United States in the World War, Volume IX, Communicable and Other Diseases, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), 78.

18 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 107.
The AEF reported substantially fewer cases of influenza than did the stateside training camps. While living outdoors did help, as did the immunity built from the summer flu, the main difference was in the reporting procedures. Stateside doctors counted every soldier that reported to sickcall with influenza symptoms. In Europe, only those cases that required hospitalization and evacuation warranted reporting to the Surgeon General’s office. All soldiers treated in quarters or treated and released failed to make the report. Soldiers in convalescent camps also failed to make the report even if they were there because of disease.²⁰

The AEF vastly underreported the effects of influenza on its soldiers. After the war the Office of the Surgeon General tried to compile the non-effective rate of the AEF. Army doctors had no trouble determining the rate for the stateside training camps, but they failed to determine a comparable number for the AEF for three reasons. First,

¹⁹Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 106.

the army did not hospitalize all of its sick. Divisions shifted from one army to another during the Meuse-Argonne campaign, making reporting difficult. Monthly reports did not pass through an army hospital. Without a check in the system many hospitals never made reports, and those that did never made it to the correct location. The Surgeon General found only one accurate AEF medical report -- the incidence of venereal disease.\textsuperscript{21} The AEF was a much sicker army than its statistics would lead one to believe.

The result of the pandemic seems clear. The AEF's morale and effectiveness suffered grievous harm from influenza compounded by underreporting, which partially hid the calamity from army leaders. The surgeon general of the AEF reported that the influenza wave "ravaged" First Army, "seriously" affecting military operations, and even threatening to stop operations.\textsuperscript{22} The 80th Division's


Surgeon called influenza "the division's most formidable foe."\textsuperscript{23}

Influenza affects the respiratory system, and there were many cases of the flu leading to pneumonia. Influenza should not, however, affect the digestive tract, but doctors and soldiers reported a stunning increase in diarrhea and dysentery.\textsuperscript{24} Medical officers in the 79th and 88th Divisions estimated that between fifty and seventy-five percent of their command had diarrhea.\textsuperscript{25} The 77th Division surgeon noted the prevalence of dysentery among his soldiers, and the 6th Division reported that one of his regiments had six-hundred cases of diarrhea at one time.\textsuperscript{26}


Doctors wondered if this particular influenza strain also caused diarrhea, but poor sanitation practices probably caused the vast majority of digestive tract illnesses. Influenza had only a secondary effect on the digestive tract. Tired soldiers practiced inadequate personal hygiene and became sick. Doughboys defecated in the woods during the Meuse-Argonne offensive without making catholes, even when there were latrines nearby. This created a severe sanitation risk, particularly since many soldiers drank out of old shell holes and streams. The Germans added to the mess by shelling their previously occupied latrines. Several divisions reported high rates of typhoid -- attributable to poor sanitation and impure water. The 79th Division Surgeon reported that proper

---


sanitation was impossible during the Meuse-Argonne. While typhoid was present in several divisions, diphtheria ran through the 32nd and the 35th divisions. Measles also reached epidemic proportions. One doctor said measles spread until there was no one left to infect. Influenza combined with outbreaks of diphtheria, typhoid, mumps, trench fever, and meningitis to create a very sick army.

**Nutrition**

The AEF was also a malnourished army. By the middle of October the American Expeditionary Forces could not feed their soldiers. British Brigadier General Bernard Fergusson, a veteran of both world wars, claimed that "lack of food constitutes the single biggest assault upon morale." Malnourished soldiers of the AEF had trouble fighting because they lacked energy. The resources of the soldier went toward finding food and not fighting the enemy. Charles Minder of the 77th Division said his buddies thought about nothing but food because they had had

---


only one meal in the past thirty-six hours.\textsuperscript{33} Another soldier commented that he had only a cracker and a glass of water for two or three days.\textsuperscript{34} A young officer in the 29th Division, Second Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence complained that rations at the front "were almost non-existent."\textsuperscript{35} AEF soldiers sometimes fought the Germans to obtain their rations. The shortage of food hurt the morale of the soldiers and their fighting ability. Soldier after soldier described the front lines as an experience in hunger.\textsuperscript{36}

Soldiers who burned upwards of 4,000 calories a day routinely received less than 2,000. The results of poor nutrition were profound. Men at the front often recounted

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33}Charles F. Minder, \textit{This Man's War: The Day-to-Day Record of an American Private on the Western Front}, (New York: Pevensey Press, 1931), 307 and 337.
\item \textsuperscript{34}Frank Freidel, \textit{Over There: The Story of America's First Great Crusade}, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1964), 290
\item \textsuperscript{35}Joseph D. Lawrence, Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, unpublished manuscript, 84. World War I Survey - 561, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania
\end{itemize}
losses of more than ten percent of their body weight. Charles Minder described his fellow soldiers as "pale and thin. I hardly recognize any of them from the red-checked fat fellows they used to be." By the Armistice, many AEF combat troops looked like mistreated prisoners of war instead of victorious soldiers. When soldiers of the AEF felt the kind of gnawing hunger that led to dramatic weight loss, fatigue, and shock, they left the front lines in search of food. Robert Casey, an artillery lieutenant in the 77th Division, described the scene at a battery headquarters as chaotic because dozens of men came to "mooch" food. "None of them seemed to belong to any outfit nor anxious to do anything but sit and watch the artillery." At the front, soldiers often had to leave their units to forage the French countryside for subsistence. Hervey Allen, a platoon leader, led his men

---


on a search for sugar beets because they were "hungry as wolves." He described sugar beets as "stringy and bitter and about as edible as pine shavings." Finally, Allen and his platoon resorted to stripping the food off German corpses.\(^\text{41}\)

While on the front lines, troops rarely received a hot meal.\(^\text{42}\) James Wharton, an infantry lieutenant said his unit did not receive a hot meal for fourteen days.\(^\text{43}\) Douglas Lawrence also went two weeks without a full meal. Hot meals often were almost always unavailable at the front because of impassable roads, a lack of transport, or impenetrable traffic jams.\(^\text{44}\) By the Armistice the shortage of food at the front lines had reached a critical stage. Hunger and the accompanying desertions to find food,

\begin{quote}
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 97.
\item For more on the problem of supplying the front with hot and cold food see Chapter VI. Hervey Allen, \textit{Toward the Flame: A War Diary} (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1926), 225-236.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
\end{quote}
particularly hot food, seriously hindered the AEF’s combat ability and its health.

**Combat Load and Clothing**

The misery index went up even higher because of the abysmal weather. October and November brought cold, hard rain -- the worst weather for campaigning. To offset the rain and cold soldiers needed personal equipment light enough to carry but warm enough to ward off the night’s chill. Doughboys had neither. Weighing in at a hefty ninety pounds, the soldier’s standard issue approached two-thirds of his body weight. Even Douglas Haig seemed shocked by the load of the American soldiers, particularly ammunition. The troops’ reaction was not nearly so shocking. Doughboys shed equipment from their first roadmarch and continued to throw equipment away at every opportunity. One survey done shortly after the Armistice showed that ninety-five percent of all soldiers had thrown

---


46 Douglas Haig, 28 September, 1918, The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97, Diary, Part 11-12.
away articles of equipment. The G-4 for the Services of Supply wrote a memo to the G-1 reporting that the soldier threw away "great quantities" of equipment to reduce the weight he had to carry. \(^{47}\) Despite the soldiers' impromptu turn-in of "excess" load, and several observers noted the massive amount of equipment that trailed each AEF attack, the loads carried by soldiers proved an onerous burden. Added to the poor nutrition confronting the individual soldier, an excessive load further strained his meager energy reserves.

The heavy load burdened only those that had arrived with the unit from a stateside camp. Replacements rarely had any equipment at all. Second Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence arrived as a replacement officer in the 29th Division with only the uniform on his back. He received no issue from his division, forcing him to scrounge among the battlefield dead for such basic leader equipment as a compass and field glasses and comfort items such as a blanket and overcoat.\textsuperscript{48}

The type of clothing added to the troops' misery. One officer complained that "we have the poorest and shabbiest uniform of any nation, and yet we pay more for it."\textsuperscript{49} The nation-wide wool shortage forced manufacturers to make uniforms from carpet wool.\textsuperscript{50} The tight, high collar and tunic of the doughboy uniform made of carpet wool must have been uncomfortable and certainly inadequate for battlefield

\textsuperscript{48} Joseph Douglas Lawrence, \textit{Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918} (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 68.

\textsuperscript{49} Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 19-j.

conditions. The overseas cap was also inadequate because it lacked a brim, allowing the rain and sun to hit the face. Douglas Lawrence called the hated cap the "most useless piece of equipment ever concocted." The overseas cap replaced the broad-brimmed campaign hat worn by the army on the frontier and in the Spanish-American War. The issue long underwear was equally unsatisfactory. Homefront shortages forced army suppliers to buy off the shelf, fleece-lined underwear. While it felt comfortable initially, it retained perspiration and rain against the body. Since soldiers usually slept in their long underwear, they often went to bed wet and woke up wet. Wet soldiers burned more calories trying to stay warm and became more susceptible to disease and infection.

---


The army rainwear also suffered from a poor design. Unlike both the Civil War and World War II, the doughboys of the First World War had no poncho. This staple of the soldiers’ wardrobe kept the elements out in even the worst weather. The poncho’s replacements all proved unsatisfactory. The initial issue raincoats came in rubberized cotton sheeting, but they retained moisture and, once wet, proved hard to dry. Oilskin raincoats also failed because the waterproofing came off easily and when the waterproofing did stay on it cracked, soaking the soldier.\textsuperscript{54}

Staying dry and warm was a full-time task that required scrounging for extra blankets and clothes and a sharp eye for the shelter of abandoned German dugouts. Cold, dreary weather was the norm during much of the Meuse-Argonne campaign. Soldiers suffered in the cold, damp weather because of the inadequate weight of the army blanket, blouse, and flannel shirt. These three items had proved their worth on the Mexican Border, but they failed the test of a European winter. The solution to the light

blanket was to increase the standard issue to three. While the blanket lacked the proper heft to keep a body warm on a cold French night, three weighed enough to create a burden, especially when wet, and infantrymen hated extra burdens. Few soldiers still carried three blankets to the Meuse-Argonne. Many had none. One officer described how his unit dropped their packs before attacking on October 8, 1918, and never returned to retrieve them. His unit, the 115th Infantry, fought the next three weeks with no protection from the elements despite the fact that it rained twenty of those twenty-two days.

One body part took an extreme beating in the wet, muddy, and cold conditions of the Meuse-Argonne -- the feet. The first shoes given to the doughboys lacked waterproofing and in even a gentle rain quickly became soaked. The wet boots obviously hurt the foot and the spirit of the soldier. After a few days of wet feet, the


56 Diary of First Lieutenant Conrad E. Crane, 55th Artillery, Battery D. Courtesy of Lieutenant Colonel Conrad Crane, United States Military Academy.

57 Captain Philip MacIntyre letter to D.C. Lyle World War I Survey.
skin would peel off painfully. This condition called trench foot incapacitated many soldiers. Lieutenant Lawrence complained that on the march to the Meuse-Argonne front his blisters burst, while water seeped in his boots causing further pain. After a week on the front lines he complained that he could hardly walk.\(^5^8\) When the shoes became wet the stitches rotted and the boots fell apart. Forty percent of the shoes at a salvage yard had separated backstays.\(^5^9\)

While boots suffered from poor construction and design, the biggest problem was proper fit. In 1908, the Munson Shoe Board met to design a boot and fitting criteria to ensure that soldiers had well-made, properly fitted shoes. The report issued in 1912 showed great foresight, but the recommendations would benefit the GI of World War II more than the doughboy.\(^6^0\) In this war, supply sergeants

\(^{5^8}\) Joseph Douglas Lawrence, Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918 (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 78, 122.


and officers fit soldiers for shoes in the United States using a light pair of socks before soldiers had marched. When the troops arrived overseas, they put on two pairs of heavy wool socks and marched constantly. Marching expanded the foot, while the extra socks allowed even less room for the foot to move. One writer to the Stars and Stripes wrote shortly after the war: "So, when our grandchildren ask even the least of us what we did in the Great War, we can say, almost to a man, 'I went in with 6 1/2B's and came out with 8Ds.' Orthopedic surgeons estimated that over fifty percent of shoes worn by soldiers in the AEF were too small. This had terrible consequences on the marching and fighting ability of the soldier. The 6th Division surgeon complained that his soldiers suffered from "acute foot strain, abrasions and blistering." He attributed the problems to the English marching shoe issued to his division. The 42nd Division had massive foot problems on


62 Stars and Stripes, 21 February 1919. 67.

the March to the Rhine because of shoes that were too small.\textsuperscript{65} Shoes that were too small caused blisters, trench foot, and cut the circulation to the toes, preventing air pockets to form layers of warmth.

Requisitioning new equipment seemed out of the realm of the possible. The Byzantine nature of requests combined with the chaotic transportation system to thwart most food and ammunition resupply, much less clothing. The 78th Division quartermaster officer complained that the summer clothing he had requisitioned in the Spring finally showed up to his division in the Fall, when they needed winter clothing.\textsuperscript{66}


\textsuperscript{66}Extract from the 82nd Division Quartermaster Report, Operations of the Quartermaster Corps during the World War, Monograph No. 9 - Notes on Army, Corps, and Division Quartermaster Activities in the AEF, France (Philadelphia: U.S. Army Quartermaster School, Schuylkill Arsenal, 1929) 137. Allen Russell Kimball Collection, USMA Special Collections
PICTURE 5.2: Navy corpsman conducting first aid on a Marine's foot. February 1918 near St. Owen-les-Paray, France. Committee for Public Information in the Paul Lubbens Collection, USMA Special Collections, West Point, New York.
Exhaustion

The AEF was a cold, wet, sick, and hungry army battered by German machine guns, artillery, and gas. The doughboys soon fell prey to shell-shock. Shell-shock was the British soldiers’ term adopted by journalists to describe what World War II GIs would call battle fatigue. Soldiers used the term because it put the onus of the disability on combat rather than on them. American psychiatrists hated the term for the same reason. Shell shock prevented psychiatrists from treating the symptoms as a neurological disorder; they also felt it led soldiers to symptoms they would not otherwise have exhibited. By calling it shell-shock, psychiatrists argued, soldiers became more prone to the affliction. Instead, they called shell shock "war neuroses" with many sub-categories such as "effort syndrome," psychosis, epilepsy, even mental deficiency. This made the combat exhaustion and PTSD psychiatric rather than a psychological problem. The symptoms of shell shock and exhaustion were wide-ranging and included headaches, restlessness, insomnia, partial and complete paralysis, paranoia, autism, tics, and severe
battlefield hallucinations. Upon admission to hospitals, patients were "dazed, confused, and disoriented."\textsuperscript{67}

Both shell-shock and exhaustion haunted the American forces. George Marshall described several soldiers who dropped dead from exhaustion.\textsuperscript{68} Marshall used the case as an example of the army's spirit under trying times, but he failed to appreciate the depth of the exhaustion problem. After days or weeks at the front trying to attack well-prepared positions, men cracked under the strain. Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence described his platoon in the Meuse-Argonne:

The men couldn't stand much more of this. We had had it for four days and were hungry hollow-eyed, exhausted. Some of them were losing their minds. Monahan, one of our best sergeants, had broken; his nervous system shattered, and was


up in Grassey's [the company commander] dugout whimpering like a baby. 69

69 Joseph Douglas Lawrence, Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918 (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 120.
PICTURE 5.3: This soldier has a gaze symptomatic of combat exhaustion. The original caption for this Committee for Public Information picture said: "Grim and vigilant this Yankee doughboy sticks to his post in the Argonne." Note the fixed bayonet. Paul Lubbens Collection, USMA Special Collections, West Point, New York.
Finding accurate figures on the number of shell shock and exhaustion cases is difficult. Medical personnel treated the majority of cases at the field and evacuation hospitals, often for several days, before sending them back to the front. Most of the casualties at the front line triage stations and at the advanced hospitals suffered from physical and psychic exhaustion. No record survives of those patients. The only accurate numbers available are for those evacuated to the base hospitals in the rear areas. One doctor counted 8,061 cases of war neuroses and hysteria at a major base hospital, but that number seems much too low. Base Hospital 8, with only a neurological section, saw more than six thousand cases. Over 8,319 psychiatric patients returned from overseas to neurological hospitals in Hoboken, New Jersey and Newport News,


Another doctor reported during the war that ten percent or 32,983 of all casualties in the AEF suffered from some form of mental exhaustion. Another said the figure was closer to fifteen percent. This number while more accurate still does not come close to describing the problem the AEF had with exhaustion. One doctor, writing in October 1918, compared his hospital to Bellevue Hospital in New York City. He claimed that his psychiatric department in a Base Hospital treated more mental patients in a week than the only mental hospital in New York, with a population of five million, treated in a year.

---


rate for admissions was over thirty times higher than that of civilian hospitals.\textsuperscript{77}

Still, any of these numbers pales in comparison to the World War II experience where psychic casualties numbered one in three. Why were the numbers so much larger in World War II? Perhaps, there were only greater reporting in the Second World War. Edward Strecker, a World War I psychiatrist and later head of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine, who served as a consultant to the surgeon general of both the army and navy during World War II, attributed the difference to better diagnosis, more careful screening, and greater awareness of physicians to psychiatric conditions during World War II. He also stated that many AEF casualties received medical diagnosis for psychic conditions.\textsuperscript{78} Post-war figures suggest that despite the short period of sustained combat, many AEF soldiers suffered from psychic wounds. In 1942, VA hospitals reported that fifty-eight percent (69,394) of their patients were Great War shell shock victims.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{77}Edward A. Strecker, Psychiatry in Modern Warfare (New York: Macmillan, 1945), 11.

\textsuperscript{78}Edward A. Strecker, Psychiatry in Modern Warfare, 54.

\textsuperscript{79}Edward A. Strecker, "Military Psychiatry: World War I, 1917-1918," in American Psychiatric Association, One
AEF physicians underreported and misreported shell-shock and exhaustion cases. Triage stations and forward hospitals rarely recorded patients suffering from exhaustion. Soldiers came to the rear complaining of the effects of gassing, when they actually suffered from combat exhaustion. Colonel Thomas Salmon wrote in the official Medical Department history: "A high percentage of men evacuated from the front line as 'gassed' were really cases of fatigue, exhaustion, and emotional disturbance." 80 Another doctor reported that thirty-five percent of all casualties were "gassed, sick, and exhausted." 81 Gas or even the smell of cordite gave exhausted, hungry soldiers fighting for days on end the excuse they needed to stop fighting, and stop they did.

Many of the division surgeons reported overwhelming numbers of exhausted soldiers posing as "light gas cases." The most widely publicized example was in the 3rd Division


during the Aisne-Marne offensive. Over five hundred soldiers reported to medical personnel complaining of gas poisoning with no clinical evidence of gas symptoms. The divisional gas officer investigated the area where the soldiers claimed exposure and found that the area had received only a shell or two that had diluted to safe levels. The 35th Division surgeon said the "shock, light gas, and exhaustion cases filled the rest of the hospital to overflowing." V Corps reported harassing fire by German artillery on the night of 27-28 October that caused nine killed, forty-six wounded, and one hundred and sixty gassed. The next night their gas losses were again high, six killed, forty-nine wounded, and one hundred and twenty-three gassed. The AEF’s Chief Gas Officer investigated these high casualty figures and blamed the problem on poor training, tactics and a failure to inspect equipment properly. He also noted the inflated rate of gas victims. "The report of casualties resulting from gas is frequently

---

exaggerated. Men who have been frequently subjected to cold, hunger, loss of sleep and exposure to fumes of high explosives are often classed as gassed cases. ⁸⁴ Some men actually believed they had received gas injuries. After the war a lieutenant colonel indicated that some "men who are merely weak from physical exhaustion or nauseated by the reaction of nervous strain or the fumes of high explosives, honestly believed that they were gassed." ⁸⁵ The G-1 section of 1st Army also reported that many soldiers claiming gas injuries did not develop any symptoms consistent with gassing. ⁸⁶ The 36th Division Surgeon reported:

Many purported gas cases reported for aid. It was the judgment of the surgeon, vindicated by experience, that the physical signs manifest in a vast majority of such cases were the result of battle environment; contributory factors being


⁸⁴ Memorandum from 1st Army Gas officer to Inspector General, 1st Army, November 11, 1918. NA, RG 120, Entry 797, Box 5.


⁸⁶ Report of G-1 section, 1st Army, 10 Aug - 11 Nov 18. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 24, Box 3361.
thirst, cold, exhaustion, [and] the mental state incident to first exposure to fire.\textsuperscript{87}

The evidence suggests that many of the AEF’s gas casualties were actually exhaustion cases. The AEF’s First Army suffered more reported gas victims in the Meuse-Argonne than soldiers killed in action.\textsuperscript{88} The AEF as a whole admitted 70,552 soldiers for gas poisoning but only 546 died of gas on active duty, a rate of three-quarters of one percent. During the month of October, gas casualties represented thirty-five percent of all wounds, a huge jump from the summer when gas casualties accounted for only fifteen percent of injuries.\textsuperscript{89}

The 5th, 7th, 35th, 36th, 77th, 82nd, and 88th Divisions all reported large numbers of exhaustion in gas patients, but they tried to treat as few cases as possible. The 77th Division made its policy on exhaustion cases


clear. The leadership and the medical officers viewed anyone who complained of exhaustion or shell shock as a malingerer and gave them "very little sympathy."\footnote{U.S. War Department, War Department Annual report, 1919, Vol. 1, Part 2, Report of the Surgeon General 77th Division (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 3358.} Soldiers who complained of psychic ills often found themselves back with their unit often to the detriment of both the unit and the individual.

The large numbers of exhaustion cases suggest an army that rapidly declined in physical and mental health in the Fall of 1918. Part of the problem was the nature of the war. Soldiers often went days with little or no sleep marching to the front. By the time they attacked they were already exhausted from lack of sleep. First Lieutenant Conrad Crane, a member of the 55th Field Artillery, went sixty hours without sleep on his way to the front.\footnote{Diary of First Lieutenant Conrad E. Crane, 55th Artillery, Battery D. Courtesy of Lieutenant Colonel Conrad Crane, United States Military Academy.} Lieutenant Lawrence slept sixty minutes in the previous forty-eight hours before his unit attacked. Then he went an additional four days averaging only one hour a day. Many men from his platoon suffered from shell-shock and
exhaustion. All sides had problems with combat exhaustion. One doctor after the war described the situation well. "The terrorizing and lethal properties of machines of war for the first time approached the saturation level of human nervous resistance." Malnutrition, fatigue, sickness, cold, wet weather, and inadequate clothing led to battlefield exhaustion that sapped the fighting strength of the AEF.

One potential aid to the exhausted doughboy was rest from the rigors of combat. The terrible fighting of the Meuse-Argonne demanded rotation policies and even rest tours before units became ineffective. Soldiers need sleep and respite from the battle every few weeks. By Autumn 1918, the AEF had chosen not to rotate units to and from the front lines, creating exhausted, demoralized soldiers. Pershing could have rotated in fresh but inexperienced units into combat; instead he chose to break newly arrived

92 Joseph D. Lawrence, Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, unpublished manuscript, 80, 113. World War I Survey - 561, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.

divisions into individual replacements in order to keep experienced units at full strength. This meant that units that bore the battle's brunt had no respite from the interminable cycle of shelling and assaults. The only break was injury, death, desertion, or for the lucky ones, a school slot.  

In addition to unit rotation, individual leave can contribute to morale by relieving the constant stress of battlefield conditions. The Chief Surgeon counseled Pershing: "A leave system was essential to the health and morale of the officers and soldiers." Leave policy, as recommended by a committee consisting of the Commanding General, 1st Division, the Provost Marshal General, and the head of the YMCA, followed the British and French examples of granting seven days leave for four months duty, not including travel time.  

---

94 See Chapter 3 for more details on the replacement system. See Chapter 2 for more on the school system that provided an alternative to combat.

95 Quoted in C.F. Martin, "Military Leave Area System in the AEF during World War I," (January 1943), Historical Section, Army War College, Army General Staff, National Archives, Record Group 165, File 7200JJ.

96 The committee did not count travel time because of the disastrous problems of the French. One reason for the French mutinies was dissatisfaction over the charging of leave. Initially the French counted travel time as part of the week's leave. The hectic nature of rail travel during
every four months seems more than generous during a period of war and would have contributed greatly to the morale of the American soldier. Unfortunately, the AEF waited until February 15, 1918, to grant leaves, and on March 21 the Germans began their great offensive, forcing Pershing to cancel all leaves on March 31. During this short period few soldiers took leave because the AEF made them pay for their own transportation to the leave area and for accommodations once they arrived. Commanders refused to grant soldiers leave unless they had a minimum of 173 francs in their pocket. After monthly deductions for war insurance, dependent allotments, liberty bonds, and other debts, most soldiers did not have enough money for leave.97

Four months later on June 23, 1918, Pershing amended his order and allowed soldiers to take leave as long as their units were south of Verdun. The circumstances, however, meant that few soldiers took leave before the

---

Armistice. Preparations for the St. Mihiel offensive caused the cancellation of leaves again on September 1. Many unit commanders refused leave to prepare their inadequately trained soldiers before combat, and few officers could spare any men once the fighting began. Additionally, the lack of transportation, only three boxcar trains, prevented large numbers of soldiers from taking leave. Soldiers would have understood a leave policy that clearly articulated the need for training and the problems of transportation that precluded leaves until victory, but the AEF promised leave to its soldiers, then continually reneged on that promise. Soldiers longed for a privilege that everyone talked about, but few actually received.

---


99 These unheated boxcars taking soldiers to and from leave areas accounted for 126 deaths in 1918 and 1919. C.F. Martin, “Military Leave Area System in the AEF during World War I,” (January 1943), Historical Section, Army War College, Army General Staff, National Archives, Record Group 165, File 7200JJ.

100 By December, 1918 soldiers had used only 72% of leave accommodations. The following numbers represent the number of soldiers who took leave by month through 1 September 1918. February - 1937, March - 886, April - 233, May - 0, June - 388, July - 4715, August - 7697. C.F. Martin, “Military Leave Area System in the AEF during World War I,” 173
By the Fall of 1918, the AEF was in poor mental and physical health caused by a dangerous enemy, inadequate clothing, miserable weather, and malnourishment compounded by the ravages of a world wide influenza pandemic. Lieutenant Lawrence description of his unit would hold true for most of the AEF in October 1918. "My feet were hurting, I was tired, and we are all weak, starved, sick, emaciated." To combat this ragged state, the doughboys needed and expected good medical care to heal their wounds and comfort them. What they found in the medical system was a microcosm of the army as a whole -- primitive medicine practiced by overwhelmed and often ineffective doctors in a system that did not work.

(January 1943), Historical Section, Army War College, Army General Staff, National Archives, Record Group 165, File 7200JJ.

CHAPTER 6

The Medical System of the AEF

The health of the AEF was in a precarious state. It needed a first rate medical system to treat casualties, sustain morale, and just as importantly, heal physically and mentally wounded soldiers so that they could rejoin the fight. The AEF desperately needed replacements, and the slightly wounded could have provided a huge resource, but the medical system failed to provide the care necessary.

Medical officers in the AEF faced a daunting task; they had to build a system from scratch for casualties numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Each wounded soldier might travel from the front lines, past the field hospitals, on to the base hospitals, and finally back to the United States; or, a healed soldier might go back to the front from a medical facility at any juncture. To accomplish these difficult tasks, medical officers needed intricate plans to integrate themselves into army planning
and operations. Army physicians also needed plans to integrate new medical specialties into the healing process. Gone were the days of the barbers, bleeders, and snake-oil salesmen who treated all maladies. The burgeoning medical profession now had specialists in every field to include dentists, ophthalmologists, orthopedic surgeons, podiatrists, and psychiatrists. Each specialty physician needed special equipment and manpower. The medical profession had increased dramatically since the Civil War, and so had the expectations of doctors and patients.

The first task facing the medical system was transporting the sick and wounded from the front by both litter carriers and ambulances. The three divisional ambulance companies remained so far behind the front that at times it took up to four relays and sixteen infantrymen to transport one wounded man to the ambulances. Since the companies only had two people assigned to each vehicle, infantry battalions had to make up the difference.¹ Each battalion had to contribute up to sixty-four infantrymen

¹Incredibly, the litter-bearers were often some of the smallest men in the army. The requirements for that job required a height of five feet and a weight of one-hundred and ten pounds. T.L. Rhoads, Principles of Evacuation (Washington, D.C.: Association of Military Surgeons, 1924), 8.
for the job of litter bearers, further depleting the infantry’s combat strength.² A shortage of stretchers combined with high casualties to force the use of makeshift litters from rifles, sticks, and shirts. Lack of transport and fierce fighting left some wounded men unattended for up to five days.³ These unattended soldiers usually became infected before they arrived at a hospital. Many died of shock, dehydration, and hypothermia after days of agony.

If soldiers were lucky enough to get to the ambulances their chances of survival were better, although still far from assured. The ambulance trucks were very successful in the war. Fast, usually dependable, and with the ability to go off-road, the Ford and G.M.C. trucks were the envy of

²Bailey K. Ashford, A Soldier in Science: The Autobiography of Bailey K. Ashford (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1934), 308. A former navy corpsmen assigned to the Marines of 4th Brigade, 2nd Division said one-hundred and fifty-six Marines per regiment were detailed as litter bearers after the original assignment of one per company proved grossly inadequate as did the assignment of band members as litter bearers. He figured the loss of combat power to be five percent. Harold C. Roberts, “The Road to the Rear.” Marine Corps Gazette 22 (Nov. 1938), 54-55.

every European country. The Fords, smaller than the G.M.C. trucks and less comfortable, were very maneuverable and useful on short trips from the battalion aid station to the field hospitals. On longer trips and in heavy mud they did not perform as well.\(^4\) Unfortunately, the American army had fewer than fifty percent of its authorized ambulance companies, and the 7th Division had only one-fifth its authorized number of vehicles.\(^5\) Americans borrowed ambulances from Italy and even used French sightseeing buses.\(^6\) Despite these desperate measures, ambulance companies still needed five hundred more ambulances.\(^7\) Further complicating the matter was the condition of the roads. During the Argonne offensive, the Americans were using roads badly damaged from years of bombardment and neglect. Faced with traffic jams of unimaginable length and density, the ambulance drivers rarely had an easy trip


transporting the wounded back to hospitals. One soldier described the difficulties of the trip. "Two or three miles by litter, mule ambulance to more solid roads where they then found motor vehicles." The drive from the front to the hospital sometimes exceeded fifty miles, averaging only a mile an hour. The average distance of 24,000 ambulance trips was twenty-eight miles. One surgeon described a load of seriously wounded that had ridden twenty-four to thirty hours in an ambulance with no food. Richard Derby, the 2nd Division surgeon, described patients evacuated in good condition from one hospital arriving at the next in shock from the rough trip. Frequently the ambulances brought in the dead rather than the wounded.

---

8 Henry Joseph Reilly, Americans All: The Rainbow at War, Official History of the 42nd Rainbow Division in the World War (Columbus: F.J. Heer Printing, 1936), 726-728.

9 Harvey Cushing, From a Surgeon's Journal, 1915-1918 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 458. One source said the trip was sometimes one hundred miles. Henry Joseph Reilly, Americans All: The Rainbow at War, Official History of the 42nd Rainbow Division in the World War (Columbus: F.J. Heer Printing, 1936), 726-728.


12 Harvey Cushing, From a Surgeon’s Journal, 1915-1918 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 463; John S.
The lack of ambulances had a grave effect on the health of the AEF. The rapid onset of infection among wounded doughboys surprised the doctors. They soon realized that casualties often survived if they could make it to medical care quickly. One officer tested a guinea pig by putting muddy water into a wound. The guinea pig developed gas gangrene and died in eighteen hours. Plowed, fertilized with organic waste, and harvested for a millennium, the French soil proved a dangerous source of infection as any Asian rice paddy. Contaminants entered the body in a variety of ways. Artillery shells would strike the ground sending dirt and filthy uniform particles along with steel into soldiers' bodies. Fertilized soil combined with poor evacuation necessitated large numbers of amputations.\(^\text{13}\) Army doctors and soldiers realized speedy evacuation was necessary. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Darby, the 2nd Division Surgeon, described the importance of speedy evacuation. "The most important factor in the

---


prevention of infection was the speed with which the wounded man was brought to the operating table."\(^\text{14}\)

While doctors realized the importance of evacuation, both soldiers and doctors realized it was merely a hope. Charles Minder, a private in the 77th Division, wrote in his diary that he hoped to stay uninjured in the Argonne. "There is no chance of getting you out and back to an ambulance."\(^\text{15}\) Minder described the effect of few ambulances. "It's impossible to get an ambulance into this jungle, and we haven't any stretchers, and haven't seen any medical fellows for a long time. The wounded are lying out there groaning and suffering and all they get is the first aid."\(^\text{16}\) Poor evacuation hurt the morale of the AEF because doctors and soldiers expected better results. Lieutenant Colonel Darby described the expectation of the soldier.

A man entering a fight likes to feel that should he be wounded he will be picked up and given prompt treatment. If he feels this he will enter battle with increased confidence, fight


\(^{16}\) Charles F. Minder, *This Man's War: The Day-by-Day Record of an American Private on the Western Front* (New York: Pevensey Press, 1931), 347
harder, and if wounded, be better able to withstand the effects of shock.\textsuperscript{17}

Unfortunately, in the chaotic Meuse-Argonne campaign evacuation was slow and painful.

In addition to the three ambulance companies, each American division should have had four field hospitals and two evacuation hospitals, but personnel and equipment shortages precluded the authorized amounts. Many divisions had to improvise. Field hospitals had to double as evacuation hospitals with lamentable results.\textsuperscript{18} Placed as closely to the front as safely possible, field hospitals consisted of little more than tents supported with light equipment. These hospitals had the mission of treating non-transportable cases, while medical personnel moved the remainder to the evacuation hospitals. Without the evacuation hospitals, however, the field hospitals had to do both jobs. The four hospitals each had different functions: one treated gas cases, one was for infectious diseases, and two functioned solely for triage. This

\textsuperscript{17} Richard Darby, \textit{Wade in Sanitary}, quoted in \textit{The Literary Digest} 64, (March 27, 1920), 131; Harold C. Roberts, "The Road to the Rear," \textit{Marine Corps Gazette} 22 (November 1938), 54-55.

\textsuperscript{18} Harold Barclay, \textit{A Doctor in France, 1917-1919} (New York: Privately Printed, 1923), 156.
specialization failed the test of battle. Hospitals with a
specific mission required ambulances to move patients on a
parallel axis across rear areas along poor roads. In the
chaos of the rear, that was an impossible task. Hospitals
eventually treated everyone even though their task
organization left them ill-equipped to handle all healing
missions.¹⁹

From the French word trier, meaning to pick, screen or
sort, the triage process for the wounded was one of the
great medical innovations of the war.²⁰ First used by the
French in 1915, the American 1st Division borrowed the
concept when it arrived in France in 1917. The triage
process sorted patients by the severity of their wounds.
Those wounded severely but treatable received attention
first, while lesser injuries waited. In addition to the
treatable, doctors also identified those soldiers that were
dying and set up a tent with a chaplain present to perform
last rites. The use of triage varied by division. Most
divisions used the field hospital closest to the front line


for triage. Usually the two triage field hospitals would alternate responsibility depending on how much movement the division made. Often the reality of the situation meant that both received floods of soldiers and moved location only with the greatest difficulty and prodding. One surgeon reported that his hospital had four hundred badly wounded soldiers waiting for triage, untreated, for four days. He described the wounded as "wet, exhausted, and infected."²¹

The role of triage teams, usually a doctor, a nurse and two enlisted soldiers, extended beyond sending wounded soldiers to the right hospitals. The teams also became charged with identifying malingerers.²² The military police eventually set up a station some hospitals to collect the able bodied for a return to duty, but triage doctors inexperienced with gas cases often failed to send soldiers back to the line.²³ Instead those soldiers found


²² P.S. Bond and C.F. Martin, Medical Service in Modern War (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1920), 38.

²³ P.S. Bond and C.F. Martin, Medical Service in Modern War (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1920), 68.
their way to the rear base hospitals, clogging an already choked transportation system.\textsuperscript{24}

The field hospital and the evacuation hospital became more than centers for identifying, treating, and transporting wounded, they also became collection points and rest areas for soldiers unwilling or unable to fight. Walking wounded and stragglers in the thousands found their way back to the hospitals in search of food. The one place that soldiers knew they could receive a hot meal was at the field and the evacuation hospitals. At meal times, skulkers, as officers called them, would come out of their shell holes or abandoned German dugouts searching for food, because the army could not feed them at the front.\textsuperscript{25}

Either on their own or in small groups, soldiers streamed back to the hospitals. They discovered many ways to reach the hospitals. Troops departed the front on ammo, water, litter, or food details and never came back.\textsuperscript{26} To

\textsuperscript{24} Harvey Cushing, \textit{From a Surgeon's Journal, 1915-1918} (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 462

\textsuperscript{25} For more on the problems of supplying the front line troops with food see Chapter VI. Jennings C. Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," \textit{Infantry Journal}, 16, no. 12, (June 1920), 1055.

\textsuperscript{26} Jennings C. Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," \textit{Infantry Journal}, 16, no. 12, (June 1920), 1055.
help feed starving soldiers, mess halls in some division hospitals served food twenty-four hours a day.\textsuperscript{27} They saw their role as providing a respite from the battle where soldiers could regain their composure before they went back to the front. Hospitals became informal centers for soldier rest and relaxation outside the commands' control.

Complicating the triage even further were the influenza cases. Naturally, the influenza epidemic hit the medical system with a fury. In the month of October four men in ten caught the flu. From September through the end of the war sixty-eight percent of one evacuation hospital's cases suffered from influenza. At the beginning of the epidemic, medical officers discounted the seriousness of the outbreak and treated flu cases after other battle wounds.\textsuperscript{28} Left untreated almost fifty percent of the influenza cases developed pneumonia, and once a soldier had


\textsuperscript{28}"Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 107; Alfred W. Crosby, \textit{America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918} (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 144.
that disease the mortality rate jumped to forty-five percent. Doctors also ordered flu cases to the rear, freeing beds near the front for battle casualties. The extra movement along congested roads proved fatal to many soldiers. By the Armistice, the head of the medical department issued a strong statement on the care of flu cases.

Do not transfer patients with pneumonia or respiratory tract infections; absolute rest is as vital to them while they are meeting and overcoming the infections as operation is for penetrating wounds of the abdomen.

It was the correct solution, but it overloaded the medical units closest to the front with flu cases at the very time they began receiving wounded.

Treating the flu sapped the strength of the medical units as well. After exposure, many medical troops caught the bug. Shorthanded ambulance companies and field

---


31 U.S. War Department, War College Division and War Plans Division, Morale Division, “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Subject: Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire,” November 5, 1919, National Archives, Records Group 165, Entry 378, Box 6.

187
hospitals could not afford to lose personnel, and overworked, exhausted doctors and nurses became more susceptible. There was another effect. Diagnosis and rest were the only treatment for flu cases; physicians' inability to treat the illness effectively led to a loss of confidence in the medical personnel.

Officers and soldiers partially blamed medical personnel for the flu's effects. One lieutenant called the medical Department "abominable." An engineer captain lamented the "sickness and ill will created by indifferent and irresponsible medical officers." Private Albert Churchill described the medical care he received as "negligent." Part of the problem was overwork caused by two different enemies ravaging the AEF -- the Germans and the flu. Concerned that doctors released influenza victims from the hospital too soon, soldiers felt that doctors failed to give flu cases a high priority. One infantry lieutenant complained:

---

32 "Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire" from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 106-107.

With very few exceptions medical officers neglected to give their men necessary attention. I personally was incapacitated for six weeks, due absolutely to improper attention by medical officer. Almost my entire company were [sic] in the same position as I was. (Due to the 'flue').”

The surgeon general thought the problem rested with commanders who drove susceptible soldiers into his hospitals.

Exhausted, driven, anxious men are easy prey to infection. The condition of the man exposed to infection is of far greater importance than the care he gets after he is sick in bed. A man is at least entitled to the same care given to a horse.

The inability to cure the rampaging influenza epidemic frustrated doctors as well as their patients. One wardman summed up the effect of the flu epidemic at his hospital.

Fifty men in this ward,
All flu cases.
Too crowded -- thirty
Would be enough
Most of them will die,
Poor devils.
Burning up with fever-
High fever, almost unbelievable.
Nothing much you can do for them.

---

34 “Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire” from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 107.

See those cubicles
Down towards the back?
The doomed are there.
Their time is short;
They are so sick, so weak,
They don’t seem to care.

Each day
Some are moved,
Bed by bed, closer
To those cubicles.
And they look at us
With frightened eyes,
Hoping somehow
We can stop
That relentless march
Toward the rear.
No wonder we call it
The Death House.

When they are gone
They turn ghastly
Dark gray;
And then the stretcher bearers
Carry them out,
Covered with a sheet.

The nurse,
It’s getting her now.
But she won’t quit.
These are her boys,
She says,
She wants to see them through.
I hope she can,
But miracles are rare.

And outside it rains
And rains like hell.
God -- will it never end?36

The combination of stragglers, gas cases, and influenza victims overwhelmed the medical system closest to the front.\textsuperscript{37} While the army bragged after the war that it was never short of hospital beds, the number of beds was not nearly as important as the distribution.\textsuperscript{38} The rest and convalescent camps in the rear never filled to capacity, but the field and evacuation hospitals swelled to three times their intended size during some parts of the campaign. One army doctor after the war estimated that the patient capacity in the army and corps zones was 18,000 -- half the number necessary.\textsuperscript{39} Nor were there sufficient medical personnel to man those units. The medical system received virtually no replacements, yet had to give up assigned personnel for a variety of reasons.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Alfred W. Crosby, America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918 (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 211.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Creating a system of administering to the wounded, sick, and exhausted nearly from scratch proved beyond the medical corps' capacity. Soldiers expected more of their medical personnel then ever before, but the doctors, like the tacticians of the General Staff, had not put in the necessary effort before the war. No amount of sweat and blood during battle could make up for that lack of planning. Doctors had a variety of approaches to saving lives, but their ability to take that knowledge and transfer it to the battlefield was problematic. Blood grouping provides the best example. Discovered just before the war, blood groups made transfusions possible, but the necessary facilities existed only at a few hospitals farthest from the front.41

Medical personnel did the best they could, but their solutions were often primitive, even by the standards of 1918. Dr. Claude Moore, a surgeon at the AEF General Hospital at Langres remembered that the standard treatment for the wounded was "to clean the wound, sew up the

opening, and hope for the best." That treatment showed in the casualty figures: doughboys undergoing abdominal operations in the 2nd Division suffered an 87% mortality rate. The types of wounds were also different. In this war over seventy percent of all wounds came from the jagged, dirty metal of grenades and artillery shells that caused mangled fragment wounds. These wounds also brought contaminated soil and clothing into the body. The lack of antibiotics doomed many wounded soldiers, as did the lack of proper technique and equipment. Bayonets, rifles, and branches became the splints of choice due to the lack of proper equipment. One doctor found that almost all of the army's medical equipment predated the Spanish-American War of 1898.

---


While old equipment often proved unsatisfactory, the lack of equipment was even worse. Ophthalmologists, for example, had no ophthalmic instruments. One doctor vehemently complained about the absence of any magnets with which to extract shrapnel. Much of the equipment shortage resulted from the haste with which Americans deployed overseas, but it added to the perception among doctors and the wounded that better care was possible. The failure to live up to expectations further eroded morale. To understand why these expectations were so high, however, one must understand the role of the doctor in the early twentieth century.

Doctors had become true professionals in the last fifty years, and the public viewed them as such. By 1920, a middle class American man saw a doctor almost twice a year, and in the last fifty years the number of American hospitals had increased almost four thousand percent. No longer a place for the indigent urban dwellers to die, hospitals became a part of every American’s life.

---

46 George Clymer, The History of Base Hospital No. 6: And Its part in the American Expeditionary Forces, 1917-1919 (Boston: Privately Printed, 1924), 73.

advances in anesthesia coupled with Pasteur’s germ theory and Lister’s antiseptic practices had transformed medicine. Expecting more than simple competence from army doctors, the public had faith that the litany of medical miracles would continue onto the battlefield and compared to previous wars' medicine did remarkably well. Typhoid, that great destroyer of armies past, accounted for only 165 American deaths in World War I. Medical advances had also brought diphtheria, tetanus, malaria, and smallpox under relative control.

The case of tetanus was interesting. Early in the war, the French and British had waited to administer the antitoxin until the patient showed signs of tetanus, which was too late. The Americans learned from this and liberally gave the shot at all levels of the medical system, but the solution caused additional problems. Some commanders disagreed with this policy because it took the slightly wounded soldier out of his unit for a week to recover from the side effects. This liberal use of


antitoxin also led to overmedication. In the chaotic triage area, a wounded soldier might receive several shots before he moved to the next hospital were he might get the same shots again. The solution to this problem was a simple grease pencil. Each soldier received a shot and a large, black "T" on his forehead. Tetanus deaths dropped to three or four percent of all casualties. Influenza, pneumonia, and a host of other diseases, however, still challenged existing medical knowledge.  

The doctor’s ability to cure anything but these diseases listed was marginal. The greatest strides in military medicine came from advances in preventative medicine but treating trauma wounds had not advanced much. Most of the gains in life expectancy had come not from the curative powers of clinical medicine but from the great strides made in public health reform, such as the provision of clean water. In the military much of the clean water came from the Lyster bag. Invented in 1913 by Major

---


51 One doctor said after the war: "Influenza, measles, and pneumonia, in the respiratory group, still stand as baffling problems, and their control has not been accomplished." "How Medicine Helped Win," The Literary Digest 62, (August 23, 1919), 94.
William J. L. Lyster, this double lined, canvas water bag used a filtration system of calcium hypochlorite to reduce the incidence of water borne disease among troops. As recently as the Mexican Expedition contaminated drinking water had contributed to a high rate of disease.\(^5^2\) Clean water and an emphasis on sanitary discipline, even the poor sanitation and the army's inability to provide Lyster bags to front line troops during the Meuse-Argonne, saved more lives among troops than their physicians healing powers.

Doctors, however, were excellent diagnosticians. William Roentgen's x-ray machine, first used in 1895, had transformed the doctor's ability to diagnose tuberculosis, ulcers, and aneurysms, although the treatment of these diseases remained an unsolved problem. Battlefield doctors also had improved diagnostic capability combined with a limited ability to cure. In the evacuation and field hospitals, doctors could diagnose shock. Unfortunately, their prescription for dealing with shock contributed to high casualties. Each hospital had a ward, usually a tent, dedicated to treating soldiers suffering from shock.

Medical personnel wrapped the wounded in blankets and placed them near oil stoves to warm them. The high temperatures increased the likelihood of infection. Doctors understood how to treat shock but without antibiotics the cure was every bit as bad as the condition. One surgeon described the shock tent in an evacuation hospital.

The shock ward is a sad and discouraging place.... The air is heavy with the odor of decay.... Many of these poor fellows die without rallying at all. If they are operated [on] their chances for life are slight.53

Despite the lack of treatment, the use of machines, laboratories, and diagnostic techniques vastly increased the confidence that patients had in their doctors. Often when doctors could not cure, they could still describe what the future would hold for a patient. The ability to foretell was powerful.54

The other tool in the doctors' handbag was the pharmacopoeia. Vastly overprescribed, morphine topped the list of drugs available. In 1890, U.S. physicians

53 Frederick A. Pottle, Stretchers: The Story of a Hospital Unit on the Western Front (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), 225.

prescribed almost 600,000 pounds of opium. The relief of pain, despite or perhaps because of the addictive effects, added to the image of a doctor as a miracle worker. Certainly, controlling wounded soldiers' pain was a great development. Daniel Cathell in an enormously popular book for physicians urged his fellow doctors to "show your power over pain." Barbiturates, acetaminophen, and aspirin, all in the doctors' kit bag by 1900, gave further proof to the public of medicine's miraculous powers to treat the symptoms of pain.\(^{55}\)

Part of physicians curative powers came from the time they spent with patients. By 1920, doctors made an average of 3.6 visits to the patient for the average illness; even a common cold garnered three visits from the doctor. Patients expected physicians to see them every day and rarely for a short visit. One internist, William Houston of Augusta, Georgia said: "For every hour an internist spends in technical examinations ... he will spend from one to three with his patients, in educating them, in encouraging them, in hearing from them the story of their difficulties and struggles." One tuberculosis specialist

estimated that he spent three hours of conversation for every hour spent looking at x-rays. Doctors of the period realized the power of talking to patients, understanding their problems helped heal. A well-placed suggestion, and occasionally, placebos, also contributed to patients' well-being.

The battlefield took away many of the physician's best tools. There was no time to sit and comfort a patient. The relationship between the physician and the patient built over the previous fifty years of accredited medicine could not survive the rigors of the battlefield. Patients expected attention, a kind word, and reassurance. Physicians overwhelmed by casualties failed to provide their patients' comfort, one of their most admired and effective therapies in the United States. Doctors realized after the war that comfort often prevented shock. Dr. T.L. Rhoads wrote that the best anti-shock treatment was to give blankets and "encouraging assurance." Soldiers rarely complained about incompetent care, but they did complain

---


about insensitive care. An infantry lieutenant griped that "medical officers neglected to give their men the necessary attention." Another complained that doctors were "overworked or careless in attendance to patients."\(^58\)

Wounded soldiers wanted what they had received in civilian life from their hometown doctor -- comfort and a sympathetic ear. When soldiers failed to get that, their morale suffered.

Occasionally soldiers received the desired comfort. Twenty-four hour mess halls at hospitals were particularly popular. Hot food and coffee aided the morale and the digestive systems of soldiers but except at hospitals it was an infrequent occurrence. The 5th Division sent every soldier who reported to their dressing station for medical attention to the chow line first and then had troops "tell the [doctors] their troubles."\(^59\) Of course, this contributed to the overflowing numbers of stragglers who

\(^{58}\) U.S. War Department, War College Division and War Plans Division, Morale Division, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Subject: Replies to Officers' Questionnaire, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Records Group 165, Entry 378, Box 6.

called hospitals their home. Physicians realized that, especially for the lightly wounded, stragglers, and influenza cases, comfort healed their patients more than any other treatment, but often overwhelmed, doctors failed to provide it. The failure to provide the traditional role of comforter frustrated and affected the morale of doctors as well. Rhoads, an AEF surgeon, wrote shortly after the war about the direct link between expected care and morale. "Soldiers know what to expect in the way of care when they sustain hits, and if this care is not forthcoming it is but natural that not only they but their comrades in arms lose heart."  

Part of the problem was the lack of medical personnel. Doctors and nurses were in such short supply at the field and evacuation hospitals that GHQ and the surgeon general "stripped base hospitals of every available officer and nurse." Badly needed to provide wounded soldiers

---


comfort, nurses were in particularly short supply. Some hospitals during the Autumn offensives had seventy nurses caring for over five thousand patients. At the Mesves hospital center 394 nurses cared for 20,186 patients. Despite receiving nearly three thousand nurses in the two months prior to the Armistice, the AEF was still short 6,925. Nurses also suffered from working eighteen hour days. In the month of October forty-one nurses died from the effects of influenza. With a limited number of nurses to care for an overwhelming load, they failed to provide the comfort that soldiers expected.

Soldiers expected much out of their doctors, but doctors also had high expectations of themselves. The social standing of physicians had changed dramatically in the previous fifty years. The professionalization of medicine and accreditation had created fewer medical

---


schools and physicians, but those doctors that did graduate entered a world with much higher prestige. Physicians expected more out of society as well. While doctors of the Civil War era had barely managed to pay their bills, twentieth century doctors expected to become part of the elite, not only as healers but also as leaders. One doctor wrote in 1913 that "medicine will become a part of statecraft; doctors will direct affairs more, and lawyers less." By World War I doctors had become one of the most revered segments of American society.65

This idea that doctors should contribute to the general welfare of society, not just to their patients, changed the way army physicians looked at themselves. Army doctors demanded a place in the planning and conduct of battle. They complained loudly during the war about their limited ability to influence the operational planning. Brigadier General Walter D. McCaw, Chief Surgeon, AEF, wrote a scathing letter to the commander of the logistics arm of the AEF complaining that despite the large number of soldiers in his command (he saw it as a command), no one

treated it as a separate organization. The morale of doctors suffered from the perception that other army leaders failed to see physicians as leaders as well as healers. Higher ranking medical officers vowed to change this. When Colonel Paul Bond lectured the AEF doctors at their school at Langres on the proper role of the surgeon in war, he validated that expansive vision:

It is the function of the Medical Department to keep the fighting man in battle. The Medical Department is an offensive arm, and as such it fights in the very forefront of the battle, in the zone of machine guns and artillery fire. The surgeon is in the field, in trenches, shell holes, dugouts, in camp or bivouac, along muddy roads and in wet woods fighting his fight along with the other combatants. He is not a swivel chair consultant or the white-robed, steam-heated surgeon of peace. He must be an administrator, an organizer, a director, a superintendent, a tactician — in short a soldier.

In his remarks, Bond seemed very similar to the civilian doctor talking about his role in society. Physicians expected to take their place in the leadership of the army. As the VI Corps surgeon and the head of the

---


AEF medical school system, Colonel Bailey Ashford put it, World War I transformed the “army doctor into a medical officer.” This transformation, however, did not occur as fast as army doctors thought it should.

The medical system of an army is a great place to evaluate competency and morale. If hospitals care for patients’ emotional and physical needs, if the evacuation of wounded soldiers runs smoothly, if stragglers have not overwhelmed the hospitals’ ability to care for them, then the army works well. In this case, the army had poor health that glutted the medical system further lowering the already limited ability of army physicians to heal.

Perception of care was also important. Soldiers expected care similar to that which they received at home; they were unhappy when they did not receive it. For doctors at the time, part of their contract with the patient was a sympathetic ear. Deafened by the roar of guns and the cacophony of chaos in the hospitals, the doctors’ ears became closed to their patients.

---

From German machine guns and gas to hunger and exhaustion to a poor medical system, the precarious health of the AEF had many fathers. As the AEF’s soldiers headed into the winter of 1918-1919, it is difficult to imagine how they could sustain themselves through the punishing cold if the Germans had continued to fight.
CHAPTER 7

"Ass End First:"

The American Expeditionary Forces in the Fall of 1918

As the AEF went into combat for the Meuse-Argonne campaign, it had not faced determined resistance as an army. The AEF's St. Mihiel offensive in the late summer of 1918 resembled a flying circus as the Americans chased a withdrawing German army. Several divisions had seen combat, but not the AEF as a whole. The Meuse Argonne would change that. Attacking in a strategically important area that Pershing described as a "vast network of uncut barbed wire, ... deep ravines, dense woods, myriad of shell craters ... [masked by] heavy fog," the Americans would have to fight hard to take this important area.\(^1\) Hunter Liggett compared it to the terrain of the Wilderness during

\(^1\) Frank Freidel, Over There: The Story of America's First Great Crusade (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), 237.
the American Civil War.² Bordered on one side by the Argonne Forest and the other by the Meuse river, there was little room to maneuver. The Germans had also spent four years perfecting the defense in depth in this area. Concrete strongpoints manned by German machine gunners provided mutually reinforcing positions throughout the area of operations. This campaign would test the AEF in a far different way than earlier battles. Frederick Palmer described it well: "The first enthusiasm had passed; our Spring of war was over; our Winter of war had come."³

The AEF lacked the training, leadership, doctrine, health, and logistical capability of sustaining operations in this rugged area. As the Meuse-Argonne campaign continued, the AEF performed even more unevenly except for a few elite divisions, such as the 1st, 2nd, and 42nd. Other aspects of the AEF failed to function as well. Mail rarely reached the front; promotions were exceedingly slow and unfair. Pay was haphazard. By November 1918, the AEF was barely a working organization. Not surprisingly some

² Hunter Liggett, Ten Years Ago in France (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928), 207-209.
³ Frederick Palmer, Our Greatest Battle: The Meuse-Argonne (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919), 475.
soldiers translated the initials AEF into a motto and an indictment -- "Ass End First."⁴

The AEF's woes started with an "ambivalent" doctrine that demanded open warfare while relying on the overworked, poorly trained infantryman to accomplish it.⁵ Several historians have argued persuasively that Pershing wanted his army out in the open to avoid the old world style of sluggish trench warfare.⁶ Unfortunately, his army received no training on how units could accomplish this open warfare without using shoulder to shoulder tactics reminiscent of the Civil War. Instead of trying to learn from the European example, Pershing and his officers discounted the horrors of 1914-1917. Ironically, by ignoring the French and British experience, the Americans mimicked the disastrous French tactics of 1914 that relied on élan to

⁴R.M. Cheseldine, Ohio in the Rainbow (Columbus: State of Ohio, 1924,) 64.


overcome artillery shells. One study authored by the Infantry School sounded like translations of the French. It asserted that effectiveness in war rested, not on training, but on “moral factors.” Pershing agreed. The American infantryman would win this war — aided only by his trusty rifle and bayonet.

The rifle and the bayonet are the principal weapons of the infantry soldier. He will be trained to a high degree of skill as a marksman both on the target range and in field firing. An aggressive spirit must be developed until the soldier feels himself, as a bayonet fighter, invincible in battle. Courage mixed with good marksmanship would carry Americans to victory, despite a poor, almost non-existent tactical doctrine.

Pershing’s wish came true; the primary weapon of the American army was the frontal assault led by rifleman. One German commander estimated that he inflicted ten casualties to every one he received at the hands of the Americans. As

---


one historian has noted, the AEF method of fighting was to "smother the enemy in flesh."\textsuperscript{10} Doughboys continued to fight with bayonets fixed despite the example of four years of war. The doughboys were incapable of using combined arms beyond a pre-planned barrage as each new attack commenced.\textsuperscript{11} After the initial barrage, infantrymen had only the use of problematic machine guns and rifle grenades to attack an entrenched enemy. Tactical air was practically non-existent, and artillery made the biggest effect on the enemy's artillery, not on the enemy's infantry, although instances of friendly fire were common as well.\textsuperscript{12} The horrific casualty bills that resulted reflected the poor tactical ability of the Americans. Private George Loukides of the 326th Infantry, 82nd Division complained after the war that his leaders had no idea what to do in combat. An officer led his company across an open field in daylight causing "scores of

\textsuperscript{10}David M. Kennedy, Over Here: The First World War and American Society, 204.


\textsuperscript{12}Joseph D. Lawrence, Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, unpublished manuscript, 84, World War I Survey - 561, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.
casualties." To compensate for this deficiency or, perhaps as part of this doctrine, Pershing stacked his huge 28,000 man divisions in the small area west of the Meuse. With little room to maneuver, divisions attacked so closely to each other that they competed for ground and tied up each other's logistical tails. Even more distressing was the inability of divisions and regiments to stay in their assigned sectors. Units continually crossed each others' path, creating chaos and casualties.  

---

13George Loukides, 82nd Division, 326th Infantry, World War I Survey-1547, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.

14Haig Diary, 28 September, 1918, The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12. The First World War: Political Social, and Military Sources, Series One.
PICTURE 7.1: Americans from the 107th Infantry, 27th Division attacking the Germans in the woodlines on October 27, 1918, using only smoke bombs for support. Notice how close the soldiers were to one another. This picture may have been staged. Soldiers, seeking the comfort of their friends, may have been even closer to one another in combat. Paul Lubbens Collection, USMA Special Collections, West Point, New York.
Massive casualties from a faulty doctrine discredited at least by 1916 further strained the AEF. Pershing ran low on replacements; the frontal assaults led to more straggling that created the need for additional replacements. The need for more replacements necessitated breaking up units to send to the front further eroding the cohesion and effectiveness of the gaining units, which in turn led to more stragglers and more casualties. George Marshall described the American operation as "disorganized and confused to a remarkable degree."\textsuperscript{15}

The stragglers and replacements constituted one part of a transportation problem that prevented supplies from going forward and wounded from going back. Snarled traffic and the lack of transport prevented the American army from supplying the doughboy with even the most basic requirements of his trade. James G. Harbord, the head of the Services of Supply described the severity of the logistical situation facing the AEF in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign in October of 1918. "The scarcity of

transportation, animals, and replacements continued to be so serious as to menace victory.”

The AEF had a desperate problem with transport, particularly horses and mules. By the third week in October, the surgeon general estimated that mules were dying at the rate of five hundred out of every thousand—a staggering mortality rate. When the Armistice finally ended the war, the AEF was short 163,382 horses. Pershing had to make a trek north to visit British Field Marshal Douglas Haig to request 25,000 horses to keep the AEF moving. Haig was not in a generous mood. In his diary, Haig reported that British wagon teams were already down to four horses from a normal six because of the horses he gave to the Americans in the Spring. Pershing failed to get replacement mounts from the French either. The

19 The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12 1918-1919, 23 October, 1918
amount of animals coming from America could not replace even the monthly losses of one corps. Instead, AEF quartermaster officers traveled to Spain to buy horses. They also bought mules so small and horses so weak they were practically useless.\(^{20}\) One soldier described those few that were alive in November 1918 as “scarecrows”\(^{21}\) Another pronounced the artillery horses as “pitiful, reduced to skin and bones.”\(^{22}\) Frederick T. Edwards, who died shortly before the Armistice, described the awful situation of the AEF’s animals.

One by one the horses fell and died; poor exhausted animals that dropped in the traces from the strain. We had no time to wait for forage and one by one they fell by the roadside. We left a trail behind us.\(^{23}\)


\(^{21}\) Henry Berry, Make the Kaiser Dance (New York: Arbor House, 1978), 11.

\(^{22}\) Joseph Douglas Lawrence, Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918 (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 112.

The sorry state of the AEF's beasts of burden suggests the precarious state of the AEF in October and November of 1918. The veterinary corps could not handle the vast numbers of sick horses; nor could the supply system provide the fodder necessary to keep the horses healthy. Much of the problem rested with the soldiers of the AEF who rode their mounts into the ground. Perhaps this was partly a function of the changing demographics in the United States. Fewer Americans dealt with horses in their civilian lives and therefore knew less about how to care for them. Many combat units complained about receiving stallions because most soldiers could not handle them. A few refused to accept them until General Headquarters ordered all units to accept stallions. By the end of the war, however, the combat units won. The stallions went to forestry units because of the disruption the steeds caused to front line units.


25 U.S. Army U.S. Army Quartermaster School, Operations of the Quartermaster Corps during the World War, Monograph No. 5 - Report of the Remount Service AEF (Philadelphia:
Soldiers also showed poor discipline in dealing with the animals that compounded other problems facing the horse including shell fire, gas, and lack of food and water. Basic horse care techniques of feeding, watering, and grooming were absent. Shoeing was also an endemic problem; many horses went lame because of ill-fitted and loose shoes. During the interminable traffic jams, soldiers would stay mounted for hours rather than dismount to loosen saddle girths to relieve their ragged animals. During the period from September 7 to November 15, 1918, two divisions, the 4th and the 90th, each lost almost 1500 horses. This lack of discipline was yet another sign of

---


28 U.S. Army Quartermaster School, Operations of the Quartermaster Corps during the World War, Monograph No. 5 - Report of the Remount Service AEF (Philadelphia: Schuylkill Arsenal, 1929) 73. Allen Russell Kimball Collection, USMA Special Collections
a ragged army struggling to maintain order in the Fall of 1918.

The shortage of horses had dire consequences. Food, ammunition, and other supplies depended on horse transportation to reach the front. Those horses available were often too weak to carry the burden of dragging heavy quartermaster and artillery equipment.²⁹ Haig recorded that "They [Americans] can't move for want of horses."³⁰ To aid First Army, Pershing and GHQ stripped the Services of Supply of every serviceable animal, but that put the SOS in a tenuous position.³¹ Pershing cabled back to the War Department in October: "The needs of the SOS must be met now -- not months from now. Unless supplies are furnished when and as cabled, our armies will cease to operate."³²

---

²⁹ U.S. War Department, War College Division and War Plans Division, Morale Division, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Subject: Replies to Officers' Questionnaire, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Records Group 165, Entry 378, Box 6.

³⁰ The Haig Papers, 23 October, 1918, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12 1918-1919.


No horses meant no supplies. Without horses, soldiers had to furnish their own muscle to move supplies and draw rations. Only four divisions had their quota of horses.\textsuperscript{33} The 88th Division was so short of horses during its march to the front that soldiers pulled machine gun carts and field wagons themselves. The average weight pulled by each man exceeded two hundred and fifty pounds in some units.\textsuperscript{34} Soldiers, especially replacements, found their way to the front after exhausting journeys only to find themselves thrown into the cauldron of the Meuse-Argonne. Added to their difficult combat job, soldiers also had to function as beasts of burden.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{34} Alfred W. Crosby, \textit{America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918} (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1989), 155.
\end{flushright}
PICTURE 7.2: Soldiers hauling a cart to the front. The shortage of horses made this a common occurrence. Paul Lubbens Collection, USMA Special Collections.
The lack of horses constituted only part of the transportation problem. Old farm roads pocked by four years of shelling combined with wet Autumn weather to create impassable roads. Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence described how his regiment of the 29th Division had to share the same narrow road with three other units, one returning from the front and two moving toward it.\(^{35}\) Traffic stood at a standstill for days, creating a logjam of wounded at the front and supplies in the rear.\(^{36}\) In one case two artillery regiments blocked a major logistical artery by bivouacking on the road.\(^{37}\) Douglas Haig remarked in his diary that the American's "roads and communication are so blocked that the offensive have [sic] to stop and cannot be recommenced for four or five days."\(^{38}\) The traffic snarl amazed the French as well. General Jean Jules Mordacq, French Premier Clemenceau's military advisor, described his experience in the American rear

\(^{35}\) Joseph Douglas Lawrence, Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918 (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 76.


areas. "Never, even in the war of movement in the beginning of the war or in the worst possible moment, when we were fighting while withdrawing, had I ever seen such a spectacle."\(^{39}\)

By the middle of October the American Expeditionary Forces could not feed its soldiers. The availability of food, particularly hot food, provided the soldier with a measurement of army competence. Using food as a criterion, the AEF failed.\(^{40}\) Field Marshal Haig received reports from the French and his own officers about the food situation in the AEF. He recorded in his diary in early October that the American "divisions in front are really starving and have to be relieved to be fed!"\(^{41}\) Haig had sent British officers to help the American’s untangle their supply mess but those officers found "no management and no discipline.

---

\(^{38}\) The Haig Papers, 1 October, 1918, part 1, no. 97, Diary Parts 11-12 1918-1919.


\(^{40}\) Manning, "Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps," 459.

\(^{41}\) The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12 1918-1919, 5 October, 1918
Everyone seems to take what they want.⁴² A month later he reported again that front-line American troops were still "starving."⁴³

The AEF suffered from a poor distribution of food throughout the war that forced soldiers to go hungry while meat rotted and bread spoiled at rail terminals throughout France. An inspector found flour, bread, sugar, and meat improperly handled at several different rail facilities. Undersupervised details would carelessly expose rations to the elements and drop bread in the mud.⁴⁴ One soldier in 42nd Division complained that the "bread and potatoes are often moldy"⁴⁵ Lieutenant Lawrence of the 29th Division griped that his bread had huge holes in it.⁴⁶

---

⁴² Haig Diary, 3 November, 1918, The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12, 1918-1919. The First World War: Political, Social, and Military Sources, Series One

⁴³ Haig Diary, 3 November, 1918, The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12 1918-1919. The First World War: Political, Social, and Military Sources, Series One.

⁴⁴ Memorandum from Captain Albert Rich, Assistant Inspector General to Inspector General, First Army, 15 October, 1918, Box 6, Entry 797, Record Group 120, National Archives.


transportation and clogged roads often prevented even moldy and spoiled bread from reaching the front.  

The bread mold epidemic forced a special sanitary report on the conditions. Most of the bread that arrived at the front had deteriorated. Some units reported losses of up to one hundred percent. One officer reported that eighty percent of his troops' bread was soggy and inedible. Part of the problem was the way the bakers cooked the bread. The outer layer was not strong enough to prevent mold from entering through cracks. Another problem was the transport system that left bread in the elements. Nor was there any way for the troops to carry bread to prevent rain from soaking and ruining it.  

Soldiers issued hard bread before battle had two choices -- eat it immediately and perhaps go hungry later or save the bread and have it become inedible due to the elements and mold.


49 Frank W. Weed, "Sanitation in the American Expeditionary Forces," in Sanitation, vol. 6, The Medical Department of
PICTURE 7.3: Quartermaster Corps soldiers toss bread into a train for distribution to the 42nd Division, Rolamport, France, February 8, 1918. Paul Lubbens Collection, USMA Special Collections, West Point New York.

Meat spoiled just as easily as bread. Americans shipped much of their meat from the United States frozen. Once the meat left the refrigerated ships it began to thaw. By the time it made it to the front line units after a circuitous journey along poor, overcrowded roads much of the meat had spoiled. Cooks tried to cut the rotted meat off to save the unspoiled portion but, hampered by poor kitchen equipment, they failed. The meat saw was too short to cut the large pieces of meat sent to the front.\(^{50}\) When the cooks did not cut enough rotten meat off, the troops howled. Cooks and supply sergeants, frustrated by huge hunks of stinking meat, threw much of it away.

PICTURE 7.4: American soldiers unloading beef into a mule wagon with an officer watching. Dec 2, 1917. Committee for Public Information in the Paul Lubbens Collection, USMA Special Collections, West Point New York.
If the meat did get to the cooks near the front, they had only one way to cook it — stew. Sergeant Major Harold Craig of the G-2 office in the 79th Division gripped that his section, despite its distance from the front, had “beans and slum [stew] for the 119th time.”\textsuperscript{51} The rolling kitchens that served the front line soldiers lacked the necessary heating ability to do more than boil liquids. The ungainly Magor, Steinburn, and Taylor kitchens lumbered toward the front only to halt miles from the troops, unable to negotiate the poor roads clogged with traffic. The heavy ration carts exhausted the poor animals assigned to them, especially in the muddy conditions in the Fall of 1918, and units abandoned them regularly.\textsuperscript{52} Yet despite their hulking presence, they lacked the energy necessary to roast or bake. They also provided the enemy with an inviting target. The kitchens smoked profusely, giving enemy artillery spotters an easy and tempting target.


\textsuperscript{52} Extract from Reports of the Division Quartermaster, 79th Division in Operations of the Quartermaster Corps during the World War, Monograph No. 9, Notes on Army, Corps, and Division Quartermaster Activities in the AEF France (Philadelphia: U.S. Army Quartermaster School, Schuylkill Arsenal, 1929), 142. Allen Russell Kimball Collection, USMA Special Collections.
Consequently few made it anywhere near the front. Major Millard Tydings (later a U.S. Senator from Maryland) described what happened to a kitchen after Germans spotted the smoke and hit the area with artillery fire.

"It is a ghostly sight. Dead horses are strewn about.... Some are walking about dragging their intestines.... Blood and parts of horses are splattered over the kitchens. The sight of food in such a setting fills one with a kind of nausea." 


To supplement bread and hot meals, the army issued an emergency or "iron ration." Unfortunately, this ration was in short supply; only after the Armistice did sufficient quantities arrive in France. Because of this shortage, units at the front lines or on the march were lucky to eat two meals a day. Regiments marching to battle routinely ate only two meals because the horse-drawn, rolling kitchens could not stop and set up during the march. Sometimes soldiers ate meals only a few hours apart because the kitchens trailed the marchers and arrived at the unit's destination only hours before they had to leave again.

Quality as well as quantity was important. The cold ration that soldiers carried consisted of a one pound can of stringy corn beef given the not so affectionate nickname

---


57 Memorandum from Chief, Morale Branch, War Plans Division, War Department General Staff to Chief of Staff United States Army, 5 November, 1919, Page 97, Box 6, Entry 378, Record Group 165.

58 Albert Ettinger, Shamrocks under the Rainbow: A Doughboy and His Buddies in the World War, unpublished memoir at the U.S. Military History Institute, File No. 364-8, 35.
"monkey meat" or a can of salmon nicknamed "goldfish." One infantry lieutenant wanted a "reserve ration more suited to the stomach than canned beef." He complained that "we could never keep up our strength up on it alone." The meat ration contained Argentine beef that the soldiers griped tasted like "gassed mule." Another soldier had an even greater imagination. He believed the cans contained "either boiled llama or some other South American animal which the natives coax from its lair and drive into the can. The can is then sealed up for thirty years." Soldiers on the boat ride home ridiculed the canned rations by carrying a stretcher with a dummy made to look like a monkey. Attached to the stretcher was a large poster that said: "Be it resolved that when we get home again we will petition Congress to enact laws to the effect that service in future wars men won't have to eat their ancestors."

59 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 97.

60 Stars and Stripes, 28 June, 1918.

61 Stars and Stripes, 28 June, 1918.

62 Joseph D. Lawrence, Experiences of Joseph D. Lawrence in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, 1918-1919, unpublished manuscript. World War I Survey - 561, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania
In addition to the poor taste and the inadequate nutrition, the army lacked sufficient stocks on hand to supply the vast need.

The army even found water a difficult commodity to bring to front line troops. Soldiers often had to fill their canteens from water collected in bomb craters while trying to avoid those craters contaminated by gas. Part of the problem was the army water cart. Weighing in at a hefty 2,400 pounds and with a disconcerting tendency to tip over, the water cart rarely made it to the front. Despite its design as a one animal trailer, the water cart required two horses and at times three to pull it under the perpetual strain of glue-like mud. The shortage of

---


horses was so acute that the water cart often lost its mount and never made it to the front.⁶⁵

Every soldier expects that war is hell. Soldiers anticipate some physical discomfort, but they want everyone to share that misery equally. Morale plummets when soldiers on the front believe that the rear echelon has “more,” whether that “more” is food, rest, or supplies. AEF combat troops felt the rear echelon soldiers had more food, candy, cigarettes, and fresh beef.⁶⁶ One officer complained that “rubber boots and leather jerkins etc. seem to all be absorbed by Q.M. [quartermaster] corps and truck drivers etc. before they ever reach troops who really need them the most.” Another officer complained that the “SOS [Service of Supply] troops and different supply bases get the choice of rations in the field.”⁶⁷

---


⁶⁶Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 97.

⁶⁷Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 99.
Troops made comparisons with the Allies as well. The French and the British troops did not have better quality of food, but they did have better distribution. Officers complained that they had to beg food from the Allies for their soldiers because the American army could not supply them on the front line. An infantry lieutenant complained that in his sector “rations were not sufficient; the French troops helped us out by giving us their rations.” Troops correctly believed that the British and French armies provided more of the front line necessities than the AEF. Officers expressed disbelief that the Old World Europeans could minister to the needs of soldiers better than the Americans.®® Many officers and soldiers saw this incompetence as a sign of anti-American inequality rather than inadequate administration.®®

Decoration, Pay, and Promotion

Doctrine, logistics and transportation made for an army that had difficulty fighting a depleted but dangerous

---

®®Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 33-37.

®®Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 97.

237
enemy, but troops measure an army’s competence in smaller ways. Good armies have policies in place to decorate heroic actions, promote success equitably, and pay soldiers on time. The AEF lacked the ability to do all three.

George Washington said “there must be some other stimulus, besides love of their country, to make men fond of the service.” The AEF sorely lacked any other stimuli. Promotion, decorations, and regular pay are among the few rewards of military service during wartime. The baubles and trinkets of war can have a great effect on the morale of soldiers if commanders award them quickly in front of their peers. Military officers of the time liked to quote Napoleon, who said: “A soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of colored ribbon.” Unfortunately, frontline troops perceived that medals went mainly to high ranking officers who saw no combat. One young lieutenant said: “The method of awarding medals for exceptional bravery was a joke. Headquarters got them.”

______________________

70 Quoted in Robert D. Heinl, Jr., Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1966), 233.


72 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of

238
had no authority to give their troops any decorations; permission had to come from AEF headquarters.

At the beginning of the war only two decorations were available, the Medal of Honor and the Certificate of Merit. Even foreign awards such as the French Croix de Guerre required American Congressional approval. Pershing called the decorations' problem a "knotty one." At his suggestion the War Department revised the decorations' policy in January 1918. Congress, however, waited until July 9, 1918, to pass a bill approving the changes. In the bill, Congress authorized the Distinguished Service Cross for "extraordinary heroism;" authorized the Distinguished Service Medal for high-ranking officers who did not see direct combat; discontinued the use of the certificate of merit; and allowed American soldiers to receive foreign decorations. A soldier could also receive a small silver star (3/16 of an inch) for wear on the campaign ribbon if

---

Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 113.


239
the unit's dispatch mentioned him.\textsuperscript{75} Pershing wanted a more intermediate medal that rewarded gallantry not covered by the more heroic scale of the Distinguished Service Cross, but that desire had to wait until 1932 when Congress approved the Silver Star Medal; and until War II when Congress approved the Bronze Star Medal, designed for gallantry by junior officers and enlisted men. Pershing said after the war: “There were thousands of instances in our armies where a medal of this class should have been bestowed.”\textsuperscript{76} He clearly felt the AEF was an underdecorated army.

Soldiers took the matter into their own hands. After the armistice many unauthorized ribbons appeared such as the Marne ribbon, the Chateau-Thierry ribbon, the St. Mihiel ribbon, and the Argonne ribbon.\textsuperscript{77} A red, white and blue ribbon appeared on the chest of those who served in France and a red, yellow, and black ribbon for those who served in Belgium. The troops even designated a gold star for the first fifty thousand soldiers to arrive in


\textsuperscript{77}Stars and Stripes, 7 March, 1919.
France. If the AEF failed to recognize their service, the troops would do it themselves.

The actions necessary to receive a medal had changed as well. One officer complained that there was a higher standard set for the “Distinguished Service Cross than was set previous to this war for the Medal of Honor.” Many soldiers would have agreed with a young infantry captain who said “it is too hard to get a decoration for a soldier.” Prior to the Armistice, Pershing and the General Staff awarded only one Medal of Honor while disapproving twenty. The section had approved only 1,101 Distinguished Service Crosses, while disapproving 1,272. Not one man received the Distinguished Service Medal before the Armistice; all of these numbers were infinitesimally small considering the two million men in France.

---

78 *Stars and Stripes*, 23 May 1919

79 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 112.

80 Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 112.

81 P.L. Ransom, Chairman, Report of Committee #7, Subject: Morale and Propaganda, Course at the Army War College, 1934-1935, G-1, November 2, 1934, United States Army
French were less stingy. By May 1, 1919, the French had awarded American soldiers 11,687 decorations, more than twice the total number of Medals of Honor, Distinguished Service Crosses, and Distinguished Service Medals (5,012) the AEF had awarded their own soldiers.  

Pershing did direct a review board to screen all recipients of Distinguished Service Crosses to see whether they should receive the Medal of Honor instead. The final tally of medals reflected the chief's post-war concern. Medals, however, help morale when commanders award them soon after battle. Unfortunately, the AEF awarded almost none during combat. The AEF failed to pin ribbons on soldiers' chests when it counted because it could not.

Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.


Unlike the British who were notoriously stingy by intent, the Americans wanted to give medals. Unfortunately, commanders lacked the authority to give awards to soldiers during combat, frustrating both officers and troops.

While decorations were difficult to obtain, receiving pay proved equally tough. The army had no system to track soldiers and pay them regularly. Men often went months without pay. Secretary of War Newton Baker talked to the two hundred and twenty soldiers from an off-loading ship in October 1918. He found only five who had received their last month’s pay, while some had not received their pay for over a year. Another officer canvassed his convalescent company of 270 men to find out when they had last received pay. Only thirteen had received pay in the last four months, while over fifty percent had not received pay in over six months. This officer observed that "the army pay system ... did more to weaken the morale of the troops than any other feature I can recall." One young soldier,

84 Albert Kellogg, "Psychological and Psychiatric Reactions of Troops in Ports of Embarkation," Army War College Historical Section, War Department General Staff, 1942, Box 7200, Entry 376, Record Group 165, National Archives.

85 Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 92.
Elmer Jones of the 82nd Division, complained that he had received no pay since he landed in France. He wrote a desperate letter home: "It looks bad for Christmas so if you could just send me five dollars by regular mail at once it would help some." Albert Ettinger of the 42nd Division went without pay for eleven months. Sometimes the problem was a lack of money to actually pay soldiers. First Army ran out of currency in October 1918 and had to suspend payment to every officer in headquarters regardless of rank.

The amount of pay also caused problems. Congress had not approved a pay increase since 1908. One investigator of training camps "noticed quite a number of soldiers begging on the streets." While the government had not

---

86 Elmer Jacobson, 327th Infantry, 82nd Division, World War I Survey - 2152, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

87 Albert Ettinger, Shamrocks under the Rainbow: A Doughboy and His Buddies in the World War, unpublished memoir, at the U.S. Military History Institute, File No. 364-8, 173-174.

88 Memorandum to All Officers in 1st Army HQ, from the Adjutant General 1st Army, October 26, 1918, File 250.03, Record Group 120, National Archives.


90 Letter from Prentice Sanger to Mr. Hopkins, U.S. War Department, Commission on Training Camp Activities,
raised soldiers’ pay, the pay of the civilian worker rose continually. Workers who did not have to undergo the drudgeries and danger of army life often made five dollars a day. An engineer lieutenant complained that his “enlisted men [worked] alongside civilian employees who drew many times their pay in Bordeaux.” Corporal Herbert Allen wrote that many soldiers, especially older ones griped about the high wages civilian carpenters made constructing barracks.

Wartime inflation had severely eaten into soldiers’ pay of thirty dollars a month. That figure was much lower when soldiers paid their expenses — war risk insurance, haircuts, canteen bills, and allotments home. Many soldiers complained that after deductions they had little left to spend. Officers complained that most of their

November 13, 1918, File 250.1, Record Group 120, National Archives.

91Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 92.

92 Herbert O. Allen, 116th Infantry, 29th Division, World War I Survey - 379, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.

93see Elmer Jacobson, 327th Infantry, 82nd Division, World War I Survey - 7029. USMHI and Report of Committee #4, Subcommittee #3, Army War College “Morale as Affected by Hygiene of the Body and the Mind, March 14, 1922, G-1
paycheck went to outfit themselves in uniforms and equipment that the army failed to provide.\textsuperscript{94}

Some of the money soldiers did earn went home as allotments to their families; this money did not always make it back to loved ones. One officer complained about the "delay and non-payment of men's allotment to their dependents."\textsuperscript{95} The War Department gave responsibility for payments to troops' families to the War Risk Insurance Bureau. The massive number of allotments and the ceaseless transfer of soldiers from one unit to another proved too much for the overwhelmed bureau to handle. One soldier described the problem as an "all round failure of the allotment branch."\textsuperscript{96} The Red Cross attempted to help through its Home Service Section, but it had no direct

\begin{flushright}
Course #18, 5-6, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.
\textsuperscript{94}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 92.
\textsuperscript{95}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 101.
\textsuperscript{96}Replies to Officers' Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 101.
\end{flushright}
connection to the administrative sections in the army. Many family members could not find help at home and wrote letters to their husbands and sons pressuring them for remedies. In response to troops' complaints, the Morale Branch researched the matter. The Chief of the Morale Branch, Brigadier General Edward Munson reported a "complete collapse in the handling of allotments." He concluded that "this failure of soldiers to receive allotments for their dependents is the worst single feature making for bad morale." The AEF unfairly blamed the movement of family members for their failure to receive allotments, but it did order every unit to interview their soldiers and complete the necessary forms to correct the allotment problem. This helped, but the allotment problems continued to plague the AEF as family members sent desperate pleas to their husbands and sons.

97 Memorandum for General Interest, Chief, Morale Branch, War Department General Staff, January 3, 1919, Box 5, Entry 378, Records Group 165, National Archives.

98 Memorandum for General Interest, Chief, Morale Branch, War Department General Staff, January 3, 1919, Box 5, Entry 378, Records Group 165, National Archives.

Despite receiving discouraging mail detailing the inadequacies of the allotment system, soldiers naturally welcomed hometown mail. A young Marine officer wrote in his diary that "nothing cheers us up more than to get mail from the ones we love." Unfortunately, many soldiers' experienced problems with the mail like Harvey Lee Hendrickson of the 29th Division. "We could not receive mail for months while the war was on! When I came home, hundreds of letters were received from overseas." Pershing realized the effect of mail "on the morale of the army and the folks back home made it very important." Mail, like pay, suffered from an overtaxed administrative system. The postal service and the army could not handle the voluminous demand and stopped accepting packages for overseas shipment. Soldiers' frequent transfers left the War Department and Post Office hopelessly backlogged.

March 14, 1922, G-1 Course #18, 5-6, United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.

100 Robert B. Asprey, At Belleau Wood (New York: Putnam's Sons), 271.

101 Harvey Lee Hendrickson, 116th Infantry, 29th Division, World War I Survey - 3741, USMHI. See also Maynard Simpson, 4th Division, World War Survey - 1906; Henry D. Lange, 29th Division, World War I Survey - 5711 United States Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks Pennsylvania.

Pershing unfairly blamed the folks back home who, because of their unfamiliarity with unit designations, often put the wrong abbreviations on letters causing the misdirection of mail.\textsuperscript{103} The AEF took over the mail functions from the Postmaster General, but the system failed to improve. It remained as one officer called it -- "abominable."\textsuperscript{104} Responding to Congressional pressure from constituents' complaints, the Morale Branch investigated the postal system and found it a "failure." The report concluded that "60 to 75% of mail is sent to the DLO [Dead Letter Office] Washington."\textsuperscript{105} Two-thirds to three-quarters of all mail for the AEF failed to reach its correct destination -- a staggering failure. Transport was a small problem, but an overburdened and poor administrative system accounted for most of the lost mail.

Overzealous censorship instructions exacerbated the problem. On incoming mail, family members received


\textsuperscript{104} Replies to Officers’ Questionnaire from the Chief, Morale Branch, War College Division, General Staff to the Chief of Staff, United States Army, November 5, 1919, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 378, Box 6, 101.

\textsuperscript{105} Memorandum to Captain Perkins, Morale Branch, War Department General Staff, no date, Box 9, Entry 376, Record Group 165, National Archives.
instructions to put only the name, rank, company, and regiment on the envelope. The War Department forbade the use of division or corps designations because that would give away not just vital information, but any information. Each piece of outgoing mail required opening and reading by a specially designated censor. These officers performed their job as censors in addition to their regular military functions. In practice, officers turned to their censorship duties after completing all of their other responsibilities. The plethora of languages among the AEF's soldiers also slowed the process. This draconian censorship policy resulted in huge delays of outgoing mail and the frustration of officers and soldiers.

All indices of army performance suggest an army in very poor condition, and this condition did not go unnoticed by observers. The Allies and the Germans commented on the AEF's ragged state in October 1918. Haig had nothing but contempt for American leadership, particularly the logisticians. American supply officers from lieutenant to general were "ignorant of their work"

and had "lost confidence in themselves." Other observers shared Haig's view. French Premier Clemenceau's military aide, General Jean Jules Mordacq described the American forces as paralyzed by October. Clemenceau went even further arguing that the American army had no "brain." He demanded that Foch relieve Pershing. The inept American offense and the chaotic supply situation might have cost Pershing his job. Only the patience of Foch kept the French and the British from reporting to Wilson the AEF's predicament. Marshal Pétain failed to share Foch's understanding and patience. He believed the Americans' incompetence in the Meuse-Argonne campaign was responsible for many French deaths. Moreover, Pétain feared that German counterattacks using artillery would result in a

---

107 Haig Diary, 3 November, 1918, The Haig Papers, Part 1, No. 97 Diary Parts 11-12, 1918-1919. The First World War: Political Social, and Military Sources, Series One


"massacre of American troops" and, more importantly for Pétain, leave his flank vulnerable.\textsuperscript{110}

The Australian \textit{Official History} is generally kind to the Americans, crediting them for bravery at the same time gently chiding their competence.\textsuperscript{111} Throughout the \textit{Official History} Australians found Americans on the battlefield "wandering to the rear," leaderless, "lost, helpless, and listless."\textsuperscript{112} Food, ammunition, and water rarely arrived at the front for the Americans. More shocking to the Australians was the state of the 30th Division sent to relieve the Australian 2nd Division on October 6, 1918. The Americans arrived at the front without water, rations, machine guns, ammunition, or


\textsuperscript{111} Perhaps the kind tone comes in part from the Australian strategic situation when C.E.W. Bean wrote the \textit{Official History} in 1942. In that year, Australia pondered the ominous threat of a Japanese invasion protected only by Australia was in great peril in 1942 from the Japanese. Only the Americans were in a position to assist the Australians with this threat. American General Douglas MacArthur spent most of 1942 in Australia.

\textsuperscript{112} C.E.W. Bean, \textit{The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918}, vol. 6, The Australian Imperial Force in France, May 1918 to the Armistice (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942), 993-995.
telephones. The divisions in the American II Corps attached to the British Expeditionary Forces had a reputation as some of the better divisions in the AEF.

The Australian corps commander in charge of two American divisions for the initial Meuse-Argonne attack, Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, described the Americans as brave but deeply flawed. "They have not yet learned the virtues of unquestioning obedience, of punctuality, of quick initiative, of anticipating the next action." Monash continued to list the American shortcomings on training, technical knowledge of weapons systems, and leadership before finishing with a flourish on the inadequate supply system and poor tactics that created unacceptable losses in battle. He had a reason to be harsh; the initial corps assault failed because the 27th and the 30th American Divisions failed to take the objectives assigned to them. Monash blamed over eager soldiers who went beyond their limit without clearing German trench systems. This failure allowed bypassed German units to wreak havoc on the

---


Australians. Untrue said the *Official History*. The Americans never achieved the objectives; they lost their leaders and their momentum before they reached the trench systems Monash thought they had bypassed. The Australian general had given the Americans too much credit.\(^{115}\)

Some German units did not make that mistake.\(^{116}\) The German 27th Reserve Infantry Regiment described the American 27th Division's attack on September 27, 1918, as poor. Their regimental history portrayed the American spirit as crumbling shortly after the offensive began. After that a German company "pushed on without troubling about the Americans, who were in the trenches." This German regiment portrayed the AEF in a damning way. "The Americans made a middling impression on our troops; they appear very unskilled in attack; in close fighting they mostly were very helpless and lacking in dash." After


interrogating a number of American prisoners, the Germans believed that they could exploit the Americans' poor morale.117

By November 1918, the AEF seemed in the words of Colonel Thomas de W. Milling, Chief of Air Services, "a disorganized and wrecked army."118 The soldiers of the AEF agreed; one called the AEF "a fucked-up mess."119 Hunter Liggett described his First Army as too chewed up to do anything.120 Supply, tactics, leadership, and morale all suffered in the Argonne Forest and the Meuse Valley. The AEF required frequent operational pauses to resupply and feed their troops. Each pause gave the German forces time to recover and reorganize their defenses. By November even Pershing felt the strain. While driving to the front he began weeping and called out for his dead wife. "Frankie, Frankie, my God sometimes I don't know how I can go on."121

120 Donald Smythe, Pershing: General of the Armies, 218.
121 Ibid., 208.
Conclusion

The war ended at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1918, and not a minute too soon for the AEF. Drained and exhausted by the rigors of the Meuse-Argonne, American soldiers "took the news in stunned silence." Some Germans rejoiced at the end of the bitter fighting, while others displayed mixed emotions of depression and restrained joy. The German side, suffering from four years of grievous casualties and revolutionary discontent, endured an even worse morale problem than the AEF. Morale problems on the German side allowed the AEF to secure victory despite an overburdened administrative system and demoralized officers and men. Luckily for the AEF, the Armistice precluded a 1919 campaign to occupy Germany. Considering the AEF's many problems, its ability to conduct a campaign to occupy Germany seems questionable.


One of the main reasons for the AEF's tactical and operational problems was poor morale. The evidence suggests a lapse in morale at all levels of the AEF. It also shows that no single element accounted for the downward spiral of morale. There were many contributors to poor morale, and each had complicated origins. Some of the elements contributing to the AEF's problems reached as deep as the structure of American society and culture, while some were as close to the surface as a missing meal. Each disparate element of morale had an effect on other aspects of morale, creating a cumulative effect.

One problem was the poor unit cohesion in the AEF, evidenced by the 100,000 American stragglers that one senior AEF general estimated to be in the battle area by the Armistice. High casualties, poor discipline, inadequate training, and poor leadership contributed to the AEF's inadequate cohesion; but army policy insured it. The War Department and the AEF took units that had trained together and broke them up for placement in other forming divisions. The individual replacement arrived at his unit without a support system and often with little training. The AEF sent officers to train away from their units, further hindering unit cohesion. The officers and the soldiers should have had training before reaching their units, but there was no
one qualified to train anyone at any level. The AEF was an army lacking expertise in every way, particularly at the non-commissioned officer and officer level. An army led by a disaffected officer corps and suffering from poor cohesion had to fight a dangerous enemy under awful conditions.

Poor leadership at all levels was a significant contributing factor to the AEF's poor morale. The vast majority of the AEF's leaders from lieutenant to major were citizen-officers who did not share the values of the professional soldier. The citizen-officer wanted the army to conform to their civilian expectations that centered on the business world. Regulars, a decided minority, but in most positions of power, wanted the AEF to retain the professional values of the peacetime army. Regulars made sure that the occupational culture of military professionalism remained the dominant force by instituting policies to control the civilians' ambition and power. Citizen-officers chaffed at the authoritarian control by the regulars. The result was an officer corps composed of disaffected and disenchanted citizen-officers. That disaffection spread throughout the AEF, hurting the morale of the entire army.
Additionally, the AEF had the unenviable task of starting a major offensive campaign in October 1918. During that month the influenza pandemic hit the entire world with ferocity. The official records indicate that over forty percent or 800,000 American troops caught the flu in October, but even that number was probably low. The flu sapped the strength and the morale of everyone in the AEF. The flu combined with malnutrition, inadequate clothing, and lack of sleep to create thousands of soldiers who suffered from combat exhaustion. Unprepared to meet the demands of overwhelming numbers of casualties, the medical system failed to care for troops in a way that both physicians and soldiers expected. The result was an ineffective army with low morale.

After the Armistice, morale and discipline declined even more. The Chairman of the Training Camp Activities, Raymond Fosdick visited the AEF in February and submitted a detailed report on the "desperate" condition of the AEF's morale. Most observers, including George C. Marshall, correctly attributed the decline to a lack of mission

---

3 Memorandum for General Pershing on Morale in the American Expeditionary Forces by Raymond D. Fosdick, February 1, 1919; Report to the Secretary of War on the Relation of Officers and Men in the AEF, 17 April, 1919. Both are in Records Group 165, Entry 376, Box 13, National Archives.
combined with harsh winter training, but there was more to it than that. The morale of the AEF started steadily declining in September 1918 and continued that descent after the Armistice, until most of the soldiers packed into transport ships and went home. The winter decline of troop morale was a natural progression from the ills that afflicted the AEF in the Fall.

Given the awful shape of American morale and the American army, the AEF’s ability to sustain operations into Germany during the winter of 1918 and 1919 seems problematic at best. Pershing, alone among the senior Allied commanders, wanted to continue the war by taking the fight onto German soil, and his army was least able to sustain the fight. He overestimated the capabilities of his army. The Meuse-Argonne campaign combined with the myriad of problems mentioned earlier had gravely affected the ability of the AEF to accomplish any mission. In November and December of 1918, the AEF took heavy losses on the March to the Rhine to occupy a defeated Germany with no one shooting.

---


Sadly, many of the elements that contributed to poor morale were present in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. Few military officers or civilians studied the problems of that war with the thought to improve the next one. Even more tragically few American officers studied the morale problems of World War I when war clouds again gathered in Europe. Consequently, the army in World War II made many of the same policy mistakes that hurt the AEF in 1918.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources

A. Documents

National Archives:
Record Group 120, American Expeditionary Forces.
   Records of the Inspector General
   Records of the Adjutant General
   Records of the Provost Marshal
   Records of the Judge Advocate General
   Records of Headquarters, First Army
   Correspondence, GHQ, AEF and War Department
Record Group 165, War Department General Staff.
   Records of the Morale Branch, War Plans Division
   War Department Correspondence

U.S. Army Military History Institute:
World War I Survey
The Lewis Board
Studies by the Historical Section, Army War College, 1942–1943.
"Morale in Armies. Deductions from History." Course at the
Army War College 1928–1929. G-1, Report of Committee
No. 6, October 24, 1928.
"Morale." Course at the Army War College, 1933–34. G-1,
Report of Committee No. 7, October 23, 1933.
"Causes of Low Morale." Course at the Army War College,
1935–1936. G-1, Report of Committee No. 6, October 21,
1935.
Studies, Historical Section, Army War College, 1942.
Museum of the City of New York
World War I Poster Collection

United States Military Academy Special Collections

The Haig Papers (Microfilm)

Paul Lubbens Collection

Allen Russell Kimball Collection

B. Printed Reports


_____. Annual Reports, 1919, 3 vols. Washington D.C., 1919

263

C. Printed Memoirs and Primary Book Sources


Cheseldine, R.M. Ohio in the Rainbow. Columbus: State of Ohio, 1924


Pottle, Frederick A. *Stretchers: The Story of a Hospital Unit on the Western Front.* New Haven, Conn., 1929.


Stearns, Gustav. *From Army Camps and Battlefields.* Minneapolis, 1919.


Taber, John H. *The Story of the 168th Infantry.* Iowa City: Iowa Historical Society, 1925.


D. Novels


E. Contemporary Magazines

Atlantic Monthly

Century

Century Magazine

Current Literature

Dial

Forum

Harper's Weekly

Harper's Magazine

Infantry Journal

International Journal of Ethics

Journal U.S. Artillery

Literary Digest

Literary Digest

Marine Corps Gazette
II. Secondary Sources

A. Books


Asprey, Robert B. At Belleau Wood, New York 1965.


270


272


Viereck, George S., ed. *As They Saw Us*. Garden City, N.J. 1929.


**B. Articles**


