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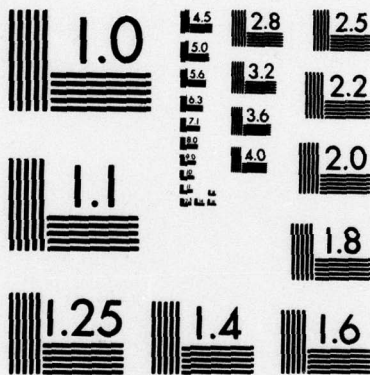
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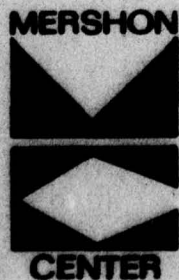
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**March, 1979**

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**POLITICAL TRAINING  
IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY:  
A RECONSIDERATION**

**STEPHEN D. WESBROOK**



**The Mershon Center of The Ohio State University  
109 West Tenth Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43201**

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A RECONSIDERATION

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## PREFACE

While American army officers have often paid lip service to the importance of psychological, non-material factors in the motivation of combat units, research on the sources of human conduct in war after World War II narrowed to questions of leadership and peer relations within small combat units. Only since the traumas of the Vietnam War era have academic researchers — military and civilian — returned to the larger questions of the relationship of military esprit and discipline to the society from which soldiers come and the military organizations in which they serve. This study is part of that reappraisal, and I believe it should contribute in an important way to the reevaluation of the moral incentives and disincentives in soldiering.

This pamphlet is actually the second part of a three-part study of socio-political alienation, combat motivation, and citizenship education done by Capt. Stephen D. Westbrook, U.S. Army, during a year's (1977-78) resident study at the Mershon Center under the provisions of Army Regulation 621-7. The final report, "A Clear and Present Danger: The Impact of Socio-Political Alienation on Combat Readiness and General Military Efficiency," was completed and submitted to the Department of the Army in June, 1978. This pamphlet is printed with the permission of the Department of the Army, although its findings and conclusions are the author's alone.

Few serving soldiers of comparable age could have produced such a thorough multi-disciplinary study. A 1970 honor graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, where he played varsity football and

became a cadet captain, Captain Wesbrook served in combat in Vietnam as a rifle platoon leader of the 101st Division (Airmobile). Already a graduate of the Officer's Basic Course and of the parachutist and ranger schools, he was an honor graduate of the Officer's Advanced Course in 1974-75 and then commanded a company in the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) before coming to Ohio State to do this study. He was no newcomer to the university since he received a M.A. and Ph.D. here in 1974 and 1976 in international relations and military history. An early selectee to the rank of major, the author is now a member of the history faculty of the U.S. Military Academy.

The Mershon Center is especially pleased to publish this study as part of its continuing interest in national security policy studies, and it invites other Army officers to apply for post-doctoral fellowships under the same terms as Captain Wesbrook in accordance with AR 621-7. Even more importantly, we urge interested citizens in and out of uniform and in and out of academic institutions to ponder the implications of Captain Wesbrook's essay and to investigate the whole study.

**ALLAN R. MILLETT**  
*Director, Force and Polity Program*

**Mershon Center**  
**The Ohio State University**  
**1979**



## INTRODUCTION

**If an army is to be successful in battle, its soldiers must possess two essential qualities. The first is the knowledge necessary to perform the instrumental skills of war, such as firing a tank gun accurately or properly organizing a defensive position. The second quality is a willingness to perform these skills in the face of battle while engulfed in the stress produced by danger, deprivation, and isolation.**

There is a fair amount of international military consensus about what constitutes the first quality and how to develop it. There is no such agreement in reference to the second quality, however. In fact, there is a wide divergence in the ways various armies approach the problem of developing a willingness to perform instrumental skills in battle. This divergence is to a large extent the result of differing assessments of the significance of political factors on a soldier's motivation in battle and, accordingly, on the value of political training in developing that motivation.

For example, the Soviet army allocates a great amount of its training time and resources to political training. Centrally controlled by the army's Main Political Administration, political training is highly institutionalized. The Soviet army views political training as a principal responsibility of the unit commander and

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places it on an equal basis with instrumental military training. Moreover, at every level of command down to company a political officer in the position of deputy commander assists in the planning and execution of political training. Although originally instituted as a means of Party control over the military, that rationale gradually changed as an increasing number of military officers became Party members themselves. The current rationale stresses the belief that political training improves military efficiency — not only in terms of combat motivation in war, but also in terms of morale and discipline in peace.<sup>1</sup>

The West German army also invests heavily in political training, which is institutionalized in the *Innere Führung* program. Translated by the Federal Ministry of Defense as "Leadership and Civic Education," *Innere Führung* was designed to guard against the re-emergence of the *Staat im Staat* that had developed after the First World War. *Innere Führung* was initiated as an integral part of West German rearmament to insure civilian control over the military through education in the values and norms of democratic society. Although the West German military still sees *Innere Führung* as providing "the bridge which links the *Bundeswehr* to society and firmly roots our armed forces in State and social order,"<sup>2</sup> the West Germans also believe that it plays an important role in developing and maintaining military efficiency. Political education is given credit not only for developing a "moral armament" to sustain the soldier in combat, but also for maintaining a high degree of internal order and discipline by instilling in the soldier self-control, thinking obedience, personal initiative, and comradely cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

The United States military, however, currently rejects the idea that political factors play an important role either in combat motivation or general military efficiency. Although the United States Army once conducted extensive political training, it has — as will be outlined in detail later — completely dismantled these programs.

If the Soviets and West Germans are correct and the U.S. military is wrong about the effects of political factors on combat motivation and general military efficiency, the consequences could be staggering. In war such an error could lead to military disintegration. Recent history has demonstrated rather convincingly that once a nation's soldiers lose their motivation to fight, finely tuned instrumental skills, sophisticated weaponry, and even



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numerical superiority will not prevent them from being routed by a determined enemy. Another more immediate result could be poor morale and discipline, which translates into wasted dollars.

The existence of these contrasting opinions about the role of political factors on military efficiency in general, and combat motivation in particular, leads to two obvious questions. First, why has the U.S. Army rejected the idea that political training can influence combat motivation, particularly in light of the position of the Soviets and the West Germans? Second, is the U.S. Army correct in this rejection? The purpose of this study is to examine these two questions.

This examination will consist of four sections. The first will define and identify the most common types of political training. The second will examine historically the U.S. Army's experiences with these types. The third will assess the value of that experience both theoretically and empirically. From the preceding analysis, the final section will establish the reasons behind the rejection of political training and the consequences of that position.

II

## TYPES OF POLITICAL TRAINING

Political training can be defined as the process of providing information and instruction concerning the actual or desired conduct of collective life, particularly as it relates to governmental principles, processes, and actions. The concept encompasses a great variety of topics and techniques. In order to analyze it, the salient dimensions will first be identified. These in turn will be used to develop a scheme of categorization, without which effective communication becomes extremely difficult and analysis becomes virtually impossible.

The categorization scheme used throughout this study is based on two dimensions. The first is *environmental focus*, that is, whether the topic is concerned with the internal or the external environment of the polity. For example, training dealing with a soldier's own governmental system is classified as internal, while training dealing with world events is classified as external. The second dimension is *purpose*, that is, whether the ultimate aim is one of *education* or of *indoctrination*. This determination is rarely simple. The two are differentiated by objective, method, and content. The objective of education is *to impart knowledge and capabilities* that allow a person to survive in and contribute to collective life. Its methods are characterized by the presentation of information in an unbiased manner and the reliance on reason, logic, and the scientific method of inquiry. The content carries the presumption of truth or validity, at least to the best of the educator's own knowledge. The objective of indoctrination, on the other hand, is *to influence or control attitudes, opinions, and behavior*. Its methods are characterized by the presentation of information designed to deliberately manipulate the individual into a desired response, most often by the use of symbols designed to appeal to emotion. Its content is characterized by *distortion and half-truth*.<sup>4</sup>

Occasionally a program will forthrightly state its objectives, in which case its classification is not too difficult. For example, in



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1922 the Army developed a course entitled "Studies in Citizenship" with the following stated objective:

**This course for enlisted men is designed to give them such knowledge and understanding of the army and the country it serves as will help them perform their duties with intelligence . . .<sup>5</sup>**

Thirty-three years later it fielded a Troop Information and Education program, the stated objectives of which were to develop in the soldier:

**A firm conviction that the principles of American Democracy and freedom are sound and correct so that he is willing to fight and preserve them.<sup>6</sup>**

In the absence of evidence indicating that these objectives were not followed, the first program would be classified as political education and the second as political indoctrination.

More often, however, the objectives are not so forthrightly stated, or else they are not followed in practice. In such cases one must rely on an examination of methods and content to determine purpose. This assessment is most difficult when the program addresses values and norms. All orderly societies by definition possess a certain similarity and pattern of social interaction. This results in, and to some extent is dependent upon, a degree of consensus as to what is considered proper behavior. Education must address these values and norms if it is to accomplish its objective. Moreover, if a society is to be stable, education must ultimately lead the majority of the population to accept these values and norms. It is, therefore, often difficult to perceive the difference between education and indoctrination if one focuses too narrowly on objectives. If, however, one also examines method and content, the classification of a program is usually clear. For instance, there is a distinct difference between teaching certain analytical skills, providing factual information, and then allowing the values to stand the test of reasoned examination (education), and relying on appeals to authority, presenting selected evidence, and then rejecting any conclusion that does not conform to the particular value position from which one was arguing (indoctrination).

The combination of these two dichotomous dimensions produces four possible categories of political training. Each category

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can contain a number of separate programs that differ on other dimensions. Our analysis will focus, for simplicity, in each category only on that type of political training that is most common in military organizations. These are identified in Figure 1, below.

<b>ENVIRONMENTAL FOCUS</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	
	<i>Education</i>	<i>Indoctrination</i>
<i>Internal</i>	Civic Education	Chauvinistic Inspiration
<i>External</i>	World Events Orientation	Threat Propaganda

**Figure 1. Common Types of Political Training**

Civic education refers to education about the soldier's own polity. For example, the course "Studies in Citizenship" cited earlier dealt with such questions as: "What is freedom of speech?"; "Of the press?"; "What is the purpose of government?"; and "Why do governments have laws?"

The most common type of education about the external environment conducted in the military is orientation about world events and their impact on a nation's foreign and military policy. One such example is the Army orientation program of the Second World War, two objectives of which were:

- a. To acquaint all recruits with factual information as to the causes and events leading to the United States becoming a combatant in a global war in December 1941.
- b. To inform all military personnel on the course of military actions, particularly those in which United States forces have participated. . . .

Chauvinistic inspiration is a form of internal political indoctrination that consists primarily of vainglorious patriotism and the militant glorification of one's country. A *Manual of Citizenship Training* published by the War Department in 1927 for use in the



**Stephen D. Westbrook**

citizens military training camps contained a significant amount of this type of material. Prepared by an Army chaplain in conjunction with a conservative civilian organization, it stated, for example:

We have been generous and magnanimous. Right, not might, has prevailed in our dealings with others. Arbitration, not armament, has been our means of persuasion. America is always ready to fulfill every obligation where human welfare is concerned. America is content to adjust all international questions within the principles of justice and equity, to engage in equal competition in selling her goods in the markets of the world. Her commercial treaties are written in terms of square dealing.<sup>9</sup>

The tone had not changed much 45 years later, when a discussion guide used in the Chaplains Corps' Moral Heritage program stated:

The American Dream of freedom, equality, and justice for all is our heritage as American citizens. Our heritage is a dynamic thing. We find that the idea of human dignity has risen to greater heights in America than any other country at any time during the long history of the world. In a little over three hundred years, America has become a symbol throughout the world of more real progress than previous centuries have yielded anywhere else on earth.<sup>10</sup>

This is stirring stuff. Unfortunately, it will not stand the test of empirical, reasoned examination. In the first example, without relying on appeals to authority, emotion, and carefully selected facts, an instructor would be hard pressed to demonstrate America's readiness to fulfill every human welfare obligation or the square dealing of American commercial treaties. In the second example, the Swiss, English, Canadians — and indeed many underprivileged groups in the United States itself — might take exception to the superior level of human dignity reached in America by 1972.

Propaganda about world events, particularly about actual or potential enemies, is the most common variety of indoctrination about the external political environment. It is characterized not only by its appeal to emotions but also by the systematic use of

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exaggeration, distortion, and half-truth to bias the soldier's judgment or opinion. For example, the following passage set the tone of a pamphlet published in the European theater of operations during the Second World War to serve as a weekly discussion guide:

The German is a human being — but sometimes he isn't quite sure of it. He suffers from schizophrenia . . . You can call it a split personality or a Jekyll-and-Hyde personality. Throughout German literature and history the dual personality crops up on every other page. Faust is a typical example. The Jap, too, to a certain extent is one of these cloven personality boys; on one hand the aspirate little gentleman, all bows and smiles and elaborate politeness, so harmless he wouldn't bruise the petal of a flower; on the other, a drooling beast, drunk with bloodlust, whose favorite place to stab you is in the back.<sup>11</sup>

The ALERT series of discussion guides published by the Department of Defense in the early 1960's was based on a similar approach. ALERT Number 8, entitled "We Will Bury You," attempted to explain communism in the following terms:

Communism is not something alien to Western civilization but a corruption that sprang from it. It could well be defined as "Ideas in Arms" . . . Everything that communism does, the deceit and the treachery which so often baffle Westerners, flows from this obsession. Communism has no abiding interest in lessening the tensions in the world; regarding them as leading inevitably to its own triumph, it cheerfully worsens them. Communism has no interest in helping to create a stable world order, except where temporary stability enables it to prepare its next offensive against peace. Communism regards total disorder — lawlessness and revolution — as the necessary forerunner of its triumph. When it cannot win outright, communism prefers chaos to compromise.<sup>12</sup>

Most programs contain elements of each of these four types of political training. Therefore, in evaluating a program of political training, one must look at the overall direction. However, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to mix education and indoctrination to



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**any great degree without the overall result being indoctrination. The reason for this is that a sophisticated indoctrination program rests on a base of factual material. Those points that the indoctrinator considers to be crucial, however, will be distorted. Consequently, if political education is intimately tied to indoctrination, the material presented as education must itself become suspect.**

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### III

## THE U.S. ARMY'S EXPERIENCE WITH POLITICAL TRAINING, 1917-1977

The historical experience of the U.S. Army with political training is one of the keys to resolving the questions raised at the beginning of this study. In this section, the distinctions developed in the previous section will be used to analyze that experience with emphasis on the type of training employed and the conditions of employment.

### *1917-1940: The First World War and the Inter-War Years*

The use of conscription to provide the majority of soldiers in the First World War created problems for the U.S. Army that it had never before been forced to consider. Foremost among these was the problem of how to motivate soldiers who in most cases did not want to be in the Army in the first place. Unfortunately, as far as the Army was concerned, this problem was "a 'no-man's land' into which neither line nor staff [would] penetrate."<sup>13</sup> Fortunately, there were civilians who preferred this "no-man's land" to the one in France.

In the first year of the war what little political information and instruction the troops received came directly from civilian organizations. The Army's reluctance to deal with this area was largely pragmatic. When the United States declared war, the Army numbered fewer than 120,000 men. Nineteen months later its strength exceeded 4,000,000. The tasks of housing, feeding, training, and fighting a force that doubled in size approximately every three months left few trained officers available to deal with the psychology of morale. Early in the war the Army turned over the task of raising morale through welfare activities to organizations such as the YMCA, the National Catholic Welfare Board, the Jewish Welfare Board, and the Salvation Army. It was consistent, therefore, also to delegate the problem of raising morale through psychological means, including political education and indoctrination, to civilian organizations — at least until the more immediate problems of expansion had been resolved.



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Of these organizations, none assumed the task with more vigor than the Committee on Public Information (the Creel Committee). President Wilson created the committee in April, 1917, and assigned it the task of "holding fast the inner lines." It became America's censor, ministry of propaganda, and cheerleader. Not only did it review all war news presented to the general public and the soldiers, it also fabricated stories, engaged in patriotic advertising, published political cartoons, and produced patriotic films. Some of the committee's activities were directed specifically at soldiers. Most were not. However, by making popular such concepts as a "War to End all Wars" and "Make the World Safe for Democracy," the committee gave most soldiers the only reason they would ever get for why they were being asked to kill or be killed.<sup>14</sup>

The Creel Committee's unique contribution to the history of political training was the mobilization of 75,000 cheerleaders known as the Four-Minute Men. The Four-Minute Men invaded theaters, churches, and training camps to deliver their four-minute speeches on such subjects as "Why We Are Fighting," "Onward to Victory," "Unmasking German Propaganda," and "Back of the Trenches." If the soldier was really lucky, he might be treated to the Four-Minute Sing, which included such songs as "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean" and "Pack Up Your Troubles." As one history of the Creel Committee states: "Wherever an American might be, unless he lived the life of a hermit, it was impossible to escape the ubiquitous Four-Minute Men."<sup>15</sup>

Early in 1918 the War Department finally began to think about how to explain the political issues of the war to the soldier. More precisely, the War Department asked the nation's colleges, universities, and vocational schools to think about it. During the initial mobilization the Army discovered that it had far fewer skilled technicians than it needed and too many potential officers. The War Department created the Committee on Education and Special Training in February of 1918 to handle the problem. The committee mobilized the nation's vocational schools to train the required technicians. It also contracted with the nation's colleges and universities to keep the excess of potential officers occupied until German machinegunners could begin to readjust the temporary imbalance between supply and demand.

The schools that were cooperating with the Committee on

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Education and Special Training were asked to organize courses on the issues of the war. The committee felt that:

... in the interest of morale the soldiers should have an intelligent understanding of the cause for which they were called to fight. They should therefore know something about the historical and economic causes of the war, the problems of government which have played so important a part in it, and the national ideals of the various countries engaged in the struggle.<sup>16</sup>

The resulting War Issues Course, which was taught three hours a week in the colleges and universities and one hour a week in the vocational schools, combined the disciplines of history, government, economics, philosophy, and literature. The cooperation of other civilian agencies — including the World Peace Foundation, the American Geographic Society, the National Security League, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace — was also secured to assist in giving these special groups of soldiers an understanding of the war.<sup>17</sup>

The War Department did not begin to establish a systematic program of political training for the entire Army, however, until the spring of 1918. That it began at all was largely the result of the efforts of one man, Colonel Edward Munson, a Medical Corps officer who had the backing of the Surgeon General and of a large number of civilian psychologists. Colonel Munson believed that:

The efficiency of an army as a fighting force obviously depends on the willingness of its component individuals to contend and if necessary to die for ideas and ideals. Heretofore no systematic effort has been made to create, elaborate, explain and implant such ideals. They have been left to chance, hazard and casual environment. . . . Training has been focussed [*sic*] on giving the ability to fight, while the will to fight has been let to look out for itself. This is neither logical nor practical.<sup>18</sup>

It took him almost a year to convince the senior officers on the General Staff that:

The morale of an army of the United States . . . must be based solidly on convictions of justice of cause and the right of ideals and principles. This conviction can come



*Stephen D. Westbrook*

only through information and understanding. Education, the mainstay of democracy in peace, must also be its strength in war. . . . Ideas are as important as armament. Ensuring that the soldier is provided with both becomes a military duty.<sup>19</sup>

When the General Staff decided to give the mission of providing the soldier with psychological armament to one of its existing branches — where there had been no support for the idea in the first place — Colonel Munson had to begin his campaign of persuasion all over again. The Training and Instruction Branch, which received the mission first, dumped it on the Intelligence Branch in the summer of 1918 after having done nothing with it. Military intelligence saw it as a defensive concept and assigned the task to its Negative Branch, the overall mission of which was to protect “against activities and influences tending to impair our military efficiency by other than armed force.”<sup>20</sup>

Having seen his concept first ignored and then perverted, Colonel Munson finally convinced the General Staff to create a separate Morale Branch under his control, which it did in October. The new Morale Branch quickly established liaison with the Committee on Public Information, the Committee on Education and Special Training, and the Commission on Training Camp Activities. Utilizing advertising, recreational activities, movies, and lectures, an aggressive “Will to Win” program was initiated. More importantly, an institutionalized system to manage these activities began to form that was to include a morale officer in every regiment and at every training camp.<sup>21</sup> For the first time, the Army provided political training for the average soldier.

Colonel Munson defined morale as the “determination to succeed in the purpose for which the individual is trained, or for which the group exists.”<sup>22</sup> He believed that its key elements were belief in a cause; confidence in oneself, one’s unit, and the Army; teamwork; physical welfare; and common purpose. The overall basis of morale in his view was, however, patriotism and love of country.<sup>23</sup> Even though physical welfare constituted only part of morale in his theory, the Army hierarchy viewed the matter differently. The Morale Branch survived the end of the war by taking over the welfare activities managed during the war by civilian agencies. When the Army reorganized in 1921, the Morale Branch was dissolved and replaced by the Welfare Branch of the Personnel

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Division. Education directed toward patriotism, conviction, confidence, teamwork, and common purpose gave way to the management of recreation, civil relations, libraries, and post exchanges.<sup>24</sup> Political training subsequently disappeared from the Army for twenty years.

There were a few exceptions. For instance, in 1922 the War Department published *Training Manual No. 1: Studies in Citizenship*. It was designed to guide citizenship education for basic trainees. Although it had a rather broad conception of what constituted good citizenship, combining both English language instruction and the organization of the Army with American history and government, it represented a reasonable effort to provide the soldier with knowledge and understanding about his own political system. The following passage, which attempts to explain the rights and duties of citizenship, characterized the approach taken in the manual:

The duties of citizenship are always equal to its rights. If I can hold a man to his contracts, I ought (I owe it) to pay my own debts; if I may worship as I please, I ought to refrain from persecuting another on account of his religion; if my own property is held sacred, I ought to regard the property of another man as sacred; if the Government deals fairly with me and does not oppress me, I ought to deal fairly with it and refuse to cheat it. . . .<sup>25</sup>

The War Department experimented in 1927 with civic education in the citizens summer training camps.<sup>26</sup> The manual used addressed topics such as social responsibility, rule of law, economic responsibility, and purpose of government. Unfortunately, it contained (as was cited earlier) a great deal of chauvinistic material that brought it some ridicule. For instance, a commentator in *The Christian Century*, writing in a tongue-in-cheek style, identified the manual's tendency to distort historical fact:

I hasten to pronounce it vast in scope, unsurpassed in frankness, and — what is the word? — arresting. My major criticism of it is that in numerous particulars it is very, very perplexing, at any rate to a simple-minded layman. There are so many facts set forth which had, till now, escaped me!<sup>27</sup>



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Political training during the period from 1917 to 1940 had no clear overall direction and little impact on the average soldier. The activities of the Committee on Public Information were largely chauvinistic and propagandistic. It translated accurately, if simplistically, however, President Wilson's idealistic war aims and presented these to the soldier and the general population in a way that was understood and accepted. The War Issues Course of the Committee on Education and Special Training was largely one of orientation and civic education. The two experiments in political training after the war took divergent approaches — one education, the other indoctrination. It is unclear which way Colonel Munson's program would have gone if the war had not ended less than a month after he finally got it started.

What is clear about the whole period, though, is that no generally accepted theory of political training emerged from these experiments. As the Army prepared its mobilization plans for the next war, the idea that political training affected combat motivation or morale in general played no role. In a series of mobilization plans in effect up to the Second World War, provisions were made to deal with those factors that the Army believed to be important to morale.<sup>28</sup> These included almost every activity pertaining to administration and supply, such as leaves of absence, pay, food, shelter, insurance, family allowances, and postal service. No provisions were made, however, to inform the troops of the principles for which they were expected to fight. What the Army believed to be the essence of morale was clearly indicated in the designation of the officer charged with maintaining it — the Recreation Officer.

#### *1941-1945: The Second World War*

With the reinstatement of selective service in 1940, the Army was again faced with the problem of having to maintain the morale of the conscript soldier. Having established in July of 1940 the Morale Branch with the mission of managing welfare and recreation activities, the Army felt secure that it had learned its lesson from the First World War and would not again be caught short in the morale area.<sup>29</sup>

The first tangible evidence that something was amiss came from an article published in *Life* magazine in August, 1941. The article reported among other things the existence of the OHIO

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movement. The reporter had visited the 27th Division, which was made up largely of National Guardsmen, and found that:

The Division has its own unique "V campaign." Instead of a V, the word OHIO is chalked on walls of latrines, field-artillery pieces, and cars. It means OVER THE HILL IN OCTOBER.<sup>30</sup>

The article claimed that 95% of the soldiers believed that the national emergency declared by President Roosevelt (which had justified an extension of their active service) was a sham. As a result, 50% of the soldiers threatened to desert (go over the hill) once their year of service was up in October. It added that another 40%, while not talking desertion, rued the day they joined the Army.

Articles about griping soldiers were not new or unusual. What was new was the idea that the trouble might be caused by political factors. The *Life* article concluded that:

The most important single reason for the bad morale in this division appears to be national uncertainty. As far as the men can see, the Army has no goal. . . . If the U.S. political leaders have set any military objective, they have not made it clear to the Army.<sup>31</sup>

The intelligence division of the General Staff looked into the matter and found that, in their opinion, there was no real morale problem. They concluded that morale was satisfactory as long as the troops had plenty to keep them occupied.<sup>32</sup>

Fortunately, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General George C. Marshall, was not ready to dismiss the matter. When *The New York Times* contacted the War Department and offered to investigate in the interests of national security, the War Department consented. Mr. Hilton Howell Railey, a correspondent who had seen some military service during the First World War, conducted the investigation. The *Times* agreed not to publish the results because of the belief that "the United States has been at war since the signing of the Lend-Lease Act."<sup>33</sup> The final report was classified secret and remained so for 17 years.

After an extensive investigation, Mr. Railey concluded that:

. . . the morale of the United States Army, as I have sampled it from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is not reassuring.<sup>34</sup>



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He agreed with the *Life* article that the principal cause of low morale was a lack of political purpose. The mood of the soldiers at the time can be gleaned from a sample of the remarks recorded by Mr. Railey:

Roosevelt is trying to edge us into a war only 20% of the people want to fight.

Congress has access to as many sources of reliable information as the President. . . . Anyway, Congress is the voice of the people, and Congress says things aren't so bad as Washington tried to make out.

The government is fooling us. . . . We are being jockeyed into a war that we ought to damn well keep out of.

England will fight the war to the last Russian . . . . And then to the last American.

This is England's war, anyway.

What business have we got on the same side of the fence with the Russians.<sup>35</sup>

As one division chaplain summed up their views: ". . . they don't appreciate the gravity of the international situation. They don't even agree that it is grave. . . . They have been confused by the debate in Congress."<sup>36</sup>

Mr. Railey believed that the lack of purpose combined with distrust had made voluntary self-discipline very rare, except in Regular Army units. As a result, the officers had no real hold on the men, who did largely as they pleased. Mr. Railey reported that some strict officers were in physical fear of their own men, while others attempted to elicit compliance from unwilling soldiers through fraternization. Apparently, neither approach worked. Observing soldiers on weekend pass outside of Camp Polk, Louisiana, Mr. Railey claimed that he had "not seen an Army on leave but an undisciplined mob" and that he could have arrested 5,000 soldiers for "flagrant violations of the Articles of War" if he had had a sufficient military police force. His military driver, a corporal, stated the case more graphically: "What I have seen would make a maggot puke."<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Railey was so disturbed by what he found that he sent a preliminary report to the War Department. The Inspector Gen-

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eral investigated immediately. His report, based on the input from fifteen subordinate inspectors general, stated that "there is no serious morale situation." Lieutenant General Leslie McNair, who was in charge of General Headquarters and responsible for raising and training the Army, stated that any laxity of discipline could be rectified by the replacement of unfit commanders.<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Railey sent his final two-volume report directly to General Marshall. It caused quite a stir for three reasons. First, it documented explicitly the poor state of Army morale and discipline and thus removed any doubt about the need for rapid action. For example, General McNair sheepishly retracted his previous statements. In a letter to General Marshall he wrote: "These revelations are astounding. I . . . had no idea the discipline was in such a shocking state."<sup>39</sup> Second, it blamed the poor morale largely on political factors. Third, it challenged the whole Army approach to morale, which emphasized "entertainment and amusement." While the report recognized that there was little the Army could do about Congress, it suggested that the Army could at least put its own house in order. The report stated:

Stimulation of morale through hard work, through pride in the regiment, through knowledge of the Army organization and history, through stimulating the men with the knowledge that they are in the army for an important and vital purpose, and not merely wasting thirteen months of their lives — these are the things that the United States has completely forgotten.<sup>40</sup>

The report recommended that the War Department "undertake at the earliest possible moment to accomplish the understanding, both of officers and men, of the *revolutionary* (world-wide) nature of the conflict in Europe and the Far East."<sup>41</sup>

General Marshall accepted this recommendation and directed the War Department Bureau of Public Relations to prepare and to present Army-wide an orientation course on the international situation. The course, which did not get going until after Pearl Harbor was attacked, originally consisted of a series of lectures tracing the historical developments that led to war. It was later supplemented by current events discussions, lectures, and literature.<sup>42</sup>

This proved insufficient, however. As late as the end of 1942, many troops in North Africa had little idea what the war was all about. Many still thought that they were "helping someone out,



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fighting someone else's war."<sup>43</sup> To correct this deficiency, the U.S. Army copied the British system of weekly discussion periods. In 1943, Army Orientation became a part of every unit's weekly training schedule. The War Department provided most of the literature and films; the unit leaders led the discussions or gave the lectures. Thus, as one observer wrote in *Fortune* magazine:

Two years after Pearl Harbor, ten years after the first victory of German fascism, twelve years after the assault on Manchuria, and twenty-one years after Italian fascism glided into power, several million young Americans have been asked to think a little about the political disorders of our time.<sup>44</sup>

Army Orientation expanded constantly throughout the war, absorbing a majority of the personnel and budget of each organization given the mission of managing it. Eventually a separate division of the War Department had to be created to contain it.<sup>45</sup>

The mission of Army Orientation varied slightly with each of these expansions. However, by 1943 Army Orientation had stabilized and for the rest of the war its objectives were simply: "Know why we fight. Know our enemies. Know our allies. Know and have pride in outfit and personal mission. Know the news and its significance. Know and have faith in the United States and its future."<sup>46</sup>

At its highest levels, Army Orientation was a classy operation. The noted historian General S.L.A. Marshall wrote the initial doctrine that subsequently guided the program throughout the war. Much of its material was selected by a reference advisory committee that included, for example, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, editor of *Foreign Affairs*, and Dr. Guy Stanton Ford, executive secretary of the American Historical Association. Its contributors included Walter Lippmann (*U.S. Foreign Policy*), Alfred Vagts (*Hitler's Second Army*), R. C. Trevelyan (*A Shortened History of England*), and John D. Hicks (*A Short History of American Democracy*). Its guiding policy was to give the soldier the facts about the war and let him draw his own conclusions. Rather than attempt to indoctrinate the soldier with reasons why he should fight, orientation was designed to show the soldier the loose, threatening shape of contemporary history that would itself provide each man with his own reasons.<sup>47</sup>

A typical product of this approach was a pocket book dis-

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tributed to soldiers entitled *The War in Outline*.<sup>48</sup> Updated a number of times throughout the war, it included a historical summary of the war (Allied defeats were, however, minimized), historical documents of the United States (including the U.S. Bill of Rights, President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms Message, and the Atlantic Charter), and historical documents of the Axis powers (including the Anti-Comintern Pact and the September, 1940 Pact of Berlin between Germany, Italy, and Japan). Not all the material followed this approach, however, particularly as the war progressed and people like S.L.A. Marshall left. The most famous product of the program, the "Why We Fight" films, for instance, were much more than simple compilations of facts. They added profound emotional coloring, and were designed to "appeal to the heart as well as the head."<sup>49</sup> Materials produced by major headquarters also tended to be propagandistic, such as the "Army Talks" originally published by General Eisenhower's headquarters.

Unfortunately, many unit officers did not understand what the program was all about or the theory behind it. A report from one corps headquarters in 1942 stated: "The specific objective of the lectures is vague in the minds of many of the officers." As a result, substantial opposition was encountered from troop commanders who felt that "the new program would interfere with strictly 'military' training."<sup>50</sup> Consequently, weekly seminars were often not conducted. When they were given, discussion guides were sometimes read word for word as fast as possible just to meet the requirement. More often than not, the least competent officer in the regiment was made the orientation officer. Consequently, the end result was often disappointing to the soldiers who sat through it.<sup>51</sup>

As the war drew to a close, the character of orientation changed. First, its name was changed to Information and Education (I&E). Thus, the weekly classes were opened to a wide new range of topics. Second, the soldiers became rapidly less concerned with the causes and course of the war and more concerned with getting back home. As a result, the return-to-civilian life theme came to dominate the new I&E program. This emphasis met the soldier's desires and helped to insure a smooth demobilization. It also helped insure that the institutionalized system of information and education would not be disbanded as its predecessor had been after the last war.



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1946-1963: The Cold War

While the information and education system survived the war intact, it rapidly shifted most of its efforts away from political matters. It still attempted to keep the soldier informed on such topics as the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, and the Truman Doctrine. However, its primary emphasis was initially on employee relations. The purpose of the program was explained as being to convince the soldier that "the Government is a good employer, considerate of their welfare," "that they have a substantial opportunity for advancement or improvement," and "that the conditions of their service are the best possible under the circumstances."<sup>52</sup> As late as 1949 a general officer writing in *Social Education* presented the purpose of troop information as being "to keep the soldier alert, interested, and informed and to supply in part, at least, a remedy for those ancient occupational diseases of the military — apathy, boredom, and mental corrosion."<sup>53</sup> It had not taken very long for the findings of the Railey report to be forgotten.

A number of factors, however, brought the Army back into the political training business, and in greater strength than ever before. The first was the push for Universal Military Training, which awakened an interest in civic education. The concept that military duty itself magically taught good citizenship was deeply rooted in American lore. In 1923, for instance, the Secretary of War had declared that: "Nowhere else can a young man be taught so well what it means to be a citizen as in the Army. . . . If he chafes under military instruction, it is because . . . he is unwilling to lend himself to the restriction of a common cause. . . ."<sup>54</sup> In 1947, when the President's Advisory Commission on Universal Training recommended that "the primary emphasis . . . must be upon two things: Military training and instruction in the meaning and obligations of citizenship,"<sup>55</sup> the Army took the hint. Not only did the existing troop information program pick up on this theme, but an entirely new program was created. As a result of experiences at the Universal Military Training Experimental Unit at Fort Knox, the Chaplains Corps initiated its Character Guidance Program. On the assumption that "religious convictions continue to give our democratic faith a very large measure of its strength," the Chaplains Corps found itself a new mission: "to strengthen good citizenship in every military man."<sup>56</sup> The result, however, was chauvinistic inspiration rather than civic education. Although it changed names

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several times, this program (which will be discussed in detail later) ran a parallel course with troop information and education.

The heating-up of the Cold War added a second push back into the political training area. Anti-communist themes began appearing regularly in I&E material well before the Korean War, but the outbreak of war in 1950 accelerated the process. There were, after all, new "Why We Fight" films and "Know Your Enemy" pamphlets to be produced.

However, the key events that were to guide political training during the Cold War were domestic and occurred after the Korean War had ended. In 1953 and 1954 the Army was forced to defend itself before Senator Joseph McCarthy's Senate Committee on Government Operations which was investigating possible communist subversion and espionage in the Signal Corps.<sup>57</sup> In the course of the hearings, the Army charged that Senator McCarthy was using his position to secure special favors, and Senator McCarthy countercharged that the Army was not only knowingly harboring communists, but that it was attempting to discredit his committee in order to forestall further investigation into communist infiltration. The resulting brawl, the Army-McCarthy hearings, bloodied both combatants.<sup>58</sup> History would eventually show that the Army had not only won the battle, but in fact had done the nation a great service by being the only organization with enough courage to stop Senator McCarthy's rampage. At the time, however, it was very uncertain who had won. In the minds of many, the Army was tainted pink. The Army position was not helped when the Jenner Committee dug up evidence that a lieutenant colonel and a number of lower-ranking soldiers who had worked in Army Orientation had once been members of the Communist Party. The committee subsequently charged the Army with having taught during the Second World War "the wrong things" about the Soviet Union, China, and the communist world conspiracy.<sup>59</sup>

Victorious but seriously wounded, the Army was unwilling or unable to withstand a far more serious and in the long run more damaging attack — the assault by the right wing on the character of the American soldier who had fought in Korea. The performance of a few American POWs, which was largely misinterpreted, strengthened a widely held belief that the American soldier in Korea had not been sufficiently "patriotic." The findings of the Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War lent credence to this idea by declaring that "many of the POWs



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knew too little about the United States and its ideals and traditions" and "couldn't answer arguments in favor of Communism with arguments in favor of Americanism."<sup>60</sup> As late as 1962 this belief was a central theme of the Senate hearings on Military Cold War Education and Speech Review Policies.<sup>61</sup> If it had not been for Albert Biderman's book, *March to Calumny* — which put the POW problem into perspective — and the vigorous defense of the American soldier by people like S.L.A. Marshall — who called the charges that the American soldier displayed weakness in Korea "a perversion of history" — the character of the soldiers who fought in Korea might still be questioned.<sup>62</sup>

But before the erroneous charges could be shown to be just that, the Army collapsed under political pressure. The massive program of political indoctrination that followed would insure that the Army would not again be accused of being unpatriotic or soft on communism. The impact of these events can be seen in the changes and new editions of Army Regulation 355-5, "Troop Information and Education," that appeared during the period. The August, 1950 regulation stated that the objective of I&E was "to motivate and inform military personnel by providing . . . essential facts . . . to enable them to discharge their duties . . . with understanding."<sup>63</sup> This was still being accomplished through the weekly, one-hour discussion periods originated in the Second World War. The mission was not changed in the new edition of the regulation issued in January of 1951. The March, 1953 edition, while making provisions "to include programs designed to offset the effects of enemy propaganda," still evidenced little change in mission:

The troop information objective is to develop in the soldier an understanding of his role in the Army and of the events, conditions, policies, and official actions which affect him as an individual.<sup>64</sup>

The Korean War had made little impact. However, in November, 1953 a special change was published which added to the above statement with emphasis: "*and of the principles of American democracy as opposed to communist ideology.*"<sup>65</sup>

The 1955 regulation expanded this further, the new objectives being to develop in the soldier:

1. A firm conviction that the principles of American

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Democracy and freedom are sound and correct so that he is willing to fight and preserve them.

2. A determination to fight, a will to resist against military odds in combat, and to reinforce human endurance under physical, mental and emotional stress.
3. A conviction that — (a) He is of fundamental importance . . . (b) His unit is of fundamental importance . . . (c) He belongs to an organization which has a vital mission in a worthy cause that demands the utmost of him.<sup>66</sup>

By 1957 even this was deemed insufficient. Item (1) of the 1955 regulation was expanded to include:

- a. Belief in the principles of American democracy and freedom.
- b. Sense of responsibility as a citizen of the United States.
- c. Awareness of the threat of communism to America and the free world.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, a separate regulation established a special course of instruction for basic trainees that coupled an idealistic presentation of democratic principles and heritage with indoctrination on international communism, communism in the U.S.A., and defenses against communist propaganda.<sup>68</sup>

The resulting program of political indoctrination was controlled and managed, however, by the Department of Defense. Armed Forces Information and Education, which had been created in 1949 in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, had the responsibility for policy-making, planning, coordinating, and supervising the program. The Army was delegated the responsibility of implementing the plans and policies originated by the civilians in this office. Initially there was some resistance by the uniformed services to the onslaught of political indoctrination, although the Army was not in the forefront.

The concept of Militant Liberty and the background of its founder, John C. Broger, provide an insight into the nature of both the indoctrination program and the impotence of the uniformed services in resisting it. Militant Liberty was designed to be the American equivalent of the communist ideology. Mr. Broger had



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over some time written down the freedoms with which he thought we had been "endowed by our Creator." He came up with *seventy*. Then, as if the cosmic plan of the universe had been revealed to him, he discovered that there were also *seventy commensurate responsibilities* and *seventy communist techniques to subvert these freedoms*. He built *Militant Liberty* around this idea.<sup>69</sup> As a private consultant he sold his program to the hierarchy of the Defense Department. However, the uniformed services refused to use it. The Navy, for example, stated bluntly that they would not use the *Battle for Liberty* kits because they "savored too strongly of propaganda," "appealed to emotion not reason," and "were aimed at too low an education level." The Marine Corps added that the concept was based on hate and fear.<sup>70</sup>

One might suspect that this rejection in 1955 would have ended the matter. However, in 1956 Mr. Broger was appointed to be the Deputy Director of Armed Forces Information and Education. His credentials for the job were certainly in order — he had attended the Southern California Bible College and had founded the Far East Broadcasting Company, which was a propaganda organization designed to disseminate messages about Christianity and America throughout Asia. He remained deputy director until 1961, when he was made the Director of Armed Forces Information and Education. From these positions he made sure that the services used his concept (packaged a little differently) despite its savor of propaganda, hate, fear, emotion, and simple-mindedness. Moreover, he did so with the support of key members of Congress, like Senator Strom Thurmond, who believed that *Militant Liberty* was "one of the most outstanding contributions to the education of our military."<sup>71</sup> In the 1962 Senate hearings on cold war education Senator Thurmond, for example, encouraged Mr. Broger to continue his "dedication to promoting a better understanding of the menace of communism and the meaning of freedom" while he chastised the Army for not using the "toughest" and "hardest-hitting" materials they could get their hands on.<sup>72</sup>

In fact, Mr. Broger, and others of the same bent, needed little such encouragement. There were at that time 52 pamphlets, "fact" sheets, and films about communism (the bad guys) current in the Defense Department inventory and another 38 on the way.<sup>73</sup> Information about the good guys, the "Forces for Freedom," was usually integrated into this material. For instance, the *ALERT* series managed to couple pamphlets entitled "Origins of Free-

dom" and "The Truth about Our Economic System" with "From Marx to Now," "Soviet Treaty Violations," and "We Will Bury You." Even when the Forces for Freedom got separate billing, the thrust did not change. Pamphlets and films under this category bore such titles as "The Big Lie and You" and "Power for Peace." Moreover, the content was generally as simple-minded as the "good guy—bad guy" approach itself. For example, the "We Will Bury You" pamphlet captioned pictures with such startling and appalling revelations as "Famed Russian ballerina Galina Ulanova receives extra Government allotment and favors . . ." and "Top athletes, too, like Vasily Kuznetsov (above), live better than average workers. . . ."<sup>74</sup>

The contrast between the general thrust of this sort of indoctrination and the orientation of the Second World War is dramatic. So, too, is the background of those who ran the programs. It is little wonder that the Army took the opportunity to break away as soon as that opportunity presented itself. However, instead of shifting emphasis to another type of political training, the Army began to dismantle the system of political training itself.

#### *1964-1977: Vietnam and Post-Vietnam*

In 1964 the Army took its first step toward the eventual elimination of political training. It issued a regulation that changed Troop Information to Command Information. This was more than a name change. Command Information added the objective of providing "timely and factual information concerning laws, policies, regulations, and actions related to their professional and personal interests." The new program also freed commanders from the requirement to use the materials published by the Department of Defense. The commander was instructed to "plan and conduct instruction on subjects of his own selection to meet his unit's requirements."<sup>75</sup> In the absence of a generally accepted theory that might justify the expenditure of the unit's time for political matters, these changes subtly but effectively killed political training in the Army. Given the opportunity to instruct his soldiers in something that might bring immediate returns in administrative efficiency — such as the following week's training schedule, a future Army Training Test, or a new leave policy — rather than in some vague and distant political matter, most commanders took it. The 1972 edition of the regulation went a step further and freed the commander from the mandatory one-hour



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weekly discussion periods that had been the backbone of the system since 1943.<sup>76</sup>

Of course, with a new war to fight political training did not disappear overnight. Once again there were, for example, "Why We Fight" films to be produced. However, this time they were entitled the "V Series," and for good reason — *no one knew* why we were fighting. The president would declare that we were fighting to stop the spread of communism in Asia and immediately prominent congressmen, strategists, and editorialists would declare the president to be in error because the domino theory was not valid. In the Second World War, presidential proclamations like the Four Freedoms Message provided the basis for the Army's answer to this key question. In Vietnam, domestic dissent made it impossible for the Army to zero in on such a theme. Having been denied an explanation from the civilian sector, whence such explanations had always come in the past, the Army tried to come up with something on its own. For example, an Army Subject Schedule published in 1970, which was designed to guide a six-hour block of instruction, attempted to equate America's struggle for independence with the Vietnamese struggle and to compare American rights and freedoms with those supposedly sought by the Vietnamese.<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, such an approach suffered grievously in terms of credibility.

The Army for its part apparently did not feel strongly enough about the need to give its soldiers a reason for killing and being killed to make this need an issue with the Congress, the president, and the American people. Moreover, the whole problem was exacerbated by the internal emphasis in the Army information system having shifted from troop information to public relations. As a result much of the material presented to the soldiers bore the unmistakable mark of the PR man — the HYPE. Examples of this material include: "To Save American Lives — President Nixon Sends U.S. Troops into Cambodia," "General Haines Sees ARVN Units Gaining Confidence," and "Military Phase of Vietnamization Encouraging to Defense Officials."<sup>78</sup>

A common theme of the orientation materials of the Second World War was: "To order a soldier to kill without telling him why would be an error only less grave than ordering a soldier to kill without telling him how."<sup>79</sup> The *Fortune* article cited earlier expressed this concept more eloquently:

. . . no crime against the human spirit is so injurious as

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allowing a man to kill (or to be killed) without establishing a full account of his act in his own mind. And he must know because his experience will be merely grim, destructive, or physically exhausting unless he understands something of the nature of the war, the nature of the enemy, and of his America. . . . This does not mean that men always know why they are fighting, or that their reasons for fighting, if they have any, are particularly good. It does mean that the soldier is compelled to give some reason for his actions. Today military failure is always something more than military failure, and is usually social disintegration.<sup>80</sup>

In Vietnam most of the nearly three million men who fought there left without any, let alone a full, account of their actions.<sup>81</sup> The thoughts expressed in the above quotation proved to be highly prophetic in terms not only of the tremendous psychological problems faced by Vietnam veterans but also of the social disintegration that would accompany the war.<sup>82</sup> Without an explanation of political purpose in 1941, the Army began to come apart after only one year of peacetime mobilization. In Vietnam, the Army held out through years of fighting before succumbing — a remarkable testimonial to the fortitude and patriotism of the American soldier in the sixties and early seventies. In 1941, the confusing political debate in Congress and the destructive domestic dissent ended once soldiers began getting killed. In Vietnam the debate and dissent never ended, and the Army eventually became a casualty of the war.

The problems created by the war — alcohol and drug abuse, for example — occupied much of the post-Vietnam internal information effort. Most of the remainder was devoted to improving administrative efficiency by keeping the soldier informed of current policies.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the regulations governing Command Information maintained the rhetoric of the Cold War. The 1976 regulation still contained in its statement of objectives the mission of instilling in a soldier a sense of "Responsibility as a citizen of the United States . . ."; "Personal dedication to the country and a determination to preserve our heritage"; "The principles of American democracy and freedom"; and "The nature of external threats to the United States and the Free World."<sup>84</sup> However, these objectives were ignored at all levels. Even if commanders chose to deal with these subjects, and they generally did not, the



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Department of the Army and the Department of Defense provided little useful instructional material. For example, the bimonthly pamphlet, "Commanders Call" (published by the Army to provide material for commanders' discussions with troops), contained thirty-eight articles between July, 1976 and June, 1977. Only one of these, an article on legal rights, would have been useful for political education. The Department of Defense equivalent, the Defense Information Guidance Series, had 208 items listed as current in its December, 1976 catalogue.<sup>65</sup> These included twenty-two items on drug abuse, thirty-one on health and safety, and twenty-one on consumer protection. Twenty-nine items were categorized under the heading "international security affairs" and would have been useful for orientation classes. Ten items were categorized as "citizenship and patriotism." However, four of these — bearing titles such as "U.S. Savings Bonds" and "Bicentennial Bicycle Trail" — would have been of no value in civic education classes. The fact that only three percent of the items dealt with civic education in a period that contained both a national presidential election and the nation's 200th birthday is an indicator of the extent of concern for this area, despite the rhetoric. The fact that a *bicycle trail* was somehow considered to be related to patriotism and citizenship demonstrates the level and the amount of thought that the Defense Department paid to these subjects.

Not only had political education virtually disappeared from Command Information, but Command Information itself had virtually disappeared. For example, in 1954 the student officer at the Army Information School received 121 hours of instruction directly related to troop information support, including fifty-four hours of "citizenship, history, and government." In 1976 the student officer received at its successor, the Defense Information School, two hours of command information support.<sup>66</sup>

While the Command Information people were bowing out of the political training business, the Army Chaplaincy was making its last big push in the area. Character Guidance was replaced in the early 1970's with the Moral Heritage and Human Self-Development programs. These programs, designed to sustain the "moral foundations of dedicated citizenship," were based on a series of pamphlets, each of which contained five or six lessons. The soldier was to receive six hours of instruction from these lessons in basic and advanced individual training and then one hour a month in his unit. These lessons represented a curious combina-

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tion of internal political indoctrination and social morality. The pamphlets mixed indiscriminately subjects like "My Country," "Personal Freedom," and "Our Heritage," with "The Marriage Go-Round," "Fair Play," and "Ambition."<sup>87</sup> However, these programs failed to be accepted at the troop level almost from the very beginning. A 1971 evaluation conducted by the U.S. Army Chaplain Board found that there was "an almost suffocating blanket of annoyance about the program as people have experienced it.

The Character Guidance, Moral Heritage, Human Self-Development series were all largely chauvinistic in their political aspects. They frequently attempted to manipulate the patriotic emotions that they tried to arouse for their own purposes. For example, Training Circular 16-5, which governed Character Guidance training, declared in paragraph 4a that:

Instruction in character guidance is confined to ethical and philosophical ideals which stress the moral principles that sustain the philosophy of American freedom, particularly as it is set forth in the opening paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>89</sup>

However, in paragraph 4b these ideals had become "prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance."<sup>90</sup> It takes an imaginative interpretation of the Declaration of Independence to find temperance and prudence in it. The signers had, after all, just started a revolution — hardly a temperate or prudent action. The concept became even more elusive in paragraph seven, which is entitled "clean speech":

The American soldier who is serving under the American flag believes and holds to the truth that he defends right and justice. The way our citizen soldiers act and speak while in foreign countries portray to the people of these countries what the United States as a whole is like. Unjust acts and profane speech can give these people an altogether wrong picture of us as Americans.<sup>91</sup>

Few would disagree with the proposition that it is not a good idea to swear at the German and Korean nationals. However, using the American flag, truth, justice, and the American way to get the point across represents a distressing perversion.



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In January, 1977, a new regulation in essence disbanded these programs, although it left most of the literature in the system.<sup>92</sup> After thirty years the Chaplains Corps finally abandoned the mission of being, as one officer in the Chief of Chaplains Office expressed it, "cheerleaders for democracy."

One of the manifestations of the morale crisis in the late 1960's, race relations, caused the creation of a new political training program. Although Race Relations/Equal Opportunity was never presented as such, it was in fact a highly successful exercise in civic education.

In the summer of 1969 major violent racial incidents at Forts Dix, Belvoir, Carson, Gordon, Hood, Jackson, Knox, Lee, Sheridan, Bragg, and Sill — as well as in all major overseas areas — brought the realization that the Army had a problem. The response by the Department of the Army to this morale crisis was remarkably similar to the response by the War Department to the morale crisis of 1941. The Department of the Army directed that a basic block of instruction be developed and that seminars be held at every major installation. Again, one-time seminars proved inadequate, and again the Army established an institutionalized political education program. Department of the Army provided the materials, unit leaders conducted the mandatory instruction. Just as it had finally been necessary to add an additional officer to the regimental staff to manage the orientation effort, it became necessary to add a Race Relations/Equal Opportunity Officer to each brigade staff. The two responses differ, however, in that Race Relations/Equal Opportunity supplemented education with an affirmative action arm that helped insure the program's effectiveness.

The Army conducted major reassessments in 1974 and 1977 and in both cases reported substantial progress.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps as a result of this confidence, an Army Regulation published in June, 1977 combined the two programs under the Equal Opportunity banner and did away with the requirement for mandatory seminars.<sup>94</sup> Instruction was still recommended, and it was in fact still carried out in most units. However, many of the recommended topics became very nonspecific, such as "Problem Solving," "Peer Group Influences," "Your Unit, Your Army," and "Off-Post Problems."<sup>95</sup> The old pattern of administrative concern had begun to assert itself.

By the end of 1977 the U.S. Army was back to where it had

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begun in 1917 in terms of political training. Once again the area was a "no-man's land" into which no one penetrated.



## IV

### ASSESSMENT

There are certainly many historical and bureaucratic reasons for the demise of political training in the U.S. Army. However, the most salient reason appears to be that there never has been much support within the Army itself for such training. There are few studies that document the rationale for this rejection. What is documented, however, are the constant efforts by unit commanders to avoid political training, the frequent attempts to make it more palatable to them by restructuring it, and the career stigma attached to being assigned to manage it.<sup>96</sup> The history of political training indicates clearly that it has largely been imposed on the Army—by morale crises, wars, and domestic politics. In each case, when the crisis abated, the war ended, or the domestic political situation changed, the Army dismantled the system or diverted it to administrative functions, preferring to rely on its traditional methods of motivation: recreation and physical welfare.

A cursory explanation of why the Army has rejected political training would be that it was tried, considered, and found wanting. However, this explanation is grossly inadequate for two reasons. First, there are serious grounds to doubt whether the criteria by which the programs appear to have been evaluated were valid. For example, Army Orientation was declared by some to be a failure because it did not instill in the soldier a sense of personal commitment to the government's war aims. However, there is a real question of whether it is necessary to turn a soldier into a "true-believer" in order to improve his willingness to fight. Second, the explanation of ineffectiveness, even if based on valid criteria, does not explain whether the ineffectiveness was inherent in the theory itself, or whether the fault lay in the application.

Consequently, in attempting to answer the two questions raised originally in this study — why has the U.S. Army rejected the idea that political training can influence combat motivation, and is that rejection correct — we must consider both the criteria for judging effectiveness and the potential effectiveness of the

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different types of political training under various circumstances. To make these judgments, we must first examine the subject of combat motivation.

### *Combat Motivation*

The most basic fact about combat motivation is that the soldier rarely fights unless he is told to do so. There are exceptions, the most common being when an individual is forced by the enemy into circumstances where the only means of survival is to fight. A second exception is the presence on any battlefield of a few men who seek out battle for its own sake. But for the rest, under most circumstances *combat is undertaken as an act of compliance with an organizational demand for the purpose of achieving some common goal.*

Considering only offensive operations, examples are obvious. The rifleman attacks the enemy along with the rest of his squad because he has been told to do so by his squad leader, who in turn has been so ordered by his platoon leader. One rarely finds an individual, a squad, or a platoon requesting permission to assault a dangerous objective. The case of defensive operations is less obvious because with the enemy initiating the action the individual is more likely to be forced into the situation mentioned above, where the only means of survival is to fight. But even in the defense on the modern battlefield retreat from danger is not only a viable option in most cases, it may also be the safest option for the short term. When the individual stands and fights, he does so as an act of compliance with the demands of the military organization.<sup>97</sup>

There are essentially three types of power that the leadership can use to bring about this compliance: coercive, remunerative, and normative. Coercive power rests in the actual or threatened application of physical sanctions. Remunerative power rests on the control of material resources and rewards. Normative power is based on the allocation and manipulation of symbolic rewards and deprivations. This last type of power — which can also be referred to as persuasive, manipulative, or suggestive power — is achieved, for example, through the employment of expressive leadership, manipulation of mass media, and the allocation of esteemed prestige symbols.<sup>98</sup>

The type of power used will largely depend on the involvement of the individual from whom compliance is being elicited. The types of involvement differ according to the orientation of the



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participants. "Alienative involvement designates an intense negative orientation . . . Calculative involvement designates either a negative or a positive orientation of low intensity . . . Moral involvement designates a positive orientation of high intensity."<sup>99</sup> Moral involvement may be pure in that it rests on abstract values and secondary symbols, such as honor, prestige, or patriotism; or it may be social, in that it rests on sensitivity to social groups, particularly primary groups. Pure moral involvement tends to develop vertical or hierarchical relationships. Social involvement tends to develop horizontal or peer relationships.<sup>100</sup>

When combined, the two elements — power and involvement — constitute a compliance relationship. There are nine possible relationships if one matches the three means of control with the three types of involvement. Of the nine, however, only three are congruent, or consistent, in that the kind of involvement of the lower participants and the kind of involvement that tends to be generated by the predominant form of power are the same. These three relationships are most common because they are most effective, and in any sort of competitive situation the less effective types will be consumed or destroyed. The three congruent types of relationship are coercive power-alienative involvement, remunerative power-calculative involvement, and normative power-moral involvement.<sup>101</sup>

Conditions of the battlefield and of society in the 20th century have necessitated a reliance on the normative power-moral involvement compliance relationship. The tremendous destruction of the modern battlefield makes remunerative power ineffective. There are no tangible incentives or rewards that are great enough to induce soldiers on a mass scale to withstand the deprivation and danger of modern battle. Battlefield and social conditions combine to eliminate coercion as a principal means of control in modern military organizations. The physical extension of battle, which causes it to be conducted by small, widely dispersed groups of soldiers, makes physical control and hence coercion impossible. Even if society allowed leaders to use coercion to force men to endure the terror of the battlefield, the organizational leadership physically could not accomplish the task. But, of course, most societies do not allow the use of force to the degree that would be necessary. The United States, for instance, has executed only one man since the Civil War for purely military offenses.

Therefore, modern armies, particularly in the West, must rely

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predominantly on a normative compliance pattern if they are to be effective. This compliance pattern is itself ultimately dependent upon the existence of a moral bond between the soldier and some larger collectivity. *This moral bond represents the key to military compliance and hence success in battle.*

The moral bond between the individual soldier and some larger collectivity is formed not by coercion or calculation, but rather through social and political values and secondary symbols. As long as the demands of that collectivity are determined to be right and proper in terms of these values and symbols, the demands will be accepted as legitimate. Once accepted as such, they will be complied with. As long as they are complied with, a military organization will be able to maintain its integrity and remain effective.

There are three collectivities with which these moral bonds are most commonly formed. The first is the primary group. The evidence is overwhelming that bonds between peers — developed by physical proximity during stress, the requirement of interdependence to insure survival, and the need for psychological comfort — allow the soldier to endure combat.<sup>102</sup> However, primary group goals are not necessarily the same as organizational goals. In fact, high peer cohesion can be equally as effective in building resistance and noncompliance as it can in developing compliance.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the peer bond is necessary but not sufficient; it must be accompanied by a hierarchical or vertical bond.

Such a bond is often formed between a soldier and his unit. This bond, referred to as *esprit de corps*, results from a communal feeling of belonging. It produces a sense of loyalty to the unit as an abstract entity in itself and to the other members of the unit as a group. This loyalty helps sustain the soldier in meeting the demands of battle.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately, war rarely allows a unit the time and personnel stability necessary to build the complex set of personal relationships and the sense of tradition and history necessary to build *esprit* to the point where it can, in itself, sustain the soldier in battle. Even in peace this is often not possible. For example, many units in the U.S. Army currently experience more than a one-hundred percent turnover in personnel each year as a result of the constant rotation of personnel to Europe and Korea.

Consequently, the key relationship, particularly for noncareer enlisted soldiers, is between the soldier and his nation. It is largely because of this national moral involvement that the soldier accepts



military demands as legitimate. National identity produces a sense of obligation to comply — to obey.

The moral involvement of a soldier with his nation rests largely on an emotional attachment produced by the acceptance of the nation's ideology, that is, the shared set of values, beliefs, and practices concerned with social and political life that define what is right and proper. The American ideology, for example, centers on such concepts as equality, liberty, tolerance, and due process of law. The acceptance of the national ideology "... implies that the individual regards the authority of the state and hence its specific demands (within some broadly defined range) as legitimate."<sup>105</sup> This becomes particularly significant in times of national crisis, when the state demands sacrifices from its citizens that they would not ordinarily make if they were acting purely out of self-interest. For the individual who possesses a moral involvement with his nation, the nation's requirements are expected to supersede, and do supersede, all competing role obligations. The strength of this involvement becomes clear when one notes that many of the obligations which are superseded are tied to primary group relations, such as one's family, that are far more central to a person's daily life than his relationship to the state.

There are two distinct types of national commitment that produce a moral involvement. These types have been described as *symbolic commitment* and *normative commitment*.<sup>106</sup> Those individuals whose commitment is manifestly symbolic will evidence characteristics such as strong positive affection for national symbols, i.e., the flag and the national anthem; an emphasis on learning and enacting the national role; defensiveness against criticism of the national way of life; and approval of actions which would extend this way of life. They will oppose policies that would weaken national sovereignty or reflect negatively on national honor. Such individuals, who might be referred to as ideologues or super-patriots, make up only a small portion of the population.<sup>107</sup>

The great majority of individuals are morally bound to the nation by a normative commitment. For these individuals, who have a low degree of active symbolic commitment, their national role is latent much of the time. Other roles (such as primary group, occupational, or community) will be their principal concern in their daily lives. However, they will perceive conformity to the national role, and acceptance of its demands, as important in maintaining their identity with the nation. Such persons feel a mild positive

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affection for national symbols; tend to support policies that preserve and protect the national way of life; manifest a relatively low level of information, participation, and interest in political affairs; and accept the responsibilities of the national role with expectations that others will also accept them.<sup>108</sup> Although the person with such a commitment is not an ideologue, ideology still plays a major role in his motivations. From the individual's point of view, the significance of the national ideology is not that it directly "causes him to do" what is demanded, as in the case of the ideologue, but that it gives him a "cause for doing."<sup>109</sup>

A condition of estrangement or separation from the nation can be defined as alienation. Alienation may be diffuse, resulting from a long-term failure of political socialization process; or it may be specific, resulting from disillusionment.<sup>110</sup> War-related alienation is usually of the latter type. It manifests itself in feelings of meaninglessness, isolation, and cynicism. A sense of meaninglessness can also be produced when the soldier begins to question the worth of the war. The soldier evaluates, however crudely, the cost of the war and compares it to the possible gains. War aims are critical because they may serve to offset the cost. If war aims cannot be tied to the national ideology, however simplistically, then the aims become insufficient to require further prosecution of the war. A sense of meaninglessness can also be produced if there is a lack of a high degree of consensus about the value of what the soldier is doing. The "rightness" of the action, which is the basis of normative compliance, is itself based on the opinion of others. If this consensus is lost, as it surely will be if the nation allows extreme dissent over the value of the war, then the act of compliance loses meaning.

Alienation in terms of isolation may occur when the soldier begins to believe that he is being exploited, that he is being used as a means for the benefit of another's end. This feeling can be produced when the distribution of threat and deprivation is clearly inequitable. It can also occur when the soldier begins to believe that he is expendable. A lack of material and psychological support from the home front, the feeling that "nobody gives a damn about us," will produce a similar result. A sense of cynicism, or lack of trust, can develop from lack of military success. More commonly, it results from the inability or unwillingness of the leadership to control the defeatist debate that is potentially present in all but the most successful military organizations.



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In summary, every soldier consciously or unconsciously makes a single decision that more than any other factor governs his behavior in combat. He decides whether the demands made upon him by the military organization are legitimate or illegitimate. If he determines that they are legitimate, he may not necessarily be an effective soldier but at least he has the potential. He may not fight because of a lack of primary group support. He may not fight because of a breakdown in the system of command and control. But at least he will feel a sense of obligation to comply and hence is subject to the system of normative appeals that has become associated with traditional military leadership.

#### *The Potential Value of Political Training*

In assessing the potential value of each of the types of political training, we will concentrate on four areas: salience in building national bonds; salience in maintaining those bonds by resisting alienation; the percentage of soldiers likely to be affected; and the applicability to conditions of war and peace.

The value of political indoctrination, whether it be chauvinistic inspiration or threat propaganda, is essentially governed by three of its inherent characteristics: a reliance on symbols, manipulation through emotions, and the use of distortion and half-truth. The heavy reliance of political indoctrination on symbols and emotions, rather than on reason, seriously limits its effectiveness for the majority of the population, that is, those soldiers with a normative rather than a symbolic national commitment. Soldiers with a highly symbolic national commitment are likely to respond very favorably to political indoctrination. These soldiers represent the ideological "hard core," the "true believers." Chauvinistic material tends to give these soldiers meaning and purpose and convinces them of the rightness of their actions. Threat propaganda allows them to justify their behavior, which often tends toward excessive violence, in terms of some greater good that they are serving.

The evidence is rather substantial that the symbolically committed soldier is generally an effective soldier.<sup>11</sup> He is very valuable to the organization because of his zealotry, energy, and unselfishness. However, the percentage of soldiers that evidence a symbolic commitment, and hence a susceptibility to indoctrination, is very small. For example, in the German army in the Second World War this percentage was estimated to be no more than ten to

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fifteen percent, despite the intense Nazi indoctrination effort.<sup>112</sup> When combat veterans in the U.S. Army during the Second World War were asked what kept them going in battle, only two percent said patriotism and only another three percent gave related answers such as "belief in what I am fighting for."<sup>113</sup>

The majority of American soldiers, those with a nonsymbolic, normative commitment, are not susceptible to indoctrination. Attempts to develop "will" and "determination" through chauvinism and propaganda are doomed to fail with these soldiers. The profound skepticism of American soldiers toward political and ideological appeals in the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War is well documented. Not only did they resist such appeals from outsiders, they also developed internal taboos against them.<sup>114</sup>

The fact that political indoctrination can produce "will" and "determination" in only a small percentage of the soldiers does not mean that it does not serve other purposes for the rest. What it can do for the normatively committed soldier is to help maintain his bonds with the nation by resisting alienation. The use of national symbols will not instill personal commitment to the war, but it can bring a positive emotional response. Chauvinistic material assists the soldier in establishing that his acts are right and proper in the eyes of the nation, helps him to overcome the destructive belief that "nobody gives a damn," and assists the leadership in combating defeatism and in instilling a belief in ultimate success. In addition, it can help the national leadership in the necessary task of connecting the immediate demands of battle with the national ideology. Propaganda about the enemy serves to reinforce a belief in the worth of a war and to make destructive acts, such as the bombing of the enemy's urban population, more psychologically tolerable.

However, there are three major factors which limit the value of these types of political training, even in resisting alienation. First, dependence on the use of emotion limits not only the circumstances when it can be effective but also the duration of that effectiveness. Emotions wear off quickly, particularly for the combat soldier. If emotional appeals are to be effective, the soldier must be constantly bombarded with them. But under such bombardment he will quickly become jaded. Political indoctrination, therefore, will become ineffective during a long war. Moreover, it has virtually no role in peacetime. Indeed, it will be counter-



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productive. Overexposure in peace will produce conditions such that when an emotional response is needed in war, it will not be forthcoming. Second, the reliance of indoctrination on distortion and half-truth can produce a dangerous backlash. For example, a soldier's confidence will be eroded rather than sustained if he is being told of glorious victories by his leaders while his personal experience tells him that he is being defeated. Also, the soldier may commit atrocities after having been constantly told that his enemy is subhuman and then suffer psychological damage when he finds the enemy in fact to be very human. Finally, and most importantly, political indoctrination does nothing at all to build moral bonds with the nation; it merely manipulates those that already exist.

In summary, political indoctrination has a significant effect in building combat motivation for a small percentage of true believers, a limited effect in resisting alienation over a short period of time in war, no value at all in peace, and no value in building the bonds that ultimately sustain the soldier in battle.

Orientation, likewise, has little value in building bonds; but its ability to maintain them far surpasses that of indoctrination. The orientation approach is effective both in war and in peace. Because it is based on fact and reason, it does not have the duration limitations of indoctrination nor does it require an emotionally charged atmosphere. In addition, it appeals to the majority of the soldiers, those with a normative rather than a symbolic commitment. Moreover, the approach is consistent with what the soldier experiences in society as a whole. He is given the facts and then allowed through his own cognitive processes to reach a conclusion. The effectiveness of this approach has long been established in American military leadership. Since the Revolutionary War, commanders have found that the American soldier must be given an adequate and intelligent explanation of the things he is called upon to do.

As long as a sense of obligation already exists, orientation can become a significant factor in resisting alienation. The fact that the leadership is taking the trouble to explain things to the soldier helps to create a sense of legitimacy for the organization's demands and assists in fighting off feelings of isolation. Orientation also helps combat cynicism and meaninglessness by instilling confidence and establishing the causes and aims of the war. During the Second World War, for example, a survey of U.S. Army personnel early in 1943, when military defeats still substantially outnumbered vic-

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tories, determined that less than one percent conceded the enemy even a chance of winning the war.<sup>115</sup> Throughout the Second World War over ninety percent of the soldiers surveyed consistently responded that they thought the war was being fought for reasons they personally felt were worth fighting for.<sup>116</sup> Among infantrymen stationed in the United States in 1944 only seven percent responded that they very often got the feeling that the war was not worth fighting. Among combat infantry veterans overseas, who were doing most of the dying, only eleven percent felt this way. Forty-nine and thirty-one percent respectively stated that they *never* felt the war was not worth fighting.<sup>117</sup> Certainly, not all of this confidence and purpose resulted directly from Army Orientation. However, the contrast between these attitudes and those reported by Mr. Railey in 1941 is great, and Army Orientation contributed to some degree.

Civic education has the same advantages of applicability and relevance as does orientation. It potentially can be effective with most soldiers, and it is not constrained by circumstances or time. Thus it can be used in both peace and war. In addition, however, it is the only form of political training that builds national bonds. As a result, all the forms of political training benefit from its results.

The American military has had little experience with civic education, so it is difficult to determine precisely how effective it can be in the U.S. environment. Clearly, formal instruction cannot in itself develop a national bond, particularly if the soldier has already been severely alienated by previous social experience when he enters the service. However, similar objections have been considered by the West Germans and rejected with regard to *Innere Führung*. More significantly, such objections have not stopped the Soviet military from conducting a massive amount of civic education.

Thus, political education in the form of orientation and of civic education can play a significant role in ensuring military compliance by building and maintaining national bonds. Moreover, political education is potentially effective with most soldiers and is valuable both in war and in peace.

Figure 2 provides a summary and a comparison of the potential value of political education and political indoctrination in the military environment.



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	<i>Political Education</i>	<i>Political Indoctrination</i>
<b>Conditions when Effective</b>	War or Peace	War
<b>Proportion of Soldiers Likely to be Affected</b>	Majority	Minority
<b>Ability to Maintain National Bonds</b>	Substantial	Limited
<b>Ability to Build National Bonds</b>	Moderate	None

**Figure 2. Comparative Summary of the Value of Political Education and Political Indoctrination**

V

## CONCLUSION

Part of the answer to the question why the U.S. Army has rejected political training is that the Army often used the wrong criteria in evaluating it. The Army apparently expected political training to do something that it cannot do, except for a very few people — instill "will" and "determination." Consequently, the success of Army Orientation was largely overlooked. While the true believer is generally an effective soldier, he is not the backbone of the Army. In trying to produce him, the Army neglected those things that motivate and sustain the average soldier. This may also have contributed, together with a narrow definition of what constitutes political training, to the Army's overlooking the implications of the success of its only major civic education effort — Race Relations/Equal Opportunity.

The greater part of the answer, however, is that when political training has not been ignored completely, it has mainly been misapplied. The most valuable type, civic education, has rarely been used; the least valuable types, chauvinistic inspiration and threat propaganda, have been used in abundance. With the two exceptions mentioned above, the wrong types of programs have been used at the wrong times, usually in a crude and simple-minded manner. The most prominent example is the massive political indoctrination program of the fifties and early sixties. When it was conceived, there was virtually no theory or empirical evidence that would have suggested that it might be successful. And there is none in retrospect. This error of excess was followed by one of omission. After belatedly halting this inappropriate political indoctrination program, we sent our soldiers off to war expecting them to be sustained by cold beer and public relations. As war-related alienation — manifesting itself in a sense of meaninglessness, cynicism, and isolation — gradually began to destroy the soldier's sense of national obligation, the Army responded with an increasing reliance on welfare functions and administrative programs designed to treat the symptoms rather than the causes of that alienation.

Nor can the general ineffectiveness of these misapplied pro-



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grams be blamed on poor management. The people called upon to run these programs gave exactly what one would expect them to have given: the chaplains gave inspirational sermons, the cold-war zealots disseminated vainglorious patriotism and threat propaganda, and the public relations man gave the soldier the hype. Perhaps the real question should be why those who should have had the best understanding of combat motivation, the combat arms officers, gave so little thought to its political dimensions even though the professional military journals of our potential enemies were literally saturated with such thought. Four answers suggest themselves.

First, and most importantly, as one private soldier discerned almost forty years ago, "*the Army seems to think that morale is a leg show.*"<sup>118</sup> The intelligence officer who followed up the 1941 *Life* allegations gave what could be the definitive statement of Army morale dogma: "the soldiers in camps having the most activity were the least inclined toward complaining; . . . dissension was obviously in direct ratio with inactivity."<sup>119</sup> The negative consequences in 1941 of this attitude were quickly forgotten, however. Twenty-five years later we even tried to fight a war with this concept of morale. The 1966 Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army took obvious pride in reporting that to aid troop morale the Army had "increased the authorized strength of the U.S. Army Chaplaincy," had made changes resulting in increased "sales volume of commissary stores," had "established a television station for troops in Vietnam," and had shipped to Vietnam "4,240 television sets."<sup>120</sup> As this report was being published, a noted sociologist, Charles C. Moskos, Jr., discovered that when he asked a group of soldiers in Vietnam why they were there, twenty-seven of thirty-four answered in terms of their own personal misfortune. Typical responses were: "My tough luck in getting drafted"; and "My own stupidity for listening to the recruiting sergeant." Only five initially responded in a way that would have provided them with even the vaguest sense of purpose — to stop Communist aggression.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps fewer television sets and a little bit of explanation as to why we were fighting would have lessened the tremendous psychological impact of the war on the veterans of 1966. It might also have saved a few aggressive officers later in the war from being assassinated by men who thought that these leaders might get them killed for what was perceived to be no purpose.<sup>122</sup>

Second, the Army has historically been overconcerned with

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instrumental skills, forgetting that without the motivation to use those skills they are worthless. The Railey Report records a classic statement to this effect, provided by a major general who was a division commander:

I don't pretend to know what my men think about the world situation, or anything else for that matter and I see no point in asking them. . . . All I know is that their spirit — judged by their performance in the field, out there in the heat, right now — is excellent.<sup>123</sup>

In fact, their spirit (and probably their performance also) was not excellent. Unless there is some larger purpose behind it, marching in the sun is a meaningless act to most citizen soldiers, and it was treated as such in most of the Army in 1941.

The military function as a whole is meaningless when divorced from political purpose. The armed forces exist to protect the nation's political system. *To fail to provide the soldier with an understanding of that political system, and of his role in it, is to effectively deny him any sense of real value in what he is doing, outside of the fact that he is bringing home a paycheck.*

Third, the concept of political training has been largely misunderstood and misinterpreted. To most military officers political training evokes one of two images. The first is domestic politics, with which most officers have no desire to get involved. Such an interpretation led the general officer directly responsible for the Army's political education effort in the Second World War to declare defensively to Edward R. Murrow: "The Army has always stayed out of politics, and it is going to stay out of politics now."<sup>124</sup> This is a tough trick to do while explaining the causes, consequences, and ultimate aims of a war. The second image is that of the political commissar making the Soviet soldier memorize and recite the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Both views are naive and based on misinformation, but both preclude any general acceptance of political training as a useful and essential tool.

Fourth, as a result of the above misunderstanding and misinterpretation, political training is considered by most officers to be inappropriate in terms of U.S. civil-military relations. Again, this view is erroneous. Congress, for example, has not only given the military a free hand in the political indoctrination and education of its soldiers, it has criticized the Army more times for not doing enough of it than for doing it to excess. The 1962 Senate hearings



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on cold-war education represent only one such example. The attitude of most congressmen was expressed by Senator J. William Fulbright in his book *The Pentagon Propaganda Machine* — tell your soldiers whatever you want, just don't try to foist it off on the American public.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, the belief persists that political training is a sensitive subject that is not worth getting involved in.

This belief appears to be largely the result of the relief of Major General Edwin A. Walker in 1961. Many still believe the right-wing distortion that General Walker was relieved for being too pro-American and too anti-communist. This simply is not true. General Walker could have told his troops any lie or half-truth about the American way of life as long as it was positive, or about the communists as long as it was negative, and he would have had no trouble.<sup>126</sup> Actually, he probably would have been commended by Mr. Broger and presented with a Freedoms Foundation Award. General Walker, in fact, was relieved for some very un-American activities, such as the removal from base libraries of books with which he did not personally agree. Not only did he accuse Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, Eric Sevareid, and Eleanor Roosevelt of being communists or Communist controlled, in later Senate testimony he also accused top Defense Department officials like Robert McNamara and Adam Yarmolinsky of being in collusion with international communism. He indicted and convicted himself in that testimony, stating, for instance: "I was a scapegoat for an unwritten policy of collaboration and collusion with the international Communist conspiracy . . ."<sup>127</sup> General Edwin Walker was a psychologically sick man, as later events would demonstrate. Unfortunately, he left a legacy that has helped to block serious consideration within the military itself of the importance of political training.

Few would argue that the famous Clausewitzian dictum that war is an extension of politics has lost its validity. If there is a need for the soldier to understand war, then there is also a need for him to understand politics. Without the latter, the former is meaningless. In peace as well as war, the soldier needs to find answers to such political questions as: Where do I come in? What is to be gained by my sacrifice? What is the value of the system I am expected to give my life to preserve? How do I know that I am not being exploited for someone else's gains?

Many who think that high morale can be built with a keg of beer, a baseball game, and a three-day pass believe that soldiers do

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not ask themselves these questions. In this belief they underestimate both their own soldiers' intelligence and the strength of the democratic idea in this country. American soldiers have always asked these questions and are likely to continue to do so. Although the soldier may lose sight of them temporarily in the heat of battle, they resurface in the quiet times when the real decisions about the legitimacy of the demands on him are made. If the soldier's leaders cannot give him a reasonable answer to these and other questions, he will ask elsewhere. As in Vietnam, the answers the soldier receives from other sources may result in the actual or near disintegration of the Army.

Although the American experience with political training has been largely one of misapplication and misinterpretation, it does not follow that political training does not have a valuable role to play in war and peace. Civic education may help build the moral bond between the soldier and his nation that ultimately produces compliance with military demands. Orientation can reinforce that bond by helping the soldier to resist feelings of meaninglessness, isolation, and cynicism. Even chauvinistic inspiration and threat propaganda have important, if limited, applications in war, serving to establish the rightness of the soldier's actions in his own mind and helping to control defeatism.

Looking back over the history of the last sixty years, it is easy to see how, prior to Vietnam, the importance of political training could have been missed. After Vietnam it is difficult to understand how its significance can continue to be ignored. Well-armed and well-maintained armies without political purpose or political training collapsed, one on drugs and the other under fire. The under-armed enemy, living in great physical deprivation, persevered to eventual victory. The enemy credited this perseverance to a strength produced by political purpose that was itself guided by political training. Perhaps it is time to believe him. The fact that the American experience with political training has been largely unfortunate should not cause us to ignore the value of political training when it is properly applied. Both the Army and the nation have not only the opportunity, but the obligation, to learn from our enemies and our allies, as well as from our own mistakes and successes. If we do not, the results could be devastating to our national security.



## NOTES

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the United States Army's experience with these types between 1917 and 1977. The third assesses the value of that experience both theoretically and empirically. Based on the preceding analysis, the final section concludes that the United States Army has rejected political training because of a negative historical experience, itself the product of misapplication, misunderstanding, and misinterpretations. However, political training—especially such types as civic education and foreign events orientation—can be very valuable in both war and peace if properly applied. By rejecting political training because of an unfortunate historical experience, the United States Army may be yielding a significant advantage to its potential foes and is failing to fully develop its capabilities.

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