



By Lt. Col. R. A. Mendoza
& Lt. Col. L. I. Gunabe

Meaning of Esprit de Corps

ESPRIT de corps is a French term which may literally be translated into the English phrase, "Spirit of the organization" or simply "group spirit." But the English equivalent has never been found adequate to express the whole meaning and the entire connotation that the French term embodies. So, instead of endeavoring to find an exact English equivalent and lose its true meaning, the better to adopt the term in its original flavor and trimmings.

More fully defined esprit de corps is the mental state that represents a common pride in and a support of an organization. It is the jealous regard for the name and honor of the group. It means comradeship of the highest order, and attachment that

makes for sticking together, for organization and support of a group. It is the bouncing pride that a soldier has in the accomplishment of his unit. It differs from morale in that while morale pertains more particularly to the individual, esprit de corps applies to a unit as a whole.

Relation to Efficiency and Discipline

Esprit de corps has an intimate relation to efficiency and discipline. Any unit that is possessed of esprit de corps necessarily operates with order and organization. Group objectives are attained through well directed efforts underscored by evident cooperation. In a situation such as this we cannot fail to notice that each individual member understands his part and that his effort is coordinated with the efforts of other members of the group. The result is unit

of action. And unity action is obtained by every member learning to receive, understand, and respond instantly to orders. This is where discipline comes in.

Efficiency depends upon the relations among the men. In a truly efficient unit the primary consideration is not that each individual members should be efficient unto himself, but that the diverse energies of each man in the group should be marshalled and brought to bear most directly upon the single objective. Too often it happens that there is in a unit a member upon whom the others cannot rely. In that case efficiency is impaired. But a unit is a team. If it does not work as a team it never is efficient. And esprit de corps is the product of teamwork.

Indicators of Esprit de Corps

In the Army the leader should be chiefly concerned with the amount of esprit de corps prevailing in his own unit. He should be able to appraise its quantity and quality. While esprit de corps cannot be weighed on a scale like a pound of sugar nor measured with a tape like a yard of cloth, nevertheless there are certain things that indicate its presence and strength.

The first indication of esprit de corps is pride in the organization. When we find the men thinking he is "the best soldier in the best outfit in the Army," rest assured the men has caught the spirit that makes for teamwork. On this regard the men think very much aloud. Distinctly they could be heard. They boast of their outfit, what it has done, what it is going to do.

The second is the reputation of the

outfit among the units in the Army. An outfit with esprit de corps is the envy of other units. They talk about its splendid organization, its men and its officers. They strive to approximate its standards and in one way or another endeavor to emulate its accomplishments. When this happens, there will be no mistaking the fact that the organization has established a reputation for itself.

The third indicator of esprit de corps is the presence of the competitive spirit in the unit. An outfit possessing esprit de corps cannot stand still under a condition where other units pile up laurels by the score. It becomes restive. It considers the achievements of other units more as a pressing challenge to equal or outdo. Victory or defeat of the unit is something that no member will ever dismiss merely with a



Competitive undertakings such as basketball help develop esprit de corps. Here's where the men take sides for their team victory.

shrug of the shoulder. They feel it deeply. The rejoice is victory, they smart under defeat.

The fourth is the unit's perseverance in stress situations. How do the men react when the going gets tough? The answer to this question will indicate whether *esprit de corps* is present or not. When during long marches nobody in the group lags behind because his pride would not allow him to, when in combat nobody ever attempts for a flimsy excuse to leave his comrades behind, then we can be sure that *esprit de corps* has secured a firm hold on the group.

The fifth indicator of *esprit de corps* is the attitude of the men toward each other and toward the leader. How do the men regard each other and their leader. Do they encourage each other and rely on each other? Do they carry out orders promptly and willingly? Do their relations with the leader show devotion, respect and admiration? If they do, a salutary condition exists.

The last indicator of *esprit de corps* is the men's readiness to help one another. How far a member will go in the sacrifices he will make and the risks he will take for another member of the unit will determine the existence or non-existence of *esprit de corps*. It is the leader's duty to live close to the men and watch whether real sacrifices are made or real risks are taken. If they are, and such are unmistakable throughout the unit, then it can safely be said that the outfit has passed the acid requirement.

Reason for Development of the Group

In discussing *esprit de corps*, no

understanding would be complete unless the leader gains knowledge of the motives that govern actions. Men are all born individuals. Naturally the group begins with the individuals. Groups are made by contacts and interactions. Contacts are made because of certain motives. Every man has social needs. One of these is the desire for security. It is axiomatic that there is greater strength in mass. Consequently the individual seeks security by aligning himself with the group. Another need is the desire for companionship. Man is a social being. Under normal conditions he does not want to be alone for long. He wants to be appreciated and be one of the group.



A unit's perseverance in stress conditions is an indicator of whether esprit de corps exists.

In the case of the soldier, he feels lonely upon entering the service. He needs companionship. He needs security. Not being able to satisfy these needs himself, he is frustrated. The resulting frustration compels him to attach himself to some one else. He identifies himself with a group. Thus, the group is formed.

Stages in the Development of Group Spirit

The soldier or the individual in his desire for companionship made contacts with other individuals. From these contacts acquaintanceship is made. Acquaintanceship may be defined as a set of social relationships with a tenuous structure. Generally very few obligations are recognized to an acquaintance. From this acquaintanceship the soldier makes the revealing discovery that his companions have different political and religious beliefs, different interests, and different backgrounds.

The next stage in the development of the group spirit is companionship. Companionship means a relationship where there is more frequent meeting, greater regularity, and a heightened sense of obligation.

The development of companionship is a gradual process. In order that it be lasting it must be forged from a set of diverse elements which understanding alone could whip into the desired combination. Impediments to desirable association among the soldiers must be disposed of as quickly as they appear. By means of orientation lectures, briefings and panel discussions, the leader could make his men understand what these differences mean. From understanding of these differences comes a

broadened outlook that produces tolerance. World War II was won by cooperation of allies from 50 different countries. The amalgamation of allies required mutual respect for differences in customs and beliefs.

As companionship is born a more intimate type of relationship begins to take definite shape. Call this partnership. Partnership involves the deciding of difficult questions of policy and taking many risks. This stage is reached by acquiring compromise. From this stage develops trusteeship, which is the cure of the unit of group itself. The individual becomes the trustee of the group.

Prerequisites to Group Participation

In the development of group spirit it is essential that all the members of an outfit recognize two requirements to fulfill which would prove highly wholesome and reassuring to the entire group.

First, there must be a realization that common interests provide the groundwork for active participation in the activity of the group. When man realizes that the interests of the other members of the group are the same as his own, his assimilation into the outfit will be nearly complete. This requires, however, introducing beliefs that will be positive factors in awakening the emotions of the men toward sharing responsibilities and revitalizing the sentiments and attitudes of the other men. Upon its attainment lies the touch stone that impels the group to work together for a common purpose.

Second, there must be the consciousness among the members of the group that no job is too small, no effort too little in the accomplish-

ment of the common goal. Never should it occur to the men even for a moment that the goal seems too far away and too hard reach.

After placing the goal before the men, the leader must motivate their cooperation towards its attainment. How can he accomplish this? He must set the pace. He must know that it is often advantageous to set intermediate goals. These intermediate goals help the soldier in seeing his progress. Knowledge of results is a spur to progress. The men must be constantly kept informed as to their status. Everyone likes to receive recognition from those about him. The leader must commend and praise and recognize ability. He must convince them their jobs have a practical value. It is said that human cooperation is a form of interaction of two or more persons striving toward some goal which may be shared, either in material goods, in prestige or in self-satisfaction. The leader has set the common goal. He must guide the common interest of the men to cooperation. The prestige is the reputation of the outfit to which they belong. The self-satisfaction is for a job well done.

How to Develop Esprit de Corps

Team spirit and pride in an outfit is dependent upon the satisfactions that one derives from group membership. What are some of these satisfactions? One is the feeling of solidarity of "belonging." Another is that membership features certain privileges that are accorded the members of the group specially. Still another is that membership inspires a feeling of security. Another satisfaction is identification. This means gain-

ing satisfaction in reflected esteem. For example, a new soldier enjoys the general reputation of the unit.

The development of team spirit within the unit is aided by the approval each member gets from other members. Social approval is a strong motive in human affairs. Practically everyone is susceptible to the attitudes of others toward him. We all strive for the praise of our fellow men. If a man feels he is appreciated by the other members of his unit, he is going to work harder for the unit and for them.

In a similar way, team spirit is aided in its development by the disapproval or punishment of non-cooperators. In some people the fear of contempt of comrades is a greater fear than the fear of danger. Punishment often comes from members of the unit themselves when men realize the standards of the outfit are at stake. Group pressure works mightily injure the high standards of the group as a whole.

Competition against the standards of other groups is still another way in which esprit de corps can be developed. Practically everyone is susceptible to a challenge to excel or to avoid being outdone by rivals. Actually one of the things that competition does is to keep esprit de corps at a high level, because there is no let up of pressure from other units. For a unit to let up will cause the other units to go high above it. In group competitions the majority of the men act for the common good of the outfit rather than for their personal benefit. This of course stimulates esprit de corps and the individual learns cooperation.

Esprit de corps is aided by the success of a group and the recognition given to it. Once a man has identified himself with an outfit as a whole, he acquires a pride of the outfit that is very personal. Its successes are his successes, and its defeats are his own. It follows that he is full of pride when his unit receives recognition for work well done. For this reason a leader should remember the value of even the smallest mention of recognition. Commendations awarded the unit by superiors should invariably be disseminated to the men in the ranks. Books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and communiques bearing a good word about the outfit should be passed on down the line. They generate the power that develops and sustains esprit de corps in the entire outfit.

That symbol of membership and ceremonies aid esprit de corps is a fundamentally sound assumption. The Armed Forces has taken cognizance of this fact by authorizing of distinctive combat patches and ribbons. Patches bearing such screaming words as "Always First," "Steady On," "We Strike," and a host of others symbolize distinct organizations to which any soldier worth his salt would take great pride in belonging. The value of ceremonies to develop esprit de corps should carefully be weighed. The practice of having a review or parade when an individual is presented a decoration tends to develop pride among the members of an outfit. They are proud that the soldier or soldiers decorated belong to their unit. It is a recognized fact that music promotes

and maintains esprit de corps. General Mateo Capinpin when he was the commanding officer of Camp Murphy instituted the practice of all training groups in the past marching in cadence with music and every so often going through a practice parade and review after the drill period. This infused esprit de corps into all the units composing his command. For this, Camp Murphy became the pride of the Philippine Army before the war.

Custodian of Esprit de Corps

Closely linked with the history of any outfit is the name of its commander. For he provides one of the best means of establishing unit identifications. It must not be divorced from your minds that a leader is a symbol. He symbolizes his organization. He represents the unit's esprit de corps. Thus it is that when we mention General Eulogio Balao, who has become Secretary of National Defense, we automatically recall the 121st Infantry of the USAFIP, NL and the gallant fight it carried against the Japanese forces at Bessang Pass. When we speak of Colonel Napoleon Valeriano, we cannot help but remember the Nenita Unit and the 7th BCT, the two units that attained high renown under his inspired leadership. Similarly, when we mention General Jesus Vargas, we unwittingly place before our mind's eye the picture of the intrepid and gallant military force that wrote finis to the bloody adventures of Asedillo and Encallado of the great Sierras. Mention of General Vicente Lim evokes memories of the 41st Division, PA. Generals Mateo Capin-

pin and Fidel Segundo are remembered in connection with the 21st Division and the 1st Regular Division, respectively. The name of Brigadier General Alfredo Santos is associated with the Panay Task Force which eliminated the Red leader Guillermo Capadocia.

When we think of Colonels Dionisio Ojeda, Salvador Abcede, Ramon Aguirre, and Nicanor Jimenez, we remember the 10th, 20th, 19th and 14th battalion combat teams, which they headed, respectively, and which gained

perito Kangleon, the Leyte Area Command; and Colonel Terry Adevos, the Hunters' Guerrilla. Their illustrious names could not be detached from the wonderful organizations they ably led.

Undeniably the leader can be said to be the custodian of esprit de corps. For upon him devolves the constant concern over the welfare of his organization. Its fulfillment forms the foundation stone of esprit de corps. Every member of the outfit has an appropriate place in his heart and

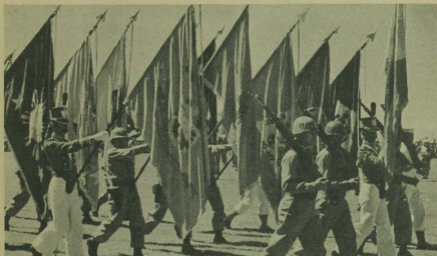


Ceremonies aid in the development of esprit de corps. A tribute paid to the unknown soldier instills pride to living veterans who too made sacrifices in the same battle.

fame in the Korean War. Colonel Juan Relosa is identified with the Lightning Sector; Lieutenant Colonel Laureano Maraña, with the Task Force Texas; Colonel Cirilo Garcia, with the Jolo Task Force; Colonel Ernesto Mata, with the Batzam Sector; and Colonel Crispin de Castro with the 12th BCT. The same is true with famous guerrilla leaders in World War II. Mention of Brigadier General Macario Peralta brings to mind the Panay Guerrilla; Colonel Alejo Santos, the BMA; Colonel Ru-

mind. The condition of his health, the amount of his pay, the organization of his leisure time, his diet, his sleeping habits, his sex problems, even the manner in which he shaves and wears his hair, are matters for his immediate concern.

Under this role the leader should be keen about the problems that tends to work against esprit de corps. At no time should his men come to be unconvinced of his capacity and to doubt his power to maintain command in periods of extreme trial. To



Sense of belonging indicates presence of esprit de corps. Note how proudly the flag bearers above march as they display their respective emblems in parade and review.

accomplish this he should not fail to regard sufficiently the LAW OF PERSONALITY — LOOKS, ACTIONS, WORDS. Equally urgent, the leader must strive constantly to preserve the physical integrity of his unit. Units must be kept intact to maintain unit spirit. Added to these measures is the necessity for the leader to accord recognition for unit achievement. It is a factor of tremendous importance that the soldiers are assured that good performance on their part is appreciated by the leader.

Above all the leader should guard his unit from precipitating into a most dangerous pitfall. There can be no justification for a esprit de corps that builds itself upon the ferment of the misdirected attitudes, "My organization first, and the rest nowhere." It could lead only to the

ways of the rebel and the recalcitrant. True esprit de corps is founded on loyalty and devotion to country and its people. The controlling idea is "The service first and my unit the best in the service." In all human enterprise the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It follows, therefore that no outfit or combination of outfits could exercise more authority or assume more power than the whole aggregate from whom authority and power in government truly emanate — the people whom the armed forces are dedicated to serve and to pay the supreme sacrifice for if need be. Those who feel the greatest affection for the service will be content in working to make their unit know that it is entitled to its rightful share of honor and pride which in its own worth the country will not deny.