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THE GENERAL BOARD

United States Forces, European Theater

MOTION PICTURE SERVICE

MISSION: Prepare Report and Recommendations on Motion Picture Service.

The General Board was established by General Orders 128, Headquarters European Theater of Operations, US Army, dated 17 June 1945, as amended by General Orders 182, dated 7 August 1945 and General Orders 312 dated 20 November 1945, Headquarters United States Forces, European Theater, to prepare a factual analysis of the strategy, tactics, and administration employed by the United States forces in the European Theater.

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UNITED STATES FORCES, EUROPEAN THEATER
APO 408

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APO 408

REPORT ON MOTION PICTURE SERVICE

Prepared by:

Colonel Walter J. Currie, 0885000, AGD, Chief, Special Services Section, The General Board.

Captain William T. Sexton, 0453922, Sig C, Special Services Section, The General Board.

Principal consultants:

Colonel Charles E. Finnegan, 0235661, Inf, Special Services Officer, Delta Base Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Lieutenant Colonel Lester C. Ayers, 0241069, Inf, Special Services Officer, XX Corps.

Lieutenant Colonel Grasson W. Keull, 0164768, Inf, Special Services Officer, Delta Base Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Lieutenant Colonel Peter de Sanchez, 0922420, AUS, Chief, Information and Education Section, The General Board.

Major Lloyd E. Barber, 0919089, Inf, Commanding Officer, 6817 Special Services Battalion.

Major Lewis J. Bowen, 0333181, FA, Special Services Officer, 2 Armored Division.

Major Michael J. Cullen, 0509059, AUS, Former Chief, Motion Picture Branch, Special Services Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Major Edward L. Gibson, 0994238, Sig C, Chief, Film and Equipment Exchange Branch, Army Pictorial Service, Signal Corps, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Major Ralph E. Waldo, 01297988, Inf, Special Services Officer, 3 Infantry Division.

Captain John J. Nicholson, 01305634, Inf, Chief, Motion Picture Branch, Special Services Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Captain W. H. Nixon, 01166796, FA, Special Services Officer, Headquarters Command, United States Forces, European Theater.

Lieutenant Claude V. Bache, 02044598, AUS, Assistant Motion Picture Officer, Motion Picture Branch, Special Services Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Lieutenant Lloyd Whitebrooke, 01646699, Sig C, Executive Officer, Film and Equipment Exchange Branch, Army Pictorial Service, Signal Corps, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

Mr. Fayette W. Allport, Manager, European Branch, Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Incorporated.

Mr. Joseph Friedman, Chairman, War Activities Committee, Motion Picture Industry, London Branch.

Mr. Ben Henry, Chief Cinema Officer, Department of National Service Entertainment, Great Britain.

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MOTION PICTURE SERVICE

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL

1. Motion picture entertainment has been rated by all consultants as the number one special services activity.[1] The motion picture is the one medium of professional entertainment which may be presented under rough field conditions with little loss of its maximum entertainment value, and, in addition, its popularity is carried over from the soldiers pre-war entertainment preferences.

2. Most special services officers agreed that an average of three programs weekly should normally be available to troops in an active overseas theater. Less does not fill the need, and more tends to decrease the value of the program by satiation of individual appetites for film entertainment and lowering of film quality because of the limited number of class "A" features produced.

3. During the European Campaign (May 1944 to June 1945):

a. Over 5,800 prints of entertainment films were distributed.

b. Over 600,000 separate performances were given with a total attendance of over 145,000,000 troops.

CHAPTER 2

THIRTY-FIVE MILLIMETER SERVICE

4. Thirty-five millimeter projection equipment has been rendered obsolete for military use by current developments in sixteen-millimeter projectors. (See Appendix #1). It is the majority opinion of experts consulted in this study that thirty-five millimeter service need not be considered in the future planning for entertainment motion picture service in the army, overseas.

5. Among the disadvantages of the thirty-five millimeter service are

a. Bulky equipment which is much more difficult to handle than sixteen-millimeter equipment.

b. Complicated equipment, requiring well-trained experts for operation, installation, maintenance and repair.

c. Fire hazard: Thirty-five millimeter film is highly inflammable and to maintain minimum safety standards, special projection booth construction is necessary.

d. Film prints are large, heavy and wasteful of raw stock. For example, sixteen-millimeter prints require only 20% of the raw stock utilized in making thirty-five millimeter prints of the same picture.

e. Spare parts stocks must be expanded to include a complete parallel line of corresponding items in a larger size.

f. Extra facilities and personnel are required to provide adequate repair service, out of proportion to the actual volume of equipment used.

CHAPTER 3

SIXTEEN-MILLIMETER SERVICE

SECTION 1

PROCUREMENT

PROCUREMENT OF EQUIPMENT

6. Responsibility for procurement of sixteen-millimeter equipment is placed by current regulations upon the Signal Corps.[2] In the European Theater, however, local procurement was occasionally handled by Special Services, European Theater of Operations, United States Army.

7. Estimate of the needs of overseas theaters in the field of entertainment motion picture service, was not available during the general mobilization period. This lack arose from the fact that Army Motion Picture Service functioned only as a peace-time agency designed solely for the operation of permanent garrison theaters.[3] Existing procurement plans of the Signal Corps during this period were based upon estimated requirements in the fields of training and orientation motion pictures.

8. Priorities for the manufacture of projection equipment and of spare parts in the United States were not granted. The effect of this deficiency in early procurement operations, was the worst problem incident to the operation of the motion picture service during the European Campaign, and resulted in a high percentage of existing projectors being continuously deadlined due to lack of replacement parts.

9. Design and specifications for effective sixteen-millimeter projection equipment for mobile military service was not available for immediate issue to manufacturers.

PROCUREMENT OF FILM

10. All sixteen-millimeter entertainment film prints were furnished free to the army during the European Campaign, as a gift of the American motion picture industry.[4] Consultants agree that this gift was a valuable contribution to the nation's war effort and feel that the motion picture industry deserves to be highly commended for its generous service to the armed forces.

11. Subjects were chosen by a review committee of the Overseas Motion Picture Service from the pictures submitted to it by the various producers. Members of this committee were drawn both from the army and from the motion picture industry. After subject selection, an agreed number of prints was furnished to the War Department by the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, acting on behalf of its member producers. The War Department in turn allotted a certain number of prints to the various theaters of operation on the basis of troop strength.

12. The Gift Plan has been withdrawn since cessation of hostilities, and that such a plan would be highly unlikely to recur is the unanimously

expressed opinion of authoritative representatives of the motion picture industry consulted.[6] They feel that the army should pay film rentals based upon a percentage of income, in line with standard industry practice. Assuming continuation of free performances to troops, rental charges could be based upon a percentage of a hypothetical gross income computed by an estimate of the total attendance multiplied by a hypothetical admission charge.

13. Military consultants consider that the morale value of the entertainment film is such that it should be placed in the category of necessary military materiel, and that payment of film rentals from appropriated funds is more than justified. Moreover, they do not feel that procurement of necessary materiel should be allowed to depend upon donations of an individual or industry.

14. Central procurement for the entire Army in the Zone of Interior and distribution to theaters of operations entirely through military channels, has proven to be essential to the smooth functioning of the motion picture service. Experience in local procurement of prints in allied countries during the European Campaign, indicated that commercial entanglements such as taxes, export and import duties, trade restrictions, existing sole exhibition rights contracts, and differing release dates for American export markets, are highly detrimental to an expeditious film procurement program. In addition, it becomes necessary to maintain staffs of procurement personnel throughout the world rather than in one central procurement office.

15. Certain restrictions were placed upon the army's use of sixteen-millimeter prints under the provisions of the Gift Agreement with the motion picture industry.

a. Increased demands, to meet the changing needs of the army had to be cleared, justified, and discussed at length with the motion picture industry. Consultants feel that time and negotiation involved in clearing innumerable non-military channels to obtain producers concurrence on army procedures was not justified. They feel that the army needs freedom of action in such matters as increasing available number of prints with a minimum of delay to provide for expansion or dispersion of troops.

b. Military personnel only, inclusive of uniformed civilians, were permitted to attend shows. This restriction was frequently prejudicial to the army's public relations program for the promotion of Inter-Allied Goodwill. Commanders, in addition, were often subjected to considerable embarrassment by having to refuse admittance to motion picture shows of local officials and prominent persons who had been highly cooperative in providing services for American troops. Consultants report that the army has been accused of selfish or unfriendly attitudes toward allies because they did not understand that the "no civilians" restriction was established by motion picture exhibitors rather than the army.

c. The loan of prints to allied military units was not authorized, although allied troops were permitted to attend showings at United States installations. This practice, however, was usually militarily impractical. Many opportunities for building goodwill between adjacent allied armies were lost because of this restriction.

SECTION 2

DISTRIBUTION

DISTRIBUTION OF EQUIPMENT

16. Responsibility for distribution of sixteen-millimeter motion picture projection equipment lies with the Signal Corps.[2] Shipment of this equipment from the Zone of Interior to theaters of operations is accomplished through Signal Corps channels to Signal Depots in the Communications Zone, and on through the various echelons of Signal Supply issuing agencies. Units and troop installations requisitioned projection equipment directly from Signal Depots through Signal Corps channels. Basis for requisition is a predetermined number of troops to be served by each unit of projection equipment, established by the Theater Commander upon consideration of the volume of equipment available.

17. Consultants report that motion picture projection equipment was given a low priority in relation to other Signal supplies. Whether or not low priorities were formally established, they felt that Signal personnel, generally, were naturally engrossed with the primary Signal Corps mission, to the detriment of the motion picture service. In addition, handling of projection equipment in Signal Depots suffered because of the differences in type and size from standard Signal supplies. This was particularly notable in small replacement parts shipments.[3]

18. Film and equipment exchanges with their own depot facilities were set up by Army Pictorial Service, Signal Corps, in November 1944, to handle all projection equipment and supplies in an attempt to rectify this condition. While improvement was shown, the problem continued acute because of the basic Signal Corps channels from the Zone of Interior to theater general Signal Depots prior to transfer of shipments to film and equipment depots. Film and equipment exchanges proved effective in distribution to large static units but there were not enough of them, nor were they so located as to effectively serve most elements within the combat zones.

19. Control of projection equipment by special services sections has upon occasion been difficult. In scheduling reallocations designed to produce maximum usage of all projectors on a theater-wide basis, special services officers have encountered reluctance upon the part of various units to submit to special services control of an item which they can claim is a piece of Signal supply issued them directly through Signal channels upon an approved basis of requisition. Corrective action in such cases is apt to be complicated.

DISTRIBUTION OF FILM

20. The Motion Picture Branch, Special Services, European Theater of Operations, United States Army, was not given adequate personnel to establish an effective system of centrally coordinated film distribution, and operations of that branch were confined to a central film exchange. Prints, therefore, had to be distributed through command channels, and distribution at all subordinate echelons was left in the hands of special services officers of the command concerned. These officers seldom possessed a knowledge of the complicated aspects of film distribution, and lacking central supervision, the command channel distribution method proved much less efficient than would have been a centrally located T/O & E organization such as was established during the post-hostilities period with branches covering all commands within the European Theater.[4]

21. A system of simple rotation scheduled, if at all, only in the broadest sense of the word was normally depended upon from army level down to provide effective distribution. This system quickly broke down, and a situation soon developed where divisions and other units, built up private stocks of prints, which after showing they would send out on peddling expeditions, trading with other units for films which had not yet been provided them. Air forces units flew films from base to base trading here

and there for new pictures, without reference to any organized systems of distribution.

22. Distribution through command channels was also ineffective, because it did not take into consideration the geographic dispersion of various elements of ground, air and service forces. Prints must frequentl travel three different circuits, through the various intermediate headquarters within the same geographic area. Time lage inherent to this travel duplication, necessitated a much larger theater stock of prints of each picture in order to obtain theater-wide coverage within a reasonable length of time. A certain amount of dissatisfaction is roused when troops are required to wait overlong for a new picture which has been generally released, and this is particularly true when adjacent units have received the film some time in the past.

23. Contrast is marked between above methods and distribution by a table of organization and equipment unit, such as was organized after cessation of hostilities. This unit, the 6814 Provisional Special Service Motion Picture Company is set up with a series of Branch and Sub Exchanges responsible to the Central Exchange at Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, United States Army, and organized as a single operating unit with subordinate exchanges, only attached, to army or base section headquarters. Through use of orthodox film industry booking and distribution methods, it achieves much wider and faster coverage with fewer prints.

DISTRIBUTION THROUGH SPECIAL SERVICES COMPANIES

24. Motion picture service was provided to units not issued projectors by means of mobile projection teams operating as a part of special services companies. These companies drew groups of prints and rotated them among their projection teams until all films had been shown to all troops within an assigned area.

25. The mobile projection team proved itself to be the ideal instrument for the presentation of motion pictures to troops in combat zones. They worked on a well organized schedule and were remarkably effective in achieving rapid and thorough distribution.

26. The success of special services companies, where available, as a medium of distribution of both film and equipment by means of mobile projection teams has led consultants to urge serious consideration of a plan to use such units, set up at division level, as the primary method of presenting motion pictures to troops in combat zones. Advantages of mobile projection teams include the following:

a. Expert operators at all times providing for higher levels of maintenance, presentation and film care.

b. Well organized booking schedules whereby each unit is assured of seeing every available picture in the least amount of time.

c. Ability of these teams to concentrate upon units most in need of film entertainment: such as those just pulled out of the line and havir been without entertainment for a period of time, and small isolated units.

d. Automatic motion picture service, thus relieving units from the necessity of providing trained operators, picking-up and returning film, and scheduling bookings.

e. Full utilization of projection equipment at all times, rather than having it lie idle while units are committed to action.

SECTION 3

MAINTENANCE

27. During the European Campaign maintenance of motion picture projection equipment was accomplished as follows:

a. First and second echelon, including only cleaning, oiling, changing of lamps and replacement of spring belts, was performed by projector operators.

b. Major adjustment and repair was performed by Film and Equipment Exchange of Signal Corps Army Pictorial Service.

c. Motion picture platoons of special services companies performed all but highest echelons of major repair or replacement.

28. Untrained operators proved incapable of providing even the simplified first and second echelon maintenance as above prescribed. Thus progressive deterioration of projectors in the hands of units threw heavier than anticipated servicing requirements upon the Film and Equipment Exchanges resulting in frequent backlogs. Delays in servicing at Exchanges further led to the practice of unskilled operators attempting to improvise the more complicated repair functions. This usually led to aggravation rather than cure of maladjustments in the equipment.

29. Film and Equipment Exchanges were further handicapped by gross shortages of replacement parts, this as a result of the following two major factors.

a. Inadequate planning and issuance of necessary priorities in the Zone of Interior for the manufacture of spare parts. Wherein any planning is evident in this field, the system employed was the makeshift theory of "one each extra" of available parts. This resulted in large stocks in the theater of some parts (such as lamp bases) which are practically indestructable, while at the same time a large percentage of projectors in the theater were deadlined through lack of certain other parts which have a high rate of replacement.[6]

b. Provisions for handling projector parts were inadequate throughout Signal Corps supply channels. Even when procurement from the Zone of Interior could be arranged losses and long delays in arrival in the theater were frequent. Small packages of projector parts frequently contained enough of one particular type to supply all the projectors in the theater. Such small packages were as a matter of routine added to huge shipments of miscellaneous Signal supplies and were frequently buried and lost in Signal Depots beneath huge stacks of bulk Signal equipment. Innumerable small cases of a single shipment of projector parts arrived in the theater sometimes, each on a different ship and at a different port and consigned to a different Signal Depot making consolidation extremely extravagant of time and personnel. Records of the Army Pictorial Service Film and Equipment Exchange Branch show that there were times when large numbers of projectors were deadlined awaiting replacement parts, and yet there were surpluses of these parts in Signal Depots which could not be found. Several of these shipments of spare parts to the European Theater have not even yet been found.[8]

30. The limited number of Film and Equipment Exchanges restricted their establishment to army, air force and base section level. In the combat zone particularly, units in the field were frequently so far removed from the exchanges geographically, that they were unable to effectively utilize the maintenance and repair service that was available.

CHAPTER 4

STANDARDIZATION OF PROJECTION EQUIPMENT

SECTION 1

STANDARDIZATION WITH ORTHODOX EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

31. During the European Campaign several different makes of sixteen-millimeter projectors, each of which included several different models, were used by the army. Very little, if any, standardization was accomplished within this group, either in performance or specifications. Included in this group were the following makes:

a. Bell & Howell.

b. R C A.

c. Ampro.

d. Victor Animatograph.

e. DeBrie (procured locally in France).

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EQUIPMENT

32. None of this equipment was designed for military usage. Because of lack of pre-planning, when the army's need for projection equipment became evident, it was necessary to take whatever equipment was being currently produced by established manufacturers. This equipment was designed to fit the requirements, primarily, of schools and industrial plants. It is portable in the sense of being movable "within large buildings," from room to room. Currently used units are definitely not practical for military field use. The following undesirable features have shown up in present equipment during the European Campaign:

a. Design not rugged enough to stand up under prolonged continuous operation, and rough field handling.

b. Design not sufficiently simplified to permit quick, easy repair and maintenance techniques.

c. Inadequate amplification and speaker systems.

d. Insufficient projection illumination.

33. Procurement and stocking of replacement parts has been unreasonably encumbered through necessity of maintaining five or more different lines of corresponding items, plus an extensive list of individual parts used by one machine but not the others.

34. Rates of normal replacement frequency, and, thereby, balanced safe stock levels, have been extremely difficult to estimate due to design and structural differences of each make. In the European Theater, for example, many instances have arisen wherein projectors were deadlined because of parts shortages, while concurrently, parts stocks on hand included ample supplies of the corresponding part for other makes of machines.

35. Maintenance, particularly first and second echelon, performed by

unit operators, has suffered because of the fact that incompletely trained operators find it too difficult to become familiar with the several different servicing routines, each peculiar to its given make of projector. This necessitates a high volume of turn-ins to Equipment Exchanges for servicing, and the consequent overloading of these central repair facilities leads to overlong delays in returning equipment to operation in the field.

36. Film quality deteriorates and useful life of film is shortened because of poor handling technique and inadequate servicing, this a direct result of operator unfamiliarity with varying types of equipment.

37. Technical quality of film presentations, with resultant audience irritation, also suffers because operators are not familiar with the various operating techniques and performance limitations of the different projectors.

SECTION 2

TELEVISION

38. Reports of current developments in the field of television, indicate that projection to considerable size has been achieved by newest television receivers. It is logical to assume, in view of current tempo of advances in the field of electronics, that within the near future television transmission of motion picture entertainment for army units may be practical.[6]

39. In this event, a standardized television projector-receiver could be distributed to units, rather than orthodox film projectors. Motion pictures could then be broadcast from the Communications Zone, effecting immense savings in personnel, equipment, and film stock required under present film distribution methods.

CHAPTER 5

FINANCING OF MOTION PICTURE SERVICE

40. The motion picture industry has since the cessation of hostilities discontinued supply of entertainment film to the army free of charge, and it is probable that during any future operation a rental will be charged for films rented for overseas exhibition.[7,8]

41. In general, the opinion of special services officers is that motion picture service should continue on a basis of free admission to all troops, and that motion pictures have proven to be such an important morale service that they should be paid for out of appropriated funds just as are all other necessary items in the supply of the army.[1]

42. Charging of admission, is considered by principal consultants, to be impractical and undesirable.[1]

a. In combat zones it is impossible.

b. In advance sections, the problems of rapidly moving troops, changing installations, and above all else, the urgent need for film entertainment, render restrictions imposed by an admission charge, decidedly impractical.

c. In base section areas, although it is sometimes physically possible to operate a box office, it is not considered desirable, because:

(1) It is felt that all entertainment should be available to all troops, at all times, wherever they may be at the moment.

(2) The mass of personnel required to supervise, operate, account for and audit a program involving the charging of admission, would probably not be militarily justified by the savings effected.

43. Film rentals were paid from Central Welfare Funds for the small percentage of prints procured within the European Theater. The high cost of film rentals for the entire motion picture program, however, would make for such a heavy drain of these funds that such a course would be highly undesirable.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1

CONCLUSIONS

The General Board concludes that:

44. The agency responsible for the planning, administration and operation of the motion picture service should also be responsible for procurement, distribution and maintenance of the necessary film and equipment.

45. The motion picture industry "gift plan" of supplying films free to the army is not likely to recur in any future emergency and it should not be depended upon as a part of future plans for the entertainment motion picture service.

46. Payment by the army of rental charges for entertainment film with terms based on standard industry practices is justified.

47. Motion picture entertainment should continue to be presented free to all troops in an active overseas theater of operations.

48. Payment of film rentals with other than appropriated funds is impractical.

49. Central procurement of film in the Zone of Interior and distribution to overseas theaters through military channels is essential in the efficient operation of the motion picture service.

50. The army should be authorized reasonable flexibility in extending audience limitations to include non-military personnel.

51. Presentation of motion pictures by means of mobile projection teams is more highly effective in combat zones than is distribution of fil and equipment to units.

52. Special services organizations based on a cellular T/O & E with branches servicing all commands within a theater of operations on a basis of geographic coverage is essential for the distribution of film and equipment to units operating their own projectors and to mobile projection teams.

53. Adequate pre-planned procurement of spare parts in the Zone of

Interior is a predominant factor in assuring effective maintenance operations in a theater of operations.

54. Operators must be well trained and licensed before they are allowed to handle motion picture projection equipment if effective first and second echelon maintenance is to be accomplished.

55. Thirty-five millimeter motion picture service should be eliminated from plans for future overseas operations except in present occupation zones.

56. Replacement of present assorted types of equipment with a standard United States Army sixteen-millimeter motion picture projector would serve to simplify or eliminate most of the problems incident to providing an effective motion picture service.

57. A system of televised motion pictures would act to conserve personnel and material and increase efficiency of the motion picture service.

SECTION 2

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Board recommends that:

58. Responsibility for procurement, distribution and maintenance of film and equipment for the entertainment motion picture service be placed upon the Director, Special Services Division, Army Service Forces.

59. Motion picture entertainment continue to be presented free to all troops in an active overseas theater of operations, and that the service b financed by appropriated funds.

60. Tentative contracts be negotiated with motion picture producers for the central procurement in the Zone of Interior of prints for all overseas theaters of operations, and that these contracts include provision granting the army reasonable flexibility in the establishment of audience limitations.

61. Consideration be given to the establishment of a automatic motion picture service for combat units by means of mobile projection teams operating as a part of special services organizations at division, corps and army level.

62. In theaters of operations a special services organization based on a cellular type table of organization and equipment be utilized for major maintenance and distribution on a basis of geographic coverage of film and equipment to static installations and mobile projection teams.

63. Special attention be directed to planning for adequate procurement of replacement projector parts, and to establishment of specialized supply channels within the special services organization for controlled shipment of such parts from the Zone of Interior to theaters of operations

64. Provision be made for an expanded projectionist training program and that only well-trained and licensed operators be authorized to handle motion picture projection equipment.

65. Thirty-five millimeter motion picture service be eliminated from plans for future overseas operations except in present occupation zone.

66. A standard United States Army sixteen-millimeter projector be developed and adopted for future use in the presentation of entertainment films in theaters of operations, and that provision be included in general mobilization plans to grant necessary priorities for the expeditious production of the army's projector requirements.

67. The Director, Special Services Division, Army Service Forces, conduct continuing research into the possibilities of television projection and that he be authorized to contract with producers of television equipment for the development of a suitable system of televised motion picture service for the United States Army.

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPAL CONSULTANTS ON THE SUBJECT OF ELIMINATION OF THIRTY-FIVE MILLIMETER SERVICE IN THE FUTURE PLANNING OF THE MOTION PICTURE SERVICE FOR THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES OVERSEAS.

Mr. Fayette W. Allport,
European Manager,
Motion Picture Producers & Distributors
of America Incorporated.

"It can be safely assumed that in the near future, thirty-five millimeter service will be obsolete for all practical military purposes. There appears to be no reason why a standardized service, utilizing only sixteen millimeter equipment and prints would not be practical and desirable. No problems or objections within the motion picture industry would arise from this changeover."

* * * * *

Mr. Joseph Friedman,
Chairman,
War Activities Committee of
The Motion Picture Industry,
London Branch.

"Sixteen millimeter equipment and service will be as good as thirty-five millimeter in the immediate future, at least for military purposes. Provided that the Army will take advantage of available types of sixteen millimeter equipment it would be better to eliminate thirty-five millimeter service.

* * * * *

Major E. L. Gibson,
Chief, Film and Equipment Branch,
Army Pictorial Service,
Office of the Chief Signal Officer,
Hq, Com Z, ETOUSA.

"The thirty-five millimeter service in its entirety is considered superfluous. Properly designed sixteen millimeter equipment can render service equal to thirty-five millimeter equipment in any military application of motion picture service. It is thought to be highly desirable that thirty-five millimeter service be discontinued in future plans for overseas motion picture service in the Army."

* * * * *

Major Michael J. Cullen,
Chief, Motion Picture Branch,
Special Services Section,
Hq, Theater Service Forces,
European Theater.

"... in fact with the rapid strides being made in the industry from a technical standpoint, sixteen millimeter film reproduction should be advanced to a point where its quality will equal if not exceed that of standard sized films."

Appendix #1