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THE GENERAL BOARD

United States Forces, European Theater

SPECIAL SERVICES CLUBS

MISSION: Prepare Report and Recommendations on Special Services Clubs.

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APO 408

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REPORT ON SPECIAL SERVICES CLUBS

Prepared by:

Colonel Walter J. Currie, O885000, AGD, Chief, Special Services Section, The General Board.
Captain Edward Latham, O1299069, Inf, Special Services Section, The General Board.

Principal consultants:

Colonel Charles E. Finnegan, O235681, Inf, Special Services Officer, Delta Base Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.
Lieutenant Colonel Lester C. Myers, O241069, Inf, Special Services Officer, XX Corps.
Lieutenant Colonel William J. Hamlin, O408704, G-1 Section, The General Board.
Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Hanley, O885671, AUS, Chief, Entertainment & Recreation Division, Special Services, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.
Lieutenant Colonel Grason W. Kaul, O164768, Inf, Special Services Section, Delta Base Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.
Major E. W. Anderson, O1284861, Inf, Special Services Section, The General Board.
Major Lewis J. Bowen, O333181, P., Special Services Officer, 2 Armored Division.
Major George Fotos, O568178, AG, Special Services Officer, Ninth Air Force.
Major Barre-Hill, O922951, AG, Special Services Officer, Seine Base Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.
Major Max Milians, O1593069, OMC, Chief, Handicraft Branch, Special Services Division, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.
Major William Mitchell, O237122, Inf, Special Services Officer, 3 Infantry Division.
Major R. E. Faldo, O1297988, Inf, Special Services Officer, XXIII Corps.
Captain Sam Bauman, Jr., O452789, Inf, Special Services Section, The General Board.
Captain Camilla M. Frank, L801406, Chief, Special Activities Branch, Special Services, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.
Captain W. H. Nixon, O1166796, P., Special Services Officer, Headquarters Command, United States Forces, European Theater.
Captain W. T. Sexton, O453922, Sig C, Special Services Section, The General Board.
Katherine F. Moran, Command Hostess, Headquarters, Chanor Base Section, Theater Service Forces, European Theater.

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SPECIAL SERVICES CLUBS

SECTION 1

CLUBS

1. Introduction.

a. Service clubs are intended to provide recreational and social activities and the best features of club life for enlisted personnel¹

b. It was planned that overseas service clubs should contain the following facilities:

Snack bar	Library
Beer and wine bar	Writing room
Games room	Handicraft room
Fing-pong room	Information desk
Lounge	Music room

2. American Red Cross.

a. Experience in the War of 1914-18 having shown that operations by a number of civilian agencies results in confusion, duplication and conflicts of interests, with consequent waste and inefficiency, it was determined that only two civilian agencies operating recreational facilities would be recognized by the War Department:

- (1) The United Services Organization in the American Theater and the Zone of Interior.
- (2) The American Red Cross elsewhere²

b. Following the entry of the United States in the war, the Chief of Staff of the Army in a letter to the Chairman of the American Red Cross, 19 December 1941, outlined the policy of the War Department with respect to American Red Cross activities in overseas theaters. This policy provided that the Army would arrange for the operation of off-site recreational buildings by military and/or American Red Cross personnel. This policy was made a matter of official publication by War Department Memorandum 850-9-43, 15 March 1943³

c. The Theater Commander first called upon the American Red Cross to assist in on-site welfare activities on 26 April 1943, and the policy announced at that time was carried forward and appeared in letter European Theater of Operations, United States Army, 14 December 1944, file AG O80 OpCA, subject: "Red Cross Recreational Huts on United States Military Reservations." The Theater Commander provided that policies for the installation of such huts would be formulated by the Commanding General, Communications Zone^{4,5}

d. The activities of the Red Cross are governed by AR 850-75⁶

- (1) In accordance with the provisions of AR 850-75, Section II, paragraph 12b coordination of recreational opera-

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tions of the Red Cross in the European Theater was placed initially under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Special Services, European Theater of Operations.

- (2) In March 1943, the European Theater responsibility for coordination of Red Cross activities was placed at the general staff level with the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Services of Supply.

e. Differences and difficulties arose between agencies of the Army and Red Cross because Red Cross personnel, being of civilian status, frequently went out of channels in the conduct of their operations. This practice rendered the position of officers charged with the responsibility of coordination difficult.

f. At the request of the Army, Red Cross opened clubs in many localities in or near which large numbers of troops were stationed, and at general hospitals and rest areas.

- (1) Red Cross clubs were popular with troops, but not sufficiently numerous to meet their needs.
- (2) Except for the work of American girls as hostesses who planned and directed decorating and furnishing, established and maintained policies, planned and directed activities, and hired and supervised civilian staffs, the contribution of Red Cross to these clubs was small. The installation, repair, furnishing and supply was done by Army agencies, notably Quartermaster, engineer and special services.

3. Allied Expeditionary Force Clubs?

a. By direction of the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, installations known as "Allied Expeditionary Force Clubs" were organized and operated under the control of a policy board appointed by and directly responsible to the Supreme Commander.

b. The policy board and all other personnel, excepting civilian employees, were composed equally of American and British personnel.

c. The purpose of these clubs was to "afford to Allied military personnel of navies, armies and air forces an opportunity to meet other such personnel and to be furnished at reasonable cost such facilities as hot meals, reading and writing rooms, game rooms, ...sleeping accommodations, and other pertinent and appropriate facilities."

d. Clubs were opened at Paris, Brussels and Rome.

e. Frequent conferences were held with the American Red Cross for the purpose of coordinating all activities where differences might arise. The Red Cross particularly desired that charges for food and beverages be not lower than their own.

f. Upon the dissolution of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces, these clubs were discontinued.

4. Special Services Clubs.

a. As the number of Red Cross clubs in operation was considered inadequate, and the Red Cross stated that due to shortage of personnel, it would not be possible to open additional clubs promptly, plans were laid

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for the opening in the European Theater of a number of special services clubs in addition to existing installations¹⁰⁻¹⁴

b. Special services clubs were to contain all the facilities usually found at the larger Red Cross clubs, with the addition of a bar where beer and wine would be sold, thus lessening the number of troops frequenting undesirable establishments for such refreshments.

c. They were to be operated by special services hostesses, trained in and brought over from the United States.

d. Plans were discussed with representatives of the American Red Cross, with a view to obviating the possibility of duplication or conflict of activities¹⁵⁻¹⁷

e. A number of special services clubs were opened shortly after victory in Europe¹⁸

5. Unit Clubs and Day Rooms.

a. A large number of soldier's clubs were organized independently of the American Red Cross in an attempt to meet the needs of the men.

(1) Most of these were unit installations, with great variation in the facilities provided, depending on the size of the unit, the location, the equipment available and the interest of the special services and commanding officer. There were some large and elaborate clubs, which included such facilities as reading and writing rooms, a bar dispensing beer and wines, games rooms and snack bars; and in the smaller units there were day rooms which simply offered the men a place to go in the evening to have a drink and listen to the radio. Dances were a popular feature of all clubs.

(2) When adequately equipped, these clubs proved to be of great value to morale and their formation was encouraged by base sections. Units were advised of the desirability of forming enlisted men's clubs, which were given second priority, after hospitals, on special services supplies, besides all assistance possible in drawing up by-laws, finding a suitable location and fixtures and procuring the necessary beverages and snacks.

(3) The funds for starting these clubs were usually raised by collecting an initial membership fee from the men. Once the club was functioning, expenses could be met out of profits on the sale of beverages.

(4) The management and operation of unit clubs was generally undertaken by a board of governors and by club officer elected by the enlisted men. Under existing regulations it was necessary to have a commissioned officer audit the books.

b. Due to the lack of a general club program, many units did not organize enlisted men's clubs despite lack of sufficient Red Cross facilities.

c. In general, these clubs were inadequate because of a lack of facilities and trained personnel. Many were simply rooms, furnished with a few tables and chairs and lacking club or homelike atmosphere.

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6. Others.

a. As a base section operation, under special services, a number of beer gardens and dance halls were opened in static areas.

- (1) It was found feasible and desirable to serve beer and wine in the evenings at transient and leave messes after supper. Music was provided throughout the evening, and the uniform was the only requirement for entering. Where space permitted, men were allowed to bring a civilian guest, but unescorted civilians were excluded.
- (2) Some dance halls had no restrictions on admittance. Others could be reserved by units for dances by invitation only. Both were very popular. It was found best to admit local girls to dance halls by invitation only, thus avoiding the intrusion of undesirables. Arrangements were made with the local police to check the records of girls applying for admittance cards.

SECTION 2

HOSTESSES

7. Procurement.

a. With plans completed for the establishment of the first Allied Expeditionary Force club in the European Theater, it was necessary for the United States Army to provide American hostesses in the same number as provided by Great Britain.

- (1) A cable was sent to the War Department, 23 October 1944, requesting eight American service club hostesses, (Reference AR 210-70, 1 June 1944). A subsequent cable, 3 November 1944, requested that this be increased to 16.^{19,20}
- (2) By 10 December 1944, 13 hostesses had arrived in Paris by air.²¹

b. A survey of special services activities and facilities in the theater having revealed the need for additional clubs, recommendations were made to Harvey Gibson, American Red Cross Commissioner for Great Britain and Western Europe, for the establishment of clubs in specific areas where the need was critical. Mr. Gibson replied that this could not be done for an indefinite period due to limited American Red Cross personnel.

- (1) On 1 February 1945, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Communications Zone, requested by informal routing slip that serious consideration be given the necessity of "procuring unlimited numbers of hostess personnel from the United States."²²
- (2) On 1 March 1945, a cable was sent to the War Department requesting 150 additional hostesses, to be dispatched to this theater in three shipments of 50 each on the first of April, May and June.²³ This request was based on a survey of needs of each major command. The special services officer in each instance requested the number of hostesses required for the enlisted men's

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clubs established and to be established within his command. Fifteen hostesses of the first shipment were for duty with Allied Expeditionary Force Clubs.

c. American Red Cross hostesses who applied for transfer to equivalent positions with special services clubs were advised that this could not be considered unless they were able to present a letter from the American Red Cross releasing them by name for reassignment.

8. Assignment.

a. Up to 2 May 1945, all the service club hostesses who arrived in the European Theater were assigned to duty with the Allied Expeditionary Force clubs.

b. First priority on the assignment of other hostesses up to 5 July 1945, was given to assembly and staging areas. After 5 July 1945, first priority was given to troops in areas where the policy of non-fraternization with civilians was in effect, second to assembly and staging areas for troops being redeployed and third to the remainder of the theater.

9. Operations.

a. By 6 October 1945, there were 88 American service club hostesses on duty in the theater, operating a total of 51 clubs and assisting with unit clubs and day room activities in areas where troop strength did not warrant the establishment of service clubs.

b. Until lessons had been learned from the initial operations, it was not deemed advisable to attempt to establish a definite theater policy. With rapid redeployment of troops and stabilization of occupation forces, the need for organization became apparent. Accordingly, steps were taken; letter, Theater Service Forces, European Theater (Near), dated 4 September 1945, from the Office of Chief of Special Services to Special Services Officers, Major Commands, subject: "Service Club Operations," to establish the position of "directing hostesses" to be assigned to the staff of the special services officer of each major command.²⁴ A conference of directing hostesses was held in Paris 26-30 September 1945, as ordered by letter, Theater Service Forces, European Theater (Rear), dated 10 September 1945, subject: "Conference of American Service Club Hostesses."²⁵ From the suggestions and recommendations drawn up by a committee of four directing hostesses, it was planned to draft a directive for publication in the theater, after approval by the Chief of Special Services and Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1.

c. Duties. The duties and responsibilities of hostesses varied with the size and type of service club. In general they:

- (1) Planned and directed the decorating and furnishing of clubs, procuring necessary equipment through proper channels.
- (2) Established and maintained club policies as approved by Chief of Special Services and local commanding officer.
- (3) Planned and directed all club activities, consisting of those listed in paragraph 1, above, with the addition, in some instances, of a tailor shop, barber and manicure service, photographic dark room, checking service and several dances per week.²⁶

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- (4) Coordinated programs with other recreational installations in the vicinity.
- (5) Supervised the civilian and military club staff.
- (6) Assisted in the installation and operation of local unit clubs and day rooms.

d. Experience showed that service clubs were very popular with the men it is their function to serve, and that the majority of service club hostesses performed their duties admirably under conditions which were difficult due to lack of proper advance planning and their absence to the situation overseas.

SECTION 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The General Board concludes that:

a. Red Cross clubs were popular with troops but not sufficiently numerous to meet their needs.

b. The principal difficulty in coordinating special services and Red Cross activities arose out of the practice of certain high Red Cross officials going over the heads of interested Army personnel and taking important questions directly to commanding officers. The Red Cross should have remained directly under the Chief of Special Services in all recreational activities in accordance with AR 850-75.

c. Had all clubs for troops been the responsibility of special services, results would have been more satisfactory for the following reasons:

- (1) It would have been possible for the War Department to lay plans in advance for the procurement and training of personnel, both Women's Army Corps and civilian. As it was, there was always a serious shortage of personnel. The Red Cross set up as many clubs as they could, then stated that, new installations would have to await the arrival of reinforcements.
- (2) Efficiency of operations would be greater with personnel well acquainted with Army practices and procedures.
- (3) The Army is in a position to install such facilities at clubs as it may deem desirable. The Red Cross is hampered in scope by restrictions on the serving of civilians and prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages.
- (4) Most of the work involved in installing Red Cross clubs and procuring equipment and supplies was done by Army agencies.

d. Most unit enlisted men's day rooms and clubs were not up to desirable standards. They suffered greatly from lack of facilities and trained personnel to organize and operate them. Special services should have been in a position to provide such personnel.

e. The operation of revenue producing activities which are in the nature of commercial activities is not a proper function of special

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services. Such activities at special services clubs should be operated by Army Exchange Service.

f. Special services club hostesses should have been selected and trained prior to the beginning of overseas operations. As it was, they were not requested until the need for their services had become critical.

g. In the selection of hostesses, less emphasis should be placed on formal academic education and more on youthfulness and cosmopolitanism. The minimum age limit at 25 was too high and it would be beneficial to reduce it.

h. Properly selected Women's Army Corps or civilian hostesses are a necessary part of special services club activities.

11. The General Board recommends that:

a. All recreational activities in overseas theaters, both on and off military reservations, be made the responsibility of special services.

b. The activities of the American Red Cross be limited to field service and hospital service.

c. Service club revenue producing activities be operated by Army Exchange Service in conjunction with special services.

d. The establishment of an adequate number of service clubs be incorporated in all plans for future military operations.

e. The selection and training of Women's Army Corps or civilian hostesses especially fitted for overseas duty be initiated as early as practicable upon the outbreak of imminence of hostilities.

f. In the selection of hostesses, emphasis be placed upon the following qualifications: youth, charm, health, initiative and native intelligence.

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