

t'HELL with ROTATION

By Capt J. L. Lowe

ROTATION IS NO GOOD! IT HAS never been any good. It never will be any good.

To achieve optimum efficiency a unit must train and fight as a whole from the beginning of a training cycle or campaign to its completion. To achieve a feeling of comradeship, group solidarity, confidence in their leaders, loyalty to the unit—be it fire team or battalion—troops have to be stabilized in their units. To achieve a feeling of confidence in the control of their units and knowledge of their subordinates, unit leaders—fire team or battalion—must command their formations for longer than the period of time allotted by rotation.

One objection to the system described would be that in the event of heavy casualties, a unit must have replacements. For this purpose limited numbers of replacements could be sent to the combat area, but once in their organizations they should remain with them, even if a particular outfit pulls out within the week to return stateside.

"But," states another critic of unit rotation, "would you not have a whole unit imbued with the 'short-timers' attitude as time for relief drew nigh?"

Maybe, but if the unit was to remain together after return to the states, what man would care to chance the disapproval of his mates by failing to do his utmost up until the last minute? This attitude would probably be manifest in almost every man in the battalion.

A unit rotation system is feasible as demonstrated by the success at-

tained with it by the British. The Marine Corps could and should adopt it not only for units on duty in the Far East, but whenever possible for units engaged in any future "bush wars." A personnel rotation system can never produce unit esprit comparable to that found in a group of Marines who have been together for a long period of time in training and in combat, who know and trust each other and who can wryly sing, "There'll be no rotation, this side of the nation"—until the whole damn battalion goes home!

How many replacements felt any sense of belonging to their units in Korea under the rotation system? Trained in a replacement draft stateside, dumped into a ship's hold, separated upon arrival in Korea from his friends, thrust into a group of strangers, torn between the examples of the "hard chargers" and the "play-it-safe short-timers," what Marine replacement said to himself, "I'm one of the best in one of the best and I'm going to do my best." Instead, his attitude in many cases was to hard charge at first and then "play it cool" as time for homecoming approached.

Unit commanders, platoon leaders, company and battalion commanders seldom commanded their units for a sufficient length of time to grasp knowledge of their units' capabilities. They were seldom able to impose their wills and personalities upon their subordinates in the time allotted and were never there long enough to inspire the fullest measure of loyalty. Who could feel such loyalty to the "Old Man" when both

he and the unit's policies changed every 120 days?

Is it any wonder then that the Marines in Korea cast envious eyes at the British Commonwealth Division and their system of *unit* rotation? Think what it would have meant in terms of combat efficiency if, instead of replacement drafts regular units had been sent to Korea intact to replace like organizations who had completed their tours of duty. Let us say, for example, that the battalion known as 2/7 had been in action for a year. A warning order was sent to 1/8 at Camp Lejeune to prepare to move within 30 days to Korea. Think of the shot in the arm it would have provided for 1/8 training in the swamps of the Carolinas! The platoon leaders would have said to their men, "Listen up! Learn this! Within two months we fire for record at targets which will fire back!" The company commanders would have been able to say, "Yes, Colonel, my company is ready to fight. I've been with them here at Lejeune for a year. I know every man in the company. We're hot to trot!" The individual Marine would have said to himself, "I know every man in this squad. I've trained, lived, scrapped and pitched liberty with every one of them. I trust them. They won't let me down and I'll fight for them."

This unit when it arrived in Korea would have presented a more formidable appearance marching ashore than 3 rattle-taggle battalions of unhappy, confused replacements.

Replacing a battalion in combat, the new unit from the States would be a hard-charging team. Each man would be well-known to the man on his right and his left and all would know their leaders. Confidence, born of long association together can go far toward the promotion of high morale and efficiency. A battalion that first trains together and then fights together is a hard unit to discourage or defeat.

What of the replaced unit? They would go back to the Carolinas or California—there to join a Stateside division and lend their knowledge and spirit to the division as a whole.

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