

# THE SOLDIER OF JAPAN

*The Jap private takes a beating during his basic that makes our chicken look like pure gravy. He gets \$1.50 a month at home and up to \$2.25 more in combat zones. This is the third article in YANK's series on the Pacific War.*

By Sgt. BARRETT MCGURN  
YANK Staff Writer

**W**ASHINGTON—How does it feel to be a member of the Jap armed forces?

There's a guy here named Joe who can tell you from personal experience. A native American of Japanese descent, Joe spent several years in college in Japan just before the war and belonged to the Jap ROTC. Talking to him here in Washington you get a good picture of how the Jap Army and Navy stack up.

The Jap EM in basic training, according to Joe, is probably the world's most beat-up character. A wrong turn while learning to march is good for a slap, dropping a rifle rates a kick, and spare moments are considered ideal time to run errands for NCOs and pfcs. Officers usually leave the rough stuff to the non-coms, but there have been reports of officers slapping EM unconscious. The men who got slapped stood respectfully at attention until they passed out.

Why, then, do they obey their officers and non-coms so faithfully? Joe has the answer from his own observation.

"They think being slapped, it's the natural thing," says the former cadet. "They know they can take it out eventually on new recruits."

There is a second reason, Joe believes—the extraordinary religious devotion of the Jap soldiers to their emperor.

"They're in uniform, and they're serving the emperor," Joe says of the much-abused Jap inductees. "What do they care if a few people in between knock them around?"

Hirohito may not have the brains of Einstein, the looks of Fredric March or the physique of Charles Atlas, but he's the emperor and that's what matters, Joe declared. "For two years before Hirohito's father died, he was insane and people knew it, but they still worshipped him because he was the emperor."

Getting caught in the draft is a high honor in Japan, the former Jap ROTC man will tell you. The man's friends all congratulate him, stressing the fact that he now stands an excellent chance of winning an honorary place in *Yasukuni*, the Jap military shrine for men killed in battle.

"They throw parties and escort him to the station," Joe recalls. "If he's important enough in the community, they hire a band. I don't know how the guy feels inside, but his friends put up a good show, and he does too. He has to."

Pretty soon the ex-civilian is doing chores for some "superior private" and is well along the way to winning for his family the medal that is sent to survivors of those killed in action. Or he may qualify for the special award given those who manage to die within three years of catching a disease in service.

In peacetime, city Japs took the *Yasukuni* stuff with a grain of salt, according to another informant here in Washington, a businessman of American parentage who was born in Japan. But even city Japs can be counted on to be fanatically pro-military in wartime, he adds.

When a Jap is inducted, he may apply for training as either an A or a B candidate, Joe reports. The A men are applicants for OCS, and the B men aspire to be non-coms. If a man is accepted as an A candidate, he goes to school and then gets a trial period in the field as a sergeant major, the equivalent of our master sergeant.

"That's where they're really watched," Joe says. "That's where they make you or break you." If he makes it, the officer candidate gets his commission as a second lieutenant.



## THE SOLDIER OF JAPAN

A good many of the army and navy higher brass come from the Jap "upper classes," which means that they are descendants of the sword-swinging *Samurai*, professional warriors of several generations back. Lately, what with hara-kiri and the increase in the draft, even the class-conscious Jap Navy has had to lower the bars to admit any officer candidates capable of filling the mental, physical and character requirements.

Like all soldiers, the Japs are given to griping, but many, according to Joe, are better off in uniform than they were as civilians.

"The Japanese don't get much in civilian life," Joe says. "When you go in the army, you're at least assured of regular pay, even though the pay scale is ridiculous in our eyes. And the Japanese soldier has the respect of the people. When you're in the army, you're It. That is the way I felt when I was over there."

The pay scale, as Joe implies, would scarcely enable a Jap soldier to buy many American War Bonds. The equivalent of a four-star general gets the same base pay as an American master sergeant, and the lowest of the four grades of private draws only \$1.50 a month, plus \$2.25 for most overseas assignments. Different theaters draw different pay.

China is apparently considered the softest overseas touch, because a fourth-grade private there gets only \$1.75 extra, while French Indo-China and Thailand entitle him to two bucks over his base pay. All other theaters rate the \$2.25 extra.

The low Jap military wages aren't counteracted by low prices in the Jap PXs. Beer is a dime. A can of salmon sets the Jap soldier back 15 cents. A box of toothpicks is 3 cents, and a bottle of *sake* takes a Jap buck private's full week's pay—45 cents. *Sake*, for the information of ETO men who have not made its acquaintance, is an insipid sort of rice liquor about a third as strong as gin. It was a prize catch in the Pacific until the retreating Japs started putting *sake* labels on bottles of wood alcohol.

**T**HE Jap chow situation is far worse even than in U. S. outfits where the cooks have been recruited from the motor pool. The Jap in the field usually cooks his own food, preparing it on a 24-hour basis. Rice, fish and a few vegetables are the mainstays, and even dehydrated seaweed is considered edible. But Jap food dumps sometimes turn up quite a few delicacies, too—canned clams, crabmeat, pineapples and plums.

There are no USO clubs or chaplains in the Jap military system, according to an American newspaperman who worked in Japan for several years, but the morale of the troops isn't altogether ignored by the home front. *Imon bukuro*, or "comfort bags," are mailed to soldiers by Japanese women "by the millions," says a woman missionary who spent more than 15 years in Japan and made many an *imon bukuro* herself. "We made them in our little church," she recalls.

In the *imon bukuro* the Jap gets caramels, chocolate bars and other candies, tooth brush and paste, needle and thread, writing materials, occasionally a pair of socks and usually a supply of toilet paper, which the Jap EM evidently has a hard time obtaining. Good-luck charms, like the loincloth-like Shintoist "belt of a thousand stitches," are also often included. The belts are supposed to protect the wearer from harm.

Theatrical troupes made up of *Takarazuka* girls tour the home islands and China, the missionary reports. These are vaudeville artists who get their name from the theater in which they perform. *Geisha* girls, who, contrary to general



## THE SOLDIER OF JAPAN

American opinion, are not always prostitutes, also give shows for the troops. The religious worker describes them as being well-dressed girls with a good education and an entertaining comedy patter. The Jap Army has employed out-and-out prostitutes, too.

By and large, the fact that the Jap soldier is fighting for the emperor is considered "enough morale in itself," on the word of a silver-leaf colonel in Washington whose detail is to keep posted on the Japanese. Every morning while in training the Jap soldier is read the "Imperial Rescript," a message written by a former emperor calling on every man to fight and die for him. When the going gets tough out in the field, officers sometimes read it as a pep talk.

The strength of the Jap Army lies in its abundant infantry, and the rifle is the infantry's pride even though Japs have a reputation for being poor shots. An American born in Japan says he believes that the wild marksmanship of the Japs is the result not of poor eyesight but of the army's stinginess in the use of ammo in training.

**J**APS are taught that their rifles and bayonets are the equivalent of the swords of the old *Samurai* heroes and that once a man has put on a uniform and drawn a rifle he is a "reincarnation of the *Samurai*." Making use of the shoulder sling in the infantry is considered disrespectful to the weapon. The rifle must be carried by hand. Ammo carriers aren't issued rifles because they couldn't hold them in their hands. Even the artillery has a short issue on rifles.

"If we went on a 15-mile hike," Joe recalls, "we had to carry the rifle on our shoulder. We were told the strap is there because it's there but it's not to be used."

Fortunately for us, Japanese emphasis on the rifle seems to have retarded development of modern tanks and artillery. Although Jap tanks and artillery have lately been improved, many observers think the improvement has come too late.

Originally, the Jap Army was built largely on French doctrines, but German influence crept in later. Jap generals went to France—and later to Germany—to study. Jap ordnance also drew heavily from France, and the light French Schneider designs still dominate the Jap artillery. The French influence is seen particularly on such guns as the 1929-model 150-mm tractor-drawn long rifle, the 1930 75, the 1932 105 and the 1936 150-mm howitzer.

In very recent years the Japs had observers with the *Wehrmacht*, so that a lot of German ideas have cropped up in Jap rockets, guided missiles, antitank devices and the placement of ack-ack. There are signs that German technicians have visited Jap factories.

The Russians, in a left-handed way, have also had an influence on the Jap Army. In the clashes with the Russians along the Manchurian border in the past dozen years, the Japs saw that Soviet armor, planes and artillery had quite an edge on their own. They began building armored divisions, but these are described as pretty poor.

The Jap Army lists four theaters of operation or "groups of armies," as Tokyo calls them: the China Expeditionary Army; the Southern Army (which still holds the Netherlands East Indies but has taken beatings in the Philippines, Burma and the South and Southwest Pacific generally); the Kwangtung Armies in Manchuria and the Armies for the Defense of Japan Proper.

The Jap "groups of armies" are in turn divided into "area armies," which are similar to U. S. armies, and these are broken into just plain "armies" that correspond to U. S. corps.

The Japs have two kinds of infantry divisions—the triangular, with from 15,000 to 20,000 men, and the brigaded division, with about 12,000 men. There seems to be a particularly large number of



## **THE SOLDIER OF JAPAN**

artillery have lately been improved, many observers think the improvement has come too late.

Originally, the Jap Army was built largely on French doctrines, but German influence crept in later. Jap generals went to France—and later to Germany—to study. Jap ordnance also drew heavily from France, and the light French-Schneider designs still dominate the Jap artillery. The French influence is seen particularly on such guns as the 1929-model 150-mm tractor-drawn long rifle, the 1930 75, the 1932 105 and the 1936 150-mm howitzer.

In very recent years the Japs had observers with the *Wehrmacht*, so that a lot of German ideas have cropped up in Jap rockets, guided missiles, antitank devices and the placement of ack-ack. There are signs that German technicians have visited Jap factories.

The Russians, in a left-handed way, have also had an influence on the Jap Army. In the clashes with the Russians along the Manchurian border in the past dozen years, the Japs saw that Soviet armor, planes and artillery had quite an edge on their own. They began building armored divisions, but these are described as pretty poor.

The Jap Army lists four theaters of operation or “groups of armies,” as Tokyo calls them: the China Expeditionary Army; the Southern Army (which still holds the Netherlands East Indies but has taken beatings in the Philippines, Burma and the South and Southwest Pacific generally); the Kwangtung Armies in Manchuria and the Armies for the Defense of Japan Proper.

The Jap “groups of armies” are in turn divided into “area armies,” which are similar to U. S. armies, and these are broken into just plain “armies” that correspond to U. S. corps.

The Japs have two kinds of infantry divisions—the triangular, with from 15,000 to 20,000 men, and the brigaded division, with about 12,000 men. There seems to be a particularly large number of brigaded divisions in China.

The three-sided divisions, in addition to three infantry regiments, have a regiment of field or mountain artillery with 36 guns ranging from 75s to 150s. There is also a reconnaissance regiment—either cavalry or a dozen tanks.

The lighter brigaded divisions sometimes have no artillery at all. They have no regiments either—just four 1,000-man infantry battalions under each of two brigade headquarters.

The Jap rifle squad consists of an unlucky 13 men. Ten are riflemen, two ammo carriers, and one is a light machine gunner. He uses either the high-pitched old .25 caliber gun or a new type with a .30 caliber slug. Jap ammo, incidentally, won't work in our weapons.

One big difference between the American and Jap armed forces is at the top. Instead of being responsible to a civilian government as our army is, the armed forces run the government. A Japanese cabinet is required to include an army and navy representative from the active list, so all the armed forces need to do to throw out a cabinet they dislike is to withdraw their men. The army broke a cabinet that way in 1940.

This system of military control, political students say, discourages any feeling of personal responsibility for the government or the success of the war effort on the part of ordinary civilians. Now that the war is going badly and bombs are falling on Japan's cities, some quarters here think that the military leaders are less indifferent to home-front ideas.

The recent inclusion of “moderates” in the cabinet is seen as a sign that the militarists hope that by giving civilians more power they can keep an all-out home-front spirit whipped up. The militarists, some students think, fear that



## THE SOLDIER OF JAPAN

if they reserve all power to themselves, civilians will regard the fate of the Japanese government as strictly up to the military and lose enthusiasm for the war.

If you ask Pentagon officials whether the Jap Army and Navy are modern, they reply with another question: "Could a second-rate force inflict so many casualties on our Army, Navy and Marines at Okinawa?"

In motorization, officials add, the Japs are not nearly the equal of the Germans. Infantry divisions are still essentially horse-drawn, although the Japs have been doing their best to switch to gasoline. On Luzon the Japs were quickly cut up because they weren't motorized, and they run the risk of being cut up whenever there is fighting in open country.

Jap air strength is numerically much inferior to American, but the WD warns that with the Jap air force compressed in the homeland, it's capable of "determined" torpedo and dive-bomber attacks on Allied carriers and amphibious forces. Anyone who has seen a *Kamikaze* suicide pilot come through the ceiling will be perfectly willing to agree.

The Jap Navy is now down to little more than a "small-sized task force," on the word of a Navy officer who is just finishing a book on Japanese seapower. The Navy, he says, "presents nowhere near the threat land-based air does. You can see that from the fact that our bombers concentrate not on shipyards but on factories and air bases."

While the French, and, later, the Germans were giving the Japs lessons in how to run an army, the British taught them about navies and even built many of their early ships. One British-built battleship, the *Kongo*, is still listed in Japan's first line even though now at least 40 years old. Since the war, the Japs have been building ships as fast as possible, but the

few - hundred - thousand tons they've turned out can't replace the tonnage lost by sinkings. The result is that the Jap Navy is now not one-third as large as it was at the time of Pearl Harbor.

According to a recent estimate by the U. S. Navy Department, the Jap Navy currently numbers about 75 ships — half a dozen battleships with guns 16-inch or better, 6 to 10 carriers, 10 to 15 cruisers and some 40 cans.

# YANK



\* page 18 \*

The Jap Navy, the experts say, can interfere to some extent with future landings if it wants to commit suicide. Although the Jap Navy has generally preferred to run instead of fight, a Tokyo broadcast some weeks ago claimed that the 45,000-ton super battleship *Yamato*, which was sunk off Okinawa, was engaged in a suicide mission when it went down. And so the possibility of a last-gasp battle remains.

The Jap Navy used to be all-volunteer, but is now half-draftee. The American Navy rates the Jap sailor a good seaman but says he's handicapped by a job-jealous policy that keeps a man from learning the work of the man next to or above him. Accordingly, losses of *junshikan* (warrant officers) and *joto heiso* (petty officers) have been hard to make up.

The Jap sailor is not cuffed around as much as the soldier.

"You'd expect them to treat the sailor better," a Navy man says. "Mutinies are much more dangerous at sea."

