

VJ-Day

THE announcement everybody had been waiting for—through day after day of rumor and counter rumor - was a long time coming, and relief was as audible as celebration when final word came through. It was what we had been fighting for, the reason we had been in uniform for a year or two or five had come true. Now the war was over.

It is a little hard to analyze the immediate meaning of anything you've been thinking about for so long so intensely. The first feeling is bound to be a bit of a let-down. After you say "It's over" for the first few times and get used to the idea, after you celebrate, after the shouting dies down, there is bound to be a certain hollowness .

The war is over and you suddenly realize that you have been living with war for a good slice of your life. You certainly aren't going to miss the war, but it's hard for a moment for most of us to think of how things will be - are - without it. It's like an itch that you've got used to scratching and all of a sudden along comes a drug that cures it; you still feel a slight inclination to go on scratching and you have to remind yourself that there is nothing to scratch. You have to make an effort to apply yourself to all the things you dreamed of doing if you ever got time off enough from scratching to do them.

The end of the war means for most of us that we be getting out of the Army - not tomorrow, certainly, and probably not next week or next month, but more or less soon. There is no doubt that this is the biggest meaning of peace to the average man or woman in the service.

One reaction is impatience. All of us are going to be very damn impatient about the speed with which we will be discharged. No matter what system of discharges is put into action there will be kicks, and no matter how good the system is there will be confusion. Recognizing this may make it easier to bear some of the inevitable snafus that will raise their heads in the months to come. We will save a lot of steam if we resist the temptation to bellache about some of the minor injustices that are in the cards for us, and gripe only when our beefs are legitimate enough and large enough to warrant some attention and action.

Getting out of the Army also means a return to a way of life - a civilian way of life - that has become strange to some of us. It isn't easy to keep from overglamorizing

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civilian life when you're in uniform and so some of us are going to be disappointed when we get the chance to put on that blue serge or blue denim. Nothing could be so wonderful as the ideal you dream of when you are stuck on some Pacific island or abandoned in some obscure supply command or when you have been engaged in a succession of D-days, each one worse than the one before. It will save a lot of disappointment and bitterness if we can remember that civilian life is not perfect, that there are snafus there, too, and that the mere changing of a uniform for a department store ready-made is not going to solve problems automatically.

Some of the more excitable of civilian editorialists have been doing a heap of worrying about our reabsorption into normal civilian life. YANK thinks a lot of this worry is groundless and it is.

We are not coming back to the States as a bunch of problem children. We have certain rights and responsibilities as citizens. We cannot accept the rights without taking the responsibilities, too.

The responsibilities include more than pulling a blind down on our war past and living as useful citizens. We have been in a war and most of us know what war means in terms of death and hardship and hunger and dislocation. One responsibility should be to keep an eye always open for forces that throw us into another war. We don't want one.

There are eventually going to be over ten million of us. We will have a hell of a lot of potential power. We are going to have to keep continually alert as to how we use that power. There are going to be people who try to use us for their own ends. There are going to be other people who are going to confuse us so thoroughly that our power will be dispersed and useless. Let's not be suckers.

Let's remember that, among other things, this war taught us how costly war can be. And let's, as civilians, pay enough attention not only to our own government but to the affairs of the rest of the world so that another war may be averted. It may seem silly to worry about far-away places when we will all be so glad to be home again. It may seem silly, but a lot of us spent a lot of time in far-away places and a lot of us died in them to end this war. Unless we pay attention to what goes on in the world today, we may be scattered all over its face, fighting again, tomorrow.

These are the things to remember now that we have the time to think about them. But the most immediate reaction is still the strongest one. The war is over.

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