

Malaria On The Front Line

All newspaper accounts of the conflict now raging in the East lay great stress on the devastating part that malaria is playing in this war.

Frank Hewlett, of the United Press, states in his account of the battle of Bataan that, "ten-thousand of our troops lay in two field hospitals, most of them ill with malaria. Another ten-thousand were confined to camp with lighter cases of malaria." In another account, "malaria and malnutrition put more soldiers out of action than did the Japanese."

Similar accounts are coming from all the Eastern fronts and even though they may be greatly exaggerated, they point out that our casualty lists may show a far greater mortality from malaria than actual combat. A sick soldier is as much of a liability as a wounded soldier. It is a military axiom that it is far better to leave the enemy with five-thousand wounded than ten-thousand dead. The wounded must be defended, fed, clothed and transported; the dead will take care of themselves!

This truth places upon the shoulders of those of us engaged in mosquito control work a grave responsibility which we as loyal citizens must accept as a patriotic duty and a challenge to our ingenuity. The problem confronting us is as different from those encountered in the past as is this war itself with respect to other wars.

This is a motorized war of rapid movement covering wide areas and is being fought through jungles and swamps in many places hardly penetrated by white men before December 7th. In this war, troops seldom remain in one place more than a few hours and are generally

transported from point to point by motorized equipment. Even Field Hospitals must move as rapidly as the troops for in this kind of warfare it is a matter of advance or evacuate--there is no rest--and territory traversed today is forgotten tomorrow.

As a consequence of this type of warfare, the problem presented is not one of destroying the mosquito in its embryo stage nor concern with the species of mosquito to be found in the areas being fought over. Our problem is to develop, and provide the troops in the field with, the proper equipment for combatting the mosquito on the wing, whatever its species, and to encourage the daily administration of prophylactics, whether quinine or atabrin, to all troops in the field.

Undoubtedly, the copious use of repellents plus fogging down with power sprayers when possible, plus spraying the interiors of trucks, tanks, planes and tents, an insistence upon complete covering of the body with light clothing, plus headnets when they can be worn, may go far toward reducing the casualty lists. However, whatever the answer, we must find it now: there is no time for experiment or the gathering of statistics: We must make use of the means at hand and do it now. We must bear in mind that all of the territory we have lost must be fought over again before this war is won and when our boys go back over the road to victory, let us make sure they go fully prepared to fight their greatest enemy, malaria. This is our duty!

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