

NOTES ON PUERTO RICO AND PUERTO RICAN TROOPS.

SECTION I GENERAL CONSIDERATION.

SECTION II PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERIZATION OF PUERTO RICAN SERVICEMEN.

SECTION III HANDLING AND LEADING OF PUERTO RICAN TROOPS.

SECTION I.

There is a lamentable ignorance on the part of most continentals about Puerto Rico. Its political status, social customs, social background, economy and even the currency in use are known to few who have not visited the island.

Puerto Rico had had four hundred years of rather eventful history before the American occupation in 1898. During that period the island was frequently attacked by the British, French and Dutch. A number of landings were effected, though the attackers never completed a conquest.

It is obvious, therefore, that a society which had developed through four hundred years relatively unaffected by an European influence except that of Spain should have presented, on the American occupation of definite and display ingrained way of life. That the language of the people is still Spanish, and that their customs are largely embodied in the past is natural enough when the forty-five years of Continental participation in the life of the island is contrasted with four hundred years of indigenous development.

The continentals of 1898 found some 700,000 people in Puerto Rico. Above racial background was a mixture of Spanish, Indians, Negro, and sprinkling of Chinese. The pure Spanish element was but a handful. Today the population approaches 2,000,000, but the racial background has not changed.

The Jones Act of 1917 granted United States citizenship to all Puerto Ricans, who chose to accept it. All but a very few did. With this event the terms "Continental and Insular" came in use to distinguish citizens of the mainland from those of the island. The term "American" is in wide use among the less educated, however in speaking of continentals and continentals are prone to call resident of the island "Puerto Rican".

The economy of the island is primarily agricultural and is based on sugar, coffee and tobacco. It can not feed itself and imports great quantities of rice, beans and fish. As this diet, plus a number of starchy vegetable, is generations old, it has quite obviously, the virtues of an acquired taste and should be so regarded in preparing menu of Puerto Rican troops.

The Puerto Rican, accustomed to a tropical environment, will not show typical Continental set. He is not us to fast force and may prefer to delay action until tomorrow. A leisurely attitude is not, however, to be confused with lack of ability.

The patriotic enthusiasm of the average Puerto Rican is as complete as that of his continental brothers in arms. This is very gratifying in view of the very temptation for disaffection that exist in Puerto Rico itself; low living standard, the mystic promises of communism, the urge of independence, and the cultural tide with Spain. No groups of our people respond more seriously to the call to arms than did the Puerto Ricans, proud impetuous and volatile, they were, and are, eager for action on any active front. These troops will respond in a gratifying manner to a leadership which is sympathetic to the understanding of the 400 to 45 years ratio in the life of Puerto Ricans.

Energetic steps have been taken in the Puerto Rican Sector to encourage the use of English and the higher great NCO are required to be able to speak and understand it. It is considered that all efforts made along this line will take good dividends. Similarly, it is highly advantageous for Commanding Officers to have some knowledge of Spanish. Such knowledge will be particularly helpful in making training inspections and in handling disciplinary problems and is beneficial in maintaining good morale in the Puerto Rican troops.

The Puerto Rican civilians standards of sanitation and cleanliness are inferior to those in the states. However the Puerto Rican soldiers at the completion of their basic training have been indoctrinated with the Army standards and are quite willing to comply with them at least while within Military Areas.