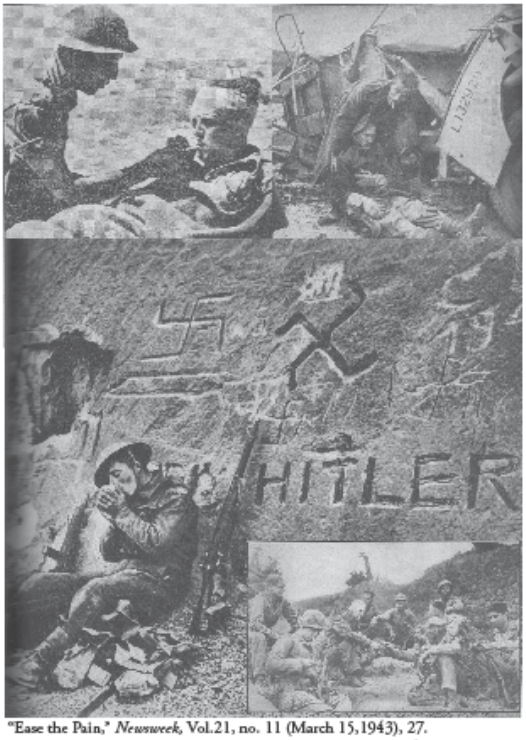
CIGARETTES AND THEIR IMPACT IN WORLD WAR II

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"Ease the Pain," *Newsweek*, Vol.21, no. 11 (March 15,1943), 27.
"Casualty in Tunesia," *Newsweek*, Vol. 21, no. 12 (March 22,1943), 18.
"Writing on the Wall," *Newsweek*, Vol. 21, no. 11 (March 15,1943), Cover.
"Pyle and Marines," *Newsweek*, Vol. 25, no. 18 (April 20,1945), 78.

In recent decades anti-smoking activists determined to propagate as much information on the negative aspects of cigarettes as possible have bombarded American society. However, there have been occasions when cigarettes have been helpful. For example, during World War II cigarettes served more than one purpose on and off the battlefield. Photos, articles, personal accounts, and medical studies illustrate that cigarettes had biological and psychological benefits, making them an integral component of the war. For those soldiers who smoked, cigarettes provided temporary relief from mental and physical stresses. Non-smoking soldiers used cigarettes as a currency with which they could purchase things such as clothing, alcohol, and sex, or easily sell them to other soldiers because all soldiers favored U.S. cigarettes.[30]

Scholarly discussions of the role of cigarettes in World War II are sparse. Martin van Creveld argues that it was the organizational ability of armies to satisfy and manipulate soldiers' sociological and psychological needs that determined the soldier's durability and compliance.[31] Alex Watson asserts in his study that self-deception often gave soldiers a "distorted, overly-optimistic but beneficial view of their surroundings and personal chances of survival."[32]

Tobacco has been a part of American culture since before the Revolutionary War. When asked how civilians could best help the Revolutionary War effort, George Washington said, "If you can't send money, send tobacco."[33] In 1917, General Pershing similarly asserted, "You ask me what we need to win this war? I answer tobacco as much as bullets."[34] Pershing cabled the government in Washington, "[t]obacco is indispensable as the daily ration; we must have thousands of tons without delay."[35] During WWI the U.S. military believed the effect of cigarettes on the troops was positive and thus provided tobacco as part of the soldiers' rations. The War Industries Board estimated that World War I soldiers smoked sixty to seventy percent more tobacco than they did in

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30 B.W.E. Alford, *W. D. And H. O. Wills And The Development Of The U.K. Tobacco Industry, 1786-1965* (London: Methuen, 1973), 402.

31 Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S Army Performance, 1939-1945* (London: Greenwood Press, 1983).

32 Alex Watson, "Self-Deception and Survival: Mental Coping Strategies on the Western Front, 1914-1918," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 41, no. 2 (April, 2006), 248.

33 Eric Burns, *Smoke Of The Gods: A Social History of Tobacco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 94.

34 Ibid., 157.

35 Peter Taylor, *The Smoke Ring, Tobacco, Money, Multinational Politics* (New York: Zonderzan Publishing House, 1984), 1.

civilian life.[36] Production of cigarettes increased from eighteen billion cigarettes in 1914 to forty-seven billion in 1918 and continued to increase to meet the tremendous rise in cigarette use during the first half of the twentieth century.[37] "In 1911, the average American smoked 141 cigarettes. In 1941, he smoked 1,892, almost fourteen times as many."[38]

With American industries readying for increased wartime production, the War Labor Board was created to supervise and wrangle American industry into greater productivity. The task assigned to this board was to turn U.S. industry into one cohesive and efficient unit. In 1941 "[President Roosevelt] proclaimed the [tobacco] leaf one essential crop and ordered draft boards to defer the men who grew it whenever possible."[39] Roosevelt as well as many of the upper echelon of the military knew that cigarettes were very important to Americans.

With any product, advertising brings potential customers to a particular brand. Although cigarettes had been advertised extensively prior to World War II there was a shift in how the message was constructed and packaged in 1941. The story of the Lucky Strike packaging is indicative of how the cigarette companies wanted the public to view them as doing their patriotic duty to help win the war, as many other industries did. Prior to the war Lucky Strikes were packaged very similarly to its current form, however, the package was green and red, instead of white and red. The marketing department had deemed this latter color combination undesirable to women just prior to the conflict. With the start of the war they changed their packaging to white with red lettering, stating that the government requisitioned their green paint (containing copper) to use for camouflage paint on boats.[40] This was an advantageous way for Lucky Strike to change their packaging, making it more appealing to the general public through the company's public and patriotic support of the war effort.

Cigarette companies used both the format and the content of their advertising campaigns to bring attention to their brand. Multiple brands utilized style of comic books to advertise their cigarettes. This format would bring a heroic character (male and/or female) to the reader and

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36 Elizabeth M. Whelan, *A Smoking Gun: How the Tobacco Industry Gets Away with Murder* (Philadelphia, G. F. Stickley, 1984), 50.

37 Ibid., 72.

38 Burns, 197.

39 Burns, 197-198.

40 Toby Thompson, "Pack Art: Wreathed in the Smoke of Dreams," *The Washington Post* November 8, 1982, 22.

provide information of his/her patriotic duty.[41] After the spine tingling mission, they would light up with their favorite brand. Though this was only an advertising blitz, many pilots have written of lighting up to relax after bombing runs over Europe or Japan. Other advertisements used photographs or drawings of heroic soldiers and pilots ready to enter or just returning from combat to emphasize how much troops enjoyed their cigarettes. Regardless of the manufacturer, one thing was certain, soldiers needed cigarettes and buying XX brand would help them in their fight.[42]

Relaxation and steady nerves were highlighted in cigarette advertisements. Camel, the largest brand distributed amongst the soldiers, ran full-page announcements listing the reasons why steady nerves and relaxation were so important to the troops in performing their duties. These advertisements were published in many formats, from the comic book style to photos and drawings. Each advertisement, geared mostly to people on the home front who could send cigarettes abroad, sought to educate the general public as to why they should mail their particular brand of cigarette to their loved one stationed abroad. All of the ads revolved around the idea that these cigarettes would allow the soldier to focus so that they could better perform their job and get home safely.

In 1943 the United States military re-designed the K-ration to be more compact and easier to prepare. In addition to the more efficient design, the military also made cigarettes standard issue with every meal. The cigarettes were provided at minimal or no cost to the U.S. government by various manufacturers. The K-ration contained a meat or cheese product, crackers, a powdered juice drink to be added to water, and something sweet such as chocolate.[43] A soldier would also receive a small four-pack of cigarettes along with matches in each ration. This addition was a much welcomed by the soldiers as up to seventy-five percent of soldiers smoked.[44] Although this claim was never officially verified, it is safe to say that the number of soldiers that smoked was very high.

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41 Camel Cigarette Ad Paratrooper, *Newsweek*, XIX no. 6, June 29, 1942: 29. Camel Cigarette Ad Pilots, *Newsweek*, XX no. 4, July 27, 1942:35. Camel Cigarette Ad Hellcats, *Saturday Evening Post*, June 10, 1944, Back Cover. Chesterfield Ad Jungle Soldier, *Newsweek*, XXI no.6, Feb. 8, 1943, Back Cover.

42 Camel Ad Man in the Army, *Newsweek*, XXI no. 11, March 15, 1943, 27. Chesterfield Ad Writing Home. *Newsweek*, XXI no.2, January 11, 1943, Back Cover.

43 Mark Henry, *The U.S. Army in World War II* (Essex: Osprey Publishing 2001,) 119. George Forty, *United States Army Handbook 1939-1945* (London: Alan Sutton, 1995).

44 James Calvert, *Silent Running: My Years on a World War II Attack Submarine* (Somerset: Wiley, 1997), 86.

As the war continued, cigarettes were plentiful to American soldiers and those that smoked had easy access via rations or at the local U.S. military Post Exchange, which was set up throughout Europe and in some areas in the Pacific. Through the K-ration redesign, which was completed in 1943, soldiers had "in most cases between five and seven packs a week [via rations], with additional quantities available at the PX, which never seem to run out."[45] Cigarettes were supplied to the troops in unlimited quantities whenever possible.

Cigarettes were so popular among the troops that numerous camps around Europe were nicknamed after various cigarette brands. In Rouen, France, Corporal William Hanford was a forward artillery observer who later remembered, "Camp Lucky Strike was only one of several 'cigarette camps'. I had to wonder whether the tobacco companies had something in their contracts with the army requiring these camps to be named in return for the free cigarettes they gave us."[46] Though the nicknaming of these camps has not been linked to any agreement between the companies and the government, due to the popularity of the various cigarette brands, it is likely that the troops named them after the cigarettes distributed to them.

Without the specific numbers kept by the U.S. government or by the cigarette companies themselves, we do not know exactly the quantity of cigarettes that were purchased by the military. However, we know this number is very large. In an April 16, 1945 advertisement from *Newsweek*, the Veeder-Root company, supplier of counter machines to the War Labor Board, counted 137,671,282,000 cigarettes made in the last six months of 1944. In other food industries forty percent of items made was diverted to the troops. If that same percentage holds for cigarettes, 55,068,512,800 cigarettes were diverted to the military in the last six months of 1944.[47]

The mental health of soldiers during wartime is critical. Since World War I and the implementation of heavy shell bombardments, and subsequent shell shock, military institutions in the U.S. and abroad looked for ways to heal their soldiers' psyche. In World War II cigarettes became an important psychological coping mechanism for soldiers. More than a decade after the war, psychologists confirmed the soothing potential of cigarettes, arguing that reasons for smoking include "relief or tension, stimulation, sociability, gives people something to do, gracefully."[48] In

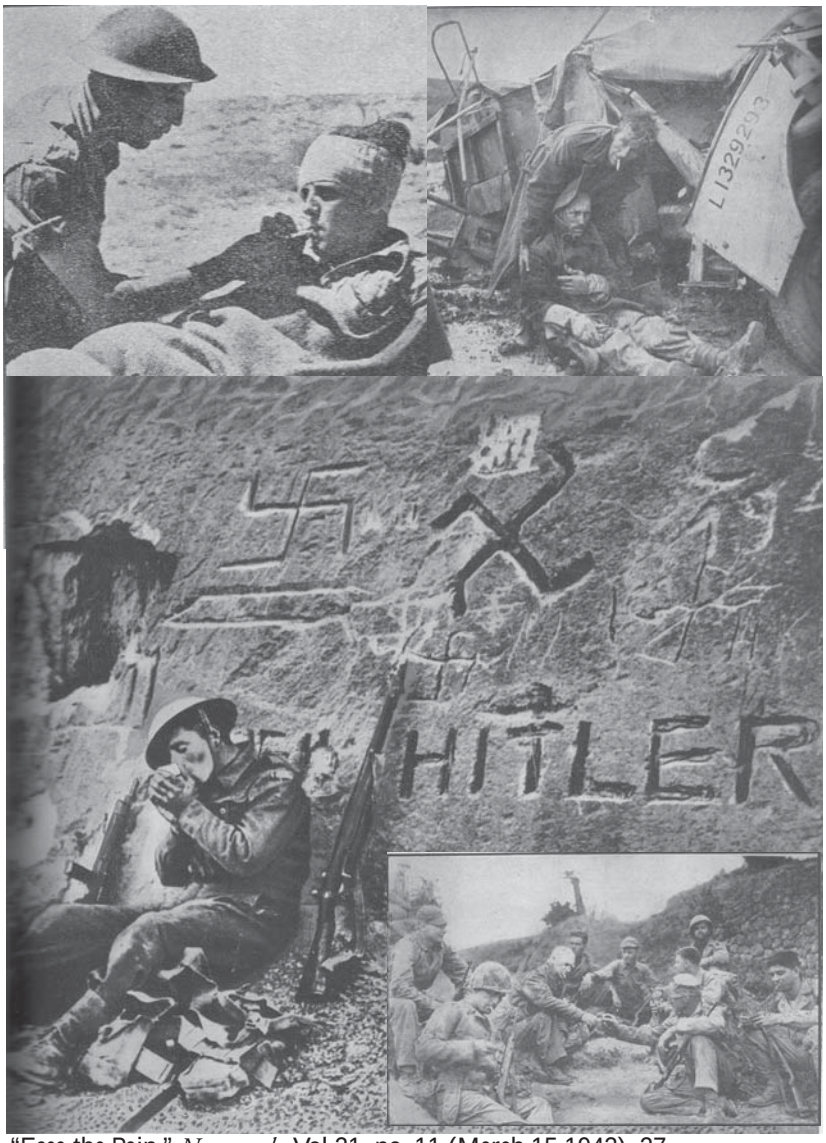
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45 Burns, 201.

46 William Hanford, *A Dangerous Assignment: An Artillery Forward Observer in World War II* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2008), 232.

47 Veeder-Root Advertisement, *Newsweek*, April 16, 1945, 20.

48 M. Powell Lawton, "Psychosocial Aspects of Cigarette Smoking," *Journal of Health and Behavior* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1962): 163-170, 165.



"Ease the Pain," *Newsweek,* Vol.21, no. 11 (March 15,1943), 27.
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"Dinner K Ration," US Quartermaster Foundation. http://www.qmmuseum.lee.army.mil/subsistence/KRation_Dinner.JPG

"Aid to Russia," *Newsweek*, Vol. 20, no. 5 (August 3,1942), 15.

his memoir, combat reporter Don Whitehead commented, "the shared cigarette…often gave them [soldiers] the necessary courage to face another day of fatigue, discomfort, and pervasive boredom."[49] Assessments such as those offered by Whitehead offer a glimpse into the lives of soldiers indicating that men often spent many hours awaiting troop movements or other routine matters of war. During those times, soldiers were restricted to camp and did not have many ways to pass the time. Smoking became a coping strategy for boredom.

Battle related reasons for smoking are some of the more typical reasons why soldiers smoked. According to research psychologists at Columbia, "emotional stress actually triggers an intricate psycho-biological mechanism that dictates how much a person will smoke at a given moment…[and] smoking frequently seems to increase when a person is under stress."[50] With smokers, stress influences how much they smoke. With war all around them, soldiers on both sides smoked more than they ha ever had before. One British soldier stationed in North Africa argued cigarettes were one of the things that helped win the war. He claimed, "I can tell you, fags for a soldier were very important in those days. Two things won the psychological war in my view-a cup of char and a fag. Whatever morale a Tommy was in beforehand, it's right high up after he's had his fag [cigarette] and a cup of char [coffee]. So long as he can sit quiet for a minute or two."[51] While stationed at Oro Bay, New Guinea in December 1943 as a part of the Army Transportation Corps, Private Sy Kahn mirrors the British soldiers sentiments, "[l]ast night I went to bed early, but an Aussie soldier came into the tent. He stuttered so badly that I was curious about him. I climbed out of my mosquito net to see him. Over cigarettes and candlelight we had an interesting talk."[52] This diary entry also matches many of the photos published in various magazines in the United States and abroad.

Film clips and photos of the 1940s often depict smoking as a way for soldiers to bond with each other. This bonding is evident in photos from every country.[53] *Newsweek* included photos of American soldiers in

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[49] John Romeiser, *Combat Reporter: Don Whitehead's World War II Diary and Memoirs* (New York: Fordham University Press 2006), 4.

[50] Joel Greenberg, "Why Do You Smoke?" *Science News* 111, no. 19 (May 1977): 297-298.

[51] Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of World War II* (Guilford: The Lyons Press, 2004), 199.

[52] Sy M. Kahn, *Between Terror and Tedium: A Soldiers World War II Diary*, 1943-1945 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 40.

[53] It is interesting to note, however, that the Nazis were the first government to warn its military and the population at large about the negative health effects of smoking. Robert Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1999).

Okinawa enjoying cigarettes together with journalist Ernie Pyle.[54] This was a way for many journalists and soldiers to take a moment to relax and remove themselves mentally from the war. *Newsweek* and other periodicals of the time published countless photos of military men, American, Russian or even German troops smoking. [55]

Prior to and during the war the United States government spent large amounts of money on propaganda to vilify both the Japanese and the Nazi government. This propaganda energized the general public as well as soldiers to support the war effort and created animosity against the enemy. On the battlefield, especially in the Pacific, the atrocities of war helped dehumanize the enemy so that fighting them would not have damaging effects on the psyche of soldiers fighting on the front lines. However, there was a need to de-vilify the enemies once they had been captured or had surrendered. Cigarettes were the tool of choice in helping to transform enemies into less hostile people.

In Hollandia, New Guinea, late in 1944, Private Sy Kahn noted in his diary the capture of sixteen Japanese soldiers one day. He noticed that "the fellows got quite friendly with them and soon had some of the younger and, consequently, less stoic and more friendly Japs conversing and making signs as best they could. After being plied with cigarettes, a few started writing good-naturedly enough on papers and on Aussie, Jap and American money."[56] When comparing the European and Pacific war theatres, most historians and soldiers agree that there was a large difference between the levels of savagery. The Pacific theatre was considered to be much more destructive and savage with a higher degree of animosity between Japanese and American troops than with German and American troops. However, in both areas, cigarettes were used as an essential tool to de-vilify the enemy and bring a human perspective to prisoners.

Soldiers stationed abroad during the war had very few reminders of home. Though parents and loved ones would send letters and, at times, some cookies, cigarettes were one of the top items requested by and sent to soldiers from home. According to one observer of the war, "cigarettes formed an umbilical cord linking soldier to civilization. There was little else in the daily grind of being bombed, burned and maimed, of killing or

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54 Ernie Pyle, Photo, *Newsweek*, April 30, 1945, 78.

55 Burns, 170. (Photo). Aid to Russia (Photo), *Newsweek*, XX no.5, August 3, 1942, 15. Two SS Soldiers resting under a Military Vehicle. NA012557, December 1, 1944. http://pro.corbic.com/enlargement/enlargement.aspx?id-NA012557&caller=search (accessed March 13, 2010).

56 Kahn, 122.

being killed in foreign countries to remind them of home."[57] This idea cannot be better represented than via a comment made by General MacArthur to a hometown group that had raised ten thousand dollars for the troops. When they asked the General what the troops needed, he answered that cigarettes would bring about more contented soldiers. He argued that "the entire amount should be used to buy American cigarettes which, of all personal comforts, are the most difficult to obtain here."[58] Cigarette companies aided this notion by advertising this idea in conjunction with ready-to-mail cigarette cartons.[59] These cartons of cigarettes were already packaged for shipping, could be purchased cheaper than regular cartons and the price included the postage. Consumers just had to put an address on the carton and it was ready to go.

Cigarettes have physical effects in addition to psychological consequences. During the 1970s scientists and doctors finally agreed that "smoking as an expression of tension is one of a few hypotheses which have received several independent confirmations."[60] Today it is known that "the physiological effect of nicotine has two stages."[61] When nicotine initially enters the blood stream it acts as a toxin to the body. The blood vessels constrict and restrict the flow of blood. In the next instant the blood vessels relax lowering blood pressure and the pulse providing a relaxing effect."[62] This relaxation effect is what causes a smoker to feel a wave of relief come over them after they light up. The actual physical effects of cigarettes on blood pressure and pulse rate provided a pseudo-medicinal quality necessary on the battlefield.

As cigarettes helped to reduce physical manifestations of tension and stress for soldiers, they became a very important part of their lives. Shell shock was a major problem on both fronts, both in Europe and Japan. While there was often no way to avoid being in the midst of battle, many soldiers became physically weakened due to being in these conditions for extended periods of time. American commanders understood that cigarettes could help their soldiers and due to their alleged "harmlessness" were provided in quantity.[63] While on a U.S. attack submarine in the Pacific a soldier wrote of "watching the smokers (three-

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57 Burns, 201.

58 Ibid., 198.

59 *New York Times*, Display Ad 10 No Title, May 11, 1942, 7. *New York Times*, Display Ad 2 No Title, April 15, 1942, 10. *Los Angeles Times,* Display Ad 18 No Title, September 20, 1943, 16.

60 Lawton, 168.

61 Richard Klein, *Cigarettes Are Sublime* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 144.

62 Greenberg, 297-298.

quarters or so of the people on board) light up their cigarettes, some with trembling hands, and seeing color come back to their complexions and response to their faces after a run-in with a Japanese enemy destroyer dropping depth charges around his submarine."[64] In New Britain, a frontline soldier noted in his diary "[m]any of the fellows were badly shocked. Brothers seemed shell-shocked when I saw him in the hall, shaking badly, eyes as wide as saucers. He asked me for a cigarette which I did not have."[65] The accounts of the soldiers indicate that these men were concerned only with dealing with their immediate circumstances.

Photographs from the period also portray a pseudo-medicinal use of cigarettes. In photographs of soldiers in triage areas, many injured soldiers had cigarettes in their mouths. In a photograph taken after the storming of the beaches in Normandy, France, numerous soldiers were treated for injuries sustained during the invasion, and all of them had cigarettes in their hands of their mouths.[66] Similar photos were published in various magazines during the war.[67] Since battlefield medical assistance was limited and often could not provide much-needed pain relief when supplies of morphine were low, soldiers relied on cigarettes to help them with pain management.

Due to the large-scale damage and the monetary cost of fighting, there was very little in Europe that functioned properly after the war. The economies of many European countries were almost shattered. After the war the United States took an active role in helping the governments of these countries to rebuild their infrastructures. During this period of economic instability only objects such as gold, silver, other precious metals, gems and consumables were valid currency. For quite some time after fighting ended "cigarettes remained the only stable currency in the retail marts of Germany, Italy, and France."[68] Almost anything could be purchased with cigarettes. As British translator Patricia Crampton wrote at Nuremberg, "[t]here was nothing you couldn't buy with cigarettes, you could buy your train tickets and you knew the price of everything in

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[63] During the 1940s there was some inkling in the scientific community that cigarettes might be harmful to the body. However, it was not until the late 1950s that this harm was considered real by a majority of the medical community. Starting in 1965, cigarette packs had a warning label.

[64] Calvert, 86.

[65] Kahn, 79.

[66] Army casualties on Omaha beach, June 6, 194. Photo SC198810. http://pro.corbis.com (accessed March 13, 2010).

[67] Casualty in Tunisia (Photo), *Newsweek*, XXI no. 12, March 22, 1943, 18.

[68] Burns, 206.

cigarettes."[69] While in Paris, an Army Private in charge of transporting war materials was asked a Frenchman from a second story window if he had any cigarettes to trade. Since he wanted a pair of boots in the correct size, the soldier traded the Frenchman his ill fitting boots along with two packs of cigarettes.[70]

Though most consumer goods were rationed, people with the right currency could buy anything they wanted in an active black market during the war.[71] While in a German prisoner of war camp a soldier wrote "[w]e prisoners kept the Black Market in Operation. There were five articles from our Red Cross parcels we used for trade: cigarettes, tea, coffee, soap and chocolate. After a trade had been completed, we would give our guard a cigarette or two."[72] Once again General MacArthur was correct. Cigarettes provided these soldiers with one of the few comforts of home, although they had to be traded first.

Cigarettes provided benefits to those who had them. For those who smoked, cigarettes helped to get them through the war both mentally and physically. People who did not smoke used cigarettes as a currency with which they could purchase the things that could offer comforts such as clothing, alcohol, and even sex. Of course since the mid-1960s Americans are well aware of the tremendous health hazards tobacco products pose and it is obvious that cigarette consumption among World War II soldiers caused smoking related illnesses and deaths.



"Aid to Russia," *Newsweek*, Vol. 20, no. 5 (August 3,1942), 15.

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69 Arthur, 470.

70 Kahn, 130.

71 Allan M. Brandt, *The Cigarette Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 100.

72 Douglas Rice, *Through Our Eyes: Eyewitness Accounts of World War II* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2008), 158.