

Thomas, Harold

## Bethlehemite Directs Recreation Program for Soldiers in Africa

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WITH THE FIFTH AMERICAN ARMY, NORTH AFRICA—Recreational programs for soldiers of the Fifth American Army in North Africa are being vitalized by new ideas and methods as a result of a conference of special services officers held recently at the Army's headquarters.

The two-day conference was called by the Special Services of the North African Theater and discussing aids in the betterment of their programs.

Major Harold Thomas of Bethlehem, Pa., former dean of Lehigh University, now director of the special services educational program in North Africa, presided at the meetings, assisted by the athletic head, Captain Harry G. Gamage, of Bowling Green, Ky., formerly a football coach at the University of Kentucky.

Major Raymond J. Novotny, of 3686 West 45th Street, Cleveland, Ohio, Fifth Army special services officer, was in charge of arrangements.

The first day of the conference featured a general discussion of special services problems in all parts of North Africa. This was followed by a showing of a motion picture, "Divide and Conquer," one of a series of seven special films designed to present to soldiers background information on the causes and purposes of the war, after which the officers considered various causes and purposes of the problems in film distribution and booking. This session included, also, a discussion of types of educational programs in the African theater.

That night, the twenty-five members at the conference joined 3500 soldiers and civilians in enjoying a sports show which included ten boxing bouts. Part of the routine recreational program at Fifth Army headquarters, the show constituted an excellent demonstration of the work of the Fifth Army special services offices.

An open forum held the second day was the most stimulating ses-



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sion of the conference. Special services officers from lower units spoke frankly of their individual problems and exchanged helpful suggestions on the recreational athletic and educational phases of their work. The conference closed with a tour of special services facilities in the area.

This meeting was the first of its kind to be held in Africa, but was so successful those who attended insisted on tentative plans for similar conferences in the near future. Commenting on the work of the conference, Major Novotny said, "What we were all hoping to get we got—down-to-earth answers to questions and some good, new ideas that are going to pay off for the enlisted men we're trying to help!"

Before returning to their respective headquarters, the special services officers demonstrated complete faith in their own program by visiting a Fifth Army recreation center and going swimming in the Mediterranean.

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