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# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

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# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

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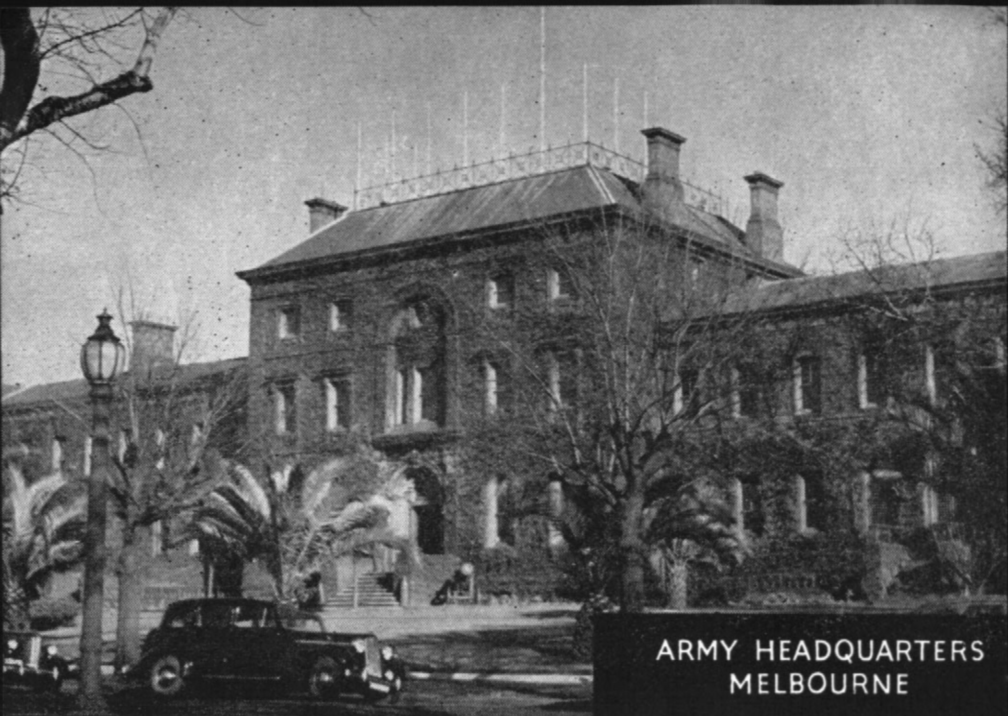


# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

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# ARTILLERY in the DEFENCE on a WIDE FRONT

Lieutenant-Colonel F. R. Evans,
Royal Australian Artillery.

WITH the reference to a new Training Directive in the last Monthly Training Report of the Director of Military Training, it is appropriate to take stock of the ideas accruing from the exercises and discussions of the past six months on the problems peculiar to the defence on a wide front. Whilst the infantry aspects of the problem have been carefully examined, on occasions the common enemy, time, often precluded a full discussion of the effect of wide fronts on the employment of the artillery. It is the object of this article to analyse some of the associated problems.

A pre-requisite to any discussion is a definition of the term "wide front," and in this connection "The Infantry Division In Battle," Section 20, paras. 7 and 8, states:

"The frontage which an infantry division may be required to hold may vary from a more normal frontage of four to five miles to a much wider frontage depending on the nature of the country and other considerations.

"When holding extended frontages, the divisional Commander must resist any inclination to cover the whole frontage by small arms fire, since by doing so he will be unable to retain a sufficient counter-attack force under his own hand. It can be taken as a principle that the wider the frontage, the greater must be the depth."

Little effort is needed to appreciate that the requirements for depth and breadth at the same time conflict.

As a first step then, an examination of the artillery tasks to be done may be appropriate and these are listed as follows:

(a) the support of troops providing the divisional screen;

(b) the support of the FDLs including patrolling;

(c) the support of the counter-attack force;

(d) Defensive Fire in depth and for counter penetration;

(e) Harassing Fire;

(f) Neutralization of hostile guns and mortars.

All of the above tasks except (e) and (f) may call for close support.

Some of the technical limitations of the equipment should also be appreciated so that their influence on siting is related to the tactical rquirements.

With the 25 pr, although it can fire to 13,400 yards with super charge, at this range the length zone of the gun is 600 yards using mixed lots of propellant. Where the safety of our own troops is involved a zone of more than 250 yards is undesirable. Furthermore, the firing of super charge should be restricted to special circumstances, and guns sited to perform forseeable tasks with normal charge. Therefore the maximum range for close support of infantry is about 8,200 yards.

Another factor to be considered before deciding on a suitable gun area for the main battle is the depth to which patrols would have to be supported. This would of course depend on the tactical situation and the nature of the country, but for discussion, a depth of 1,200 yards is taken and guns sited approximately 8,200 yards in rear. This means that gun positions would be about 7,000 yards from the FDLs.

From the same positions it may be possible to support the Divisional Screen, but if not, some guns would be required forward of the gun area until the screen was withdrawn.

With guns sited approximately 7,000 yards from the FDLs, the maximum frontage that could be covered by all guns with the desired accuracy is about 8,400 yards.

As the frontage increases, to achieve the same effect, guns must necessarily be sited closer to the FDLs. This presupposes that guns are concentrated into one gun area which is desirable from the point of view of control, communications and survey. However, to counter the increased possibility of penetration of the FDLs, guns would have to be sited further back. Additionally there is the support for the counter-attack force which in the circumstances under discussion would be positioned further back than normally. This then calls for some artillery being sited even further back.

Obviously it will not be possible to meet all these requirements from one gun area. Consequently gun areas in depth must be found.

If this is done, then those guns sited for the support of the counter-attack force may not be available for many of the other tasks and all guns would not be available for all phases of the defence.

The alternatives to this are:

(a) to make field artillery more tactically mobile so that it can change position during the battle; or

(b) site guns to the flanks so that in addition to covering the FDLs, their arcs of fire come far enough into the defence position to provide the requisite depth for the support of the counter-attack force and the provision of counter-penetration fire.

The first alternative may be possible under certain circumstances, particularly when SP equipment is available, but, in most cases, it would

be undesirable as the guns may have to move at a vital moment in the battle. Nevertheless, some movement within the sector to alternative positions will be necessary for security and deception, so tactical mobility is still an important requirement.

With the guns sited to the flanks, the whole of the front could probably be covered to sufficient depth, but all guns would not be able to cover the whole front. However, sited in this way positions would normally be obtainable from which the counter-attack could be supported, and counter-penetration fire from the same positions provided. There may be technical difficulties connected with firing at the shorter ranges, viz., crest clearance and danger to our own troops, but careful siting should lessen these disadvantages.

By positioning guns in this way and so providing depth to the fire by large switches rather than by alterations in range, a large demand for OPs is created which will at times be beyond the capacity of a Field Regiment to maintain. However, by the co-ordination of OPs of all regiments and of the Divisional Locating Battery and the Corps Locating Regiment, a satisfactory solution should be possible on most occasions.

It should be noted here that for the most effective fire against large troop concentrations gun positions should be widely dispersed. However, for the close support of our own troops it is desirable to have the guns which will be firing closest to our troops sited directly in rear. Consequently once dispersion is accepted, positions will be required on both the flanks and near the centre of the divisional sector.

The medium artillery will be concerned mainly with harassing fire and counter-bombardment tasks. Normally with only one gun area in the division it is often difficult to find positions far enough forward for the medium and heavy artillery to develop their best shooting ranges. With the field artillery dispersed suitable positions should be more easily found.

So far, the effect of penetration is the only enemy activity that has been related to the problem of siting guns. In addition the effect of air attack and counter-bombardment should be considered and in both cases better protection will usually be achieved by dispersion. Against ground attack, the tendency will be to try to find positions which will be protected by the disposition of the defending infantry. It will seldom be possible to occupy positions affording complete protection, and so in addition to fulfilling the requirements previously mentioned, the sites must be suitable for local defence against penetrating infantry and tanks.

In conclusion therefore, the main features peculiar to this type of defence may be summarised as:

(a) reduced number of guns capable of covering the whole of the divisional front;

(b) guns dispersed in breadth to cover the FDLs;

(c) flank guns sited with large arcs to enable them to engage targets

inside the divisional sector as well as to support the FDLs;

(d) guns sited in depth to provide close support for the counter-attack force and to counter any deep penetration;

(e) dispersion for security and deception;

(f) fields of fire for local and anti-tank defence;

(g) co-ordination of all observation resources to enable the large arcs referred to in (e) above to be adequately covered;

(h) high degree of tactical mobility for quick redeployment and the occupation of alternative positions to avoid neutralization by hostile counter-bombardment.

Finally it is stressed that such dispersion does not depart from the principle of centralized control. There will seldom be occasion for the sub-allotment of artillery to be commanded by brigades.

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**The energies that carry men on and the ideals which inspire them are drawn from deeper sources than fear or necessity. If Europe or the Atlantic nations or the whole free world are to achieve the great goals of unity and strength, it is no small vision that they need to inspire them. But have they such a vision? Is there in the free nations "rational hope" and faith and fortitude enough to withstand the Communist onslaught and remake the world? Without it they can frame their constitutions and balance their books, expand their economies and man their frontiers. Yet all the same victory will go to the other side.**

*—Barbara Ward in "Policy for the West."*

# *The Situation in . . .*

# INDO-CHINA

Major M. D. Malgonkar.

INDO-CHINA or, to be more exact, Viet Nam, today enjoys the unique if somewhat peculiar distinction of having two Governments, both duly recognized by several international powers. To explain this away as just another off-shoot of the cold war is, apart from being an over-simplification, not entirely true. For it is also largely the result of the national aspirations of the Indo-Chinese people to free themselves from French domination. Moreover there is nothing "cold" about the war that has been raging in Indo-China for the last five years. This article attempts to present an objective study of the situation in Indo-China.

**Geography.**

Indo-China comprises five States; Cochin-China, Annam, Tonking, Laos and Cambodia. The total area of the country is 2,860,000 square miles which makes Indo-China slightly bigger than Burma. It is a land both mountainous and covered with dense tropical forests; a regular guerilla paradise. Three-fourths of the country is wild and hilly jungle very sparsely populated. The population is all concentrated in what are known as the two delta areas as well as along the narrow strip of lowland on the eastern coast of Annam. It is important to remember the delta areas. One of them, the delta of the Mekong river, is in the south. The other, the delta of the Red river, is in the Tonking State in the north-east. The rainfall is heavy, particularly along the coast, and the country is subject to violent typhoons and tidal waves. The heaviest rains and the worst typhoons occur during the months of August and September.

*—From "Military Digest," India.*

**Resources.**

The two delta areas are veritable "rice bowls". They are intensively cultivated, admittedly by methods which are far from modern, and produce rice in quantities far in excess of Indo-China's needs. Even today after five years of bitter war Indo-China has an exportable surplus of rice. Tea and tobacco are also grown as well as rubber, the economic backbone of South-East Asia. The country is also rich in mineral resources, particularly coal, zinc, tin and copper, but so far these resources have been hardly tapped.

**The People.**

The total population of Indo-China is two and a half crores. Out of these nearly two-thirds are Annamites who inhabit the two delta areas and the fertile coastal lowland of Annam. The Annamites are closely related, culturally and physically, to the Chinese. The remaining population is made up by Cambodians, Laotians, and Chans, to say nothing of a large number of foreigners of whom the Chinese number five lakhs and the Indians seven thousand.

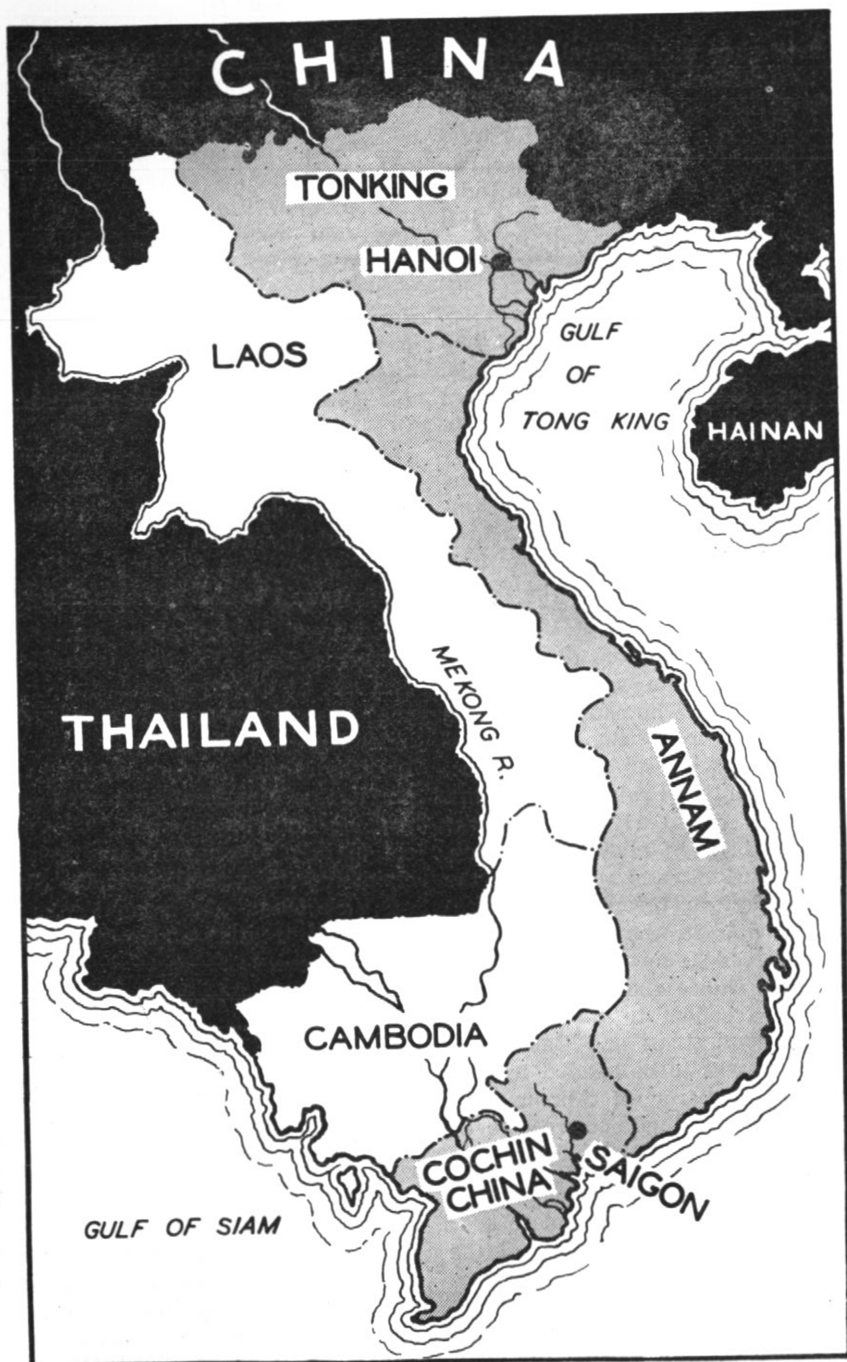
**History.**

Towards the end of the 18th century when the process of empire building by the major European powers was at its height, there came to this rich and fertile land a French missionary. He persuaded the King of Cochin-China to sign a treaty with France. This penetration by France proved to be the proverbial "thin end of the wedge". There is no need to follow the subsequent course of French expansion in Indo-China which took place more or less according to the pattern so familiar all over the East; suffice it to say that during the next hundred years French influence continued to grow and Indo-China became French Indo-China.

By 1897 the French had established Cochin-China as a direct colony of France and the other four States as her Protectorates. They ruled with a Governor General at Hanoi as the Head of the whole of Indo-China. Cochin-China, being a direct colony, was administered by a Governor and each of the remaining four States had a Resident. There were, in addition, a host of subordinate French officials to assist the Governor and the Residents. The three States of Annam, Laos and Cambodia nominally retained their Kings whose position was rather analagous to the Ruling Princes of pre-partition India. The real power was wielded by the French officials.

French rule in Indo-China was carried on strictly on colonial lines. In the interest of the French industry a purely agricultural policy was imposed and the economic development of the country came to be neglected. Furthermore, lulled by the false sense of security then prevailing amongst the colonial powers in the East, the arrangements for the defence of Indo-China also came to be neglected. Consequently in 1942 Indo-China, the "most profitable segment of the French Empire," was occupied by the Japanese without any resistance on the part of the French troops. There were, of course, many redeeming features; for instance, France herself had been occupied and the Vichy Government was collaborating with the Axis powers but even so it cannot be denied that the military preparedness of Indo-China was far from satisfactory.

Busy with their campaigns, the Japanese were content to use Indo-China merely as a base for operations; they had no desire to tie down their forces in Indo-China. Naturally, they made the fullest use of the large quantities of rice and other products of the land, but, for the next three years, they did not interfere with the internal politics of the country, that is, at least not in a direct manner. During this period the Japanese with their tall talk of "greater Asia" and "co-prosperity


CHINA
TONKING
HANOI
LAOS
GULF
OF
TONG KING
HAINAN
THAILAND
MEKONG R.
ANNAM
CAMBODIA
COCHIN
CHINA
SAIGON
GULF OF SIAM

sphere" gave a considerable impetus to the national aspirations of the Indo-Chinese people and fostered among them a strong desire for freedom. By 1945 the Japanese seem to have realised that their time in Indo-China was up, whereupon, as a last act of graciousness, they decided to free the Indo-Chinese people from French bondage.

As stated earlier,, the French had retained the three kings of Annam, Laos and Cambodia in a subservient role. The Japanese decided to make a gift of freedom to these rulers. Furthermore they decided that the two remaining provinces of Cochin-China and Tonking should be added to the kingdom of Annam to form a strong and viable state of the Annamese people—the State of Viet Nam.

To secure the consent of the three kings to their plan was a task none too difficult for who can blame these rulers for accepting the gift of freedom from foreign subjugation, whatever the motive behind such a gift. Then one day early in 1945 the Japanese brought about their coup. They attacked and captured the French garrison, threw out all European officials in the administration and replaced them with people of their own choice and announced the grant of freedom to the kingdoms of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia. Viet Nam was to be headed by Bao Dai, the Emperor of Annam, and the other two kingdoms were to be ruled by their respective kings.

For a proper understanding of what follows it is important to bear in mind these new divisions of the five original provinces of Indo-China, namely Annam, Tonking, Cochin-China, Laos and Cambodia. The first three were grouped together to form the State of Viet Nam. The other States, of course, remained as they were.

Thus the Republic of Viet Nam came into being. Although born in this manner Viet Nam was not entirely an accident of war nor was it a purely puppet State sponsored by the Japanese. It had deeper roots, for the struggle of the Annamites, a vigorous and warlike people, for independence, had been going on for some time and a free Viet Nam to them was a fruition of their efforts. Despite outward appearances therefore the new State had from its very inception a strong national character.

**Background to the Present Struggle.**

With the Japanese surrender Emperor Bao Dai left Indo-China and out of the administrative chaos that ensued emerged a new leader, a leader of outstanding stature, Dr. Ho Chi Minh. In August, 1945, his party, the Viet Minh, assumed control of the Government. The first act of this government was to proclaim the independence of the State of Viet Nam; the second was to annul all treaties and engagements with France.

This was the situation which met the French when they returned to re-assert their control over Indo-China. What is more, they were also faced by a strong guerilla army, that of the Viet Minh Party; an army which was well organized and armed liberally with both French and Japanese weapons. The French soon realized that "to begin where they had left off when the Japanese came" was not possible and undertook negotiations with Dr. Ho Chi Minh's Government. But these nego-

tiations were marked by a total absence of concession on either side and were doomed to failure.

With the breakdown of the negotiations the war in Indo-China began in right earnest. Numerically weak, the French Army was quite unable to cope with the nationalist struggle which they could see was gathering momentum. Having just emerged, somewhat shaken, from a major conflict, they were reluctant to plunge headlong into what might turn out to be another full-scale war. The French also realized that some sort of concession must be made to meet the national aspirations of the Viet Namese people. They therefore set about trying to find "a political solution" to settle the problems of Indo-China.

This political solution took the form of setting up a French-sponsored State of Viet Nam, autonomous within the framework of the French Empire and headed by a Viet Namese leader. The choice of this leader was somewhat difficult for he had to be someone who would be in tune with the French way of thinking and who, at the same time, would also command the respect of the Annamite people. This choice fell upon Bao Dai, ex-Emperor of Annam and the Head of Japanese-sponsored Viet Nam. Accordingly, in July, 1947, the French announced the establishment of a reconstituted Government in Viet Nam with Bao Dai at its head. Bao Dai, who was then in exile, was not at all keen to accept this new role and it was not until 1949 that, after a great deal of persuasion, he actually returned to Indo-China as the head of the Government of Viet Nam.

Two years have now passed since Bao Dai's return to Indo-China but the war in that country is no nearer its end. On the other hand, recently the fighting has become even more fierce. The French had hoped that Bao Dai would provide a focus for drawing off the genuinely nationalist elements in Viet Nam from the Viet Minh fold but so far the number of such converts has been insignificant. Militarily there is little improvement in the situation. The increase in the strength and equipment of the French Army is almost evenly balanced by the improvement in the training and equipment of the Viet Minh Army. Beginning as mere "hit and run" guerillas, they are gradually developing into real soldiers capable of giving organised battle in the open.

It is important to remember that the war in Indo-China is almost solely confined to the State of Viet Nam. The other two States, Laos and Cambodia, have not been affected by the struggle. The respective kings of these two States have signed treaties with France and they are quite content to remain within the framework of the French Commonwealth.

**The Present Situation.**

After the fall of China the fighting in Indo-China began to assume a different complexion. The struggle which began as one solely for the liberation of Indo-China from foreign domination gradually became more and more influenced by the Communists. This was a somewhat natural result because the only sympathy and help the Viet Minh leaders received was from Communist China. The Viet Minh therefore gradually

veered more and more towards the Communist countries. On the other hand the French began to receive increasing support from the Western Democracies.

The five-year-old war in Indo-China thus became absorbed in power bloc politics. The French now insist that the Viet Minh are out and out Communists and that in opposing them they are not in any way suppressing the true nationalism of Indo-China but are really fighting Communism. The Western Democracies, the U.S. and the U.K. in particular, go a long way towards accepting this view. They believe that what the French are fighting in Indo-China is world Communism; that in resisting the Viet Minh they are doing a great service to the Democratic world by preventing the Communists from obtaining a foothold in the vital area of South-East Asia.

The sympathy of the two power-blocs for the opposing sides in Indo-China has been evident for some time but it was not openly declared until early 1950. The Chinese Communist Government was the first major power to accord recognition to Dr. Ho Chi Minh's Government as the real Government of Viet Nam. This was followed by Russia in January, 1950, when she too announced the recognition of the Viet Minh Government. On the other hand, in February, 1950, the Governments of the U.K. and the U.S.A. announced their decision to recognize Bao Dai's French-sponsored Government as the real Government of Viet Nam. Recognition by other countries has more or less followed the pattern of cold war politics.

It is thus that the two Governments in Viet Nam, both claiming to represent the true nationalism of the country and in armed conflict with each other, have been formally recognized by the opposing sides in the cold war. Political recognition by these opposing sides has heightened the tenseness of the situation in Indo-China. The root cause of most of the trouble of course, is the unfortunate mingling up of the nationalist aspirations of the Viet Namese people with Communism. The wider issues of power politics have tended to envelope and distort this local struggle. On one side there is a danger that the continuous thwarting of the nationalist aspirations of the Viet Namese people may lead them irrevocably into the Communist fold. On the other side there is equal danger that obsession with the Communist bogey may make one lose sight of these national aspirations altogether. The just solution of the problem of Indo-China will prove a real test of statesmanship.

## FORMATION

# RECOGNITION SIGNS

Major J. T. Ashenhurst, R. of O.

Design Establishment, Army Branch,
Department of Supply.

**The Australian System of Colour Patches.**

The method adopted by the First A.I.F. for identification of formations and units was a system of coloured patches for wear on service dress. Geometrical shapes were allotted to formations, within which brigades were allotted basic colours according to their seniority within the division. Regiments or battalions wore the basic brigade colour with a second colour which indicated their numeri-

cal seniority within the brigade.

The Divisional signs used are illustrated below.

These same shapes were retained for brigades and units who were identified by a system of colours. Within infantry divisions the numerical seniority of brigades was indicated by the following colours: (1) Green; (2) Red; (3) Light Blue; (4) Dark Blue.

Black, purple, brown and white, in that order, indicated the numeri- cal seniority of battalions within the brigade.

CAVALRY

BLACK CENTRE ON WHITE BACKGROUND

H.Q. 1 CAV. DIV.

H.Q. 2 CAV. DIV.

INFANTRY

WHITE CENTRE ON BLACK BACKGROUND

H.Q. 1 DIV.

H.Q. 2 DIV.

H.Q. 3 DIV.

H.Q. 4 DIV.

H.Q. 5 DIV.

The diagram opposite shows the colour scheme of 1 Division during the 1914-18 war.

A similar system was used for cavalry formations. Personnel of Arms and Services other than Infantry and Cavalry wore standard Corps or Service colours.

It will be seen that this system was practicable only so long as there was continuity of numbering of battalions within brigades and of brigades within divisions throughout the force. Uniformity of colour patches within formations was also necessary. These conditions obtained during the 1914-18 war and the system proved a successful and simple means of identification of formations and units.

During the 1939-45 war the colour patch system became hopelessly confused due mainly to the following factors.

After the formation of 6 and 7 Divisions, the reduction of infantry brigades from four to three battalions destroyed the bases of the colour patch system. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the original system was never observed by C.M.F. formations whose units had inherited their colour patches from First A.I.F. units and were grouped in brigades according to districts. It was possible to find in one C.M.F. brigade three different shaped patches and five colours.

The return to Australia of 6 and 7 Divisions in 1942 added to the confusion because of the resultant duplication of colour patches in the same theatre between units of these divisions and C.M.F. units which had been granted the grey background of the Second A.I.F.

**British Army Identification Methods.**

In the early days of the 1914-18 war, unit identities were disclosed by inscriptions "in clear," thus affording the enemy ample opportunity of ascertaining the composition of the forces opposing him. For security reasons the British Army introduced the system of formation signs as a means of recognition of Corps and Divisional vehicles and personnel. Many of these signs became famous and troops soon began to take a great pride in them. Thus was engendered a formation esprit de corps which vied with pride of unit.

The use of these formation signs was discontinued after the 1914-18 war, although certain Territorial Divisions retained their distinguishing signs. They were brought back into use in 1940, first as "Divisional Signs" and later as "Formation Badges". Their use was extended to Commands and Districts and applied to all field formations down to Divisions and Independent Brigade Groups. As the war progressed these badges, originally intended for personnel and vehicles, were used for marking routes, headquarters, billets, stores, captured equipment, formation rest areas and welfare institutions.

The badges were worn one inch below the shoulder title and immediately above the arm of service strip. The latter was introduced late in 1940 to enable quick identification of the wearer's arm of service when he was wearing a steel helmet with no distinguishing badge. These simple two inch strips were of coloured cloth, red for infantry, blue and red for artillery, and so on.

H.Q. 1 DIV.

| H.Q. 1 INF. BDE. | H.Q. 2 INF. BDE. | H.Q. 3 INF. BDE. | H.Q. 4 INF. BDE. |
|---|---|---|---|
| GREEN | RED | L. BLUE | D. BLUE |
| **1 BN.** | **5 BN.** | **9 BN.** | **13 BN.** |
| BLACK / GREEN | BLACK / RED | BLACK / L. BLUE | L. BLUE / D. BLUE |
| **2 BN.** | **6 BN.** | **10 BN.** | **14 BN.** |
| PURPLE / GREEN | PURPLE / RED | PURPLE / L. BLUE | YELLOW / D. BLUE |
| **3 BN.** | **7 BN.** | **11 BN.** | **15 BN.** |
| BROWN / GREEN | BROWN / RED | BROWN / L. BLUE | BROWN / D. BLUE |
| **4 BN.** | **8 BN.** | **12 BN.** | **16 BN.** |
| WHITE / GREEN | WHITE / RED | WHITE / L. BLUE | WHITE / D. BLUE |

Note: The divergencies from the general colour scheme by 13 and 14 Bns. were presumably because of the clash of colours: in the first case, black and dark blue and in the second purple and dark blue.

**Use of Formation Signs by Australian Forces.**

When formation signs were introduced into the British Army in 1914-18, signs were also allotted to certain Australian or partly Australian formations. So far as can be ascertained, Australian use of the signs was restricted to the marking of vehicles. The colour patch system already described was considered adequate for the marking of service dress.

Formation signs were re-introduced in the 1939-45 war but, although more widely used than in 1914-18, they were not used on battle dress, colour patches being retained for identification of personnel.

It has already been shown, however, that the colour patch system had got out of hand and it was obvious that it would have to be abandoned for a more positive and reliable system. A questionnaire on this subject was distributed to all A.M.F. formations down to battalion level and has resulted in a decision to discontinue the use of colour patches and to adopt suitable formation signs in lieu.

All ranks of the A.M.F. will wear on each sleeve of the battle dress tunic a woven formation sign below the shoulder title. The signs will be provided for A.H.Q., Commands and all field formations down to Divisions and Independent Brigade Groups.

Fifteen signs have so far been approved and they are illustrated in the following pages. As a general rule, Commands have adopted the traditional badge or flower of the State or Territory in which they are located. So far as is known, Northern Territory has no such emblem and the Buffalo Head has been chosen to represent the native life of the Territory. The field formations have selected symbolic fighting signs, some of which hark back to the days of 1914-18.

**CURRENT AUSTRALIAN FORMATION SIGNS.**

**Army Headquarters.**

Royal crest on red and blue shield. Gold background. Left arm sign; lion to face front of wearer.

**Northern Command.**

Gold crown superimposed on blue Maltese Cross. White background.

**Central Command.**

Traditional Magpie of South Australia (piping shrike) on gold circle with khaki background.

**Eastern Command.**

Red Waratah on white background.

**Southern Command.**

Southern Cross on blue shield surmounted by white crown with blue outlines. Grey background.

**Western Command.**

Black Swan on gold background. Right arm sign; swan's head to point to front of wearer.

**Tasmania Command.**

Red lion rampant on gold shield. Khaki background. Left arm sign; lion's head to point to front of wearer.

**Northern Territory Command.**

Buffalo Head in black with white horns on gold circle with green background.

**2nd Division.**

Crossed bayonets surmounted by figure "2" in white on red background.

**3rd Division.**

Crossed swords with A.M.F. badge above and figure "111" below in gold on red background.

**1st Armoured Brigade.**

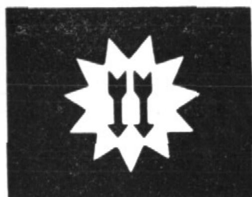
Green palm tree behind red crocodile over brown boomerang on yellow background. Right arm sign, tail of crocodile to point to rear of wearer.

**2nd Armoured Brigade.**

Mailed arm and battle-axe in black on gold background. Right arm sign; axe to point to front of wearer.

**1st Infantry Brigade.**

Crossed swords above boomerang in gold on red shield. Khaki background.



**11th Infantry Brigade.**

Eleven pointed white star on a scarlet background. Arrows in the star.

**13th Infantry Brigade.**

Mailed arm and dagger in white on green shield. Royal blue background. Left arm sign; dagger to point to front of wearer.

# HOW CRETE WAS LOST

# ..... YET WITH PROFIT

Captain B. H. Liddell Hart.

TEN years ago saw the most astonishing and audacious feat of the war. It was, also, the most striking of all air-borne operations that had yet taken place. It was performed at Britain's expense—and should remain a warning to us not to discount the risk of similar surprise strokes "out of the blue" in the future.

### The Attack.

At 0800 on the morning of 20 May 1941, some 3,000 German parachute troops dropped out of the sky upon Crete. The island was held by 28,600 British, Australian, and New Zealand troops, along with two Greek divisions amounting in numbers to almost as many.

The attack had been expected, as a follow-up to the German conquest of the Balkans, and good information about the preparations had been provided by our agents in Greece. But the air-borne threat was not regarded as seriously as it should have been. Mr. Churchill has revealed that General Freyberg, who had been appointed to command in Crete on his suggestion, reported on 5 May: "Cannot understand nervousness; am not in the least anxious about air-borne attack." He showed more concern about a sea-borne invasion—a danger which was, in the event, dispelled by the Royal Navy.

Mr. Churchill felt anxious about the threat, "especially from the air." He urged that "at least another dozen 1 tanks" should be sent to reinforce the mere half dozen that were there. An even more fundamental weakness was the complete lack of air support—to combat the German dive bombers and intercept the air-borne troops. Even the provision of anti-aircraft guns was scanty.

By the first evening, the number of Germans on the island had been more than doubled, and was progressively reinforced—by parachute drop, by glider, and, from the second evening onward, by troop carriers. These began landing on the captured Maleme airfield while it was still swept by the defenders' artillery and mortar fire. The ultimate total of German troops brought by air was about 22,000. Many were killed and injured by crashes on landing, but those that survived were the toughest of fighters, whereas their numerically superior opponents were

*—From Military Review, U.S.A.*

not so highly trained and still suffered from the shock of being driven out of Greece. Nevertheless, many of these troops fought hard, and their stiff resistance had important effects that have only become known later.

Optimism continued to prevail for a time in British high quarters. In the light of reports received, Mr. Churchill told the House of Commons on the second day that "the greater part" of the air-borne invaders had been wiped out. Middle East Headquarters went on for two more days talking about the Germans being "mopped up."

### Evacuation.

But on the seventh day, 26 May, the British commander in Crete reported: ". . . in my opinion the limit of endurance has been reached by the troops under my command . . . our position here is hopeless." Coming from such a stout-hearted soldier as General Freyberg, holder of the Victoria Cross, this verdict was not questioned. Evacuation began on the night of the 28th, and ended on the night of the 31st—the Navy, in its persistant efforts to bring away as many troops as possible, suffered heavy losses from the enemy's dominant air force. A total of 16,500 was rescued, including about 2,000 Greeks, but the rest were left dead or prisoner in German hands. The Navy had well over 2,000 dead. Three cruisers and six destroyers were sunk. Thirteen other ships were badly damaged, including two battleships, and the only aircraft carrier than in the Mediterranean Fleet.

The Germans had some 4,000 men killed, and about twice as many wounded. Thus, their permanent loss was less than a third of what the British had suffered, apart from the Greeks and local Cretan levies. But, as the loss fell mostly on the picked troops of Germany's one existing parachute division, it had an unforeseen effect on Hitler that turned out to our benefit.

At that moment, however, the collapse in Crete looked disastrous. It hit the British people all the harder because it followed quickly on the heels of two other disasters—in April, the British forces had been swept out of Cyrenaica by Rommel in 10 days, and out of Greece within three weeks from the start of the German invasion. General Wavell's winter success in capturing Cyrenaica from the Italians appeared no more than a delusory break in the clouds. With this fresh run of defeats at German hands, and the spring renewal of the air blitz on England, the prospect was darker even than in 1940.

### German Reaction.

But Hitler did not follow-up his third Mediterranean victory in any of the ways expected on our side—a pounce onto Cyprus, Syria, Suez, or Malta. A month later, he launched the invasion of Russia, and, from that time on, neglected the opportunities that lay open for driving the British out of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. If his forfeit was due mainly to his absorption in the Russian venture, it also was due to his reaction after the victory in Crete. The cost depressed him more than the conquest exhilarated him. It was such a contrast to the cheapness of his previous successes and far larger captures.

In Yugoslavia and Greece, his new armoured forces had been as irresis-

tible as in the plains of Poland and France, despite the mountain obstacles they met. They had swept through both countries like a whirlwind and knocked over the opponent armies like ninepins.

Field Marshal List's army captured 90,000 Yugoslavs, 270,000 Greeks, and 13,000 British—at a cost to itself of barely 5,000 men killed and wounded, as later records showed. (At the time, British newspapers estimated the German losses as more than a quarter of a million, and even a British official statement put them as "probably 75,000.")

The blemish on Hitler's Cretan victory was not only the higher loss, but the fact that it weakened temporarily the one new kind of land-fighting force he had which could reach out and seize places over the sea without risking interception by the British Navy—which still dominated the seascape, despite its heavy losses. In effect, Hitler had sprained his wrist in Crete.

**German Viewpoint.**

The story of the dramatic campaign often has been related from the British side, but now can be given from the attacker's side. After the war, I had an opportunity to interrogate General Student, the Commander in Chief of the German Air-borne Forces, when he was a prisoner of war here, and subsequently have received further details from him.

He revealed, surprisingly, that Hitler was a reluctant convert to the scheme of attacking Crete. "He wanted to break off the Balkan campaign after reaching the south of Greece. When I heard this, I flew to see Göring and proposed the plan of capturing Crete by air-borne forces alone. Göring—who always was easy to enthuse—was quick to see the possibilities of the idea and sent me on to Hitler. I saw him on 21 April. When I first explained the project, Hitler said: 'It sounds all right, but I don't think it's practicable.' But I managed to convince him in the end.

"In the operation, we used our one parachute division, our one glider regiment, and the 5th Mountain Division which had no previous experience of being transported by air."

The air support was provided by the dive bombers and fighters of Richthofen's Eighth Air Corps, which had been a decisive instrument in forcing the gate into Belgium and France, successively, in 1940.

"No troops came by sea. Such a reinforcement had been intended originally, but the only sea transport available was a number of Greek caiques. It then was arranged that a convoy of these small vessels was to carry the heavier arms for the expedition—anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, the artillery, and some tanks—together with two battalions of the 5th Mountain Division.

"They were told that the British fleet was still at Alexandria—whereas it was actually on the way to Crete. The convoy sailed for Crete, ran into the fleet, and was scattered. The *Luftwaffe* avenged this setback by 'pulling a lot of hair' out of the British Navy's scalp. But our operations on land, in Crete, were much handicapped by the absence of the heavier weapons on which we had reckoned."

Describing the air-borne attack to me, General Student said: "At no

point, on 20 May, did we succeed completely in occupying an airfield. The greatest degree of progress was achieved on the Maleme airfield, where the valuable assault regiment fought against picked New Zealand troops. The night of 20-21 May was critical for the German Command. I had to make a momentous decision. I decided to use the mass of the parachute reserves, still at my disposal, for the final capture of the Maleme airfield. If the enemy had made an organized counter-attack during this night or the morning of 21 May, he probably would have succeeded in routing the much-battered and exhausted remnants of the assault regiment—especially as they were handicapped badly by a shortage of ammunition.

"But the New Zealanders made only isolated counter-attacks. I heard later that the British Command expected, besides the air-borne venture, the arrival of the main German forces by sea on the coast between Maleme and Canea, and, consequently, maintained their forces in occupation of the coast. At this decisive period, the British Command did not take the risk of sending these forces to Maleme. On 21 May, the German reserves succeeded in capturing the airfield and village of Maleme. In the evening, the 1st Mountain Battalion could be landed, as the first air-transported troops—and so the battle for Crete was won by Germany."

**Price of Victory.**

But the price of the victory was much heavier than had been reckoned by the advocates of the plan, partly because the British forces on the island were three times as large as had been assumed, but also from other causes. General Student said: "Much of the loss was due to bad landings—there were very few suitable spots in Crete, and the prevailing wind blew from the interior toward the sea. For fear of dropping the troops in the sea, the pilots tended to drop them too far inland — some of them actually in the British lines. The weapon containers often fell wide of the troops, which was another handicap that contributed to our excessive casualties. The few British tanks that were there shook us badly at the start—it was lucky there were not more than two dozen. The infantry, mostly New Zealanders, put up a stiff fight, though taken by surprise.

"The *Führer* was very upset by the heavy losses suffered by the parachute units, and came to the conclusion that their surprise value had passed. After that, he often said to me: 'The day of parachute troops is over.'

"When I got Hitler to accept the Crete plan, I also proposed that we should follow it up by capturing Cyprus from the air, and then a further jump from Cyprus to capture the Suez Canal. Hitler did not seem averse to the idea, but would not commit himself definitely to the project—his mind was so occupied with the coming invasion of Russia. After the shock of the heavy losses in Crete, he refused to attempt another big air-borne effort. I pressed the idea on him repeatedly, but without avail."

**Summary.**

So the British, Australian, and New Zealand losses in Crete were not without compensating profit. General Student's project of capturing the Suez may have been beyond

attainment, unless Rommel's panzer forces in Africa had also been strongly reinforced, but the capture of Malta would have been an easier task. Hitler was persuaded to undertake it a year later, but then changed his mind and cancelled it. "He felt that if the British fleet appeared on the scene, all the Italian ships would bolt for their home ports and leave the German air-borne forces stranded."

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**It would have been to be wished . . . that at the end of so long a struggle the several Powers might have enjoyed some repose, without forming calculations that always augment the risks of war; but the tone and conduct of Russia have disappointed this hope and forced upon us fresh considerations.**

*Castlereagh to the Duke of Wellington, 25 October, 1814.*

# MOBILITY
## of the
# SOVIET SOLDIER

UNBURDENED by luxury items and carrying minimum rations and the bare essentials of equipment, the Soviet soldier marched more campaign miles than any of his allies during World War II. While the Soviet infantryman generally trains with a heavy pack—sometimes weighing as much as 70 pounds—in combat the burden of his clothing and equipment is considerably lighter.

He can move easily because his field uniform fits loosely and his rifle, the M1944 carbine, is light.[1] Crawling and creeping are likewise made easier because of the fullness of his clothing and the total lightness and distribution of his equipment. The Soviet soldier's combat gear is as simple and practical as his dress uniform is smart and colourful. From the standpoint of individual mobility, comfort and practicality, the present-day Soviet infantryman is far better outfitted than Russian foot soldiers of the past.

In 1938 the individual equipment of Soviet troops was re-designed. When the German armies attacked in 1941 the Soviet equipment programme was still in the early stages of procurement. Normally boots are worn by the Soviet infantryman because the poor roads of his country are often knee-deep in mud, and theoretically every Soviet Army soldier should have been provided with leather boots and the standard field pack. The circumstances of war, however, forced improvisations and substitutes upon the fighting man.

Mentally and physically the Soviet soldier was never spoiled by the luxury of ample motor transport. His reliance on machines was inconsequential. Not only did the soldier march on foot most of the time but he also demonstrated greater ability than the German in traversing difficult terrain. In the swamps of Byelorussia the Soviet soldiers—labelled "swamp rats" by Hitler—fastened boards to their feet to maintain footing while building corduroy roads.

In the broad expanses of the plains which comprise so much of the USSR, the Soviet Army man had little use for tents which were so easily discernible in any season and

*—From Army Information Digest, U.S.A.*

1 The Soviet M1944 carbine, a short-barrallled rifle with a folding bayonet, is gradually replacing the old M1891/30 rifle.

**Soviet Infantry**

which failed to provide the warm shelter required in winter. Shelter halves therefore were not carrid in World War II. Instead rain capes or ponchos designed to fit together to form a tent covering were issued. With a genius for improvisation engendered by his hard existence, the soldier improved his various shelters by using locally available materials.

Even in the burning heat of summer he kept his long-skirted overcoat with him. Serving as coat and blanket, it was the most valuable article of his equipment next to his rifle and canteen. So marked was this habit of carrying the overcoat in summer that the Germans found it of great assistance in distinguishing enemy soldiers from their own at long range.

Due to the breakdown of the equipment procurement programme in World War II, the grenade pouch, the rations pouch and suspenders for the uniform belt were not issued in quantity. Many Soviet soldiers carried grenades in their pockets or hung them on their belts. As an expedient to compensate for the lack of pouches and suspenders the Army issued a drawstring rucksack for carrying rations, mess kit, rain cape and other accessories. A variety of combinations of individual equipment resulted and, while not originally intended, some Soviet soldiers carried rucksacks in summer combat. Generally, however, these were used in winter.

During World War II Soviet infantrymen were armed mainly with the unhandily long M1891/30 rifle and bayonet which is about a pound heavier than the M1944 carbine now in use. For quick, automatic fire power, ease of carrying and availability, the 7.98 pound sub-machine gun[2] favours infantry efficiency and mobility. Soviet troops did not like the United States sub-machine guns they received via lend-lease. They complained that the weapon was much too heavy, that the sling trap

2 The 7.62mm. Model PPS-1943 sub-machine gun fully loaded.

would not permit carrying the gun across the chest in the manner to which they were accustomed.

Like all combat soldiers, the Russian infantryman learned to separate the necessary from the unnecessary. The light or combat equipment—because of its simplicity and its more ready availability for procurement and issue—was the equipment of the majority of Soviet soldiers in World War II. In the summer, combat gear weights the infantryman with a total of about 55 pounds; in winter about 65 pounds.

On his uniform belt the soldier carries 70 rounds of ammunition, two hand grenades, a filled canteen, first-aid packet, entrenching tool, rations pouch, mess kit and cup. This places a total of about 15 pounds on the man's belt, including the pouches filled with grenades and ammunition. The overcoat is slung in a horseshoe roll over the shoulder and the rain cape may or may not be added to this. With this load he carries a total of about 45 pounds. Normally he also carries rations, tobacco and toilet articles, plus extra clothing.

These bring the grand total up to 55 pounds. The extra clothing is not always carried, however, and the rations may consist of only a piece of bread.

Despite its annoying shoulder straps, the crude but practical ruck sack is still in use. In winter it is a normal part of the soldier's equipment. A loose fitting white cape is issued if the soldier is operating in snow-covered regions and those so outfitted are required to turn in their rain capes. Foot gear takes the form of fur felt boots (valenki) in the dry sub-zero zones.

In training the combat pack may be worn on long marches; normally, however, the full or field pack is prescribed for all training exercises in summer or winter. The Soviet soldier, like soldiers of other nations, is still burdened with the gas mask.

In the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 the marching capability of the

**Soviet Paratroops**

Russian infantryman was impeded by the bulk and weight of his equipment, which included a minimum of 120 rounds of rifle ammunition. This number of rounds per soldier remained standard until about the middle of World War II when it was reduced to only 70. One hundred rounds is the unit of fire for the rifle or carbine; 300 rounds for the sub-machine gun. The rifleman carries 70 of these rounds with him while the remaining 30 rounds are left on the battalion and regimental trains. The Soviet soldier today may sometimes carry 90 to 120 rounds of rifle ammunition with the field pack but this is not the standard procedure.

The Soviet paratrooper jumps heavy and fights light. The average Russian paratrooper jumps with a 60-pound combat load, exclusive of his parachutes. Those lightest equipped are officers and senior non-commissioned officers who jump with about 53 pounds. Light machine gunners carrying 65 pounds are the heaviest equipped of any individual trooper. Wearing a jump suit over the usual Army uniform, the paratrooper carries this equipment into combat:—

Carbine
200 rounds of ammunition
2 hand grenades with pouches
1 mortar shell (50mm)
400 grams of explosive
Mess kit and canteen
Entrenching tool
Weapon cleaning set
First-aid packet
Anti-gas set and mask
Signal lamp
Signal panels
Haversack
Rain cape
Compass
Knife
Rations.

The infantryman trains with a combat load heavier than he carries in battle. Individual clothing and equipment are simple and well adapted to the needs of the soldier whose mobility is not usually impaired by an overstuffed pack. Abandonment of equipment is not a combat characteristic of the Soviet fighting man. On the contrary, he more often seeks to supplement his own meagre supply with scavenged bits of equipment.

The marching capacity of the Soviet soldier is enhanced by his generally good physical condition and stamina and the common sense design of his equipment which stresses looseness and comfort in clothing and lightness and practicality in equipment.

In World War II, the mobility of the Soviet soldier lay not alone in his ability to cross difficult terrain but in his ability to move forward against heavy fire amid his own staggering losses.

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# O and M

## Can it help to solve . . .

# Your Clerical Problem?

Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Speed, O.B.E., E.D.

WE are faced with the prospect that, unless diplomacy can find another solution, war may possibly break out within the next two years. So far as the Army is concerned this means that there is a real need for an increased tempo of preparation—and yet the shortage of manpower, military and civilian, prevents us from putting more men to work on the tasks still to be done.

One solution may lie in simplification of the methods by which the work is carried out. Simpler methods enable more work to be done in a given time. This applies both to the manual trades actually engaged in preparations for war and to the clerical and supervisory duties which are an inseparable part of the whole structure.

Organization and Method is an art which requires experience. But anyone who can think can solve individual problems of method. Therefore, if one is faced with a programme which appears insurmountable in the time available, it may be worth while to examine critically the methods by which the work is at present being done—to see whether these methods can be simplified. This applies particularly to clerical operations, which are so often involved and time-consuming.

The first step is to examine each task to find out whether it is one problem or a collection of lesser problems. If the latter, one must solve each individual problem, one at a time, in proper order.

The next step is to establish clearly the purpose it is desired to achieve. Unless there is an unmistakable and simple statement of aim, the investigator will easily be led into arriving at the wrong answer. The last state will then be worse than the first.

In establishing the aim, the investigator should arrive at a clear understanding of the way in which a

proposed task will serve the practical needs of the Army. In so doing, he will be able to distinguish between
(a) ends—the way in which the product of the task is to be used; and
(b) means—the system by which the product is evolved.

Many clerical tasks, for example, produce information. The way in which the information is to be used is the end; the system by which the information is recorded is the means.

With the aim or purpose clearly in mind the next step is to go straight back to the source of information. In the case of a stores accounting problem there is the point of preparation of the requisition or indent. In the case of a production records problem, it is the work bench.

At this point it is interesting to note the procedure which is then followed in professional Organization and Methods Sections.

The investigator is required to write each problem down in detail including any factors which govern the solution. He then sets out every possible solution he can think of with every conceivable advantage and disadvantage. Not until he has done this is he allowed to think of a conclusion.

The object of this procedure is to avoid the preconceived idea and to prevent an investigator putting forward a recommendation merely because he has seen it working elsewhere.

This, however, is the ideal method and may be too time-consuming for the average head of an army branch or section. Something less exacting will probably produce reasonably good results.

With the aim clearly in mind, therefore, and completely ignoring the existing system, seek to convert the initial information into the form required to fulfil the purpose in the shortest possible number of steps. In so doing it is important to reduce copying and all other clerical operations to the practical minimum.

The product of the exercise so far will be

(a) A step by step description of the processes involved.

(b) A rough layout for any printed form or forms required.

At this point, go back over tne step by step description and use all the imagination you have at your command to eliminate those which, on reflection, are not really necessary. At this point also, having clearly in mind what the new system is going to achieve—make certain that the job itself is really necessary. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it essential to do this job at all? Can it be cut out?

2. Is the job also being done elsewhere. In other words, is there duplication?

If the answers are that the job is essential and is not being duplicated elsewhere, the final step is to take the job notes and rough drafts of forms, and work out the actual method by which the job is to be done. This involves a decision as to whether manual methods or machine methods, or a combination of both, will be used.

The degree of success in this particular operation will depend on the knowledge which the investigator has of office machines and their uses. Some care is necessary that machines are not put in just because "mechanization" sounds efficient. In many cases, manual methods using modern designs of equipment and forms are equally effective and/or less costly. Many operations in accounting, for example, can still be done by hand just as quickly and much more economically than by machine.

The result of this final stage of investigation will be a connected statement setting out the method by which the job will be done, specimens of the forms to be used, and details of the machines, if any, which will assist in the execution of the task. The whole should be a straight forward description of what is to be done and how it is to be done by the simplest possible methods. This then forms the basis for changing the existing method—either immediately, if the matter is under direct control of the investigator, or after approval if someone else has the final authority.

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**We should stop thinking that the soldier is set apart from the rest of the people. This is bad thinking. A soldier, whether he be an officer or a private, is still a citizen. In fact he is first of all a citizen.**

*Bernard Barush.*

# DEFENCE of WESTERN EUROPE

General Gunther Blumentritt.

RECENTLY, in almost all European countries, much has been written on this subject of current interest. Let us hope these forebodings will not become realities. The best military brains in the Western world are combined in the joint Staff of General Eisenhower in Paris to prepare, as a matter of prudence, for the defence of Western Europe. It may, therefore, seem presumptuous of private individuals bearing no responsibility to busy themselves with this problem. In the last analysis, however, the question is of interest to all thinking men. In the free world everyone is free to express one's opinion as a layman even if it must, of necessity, be incomplete in the absence of the detailed evidence which is doubtlessly essential. Thus one can only assess such a problem in a very general way. It is natural that within Western Europe, the German and Austrian peoples in the centre of Europe should be particularly interested in this question. We have for a long time had a common frontier with the eastern world, and a glance at the map of Europe shows that this German-Austrian zone would be bound to be one of the first theatres of operations. It is, therefore, no wonder that this is a subject of concern to many in Germany.

Certainly "strategy" has now ceased to be the sole preserve of the soldier as it may have been in the past. "Strategy" today embraces so much that it extends far beyond purely military concepts. In the modern sense, therefore, "strategy" is a mixture of political, economic, military, philosophical and propaganda ideas. It follows from this that every talented civilian can also be a "strategist". In fact, all really great "strategists" or "Great Captains" in world history were also, simultaneously, great politicians en-

*—From Irish Defence Journal.*

dowed, in addition, with an understanding of related economic and psychological questions.

Within the concept of "strategy" one must today view the world as a whole, and we come closer to the vast problems confronting us by intensive study of the globe. In the absence of a globe, a map of the world will suffice although, as we know, this is not completely true to scale. Within the strategic global picture the connected Eurasian area plays a special role. Here the mutually opposed lines of strength clash more acutely than elsewhere. The Eurasian area, viewed strategically, has two powerful flanks. In the East there is Eastern Siberia with Japan and Eastern China, and in the West, the continent of Europe. The pressure radiates from the northern half of Eurasia in eccentric circles towards the South-east, South and West. In this direction lie the rich, climatically favourable, large border areas with their harbours giving access to the sea and the ice-free oceans. Thus, strategic defence lies in a grat semi-circle roughly corresponding to the line Kamchatka-Aleutians - Japan - Philippines - Singapore - Iraq - Suez - North Africa - England - Iceland - East coast of Greenland. This line marks the situation of the great air force and navy bases. The air-lanes radiate concentrically from this semicircle into the interior of Asia. Eurasia may be compared with a piano, the keys of which extend from East Asia to Western Europe. Now this key is struck, now the other. And yet the individual sounds are inter-related and cannot be regarded as existing independently. When, therefore, there is fighting in Korea it has indirect effects not only on Indo-China or on the Near East in Persia, but even on Western Europe. There can be no strategy without an assessment of the political factors. Strategic plans can only be formulated on a political basis. Nevertheless I shall try here, as far as possible, to exclude political questions from consideration and to deal only with the military side of the problem even though this may lead to a one-sided assessment.

Only now can one advance one step further to obtain a close-up view of the strategic sector which is Europe. Even little Europe has two flanks. In the south there is Asiatic Turkey and Persia, and in the north the Scandinavian area. The control of both flanks would considerably facilitate the effective defence of Europe. It is only necessary to devote a little quiet contemplation to an atlas map of Europe. The importance of the Turkish area and the countries south of the Caspian Sea becomes clearly discernible. Their importance lies in much more than sites for strong air bases. Turkey also occupies a position of particular significance on its eastern frontier as it would here flank any attack conducted from the Caucasus against Mesopotamia. The Scandinavian area in the north represents, comparatively speaking, the flanking counter-pole. Thus both parties are striving to draw both of those flanking territories into their sphere of influence.

If we go further and consider Western Europe proper the area under review progressively diminishes. In the north the Scandinavian area retains its importance as northern flank. In the south lies the flank in Greece and its exercise of influence

over the Balkan countries proper. Any attacker attempting to penetrate from the east through Central Europe across the Elbe and the Rhine would have to pass through a dangerous defile. In the north such a thrust would be flanked by the Scandinavian area, to which Denmark and Norway belong, according to the immediate political situation. In the south-east Greece forms the bastion designed to prevent the capture of the eastern Mediterranean by partial attacks towards the south. Above all, however, the importance of Yugo-Slavia is becoming clear and, to an even greater extent, that of Northern Italy and the European Alps. The Alps can form an obstacle which would be difficult to overcome. The mass employment of tanks could be limited to the same extent as large-scale bombing attacks from the air. The nature of the high mountain-chain and its artificial fortifications make the Alpine area a powerful breakwater. Supplies can conveniently be conveyed northwards to this region from Genoa. Even strategic counter-attacks towards the north, i.e., against the south flank of an enemy advancing westwards, can be conducted from this region. The theatre of operations of an aggressor with millions of men at his disposal lies, therefore, between the Baltic and North Sea on the one hand and the Alps on the other, and is extraordinarily cramped and endangered on both sides the further an aggressor drives westward.

Even the supply lines, which are so important, are more and more endangered by aerial warfare and partisan activity the further an aggressor penetrates towards the west in this narrow, Central European region. Consequently, an aggressor could successfully carry out this offensive only if he occupied, in advance or simultaneously, the Balkan region and the Alps in the south and the Scandinavian region in the north. Thus both parties will always need these two flanks.

Let us now look at the three natural landing bridges of Greece, Italy and Spain. All three are bridgeheads within easy reach of North Africa. From the strong points and defence bases of North Africa between Suez and Morocco the Western defender can throw more and more newly assembled forces across the Mediterranean into Greece, Italy and Spain and then operate in a northerly direction against the flanks of an enemy attacking towards the west.

We have still to examine the local defensive possibilities of the narrow, Central European region between the Alps and the North Sea. We see, of course, the Elbe, the Weser and, above all, the Rhine. Obviously these natural obstacles would be turned to military advantage. But there can be no doubt that such rivers and streams can never be held for long duration. The greatest rivers were forded in the long run by friend and foe in all the wars of history. Such a natural obstacle can never hold up a determined enemy very long. Furthermore, the Elbe, over the greater part of its course, is not in Western hands at all. In addition neither the Elbe, Weser, or Rhine are adequately fortified. It would therefore be a dangerous illusion to depend on such natural obstacles.

In consequence warfare in this area must be conducted on a mobile

basis with help of the air force and motorised ground troops.

It is a serious problem whether, in the event of aggression, one should advance the line of defence as far as possible towards the east or more to the west from the very beginning. The German and Austrian peoples naturally demand, with justice, that the Western Powers should protect them as far to the east as possible for, if they were overrun by an aggressor, they would suffer serious consequences of a personal, material and psychological character, and the countries west of the Rhine would be in mortal danger. In military considerations, however, there can be no wishful thinking; there must be only sober deliberation. In my opinion any plan of defence of Western Europe must be variable. It must be different in 1951 from what it is to be in 1952 or 1953. That is, the weaker one is the more modest one's objectives must be. The stronger one is the bolder one's defensive measures can be and the further east the line of defence can be advanced.

I may here mention that I have been convinced for years that the German people must play its part in a joint defence whether it wills it or not. It is unnecessary to say more in this connection. A glance at the map of Europe gives a clear answer. Western Europe is only a component part in the theatre of Eurasia. The great advantage of the Western world lies not only in its rich material and economic resources but also in another field. The two great world Powers, the U.S.A. and England, dominate the oceans. With the help of their mighty resources on sea and in the air, and with the help of the great world harbours con-

trolled by them, they are in a position to make a rapid transfer of forces of any strength they wish to any point on the coastline of Eurasia. An eastern aggressor, on the other hand, would, as an inland State, be unable to do this. In order to move great masses of troops from eastern Siberia to Europe, or to do the reverse, many months would be required in view of the great distances and bad communications.

Finally, I may mention a fact which is very rarely taken into consideration, namely, that in both world wars the Eastern enemy was an ally of the West and received valuable supplies from the West. In the event of a future war the East would have to do without those vital supplies.

Level-headed thought will, let us hope, convince a future aggressor that the risk involved would be great. Thus, through the unity and strength of the West, peace would be secured!

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**The word flexibility is a good one and the principle of flexibility, properly applied, has many advantages, especially when one's resources are slender. But it is well to be flexible only if at the end of the period of flexibility there is a firm intention of doing something definite.**

*Lieutenant-General Sir Frederic Morgan.*

# PULTAVA, 1709

CONCURRENTLY with the great struggle between Louis XIV of France on the one hand and England, Holland and Austria on the other, another vital conflict was being fought out in Europe. Although at the time this conflict attracted little notice in European chancelleries, and has been given scant attention by historians, it held in the balance issues as important for Western Civilisation as those decided in the major clash. Indeed, looking at the world today, it may not be too much to say that the effects of Pultava were far more heavily charged with fateful consequences for mankind than anything decided at Blenheim.

**The Struggle for Baltic Supremacy.**

Five seventeenth-century states—Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, Poland and Russia—had access to the Baltic. Their struggle for supremacy in the inland sea forms the background to the campaign of Pultava.

The first part of the struggle, in which Russia played no part, ended in Sweden's favour. The genius of Gustavus Adolphus made the Swedish Army one of the most formidable in Europe and a factor of importance in the councils of the great powers. Both Louis XIV and Marlborough sought Swedish aid or, if that could not be secured, at least Swedish neutrality.

When the Thirty Years' War ended Finland, Reval, Esthonia, Karelia, Ingria and Livonia were Swedish provinces. The treaty of Westphalia gave her possession of Pomerania, Rugen and Bremen, and a foothold in north-western Europe.

Sweden's newly acquired possessions required expensive armies of occupation and yielded disappointing revenues. Military success, coupled with economic necessity, tempted her rulers to undertake the task of making the Baltic a Swedish lake. As matters stood this seemed feasible enough, for it required only the conquest of Prussia and Courland, with the important harbours of Dantzig, Elbing, Pillau and Memel to convert the dream to a reality.

The first part of the struggle was a tangled conflict of politics and military operations between Sweden,

Denmark, Prussia and Poland. When the net gains and losses were counted up after peace was restored by the treaties of Olivia and Copenhagen it was seen that the only contestant who had gained anything was Prussia. That country, under the leadership of the Hohenzollern family, had been steadily and quietly gaining territory and power.

During the War of the Spanish Succession Sweden pursued an uncertain and dilatory foreign policy which in the end left her the sole and isolated ally of Louis XIV when the tide of that monarch's fortunes was running out. The Prussians seized the opportunity and inflicted a defeat on a Swedish army at Fehrbellin (1675). Although the action was little more than a skirmish it broke the legend of Swedish invincibility and marked the beginning of her military decline.

**Peter the Great of Russia.**

If one were to turn the pages of a book of portraits of the Russian Tsars from early times one would be struck by the similarity of expressions, costumes and bearing. The same Byzantine solemnity, the same gold-embroidered mantles of an ecclesiastical design, the same venerable beards, the same ornate crowns. There is something remote, oriental, about these portraits. Suddenly, at the turn of one page, one sees a youthful knight in shining armour, a round face with a carefully trained moustache, and a crop of wavy hair in poetic disarray.

The portarit of Peter the Great, compared with the portraits of his predecessors, illustrates the sudden change in the direction of Russian policy and effort. Until Peter came to the throne in 1682 Russia had played but an insignificant role in European politics. To Europe, Russia was a wild, uncivilized land stretching away into Asia. To Russia, western Europe was equally unknown. Untutored in the arts and crafts of civilization, the Russians went their own way of interminable civil war, of devotion to their ancient way of life, of hostility to the stranger.

Peter wrought drastic changes in Russian life and policy. A seven foot colossus with an enormous pair of shoulders and arms, a dynamo of creative energy, he tore across the tradition-bound Russian land like a great storm, clearing the stagnant air, breaking, crushing, and sweeping away the debris of musty institutions, customs and beliefs, to plant the seeds of a new culture and a new life.

As a child Peter was a pawn in family factions bloodily competing for power. Left to shift for himself in the matter of education, he showed a marked preference for the company of visitors and settlers from Europe. These associations brought him a realization of the backwardness of his people. Under cover of a bitter family feud he slipped away to Europe to work in shipyards and factories, to learn the crafts of the West, and to study the organization, armament and methods of the leading military powers.

When he ascended the throne in his early twenties, Peter indicated the direction his efforts would take in two simple statements, "Russia needs water" and "Russia must have a window into Europe". Thus began

Russia's drives to the sea and to the west, drives which have been continued by Tsar and Commissar, drives which are a powerful factor in the Russian bid for world domination today. Ever since Peter enunciated that policy Russia has been a country with a mission, a mission which today finds the gospel of Communism a strong and willing instrument of its fulfilment.

As soon as the crown was on his head Peter settled the age old competition for power by liquidating all rivals and claimants. He crushed opposition to his reforms with equal ruthlessness. He slaughtered the traditional palace guards, executed or dismissed the old incompetent generals, and proceeded to reorganize his army on western lines. To assist him in this task he engaged capable European officers, soldiers of fortune temporarily unemployed. He introduced European craftsmen to teach his people various manufacturing processes, with particular emphasis on munitions making and shipbuilding. He set a personal example by taking off his crown and his coat and working sixteen hours a day in the new factories and shipyards.

After thirteen years of preparation Peter felt strong enough to make his first attempt to reach water free from ice throughout the year. To this end he provoked a quarrel with Turkey who then controlled all the lands around the Black Sea. The attempt was partly successful and Russia obtained a foothold on the Sea of Azov. Europe began to take notice.

Peter now turned to the north and began a campaign which had as its avowed object the conquest of all the land lying along the southern and eastern coasts of the Gulf of Finland. This move brought about a collision with Sweden whose interests were already strongly entrenched in that area.

**Charles XII of Sweden.**

Like Peter of Russia, Charles XII of Sweden came to the throne at an early age. But unlike Peter, he inherited a magnificent army with a tradition of almost unbroken successes. He also inherited an empty treasury, a difficult political situation, and a ring of jealous states waiting for a chance to break his country's hold on the Baltic.

It is difficult to access the character of this extraordinary man. Of unbounded ambition, he dreamed of extending Sweden eastward to the Urals and southward to the Mediterranean, a dream that might have had some chance of at least partial realization had he given some attention to the difficulties of the undertaking. Obstacles are not overcome by simply ignoring them.

In military affairs Charles was more interested in the mechanics of soldiering than in the art of generalship. He had an exalted opinion of the prowess of the Swedish soldier and apparently considered that a Swedish army was invincible just because it was Swedish. He was personally brave and his soldiers held him in high esteem.

In 1699 Denmark and Saxony felt that the presence of an inexperienced youth on the Swedish throne offered the opportunity for a cheap extension of their power. The Saxons besieged Riga while the

Danes moved against Swedish possessions in the west. Charles reacted with speed and energy, making Denmark his first object. He landed on Danish soil in the early summer of 1700, and within a few months had compelled his enemy to sue for peace.

Turning eastwards Charles found more formidable adversaries. Frederick Augustus, king of Saxony and Poland, was besieging Riga while Peter of Russia, with about 40,000 men under German officers, was trying to capture Narva.

Charles decided to eliminate the Russians first. Moving rapidly, he reached Narva late in November, 1700. Although outnumbered more than five to one he immediately attacked under cover of a snow storm. As usual, superior leadership and training prevailed over mere numbers, the Russian army was cut to pieces. Thus the military history of modern Russia began with a crushing defeat.

Charles followed up his success by driving the Saxons from Riga and occupying Courland. He then turned to Poland with the object of forcing Frederick Augustus to relinquish the crown of that country. To this end he nominated a puppet of his own and then wasted seven years trying to establish his authority. He marched hither and thither, dipped ihs fingers into numerous quarrels, kept Marlborough and Louis XIV guessing, and generally accomplished little of value.

**Russian Recovery.**

Charles's long stay in Poland gave Peter plenty of time to re-organize his forces. In the Baltic he was still kept at bay by mere handfuls of Swedish troops, but the absence of a Swedish field army enabled him to conquer Livonia, Esthonia, Karelia and Ingria. He took the island of Kronstadt, and made a beginning of the great city on the Neva to be known to posterity as St. Petersburg and later as Leningrad. By the end of 1704 Peter had conquered all the territory necessary for access to the Baltic and had fully achieved all that he had set out to gain. The task had been easy because, after Narva, Charles held the Russians in such contempt that he felt he could easily deal with them whenever he chose. At length the Swede tired of western European politics and resolved to smash Russia once and for all. To crush Russia, not merely to retrieve the Baltic situation, fired his imagination and his ambition. With scant attention to the formidable nature of the undertaking he resolved to march on Moscow and dictate peace in the Kremlin, perhaps to make himself Tsar of Russia.

**The Campaign of Pultava.**

In the autumn of 1707, when Charles began his eastern campaign, the Swedish forces, including General Levenkaupt's army in Riga, numbered not more than 46,000 troops. Peter had at least 70,000 trained men as well as enormous reserves. But the lesson of Narva had not been lost upon him and he did not trust in numbers alone. This time he would fight only on his own terms and on his own selected ground.

By the middle of December, 1707, Charles had crossed the Vistula, and in January, 1708, after taking Grodno, he caught up with the elusive Tsar at Wilna. But Peter's

SWEDEN
GULF OF FINLAND
KRONSTADT
KARELIA
R. NEVA
ST PETERSBURG
ESTONIA
NARVA
COURLAND
RIGA
MEMEL
DANZIG
ELBING
PRUSSIA
VILNA
MOSCOW
GRODNO
MINSK
BERESINA R.
KOLOWEZYN
WARSAW
POLAND
VISTULA R
DESNA R.
DNIEPER R.
TATARST
PULTAVA
UKRAINE
SEA OF AZOV

policy was to avoid pitched battles and lure his enemy further and further from his base.

In June Charles crossed the Beresina and in July he defeated a Russian force in the cavalry battle at Kolowezyn, a victory which enabled him to reach the Dneiper. Late in the autumn he arrived at Tatarsk, on the frontier between seventeenth-century Poland and Russia.

At this point the Swedish troops began to feel the hardships of their arduous campaign. They were subjected to constant raids from Cossack horsemen, supplies were going short, and most of the gunpowder was wet. Moreover, disease and sickness were playing havoc with troops lacking in everything but courage and devotion to their king.

At Tatarsk Charles surprised his generals by asking their advice. Characteristically he refused to accept their counsel to go into winter quarters and await the arrival of Levenkaupt who was marching from Riga with 12,000 troops. He obstinately declined to accept any course that might be interpreted as a retreat.

At this point Charles received a promise of 50,000 reinforcements from Mazeppa, a Cossack leader in the Southern Ukraine who proposed to raise a rebellion against Peter. Charles saw in this unreliable promise a sound reason for rejecting the advice of his generals. He hoped, too, that the ambassadors he had sent to Turkey would be able to persuade that country to invade Russia from the south. Although the Turks promised nothing and Mazeppa's rebellion had not yet materialized, Charles turned south to meet them. At the same time he ordered Levenkaupt to accelerate his march, and for the Swedish garrisons in Poland to concentrate and join him in the Ukraine.

The Swedish troops, destitute of suitable clothing and equipment, suffered dreadful hardships in the Ukraine winter. Their clothes were in rags, for boots they had to use the skins of animals, food was often short and fuel was scarce. Large numbers perished from exhaustion and exposure.

Meanwhile Peter with 50,000 men had fallen upon Levenkaupt. In a long, running fight Levenkaupt succeeded in cutting his way through, but he lost 8,000 men and all his guns, transport and supplies. He joined Charles on the Desna with about 4,000 exhausted men.

Mazeppa's rebellion was not a great success. The Cossacks refused to join him and Peter, learning of the proposed treachery in time, was able to take effective countermeasures. When Mazeppa joined the Swedes he brought with him only about 3,000 men.

Still Charles persisted. The march south and east was continued without intermission throughout the winter. The Russians offered no direct opposition, but they denuded the country of supplies, harassed the flanks and rear, cut out stragglers and drove in foraging parties. By the spring of 1709, when Pultava was in sight, Charles's total force was less than 22,000 men of whom 5,000 were sick or disabled. He had lost more than half the army he started with and accomplished nothing.

The fortress of Pultava was an important Russian supply centre containing magazines stocked with weapons, clothing and food. Possession of the fortress was vital to Charles since it offered the only means of supplying his army. He had now got himself into a position where he had to capture supplies from the enemy or perish.

But Pultava was strongly garrisoned and could not be taken on the run. The siege began in May, 1709. During the siege the Swedes suffered as much from heat as they had previously suffered from cold, while their ranks were thinned by gangrene as previously they had been by frost bite.

Meanwhile Peter had moved to the relief of Pultava with 80,000 men. By rapid movement and skilful manoeuvre he placed himself in a strong position close to the fortress, and created a situation in which Charles would either have to give up the siege or attack him. Charles, in fact, had no option. It was now a matter of fight or starve.

The odds against the Swedes were tremendous. Peter had 80,000 well-equipped men, plentifully supplied with artillery, and occupying strongly fortified lines. Charles had only four guns and about 20,000 troops, many of whom were unreliable allies.

On the eve of the battle Charles was wounded in the foot and had to be carried about on a litter. He entrusted the conduct of the battle to General Rehnskjold. This would have been an advantage had Charles not interfered with his general before and during the action.

Few details of the battle are now available. The Swedes attacked again and again with their usual courage, but they were mown down by the Russian artillery and they could make no impression on the strong redoubts. As they recoiled from the last assault Rehnskjold and Charles gave contradictory orders. Confusion and panic followed. Peter launched a general counter-attack and cut the remnants of the Swedish army to pieces.

Nearly all the Swedish senior officers were killed or captured. Against his will Charles was hurried away by his litter bearers and, through the devotion and sacrifice of a small band of survivors, he made his escape and eventually reached Turkey.

**Comments on the Operations.**

Although Charles seldom confided in anyone all available evidence suggests that he started his campaign without any clear plan at all. Apparently he made it up as he went along. To succeed on those lines requires a lot of luck. And history contains few, if any, examples of luck favouring a commander who conducted his operations on that basis. In war luck rarely favours the fool.

Apparently intending to live on on the country, Charles made no arrangements for supplies from home. At Tatarsk, when he realized that he needed supplies and reinforcements from his bases in Poland, he was still in a position to secure the communications along which they would have to come. He could have waited for them, there was no hurry. Or he could have kept

straight on towards Moscow and thus kept his L of C covered. Or he could, most sensible of all, have withdrawn. Instead he chose a course which would have been fraught with grave risk against any enemy. Against the Russians in that terrain and climate, it was sheer madness. In turning south to the Ukraine he left his L of C wide open and parallel to the Russian front for hundreds of miles. It did not need a Peter the Great to take advantage of an opportunity like that.

When he left Tatarsk Charles plunged, literally, into the unknown. He knew very little about the country, the people or the climate of the area into which he was about to move. This elementary neglect of intelligence inflicted dreadful hardships on his troops, wasted his army, and finally led him to a position from which he could neither advance nor retreat.

Finally, his crowning error was the persistent obstinacy with which he refused to listen to the advice and the pleas of his experienced generals, and simply refused to face up to the realities of his situation.

On the other hand, Peter extracted the utmost value from the characteristics of his troops, the country, the climate and the people. He avoided a pitched battle until the time was really ripe. Meanwhile he weakened his opponent by constant attacks on his flanks and rear and he allowed the Russian climate to do its deadly work on an army totally unprepared for its severities.

Peter's conduct of the operations set the pattern for Russian strategy on the two subsequent occasions when European armies attempted to capture Moscow. If the general European ignorance of Russian conditions can be advanced as some excuse for Charles, the same reason cannot be held to justify Napoleon or Hitler. The first had one example before him, the latter had two and, in addition, much better information.

There is, indeed, a striking similarity between Charles and Hitler in the conduct of their Russian campaigns. There is the same blind obstinacy, the same blank refusal to accept advice, the same persistence in a line of action that had long since lost all strategic meaning.

### Results of the Campaign.

The campaign of Pultava reduced Sweden from a first class to a third class military power. All her possessions in the eastern Baltic were lost to Russia. Only her great name and the exertions of her people enabled her to retain, temporarily, her hold on a few points on the southern Baltic coast.

From the standpoint of subsequent history the disaster at Pultava reduced to a negligible factor the only power that flanked, and could have for many years opposed the western advance of Russia in northern and central Europe. Had Charles been less ambitious, less incredibly reckless, the map of eastern Europe might have been very different today.

On the bloody field of Pultava Peter the Great enunciated a policy of Russian expansion and aggrandisement in Europe and Asia from which his successors in the Kremlin have never departed. From that day

until now the long line of Russian dictators, whether they wore an ermine mantle or a peasant's blouse, *have faithfully followed the policy* laid down by the great Tsar, both in its aims and the methods of their fulfilment.

In 1851 the historian Sir Edward Creasy wrote—

"And though the Tsar failed in his first attempts against Turkey, the successors of Peter have, one and all, carried on a uniformly aggressive and uniformly successful policy against every state, Asiatic as well as European, which has had the misfortune of having Russia for a neighbour.

"Historians who have discussed the progress of Russia have often alluded to the similitude between the modern extension of the Muscovite empire and the extension of the Roman dominions in ancient times. But attention has scarcely been drawn to the closeness of the parallel between conquering Russia and conquering Rome, not only in the extent of conquests, but in the means of effecting conquest.

"The history of Rome during the century and a half which followed the close of the second Punic War, and during which her largest acquisitions of territory were made, should be compared with the history of Russia for the last one hundred and fifty years. The classical scholar will remember the statecraft of the Roman Senate, which took care in every foreign war to appear in the character of a Protector. Thus Rome *protected* the Aetolians and the Greek cities against Macedon; she protected Bithynia and other smaller Asiatic states against the Syrian kings; she protected Numidia against Carthage; and in numerous other instances assumed the same specious character. But every state which Rome protected was ultimately subjugated and absorbed by her.

"And Russia has been the protector of Poland, the protector of the Crimea, the protector of Courland, the protector of Georgia, Immerita, Mingrelia, the Tcherkessian and Caucasian tribes. She has first protected, and then appropriated them all."

That was written a hundred years ago. With a little transposition of place names the words would be equally true of what has happened in Europe and Asia in the last six years, of what is happening now. The only difference is that the pace has been accelerated and that the successor of Peter the Great has added the Communist fifth column to the older instruments of Russian imperialism.

[This is the twelfth article in the series "Decisive Battles of the World." Next month we shall consider the battle of Saratoga in 1777. —Editor.]

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