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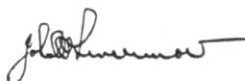
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VICTORIA BARRACKS, MELBOURNE.

AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

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TACTICS and ATOMICS

Colonel M. F. Brogan, OBE, Australian Staff Corps.

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily represent AHQ policy.—Editor.

Introduction.

ONE could be forgiven for believing that the advent of atomic weapons in the form of atomic artillery, guided weapons and the aerial bomb into the tactical field has in one bludgeoning stroke removed the finesse, the nicety of moves and counter-moves and the necessity for high proficiency in individual training and detailed staff work called for in the past. The awful power of these devices vis à vis conventional weapons, together with the absence of any international convention governing their use (as is the case with gas warfare), portends World War III as a short succession of rapid holocausts in which all the tactical principles we have learned hitherto will be subjugated to the object of getting in first with the only blow required. One atomic device exploded somewhere near the centre of gravity of the enemy's field forces would appear to resolve each operation.

Closer reflection, however, indicates that the foregoing conception is rather absolute and needs to be

tempered with factual considerations. Some of these considerations are associated with the atomic devices themselves, for example, the time taken to deliver one at the right time and place. Others relate to the well-established principles of preservation learned in earlier warfare but to some extent overlooked since 1918, e.g., the protection afforded by solid earth and the vulnerability of mass attacks to fire power.

There is no doubt that whilst either side has an atomic weapon the "good old days" of warfare are gone forever, but, on the other hand, this does not mean that the whole of our current tactical doctrine must be scrapped. Indeed, without trying to oversimplify the issue, a theoretical investigation (and the price per A bomb permits only this at present) will show that the old principles varied in application in degree only will still prove sound. The degree will be in terms of such factors as ground, size of forces, mobility, protective works, time and space. After all, the physical effects of an atomic explosion are heat, blast and radiation, the two former of which are not new to war (albeit in a less efficient degree weight for weight) and the latter of which now shown as not the inexorable killer it was first believed to be.

The rational approach to the use of atomic weapons would, therefore, seem to be somewhere on a line between resigning ourselves to hopelessness of combating them on the one hand and regarding them as just a new series of explosive devices on the other. Admittedly, no sane person subscribes to either of these philosophies, but let us examine some tactical concepts to determine the weighting due to each with a view to establishing a more realistic picture of the influence of atomic weapons on the battlefield. For the sake of simplicity it is proposed to devote the rest of this submission to five parts, covering each phase of war. i.e., advance, attack, defence and withdrawal, plus a final summary. It is assumed that the following vehicles are available for the delivery of atomic devices:

- (a) Aerial bomb (ground and air burst);
- (b) Guided missiles:
 - (i) Air to ground;
 - (ii) Ground to ground;
 - (iii) Ground to air;
- (c) Atomic artillery;
- (d) Land mine;

and that both sides have overall parity in devices and the means of delivering them. This postulation is an unlikely one, but is chosen here for simplicity's sake. Variation of these conditions or of other relevant factors, e.g., ground or morale, would materially influence any conclusions drawn here.

The Advance.

In recapitulating some of the more important principles involved in a successful advance (including the advance to contact, the follow-up and the pursuit), we are reminded of the importance of:

- (a) The necessity to reconnoitre on a wide front;
- (b) Tactical surprise;
- (c) The early capture of tactical features (firm bases);
- (d) The maintenance of momentum;
- (e) Good control;
- (f) Passing of intelligence;
- (g) Tactical grouping and local protection;
- (h) Sound logistics; and
- (j) The inherent fillip to morale.

As in other phases, the object might well be to force the enemy into a position where he will become vulnerable to atomic attack whilst ensuring we do not present him with a similar target. This emphasises perhaps more than hitherto the early passage of information, particularly relating to enemy dispositions, lines of withdrawal, defiles, check points and administrative installations where suitable targets are likely to eventuate. The laying on of an air strike or the deployment of ground-to-ground missile units, on present indications, take considerably longer than that involved in using conventional projectiles. This, and the fleeting nature of a target presented by a mechanised column, underlines the importance of a streamlined reporting system based on, say, a combination of reconnaissance aircraft, radar, agents and armoured vehicles. This system would also be required to report on enemy atomic preparations, such as the fabrication of launching ramps, which might be engaged by our offensive air support or CB organizations. On our part, the need for dispersion consistent with control and the requirements of local protection arises more forcibly. A concentration of a certain number of men to the square

mile will constitute a density sufficient to warrant the use of an A bomb. Axes of advance should be chosen where ground, defiles, groupings and speed do not combine adversely to produce a banking up to the degree indicated. The concomitant requirement of a reliable inter-communication system covering the dispersion necessary is a vital factor to the control of this type of advance.

Our selection of tactical bounds could conceivably be modified by the enemy's possession of atomic weapons in the field. In the past the high topographical features astride the axes which, if necessary, could be held against a turning enemy, have been the desiderata from the advancer's point of view. It is now well known that atomic blast from the air burst of a nominal (20 KT) bomb will kill at 1,000 yards by either heat flash or an overdose (2,500 Roentgens) of gamma rays. This lethality may not be possible from tactical weapons at this range, but the possibility remains that those exposed on high features are liable to become casualties from heat flash and/or radiation alone, as well as blast. Bounds may therefore be selected where the ground offers good reverse slope positions and where personnel may gain a certain amount of protection from the "atomic shadow" provided by the figuration of the ground and its relationship to ground zero.

Where it is necessary that close contact is maintained regardless of the possible exposure to atomic explosions, the need to protect fighting personnel from the effects of such explosions stresses the importance of the maximum numbers of tanks,

armoured personnel carriers and self-propelled guns well forward. In addition to the mobility necessary for this type of operation, such equipments afford an acceptable degree of protection to crews against all three products of fission. The crossing of radio-active ground or the concentration of forces for a quick tactical decision would appear to be directly related to the numbers of such equipments which are available. This, balanced against the offering of a suitable atomic target when forming up, may well call for a nicety of tactical judgment on the commander's part.

The air aspect is a dominating factor. It is most likely that in an advance, at least a favourable local air situation will prevail. In addition to providing tactical reconnaissance this situation could be exploited (subject always to the efficacy of the enemy's ground-to-air missiles) in such roles as:

- (a) By-passing of radio-active ground to seize tactical features with airborne troops;
- (b) Denying enemy air observation over our concentrations, installations or movement; and
- (c) Re-supplying field units where maintenance areas are liable to atomic attack.

The Attack.

Again, let us refresh ourselves on some of the basic considerations in planning the classical attacks. The following points warrant attention:

- (a) The launching of the attack from a firm base and the gaining of firm bases for subsequent phases;
- (b) The penetrative power of the attack in depth on a narrow

- front (except across wide obstacles);
- (c) The security of start lines;
 - (d) The early movement forward of supporting weapons;
 - (e) The maintaining of momentum; and
 - (f) The need to widen the gap of penetration, to get behind and to outflank the enemy positions.

Of the above requirements, probably the most telling is that of momentum. If the attack is slowed down or stopped, and the enemy given the chance to regroup and hit back, the chances of our attack succeeding become slimmer. It is after the break in and during the dog fight that this critical stage will probably occur, i.e., when the enemy recovered from his initial shock and has had time to get his defence plan (including his counter-attack) into operation. At such a stage all our resources of close support, tanks, artillery and offensive air are called into play. It is now that the extra punch is required. Atomic weapons used indiscriminately in such a melee may clear the battlefield, but probably of both sides, with resultant indecision. Suitable targets would appear to be on the outskirts of the area and include HQs, command posts, signal centres, artillery positions, tank assembly areas and reinforcement routes. Thus interdiction on a tactical scale may be achieved, leaving the mopping up to be done by the attackers using conventional weapons.

The preparatory stage of the attack will require somewhat more caution than hitherto. The massing of men and material in preliminary positions, such as concentration

areas, assembly areas and forming-up places has always been fraught with a certain amount of risk, but now the vulnerability of such concentrations is even less acceptable. This may involve more such areas, smaller forces or more limited objectives, or some combination of these factors. If our requirement of attacking with a maximum of momentum on a narrow front is not to be upset we must face up to smaller, harder-hitting, mobile, protected forces extended in considerable depth in "get set" positions behind a secure Start Line. These, in turn, must be supported by adequate atomic fire power and backed up, if necessary, by tactically grouped reserves ready to by-pass dog fights and maintain the initial impact of the break in.

A cover plan to mask preparatory activity is indicated in the above atomic setting. Any deception or simulations possible, e.g., dummy signal traffic, sonic devices, mock-up guns, vehicles and tanks should repay effort. Resupply of expensive and complex atomic devices to either side is hardly likely to approach the same scale as for conventional ammunition, and every enemy abortive round fired is a contribution to the unbalancing of his logistics.

Routes to Start Lines will require careful consideration to ensure that "man density" is not increased by reason of banking up at obstacles, defiles, minefields and enemy fields of fire. The arrival of a well-placed atomic missile amongst the attacking force during this opening gambit could involve the abandonment or postponement of the operation. This consideration may have to be balanced with the narrow front com-

plex and force the use of more axes on a wider front, followed by convergence after contact.

Once battle is joined, close contact as well as momentum will need to be maintained right through the pursuit stage. Thus the enemy becomes, in effect, an atomic shield whose proximity to our forces will lessen the likelihood of enemy atomic missiles being launched against the interlocked combatants. It should not, however, be discounted that the enemy's philosophy and reinforcement position may be such that the simultaneous liquidation of both friend and foe will, in certain circumstances, be justifiable.

Because of the need already mentioned, to husband our resources of atomic missiles, the decision to use them will remain at a high level. For the immediate future and until all commanders are experienced in the use of these devices, some form of specially trained atomic adviser to the commander would appear justified to advise on the probable effects of atomic requests before acceptance is given. Such an adviser would require to be kept continuously informed of the tactical situation by means of a reporting and control organisation possibly superimposed on the air support signal system.

As before, success will be materially affected by the local air situation, the availability of tanks, armoured personnel carriers and self-propelled guns. These factors, if favourable, will enhance our ability to deploy and to take quick advantage of the targets presented by enemy concentrations.

The Defence.

In this phase of warfare, we have been taught conventionally to give emphasis to:

- (a) Depth;
- (b) Concealment;
- (c) All-round defence;
- (d) Mutual support;
- (e) A co-ordinated plan, including counter attack;
- (f) The need to sustain morale;
- (g) Domination of ground between opposing forces;
- (h) Centralized control of artillery;
- (j) Protection of obstacles; and
- (k) Good communications.

Probably the greatest influence of atomic attack will be to increase the depth of defence, and this means depth in two planes, deep in distance and deep down. The emphasis is on digging. Here the human element enters and, regardless of the latest scientific developments, the fighting soldier can be expected only to remove average spoil at the old standard rate of 1 cubic yard an hour, using hand tools. Hasty defences, therefore, to be effective against atomic attack, will require the application of mechanised equipment on a large scale. To meet this situation, it is considered a case exists for the formation of special earth-moving units with the primary role of construction of field works. (An empirical figure determined for Australian troops in World War II was that 1 brake horse power was on an average the equivalent in output of 2½ men. Assuming that one item of plant can work twice as many shifts as a soldier, one 35 bhp excavator is the approximate equivalent of 175 men. The indication is clear—more horse power in the defence.)

The requirements of all-round defence, mutual support, protection of obstacles, control and good com-

munications militate against the need to disperse to avoid mass casualties from the one blast. This points to small self-contained bastions of defence supported by more self-propelled artillery. The risk of penetration and defeat in detail must be countered by thicker minefields, probably laid mechanically, and mobile, hard-hitting counter-attack forces, kept on the move or ready to concentrate for a quick decision. The need to disperse will reduce the effectiveness of control to a degree which will demand a high order of initiative in, and a granting of freedom of action to, junior commanders and leaders.

Whilst avoiding concentrating ourselves, it will obviously be to our advantage if we can force the enemy into a worthwhile mass formation in an area where he is exposed to our atomic weapons. In a defensive sector this may well be achieved by large-scale use of tactical and defensive wire and minefields, thickened up possibly with radio-active material to render certain ground untenable. This presupposes a very deliberate defence, but may be possible in a modified form in a hasty operation.

A prerequisite to a successful defence against enemy atomic attack will be a high state of training and morale. Apart from the physical havoc to be seen immediately on detonation, it is going to demand a high state of morale and efficiency to keep a participant fighting with the knowledge that he has absorbed a lethal amount of gamma radiation and his remaining life can be measured in hours.

The selection of the ground to be defended in relation to vital ground will, in future, be influenced to some

degree by its relative exposure to atomic blast, either ground or air burst. Here again, reverse slope positions seem to offer a certain attraction, but a lot will depend on technical developments, particularly in fuses and the accuracy of their control.

Concealment, camouflage and deception will demand considerable attention. The combination of hiding targets and diverting enemy atomic ammunition to non-existent concentrations is a tactical advantage and, in the long-term view, a dissipation of valuable enemy resources.

It is probable that the enemy will be aware of the atomic potential against him, and will be wary in massing large numbers for attack. Should he do so, however, it is imperative that he be seen off before he effects close contact. This will entail the pre-positioning and registration on our part of launching devices and/or atomic artillery, together with an efficient warning system.

Unless the defence has been organised on a deliberate basis and defenders are well protected, it seems unlikely that any close support in the nature of Defensive Fire or Defensive Fire (SOS) will be practicable from atomic sources. It is more likely that such support will be reserved for Harassing Fire or softening up prior to a deliberate counter-attack.

In the field of resupply, our present system of road or rail bound convoys feeding static formation maintenance areas is relatively inflexible and liable to neutralisation by a few atomic missiles. An overhauling seems necessary to reduce the amounts and types of stores brought up, and the means of bring-

ing them is indicated to be by aircraft requiring no elaborate forward airfield, i.e., helicopters, usually, and fixed-wing aircraft in appropriate situations.

The Withdrawal.

In this temporary phase of warfare, planning is usually directed to:

- (a) The withdrawal of tactical groups from, through and to firm bases;
- (b) Simplicity commensurate with flexibility;
- (c) Strict timings and centralised control;
- (d) Secrecy; and
- (e) The achievement of a clean break, together with the avoidance of a running fight.

Usually the adverse factor is time. The operation is more often than not started without much warning and is executed in a hasty manner. These circumstances react against the completion of reconnaissances, detailed staff work and, most importantly, the completion of intermediate or main positions, i.e., the firm bases on which we can stand and fight back. The time taken to complete effective protective works against atomic blast, even with an increased scaling of engineer plant is going to be protracted. The decision to hold intermediate positions must be carefully considered in the light of the amount of excavation possible in the time available, and whether it would be more prudent to divert this effort into preparation of the main position. Similarly, covering positions, being even less effective in stopping power, cannot be relied on against atomic assault.

A likely pattern of withdrawal, then, might be to move rearwards.

in longer bounds, or one bound only, to a main position prepared with the extensive use of earth-moving equipment and mechanical mine layers. To enable the retreating force to gain its quick break and unmolested occupation of the new position, something drastic in the way of staving off the enemy may have to be done. This might take the form of an atomic barrage whilst the getaway is achieved or if this is considered too prodigal, to attack in force with a grouping which is capable of changing to a rearguard role when the main body is well clear of the action.

Really spectacular results should be possible with atomic devices in the demolition aspects of the withdrawal, but the tendency to crack nuts with sledge hammers by enthusiastic vandals will have to be watched. The time and manpower involved in preparing demolition belts has given rise to two types of demolition, viz., "preliminary," which are blown when ready, and "tactical," which are blown when tactically necessary. It is obvious that any large-scale preliminary demolition activity prejudices secrecy and militates against the clean break. The absolute destructive effect of atomic charges should reduce the work involved in preparing structures for demolition and eliminate the necessity for preliminary neutralisation, thereby completely reducing the chances of disclosing our retrogressive intentions.

Once the rearward movement is apparent to the enemy and his follow-up commences, there will probably be scope for our inflicting delay by the detonation of carefully sited atomic land mines. Apart from the casualties inflicted by heat and

blast, there will remain the persistent hazard of gamma radiation. Such deterrents located between primary demolition belts and supplemented by nuisance minefields should slow the pursuer down to the degree necessary for our disengagement and redeployment in the new position.

In common with the other phases discussed above, the requirement will exist here to avoid concentrations of men and equipment, to provide a large degree of mobility and armoured protection for personnel, to operate under a favourable air situation and to ensure the provision of adequate earth-moving equipment.

Summary.

The introduction of atomic weapons into the tactical fields has brought new problems into the conduct of operations. These problems are determinate using accepted tactical doctrine, and modifying it to the degree imposed by the physical effects of atomic detonation in specific field conditions.

The major unit reorganisation necessary is in artillery units to undertake the offensive use of atomic missiles. In addition, a real need exists to ensure that engineer support is of such a scale and so equipped that the provision of protective works against atomic assault is feasible in most field situations. Intercommunication and control systems now operative should be extended or duplicated to provide facilities for rapidly reporting, requesting or granting atomic action.

In the circumstances of atomic activity the need is emphasised to provide adequate resources of tanks, self-propelled guns and armoured personnel carriers to exploit or withdraw from atomic explosions.

Control of atomic missile expenditure should be vested in the most senior commander practicable and he should be assisted by a specialist trained in the technicalities of such missiles.

Some of the prime requirements in training for and conduct of field operations involving the use of atomic weapons are:

- (a) Move mechanised, protected and self-contained;
- (b) Grant freedom of tactical action to junior commanders and leaders—encourage initiative and stimulate leadership qualities;
- (c) Avoid concentrations of men, material and maintenance areas and aim at forcing the enemy into such concentrations;
- (d) Avoid road bound lines of communication; seek flexibility in resupply by the use of aircraft, both fixed and rotating winged; reduce the quantities of stores brought forward, particularly creature comforts;
- (e) Gain maximum mobility, range, arcs and coming into action of artillery weapons;
- (f) Provide maximum resources of manpower-saving devices, including a high proportion of earth-moving and mine-laying equipments;
- (g) Move in big bounds between well-dug, firm bases;
- (h) Local air superiority is essential to successful ground operation;
- (j) Disperse, dig, disappear and deceive.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

By the time you read this you will, we hope, have become "Cost Conscious." At least you will, if you are not totally unobservant, have become conscious that the Army is seriously concerned about getting the last penny-worth of value out of everything it uses, from Centurions to tin-openers. By the Army we mean, at the moment, those members of it whose work in the postings they occupy for the time being forcibly impresses with the dire necessity of getting the utmost value out of everything the Army uses, including time. We hope the campaign now under way will make every member of the Army equally aware of the necessity of making a little go a long way.

To say that a little has to go a long way is not an overstatement of the case, quite the reverse in fact. This year's Army vote is £72,185,000. That sounds a lot of money. But when you think about what has to be done with it, it seems pretty small really. Yet it is just about all that this country can afford for the time being. Australia is in rather a different position from older countries. They built most of their developmental works long ago; we are just starting on the job. We are faced with the problem of maintaining a much bigger defence establishment than we have ever before set up in peace, and at the same time building roads, power plants, irrigation works and many other projects, all of which, in the long run, have a bearing on our ability to defend this country.

Army Headquarters is by no means the only governmental authority deeply concerned with the problems of costs. They are all more or less in the same boat. Every one of them is exploiting every possible avenue to get the utmost value from the limited funds the Parliament has been able to allot them.

The Army ought to be better at this sort of thing than most other institutions because its members, by virtue of their training, ought to have a highly developed sense of responsibility. Unfortunately, a good many of them seem to have forgotten their responsibilities in this matter. Maybe this is a hang-over from the war years, years when almost the entire national effort, by putting everything else aside, was devoted to the provision of military stores and equipment on a scale which no nation could possibly afford in time of peace. But the war ended a long while ago, and it is high time we finally ridded ourselves of the bad habits acquired in those days of prodigious expenditure.

In the final analysis, an organization is only as effective as the people who comprise it. Every soldier of any rank who misuses stores or equipment, or who fails to take proper care of them, reduces the effectiveness of the whole army.

There are five basic principles of economy which concern each one of us directly. They are:

1. **Use supplies and equipment only for the purposes for which they are intended.**

2. Use only the amount necessary to do the job.
3. Take proper care of all supplies, stores and equipment.
4. Guard against loss.
5. Prevent over-supply, hoarding and waste.

Every bit of equipment is designed for a specific purpose. A jeep, for instance, is designed for cross-country travel over rough ground. It is not designed to pull the load that a tractor is built to pull, nor is it intended to push lorries and guns out of the mud. It is certainly not a racing car. High speeds and heavy loads lead to broken parts—and replacements cost money. Exactly the same argument applies to every single thing the Army uses. Except in real emergency, misuse is never justified.

Using only the right amount does not mean false economy. Use what is required but *no more than is required*. Put a little thought into it before you start, and don't send a 3-tonner to fetch a pound of nails.

Every piece of equipment should be cared for properly. If it isn't where it should be, or isn't in good shape, the people responsible for it are not doing their jobs properly. Every piece of equipment not actually being used must be in a place where it is not exposed to damage or loss. When the job for which it was being used is finished it must be returned to its proper place in store. And that is not all. Every bit of equipment must be cared for, and given proper maintenance, just as if it was your own highly valued property.

Loss of stores and equipment nearly always boils down to the fact

that someone failed to do his job. In peace, extenuating circumstances are rare, and most reasons given for losses are no more than excuses. Constant check is necessary to ensure that all items are accounted for, and that when not in use they are adequately safeguarded.

Oversupply and hoarding are great causes of waste. People constantly order more than they are entitled to or really require. Scales of issue are carefully worked out. The person who "beats the book" by getting more than the scale may think he is clever, but don't let him imagine he is a good soldier. By helping to wreck the Army's budgetary system, he is doing his best to reduce his country's defences to a state of chaos. Similarly, stores in excess of scale have no business in units. They should be returned to the appropriate depot, where they can be taken care of, or perhaps issued to a unit which really wants them.

The prevention of waste is, of course, a matter of good administration. The hard fact is that the leader who tolerates waste of any sort within his command is inefficient. No one need be miserly, but everyone must be reasonable.

The soldier is as good as anyone else at pointing the bone, at declaiming against the way in which other people appear to be wasting the taxpayer's money. Even when he is right, his energy would be better applied to keeping his own house in order.

In the long run the "Jack System" ("— you Jack, I'm all right") never does work, not even for those who practise it.

ARMOUR en MASSE



Captain J. C. Gorman,
1 Royal New South Wales Lancers.

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of the Director of Military Training.—Editor.

MANY of the junior Armoured officers, like myself, studying the evolution of armoured tactics in the post-war period, are unable to understand why the British and French armies clung to the theory that tanks should be used in slow, methodical infantry support, rather than the blitzkrieg methods of the German. We are, of course, wise after the event, basing our present ideas on the military histories of the recent war which are available to us. I feel that Guderian, Liddell Hart and Martel were right in the thirties, when they advocated armoured striking forces, and cannot understand why the six-pounder of 1918 gave way to the two-pounder of 1939-42, or why the Churchill was ever produced.

I feel that today, although we have modified our thinking, we are still on the wrong track. I refer to the employment of armour en masse, rather than in relatively "penny packets." No squadron leader would dream of splitting his squadron, and rarely are armoured regi-

ments set out squadron by squadron, to different commands. If we continue up the scale, we find that this antipathy is not continued.

Chester Wilmot gives the Order of Battle in France in 1945. It is notable that the average Corps comprised three infantry divisions and one armoured division. The armour was not massed for use over the good tank country north of Aachen, but was tied down in Walcheren, in the Vosges, and in other areas where tanks were relegated to relatively minor roles. In my opinion, these divisions were wasted, and we did not make use of the Principle of Economy of Force.

There was no outcry about this dispersion. American armoured officers are now trying to force the principle of employing armour en masse into the minds of officers of other arms. Otherwise some of the major lessons of the recent war have been ignored.

Guderian states that in France he had many less tanks than the

French, and his tanks were, in fact, inferior to the Char B and some other French tanks. The Matilda was more than a match for the PZ KW 111 with the short 50mm., yet the majority of the German tanks were 11s and 1s. Tactics won the campaign, not numbers or quality of the tanks. The Germans massed.

The German spearheads into Russia were armoured corps. The offensive stalled when Hitler reduced the number of tanks per division to form more divisions, and when he concentrated on SP assault guns, rather than tanks, in his factories. The German officers still had their skill, but their weapon had deteriorated in their hands.

The military history student cannot overlook Rommel's successful use of armour in Africa. The 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions attacked concentrated time and again, and Rommel says, "Even the main offensive force (of Eighth Army), already too weak for its purpose, was thrown into battle dispersed." Rommel continually battered the British armoured brigades separately and defeated them in detail. The Knights-bridge debacle, when the British finally concentrated some 300 tanks, was not due to the fact that we massed our armour, but rather that we fell for a deception scheme. Montgomery produced an armoured corps at Alamein, but it was soon broken up. I may be incorrect, but I cannot recall any other allied armoured corps that was used during the Second World War. For the Kasserine pass control, Rommel withdrew two of his three panzer divisions (10th and 21st), leaving only one in the vital defences. I cannot but feel that, had the positions been reversed, we would not have left the Mareth positions, and

if we had considered the Kasserine operations, we would have left two divisions and taken one for the diversion.

Coming nearer home, the Korean War has cemented some ideas that are better dissipated. My own regiment had only one squadron in the bridge line, at any one time, and in the disastrous Battle of the Imjim River we had to split our squadron to try to cover both the bridge valleys. Two more squadrons sat back, 20 miles away, and were not used. Now, I understand, the individual tank, emplaced in the company position, is all the rage.

It is my opinion that, in early April, 1951, an armoured brigade could have swept through to Pyongyang almost unopposed, but political decisions had much to do with that omission.

Our tactical thinking is reflected in our formations. The ill-balanced armoured division, which gives us the choice, as Colonel Miles put it, of leading with tanks or three-tonners, is not the instrument of massive penetration. Consider our own 1st Armoured Division. At one stage it consisted of six armoured regiments and six motor battalions. The decision to reduce to a single armoured brigade was, I understand, because the division was too unwieldy. A fair argument! It is now, however, unbalanced. There is only an infantry brigade increase in the armoured division, compared to the armoured brigade, plus a few oddments, and a mass of service troops.

I must stress that the divisional regiment RAAC is not concerned in any of the foregoing arguments. I personally regard it as an SP anti-tank regiment to be dispersed as required. Unfortunately most infan-

trymen are unable to distinguish the abyss (it is no thin line) between the armoured and the divisional regiments. I do not consider it to be part of the striking force of an armoured division.

I propose an entirely different line of thinking.

I would abandon the armoured division, and concentrate on armoured brigades. The balance of three armoured regiments to one motor regiment is, in my opinion, sound. There we have a compact, mobile, flexible striking force. Let us have brigade groups by the dozen.

Next I would advocate that no armoured brigade group be ever placed under the permanent command of an infantry division, or corps, unless there is only one corps in a campaign. I would mass my armour under the hand of the senior commander of the theatre of war. If there were sufficient tanks, I would mass it into armoured corps and armoured armies. An armoured

corps would be from three to six armoured brigade groups, and an infantry division.

If a division required an armoured brigade, I would allow my senior commander to attach one for a brief period. Then it would be called back into the armoured fold.

My ideal commander would be aggressive, even on the defensive, and would aim at unleashing his armour, to pour through the enemy line on a narrow front, and with maximum weight behind the punch. He would echo Patton, "To hell with my flanks, I'm going to make the (enemy) worry about theirs." He would ride like Patton and Rommel with the leading tanks, where he could appreciate the position swiftly, and make rapid changes to meet the demands, or to exploit success.

I would mass my armour by streamlining the organization, centralizing the command, concentrating the tanks, and placing it in the hands of a mobile-minded, aggressive commander.

**It is more difficult to organize peace than to win a war:
but the fruits of victory in war will be lost if the peace is
not well organized.**

—Aristotle, B.C. 340.

DIEN BIEN PHU

Captain M. Harrison, Army H.Q., Eire.

PART I.

This article, which is reprinted by courtesy of the Irish Defence Journal, was written before the Indo-China cease fire agreement was reached.—Editor.

BEFORE the recriminations begin and Dien Bien Phu is smothered in its consequences a serious analysis of the siege must be attempted, not in terms of heroics, but of ground and men, material and tactics.

While it is misleading at all times to generalise from one particular, this maxim is notably applicable to the action which culminated in the fall of the French fortress.

It was an operation so highly specialised as not likely to be duplicated often in future. But it highlighted two very important aspects of military science, namely, Chinese Communist tactics at low level and the apparent failure of air power when employed against such tactics.

Stripped to the essentials, Dien Bien Phu was a simple contest between infantry besieging and infantry besieged.

The logistics of the Communist forces were based mainly on the human pace as the measure of distance and on the human back as the measure of load. As for the besieged,

their logistics were based on the ultra modern—cargo aircraft and helicopters.

The only other notable factor deserving early mention is this, that the attackers had no air capacity whatever—not even a single aircraft—while the besieged had the services of considerable air support. The latter, then, had two great advantages both derived from air power—quick support and quick supply.

Despite the apparent superiority which modern equipment and advanced techniques created for the French, the Viet Minh continued to assault the fortress resolutely. If their first attempts did not succeed, it was no tribute to air power but rather to the steadfastness of individual infantrymen who maintained a high volume of effective fire, and who, when the assault was spent, moved out to disperse the invading remnants with the twin weapons of cold steel and high morale.

Here then, selectively consolidated from many sources, is the story of Dien Bien Phu.

As announced by General Navarre, French overall commander in Indo-China, the plan for this season's campaign was to be aggressive everywhere so that by stealing the initiative from the Viet Minh he

could dictate the course of the war and so finish it.

To this end he had concentrated on building a force of some 300,000 troops, French, French Colonial and native. A feature of his plan was the emphasis on air, mainly as a transport service, but also as a tactical weapon. Total aircraft of all types available at the start of the campaign season in October, 1954, was about 300.

In furtherance of his plan, General Navarre staged two airborne sorties into Cochin China which were successful at least as demonstrations of strength to sway the populations of indifferent or disaffected areas, although no great opposition was either expected or encountered.

The decision to sit astride Viet Minh routes south from China was in the spirit of the Navarre plan, since it would seriously threaten them in their annual excursion into Laos. The fertile valley just 12 miles north of the Laos border, situated high up in the Thai mountains in which the roads converged, was the only possible site for a base from which French offensive sorties could radiate. In the centre of the valley grouped about the road junctions lay a straw-hut village watered by a river.

During World War II this site had been an important garrison for the Japanese, who had built an airfield with a 4,000-foot runway, surfaced with steel mesh.

As readers of "Beau Geste" and such literature will appreciate, the concept of a fort isolated from its base area is no new departure for French colonial garrisons. In Indo-China it was no novelty having been tried out at least twice with success. The experience during the

defence of the fortified area of Na-Sam would, indeed, lend support to those who considered such tactics to be militarily sound.

The difficulties inherent in the siting of the proposed defences were those experienced usually by commanders of combined arms. Artillery will demand secure gun areas, capable of concealment from above and not in view of enemy ground observers. Armour, being essentially offensive, will demand to be placed in localities from which it can counter-attack with avenues of advance which will not be hazardous by reason of minefields, marshes or too steep slopes. Infantry, to achieve security, will seek commanding ground from which approaches can be dominated. This generally means a height with capabilities for all-round defence.

Air, whether it be tactical or logistical, must, too, be secure. Tactical aircraft is secure only when the landing ground is protected by other arms from enemy fire and penetration. The same holds good for trooping and cargo aircraft. Since, for the projected French operation, all goods, stores and personnel were to be air-ported and air-landed, the airfield had to be the major factor, over-riding other factors since without it no sustained effort would be possible; the defence would be nothing but a suicidal gesture.

This, then, was the problem confronting the French staff, and on analysis it permitted of only one solution. Sacrificing the interests of other arms—of infantry mainly—for the greater good, the defence was sited with reference to air support generally. The place had to be Dien Bien Phu.

Build-Up.

The implementation of the decision resulted in a protected air-head. The main mission—denial of lines of communication and approach, by offensive sorties from a firm base—came a bad second.

As the official title of the type of operation—defensive centre—implies, this was to be no small fort holed up in the wilderness, but a large-scale installation. It was considered that encirclement of the valley positions would require a force of 30 Viet Minh battalions which, if that were correct (as indeed it proved to be) would justify its organization and maintenance.

The operation was called "CAS-TOR," and on November 21, 1953, it began with the parachuting from 150 Dakotas of thousands of troops and their equipment. First dropped was Six Battalion, which quickly annihilated the Viet Minh garrison.

The work of organization went on until early March, when all installations possible were secured underground. The various headquarters, a 250-bed hospital, wireless station, billets, dumps, car parks, were all dug in and solidly roofed over.

Bunkers, gun pits and weapon pits were thoroughly concealed and protected.

Artillery up to 155 mm. calibre was integrated into the scheme and light tanks, in unknown numbers, were available to give offensive punch.

The airfield was made usable at an early date and an emergency landing ground was levelled at *Isabelle* (see map).

By early March the French were sending tank-infantry teams into the surrounding countryside and inviting the enemy to fight.

French Forces.

The combat element as finally organized consisted of twelve battalions made up of Morroccans, Africans, Legionnaires and Vietnamese; Thai tribesmen organized in battalion strength were also present, their quality being, however, indifferent. Numerous technical and specialist troops completed the garrison.

The total force of all arms and services amounted to about 12,000, which strength was maintained throughout the siege by the addition of some 2,400 paratroops and volunteers to replace casualties.

The Fortress.

The "defensive centre" was based on seven defended localities—some reports mention eight—each sited on such elevated features as existed. Although the valley has been described as a plain, it was like the Curragh plain, not entirely featureless, but having heights of such eminence as to command adequately the entire surrounding countryside.

Each locality appears to have been self-contained and almost all would have been mutually supporting.

Isabelle, in the extreme south, held two battalions and a proportion of support arms. Being some three miles distant from the main group of localities it was well-nigh isolated and could not directly support or be supported by them.

Beatrice, in the north-east, and *Gabrielle*, in the north, were the other outlying localities. Each held one battalion. They were both so close to the main centres as to be capable of support and were not in serious danger of isolation. These localities protected the airfield on the north-east and north respectively.

A further locality, *Anne-Marie*, in the north-west, situated in a complementary position to *Beatrice*, appears on a map originating in a French newspaper. It was not mentioned in the actions, however, and strong doubts remain as to its existence as a permanent installation. If *Anne Marie* had existed, its role would have been to protect the approaches to the airfield from the north-west.

The redoubt itself, the main complex of fortifications, installations and reserve areas, had four defended localities so sited as to present a solid front in all directions. These localities were *Elaine*, *Dominique*, *Huguette* and *Claudine*.

From *Isabelle* to *Gabrielle* was about seven miles. From *Huguette* to *Beatrice* was about three miles.

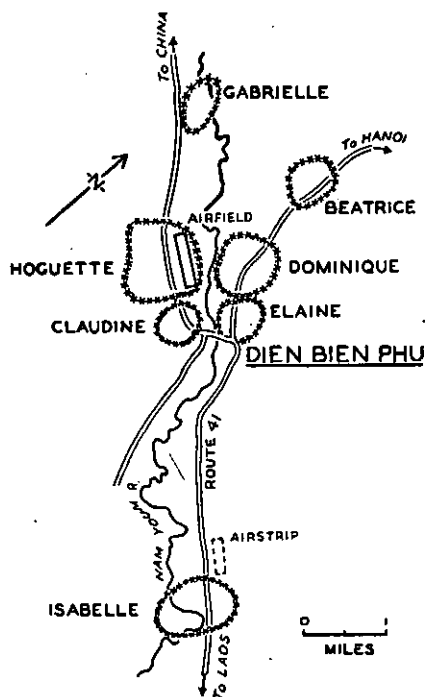
The main bastion, with its four localities, was about 3,000 yards in diameter.

While there are many references to wire on the perimeter of the localities there is no reference whatever to that most necessary adjunct to all defensive schemes—minefields. Their omission is inexplicable and, to date, is the major mystery of Dien Bien Phu. No mention of their use appeared in any report available to the writer.

Viet Minh Forces.

Best estimates give the Viet Minh a total force of eight divisions of Regulars, plus an unknown number of garrison and guerilla units. Of the eight divisions, half fought at Dien Bien Phu and they can all be identified.

The 308, 312 and 316 divisions invested Dien Bien Phu immediately after the French had settled in. The 308 Division left soon after for a



THE FORTRESS OF DIEN BIEN PHU

Situated on the border of North Laos and Tonking, the fortress controlled important Viet Minh routes leading south from China.

sortie into Laos, but returned and remained.

The strength of these infantry divisions is generally regarded as being about 5,000 personnel, almost all combat troops, but the evidence accumulated during the battle would point either to a considerable increase in their establishments or to their reinforcement by entirely new troops. It was most probable that after the second assault, which was in two division strength, the protracted lull was occasioned primarily by the wait for perhaps another division, if not more.

A fourth division, the 351, composed entirely of artillery and assault engineer units, was brought up as soon as Ho Chi Minh decided to dispose of Dien Bien Phu. This formation, about whose strength little is known, was equipped with the typical preponderance of mortars and used, in addition, 105 and 75 mm. artillery in great numbers.

French official sources assert that the Viet Minh anti-aircraft regiment was delivered from China. This equipment caused the French airmen much surprise and gravely affected the defenders.

Since no reliable information is at hand concerning the size of the force as a whole, a proper deduction cannot be made. It does appear, however, that General Giap, the Viet Minh commander, maintained his forces at a strength of about 30,000.

No estimate whatever can be made of the coolie supply army or of the base elements.

The Action.

By March 9 the Viet Minh force was disposed with its artillery positions in the hills north-west of the plain and with its forward infantry

elements on a perimeter some three miles distant from the fortress and surrounding it.

Two days later, March 11, the infantry had moved closer and were no more than 2,000 yards from the outer wire. Digging by night in the long grass, they were able to advance, mole-like, to points just out of range of small arms and automatic fire.

On this day, for the first time, 75 mm. field guns shelled the airfield. Fire continued for one hour and ceased only when French aircraft engaged the gun sites with napalm.

On March 12, two Viet Minh assault engineer companies, which had closed up to the wire entanglements of *Beatrice* during the previous night, had to be cleared out of their trenches by the garrison which was reinforced by tanks.

As the mists cleared from the valley at 1100 hours on March 13 the airfield, emergency airstrip and defences generally were shelled. This continued all day and effectively masked the forming-up and approach of infantry towards the two northern outposts through gaps which had been prepared the previous nights and to points in the wire which were prepared for demolition.

At 1700 hours, in failing light, fire was lifted and brought down on *Gabrielle* and *Beatrice* (intensity one round every six seconds). After an hour the assaulting infantry in dense formations had reached the outposts' foxholes. Two regiments, some 2,000 men in each, were committed in this action.

Beatrice, occupied by one Foreign Legion battalion (800 all ranks) re-

mained intact until 2000 hours, when it began to crumble. *Gabrielle*, manned by a battalion of Algerians, felt pressure at 2200 hours.

By midnight an attack on *Isabelle*, in the extreme south, had proved abortive, its two-battalion garrison being completely master of the situation.

Shortly after midnight *Beatrice* collapsed, but *Gabrielle* held out under repeated assaults.

First light (March 14) gave respite to the defenders, who were not engaged again in force until last light. This was the day of truce when, between 0900 hours and 1200 hours, both sides busied themselves with claiming their dead and wounded.

After mid-day one battalion of French paratroops was successfully landed to restore the garrison to its original twelve-battalion strength.

Towards evening the assault on *Gabrielle* was resumed, when two fresh regiments assaulted. By midnight this effort has bogged down and the survivors withdrew.

Subsequent, however, to a further effort, mounted in great strength, the horde tactics of General Giap paid off in victory. *Gabrielle* was occupied.

A counter-attack by French forces at first light on March 15, using one Foreign Legion battalion, supported by tanks, resulted in the annihilation of the Viet Minh on *Gabrielle*. The position was not, however, held by the counter-attack forces, who withdrew in the evening to tighter and more secure lines.

To summarize, at the end of these days of fighting (9th-15th) the French had lost their two northern battalion strongpoints and with them

the ability to keep their enemy from directly threatening the airfield.

What of the French air effort during these days and those proceeding when the forces of General Giap were assembling, and the many preceding days when supplies and ammunition were being dumped to give the necessary strength and backing to the assault?

The weather dictated the volume of air support, and, being unfavourable, no systematic flying was possible.

First Lull.

At this time various hard facts became clear as the battle was analyzed. It was noted that there was a complete change in Viet Minh tactics. Far from merely flowing around the defences as they had done in such situations previously, they now launched co-ordinated set-piece attacks against definite if limited objectives. Support was massive, their artillery fire was described as "without precedent in Indo-China." Further, it became clear that gun sites dug deep and well camouflaged were well-nigh impervious to both napalm and H.E.

The third fact was the manner in which the Viet Minh were able to spring up in great numbers close to the wire and seemingly right out of the ground.

By March 20, when B-26 bombers were operating (probably their first sortie); they were used to burn the high grass around the perimeter so as to expose the attackers. This, as will be seen later, did not prove successful.

But it was to air power that the French staff turned as the means of salvation. On March 17, General Navarre, in an Order of the Day,

announced: "*The whole air force must join without restriction in the battle. Upon the efficacy of its action depends our success.*"

Echoing this was the plaint (so often echoed in all wars in one connection or another), "If I had ten times more bombers . . ."

There were at this time some 200 combat aircraft in Indo-China, almost all of which were at the disposal of Dien Bien Phu. In addition, upwards of 50 cargo aircraft could, by dropping napalm, function effectively as combat aircraft from time to time.

The overall effect of this force of aircraft was, for the defenders, something less than nil.

On the third day and for the ensuing week, as the weather cleared, aircraft mounted sorties against the besiegers, who were now pulled back to the relative security of the bush. These sorties averaged 150 daily. Concurrently with close air support, supply and evacuation proceeded by helicopters and transports.

The southern strip, intended for emergency use only, had by now dropped out of the picture entirely.

The airfield proper was under close observation by artillery and mortar observers, who could call down fire at will on any part of it. In consequence, no further landing operations could be carried out. This was the first defeat for air power and was the beginning of the end for the defenders since it denied to the commander large-scale reinforcements and re-supply or augmentation of heavy equipment; air-drops could only provide a fraction of what was possible by air landings.

Evacuation, too, was seriously affected, since helicopters cannot

take out appreciable numbers. Even on this scale, evacuation could not be systematic, since the Viet Minh gave no quarter to the Red Cross, turning even the accumulating wounded to their own tactical advantage.

Inability to base tactical aircraft on the site reduced greatly the entire support effort, for even with a small number of machines under his control the garrison commander could use them most effectively—and in time, which was most important. The hour's delay before the arrival of air support and the frustrating errors of indication coupled with the fleeting nature of many targets must have been a trial to ground and air alike. Aircraft at hand could engage targets for far longer by contrast with Hanoi-based machines, which had to deduct some 360 miles from their range and time on targets.

On the ground the intervals were spent by the Viet Minh in harrassing by artillery and infiltration by infantry and assault engineers. At night working parties wormed their way close up to the fortress wire, digging first fox-holes, then weapon pits, and enlarging the isolated holes into trace systems and saps, all to a general plan designed to bring the assaulting infantry so near to the outer wire that exposure to defensive fires would be for the minimum time.

During this period *Isabelle*, with its two battalions, was isolated by infiltrating infantry. Each day tank-infantry teams moved north from this strongpoint up the road to Dien Bien Phu to re-establish the link and each night the Viet Minh came out to dig-in again in greater numbers. Since permanent patrols could

not remain out to control the road to *Isabelle*, this fort remained virtually isolated and cut off during all the succeeding actions.

All during the interlude the airfield was the main target, not alone for artillery and mortars, but also for assault engineers, who time and time again blew up sections of its steel grid. By the end of March the area intact was very much reduced.

By March 21, General Giap was considered to be ready for the next operation. His dispositions and technique could be noted by the defenders.

Close up, particularly east and south of the perimeter, trenches were ready. These ran parallel with the wire, at some points a bare hundred yards from it, and stretched in an arc for almost 2,000 yards. Radiating back from these assault trenches into dense high foliage were the communications trenches. At their terminals, some 800 yards distant, further trench systems held the support elements, the equipment, men and material needed for the assault.

For their part the French had tidied up their salients and were

now confined in an area some 3,500 yards in width, re-supplied and reinforced.

Air strikes concentrated on the masses of Viet Minh in the support lines.

The entire ground set-up exactly paralleled the ancient and medieval concept of siege warfare.

Two strongpoints one mile west of Dien Bien Phu on an area of open ground had long been noted as anti-aircraft gun sites from which most of the night engagements of supply aircraft were directed. These sites were fronted by strong infantry positions. Heavy air assaults had not reduced the guns' effectiveness.

At first light on Sunday, March 28, twin sorties from *Huguette* and *Claudine* composed of tank-infantry teams supported by artillery moved out over the pocked plain, and surrounding both the installations, annihilated their garrisons—upwards of one thousand—capturing, among other weapons, five 20 mm. LAA guns and two AAMGs.

Viet Minh artillery, taken un-awares, did little to harass the French forces, which returned to base with scarcely a casualty.

(To be continued)

BOMB DISPOSAL

Lieutenant H. B. Herron,
Royal Australian Engineers.

IT is probably a little known fact that at the present time there are two Bomb Disposal Sections still operating in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and before discussing the work being done by these sections it may be of interest to give you something of the background of this particular branch of the Army.

Although it is officially stated that Bomb Disposal Units were formed to meet the special requirements arising from the exigencies of World War II, there must surely be a link between those organised units of men whose job it was to recover spent arrows shot into besieged fortresses during the Middle Ages. Or perhaps we may delve more deeply into ancient history and discover a link between the present-day bomb disposers and the intrepid adventurers who in Neolithic (or was it Paleolithic?) times, after a fracas over a particularly toothsome morsel taken from the thigh bone of a dinosaur or a delectable portion of the wing of a dodo, returned to the scene of the fray to clean up the mess.

Be this as it may, the formal inauguration of Bomb Disposal units was brought about during the last war as part of the trend towards specialization which has been rendered necessary by the increasing

complexity of modern warfare and weapons. The Corps of Royal Engineers of which BD are a part, and which comprises quite a number of these specialized units, expanded in numbers from 10 members in 1700 to 400,000 during the last war, and the variety of its tasks had increased in a like proportion.

It became obvious during the Battle of Britain that the large numbers of bombs which were being dropped by the enemy and failing to explode were, whilst an optimistic sign of the inefficiency of the enemy's industrial capacity, very disconcerting for the civil and military population of the United Kingdom.

During World War I, aerial bombs were only in the experimental stage and were consequently not very complex. Should a bomb be dropped, and fail to explode, it could be treated by any Sapper with a knowledge of explosives and demolitions. However, with the advent of anti-withdrawal devices fitted to bomb fuses and such other horrors, the use of Field Engineers for de-lousing would have caused heavy casualties among the troops involved, and it became essential that specialist sections be formed to carry out the task.

Thus did Bomb Disposal Units come into existence.

Although BD is a very young branch of an old Corps of the Army, the recent war provided for them, as for many others, the most dramatic highlights of the Units' existence. They produced their fair share of heroes, eccentrics and outstanding personalities.

One of the latter was the incredible Earl of Suffolk, who went to sea before the mast when he was 17, served a period in the Scots Guards, and spent six years in Australia jackarooing and sawmilling before returning to England to assume his title. Early in the war, when bomb disposal was considered a fit pastime for public-spirited suicides, he took to it as a duck takes to water and became OC of a small section. All went well until a large and rejected bomb known affectionately as "Old Faithful" came to be dealt with, and something went wrong.

The Earl of Suffolk was buried in a casket some six inches by six inches by eight inches, and was posthumously awarded the George Cross.

Whereas the majority of units has settled down to comparatively normal peacetime routine, it has fallen to the lot of the Bomb Disposal Sections to continue a rather more active role, in clearing up some of the debris of the recent battlefields. Until as late as 1949 British Army Bomb Disposal Units were still working in France and Germany clearing away large masses of unexploded bombs, and are still being called upon to perform this task in Britain.

Of the only two in the Australian Army, the first of the Bomb Disposal Sections operating in the islands has a HQ at Port Moresby and covers the area of Papua, New Guinea,

New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville, as well as the other smaller islands lying in this area. The second has its HQ as Honiara, the capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, and covers the islands of Gaudalcanal, Santa Isabel, Choiseul, New Georgia and the other small islands in that area.

As may be expected, the areas which saw very bitter fighting are those which required a considerable time to clear. Wewak is still being cleared; Rabaul, because of its importance to the Japanese as a base, will take a long while yet as underground storage tunnels are still being found, in many cases filled with torpedoes and bombs. Although areas such as Port Moresby and Lae were cleared immediately after the war, reports from these areas come in regularly as rain washes away topsoil and reveals bombs or missiles; or perhaps a native, in burning off some land to cultivate a garden, discovers to his astonishment that there is a bomb somewhere close at hand. Never is fire fighting more expertly nor quickly executed.

Perhaps one of the greatest concentrations of bombs and ammunition which had to be cleared was at Hell's Point, on Gaudalcanal, some 10 miles from Honiara. This area was, during the war, the main ammunition dump for the US forces in their campaign on the island. In 1943 it was bombed by the Japanese and a series of explosions began which lasted intermittently for five days, destroying much of the ordnance but also scattering thousands of shells throughout the area. It was estimated that an area of 500 acres contained between 20,000 and 30,000 tons of unexploded bombs and ammunition.

The normal reports, however, are received from plantations or native villages, in which case one or two sappers are despatched to deal with the job.

It is preferable, as the ordnance has been lying in the weather for approximately 10 years, to destroy all bombs in situ, but where this is not possible because of likely damage to coconut palms or houses they are removed to a suitable demolition area, or dumped in the sea.

In some cases the explosives have been put to good use. At Gizo, in the British Solomons, some depth charges were used to blow a shoal which was preventing shipping from entering the harbour; and in Wewak a similar attempt was made with rather more limited success.

Taken all in all, the job being done by the Bomb Disposal Sections is assisting in the development of the Territory, mainly by allowing areas which would otherwise have to be fenced off to be used for agricultural purposes, and also by removing the hazard of dangerous explosive ordnance which could cause considerable loss of life and damage to property.

The first Regular Army Bomb Disposal Section arrived in the Territory in 1949, and, as the average number of bombs still being recovered each month totals some hundreds, together with large quantities of artillery projectiles, there will be a very useful job for the sections in the Territory for many years to come.

When armies approach each other it makes all the difference which owns only the ground on which it stands or sleeps and which owns all the rest.

—Winston Churchill.

Mess Etiquette

Major-General R. G. Pollard, DSO,
Quartermaster-General.

Part II—Dinners, Mess Dinners and Guest Nights.

DINNERS, Mess Dinners and Guest Nights, which are formal meals, are held at such times as arranged by the Mess Committee with the approval of the Commanding Officer.

As a rule, dinner is served on three or four nights each week and Mess Dinners weekly. Guest Nights are usually held monthly.

All resident members are expected to attend at dinner. Both resident and non-resident members are expected to attend Mess Dinners and Guest Nights. Should a member wish to be absent, he seeks the permission of the Mess President. Only under exceptional circumstances is permission granted for officers to absent themselves from Mess Dinners and Guest Nights.

Guests.

Owing to accommodation and staffing difficulties, it is usually necessary to restrict the number of guests who can be invited to Guest Nights. Members, therefore, are required to notify the Mess Secretary of the number of guests they wish to invite, at least two days before the dinner. In addition, the Mess Secretary is informed of the names of

guests attending not later than the day before the dinner.

A member of the Mess is made responsible for looking after each official guest.

Assembly.

As mentioned previously, the members of the Mess assemble in the ante-room at least ten minutes before the time appointed for a normal dinner or Mess Dinner. On Guest Nights, however, they assemble half an hour before the appointed time, in order that all will be present before the arrival of the first guest.

Reception of Guests.

On Guest Nights, the Mess President, assisted by the Vice-President, meets the guest of honour and any official guests on arrival. The guests are then presented to the Commanding Officer or senior officer present, provided with refreshments and introduced to the other officers present.

Personal guests are introduced by their host to the Mess President and, in addition, to the Commanding Officer and other officers.

Seating Plan.

For Guest Nights, a seating plan is prepared by the Mess President

and, after approval by the Commanding Officer, placed in a convenient position in the Mess. This is done in order that all may ascertain their place at table before entering the dining-room.

In preparing the seating plan, it is normal to place the President at the head and the Vice-President at the foot of the table. The Commanding Officer sits about a third to half way down the table, on the left of the President. The Second-in-Command sits opposite the Commanding Officer. The Guest of Honour (or senior official guest) is placed on the right of the Commanding Officer and the next senior official guest or a personal guest on his left. The senior and next senior of the remaining official guests are placed on the right and left of the Second-in-Command. A senior member is placed on the right of the Guest of Honour or senior official guest. Private guests are placed between their host and another member of the Mess.

Although there are no hard and fast rules regarding the positions occupied by other members of the Mess, they are usually seated alternately more or less on seniority from the centre of each side of the table.

When the mess table is in the form of a "U", the Guest of Honour (or senior official guest) and the next senior official guest are placed on the right and left respectively of the President. The Commanding Officer sits on the right of the Guest of Honour (or senior official guest) and the Second-in-Command on the left of the next senior official guest. The remaining members and guests are then placed according to their seniority alternately on the right and left of the President.

Although the Mess President is appointed by the Commanding Officer, the latter reserves the right to take the chair at any particular Mess function. Should the Commanding Officer exercise his right on a Guest Night, the seating plan remains unaltered except that the Commanding Officer and President change places.

Seating at Normal Dinners and Mess Dinners.

Usually for normal dinners and Mess Dinners seating plans are not prepared. Officers move into the mess room in any order, irrespective of seniority. Seats are taken simultaneously on either side of the table; those nearest the President being occupied first. Vacant seats are not left. The only seats reserved are those for the President, Commanding Officer and Vice-President.

Announcing of Dinner.

At the appointed time, the Mess Sergeant approaches the Mess President and says: "Dinner is ready, sir."

The Mess President then informs the Commanding Officer, adding: "Shall we go into dinner, sir?" The Commanding Officer answers in the affirmative when he is satisfied the guest of honour and other official guests are ready.

Moving Into Dinner.

On receiving the approval of the Commanding Officer, the Mess President leads the way into the dining-room. He is followed by the Commanding Officer who, on Guest Nights, is accompanied by the guest of honour (or the senior official guest) and a personal guest, if he has one. On Guest Nights, the Second-in-Command, accompanied by the next senior official guest and

possibly a personal guest, follows closely behind the Commanding Officer. Members, escorting the other official guests, follow next. The remainder of the members, with or without private guests, follow without any untoward delay.

The Vice-President is the last to enter. It is his duty to ensure that everyone moves into the dining-room with the minimum of delay.

On entering the dining-room, members and guests stand behind their chairs. When the Mess President takes his seat, the remainder do likewise.

Prior to World War II, it was customary for the President to wait until the Commanding Officer reached his chair and then to sit down. The effect of this was that the remaining officers sat down immediately they arrived in their places. Generally speaking, this procedure is preferred to that followed in some messes today.

In the latter messes, the procedure is for all to stand behind their chairs until the Vice-President is in his place. Then, taking their cue from the President, all sit down together. When this procedure is followed, the President does not say, "Be seated, gentlemen."

It is customary, whenever a Padre is present, for the President to ask him to say Grace. Grace is said either while the members are standing or after they have seated themselves. Normally, this depends upon which of the foregoing procedures is followed. However, some Messes, which normally follow the former procedure, remain standing when a Padre is present, until after Grace has been said. There appears to be little good reason for this departure from normal, as at least the majority

of those present are accustomed to Grace being said when seated.

Vacant Places.

The table is set for the exact number attending. However, if for some unforeseen reason there should be more places set than required, the vacant places and chairs are removed promptly by the Mess Staff before dinner is served.

Serving of Dinner.

Dinner is always served in a clockwise direction. When there are only two waiters, one serves the President, while the other serves the Vice-President. Each then continues to serve clockwise.

In order to avoid delays in service and to ensure meals are served hot, it is normal to have four waiters in large Messes and on Guest Nights.

When four waiters are used and there is only one mess table, No. 1 waiter services the President, No. 2 waiter the guest on the right of the Commanding Officer, No. 3 waiter the Vice-President and No. 4 waiter the guest on the right of the Second-in-Command. Each waiter then continues to serve in a clockwise direction.

When there are four waiters and the mess table is in the form of a "U", No. 1 waiter starts with the guest on the right of the President, No. 2 waiter at the far end of the table to the left-front of the President, No. 3 opposite the President and No. 4 at the far end of the table to the right-front of the President.

The waiters are supervised and controlled by the Mess Sergeant from a position at the end of the dining-room. After serving each course, the waiters take up positions around the room.

Serving of Drinks.

Normally, wine is served with the meal and orders for drinks are not taken.

When orders are taken for drinks during dinner, they are served in the same order as the courses.

Clearing of Mess Table.

At the conclusion of the last course, the mess table is cleared, except for the port glasses. All waiters, other than those required during the passing of the port, then leave the room.

As officers are permitted to drink the Loyal Toast in water or other non-alcoholic beverages, stewards are present during the passing of the port to serve officers who do not take port, and to supply extra port if necessary.

Port.

Decanters of port are then placed on the table in front of both the President and Vice-President by the Mess Sergeant and his assistant. Sometimes, owing to the large number at dinner, four decanters are used.

Taking the time from the President, the stoppers are removed from the decanters and placed on the table. Those members with a decanter in front of them then pour a little port into their own glasses and pass the decanter to the officer on their left. Each officer who is taking port fills his glass and passes the decanter to his left. When a decanter reaches each officer who originally had a decanter placed before him, he fills his partly filled glass and replaces the decanter on the table.

There are various methods in current use for passing the port. In

some messes, it is customary to pass the decanter from hand to hand. This method has a definite advantage in that it reduces the time for the passing of the port to a minimum, and ensures that a decanter is not left unnoticed on the table during conversation. In other messes, it is wheeled around the table on a special carrier, such as a silver model of a GS waggon or a gun carriage. Then again, it may be pushed along the table. It is an easy matter to observe and follow the custom of any particular Mess.

Normal conversation continues during the passing of the port but care is taken to ensure that the port is passed without delay.

Loyal Toast—General.

It is a long-standing custom within the Services for the Loyal Toast to be drunk at Mess Dinners, Guest Nights and on other specific occasions. This custom is observed by all Regiments and Corps of the Australian Army. The custom, however, is not observed by all British Regiments, nor is it observed in the same manner throughout the Services.

For instance, The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) and certain other British Regiments do not drink the Loyal Toast. When officers of the former Regiment were asked for the reason, they replied that this was a privilege of long standing, bestowed upon the Regiment at a Mess Dinner by the then reigning Sovereign. They claimed that the Sovereign decreed the toast to be unnecessary in their case, as the loyalty of The Royal Fusiliers had never been in question.

Again, the Royal Marines and certain British regiments with a

sea-going background, always drink the Loyal Toast seated; as in the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy. It is probable that this custom is due to the fact that officers could not stand upright in the old-time men-of-war. Although the need no longer remains, especially in aircraft carriers, the custom is still observed.

In view of the fact that in some instances the Australian Army manner of observing the Loyal Toast has become confused with that of the Air Force, each procedure will be explained fully.

Loyal Toast—Air Force.

In the Royal Air Force, the procedure for proposing and drinking the Loyal Toast is as follows:

The President knocks once on the table for silence; he then stands and, addressing the Vice-President of the day, says, "Mr. Vice, The Queen." The Vice-President then stands and, addressing all present, says, "Gentlemen, The Queen." All then stand, and if a band is in attendance, the first six bars of the National Anthem are played, while all officers stand to attention; on conclusion, lifting their glasses from the table, all officers together repeat the toast, "The Queen," and drink Her Majesty's health. All present then sit down and conversation is resumed. When a band is not in attendance, all officers rise to their feet, pick up their glasses and repeat the toast "The Queen" and then drink Her Majesty's health.

This procedure is followed also in the Royal Australian Air Force.

Loyal Toast—Australian Army.

It will be seen that the Australian Army method of honouring the

Loyal Toast, described below, differs materially from the foregoing.

In Australian Army messes, when all glasses are charged, the President, remaining seated, calls the Mess to order by saying: "Mr. Vice!" or "Mr. Vice, The Queen!" This calls for silence and indicates that the President is handing over control to the Vice-President for him to propose the toast of the Queen. From then, until all are seated again, the Mess conforms to the orders and actions of the Vice-President.

The Vice-President, after a slight pause, rises with his port glass in the right hand and says: "Gentlemen!" This is the indication for all present to rise with their port glasses in their right hands.

When all movement has ceased and silence reigns, the Vice-President proposes the Loyal Toast by adding: "The Queen!"

Those present then repeat "The Queen" and drink the toast, after which, taking the time from the Vice-President (not the President), all resume their seats and conversation.

If a band is in attendance, when the Vice-President says: "The Queen!", the first six bars of the National Anthem are played. Those present remain standing to attention but holding the port glass in the right hand.

On conclusion of the National Anthem, all present repeat "The Queen", drink the toast and resume their seats, again taking the time from the Vice-President.

In some British Regiments, it is customary for field officers and above to say "God bless her" on the conclusion of the toast. This, however, is not an Australian custom.

When a band is in attendance, usually the Bandmaster is invited into the Mess and given a seat on the right of the Commanding Officer or senior officer present. He is invited to have a glass of port or any other drink he may prefer. After one or, at most, two drinks, the Bandmaster returns to his band, and the extra chair is removed by the Mess Sergeant.

After the Loyal Toast.

After the Loyal Toast, coffee and dessert are served. In addition, cigars and cigarettes are passed around, normally by a Mess Steward.

Smoking.

Officers and guests may not smoke at table until permission is given by the President. He does not give permission by saying, "Gentlemen, you may smoke," but indicates it by lighting a cigar or cigarette himself. Should the President be a non-smoker, he asks the officer on his left to light up. The smoking of pipes is not permitted. Further, it is considered to be bad form to take out one's own cigarettes or cigar before they are passed around or before the President does so.

Second Round of Port.

At the appropriate time, i.e., as the glasses are emptying, the port decanters are circulated for the second time. On these occasions, there are always at least two rounds of port. Further rounds are at the discretion of the President.

When the President replaces the stopper in the decanter in front of him, the stoppers are replaced in all decanters.

Leaving the Table.

Normally, no one leaves the table

until after the port has been passed around for the second time.

Should any member or guest have occasion to leave the table before the second round of port, he first obtains the permission of the President. Such permission is sought only in cases of extreme urgency.

After the second round of port, other than on a Guest Night, members may leave the table at will. It is not necessary to await the departure of the senior officer or for all to leave the table when he does. Still, if only out of consideration for the mess servants, members do not tarry unduly in the dining-room.

On Guest Nights, members do not leave until after the official guests. In some messes, when the Commanding Officer and the official guests with him stand up, all present do likewise, but, if they so desire, may resume their seats as the official party leaves the room.

As mentioned earlier, the President and Vice-President are the last to leave the table. The President, however, may hand over the duties of host to the Vice-President. In this case, the Vice-President occupies the President's chair. On the other hand, he may permit the Vice-President to leave, in order to see to the entertainment of official guests.

Other Guests.

It is not normal for any toast, other than the Loyal Toast, to be honoured at Dinners, Mess Dinners or on Guest Nights. Here again, Army custom differs from that of the Royal Australian Air Force, where it appears to be normal to toast "Our Guests" on Guest Nights.

Speeches.

Prior to World War II, speeches were never made at the mess table.

Since then speeches have been heard in some messes. Probably it would still be better if the old custom continued and speeches were made only in the ante-room.

After Dinner Entertainment.

After dinner, the President, assisted by the other members, en-

sures that official and other guests are entertained and that none is neglected, even momentarily. Should a member have to leave a guest, he does not do so before handing the guest over to another member.

The President and all members remain in the Mess until the last official guest departs.

The advantage of guerillas lies in their mobility. They filter through the adversary's ranks, reappearing in his rear to attack wherever they find points of least resistance. They constantly threaten the communications of the opposing units, and this threat is at the same time one of their best means of defence. Then again, partisans need not fear attacks on their rear, and loss of ground is of no importance to them. From the strategic aspect they have nothing substantial to lose, and consequently nothing to defend.

—Lieutenant-Colonel F. O. Mikshe, in "Secret Forces."

THE ARMY OFFICER

as a

SOCIAL ANIMAL

Lieutenant-Colonel L. J. Loughran
Royal Australian Infantry

"And when they meet in private will not people be saying one to another, 'Our warriors are not good for much?'"

—Plato, "The Republic."

The views expressed in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent those of the Director of Military Training.—Editor.

IN this article, "Revolution in the Military Profession" (AAJ No. 61, June, 1954), Lieutenant-Colonel Green attempts a diagnosis of the "general malaise" which undoubtedly afflicts the Army today. By a faulty syllogism he arrives at the conclusion that the declining prestige of the professional soldier derives from his own conservatism—his unwillingness to keep pace with the machine age. The cure, he suggests, lies in "a realistic adjustment to scientific progress"; in producing "the military scientist and specialist equal in qualifications, quality and status to his civilian counterparts."

This is an interesting theory, but it is no more than a theory. Any conviction which it carries in the manner in which it is presented rather than in any logic which it contains.

The soldier's role has never been to match himself against the civilian in scientific achievement but to apply the principles of war as effectively as possible according to the means available to him. It is extremely doubtful whether Richard Coeur de Lion could have made a decent sword, but he certainly knew how to use one. And, more important, he knew how to lead others who could.

No, the changed status of the Australian Army Officer in his professional capacity is not due to his technological deficiencies but to post-war economics and the community's inherent distrust of any conditions likely to produce a mili-

tary caste of social status superior to the butcher, electrician, or horse-trainer, who pay the Army's expenses.

Within our lifetime there have been two World Wars and innumerable smaller conflagrations. We have learnt that only by united action and sacrifice by all sections of the community can our civilization and way of life be protected. The mobilization and effective functioning of our civilian army depend on the regular soldier, but the regular soldier *alone* cannot win a modern war. His importance to the defence of the country is therefore evaluated by his fellow citizens as no greater than that of the man who forges the weapons. This is a direct outcome of the wartime policy, designed to boost civilian morale, of stressing over and over again the paramount importance of the "man behind the man behind . . . the man behind the gun."

The Army Officer is, to the civilian, just another public servant, and his status, depending on his salary range, is equated with that of the local postmaster, train guard or treasury official. Even then, unless he has married a wealthy wife, he is bound to suffer to some extent by the comparison. Being nomadic by profession, he can never really integrate himself with the community in which, for the time being, he finds himself. He cannot guarantee himself a house in reasonably salubrious surroundings; he cannot guarantee himself a house at all. Almost certainly he will find himself living apart from his family for varying periods. His furniture, selected initially for one house, will rarely be entirely satisfactory in another. His floor coverings, cut to

new shapes and sizes every few years, will soon be useless. His children's education will suffer from constant changing of schools and his pocket will suffer from their changes of school uniforms.

If he gives up his suburban home in one city and moves into an Army Married Quarters area elsewhere the keynote of his treatment will be, "You should be grateful you have quarters at all!" Here he will find democracy really at work. With rail and wire fences two feet high, he will be completely devoid of privacy. He will live cheek by jowl with all ranks and all types. His children will acquire the fruity accent of Surry Hills. From time to time he will leap from his bed in answer to shrieks of "Help! Murder!" as an errant wife is severely dealt with by an angry husband. He will be summoned to restore order when a drunken soldier has thrown his family into the street and is smashing up the home. He will hear complaints of excessive child beating, of nocturnal callers at certain addresses.¹

In Australia, in 1954, the house you live in, the car you drive, the schools your children attend, the clubs you belong to and the outward evidence of a healthy economic state are the hallmarks of worth. The community, having relegated the Army Officer to the category of just another citizen, judges him by the standards of success in trade. By those standards the shabby genteelity of an officer represents failure. He may be a good fellow but he just hasn't got on!

1. I have not drawn on my imagination. These are a few examples from personal experience.

It may be argued that this cannot be so because the extent to which an officer has progressed in his profession is pin-pointed by the rank which he has attained. This may have had some significance once—when an officer was expected *de facto* to be well-educated and well-spoken, to have cultural interests outside his profession, to have good manners and social ease. But in recent years the community has come to realize that there are officers at many levels who have none of those qualities, and this must naturally influence their judgment of officers as a class.

This is in part a derivative of the means taken to fill the officer ranks in the post-war period. It involved the circumvention of the Defence Act by a confidence trick to meet an urgent need but, in the process, it lowered the standards until army officers, as a social group, lost the prestige which was once a part of their pay. This loss was not, of course, compensated by a financial adjustment. Although the community has come to think of the officer as merely a tradesman, it hopes he is sufficiently endowed with noble ideals of service to prevent him from bettering his conditions as he would do if he really were a tradesman.

As a social animal the Army Officer has slipped far down the scale and he either must resign his pretensions to genteelity and relax comfortably in an aura of carpet slippers and the sporting pages or he must be given the means to maintain the standard of living of a professional gentleman.

Shall he relax and munch his fish and chips out of the newspaper? He may have to but, if he does, in

another generation we shall see the end of a fine tradition which has nurtured men of true greatness—greatness not only in military art but greatness of personality.

There is certainly nothing fantastic nor even hyperbolic in the foregoing. That there is a revolution going on in the military profession can hardly be denied by anyone who has eyes and ears. The path that the revolution will take is reasonably clear unless some positive action, not even remotely discernible now, is taken to combat it.

The current phase of the revolution might be described as "The Levelling of the Second Estate." In this phase the traditional Army Officer, a man of education, character and reasonably high ideals, vanishes. This is caused by, firstly, the leavening of the officer class by long-term, stop-gap officers too many of whom, though perhaps competent in one particular line, lack the background, the training or the *savoir faire* necessary for a true "officer and gentleman"; and, secondly, by the sapping of the lifeblood of the surviving officers by conditions of service which make dignified standards of living impossible. Just as it is necessary that justice should not only be done but should seem to be done, so it is necessary that the conditions of service of an officer should seem reasonable to the officer, not merely to the treasury.

2. A side-light on this is the way Army Officers are hospitalized in Repatriation General Hospitals, side by side with serving soldiers of all ranks (ARA, National Servicemen and CMF injured on duty) and with repatriation cases. The medical treatment in these hospitals is excellent, and the inmates are generally easy to get along with. That is beside the point. The plain fact is that this is not the right way to hospitalize officers.

Present conditions of service require the celibacy, self-imposed poverty and obedience of the crusading Knight Templar. In the Middle Ages there were enough of these semi-monkish vocations to the service of arms to keep the ranks of the officers filled. Today the monastic ideal is incompatible with the changes centuries have wrought in the military profession. It is even less compatible with the materialism which now permeates the world.

Failure to appreciate this fact and to restore to the profession of arms

its traditional social prestige will lead the revolution to a second phase where officers, treated like tradesmen, will protect their interests like tradesmen.³ In the ideological conflict which divides the world today the unswerving loyalty of the Army Officer is *more* important than that of the atomic scientist.

Can the country afford to take it for granted?

3. When the levelling down process is complete the importance of the Army Officer in the community will approximate that of a Fish and Game Inspector.

It was both easier and more saving in life to attack the enemy's state of mind than to advance against his horsemen. Antigonus had developed a whole technique of intimidation and deception, and Ptolemy was proving an apt pupil. Only Alexander seemed backward in grasping the new method of warfare.

—Harold Lamb, in "Alexander of Macedon."

THE PATTERN of SOVIET SUCCESSION

Personalities and Policies in the Soviet Union

Major G. M. F. Wood
Australian Intelligence Corps

SOMETIME about 10 p.m. on Thursday, March 5, 1953, Joseph Vissarionovich Djugashvili, alias Koba, alias Stalin (the man of steel) passed away and it may well be that now he stands in need of the Pope's divisions.¹

There is no doubt that plans for a smooth succession of leadership occupied much of the ailing dictator's later years, as he would wish to avoid a repetition of the tremendous struggle for power which occurred on the death of Lenin in 1924. This struggle was not complete until Stalin reigned supreme, and the purgers were themselves purged, in 1938.

Stalin apparently decided that power should pass, not to one man but to three—Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, with the first named as the nominal leader.

¹Stalin, at Teheran, asked, "How many divisions has the Pope?" The Pope replied, "Tell my son Joseph that he will meet my divisions in heaven."

It is noteworthy that after Lenin died his place was also taken by a troika, or threesome, including Stalin. In practice this didn't work out, and Stalin steadily assumed dictatorial power until he was able to dispose of the other two members, Zinoviev and Kamenev so effectively that their very names are now unfamiliar.

Stalin's bitterest and most determined rival, however, was not a member of the troika, but Trotsky, the hero of the civil war. The struggle between these two lasted from 1922, when Lenin suffered his first stroke, until Trotsky was finally expelled from Russia in 1929. It closed with Trotsky's assassination in Mexico in 1940.

The evolution of this first succession may prove to have set a sort of pattern of Soviet inheritance.

After Stalin's death there was a shuffling of ministries and other changes, but power seemed to pass

fairly smoothly to the new heirs. Then, three months after the death of Stalin, a plenary session was summoned with some momentous news. Malenkov accused Beria of "criminal anti-party and anti-state actions, intended to undermine the Soviet state in the interest of foreign capital."

Beria was removed from office, charged with treason and executed six months later. Thus it would appear that the struggle for power is again under way, and that the main contender will again come from outside the original troika.

Stalin has been dead over a year. Any possible contender should show up within, say, two years of his death, otherwise it appears feasible that the nominal ruler would have so consolidated his position that possible challengers could easily be diverted or disappear in the normal manner.

An examination of the prominent personalities of the Soviet Union, past and present, may give us an indication as to who is to succeed Stalin and if the succession is likely to be challenged. Self-effacing personalities should not be overlooked, because both Stalin and Malenkov rose to power by a careful practise of obscurity and conformity in their early days.

Discussing Stalin's appointment as Commissar of Nationalities, Lenin joked, "No intelligence is needed, that is why we've put Stalin there." When someone asked who Stalin was Trotsky snapped, "The most eminent mediocrity in the Party."

The change in Lenin's opinion is clear when, discussing his own succession, he said, "The two most able leaders of the present Central Com-

mittee are Stalin and Trotsky. . . . Stalin has concentrated enormous power in his hands, and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution" Later he added a postscript, "Stalin becomes unbearable in the office of General Secretary I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin and appoint another man, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious"

The "way" had not been found when Lenin suffered a third and paralyzing stroke and Stalin began the long and devious intrigues to power which resulted in the final expulsion of Trotsky from Russia five years later.

Malenkov.

Georgy Maximilianovich Malenkov has succeeded Stalin as Premier of the Soviet Union in his position of Chairman of the Praesidium of the Council of Ministers.

Aged 52 and born in the Southern Urals, Malenkov is fat and flabby-looking, with a pale, round, expressionless face. He was once Stalin's private secretary, and it was Stalin himself who trained Malenkov to handle the administrative machinery of the party.

During the war he reorganized the aircraft industry and later he became President of the Committee for the restoration of liberated areas.

Despite these great responsibilities, he never relaxed his grip on the organizational section of the party or the administration of the Central Committee. This gave him control of major party appointments and the opportunity to place loyal and talented supporters in sensitive posi-

tions. During Stalin's lifetime he was content to be his shadow and always appeared in the now outmoded party uniform of a drab tunic with high-buttoned, turned-down collar and a peaked cap.

There is some slight evidence that he became less favoured by Stalin as time went by. It was then probably too late for the aged dictator to select and train another successor. This may have influenced Stalin in deciding a troika to succeed him, although he knew from his own experience the danger of this course.

Malenkov is forceful, subtle, sensible, realistic and apparently orthodox, but it seems unlikely that he can ever fill the mantle of that titan J. V. Stalin.

He is at least the nominal head of the USSR and appears to be steadily gaining control of the channels of power. It is probable that the Security Police and Stalin's own super-police organization are now firmly under his control.

The disposal of Zhdanov and, more recently, Beria, shows that he has learnt the lesson of ruthlessness from Stalin.

It would seem that complete, unchallenged power has not yet come to Georgy Malenkov. When it does, the myth-making machinery will be activated to complete the deification of Stalin and commence the canonization of Malenkov.

Beria.

The world was not amazed but perhaps somewhat surprised to learn, on July 7, 1953, that Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria was deposed from his position as No. 2 Communist, first Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (police)

and Chief of Atomic Energy. He was lodged in the Lubyanka prison, where he formerly had his office, on charges laid by Malenkov of "Criminal anti-party and anti-state actions, intended to undermine the Soviet State in the interest of foreign capital in his perfidious attempts to place the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs above the government and the Communist Party." Some time later it was officially stated that he had been executed.

Beria was 53, and a native of Georgia, as was Stalin. He had been head of the Secret Police since 1938, so it was obvious that at a vital moment he had lost control of his own feared and powerful organization. He could not have lacked warning about his own possible fate, as his four predecessors in office either died in mysterious circumstances or were executed. The decline and fall of Beria is of great interest and would be more so if the truth could be told.

It is said that Stalin's son, Lieutenant-General Vassily Stalin, has not appeared publicly since his father's funeral. One theory has it that he has been banished to a correction camp for refusing to believe that his father died from natural causes.

It is rumoured that Beria plotted against Stalin and either arranged the murder of the aged dictator or hastened his death by an emotional shock which brought on the fatal stroke. These rumours are unproven but it seems clear, from the following extract from the Russian paper "Izvestia," that something dark and secretive did happen two weeks before Stalin's fatal illness:

"The office of the Commandant of the Kremlin regrets to an-

nounce the premature death, February 15, of Major General Piota Kosynkin, and expresses its condolences to the bereaved family."

Kosynkin was one of the chiefs of Stalin's bodyguards and the very earnestness of the notice could be read as an ominous warning to the disaffected.

Another and more credible conjecture is that Beria sought to provide a loyal (to Beria only) stronghold in his native Georgia, and arranged many appointments in the area. True or not, after Beria's downfall, most party appointees in the region were purged and replaced by new men.

The truth about Beria's downfall will take much unravelling and the full story may never be known, but there is nothing so far to indicate that his fall resulted from anything but the normal struggle for power.

Beria was replaced by his former assistant Colonel-General Kruglov, and it appears that the invaluable police apparatus is now firmly in Malenkov's hands.

Molotov.

Of all the shadowy figures in the Kremlin, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (the Hammer) is the man the Western world knows most about. He is Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister and has been a member of the Politburo (now Praesidium) longer (33 years) than anyone else.

Aged 64, he is a small, colourless man, always correct, courteous and coldly self-possessed. Churchill said that Molotov was "a man of outstanding ability and cold-blooded ruthlessness . . . his cannon-ball head, black moustache and comprehending eyes, his slab face, his ver-

bal adroitness and imperturbable demeanour were appropriate manifestations of his qualities and skill. He was above all men fitted to be the agent and instrument of an incalculable machine."

It is considered that Molotov's present peace offensive has a four-fold purpose—

- A break between the U.S. and her allies;
- Breakdown of NATO and EDC;
- The neutralization of Germany;
- The end of Nationalist China.

Molotov does not appear to be ambitious for supreme power and has always shown great loyalty to leader and party. He is perhaps too old to embark on such a fateful and difficult venture, too tainted by Western contacts and too long a foreign affairs specialist to be accepted as supreme leader. He is perhaps satisfied to remain No. 2 man in Russia, although recent happenings indicate that Khrushchev has moved ahead of him.

Khrushchev.

About two weeks after Stalin's death Malenkov asked to be relieved of the Secretary-Generalship of the Soviet Communist Party—a post previously held by Stalin—and this important position was given to old Bolshevik Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev.

This seemed odd and caused comment at the time because few officials, and least of all a brand-new Communist leader, would willingly give up a position of such power and privilege.

Khrushchev, the son of a Ukrainian miner, is aged 60, an old Bolshevik, squat, tough and energetic, with plenty of bounce and ambition. He has been a member of the Politburo

since 1942. His precedence has varied slightly from year to year, but since 1947 has closely followed Malenkov.

An increasing number of important announcements have been made by Khrushchev and not Malenkov. The most important concerned the serious state of Soviet primary production, with a proposal for a gigantic agricultural scheme which would obviously entail some deferment of the expansion of heavy industries. Khrushchev promised "an abundance of popular goods and agricultural produce." Designed to correct a known unbalance in Soviet economy and improve living conditions, the plan should increase Khrushchev's popularity if it succeeds.

It is becoming clear that the man who will jog Malenkov's elbow, when he reaches for supreme power, is Khrushchev.

Marshal Bulganin.

Deputy Premier and Minister of War, Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin is 59. His military experience prior to World War II was limited to the usual participation in the civil war. During the war he showed an aptitude and ability for military affairs, and is said to be an able administrator and executive and a brilliant speaker. In appearance he is small, neatly dressed and mild in manner and tone.

The Red Army has shown little political interest or ambition, having learnt a salutary lesson in 1937, when all but twelve members of the general staff were shot during the great purge. A certain deference has been shown the Armed Services by the post-Stalin regime, and it may be that this powerful unit has not yet been brought under effective control by the new rulers.

If this is so, Bulganin may be a man to watch either on his own account or in association with others.

Kaganovich.

Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich, aged 61, is the fifth and final member of the Praesidium of the Council of Ministers. He is the last remaining Jew on the Praesidium and is described as a colourful, forceful man of great intellectual and practical capabilities and energy. He has kept out of political and power quarrels in the past.

The Big Five.

The five men mentioned are the big five, and it is among these men that the struggle for power will assuredly take place. It appears unlikely that any of the other members of the Praesidium, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Saburov or Peruvkhin, or any of the alternate members such as Shvernik or Ponomarenko, could successfully challenge the leader. They lack the firm and powerful base from which to organize the challenge.

The successful challenger must have the support of either the Party, the Secret Police or the Army. The Army appears to have little political ambition and can probably be excluded except to climb on the bandwagon.

Malenkov appears to control the Secret Police and Khrushchev a least major elements of the Party.

There can be no doubt of the rise of Khrushchev in the Party. Last April, when the Supreme Soviet met, Malenkov addressed the Upper House while Khrushchev spoke in the more important Lower House. On May Day celebrations, Khrushchev had pride of place, and on May 30 he appeared on an equal footing with Malenkov.

No less than seven recent major policy pronouncements have been made in the name of Khrushchev, not Malenkov. The name of Khrushchev has been steadily rising in the published lists of the Russian leaders.

This useful pointer to the changing seniority of Soviet rulers ended in mid-June this year, when the strict precedence of published lists of leaders' names was discontinued in favour of alphabetical order.

Khrushchev appears to be moving steadily towards the centre of power and there are many evidences that he is challenging Malenkov's control. It may prove that the struggle has been going on for some time and will continue until one or the other is broken.

Power.

Power in the Soviet Union may be likened to a solar system. Lesser leaders, like satellites, are safe only while they gyrate in a fixed orbit outside the margin of central power. Every now and then a radical body flares up and, breaking from the safety and balance of its orbital movement, plunges inexorably towards the centre of attraction. Usually it flames briefly to self-destruction but, if conditions are sufficiently fluid, it may survive this headlong collision and usurp and overlay the solar body at the pivot.

The whole system, though shaken by the clash of this event, may stabilize itself from inherent momentum and control.

Prediction.

Stalin boasted of being able to predict and to some extent control the course of history.

From our study of the personalities and the development of Soviet succession it appears that Russia is subject to the same bourgeois and reactionary pattern of history that afflicts the West, namely, repetition with variations.

Based on this assumption, the following prediction of Soviet succession is made—

"Collective leadership," willed on the Soviet by Stalin, has already broken down and the struggle for absolute power will slowly become apparent.

Molotov will retain his prestige in the party, taking little active part in this struggle and tending to become more and more a foreign affairs expert.

The Army will remain neutral, simply reinforcing the victor when the outcome is quite clear, in the normal Asian fashion.

Malenkov's position as nominal leader will most certainly be challenged by Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoyan or some other less prominent member or members.

This struggle for absolute power will be in the nature of a Kremlin revolution. When the loser falls he may drag with him whole sections of his supporters, but this will have little effect on the power and momentum of Soviet society.

To summarise, it is clear, despite Marx's statement of the harmful effects of "the cult of personality," that one man will rule as an absolute dictator and will be deified in the same manner as Lenin and Stalin.

On present indications that man is Malenkov, but he will have to survive a climacteric struggle with

Khrushchev or some other contender before he assumes autocratic power.

Soviet Power in the West.

What we of the West are most interested to know is something about the policies that will guide Stalin's successor in his relations with us. In this we have little to guide us except Stalin's writings, Malenkov's statements, and the general actions of the Soviet since Stalin's death.

We know the importance the Soviet attaches to theory, and, as the new regime has not swept Stalin's published works aside, it can be taken that they are still regarded as the bedrock of Soviet dogma and practice.

To begin with, Stalin contended that in Marxist-Leninism he had a science of human society and its development in history which makes possible the prediction and, within limits, the manipulation of the course of history.

Stalin contended that the transition from Capitalism to Socialism could be accomplished, "not by means of evolution, not by means of reform, but only by means of a qualitative change of the capitalist system, by means of revolution."

He stressed the importance of the class struggle. Under Capitalism the chief contenders of the class struggle are the capitalists and those who sell their labour to the capitalists in order to exist—the Proletariat; the rest of society—petty bourgeois, peasants and intelligentsia—did not matter very much.

To Stalin the importance of war "as the midwife of revolution" cannot be exaggerated. He considered that the Capitalist system would never recover its pre-World War I

stability and assurance, although he agreed that there would be a considerable ebb and flow, and wrote "The epoch of world revolution is a whole strategic period, embracing a whole series of years and, I dare say even a number of decades. In the course of this period there can and must be ebbs and flowings."

Stalin considered that the revolutionary flow in the West began in 1929 and continued at least until 1948. Although he published nothing to indicate that the Western revolutionary movement had passed its crest, his silence and his doctrine of ebb and flow suggests that he expected an ebb thereafter.

"Aggressive tactics," he said "should be timed with a rising tide but the tactics of defence, the assemblage of forces, the even retreat go with an ebbing tide."

The importance of gauging the direction of the tide is illustrated by Stalin's remarks in 1929, when he said, "This question, comrades, is of decisive importance for the sections of the Comintern. Is the capitalist stabilization going to pieces or is it becoming more secure? On this the whole line of the Communist Parties in their present day-to-day political work depends. Are we in a period of decline of the revolutionary movement . . . or are we in a period when conditions are maturing for a new revolutionary rise, a period of preparing the working class for coming class battles—on this depends the tactical position of the Communist Parties."

Writing in 1946, Stalin inferred that the final struggle with the United States, the "Stronghold of Capitalism," would not be risked before the period 1961-66.

The evidence, therefore, indicates that Stalin believed that the early part of the 1950's would coincide with an ebbing revolutionary tide in the West.

Admittedly, this is a study of one phase only of Stalin's writings, the theory of ebb and flow, but there is no doubt that Stalin considered it of vital importance and probably his successors consider it in a like manner.

Since Stalin's death, and possibly before it, there have been a succession of carefully controlled gestures of easing up. They include:

- Foreigners held in Soviet prisons on espionage charges were released.
- More agricultural and consumer goods are to be produced at the expense of heavy industry.
- In Austria and East Germany there has been a switch from military to civil government.
- Russia has started trade negotiations with Western countries.
- German and Japanese prisoners of war were released.

Many other restrictions on Russian and satellite peoples have been loosened, and Malenkov's public statements, although generally anti-Western, contain little of the vitriol

we have been accustomed to in Soviet leaders.

He has even said that peaceful co-existence between Communist and Capitalist countries was possible. This statement appears to be just brushing the dust off that hardy annual exhibited on suitable occasions in the past by his mentor J. V. Stalin.

Studying the recent relaxations by the Soviet, does it not appear that, viewing the satisfactory flow of revolutionary affairs in the East, they have conceded a temporary ebb of the tide in the West, and have accordingly adjusted their infinitely variable tactics to meet this recession.

The aim (world Communism) and the overall strategy, remains unchanged, and we can say with certainty that Stalin's favorite quotation from Lenin is still the very basis of Communism: "We live not only in a State, but in a system of States, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the imperialistic states for a long time is unthinkable. In the end either one or the other will conquer, and until that end comes a series of the most terrible collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states is inevitable."

To this quotation Stalin added a succinct, "Clear, one would think."
