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# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL



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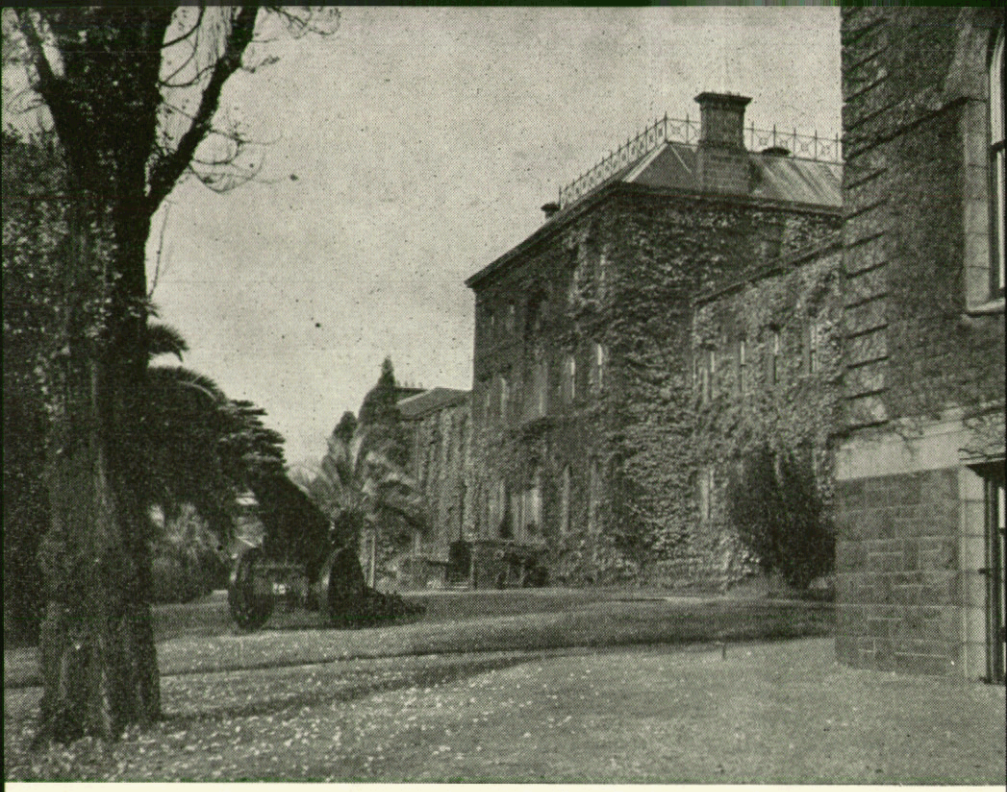

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# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

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# The Graduated Deterrent

Colonel K. Mackay, MBE,
Royal Australian Infantry

**"The atomic bomb with all its terrors did not carry us outside the scope of human control or manageable events in thought or action, in peace or war . . . with the hydrogen bomb, the entire foundation of human affairs was revolutionised and mankind placed in a situation both measureless and laden with doom."**

*—Sir Winston Churchill, The House of Commons, March 1st, 1955.*

**Nuclear Rearmament**

SINCE the statement quoted above was made, both the Governments of America and the United Kingdom have continued a policy of developing atomic weapons and hydrogen bombs, and the Services of both countries have been, or are about to be, equipped with an array of these weapons as and when they are suitable for Service use. Both governments have implied that aggression will be met by massive retaliation in one form or another involving the use of these new weapons. Russia has a nuclear capability and has also implied the use of nuclear weapons in retaliation. There is no doubt that a great deal has been accomplished in the last five or six years in the field of nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them. It also seems clear that much more progress, if progress is the right word, will be made in the next few years. The intermediate range ballistic missile (1500 miles) and the intercontinental ballistic missile of about 5,000 miles' range will no doubt be developed in the next few years. The first atomic bomb was exploded in August 1945 and the first hydrogen bomb in 1952. Compared with the development of more orthodox explosives, the development of nuclear weapons has been fantastically fast. Perhaps it has been too fast for the world at large to comprehend.

### The Problem

Whether we like it or not, we live in a thermo-nuclear age. A stage has been reached which has been referred to as a thermo-nuclear stalemate. While vague statements have been made by some heads of governments, no policy regarding the circumstances under which these latest weapons will be used has been stated, and this creates an atmosphere of great uncertainty, which no doubt helps to make the weapon an effective deterrent. Many prominent people are of the opinion that in the period of this stalemate there will be no global war. However, this does not rule out limited wars, cold wars or armed conflict such as Suez. As things stand at the moment, is a world power like USA or UK prepared to risk global war and massive destruction over a relatively minor issue which is not vital? Insofar as the Western world is concerned, it would appear that if the governments arm their Services with nuclear weapons and do not contemplate national suicide, then separately, and preferably collectively, some clear governmental policy is required dealing with the circumstances under which these weapons will or may be used.

Scientists and physicists have shown that three and certainly not more than ten large-sized hydrogen bombs dropped on UK will almost certainly destroy life as it exists today. Similar figures of no great magnitude have been produced to deal with the heart of both Russia and USA. In brief, this is the massive deterrent threat which exists now and produces a stalemate in conditions of global war. A situation has been reached when few thinking people feel that wholesale destruction of an unprecedented magnitude would be a sensible solution, say, to another Korea. While global or total war might be ruled out for the time being at least, there still arises the question of what should be done to deter and if possible prevent all lesser forms of war. Basically this is the problem to be resolved.

### Graduated Deterrent Concept

It would appear that a solution could be in some form of graduated deterrent which after all is a part of our way of life. At any school the "bully" is discredited, and a young boy soon learns that if he must fight he should scrap with someone his own size. In civil law it is basic that only sufficient force should be used in self-defence, and, of course, serving officers are all too familiar with the stringent rules concerning aid to civil power. The graduated concept is not new at all, even on an international scale.

The idea of "graduated deterrents" is briefly to graduate the size of the nuclear weapons used to the size of the aggression. It implies using only sufficient forces in a limited area to deter the aggression. Put another way on an arithmetical scale, it means to an aggressor that if you hurt me or my friends to the degree of 4, then I will retaliate to the degree of 5, and so on up the scale. In this way it should be possible to ensure that aggression, to whatever degree it is contemplated, will not be profitable and is therefore less likely to be attempted.

The concept sounds delightfully simple but it is deceptively difficult. On closer examination, political,

moral and strategic implications of the greatest magnitude quickly emerge. While a great number of prominent and distinguished men with a wide variety of background have spent a great deal of time on this question, it would appear that up to now not one has been able to think the problem through to anything like a logical or acceptable solution.

### The Massive Threat

In the first place, while it is conceded that we live in a thermonuclear age and weapons of mass destruction are available to both sides, a small group disagrees with the graduated deterrent concept. In brief, their attitude is that the moment we speak of a graduated deterrent we show the Russians that we have a fear of using the ultimate weapon. Their attitude is that there should be no compromise at all, and Russia should be left in no doubt that if she begins any form of aggression the retaliation will be both massive and immediate. It would appear that this minority group is losing ground fast, and will probably come round to the view that in the final analysis a defence policy based on national suicide is not very promising for the future.

### Factors of World-wide Significance

The problem of a graduated deterrent policy is not simply a question of evolving a national policy, although it might well begin on that level. The issue clearly has world-wide implications, and to be effective even a national policy must at least take into account the likely attitude of neighbouring and like-minded nations, if that is possible. It is not a question of a policy suitable for the USA and UK, who now have nuclear capability as against Russia. The countries of Europe are much more than interested spectators. It has been suggested, and it could well be correct, that if it became necessary for Strategic Air Command to destroy the Russian nuclear establishments in the Lake Baikal area, the resulting primary and secondary fall-out, due to prevailing winds, might destroy life as it exists today in the Indian subcontinent. It is well known that if war must be waged it is most undesirable that it be conducted in your own back yard, and no country seeks to be the scene of battle. Relatively underdeveloped areas which could be a target for Communist aggression might think twice about seeking aid involving nuclear weapons which could well bring retaliation and great destruction. The problem clearly affects the whole world, and political and moral considerations; at least initially, are likely to be the major ones.

### Fission or Fusion Weapons?

Every thinking person has a stake in the solution of this problem, assuming a workable solution is not beyond the ingenuity of man. When a problem seems to be too big to grasp one might be tempted to seek a short cut or easy way out. Before going further it might be a good idea to rule out some of the temptations. One might spring from Sir Winston Churchill's quotation at the beginning of this paper; and in fact many people have advocated banning the hydrogen bomb completely. Unfortunately there is no such thing and no such easy demarcation line. Low yield fission

weapons have been produced from a small infantry weapon of about 2 KT up to 500 KT bombs. Fusion weapons can be produced in the three-decker form of fission-fusion-fission up to 60 megatons or they can be scaled down to say 100 KT. The lower yield small KT weapons may be clean, that is with negligible radiation, or dirty. No doubt the smaller weapons will be made smaller, but there seems to be no point whatever in going beyond 60 megatons, which is about 3,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima nominal bomb of 20 KT. To the layman, fission and fusion do not mean much any more, even if they did earlier. It is now more a question of what effect, measured roughly in either kilotons or megatons, is required, and it can be tailor made.

### Conventional and Unconventional Forces

As times goes on it will become more difficult to draw a distinction between conventional and unconventional forces, not that it is easy to make the distinction clearly today. As nuclear weapons are taken into service they become an integral part of the defensive or offensive capability of the forces. Defence costs are such in both money and manpower that Russia cannot be matched in armed manpower alone, but she can be matched by the West in defensive and offensive capability—only with nuclear weapons. The old rifle and bayonet element is decreasing, and this process will no doubt continue. A state has almost been reached now when the main striking power of the Services of the major nations is based on nuclear weapons, and if hostilities began on any scale they would have to be used because the forces would be armed and trained to fight with these weapons.

### No Policy Decided Yet

Before considering moral issues or tactical and strategical implications it would seem that the whole problem of a workable policy for graduated deterrents is extremely difficult and there is no easy answer. This of course is proved by the fact that no politician of international repute has offered a solution. In fact, they have been remarkably quiet on the subject, yet many realise only too well that sooner or later they will be required to decide on a policy. It is rather significant that so little has been written and said about what is surely a very important and current problem.

### Countries Without Nuclear Capability

While it might be unwise to generalise, it would seem that a majority of countries who have no nuclear capability and no intention of developing it are inclined to favour banning nuclear weapons of all types or drastically limiting them. Those countries pursuing a neutral policy, except perhaps Sweden, can be expected to favour disarmament and banning. Many of the less-developed countries have offered no views at all, and might be expected to go along with the tide and see what happens. Very few countries, and they are NATO nations, seek to obtain or be associated in overall defence plans involving nuclear weapons. Russia has used threats in connection with nuclear weapons,

and her intention seems clear. It would be reasonable to expect the lead on this question to be taken individually or collectively by USA and UK, but they are likely to be opposed, no matter what they say or want, by most other nations, and on principle by Russia.

### Public Opinion

It is quite clear that any national policy on the graduated deterrent would be a governmental decision. Apart from taking into account aspects of world-wide significance, some of which have already been mentioned, the government would require the backing of public opinion, and of course military advice on the application of a policy. As great moral issues are involved, public opinion is likely to be a major factor. At present the general public in the UK has been told very little on this subject, and has had little opportunity to form an opinion. It is probable that a similar situation exists in USA. Religious leaders, educationists and moralists are likely to influence a large proportion of people in both countries, and to date the main theme is humanitarian. It would be as well to have a working knowledge of their point of view.

### Are Nuclear Weapons Illegal?

The Hague Convention of 1907, the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva Convention of 1929, which were of course preceded by earlier declarations and conventions, imposed certain rights and agreements, which should not be violated by belligerents during hostilities, and protected to some degree both civilians and combatants. After World War II, at Nuremberg both the Western Powers and Russia realised that some of the crimes against humanity attributed to Germany stemmed from the Nazi concept of total war. The trouble is that global, total or world war tends to disregard the limitations of the conventions mentioned above and considerations of humanity. The introduction of nuclear weapons worsens this trend, and many people consider that the use of megaton weapons is not simply illegal but morally indefensible and quite unthinkable. Not unnaturally this concern and fear go right down the scale of nuclear weapons, since to their way of thinking even the smallest of KT weapons is likely to cause unnecessary destruction to both civilians and combatants alike.

### Attitude of Religious Leaders

The second assembly of the World Council of Churches (the Evanston Report 1954) named two conditions of crucial importance which must be met if catastrophe is to be avoided:

"1. The prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction; including atomic and hydrogen bombs, with provision for international inspection and control, such as would safeguard the security of all nations, together with the drastic reduction of all other armaments.

2. The certain assurance that no country will engage in or support aggressive or subversive acts in other countries."

These are indeed crucial points, but it might be reasonable to suggest that they represent a major goal towards the ideal of the total

abolition of war itself. The pacifists very briefly reject all manner of armed force and seek to resist evil by methods which do not employ violence. This of course makes aggression just too easy. As far as can be judged, churchmen, moralists and educationists, who, of course, would be supported by a large section of the community, appear to be realists in the sense that they recognise the danger of easy aggression and accept nuclear weapons as a fact. In these circumstances the graduated deterrent idea at least represents a step in the direction of the goal mentioned above.

**Some Military Considerations**

It might now be appropriate to consider the problem very briefly from a military point of view. There has never been international agreement on what exactly constitutes strategical and tactical aims or objectives—not that the distinction matters a great deal today. The graduated deterrent concept aims at restricting and limiting a possible area of conflict with the object of restoring the status quo or getting a cease fire as soon as possible. If the suggested arithmetical scaled application of the graduated deterrent is to be effective, the conflict need not reach such proportions that strategical targets should be attacked. However, such targets cannot be ruled out, although the implication is that the area of conflict would be wide and the scale something in the order of a large-sized limited war with the grave risk of becoming larger not smaller.

In the circumstances it might be desirable to restrict consideration to what might be more properly termed tactical objectives or targets. In this sense such targets would be those directly affecting the area of conflict of the ground forces involved or the area of immediate aggression. In an era of great mobility these targets might be 500 or as much as 1000 miles from the "front," if indeed there is one. It is clear that some geographical limit is desirable, but the distance must be flexible to meet possible contingencies on a world-wide basis. The tactical area will be very difficut to define and limit, and because of wider implications this is more likely to be a political than a military matter. Inside the tactical area a policy will be required for the conduct of the resistance to the aggression committed. It will also be necessary to decide on a scale and priority of tactical targets to be attacked and with what size and type of weapon. Few military targets are likely to be clearly isolated from some civil community, and in fact the more important targets are likely to be close to centres of population. Attacks on such targets using even small KT weapons are indiscriminate to a degree that civilian casualties are likely. It would seem that centres of civilian population should be spared yet vital military targets such as airfields might be in or close to large cities and towns. From this it is evident that a degree of political direction and control is necessary and desirable in the tactical sphere, otherwise the military commander would be placed in an intolerable position; in fact, in any event his position might very quickly become intolerable. No doubt books could be written about

the tactical considerations, so having indicated some but by no means all of the major difficulties, there is no point in pursuing this aspect further at the moment.

### The Paradox

It seems a paradox to spend a great deal of time and thought on how to conduct war with the object of preventing war. Yet a policy for the use of the deterrent must in fact indicate how force will be used in the hope that it will prevent war from beginning. One can but hope without being unduly optimistic, since it is clear that there are many irreconcilable factors in the international and humanitarian field, internally with public opinion on moral issues, and lastly from the application or tactical point of view.

### Suggestions

With a problem as complex and difficult as this, one is tempted to admit it is just too hard for the present, and hope that some answer will emerge some time. I do not know enough nor am I wise enough to propose conclusions or recommendations. I have some thoughts on the subject at present which no doubt I shall change as I learn more and hear more convincing argument. Still one must have the courage of one's convictions, and as a very humble being my thoughts on the subject very briefly and for what they are worth take the following form:—

1. Megaton and Kiloton weapons and the means of delivery are possessed by the West and Russia now and are a fact. Further development of these weapons is certain, and in due course more nations will have nuclear capacity. Some control or policy for their use on an international scale is required.

2. It will not be possible to devise rules for the use of thermonuclear weapons on an international scale which have any hope of being workable and acceptable. There is no supra national authority at present capable of handling the problem with any hope of success. The major Western powers must take the first decisions individually or collectively, yet whatever is decided must have a reasonable chance of success from their point of view.

3. The idea of the graduated deterrent offers the best line of approach, even though it may not be anything like a complete answer to the problem and may take some time to evolve.

4. The Western policy should take the form of a brief indication of intention and should not be unduly limited or expressed in detail. There should be political certainty that nuclear weapons will be used to a degree that will ensure that aggression is unprofitable, but there should be some uncertainty as to the size, area and circumstances under which they will be used.

5. The Western policy might be in the form of a blunt statement of intention to preserve peace by stopping aggression on the part of Russia or the Communist satellites. There seems to be little point in discussing it with Russia, less in expecting her agreement, and no reliance should be placed on her honouring any such agreement if one was reached.

6. At the top end of the deterrent scale it would be desirable for both the Governments of USA and UK to have megaton capability and the means of delivery on an intercontinental scale. This implies that massive aggression on the part of Russia will be met by massive retaliation. Politically this intention should be made quite clear to Russia in spite of the danger of national suicide. Major aggression would be too easy if the West renounced the major weapons. In the final analysis it might be pointed out to Russia that in global war there is a degree of certainty that she could be destroyed, but some of the democracies at least, because of their geographical spread, would survive.

7. While cities and large centres of population should be spared as far as possible, there should be no limit or guarantee that strategical targets of military importance even in the heart of Russia should not be attacked with high-yield weapons if such targets are linked with the form and scale of aggression.

8. While warning of attack may be given in some circumstances to reduce civilian casualties, no such warning should be given if it involves risk to the means of delivery or to allied forces.

9. In the tactical field the aim should be to limit the area of conflict geographically, but to no fixed mileage from the point of aggression. The area must be large enough to include sufficient priority military targets for the retaliation to match or exceed the initial aggression in weight of attack. The aim should be to restore the status quo as soon as possible or obtain a quick cease fire, and in these circumstances weapons in the KT range should be adequate. In any event the geographical limit should be large enough to permit attack on part at least of the home land of the aggressor.

10. The policy should be such that the commander of the forces engaged retains freedom of action and the element of surprise to act in the best interests of those forces. He should certainly have complete freedom of action for the immediate protection and safety of his forces. It would be intolerable if the commander's hands were tied unduly by predetermined political directions which might not be appropriate, or he was forced to refer to political authority for decisions in the tactical battle.

### Conclusion

Whatever policy is ultimately decided, if it is to succeed it must both reduce to a minimum the danger of a local conflict developing into global war, and ensure that effective and practical deterrents are provided against aggressions. To achieve this, it is not enough that its technical details should be studied by Service and Government circles, but, in addition, its broad implications must be understood by the general public. This article will be successful if it does no more than provoke further study and discussion on a problem which may be vital to the very survival of mankind.

# THAT POINT PLATOON

Simon Daedalus

IN examination of Infantry Training, Volume IV, Tropical, Parts 1 and 2, still appears to leave some important questions unanswered as far as the infantry platoon commander is concerned. So far the most important omission noted appears to be the lack of any clear indication as to any suggested form of contact "drill," apart from that at section level. In case there is any misunderstanding at this point it is not my intention to develop, much less suggest, that there is a case for a contact "drill" at any level above a platoon, and even at this level only under certain circumstances.

As far as can be seen, the producers of tactical cliches have gone a full cycle since 1939. There will be vague memories of the accusations hurled against the pre-war soldier—"The leading scout has been shot. As Brigade Commander what is your appreciation?"—to the more recent development of "Drifting into battle," with a great deal of confused tactical thinking in the interregnum, particularly in the early part of the jungle wars in 1942-43.

Apart from giving the contact "drill" for a section, the new draft volumes leave the action of the leading platoon commander delightfully vague, although it must be admitted that the author(s) appear to have been at pains to please everyone, and consequently, although the necessity for the platoon commander to do something is recognized (no doubt to stop potential brigadiers from having to make an appreciation), it is equally apparent that the company commander must be standing at his elbow like a guardian angel, ever ready to take away any initiative the poor fellow may possess—on the excuse, no doubt, that the battalion must be prevented from drifting into battle! No doubt the author(s) meant well, but there will be many, including an odd platoon commander, who would prefer to be given a more positive lead than some of the generalities given in Chapter XX—Advance and Pursuit.

At this stage it may be as well to confine the limits of the discussion to the advance in rain forest, secondary growth, "jungle" (high, low, primary or secondary), or any other type of vegetation in which visibility is restricted.

Exactly what is the task of the point platoon? This is covered in Sec 72, para 9 and, as stated, is to:

(a) Clear minor opposition, within its capability, from the axis of the advance.

(b) Give early warning, gain information and provide close

reconnaissance for the vanguard.

(c) Form a firm base for an attack by the vanguard.

To carry out these tasks, however, the following quotations, although admittedly torn from their context, also appear to be pertinent:—

(a) Sec 68, para 1, " . . . battlecraft based on immediate aggressive action will go far to ensure success." This is further emphasized in Sec 68, para 15—"This is NOT to imply that a platoon commander does NOT press on resolutely to carry out his task when contact is made with the enemy," and in Sec 72, para 2, "Therefore, leading infantry elements must be imbued with the necessity of maintaining the momentum of the advance."

And this is where the author(s) leave the platoon commander to act on his own initiative, coloured as it may be from information freely given by "old jungle fighters," —gleaned from courses, discussions and demonstrations. The net result is that the platoon commander feels that to "press on"—"clear the opposition"—"gain information" and all else that he is required to do, he must PERSONALLY carry out the reconnaissance, PERSONALLY take aggressive action—even if it is only to "tick off" the leading section commander for not doing all the things he is supposed to do, even though the ENEMY won't allow him to do these things.

(b) Is this in fact so? Must he do all these HIMSELF? Presumably not as Sec 68, para 9, states, "On many occasions, therefore, reconnaissance must be done from a map, or from what the platoon commander can see for himself from the position he finds himself at the time." Under the rather circumscribed terms of reference of this paper this would appear to be emphasized by Sec 74, which does not mention personal reconnaissance at any stage.

In essence, therefore, shorn of all verbal trappings, the real task of the point platoon can clearly be seen to be the provision of accurate and timely information which can be acted upon by the company or battalion commander as appropriate.

Information can be gained only by fighting for it, with the minimum amount of wasted time, that is some form of contact drill for the point platoon must be used. Speed of action under such circumstances is one of the few ways open to platoon commanders to achieve tactical surprise — a most potent weapon when it is available. Actually this would appear to have crossed the mind of the author(s) since Sec 72, para 4 (f) states that "Leading troop must be prepared to outflank and bypass enemy positions. This demands a high degree of initiative, rapid appreciations, clear, brief orders, and resolute execution," while para 4 (k) further lays down that "Speed, boldness and a willingness by platoon and com-

pany commanders to take calculated risks" are principles on which "the success of the advance or pursuit will depend."

As a platitude, the opposition facing the point platoon will be—

(a) Small enough for the platoon to deal with with its own resources, or with additional fire power allocated from the vanguard commander.

(b) Too large for the platoon to deal with.

If contact drill has been carried out by the leading section, what does the point platoon commander *do next*? At this stage he does not necessarily know if the opposition falls into (a) or (b) above. This point is emphasized by the wording of Sec 74, para 11, which appears to leave a lot unsaid. If the enemy discloses sufficient sources of fire on initial contact with the *leading section*, the platoon commander must know whether it is too big for him to deal with. The real problem arises against an astute, well-disciplined enemy, who only discloses sufficient fire power initially to deploy the leading section and hold it after contact drill has been carried out. Under most circumstances *the platoon commander* will not know how strong the enemy position is, and will have to get additional information. Personal reconnaissance is of little value to him, and may in fact, against an active enemy, merely result in him being forcibly and *rather ignominiously* removed from the scene of action. Any reconnaissance must be done in strength if the vital information regarding enemy strength and locations, particularly sources of automatic fire, are to be established *accurately and quickly*.

This discussion leads us to Sec 74, para 16, which gives three courses open to an *assaulting platoon commander* "should he decide to assist the leading section by assaulting." The question is rather begged, but the problem hardly appears to be one for assisting the leading section! Unless it is absolutely clear that the enemy position is such that the leading platoon cannot deal with it, in which case the main concern of the *platoon commander* is to "organize his platoon into a defensive position where it can contain the enemy and cover deployment of the vanguard," the main task of the platoon commander is still to get additional information. In accordance with the views *already expressed, this can* be done only by assaulting. Any assistance to the leading section is purely a secondary consideration, whereas any assistance given by the leading section is a most important part of the platoon commander's fire plan.

While waiting for his platoon to close up (if this is necessary because of the ground and the denseness of the vegetation), the platoon commander should be examining the ground from maps, air photographs, whatever he can see of it from where he is, and in view of whatever information he has received from the leading section commander. From this it should be obvious that the platoon less one *section should be committed* around one flank or the other. (The views of Sec 74, para 17, are heartily endorsed, but one may well ask—How wide is wide?) While Concentration of Force and Economy of Effort

remain principles of war it will rarely be wise to attempt any double envelopment with a platoon less one section. This leaves the support section and the section already deployed to provide a firm base for the platoon. The four elements of the leading platoon (Sec 74, para 4), Security, Command, Assault and Support, naturally lend themselves to such action.

The question of track protection and uncovering the remainder of the vanguard can be over-emphasized. After all, company commanders do have ears and eyes, and those who survive the enemy and their own battalion commanders are experts at reading the sounds of battle and, providing the point platoon has gone resolutely about its business, will have a very good idea of the number of enemy in a position. Moreover, they seem to be able to get the company into a reasonable defensive position astride the track (if the track is important, which as such is doubtful) without much fuss and bother.

Accepting this action of the point platoon commander as a drill, what has he lost? If the enemy is in fact within his resources, say approximately 24 men, his strong immediate reaction will in all probability effectively deal with them and the battalion will not "drift into battle," nor will our brigade commander be worried fighting the platoon battle.

If on the other hand the position is too strong for the point platoon to deal with, the enemy will be forced to disclose more sources of fire, particularly automatic fire, one flank may be located, and even if it isn't this in itself will more than interest the battalion commander, who is in a position to prevent both the "reinforcement of failure" and the remainder of the vanguard "drifting into battle."

Summarizing, the platoon commander does not appear to have lost anything. He has retained control of his platoon, gained time, and within his resources brushed aside or eliminated minor opposition, or at the very least, within those same resources, established part of the fire plan of the enemy position.


# THE POSITION WILL BE HELD

ON March 1918, in World War 1, the Germans launched a mighty offensive which effected speedy and deep penetration and threatened the Allies with irretrievable disaster. The stage was reached when there was little room left for manoeuvre. All depended on the resolution with which formations, units and sub-units defended their positions.

No. 1 Section of 3 Australian Machine Gun Company,. commanded by Lieutenant F. P. Bethune, was ordered to hold its allotted position "at all costs."

On taking up his position Bethune issued the following order to his Section:—

**Special Order to No. 1 Section, 13/3/18**

1. **This position will be held and the Section will remain here until relieved.**
2. **The enemy cannot be allowed to interfere with this programme.**
3. **If the Section cannot remain here alive it will remain here dead, but in any case it will remain here.**
4. **Should any man, through shell shock or other cause, attempt to surrender, he will remain here dead.**
5. **Should all guns be blown out, the Section will use Mills grenades and other novelties.**
6. **Finally, the position, as stated, will be held.**

**F. P. Bethune, Lt.**
**O/C No. 1 Section.**

This resolute order was carried out. Bethune and his men held their position until relieved.

# MAN MANAGEMENT

Lieutenant-Colonel H. Fairclough
Royal Australian Army Service Corps

MANY more able pens than mine have dealt exhaustively with this subject, but some articles appear to have been more technical than practical, more up in the air than down to earth. Since the problem is as important in the army today as ever it was, perhaps this further contribution may be of value. What is written here has been put to the test and has proved itself.

The first thing an officer should realise is this: it is absolutely essential for a person in authority to be genuinely interested in his subordinates and anything less than this attitude will be as readily discerned by them as night from day. All conscientious officers and NCO's want to be associated with a good unit, with efficient, well-trained and contented soldiers. The best way to achieve this desirable standard is to hand out strict, fair and impartial treatment at all times. This can only be done if those in authority realise they are dealing with human beings like themselves.

A 2,000-year-old lesson from the Sermon on the Mount will suffice to indicate to anyone in doubt as to how to be fair and impartial. I refer to the Biblical injunction: "Do unto others that which you would have done unto yourself." Anyone in a position of authority in a unit who is incapable of following or appreciating that age-old piece of advice, which is as timely today as it was centuries ago, would be far better off in a job where he cannot exercise any influence over his fellowmen. That there are such persons masquerading as leaders today is beyond question.

Follow that simple advice when dealing with troops, and their reaction, like yours in similar circumstances, will be far more favourable than if another and less understanding attitude is adopted. Keep a subordinate with a problem or request waiting all day, give an evasive answer, fob him off with impatient and specious excuses or generally treat him as you yourself would dislike being treated, and he will react accordingly.

That soldier then becomes a bad advertisement of you as an officer and he remains a potential source of trouble and discontent in the unit. Put it to yourself and be honest—would you appreciate such treatment?

The military records of crime and punishment are an indictment of bad man-management. It would be no exaggeration to say that more

courts-martial are convened to deal with the direct and indirect results of ill-considered treatment of subordinates by officers and NCOs than for any other reason.

It must be remembered at all times that no two persons are alike in characteristcs and outlook, and not everyone likes Rock-'n'-Roll any more than everyone likes Bach or Beethoven. If an officer never bothers to find out what each and every soldier under his command does like and by this is meant, in colloquial terms, what makes him tick, then he will never be a leader in the true sense of the word. The soldier, when not on leave, is on duty 24 hours a day. Not all in authority in the army realise that this applies equally to them. It is only by devoting some extra time over and above normal working hours that an officer will get to know his troops.

Officers and NCOs in the Australian Army can be as strict as they like and the soldier will take all the discipline that the Brigade of Guards can hand out providing it is sensible, reasonable and fair. No soldier likes to belong to a sloppy unit in which there is no discipline. Troops should be told the reasons for any order, the meaning of, or requirement for which, might be obscure. This is the best way of getting them on side.

The strongest support and background to discipline is for officers and NCOs to set the example in every way and within the charter laid down by their Commissions and Warrants and the rules and regulations of the army. In the writer's experience during the war some 20 soldiers who marched into his unit one day from 28 days in a detention camp, on being asked individually why their conduct sheets were as long as the history of the Australian Army, all gave as the reason, the state of the unit in which they had served prior to detention. In this unit, it transpired, ORs called their officers by their Christian names, those in authority went about their military duties badly dressed, cared nothing for their men and did not maintain any sort of discipline. It is nothing short of criminal for officers to encourage crime by lack of discipline and then to make examples of those who get caught by inflicting severe punishment.

As officers, particularly commanding officers, identify yourselves with the men and since, at some time or another, you will be new to a unit and the members strangers to you, make a point of once paying all the men yourself. With this one action you meet your troops and give them your personal autograph. No one else can do this. At least they will know who you are and what you are. That is the time to sum them up; you can bet you life they'll sum you up and pretty shrewdly, too. I can strongly recommend this simple gesture to any commanding officer.

Always explain your policy and your reasons for having it. Be open and frank with troops on why things have to be done or why they should not be done. Above all, point out that every officer engaged on courts-martial or investigations as a result of ill-discipline, theft, accidents, or losses of stores, etc., is that one officer less to help the men, that one less to watch the interests, ad-

ministration and training of the unit. Always point out that an efficient unit has more chance of getting the breaks than an inefficient one. This is of particular significance because a unit actively engaged on the task for which it was formed is far happier than one awaiting a job.

Having established the attitude of those in authority which is most likely to produce favourable results, let us look more closely at the detailed management required in a unit, because this has considerable bearing on the problem. Efficient administration of all aspects of a unit's affairs is absolutely essential, as it is only by having efficient administration that officers achieve the necessary time to devote to man-management.

A basic requirement in a unit is a good standard of dress. No man in civvy street likes to go around with a patch in his pants and Australian soldiers, that is, good soldiers, are very particular about dress. Observe their distinctive way of wearing the slouch hat and their method of getting uniform trousers, when wearing gaiters, to hang correctly by wearing weights inside the trouser legs. This denotes pride in their appearance which should always be fostered. Always see, then, that troops are well dressed, and this question of dress, if properly understood, when selecting and designing the Australian Army uniform, would go further to solve the recruiting problem than perhaps any other single factor. A smartly dressed soldier in a well-fitting and attractive uniform is a walking advertisement for his profession. Such a man will attract more recruits to the service than any poster or paper advertisement. If men did not like to show to the best advantage either in civvies or in uniform then many of the retail clothing businesses would long ago have closed their doors for lack of business.

It is axiomatic and a basic principle in the army or elsewhere that men like good wholesome food, well cooked and well presented, but the stick-wielding, leg-slapping orderly officer who merely stands and looks, apart from uttering that parrot phrase "any complaints" is not sufficient to get the required standard. Not all orderly officers conform to that description, but some do and only one such in a unit is bad enough. There should not be any complaints in a well-run unit. Officers, and particularly commanding officers, must get into the kitchen and mess hall on frequent occasions to see what is going on and they must not be above poking their noses into the trash cans to see what is wasted.

After work is done for the day, officers and NCOs like to relax in a good comfortable mess and so do the men in their clubs. See that they can do just that. The troops' sleeping quarters must be as clean and comfortable as possible, with every amenity the army provides. Always remember that soldiers like their personal photographs and other mementoes around them as much as anyone else. Is there so much harm in their having pin-up girls, as is thought by some?

Soldiers dislike dirty barracks and unit areas. Therefore the unit's utilities must be brightly signposted and the area kept clean and tidy.

The soldier who has to do the work may grumble, but is much more vociferous in his complaints if he has to live like a black. Probably there isn't a unit in Australia which does not conform with this basic principle, nevertheless it is important enough to mention here.

The necessity for amenities and sports, all very vital in the scheme of things, are appreciated by most; suffice to say that sport to be successful and to benefit all, must be encouraged and supported by officers.

On the tremendously important subject of stores, clothing, equipment and supplies, I would say "Sack the quartermaster who does not get from Ordnance every item that the scales provide and which the unit requires," and doubly sack him, if possible, if he doesn't issue it and with good grace. Display the price of clothing, etc., and as an officer be there sometimes at the Q store when issues are made, and thus by your presence indicate the importance of the occasion and your interest. Even today soldiers are sometimes fobbed off with ill-fitting shirts, boots and uniforms.

Finally, when you, as the commanding officer or an officer in charge of a platoon, etc., consider you have an efficient, well administered unit or sub-unit, then that is the time to take stock, that is the time when you must think up something new which will put fresh stimulus into your men. Within the framework of your charter and scope as an officer, be original, exercise initiative, make the training realistic and interesting and encourage competition. Put colour into your unit.

An army in peacetime needs colour. Our army, for instance, allows the Police Force to carry out a traditional function of the Service in providing mounted escorts for the Governor-General and State Governors on ceremonial occasions. That colourful piece of pageantry, because the police look smart and bear themselves well, evokes favourable comment for them that should go to the Army. What a recruiting aid and what a stimulus to competitive spirit if membership of a small mounted unit like that, maintained by the Army for ceremonial, was awarded to the best soldiers of all the arms and services. Ceremonial need be only part of such a unit's duties; at other times the members could be used according to their skills and categories or specially trained in other military duties.

It may be considered that such a suggestion is out of keeping with this article, but it is included as an example of how colour could be included in military affairs without loss of efficiency. Make no mistake the Australian soldier responds to ceremonial as do soldiers of any country.

Challenge the soldiers under your command, the old stick-orderly system never fails, and there are other ways available to officers with initiative. In the United States of America the recruiting posters challenge civilians to join the Marines by the stark statement: "You are not good enough for the US Marines." Put that sort of thing to the Australian soldier in his training and behaviour and he'll react in the right manner. Pride in oneself, esprit de corps, or whatever it is called, does not matter, since in the

long run it all amounts to the same thing, will always respond to a challenge.

Soldiers will give loyalty and obedience in peace and war to officers who have their interests at heart and who will devote time and energy, without reckoning the cost, to understanding and sympathetic man-management. Soldiers will gladly follow such leaders anywhere.

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**War is far too close to the inevitable — not because it could not be avoided by a clever and realistic policy, but because policy is largely based on ignorance, wishful thinking and military illusions. War is virtually inevitable, not because the aggressor could not be stopped in time, but because the victims of aggression and the non-aggressive nations do not unite to stave off aggression. War seems close to inevitable, not because it would be impossible to knock the aggressor down at the first frontier he crosses, but because the peaceful nations are busy building paper walls against steel, fire and radiation and, under the pretext of specious economic arguments, neglect to procure the weapons they need for their political and economic security. War becomes inevitable, not because the nations want to fight, but because the fascinating game of politics often blunts the instinct of self-preservation. War, in short, is made inevitable because democratic politicians and voters seldom think about war seriously, and because they rarely believe that war, though an ever-present danger, is being plotted somewhere on the globe this very moment. If it were clearly realised that in order to preserve peace military means are indispensable and that weapons are instruments of peace and not of war alone, a new conflict could be avoided. If the democracies would constantly think about war, if they would assign top priority to all matters of defence, and act incessantly to improve their common security, then war would be averted.**

*—Stefan T. Possony, in "Strategic Air Power."*

# A NEW LOOK for an INFANTRY DIVISION

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IT is generally agreed that the use of atomic weapons in a tactical role will change the known and tried tactical doctrine of field formations.

One of the main tasks for an infantry division in a nuclear war will be to hold vital ground or key areas. With the width of front an infantry division can be expected to hold under modern conditions, there will inevitably be gaps which must be covered. How can this be done? Primarily by intelligent siting of positions and a sound appreciation of the enemy's probable intentions. A definite requirement, however, is for a division that can withstand attacks in great strength and then be able to counter-attack when the enemy's main attack has failed. This requires a division which is strong in infantry, artillery and armour, armour which can be moved quickly and with the shortest possible notice and to transport infantry if necessary.

In the British Army on the Rhine trials in divisional reorganization, both armour and infantry, have been practised in an effort to evolve a technique which can be used in Europe against a background of both sides having a tactical sufficiency of atomic weapons.

As a result of these trials, the Army Council have agreed on the outline organization of the infantry division in which, *inter alia*, each infantry brigade will have its own armoured support under command.

At the time of writing this outline organization for the infantry division as set out by the War Office is:—

*Divisional Headquarters.* Includes a Brigadier Royal Armoured Corps, with a small staff, who will be adviser to the Divisional Commander as well as supervising the armoured training and seeing to the technical needs of the armoured regiments which are to be integrated with each infantry brigade. In battle he

will have sufficient wireless communication to enable him to take command of a mobile reserve of armour and infantry should the need arise.

*Three brigades.* Each of one armoured regiment and three infantry batalions.

*Divisional Artillery.* Comprising three Field Regiments, one Medium Regiment and one Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

*Engineers*
*Signals*
*Administrative Units* } No radical change

The administrative organization to support this division, together with engineer and signal units, at present are undergoing trials. It is almost certain that these will have changes in their organization, particularly the Royal Army Service Corps, who will have greatly enlarged ammunition, petrol, oil and lubricant commitments.

The purpose of this article is to present the framework of the new Infantry Division so far as it is known and to set out some of the thoughts which have led to the reorganization. These changes are the result of complying as far as possible to a given set of principles. These are:—

(a) That after taking into account the possession of sufficient atomic weapons, the new organization must be capable of more 24 hour a day fighting capacity than exists at present.

(b) If fighting mobility and flexibility are to be achieved, there must be a reduction in the variety of weapons and a considerable cut in the amount of transport in the combat zone.

(c) Future battles must be conducted as properly integrated battles of all arms. No longer can an attempt be made to include in any one arm all that it requires to meet every eventuality.

(d) That all future equipment must be capable of being quickly and effectively dug in or be self-propelled within an all-enclosed fighting cabin.

How then are these principles applied in the reorganization of the Infantry Division? The infantry battalion, being the basic unit, seems to be the logical start point for analysis.

### Infantry

The aim in reconstructing the battalion was to increase the number of men in the rifle companies. The old organization had a variety of specialist weapons which absorbed a number of men who were therefore not available to the platoon or section commander. The result of initial trials was to eliminate the Support Company by deleting the Battalion Anti-Tank Gun (this is a recoilless gun somewhat resembling the old 6-pounder in size and style but firing a 120 mm shell. It is generally referred to as the BAT), and the 3-inch mortar, and transferring the Machine Gun Platoon to HQ Company. This enabled the battalion to add a fourth platoon to each rifle company. The removal of the BAT accorded with the principle to cut the variety of weapons for which one arm is responsible. This loss is compensated

for by the increased number of tanks available to the brigade and consequently to the battalion. For close fighting the battalion retains the ENERGA grenade and the 3.5-in. rocket launcher. Subsequent to this trial the 3-inch mortar has reappeared, but with HQ Company. The reorganization then has produced an enlarged HQ Company and Rifle Company and dispensed with the Support Company, the overall saving being the Anti-Tank Platoon.

**Armour**

Bearing in mind that this reorganization applies only to the needs of a formation operating in Europe, there will have to be tanks on immediate call to deal with the large numbers of enemy tanks expected. The old division had a Divisional Regiment Royal Armoured Corps whose primary function was to destroy enemy tanks. The normal employment was one squadron under command of each brigade, usually sited in the brigade's battalion areas and depending on the infantry for protection against enemy infantry. Disadvantages of this were insufficient tank destroying weapons and the fact that this unit was untrained in the tactics of an armoured regiment. The new organization overcomes this by converting the Divisional Regiment to an armoured regiment and introducing two additional armoured regiments. Therefore each brigade has an armoured regiment under command which can operate in more than one capacity, i.e., it can destroy enemy tanks and can attack and counter-attack in conjunction with infantry of its own formation. Each armoured regiment is organized on a three-squadron basis, each squadron having three troops of four Centurions and one troop of three Conquerors. How do these changes conform to the principles mentioned earlier? It would appear that the capacity of the infantry division to destroy tanks at longer range has been increased. Also the divisional anti-tank weapon is now self-propelled and in an all-enclosed fighting cabin.

**Artillery**

The inclusion of a medium regiment equipped with the new 5.5-in. self-propelled gun in the divisional artillery is a significant change. With its maximum range of 24,000 yards it will greatly add to the effectiveness of the fire power at the disposal of the Commander Royal Artillery. The fighting compartment of this gun will give protection against HE splinters, ground or air burst, from field artillery at 20 feet and medium artillery at 60 feet. Its armour, speed and range will be similar to that of the Centurion.

Field regiments retain their structure, but the proposal is to equip them with a 95-mm gun. This is a highly mobile weapon easy to dig in and conceal. It is intended to fire in the upper register in order that a greater measure of protection can be gained in firing from a deep pit. It will also break into pack loads to accompany infantry across country.

The Light Battery has been removed, but no changes are as yet envisaged for the Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, the Locating Battery or the Air Operational Flight. These changes also accord with the principles, as mobility and flexibility are catered for. The

principle of being quickly and effectively dug in or of being self-propelled is adhered to, and protection in the form of a pit or enclosed fighting cabin is available.

### Other Arms

So much for what has already been agreed. Other arms, the engineers and signals, have been reshaping their organizations, and the results shown should soon be known.

### Services

No decision has yet been reached on the reorganization of any of the services in the division. The following gives the line on which they are working, and it is concerned mostly with one particular infantry division.

### Royal Army Service Corps

The increase in armour and the inclusion of a medium self-propelled regiment, although partly offset by the disappearance of the light regiment, will increase the second line lift to some extent. In addition to this factor, the RASC have been required to experiment with two new systems of replenishment—first, what is known as the Continental System of Supply, and second, the Forward Maintenance System. The former is practised by most NATO countries, and is now being tried by the BAOR, which is operating in a NATO area. The latter is a logical follow on from the Continental System, and is designed to reduce administrative transport in the forward areas of the division.

Much has already been written about the Continental System of Supply and other methods of logistical support, and it is not within the scope of this article to compare them in detail with our existing Corps Maintenance Area System. However, a short definition of each may clear up some doubtful points and may assist in a better understanding of the RASC function in this new role.

Briefly, under the Continental System of Supply, Corps HQ has no direct responsibility for the maintenance of the divisions under its command. This task is performed by Army HQ, which establishes an Army Maintenance Area holding each type of commodity and store.

The division requirements are then sent forward in Army transport to Army Supply Points (ASPs) from which the divisions draw with their second line transport.

The Corps Maintenance Area is thus deleted from the chain of replenishment.

The Forward Maintenance System requires ammunition, POL and supplies to be delivered by Divisional Column RASC vehicles to the Brigade Administrative Area, where unit echelon vehicles collect. Units located behind the division rear boundary collect from a Divisional Point in the Divisional Administrative Area.

This system therefore removes from the unit the responsibility of proceeding to the Divisional Administrative Area to collect.

The method of operation is by the nightly establishment of Brigade Supply Points in the Brigade Administrative Areas from which units under command pick up their am-

munition, POL and supplies under arrangements made by the Brigade RASC officer.

Certain refinements have been added for the supply of ammunition and POL to armoured regiments by the experimental creation from the Divisional Column RASC of an Armoured Support Company RASC in direct logistical support of the three armoured regiments. Many variations of this innovation have been tried and experiments in this direction are still going on. Basically the idea is that loaded vehicles from the Armoured Support Company may be called forward to the Regimental "A" Echelons at any time, where they are held until the load is used. Platoons of the Armoured Support Company are normally affiliated to each armoured regiment. In the event of an armoured regiment requiring immediate replenishment after exhausting the stocks of its affiliated platoon, the reserve platoon, or a platoon affiliated to another armoured regiment, may be used, but only with prior staff approval. Thus armoured regiments are not tied to a fixed drawing time. Greater flexibility is obtained in that the regiment's own vehicles, carrying the unit ammunition and POL reserve, can be replaced by RASC vehicles when necessary, the empty regimental vehicles moving back along the RASC chain of replenishment as though they were RASC vehicles, returning to their regiment echelon when reloaded.

The introduction of racked vehicles (normal RASC 3-ton task vehicles fitted with steel racks in which uncased 20-pounder shells can be carried) in the Armoured Support Company RASC for the carriage of 20-pounder ammunition makes it possible to double the present second line holding without increasing the transport. First line transport can thus be reduced accordingly.

To sum up on the RASC operation in the new division, more transport is required. One estimate is that the second line lift will increase from 540 tons to 810 tons, i.e., from three companies of two transport platoons to three companies of three transport platoons, 90 additional 3-ton vehicles. Another estimate, which caters for an increase in the lift of all divisional transport from 25 miles to 40 miles and the provision of a troop carrying platoon, assesses the additional requirement to 330 x 3-ton vehicles, i.e., 150 extra.

Although these are considerable increases, there are sound reasons for them. With new systems of resupply and the use of racked vehicles for ammunition, and possibly bowser vehicles for POL distribution, it is thought that any increase in second line vehicles will be offset by a compensatory or even greater reduction in unit first line transport.

### Medical

The divisional medical service considered their reorganization in the light of:—

(a) Atomic war.
(b) Increase in strength of the division from approximately 17,000 to approximately 20,000.
(c) Cases requiring urgent surgery to be evacuated by helicopter or light fixed wing aircraft.

(d) Strictest economy in personnel in view of the heavy demand under atomic conditions for medical personnel behind the division.

(e) That units would accept more responsibility for treatment of minor cases.

Under atomic conditions, the Assistant Director of Medical Services must have a reserve and must exercise more control over the division medical organization than in the past. For this a medical wireless net is a requirement.

It was considered that the existing three field ambulances could provide sufficient medical cover in spite of the increased size of the division, and that the Field Dressing Station, which would not be available at the beginning of war, could be dispensed with. Flexibility of the present medical company of three sections is thought to be satisfactory, as it can collect, treat and evacuate casualties and hold up to 100 casualties in isolated locations, provided that buildings or other overhead cover is available. Medical affiliations to brigades were considered essential, and sufficient cover can be given from a medical company of three sections (Casualty Clearing Posts). It was also agreed that an Advanced Dressing Station can carry out its functions without its reserve section. This could well provide the means without increase of raising a reserve medical company of three sections. This reserve company should be self-contained. Nothing less than three sections would be of adequate value where large numbers of atomic casualties had been caused.

Conclusions reached (but not final) were that the new organization could be:—

(a) Three field ambulances providing a medical company of three sections for each brigade.

(b) A total of three Advanced Dressing Stations, two of which may be deployed and a third in reserve.

(c) One reserve medical company of three sections (drawn from present reserve sections of the ADS).

Summing up on the medical aspect, it can be seen that this service, too, has an increase on present establishment, i.e., one Medical Company HQ, which is slight in proportion to the estimated increase of 3,000 within the division. The new organization also provides facilities for holding up to 400 casualties for a period of 48 hours, plus a reasonable reserve available in the event of atomic casualties.

### Ordnance

The Ordnance Service has many problems in testing its organization against the requirements of the new style division, as it is appreciated that in war as opposed to exercises the range and volume of items required will be greater.

From practical experience gained during the training season, catering for the increase in teeth arm units, it was found that 12,000 to 12,500 items were required to be held by the Divisional Ordnance Field Park. In war it is estimated that a further 5-6,000 items would be needed. The

supply of 20-pounder barrels was also practised on the assumption that the Ordnance Field Park scaling would be 24 as a divisional holding. Various estimates of barrel wastage were given, the general opinion being 4 per day per armoured regiment. On this calculation there would be no difficulty in the supply. The method of supply, however, can be varied, but the recommendation at present is that the Ordnance Field Park be called upon to deliver barrels direct to the Light Aid Detachment carrying out the replacement. The place of handover of serviceable barrels can be varied to suit circumstances obtaining at the time, i.e., at the LAD or at a given rendezvous.

Truck 10-ton GS towing 7½-ton trailers carrying up to 6 x 20-pounder barrels were found to be satisfactory for movement from the Army Maintetnance Area to the Ordnance Field Park, and in most circumstances from the OFP to the LAD. For resupply of barrels under adverse conditions, they should be carried on a tractor (MATADOR) if delivery is to be guaranteed.

The Mobile Laundry and Bath Company was examined from bathing and laundry aspects on the assumption that the reorganized division has a strength of 20,000 and that the old bath equipment will be replaced by a new pattern.

With the total bathing resources it is possible to bath the personnel of the new division in a two-day period, and this was recommended as acceptable.

Whilst there was no opportunity to operate the wartime system of laundering (clean underclothes issued after bathing), it was thought that approximately 400 sets of clothing could be laundered per section per day in good weather. In bad weather the figure would drop to 300 sets per section per day on the present capacity of the trailer drier.

To launder the clothing of personnel of the new division in 7 days, it would be necessary to handle approximately 550 sets per section per day, but as the maximum output per section is assessed at 400 sets per day, the laundry could only be exchanged every 10 days. Provided that this and the two-day bathing period is acceptable and that the new bathing equipment is available, the Mobile Laundry and Bath Company can function in the new division without increase.

To sum up the Divisional Ordnance requirements, very little increase is considered necessary for operation in peace. However, if the OFP is required to hold in peace all stores included in War Maintenance Scales, then an appreciable increase in stores and vehicles would be involved. The estimate of this increase has been recommended for further study.

## REME

The duration, type and lack of battle casualties on exercises make it difficult to assess fully the operational efficiency of Field Workshops. Based on the experience of exercises held to date, however, it is thought that the Divisional REME load will increase by 30 per cent, and that the infantry workshops will all still be required.

Certain modifications to the existing organization of three infantry workshops have been considered. The main ones are:—

(a) The establishment of mobile teams to effect repairs in the forward areas.

(b) The establishment of a Divisional Recovery Company.

Maximum availability of armoured fighting vehicles will, of course, be of primary importance. To achieve this, repair to AFV casualties must be carried out as far forward as possible. The present REME support is found initially from the LAD of the armoured regiment, and it is considered that this should remain. If, however, the load on a particular LAD becomes excessive due to battle casualties or mechanical breakdown, there is a requirement to reinforce the repair effort. This can be done by creating Forward Repair Teams from any of the divisional workshops. The proposal is for 21 x A-vehicle mechanics per workshop on establishment. This figure would allow 7 teams for AFV repair, 3 of which could be available for forward repair. A total of 9 teams would be available within the division.

Forward repair tasks would be dependent on the time available to effect repair and the availability of spares; so accurate and speedy diagnosis by the LAD and correct assessment of parts required would be a pre-requisite to success. The forward workshop supplying the forward repair team would issue the necessary spares. The repairs by these teams would be confined to the exchange of major assemblies, i.e., gearbox, clutch, final drive and idlers (not engines).

The method of command and control of forward repair teams is still being studied. Present thought is that any request for repair teams must be originated by the EME of the armoured regiment to the BEME or to the REME Report Centre at Div HQ (previously known as the Divisional Recovery Control).

The requirement would then be passed to HQ REME at Rear Divisional Headquarters, HQ REME then to arrange for the forward workshop to supply the Forward Repair Team and the necessary spares. In the event of more than 3 teams being required, HQ REME would arrange the provision of additional teams from the other two workshops.

In certain circumstances it may be an advantage to attach forward repair teams to regiment LADs before operations begin.

The idea of forming a Divisional Recovery Company is not new, as the recovery elements in LADs and divisional workshops have, under certain circumstances, been brigaded by CREME to permit direct control on divisional level to cope with special recovery commitments. With the increased number of AFVs in the new division, however, it is considered that the establishment of a permanent recovery unit is necessary.

The scaling of RAOC Stores Sections will obviously need to be revised to cater for three armoured regiments and the medium artillery regiment (SP). Investigations are

at present being carried out by the REME Scales Branch, and although not completed, it is thought that the additions will not necessarily be proportionate to the increase in teeth arm units.

Like the other services, the REME has not as yet been able to produce a firm organization to fit into the new division. It seems certain, however, that the reorganization will show an increase. At the same time the size of the divisional workshop must be kept as small as possible if they are to operate and be accepted in the forward areas. To meet these conflicting requirements it has been proposed that:—

(a) LAD support to remain as at present except that the Divisional Troops LAD and the Divisional Signals Regiments LAD be combined.

(b) The tank platoon of the divisional workshop to be organized to permit the whole platoon, or a number of forward repair teams to be detached for operations with the armoured regiments. It will be necessary to increase the numbers of A-vehicle mechanics to cope with the additional armour.

(c) The field repair of small arms and machine guns, instruments and towed artillery equipments, excluding those on AFVs and artillery (SP), to be discontinued.

(d) The establishment at Main Div HQ of a REME Report Centre which will command and control the forward repair teams and the Divisional Recovery Company.

**Provosts**

Provost duties being basically personnel tasks, any increase in numbers and vehicles to a formation would require proportionately more provosts. Fighting on a broader front, where more routes are needed involving signposting and policing, calls for additions to the Divisional Provost Company. It has been recommended that this unit be increased by two sections, making a total of ten to be employed as follows:—

(a) Section at Main HQ.

(b) Section at Rear HQ.

(c) Section in Divisional Administrative Area.

(d) Section to each brigade.

(e) Traffic Control Section.

(f) Section for escort duties, i.e., for the General Officer Commanding, Conqueror Tanks and any other appropriate specialist vehicles.

(g) Two sections in reserve to be employed on divisional moves.

**Divisional Reinforcement Unit, Divisional Battle School, Forward Delivery Squadron**

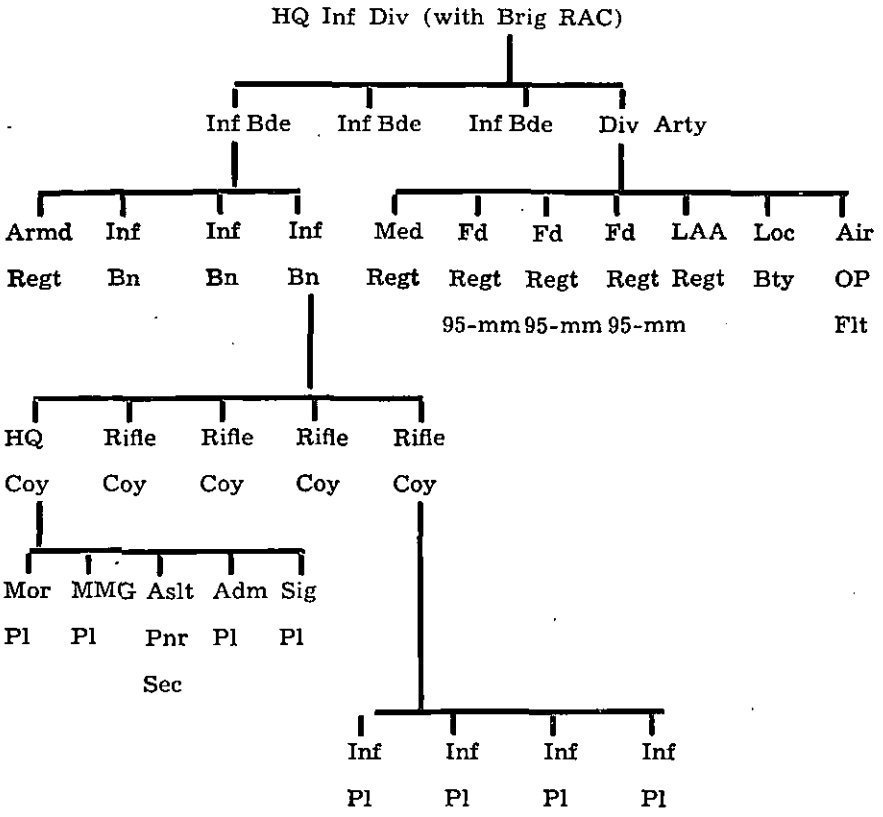
There has been one proposal that the Divisional Reinforcement Holding Unit and the Divisional Battle School should both cease to be divisional units and become Army units located in the area of the Army Supply point and allocated to each division. Furthermore, each infantry division, now with three armoured regiments, be allotted a

Forward Delivery Squadron the *same as an armoured division.*

A suggested system for operation is that reinforcements, other than Royal Armoured Corps and certain Royal Artillery personnel, should pass through reinforcement holding units in the Army Area direct to *the reinforcement unit in the Army* Supply Point area. On demand from units, reinforcements travel to the unit.

Tank crews from the reinforcement holding unit organization to be united with their tanks in Army Delivery Regiments in the Army *Area and then moved forward to* the divisional Delivery Squadron in the Army Supply Point area. Tanks and tank crews on demand would then move to their respective units. The Divisional Delivery Squadron should be located if possible near a workshop for dekitting tanks which are beyond repair.

Training directives for the Divisional Battle School must of course be laid down by the GOC—also the instructors are often selected by the GOC from the Division. For all



other purposes, however, including movement, it is considered that it could be controlled by Army.

### Summary

The formations and units so far approved are shown in the diagram.

No radical change for engineer and signal units, although some reorganization in both must be expected.

Trials in service units point to a general increase in size, particularly the RASC, who must accept the additional commitment of ammunition and POL for the Armour.

### Conclusion

It may be a disappointment for some who are "streamline" conscious that the size of the infantry division will increase. Considering its vastly improved hitting power, however, the increase, due mainly to the additional armour, should pay a good dividend.

Reorganization and streamlining are NOT the same, though one may be complementary to the other. "Streamlining" infers a definite cutting down of numbers and vehicles to produce a more efficient and compact formation. This is also true of reorganization, but in this case the total number of men and vehicles may increase.

The trials reorganization of the infantry division in BAOR may be regarded as a combination of "streamlining" and reorganization, and is only applicable to a formation in North-West Europe. The fact that it may have more vehicles and men than the existing division does not mean it is outside the terms of reference of both "streamlining" and reorganization if it can carry out its tasks with more efficiency.

A most encouraging aspect of the trials so far has been the co-operation and camaraderie established between the Armour and the Supply Service. The new method of Armoured resupply coupled with regular liaison visits has done much to promote harmony and confidence between these two types of unit.

No claim can be made that the changes outlined are the best and will provide the ultimate solution. More time and much further study is required.

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### CORRIGENDUM

**"Contre L'Armee de Metier," page 5 of AAJ 94, March 1957. In line five of paragraph one of this article the word "vocative" should be amended to read "vociferous."**

# TRAINING THE MILITARY SHOT

## THE AMERICAN TRAINFIRE EXPERIMENT

Reprinted from the August 1956 issue of "The Infantryman," United Kingdom

*The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect War Office policy.—Editor.*

AMERICAN soldiers, like our own, come largely from cities and suburbs; they are no longer the frontiersmen, brought up with gun or rifle in hand, who produced the fine marksmanship of an earlier generation.

The soldier of the present day must be taught not only to shoot but to find and shoot at indistinct targets from any aiming position.

**The skill required of the infantryman, whether fighting in jungle, trenches or built-up areas, is the quick reaction of hand to eye, usually at quite short ranges.**

Training on a normal type range teaches a man to be accurate and to maintain a steady volume of fire, or to take a snap shot, at easily seen targets. Nearly all his shooting is done in the lying position on word of command. Present methods of training are so far removed from the infantryman's task on the battlefield that he has no "transfer value" as the Americans call it.

The Korean war brought home to the Americans, as it did to us, that the soldier was not good at picking up the indistinct targets of the battlefield and that often, even when he met an enemy at point blank range, he failed to raise his rifle and kill him.

We know this to be true of ourselves just as we know only too well the difficulties experienced at short ranges by battalions new to Malaya and Kenya.

The Trainfire experiment was ordered by the American Commander-in-Chief to find the answer to these problems. The aim is to find a basic course in rifle shooting which will train the soldier's powers of observation and initiative in shooting. The course will not take the place of Field Firing: it is basic training.

Trainfire requires a special type of range, but danger areas are not greatly increased because firing is still carried out in "lanes." Targets are of the moving and pop-up types.

It is reported that recruits who have been put through Trainfire have shown a marked enthusiasm

for their training in comparison with the general attitude of recruits undergoing a conventional course.

Other interesting points are that a Trainfire range is far less costly than a standard range and that standard ranges have been satisfactorily converted.

**A rifle team which regularly competes in American Army Rifle Championships was put through the Trainfire course and did not do at all well: several failed to qualify!**

The difficulties in devising a realistic and interesting peacetime shooting course are these—Limited training time, ranges and ammunition; restricted danger areas and the paramount importance of safety.

In their large country the Americans have less difficulty than we do in finding suitable areas for ranges, but on the other hand they have far greater numbers to train. In both armies there is the same need for a satisfactory method of classification.

In one respect only does our training differ widely from American practice. In our army it is considered necessary to link shooting efficiency with pay.

The factors enumerated above are those which cause our range work to be so unlike the task of the Infantryman on active service.

There are other factors which should compel a revision of our ideas on training methods. We shall shortly have a self-loading rifle and no longer need to spend many hours in practising bolt manipulation and magazine charging.

**It is now generally agreed that the individual requires training only up to a range of 300 yards. Beyond that distance fire effect is achieved by Section fire. This, of course, is Field Firing, and does not influence the basic training or classification course.**

No one will dispute the need for moving targets and the use of figure targets in the soldier's training in preference to the 4-foot target with a bull. The difficulty is how to introduce them without costly expenditure and how to manipulate them without increasing range danger areas.

The Americans have found that the cost of a Trainfire range is much less than a standard classification range. Our trouble is that we have the classification ranges already and cannot get either the money or the land to start afresh. We would therefore have to convert existing ranges, as the Americans have done at Fort Carson.

Moving targets are not difficult to make and they can be activated by men or vehicles by use of wire and pulley wheels. The starting position can be concealed by roughly made banks, which are easily constructed with a bulldozer, or by clumps of gorse bushes. On a Trainfire type range there are no intermediate firing points to obstruct the movement of targets, all targets being at ranges unknown to the firer.

The American method of scoring on the Trainfire course is one hit one point, one miss minus one point. So a man who gets 15 hits and five misses scores 10 points. A man who gets 10 hits and 10 misses scores nothing. Grading naturally goes

below the line as well. This brings into the efficiency calculation the man's temperament and balance between accuracy and expenditure of ammunition: a very important part of training.

This form of scoring, and in fact the introduction of unknown ranges and moving targets, would probably be unacceptable in our army as long as shooting efficiency is tied to the soldier's pay. But if range training can be made really interesting and more closely akin to the soldier's task in battle, is it still necessary to produce this incentive for the Infantryman's most important task?

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## COMPETITION FOR AUTHORS

**The Board of Review has awarded first place and the prize of £5 for the best original article published in the January and February issues as follows:—**

**January.—R. J. O'Neill, Corps of Staff Cadets, for his "Tito — Keystone or Stumbling Block."**

**February.—Lieutenant-Colonel A. Green, Royal Australian Army Service Corps, for his "Order or Anarchy Under the Atomic Umbrella."**

**Lance-Corporal R. J. O'Neill, of Burwood, Victoria, joined the Scotch College Cadet Unit in 1950. In January, 1953, he was awarded the General Vasey Memorial Cadet Efficiency Prize after gaining first place in a course for 220 potential cadet officers. He entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in February, 1955, and was one of the twelve members of his class promoted to Lance-Corporal rank this year.**

# INDO-CHINA

# The Last Year of the War

## The Navarre Plan

Bernard B. Fall

Reprinted from the December 1956 issue of the MILITARY REVIEW, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, USA

WHILE a previous article (AAJ 94) dealt with the organization and tactics of the Communists in Indochina, this article will attempt to describe briefly the operations of the French Union Forces during the fateful 1953-54 period which led to the disaster of Dien Bien Phu and the cease-fire at Geneva in July, 1954.

In brief, the problem that faced every French field commander in Indochina since the outbreak of hostilities in 1946 was to compel the main battle force of the enemy to make a fight-or-die stand; and to loosen the Communist stranglehold upon the majority of the population. The first of those objectives was strictly military; the second was fraught with political implications, and thus not within the sphere of control of the military commander (except when he, as in the case of Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny and General Paul Ely, simultaneously held the civilian post of French High Commissioner in Indochina).

Until 1953 the French logistical and manpower base was too narrow to permit a full-scale counter-offensive of nearly one-half million men over a terrain *four* times the size of Korea. However, by 1953, thanks to increasing American aid and French reinforcements, the time now was considered ripe to strike this decisive blow. The man chosen to lead the French Union Forces in this final operation of the war was a newcomer to Indochina, Lieutenant-General Henri-Eugène Navarre.

When General Navarre took over command of the French Union Forces in the Far East on 28 May

1953, he found a situation that was at best stagnant. Surely, the first Vietnam People's Army (VPA) offensive into northern Laos had been stopped short of Luang Prabang, the royal residence of Laos, but at the price of building up another airhead at the Plaine des Jarres, thus again diverting precious troops from the Red River Delta. Navarre brought with him to Indochina the promise of increased American aid and that of additional fresh French troops: seven infantry battalions, the French reinforced United Nations battalion from Korea (where hostilities had ended in July 1953), an additional artillery group, and two battalions of combat engineers.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese National Army—which already had more than 100,000 men in the field—fighting as an ally of France was to raise within the year a first group of 19 "light" (that is, 600 men) commando battalions for the purpose of fighting the Communists on their own terrain, to be followed by 35 additional commando battalions within the next fiscal year.[1] Several sub-sectors had been transferred to Vietnamese command in the meantime, in order to create a mobile reserve with the French troops thus withdrawn from duty in the fixed positions in thousands of bunkers of the De Lattre Line.

There had never been an official published programme known as the "Navarre Plan." However, according to various public statements made at the time of its inception, the practical meaning and purpose of the plan becomes clear. According to Navarre's own chief of cabinet, Colonel Revol, the Navarre Plan was to endow the French battle corps "with a mobility and an aggressivity which it lacks." According to another authoritative source, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the Navarre Plan was designed to break "the organized body of Communist aggression by the end of the 1955 fighting season," leaving the task of mopping up the smaller guerrilla groups to the national armies of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Whatever the ultimate effect of the Navarre Plan, it cannot be denied that the French Union Forces showed the same offensive ability which they had displayed under the late Marshal De Lattre. In fact, it can even be said that too much activity was displayed too often at too many different places (see Figure 1), thus leaving troops and leaders but little time to prepare for the large-scale operations envisaged for the latter phase of the Navarre Plan. (The French still operated with *Groupes Mobiles* (units the size of a regimental combat team) as their largest tactical unit, while the VPA operated with Chinese type, 10,000-man divisions.)

On 17 July 1953 two airborne battalions were parachuted 150 miles behind Communist lines at Lang Son, destroying important enemy depots of Red Chinese and Russian matériel. The troops withdrew successfully to the coast, where they were awaited by a French naval task force. This was followed on 28 July by Operation *Camargue*—an attempt by the French to liqui-

1 General Henri Marchand, L'In*dochine en Guerre*, Pouzet & Co., Paris, 1955, p. 278.

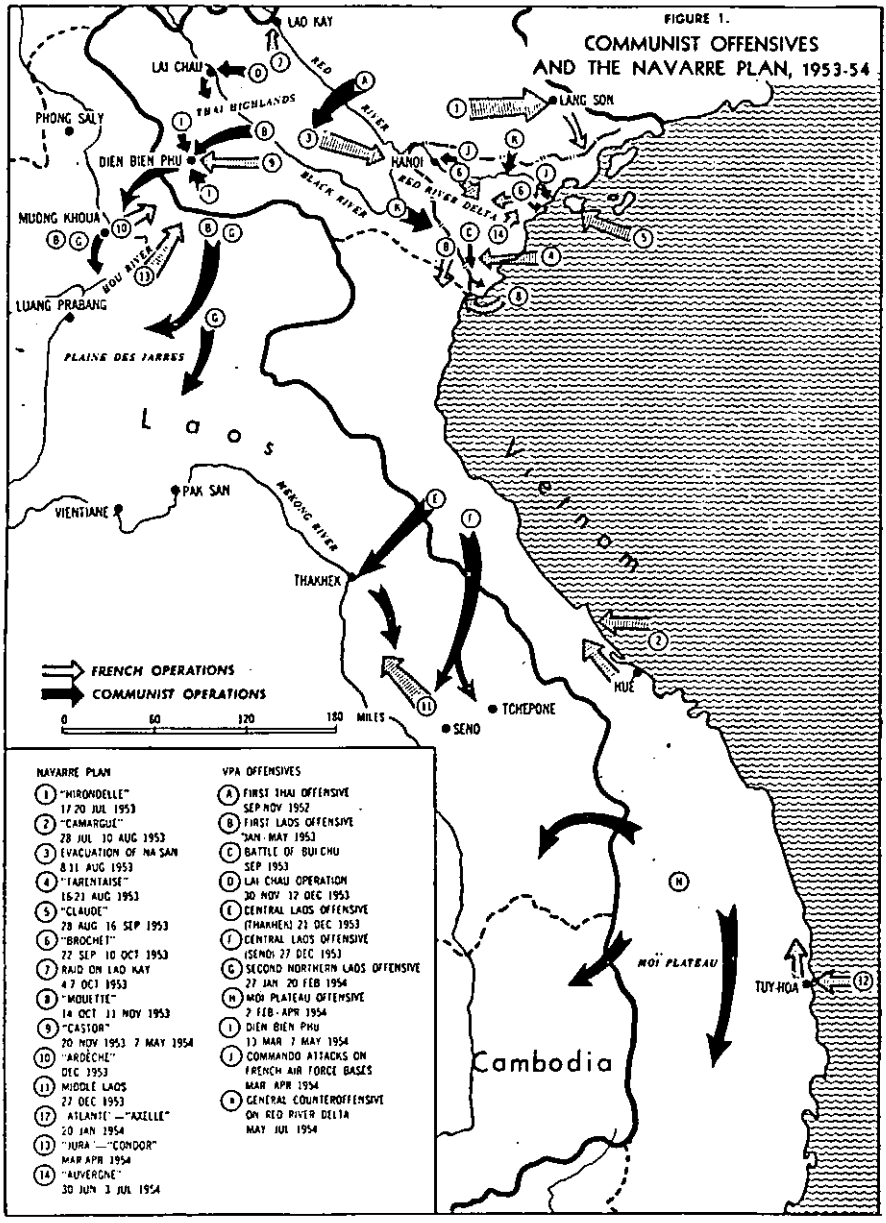
date a string of enemy fortified villages along the central Vietnamese coast, which, in view of the losses they had caused to passing convoys, had become known as the "Street without Joy." Two airborne battalions followed by 10 infantry battalions, three amphibious squadrons, two French Navy commando units, and adequate air support, sought for nearly two weeks to corner VPA Infantry Regiment Number 95. When the latter was finally cornered, one of its companies fought to the death while the rest of the regiment quietly "melted" into the countryside.

On 8 August began the successful air evacuation of the 12,000 men uselessly bottled up in the Na-San airhead, thus relieving the sorely overburdened French transport air force of one of its heavier charges and giving the Red River Delta, for the first time in years, an operational reserve for guerrilla mop-up operations. The evacuation was completed without enemy interference on 11 August.

Anti-guerrilla operations began now on a large scale within the delta. On 16 August began Operation *Tarentaise* in the Bui-Chu area, followed on 28 August by Operation *Claude*—the latter directed against regular VPA Battalion Number 120, which operated on an island outside of the main port of Haiphong—and by Operation *Brochet (Pike)* on 22 September. *Pike* was the largest anti-guerrilla operation ever undertaken within the delta: no less than 17 infantry battalions, six artillery battalions, one combat engineer battalion, and two *Dinassaut* (naval assault boat groups) were engaged in order to wipe out VPA Infantry Regiment Number 42, infiltrated in Hung Yen province, in the centre of the delta. After several severe fights, *Pike* came to a halt on 10 October; Regiment 42 had melted into the countryside, its arms hidden in underground caches.

In an effort to accentuate pressure upon the enemy's rear communications lines through methods similar to those of the Communists themselves, several *Groupes Commandos Mixtes Autochtones (GCMA)*, or Mixed Native Commando Groups made up of French-trained Thai tribesmen and French cadres, began to operate behind enemy lines. They were, however, too weak to influence the outcome of any particular operation, but proved useful for long-range reconnaissance. The most significant operation of such a commando group was the parachuting of 40 Meo tribesmen near Lao Kay on 4 October 1953 in an attempt to destroy VPA communications lines at this vital point of entry into Red China. The operation failed, but as late as October 1955 the Communist authorities in North Vietnam complained over their radio about guerrilla tribesmen who refused to surrender.

However, it became clear to the French High Command that the offensives of the Navarre Plan had thus far failed in their two main objectives: destruction of the enemy's organized battle force and liquidation of the guerrilla threat behind French lines. Under the personal supervision of General Navarre, Operation *Mouette (Seagull)* was launched on 14 October into enemy territory south of the delta in direction of the important




enemy supply centre of Phu Nho Quan. More than six *Groupes Mobiles*, reinforced by tank and amphibious battalions, two French Navy marine units, broke through the Ninh Binh limestone hills in a

pincer movement seeking to encircle the VPA's 320th Infantry Division. VPA Regiments 48 and 64 resisted and even counter-attacked the vastly superior French forces until all vital supplies and matériel had been removed from Phu Nho Quan.

Contrary to the hopes of the French, Communist General Giap did not let himself be goaded to commit the mass of his elite forces for the sake of saving one division. When Phu Nho Quan had become useless, the VPA forces around it merely melted again into the rice paddies and hills, and the French entered a deserted city. On 7 November they returned to the delta perimeter. The 320th, although severely mauled, was still a fighting unit. The last attempt to force Giap to a decision on a terrain not of his own choosing had failed.

It but remained for General Navarre to seek out the enemy in his own lair, the mountain uplands. Two alternate solutions were open to him: either attack the enemy's main bases in the Thai-Nguyen Tuyen-Quang "redoubt" (with the chance of perhaps capturing a good part of the enemy's central government and supplies), or place his troops astride the traditional invasion routes into Laos. In spite of the entreaties of General René Cogny, the able commander of the Red River Delta, and in all likelihood due to non-military considerations,[2] Navarre chose to defend Laos. At the same time he hoped to make this upland stronghold into a sufficiently attractive bait for Giap to commit his elite divisions against it in the hope of taking it.

The bait chosen turned out to be an oblong valley, about 10 miles long and six miles wide, in which the Japanese had built a fairly solid airfield. In pre-French times the little city in the centre of the valley had been near the Chinese border and was, therefore, named "Seat of the Border Prefecture," or in Chinese: Dien Bien Phu.

### The Trap

Contrary to what has been asserted elsewhere, Dien Bien Phu was never conceived as a "large-scale airborne raid."[3] Its entire mission from the outset was to become a "meat-grinder" for the bulk of the Communist battle force far from the vital Red River Delta, while the French Command would concentrate the remainder of its forces upon mopping up the delta without interference by regular enemy troops. In addition, bomber units stationed in Dien Bien Phu could successfully hamper—if not strangle altogether — the ever-increasing flow of Red Chinese supplies reaching the VPA, and the fortress could become a solid anchor for French raider units operating behind lines, in addition to covering northern Laos.

Operation *Castor*—the code name for the Dien Bien Phu attack—began on 20 November 1953 by the dropping of three parachute battalions over the valley. While the operation itself was a tactical surprise, a Communist mortar unit and

[2] The Kingdom of Laos was the first and thus far only Indochinese State to sign an association treaty with France. French political circles felt that northern Laos could not be abandoned to the enemy without also endangering political negotiations with Vietnam and Cambodia.

[3] Lieutenant Colonel Norman E. Martin, "Dien Bien Phu and the Future of Airborne Operations," *Military Review*, June 1956, p. 20.

several rifle companies training in the drop zone at the moment of the landing inflicted losses to the parachute force before withdrawing for the nearby ring of hills.

Thus the first objective of destroying enemy forces in the immediate vicinity of Dien Bien Phu was never achieved. Considering the number of troops available for the operation (seven paratroop battalions, three North African battalions, one Vietnamese and two tribal Thai battalions, one combat engineer battalion, one truck company, ten light tanks, two 75- and 105-mm artillery groups, and four 155-mm medium howitzers), the size of the valley prevented the occupation of the high grounds surrounding the fortress and their inclusion in the defence perimeter. Therefore, all French preparations had to be made in presumably full view of Communist reconnaissance parties.

However, the major miscalculation of the Dien Bien Phu operation seems to have been made by French intelligence estimates, which initially credited the enemy with an artillery composed of 40 to 60 medium howitzers capable of firing 25,000 rounds. However, they apparently gauged Giap in terms of his attack two years earlier on the Na-San airhead, and gave the VPA and its Red Chinese backers, now freed from the drain of the Korean conflict, no credit for improvement. As it turned out, Giap's artillery used an estimated 240 to 350 guns, including Soviet heavy rocket launchers, and fired nearly 350,000 rounds, while the fortress (initially provided with 13 days of supplies and less than 10 days of ammunition and fuel) had to use its ammunition sparingly in the face of ever-increasing losses of air-dropped tonnage to the enemy as the defence perimeter shrunk to less than a few hundred yards in diameter.

An investigation by a commission of French generals as to the causes of the Dien Bien Phu disaster was held recently. Its results are still classified, but as early as 9 June 1954 General Pierre Koenig, then French Minister of Defence, admitted that:

*In fact, from the outset, the enemy artillery dominated ours. . . . It was the same with the [VPA] anti-aircraft artillery, which immediately proved very effective. Under such conditions the drama began with the beginning of the battle. . . .*

However, the drama of Dien Bien Phu was only a relatively more spectacular part of a drama that now played throughout Indochina on a far grander scale: General Vo Nguyen Giap's long-promised general counter-offensive.

### Communist General Counter-offensive

Ever since his first attack upon northern Laos in the spring of 1953, Giap had retained a corps of about four divisions in the Thai highlands and the northern part of central Vietnam, at almost equal distance between the Red River Delta and Luang Prabang. Throughout the rainy season of 1953 (May to October), Giap successfully avoided engaging his main force while Navarre vainly sought to disrupt the Communist timetable or order of battle. In December Giap was ready. Regiment 101 of the 325th

and Regiment 66 of the 304th Infantry Divisions, VPA, drove across the Annamite mountain chain, sweeping ahead of themselves French *Groupe Mobile (G.M.)* Number 2, which had been hurriedly sent out of Hué to meet the new threat and whose battered remains now fell back upon the Laotian side of the mountains to the unfortified airfield of Seno.

Once more Navarre had to disperse his already thinly stretched reserves. Along the tried pattern of Na-San, the Plaine des Jarres and Dien Bien Phu, another fortified airhead was hurriedly created around Seno, and a separate Middle Laos Operational Groupment (GOML) activated on Christmas Day 1953: three parachute battalions from the general reserve—including two Vietnamese battalions which gave an excellent account of themselves—parts of *G.M.* Number 2, all of *G.M.* Number 1 and, a few days later, *G.M.* Number 51, plus assorted air and supply components, were concentrated 400 miles away from the major battlefronts of the Red River Delta and Dien Bien Phu.

On 25 December 1953 the Communists reached the Thai border at Thakhek on the Mekong—the overland lifeline to northern Laos was severed and Indochina cut in two. In the meantime, Regiment 66 of the VPA directly cut across the mountains (see Figure 1), and one by one crushed the smaller French posts strung out along the road from Vietnam to Seno. *G.M.* 51, sent to the rescue, fell into a severe ambush of the jungle variety, and its lead battalion was practically annihilated on 24 January 1954, losing all its vehicles.

Two of the paratroop battalions of the Seno airhead, by valiant stand at Hine Siu, saved Seno from a direct attack, but Giap's major southern Laos forces by-passed the now well-fortified position and melted into the jungle only to reappear 20 days later nearly 200 miles farther south, in hitherto quiet northern Cambodia, while another pincer from the Annamese coast suddenly attacked the lightly defended posts of the Moï Plateau.

In northern Laos the situation had also taken a turn for the worse. The entire 316th VPA Division, after having taken the airhead of Lai Chau 55 miles north of Dien Bien Phu, now again marched upon Luang Prabang in four separate columns, liquidating the small garrisons of Muong Nguoi and Muong Khoua, where the year before a small Laotian garrison under a French captain had fought to the death to delay the Communist rush upon Luang Prabang. This time the 2d Laotian Battalion and the 2d Battalion, 3d Regiment, French Foreign Legion, covered the retreat of the small garrisons toward the new defence perimeter around Luang Prabang, being nearly wiped out in the process. On 13 February 1954 Navarre air-lifted another five battalions, including a parachute battalion, into Luang Prabang, thus further dispersing his forces and adding another crushing burden to the already heavily taxed air infrastructure. Five additional battalions were diverted to Muong Sai, covering the northern approaches to the city.

Giap thus had fully succeeded in making Navarre progressively throw his painfully gathered mo-

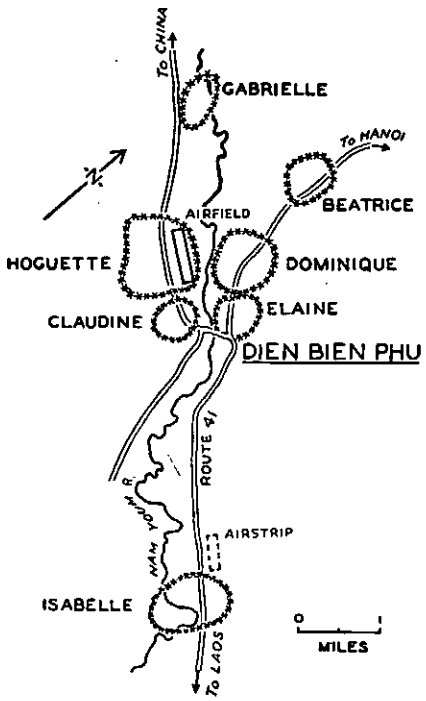
**Typical Delta Country**

bile reserve into the four corners of Indochina in pursuit of a "single-battle decision" that was definitely not part of the pattern of the war fought in Indochina. Yet, in his New Year's message to his troops, Navarre stated:

*Having lost all hopes of winning a decisive battle in the Red River Delta, the Vietminh disperses its forces. . . . However, in that type of warfare, we have the advantage of being able to concentrate our forces rapidly at any essential point. . . . A campaign begun under such conditions can but turn in our favour.*

What happened next cannot be readily explained in terms of military strategy and must await careful examination by future students of military history: with Dien Bien Phu threatened, central Laos invaded, northern Laos under attack, and the Red River Delta more infiltrated than ever, Navarre, on 20 January 1954, launched a combined land and amphibian attack against Tuy-Hoa, a stretch of Communist-held coast in southern Central Vietnam that had been in Communist hands since 1945 and was of no military usefulness to anyone. Operation *Atlante*—as it was called—diverted another 15,000 troops and, after initial successes in the landing areas, soon bogged down in the jungle-covered hills of the roadless hinterland. The time now was ripe for Giap's last round.

Within a week after the beginning of Operation *Atlante,* Giap called off the attack of the 316th Division upon northern Laos and concentrated the bulk of the 304th, 308th, and 312th Infantry Divisions, and all of the 351st "Heavy" Division around Dien Bien Phu. Giap's attack began at 1730 on 13 March 1954 by a heavy artillery barrage upon the two major outlying hill positions covering the central redoubt, which were overrun 48 hours later after several "human sea" attacks.




**The Fortress of Dien Bien Phu**

According to a conservative French weekly, *Paris-Match,* of 12 May 1956, the report of the French military investigation commission states that General de Castries had committed "a grave error" in not attempting to hold the two hill positions at all costs.

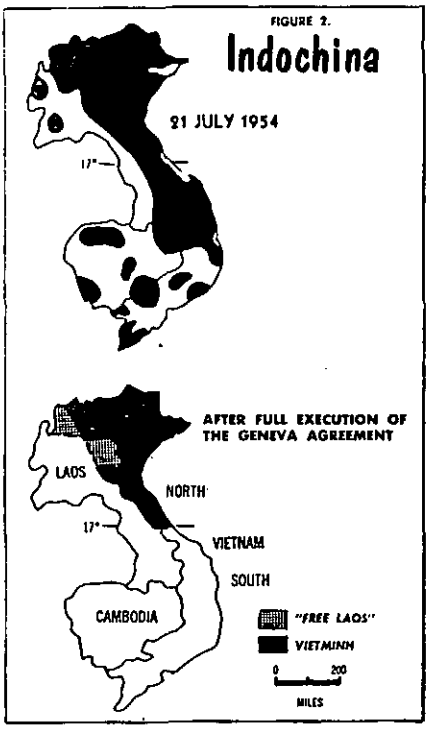
Attempts were made to constitute a link-up force in northern Laos in order to save the doomed fortress. Under the code name of *Jura* and *Condor,* about 5,000 men were assembled under Colonels De Crèvecoeur and Goddard, but the attempt was finally abandoned for the good reason that there were simply not enough reserves left to give the column the necessary strength for at least an even chance of survival against the 40,000 Communist troops concentrated around Dien Bien Phu.

Furthermore, the logistical problem of supplying by air a mobile 12,000-man force over several weeks in addition to supplying Dien Bien Phu with the daily 200 tons it needed was simply insuperable under the then prevailing conditions, the more so as the monsoon weather considerably curtailed air activities throughout the area.

**The End**

The ensuing disaster, although it deprived the French only of about four percent of their total military manpower in Indochina, proved a crippling blow. Navarre's order of the day of 9 May 1954, that Dien Bien Phu's "sacrifice had not been in vain, for . . . it saved Upper Laos from invasion and preserved the [Red River] Delta," is not too convincing, for the Red River Delta, already thoroughly undermined by Communist guerrillas and infiltrated VPA regulars, already had begun to crack even before the arrival of the victorious VPA divisions from Dien Bien Phu. General Paul Ely, the new French commander, who had replaced Navarre, now had to face in the delta area nearly 100,000 Communist regulars and an equal number of guerrillas with less than 80,000 troops of his own. And among the French Union Forces certain Vietnamese units, seeing the signs of the tide, began to disintegrate.

On 30 June 1954 began Operation *Auvergne,* the last of the Indochina war: two armoured and two motorized *G.M.* covered the retreat of all French forces in the southern part of the delta toward a shortened line




south of the Hanoi-Haiphong road, where the maintenance of communications had become a daily battle between French armoured forces and hordes of Communist infantry now armed with modern recoilless weapons.

Hostilities ended on 21 July 1954 after a cease-fire had been negotiated at Geneva, which gave the Democratic Republic of Vietnam control of all of Vietnam north of the 17th parallel (see Figure 2). The eight years of war had cost the French about 10 billion dollars (in addition to 1.1 billion dollars United States aid delivered before the cease-fire), and 106,000 dead or missing, including three generals and 2,000 other officers.

**Conclusions**

1. As General Gavin once said: "Mobility which does not result in concentration for battle is of no use whatever." This is, perhaps, one of the major lessons to be drawn from French tactics in Indochina during the last year of the war. Contrary to the previous years, when a "wall psychology" prevailed, no one can accuse Navarre of immobility. However, the judiciousness of his use of mobility is open to serious question.

2. As a result, although on the whole the French Union Forces were superior in numbers to the enemy, they were numerically inferior to the enemy at *any* given point of attack. One must add, in all fairness, that the VPA could afford to use hundreds of thousands of slave labourers for logistical and communications support where the French had to use field troops.

3. The Indochina war had confirmed once more—the Korean conflict being, by and large, another example—the *limited usefulness of air superiority in wars involving underdeveloped areas.* General L. M. Chassin, the former Commanding General of the French Far Eastern Air Force, gave the problem much thought in his recent book, *Aviation Indochine:*

*The Communists are well placed to unleash small mass wars in Asia as well as in Africa. They would regain once more all their opportunities for victory if we do not take effective counter-measures.*

Chassin asserts that such wars—and Communist operations in Indochina amply bear him out on this—

cannot be won by an atomic arsenal. The West at present, by attempting to rely more and more upon unconventional weapons, simply risks finding itself in a position where it will be technologically incapable of effectively dealing with an enemy whose hordes of ground troops advance single file along jungle paths, supplied by swarms of porters from depots and arms factories installed in mountain caves.

4. The importance of political and social action upon the civilan population, both at home and in the combat area, cannot be stressed enough. At home—and here, the French with regard to Indochina failed to a far greater extent than the Americans with regard to Korea—the objective of such a "limited war" must be made clear in order to obtain the moral and material support necessary to provide the fighting army with all that it needs in terms of manpower and equipment. In the combat area the Western force will always be the "stranger" (sometimes welcome, sometimes not), while the adversary will be on his own home ground. A thoroughgoing psychological warfare programme coupled with effective improvements (good local government, public health, and agricultural reform programmes) must provide the local population with a reason to commit itself effectively to the Western side without feeling that it betrays its own national interests. In Vietnam many of the anti-Communist Nationalists felt that a French victory would merely mean a continuation of French colonial influence, while a Communist victory, no matter at what cost to their personal liberties, would bring some type of national "independence."