# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

CAPT HOWARD

No. 212 January 1967

**AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL**

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The Australian Army Journal is printed and published for the Directorate of Military Training by Renown Press Pty. Ltd., and issued through Base Ordnance Depots on the scale of one per officer, officer of cadets, and cadet under officers.

Contributions which should be addressed to the Editor, Australian Army Journal, Directorate of Military Training, Army Headquarters, Canberra, are invited from all ranks of the Army, Cadet Corps and Reserve of Officers.

$10 will be paid to the author of the best article published in each issue. In addition, annual prizes of $60 and $20 respectively will be awarded to the authors gaining first and second places in the year.

# AUSTRALIAN ARMY JOURNAL

*A periodical review of military literature*

No. 212, JANUARY 1967

## Contents

**KOREA, 1950. 'C' Company, 3 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, firing on enemy troops from a hill south of Pakch'on on 7 November. Early that month the 27 British Commonwealth Brigade had concentrated round Pakch'on, covering the north-western corner of a line guarding the Taenyong River crossing and the Ch'ongch'on River crossing farther south.**

**On the night of the 4th a Chinese force moved east round Pakch'on, threatening to cut the road behind the brigade, and at daylight launched an attack on the supporting US artillery. The artillerymen fought stoutly, killed about 70 enemy and held on to a vital bridge until armoured support and the Argylls arrived. The Argylls attacked a nearby hill commanding the road, first winning then losing it, and then the Australians attacked north towards Pakch'on. They regained the high ground but lost 12 killed and 64 wounded.**

**That evening the Australians occupied the most advanced and exposed position in a defence perimeter taken up by the Commonwealth Brigade astride the Pakch'on road on the first line of hills north of the Ch'ongch'on River. Soon after dark the Chinese struck them in an attack which continued unabated for four hours, and forced a partial withdrawal. By dawn of 6 November, however, the Chinese themselves could be seen withdrawing. Next day Pakch'on was reoccupied. The British estimated that the Chinese lost 300 men to ground fire and 600 to 1000 to air attack during the actions on the day and night of the 5th.**

Photograph: *Australian War Memorial.*

# Chinese Communist Revolutionary Warfare: Theory and Application

*Lieutenant-Colonel R. F. Morison,*
*Royal Australian Infantry*

## INTRODUCTION

CHINESE Communist Revolutionary Warfare is the name given to the politico-military method used by the Communists to seize power in China between 1927 and 1940 and in North Vietnam between about 1941 and 1954 and to pursue the struggle in South Vietnam since 1954. It is a form of struggle evolved to meet particular conditions at a particular stage in history and the brilliance of its success so far stems from this subjectivity. Mao has written that "direction (must) dovetail into realities . . . failure arises when the contradiction between the subjective and the objective is not solved."[1]

Despite the fact that some changes of method and emphasis were necessary and possible when the time came to apply the system to Vietnam, there remain basic characteristics which a prospective target country must exhibit. In this sense the subjectivity of the method limits its scope and may provide the non-Communist world with the key to stemming the tide.

## THE NATURE OF CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

### Origins

Mao did not invent 'people's war' nor 'liberation war' nor was he first to employ guerilla[2] warfare to further these. The American revolution, for example, could be described as a 'liberation war.' Napoleon and Machiavelli both saw that war should be people's war—a matter for the people as a whole—and that there is

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almost no area that could be termed purely military or purely *political*.

Two examples of the essentially guerilla nature of 'people's wars' in the pre-Communist era are to be found in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and the struggle of the Arabs, led by T. E. Lawrence, against the Turks in Arabia during the First World War. Clausewitz, writing in the first half of the 19th century, included among his five general conditions for the successful pursuit of guerilla warfare the stipulation that 'the national character must support the war.' And of course the object of the most intense study by Mao and his disciples was the civil war in Russia. Mao, however, took only what he needed from the past. From the outset he perceived the peculiarities of his own problem. He warned against the incorrect view 'that it is enough to study the laws of war in general . . . copied from abroad. If we copy them and apply them mechanically,' he said, 'without the slightest change in form or content, it will be like whittling down our feet to fit the shoes and we shall be defeated . . . Similarly we shall be defeated if we apply mechanically the experience of the Russian Civil War.'[3] In particular, the Marxist theory of revolution being led by the industrial proletariat was found to be unsuited to Chinese conditions, and after the unsuccessful uprisings of the urban workers in Shanghai in 1927, the industrial proletariat remained a passive factor in the revolutionary struggle. For the remaining 22 years of its duration the agrarian proletariat was the spearhead. This variation led in turn to the emphasis placed by Mao and later by Ho Chi-minh and Vo Nguyen Giap on the building of a sound political foundation in the countryside before any military action was commenced.

Mao's political-military philosophy developed during the 22 years of his struggle against the Kuomintang and the Japanese, but most of it emerged during the first ten years. By 1936 his ideas were fairly clear and it is principally from then that the world began to hear of them. Thenceforward, for a further 13 years, Mao applied his methods unwaveringly and perfected them. The wealth of this experience was made available to the North Vietnamese leaders from 1949 onwards.

### *The Place of War in the Spread of Communism*

Mao's views on war as an instrument of Communist policy are quite definite. 'Every Communist must understand this truth,' he said. 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' Not only

1 Mao Tse-tung, *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War* (1954), p. 14.

2 Guerilla warfare refers to the tactics used in the actual armed clashes during revolutionary warfare It is fatal to a proper understanding of revolutionary warfare to think of it only in terms of guerilla armies laying ambushes and striking like lightning from jungle bases, or even to think of these armies as primarily wielders of weapons.

3 Mao, *Strategic Problems*, p. 3.

does he apply this to internal revolution by saying that 'the toiling masses cannot defeat the armed bourgeois and landlords except by the power of the gun;' he added what was, even in 1938, an ominous note: 'We can even say that the whole world can be remoulded only with the gun.'[4] Mao does claim, however, to be an advocate of the eventual abolition of war, but he maintains that war can be abolished only through war. 'War, this monster of mutual slaughter among mankind,' he says, 'will be finally eliminated through the progress of human society. But there is only one way of eliminating it, namely to oppose war by means of war.' Continuing this line of thought, Mao then joins Grotius in saying that 'there are only two kinds of war in history—just and unjust;' but he does not become involved in the Grotian dilemma of what objective standards to apply in order to decide which wars are just and which unjust. He simply concludes: 'All counter-revolutionary wars are unjust and all revolutionary wars are just.'[5]

These then are the fundamental beliefs of Mao on the necessity for war, which must today be one cause of the growing divergence of opinion between him and the Russians, who, we are led to believe, are no longer fully convinced of the need for continued armed struggle.

It is of interest to note that, after the quotation, 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,' made famous by Denis Warner, Mao added that 'our principle is that the Party commands the gun; the gun shall never be allowed to command the Party.' It seems that even Mao, perceiving that China, in common with all states throughout all times, must depend upon its fighters, still wanted to make sure that they knew their place and kept it. But, be this as it may, it is a very strange remark for him to make in view of other pronouncements, discussed later, on the dominant role the rebel army must play in all aspects of the revolution.

### *War and Politics*

Mao's statements that war is the continuation of politics and that war itself is a political action are too well known to require detailed discussion here, but two related aspects are worthy of comment.

First, the involvement in the war of all the citizens and all aspects of the national life. This is fundamental. Mao calls for 'mobilization of the people . . . unity of the army and the people . . . cultural mobilization . . . universal and thorough-going political mobilization' and, most interesting at the present moment, for 'efforts to win the support of international forces and of the peoples of the enemy's country.'[6] He complained in 1938 that, even then, 'people in remote regions who cannot hear the guns, lead a tranquil life . . .'

4 Mao, concluding remarks at the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee, Nov 1938.
5 Mao, *Strategic Problems*, p. 6.
6 Mao, *On the Protracted War* (1954), p. 71.

Second, the involvement of the army in politics. Brigadier-General Griffith, in his introduction to some collected writings of Mao on guerilla warfare, wrote that: 'In the USA we go to considerable trouble to keep soldiers out of politics and even more to keep politics out of soldiers. Guerillas do exactly the opposite. Their most important job is to win over the people, so they spend a great deal of time in organization, instruction, agitation and propaganda.'[7] This is pure Mao. One of his most emphatic 'erroneous conceptions,' contained in a resolution of a Red Army Communist Party Conference in 1928, included a warning against 'the purely military viewpoint' which manifests itself as follows:

> To regard the task of the Red Army as merely fighting; not to understand that the significance of the tasks of the Chinese Red Army lies in the fact that it is an armed group for carrying out political tasks of a class nature . . . The Army must not merely fight, it should also shoulder such important tasks as agitating among the masses, organizing them, arming them and helping them to set up political power . . . apart from such objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army the reason for its existence.

It is thus clear that military and political action are to be completely integrated and complementary. In fact the distinction between the two becomes blurred as one absorbs Mao.

### *Its Characteristics and Pre-requisites*

Mao listed four characteristics of the revolutionary war in China:

- China was a *vast semi-colonial country, unevenly developed both politically and economically* and with a frail capitalist economy co-existing with a semi-feudal economy.
- The great strength of the enemy. (The Kuomintang and later the Japanese had preponderant military strength, political control and control over communications.)
- The Red Army was weak and small and was poorly equipped.
- *The Communist Party's leadership* and *the agrarian revolution.*

At first glance these may not appear to be very illuminating but on examination they turn out to be a good starting-point for determining under what conditions Mao would see revolutionary warfare being successfully initiated. Looking particularly at the parts italicized above, a list can be built up something like this:

- Favourable operational terrain with space to operate, or a sanctuary.
- Presence of foreign influence curtailing local political development.
- Economic inequality.

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7 Brig-Gen Samuel B. Griffith, USMC (Ret), introduction to *Mao Tse-tung on Guerilla Warfare* (1961), p. 8.

- A unified communist organization.
- Strong (communist) leadership with an appealing programme.
- The nucleus, at least, of a military force.
- Conditions favourable to an agrarian revolution as a means of winning the support of the peasantry.
- Time to fight a protracted war.

Because these were the conditions under which Mao fought the war in China from which his theories emerged, we can probably say that his form of revolutionary warfare can only be applied with any assurance of success in another country if these conditions can be met in the main.

### *Its Flexibility*

As mentioned Mao was insistent on the subjective nature of revolutionary war. 'One method,' he said, 'to obtain wisdom [for the conduct of the war] is to familiarize ourselves with all aspects of the enemy's situation as well as our own, to discover the laws of the actions of both sides and to take these laws into account in our own actions.'[8]

He is saying that up to a point the principles for solving a situation can be deduced from examination of the situation. There must, however, clearly be a limit to this if 'Chinese Communist Revolutionary Warfare' is to have any constant meaning. At some stage the key principles must come into play if, as Mao has said, 'we can raise all important problems of war on operations to a higher level of principle and solve them.'[9] If Mao's system is to be followed there must be a limit to the variations that can be made in it. Nevertheless, both the Indo-China and South Vietnam wars have provided clear warning that we should not expect the rigid repetition of exactly the same detailed pattern in all situations. This would be as serious as to fail to discern any repeating pattern at all.

Allied with this aspect of flexibility or subjectivity is Mao's warning to avoid becoming too involved in the details of a situation. The main characteristics of the situation determine its nature and the nature of its solution. The remedy cannot be tailored to fit every minor factor or influence. According to Mao:

> The commander at any level should centre his attention on the most important and most decisively significant problem or action in the whole situation he is handling and not on other problems or actions . . . In a word, the only principle is to centre our attention on the important links which have a bearing on the whole situation.[10]

8 Mao, *Strategic Problems*, p. 13.
9 *Strategic Problems*, p. 13.
10 Mao, *Strategic Problems*, p. 10.

### *Organization of the Revolutionary Forces*

A hierarchy of forces must be established to utilize all the available manpower and womanpower in the way for which it is best suited. 'The civil population must be organized into mass organizations of workers, peasants, youth, women, children and members of free professions. [Local] leaders should [continually] create more guerilla units, converting them progressively into regional troops and finally into regular forces.'[11]

Thus we see that the four elements are:

1. The population.
2. Popular forces (or village guerillas).
3. Regional forces.
4. Regular forces.

The population provides 'the ocean in which the fish (the fighters) swim.' They must be thoroughly politically indoctrinated and their support must be enlisted for the provision of food, information and recruits for the guerillas. There are stories from South Vietnam of this 'third echelon' which is available to a unit to build its fortifications and camps, to feed it, and, when the time comes, to remove its stores to another area where a new, locally-assembled support party has already built a camp and stocked it with food.

*The Popular Forces,* or village guerillas in current Western counter-insurgency terminology, are the lowest level of fighters. They operate only in the area of their own village, protecting it, carrying out minor offensive tasks and supporting operations by Regional or Regular troops in their vicinity. They are on a low priority for arms. Throughout the Chinese and North Vietnamese revolutions and even up to the present in the South some have carried hand-wielded weapons only. They fight on a part-time basis, hiding their arms and resuming their normal activities between duties.

*The Regional Forces* are recruited from among the better trained of the Popular Forces. They are full-time troops organized into companies, battalions and sometimes regiments on a territorial basis. They carry out offensive and defensive operations within their territory, either independently or in co-ordination with regular forces.

*The Regular Forces* are recruited from among the best Regionals and are conventionally organized forces operating country-wide as the situation requires. As the struggle progresses, so their training, arms and equipment improve, their organization progresses into divisional or higher formations and they develop the capability to carry out mobile defensive or offensive operations on equal terms with the enemy army.

11 Denis Warner, *Out of the Gun* (1956), p. 36.

This system is most economical in that it ensures the availability of an appropriate element for any task to be undertaken. It ensures that only those who are well trained and properly politically oriented reach the higher levels, but at the same time ensures a steady flow of reinforcements to those levels.

### *The Course of Revolutionary War*

The phases of revolutionary warfare which emerge from Mao's writings are commonly referred to as: (1) the Passive Phase; (2) the Strategic Defensive; (3) Active Resistance; (4) the Counter-Offensive. Another scheme describes the phases as: (1) Consolidation; (2) Progressive Expansion; (3) Decision.[12] In the latter scheme 'Progressive Expansion' would include Phases 2 and 3 of the first list. A similar three-phase scheme (Passive Phase, Active Phase, Counter-offensive) is in common use for counter-insurgency purposes, but I believe that Mao saw a distinct change from active defence to active offence which can be overlooked unless the analysis is carried out on the four-phase basis.

Before examining the contents of each phase of the four phase scheme, it should be borne in mind that the transition from one phase to the next need not be at any discernible point. The phases will merge, and may change at different times in different parts of the country—except that a greater degree of co-ordination and deliberation can be expected when the counter-offensive is launched.

The *Passive Phase* is used for the widespread political indoctrination of the masses and the setting up of bases in isolated and difficult terrain. Guerilla warfare is sporadic and only carried on to the extent necessary to prevent enemy interference in the other processes. Clandestine activities predominate. Volunteers are trained and indoctrinated and political agents sent forth. The people in areas round the bases are persuaded to give support with food, information and recruits. In the political field, united front tactics may still be employed.

During the *Strategic Defensive* direct action assumes ever-increasing importance and progressive expansion, while weakening the enemy, is the keynote. Warner describes this as 'the classic . . . policy of luring the enemy deep into the bases, while containing and harassing enemy columns with the supplementary forces' (i.e., the Regional and Popular forces); 'the main force should be used to attack a single enemy column by springing surprise attacks on it, principally when it is on the move: hence the massive ambush.'[13]

Sabotage and terrorism increase. Collaborators and reactionaries are liquidated. Attacks are mounted on vulnerable military and police columns and outposts to weaken the enemy physically and psychologically and also to procure arms, ammunition and other

12 Griffith, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerilla Warfare*, p. 20.
13 Warner, *Out of the Gun*, p. 37.

essential materials, such as medical supplies and radios. So the 'liberated' area expands and the regular forces, in particular, are built up within the enlarged base areas.

The emphasis in the Strategical Defensive Phase is still on preservation. This will often necessitate periods of restraint and retreat in the face of the enemy forces, and Mao has found it necessary to defend the dignity of such actions in ideological terms. 'The Strategic Defence,' he wrote, 'not only demoralizes armies of countries where class contradictions are sharp and the war benefits only the reactionary ruling strata or the reactionary groups in power. Our case is different.' In these early days (1936) he also found it necessary to defend this tactic as not being contradictory to Marx. 'Marx,' he continued, '. . . in saying that once an uprising is started there must not be a moment's pause, meant only that [we] must not allow reactionary classes any chance to retain or recover their political power.'[14]

*Active Resistance* is a continuation of the Strategic Defensive but regular troops have now become strong enough to conduct mobile operations to spread the war and disperse the enemy. The guerilla war is intensified and conditions are prepared for the counter-offensive.

The *Counter-Offensive* effects the destruction of the enemy forces. It is conducted as a conventional campaign, and carefully planned thrusts are mounted from the liberated areas to divide the enemy forces and then to encircle and annihilate them. At the same time widespread guerilla actions flare up in the enemy's rear areas.

Mao believed that this phase could afford no setbacks, right from the first battle. It was therefore fundamental that the counter-offensive should not be launched until conditions were right, no matter how protracted this caused the previous phases to be. He said it must not be launched until at least some and preferably all of the following conditions prevailed:

- The people give active support.
- The terrain is favourable.
- The main force of the revolutionary army is completely developed.
- The weak spots of the enemy are discovered.
- The enemy is worn out both physically and morally.
- The enemy is induced to commit mistakes.

Another point worth remembering in association with the phases is the protracted nature of the war. As mentioned, there is no set period for each phase. Each will merge into the next as conditions

14 Mao, *Strategic Problems*, p. 56.

permit and according to the rate of success. This philosophical treatment of the time factor is one of the main characteristics of Chinese Communist Revolutionary Warfare. If the principles are followed it will succeed eventually, no matter what pauses or withdrawals are necessary. Even the reversion to a previous phase as a temporary measure would apparently be acceptable. Mao himself accounts none of these things as 'failure.' 'Failure,' he said, 'is only when a campaign against an enemy encirclement and annihilation is unsuccessful, and this is only a partial and temporary one at that. The loss of external bases, and the shift of the army [here he must have had the "Long March" in mind] even the loss of 90 per cent. of the bases, or of the armed forces, or of the party membership is only a partial failure.'[15]

*Negotiations* are a tactic which can be applied in any phase. In the three earlier phases they, or the prospect of them, are used to delay, confuse and demoralize the enemy and perhaps to wring some concessions from him which will allow greater freedom to go on preparing the war. In the counter-offensive stage they can be employed for the same purpose, but they will also be offered—as they were both to the Kuomintang and the French—as a means of surrender before complete annihilation. It suits the Communists to end the war early on their terms, so that they can go ahead and complete the establishment of a Communist state.

### *Military Tactics*

At least up to the counter-offensive phase, a study of the actual fighting methods used by Chinese Communist revolutionary armies involves a study of guerilla warfare. As this is not peculiarly Maoist nor even peculiarly communist it is not proposed to discuss it at length here.

In general it is the technique employed throughout history by small, weak forces to combat a larger and better-equipped enemy. It employs hit-and-run tactics, preferably in the enemy's rear or on his flanks. Its proponents must deny themselves elaborate weapons and an elaborate logistics system and must capitalize on their mobility and freedom from security responsibilities.

Although Mao did not invent guerilla warfare, he did adapt it to his purpose. The set of rules quoted below, which are based on a list written by him, sum up very well his views on the actual fighting. They come from a report made by Mao in 1947 to the Red Army and described by him as 'The Military Principles of the Chinese Red Army.'[16]

- Attack dispersed and isolated enemy forces first.

15 Mao, *Strategic Problems*, p. 44.
16 Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (1961), pp. 61-2.

- Take extensive rural areas and the small and medium cities first and take the big cities later.
- The wiping out of the enemy strength is the main objective, rather than the seizure and holding of territory.
- Concentrate a superior force in every battle and strive to wipe out the enemy force thoroughly. (Forces 2, 3, 4 and sometimes 5 or 6 times those of the enemy are recommended.)
- Fight no battle unprepared.
- Fight no battle if we are not sure of victory.
- Permit the enemy no breathing space. Fight successive battles without pause (periods of rest between battles should not be very long and should be used to train and consolidate the troops).
- Replenish our strength with the arms and manpower of the enemy. (Our army's main sources of manpower and material are at the front.)
- In mobile warfare: *Resolutely* seize all *weakly fortified* points and cities. At opportune moments seize all *moderately defended* points. *When conditions are ripe* seize *strongly defended points.*

## THE WAR IN FRENCH INDO-CHINA

### China moves on

After his victory over Chiang Kai-shek, Mao began to think in terms of capturing the whole of Asia for the Communists. The pattern that would be followed in other countries was stated clearly enough by Liu Shao-chi, speaking for Mao at the 'Australasian Trade Unions' Conference' in Peking in November, 1949.

The nation-wide united front (he said) must be led by and built around the working class and its party, the Communist Party, with the latter as its centre. It must not be led by the wavering and compromising national bourgeoisie, or the petty bourgeoisie. It is necessary to build up through long struggles the Communist Party which is armed with the theory of Marxism and Leninism, which understands strategy and tactics. It is necessary to set up a national liberation army which is led by the Communist Party and is powerful and skilful. It is necessary to set up the bases on which the liberation army relies for its activities and to make the mass struggles in the enemy-controlled area and the armed struggles coordinate with each other. Armed struggle can and must be the main force in the people's liberation struggle in many colonial and semi-colonial countries. Armed struggle is to be carried on in the countryside while in the enemy-controlled cities and areas other legal and illegal mass struggles should be conducted to coordinate with it.

Here was a rampant and fiery dogma, straining for exercise, and Mao could have found no better land in which to demonstrate his magic than Indo-China, whose revolution was at that stage badly in need of a shot in the arm.

### *Indo-China as a Target*

How did Mao's four main characteristics of the war in China apply to Indo-China?

- It was a colonial country, unevenly developed, and although only one-thirteenth the size of China and containing one-twentieth its population it did contain large, sparsely populated areas to afford shelter for irregular forces.
- There were strong French forces stationed on its territory.
- The Indo-Chinese were initially unable to put into the field a modern army.
- There was Communist Party leadership with the support of the people.[17]

Here was a typical colonial economy, exploited for the benefit of the colonizing country. The indigenous people were kept socially inferior and politically repressed. There were therefore, *prima facie*, ideal conditions for the system to be applied.

A fascinating study has been done by Brigadier-General Griffith on the prospects for ultimate success of revolutionary war in Indo-China. Using slightly different determinants from those listed earlier in this paper, he has set out comparative ratings of the Ho Chi-minh faction and the French as an impartial analyst might have seen the situation within a year of the final debacle.[18] Here is his table:

| *Determinants* | *Ho Chi-minh* | | *French* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appeal of programme | Dynamic | 7 | No programme | 0 |
| Popular support | Growing | 7 | Diminishing | 3 |
| Quality of leadership | Good | 7 | Good | 7 |
| Quality of troops | Good—improving | 6 | Very good | 7 |
| Military efficiency in guerilla situations | Very good | 8 | Good | 6 |
| Internal unity | Excellent | 8 | Excellent | 8 |
| Equipment | Fair, but improving (from China and the French) | 7 | Good | 9 |
| Operational terrain | Favourable | 10 | Unfavourable | 5 |
| Operational area communications | Favourable | 10 | Unfavourable | 5 |
| Sanctuary | Available in China | 8 | Remainder of Indo-China | 10 |
| | | 78 | | 60 |

17 G. K. Tanham, *Communist Revolutionary Warfare — The Viet Minh in Indo-China* (1961), p. 11.
18 Griffith, pp. 28-30.

Although the short time before the end on which this assessment is based perhaps weakens the argument that Indo-China was, from the start, fertile ground, practically the same result, I believe, would be achieved if a similar exerecise were carried out from the standpoint of, say, 1950.

The French no doubt appreciated much of this but had reason to be confident, at least until 1950, that they could hold the country by military means alone. This they were able to do, until Chinese support to the rebels began in earnest in 1950, and by then it was too late.

### *The Beginnings of War in Indo-China*

Before Communist China became able and willing to throw her whole weight behind the war against the French in Indo-China the revolution was already being pursued generally along Maoist lines. The two principal figures were Ho Chi-minh and Vo Nguyen Giap.

Ho was born in Annam between 1890 and 1892, probably under the name of Nguyen Van Thanh, although he used at least a dozen aliases during his long career as a Communist agent.[19] Between about 1911 and 1940 he lived abroad, working orginally for the cause of Vietnamese but, gradually, more and more for the cause of International Communism, in England, the United States, France, the Soviet Union, China, Germany, Thailand and Hong Kong.

In 1925 in Canton, China, Ho founded the Annamite (or Vietnam) Revolutionary Youth Association, the embryo of the Communist party which was to be formed five years later.[20] Immediately thereafter he set to work to train Vietnamese cadres, many of whom were infiltrated back into Indo-China over the next few years to agitate against the French. Under some pressure from the Comintern to speed things up, he called a meeting in Hong Kong in January 1930, at which he successfully unified the several nationalist and Communist groups working for Vietnamese independence under the banner of the Vietnamese Communist Party, which was to be renamed the Indo-Chinese Communist Party later in the same year.

The first serious uprising against the French also occurred in 1930, but the Communists, realizing that they were premature, held aloof from the mutiny at Yen Bay in February and used the Nghe-An food riots in July merely to provide the young party with revolutionary experience.[21] During the early 'thirties, while the war in China was increasing in intensity, Indo-China was relatively quiet, but towards the end of the decade the tempo began to rise. In December, 1940, Ho returned to Vietnamese soil for the first time in about 30 years. Soon afterwards, at a meeting at Pac-Bo in the border province

19 Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (1963), p. 83.
20 Malcolm D. Kennedy, *A Short History of Communism in Asia* (1957), p. 196.
21 Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, p. 96.

of Cao Bang on May 19, 1941, the front organization of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, the Viet Minh (or Viet-Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi—the League for the Independence of Vietnam) was born.[22]

The years from then until 1946 were to demonstrate Ho's nimbleness and opportunism in seeking support for his movement from even the most ideologically tainted quarters. 'For the time being he discarded all Communist trappings—and emphasis was laid on nationalism alone.'[23] He co-operated in turn with an anti-Communist warlord, the American Office of Strategic Services in South China, and even advocated co-operation with the French for a period in 1945. But, as shall be seen, all these pretences fell away when it was time to get down to business in earnest.

Ho Chi Minh was considered by some a nationalist first and a Communist second, almost until the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

> The long-held theory (writes Warner) that Ho was a nationalist and not a communist dates from his Canton days. In a speech in 1927 he said that no one would understand communism in Indo-China. This was widely taken to mean that he was not for communism—especially since his Revolutionary Youth Movement, though provided with Russian funds, was nationalist and Marxist but not communist.[24]

The answer seems to be simply that right through to the end of the Passive Phase, nationalist and united front tactics are a normal means of avoiding the concentration of enemy repression on the growing Communist elements. They are also a prime means of broadening popular appeal and support. Bernard Fall also has something to say about the theory that Ho's nationalism prevents him being a true Communist.

> Ho has always been a dedicated communist with Vietnamese reactions (he declares), just as Gomulka is a Polish communist or Krushchev a Russian communist. This means that Ho is probably equipped with an instinctive Vietnamese fear of Chinese domination (no matter what its colour) just as most observers agree that to Krushchev any German might be slightly suspect. Thus, all his life, Ho has used the nationalist catch-phrases, the references to traditional heroes and values — but without ever losing sight of his party's goals. The fact that this was not understood by naive outsiders was certainly not his fault; his career as a communist has been on record since 1920.[25]

Although Ho Chi-minh was the acknowledged force behind the Indo-China revolution he was not its most prominent theoretician—this title was generally bestowed on Dang Xuan Khu, better known as Truong Chinh—nor its most prominent leader in the military field —Vo Nguyen Giap fills that role. It has been said of Ho: 'He is neither an innovator like Mao nor a ruthless dictator like Stalin, neither a great thinker nor a man of action. Mao led his men

22 *The Two Vietnams*, p. 98
23 *The Two Vietnams*, p. 100
24 Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian* (1964), p. 43.
25 Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, pp. 98-9.

against Chiang Kai-shek; Ho has never fired a shot in action nor given a command in battle.'[26]

*Vo Nguyen Giap, who is still the commander of the North Viet*namese army, adapted the Maoist formula to the war in Indo-China and planned and directed that war. He formulated whatever new principles and techniques were added thereby to the theory and practice of Communist revolutionary warfare. Giap was named Secretary-General when the Viet Minh was formed in 1941 and it was he who in December, 1944, with the assistance of the American OSS, created the first platoon of the Viet Minh Army in the mountains of Cao Bang. (He had several thousand within weeks.) He is the author of numerous books and has thoroughly absorbed and analysed the Maoist theories. To his thorough knowledge of the actual conduct of the war can be ascribed a large proportion of the success of the revolution.

Giap was more realistic and violent than Ho and as the defeat of the Japanese occupiers drew closer in 1945, he made it clear by words and actions that he saw no possibility of reaching any lasting agreement with the French. While Ho was in Paris from June 1945, negotiating with the French Government, Giap worked frantically to build up his army in men and equipment, to set up guerilla bases, and to establish the framework for political mobilization of the population. He knew his Phase 1 and pursued it in classic fashion.

By the time Ho returned from Paris in August 1945, disillusioned and with only a worthless agreement to show his people, Giap had organized the equivalent of guerilla and regional units in every district, and resistance committees in every province. He had purchased arms from a wide variety of sources and had built up a regular army of well over 30,000 men. On 29 August units of this army entered Hanoi. That month also, the People's Congress of the Communist Party met in the presence of Ho himself and a Provisional Government of Vietnam was appointed. With the surrender of the Japanese the puppet government of Emperor Bao Dai collapsed and on 2 September, 1945, Ho proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam. Then in November, to broaden the base of his popular support, he dissolved the Indo-Chinese Communist Party and held elections as a nationalist. These resulted in a sweeping victory for Ho.

The Chinese Nationalists, who had accepted the Japanese surrender in North Vietnam, had handed control back to the French, and an uneasy truce amid growing hostility prevailed until 23 November, 1946, when any hopes for reconciliation were shattered by the senseless and cruel bombardment by the French of the Vietnamese section of Haiphong.

26 Warner, p. 39.

Up to this time and even for some time afterwards, there were probably enough true nationalists in Vietnam with whom the French could have allied themselves against the growing threat. But the French systematically destroyed these forces by their actions and by clear indications that any real form of independence was out of the question. By the end of 1946 it was clear that the human factors in Mao's 'characteristic' were going to remain present. The success of the war was probably at least 25 per cent. assured from then on. 'To have under-rated the force of Nationalist feelings and to have disregarded all opportunities for genuine compromise may be called the basic French mistake in Indo-China.'[27]

In December 1946, Ho's government fled Hanoi and established itself in the mountains; that month a call was made for a general uprising against the French to begin on the 19th.

### *War in Earnest*

The brief campaign conducted by Giap in December 1946 and early 1947 was a failure. His forces were inexperienced in guerilla warfare and exposed themselves too often to the superior fire-power of the French. Giap learnt much from that period. Among other things he probably learnt that the transitions from phase to phase cannot be forced. As it turned out it was to take about another three years before the Passive Phase was to be fully transformed politically and militarily into the Strategic Defensive, whereas some of the rash attacks in the early days had more the flavour of Active Resistance, the penultimate phase. Giap learnt from this setback but in 1950 made a similar mistake when it came to forecasting the proper time for the final phase.

By the end of 1949 Phase 2 was well-established and guerilla warfare, applying the classic tactics of drawing in and ambushing enemy forces and wiping out small posts, had already caused 100,000 casualties to the French. The war, however, was proceeding very slowly and the French still had a good chance of winning. But, about this time, Mao was finally victorious in China, and the Chinese Communist Armies were on the northern borders of Indo-China. Mao already, in July of that year, had issued a statement 'On People's Democratic Dictatorship' in which he promised full support to such revolutions as Ho's, and, as mentioned, Liu Shao-chi had presented Mao's blueprint for wars of national liberation at the 'Australasian Trade Unions' Conference' in Peking in November.

This was a turning point for Ho and Giap and they never looked back. General Ho Lung, one of Mao's greatest war leaders, took a mission to Ho's headquarters to discuss assistance and Giap went to Peking for discussions. The Maoist formula was followed precisely thenceforward. From early 1950 thousands of Viet Minh went to

27 Tanham, *Communist Revolutionary Warfare*, p. 7.

Kwangtung in China for training and arms poured south over the border.

The whole machine was tightened up and each element—peasants, guerillas, regionals and regulars—made to carry out its proper function. It was now fully a party war and the party was in control. Discipline in the Regular Army was tightened up and wasteful tactics eliminated. For example, terrorism in the cities was stopped as futile and the effort concentrated on the countryside in accordance with Mao's teaching. By the summer of 1950 the French were already turning more and more to defensive warfare; then in September there poured from China the Kwangtung trained regulars, three divisions of them.[28]

The main requirement for Phase 3 (Active Resistance)—good and strong regular troops—was now available and this phase could now be fully consolidated. In other words, the move from Strategic Defensive to the Strategic Offensive was completely possible.

Giap, however, had still not learned thoroughly Mao's lesson on patience and the necessity for consolidation of each phase. After smashing the French posts near the northern border, he began a lightning campaign in October 1950 to drive into the Red River delta, aimed at Hanoi. This had all the marks of Phase 4 (Counter-Offensive) and it soon became obvious even to Giap that the French had not yet been sufficiently weakened for such a stroke. After three days of battle in the area of Vinh Yen, in which the French, then under General de Lattre de Tassigny, drenched the Viet Minh with napalm from the air, Giap dispersed his forces and withdrew, beaten but not destroyed.

The principal results of this failure on Giap's part seem to be first that he afterwards held more firmly than ever to his Mao, and second that the French, flushed with success, went on further to improve their fixed defences and increase their reliance on the air power and heavy weapons which were to avail them little in the final stages. This in turn led to further abuses of the people by the indiscriminate use of such weapons and this turned the population even further towards the guerillas. Vinh Yen can probably be described as a Pyrrhic victory for the French.

Giap then resumed his Phase 3 activities of consolidating his hold on the countryside. In the terms of Mao's 'Military Principles of the Chinese Red Army,' he 'resolutely seized all weakly fortified points—and at opportune moments seized all moderately defended points' while waiting for 'conditions to ripen' for the 'seizure of strongly defended points.'

On the political side, it was time to drop the nationalist pretext. Thus in March 1951, the Indo-Chinese Communist Party re-emerged

28 Warner, *Out of the Gun*, p. 141. It is also interesting that a large Chinese military mission had begun to grow at Giap's headquarters. By the end of the war this had grown to about 5,000.

as the Lao Dong Party and so it remains today.

During the remainder of 1951 the Viet Minh advanced slowly and the French withdrew. Giap took no risks, accepting tactical withdrawal on occasions,[29] but never again losing the initiative. 'He fought no battle unprepared nor unless he was sure of victory.' His tactics during this period were practically faultless, and examples of the application of all Mao's principles can be found in them.

It was the same story in 1952. During that year the Viet Minh eliminated more and more posts in the Delta itself until by September the Delta was more in their hands than in those of the French.

It is worth noting that by now the United States was meeting one-third the cost of the war, which was immense. China was thus draining two powerful Western countries at very little manpower cost to herself and at relatively small material cost as most of the weapons and equipment she was sending to Vietnam were of patterns being discarded by the Red Army.

The Viet Minh offensive westward in the autumn of 1952 was a rehearsal for the mobile counter-offensive which, in the event, they did not have to mount. Between September and December 1952, three regular divisions fell on the remaining French posts west of the Delta and swept on through the north-east into Northern Laos and on through the Plain of Jarres to threaten Luang Prabang and even Vientiane. Having established Prince Souphanouvong as head of a Pathet Lao government at Sam Neua they withdrew again.

Within North Vietnam, this thrust completed the isolation by land of the remaining French posts in the mountains from those in the Delta. Among the remaining mountain posts was Dien Bien Phu which was to play a vital part in the offensive planned by General Henri Navarre for the autumn and winter, to destroy the Viet Minh bases in the Delta and then move north into the mountains. Dien Bien Phu was built up towards the end of 1953, both as a position to prevent Viet Minh access to Laos and as an important base for the northern offensive.

Giap, however, knew the grave risk of meeting the French challenge in the Delta and while continuing to occupy the French there he wiped out all the French posts in the north-west other than Dien Bien Phu, and prepared for a massive and lengthy siege of that unfortunate place.

There was nothing unorthodox, or to his mind, unduly risky in this. Mao had said that during Active Resistance positioned warfare had to be combined with mobile warfare. He had the French forces split, and to confuse them still further, and draw their reserves, he launched preparatory offensives into Central Vietnam by sea and

29 Late in 1951 the French recaptured Hoa Binh, west of the delta, thereby severing the Viet Minh north-south route but the Viet Minh retook it again in Jan 52.

by land through Laos. He also seized Thakhek on the Mekong River in central Laos and again threatened Luang Prabang in the north.

Meanwhile field and anti-aircraft artillery and ammunition and supplies of all kinds poured from China across country and down the tracks and roads which Giap was frantically building towards Dien Bien Phu. In Janary 1954, the conference at Geneva was scheduled for April so that the Viet Minh needed an all-out victory before then. Mao had always approved negotiations—particularly during the final phases—but they must always be entered from a position of strength.

The story of Dien Bien Phu is well known. The French throughout were unable to supply or reinforce it by land and the Viet Minh first whittled away at the edges until they could bring field gun and anti-aircraft fire to bear on the airstrip. From then on the French could not supply it by air; neither could they evacuate their wounded nor withdraw their force. The garrison had its last radio contact with Hanoi on 7 May 1954, and by then, or over the next few days, the Viet Minh captured or killed 16,200 French Union troops. The Indo-China phase of the Geneva Conference opened next morning and the political success of the battle of Dien Bien Phu was assured, even though its military effects were far from catastrophic. The French lost only one-fifteenth of their force in Indo-China but the political repercussions were so great that they gave up. Here was a classic example by the Viet Minh of the subordination of military considerations to political ends.[30] On 21 July 1954, the war ended. Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel and Communist rule engulfed the northern half.

### *Observations on the Indo-China War*

Let us look back quickly at some of the headings under which we examined the principles of Chinese Communist Revolutionary Warfare and see how the Indo-China War measured up.

The four characteristics of China's Revolutionary War were repeated almost exactly. There was thus a *prima facie* chance of success from the outset. Some observers think it possible that had the French modified their colonial attitude in time, sufficient strong and real nationalist strength was available to prevent the communists taking hold of the people. A pointer to this may be the fact that, in the north, there were about 1,250,000 devout Catholics who were strongly anti-communist. About 750,000 of them got out ahead of the communists but the remainder were prevented by force from doing so. The French could only repress nationalist feelings, communist or otherwise; they took no preventive action and the whole nationalist movement was ripe for communist take-over in the 1940s. However, it was only after Ho had gained sufficient power that he reformed the Communist (Lao Dong) Party and openly declared his ties with the communist bloc.

30 Tanham, p. 31.

The flexibility of the system, and its essential subjectivity, were demonstrated principally by, first, the use of haven in China while base areas were cleared within Vietnam. There were very few completely remote areas for the initial concentrations. This and the forcing of an end to the war by political means before military victory was complete, together with the fact that the last and most vital campaign fought was one of positional and not mobile warfare show that quite major variations can occur within the basic framework as the situation demands.

There is some doubt as to whether Phase 4 (Counter-Offensive) was ever launched in Indo-China. If it was, it probably included only the thrusts into Laos and Central Vietnam early in 1954 and Dien Bien Phu itself. The autumn offensive of 1952 was too widely separated in time from these final battles to comply with Mao's admonition that once launched a counter-offensive must not pause. In fact Giap's view of the counter-offensive was slightly different from Mao's. He saw in it several subdivisions with set-piece battles only in the last. This of course means only that he saw the Active Resistance Phase merging into the Counter-Offensive at an earlier stage. Mao saw one relatively short, sharp prepared stroke by forces matching the enemy in all respects. Perhaps it is because the Viet Minh never reached the strength required to permit them to match the French as the Red Army had matched Chiang Kai-shek that Giap was forced to effect his final stroke by more subtle means.

In general terms the Indo-China War added little to the military tactics of revolutionary war, although Giap often stressed different rules from Mao. For example, he emphasized the negation of the enemy's weapons, concealment and protection from the air and widespread offensive action against attacking aircraft. The extensive tunnelling methods now practised by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in South Vietnam were developed during the war in the North.

In summary, the locale and the course of the war in the North fitted the Maoist pattern very closely, and the Viet Minh were never seriously at a loss in following the formula. Internal conditions were such that the support of the people was virtually handed over to them; and on the military side, the conventional, roadbound mobile warfare of the French combined with their over-use of fixed defences and ground-holding tactics provided precisely the right conditions for guerilla warfare to operate.

## *THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM*

### *Conditions in the South*

After the fall of Dien Bien Phu signalled the end of French dominance in Vietnam, the communists were not in power in the South and were not in a position to seize it. Insurgency had never progressed as well there as in the North, due among other things to

its distance from the supply source in China, the ubiquitous French supervision of the countryside and to the great power—political, religious and military—of the various sects.

The French had promised independence to the country in an agreement signed in Paris on 4 June 1954, but Emperor Bao-Dai had still to get this promise converted to reality and at the same time to unify and organize his country. To execute both of these requirements he brought back from four years exile abroad a strong and energetic Vietnamese nationalist named Ngo Dinh Diem and gave him full powers pending the proclamation of a democratic constitution.

Diem set about reorganizing the country in a number of ways, some commendable. For example some of his plans for rural development and land reform were far-sighted (but he delayed their initiation too long while he consolidated his own power); but some played into the hands of the communists. He smashed the military power of the turbulent though valuable sects and in place of the French administration established a regime of repression, regimentation, police supervision, patronage and nepotism. The imposition of Personalism, the official Ngo Dinh ideology, the Confucian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist philosophy created by Nhu,[31] mocked the principle of freedom as an alternative to Communism.'[32]

For the first year or so, the communist threat was overlooked, or ignored (perhaps because Diem was off guard, having been abroad and not experienced the full process of the Indo-China war) and little was done on the military side. The local defence organization, which under the French had been a reasonable force, was totally neglected and the only effective intelligence and police organizations were focused on anti-Diemism, not anti-Viet-Namism.

The situation of the people in the rural areas declined rather than improved from French days. The Montagnard tribespeople, who occupied the mountain areas vital to the forthcoming establishment of guerilla bases, were alienated by neglect and by positive abuse. Had he been aware in 1954-55 of the Maoist germ already breeding under his nose, and studied its habits, as he began to do with frantic haste later on, Diem would no doubt have put more effort into the rural areas of his country instead of concentrating on manipulating the urban population for personal ends.

### *The Beginnings*

In accordance with the Geneva Accords the Viet Minh evacuated most of their troops from the south during the second half of 1954. They left behind, however, somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 *elite* cadres to form the nucleus of both a political framework and a

31 Diem's brother.
32 Warner, *The Last Confucian*, pp. 29, 32.

military force. All of these had friends or accomplices to help them and the many who had married had relatives also. In addition, most of those who went north left behind some form of link with the people in the South or at least had gained a good knowledge of the terrain in the area where they had operated. Of course only the Viet Minh regulars went home to the North. An unknown number of regionals and village guerillas, recruited in the South, joined the cadres in simply taking off their uniforms and burying their arms, and went back to work in their villages.

In this, the Passive Phase, the emphasis was on political action and the original order to the cadres was to prepare for the elections which Diem was bound to hold in 1956 under the Geneva Accords.[33]

By mid-1955, without coming to the attention of the Ngo Dinhs, the communists had expanded their framework so that they had agents in every village in the country. The years between 1954 and 1957 were spent in forming fronts, infiltrating among teachers, transport facilities and other key-points in the countryside. This was the 'front' period on the Maoist plan and the emphasis was on the exploitation of legitimate grievances—land, health, education, police repression, etc. The aim was to discredit the government and the army and to eliminate their influence.

About mid-1955 terror was added to the communist methods and Diem began to take some notice. At the urging, particularly of General Duong Van Minh ('Bib Minh'), Diem began to read his Mao and the pattern began to fall into place. As a first step the Self Defence Corps was formed, armed with ancient weapons but at least some force on the ground during the training and equipping of the future regular force being drawn from the Vietnamese light battalions used by the French as regional troops. The twelve to eighteen months delay, however, had been too long and the communist Phase 1 framework was well on the way to completion.

### *The Rot Sets in*

By the end of 1955 Diem may have been ahead. He had ousted Bao Dai and proclaimed the Republic of Vietnam of which he became President. He had defeated the sects and restored some semblance of order to the countryside.[34] What he needed now was to match the communist promise of a better life with a real programme of his own and to produce the military force necessary to give them security against Viet Cong coercion.

Laid bare, the question of appeal is not one of ideologies, and much misunderstanding surrounds the expression 'the hearts and minds of the people.' On this, the words of Denis Warner are the

33 These were never held.
34 Warner, *The Last Confucian*, p. 128.

most pertinent I have read. He says: 'Nothing in the evidence suggests that it is necessary to match ideology with ideology. The people are not interested in communism or anti-communism. Above all, they are interested in land and what that means to their livelihood. They are interested in schooling and health',[35] and to this it must be added that they are interested in peace and security. Possibly the idea of nationalism may have appealed to the Vietnamese but remember that this was exactly the line the communists were pushing in those early years. So what Diem needed was to offer freedom and the security under which it could be developed. Sadly enough he was prevented from offering either of these things.

Politically, the nature of the Ngo system precluded measures which would have won it popular appeal. What the people needed was land reform, medical help, schooling, freedom and security. What they got from Nhu were control, regimentation, political indoctrination and organization. Even the strategic hamlet programme, a potentially very useful measure, similar to one applied by the British in Malaya, was turned into a repression and itself provided new grievances for the communists to feed on. The control of social institutions introduced by Madame Nhu added to all this, as did the treatment afforded to the Buddhists by the family.

Diem was, of course, short of money and resources and dependent on US aid. This meant that he had to convince the Americans of the nature of the threat before he could combat it in the way he thought necessary. It is true that early on he was not very clear himself of the precise military requirement and allowed the US Military Assistance Advisory Group to press on with shaping for him a conventional Western style regular force. This new army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was designed to meet the threat as America saw it— invasion by the Viet Minh. It was no use for low-level anti-guerilla operations in the jungle. Nevertheless, had there been strong and effective para-military forces during the first phase, to combat subversion and provide security in the countryside, perhaps the ARVN could have been spared to await the emergence of Viet Cong and Viet Minh regular units but this was not the case. Diem was unable to convince his US advisers of the need for training and military assistance to the Civil Guard and Self Defence Corps and for the development of communications in the mountains and hinterland.[36] The West had apparently learned little of Communist Revolutionary Warfare from the Indo-China War, or from the freely available writings of Mao. The British were learning something in Malaya but when they attempted to pass this on were told in effect that 'things are different here.'

Phase 1 lasted until late 1959 and, because most of the activities associated with that phase go on below the surface, no one appreciated

35 Warner, p. 51.
36 Warner, p. 131.

how bad things had become. There was no one out in the countryside capable of finding out.

### *War in Earnest*

That large-scale guerilla action had not occurred by 1959, was no indication that it had been prevented, as was commonly believed. In fact the bases in the 'War Zones' in the Central Highlands, on the Cambodian border and in the Delta and the areas around them were only by then fully consolidated and the guerilla army only just ready for action.

From 1957 a trickle of armed cadres had begun to infiltrate from the North to supplement the original 3,000-5,000 and to bring new training methods and new techniques from the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). In 1959 the trickle increased to a steady flow. They came by junk down the coast, across the Demilitarized Zone on the 17th Parallel and by the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' through Laos. This new blood was essential to the training of the Regionals and to the creation of the Regular army, just as Giap was only able to fashion the original Viet Minh army with Chinese help.

By September 1959 the Viet Cong were ready for Phase 2 (Strategic Defensive) and guerilla attacks stepped up throughout the countryside and increased steadily during 1960.

Late in 1960 the Lao Dong party met the need to extend the national front image, and at the same time effectively destroyed any impression that they were not behind the war in the South, by creating the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSVN) and established it in the War Base adjacent to the Laos and Cambodian borders. This front took over the political and part of the military direction of the war and over the next year or so had set up a rival administrative structure covering the whole of South Vietnam. The deterioration was so great in 1961 when the Strategic Defensive was in force, that the US was forced to recognize the gravity of the situation and stepped up its aid considerably. The para-military forces were also brought into the picture at last, but the phase when they were most needed had already passed. US aid continued to increase in 1962 but by mid-1962 there were clear signs that the Viet Cong regular army, in battalion organization at least, was beginning to take the field.

As we have seen, negotiations are used by the communists as a tactic. In February 1962 an attempt was made to commence talks, possibly because the preparation of the regular army was behind schedule and time was needed. At that time nothing came of it but the attempt has been repeated on several occasions since. No settlement other than one involving complete victory for the communists could ever be accepted, but the communists know there will

always be people in the West who refuse to believe this so they keep trying.

Between mid-1962 and the end of 1963, the Viet Cong entered Phase 3, Active Resistance, and at some time in that period the ARVN was forced, strategically speaking, on to the defensive. In fact the ARVN had never really been on the offensive nor had the initiative against the real threat. They had been unable to bring the regulars, and often not even the regionals, to battle, but had fought hard, expending themselves against guerillas, whom they were neither trained nor equipped to fight.

The internal situation changed for the better in November 1963 when a military junta deposed Diem in a bloody coup and destroyed the system under which his family had run the country. But it was too late now to offer freedom to the people. Many of them no longer had the choice, and the succession of new regimes did not have the machinery to put improvements into effect in the areas they did control. In any case, Phase 3 was now well established and the war demanded most of their resources and attention.

Next year saw the continued growth in the size and equipment of the Viet Cong regular army, with heavy weapons brought overland or by sea from the DRV. US aid increased and the US, with free world support, continued efforts to re-tool the ARVN for the real task in hand. The ARVN, however, had mainly lost any active ability or will they once had to get out into the countryside and jungles and stay there. More and more they became tied down to security tasks and were heavily dependent on air and ground firepower when they did mount offensive operations.

In 1963-1964 the Viet Cong grouped their regulars in regimental strength and co-ordinated their battles on that level. But the regular army was still not big enough for Phase 4 and US air power was helping to prevent the balance swinging in Viet Cong favour. They were a good Phase 3 force but who was to do Phase 4? Towards the end of 1964 the pattern became clear. Formed regiments of the PAVN began to infiltrate through Laos into South Vietnam and establish themselves in the mountains of Kontum Province. Partly because of this, and partly because the ARVN was simply not holding off the Viet Cong alone the US began in March 1965 to bring in combat units for the first time.

What have been the effects of the introduction of American and other outside forces? The first point is that the communists require a certain level of force before Phase 4 is possible, even if they wish to engineer another Dien Bien Phu-type situation, and there must be a limit both to the number the DRV can spare from its own manpower pool and the number that can

be recruited within the South. Before the United States sent troops the chances were that the communists could have produced the required strength to defeat an ARVN weakened and demoralized by guerilla warfare. Now the question again hangs in the balance.

The US forces have air power and heavy weapons but they also have a huge security problem, and intelligence inferior to the communists. They also have the problem of bringing the PAVN to battle, a thing they have succeeded in doing significantly only once so far—in Pleiku Province late in 1965. The communists have time on their side—they know of the impatience of the Westerner and of the will-sapping effect on a democracy of an antipathetic public opinion ('win the support of international forces and of the people of the enemy's country,' Mao has said)[37] and they know that the longer the foreigners stay the more resentment must grow among the South Vietnamese people and the more propaganda ammunition is given to the revolutionary cause.

### *The Future*

The war can now be said to be in an advanced Phase 3. It seems highly unlikely that a Phase 4, in Mao's terms (i.e., a lightning campaign) is likely—unless foreign force strength was reduced; but a Dien Bien Phu-type battle perhaps on a larger scale in the Central Highlands or in the two extreme northern provinces is still conceivable. There is also the possibility that when the foreign build-up levels off, as it clearly must do some time, protracted Phase 3 tactics could whittle them down sufficiently, in effectiveness if not in numbers, to again make a communist military victory possible. The communists have plenty of time.

However, the unprecedented mobility and firepower of the Allied forces now offers real hope for the destruction of the communist regulars—both Viet Cong and PAVN—which the French never really had. It cannot be discerned yet whether this will be possible, but, even if it is, the war will not be over until the regionals and guerillas are destroyed or disarmed and complete control and security is reestablished over the country, to prevent a resurgence of communism, whilst a new life is built for the people. These are fantastically vast and difficult tasks, but there will be no other way. If they had been done properly in 1955 even Phase 1 would not have got off the ground.

The only people to carry out these tasks are the ARVN, the paramilitary forces and the police. On the ARVN must fall the task of the initial clearing and holding of the countryside. It will be fatal

37 Mao, *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War*, p. 5.

if they are unequal to the task, either through inability to shake off the unfortunate conventional heritage of their formative years or through the onset of war weariness before the task is complete. Once security is re-established and provided a better life is offered to the people, it will be amazing how quickly the ideological appeal of the communists will be forgotten. The para-military forces and police must then be kept strong enough and close enough to the people to detect the faintest re-emergence of the signs of another 'nationalist revolution.' The communist never gives up—unless he is stopped.

### *Observations on the War in South Vietnam*

Again an ideal political situation was presented to the communists. Again they were able to build their political and military bases almost unhindered. Again in the early stages they were matched by troops who did not understand the war they were fighting and against whom classic guerilla tactics were completely effective. But as the war progressed things began to go wrong. The regular army of Southerners trained in the North was not big enough, and the defence of the DRV prevents too great a supplement from the PAVN. China had a problem with America herself and could not provide too much overt assistance. In any case the line of supply from the DRV was long and rugged enough, let alone that from China. As it turned out it was not only the ARVN over whom superiority had to be gained; by December 1966 there were about 350,000 foreign troops as well. Air mobility and fire power were the keynote of the defensive in Phases 2 and 3, not fixed defences as it had been with the French. Air surveillance methods reduced the sanctuary of the jungle and mountain basis. A repressive regime was thrown over at a relatively early stage, whereas the French had kept and retained their domination over the people in the North until the bitter end.

Any of these factors, or a combination of them all, may prove to be the final obstacle to communist success in South Vietnam, but it is a pity that they did not exist, or were not imposed, in 1955 when the requirement was just as obvious as it is today.

## *CONCLUSION*

Chinese Communist Revolutionary Warfare is only forty years old and has won only two wars. The conditions which make it possible are not many, nor are they hard to remove. Once it is established it becomes progressively more difficult to combat but it should be easy to nip in the bud if the signs are read properly. The indications are that we have at last awakened to the need to adapt our methods of warfare to the exact threat, and to fight in such a way

that the effectiveness of guerilla warfare is minimized. It is a pity that in South Vietnam no attempt was made to remodel the political, economic and social conditions until deteriorating security made this next to impossible. Perhaps this mistake too will be rectified in Laos and Thailand and leave the record of Communist Revolutionary Warfare like this for the history books of the 21st century: Born 1927; grew up in China 1927-1949, spent some time between 1940 and 1949 in Indo-China; matured in North Vietnam 1949-1954; severely crippled in Laos and South Vietnam 1954-1967 during an unsuccessful world tour; dies in Thailand 19 ? □

## JUNGLE GREENS

**While making instructional films to demonstrate the principles of fieldcraft and individual concealment, the Department of Home Security made many experiments to discover the best colour for uniforms in the jungle. The uniform first suggested was patterned in two or more shades — that is the principle of disruptive colouring was used — but as a result of strong resistance by clothing manufacturers, and of experiments which showed that this type of uniform had very little in its favour, the army adopted 'jungle green'. The first troops to wear jungle greens went into New Guinea in September 1942. The original jungle green was a most uncertain colour and varied even in the one garment. Material from a dozen different rolls which originally looked exactly alike would come from the dyeing vat in as many different shades. The army, however, managed to insist that each shirt should come from one roll of material only, though this involved a certain amount of waste cutting. Such uniformity of shade was not really necessary for camouflage in the jungle, but it did appeal to the men, who objected to looking like harlequins when they went on leave.**

— D. P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry* (1958), a volume in the series *Australia in the War of* 1939--1945.

# The Accelerating Role of Technology in Warfare

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THE role of technology in warfare has not been overlooked. Many writers have incorporated it as a factor in their analyses. Thus, for those who study warfare in terms of the differential predominance of the offensive and the defensive, technology may favour first one and then the other.

'Electronic developments,' one prominent writer has noted,' have changed the weapons and the tactics of conventional warfare so that the defence, armed with new missiles and radar- and computer-controlled batteries, may have an edge over the attack.'[1]

For those who analyse war in terms of positional and fluid operations, technology is the factor involved in the cycle from one to the other. For example, Colonel Garland has written that 'the supremacy of positional warfare versus fluid warfare is governed by scientific progress.'[2]

Other writers have commented specifically on the subject. Technological evolution is a continuous phenomenon,' wrote Squadron Leader Coleman in *Military Review*. 'It can no longer be neglected, but must be constantly integrated in our reflections on the military art.'[3]

Invaluable as all this is, especially in the latter case, the full point is yet to be appreciated. Rather than being just one factor influencing more important divisions of tactical and strategic theory, technology has become the predominant factor.

This article is, in fact, another analysis of warfare. Its principal thesis is that technological advance, in itself, is becoming the

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paramount factor in the theory of modern warfare, and as such, is a more useful analytical construct than defensive versus offensive, or positional versus fluid.

The effect of technological advance is apparent throughout the entire history of warfare.

Perhaps it all began in the stone age, when wooden spears and clubs were surpassed by flint-tipped weapons. Many of these weapons, such as the Solutrean knives and spearheads of the Upper Palæolithic were beautifully made, and must have been quite effective in combat.

Next came the metals, first copper and bronze. The advantages offered were not lost on the soldiery of the day. Knives, swords, spears and protective clothing—all were superior to their lithic predecessors. Iron and steel followed. Gunpowder, cannon, rifles, machineguns, bombs, aircraft—the progression is familiar. Nuclear fission, and hence the atomic bomb, is one of the more recent and spectacular manifestations of the technological advance.

With each step in this ladder of technology a new type of fighting developed. The history of tactics can be seen as a series of developments, each one appropriate to its contemporary level of technology. It would be absurd to claim that technology obviates tactics; it does no such thing, but it does set limits.

If we examine this process of technological advance, in abstract, we will notice that there are a number of possibilities.

Let us consider two opponents, A and B, who are approximately equal in resources, manpower and military might. A develops a super-weapon. He is immediately at an advantage and will presumably defeat B unless B either develops an equivalent weapon, or develops an anti-weapon.

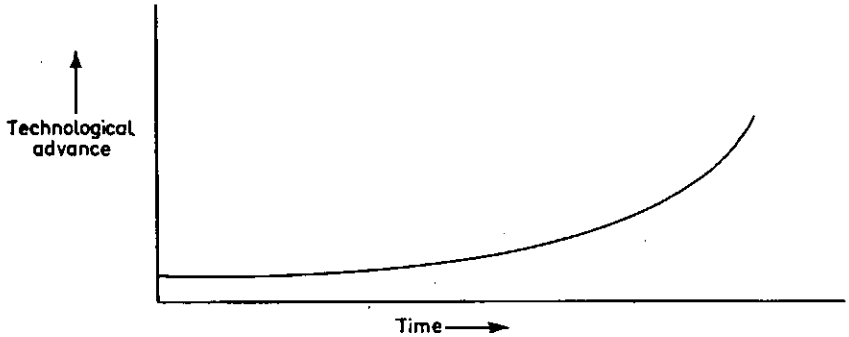
If B develops an equivalent weapon, stalemate might be expected, and any decision in combat would be a result of tactical superiority. If B develops an anti-weapon a similar situation would develop, although A would possibly retain the initiative, forcing B to fight defensively.

Notice, incidentally, that at each stage of technological equivalence, the conduct of warfare becomes, at heart, a tactical issue. Since tactics, related as they must be to the current technology, still allow quite a diversity of ways of fighting, it is fallacious to argue that there would be a necessary cycle from positional to fluid warfare. (I would therefore disagree with Colonel Garland.)[4] Equivalence in rifles, or machine-guns, or atomic bombs, does not *necessarily* result in either stalemate, or positional warfare, or fluid warfare.

1 Neville Brown, 'The Weapons of Limited War' (*New Scientist*, 28 Jul 1966).
2 Lt-Col R. S. Garland, 'The Natural Laws of War' (*Australian Army Journal*, Aug 1966).
3 Sqd Ldr B. Coleman, 'Strategy and Technology' (*Military Review*, Aug 1965).
4 'The Natural Laws of War' (*AAJ*, Aug 1966).

The technological battle, as between A and B, has been widely noted. As Coleman has written: '. . . there is also the unremitting technological struggle, on the one hand dedicated to maintaining the validity of the deterrent, and on the other striving to invalidate it. The technological resources of the world's great nations are geared to this struggle, which becomes more and more recognizable as a fight for survival.'[5]

Technological advance is unfortunately not linear. It would appear, in fact, that it is hyperbolic. In other words, not only is technology advancing but its rate of advance is also 'advancing.'




(The philosophical implications of this are notably eschatological.)

This aspect of our present day world is very much evident in all spheres. In mathematics, for example, the amount of original published research is such that one person could not possibly even read it, were he to apply himself 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. One hundred years ago the task would have been comparatively easy! Industry is changing in a similar way. Today's school leaver will probably be employed in at least three occupations which at present do not even exist.[6]

The import of this to warfare is not hard to see. We can expect, if the *status quo* is to be maintained, an accelerated rate in the production of entirely new weapons. We can expect to have increasingly less time to use them. The tactical stage will be continually reduced.

Time will be a key factor. It will be essential, for our very survival, to conduct weapon development, to get into production, and to train weapon operators in the shortest possible time. We must avoid being surprised.

'The quest for breakthrough is a quest for technological surprise, which, in turn, can be converted to strategic surprise.'[7]

5 'Strategy and Technology' (*Military Review*, Aug 1965).
6 Sir Leon Bagrit, 'The Age of Automation' (*BBC Listener*, 26 Nov 1964).
7 Coleman, 'Strategy and Technology' (*Military Review*, Aug 1966).

The implications for military organization, training, and personnel selection are important. Organization will have to be flexible. To be tied to traditional methods and forms may fatally impede the introduction of new equipment.

Above all, personnel should be flexible. While this is partly a function of training, it is more especially dependent on the intellectual capabilities of the soldier. Presumably technology will reduce the manpower requirement. Certainly it will raise the lower limit of intelligence. We will need bright, well-educated, open-minded soldiers. We must avoid dogma, and prefer reason to precedent.

Technological research is often conducted by non-military organizations. The wisdom of this is doubtful. Not only are the researchers at some remove from the actual requirements, but when the need arises for urgent development, in response to some new battlefield threat, the distance (bureaucratic, psychological and physical) between research agency and fighting troops could be a distinct liability. Attention could be profitably allotted to organization, funds, and techniques of research, with a view to expediting the whole process of development.

The empirical soldier may well dismiss all this as impractical theorising. He may cite Vietnam, pointing out that technology has apparently been of little avail. The Americans, who have probably the most technologically advanced army on earth, are not being especially successful against an enemy who are relatively unsophisticated in this direction.

If it is true that the Americans are not successful, it may well be because they are relying over much on technology, at the expense of fundamental aspects of soldiering which have not yet been influenced by technology. I find myself in complete agreement with such people as Colonel Garland ('The Conduct of Counter- Insurgency Warfare,' *AAJ,* January, 1966, and 'The Concept of the New Infantryman," *AAJ,* July, 1966) and Captain W. E. Long (letter to the editor, *Army,* August, 1965), especially in regard to such things as patrolling, intelligence and tactical deception. However, it is not hard to imagine technology eventually removing these functions from the man on the ground. Sophisticated, remote-controlled, microelectronic reconnaissance devices, armoured flying vehicles, and smaller more accurate missiles are conceivable developments.

On might well ask where the technological battle will end. There seem to be four possibilities:

(a) The race will continue *ad infinitum.*

(b) War will eventuate, and (1) if there is a sufficient gap that one side will win; or (2) that stalemate or mutual annihilation will result.

(c) A disarmament agreement will be reached.

(d) The opposing nations will cease to regard themselves as entities, but as members of a common group.

We hope that the latter two possibilities prevail. We will hope that political sanity backed by an enlightened populace will result in disarmament or union before the rate of technological advance has become too great, or economies founder under immense development costs. □

**FRANCE, 1917**

**I went into the village to cheer myself up, and into the rowdiest estaminet I could find. Ordering four fried eggs, I sat back and watched the fun. Two rather nice-looking French girls were handing round drinks to a crowd of our fellows. The tables were close together, and one of the girls, in broken English, kept calling out, 'Deeger, do not touch ze legs with ze hand,' and occasionally making leaps and bounds like a young kangaroo. They were certainly a lot of rascals but a cheery crowd.**

— E. J. Rule, *Jacka's Mob* (1933).

# Strategic Choice
## Formosa or the Philippines

*Lieutenant-Colonel Charles M. Simpson,*
*United States Infantry*

PRESIDENT Franklin D. Roosevelt, famous cigarette holder jutting upward from one corner of his widely grinning mouth, called back the dignified figure of his departing general, and said: 'Well, Douglas, you win! But I am going to have a hell of a time over this with that old bear, Ernie King!'[1] These words marked the decision in a strategic choice which greatly influenced the conduct of the Pacific War of 1941 to 1945. They were spoken at the conclusion of a two-day conference in Honolulu in late July, 1944, at which President Roosevelt met with his principal commanders in the Pacific to determine the future strategy for that vast ocean theatre.

The broad strategic question of the war in the Pacific from the moment the Allies stopped losing was: which arm of the two-pronged attack in the Pacific War was to be the main effort in the defeat of the Japanese empire? By July, 1944, that question had not been conclusively resolved. The immediate strategic decision which focused and resolved the broader question was the choice of strategic objectives: Formosa or the Philippine Archipelago? The proponents were Fleet Admiral Ernest King and the other Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, and General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of the South-West Pacific area.

Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to advocate the attack of Formosa until almost the day of the Leyte landing in October, 1944, the fact remained that General MacArthur had indeed won and his strategy prevailed over the collective command of the Joint Chiefs. This is the story of that important strategic decision and the role of General Douglas MacArthur, in securing approval for his strategy, and thus recognition of his command as the primary effort in the Pacific War.

The annexation of the Philippine Islands in 1898, as a by-product of the war with Spain, introduced a dilemma for American strategists which was never completely solved. The islands never represented

*This article was forwarded to the AAJ for publication by the United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. It was written while the author was a student at the college in 1966.*

*The question of how the strategic decision whether to seize Formosa or the Philippines was resolved in 1944 is a controversial one. The US official history argues that the decision was reached in October by the Joint Chiefs of Staff based on military factors, particularly logistical limitations affecting the Formosa choice. General MacArthur has stated that the decision was reached in his favour at the Honolulu conference in July 1944 between President Roosevelt and the principal commanders in the Pacific.*

an asset to the United States, nor has the United States derived any tangible benefits from its Far Eastern possessions, except the dubious gain of military and naval bases on a militarily indefensible archipelago, dependent on strong sea and air power for its protection. Recognition of this fact resulted in the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act, which provided for complete independence by 1946, after a period of ever-increasing self-government by the Filipinos. Only the right to maintain American naval bases was to be retained. President Roosevelt signed this act, thus fulfilling a minor party plank of the Democratic Party since the Spanish-American War. He appointed General MacArthur to be military adviser to the first president of the Philippine Commonwealth, Manuel Quezon. Two years later, while still the US military adviser to the Philippines, MacArthur retired from the US Army and accepted the position of Field Marshal of the Philippine Forces. In 1941, MacArthur was recalled to duty by President Roosevelt and given command of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) and responsibility for the defence of that nation he called his 'second country'.

At that time, the strategy of the United States was not to reinforce the defence of the Philippines either before or after the outbreak of war with Japan. The American commander, with the Philippine forces under his command, was to withdraw to the Bataan Peninsula on Luzon and defend Bataan and Corregidor. The plan, based on the joint Army-Navy ORANGE Plan of 1938, estimated the defenders could hold out for six months, but said nothing about what was to happen after the defences on Bataan fell. In fact, all American military dependents were evacuated from the Philippines in the Spring of 1941, and the command placed on a war basis.

When General MacArthur assumed command of the combined US-Philippine forces in July, he argued for a more aggressive plan which would defend the inland seas and the entrances to Manila and Subic Bays. His optimism and persuasiveness caused a reversal of the strategy and USAFFE was given the highest priority for all kinds of military equipment and personnel, much of which was en route to the Philippines when Pearl Harbour took place.

A new war plan, RAINBOW 5, issued in October, reflected agreed US and British world-wide strategy in the event of war with all the Axis powers. Germany was to be considered the dominant member of the Axis powers and the Atlantic and Europe to be the decisive theatres. The policy in the Pacific was to be one of initially containing Japanese sea power, maintaining the life-line to Australia, and defending the Pacific bases. In effect, RAINBOW implicitly assumed the loss of the Philippines, as it provided for defence of Manila and Subic Bays with the Army and Navy forces already in the Philippines—no reinforcements could be expected.

1 John Gunther, 'Caesar of the Pacific' (*Procession*, 1965, p. 295).

MacArthur immediately objected to the plan, maintaining that he could successfully defend the Philippine Archipelago using an active defence of all the islands in the Philippines with the forces available. He did not rebut the lack of provision of reinforcements after the outbreak of hostilities, although he certainly implicitly expected such relief. His plan was under consideration in Washington when the Japanese attacked in December, 1941.

The first hours of the Pacific War at Pearl Harbour inflicted major naval losses which limited our navy for several months thereafter to raiding forays, submarine warfare, and limited supply operations. The successful implementation of any relief of the Philippines by the fleet (with an accompanying ground force) was considered hopeless by the Navy.

The Japanese attack in the Philippines met with remarkable success, largely due to the immediate loss of large numbers of the B-17 bomber force, the ineffectiveness of the Asiatic Fleet in repelling Japanese amphibious forces, and the lack of fighting ability of relatively untrained Philippine reservists. MacArthur was quickly forced to abandon his plans for an active defence of the islands and fall back on the old plan calling for a withdrawal to Bataan and Corregidor. MacArthur and President Quezon addressed urgent pleas to Washington for reinforcements and supplies. In reply they received promises of aid. A proclamation by President Roosevelt stated: 'I renew my solemn pledge to you that your freedom will be redeemed and your independence established and protected.'[2] In spite of this, the *de facto* strategy recognized that there was little hope that the garrison in the Philippines could hold out for long, but that everything possible should be done to support it. This policy recognized the importance to the United States of the friendship and trust of the peoples of Asia. Our failure successfully to defend the Philippines could be excused; our abandonment could not.

In spite of efforts to supply Bataan by blockade-runners, few supplies arrived to bolster the depleted and exhausted forces. As the situation in the remainder of Asia worsened with the fall of Singapore in February, 1942, and the Japanese forces rapidly advanced southward, Bataan and its gallent defenders stood as symbols of courage and determination for the free world. Late in February President Roosevelt ordered General MacArthur to Australia to take charge of the defence of that continent, abandoning the Philippines to an inevitable fate.

The tired general who arrived in Australia three weeks after departing Corregidor was a bitter and disillusioned man. He felt that his country had abandoned him and his troops on Luzon. He was shocked to find only a token American force in Australia, instead of the great American army he had expected to find assembled for

2 Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (1950), p. 19.

relief of the Philippines. His disillusionment increased as he discovered the extent to which the Pacific Theatre was to play a secondary role to Europe, that his available forces were inadequate for even the defence of Australia, and that he was given a largely defensive mission, tempered only by the injunction to 'prepare to take the offensive'. In spite of this he issued his pledge to the people of the Philippines: 'I shall return.'

Bataan fell on April 9, 1942, and Corregidor was over-run a month later. Fortunately the Japanese chose to move cautiously and deliberately after the capture, on 23 January, of Rabaul on strategically located New Britain. MacArthur urged haste in developing the Australian 'defensive bastion' and repeatedly requested two aircraft carriers and an amphibious division, but was turned down by the Joint Chiefs because of non-availability. When an offensive operation against the Solomon Islands was initiated in August, 1942, it was commanded by Admiral Ghormley, commander of the Southern Pacific Area (subordinate to Admiral Nimitz), though the Solomons were largely in MacArthur's territorial jurisdiction.

The strategy for the Pacific was derived from the Arcadia Conference held in Washington in late December, 1941, which re-asserted the results of the earlier A-B (American-British) staff conversations of February, 1941. This conference reasserted the strategic global conclusions of the RAINBOW 5 Plan, assigning primacy to the European Theatre. As a result of a conference with the British in March, 1942, the United States assumed responsibility for operations in the Pacific, to be directed from Washington by the United States Chiefs of Staff. General MacArthur was given command of the South-West Pacific Area in April, 1942, and Admiral Nimitz was established as commander of the Pacific Ocean Areas, as well as the Pacific Fleet, in May, 1942. Admiral Nimitz's command was far larger in forces and area than MacArthur's. In effect, the Pacific Theatre was considered the domain of the United States Navy under the direct control of Admiral King in Washington. Admiral King had drawn up the strategy to be followed in the Pacific in March, 1942, in a memorandum approved by President Roosevelt. He outlined the strategy of holding Hawaii, supporting Australasia and driving north-westward from the New Hebrides with naval and marine amphibious forces to cover the Australian line of communications and draw Japanese forces from other Pacific areas. Admiral King ordered the Guadalcanal operation and was insistent in the face of General Marshall's opposition on behalf of MacArthur, that it be under naval command.

MacArthur repeatedly protested this policy to the Joint Chiefs, even attempting to bring pressure to bear through Australian Prime Minister Curtin, but to no avail. The marine offensive on Guadalcanal suffered from heavy naval and ground resistance, extremely

difficult fighting conditions, and inadequate US naval and logistical support, and managed to maintain a toehold by a narrow margin.

MacArthur, a month later launched an offensive into New Guinea with his three division force, transporting many of his troops by air due to the absence of adequate sea lift. His subsequent campaign was brilliantly successful; and served to dispel some of the gloom in high circles in Washington which resulted from the Guadalcanal campaign. Though the Navy's top command deeply wished to follow the agreed-upon strategy in the Pacific, the successes of General MacArthur's forces[3] in 1942 and 1943, forced the recognition of his axis of advance toward the Philippines.

In March, 1943, the Joint Chiefs of Staff conferred on the two conflicting strategies of General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz to resolve the differences. Admirals Nimitz and King were thinking in terms of one major effort, based on Hawaii, moving across the Central Pacific to secure bases in China, with the South-West Pacific Area forces playing a supporting naval and air role from the New Ireland-Admiralties area. MacArthur, eager to return to the Philippines, urged unity of effort in one major offensive based on Australia which would approach the Philippines from the south, with the Pacific Fleet guarding his exposed eastern flank. At this conference, neither commander was allocated all of the necessary resources to enable him to carry out his objectives alone. As the Central Pacific thrust required resources then committed elsewhere, which would not be available until April, 1944, the planners were forced to designate MacArthur's command the main effort for the remainder of 1943, and the early part of 1944, although the previously agreed-upon strategy had recognized the primacy of the Central Pacific effort.

At the Trident Conference in Washington in May, 1943, the Combined Chiefs approved King's concept of a main offensive directly across the Central Pacific. This plan was based on the premise that it might be necessary to invade the home islands of Japan to complete the defeat of the Japanese. It used the shortest route from the United States and attacked the enemy's vulnerable eastern flank in order to secure bases in China from which to cut Japanese supply lines and provide airbases for B-29 strikes against Japan. King's belief that the Marianas were the key to victory in the Pacific was accepted.

At the same time the Joint Chiefs recognized that there was a requirement for air bases in the southern Philippines in order to neutralize Japanese air power on Luzon. MacArthur's offensive toward Mindanao via New Guinea was approved as a secondary offensive. MacArthur was to be allowed to fight his own war in the South-West Pacific while the Navy hopped Naval-Marine forces across the Central Pacific to seize the Marianas by way of the Marshall

3. General MacArthur's ground forces in this phase were chiefly Australian. — Editor

and Gilbert Islands. The two offensives were intended to be mutually protecting and laterally co-ordinated, with the common objective of the Southern Philippines. The two operations were actually in competition, due to the flexibility of the strategic plans for the Pacific, each commander attempting to achieve its objectives before the other. If one or the other had been outstandingly successful, its commander would undoubtedly have a great deal to say about the conduct of future strategy in the Pacific.

By March, 1944, General MacArthur had advanced from his Australian base and secured eastern New Guinea, western New Britain, the Admiralty Islands and had effected the neutralization of the strong enemy forces at Rabaul on the eastern tip of New Britain. Admiral Nimitz had moved through the Gilbert Islands into the Marshalls, and was ready to invade the Marianas. The supply route to Australia was secured. The period of the aggressive defence was over. The Japanese forces were greatly reduced, large numbers of them being by-passed to sit the war out and starve, and the Japanese Navy had suffered serious losses in ships and aircraft.

The two allied forces were advancing so rapidly that the Joint Chiefs of Staff once again considered the question of Pacific strategy. Of course, General MacArthur wanted his forces designated as the main effort to seize Mindanao. Naturally, Admiral Nimitz wanted his forces to move into the Philippines via the Palaus and Ulithi Atoll. The Joint Chiefs, faced with conflicting recommendations from equally successful commanders, compromised. They ordered the two forces to continue to advance along their own axes for a joint invasion (on 15 November, 1944) of the Philippine Island of Mindanao; Admiral Nimitz's was designated the main effort and given the additional mission of the invasion of the Marianas Islands. No decision was announced at that time for operations after Mindanao. Both axes of advance continued to move very rapidly. MacArthur moved in a series of amphibious hops up the northern coast of New Guinea to the island of Morotai. In June he issued his plan for the offensive against the Philippines in two phases: the invasion of Mindanao on 25 October, to obtain air bases, followed by the invasion of Leyte (in the central Philippines) on 15 November by his forces from New Guinea. Admiral Nimitz had been busy with the neutralization of the Japanese bases in the Carolines, heavy carrier strikes against the Marianas, carrier and amphibious support of MacArthur's Hollandia operation, and preparation for the invasion of the Marianas on 15 June, and the Palaus on 15 September.

The advances had been so rapid that the Joint Chiefs believed that the time-table for the conquest of Japan might be advanced substantially by a revision of strategy. The Joint Chiefs again consulted the two commanders in the Pacific to learn their opinions on three alternative courses of action: (1) earlier invasion of the Philippines

and Palaus followed by an offensive against Formosa; (2) by-passing the Philippines and Palaus in favour of an invasion of Formosa; (3) by-passing the Philippines, Palaus, and other objectives in favour of new objectives, including the home islands of Japan.

Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur separately agreed that the first course of action was not feasible due to logistical difficulties and the strengths of their assigned objectives. They also agreed that the second course of action was not sound due to the lack of bases to support the invasion of Formosa and the need for land-based air power from the Philippines to counter the Japanese land-based air power on Formosa and in China. MacArthur flatly rejected the third course of action because of lack of shipping for troop transport, insufficient air support, and his strong conviction (for military and moral reasons) that the Philippines must be invaded. Nimitz disagreed with MacArthur only to the extent that he was willing to await the outcome of current operations before making his final decision on course of action number 3.

In the Joint Chiefs of Staff there was a definite split on the question of whether to take the Philippines or by-pass them in favour of Formosa.. Admiral King, Chief of Naval Operations, was the prime advocate of the Formosa plan, seconded by all of his top admirals in Washington (though, notably, not by Admirals Nimitz and Halsey). He believed that capture of Formosa would quickly open up a seaborne supply route to the rapidly failing Chinese forces on the mainland, that the capture of Luzon first would unnecessarily delay the Pacific War, while capture of Formosa first would make the task of seizing Luzon easier. Formosa is located several hundreds of miles nearer Japan than Luzon and B-29s flying from Formosa would have a shorter flight with a heavier bomb-load. Finally, the strategic location of Formosa is such that the task of interdicting Japan's lines of communications to the south favour it over either Luzon or the coast of China alone. General Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Force, had long deplored the lack of unity of command in the Pacific, and was principally concerned with the strategic employment of the new B-29 bomber and securing bases within striking distance of Japan. General Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, agreed with MacArthur on the strategic necessity for invading the Philippines, although he is known to have favoured course of action number 3 and was probably responsible for its inclusion in the query of the Pacific commanders. Admiral Leahy, President Roosevelt's Chief of Staff, favoured the liberation of the Philippines for purely strategic reasons.

The Joint Chiefs finally concluded that none of the targets which they had already selected for invasion should be abandoned, though they were still searching for means for stepping up the Pacific timetable.

In late July, 1944, President Roosevelt flew to Honolulu to meet his Pacific commanders and to make a long-deferred inspection of Hawaii and Alaska. He also wanted to establish the strategy to be followed in the Pacific in order to be prepared for the eighth Allied war council to be held in Quebec in September, 1944. On 26 July, 1944, General MacArthur, in compliance with an order from General Marshall, arrived in Honolulu with only one aide and no foreknowledge that the President was to preside over a conference on Pacific strategy.

President Roosevelt believed that the choice of strategies was essentially an inter-service rivalry, for there had been a great deal of talk in Washington about MacArthur's long-standing feud with the Navy. The President was pleasantly surprised to discover that MacArthur and Nimitz were mutually cordial, and essentially in agreement on strategy by the time the conference ended. Admiral Nimitz presented Admiral King's strategy for by-passing the Philippines and attacking Formosa, pointing out the high cost in lives and material that Luzon would exact. The President was thoroughly familiar with this plan through his intimate contact with Fleet Admiral King, a well-liked and trusted adviser (of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, only Admiral King was on a familiar basis with the President). President Roosevelt's long-standing affection for the Navy pre-dated his tour as Secretary of the Navy. The fact that he had sons serving in the Navy and the Marine Corps, and his pride in the tremendous accomplishments of the Navy in the Pacific, naturally caused him to favour the Navy's views on strategy.

Admiral King, aware of President Roosevelt's plan to visit Hawaii and his commanders in the Pacific, had made a flying trip to thoroughly brief Nimitz on his ideas, departing the day before the President's arrival. Admiral Nimitz, a loyal officer, faithfully presented Admiral King's strategy, though Nimitz and his principal subordinate commanders (Admirals Halsey, Spruance, and Turner) personally favoured the occupation of Luzon.

General MacArthur quickly discovered that the President had already decided in favour of moving against Formosa instead of Luzon. The military factors appeared to favour Admiral King's plan, the consensus of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had already awarded to Central Pacific Area Command the primary effort for 1944, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces was already convinced!

When MacArthur's turn came to present, he persuasively argued for his strategy of liberating the Philippines in an apparently impromptu, but brilliant and convincing, presentation. He stated that he had no requirement for additional forces, other than naval support and landing craft. He cited his extraordinarily low casualty rates in his approach to the Philippines, and compared them to the high casualty rates of the atoll-assaulting Marines of the Central Pacific

Command, and other theatres. He stated his belief that the Japanese could be defeated in the Philippines as they would deploy ground, air and naval forces to defend the archipelago they considered the key-stone in their defences. Finally, he pointed out the moral obligation of the United States to the Filipino people.

President Roosevelt surely understood the nature of this moral obligation as spelled out in the Tydings-McDuffie Act, and restated in his pledge to President Quezon in 1942. He was well aware of the long suffering of the Filipino people under Japanese domination; he knew that they had courageously supported an extensive Filipino-American guerilla organization which could render highly effective aid to our invading forces; and he knew of the large numbers of Americans held captive on Luzon, awaiting liberation. The predominantly Christian content of the Filipino population, the fact that the prewar Philippine Commonwealth was a Western-style democracy, and the existence of the Philippine Government in exile (in Washington) added to the moral obligation of the United States to the Filipino people.

The personal equations must have played an important role in President Roosevelt's decision. General MacArthur's prestige in the eyes of the American public was at hero level. The two men were old and good friends from the days when MacArthur served three years as Chief of Staff of the Army under the President and Roosevelt had taken the unprecedented step of extending MacArthur's tenure. MacArthur had been singled out by the President for distinguished assignments, high decorations, and promotion subsequent to this relationship. Although MacArthur owed much to the President, Roosevelt may well have felt himself deeply indebted to his general for the gallant stand made at Bataan, and the badly needed lift that this had provided American morale and fighting determination. General MacArthur's outstanding success and his use of 'soft-spot' strategy in his march northward from Australia, together with his determination to take and maintain the offensive, significantly added to his already great military prestige. The President undoubtedly remembered that he had personally ordered MacArthur to leave Corregidor over his already stated determination to remain with his command, and that MacArthur had promptly announced his intention to return upon arriving in Australia. The earnest plea of the distinguished general, old friend, and man who had some claim to the President's personal loyalty, together with MacArthur's impressive appearance, brilliant presentation, and relaxed and self-confident manner, must have had some effect on the argument.

Admiral Nimitz, on the other hand, made his presentation in a thorough and workmanlike manner, but without personal conviction. More telling, as the discussion progressed, Nimitz conceded the validity of MacArthur's arguments and slowly swung round to the

view that he personally held, but had not expressed in his capacity as a spokesman for Admiral King. The completely friendly attitude and the obvious and demonstrated competence of the two commanders, their lack of demands for reinforcements, the confidence they evidenced, and their eventual unanimity on strategic objectives undoubtedly had a profound influence on the President.

The extent to which political factors influenced President Roosevelt's decision can best be shown by recalling the political situation which existed in the summer of 1944. The political factor may have been overriding, for above all, President Roosevelt was a 'political man'. The United States was in the midst of a presidential campaign when President Roosevelt departed for his 'inspection' trip to Hawaii. Contrary to his usual custom of travelling with his Joint Chiefs of Staff, Roosevelt was accompanied by only Admiral Leahy, nor were the Joint Chiefs invited to attend the Honolulu Conference (which explains Admiral King's hasty retreat the day before the conference, despite the fact that he was extraordinarily interested in the outcome of the conference). Undoubtedly the President wished to demonstrate his position as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces to the American voting public, at a time when these forces were defeating the Axis powers all over the globe. Roosevelt's second term was associated with the debacle of Bataan and the issue could be expected to be an issue in the campaign; anticipating this, Roosevelt made a point of associating himself with MacArthur in Honolulu, as shown by front page photographs throughout the nation.

Politically, the Philippines as an objective certainly had more political appeal to the American public than the unknown island of Formosa. The invasion date set for the Philippines was November 15, 1944, but in September MacArthur cancelled the invasion of Mindanao in favour of a direct jump to Leyte on 20 October. The Philippines did become a campaign issue. Mr. Dewey, the Republican nominee, made unfavourable reference in a campaign speech to the 'insufficient supplies' being sent to General MacArthur's theatre. President Roosevelt answered the charge with great glee when the invasion of the Philippines was announced (prior to election day). In a campaign speech in the Fall of 1944, President Roosevelt referred to the Philippines as 'a pattern for the future of other small nations and peoples of the world'.[4] President Roosevelt was constantly urging Prime Minister Churchill to grant freedom to the colonies and possessions in the British Empire, and the Philippines was the best example of American enlightenment and anti-colonialism.

Of importance to the political factor was the fact that the prestige of General MacArthur had assumed political proportions by the summer of 1944. MacArthur did not encourage this nor seek the presidential nomination. President Roosevelt, however, was a

4 *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p. 462.

sick and exhausted man that summer of 1944, only eight months from his death. After years of arduous service as President during the turbulent New Deal and the war he faced the wearying prospect of having to campaign once again to gain re-election as Commander-in-Chief of the victorious forces that he had forged at such great cost to his physical vitality. The dynamic and colourful person of Douglas MacArthur, nationally known as a military strategist without peer in the United States, represented a much greater political challenge than the sober civilian governor of New York. President Roosevelt asked General MacArthur to stay with him in Hawaii an additional day after the conference ended, and the two men were together for a large part of the succeeding twenty-four hours. What they discussed is not recorded, but it is known that MacArthur later made press releases and statements during the Philippine campaign (and the presidential campaign) which were expressly designed to aid President Roosevelt's prestige and chances for election.

Perhaps the key to the puzzle of the basis for this strategic decision lies in the words the President spoke when he made the decision. President Roosevelt was an intensely personal and humanistic man. He was known for his inability to say 'no' to those he liked and respected. The backgrounds and personalities of Roosevelt and MacArthur were similar in many important respects. They were both well-born, aristocratic gentlemen, and devoted to the American tradition. Both had been strongly influenced by their mothers, well past middle age, and both tended to be mystics instead of deep thinkers: MacArthur apocalyptic, and Roosevelt sensitive to the great historical currents of his time. The characters of both men were marked with vision, courage, ego, bravado, austerity, and the ability to inspire great hatred or fanatical devotion. Roosevelt, in the presence of a kindred spirit, precipitately discarded the views of 'the old bear, Ernie King,' and embraced the views of the man who shared his idealism and feel for history.

The importance and result of this strategic decision are of interest today and should not be relegated to the archives of history. We shall never know the extent to which the various factors of military strategy, domestic and international politics, personality, moral obligation, and psychological relations influenced President Roosevelt. It is significant, in this era of strategy formulation by committee, to understand how one strong and capable commander was able to prevail over the collective power and clear military logic of the wartime Joint Chiefs of Staff. The effect of MacArthur's victory over his 'Washington opposition' undoubtedly led him to believe that he could be equally successful at a later date, in another war, and on a different Asian battleground. The strategists of today and tomorrow would do well to examine the failure as well as the success to determine the parameters of individual strategy in this world of great strategic choices. □

# Recommended Reading

THIS is the seventh list prepared by the Australian Staff College and published in the journal for the benefit of the officer seeking to improve his professional knowledge through the study of past events and current trends and developments.

The lists are by no means exhaustive; they do not aim to list every book that every officer may wish to read. They are intended as a guide to planned reading which aims at the acquisition of knowledge of

(a) Contemporary military thinking.

(b) Political, economic and scientific developments which have a bearing on Australian defence.

(c) Military history.

The fact that a book is recommended does not imply official approval of the author's views and interpretations; it merely signifies that the recommended book contains a thoughtful presentation of facts, or analyses viewpoints which merit the attention of military officers.

Some important omissions are probably inevitable. Readers who are aware of such omissions are invited to send their suggestions to the Australian Staff College, Fort Queenscliff, Victoria, giving the title of the book, its author and publisher, together with a brief synopsis or review of its contents. The Staff College would welcome assistance of this kind.

THE ANZUS TREATY ALLIANCE, by J. G. Starke, QC (Melbourne University Press).

Developments during the last decade have emphasized the importance of the ANZUS Treaty to Australia. This pact now surpasses its original purpose, having become the main document which formally allies America and New Zealand with Australia for their mutual security in the Pacific area.

Mr. Starke authoritatively examines the treaty's text, its historical background, and its purpose. He compares the treaty with other regional security agreements and discusses the assurances and obligations which are derived from its membership. He also suggests revisions to this treaty which could enhance its value.

This book, which is well indexed, provides a unique text which should be read by all students of international affairs and retained as a convenient reference.

SOLDIER: THE MEMOIRS OF MATTHEW B. RIDGWAY, by Harold H. Martin (Harper).

The author brings to the reader of this book the memoirs of

General Matthew B. Ridgway, US Army Retired. He relates the problems of command and leadership that confronted the General during his service career and the solutions that General Ridgway produced for these problems.

He also tells of the efforts of General Ridgway during his term as the Army Chief of Staff to maintain a strong, combat-ready army to support American foreign policy during the Cold War period of the middle 'fifties.

This book is particularly recommended to all those who are students of the problems of command and leadership.

THE BLUNTED SWORD, by David Divine (Hutchinson).

*The Blunted Sword* is a scathing indictment of the British Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry. It delves into 150 years of Navy and Army administration and into the history of the air force since its inception. It attacks the 1964 Ministry of Defence organization as a deliberate perpetration of traditional deficiencies of the offices it replaces.

Written by a prominent British defence commentator, the book abounds with examples to prove his points. His case may be overstated, but his style makes interesting reading. For Australian officers the message is clear—tradition has value, but the open mind is beyond price.

OPERATIONAL RESEARCH IN THE R.A.F. (published by the Air Ministry through H.M.S.O.).

This book is a treatise on the origin, development and achievements of operational research within the Royal Air Force from the 1930s through to the War of 1939-1945. The areas of operational research covered are many and varied and assist to hold a reader's interest.

Any officer who doubts the value of operational research to the armed services should read this book. Afterwards he will be impelled to agree with Air Chief Marshal Sir John Slessor's statement that operational research is 'an absolute essential in any modern air force in war and peace.'

THE McNAMARA STRATEGY, by William W. Kaufman (Harper and Row).

This book deals with the changes in American defence policy in recent years and the outstanding influence of Robert S. McNamara in the direction of the reorganization involved.

McNamara revealed the weaknesses in the rigidity of the Eisenhower concept of massive nuclear retaliation in relation to the changing world situation. He redesigned American forces to provide

flexibility in the range of military responses. Concurrently he boldly streamlined Pentagon procedures to raise efficiency and lower costs.

Professor Kaufman's studies of American defence problems over many years and his standing as an official consultant enable him to write with authority and interest for the student of modern strategy.

MARITIME STRATEGY, by Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Gretton, KCB, DSO, OBE, DSC (Cassell).

The author explains what he considers to be the principles of Maritime Strategy in peace and war and examines them in relation to the period 1914-1965. Admiral Gretton produces convincing arguments to support these principles, the need for Britain to retain a well-balanced Navy and the need for greater co-operation between the three Services. The book's major shortcoming is in the arrangement of the chapters, which appears to be haphazard; despite this, however, the book is well worth reading.

THE EDUCATION OF AN ARMY—BRITISH MILITARY THOUGHT 1815-1940, by J. Luvaas (Cassell).

The Australian Army derives much of its military philosophy from its long association with the British Army. This book traces the development of British military theory, doctrine and policy through a study of eleven personalities which have influenced the evolution of the British Army. It presents interesting sidelights on the study of military history, the training of reserve forces, the growth of interest in strategy, and on the effects of public apathy, a reluctant Treasury and barren political leadership. Although the issues and personalities are of another age there is much to learn from these men and their ideas. The author shows that the pen can be as effective as the sword.

THE PREVAILING WIND, by Michael Field (Methuen & Co.).

*The Prevailing Wind* is a personal description and analysis of events in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam since the first Geneva Conference on Indo-China in 1954. Michael Field's accurate on-the-spot observations combined with a free flowing journalist's pen make the book attractive to the student of South-East Asia as well as to the casual reader.

Mr. Field discusses neutralism, Asian Communism, the paradoxical attitudes of France, the high hopes and tragic failures of United States policies—in brief the dilemma of the West. He concludes that the West's present military and political struggle in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand will be doomed to failure unless it is accompanied by far-sighted policies aimed at basic settlements between the West, the Soviet Union and China, founded on the realities of power. □