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# ARMY JOURNAL

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# ARMY JOURNAL

*A periodical review of military literature*

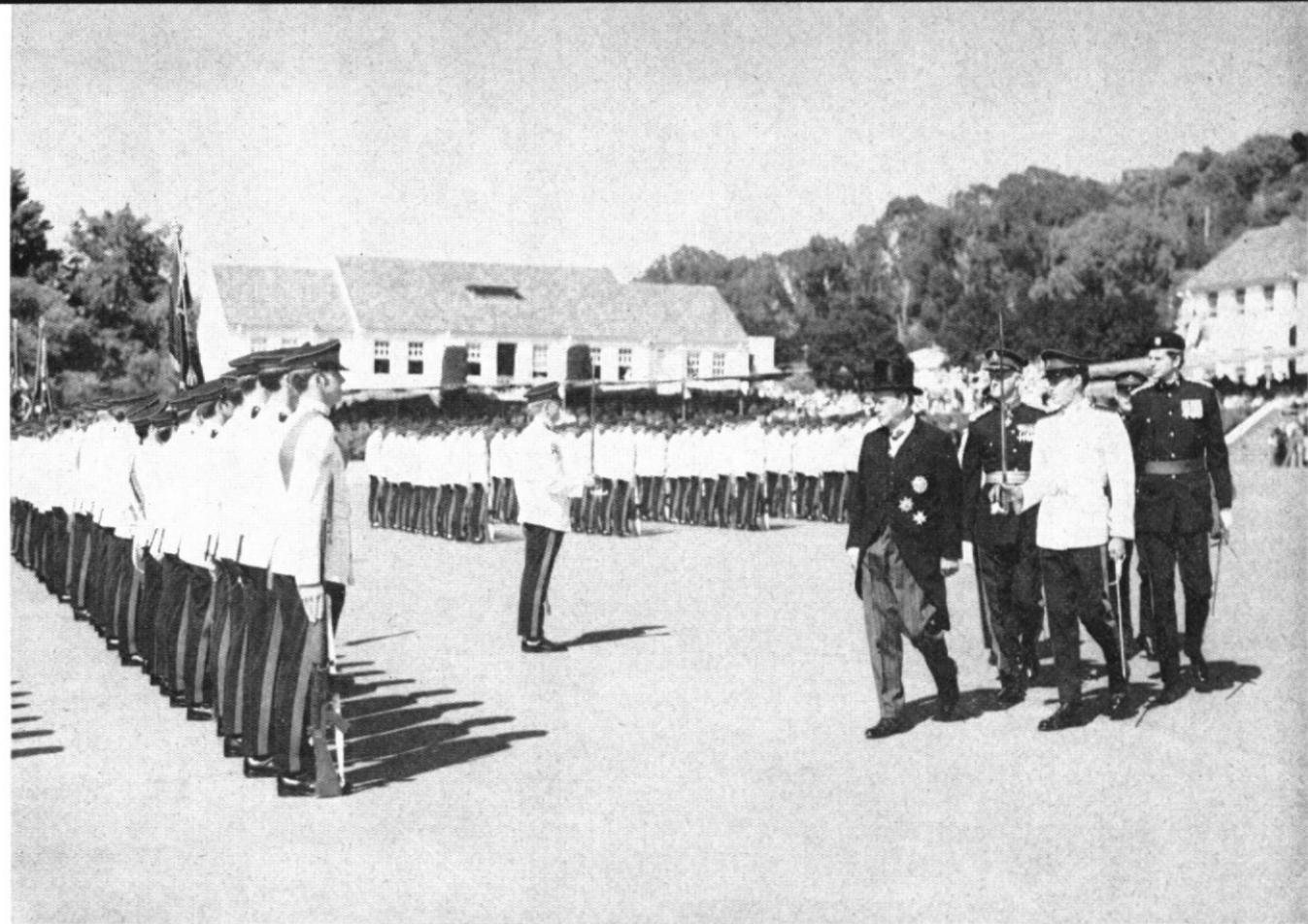
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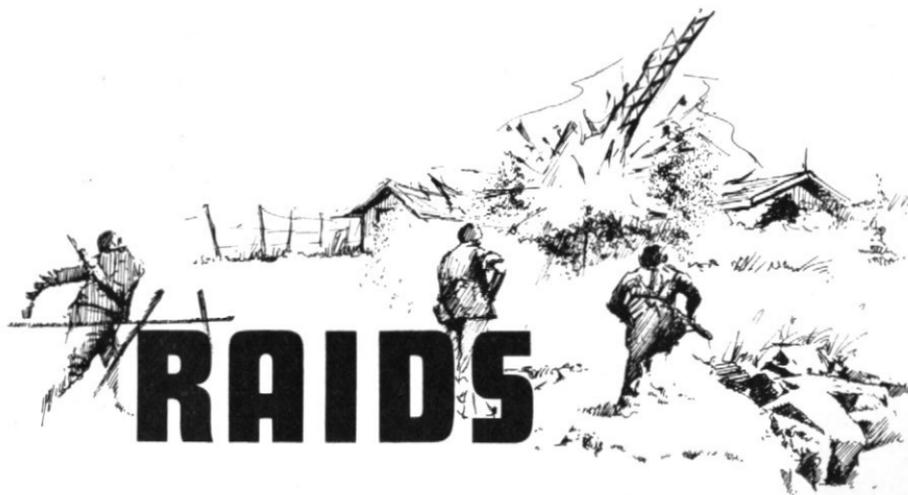
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*(Army Public Relations)*

His Excellency, The Governor General of Australia, Sir Paul Hasluck, about to inspect The Sovereign's Company during the graduation parade at the Royal Military College, Duntroon on 11 December 1973.



# RAIDS

*Major J. Viksne  
Royal Australian Corps of Signals*

## AN ANALYSIS

**H**ISTORICALLY, the main purpose of military raids has been to inflict maximum damage on the enemy with minimum expenditure of resources. More recently, they have been used to put forward a political point of view, or draw attention to a cause. The techniques used are well known and have often been employed in recent years with varying degrees of success. They have been brought to a high degree of perfection in South Vietnam and, more recently in the Middle East.

Let us analyse a typical raid into enemy territory. It can be divided conveniently into two phases: first, the occupation of the objective, and secondly, the reaction by the enemy. The first phase comprises of preparation, assault of the objective, destruction of material or abduction of personnel, and withdrawal. The reaction phase commences with the enemy's efforts to eliminate the raiding force and continues, possibly at a later time, with increased security preparations

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in the affected area, generally at the expense of other areas. Perhaps the most striking example of the two-phase relationship was the Dieppe raid in the Second World War. The assault was not the success expected; however, it unintentionally reinforced German expectation of an Allied invasion in this general sector, which persisted right up to the eve of Normandy.<sup>1</sup>

It is surprising that this reaction effect is not exploited more, particularly since the result can be out of all proportion to forces employed. Raids, co-ordinated with major activities elsewhere, can be used to divert the enemy's attention from an important undertaking, cause him to withdraw forces from tactically important areas, or force him to maintain strong elements in a threatened sector which is unimportant at that time to the friendly forces. This of course implies that the threatened sector is sufficiently important to him that he will devote large resources to protect it.

Judicious employment of raids as a diversionary measure in military operations can transform a tactically sound, but conventional plan, into an imaginative and outstanding one.

In 1972, North Vietnamese carried out a number of raids into what were considered secure Cambodian government areas. Those launched from March to October of that year had a considerable effect on deployment of government forces throughout the country.

I propose to discuss these raids to see what effect they had on operations in other areas, and what lessons may be drawn from them. Two of these, one highly successful, the other unsuccessful, are considered worthy of analysis in detail to highlight the essential elements of success or failure.

### THE RAIDS

Since the Second World War, eastern Cambodia has played a major part as a base area for insurgency movement into South Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> During the 1972 North Vietnamese campaign into South Vietnam, Cambodia was again destined to play an important part in operations in the latter's Third and Fourth Military Regions as a base area and

<sup>1</sup> A vivid analysis of the raid is given by M. Raemond Rudler in 'L'Operation "Jubilee" in the February 1973 issue of *Forces Armees Francaises*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> In 1972 Lt Col Robert Fourest, the French Military Attaché in Cambodia, vividly recalled his participation in French Campaigns in the Chup Plantation and Dambe base areas during the Indo-China war.

infiltration corridor. However, whereas previously the Cambodian government of the day had permitted free passage by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, on this occasion the Lon Nol government made strenuous efforts to stop entry by their troops. Consequently the North Vietnamese had to secure their base areas and the vast infiltration route complex in Cambodia against interference by government forces.



INFILTRATION ROUTES TO SOUTH VIETNAM

The North Vietnamese could not afford to commit large regular formations for their protection. To meet this need, they set about organizing and training local dissidents, who later became known as Khmer Communists. However, their capability and loyalty was not predictable and consequently, as a double insurance, a largely Vietnamese sapper group was constituted, whose mission was to present a constant threat to Phnom Penh. This group's role was to tie down the govern-

ment General Reserve, which could otherwise be used to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines into South Vietnam.

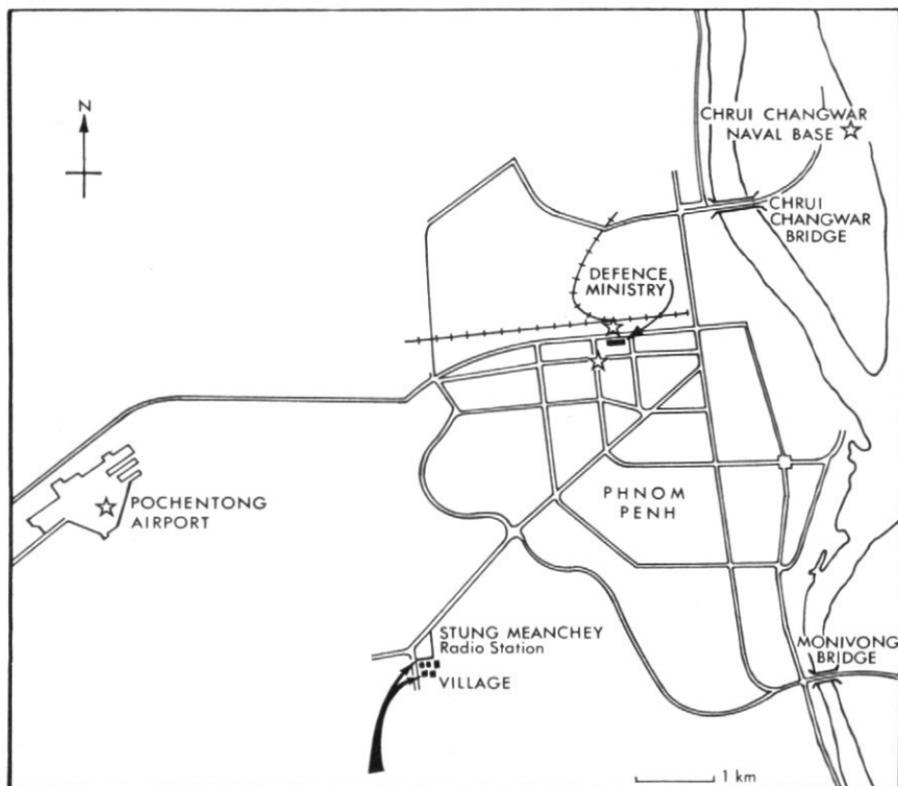
The sapper group carried out its mission by a continuous programme of terrorist and sabotage activity within the city, as well as mounting major raids against important targets in or near by. The first was mounted in March 1972 against the national radio broadcasting station at Stung Meanchey. It was followed in May by an assault on the Monivong bridge, one of the two major bridges in Phnom Penh. These two raids are discussed in detail later. A sapper assault failed to destroy a bridge joining Phnom Penh to its sister city of Takhmau in June, whilst the final major raid took place in the heart of Phnom Penh in October when sappers raided an APC squadron camp destroying approximately half of the 25 M-113s located there, at the same time destroying the second major bridge in Phnom Penh at Chrui Changwar. It is interesting to note that an earlier attempt on this bridge had failed due to a faulty placement of charges. This was probably the last major

raid on Phnom Penh as soon afterwards moves commenced to bring about a cease-fire in South Vietnam.

Each of the raids was conducted by some 300 men comprising of assault sappers and a fire support element. Each followed a similar pattern — rocket fire into selected parts of the city with simultaneous sapper attacks on the designated target. The attack on Stung Meanchey radio station serves to illustrate how successful such an attack can be.

### STUNG MEANCHEY RAID

The sapper attack is thought to have been mounted from a forest area some 30 kilometres south of Phnom Penh. Over a period of time, careful reconnaissance of the target was carried out by Cambodian nationals serving with the unit, who acted as guides in the attack. Very detailed rehearsals allowed the sappers to move undetected at night to

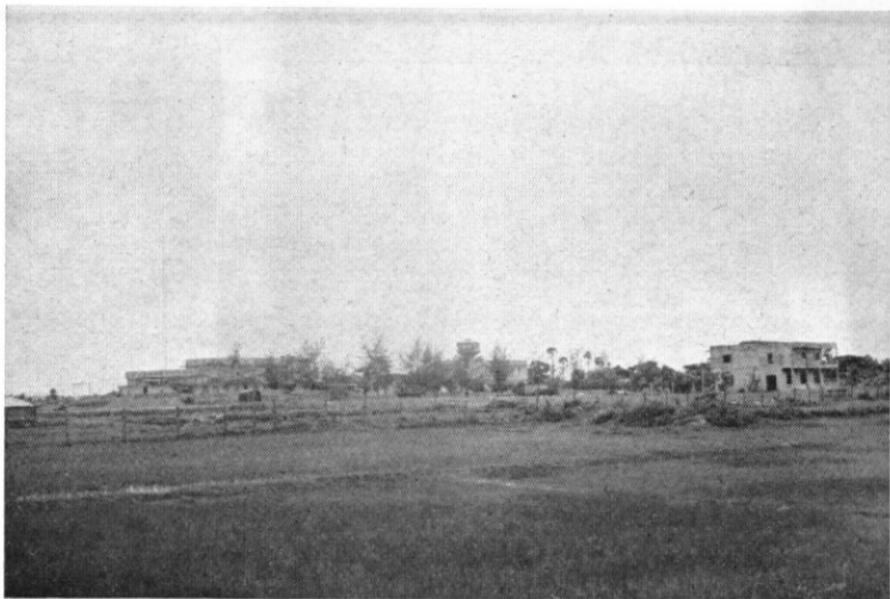


STUNG MEANCHEY RAID

their allocated targets. The group of sixty men moved out two days before the night of 20-21 March and travelling only by night arrived at an assembly area some two kilometres from Stung Meanchey several hours before H hour.<sup>3</sup>

After detaching a small fire support element armed with 82-mm mortars, the sappers moved on to a small village next to the radio station. Arriving there sometime before 0145 hours, they divided; one group moved through the village systematically bayonetting villagers, while the second penetrated the barbed wire of the radio station under cover of supporting fire, which by now was falling on the radio station.

At 0200 hours, 122-mm rockets commenced falling on the Pochentong air field — on which the Cambodian Air Force was based — in the vicinity of Defence Ministry buildings in the heart of the city, and Chruy Changwar Naval Base. In spite of attacks by 'Spookeys'<sup>4</sup> on suspected firing positions, rockets continued to fall sporadically throughout the attack.



Stung Meanchey Radio Station. Its boundary was marked by a normal barbed wire fence.

<sup>3</sup> Press interview of North Vietnamese prisoner of war, Dang Xuan Mai. *Realites Cambodgiennes*, 31 March 1972, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cambodian Air Force armed C-47 aircraft.

At the radio station, sappers armed with AK-47s, RPG-2/7s and satchel charges fanned out, quickly overcoming slight opposition by local militia. They destroyed two unmanned AMX-13 tanks and then moved to the administrative/transmitter building complex. After inviting the occupants to come out, they fired RPG-2/7s and exploded satchel charges in the buildings. On withdrawing, they blew up a radio mast.

The guerillas had long withdrawn by 0420 hours when the government relief column moved out. At the radio station, the sappers killed 38 and wounded 52 civilians and militiamen while leaving three of their own dead behind. In Phnom Penh, the rocket attack claimed a further 310 casualties.<sup>5</sup>

Although tactically the attack was eminently successful, damage to the station was light. In the transmitter building, studio equipment was extensively damaged but transmitters and the antenna base insulator outside, which would have been more difficult to replace, were little affected and the radio mast could be replaced easily.

As a result of the large public outcry which followed, plans were drawn up to improve the city's defences. Significantly, when three weeks later the North Vietnamese opened the offensive to widen their infiltration corridor in south-eastern Cambodia, government reserve units from Phnom Penh were not committed. This corridor crosses Route 1 which joins Phnom Penh to Saigon. In a little over a week, practically all Cambodian army posts picketing the strategically important section of road east of the Mekong River were eliminated in turn without interference from government forces. The raid played a significant role in retaining some 30,000 government troops in the Phnom Penh area at a time when the overall threat to the city had been reduced.

Not long afterwards, another raid, although unsuccessful in its primary purpose, again succeeded in preventing the deployment of government forces, this time in a threatening situation in south-west Cambodia.

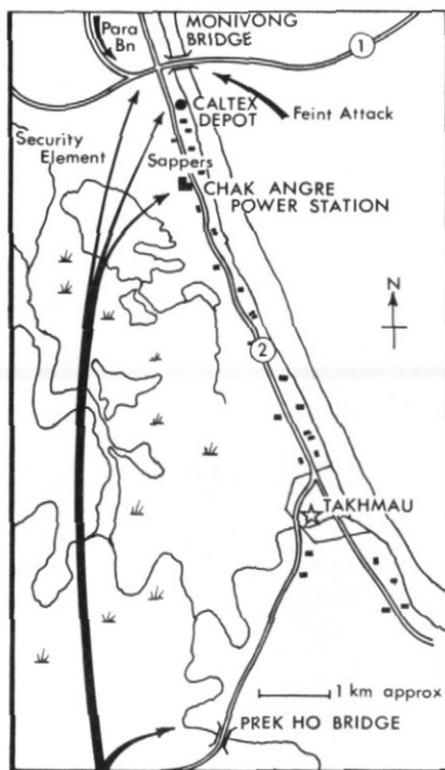
### **MONIVONG BRIDGE RAID**

Though the plan of attack on the Monivong Bridge on the south-eastern outskirts of Phnom Penh on the night 5/6 May was similar in outline to that on the radio station, it was more complex. A rocket attack on the city was mounted against the same targets from the same

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<sup>5</sup> *Agence Khmer Presse*, 10 May 1972, p. 5.

firing positions as in the previous raid. The assault sappers, probably coming from the same base area, were to seize a small bridge over the Prek Ho river some seven kilometres south-west of Takhmau on their way to the target area. This was to serve as a rendezvous for the withdrawal.



MONIVONG BRIDGE RAID

bridge, which was held by approximately a dozen militia men. Here the sappers suffered their first real reverse, which was to have far-reaching effects. Despite several assaults the sappers failed to take the bridge.

At the Monivong bridge, the main objective of the raid, the situation was hardly more encouraging. At the eastern end a feint attack went in on time just after 0300 hours, but in the west, where the main assault was to take place, the assaulting elements were so delayed that they arrived only at 0515 hours, to find the bridge fully lit up.

The stage was set for failure by leaving the approach march of some 30 kilometres for the same night as the assault. The sappers thus arrived at the Prek Ho bridge already late. Leaving a small element to deal with the bridge guard, the remainder hurried north through a marshy area (which was picketed badly by government forces) towards their objective. At 0300 hours, 82-mm mortars and 75-mm recoilless rifles opened up on Monivong Bridge, Takhmau and Prek Ho bridge. By this time, 122-mm rockets had been falling on the other targets in Phnom Penh for an hour.

Harassing fire on Takhmau was put down to cover the attack on the Prek Ho

Another sapper element, which was to attack the Chak Angre power station and thus plunge the bridge into darkness, had become disoriented, and had not yet reached their objective.



Western approach to Monivong bridge. At this point government paratroopers ran into the North Vietnamese sapper support element.

Worse was to come. The Phnom Penh garrison commander, believing that Takhmau was the enemy's main objective, finally dispatched one paratroop battalion of the garrison reserve at 0500 hours to reinforce the out-lying town. Arriving at the Monivong bridge, they ran into the sapper elements preparing to assault the bridge. Adding to their dilemma, the mortar fire supporting the sappers from across the river ceased, their crews having to withdraw with the approaching dawn. Luckily a thick mist covered their withdrawal from the now active Cambodian Air Force.

Just before 0600 hours, about 20 sappers finally found their way to the Chak Angre power station. Capturing part of it, they damaged one generator and switching equipment. However, although this blacked out part of the city, the bridge lighting was unaffected. Under constant pressure from paratroopers and an M-113 squadron, which had joined them at dawn, enemy sappers at the Monivong bridge commenced withdrawing to the south. To create a diversion they set a small Caltex

fuel depot near the bridge alight. Moving along the houses bordering on Route 2 they systematically searched out soldiers and government workers and killed them. With approaching daylight the Cambodian guides deserted and a number of sappers became lost in the swamps to the south-west of Monivong bridge.



Paratroopers supported by APC's clearing south from Monivong bridge.

Government mopping-up operations continued for several days. In all, North Vietnamese casualties were 25 killed. Another 9 were captured. This represented nearly half of the assaulting force. On the government side, the attacks and rockets killed a total of 29 and wounded 134, including civilians. An estimated 115 122-mm rockets and 50 rounds of mortar and recoilless rifle ammunition were fired into the city.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time as the raid on Phnom Penh, five Cambodian Army outposts sitting astride the other important Communist infiltration route into South Vietnam, in the vicinity of Kompong Trach in south-west Cambodia, were attacked. Within several days all fell, without any reinforcements being sent from the general reserve in Phnom Penh. Again, the raid had successfully tied up large Cambodian regular elements, which were needed urgently elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> *Realites Cambodgiennes*, 13 May 1972, p. 8.

## THE LESSONS

One lesson stands out above all others. Raids mounted by relatively small forces against what are considered vital areas can tie down significant regular forces, thus allowing far greater freedom of action by the opponent in other areas.

However, to be effective they must present a credible threat, and this credibility is largely dependent on their success. The raids discussed have indicated some essential ingredients for success and some causes of failure. The more important lessons are considered to be the following:

- The requirement for a simple plan has been often repeated and often ignored. The attack on Monivong bridge called for a complex fire support plan and co-ordination, which was obviously beyond the capability of the attacking forces. Moreover, it required the seizure of three objectives which were inter-dependent: Prek Ho bridge for rendezvous, Chak Angre power station to extinguish the bridge lighting and finally, the Monivong bridge which was the principal objective itself. This introduced three uncertainties in the execution of the plan, each of which contributed to its eventual failure. The simpler operation against Stung Meanchey radio station was eminently successful.
- More often than not, raids require specialist knowledge and training. In the Stung Meanchey raid the most vital parts of the radio station were not destroyed; in the Monivong raid, the bridge was not blacked out since the wrong set of switching gear was destroyed; and in the Chruai Changwar raid, incorrect placement of charges failed to destroy the bridge at the first attempt.
- Considerable detailed preparation is required. Reconnaissance for all raids described was carried out by Cambodians, since Vietnamese nationals would immediately have been obvious to local inhabitants. Detailed rehearsals were carried out until each man knew his task.
- There is no evidence to show that rocket fire into the city was successful as a diversionary measure. Thus the effort in

reconnaissance, manning and supplying the widely separated firing sites was largely wasted. Indeed, by causing suffering to the population it was, in the long run, counter-productive.

- In the case of a raid co-ordinated with activity in another area, probably the most difficult decision is when to mount it. If it is designed to draw forces away from that area, sufficient time must be given for the decision to be made and movement of forces to be completed. This could last up to a month or so. On the other hand, if it is to tie up forces which could influence a decision elsewhere, the raid should be mounted at the same time, or shortly after the commencement of the offensive in the principal area of activity. However, once the decision has been made, it is difficult to change detailed timings. Evidence indicates that timings had been changed for the Monivong raid, and this could have contributed in part to its failure. ❧

The Guards are superior to the Line — not as being picked men like the French — for Napoleon gave peculiar privileges to his guardsmen and governed the army with them — but from the goodness of the non-commissioned officers. They do in fact all that the commissioned officers in the Line are expected to do — and don't do. This must be as long as the present system lasts — and I am all for it — of having gentlemen for officers; you cannot require them to do many things that should be done. They must not speak to the men, for instance — we should reprimand them if they did; our system in that respect is so very different from the French. Now all that work is done by the non-commissioned officers of the Guards. It is true that they regularly get drunk once a day — by eight in the evening, and go to bed soon after, but then they always took care to do first whatever they were bid. When I had given an officer of the Guards an order, I felt sure of its being executed; but with an officer in the Line, it was, I will venture to say, a hundred to one against it being done at all.

—*Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington 1831-1851.*



# AIRBORNE ASSAULT DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

*S. W. Dyer*

CLAUSEWITZ thought defence the strongest form of warfare,<sup>1</sup> and in the peculiar circumstances surrounding Airborne attack his view seems particularly sound. The defence was indeed faced by only a small, relatively weak group, totally isolated from friendly forces, and possibly disorganized and incomplete. The invaders lacked the defence's intimate knowledge of the battleground, and could hope for only a brief period of surprise. The defence's counter-attack did not conform to Clausewitz's model of an attack which assumed that the thrust was across unfamiliar terrain against a superior force of unknown strength.

Rather it took place on familiar ground against an inferior force whose numbers were known.<sup>2</sup> Because the defence was attacking an enclave behind its own front lines the troops necessary to defend lines of communication were already in position, and did not constitute an additional burden. The defence had no need to shed troops as it moved forward on its offensive, and so could bring all its mobile forces to bear on the Airborne pocket before beginning to fight.

The capture of the objective, while momentarily a loss to the defence, was not a total defeat. The attacking force was pinned to its objective, unable to risk an aggressive defence for fear of losing some of its continually diminishing forces, and with them, the objective. Equally, they could not retreat without surrendering the objective and so losing the battle.

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*After graduating from the Adelaide University BA(Hons) Mr Dyer undertook research in the subject of Airborne Warfare. Currently he is tutoring in American History at the University of New England and researching in Australian and Pacific History.*

Compared with the defence, the attacking units had few advantages. When scattered about like confetti the Airborne troops distracted the enemy, but caused him little harm, and could possibly warn him of the opening of an offensive on the front close at hand. Failure to arrive in strength not only indicated to the defence what vital installations needed immediate reinforcement, but almost certainly precluded any chance of a successful attack.

According to Clausewitz the attacker possessed only a superiority in moral and physical force.<sup>3</sup> The first of these the Airborne forces had in abundance, from the very nature of the operation. The initial impact of Airborne assault came from its ability to strike deep behind the rear lines of the enemy, into areas normally immune from attack. In one surprise move, distance, terrain, and the defensive perimeter were surmounted and the enemy speedily outflanked. In the early years of the Second World War this capability created widespread fear. In newspapers and books published after the invasions of Norway and Holland,<sup>4</sup> the public was told of parachutists dropping from the sky disguised as policemen and tram conductors. Even the armed forces warned their personnel to be suspicious of civilians and nuns who might be Airborne soldiers in disguise.<sup>5</sup> As late as 1944 even the Germans, who had pioneered Airborne attack, were still in awe of its potential. The defenders of the Normandy coast, whatever their rank, felt there was no viable defence against a large scale assault from the sky.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the fact that the Allied forces came as liberators, not invaders, meant that they were more likely to gain the support of the civilian population. This reversal of an advantage normally thought to belong to the defenders<sup>7</sup> was not a universal characteristic of Airborne operations. In the Pacific theatre of the war, the native civilians were more likely to be neutral, favouring neither attackers nor defenders because both were alien invaders. In addition the population was scattered through more inhospitable terrain than in Europe and only in

<sup>1</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War* (London, 1966), vol. II, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 139, 148; vol. III, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> e.g., E. N. Van Kleffens, *The Rape of the Netherlands* (London 1940), *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> *Defence of Aerodrome against Parachutists and Airborne Troops*, File S4929. (Department of Defence (Air Office).

<sup>6</sup> J. M. Gavin, *Airborne Warfare* (Washington, 1947), p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Clausewitz, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 159.

the administrative centres, or the battlefield, would any change of rulers be noticeable. In Europe, however, conquest was more noticeable because there was more widespread contact with the occupying power. The different attitudes engendered by the different roles of the attacking troops could be seen after the War in Europe. In Holland the failure of the Arnhem attack was celebrated as a gallant gesture of liberation; in Crete, the German invasion was remembered on 'Crete Day' as the defensive battle that was lost.<sup>9</sup>

The physical strength of the attacker, stressed by Clausewitz, was not an essential part of Airborne operations. The Ardennes attack demonstrated that even without physical strength, the paratrooper could create havoc with the defenders' morale. The panic which gripped the Allies as a result of the scattered German drop hampered their attempts to stem the surprise ground attack. Scattered parachutes brought inaccurate reports of mass landings, and as far as 250 miles from the front identity checks were carried out to detect German infiltration.<sup>9</sup>

However, dispersed landings confused the attacking force as well as the defence. Before any Airborne landing could carry out its mission, or even adequately defend itself, it had to regroup into a reasonably coherent fighting force. Once having assembled and gained its objective the Airborne force was placed on the defensive and here it displayed its weaknesses. It had only a limited number of men, and its strength was sure to decline unless reinforced by another landing. The encircled troops lacked the normal advantages associated with defensive positions. They could not attempt to surprise their attackers by revealing a greater force than they expected<sup>10</sup> because once the landing had taken place they could make a reasonable estimate of its strength. Moreover, the attackers were forced on to the defensive in a position which could not be abandoned without losing the objective, and thus the battle.

The Airborne force in its defensive role lacked other common advantages inherent in defence. They were not operating from a prepared base, and their position was most often determined by the location of the objective, not by the advantages of the terrain.<sup>11</sup> Any attempt to gain control of more favourable terrain would further weaken

<sup>9</sup> S. von Bultzingslowen, *Insel Kreta*, magazine article in author's files.

<sup>9</sup> W. L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (London, 1964), p. 1298.

<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 71.

an already relatively weak force. However it was essential that commanding features should be held by friendly forces so this diminution of strength had to be balanced against the overall tactical objective. During the thrust to Arnhem the Americans diverted part of their forces to seize the high ground at Groosbeek in order to ensure their complete control of the approaches to the Nijmegen bridge.<sup>12</sup> Even if the force arrived in strength sufficient to seize the target, and defend its static position, the absence of a large rear area meant that, because there were no uncommitted troops, the strengthening of one sector of the perimeter automatically weakened another. There could be no absolute increase of numbers within the perimeter.

Such imbalance of tactical strengths in favour of the defence was common to most Airborne attacks, yet during the Second World War most Airborne assaults were successful. The simplest explanation of the paradox would be that the defence did nothing, and failed to exercise the advantages of its position through indifference, or because it felt itself too weak, or did not realize an attack had been made. These reasons will not suffice, for the defence was indifferent to the arrival of Airborne troops only once, in Burma, and never failed to recognize an attack, or even felt too weak to react.

Part of the reason for the Airborne successes lay in the calibre of the men in the force, a moral strength inherent in the very concept of Airborne forces. They willingly precipitated themselves into a tactical situation which would have given the most intrepid infantryman pause. If the Airborne force was lucky enough to find itself intact it was still cut off from supplies and support, encircled by a numerically stronger enemy, and unable to retreat. These potentially disastrous conditions were accepted by the Airborne soldiers as normal and indeed quite proper conditions for an attack. By accepting that tactically suicidal situation, the Airborne soldier also accepted that his survival depended on his ability to remain undefeated until relieved. That realization did not necessarily make him a better fighter, but it did increase his tenacity.<sup>13</sup> Although only sixty from a force of 200 German paratroopers arrived at their objective, the rail and road junction at Dombaas in Norway,

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<sup>12</sup> A. Farrar-Hockley, *Airborne Carpet: Operation Market Garden* (London, 1970), p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> J. W. Herrington, 'Planning an Airborne Assault', *Military Review*, XXXI, (1952), p. 46.

they held out for five days.<sup>14</sup> The small group that eventually reached the vital road bridge at Arnhem held one end for over three days while three-quarters of the original scant six hundred were whittled away.<sup>15</sup> Similarly the soldiers holding at the Ponte Grande Bridge in Sicily accepted the fact that at least 85% of their force had failed to arrive and defended the bridge until relieved.<sup>16</sup> In this case they survived by the narrowest of margins, they were rescued from captivity by the relief column.<sup>17</sup>

None of these desperate battles was seen as hopeless at the time. At Arnhem, as in Sicily, the Airborne forces could hear the sounds of friendly troops advancing towards them — relief was almost a reality. At Dombaaas, the German force expected reinforcements, unaware that the Luftwaffe had forbidden any further commitments in the Norwegian campaigns.<sup>18</sup> Thus the doggedness of each of the units was not born of desperation, rather it was a consequence of their inculcated determination. In other battles the Airborne enclaves did judge their position unprofitable and moved back to their own lines. The German parachute drop in the Ardennes was so scattered that it was incapable of setting up an effective road block, and rather than risk annihilation by attempting to do so, simply dispersed.<sup>19</sup> They did not seek combat because they could not have survived it. The officers responsible for this needed not only training, but the ability to make the best of the situation, a quality nicely illustrated by a report from a glider attack in Burma that although they had crashed and 'our position was, on paper, complicated, but in practice was simplified by the fact that we did not know where we were, and had no map.'<sup>20</sup>

When such spirit was present in the Airborne force it was to be expected that their attacks would be feared. However, it was essentially the attack, not the force itself that caused concern. The Normandy

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<sup>14</sup> Dowd, *Combat Operations of the Fallschirmjagers*, typescript notes for *Bund Deutscher Fallschirmjager e.V.*, copy in author's files.

<sup>15</sup> J. L. Moulton, *The Norwegian Campaign of 1940* (London 1952), p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> C. Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London 1952), pp. 509, 513.

<sup>17</sup> G. Chatterton, *The Wings of Pegasus* (London 1962), p. 50, claims only 500 men were assigned for the bridge assault. If, however, the figure of 2,000 claimed by L. Wright, *The Wooden Sword* (London 1967), p. 157 is correct then a mere 4% of the group arrived.

<sup>18</sup> Moulton, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>19</sup> J. Nobecourt, *Hitler's Last Gamble: The Battle of the Ardennes* (London, 1967), p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> H.M.S.O., *Wings of the Phoenix* (London, 1944), p. 61.

garrison which believed that Airborne *attack* was insurmountable, was at the same time indifferent to the fact that they would be fighting Airborne troops.<sup>21</sup> The attack *per se* had only surprise and short-lived local superiority in its favour. The defenders could call on larger reinforcements once the attack was recognized, while Airborne troops were rarely reinforced, and they had the additional advantages of fighting in a familiar area, with almost unlimited reserves.



In the opening stages of the Airborne attack the defence could not be certain of the strength of the assault, so it did not lose its advantages immediately it assumed a defensive position. On Crete the landings at Maleme and the Prison Valley were quickly forced on to the defensive, but were not counter-attacked. Dust and smoke enveloped the landing areas, making observation difficult, preventing prompt retaliation and, in the event, saving the weak, disorganized German force from destruction.<sup>22</sup> More than that, it prompted the reinforcement of the Maleme landing and eventually enabled the capture of the airstrip there.<sup>23</sup> When the first Junkers 52 landed the fate of Crete was decided, from then on the attack was continually reinforced by air-landed infantry. The aim of the attack on Crete was the capture of the island, so that continued airborne assault was essential. In other attacks the capture of the immediate objective did not entail the elimination of all the defence, but rather to the ossification of the attack, inviting the defence to counter-attack.

From the beginning of the war, armour had been a great threat to lightly armed troops. One defence, proposed by Wingate, was to set up 'pivot and rest areas'<sup>24</sup> behind the enemy's lines. Such strongholds were not feasible because of the immense demand they would make on men and materiel; the Airborne force needed light, easily handled, anti-tank weapons. Within a year of the landing on Crete,

<sup>21</sup> Gavin, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-5.

<sup>22</sup> K. Student, 'Ein Angriff ohne Kenntnis der Lage' magazine article on author's file.

<sup>23</sup> H. A. Jacobsen, J. Rohwer, *Decisive Battles of World War Two: The German View* (London, 1965), p. 124.

<sup>24</sup> G. Matthews, *The Reconquest of Burma 1943-1945* (Aldershot 1966), p. 173, p. 52.

where obsolete tanks had engaged the attack,<sup>25</sup> the Germans had developed two recoilless guns to substitute for artillery during the opening stages of battle.<sup>26</sup> These, however, were only satisfactory if they were available to the soldiers as soon as they landed. Parachutists, wary of scattered drops, preferred to sacrifice comfort items and load themselves with anti-tank grenades and mines<sup>27</sup> to ensure their instant readiness to fight off armour.

The successful deployment of Airborne artillery naturally strengthened the attack, and was felt to be particularly valuable in the early stages of a landing when the enemy counter-attack would generally be made by inexperienced troops, unaccustomed to shelling.<sup>28</sup> If artillery support was combined with advantageous terrain the Airborne troops' position was very favourable. On Corregidor, air landed artillery was hastily emplaced in such improvised sites as the upper floor of buildings and harassed Japanese positions day and night, silencing a threat to the seaborne invasion.<sup>29</sup> One inherent disadvantage was that in a small airhead the guns had to be positioned to provide a 360° arc of fire, i.e., they had to be in the open, exposed to direct enemy observation and counter-fire. With air superiority this risk was lessened, and in practice it was found that guns were almost immune from mortar barrages when well dug in.<sup>30</sup>

Another strength of the Airborne forces in their defensive role was their ability to move swiftly to oppose any attack on their positions, because they had short internal lines of communication, an advantage not normally credited to the offence. It was thus possible to transfer troops from a quiescent part of the perimeter to a threatened sector almost instantaneously. The absence of rear areas, and of attenuated lines of communication eased the demand made on the fighting strength for purely defensive activity. At Arnhem this strength was not present, it was necessary to split the force between the attack on the objective, and the defence of the landing ground.<sup>31</sup> Generally, however, the land-

<sup>25</sup> I. McD. Stewart, *The Struggle for Crete* (London, 1966), p. 173.

<sup>26</sup> H. Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won* (London, 1966), p. 105.

<sup>27</sup> S. L. A. Marshall, *Night Drop* (Boston, 1962), p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> Gavin, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-4.

<sup>29</sup> Belote J. H. and W. M., *Corregidor — The Saga of a Fortress* (New York, 1967), p. 221.

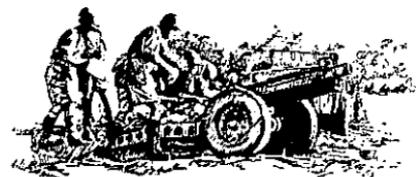
<sup>30</sup> W. F. K. Thompson, 'Some Airborne and Mountain Artillery Techniques and Tactics Developed by I Airlanding Light Regiment R.A.', *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, LXXIV (1947), p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> XXI Army Group, *Operation 'Market Garden', 17-26 September 1944*, p. 114.

ing ground was of no tactical value after the attack force had arrived and was not defended as an essential stronghold.

If the landing zone was some distance away from the objective the troops had no need to defend the route over which they travelled, but they did need to traverse it quickly. At Oslo, the political aim of the attack, the capture of the King and his ministers, failed because the German advance was slowed by lack of transport and the pedestrian traffic on the roads.<sup>32</sup> Allocation of transport did not, of course, ensure either mobility or success. Once again, the Arnhem attack illustrates the point. The planned rush to secure the bridges over the Neder Rijn was frustrated because most of the armoured jeeps were in the gliders which failed to arrive. After a delay of an hour for the reformulation of plans, the troops paraded down the highway into Arnhem, four hours behind schedule<sup>34</sup> to find the railway bridge demolished, and the road bridge defences reoccupied.<sup>35</sup> If transport was available then the advance was quicker and less fatiguing, so during the reinforcement of the Salerno landings, the Americans provided trucks at the drop zones to take the new arrivals directly to the front.<sup>36</sup>

Inside the defensive perimeter established once the objective was attained vehicles were less important. They were useful for the transport of casualties, supplies, and written communications but were infrequently called upon to provide transport from a central supply dump. In practice the Airborne force found that scavenging was quicker and tied down less manpower.<sup>37</sup>



However tenacity, surprise, artillery, and the other small strengths of Airborne assault could not guarantee success. The key to the real strength of the Airborne force lay in their rear areas. By considering the attack only in classic terms the possibility of communication between an isolated, surrounded, attacking group, and

<sup>32</sup> Dowd, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Wilmot, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

<sup>34</sup> XXI Army Group, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> Wilmot, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

<sup>36</sup> W. F. Craven, J. L. Cate (eds.) *The Army Air Forces in World War Two* (Washington, 1950-55), vol. II, p. 531.

<sup>37</sup> S. C. Myer, 'Varsity's Organic Artillery', *The Field Artillery Journal*, 35 (1945), p. 675.

its allies elsewhere was neglected. In conventional land warfare outposts were either tangibly linked to a friendly force or they were not. In Airborne warfare the avenue of contact, the air, was intangible. So while the airhead could not shelter uncommitted reinforcements because it was small, circumscribed, and completely surrounded, its rear areas could. They were far removed from any threat of attack, being located well behind the friendly front. The enemy was not likely to be able to pinpoint which air base was the main supply centre and hence was not in a position to successfully strike at the root of the Airborne invasion. In addition the almost universal practice during the Second World War to launch Airborne attacks under the protection of air superiority effectively prevented an enemy air strike. Air superiority allowed the Airborne force to call upon unlimited supplies and reinforcements with little fear that they would be lost en route. Air transport direct to the airhead meant that requirements could arrive soon after they were called for, and reinforcing troops would be fresh. In conventional warfare neither of these advantages could have been expected.

Air superiority alone did not guarantee the success of an assault; there had to be the logistic ability to exploit that superiority as well. The prosecution of an Airborne attack was dependent on the supplies that could be sent into the airhead. The Germans found from experience that the requirements for a day's resupply for an Airborne unit were the same as for the initial landing.<sup>38</sup> The ability to quickly call on reinforcements gave the Airborne force a moral as well as physical advantage. In Italy in 1944 the arrival of Airborne relief greatly heartened the 4th Army at Salerno, and the Allied troops near the dropping zones at Altavilla, Avellino, and Agropoli.<sup>39</sup> The advent of the vast glider reinforcement of the Allied landings in Normandy diverted a German armoured drive heading for the invasion beaches. The sight of over two hundred gliders and tug aircraft rolling in from the Channel convinced them that their moves had initiated an Allied counter-attack. They therefore withdrew to avoid being cut off by an obviously superior force.<sup>40</sup> The number of aircraft involved in the resupply mission to the British airhead illustrated the need for an Airborne operation to have adequate transport during *and* after the initial landing.

<sup>38</sup> U. S. Department of the Army, *Historical Study; Airborne Operations: A German Appraisal* (1951), p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> D. Richards, H. St.G. Saunders, *Royal Air Force, 1939-1945* (London, 1945), vol. II, p. 339.

<sup>40</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart (ed), *The Rommel Papers* (London, 1953), p. 473.

The resupply of airheads also required additional ground personnel to pack and load supplies into aircraft at the base; as many as two hundred extra men for every 25 sorties flown.<sup>41</sup> American experience showed that resupply was most efficient when the stores were packed before the mission began, and even then the arrival of supplies could not be relied upon.<sup>42</sup>

Prolonged resupply in the face of opposition became more difficult with each succeeding sortie, as the Americans discovered during their resupply operations at Corregidor. The aircraft in the first two missions over the island were unmolested; the third, a day later, suffered damage to 16 of the 44 aircraft involved.<sup>43</sup> During the interval the Japanese, although generally hard pressed, had rearranged the anti-aircraft defences to enfilade the flight path over the dropping zone. In battles where the enemy was in a stronger position the loss rate could be as much as 25%, with an additional 20% damaged by fighter attack.<sup>44</sup> The ease with which the defence could disrupt resupply forced the Germans to plan for the relief of an airhead by ground columns within ten days.<sup>45</sup>

The enemies of material support of the Airborne landing were not only fighters, anti-aircraft fire, and lack of transport; the weather was also important, both in the battle area and at the base airfields. This is exemplified by the repeated failure of resupply to the Arnhem airhead, when poor visibility over the English airfields delayed the reinforcement of the landing while the German strength increased. For two days the third 'lift' was unable to take off. Had the supporting troops arrived at their dropping zone behind the Germans at the southern end of the bridge, the defence would have been squeezed between two Allied forces. It is possible that the later drop could have linked up with the small force at the northern end of the bridge and held it for longer. But, after the delay, the last wave of Airborne troops arrived just too late, nine hours after the tiny British force at the bridge had been overwhelmed.<sup>46</sup> Low visibility indeed did make take-offs dangerous, but it did not make

<sup>41</sup> D. White, 'Air Supply in the AMF', *Australian Army Journal*, No. 161, (1962), p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> W. H. Peifer, *Supply by Sky — The Quartermaster Airborne Development 1950-53* (Washington, 1947), p. 28 in *Q.M.C. Historical Studies, Series II*.

<sup>43</sup> Belote, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>44</sup> C. Hibbert, *The Battle of Arnhem* (London, 1962), p. 160.

<sup>45</sup> U. S. Department of the Army, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Farrar-Hockley, *op. cit.*, Bridge defences overrun at 09:15, reinforcements dropped 18:00, pp. 148, 150.

them impossible. The aircrew engaged in the operation thought it would have been a sounder tactical move to hazard their lives in the poor conditions rather than certainly endangering the whole operation.<sup>47</sup> The late reinforcement had further repercussions, it allowed the Germans to reorganize their defensive anti-aircraft fire in the approaches to the dropping areas. After losing no aircraft to flak on the first day of the operation, the losses rose to 20% after five days.<sup>48</sup>

A further reason for the non-arrival of supplies in useful quantities on the ground occupied by the Airborne troops was the lack of communication between the airhead and the rear areas. Signal units were especially vulnerable in operations which expected high casualty rates.<sup>49</sup> Inadequate radio contact also prevented the Airborne force from making full use of the air superiority which, it was thought, should enable it to call on more air support than a normal ground operation.<sup>50</sup> In the confused fighting of intermixed troops on the ground there was no easily visible or obvious front line. This had been demonstrated on Crete, where the German command of the air was neutralized by the hand to hand fighting in which neither army was readily distinguishable.<sup>51</sup> Without specific information pilots could not attack for fear of hitting their own troops. At Arnhem the forces were intertwined and fighting in woods and streets, so no indication of their positions was visible from the air.

Air support of Airborne landings had so many problems associated with it that its value was seriously disputed.<sup>52</sup> Generally the difficulties of recognition from the air arose from the nature of an Airborne attack. The force did not issue from obviously friendly territory, so there was no axis of advance to guide the support aircraft. The zone of fighting was small and ill-defined, because the Airborne unit landed among the enemy and so its position was difficult to visualize from the air. Lack of vehicles of any great size, or armoured units, rendered the offensive pockets even less visible than conventional forces. In these circumstances visual signals from the ground were the best available identifi-

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<sup>47</sup> Personal communication from survivor.

<sup>48</sup> H. St.G. Saunders, *By Air to Battle. The Official Account of the British First and Sixth Airborne Divisions.* (London, 1945), p. 127.

<sup>49</sup> A. Lee, *Air Power* (London, 1955), p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Herrington, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>52</sup> *Gemeentearchief Arnhem, Arnhem September 1944* (Arnhem, 1969).

cation aid, but they were readily copied or captured by the enemy.<sup>53</sup> It was possible to support landing by attacks made away from the confusion of the battle area. In the hinterland the air force could assist the Airborne force by interdiction of enemy reinforcements moving towards the airhead. As in ground attacks, the disruption of the enemy's reinforcements could make a significant contribution to the efforts of a force attempting to establish itself.<sup>54</sup>

Throughout the war most Airborne attacks were successful. They took and held the primary objectives of their missions. All attacks were successful in their secondary role of disorganizing the enemy, but this was scarcely a definite role; it was more a feature inherent in the nature of the Airborne attack itself, and hence no real achievement. Very few operations were planned merely to disorganize and distract the enemy, and those that were naturally succeeded. A drop of about two hundred and fifty Italian paratroopers near Ferrara in Northern Italy, after the Italian surrender, convinced the Germans that a force of over three thousand was upon them. In addition to spreading panic, and incidentally helping the Allied advance, the group managed to capture over four hundred Germans.<sup>55</sup>

Surprise alone is an insufficient explanation of why Airborne assault was successful when pitted against the traditionally stronger defence. The main reason was that, in most cases, the surprise came not from the suddenness or strength of the attack, but from its location. Generally the Airborne soldiers swept out of the sky into areas free of large troop concentrations. Upon landing they had immediate numerical superiority because they were unopposed, or had only to deal with weak initial resistance. Thus they could move almost unhindered to their targets. The defence's reaction, no matter how swift, always allowed the attacking force some time in which to organize after landing. In that time the initial offence could turn to defence and, by awaiting counter-attack, refrain from expending itself by forcing combat on the enemy. And in most instances that transitory, but immediate, superiority was sufficient to invest and take the objective. The problems of air support and resupply, while important to forces behind enemy lines for an extended period, were normally less vital to Airborne

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<sup>53</sup> Hibbert, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>54</sup> U. S. Department of the Army, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> *Middle East Training Pamphlet*. Part I, p. 28. In Australian War Memorial Files.

success because, in most operations, the force was dropped close behind the enemy front line in the expectation of an almost immediate link-up with the attack they were supporting.

Under those conditions the Airborne force had only to survive in possession of the objective for a short time to be sure of success. The chances of survival were improved by the simultaneous launching of a ground offensive which further confused the enemy, and split his defensive strength. He was faced with the choice of removing the Airborne force from its tactical stronghold, and so denying it to the attacking force, or he could leave the position to wither away while the main attack, upon which it ultimately depended for relief, was repulsed.

The defence's problem was further compounded because the Airborne objective was usually chosen so that it would positively interfere with the defensive reaction against the ground thrust, not merely distract it.

The key to Airborne success, then, lies not in the surprise, nor the superior moral or physical strength, but in the practice of relieving the force before an effective defensive counter-attack could be executed. Landings which were attacked and not quickly relieved rarely succeeded. The Airborne force at Arnhem managed to gain and maintain the road bridge with only 10% of their men. They held it for twice as long as they had been expected to, and were destroyed in the end because the relief column was unable to advance quickly along the vulnerable road that led to Arnhem. The Airborne forces failed to fulfil their mission at Arnhem because the conventional ground forces had underestimated the strength of German resistance, and could not advance swiftly enough.<sup>56</sup> The Crete landing survived the failure of the seaborne attack because it was adequately, albeit riskily, reinforced by air-landed troops. The relief of the landing was, for all practical purposes, accomplished on the second day of the attack after radio reports of the situation had been evaluated.<sup>57</sup>

The success or failure of Airborne assaults during the Second World War depended on the speed with which they were relieved. The time required by the land forces to reach the airhead was not easily calculated. It depended on the strength of the enemy, and his reactions, it depended on the morale and the strength of the Airborne force. That

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<sup>56</sup> U. S. Department of the Army, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> C. Bonciani, *'F' Squadron* (London, 1947), pp. 156, 171-2.

last, and most important, factor was incalculable because so many different conditions could influence the proportion of the force that actually arrived on the objective. The attacking force could only be relieved in time if that strength and the actual conditions were known. In an Airborne assault this was particularly important, and the peculiar circumstances of these attacks made wireless communication essential. Without good communication, attacks were difficult to prosecute effectively;<sup>58</sup> in Airborne they were impossible. ✂

#### MONTHLY AWARDS

The Board of Review has awarded prizes for the best original articles published in the November and December 1973 issues of the journal to:

November: Major N. J. Braun ('Training for Leadership: An Approach') \$10.

December: Captain W. Glynn ('There is No Such Thing as a "Simple" Visual Aid') \$10.

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<sup>58</sup> Craven and Cate, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 608. In fairness to the ground forces it must be mentioned that the maps which were issued, and upon which they had to rely, showed no possible alternative approaches, other than the main road and gave little indication of what the terrain was like. A cautious approach was thus encouraged. (Map in 21 Army Group, *op. cit.*)

# THE DRAGON



# IN BONDAGE

*Lieutenant Colonel R. J. G. Hall  
Royal Australian Armoured Corps*

Even if we must sacrifice everything, we are determined not to lose our country — not to live as slaves.

—Ho Chi Minh

## THE SIZE, SHAPE AND SOUL

WHAT is this Vietnam that for 2000 years has played such a prominent role in Asian history? To a considerable extent Vietnam's geographical position goes a long way towards providing an explanation of her political role over the years. In contrast to Asia, the continent of Europe constitutes a single geographical entity. No natural barrier exists whereby cultural integrity can be entirely maintained. Interchange between races has long been common practice. On the other hand the Asian continent is divided by the Himalayan Range and the Annamese Chain. The geo-ethnic entity on one side is almost exclusively subject to Chinese culture and on the other side the influence is just as exclusively Indian.

This barrier has not completely isolated one area from the insinuation of certain religious and philosophical concepts from the other. It has not stopped the migration of some tribes from the north to the south. But the fact remains that neither Han, Mongol nor Manchu cavalries did cross this range. The map of China and Vietnam suggests a funnel draining away from southern China into the south-east Asian area. There is considerable historical relevance to this image. For many centuries China attempted a passage through the Vietnamese 'spout' to the ricefields and the fertile plains of south-east Asia. It is therefore

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in the Vietnamese tradition to have stood, pressed against the Annamese Chain, fairly in the path of Chinese expansion whilst at the same time permitting the permeation of a refined Chinese culture.

Having arrested the Chinese advance whilst at the same time absorbing much of this culture, the Vietnamese themselves commenced a slow spill-over from the Red River valley. The north was blocked by the sure prospect of further military confrontation with the Chinese. The west contained infertile mountains and primitive people. The only possible direction for migration was south. As it happened, the land lying against the Annamese Chain was ideal for rice growing. The spill-over to the south took 800 years, at the end of which the Vietnamese were cultivating the fertile Mekong delta. They spread over a distance of 1000 miles. Notwithstanding the paucity of communications, a sound social organization soon emerged. Every settlement, from the Red River to the Mekong became a link uniting the people.<sup>1</sup>

The French conquest imposed on the Vietnamese three arbitrary regions — Annam, Tonkin and Cochin-China. This partitioning forced on the Vietnamese different 'nationalities' that had no bearing on the cultural or geographic divisions. People of Cochin-China became French *subjects*, those in Annam and Tonkin were French *protégés*. By 1930, a new set of social strata had been created as a result of a local industrial revolution. New classes emerged with new economic interests, new outlooks on life and new political aspirations.

Within these strata, the native landowners created a perplexing social phenomena. An upper class they certainly were, but they exercised no political power. They were unquestionably rich, but they contributed little if anything to the development of capitalism. Few of the native population were engaged in manufacture, commerce or banking. The major economic operations were set in renting land to tenants, selling rice to the French exporters and money lending at usurious rates.

By 1838, 2.3 million of Cochin-China's 5.1 million hectares of *arable land* was under cultivation. The majority of the land was in the hands of 2.5% of all land-owners. 70% of the land-holders (some 183,000 rice peasants) owned only 15% of the land.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of the Vietnamese large land owners were in Cochin-China. The rubber

<sup>1</sup> Paul Mus, *Vietnam Sociologie d'une Guerre*. Paris 1950, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> W. MacMahon Ball, *Nationalism and Communism in East Asia*. (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press 1952), p. 70.

boom at its peak in the 1930s attracted capital investment, estimated by Virginia Thompson as 4 billion francs.<sup>3</sup> It was not to the Vietnamese but to the French to whom the rewards of this business were made.

## THE COMPETITORS

### Japan

The early Japanese interest in South-East Asia was demonstrated in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 in which the control of Korea was the prize. By July 1937 Japan had occupied large parts of coastal China. The value of Indo-China in any attack on Malaya, Borneo and Sumatra was obvious from a glance at the map. Roosevelt saw the Japanese activities as '... being undertaken ... for the purpose of further offensive'.<sup>4</sup> Less obvious perhaps was the real part Indo-China was to play in the 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere'. Certainly by 1939 Indo-Chinese products and resources began to be marketed in Japan. It was the beginning of an association designed to draw Vietnam inexorably into the Japanese economic orbit.

As early as 1900, Japan had shown interest in the Vietnamese National Movement. Prince Cuong-De was encouraged to feel that he could be placed at the head of a Vietnamese government with the sponsorship of Japan.<sup>5</sup> Both Communists and Nationalists were quick to join in the rebellion at Cai Kinh. Despite its failure, the willingness of the Japanese to provide arms to the revolutionaries concerned the French greatly.

From the actual occupation of Indo-China, the Japanese derived a number of advantages — most of them military. However, the economic advantages were considerable. Indo-China no longer had any other market except Japan for its annual export of 1.6 million tons of coal, 1.4 million tons of rice, 500,000 tons of corn, 140,000 tons of cement and 60,000 tons of rubber.<sup>6</sup> In turn Japan was producing goods marketable in Indo-China.

### China

The long association between Vietnam and China has certainly left its mark on the Vietnamese. In 1942, Ho Chi Minh saw China as

<sup>3</sup> V. Thompson, *French Indo China*. (London, Octagon Books, 1967), p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> Department of State, *Papers Relating to Foreign Relations US-Japan 1931-1941*. Washington D.C. 1943, vol. 2, p. 528.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Political History*. (Andre Deutsch, London 1969), p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indo China 1940-55*. (Stanford University Press. California 1954), p. 28.

an ally. His friendly visit in August of that year was directed towards establishing contacts with the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>7</sup> Although his arrest 'increased the resentment towards China among the Vietnamese revolutionaries',<sup>8</sup> his subsequent release, apparently through the good graces of General Chang Fa-K'uei,<sup>9</sup> was the first of a chain of events that demonstrated the extent of China's claim on Vietnam.

The organization of the *Dong Minh Hoi* by Chang Fa-K'uei was an interesting step for the Chinese to take. The Vietnamese revolutionary forces were to be consolidated in China under the General's direction. These forces were to exclude the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. What motivated Chang? Chen claims to recognize a degree of fraternal sympathy for the revolutionaries. However, the future military advance of the Chinese into Vietnam cannot be overlooked as the reason for the General's interest. Chang himself records in his memoirs that the revolutionaries would be returned to Vietnam where they would co-operate with the Chinese in a joint effort against Japan.<sup>10</sup> In the ICP Chang may have detected some threat to the ultimate Chinese occupation of the northern portion of Vietnam. In any event the Chungking Government would have rejected collaboration with the Communists.

Ho Chi Minh must have considered that the Chinese aims were short term and primarily military. For he appears to have thought that he experienced little risk in his double dealings with the Chinese: co-operation, cordiality and obedience towards Chang on one hand and insinuating ICP influence into the *Dong Minh Hoi* at the expense of the China-supported VNQDD on the other. Whilst Ho's appreciation of the risk was in his favour, the French were emphatically opposed to any Chinese advance into Vietnam. A Chinese attack, said M. Hoppenot representing General de Gaulle's Committee of Liberation '... would have the immediate effect of causing the whole Indo-Chinese population to rise against the Allies. For... the Chinese... represent the traditional enemy. If Chinese troops attacked... plainly there would

<sup>7</sup> K. Chen, *Vietnam and China 1938-54*. (Princeton University NJ, 1969), p. 55 quoting Truong Chinh *President Ho*, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Chen, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Devillers (*Historie du Vietnam de 1940 à 1952*), Hoang Van Chi (*From Colonialism to Communism*) and Fall (*Two Vietnams*) all speculate on variations to this.

<sup>10</sup> Chen. *op. cit.*, p. 71.

not be any support from the French . . .'<sup>11</sup> If M. Hoppenot thought to convince the US Assistant Secretary of State of a French paternalism for 'their' Vietnamese, he was to be disappointed. In any event, it is clear that the French saw China as a competitor for a country which was French by colonial right. The fact that the Chinese might have no long term intention of staying in Vietnam was of no moment to the French. China could oust the French — that was the rub. To the French, a non-French Indo-China was inconceivable.

### The French

Following the spring of 1940, French Indo-China represented a significant part of all that was left of the French Empire. To hold on to it in the face of Japanese assault required help from abroad. Neither Britain nor the USA could offer more than warm assurances. The colonial administration, in desperate bids to retain a grip on Indo-China, however humiliating, acceded to a series of Japanese ultimatums. It was not heroic. The French fought Japanese troops on two separate occasions between the fall of France and the surrender of Japan. Of one, a French source claimed it to be 'the first of a series of glorious episodes in which the French Army showed it knew how to fight against all hope, just for honour'.<sup>12</sup> Other observers must have been more impressed by the brevity of the action. However, the Vietnamese were unlikely to have seen it in terms of fighting for Vietnam. Ho's later argument that the French 'lost' Vietnam to the Japanese and the Vietnamese 'won' it back from the Japanese had enormous appeal to a wide range of Vietnamese nationalists.

Throughout the subsequent occupation, the French and the Japanese carried out a psychological war in which the stakes were the Indo-Chinese people. The Greater East Asia Prosperity appeal was countered by the French model of the Indo-China Federation. Although the French increased the prestige of the Emperor of Annam, significantly, his functions of rule were not increased. Considerable effort was made towards implementing large scale public works programmes and closer and more egalitarian relations were urged for adoption between the French and the Indo-Chinese elite. Yet for all this, the French Administration was not prepared to give up any of its control of the country.

<sup>11</sup> Department of State: *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers — 1943 — China*. (Washington, DC, 1957), pp. 882-7, quoted in Chen, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>12</sup> *Direction Fédérale de l'information, Le situation en Indo China Mars 1945 — Juin 1946*. (Saigon 1946), p. 2. Quoted by Hammer op. cit., p. 22.

Even the minuscule French Resistance could not be persuaded that Vietnamese civilians should be part of the Movement. Following the Japanese coup on 9 March 1945, General de Gaulle announced his displeasure at the Allies slowness in coming to the aid of the French in the colony. 'By the trials of all and the blood of the soldiers at this moment a solemn pact is sealed between France and the peoples of the Indo-Chinese Union'.<sup>13</sup> The world at large and the Vietnamese people in particular were in no doubt that the General saw the pact and the struggle in terms of a French Indo-China.

The roll of the non-Vietnamese competitors cannot be closed without a reference to the Bank of Indo-China, the stockholders of which guarded the Vietnamese market for French goods. The bank was involved in large scale financial operations throughout Asia. Founded in 1875, it was granted '... the privilege of issuing currency for twenty-five years ... and [it] acted on behalf of the Governor-General in its dealings with the French Treasury'.<sup>14</sup> In 1931 its *privilege* was renewed. The French Government acquired twenty per cent interest in the bank. There can be no doubt that the economic policy of Vietnam, such as it was, became the right of the Bank's directors—six of the twenty being nominated by the French Government.<sup>15</sup> The stockholders wanted profits from their investments returned to France. They were completely indifferent to the economic needs of Vietnam outside the demand to safeguard the investment.

### The Vietnamese Factions

Throughout the whole colonial period there were continuous armed revolts. Some non-violent movements were prominent for short periods. Notwithstanding Hoang Van Chi's belief that the Communist Movement (1925-45) did not have a real nationalistic ethos<sup>16</sup> nascent nationalism was the one common feature with the miscellany of Vietnamese political groups. However, one must define nationalism with care. In view of the total subordination of Indo-China to Metropolitan France, Vietnam was a country almost totally without political dynamism and 'most Vietnamese withdrew entirely from political life, silently if unmistakably indicating their passive resistance to foreign rule'.<sup>17</sup> Thus

<sup>13</sup> *New York Times*, 15 March 1945. Quoted by Hammer op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> D. Lancaster. *The Emancipation of French Indochina*. (London, Oxford University Press 1961), p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*. (Pall Mall Press, London 1964), pp. 14-26. See also D. J. Duncanson, *Government and Revolution in Vietnam*. (Oxford University Press, NY. 1968), p. 140.

<sup>17</sup> Hammer op. cit., p. 74.

'Vietnam for the Vietnamese' was rather 'Vietnam without the French'. Few of the revolutionaries saw much further than that.

In 1927 the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) came into power in China. This revolution, just beyond her northern borders, appeared to provide Vietnamese ideologies with a model worth emulating. At the end of that year the *Viet Nam Quoc Can Dang* (VNQDD) appeared in Hanoi. Its idealistic but inexperienced founding fathers were, like the Party Chairman (Nguyen Thai Hoc), students of the higher level commercial schools. Although in theory the VNQDD reached out through the central committee to province, regional and village cells, it was no more than a hollow imitation of the Kuomintang's incomplete reflection of Russian Communist organization. It had neither real financial nor popular support.

Although it appears that all classes opposed foreign rule to some extent, not all were committed to overt or covert forms of struggle for independence. The landowners, despite their obvious discontent, still worked towards a *modus vivendi* with the French. The richer this class became, the stronger was their wish to participate in the running of the country. To translate desire into action was quite inconsistent with the retention of the social status provided for them by the French rule.

In Tonkin, Le Van Huan led the briefly existing Revolutionary Association of Vietnam. Rejecting both monarchy and French rule, it failed particularly in providing any programme for social reform. The Party's appeal was limited to the intelligentsia and was thus doomed to failure. A judgement so easily made in retrospect, but one that at the time appreciated only by the Communists.

The strong traditional attitude to the alien quality of French rule brought forth numerous secret societies and a host of private thugs who were the main strength of the resistance forces. Motives were frequently criminal, or at the very least for private gain and their methods, often shockingly brutal, were characterized by callous cynicism.<sup>18</sup> These mutually competing factions were patriotic if the question ever arose, but primarily they were seeking local power and influence by force. Genuine nationalistic feelings had no way of being translated into constructive political activity. The mechanism for reform was almost non-existent. The nationalists were left with no practical alternative to operating clandestinely as revolutionaries. In this way a series of movements were formed aimed at freeing Vietnam

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<sup>18</sup> Duncanson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

from the French. Whilst they were not political parties competing for control of the country in the Western sense, one party with a positive (if somewhat idealistic) programme for the future stood out above all the rest — the Indo-China Communist Party (ICP).

During the 1920s knowledge of Marxian political economy spread mainly among the young Vietnamese intellectuals and the new middle class. Independent associations, often quite small, began to urge the adoption of Communist economics. The majority were Trotskyites, trained in Moscow or Whampoa and subject to many dissensions of their own that made them so similar to the other Vietnamese movements. This competition between several mutually antagonistic 'Communist Parties' was resolved at the apparent behest of the Comintern through their agent Ho Chi Minh and the ICP was formed. It is interesting to note that Moscow rejected Ho's original title of the 'Vietnamese Communist Party' on the grounds of its excessive nationalist flavour.<sup>19</sup>

The unified Communist Party of Vietnam came into existence in 1930 under the leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc. The Party announced a ten-point plan which commenced with the slogan: 'To overthrow French imperialism, feudalism and the reactionary Vietnamese capitalist . . . .'<sup>20</sup>

The 1930 ICP Manifesto proclaimed land and labour reforms, nationalization of banks and rubber estates, abolition of taxation and the monarchy and support of the Soviet Union. Why the Soviet Union? Because, said a Vietnamese nationalist arrested by the French '... the Soviet Union . . . does not want slave people'.<sup>21</sup>

Ever the opportunists, the Communists attempted to exploit the French collapse in Europe by launching their revolt at My Tho. Crushed by the French and checked by the new Tokyo-Vichy alliance, the ICP turned again to China. With his forces regrouped in South China, Ho emerged with the one issue that could rally Vietnamese of every social class — Independence. But far more important, in lieu of an expected ICP declaration of orthodoxy at the Congress, the *Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi*, (the League for Independence of Vietnam) was formed. For the first time factionalism was at an end. At last a formidable indigenous competitor had emerged.

<sup>19</sup> Duncanson, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>20</sup> *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution. Selected Writings 1920-66*, Editor B. Fall. (Praeger, NY. 1967), p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> Hammer, op. cit., p. 75. Quoting Andrée Voillis. *Indochine SOS*, p. 8.

Buttinger claims that the *Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi* or Viet Minh was based on a lie in that it claimed to be a multi-party and not a Communist organization.<sup>22</sup> Clearly Buttinger is prepared to apply a simple label to the Viet Minh rather as the French were to do. 'The Viet Minh is Communist'. Perhaps Ho was being naive if he expected General Chang to believe his statement 'I am a Communist, but my present concern is for Vietnam's freedom not for Communism.'<sup>23</sup> Yet it was a statement that was to be welcomed by the fractious VNQDD, many Catholics and a great number of other genuine nationalists. After all, who could really oppose the Viet Minh's programme for national independence, belittle an organization that won international recognition, or refuse support of men whose dedication was demonstrated at link after link in the chain that unites the people?<sup>24</sup>

On this wave of popularity and with the prodigious work of Giap in forming the 'Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Vietnam', six provinces between the Chinese border and Hanoi were firmly in Viet Minh's hands by June 1945. Two days after Japan's capitulation, Ho issued his order for the general insurrection. In the absence of all opposition, he celebrated his victory in Hanoi on 19 August. Ten days later he formed his first Government. The country was free, united and the owner of a title long sought by all Vietnamese — The Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

### THE DRAGON AT BAY

'How', said a long time resident of Indo-China to Lucien Bodard, 'can a country that has been so overwhelmed with kindness possibly have blown up in our faces?'<sup>25</sup> It would appear that many French really believed that their brand of colonialism was a 'blessing of which the contented masses should not be deprived by a few disgruntled and ambitious nationalist intellectuals'.<sup>26</sup>

#### The French Resistance

It does not seem unfair to say that an early component of the French Resistance was resistance to the facts. Bao Dai had abdicated, his regalia of office handed to the Chairman of the National Liberation

<sup>22</sup> Buttinger, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>23</sup> Chen, *op. cit.*, p. 82. Quoting in English from *Chang Memoirs*.

<sup>24</sup> See Paul Mus, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-7.

<sup>25</sup> Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War*. Trans by P. O'Brian. (Faber and Faber, London 1963), p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Buttinger, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

Committee. Hanoi was the capital of the new Vietnam. The Viet Minh had successfully persuaded the United National Front that the new Government had international recognition as well as popular regard. Ho's first Ministry consisted of seven Viet Minh, three Democratic Party, one Catholic and one non-Party members. The less secure South was under the administration of the Committee of the South, resident in Saigon.

France based its non-recognition of this situation on its issue of the Declaration on Indo-China made on 24 March 1945, providing for a federal Indo-China within a French Union. A Union that would include France and other members of the French community. Foreign affairs and defence were to be in the hands of the French but the Federation would have its own armed forces. The Governor-General was to be renamed High Commissioner and there was to be a Federal Representative Assembly chosen in accordance with the mode of elections best suited to each of the States.<sup>27</sup> It did appear to add up to some kind of autonomy — autonomy for the Governor-General not the Indo-Chinese.

Ho pointed out that '... since the autumn of 1940 our country ceased to become a French colony and became a Japanese possession'.<sup>28</sup> The French were unwilling to concede that this was a legitimate result of either the uneasy alliance of the French Army in Indo-China with the Japanese, or the coup of 9th March. Unexpected stiffening of this resistance came with the arrival of General Gracy. The General, in an extraordinary departure from his instructions to '... disarm the Japanese [but] do not become involved in keeping order'<sup>29</sup>, took it upon himself to bestow that portion of Vietnam south of the sixteenth parallel to the French! For the French, this was now the base of legitimacy from which 'mopping-up' operations were undertaken for the early restitution of the whole of the country.

Franco-Vietnamese negotiations were commenced but the French were faced with a far more dangerous competitor in the north than the apparently moderate Ho Chi Minh.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese arrived in September 1945. They were immediately resistant to the French pleas for entry to the north of French troops and administrators. It was soon clear that Chungking did not want the French back in Indo-China. As the

<sup>27</sup> Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-2.

<sup>28</sup> Ho Chi Minh, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>29</sup> P. Devilliers, *Historie du Vietnam de 1940 a 1952*. (Paris, 1952), p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

occupation continued, Ho had to put up with the consequences of his dealings with the Chinese. Notwithstanding a degree of ravagement of the country in which French and Vietnamese suffered alike, France's position was being slowly eroded. On the other hand Ho was confident of the short term nature of the Chinese presence.

The Chinese quickly forced the French into surrendering the various special rights acquired in China in the past and re-negotiated the control of port and railway concessions. The longer the French were forced to fight against the Chinese occupation, the more time was available to the Viet Minh to establish a vital country-wide communication system and sound organizational base. It is perhaps too much to assume that Ho foresaw this at the time of his agreements with the Chinese. But it was an opportunity grasped with their usual relish and the Viet Minh did not waste a moment of it.

By 31 March 1946, China had gained all she could from the French. With as much bad grace as possible and with a last spiteful fanning of the fire of Viet Minh-French suspicions, the Chinese left.

The French had hung on. But General Leclerc must have recognized the full implications of an armed resistance to Ho in Hanoi. They were certainly gravely conscious of the 185,000 Chinese troops and 30,000 Japanese still in the north when the Agreement of 9th March was signed. An agreement that recognized the DRV as '... a free state with its own Government, parliament, army and finances forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union'.<sup>31</sup> With the agreement of Ho not to oppose the French return to Tonkin in exchange for the French promise of a referendum to determine the future status of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China, Leclerc's patience in dealing with the Chinese appeared to be paying off. However, armed clashes continued in the South and the real meaning of 'a free State' continued to be elusive.

At the Dalat Conference the French continued their hard line on the matter of retaining control of Cochin-China. This area was, of course, the repository of the bulk of French investments and the centre of the French economic interests. Furthermore, the referendum would not be held until all hostilities ceased. Ellen Hammer notes that at the conclusion of the Conference, Giap wept.<sup>32</sup> They were doubtless tears of frustration. France was offering nothing.

<sup>31</sup> 'Notes Documentaires et Etudes No. 548', quoted in Hammer, op. cit., p. 153,

<sup>32</sup> Hammer, op. cit., p. 165.

Failure at Fontainebleau and the *modus vivendi* which 'skirted all the vital issues between the two countries'<sup>33</sup> attested to the irreconcilable ideas on the construction of the Vietnamese State. It was only a matter of time before the French moved out of the area of their ill-conceived political resistance to that of full-scale military conflict. As Premier Blum rationalized it, 'Before all, order must be re-established'.<sup>34</sup> For the next seven years the French attempted to achieve this order with the application of a force which was never adequate for the task of country-wide pacification.

The military aims were simple. It was a war of colonial reconquest. The French clung to the tactic of oil slick pacification because politically and militarily there appeared to be no alternative. 'It is', said Leclerc, 'a question of coming to terms with an awakening xenophobic nationalism, of channelling it in order to safeguard... the rights of France.'<sup>35</sup>

The final throw by the French before they became bogged down in a hopeless military conflict was the effort to change the character of the struggle from that of a colonial war to a civil war — a war that was to be between the 'communists' and the 'anti-communists'. Thus was born the Bao Dai solution. It should be noted that this attempt to redefine the protagonists was made before the Viet Minh made their blunder in 1950 of going all the way on the Communist line, thereby reshaping the battlefield in precisely the form sought by the French. But by then, of course, the Bao Dai solution was dead.

The curious quality of the solution was that the success of the scheme to use Bao Dai against Ho Chi Minh depended on conditions which, if fulfilled, would render the entire operation useless to the French. To succeed, Bao Dai needed at least the same broad base of popular support as that enjoyed by Ho. The only likely attraction to the masses was Independence and Ho was offering that now. The French were not prepared to provide Bao Dai with the concessions they had already refused Ho. Concessions that would inevitably lead to independence.

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<sup>33</sup> Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>34</sup> 'Assemblée du Union Française', 9 March 1945, quoted in Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>35</sup> Leclerc, quoted in Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

## The Viet Minh Resistance

The aim of the work of civilization which France is accomplishing in her possessions exclude any idea of autonomy... self government in the colonies... must be excluded.<sup>36</sup>

In view of this attitude, it can be claimed that the French created the conditions for the ultimate success of the Viet Minh and effectively closed the door to any real possibility of the emergence of a nationalist anti-communist front. The French unwillingness to prepare the colony for self-government on the one hand and their subsequent willingness (albeit in desperation) to negotiate with the Viet Minh on the other, irrevocably cast the majority of the nationalists into the Viet Minh camp.

For the Viet Minh, the aims of the war were far simpler politically, although militarily more complex than those of the French. The Viet Minh called 'Independence' and this call was taken to the People. The operation was fundamentally Marxist in character and was in response to the demand by Mao Tse-tung that nothing less than the total support of the people can be accepted. 'The people are the water and our Army the fish.'<sup>37</sup> Whilst Western writers like Buttinger and Ralph Smith<sup>38</sup> point out that in practice the Communist anti-French programme was often stimulated by means of terror, neither mentions one significant contradiction. Ho and his major subordinates were lowland Vietnamese, yet nearly all Viet Minh strongholds were in areas inhabited by mountain minorities that traditionally hated the Vietnamese. Furthermore both the 325th and 335th Peoples' Army Divisions had large groups of minorities.<sup>39</sup>

This is obviously a slender argument upon which to base any claim on the persuasive nature of the appeal of Ho. However it is known that he did mobilize the masses and he did so in conditions not always in his favour. Truong Chinh identifies three levels of community mobilization — the political, economic and cultural.

On the political level it should be noted that the Communist contribution to notions of resistance were played in a very low key. The traditional Vietnamese social solidarity was the Viet Minh's major target. In an example of Truong Chinh at his most revolting, he urges

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<sup>36</sup> de Gaulle, at the Brazzaville Conference January 1944, quoted (in English) in F. Traeger *Why Vietnam?*, (Praeger, NY. 1968), p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> Truong Chinh, *Primer for Revolt*, (Praeger, NY. 1963), pp. 116-7.

<sup>38</sup> Ralph Smith, *Vietnam and the West*, (Heinemann, London 1968).

<sup>39</sup> B. Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, (Praeger, NY. 1963), p. 112.

Catholics to 'beware the false and misleading propaganda that claims the Ho Chi Minh Government would forbid the worship of God, destroy the churches and desecrate the Cross.'<sup>40</sup> For a while, the Catholics enjoyed what was almost '... a preferred status within the Republic... a Catholic became Minister for Veterans Affairs'.<sup>41</sup> But, perhaps as the result of world hardening of views on Communism and the Catholic Church's attitude in particular, arrests, excessive taxation, confiscation and expulsion of the non-Vietnamese clergy all marked the process of liquidation of the Church from 1951 onwards.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand Buddhism did not present much of a practical problem to the DRV and a compliant 'National Buddhism' similar to the National Churches in the USSR and Eastern Europe soon developed. The southern feudal politico-religious sects aspired to a share in the temporal power of the State and were thus subject to the same naked force as other imperialist oriented groups.

Whilst the first attempts at local administration on the part of the Viet Minh were haphazard, the traditional autonomous structure of the village presented an ideal breeding ground for the type of '... decentralizing policy practised by the Revolutionary Government [which] presented great analogies with that applied by the Communist Government of Soviet Russia'.<sup>43</sup> At every community level there were popular assemblies (*Hoi Dong*) as well as cultural front organizations such as the Democratic Party (for landlords and rich tradesmen), the Socialist Party (for intellectuals) and the *Lien-Viet* (for the revered figures in national culture and political life that still might have influence on the youth).<sup>44</sup> The effect of this upon the efficiency of the administration must have been profound. But far more significant was the Viet Minh web that bound so many hands to the needs of the revolution and placed so many feet on the path of the Central Government 'righteousness'. In this regard, the sweeping powers of the Police to 'repress any act of a nature likely to be harmful to the interests of the State'<sup>45</sup> was tantamount to total control of any political activity not in full accord with the policies of the Government.

<sup>40</sup> Truong Chinh, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>41</sup> B. Fall, *The Viet Minh Regime*. Institute of Pacific Relations. Cornell University South-East Asian Program. NY. Revised Edition 1956, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> Fall, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>43</sup> Vu Quoc Thong *La Decentralisation Administrative au Vietnam*, (Presses Universitaires au Vietnam, Hanoi). Quoted in Fall *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Hoang Van Chi, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>45</sup> Fall, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

The economic demands of the protracted war were enormous. Because a blockade was imposed by the Viet Minh against the French occupied zone, trade or barter goods were almost non-existent. If the aim of this exercise was to increase local production, the results were less than encouraging. However, the logistic overheads of the expanding Peoples' Army were met and this was a sure measure of the success of the economic mobilization. Such mobilization still did not include the implementation of the long promised land-reform.

This, it would appear, was the time of greatest vulnerability for the Viet Minh. They had imposed a multiplicity of taxes on the people under their control. The peasant had to pay a land tax, a contribution of grain to the public store and another to the Regional Troops and still another to support the road repair gangs. Finally, there was a 10% tax on the yearly rents.<sup>46</sup> Ho was confronted with peasant opposition, inflation, shortage of food, salt, cloth and consumer goods. Health was poor. 'We have many defects'<sup>47</sup> said Ho. Bao Dai's alternative was a zone of political control based neither on popular support nor party strength but on a number of feudal units. Such support as he did enjoy was diverse and attracted more suspicion than sympathy.

The resistance in the cultural field was firmly based on three principles. Truong Chinh states that the resistance must be national, scientific and popular. In this way he enters upon an exercise in comparing the 'depraved, obscurantist "culture" of the aggressors'<sup>48</sup> with the dynamic and progressive culture of the Vietnamese. The scientific nature of culture is used to rationalize economic demands and the encouraged xenophobia bears with ease the label — 'national'. Nevertheless, by coupling these themes with a programme of education and literacy, few could fail to be involved and identified with some aspects of the resistance.

The Peoples' Army was, in accordance with Giap's version of Mao's tactic, progressing from the first stage of the Protracted War to the more mobile operations of the second stage. This was being made possible with the increase in the number of Viet Minh base areas. Notwithstanding the justice of its cause<sup>49</sup> and the local superiority of

<sup>46</sup> Hammer, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>47</sup> *Le Monde*, 19 December 1952. Quoted in Hammer op. cit., p. 264.

<sup>48</sup> Truong Chinh, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>49</sup> Truong Chinh, op. cit., p. 164.

the Viet Minh forces, the prospect of entering the third phase (the counter offensive) was still quite remote.

The greatest risk to the success of the Viet Minh was a loss of patience. The nature, size, location and duration of the military contact with the French had to be controlled completely by Giap. If the initiative in any one of these areas passed, even momentarily, to the French, the Viet Minh forces stood to lose equipment, men and morale. Accordingly, training and equipment policy was geared to a hierarchical model of military skill and technical capacity, ranging from the self-equipped village guerilla to the Main Force regular soldier.

Strangely, it was their own loss of patience that sent the Viet Minh down the road to a political defeat that has been quite obscured by the dramatic victory at Dien Bien Phu and the retreat of the French from Indo-China for all time. The defeat was that suffered by the forces of national liberation.

The arrival of the Chinese Army on the border of North Vietnam in 1949 created the situation whereby the Viet Minh could launch themselves into the counter offensive. From the Chinese came a veritable flood of vital artillery equipment. In 1950, the United States defeats in Korea resulted in Giap receiving enough heavy material to ensure gun support for five Main Force divisions. China based facilities and advisors were available to train the DRV Army '... with complete impunity'.<sup>50</sup>

What was the price of this aid? The Vietnamese nationalists whose support had been so necessary to maintain the facade of national unity were swiftly and brutally purged.<sup>51</sup> The *Lao Dong* unloaded many of their founding fathers in favour of pro-CCP members. 'Anti-imperialism', a theme with which the Viet Minh had considerable success, shifted to 'anti-feudalism'. The *Lao Dong* Manifesto of 1951 clearly reflected the primacy of the communist ideology.<sup>52</sup> Hoang Van Chi claims that the dramatic change in the Viet Minh's political tactics was a direct result of the Chinese demands in exchange for aid. 'Ho was devoting too much time to the patriotic war with the French and not enough to establishing Communism'.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> B. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, (Pall Mall Press, London 1963), p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Hoang Van Chi, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-12.

<sup>52</sup> M. Gurtov, *The First Vietnam Crisis*, (Columbia University Press, NY 1967), p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Hoang Van Chi, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

It certainly spelt the effective end of the Viet Minh<sup>54</sup> and under the banner of the 'Fatherland Front', the political and military axis of the DRV and China was formed. It was this post-1950 front that rolled inexorably towards the victory at Dien Bien Phu. With one stroke Ho Chi Minh had succeeded in doing what the French and the United States had tried so desperately to do and failed — he had turned the war into one between the *Communist* and the *Anti-Communist*. The DRV, United States, the 'Free World' Forces and the China/Soviet Bloc countries have remained enslaved in this setting ever since.

### CONCLUSION

'... not to live as slaves.'

Ho Chi Minh had been faced with the prospect of many forms of servitude during the years between 1927 and 1950. The Japanese were cynical opportunists and the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere would have replaced the economic tyranny of the French with another even more restraining. The increasing Japanese default in the economic and trade agreements with Indo-China in 1944 was an ominous indicator for the possible future. For all their grudging concessions, the French offers fell far short of Vietnamese independence. Even Paul Mus considered that, had he been in Ho's place, he would also have refused the French in 1947-48.<sup>55</sup> The Chinese certainly appeared to have only short term objectives in Vietnam and just as clearly, it appears that Ho felt confident enough to manipulate these aims for his own use.

Yet it was in this last exchange that I believe Ho failed in his claim that the Vietnamese would '... [never] live as slaves'. Having decided to follow the communist line after 1950 as the price for Chinese resources for the counter-offensive, Ho abdicated his position as leader of a united Vietnamese nationalism. Ever the prisoner of its own geography, the new (post 1950) DRV filled the role that was inevitably theirs — a sympathetic southern buffer to China. In this respect, China's understanding of the history of South-East Asia may have been deeper than that of Ho Chi Minh.

In 1950 the DRV entered on a collision course with the containment policy of the United States. The decision to do this redrew the international battle lines and created the setting in which Vietnamese, both North and South, are still enslaved. ☞

<sup>54</sup> See also B. Fall *The Viet Minh Regime*, pp. 39-74.

<sup>55</sup> Buttinger, op. cit., p. 290. Quoting in English, Paul Mus *Vietnam*, pp. 315-16.



# THE ANSWER IS

# A BITTER LEMON

*Major A. G. Jones, MC,  
The South Wales Borderers*

**T**HE mountains of Cyprus, as nearly everyone knows, are very beautiful. They are also nearly perpendicular, and if some of the people, who write fine prose about the mountains and the oleander and the carob trees, had to climb up and down these mountains every day with a rifle in their hot little hands, it is possible that their prose might deteriorate, and become punctuated with some of those Anglo-Saxon monosyllables which ring musically over an infantry patrol about its lawful business.

On arrival in Cyprus recently, the battalion to which, as the saying goes, I have the honour to belong, was sent to a seaside resort of unbelievable Mediterranean charm, there to while away its days in bathing, and its nights in the sort of cultural activities which Rupert Brooke had in mind when he wrote of Madingley, on Christmas Eve; but I, with my company, was selected for the somewhat awesome privilege of ascending into the mountains, there to attach myself to a Royal Marine Commando for, as the instruction put it with unconscious accuracy, 'operational purposes'. I was allotted as my headquarters a village of bewitching aspect, known as much for its fruit and wine as for the vigour of its underground terrorist organization. I looked appreciatively at the figs and the vines, I savoured the view from my

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window across the sea to the Taurus Mountains, and I settled down to enjoy the sort of life which all those writers of fine prose had led me to expect. The vision was one of hot and dusty sunshine, of sweet red wine, hospitable peasants, figs, Mount Olympus and monasteries reeking of culture. I prepared to succumb to the irrational Philhellenism which is part of anyone who has suffered from the paralysing disadvantage of a classical education. I decided that during the period of 'settling in', I would find out what all the fuss was about and I would settle once and for all the endless arguments over the relative merits of the wines of Alona and of Clito.

My hedonistic proclivities were dealt a sharp blow on the day after our arrival, by the appearance of a taut young gentleman with a green beret, rubber-soled boots and that air of thinly disguised violence which has something to do with facial muscles deformed by the constant carrying of a knife between the teeth. He smiled at me with a hungry sort of charm and invited me to take part in a clandestine operation of unimaginable drama. It involved all the trappings of cinematic cloak-and-daggery — blackened faces, stealthy movement by night and the apprehension of some ill-disposed citizen armed, it was said, with a sub-machine gun. Now stealthy movement by night is all very well in some circumstances, but blackening the face and tangling with some heavily armed antagonist requires mature thought and careful planning. 'How long', I said to the young man, 'have we to prepare for this operation'?

'24 hours', came the reply, ejected between the teeth like spent cases from a Bren gun.

Twenty-four hours later, my face covered with cocoa and my head encased in one of those ridiculously misnamed woollen bags — a 'cap comforter' — I set out incredulously across the dark landscape, followed by a small band of bewildered soldiers.

The details of the ensuing encounter are of necessity secret. It is necessary only to record that the menacing young gentleman in the green beret conducted himself with an almost theatrical valour, hurling himself through dark and unreconnoitred doorways with complete disregard for what lay beyond. In one house rather more sinister in aspect than any other we came upon a series of rooms along a corridor. The young gentleman, feline and adroit, tried the first door. It was locked. He drew back almost imperceptibly, and threw his shoulder with deceptive economy of effort against the door. It flew open with a slight splintering

noise and in one movement he was inside, back against the wall, silent and motionless. The room was empty, which was just as well, because I was left teetering gently on one leg, framed neatly in the doorway.

At the next room, the procedure was exactly repeated. This time I was quicker, and succeeded in striking my forehead sharply against the young man's elbow. 'Quiet!' he said, peremptorily, and, I thought, a little unnecessarily.

I was beginning by now to acquire an inferiority complex of cathedral proportions; and when we came to the next door, I decided to assert myself. I hurled my inconsiderable weight unscientifically against the door. It was, unfortunately, not locked and I continued uncontrollably through it, caught my foot on some obstacle, and landed heavily on all fours in the middle of the floor. A short, bitter laugh came from behind me.

The operation, eventually and surprisingly, ended in success. On our return to base our violent young friend was pleased to commend our part in the endeavour, but ruined the effect by an unfeeling reference to my abrupt progress through the unlocked door. 'It is never', he asserted pompously, 'safe to assume that things are what they appear to be'.

Immediately after this adventure, we disappeared into the wild mountains on an operation of considerable scope. For days helicopters and brigadiers whirled around in ever decreasing circles; clouds of dust rose into the quiet air as jeeps raced theatrically about carrying officers looking quite unnecessarily grim; and by an inevitable military extension of Parkinson's Law, as it became evident that we were in pursuit of an ever decreasing number of terrorists, so Headquarters of increasing size made their appearance, until we were equipped with approximately two staff officers for every bandit.

In the middle of this operation I was sitting in my company headquarters on the side of a particularly stark mountain. I was sipping at a can of beer and on my table was a used beer can in which my soldier servant kept a stock of rifle oil, with which he was engaged in cleaning my automatic pistol.

Suddenly, through the gathering dusk strode the intense figure of my Commando friend. He came alongside my table like a frigate and promptly began to fulminate violently against the incomprehensible

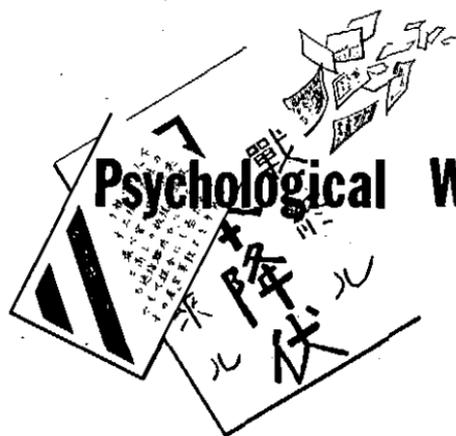
machinations of our latest and biggest headquarters. Gesticulating wildly he damned and blasted all staff officers, grades one, two and three; he suggested, graphically but unrealistically, what they could do with their ration returns; he made one final and impressive point on the subject of the ancestry of the Staff Captain 'Q', and sweeping up the beer can, he took a long and dramatic swig.



It was, of course, the one with rifle oil in it, and after a moment of stunned and incredulous silence, he dashed urgently into the bushes.

Minutes later he re-appeared, white and subdued. I handed him a can of beer, and with the air of one who puts away a volley to make the score 30-all, I murmured gently, 'It is never safe to assume my boy, that things are exactly what they appear to be'.

For a moment he looked at me; then he drank his beer; and the night crept down over the silent hills. ✕



# Psychological Warfare in the South-West Pacific

*H. N. Walker*

## Introduction

**S**HORTLY after the Japanese invasion of Papua and the mandated Territory of New Guinea in 1942, Allied Headquarters, South-West Pacific Area, became perturbed at the support the invaders were receiving from some of the native population to whom, in terms of colour, the Japanese were more closely akin than were the white men who had controlled them from the time of the respective annexation of Papua by the Queensland Government in 1883 and the colonization of New Guinea by the Germans. So far as the natives were aware, the white-men had deserted them; such of the settlers who had not been able to get away by lugger, lakatoia (native outrigger canoe), or launch had 'gone bush' to avoid nearly certain massacre at the hands of the Japanese. District officers of the administration who could be contacted in time had been recalled to Port Moresby, and the native police had thrown away or buried their arms and uniforms — an example quickly followed by the village tultuls and luluais, who had similarly disposed of their red-banded uniform caps.

In Moresby and other centres, numbers of planters and officials, many of them with years of experience among the natives, were awaiting direction to suitable posts, while from the hinterland came news of recurring instances of co-operation by the natives with the invaders.

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Much of this co-operation was purchased by the Japanese by means of copious distributions of 'trade goods'. In the period of peacetime administration almost every item of 'trade' had assumed a standard value in terms of work or native produce. The Japanese, with their markets for 'chain-store trash' now completely vanished, were well supplied with mirrors, strings of beads, combs, and other items catching to the native eye, and such was their anxiety to obtain support and co-operation from the natives that they distributed these persuasive items with lavish hands.

It was clear to the Australian authorities that such largesse must create a profound and favourable impression on the native mind. It was equally clear that the side having the native support also held the long end of the stick when it came to jungle warfare and a dependence on the goodwill of the local population. As a corollary, it was abundantly evident that if we lost this support and, more particularly, if the support we lost was transferred to the enemy, the reoccupation of the islands would mean a long and difficult battle. Of equal importance was the fact that the more native carriers and labourers either side could obtain, the more effective fighting troops that side could maintain in the line.

When all these facts had been assessed and evaluated, it became evident that an effort would have to be made to deny native assistance to the Japanese — even though this would entail getting at the natives in their own villages and districts and, accordingly, would mean sending white patrol officers into the areas occupied by the Japanese. When the proposal was mooted to the displaced planters and officials, no difficulty was experienced in getting sufficient volunteers for the suggested patrols; and in September, 1942, a secret memorandum, issued from Allied Headquarters, ordained the formation of the Far Eastern Liaison Office as a 'top secret' unit with a number-one priority on any transport, equipment, or personnel that it might require. By this memorandum FELO was placed in the same category as AIB (Allied Intelligence Bureau), ATIS (Allied Translator and Interpreter Service), and SRD (Special Reconnaissance Detachments), and was grouped with 'Z' Special Force. An office was established in Port Moresby, and patrols, comprising white officers and native police, together with carriers, radio technicians, and medical orderlies went into occupied territory, trusting to their knowledge of the natives and the loyalty of their police-boy escorts to evade and avoid surrounding Japanese.

### 'Paper Bullets'

One of the earliest activities of FELO was the introduction of leaflet warfare in the Pacific area. The value of leaflets was appreciated by Allied Headquarters and FELO was made responsible for the dissemination of written as well as verbal propaganda. The headquarters of the unit was moved to Brisbane, and its organization was expanded.

As may be seen from the collection of FELO leaflets in the library of the Australian War Memorial at Canberra, language was no problem to the FELO organization. Linguists with a thorough working knowledge of almost every language were on the strength of the unit, either as members of one or other of the Allied services, or as civilians. In fact, it may be doubted whether, at any hour of the day or night, any other branch of the Allied services could have provided such a heterogeneous collection of 'odd types' as could FELO headquarters at Cape Tasman. This comment is made in no sense of criticism, but merely as a true statement; the 'odd types' were, almost without exception, one of the finest collections of experts and good comrades that one could wish for. The fact remains, however, that they were a crew intent on one job alone, and, accordingly, had little time for the 'blanco, brasso, and bull' normally associated with a unit headquarters.

Despite the claim of the author of the American book *Psychological Warfare*, that the Americans first introduced psychological warfare into the Second World War, the fact is that it originated in England in the early days of the struggle, when RAF bombers dropped loads of phosphorus cakes and leaflets over the Black Forest in Germany. Their 'raids,' however, were only spasmodic — just as were those of the Germans and Italians over the Middle East battle-areas, when they dropped lewd and absurd pictorial illustrations of the 'liaison' between the men of the US forces and Australian and English women.

The first real psychological approach to such propaganda was an Australian approach, made by FELO, which, in fact, trained the nucleus of the American Psychological Warfare Branch. In addition FELO also trained Dutch, Free French, and Chinese forces in propaganda work, and it provided the director for the Psychological Warfare Bureau of Lord Mountbatten's Far Eastern Command.

From the outset, it was insisted upon in FELO that every leaflet and other propaganda weapon should give only those aspects which could be proved. Exaggeration, even in its mildest forms, was not ap-

proved, the attitude being that, if we were once caught out in a lie, we should find it very difficult to live down that lie and our value would at once diminish. Accordingly, all FELO propaganda was factual, and although, for example, there was no great objection to making the smoke from a burning wreck look a little denser than the photograph actually showed, there was no question of adding a few extra burning ships to the illustration even, if by doing so, the leaflet would look much more impressive. There was always the chance that the leaflet would fall into the hands of someone who had been an eye-witness of the particular episode — in which case exaggeration would have the opposite result of that sought.

Where Japanese prisoners were portrayed on the leaflets, steps were taken to ensure that they were unidentifiable — by the simple expedient of blanking-out the eyes. The soldier wishing to surrender thus realized that, if he did give himself up, he would not be 'given away' to his own people, and so would not 'lose face'. Similarly, FELO leaflets (unlike the American) deliberately refrained from mentioning the word 'surrender'. Instead, the Japanese were advised to 'cease resistance', in order that they would be able to take part in the 'reawakening of the new Japan'. By 'surrendering', he would lose face before his ancestors; by 'ceasing resistance', particularly so that he could take his place in remoulding the new Japan, he could (in his own eyes) not only save his face but could also take action that would get him out of a nasty and uncomfortable hole. It might even redound to his credit if he could help to rebuild Japan, which he had begun to realize, from his own personal experiences in the jungle, must be in a pretty bad state if it could not supply him with sufficient food and ammunition with which to carry on the fight.

FELO's leaflets were in many forms. Perhaps the one with the widest distribution was that which was known to us as the 'surrender' leaflet — even though (as mentioned above) the word surrender did not appear on it. Diagonally across one corner it carried red, white and blue stripes, with the words, in English and Japanese, 'The Japanese with this message has ceased resistance. He should be treated well in accordance with international law. Take him to the nearest Commanding Officer. C. in C. Allied Forces'. On one side was printed a 'standard' message of more-or-less universal application to the particular area while on the other side was a space in which the local FELO divisions printed their own 'spot' message.

At one time great care was taken in producing the 'spot' leaflet, the idea being to make it a job equal to the standards of normal office practice. Much to our surprise, however, we learned from surrendering Japanese that they were far more impressed with a dirty, badly printed leaflet showing ob-



下の人たて親り  
 のは國切上す  
 英括者に除に  
 文梳規な扱に  
 此はに所聯指  
 こはよ基にも  
 のめりよ致軍  
 の

The Japanese with this message has ceased resistance. He should be treated well in accordance with International law. Take him to the nearest Commanding Officer.  
 C.I.M.C. ALLIED FORCES

vious signs of having been produced in a hurry under field conditions, and containing news or information which seemed to be fresh and spontaneous, than they were with one which was technically perfect and looked as though it had been prepared under the supervision of a skilled worker in an office on the mainland. This reaction, when voiced, was the obvious one — and I must confess to having deliberately cracked, torn, or punctured afterwards many a stencil which produced copies too perfect.

Surrender leaflets were dropped in large numbers wherever there was a chance of getting a living Japanese to come in and 'blow his top'. We were interested in inside information, and, although quite a lot of this was forthcoming from the native population and from FELO and AIB patrols, none of it was quite so valuable as that obtained from a surrendering Japanese who, after a good meal and several cigarettes, was usually prepared to talk and produce the appropriate *quid pro quo*.

Despite the fact that the Japanese Command issued dire threats concerning the fate of any of their troops found to be in possession of one of these surrender leaflets, many Japanese appear to have made a habit of preparing for the 'best' by having one or two of them 'just in case'. Be that as it may, it is of some significance that a check by FELO at one time elicited that, out of 1,000 Japanese bodies searched, more than 900 had at least one surrender leaflet, while many of them had a plurality amounting, in one case, to a bundle of twenty-five. However, a patrol officer of FELO, who was detailed to pay particular attention to indications as to the apparent attitude of the Japanese towards FELO leaflets, concluded his report with the laconic statement: 'It is regretted that positive evidence was seen on various abandoned camp sites that FELO leaflets had been put to unofficial uses'.

Japanese surrendering with leaflets in their possession were required to remove the whole of their clothing before coming into our lines. This precaution was necessary, because, in our early days of the leaflets, one or two cases had occurred where a Japanese had hidden a grenade in his armpit or groin and, after coming in and getting the more-or-less usual group of interested Diggers around him, had raised his arm or opened his knees and allowed the grenade to drop, killing himself and taking a few Australians with him. Thus, no chances were taken: and a Japanese coming in who omitted to remove the whole of his clothing was liable to receive a welcome out of keeping with his apparently peaceful intentions. On one occasion, in Bougainville, a Japanese on his way in was seen to be displaying no less than six surrender leaflets — one in each hand, one in each ear, one in his mouth, and one tucked in a grass band tied around his waist!

A modified form of surrender leaflet combined the normal 'ceased resistance' message in Japanese with one in pidgin asking the natives to report the whereabouts of any sick or wounded Japanese in their vicinity. The 'news bulletin' leaflet was always popular with both the enemy and the native population. FELO's bulletins were issued every week, in a variety of languages and dialects, including Japanese, Pidgin, Chinese, Malay, Arabic and Portuguese.

The 'nostalgic' leaflet was yet another form of propaganda which was dropped in large numbers. These leaflets, designed to create a feeling of home-sickness and self-pity, normally consisted of pictures of Japanese home-life, such, for instance, as a Japanese peasant farmer and his wife sitting down to the evening meal of fish and rice; or a group of Japanese 'flappers' or 'bobby-soxers' standing in the doorway of the Tokyo University. It was calculated that these leaflets would cause the Japanese to wonder why he could not share in the life he remembered so well, instead of sweating it out in the jungle with no decent food, *no medical supplies, and insufficient ammunition to take care of himself.*

In a similar category were the leaflets which portrayed the treatment accorded to prisoners-of-war in Australian hands. The prisoners were shown lining up for meals, tending their gardens in the POW camps, playing cards, and engaging in handicrafts such as weaving and leatherwork. Others were shown in hospital beds, receiving treatment from Australian nursing sisters. Letters, written by Japanese on Red Cross notepaper, and expressing their gratitude for the treatment received in hospital, were also reproduced. These letters, it should be remarked, were entirely genuine and unsolicited.

An important and unexpected change in Japanese national policy early in 1944 provided FELO with its most valuable propaganda item. After a studied and complete silence on the matter of Japanese prisoners-of-war, the Japanese Government, through Geneva, sought permission to send a shipload of comforts to its prisoners and wounded held captive by the Allies in Australia. This was a complete reversal of policy, as it had long been accepted by the Japanese people that death was preferable to capture; whether captured or killed, the victim was regarded officially as being dead. If a Japanese fell in battle, or committed hari-kiri to avoid capture, his name was honoured in the Warriors' Shrine, whereas, if he was taken prisoner, his name was written off the records and his memory was accordingly disgraced.

Thus, the captured Japanese were a hopeless crowd whose only apparent chance of rehabilitation lay in the performance of some mad act for the Emperor, or in the commission of hari-kiri if the chance came.\* When, however, the Japanese Government officially recognized that prisoners-of-war in Australia were still 'living' Japanese, the propaganda value of this admission was not lost sight of; and FELO at once took steps to ensure that, if possible, every Japanese in the South-West Pacific area would learn of it and be advised that the last obstacle to his cessation of resistance had now been removed. These leaflets had a profound effect upon the Japanese troops and, although surrenders were rarely spectacular, they became steady and regular and, in fact, quite as numerous as we wished them to be. All that we wanted were sufficient Japanese who could give information about troop dispositions and the strength of their forces opposing us. We were not particularly interested in securing large numbers of Japanese, for we would have been obliged to feed, guard, clothe and transport them, whereas in the jungle they were good, self-supporting prisoners.

One spectacular surrender, however, took place at Wewak early in 1945, when eighty Japanese officers and men, including a lieutenant-colonel, gave themselves up *en masse*. Wind of this move had reached FELO a few days beforehand, and, in an endeavour to contact them, two FELO officers went ahead of the forward company, which was ordered not to open fire unless its position was placed in jeopardy. However, it was relieved by a company to which the order was not

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\* This was undoubtedly one of the major factors in the incident at Cowra, NSW, in 1944 — mass hari-kiri with the possibility of killing a few Australians at the same time.

repeated, and, when the Japanese showed themselves, the newcomers opened up on them with all they had, and they cleared out. Efforts were made to get in touch with the Japanese again, and some four days later the eighty came in, this time without incident. The information given by the Japanese colonel, an artillery commander, proved to be of the utmost value.

Another valuable surrender took place on Bougainville in July, 1945. For several weeks a Japanese 135-mm battery had anchored the Australians at the Hongorai River ford and almost immobilized the attack in the south of the island. The guns were carefully hidden, and aerial reconnaissance failed to locate them. One evening about dusk a naked Japanese, waving a surrender leaflet, was seen heading towards the front-line post of FELO's broadcast unit. He was escorted to the forward company, and then taken to battalion headquarters. There, questioned again, he disclosed that he was the GPO of the 135-mm battery. A map was thereupon placed in front of him and on this he pinpointed the position of each of its six guns. The map references were signalled to the New Zealand Corsair squadron, and at 8 o'clock next morning twelve Corsairs, complete with 1,000 lb bombs, arrived overhead and laid their eggs on the positions given to them. By 10 a.m. the Australians were over the Hongorai River; before nightfall the crossing was complete, and they were on their way to the Mivo River, which was their position on August 15th when the news of Japan's surrender was received.

Apart from those designed specifically for the Japanese, FELO also produced numerous leaflets that were directed to the native populations in the various occupied territories. These took several distinct forms, the 'news' leaflet being prominent, as were those in which the natives were continually admonished for co-operating with the Japanese and advised to 'get out or get hurt'. When a concerted attack was to be launched against any area in which there was a native population, strong efforts were made to get the natives out before the bombing or shelling began, even at the risk of forewarning the Japanese that something was in the wind.

Leaflets with the object of keeping the natives ever on the look-out for Allied airmen and others shot down or lost in the bush were continually distributed. All airmen carried an 'Airman's Card' on which was printed, in the local language, or languages, advice to the effect that the bearer was an Allied airman, that he should be assisted

to the utmost and shown the way to the nearest position occupied by our forces. 'Pointie-talkie' books were also issued in which question and answer were printed in two or more languages; the question was asked by pointing to the appropriate line and was similarly answered, each person reading in his own language.

A distinctive feature of almost all the native leaflets issued by FELO was the printing, on the obverse side, of the Australian coat of arms and, on the reverse side, of some device (or 'totem', as it was called in FELO) well known to the native population of the particular area in which the leaflet was to be dropped. The reason for the addition of the totem and the coat of arms was not merely to give the native a 'pretty picture' to look at: it was, in fact, a deeply thought-out example of applied psychology. The underlying idea of the totem was that, as not all natives were able to read pidgin, a mere collection of words was not always sufficient to carry the message; if the native could not read, he would throw the leaflet away without knowing its contents. On the other hand, with a totem printed upon it in colour — especially the representation of a totem having some personal or local significance — it was likely that the illiterate native would carry it round with him and show it to his friends and fellow tribesmen until he found one able to read the printed message. Thus the message would be spread to literate and illiterate alike. Similarly, the coat of arms served to indicate that the message was an official one from the Government, and, as such, it held for the native an importance which no unofficial leaflet could have held.

These 'totems' introduced a delicate set of conditions into the production of the leaflets, because a totem which would give immense pleasure (say) to a New Guinea native might prove to be intensely offensive if dropped over Bougainville. Accordingly, FELO's stocks of totem paper were always carefully labelled with the appropriate areas in which they might be dropped. One popular type of totem paper was that which bore a coloured representation of a tanget leaf. The tanget is a vine-like plant having leaves of clothlike texture which are passed round, or carried, by the natives to convey messages — the nature of the message being indicated by the manner in which the leaf is tied or knotted. In the FELO leaflet, the tanget was knotted in the form which, to the natives, represented a safe conduct pass.

Two other leaflets, carrying representations of either a male or female 'duk-duk', and limited to New Britain and New Ireland, were

very unpopular with the missionaries who had remained in the islands. The 'duk-duk' is the 'high priest' of a secret native cult which is anathema to the missions, and it had been officially suppressed at every opportunity in pre-war days. But, as a cartoonist in *The Yank Down Under* remarked, the duk-duk 'sort of represents our padre'; and, as the be-all and end-all of our propaganda efforts was to finish the war as soon as possible, hence the temporary disregard for official proscription of the duk-duk cult.

Leaflets were distributed in numerous ways. The easiest way was to give them to the native patrols that were continuously at work behind the Japanese lines. One white member of FELO accompanied by three or four native police boys, usually travelled with patrols of the Allied Intelligence Bureau, the co-operation between the two organizations always being very close. In the earlier days of our unit, from twenty to thirty FELO police boys were brought to Australia and taken on a tour of munition works, aircraft factories, aerodromes, military camps, dockyards and other places likely to impress them with the strength of the Allied war machine. These tours afterwards became a regular feature; and when they returned to the islands, the boys were attached to patrols and encouraged to talk about what they had seen. Thus they became doubly useful on patrol — useful for their bushcraft and their uncanny sense of the presence of Japanese in the vicinity, as well as great boosters of the power of the white master to beat the Japanese who had stolen their pigs and denuded their garden patches and coconuts.

Another easy method of distributing the leaflets was to throw them out of aircraft. This, of course, was no new idea; but FELO was the first to place leaflet-dropping from the air on an organized basis. Airmen were not at first very keen on going out with 'paper bullets'. They could not see any future in the idea, which appeared to them to be far more appropriate for advertising sunburn cream over an Australian beach, while many of them felt that the leaflets might foul their controls and bring them trouble in the air. However, this reluctance was gradually broken down, and posters bearing the words 'Fly with FELO', began to appear in operations rooms. It soon became part of the average pilot's briefing for him to pick up a few bundles of leaflets on his way out of the operations room. On one occasion I was roundly abused by a pilot who had gone to the leaflet box and found it empty. Each FELO division had its air liaison officer or NCO, and his duties were to



*(Australian War Memorial)*

Australian and New Zealand airmen at Torokina, Bougainville on 15 August 1945 looking at surrender leaflets prior to distributing them. The Beaufort bomber which will drop the pamphlets has the characters 'Japan surrendered' painted on the underside of its wings.

arrange with the appropriate squadron for the availability of aircraft, the briefing of pilots, and the actual drops in most of which he took an active part, receiving flying pay of 2/6 an hour from the FELO special fund for this duty.

The most popular aircraft for this work was the Beaufort, the camera hatch of which was particularly well suited for use as a chute for the bundles of leaflets. Over the target area the pilot would take his Beaufort down to 500 feet or thereabouts, when the 'dropper' would push the bundles down the chute as quickly as possible. The leaflets were in bundles of about 300 or 400, each bundle being tied with a slip-knotted string which was held as it went down the chute, with the result that the leaflets were loose when they emerged from the aircraft.

Where drops had to be made on heavily defended areas, flying at less than ten or twelve thousand feet would have been suicidal. Consequently, more involved apparatus was required for effecting the drops, otherwise the leaflets would have drifted for many miles before reaching

the ground. Various devices were used, including deloused 4.5-inch aircraft flare-containers. The flare material having been withdrawn, and only sufficient explosive retained to force the end off the container and the leaflets from its interior, the fuse was set to fire at a predetermined height, and the containers were hung on the bomb racks. Although the pilot could have carried out the drop himself, the FELO man usually went along for the ride — and the extra 2/6 an hour flying pay!

The number of leaflets carried by the flare containers was limited. Where a heavy saturation of leaflets was required — over places like Rabaul, for instance — the Weigall device was used. This consisted of two scored strips of corrugated cardboard laid down in the form of a cross. The leaflets were piled upon the overlapping area of the crossed strips: these were then folded along the score marks to form a square box, which was tied together with string. Where the string crossed on the top of the package, it was passed over a wooden box like a pill-box, which was filled with a slow-burning powder. A piece of normal safety fuse was led into the box and taped to the string, and the top of the box was closed by means of a disc of cardboard. The fuse was then cut to the appropriate length in relation to the flying height and the height at which the box was to be opened, and a fuse igniter was attached to the free end of the fuse. Over the target the box was thrown out, the free end of the fuse igniter being held. The weight of the load exploded the fuse igniter which thereupon fired the safety fuse; this burned down until it ignited the powder which, in turn, burned through the string and caused the cardboard container to come apart in the air and the leaflets to scatter.

Twenty-five pounder shells and mortar bombs were also employed to distribute leaflets, use being made of the smoke projectiles in each calibre. The smoke-forming filling was removed, and only sufficient burster charge was retained to blow the base off the projectile and expel the leaflets. The force required to blow off the base plate necessitated a different loading technique if the leaflets were to be scattered without being set alight or torn to pieces by the explosion. In this case, the leaflets were tied in a tight roll but were loosely inserted in the projectile, and the string (or preferably a rubber band) with which the roll was secured was placed considerably closer to the inner end of the roll than to the outer end. When the leaflets were forced out, the rush of air catching the longer confined end, which emerged first, caused the paper to slip out of the rubber band or string and the leaflets to separate.

Reference has already been made to 'spot' leaflets — that is, leaflets produced on the spot in the islands by the local FELO detachments. These were usually written or typed on wax sheets and run off on office duplicators, normally hand-operated but occasionally electrically-driven. In so far as Bougainville was concerned, the writer drafted the essential parts of the native leaflets and then had them transformed into pidgin by one of the many island identities serving with AIB or ANGAU. The spot leaflets for the Japanese originally were drafted in English and then transposed by an American-born Japanese attached to corps headquarters. Later we were given a Japanese soldier who had surrendered and who, after being vetted by ATIS in Brisbane, and paroled, was sent back to Bougainville to act as FELO's writer of Japanese.

The last spot leaflet that was produced on Bougainville announced to the Japanese on the island the news of the surrender of their country's forces. This was a lino-cut, carved into a piece of linoleum that was taken from the floor of an officer's tent while the officer was asleep some six feet away, and hacked out with an army jack-knife in the light of a jeep headlamp. The 1st Australian Army Mobile Printing Unit, working three shifts, printed 500,000 copies of it.

The leaflets for general distribution were printed in Brisbane or Sydney in fantastic numbers. What the total number of FELO leaflets was, no one will ever know, as the unit records were, by direction, destroyed within a few days of the Japanese surrender. All printing techniques were used; Japanese, Chinese, Arabic and similar abnormal scripts were firstly drawn or written, and then photographed and printed by half-tone or line blocks, lithography, or photogravure methods. The mainland division of FELO kept all its outer divisions supplied with huge reserve stocks, and (as mentioned earlier) on most of the leaflets was left a space upon which a spot message could be printed, if necessary. Each batch contained a number of translations of the script on the leaflet proper, so that all concerned could ascertain what was the text of the message they were dropping. Very often, these leaflets arrived well in advance of the date of the actual event to which they referred. For instance, we received at Bougainville, at least six weeks before it happened, a leaflet in Japanese characters which said: 'Soviet declares war on Japan'; accompanying it was the following instruction — 'Not to be dropped until official announcement of declaration'. Incidentally, on 19 August 1945, I supervised the destruction of half-a-million copies

of a leaflet, which the bomb on Hiroshima had made it unnecessary to drop, announcing 'Allies invade Japanese homeland'.

### **FELO's Other Activities**

Although leaflets rapidly became the most important sphere of FELO's activities, they did not comprise the whole of the unit's work. For example, it also operated and controlled several small marine craft which were used for the dissemination of propaganda and also for landing patrols on isolated beaches within the Japanese lines. In this work FELO and AIB, interested as they were in the same areas, overlapped to some extent. The most harmonious relations, however, existed between the two units, for FELO was concerned with propaganda and AIB with intelligence — although intelligence obtained by FELO was never ignored, and AIB was always ready to put out propaganda. *It will therefore be seen that the two organizations were closely linked, a fact that was recognized towards the end of the war when, instead of being units of Z Special Force, they were designated M Special Force and formed their own native infantry unit.*

Many soldiers who served in the islands doubtless still curse the FLBU's (Front Line Broadcasting Units) which did fair to outvie the 'shoot and scatter' mortar crews of the First World War for sheer unpopularity. *An FLBU consisted of a white officer, warrant officer or NCO, a radio technician, a Japanese linguist, and a guard of four or five native police boys. The unit's equipment comprised two 15-inch loudspeakers in 6-foot directional horns, a public address amplifier and microphone, car-type wet-cell batteries, and a rotary converter — plus a 'Chorehorse' battery charger. The effective range of the speakers was about 800 yards at night and about 440 yards in the daytime. They were set up in a suitable banana clump, with the amplifier 400 yards away to the flank or the rear, and the microphone some distance from the amplifier.*

The propaganda broadcasts usually commenced, much to the disgust of the Diggers, with a selection of Japanese gramophone records, followed by a news broadcast in Japanese and suggestions that the Japanese should surrender — and the rest of the propaganda theme. The reaction to this was usually a shower of shot and shell, and the FLBU often had to do a hurried move to another position. Even then, the loudspeakers suffered severe casualties, and at one time on Bougainville, out of some twenty-four spare speakers, we had only one in operation; the cones of all the others had been ruptured by shell blasts.

FLBU equipment was also installed on a superfast marine craft which plied up and down the Labuan coast for some days before the Allied landing. Experiments were also made in the use of FLBU in aircraft, but these were not successful, the speed of the aircraft being such that broadcasts could not easily be kept within a reasonable area so that the same people could hear the complete message.

In the closing days of the war, FELO was really getting into its stride, and an enormous organization was being built up. At the time when the writer joined the unit, almost every member was known to him either personally or by reputation. In October, 1945, however, of some fifty FELO personnel at Cape Tasman awaiting disposal he knew only three, all the others being new members. Around this time, the unit had bought the entire plant of a large Adelaide printing establishment and had shipped it to Brisbane, where it was installed at Cape Tasman. Such was the increasing tempo of the war, however, that a forward headquarters was established at Morotai, and the printing plant was again crated and shipped to the Halmaheras. Before it could be brought into use, however, the war had ended. A high-powered radio transmitting station was built into several trucks and trailers and was ready to be shipped to the north, but the Japanese surrender again prevented it from being brought into operation.

### **Japanese Surrender**

With the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima, it became evident to us that the Japanese would not last much longer, and we decided that we would have to work as we had never worked before to try to prevent unnecessary bloodshed once the war was officially over. A Beaufort squadron made four aircraft available for us for drops, and the Japanese characters for 'Japan has surrendered' were printed beneath their wings. These planes were kept in a bay at the Piva airstrip, and as the leaflets were printed and rolled they were loaded on to the Beauforts.

When, at 11 a.m. local time, Winston Churchill announced Japan's capitulation, our planes were loaded up all ready to go, and within twenty minutes they were airborne and on their way. The drop was completed by noon, and from that time not another shot was fired on Bougainville, although the Japanese General Kanda was unable to contact his units and call them off until 7 a.m. the following day. The finale more than proved, wherever it had been in doubt, that FELO

propaganda was effective, and that the Japanese believed us. Had they not done so, it is difficult to imagine that four Beaufort-loads of leaflets would have stopped the Japanese fire the way they did.

This substantially completed the work of FELO in that area. Leaflets giving Lieutenant General Savage's instructions to the Japanese commander were dropped on the following day, and a few days later a special leaflet signed by General Blamey was dropped. On the day of the surrender, the air commander of the North Solomons area, a New Zealand group captain, grounded all aircraft on the island and placed them wholly at the disposal of FELO. No aircraft was allowed to take off without reference to us until we had time to assess our requirements. Apart from the Beauforts, however, our only other requirements were four Venturas, which we loaded with 4.5-inch leaflet flare-containers and sent over the heavily defended islands in the Buka passage. These islands, after the original drop, we did not disturb again until the Japanese came in to surrender in their own barges.

Within a week of the surrender, all FELO stocks of blank paper on Bougainville had been handed over to the Army Education Service for cutting-up and padding for use in the various schools that were set up to keep the troops occupied until they could be returned to the mainland. Supplies of all leaflets were made available to the troops for one week, so that, if they so desired, they could collect copies of them as souvenirs. At the end of this period the remaining leaflets were burned, the unit stores and vehicles were returned to Ordnance, and all vouchers and other local records destroyed. The collection of leaflets in the Australian War Memorial, which the writer obtained by going through the files prior to the destruction of the records at Torokina, is possibly the only collection of FELO propaganda now in existence. ☞

Reproduction of the surrender leaflet printed from a "tino cut." It reads:  
 "The War is ended."  
 "JAPAN HAS SURRENDERED."  
 "Peace is here."