Control of Civilians, Refugees, And Displaced Persons

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THE control of civilians, refugees, and displaced persons is one of the many problems which confronts the commander of large forces in time of war. While it is not directly connected with the tactical handling and the administrative and logistical support of his forces, he must solve the problem successfully or it may assume such large proportions that it will seriously interfere with his mission. For example, it is possible for civilians to so clog the roads that they affect the ability of the military forces to operate successfully. Probably the most conspicuous instance of this was in the spring of 1940 when Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Refugees fleeing the combat area so congested the roads of northern France that the movement of French military forces was seriously hindered.

Early in the Korean action, large numbers of refugees fleeing south before the invading North Korean Army made the task of the defending South Korean and United Nations forces even more difficult, They hampered movement and were a constant source of danger in that enemy agents and partisans used this means of infiltrating our lines.

A Growing Problem

In any future war, we may expect this

problem of control to be a serious one. Modern war, with its great destruction, has achieved such proportions that civilians naturally seek to leave the combat area to increase their chances of survival. This they will do of their own volition. Add to this the possibility that an advancing enemy may drive the civilians before him into our lines in order to congest our highways, increase the number of homeless people we must care for, and provide a mass of humanity in which his agents and sympathizers can infiltrate our lines, and it becomes apparent that the task of handling and caring for these people will undoubtedly be enormous.

Such a problem will involve the highest levels of command, and if more than one nation is involved it will even require decisions and actions on intergovernmental levels. However, what about the relation of this problem to the actions of divisions, corps, and field armies? What must the commanders of these organizations do to handle this problem? This article will endeavor to explore and delineate this question.

The Groups Defined

Even though all or nearly all of the people with whom we are concerned are civilians, they fall into three broad groupings which require different care, control,

The presence of refugees and displaced persons in the combat area is a serious and growing problem which major unit commanders must solve effectively if they are to be freed of this hindrance during combat.

and handling. For the purpose of this article, let us define these groupings:

- 1. Civilians are those people who are still living in their homes and carrying on their normal pursuits, even though on a restricted and altered basis. They must always be considered as a potential augmentation to the other groups.
- 2. Refugees are those people who are not outside the national boundaries of their country, but who are temporarily homeless because of military operations, or who are at some distance from their homes for reasons related to the war.
- 3. Displaced persons are those people who are outside the national boundaries of their country by reason of the war and are unable to return or to find homes without assistance, or who are to be returned to enemy territory.

During World War II, the popular conception was that all displaced persons were people who had been brought from their home countries to provide cheap "slave" labor for the German economic system. This popular definition of the term displaced persons was occasioned by the German national policy of transplanting millions of people from one country to another for that purpose. In a future war, this condition may or may not exist, depending upon the area of operations involved and the policies of the enemy concerning the exploitation of civilian labor in satellite and hostile countries. In any event, there undoubtedly will be displaced persons, since any refugees who leave their country become displaced persons by so doing.

The problem of caring for and controlling displaced persons is generally no different from caring for and controlling refugees. The main difference is that local populations are more willing to absorb and take refugees into their homes than displaced persons. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this article, unless specifically stated otherwise, the term refugees will be understood to include displaced persons.

Objectives

The objectives of the control of civilians and refugees by the military can undoubtedly be stated in a number of ways, but however stated they include the following:

- 1. The prevention of any hindrance to military operations which might be occasioned by the massing of uncontrolled movement of refugees.
- 2. The prevention and control of outbreaks of disease among civilians and refugees which might threaten the health of the military forces.
- 3. The relief, as far as practicable, of conditions of destitution among refugees,
- 4. The setting up of an organization to effect the rapid and orderly repatriation of displaced persons.

Division, corps, and army commanders are vitally concerned with the first three of these objectives, and army commanders may on occasion be concerned with the fourth. However, the fourth objective is primarily the concern of the theater and possibly the communications zone commanders.

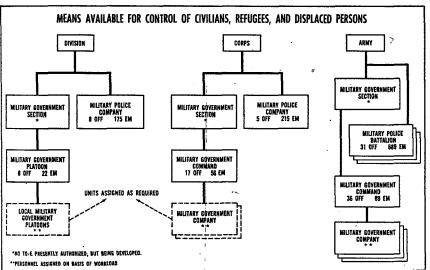
Control at Division Level

It is in the division area that the mass movement of refugees can cause the most disruption. It is here that their impact on military operations can be the greatest if they are not properly handled and controlled. This is the area in which most of the roads are needed for military movement. It is here that the first impact is felt from refugees who are fleeing before the enemy or who are being driven into our lines by the enemy. It is here that the transition of most people from the status of civilians to refugees will occur if positive action to prevent it is not taken. Despite this, it is at the division level that the least number of military personnel can be spared to exercise control over civilians and refugees. If combat troops must be used for this purpose, the normal operational effort of the division is thereby reduced.

The division commander has the following military personnel for possible use in controlling civilians and refugees: the combat troops of the division, the service and supply troops of the division, the division military police company, the military government personnel attached to the

traffic, man the straggler control line, and guard prisoners of war. This leaves them little time and effort to control the civilian population unless it can be performed as part of their other duties.

Any units other than military government units attached to the division are attached for a specific purpose and generally are not available for controlling ci-



division, and any other units attached to the division by higher headquarters. All of these have duties to perform.

The combat troops, of course, are primarily concerned with the execution of the combat mission of the division.

The service and supply troops must perform all of the tasks necessary to supply the division and attached units and maintain them as an effective fighting machine. They are designed to do this, but if required to perform other tasks they must do so at the expense of their primary missions.

The military police company must maintain law and order among the military personnel, regulate and control military

vilians and refugees. Therefore, most of the task of controlling civilians and refugees must be performed by military government personnel. This is a logical assignment. However, what military government personnel does the division have to do the job? (See organizational diagram above.)

Military Government Activities

The military government staff section must plan, co-ordinate, and supervise all of the military government activities of the division. In addition to the problem which we are considering, these include the restoration or continuation of law and order among the civilian populace; the re-

establishment of some form of local government or the direction and control of existing local governments: the repair of utilities and the continuation of civilian medical facilities so that epidemics will not break out: and the control of the distribution of civilian supplies or the distribution of military relief supplies-in fact all of the actions necessary to carry out the commander's responsibilities under international law and to meet the needs of military necessity. The local military government platoons are furnished to the division to perform these military government functions in a designated area to which they are assigned and remain in the area reverting to corps control as the division moves forward. The division military government platoon is furnished to the division to assist the regimental commanders in exercising military government functions in areas assigned to them; to exercise military government functions in areas retained under division control for which no local platoon is yet available: and to perform other military government tasks of a recurring nature. It is among the latter that the problem in this article can be considered.

Sound Policy Needed

The primary aim of the division commander, so far as controlling civilians and refugees is concerned, must be to exercise this control in such a way that the civilians and refugees will not be a hindrance to military operations and to accomplish this control with the use of the least possible number of military personnel who are needed for military operations. Since the only military personnel that can be used while still accomplishing their normal duties are the military government personnel, and, at times, military police, plans for controlling civilians and refugees must be based upon making the maximum use of local civilians, agencies, and facilities. Of course, the division commander's policies, decisions, and plans

must be in consonance with the policies and directives of higher headquarters, but these will normally allow a fair degree of latitude on his part.

Courses of Action Open

The possible courses of action open to the division commander in controlling civilians and refugees are not numerous. Concerning civilians, he may freeze them in place, evacuate them, allow them to move either freely or under certain restrictions, or employ a combination of any of these. In the case of refugees, he may require them to stay in local communities, place them in camps, evacuate them, allow them to continue their movement either freely or under certain restrictions, or employ a combination of any of these.

Civilians pose the least problem to the military and are the most easily controlled when they can be frozen in place. They are then at home where they have shelter and some degree of security. They normally have some food, clothing, and fuel supplies, and thus are able to take care of themselves. It may be necessary to augment their supplies with military relief supplies, but the amount involved will be smaller than if they become refugees. However, it is often difficult to freeze civilians in place unless they can be convinced that they are better off in their homes than they would be leaving them to join the masses of refugees. Even if this is done, it is necessary to enforce the freezing by imposing travel restrictions which prohibit movement outside a designated radius.

It is not advisable to evacuate civilians unless military necessity demands it as evacuation is a big task and provision must be made for the evacuees in the new area to which they are moved. They must either be superimposed on communities in the rear or placed in camps. In either event, the use of military effort and supplies will be required.

It is not advisable to allow civilians to

move from their homes either freely or under certain restrictions for they become refugees when they move, and provision must then be made for them in the rear.

Refugees cannot be frozen in place without special provision being made for them. If they are required to stay in local communities, either the local civilians must be required to take them in and provide for them, or camps must be provided for them with the attendant shelter and supplies being furnished by the military. The same difficulties and expenditure of effort and supplies are encountered in the evacuation of refugees as in the evacuation of civilians. Allowing refugees to continue their movements freely is not satisfactory. If free movement is allowed, refugees will use the roads and will interfere with military operations. Therefore, some restriction on movement is necessary. At one extreme this may involve only the designation of routes and the use of traffic control posts to ensure that these routes are used and that roads needed for military traffic are kept free of refugees. At the other may be the establishment of detention points with supervised and controlled movement from one point to another.

In the light of the foregoing, let us consider the division commander's problems and his decisions and plans under three different conditions—when the division is attacking, when it is defending, and when it is executing a retrograde movement.

Division in the Attack

During the attack, the division is moving forward, and new territory is coming under its control and with it new civilians and refugees. In friendly territory, the number of these persons will be large. In enemy territory, the number will not be so great, because many of the people will flee before our forces. At first, the division will have no organized control over the people in the territory it is gaining, but

during the period that actual combat is passing over the area the people in it will seek cover and protection wherever it can be found. It is imperative that provision be made for establishing and exercising control over the civilians and refugees as quickly as actual combat has passed.

The objectives should be to freeze the civilians in place, thus preventing them from becoming refugees, and to keep any refugees off the roads needed for military traffic. These can best be accomplished by having combat troops disseminate, proclamations, prepared in the indigenous language, which require civilians to stay in their homes and all refugees to stay off the roads. Military government personnel must follow with or close behind the advancing combat troops to take over governmental control. They must quickly establish law and order, re-establish the local police force, and issue supplemental proclamations which delineate curfews, passes, travel restrictions, travel permits, and the like. Every effort must be made to freeze the civilians in place, and this can be accomplished through the utilization of the local authorities and the division military police, by requiring each civilian to obtain credentials in his home town; by establishing road blocks; and by not allowing travel beyond a designated radius from home. Refugees and others without proper credentials will be taken into temporary custody and not allowed to travel without suitable clearance.

Treatment of Refugees

What provision should be made for these refugees? Having the local communities provide for them is the best solution provided that the local communities are capable of doing so. This is true even if a minimum of military supplies has to be provided to assist the civilian communities. Seldom will the division be able to provide camps for them; therefore, if they cannot be provided for by the local communities, they must be allowed to move to the rear.

The division cannot provide military transportation for this movement, so it must be provided by higher headquarters, or the refugees must move under their own power. Movement in controlled groups is preferable to free movement, but in any event the movement must be on designation.



Two refugees arriving at a displaced persons camp in Germany during World War II.

nated routes to keep open the roads which are needed for military traffic.

Of course, this movement of refugees to the rear does not solve the over-all problem; it only relieves the division of the burden by shifting it to the corps. Any movement of refugees laterally into adjacent division zones cannot be tolerated.

Preventive Medicine

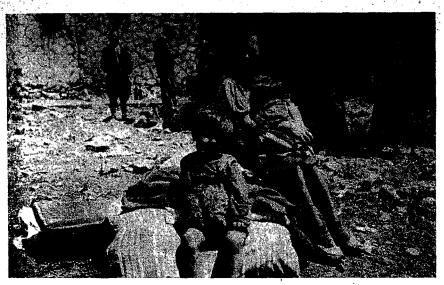
As soon as facilities for control are established, provision must be made for disinfecting civilians and refugees and inoculating them for contagious diseases. Large masses of refugees moving about the country or gathered together in large groups are a constant threat of epidemic

disease, especially when sanitation facilities are usually totally inadequate. Civilian medical personnel should be used to the maximum in carrying out these inoculations, but the necessary medical supplies will probably have to be furnished by the division.

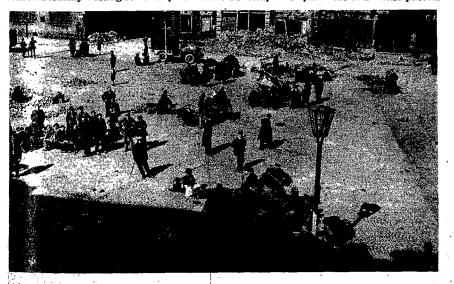
Division in Defense

During the defense, the division problem is somewhat different. The division is not gaining new territory and will have established some degree of organized control over the people in its area. Depending upon the length of time the territory has been under friendly control, military government units will have re-established local governments in varying degrees: local police forces will have been re-established; and utilities and other public services will have been reinstituted or will be in the processes of being re-established. However, most important, the policy of freezing civilians in place will have been communicated to the populace: a system of curfews, passes, travel restrictions, and travel permits will have been instituted; road blocks will have been established and will be manned by either local or military police: and a system of handling refugees will be in operation. If the territory has been under friendly control for only a short time, many of these arrangements may not be complete, but it will be a simpler task to continue developing them than it was to initiate them during the attack. If the territory has been under friendly control for some time, little difficulty should be encountered in continuing the arrangements already established.

One of the problems likely to be encountered during the defense will be the control of refugees who enter our lines either because they are fleeing before the enemy or because they are being driven through them by the enemy. In either event, the number of refugees may greatly exceed those encountered during the attack. However, the division has an advan-



Civilians become refugees when they leave their homes, whereas refugees who leave their own countries are considered to be displaced persons. All such people present a problem to combat commanders. Above, a waiting refugee family in Italy. Below, displaced persons in Germany waiting for transportation to DP camps.—Department of Defense photos.



tage in that a system for handling them has already been established. This system should be continued, augmenting the personnel operating it as necessary with local civilians. Thus, depending upon the situation existing in the territory involved, the refugees should be handled by requiring the local communities to provide for them or by moving them to the rear on designated routes.

Evacuation of Civilians

Military necessity may create another problem during the defense by requiring the evacuation of civilians from certain areas. Such areas should be held to a minimum. Seldom should the area of complete evacuation be larger than from the combat outpost to the rear of the frontline regimental reserve positions. It may be necessary to effect a partial evacuation of an additional area to the rear of the positions prepared by the division reserve. Even in the completely evacuated area it probably will be necessary to allow some local police, firemen, and utilities operators to remain. If so, these personnel should be issued special passes.

What is to be done with the people who are evacuated, and how is the division to accomplish this evacuation? The evacuees can be moved to other communities in the rear of the division area or in the corps rear area, and these communities can be required to care for them. They probably will be willing to do this if they are able to do so. The evacuees can be moved to camps which the division establishes in the division rear area or which the corps establishes in the corps rear area. The camps must be located in areas not needed for military installations. This solution is not as sound as the first because it requires the expenditure of large amounts of military effort and supplies. Upon their request, some of the evacuees can be allowed to go to stay with relatives or friends living in rear areas. The division must exercise control over the evacuation and can

posters, and its execution should be coordinated with the regimental commanders responsible for the areas concerned so that it will not interfere with their plans and activities. Maximum use should be made of local transportation, but if sufficient transportation is not available, it must be augmented by the division either with organic transportation or with transportation obtained from higher headquarters. Local police should be used to the maximum in assisting in the control of the evacuation, but they must work under the direction of the military, and the division military police undoubtedly will be required to assist in this direction. It must be remembered that the evacuation of civilians cannot be allowed to interfere with preparations for the defense, so previously designated secondary routes must be used. Detailed plans must be prepared for the evacuation if it is to be accomplished successfully without undue interference with other division activities. A minor point, but one which must be considered and provided for, is the evacuation of livestock from farms in the area being evacuated. They should be evacuated to other farms immediately in rear of the area being evacuated. Division in Retrograde Movement When the division is executing a retrograde movement, the problem of controlling civilians and refugees becomes more important and more difficult. They must be kept off all roads to free the roads for military movements. At this time, all of the resources of the division are needed to

use military government personnel for

supervising the movement. The evacuation

should be announced by proclamations and

In a retrograde movement, as in the de-

accomplish the combat mission, and any use of combat or service troops to assist

in handling civilians and refugees may be

fatal. Therefore, the problem must be handled by military government personnel

assisted by the local authorities.



During combat, civilians and refugees can so clog the roads that they hinder and restrict the operations of the military forces. Above, South Korean refugees streaming along the road leading away from the combat area during the Korean conflict. Below, Sicilian refugees clogging the roads during their flight to safety.—Department of Defense photos.



fense, the division has the advantage that it is not taking over new territory from the enemy and so has already established its control over the territory; has promulgated and announced its policies and regulations concerning civilians and refugees; and has established its agencies, installations, and procedures for handling them. These should be continued in force. The civilians in the territory under friendly control can continue to be frozen in place by rigid enforcement of existing travel regulations. The important thing is to keep word of the retrograde movement from the civilians so that they do not become panic-stricken and start a mass movement.

The big problem is to control and handle large numbers of refugees who may be fleeing before the enemy or who may be driven purposely into our lines by the enemy. The problem here is the same as when the division is on the defense except that refugees must be disposed of more quickly, combat and service troops cannot be spared to assist in their control, and fewer roads can be used for their movement to the rear. Here again, the best solution is to require the civilian communities to absorb and care for them if they can. If they cannot, the refugees must be moved quickly to the rear. This movement must be controlled, must be over the few routes which the military can spare, and must be to areas far enough in the rear so that the processes will not have to be repeated as the division withdraws. This latter requirement obviates the possibility of establishing camps for refugees in the division area and necessitates that they be moved into the corps rear area. The need for division transportation in the preparation for and execution of the retrograde movement makes it necessary that any military transportation needed for the movement of refugees be obtained from higher headquarters. This will be difficult to obtain, and the maximum use must be made of available civilian transportation and of the refugees own motive power.

Enemy-Refugee Relationship

If the enemy is driving refugees into our lines, it is better to move them to the rear than to leave them in forward communities where they again will be available for the enemy to drive into our lines. The civilians that we must leave in place will provide the enemy with enough personnel for this purpose without increasing this number by leaving refugees be-In fact, under these conditions, if time is available before the actual retrograde movement starts, it may be advisable to move civilians to the rear. However, since these people will then become refugees and will have to be cared for in rear areas, the policy concerning what is to be done should be established by higher headquarters.

Key Civilians Evacuated

If civilians are to be frozen in place, it will be necessary to evacuate certain key civilians and their families-people who have assisted our military government by holding key positions in the local government, people who have been particularly outspoken in public against the enemy, and people of great potential value to our military effort. The evacuation of these people must be accomplished at the last possible moment in order not to alarm the remainder of the population. However, lists of these people should be prepared in advance showing their locations. These lists should be based upon the recommendations of the division G2 and the military government officer. When the lists have been prepared, applicable portions should be distributed to the military government or combat commanders having area responsibility, with instructions that upon division order the people included on the list, provided they are willing, are to be taken from their homes and moved to a designated assembly point where the

division will take over their movement to the rear. The division military government officer must arrange for necessary transportation and personnel to control their movement to the rear.

At the last possible moment, the military government units in the various areas must move to the rear, upon division order, leaving assurances with the local officials left in charge that it is their intention to return as quickly as possible.

As the division moves to the rear, the area which has been under the control of the corps will come under the control of the division as will the local military government units in charge of this area. Through these units, the division will repeat the process described above. However, in order that the transition from corps control to division control may be accomplished smoothly—early, direct, close contact must prevail between the corps and division G1s and military government officers, and their prior planning must be done in detail.

Control at Corps Level

The corps commander must continue control of civilians in the areas which he takes over from the divisions as their rear boundaries are moved forward. The corps cannot permit the divisions to be hampered by large masses of refugees and, therefore, must assist the division by taking the refugees off their hands when necessary.

Corps Means

The military means used by the corps are similar to those of division. As in the divisions, combat and service units cannot be spared for this purpose except in cases of emergency. Therefore, dependence, once again, falls upon the military government personnel and the military police at the corps level. The corps has more military government and military police personnel then the division, but it also has a larger area to control. Moreover, these units have other functions to perform, just as

their counterparts at the division level. Therefore, it is essential that the corps follow the division plan of making full use of available civilian officials and police personnel in exercising control over civilians and refugees.

The corps has an advantage in that some control normally has been initiated by the divisions before the area comes under corps control. The divisions usually have instituted a policy, and this policy can be continued without much difficulty.

The Corps' Greatest Problem

It is in the handling of refugees that the corps encounters its greatest difficulty. Any refugees in the corps rear area must be provided for and controlled or they will clog the roads, disrupt transportation, occupy needed areas, and generally interfere with military operations. As has already been stated, if refugees cannot be absorbed by the civilian communities in the division area, other provisions must be made for them. Since divisions will seldom have the means to provide camps for them within the division area, they must be moved into the corps rear area. Here the corps must require the civilian communities to absorb them, must control and expedite their movement to the rear into the army service area, or must provide camps for them. Any of these courses of action requires considerable planning and management on the part of the corps if it is to be administered successfully.

The best solution is to require the civilian communities to take in the refugees and care for them, if they are able to do so. Accomplishing this requires that the capacity of the various communities be determined, and that the refugees be moved to the communities in accordance with their capacities.

If the communities cannot absorb the refugees, the second best solution is to move the refugees to the rear into the army service area. The corps can ill afford to expend the effort necessary to

establish large refugee camps without army assistance. Therefore, the camps are established by army in the army service area. This reduces the distance which any required supplies must be moved, and permits larger camps with resultant greater efficiency in operation. However, the move requires that the corps designate the routes to be used and control the refugees to assure that they use these routes and not others which are required for military purposes.

Transit Camps

The corps will also very probably have to establish transit camps along the routes to be used by the refugees in transit. These camps serve as facilities for security screening of refugees, accomplishing inoculations and health checks, and providing accommodations for those refugees who become ill. They are not intended to provide accommodations for long periods of time.

The only remaining task for the corps is the establishment of camps in which the refugees can be retained and cared for. From the corps point of view, this is the most difficult problem.

However, if it must be accomplished, suitable teams should be provided by the army to operate the camps. In establishing these camps, the corps should use existing facilities to the greatest extent possible and should construct only those facilities which are required. This, of course, is an added burden that must come out of the total construction effort which the corps has available. Civilian and captured supplies should be used for personnel in these camps wherever possible, but military relief supplies will be used to make up the balance required.

Control at Army Level

The army commander establishes the policies concerning the civilians and refugees to be followed throughout the army. These policies are based upon the broad

directives of higher headquarters. In addition, the army commander must not allow civilians and refugees to interfere with the operations of his division, corps, and army troops. He must provide the divisions and corps with the necessary logistical support to handle them, and within the army service area he must provide the necessary personnel as well as the supplies which are essential for their care, and most of the military transportation required for their movement.

As at the division and corps levels, any military personnel employed in controlling civilians and refugees, other than military government personnel and those military police who can do so in addition to their other duties, must be used at the expense of the army's combat mission. The army has a large area of responsibility, therefore, it has more military government and police personnel than either the division or the corps. However, the control of civilians and refugees by these units is in addition to their main duties. Once again, maximum use must be made of local officials and police in handling this problem.

As at the corps, the army has the advantage that military government has been established and civilians have been under military regulations and policies. These regulations and policies must be continued and vigorously enforced by the military government personnel and the military police with the assistance of local authorities.

Refugees will cause the greatest problem. The courses of action available for handling them are the same as at the corps and division, and the solutions are desirable in the same order. The army's advantage is that civilian communities when located in its service area should be able to care for a greater number of refugees than when located in forward areas recently overrun by combat. This system will be aided to some extent since both the corps and the division probably

will have required these communities to absorb large numbers of refugees. It is at the army level that large camps for refugees generally will become feasible. If they are established, suitable teams for their administration should be obtained from the theater. Maximum use should be made of existing facilities in establishing them; but, even so, some additional construction generally will be required with the attendant expenditure of military effort and supplies. If possible, refugees who cannot be absorbed by civilian communities should be evacuated into the communications zone where they can be cared for more easily, and where they will interfere less with military operations.

It is from the army service area that returning railroad trains can first be used for this movement. However, movement by train must be planned and controlled in advance. It is necessary for such movements to have train commanders, medical personnel, guards, and feeding stations en route.

International Roundaries

It is at army, or in the movement of refugees from army to the communications zone, that the problem of international boundaries may first assume prominent proportions. No country is willing to receive masses of refugees, who then become displaced persons, from other countries and assume the responsibility for their care and control. While actual combat is being conducted in close proximity to or astride international boundaries, the exigencies of the situation may be such that the nation involved accepts the necessity of allowing displaced persons to enter

its territory. However, as the area of combat moves forward, this condition soon ceases. The nation involved then requires guarantees that it will not be responsible for more displaced persons brought into its territory. If it is still necessary that displaced persons be allowed to cross the boundary, it usually must be accomplished under an agreement whereby they enter as a definite military commitment. The military forces, under the commitment. are responsible for the care and control of these persons and ultimately for their repatriation. Of course, this responsibility is assumed by the highest level of command and is normally carried out by the communications zone. The practical solution is to make every effort to keep the refugees in their own country.

Conclusions

During combat operations, the control of civilians and refugees is of great concern to the commanders of field combat units. These civilians and refugees cannot be allowed to wander freely, interfering with military operations, constituting a means of cover for enemy personnel, and providing a constant threat of epidemic disease. The best solution at the three echelons is to freeze civilians in place and to require the civilian communities to absorb the refugees to the limit of their capabilities. If the latter action does not provide for all refugees, their movement to the rear over designated secondary routes must be controlled, or camps must be established for them. Maximum use must be made of local authorities, local supplies, and local facilities in controlling both civilians and refugees.