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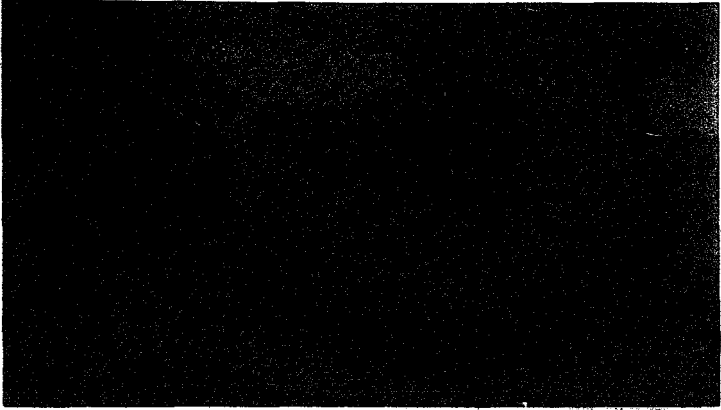
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INDIA Under the Second Defense Plan

Wing Commander Maharaj K. Chopra, *Indian Air Force, Retired*

INDIA enters the seventies under the second defense plan. The first embraced five years from 1964 to 1969. The second, too, is on a five-year basis, 1969 to 1974, but with a difference. It is called the "roll-on" plan—each year completed is replaced by another so that the plan is always of five-year duration. In this manner, the cycle of weapon development, which normally exceeds five years, is taken care of, and a longer planning perspective, 10 years in this case, is insured.

The second plan is thus an indicator of defense buildup during the coming decade. This contrasts with the first which was based on short perspectives with resources mustered from year to year. Now, the planners proceed with experience under long-term directives and assured resources.

Of the three elements of India's defense policy, internal security is the first. Since the general elections to the Central Parliament and state assemblies

Title photo shows the Indian-built Vijayanta medium tank, a version of the British Chieftain. Photos courtesy of Indian Ministry of Defense.



An Indian officer surveys a Chinese outpost complete with portrait of Chairman Mao Tse-tung at Nathu La on the border of Sikkim

held in 1967, significant changes have taken place in Indian politics. The mighty ruling party of the past has been weakened and is presently split into two factions. Other parties, including Communists, have come to the fore controlling a number of the state governments.

In some states, semiarmed forces have been organized, some functioning underground. Among the discontented peasantry, marauding bands have appeared, seizing lands and committing

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sabotage. Thus, central authority has weakened, central-state relationships have come under strain, and law and order have suffered.

This is not to say that there is chaos, for India has registered remarkable progress in industry and agriculture, its export-import trade gap has narrowed, and its gross national product is growing. But the fact must be noted that, while the first plan was ushered in against the background of wars with China and Pakistan and national solidarity, the second plan is ushered in in the environment of cold war with neighbors and national turbulence.

Thus, on the score of internal security, the role of the armed forces in the third decade of independence is likely to be more crucial than in the first two decades.

Border security is the second main-spring of defense. India continues to be preoccupied with its land frontiers and not so much with the sea frontiers, from where it feels little threat at present. Among the many aspects of this defense task, there is the integration of the farflung Himalayan sectors into the mainstream of national life. These sectors have been in ferment, with a number of powerful tribes—the Nagas and the Mizos in the northeast, in particular—who have indulged in defiance and rebellion, necessitating heavy military commitment.

Reconstruction

The Nagas have now been largely brought under control and their links with Pakistan and China substantially cut. Nagaland is functioning as a state of the Indian Union. Some quarter-million Mizos have been moved into more secure areas where they are settling peacefully. The North-East Frontier Agency, which was overrun by the Chinese in 1962, is under control and progressing, while in the northwest, Ladakh, the most advanced Indian base, has also picked up the tone of economic development.

In all of these remote zones, the accent is on reconstruction under joint military and civil administrations. Troops will continue to be stationed here, particularly in areas adjacent to China, but they can relax.

On the other hand, the Kashmir problem has become more complicated. The "silk road," joining Sinkiang in China with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, is now in use. Another road, which cuts short the distance between Sinkiang and Tibet, has been completed. Thousands of Chinese have been seen here in one role or the other.

With the coming of the seventies, a

new stance among the three Himalayan kingdoms has been noted. Bhutan and Sikkim are virtually a part of India, but with considerable autonomy under special treaties. They are shedding their feudal character under popular demand with Communist undertones. Nepal is a sovereign state, but has a special relationship with India under an old treaty. The treaty is now eroded, and last year, at Nepal's request, India withdrew its military teams from the Nepal-China frontier. These developments fit into Peking's scheme of bolstering a federation of Himalayan states which would be China-oriented. The military repercussions of these developments cannot be lost upon the Indian planners.

Pakistan and Red China

Behind the entire border defense policy lurk the dangers from Pakistan and China. The latest report of the Ministry of Defense points out that, since the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, China has supplied Pakistan complete equipment for two infantry divisions, about 350 tanks, 120 *MiG* aircraft, two squadrons of *Il-28* bombers, and a large number of artillery pieces, vehicles, and spare parts for tanks and aircraft. To this have been added the Soviet-supplied *T54* and *T55* tanks, 130-millimeter guns, and spare parts for *MiG* aircraft. On its part, China keeps a large force in Tibet estimated at between 130,000 and 150,000 men supported by a well-developed infrastructure.

India's defense policy as applied to the land borders is aimed at protecting the borders from any external aggression or threat of aggression. It is highly conditioned by the requirements of mountain warfare, and demands stability in the border territories.

While not threatened from the direction of the sea, India has, however, shown increasing awareness of its responsibilities in this direction for two reasons. The fact that the Andaman Islands, which are its oversea possession, are only 100 miles from Indonesia underscores the geopolitical proximity of India with Southeast Asia. The closing down of the Suez Canal and the indispensability of the Cape route for contacts with the West highlight the importance of the navy in terms of the oceanic lines of communication. India has, in fact, launched an accelerated program of naval expansion.

The Budget

Finance, the cornerstone of defense buildup, is always a matter of hot debate in Parliament. Last year, when the second plan was inaugurated, the defense budget was 1.4 billion dollars, and it is slightly more this year. Roughly, it is one-third of the national budget and 3.4 percent of the gross national product. Unless something unforeseen happens, this level of expenditure is expected to continue during the second plan period. Obviously, it is a far cry from the budget of 1962, a bare 400 million dollars, when China struck.

Over the years, the number of optimists who thought the expenditure could be brought down somewhere near this figure has disappeared. In percentages, the spending may still seem small compared with many countries, but it is heavy in terms of India's economic commitments. Hence, there are critics who enjoin that it be scaled down, but the accent is on economy and not on cutback.

Presently, the pay and allowances of the personnel have assumed special interest. Constituting over one-fourth

of the total outlay, they have been going up every year. A pay commission has now been appointed to draw up a new pay code. Since a pay commission of this kind is normally appointed once in 10 years, it is a landmark in the history of the defense services in the seventies.

Army, Air Force, Navy

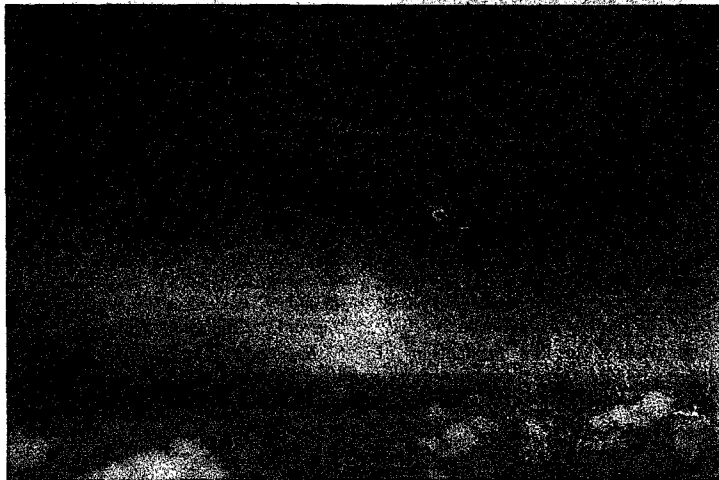
During the first plan, the army was built to a force level of 828,000; this will continue under the present arrangements. Among the weapon systems, the old *Centurions* and *Shermans* will form a sizable component of the tanks, but *T54's* and *T55's* are being added while the indigenously built *Vijayanta* (British *Chieftain* model) is being increasingly introduced. To the British 25-pounders have been added Soviet 100-millimeter and 130-millimeter guns. Reequipment of the infantry units with weapons of the post-1960 design has been completed, and considerable progress has been made in a similar reequipment of the armor and artillery units. The emphasis is now on tougher training, better communications, and increased firepower.

The air force is being consolidated around a strength of 45 squadrons, a target fixed for the first plan but not fully achieved. The operational squadrons with *MiG-21's* and *Su-7's* are at full strength. The *Gnats* and *Mysteres* will be replaced by improved versions of the *MiG-21* and indigenously built *HF-24 Marut*. *Mi-4* and *Alouette III* are the main helicopters, but these are to be replaced after the midseventies by Indian-built versions. The *HS 748*, also built in the country, has taken the place of the *Dakotas* while another indigenous transport plane for a more varied role is on the way. The air force seeks to cut down the mul-

tiplicity of aircraft and streamline its repair and maintenance apparatus.

There has been further extension of surface-to-air guided weapon complexes with the Soviet SA-2's, and an elaborate air defense ground environment system has been planned which

The organization of the defense services remains unchanged. At the top is the Supreme Commander, who is also the President or the Chief Executive of the Indian Union, but the authority is exercised by the Cabinet of Ministers which has a stand-



The HF-24 Marut air force fighter is manufactured in India

would include sophisticated static and mobile radars and reliable air communications.

India has decided not to procure a second aircraft carrier, nor any addition for the time being to the existing strength of cruisers. But it has acquired a fleet of submarines, a few destroyers, and a number of patrol boats, all Soviet-built. To these are being added a locally made class of small boats capable of operating in confined waters. The navy is looking forward to locally constructed *Leander*-type frigates, three of which are likely to be available during the second plan period.

ing defense subcommittee. The Defense Minister is the agent of the Cabinet who is assisted by a number of committees composed of the heads of the departments concerned.

There have been demands for establishing something similar to a National Security Council, but in the government view the existing setup is satisfactory. The Chiefs of Staff function as a committee, providing expert advice to the government, and also as the topmost executives of their respective service. The three services are autonomous, each with a headquarters which exercises authority through commands. There are four

commands of the army, five of the air force, and three commands of the navy.

But within the organization, a few new features have appeared. There is the Systems Analysis Group, for instance, which seeks to rationalize the decision-making process. The Work Study Group is another, the task of which is to improve the working efficiency and the logistic support systems, and, for the first time, the high command has engaged the services of industrial and management consultants. Yet another is the Value Engineering cell which is engaged in the selection and examination of design features. All these are a part of the new planning concept and are intended to maximize output of labor, institute cost effectiveness, and assist in sound budget formulation.

In regard to the production of

weapons and equipment, the authorities are engaged in a two-pronged endeavor—fulfill demands and establish self-reliance. The latter rather trails behind the former. Insofar as major weapons are concerned, the three services are considerably dependent upon supplies from abroad.

Under the second defense plan, the pursuit of self-reliance continues. A significant new feature is the complementary role being assigned to civil industry which in the past has been kept at bay. With assistance provided by the government, private manufacturers are producing defense equipment on a progressively larger scale. This is an index of the general industrial advance of the country, as well as recognition on the part of the government that its own machinery cannot deliver the goods fully.

Assistance is also forthcoming



India's preoccupation with its mountain borders is illustrated by this high-altitude troop exercise in the Himalayas

from scientific bodies, of which the major one is the government's own Defense Research and Development Organization. Its present budget of 20 million dollars is still modest, and even when it is doubled during the second defense plan period, it will not be too impressive. Nevertheless, it has about 1,000 projects in hand.

Defense Undertakings

The principal production effort is concentrated, however, in the government-owned ordnance factories, and "defense undertakings" run on corporate lines. The ordnance factories meet the demands of the services for a wide range of items such as arms, ammunition, engineer equipment, chemicals, clothing, and general supplies. India is completely self-sufficient in small arms. One of the factories produces tanks and armored vehicles.

The defense undertakings are the principal producers of the major arms. During the second plan period, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the largest, will produce *MiG-21's* in quantity, improve its own fighter bomber, start helicopter production, and design a versatile transport plane, in addition to producing a number of aircraft it is already manufacturing for a variety of roles. A shipyard has been substantially expanded for building destroyers, frigates, and assault craft; its first frigate will go out for trials in 1971. For many years, the electronics undertaking has been engaged in manufacturing sophisticated and specialized equipment for radio and radar. It is now being expanded to accelerate missile production.

In this defense program, India has the assistance from technicians of many countries, including Britain,

France, the Soviet Union, West Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands.

It would be reasonable to assume that, unless contingency dictates otherwise, India will maintain a force of around one million during the first half of the seventies. While the army and the air force will be consolidated around their present levels, the navy will be expanded. This force will phase out most of its weapons of old vintage. The defense production base will be rendered increasingly self-reliant, although there will remain certain deficiencies in the more sophisticated fields. The weapon systems will be of the conventional type.

Defensive Role

The armed forces will be principally designed for a defensive role, concerned with the security of the borders and territorial integrity. They will be built and deployed against possibilities of aggression on two fronts, that is, Pakistan and China. The cost will be heavy, but India has decided to bear it as an imperative of national survival and advance. Meanwhile, at least three important questions arise.

How will the military services figure in the turbulent situation that has developed in the country? Early this year, a former Chief of the Army Staff, who is also the senior retired general, came out publicly with the suggestion that the military services should come to the helm of affairs for awhile. There was a furor in the country. The Parliament, which was in session, was enraged. The general explained that he only meant that the military forces should be delegated power and not that it should seize power.

Constitutionally, this is possible, for the Parliament could arm the Chief Executive, who is also the Su-



An Indian soldier in Ladakh uses a PRC-10 to communicate with headquarters

preme Commander, with all necessary authority to be exercised with the help of the armed forces. But the country is in no mood for a surrender of this kind, nor can the armed forces act on their own. They are, in the political hierarchy, distant from the seat of power, have little control over the infrastructure of defense which is in civilian hands, and are constituted too autonomously for a joint concerted action. Above all, they are non-political, disciplined, loyal, and patriotic.

The national consensus is to live with the democratic system with its enormous advantages of freedoms, mass participation, and potential for progress through consent rather than brutality and force. The disadvantages inherent in it are to be accepted, and it would be the function of the military services not to let them degenerate into chaos. As it happens, the armed forces are well suited to face the challenge.

Will India go "nuclear"? Inasmuch as India has not signed the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Arms, it has still the option; the question is whether the option will be exercised. On this crucial issue the debate continues, in the course of which some violent divergencies of opinion are noticed.

For the Bomb

Almost all the major opposition parties, barring Communists, and a sizable section of intelligentsia in the press, universities, and scientific bodies, are for the "bomb." Red China is their major bugbear. There is no doubt that Peking has increased its stockpile of nuclear weapons. The fact that it has been able to fire a satellite into space shows that it can now command missiles of intermediate if not intercontinental range. That, according to the critics, is the latest measure of threat to India.

The critics argue that guarantees against it are not credible and that this threat is likely to be switched from the purely political and technological fields to the battlefields. They are aware of the sacrifices involved, but note that India has already invested around 900 million dollars in its nuclear sector. They demand that at least a beginning be made in this direction, such as alerting the nuclear establishment and working out the cost realistically in national environment.

After the Chinese launched their satellite, the government promised to reassess the danger and step up some sectors of its own defense program. Semiofficial attempts at costing are also likely to be made. In view of the reduction in the strength of the ruling party, the government may also become more susceptible to the opposi-

tion thrusts. But on the point of going nuclear, it is adamant. From the Prime Minister downward, repeated statements have been made that India will not build the bomb.

Do the weapon systems of the armed forces reflect any particular stance? This question has acquired some pertinence now. For a decade and a half after independence, the Western countries were the main foreign sources of India's arms, including France, Italy, Switzerland, and particularly Britain whose legacy lingered in many forms. This has changed. Most of the more modern major arms with which India has equipped its armed forces during the sixties have been obtained from the Soviet Union.

Some eyebrows have been raised at this. It is stated that, because of its dependence for arms upon the USSR, India's economic and political policies have become Soviet-oriented. For this very reason, India might in a pinch make available to the Soviets certain facilities of a military character.

India denies this and also points to the compulsions behind its policy.

Since the Chinese attack, the USSR has been about the only source from which it could draw principal weapons of required quality and quantity to equip the armed forces against Peking's menace. Geopolitically, too, the Soviets are a counterweight to Red China, particularly so in the environ of north Asia which for centuries has borne heavily upon India's security. All purchases of arms from the USSR are on a commercial basis so that India has kept its policy options open.

At the same time, many in India are aware of the dangers underlying the situation. One of the causes of the split in the ruling party is precisely this—too much official leaning toward the Soviet Union whose presence in the Indian Ocean, whose role in the Middle East, and whose military aid to Pakistan are looked at askance.

It is clear that, during the period under review, India's defense planning and tasks will be under a variety of stresses from within, as well as without. The heartening feature is that, in their midst, the armed forces will be reliable and resourceful, respectful of authority and respected by the people.