

PARTISAN OPERATIONS

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MODERN warfare includes many phases other than just the engagement of armed forces. One of these phases, called "partisan operations," involves the application of economic, political, and psychological, as well as military, pressures. It has proved a valuable weapon in past wars.

It might be well to pause before delving into this subject to present a few definitions. People who are devoted adherents of a party, faction, or cause are classed as partisans. Thus, the American revolutionists, adherents to the cause of freedom, were partisans. On the other hand, members of any subversive group within this country who are followers of a foreign ideology must likewise be classified as partisans.

The dictionaries have defined partisans as members of a detached body of troops engaged in irregular warfare, with the principal mission of harassment. Such a definition is not entirely satisfactory because, in its broader aspects, partisan operations include more than open active resistance by isolated troop units. Partisan operations may be typified by guerrilla action, but they also include the passive resistance of underground groups, as well as related acts of espionage, sabotage, and propaganda.

Historical Basis

The military use of partisans is not a recent innovation. Some specific historical examples will serve to illustrate this point.

During the early years of the settlement of North America, the American Indians were employed as partisans by the French and by the British. The Indians resented encroachment of the colonists on their hunting grounds and were easily persuaded to take up guerrilla warfare against the settlers. The French aided and abetted the Algonquin, the Huron, and part of the Iroquis tribes in a resistance move against the expansion of the colonies from 1753 to 1761. Later, the six Indian nations (Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, and Tuscarora) were employed by the British as partisans against the colonies. The warfare practiced by these Indians was definitely guerrilla warfare.

In 1808, Napoleon was unable to overcome the partisan forces of the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish Army was no match for the seasoned, well-armed French forces; but the success of the Spanish partisan groups offset the failures of the Army. The desire of the Spaniards for freedom occasioned widespread uprisings, characterized by stubborn, almost fanatic, resistance. The rugged terrain of Spain was ideally suited to partisan warfare. When Napoleon was finally forced to abandon Spain, his initial force of over 300,000 had been reduced to considerably less than

half. Even recognition of the effectiveness of the English forces under Wellington does not reduce the over-all evaluation which must be placed upon the accomplishments of Spanish partisans.

During World War II, partisan resistance movements were widespread. They were known by various names such as the French *Maquis*, Italian Partisans, Belgian Underground, Russian Guerrillas, Philippine Guerrillas, the guerrilla forces of the Chinese National government and the Chinese communists, the aborted German Werewolf, and many others. Despite the differences in names and in the type of activities conducted, they were all partisan forces.

In France, prior to World War II, there were Frenchmen sympathetic to Nazi aims. When the Germans invaded France, they exploited these individuals and groups

uable assistance to the Allied Forces during the military operations in France, particularly during the establishment of the initial beachheads. In co-ordination with the landings, the partisan forces destroyed telephone and telegraph lines, demolished roads and bridges, attacked installations and depots, ambushed and attached German units, and conducted many other activities of this general nature. The operation of the FFI did much to isolate the German defense units in the beachhead areas and to delay the movement of reserve units.

The activities of partisan forces in Belgium, Holland, and Denmark developed along different lines. The topography and density of population of these areas were not well suited to the development of guerrilla activities. The countries are small with comparatively large popula-

The factors which favored the widespread employment of partisan warfare during World War II still exist. In the future, it may be expected that such operations will again be developed extensively

by using them to conduct sabotage and to spread rumors and confusion. Such traitorous acts were highly valuable to the Germans in breaking French morale and developing a spirit of despair.

However, the strong feeling of French nationalism and hatred of the Germans held by most French people were not suppressed by German occupation and resulted in the development of several partisan groups. The largest of these was the *Maquis*, totalling approximately 300,000. All partisan groups were later united into the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), with a total strength of nearly a half million. The activities of the FFI were directed by SHAEF when it came into being, although some of the French communist forces also received direction from Moscow.

The activities of the FFI proved of val-

ties; and open resistance could have been easily isolated and eliminated. Thus, the activities of the partisan forces developed along the lines of passive resistance, typified by wastage of materials, imperfect workmanship, general slow-down movements, subtle forms of ridicule of the occupying forces, and scores of similar acts.

These clandestine partisan movements were all successful in reducing the German capacity and will to resist, and they provided a fruitful source of information to Allied Headquarters. Along with their French colleagues, partisans in the low countries played an effective role in the war of nerves, which is a part of psychological warfare. No action was decisive, but all actions served to harass the enemy.

Long before World War II, the German General Staff recognized that the Soviet

Union was placing guerrilla or partisan operations on an equal footing with regular tactical operations. Nevertheless, the Germans developed no effective counter-measures. Their occupation policies, particularly in the Ukraine, gave impetus to partisan activities rather than suppressed them. From the fragmentary reports of the campaign in Russia, we learn that German losses in personnel, weapons, and equipment at the hands of the Russian guerrillas were of critical importance.

Types of Operations

There are two broad categories of partisan operations, the open, overt, or guerrilla type; and the underground, covert, or clandestine type.

Let us first discuss the overt type. Forces of this nature are organized, trained, and equipped to operate along military lines. They usually develop in areas which are difficult of access, such as mountains, forests, and jungles which provide the extensive cover and concealment essential to guerrilla type operations. Since the partisans are normally natives of the area, they are familiar with all of the trails, hideouts, and short cuts. Their operations are offensive in nature, typified by numerous raids and ambushes conducted by small parties. All operations are characterized by surprise and mobility. The area for the operation is selected to gain surprise. Maximum fire power is suddenly directed upon the enemy; the partisans then vanish in the resulting confusion, before the enemy can bring his fire to bear upon them. Defensive action is avoided because the superiority of the enemy's armed forces and equipment may result in the destruction of the partisan forces.

Now we will turn to the underground or covert type. Partisan organizations of this category usually develop in cities, towns, and heavily populated areas. Their activities include passive resistance, sabotage, espionage, and general subver-

sion through the spreading of rumors, underground newspapers, and leaflets. The operations of these clandestine partisan forces are characterized by secrecy and stealth. If overt action is contemplated in heavily populated areas, it must be planned and co-ordinated with military operations in order that the partisan forces may be quickly relieved.

The result of the Polish uprising in Warsaw under General Bor is an excellent example of what usually happens if such co-ordination is not effected. In this instance, the Russian armies besieging Warsaw stood off deliberately until the defending Germans had completely annihilated General Bor's forces, thereby eliminating a strong partisan faction which would have subsequently been troublesome to the Soviet occupation of Poland. On the other hand, the partisan uprising in Paris in August 1944, which coincided with the arrival of the Allied forces, illustrates the measure of success possible with proper timing.

In a large country, which contains both built-up areas and inaccessible regions, the development of both types of partisan forces may be expected. In all probability, there will be no definite organizational or operational pattern. Partisan forces will vary according to the terrain, the character and density of the population, the supply of arms and equipment, the presence of strong and determined leaders, and the methods employed to counteract their operations. Consequently, an intensive study and analysis of all factors must be made either to develop and employ partisans, or to organize a defense against them.

Development of a Force

Let us now turn to the development of a partisan force. Normally, partisan forces develop through gradual stages of progression. The first stage is the effort, usually aided from without, to alienate the people from their existing or occupying

government. At first, such a movement involves individuals or small groups of determined men. Initial operations are simple acts of sabotage, pamphleteering, or minor forays of little real significance against the government. However, the fact that the partisans are able to conduct these acts bolsters their confidence and brings in additional followers to add strength to the movement.

As operations gain in scope and frequency, the spirit of resistance becomes more defiant. As the movement gains momentum, many persons who have been reluctant to join are converted to the cause and recruited for the resistance forces. Eventually a full-scale resistance movement is established. This can be considered the normal evolution of partisan forces in war. The span of organization will be in terms of years rather than days or months. In much of the world today, however, there exist militant political groups which are compactly organized during peace, and are thus capable of overnight conversion to wartime activities.

A highly important feature in the creation of any partisan force is the assistance rendered by outside agencies. In World War II, it was of vital concern to this nation and to our Allies to have effective partisan forces operating in territories occupied by the Axis. We supported partisan activities by supplying arms, ammunition, radio equipment, and many other items. We also provided personnel to train partisans in the use of such equipment and to assist them in organizing and developing their forces. The moral and the physical support rendered by the Allies was of tremendous importance. Without outside assistance, the time required to create such forces would have been increased many times over.

The demands of modern warfare being what they are, a nation must employ the bulk of its man power in producing and supplying weapons and equipment to the

fighting soldier. The net result is that a relatively small percentage of the total population is available for combat duty. Therefore, it is necessary to enlist the aid of allies, be they friendly powers or partisan forces.

In order to employ partisan forces so as to bring the maximum pressure to bear upon the enemy, it is essential to appreciate the capabilities and limitations of these forces. Conversely, to establish a defense against attack by unfriendly partisan forces, the commander must be able to determine the capabilities of the enemy's partisans in the same manner that he estimates the capabilities of the enemy's armed forces.

Although some of the activities conducted by partisan forces may be strategic in nature, others are primarily tactical. Paramilitary or guerrilla action is principally in the form of raids and ambushes. Guerrilla partisan forces operate in small bands employing hit-and-run tactics. By surprising the enemy, they are able to inflict heavy casualties with negligible losses to themselves. They force the enemy into adopting combat formations for administrative movements. The enemy is forced to employ combat troops to guard installations and lines of communications, thereby reducing his effective fighting strength at the front. The presence of partisans over a wide area makes it difficult for the enemy to move his reserves. Paramilitary partisan operations will always be most effective when co-ordinated with the military effort.

Sabotage

Sabotage derives its name from an old French practice of throwing wooden shoes (sabots) into machinery to slow down production. Sabotage is still defined as destruction of or injury to property to stop or slow down a nation's war effort, and it can be performed by any person who is not a lawful belligerent.

Some sabotage will be simple acts conducted by the untrained saboteur with ordinary tools, such as a knife to cut things, water or sugar to adulterate gasoline, or household matches to start fires. The potentiality of the use of these tools, coupled with imagination, is tremendous. Other acts of sabotage will be committed by trained saboteurs. The civilian occupations, military training, or skill in the use of specialized sabotage devices, explosives, and the like, qualifies specific saboteurs for attacks on targets such as power plants, bridges, or ships.

Sabotage targets may be classed under two headings: industrial targets, and military targets. Industrial targets include factories and industrial establishments, as well as the utilities and the transportation and communications systems which supply them; natural resources, such as mines and oil wells, and the smelters and refineries which process raw materials. Military targets include military installations, vehicles, aircraft, ships, weapons, roads, bridges, and communications.

Individuals or partisan groups will be able to attack all types of sabotage targets, but the effectiveness of the attacks will vary. The nature and location of the partisan forces will dictate the targets which might be sabotaged. Industries are normally located in the population centers; therefore, we can expect the covert type force to direct its main effort against them. The guerrilla forces will be able to sabotage certain industrial targets such as isolated plants, communications installations, transportation, and, possibly, natural resources. Military targets may be present in all areas.

For greatest effectiveness, sabotage is aimed at critical points or bottlenecks. An entire rail line may be disorganized for days by destruction of a large bridge or tunnel. The elimination of power supply will stop industries. Planning is important

in sabotage, and so is clear direction. Failure to designate targets may result in a dispersal of effort or in damage to communications or installations, which are of negligible value to the enemy but of great future value to us. Therefore, all sabotage activities should be carefully planned and co-ordinated with the military effort.

Passive resistance is often led by members of clandestine partisan forces. In effect, these activities are another form of sabotage, although they are not necessarily acts of violence. For example, in industry, wastage of materials, improper workmanship, and slow-downs in work will greatly reduce the production of an industrial plant. Other acts of passive resistance are aimed at the morale of the enemy's armed forces and administrators. These acts include such matters as crossing the street to avoid a member of the enemy forces, leaving a restaurant or theater when one enters, the taunts of children, and other acts of non-co-operation. All are designed to irritate and aggravate the enemy and to develop in him a feeling of uneasiness. By itself, one of these acts is of little consequence; but when multiplied, they become highly effective.

A Source of Information

Partisan forces are a valuable source of information. They can collect both strategic and tactical information. The clandestine forces in the cities can provide information concerning the location of industrial establishments, items produced, rates of production, political information in respect to the local administration, methods used in control, and identity of leaders. Further, they can obtain sociological information, such as population figures, movement of groups, and data on mobilization of labor. These forces can also provide valuable military information concerning disposition, identity, strength, and composition of the



The French Forces of the Interior (FFI) numbered a half million partisans and gave valuable assistance to the Allies in the invasion of Europe. Above, French partisans and US soldiers near St. Tropez, August 1944. Below, FFI men guarding a German supply train wrecked by US tanks at Braine, September 1944.—US Army photos.



enemy's armed forces. Guerrillas are also a useful source of information. Much of the information from them will be military in nature.

In order that the collection effort of partisan forces be properly exploited, it is necessary to provide continued direction. Representatives or agents must contact these forces to establish communications for the receipt of missions and the transmission of information. There are several means which can be employed to conduct such communication. During World War II, the radio was the most common method, although couriers, aircraft, and vessels were employed.

Partisan forces can provide guides, hideouts, and contacts which are necessary in the development of escape and evasion routes. Here again, it is important that these activities be closely controlled and co-ordinated with military operations.

The broad objectives of a psychological warfare program are to lower the morale of the enemy and to raise the morale of individuals or groups who oppose the rule of the enemy. The existence of partisan forces assists in accomplishing both of these objectives. Such partisan activities as raids, ambushes, sabotage, and the spreading of false rumors; the publication of leaflets, stickers, and newspapers; radio broadcasts; and acts of passive resistance, help to lower the enemy's morale by creating fear, suspicion, distrust, and frustration. Conversely, the same acts provide encouragement and hope to the civilian population and generally bolster their morale. The more widespread and aggressive these activities become, the more effective are they as psychological implements.

Limitations and Problems

Definite limitations are placed on partisan activities. The guerrilla or paramilitary forces are not organized, trained, or equipped to employ formalized military

tactics. Even in their own field of harassing activity, they are not capable of sustained action, due primarily to logistical limitations. Guerrilla forces must operate primarily during hours of darkness. Since they will have no transport, ordinarily, targets must be within reasonable marching distance.

Guerrilla activity is very strenuous, and rest and recuperation time must be allowed to the personnel thus engaged. The physical isolation of guerrilla forces renders more difficult the control of their operations. This is particularly noticeable in the changing attitude of guerrillas following small or local successes.

Guerrilla forces are prone to overestimate their capabilities, and their leaders are likely to entertain delusions of grandeur. They may then undertake action beyond their capabilities. Security is a limitation within itself, when enemy counterespionage and countersabotage units are operating. Partisan forces must work slowly to preserve secrecy. This requirement increases the complexity of operation and the difficulties of control. Any relaxation of security by these forces will subject them to penetration by enemy counterintelligence, which will lead to a break-up of the organization.

There are many problems in connection with partisan forces, but from a theater headquarters viewpoint they may be all placed under the three headings of development, supply, and direction and control.

If the partisan movement develops spontaneously within a country, theater headquarters must develop plans and the means by which the partisan leaders are brought into contact. This is generally accomplished through radio communication, with facilities and a secure code furnished by theater headquarters. It may also be accomplished by arranging a meeting of qualified representatives of the theater commander with the partisan leaders,

to work out mutual problems. An example was General Clark's clandestine meeting with the French authorities in North Africa in the early part of World War II. It is also feasible that some of the partisan leaders may be brought to meet with the theater commander's representatives. Such contact should be established as early as possible in order to facilitate the theater commander's function of direction.

As early as possible, preferably during time of peace, plans should be made for the rapid development of friendly partisan forces in areas where a need for them may arise. Included in these plans would be the selection and indoctrination of potential leaders, and the actual training of cadres. Such planning would be an intelligence function on the joint level.

Excellent examples of successful planning along these lines are the cases of Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia and Klement Gottwald in Czechoslovakia. These men were thoroughly and painstakingly trained in Moscow and sent into their respective countries fully prepared to bring them under Russian domination at the proper moment during the unstable period immediately following World War II. The overthrow tactics which were used in these two cases are contrary to United States policy, but they are cited to illustrate that the partisan weapon can be all the more effective if its use is planned for well in advance.

If the spirit of resistance has not developed within a country, or if resistance groups have not been formed, then the theater commander's problem is increased. Rigid control measures adopted by the theater may have prevented the formation of partisan groups or, as in the case of the Ukrainians in the early part of the War, the people may have swayed toward the theater. In such case, propaganda must be directed at separating the people from the theater and winning them over to the

friendly cause. Leaders will emerge and must be given the proper guidance and support to gain strength. To develop a partisan movement under such conditions will obviously require considerable time and effort.

In dealing with partisan forces, national and foreign policies must be considered. From a military viewpoint, it might be highly advantageous to arm a certain group of partisans. However, by doing so, we might be giving support to their political beliefs and thus offending other partisan groups or allies. The theater commander is rigidly guided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in such matters, but there remain many decisions which he must make. Consequently, there are State Department representatives who act as advisers to the theater commander and his staff on the political aspects of such problems.

Problems of Supply

As far as possible, partisan forces live off the land and attack enemy depots and installations to gain additional weapons, food, and equipment. Under certain conditions, partisan forces will be completely unable to supply themselves locally, and it then becomes a tonnage problem for the theater commander. A figure of 18 pounds per man per day can be used for planning purposes. The theater commander must be prepared to allocate these supplies and deliver them to the partisans if he expects to make full use of their capabilities.

In the European Theater during 1944, the Americans air-dropped a monthly average of over 250 tons of supplies to the FFI. The July 1944 effort alone was over 1,000 tons. British operations in support of French partisans were even larger. Additional supplies were furnished to the Norwegians, Poles, Danes, Belgians, Dutch, Italians, Greeks, and others. Partisan forces will always be able to use more supplies than a theater is logistically able or willing to provide. Therefore, the

supply procedure must be carefully worked out to ensure that priorities are established both as to the various partisan forces to be supplied and the items they are to receive. Arrangements must be made with the partisan forces to enable them to requisition supplies. It is advantageous to have a liaison officer with the partisans to assist them in ordering supplies and in selecting drop sites or landing beaches.

Delivery imposes special problems upon the theater commander. Although the amount of supply provided a partisan is relatively small, it is difficult to deliver supplies to him secretly. The most common method of the past War was by air-drop. Other methods included supply by submarine, by specially designed patrol craft, and by pack train through the enemy lines. Such delicate items as radios and sabotage devices require extremely careful packing. This is best accomplished by providing special packing stations within the theater. To air-drop the quantity of supplies needed by partisans will require the constant use of a large number of aircraft. The crews must be trained for dropping, particularly night-dropping in mass formation, and the aircraft may require special equipment or modification. The operations of supply aircraft may disclose to the enemy the location of major partisan groups. Consequently, drop zones must be changed frequently, and the flight of supply aircraft must be concealed by every possible means.

Direction and Control

Direction and control of partisans must be delicate, yet firm. Partisans are not members of the military establishment and are not subject to normal disciplinary measures. If they disagree with or dislike the orders they receive, they may disregard them. The leaders are apt to be strong, determined, and highly individualistic. Sometimes, these leaders adopt an attitude that they are fighting their

war, and nobody is going to tell them how to do it. Normally, co-operation is excellent when proper direction and control are furnished. The staff officers planning and supervising partisan activities must have a thorough picture of the situation and an understanding of local problems. Liaison officers with the partisan forces will aid in settling differences but, as frequently as possible, theater representatives should confer with the partisan leaders to discuss mutual problems.

During the past War, there were several different methods used in co-ordinating and directing partisan activities. In certain theaters, G-2 supervised partisan intelligence activities and G-3 the operations. In other theaters, special staff sections were created. In one theater, co-ordination was accomplished through a catch-all general staff section, designated as G-5. The method employed is relatively unimportant, so long as the theater general staff divisions realize their responsibilities in regard to partisans and prepare the necessary plans and policies. For example, the J-2 may logically be charged with the initial development of the partisan force, including contacts with partisan leaders, and should be responsible for the direction of the intelligence effort at all times. However, the requirements for partisan forces and the direction of their overt operations are J-3 responsibilities.

Plans for partisans should be scheduled so that the partisan operational activities reach their highest tempo at a predetermined time in accordance with the theater operational plan. Usually, this peak is reached concurrently with the peak of tactical operations. However, there may be exceptions in such timing, since partisan activities can be used for feints and diversions.

It must be borne in mind constantly by a commander who employs partisans that

the security of his own plans can be jeopardized by defection within partisan ranks. It is a relatively simple matter for the enemy to plant agents among partisan forces, and for these agents to transmit information concerning missions and activities which would give indications of the friendly commander's plans.

Partisan operations should be centrally controlled from theater headquarters. Some tactical co-ordination may be accomplished by subordinate commanders, but it will be supervised by theater headquarters and in accordance with existing policies and directives. Liaison officers or control detachments are attached down to armies to assist commanders in obtaining needed partisan support. Theater headquarters must prepare and implement standing operating procedures to be used by the subordinate commanders in this connection.

Defense Against Partisans

Let us consider the defense against partisan activities. Both passive and active measures are employed. Passive defense measures consist of a strict interior guard system employing sentries around vital installations, and patrols along main routes of communication. These measures will normally provide adequate security against a local underground threat. In co-ordinating passive defense measures, a commander should take the following actions:

Establish an intelligence system that will provide information from which a continuous estimate of the situation can be made.

Select the vital areas and arteries of communications that require protection.

Assign major subordinate units to sectors to protect the vital areas and arteries of communications.

Centrally locate these units in their respective sectors; locate a mobile reserve to support unit sectors on short notice.

Establish a communications net using radio supplemented by wire.

Active defense measures, envisioning offensive action against partisan bases, may be applicable if the rear area extends to an unusual depth or if the theater includes jungles or mountains. These measures are employed against bands of partisans operating under centralized control from strong points, and in sufficient numbers to threaten the efficiency of rear area installations. The offensive may include organized drives against partisan centers, rapid pursuit of partisan bands, roundup of wanted men, and raids on suspected buildings and localities. The essential elements of these actions are surprise and encirclement. In addition, they require a high degree of alertness and mobility. If possible, all troops engaged in these operations should be motorized. Tanks will assist, but they have the disadvantage of alerting the partisans by noise, and are difficult to employ in rugged, isolated areas. Motorized infantry are the most effective troops, although armored cavalry is excellent for isolating selected areas.

In executing active defense, the commander should take the following actions:

Establish an intelligence system that will provide information from which a continuous estimate of the situation can be made.

Determine those areas or strong points from which partisans are operating.

Surround each area, cutting all avenues of approach.

Strike simultaneously, eliminating as many strong points as possible.

Maintain sufficient reserves to ensure success in all operations.

Establish a communications net adequate to control the operation, using radio supplemented by wire as the means of communications.

Defense measures against a partisan threat can be delegated to units along with other rear area security responsibili-

ties. Forces employed in a defense against partisans can organize a defense against an airborne or an armored threat. Similarly, a general reserve retained for counterattacks against an enemy airborne threat can launch a limited offensive against a partisan threat.

Conclusion

During World War I, there were few partisan groups. Yet in World War II, fought over much of the same ground, partisan groups were to be found in practically every enemy-occupied country. What caused this radical change? Probably the greatest factor, was psychological. For the first time in modern history, entire populations felt quickly and personally the impact of war. The opposing forces were no longer engaged along relatively stable lines. The airplane, tank, and other means of mechanization extended the combat zone over wide areas. There was not one front but several fronts, with combat zones extending to great depths. The broadening and deepening of the combat areas provided the space required for partisan operations. The long and extended supply lines and numerous installations, depots, and factories were particularly inviting to attack. The development of the airplane provided the means for supplying the partisan forces with arms, ammunition, and other equipment. The radio provided the means whereby outside forces could establish contact with the partisan forces and direct

their activities. The fact that World War II was a total war, whose hardships and privations were felt by everyone, gave natural rise to partisan activities.

In the period between the Wars, almost all of the Allied and Axis nations had recognized the value of this type of warfare and had developed doctrine and organization for its conduct. Without stimulus and support from outside sources, many of the partisan movements would never have developed.

The political foundations of the Allied and Axis causes were radically different. It was nearly impossible for inhabitants of an area or a country to take the middle road. They were either for or against the occupying power. Therefore, the Allies were able to prepare plans to exploit the friendly groups or to defend themselves against hostile groups.

The factors which favored the development of partisan warfare in World War II have not disappeared. As a matter of fact, they have become even more favorable.

Weapons, transportation, and communications have increased their ranges and, in all probability, the battlefield of the future will extend over continents instead of countries. The division of the world into separate blocs, with wide divergence in political beliefs, provides a fertile ground for the development of partisan warfare. Thus, we may expect, in the event of another war, that partisan warfare will be developed extensively.