



Chinese guerrillas of the 4th guerrilla zone actively harassing the Japanese invaders in southwest Kwangtung. Acme

Guerrilla Warfare and Motorization

Lt. Colonel Braun.

[“Motorisierte Gedankensplitter aus aller Welt: Der Guerillakrieg und die Motorisierung,”
Condensed from *Militär-Wochenblatt*, 18 November 1938.]

Major Wm. H. Speidel, Infantry

The Chinese irregulars, also referred to in the foreign press as “partisans,” are giving the Japanese plenty of grief. They destroy bridges, set fire to gasoline and stores, commit violent assaults on people of importance, explode mines, raid troops, staffs and airports, even entire villages, incite rebellion, gather important military information which keeps Chiang Kai-shek constantly informed, and in an astonishing manner appear and disappear like ghosts. We only get meager information about their highly interesting fighting. Their organization, hastily carried out, lacks unity.

Their weapons and sometimes their teamwork are poor. Their sacrifices are great (there is no mercy in guerrilla warfare), but still they have successes to their credit.

We have heard recently that some of these shock troops have armored scout cars, cargo trucks, motorcycles and light motorized guns. On 5 August 1938 one group blocked the Peking-Tientsin highway at several points; another wrecked a large railway bridge and kept the place under fire for two days. Right near Peking on 29 August

1938 a train was blown up. This news gives us some idea how motorized troops and vehicles might be used in guerrilla warfare. In future wars this style of fighting might assume other forms, such as parachute landings.

The important point is fuel. A country that wants to organize guerrilla warfare behind the enemy's front must first provide a supply of gasoline. It must be stored in small quantities, decentralized as much as possible and secured against deterioration and discovery, the storage place plotted on maps and entrusted to the care of responsible civilians (a well-planned guerrilla warfare in its greater proportions is, of course, only possible in one's own country and under the support of the population, as is the case in China). Motorized troops greatly enhance the increased efficiency of the "partisan" detachments. Light, hill-climbing, scout cars, organized in at least two sections, are an important consideration. They should be assigned to quick raids, appearing and disappearing suddenly, and again appearing at widely separated points, to reconnoiter and insure security. Motorcyclists, equipped with highly efficient machine guns and demolition material, are assigned to independent, long range missions involving small fights such as raids. They should have at least one truck for baggage.

Propaganda troops on fast, cargo trucks or motorcycles are valuable in maintaining the fighting spirit of the people, intercommunication, liaison with our own air force, and transporting plunder, wounded, and weapons for distribution to civil guard detachments. We have seen pictures showing that a larger portion of the Chinese detachments, that first fought against the Japanese, were still equipped with flintlocks and even spears and clubs, a situation that would make small impression on the modernly equipped Japanese Army. Recent Japanese newspapers report that 27 guerrilla divisions (not to be compared with European divisions) were assigned to destroy the North-South Railway.

The most difficult part of guerrilla warfare is command and coordination. Great success depends on incorporating all the acts of bravery of single detachments, often separated by several hundred miles, into a common cause. But such a

leader and the means of communication are hard to find. Aircraft, motorcycles and modern radio equipment would be very advantageous, but these are scarce articles in China.

Tanks, at least medium and heavy, large cargo trucks, heavy scout cars and tractor artillery have scarcely a chance behind the enemy front. In addition to consuming too much gasoline, they are difficult to camouflage and conceal.

The following is in my opinion the ideal of a motorized guerrilla organization. It should appeal to every courageous soldier thirsting for independence and freedom:

Strength: 1 motorized company of 4 platoons. The first a motorcycle platoon with light machine guns. The second a pioneer platoon with considerable demolition material and chemical equipment. The third a scout car platoon with communications, and aircraft liaison troops. The fourth a cargo truck platoon with repair equipment, spare parts, fuel, subsistence, clothing, ammunition, as many weapons as possible, and replacement trucks. Also a strong company section with motorcycles, 2 light armored cars and reserve drivers. Guns, depending on the situation, drawn from the guerrilla battalion. Consider only very mobile guns, drawn by hill-climbing armored trucks. To avoid breakdowns, trucks should be constructed of very serviceable material.

Such an organization can be employed as one unit or as the situation demands, in the form of reinforced platoons, squads and patrols.

Every platoon should have about five squads and be proportionately strong. Its method of fighting is about as follows: marching at night, through fog and bad weather; fighting at dawn and dusk or in fog; keeping concealed and scouting with weak, inconspicuous forces during daylight. Troops required to walk or ride horses will not be as effective as motorized troops, when the terrain favors motorization.

Replacements of casualties must be provided for locally, when impossible to introduce them by means of parachutes. Every replacement must furnish at least a bicycle, still better a motorcycle, or else he is useless.

Motorized organizations larger than a battalion (4 of the above companies) are too unwieldy for guerrilla warfare. In its own territory each battalion should operate something like a pursuit wing, or like a submarine flotilla fighting in the enemy's shipping lanes. Freedom of action is fundamental. Somewhere in the center of the area might be the very point or line which is the desired objective. The Japanese oppose the guerrilla troops with flying columns, partially motorized or mechanized. They usually succeed, as they are far superior to the Chinese hordes, especially in weapons. Still, the enemy is highly dangerous and harmful. Very strong forces are being taken from the front and reorganized in the interior. The advance is delayed considerably. Early in September 1938 a regular Japanese division was landed east of Tientsin as "counterguerrilla" troops. In the lines of communication in China there has developed unrest and insecurity, pilfering of supplies, and heavy losses consequent to the shifting of forces and—what is perhaps the hardest to bear—in the conquered areas efforts to develop

a friendly attitude toward the Japanese has been unsuccessful.

Experiences gained in China do not necessarily fit European conditions. Still, one might conclude that guerrilla warfare will have its place elsewhere in another form with other means, and that there will be considerable demand for the cooperative effect of ground and air forces. In the lines of communication in China there has developed unrest and insecurity, pilfering of supplies, and heavy losses consequent to the shifting of forces and—what is perhaps the hardest to bear—in the conquered areas efforts to develop a friendly attitude toward the Japanese has been unsuccessful.

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