

THE POWER OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section is presented as a fictional portrayal, written in the first person, of a Maoist lecture on the political/military power that is produced by political mobilization. The second section entitled “Lessons for Counter-Revolutionary War” is written in non-fiction third person and elaborates on the concepts presented in the first section from a counter-insurgency perspective.

The setting for the following fictional Maoist lecture takes place at a meeting of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). RIM is an actual umbrella organization for Maoist movements worldwide dedicated to spreading revolution through People's War. ¹ The presenter of the lecture, a leading Maoist political figure, instructs his colleagues on how political mobilization will generate revolutionary power.

As the reader peruses the first section of this paper he or she might want to ask these type of questions:

- “Could the Maoist concept of a United Front be applied to uniting the sectarian factions in Iraq against the insurgency?”
- “Could the Maoist critique of roving bandits apply to insurgents in Iraq or Afghanistan?”
- “Could the Maoist idea of conducting political mobilization work amongst the enemy be used to compel insurgents in Iraq to defect?”

THE REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT (FICTIONAL)

We are here in this forum to discuss the role of political mobilization in revolutionary warfare. The objective of political mobilization is to transform the masses into an unstoppable weapon. Chairman Mao Tse-Tung taught us that people, not weapons, are the decisive factor in revolutionary warfare. He stated that, “the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new types of weapons.”² Yet many have proclaimed that advanced weapons and technology decide everything in war. This simple-minded militarist position is detrimental to the revolutionary cause. In 1944, Comrade Mao remarked that Chinese resistance against Japan must change, “the policy of solely depending upon weaponry to associating weapons with people.”³ The people are the weapon. Political mobilization turns the people into a rabid dog that tears, shreds and rips apart the counter-revolutionary enemy. Clausewitz referenced the political and military energy produced by political mobilization of the masses when he described Prussia's rise against Napoleon. Clausewitz noted that Prussia, “made the

¹ See “Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement,” http://www.awtw.org/rim/declaration_eng.htm

² Mao Tse-Tung, “Talk with Anna Louise Strong,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Third Revolutionary Civil War Period* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 100.

³ Mao, “Crisis Arising From the Fall of Changsha” *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949), Vol. 7-10*, (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 164.

war a concern of the people, and with half her former population, without money or credit, she mobilized a force twice as large she had in 1806.”¹ That is the power of political mobilization. Prussia brought forth her greatest army, from a deteriorated and weakened state, by mobilizing the masses for war. The energy of the masses infused the Prussian war machine with the power necessary to challenge Napoleon’s armies.

What other method can bring a people on its knees, begging for mercy, to a position of revolutionary strength? Only political mobilization can accomplish such a feat. Political mobilization channels the energy of the masses into the revolution. It raises the political consciousness of the people and makes them realize they are the weapon of revolution.

We live in an era where weapons and modern armies, by themselves, cannot bring victory in battle.² The power of the masses must be tapped into or else the revolution will fail. Political mobilization produces revolutionary victory by bringing the people back into the fold of war.

Social grievances, foreign invasion, economic oppression, failure of the state structure, ideological fervor etc...have all been referenced as principal causes of revolution. The aforementioned causes are not enough to galvanize a population into full blown revolutionary war. The political power and ire of the people has to be organized and provoked through political mobilization before a successful revolution can foster itself.

Chairman Mao wrote, “A national revolutionary war as great as ours cannot be won without extensive and thoroughgoing political mobilization.”³ The people will remain inert without political mobilization. In an analogy explaining this problem Chairman Mao stated, “Bells don’t ring till you strike them. Tables don’t move till you shift them.”⁴ The revolution, no matter its cause, has to be politically organized and mobilized.

A neutral population is never beneficial to a revolutionary cause. Deng Xiaoping remarked that even if the people, “oppose the enemy but remain neutral towards us, this will only benefit the enemy.”⁵ The neutral masses do not channel any energy into the revolution. Mao chastised the Chinese people who considered resistance, “to be solely the task of the Red Army, while they themselves sit by and hope for a Red Army victory.”⁶ The masses must be educated in the fact that they are the main weapon of the revolution. Our Vietnamese comrade Truong Chinh in *The Resistance Will Win* also warned us on how dangerous an indifferent population is to a revolutionary movement.⁷ Political mobilization corrects the problem of a neutral population. It pushes the masses from a state of neutrality to a state of revolution.

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Peter Paret and M. Howard, (New York: Knopf, 1993) 716.

² Mao, “Basic Tactics,” http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_28.htm#ch15

³ Mao, “Urgent Tasks Following KMT-CPC Co-operation,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Period of the War of Resistance Against Japan* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 154.

⁴ Mao, “Present Situation and Our Tasks,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Third Revolutionary Civil War Period* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 20.

⁵ Deng Xiaoping, “A General Account of the Struggle Against the Enemy Over the Past Five Years,” *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Vol. 1*, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol1/text/a1050.html>

⁶ Mao, “On Mobilization for War and the Style of Work” *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949), Vol. 3* (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 121.

⁷ Truong Chinh, *Primer for Revolt: The Communist Takeover of Vietnam*, (New York: Praeger, 1963) 207.

A revolutionary movement must understand the correct relationship between politics and war in order to implement political mobilization. Lenin, in analyzing Clausewitz, found that politics is the key to grasping the nature of war. He stated, “War is the continuation of politics by other (i.e. violent) means. This famous aphorism was uttered by one of the profoundest writers on the problems of war, Clausewitz. Marxists have always rightly regarded this thesis as the theoretical basis of views concerning the significance of every given war.”¹ War is a continuation of politics by other means. This is the correct thesis of war.

Chairman Mao condemned those militarists who say, “We are not interested in politics but only in the profession of arms.”² These simple-minded militarists believe weapons and military action are everything in war. They reject the role of politics in war and refuse to politically mobilize the masses. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and his bandit gang, the Kuomintang, were such militarists.

They espoused these ridiculous claims, “We can only win with modern weapons” or “We lose because we lack modern weapons.” Mao remarked that, “If this kind of ‘weapons only’ theory is followed constantly, China’s battlefronts will only continue to deteriorate.”³ Fortunately, Chairman Mao reversed this militarist nonsense by developing a political goal and political mobilization program that harnessed the energy of the Chinese masses.

Chairman Mao argued that the essence of war is determined by its political goal.⁴ The political goal of the revolution stings the consciousness of the masses and stirs them from their subjugated slumber. Mao stated that the political goal of the Chinese revolution against Japan was, “to drive out Japanese imperialism and build a new China of freedom and equality.”⁵ Political mobilization was the mechanism through which this political goal came to fruition. A strong political goal, through political mobilization, arouses the political consciousness of the masses and awakens their prowess for war.

A human’s martial prowess emanates from his political consciousness. It does not emanate from the weapon that he carries. Chairman Gonzalo of Sendero Luminoso said, “Modern weapons are necessary, but their performance depends on the ideology of the man who wields them.”⁶ The weapon is only an extension of the mind. A soldier with a weak mind will perform poorly no matter what advanced weapon he holds in his hands. Deng Xiaoping remarked, “our soldiers should not only have weapons in their hands but, more important, they should also be armed mentally.”⁷ A revolutionary political consciousness arms the soldier mentally by increasing his martial creativity and political motivation.

Chairman Mao said, “there is a great creative power among the people and there are thousands of geniuses among them. There are geniuses in every village, every town and every city.”⁸ Revolutionary

¹ Vladimir Lenin, *Socialism and War*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/s+w/>

² Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1961) 89.

³ Mao, “Crisis Arising From the Fall of Changsha,” 162.

⁴ Mao, “Essential Points of Speech on Second Imperialist War,” ” *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)*, Vol. 7-10, (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 16.

⁵ Mao, “On Protracted War,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Period of the War of Resistance Against Japan* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 155.

⁶ Abimael Guzman as quoted in “Interview with Chairman Gonzalo” http://www.blythe.org/peru-ppc/docs_en/interv.htm Chairman Gonzalo was the leader of the Peruvian Maoist organization Sendero Luminoso/Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) before his capture in 1992.

⁷ Deng, “Mobilize New Recruits and Conduct Political Work Among Them,” *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Vol. 1*, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol1/text/a1010.html>

⁸ Mao as quoted in James Mrazek, *The Art of Winning Wars*, (New York: Walker and Company, 1968) 3.

political mobilization brings the creativity of the masses into war. It destroys reactionary political structures that suppress the revolutionary consciousness of the masses.

New ways of war are generated once the collective revolutionary consciousness of the masses is allowed to flourish without restraint. Clausewitz observed this phenomena in the French Revolution. He noted that the mobilization of the French people, “set in motion new means and new forces, and have thus made possible a degree of energy in war that otherwise would have been inconceivable.”¹

Lenin also commented on the creative energies of the masses unlocked by the French Revolution. He stated that France showed its, “revolutionary creativeness when it remodeled its whole system of strategy, broke with all the old rules and traditions of warfare, replaced the old troops with a new revolutionary people’s army, and created new methods of warfare.”² Orthodox methods of war fall by the wayside once the revolutionary consciousness of the masses has been unleashed.

The revolutionary political consciousness is not confined by rigid military rules and formulations. It has broken free from the constrictive structures of doctrinaire military thought, politics and society that stymie man’s inherent genius for war. The revolutionary political consciousness is an inquisitive one. It does not fight in fixed patterns. It utilizes all ways to destroy the enemy. Any object or action that can defeat the enemy is employed.³

Innovative ideas are the hallmark of the revolutionary political consciousness. Innovation comes to the revolutionary soldier because he operates in the moment of battle. He does not live in the past and attempt to refight previous wars. Comrade Deng said, “The purpose of learning from the past is to improve future work, not to do mechanically what was possible in the past.”⁴ The revolutionary political consciousness learns from history but is not bound by the traditions of history.

The revolutionary guerrilla’s high degree of political motivation is another source of his innovation. He knows the political goal of the revolution and the strenuous efforts that it will take to realize that goal. The revolutionary soldier is motivated to create new ideas and tactics that will bring the political goal closer to realization. Political motivation gives him the tenacity to see his innovative ideas through to the end.⁵

Lin Piao noted the creativity shown by revolutionary guerrilla armies against professional militaries.⁶ He stated, “Guerrilla forces have ultimately defeated regular armies. “Amateurs” who were never trained in any military schools have eventually defeated “professionals” graduated from military academies.”⁷ Soldiers trained in these military academies are often constrained by orthodox military thought and formulaic battle plans. These soldiers lack the initiative, political motivation and freedom of action necessary to win revolutionary war.

¹ Clausewitz, 737.

² Lenin, “War and Revolution,” *Lenin Collected Works Vol. 24*, www.bellum.nu/literature/lenin002.html

³ Mao, “Basic Tactics.”

⁴ Deng, “The Establishment of Base Areas and the Mass Movement,” *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Vol. 1*, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp/vol1/text/a1070.html>

⁵ Mrazek, 137.

⁶ For a full treatment on the idea of a creativity gap between guerrilla armies and conventional armies see, Mrazek, 125-141.

⁷ Lin Piao, “Long Live the Victory of People’s War” http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1965/09/peoples_war/ch09.htm

General Chin T'ienjung noted this constrictive doctrinaire thought process in the Japanese infantry. Chin said, "The Japanese infantry fights by the drill book. When the drill-book instructions don't work, they are lost."¹ The Japanese, although devoted to their cause of subjugating China, were weak minded. Their infantry fought by rote and when their formulaic battle plans did not work, they were helpless.² The revolutionary guerrilla is never fixated or reliant on a fixed formula of war or weapon system. His political consciousness easily overcomes failure by adapting to the chaotic nature of war.

There are those that will say, "What about the sixteen character formula of the Red Army?" The sixteen character formula is, "When the enemy advances, we retreat; when the enemy camps, we harass; when the enemy tires, we attack; when the enemy withdraws, we pursue."³ There is great flexibility within the sixteen character formula. It does not promote fixed patterned attacks nor does it demand rigid obedience. There were times when the Red Army abandoned the formulation, "when the enemy advances, we retreat," and adopted the formula, "when the enemy advances, we advance."⁴ The revolutionary soldier knows that the sixteen character formula is a way to defeat the enemy but not the only way.

Political indoctrination develops soldiers that can outfight an enemy with a better military education, more modern weapons and larger forces. This is one of the reasons why political work must be emphasized in the military. Jeh Peh-hsi, political director of the Eighth Route Army (Red Army) stated, "Political work is the life line of the army and the heart and soul of our resistance to the [Japanese] invasion. Our weapons are antiquated and inferior, but we can compensate for this handicap by emphasizing political indoctrination."⁵

Clausewitz noted that transformations in war are the result of political transformations.⁶ Political mobilization transformed the political consciousness and political structure of China. China was weak and humbled when Japan invaded it. The old Chinese adage that a "good man does not join the army" was pervasive amongst the masses.⁷ The peasant farmer knew only how to till his lands. He did not know how to resist the Japanese invader.⁸

It was only through constant and patient political mobilization that China changed from a society that discouraged men from becoming soldiers to a society that championed the cause of revolutionary warfare. It was through political mobilization that the peasant farmer learned to destroy his oppressors.

China brought forth her greatest army from a weakened state through political mobilization. So how is it that so many revolutionaries have shown disdain for political mobilization? Political mobilization is a long and arduous process. The people will not automatically gravitate to the political goal. They have to be slowly and patiently educated in the political goal before they will join the revolution.

¹ Chin T'ienjung as quoted in Evans Carlson, *Twin Stars of China* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2003) 124.

² Carlson, 27.

³ Mao as quoted in Victor Corpus, *Silent War* (Quezon City: VNC Enterprises, 1989) 61.

⁴ Deng, "A General Account of the Struggle Against the Enemy Over the Past Five Years."

⁵ Jeh Peh-hsi as quoted in Carlson, 68.

⁶ Clausewitz, 737.

⁷ Deng, "Mobilize New Recruits and Conduct Political Work Among Them."

⁸ Wang Yu-Chuan, "The Organization of A Typical Guerrilla Area in South Shantung" Carlson, 92.

Revolutionaries who seek quick victory over the counter-revolutionary enemy have no patience for political mobilization. They seek quick victory by placing an undue emphasis on military action, urban insurrectionism, advanced weapons and other notions of adventurism.

Revolutionaries in the past fell under the dangerous spell of Soviet socialist revisionism that worshiped sophisticated weaponry and quick victory. The vestiges of Soviet revisionism still haunt us today in the 21st century. The Soviets believed in winning a quick victory over the Western imperialism by dominating the initial period of a nuclear war through pre-emptive striking.¹ Whereas Mao saw that capitalist imperialism can only be destroyed through protracted warfare.²

The Soviet revisionist strategy of high technology, rapid offensive movement and nuclear weapons never offered any guidance to revolutionaries. Comrade Lin Piao chastised Soviet revisionism in his seminal speech, “Long Live the Victory of People’s War.” He said that Soviet revisionism, “ignores the human factor and sees only the material factor and which regards technique as everything and politics as nothing.”³ We reject the idea that material factors or weapons are the decisive factor in war. The people are the weapon. We reject the idea that politics is nothing. Politics is everything.

The Soviet revisionists rejected the power of the masses. Lin Piao noted, “The Khrushchev revisionists insist that a nation without nuclear weapons is incapable of defeating an enemy with nuclear weapons, whatever methods of fighting it may adopt.”⁴ A weak people can defeat a stronger power with nuclear weapons through political mobilization or People’s War. They do not need advanced technology or nuclear weapons to win revolutionary war. We have already stated the evidence for this fact.

Our comrades of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) gave a lucid description of those revolutionaries who damn patient political mobilization:

In the wish to hasten revolutionary victory, spontaneous uprisings of the masses is actually rated higher than steady and solid organizing of a proletarian revolutionary party and other revolutionary forces. The premium is put on sweeping propaganda, street activism, transport paralisation by armed units and other dramatic acts of violence rather than on painstaking mass work.⁵

Many revolutionaries believe in the theory of spontaneous masses. This theory holds that the masses will spontaneously arise in revolution after spectacular acts of violence, urban street fighting, terrorism or even peaceful protesting. This is foolish adventurism. Wishful thinking and fanciful theories of quick victory have no place in revolutionary war.

Chairman Mao rightly concluded that it is only through a protracted war of the masses that a beleaguered people can defeat a stronger counter-revolutionary force. Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap commented on the importance of political mobilization during the first phases of a protracted war. He

¹ V.D. Sokolovskii, *Soviet Military Strategy* (New Jersey: Republished by RAND, 1963) 308.

² For a review of the Soviet-Chinese debate over the nature of revolutionary war See COL William F. Scott, “The Contrast in Chinese and Soviet Military Doctrines,” *Air University Review*, January-February 1968 www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1968/jan-feb/scott.html

³ Lin Piao “Long Live the Victory of People’s War.”

⁴ Lin Piao, “Long Live the Victory of People’s War.”

⁵ Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) Document, “Five Kinds of Insurrectionism,” February 24, 1992, <http://www.philippinerevolution.net/cgi-bin/cpp/pdocs.pl?id=insue:page=01>

wrote of the French–Indochinese war, “In the early years, as the political movement of the masses was not strong enough and the enemy’s forces still stable, the political mobilization among the masses had all the more to be considered as the main task, for the preparation of armed insurrection.”¹

It is critical that political and military power be built through political mobilization before significant operations against the counter–revolutionary force take place. The momentum of revolutionary war is weakened when the vital stages of political mobilization are bypassed.

Our comrades of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP) also give further insight into adventuress revolutionaries who deny the power of political mobilization:

They pay homage to weapons and reject the protracted and systematic political work among the masses (especially the peasantry), favoring guerrilla “*focos*” for the auctioning of wandering armed bands. They cultivate spontaneity, initiating the military activities without considering the political conditions and the subjective desire of the masses (acting above the conscience of the masses.)²

This PCP statement points to the danger of roving guerrilla bands like those favored by Cubanism in revolutionary war.³ These guerrilla bands are called roving guerrillas because they practice only mobile guerrilla war wandering through the countryside or city on hit and destroy missions. Chairman Mao wrote, “History knows many peasant wars of the “roving rebel” type, but none of them ever succeeded.”⁴ The roving rebel will be destroyed, despite all of his elusiveness and cunning, because he does not establish base areas. The base area is a strategic necessity for revolutionary war.

The base area serves as a defensive and offensive platform to consolidate and expand the political power of the revolution. Self–defense militias mass organizations, the Party and other mechanisms of political mobilization all function within the base area. Political power is produced and consolidated within the base area through continuous political mobilization of the masses. Offensive political and military operations are launched from base areas into guerrilla zones (areas not controlled by revolutionary forces) to expand the revolution.

The roving guerrilla has no concept of base areas because he is not interested in building political power through political work. He believes that his military operations will either topple the reactionary or cause the masses to spontaneously arise in revolution. So he has no need for base areas to consolidate or expand power. That is the romantic ideal of guerrilla warfare. We are not romantics. All manifestations of roving guerrillas must be eliminated.⁵

We will briefly mention Muslim resistance movements here for a few reasons. Islamic popular resistance has continued to prove Mao’s precepts that a nuclear power can be challenged and defeated by mobilizing the masses. Within Islamic resistance there are those who have advocated some kind of

¹ Vo Nguyen Giap, “People’s War, People’s Army,” (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 78.

² Communist Party of Peru Document, “Latin America: Great Victories and Brilliant Perspectives,” *Bandera Roja Magazine* No. 42, Voice of the Central Committee of the PCP, May 1970. http://www.blythe.org/peru-pcp/docs_en/latin-1.htm

³ Cubanism refers to the style of guerrilla warfare advocated by Che Guevara that placed emphasis on armed action to mobilize the masses. See Abimael Guzman, “Interview with Chairman Gonzalo.”

⁴ Mao, “Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Period of the War of Resistance Against Japan*, (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 94.

⁵ Mao, “Resolution of the Ninth CCP Congress of the Red Fourth Army,” *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)*, Vol. 1-2 (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 173.

political mobilization and those who have advocated simple-minded armed adventurism. An short examination of this dichotomy in Islamic resistance will further illustrate our discussion on political mobilization.

Islamic revolutionaries have proven that they can challenge a nuclear power by mobilizing the masses for a protracted war. Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hizbullah, recognized the power of the masses. He said:

I say to the Government that on this juncture you have to get close to the people in particular, the deprived and the poor and the needy and the people who live in the slums because during the hard times you will find that the people of those areas are ready more than any other to sacrifice and give their blood for the sake of this country and the nation.”¹

HAMAS is an organization that has recognized the power of the masses. A HAMAS political leader recognized that resistance cannot be won through simple-minded armed struggle alone. He said, “First, resistance does not mean only military action, but it is also the social work, the political work and so on. In our program, we adopt all of these forms of resistance that can go in parallel ways...”²

Conversely there are Islamic groups that have concentrated on armed adventurism hoping for spontaneous uprisings. The leadership of Egyptian Gama’*a* Islamiyya has accused Al-Qaeda of this type of simple-minded militarism. A summary of Gama’*a* Islamiyya’s argument from their book “The Strategy and Bombings of Al-Qaeda” is as follows:

An analysis of Al-Qa’ida’s strategy shows it is based on choosing one road to resolve the conflicts in which it entangled itself. This road is that of force only. It does not come to an end except after shedding the last drop of blood of its followers. This rigid reliance on one single strategy does not bring the flexibility that is needed to attain the aspired goals.³

Parallel contradictions exist within Marxist and Islamic resistance movements. There are those who favor mobilization of the masses through political work and those who favor military work over political work.

We have discussed at length those revolutionaries who deny the power of political mobilization. These armed revisionists are dangerous for two main reasons. First they prevent the implementation of political mobilization. Second they give the counter-revolutionary an opportunity to destroy the revolution. The counter-revolutionary enemy does not always toe the militarist line. He can also understand that war is an extension of politics and implement his own form of People’s War.

Mao stated that at one point Chiang Kai-Shek and the American imperialists were beginning to understand the importance of the political struggle. He wrote,

¹ Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, “Speech of Hizbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah” 3-13-2003
http://www.hizbollah.org/english/frames/index_eg.htm

² Abu Anas as quoted in, “Interview with Vice Chairman of Hamas Parliamentary Bloc,” May 21, 2006.
<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=4500>

³ “Egyptian Islamist Leaders Fault Al-Qa’ida’s Strategy: Part 1 of Book Review,” *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, Sunday, January 11, 2004
http://www.google.com/search?q=cache:cuGHFuSYzAJ:www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ig_bk.htm+%22Egyptian+Islamist+Leaders+Fault+Al-Qa’ida’s+Strategy%22+&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clink&cd=1

“Precisely because they realize that the country wide victory of the Chinese people’s war of liberation can no longer be prevented by a purely military struggle, they are placing more and more importance each day on political struggle.”¹

The Chinese People’s War was strong and it crushed Chiang Kai-Shek’s efforts in the political struggle. However, we must recognize that the counter-revolutionary enemy can use political mobilization to challenge revolutionary movements. Our comrades in the CPP recognized that “counter revolutionaries have adopted and successfully implemented some kind of “people’s war” based on tribal and religious anticommunist mass loyalty as in the use of the Unita in Angola, the Renamo in Mozambique, the mujaheddins in Afghanistan and the Contras in Nicaragua.”²

When we do not implement political mobilization we face the grave danger that the counter-revolutionary force will. Armed revisionists in the CPP hurt the revolutionary struggle by concentrating on armed adventurism rather than on painstaking mass work.

The AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) developed their own version of People’s War and built a mass base amongst the people. The AFP employed Special Operation Teams (SOTs) to destroy the CPP’s political infrastructure and political mobilization capability.³ The CPP response to the SOTs was hampered by the armed revisionists and urban insurrectionists.⁴ This resulted in critical damage to the CPP’s infrastructure and mass base.

The counter-revolutionary enemy will only be defeated when the people’s political power is established. The Maoist revolutionary understands that the people are the main weapon of the revolution. This is why propaganda work is the foremost task of a revolutionary army.⁵ Political propaganda and agitation is not just the job of a special political department. ⁶ Each soldier is charged with politically energizing the masses. Chairman Mao concluded that a revolutionary army, “definitely does not exist merely for the sake of fighting. Besides fighting, it must also shoulder such important tasks as agitating, organizing, arming and helping the masses, and building political power.”⁷

The revolutionary army must have harmonious relations with the masses in order to politically mobilize them. In the past, armies in China developed a habit of mistreating the populace and stealing from them.⁸ The Chinese Red Army created a system of rules to ensure that trust could be built between the soldiers and the masses. This system of rules is called “Three Rules and Eight Remarks.” The Three Rules and Eight Remarks during the anti-Japanese campaign were:

Three Rules: 1) Execute the anti-Japanese patriotic principles 2) Execute the instructions of leaders 3) Don’t take the smallest thing from the people. Eight Remarks: 1) Soldiers must ask permission before entering a house. Before leaving, the occupants must be thanked for their hospitality, and they must be asked if they are satisfied with the condition of the house 2) Keep

¹ Mao, “Carry the Revolution Through to the End,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Third Revolutionary Civil War Period* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 301.

² CPP, “Five Kinds of Insurrectionism.”

³ CPP, “Five Kinds of Insurrectionism.” See Corpus, 190-191 for details on AFP SOTS.

⁴ CPP, “Five Kinds of Insurrectionism.”

⁵ Mao, “Resolution of the Ninth CCP Congress of the Red Fourth Army,” 180.

⁶ Mao, “Report of the Ching-Kang Mountains Front Committee to Central Authority,” *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949), Vol. 1-2* (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 140.

⁷ Mao, “Resolution of the Ninth CCP Congress of the Red Fourth Army,” 166.

⁸ Jeh Peh-hsi as quoted in Carlson , 70.

the house clean 3) Speak kindly to the people 4) Pay for all you use, at the market price, 5) Return all borrowed articles 6) Pay for all things which are broken or destroyed 7) Never commit a nuisance 8) Do not kill or mistreat prisoners.¹

This is an example of the Three Rules and Eight Remarks during the anti-Japanese phase of the Sino-Japanese war. The rules will change somewhat according to the circumstance of each revolution, particularly the political goal. These rules will create a trustful rapport with the people. Strict discipline by the revolutionary soldier is one of the surest ways to win the confidence of the masses. Many times the counter-revolutionary armies are undisciplined and they hurt the people. The masses will choose the disciplined revolutionary fighter over the undisciplined counter-revolutionary.

A critical distinction must be made between establishing political power amongst the masses versus merely winning the trust or support of the masses.² Repairing a man's house after it has been destroyed in an enemy artillery barrage will win you his heart, but that action by itself will not build his political consciousness. Simply repairing a man's house will not unleash his martial creativity. You must tie the action of repairing the man's house with the political goal of the revolution in order to build his political consciousness. After you repair the man's house, you must explain that the counter-revolutionary army will destroy his house again unless he stands up and fights. You must make that man understand the political goal and how the revolution can provide him with the means of realizing that goal. That is political mobilization. That is building political power. This same man will now pick up a knife or a rifle and kill the enemy before his house is destroyed again. This same man will go out and politically mobilize another ten men who in turn will mobilize another hundred. As Mao said, "A small spark can start a prairie fire."³

All classes of people must be brought into a United Front against the counter-revolutionary enemy. This means creating a political program that can galvanize different classes of people into a revolutionary alliance. Lin Piao succinctly explained the importance of the United Front, "In order to win a people's war, it is imperative to build the broadest possible united front and formulate a series of policies which will ensure the fullest mobilization of the basic masses..."⁴ The creation of a United Front will bring the full energy of the masses into effect.

The Red Army's political work with the Muslims serves as an example for us on how to bring divergent peoples into a United Front alliance. During the anti-Japanese war the Chinese Red Army did extensive political work amongst the Muslim masses. Chairman Mao wrote to the Muslims, "We wish to rally all armed strengths of the Moslems and to help and develop them. We wish to arm the Moslems and form an independent Moslem Resist-Japan Army."⁵ The Red Army was able to bring the Muslims into a United Front through political work and strict discipline.

¹ Jeh Peh-hsi as quoted in Carlson, 69-70.

² See Mao, "Letter to Comrade Lin Piao," *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)*, Vol. 1-2 (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 197-206 for a discussion on the concept of winning the support of the masses vs. building power amongst the masses.

³ Mao, 201.

⁴ Lin Piao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War."

⁵ Mao, "Declaration of the Soviet Central Government to the Moslem People," *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)*, Vol. 5-6 (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 36.

The Red Army adapted some of the Three Rules and Eight Remarks to the Muslim's particular cultural situation. These adapted rules were noted by a journalist traveling with the Red Army. He wrote, "Red soldiers must not: enter the home of a Moslem without his consent; molest a mosque or a priest in any way; say pig or dog before Moslems, or ask them why they don't eat pork; or call the Moslems "small faith" and the Chinese "big faith."¹

The Red Army's strict discipline and political work heightened the revolutionary consciousness of the Chinese Muslims and brought them into a United Front against Japan. The Red Army built political power amongst the Chinese Muslim masses making them realize they were the main weapon of revolution. A revolutionary movement must conduct hard political work amongst all classes in order to bring them into a United Front against the counter-revolutionary enemy.

Jen Peh-hsi described the three main components of political mobilization: (1) Education within the army, (2) Work among the civil populace and (3) Work among the enemy.² We have already discussed the first two. Work amongst the enemy is an overlooked component of political mobilization. A revolution must shatter enemy propaganda that says, "Communist bandits kill anyone in sight."³ We do this by releasing enemy soldiers and treating their wounded. We hold political discussions with prisoners and other reactionaries to win them to our side.⁴

Deng Xiaoping commented on winning over reactionary landlords, "We should combine the struggle against feudal landlords with the effort to win them over. That is to say, while struggling against them, we should try to draw them nearer to us; and vice versa."⁵ Winning reactionaries over to our side is much better than killing them. Violence against reactionaries is inevitable but we should keep the violence to a minimum.

Mao said, "Reactionaries must be suppressed, but killing without discrimination is strictly forbidden; the fewer the killings, the better."⁶ He further commented that, "killing without discrimination is entirely wrong; this would only cause our Party to forfeit sympathy, become alienated from the masses and fall into isolation."⁷ Indiscriminate killing can divorce the masses from the revolution.

There must always be a political explanation for the killing of reactionaries. It is best when the masses themselves are able condemn reactionaries in public trials.⁸ Public trials help mobilize the population against the counter-revolutionary enemy and prevent indiscriminate killing.

Chairman Mao championed violence and illegal methods against reactionaries when appropriate. He wrote in 1928 that, "considerable work has been done in unleashing the masses in guerrilla uprisings to kill the landlords, with much success."⁹ He also wrote, "Although the attacks by the peasants on the local bullies and rotten gentry in the villages have used illegal methods, these are methods which must

¹ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, (New York: Grove Press, 1944) 353.

² Jen Peh-hsi as quoted in Carlson, 68.

³ Mao, "Report of the Ching-Kang Mountains Front Committee to Central Authority," 140.

⁴ For a short description of political work amongst Japanese POWS see Carlson, 71 and 197.

⁵ Deng, "The Establishment of Base Areas and the Mass Movement."

⁶ Mao, "Essential Points in Land Reform in the New Liberated Areas," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: The Third Revolutionary Civil War Period*, (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001) 201.

⁷ Mao, "Important Problems of the Party's Present Policy," 186.

⁸ Mao, 186.

⁹ Mao, "Report of the Ching-Kang Mountains Front Committee to Central Authority," 132.

be adopted in the course of revolutionary struggle.”¹ We must keep in mind that violence is only correct when it is done to further the political goal of the revolution.²

We will summarize our long discussion on the role of political mobilization in revolutionary war with a quote from Lin Piao’s speech, “Long Live the Victory of People’s War.” He stated:

The essence of Comrade Mao Tse-tung’s theory of army building is that in building a people’s army prominence must be given to politics, *i.e.*, the army must first and foremost be built on a political basis. Politics is the commander, politics is the soul of everything. Political work is the lifeline of our army. True, a people’s army must pay attention to the constant improvement of its weapons and equipment and its military technique, but in its fighting it does not rely purely on weapons and technique, it relies mainly on politics, on the proletarian revolutionary consciousness and courage of the commanders and fighters, on the support and backing of the masses.³

Political mobilization will bring revolutionary movements from a state of weakness to a state of power by unleashing the fury of the masses. As Giap told us, “Revolutionary theory is translated into invincible strength once it has gripped the masses.”⁴ The political goal of the revolution is given life and unassailable power once it has taken hold of the people.

Editor’s Note – end of the RIM meeting, back to non-fiction.

LESSONS FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY WAR:

(1) DON’T RELY ON SPONTANEOUS MASSES

Counter-insurgency forces cannot expect the people to rise up and spontaneously support them any more than a revolutionary insurgency can. The people must be politically organized against the revolution. Noted counter-insurgency analyst David Galula wrote, “The support from the population is not spontaneous, and in any case must be organized.”⁵

(2) DESTROY THE POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The political infrastructure and base areas of a revolutionary movement are used to mobilize the masses. Destroying the political infrastructure or base areas of an insurgency is a key strategy in defeating revolutionary political mobilization efforts. General Victor Corpus of the AFP noted the reason for concentrating on destroying the political infrastructure of the CPP:

It is noticed that in previous military undertaking against the communist insurgents, the emphasis lay on the elimination of the armed elements, with body counts serving as the gauge for success. On the other hand, the enemy political structures in the barangays remain practically untouched and intact. The destruction of the enemy political structure is not given due attention.

¹ Mao, “Declaration of the First Hunan Peasant Congress,” *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1917-1949)*, Vol. 1-2 (Arlington: Joint Publications Research Service, 1978) 112.

² For a discussion on the role of terror and violence in Maoist revolutionary war, see Thomas Marks *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996) 151-169.

³ Lin Piao, “Long Live the Victory of People’s War.”

⁴ Giap, “The South Vietnam People Will Win.” Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. 36

⁵ David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956-1958*, (Rand Monograph, 2006) 417. www.rand.org

But these political structures in the barangays are what the enemy uses to mobilize the people in support of the insurgents' cause...¹ (barangays=town/district)

(3) THE ROLE OF INSURGENT DISCIPLINARY STANDARDS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The counter-insurgency force must uphold the highest disciplinary standards in order to undercut popular support for a revolutionary movement that has already established strict disciplinary standards for its own fighters.

Al-Qaeda commander Abu-Hajar Abd-al-Aziz al-Muqrin argued that Al-Qaeda fighters must be known for their good character in order to gain the support of the people. He stated that, "The troops must be marked by their good manners and conduct. A mujahid must serve as a beacon to lighten the road for the people and a model for other colleagues to follow."² Al-Muqrin's logic of strict disciplinary standards towards the civilian population seems paradoxical given Al-Qaeda's penchant for gruesome and murderous acts of violence.

Mao and al-Muqrin both insisted upon high disciplinary standards for revolutionary fighters in order to win over the population and prevent indiscriminate violence that would alienate popular support. Sir Robert Thompson noted that, "Terror is more effective when it is selective. This allows the communists' behavior towards the people as a whole to be good, and strict discipline is used to enforce it."³ Selective violence combined with strict disciplinary standards allows the revolutionary movement to ruthlessly kill its enemies and gain popular support at the same time.

Violence against civilians has to be couched in the political rhetoric of the revolution to make it justifiable. The insurgency faces problems when it can no longer justify its violent actions. In 1996, Al-Qaeda condemned the massacres of civilians by the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA).⁴ The extreme violence of the GIA had, in Al-Qaeda's opinion, estranged the GIA from the people and prevented it from establishing an Islamic state. The violence of the GIA was no longer politically explainable to the Algerian people.

Al-Qaeda's admonitions against indiscriminate terror appear to apply in localized environments where it seeks to establish power. There are no such admonitions against attacking Western targets.

(4) THE PEOPLE ARE THE WEAPON

The people are an energy source for the counter-insurgency. An energy source that can infuse the counter-insurgency program with ideas, intelligence, fighters, material and martial creativity. A counter-insurgency campaign can regenerate itself, bring itself from the brink of defeat, by mobilizing the people for war. Thomas Marks noted that citizen militias organized and supported by the Philippine armed forces, "...became the ultimate Maoist nightmare: the people armed and numerous."⁵

¹ Corpus, 190-191.

² Abu-Hajar Abd-al-Aziz al-Muqrin as quoted in Michael Sheuer, "Al-Qaeda Doctrine: Training the Individual Warrior," *Terrorism Focus*, Vol.3, Issue 12, <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369944>

³ Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, (New York: Praeger, 1966) 25.

⁴ Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 138.

⁵ Marks, 137

The people who refuse to be persuaded by Maoist political indoctrination can become targets for assassination. A Filipino man remarked that the people could do nothing to stop the violence of the Maoist CPP because, “we had no arms.”¹ An alienated and distraught population that has been cowed by the violence of an insurgency will be of no help to the counter-insurgency force unless it is politically organized and given the means to protect itself.

The people, from a Maoist perspective, are first and foremost a weapon. The Nepalese Maoist Leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda) stated, “A poor village woman with a gun feels her life as a woman has been elevated.”² The poor village woman is politically indoctrinated before she is given a weapon. Her political consciousness is aroused and a metaphysical political bond is created between her and the revolutionary movement. Once her political consciousness is aroused the poor village woman is willing to dedicate her life, her material wealth and creative energy to the revolution.

North Vietnamese military leader Truong Chinh argued that the militia or arming of the people was one of the most important means of mobilizing the people against the counter-revolutionary enemy. He wrote:

We must arm the people, *launch the militia movement*. To launch the militia movement is the best means of mobilizing the entire people to take part in the fighting; it is a measure aimed at organizing and training a numerous reserve army to serve the regular army and to enable the latter to prolong the war.³

A political connection is established between the revolutionary movement and the masses before the people are entrusted with arms. If the people are not politically mobilized or refuse to support the revolution they are not given weapons.

The counter-insurgency program, must similarly, establish a strong political bond with the people before citizen militias are formed. Citizen militias that are not politically connected and controlled by the counter-insurgency force can become an easy supply source of weaponry to the insurgency. Past experience has shown that insurgents have procured weapons from militias that were haphazardly thrown together by government forces or not politically connected to the government.

Citizen militias are often distrusted by governments. Niccolo Machiavelli was a staunch proponent of citizen militias. He argued,

...how little foundation there is for [the] conviction that such a citizen’s militia, under the command of an aspiring subject or citizen, may deprive a prince or republic of his authority and dominions; for it is certain that no subjects or citizens, when legally armed and kept in due order by their masters, ever did the least mischief.⁴

Machiavelli’s point is that a militia has to be governed by the rule of law and could be considered trustworthy once its political loyalty securely lies with the government. Citizen militias in the

¹ Marks, 164.

² Pushpa Kamal Dahal as quoted in Charles Haviland, “Meeting Nepal’s Maoist Leader,” BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4707058.stm

³ Truong, 192

⁴ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Art of War* (New York: De Capo Press) 30.

Philippines are subject to military law and regulations to dissuade human rights abuses and keep militia behavior in check.¹

(5) THE CREATIVITY GAP AND EVANS CARLSON

In 1968, Colonel James Mrazek in *The Art of Winning Wars* came to the conclusion that soldiers are most creative when they are unconstrained by rigid military formulas and traditions. He argued that communist guerrillas had an advantage in that their training conditioned them to think outside of and beyond orthodox military thought. Recently, John Poole (a former USMC infantry officer) came to a similar conclusion. Poole argued that “Hezbollah and al-Qaeda trainers are not handcuffed by inane standardization and bureaucratic procedure.”² They are therefore more free to create new tactics that can challenge American military supremacy.

Poole argued that American infantrymen, “are conditioned to follow—to the letter of the law—squad tactics manuals that haven’t significantly changed in 50 years.” He further stated the U.S. infantryman is not trained to fight as a guerrilla and therefore, “has a hard time thinking like one.”³

No American military unit in history has come closer to training its soldiers like revolutionary guerrillas than the famed 2nd Marine Raiders battalion formed in WWII. Evans Carlson, founder of the 2nd Raiders, traveled and lived with the Chinese Red Army for eighteen months as a military observer. Carlson incorporated Red Army political and military philosophy into the 2nd Raiders organizational structural and training regimen.

Carlson conducted extensive political training in the 2nd Raiders emulating Mao’s maxim that every guerrilla must know the war’s political goal. Carlson came to believe that a soldier’s military prowess, initiative and motivation were directly related to his political mindset. A 1943 study of WWII psychiatric casualties noted that, “Carlson set out to train his men along lines opposed to the conventional outlines of U.S. military procedure. Perhaps more than any other American officer in this war, he has practiced his conviction that training must foster not stifle a soldier’s individual initiative...”⁴

Carlson trained the Raiders to think on their own and to defeat the Japanese through superior tactics, not superior firepower. The 2nd Raiders would outfight the Japanese through a superior political mindset and tactical military innovation. The 2nd Raiders would not be bound by orthodox military training. Carlson was highly critical of the Japanese for constraining its men with rigid military doctrine. Carlson wrote, “And what of the Japanese army? It was not that the men lacked courage, for no man is braver on the field of battle than the Japanese. It was, rather, that the leaders lacked initiative and resourcefulness, and that the army had been trained to fight by rote.”⁵

Carlson was critical of standard Marine Corps training in a speech given after the battle of Tarawa in 1943. He said:

¹ Irineo C. Espino, “Counterinsurgency: The Role of Paramilitaries” (Monterey: Naval Post Graduate School Thesis, 2004) 36.

² John Poole, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon* (Emerald Isle: Posterity Press, 2004) 234.

³ Poole, 234.

⁴ “Psychiatric Toll of Warfare,” *Fortune* 28, no. 6 (December 1943) 280 as sourced in Maj. Katherine Gomrick, “Gung-Ho Raider! The Philosophy and Methods Brig Gen Evans F. Carlson, Marine Corps Raider,” (Alabama: Air Command and Staff College, 1999) 36. <http://stinet.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA396537&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁵ Carlson, 27.

Tarawa was won because a few enlisted men of great courage called out simply to their comrades, 'Come on, fellows. Follow me!' And then went on, followed by men who took heart at their example, to knock out, at great sacrifice, one Jap position after another, slowly, until there were no more. Tarawa is a victory because some enlisted men, unaffected by the loss of their officers, many of whom were casualties in the first hour, became great and heroic commanders in their own right.

But with all that courage and fortitude and willingness to die on the part of some of the men, too many others lacked initiative and resourcefulness. They were not trained to understand the need for sacrifice. Too many men waited for orders – and while they waited they died. What if they had been trained not to wait for orders?"¹

Carlson's premise in the second paragraph above follows the Maoist line that soldiers must be self-reliant and understand the political goal of the war. In Maoist thinking, a soldier's political motivation or willingness to fight for the war's political goal is a crucial factor in developing resourcefulness and initiative on the battlefield.

Carlson's emphasis on political training and indoctrination distinguishes the 2nd Raiders from other American special operations type units that have tended to concentrate on the military aspect of guerrilla warfare. Lieutenant General Samuel B. Griffith (USMC), translator of Mao's *On Guerrilla Warfare*, noted that:

In the United States, we go to considerable trouble to keep soldiers out of politics, and even more to keep politics out of soldiers. Guerrillas do exactly the opposite. They go to great lengths to make sure that their men are politically educated and thoroughly aware of the issues at stake.²

Griffith's words are not just a statement of fact but also a warning that politically energized guerrillas in a revolutionary warfare environment can defeat a superior but apolitical opponent. Griffith served as a language officer at the American embassy in China. He witnessed, with Carlson, the rise of the Red Army in China. Griffith served in the 1st Raiders battalion and knew Carlson personally. He was fully cognizant of the 2nd Raiders emphasis on Maoist style political and military training. Griffith may have been implying in his forward to *On Guerrilla Warfare* that American soldiers need to be politicized, just as the 2nd Raiders were, in order to understand and fight counter-revolutionary warfare.

(6) CONCLUSION

The United States faces a complex situation in the Middle East as it waits for the Iraqi people to spontaneously rise up and defeat the insurgents and the Iranian people to spontaneously rise up and overthrow their government. Political mobilization was the answer to the Red Army's problem of motivating a population that did not want to fight for itself. Political mobilization may be the answer to motivating the Iraqi and Iranian people to fight the insurgents and radicals that oppress them. As Mao said, "Bells don't ring till you strike them. Tables don't move till you shift them."

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¹ Evans Carlson, "Speech at Camp Pendleton on the Battle of Tarawa," December 1943 <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWcarlson.htm>

² Samuel B. Griffith, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1961) 8.