

TRAINING FOR WAR

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INTRODUCTION

With neighbours such as we have, we too like them shall have to accept the principle of inevitability of wars, be it as a necessary evil. For, it takes only one to wage a war. We must, therefore keep training hard for war, however peaceful the political atmosphere may appear. Political speculations, especially where they aim at ruling out possibilities of war, greatly injure sincere and hard training. No country has been caught napping twice and we do not wish to create such history.

With the war lurking round the corner thus, our training should be knitted round the great aim – preparedness for war. There is now no room for eyewash. The unit commanders themselves are the best judges as to the state of training of their units. Their entire effort should, therefore, be to satisfy their own conscience rather than worry about higher commanders. In most cases it is easier to satisfy an inspecting officer who cannot see every thing. The temptation to follow the easier course must be checked, and if need be personal gains sacrificed for the good of the Army and consequently the country.

SANCTITY OF TRAINING

In the absence of the greatest influencing factor – the enemy – during training accurate assessment of the state of preparedness for war and the proficiency of the commanders on the basis of results achieved during training, is not possible. Again, in the absence of the actual war conditions some results can be forged too. This is more so in the case of Infantry, or perhaps the Armoured Corps, than other arms. It is easier to forge tactical proficiency than technical. As a general rule, however, the only test of training is the war. With no certainty of a war breaking out in the near future; and then, if at all it does there being no guarantee that they will have to command the same troops that they are training; and greatest of all, their being no acid test of training during peace, the unit commanders are tempted to cheat and forge results, either merely to avoid hard work or as a short cut to promotion. To avoid this an air of sanctity needs to be given to our training, much like the sanctity that has been given to universally accepted good *karmas* that may not outwardly yield fruit to the doer. Personal ambition should come into play only after one has worked conscientiously with the sole aim of preparedness for war, as a matter of sacred duty. The high ambition of doing one's duty can prove to be sufficient motivation for work.

THE PROBLEM

It is not only the *will* that is needed to carry out effective training. There are numerous and puzzling hurdles that come in the way of training that require ingenuity of thought for overcoming them. The ideal conditions, under which clock-like training is conducted in the various schools of instruction, never prevail in units. Guard duties, workings, unit employment, the limited quota of leave, inspections and the like are chronic problems facing training in a unit. To add to all these, units in certain areas face further obstruction to training in the shape of operational commitments and maintenance problems such as road repairs, store lifting, airfield workings, shelter construction and repairs and water carrying duties. Every regimental soldier will bear it out that these are only to name a few and there are many other unforeseen types of

obstructions which completely upset training plans. All these tasks and duties tie down manpower, limit the time available for training and cause interruptions in the training of an individual. The great problem, therefore, is as to how to put all the men through the training and what all to teach them in the limited time available. The complexity of the problem is an indication for flexibility of action and not an excuse for inactivity. Failure to cope with the problem will invariably cause frustration.

MEANS AND ENDS

As in the case of all work, before we get down to training we must make a clear distinction between the means and the ends. Mixing up of the two whereby we may start glorifying the means and completely forgetting the ends may well result in utter waste of effort and time. Simple as it may appear, quite a number of us are likely to get entangled in the means and completely lose sight of the ends. That is the reason why, whereas at higher level the formation of the Training Directive has assumed greater importance than the execution of it, at lower level the instructor is more worried about the class management than the intake by the students. Means are to take us towards our goal at the earliest. Those that do not fulfil this task must be discarded, however impressive they may appear outwardly, rather than shift the goal on their account. A football player may be able to thrill the spectators through magnificent dribbling and earn cheap laurels for himself, but he is of no use to the team unless he scores or helps the team to score a goal.

TWO-YEAR TRAINING CYCLE

The two-year training cycle seems to be the only solution. Much has been said on the subject in the past. Its greatest advantage is that of thoroughness achieved through greater time allotment. A thoroughness that will stand a soldier in good stead not only for two years before his turn comes again for revision, but may be for life. The only drawback it suffers from is the less spectacular output per year in terms of quantity. Or perhaps the disadvantage that training having got spread over such a long period, in case of emergent requirement of troops for action at that particular moment, they may not be very proficient in those aspects of training which might have been scheduled for the next year. Without getting any further involved in the argument it may be said that even if the two-year training cycle is not accepted for all the trained soldiers, it must be carried out once with young soldiers for giving them sound grounding in training, which his short stay at the training centre cannot give him. Once he is up on his feet he can be put through the yearly cycles as a matter of revision.

TRAINING DIRECTIVES

In view of the great hurdles facing training (come of which are necessary evils that cannot be done away with), ambition in our training directives will have to be curbed to the point of practicability. Where impractical ambitions are dictated by training directives from higher headquarters, it is the moral duty of the unit commanders to point out this to their higher commanders. Where the unit commander fails to put up the true circumstances, he thereby deprives the higher commander of the vital data required for assessing and policy-making. The sole responsibility of the training turning into a farce would in that case lie on the unit commander himself.

Although the putting forward of difficulties is the responsibility of the unit commanders, it would do well for higher commander to encourage them to come out with their problems. For,

which commander does not wish that his directive is carried out in fact? The training conferences are too short and formal to solve the multifarious problems of a unit. They are more of a senior's assertions as to what he would like to be done. Individual attention is required for their solution. Special inspection, visits with the sole purpose of listening to their subordinates would put them in a better picture as to the state of training of units under their command. Many problems will automatically be solved if the training directive from higher headquarters gives greater latitude of action to the unit commanders in conducting of their training. A flexible training directive based on a thorough knowledge of the difficulties of the units required to implement it, though less ambitious, will be of greater guidance and instructive value than an over ambitious one, made impressive by a choice of thundering words. A practical training directive would not only be a guarantee for implementation but also counteract the danger of our living in a fool's paradise through paper achievements.

The other requirement of the training directive for it to be taken really seriously by the units/sub units required to implement it, would be for it to contain only a selected list of the various aspects of training that a commander would like to stress during the training period. Religious reproduction of all that is contained in the pamphlets in the garb of points that are to be stressed during ruins the effectiveness of the training directive. The same goes for the enumeration of standards to be achieved. Here again the training directive has to be more specific as to what standards are required to be achieved rather than a general leaning on the pamphlets.

During formulation of a training instruction at a lower level, carrying down of a generalisation of a higher headquarters training directive must be checked for it to be some use to the sub unit commander. When a commander finds himself in a vicious circle where each rank blames its higher rank for eyewash and forces its lower rank to follow the same, his task of producing a practical training directive may become difficult. Under such circumstances even preparation of two training directives, like the double account books of tax evaders is advocated, rather than allowing insincerity to set in. Loyalty to training is now more important than any other loyalty.

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING

Cadre System

The main hurdle of non-availability of troops for training can be overcome by organising individual training in a number of short cadres instead of the normal continued programme for the whole of the individual training period. This will enable troops to carry out training, (may be bare essential only), and also perform duties by rotation. By reducing interruptions in an individual's training thus, the much needed thoroughness is also achieved in this way. The cadre system will also solve the problem of non-availability of NCO instructors besides facilitating the squading of the classes by service groups. The inherent drawback of the cadre system in that it does not give an opportunity to sub unit commanders to train their own command is quite appreciated but, as it is, how far is it possible for sub unit commanders to be present with their sub units during the training period, which continues all the year round. Wherever possible the opportunity to commanders to train their own men should be given even in the cadre system.

The Syllabus

The syllabus for the cadre will, of course, depend on the duration of the cadre but the general requirement being the conducting of a larger number of cadres, the cadres will have to be

short and the syllabus slashed to the bare essential. This bare essential syllabus should include maximum of practical handling of weapons and practice in fieldcraft. It would also be a waste to teach a trained or even a young soldier. It would do well to eliminate basic lessons or combine many into one to devote more time to 'key' lessons.

Flexibility

Flexibility to ensure that no individual misses any period due to unforeseen duties, can be achieved by so arranging the revision periods in the cadre that each days programme is repeated the next day. Further flexibility could be given to the programme by keeping a large number of spare periods proportionate to the prevailing uncertainty in planning.

COLLECTIVE TRAINING

During collective training we must guard against the drawback of generalisations. With live enemy around us, there is no reason why we should still indulge in generalisations and exercise in the various operations of war in a mechanical manner. All collective training should now be carried out on the basis of our actual operational commitments. This is more so applicable to the training of those troops that are poised near the border to take on the enemy. This time of the lull should be utilised in a thorough study on the ground on which they may have to operate, the likely courses of the enemy and a rehearsal of own actions and reactions. Training conducted thus would show up problems of administration, wireless communications, infiltration and encirclements, in their correct magnitude for which answers will have to be found perforce.

The aim of collective training in general should be to develop in our unit/sub units commanders the 'art' of war which will pay greater dividends as a substitute for material and equipment where we may not be able to compete with our enemy. The setting of exercises should allow for greater freedom of action to unit/sub unit commanders. The necessary fog of war should be created for developing initiative, cunningness and quick reaction among leaders. The 'enemy' should be made more live by springing surprises after our plans have been made. Slipshod exercises can be most frustrating for the troops even they may bear it quietly.

Battle Intelligence

Fighting without information about the enemy amounts to fighting blindfolded. The enemy, naturally, strives hard to den intelligence about himself. The task of acquisition of information in war, therefore, is a difficult one and needs much training. In our collective training exercises, therefore, the tendency to provide such information on the platter must be checked even if the exercise gets prolonged on that account. That is how things are going to happen in war and this type of training will wash away the set ideas in commanders of "quick attacks" in specified limits of time.

Acquisition of information is a laborious and time consuming job and the process must be accorded the status of an operation of war. It not only involves mere observation of the enemy but thoroughly planned patrols, raids, outflanking moves, cunning devices for making the enemy open up and, may be, faint attacks. All this needs to be practiced during collective training exercises. Two sided exercises would be ideal for this type of training.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

We must correctly understand the relationship between safety precautions and training. More the safety precautions are cared for the less is the effectiveness of training. The less effective the training the lower will be the standard of training and greater the need for safety precautions. A chain reaction is thus set up dragging the training standards to lower and lower depths of deterioration. It is not intended here to advocate carelessness, not to condemn all safety precautions being taken at present. Our social structure being such, we shall have to take some safety precautions despite their ill effects. The aim here is only to decry over safety whereby an attempt is made to eliminate even the zero percent chances of an accident. Over-safety is either a result of ignorance whereby one feels that any thing can happen or moral cowardice at the thought of having to answer in case of a mishap. All this will go when we realise the immense responsibilities on our shoulders as regards preparations for the war.

SUPERVISION

It goes without saying that training cannot run by itself without supervision. Also that supervision has to be effective and essentially that of an officer to ensure correct execution of policy and uniformity in standards. This is what the task of an officer is during peace and no excuse can be great enough to take him off this job. The neglect of this aspect of training is attributed mainly to the non-availability of officers and excessive paper work which keeps the officers busy to the detriment of training. Both these difficulties are genuine but are no excuse for inaction. The problem of non-availability of officers could be solved by pooling all officers for training into a training team headed by the unit 2IC. Adjutant whose important job is supervision and control of cadres could be relieved of quite some paper work either by giving more responsibility to the head-clerk in routine matters or handing over such matters to the intelligence officer. As a matter of fact where an officer is required most is the briefing period and this much time every one should be able to spare.

OFFICERS' TRAINING

Regimental duties occupy an officer so much that he can devote very little time for his own training. Shortage of senior officers also makes the young officers in the unit difficult. The old timers who were clinging to the idea of YOs being trained by senior JCOs have also now relaxed slightly. Courses are the only way of training an officer. Unfortunately, there seems to be feeling in certain quarters that the courses are only meant to fit officers in the various unit appointments. Any courses beyond this aim are considered as of personal benefit to the officers. A well-qualified officer is not only a good officer but is accepted as such by his subordinates and good officers make good battalions. The tendency to do only such courses as are necessary for promotion must also be checked.

Sending officers for courses to countries like Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Indo-China, which have problems similar to our, would probably be more profitable, (however unpleasant it may look) than sending them to USA and Europe.

CONCLUSION

Political speculations ruling out the possibility of war are the greatest enemy of hard and sincere training. The sentinel cannot be caught down guard, for on his shoulders lies the heavy burden of keeping the tricolour aloft. His training, therefore, forms part of his religion and must be accorded the same sanctity to fight against the temptation to cheat.

It is not only the great will that is required to carry out effective training but also a struggle against numerous problems though flexibility of action and thought on the part of the planners. Syllabus has to be related to time available so that the thoroughness of the bare essential is not sacrificed for the sake of impressive paper achievements. Training has also to be related to our enemy, the ground, likely operations and our state of material preparedness. Crushing defeat next time for the enemy we have just defeated and vengeance against the one that got away in '62 should be the motto of every Indian soldier while he is preparing for the inevitable war.