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— An Exposition of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's
Thinking on the Strategy and Tactics of
the People's War

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COMRADE Mao Tse-tung's thinking provides the sole correct guidance in every sphere of work of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Since its inception, the Chinese People's Liberation Army has waged a protracted and heroic struggle under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung to defeat domestic and foreign enemies and liberate China. The Chinese revolution took armed struggle as its main form of struggle; by destroying the counter-revolutionary armed forces one after another and smashing the reactionary state machinery in one area after another, it finally captured state power throughout the country and ended the reactionary rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. The historical experience of the Chinese revolution in winning this great victory provides striking proof of the wisdom, greatness and correctness of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thinking.

When first established, the revolutionary army of the Chinese people was inferior both in numbers and in equipment to the reactionary Kuomintang armed forces backed by the imperialists. For a very long period it was constantly besieged and attacked by a powerful enemy. Therefore, the question of cardinal importance turned on whether it dared to despise the enemy and fight and win victory by pitting one against ten strategically, and whether it took the enemy seriously and was good at fighting and winning victory by pitting ten against one tactically. It was Comrade Mao Tse-tung who, integrat-

ing the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, formulated the correct political and military lines for the Chinese revolution. Starting from the basic standpoint of a people's war and a people's army, he laid down the policies and principles for building such an army, created a whole range of strategy and tactics of people's war by which we were able to utilize our strong points to attack the enemy at his weak points. In this way, he guided the Chinese people's armed revolutionary struggle on to the path along which we were able to grow from a small and weak to a large and strong force, finally defeating formidable enemies at home and abroad.

The kernel of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thinking on the strategy and tactics of a people's war is to concentrate a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one. This is also our army's traditional method of fighting. It was evolved and developed in the course of the practice of the Chinese revolutionary wars and in the struggles against the erroneous military lines of "Left" and Right opportunism. It played a great role in defeating the domestic and foreign enemies of the Chinese people and in winning a nation-wide victory. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out:

The Chinese Red Army, which entered the arena of the civil war as a small and weak force, has since repeatedly defeated its powerful antagonist and won victories that have astonished the world, and it has done so by relying largely on the employment of concentrated strength.¹

Elsewhere he said: "Using this method, we shall win. Acting counter to it, we shall lose."²

In order to gain a profound understanding of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's military thinking and make an overall study of our army's rich experience of war accumulated over several decades, it is of great importance to make a serious study of the method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one.

I. THE METHOD OF CONCENTRATING A SUPERIOR FORCE TO DESTROY THE ENEMY FORCES ONE BY ONE IS THE EMBODIMENT IN MILITARY STRUGGLES OF THE GREAT STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL THINKING OF COMRADE MAO TSE-TUNG

To win victory for the revolution it is of key importance to size up correctly the situation with regard to the enemy and ourselves and to form a correct strategic and tactical concept. Comrade Mao Tse-tung, basing himself on the experience gained in the prolonged struggle against the enemy at home and abroad and on the point of view of dialectical and historical materialism, analysed Chinese and world history and the contemporary international situation, advanced the famous thesis that "imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers" and put forward the great Marxist-Leninist strategic and tactical concept of despising the enemy strategically and taking full account of him tactically.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out again and again that although imperialism and all reactionaries are seemingly powerful, they represent the reactionary, decaying and declining classes. The law of historical development determines their inevitable doom. The revolutionary people must, therefore, see the essence of their

nature, look at them from a long-term point of view and regard them for what they are — paper tigers; they must despise them strategically, dare to struggle against them and dare to seize victory. On this they should build their strategic thinking. At the same time, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has also pointed out repeatedly that just as there is not a single thing in the world without a dual nature, so imperialism and all reactionaries have a dual nature. Before they are finally destroyed, they may still be powerful for a certain period, may still enjoy a temporary military advantage, and will continue to devour people. From this point of view, they are living tigers made of iron. Tactically, therefore, with regard to each specific struggle, the revolutionary people must take the enemy seriously, be prudent, carefully study and perfect the art of struggle. On this they should build their tactical thinking. Only by combining a fearless revolutionary spirit with an art of struggle which is flexible and inventive, will they be able to seize victory in every specific encounter and finally defeat the enemy.

Summing up the experience of the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-37), Comrade Mao Tse-tung said:

Our strategy is “pit one against ten” and our tactics are “pit ten against one” — this is one of our fundamental principles for gaining mastery over the enemy.³

He went on to say:

We use the few to defeat the many — this we say to the rulers of China as a whole. We use the many to defeat the few — this we say to each separate enemy force on the battlefield.⁴

The concept of despising the enemy strategically and taking full account of him tactically may be considered a generalization on a higher plane of the idea of strategically “pitting one against ten” and “using the few to defeat the many”, and tactically “pitting ten against one” and “using the many to defeat the few”.

The method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one is a concentrated expression in a military struggle of the concept of tactically taking the enemy seriously; it is a concrete expression of the concept of tactically “pitting ten against one” and “using the many to defeat the few”. In a military struggle, we take full account of the enemy and make a full estimate of his strength, therefore we stress the need to prepare fully for every battle and not to fight any battle unprepared or without assurance of victory. We are against any calculations for easy success based on luck. We are against taking the enemy lightly and advancing in a reckless way. We strive to make sure we will win every engagement we fight, otherwise we avoid battle. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: “It is common sense that several hefty fellows can easily beat one.”⁵ In each and every battle we concentrate a force two, three, four or even five or six times the size of the enemy force we intend to deal with. In this way we ensure victory. At the same time, we take pains to study and perfect the art of directing battles and watch for chances to destroy the enemy’s forces one by one by taking advantage of his weaknesses, mistakes, internal contradictions and other conditions favourable to us. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said:

In war, battles can only be fought one by one and the enemy forces can only be destroyed one by one.

Factories can only be built one by one. The peasants can only plough the land plot by plot. . . . This is known as a piecemeal solution. In military parlance, it is called smashing the enemy forces one by one.⁶

The method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one also embodies the idea of despising the enemy strategically. For only by strategically despising the enemy and displaying a revolutionary and militant spirit of "pitting one against ten" can we remain cool-headed in face of a powerful enemy and not be overawed by his truculence or confused by a complex situation; only in this way will we dare to concentrate our forces and deal the enemy blows. On the other hand, victories won in a succession of campaigns and battles — by the use of this method — will further educate the people and their army and enable them to see clearly through their own experience that the enemy can be defeated and that it is entirely correct to despise him strategically. This will inevitably increase the confidence of the people and their army in their struggle against the enemy and encourage them to fight and win still greater victories.

Some people hold that tactics are subordinate to strategy, and that since strategically we "pit one against ten", we cannot "pit ten against one" tactically, for otherwise tactics will be in conflict with strategy. These people look at things in a metaphysical way. They fail to understand the dialectical relationship between strategy and tactics. When we talk of tactics being subordinate to strategy, we mean that all tactics must effectively ensure the implementation of the strategic principle and the attainment of the strategic aim. Strategy and tactics are

at one with each other, and yet they are different. They are at one with each other in that tactics are subordinate to strategy and serve the strategic aim. The difference between them lies in the fact that strategy studies those laws for directing a war that govern a war situation as a whole while tactics study those laws for directing a war that govern a partial situation. For example, our strategic principle in the War of Resistance Against Japan was "protracted defensive warfare on interior lines" whereas our basic operational principle in campaigns and battles was "quick-decision offensive warfare on exterior lines". The two seemed to be opposite. But the former could not be realized without the latter. Likewise, strategically "pitting one against ten" and tactically "pitting ten against one" seem to be opposite, but the latter is a necessary means for realizing the former. If we ignore the difference between strategy and tactics and hold that we must also "pit one against ten" in specific battles, we will surely commit the mistake of underestimating the enemy and making reckless moves.

To be sure, under certain circumstances in which all the advantages are on our side in relation to mass support, terrain, weather and the specific antagonist, or when a certain specific battle assignment has to be carried out, there may be occasions in which campaigns or battles are won by using the few against the many. But as our guiding operational concept and chief method of fighting we must insist on using the many to defeat the few and concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one.

It can thus be seen that this method shows both our revolutionary spirit of daring to struggle and seize victory, and our strictly scientific attitude and flexible and

inventive art of struggle. It is the embodiment in a military struggle of the great Marxist-Leninist concept of strategy and tactics, the concept of despising the enemy strategically and taking full account of him tactically.

II. CONCENTRATING A SUPERIOR FORCE TO DESTROY THE ENEMY FORCES ONE BY ONE IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF FIGHTING TO CHANGE THE SITUATION IN WHICH THE ENEMY IS STRONG WHILE WE ARE WEAK

At the outset and even over a fairly long period of time, the people's revolutionary armed forces are always relatively weak and small in numbers and subject to continuous attacks and "encirclement and suppression" by their powerful enemies. This is usually the objective situation in regard to the balance of forces. In the eyes of Marxist-Leninists, such a situation can be changed. War is a contest of strength. The objective basis for initiative or passivity is to be found in the superiority or inferiority of the forces of war but neither in itself constitutes initiative or passivity. In the course of war we must know how to change the balance of forces and make it possible for the small and weak revolutionary forces to seize the initiative and shake off passivity in the face of the enemy's superiority so that instead of being pinned down by the enemy we will be able to gain the upperhand and defeat him. The decisive factor here is the subjective effort. That is to say, we must use the correct method of fighting, win more victories, commit less errors, and continuously eliminate the enemy forces and enlarge our own forces through protracted, hard and

complex struggle and thus turn our strategic inferiority and passivity into superiority and initiative. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out:

. . . it is possible to escape from our position of relative strategic inferiority and passivity, and the method is to create local superiority and initiative in many places, so depriving the enemy of local superiority and initiative and plunging him into inferiority and passivity. These local successes will add up to strategic superiority and initiative for us and strategic inferiority and passivity for the enemy. Such a change depends upon correct subjective direction.⁷

This correct direction refers, first and foremost, to implementing the method of fighting characterized by concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one.

This method of fighting was widely employed at various periods in China's revolutionary war. It played a most important role in changing the situation in relation to advance and retreat, the offensive and the defensive, and fighting on interior and exterior lines as well as in enabling our army to change from being weak to being strong and from inferiority to superiority. It has undergone all manner of tests in the prolonged practice of revolutionary war and has been proved correct.

During the Second Revolutionary Civil War period, Comrade Mao Tse-tung applied the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to make a penetrating analysis of the situation in which the enemy was strong while the Red Army was weak. He pointed out that China's revolutionary war had both favourable and unfavourable conditions, that is, the Red Army could grow and defeat the

enemy, but that it could not do this quickly. Such was the fundamental law governing China's revolutionary war. In the light of this law, Comrade Mao Tse-tung put forward a whole series of principles and methods of operation such as "divide our forces to arouse the masses, concentrate our forces to deal with the enemy", "the enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue", "extend stable base areas, employ the policy of advancing in waves; when pursued by a powerful enemy, employ the policy of circling around", "lure the enemy in deep", and "concentrate superior forces, pick the enemy's weak spots, and fight when you are sure of wiping out part, or the greater part, of the enemy in mobile warfare, so as to crush the enemy forces one by one". Thus he solved the most difficult problem of how the weak and small Red Army could defeat a powerful enemy.

From 1930 to 1933, by employing the above-mentioned strategy and tactics, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, successfully smashed four counter-revolutionary campaigns of "encirclement and suppression" carried out by Chiang Kai-shek. In this way, the Red Army increased its forces and extended the revolutionary base areas. At the end of 1930, Chiang Kai-shek amassed seven divisions totalling 100,000 men and by advancing his troops in a converging attack launched his first "encirclement and suppression" campaign against the Red Army in the central base area of Kiangsi Province. His aim: to destroy at one stroke the Red Army, which was only 40,000-strong. With the balance of strength tipped heavily against it, the Red Army adopted the principle of luring

the enemy in deep and concentrating forces to destroy the enemy forces one by one. With its 40,000 troops it launched a surprise attack on the enemy division commanded by Chang Hui-tsan and put it completely out of action, then it pursued Tan Tao-yuan's division and wiped out half of it. The enemy's first "encirclement and suppression" campaign was thus smashed. In May 1931 the enemy started another "encirclement and suppression" campaign with 200,000 men. The Red Army at the central base area had only a little over 30,000 men, less than what it had in the first campaign. So the Red Army adopted the same principle of concentrating troops as it did before, and, taking advantage of the contradictions within the enemy's camp, first attacked the eleven regiments under the command of such military leaders as Wang Chin-yu. Following an initial victory, the Red Army continued to attack other enemy columns. Within fifteen days it had marched 700 li,⁸ fought five battles in succession and captured 20,000 enemy rifles, thus successfully smashing the enemy's second "encirclement and suppression" campaign. In July 1931 Chiang Kai-shek took personal command and started the third campaign with 300,000 men. The enemy forces marched deep into the base area in three columns aiming to press the Red Army back against the Kan River and wipe it out. After much hard fighting in the second campaign the Red Army, having had neither rest nor replenishment, remained 30,000-strong. In the face of such a situation, it adopted the operational principle of "avoiding the enemy's main forces and striking at his weak spots". It made a detour of 1,000 li, and, taking advantage of the gap between the enemy positions, made thrusts and shifts with great flexibility within the big enemy encir-

clement, thus putting him on the move and tiring him. The Red Army eventually seized the opportunity to engage him in three battles in the Hsingkuo-Ningtu area and won all of them, capturing over 10,000 rifles. The Red Army also destroyed another division and brigade during the enemy's retreat. After three months of hard fighting the third "encirclement and suppression" campaign was broken. During the fourth campaign, the enemy advanced in three columns towards the central base area. Concentrating its forces the Red Army first attacked the enemy's western column, destroying two divisions at one stroke, and then wiped out another enemy division in the central column. Another pile of more than 10,000 rifles was captured in these two battles and, in the main, the fourth campaign was smashed. But the Red Army failed in its fifth counter-campaign against "encirclement and suppression", because the supporters of the third "Left" opportunist line carried out a policy which ran completely counter to Comrade Mao Tse-tung's military line. The Red Army consequently suffered great losses.

During the War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-45), Comrade Mao Tse-tung, after correctly analysing the characteristics of the enemy and ourselves and the domestic and international situation, showed that the war would inevitably be a protracted one. He refuted the "theory of national subjugation" and the "theory of a quick victory" and scientifically foresaw the development of the war in three strategic stages.⁹ Thus he defined the general principle of a protracted war and put forward the specific strategic principle of "offence within defence, quick decisions within a protracted war and exterior lines within interior lines". In this way, the method of con-

centrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one found new development and varied ways of application under new circumstances and conditions.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung put a high value on the role played by guerrilla warfare in the War of Resistance Against Japan. He considered it to be of strategic importance, and correctly solved a series of problems concerning the operation of guerrilla warfare in the enemy's rear. First, he clearly set forth the principle that "the dispersal of our forces for guerrilla warfare was primary, and the concentration of our forces for mobile warfare was supplementary",¹⁰ and criticized and refuted the erroneous concept of "mobile guerrilla warfare" advanced by the Right opportunists. Secondly, he stressed the need to establish base areas. These were strategic bases in which guerrilla warfare was fought and where we maintained and strengthened ourselves and destroyed and drove out the enemy. Without base areas, guerrilla warfare could not exist and develop for long. And "A base area for guerrilla war can be truly established only with the gradual fulfilment of the three basic conditions, *i.e.*, only after the anti-Japanese armed forces are built up, the enemy has suffered defeats and the people are aroused".¹¹ Thirdly, he said that the chief ways of employing forces in guerrilla war involve "dispersal, concentration and shifting of position".¹² That is to say, we must at one time assemble the parts into a whole and at another break up the whole into parts and appear "now in the south and now in the north", and move and fight simultaneously. In regard to the relations between dispersal, concentration and shifting of position, Comrade Mao Tse-tung stressed:

Because of its dispersed character, guerrilla warfare can spread everywhere, and in many of its tasks, as in harassing, containing and disrupting the enemy and in mass work, the principle is dispersal of forces; but a guerrilla unit, or a guerrilla formation, must concentrate its main forces when it is engaged in destroying the enemy, and especially when it is striving to smash an enemy attack. "Concentrate a big force to strike at a small enemy force" remains a principle of field operations in guerrilla warfare.¹³

When circumstances and tasks call for it, guerrilla units or formations should shift their positions secretly and with lightning speed. Fourthly, Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out that after guerrilla war has begun and developed on a considerable scale, the enemy will inevitably attack the guerrilla base areas. In the enemy's rear, therefore, "the guerrilla policy should be to smash it [the converging attack] by counter-attack".¹⁴ But how can such a converging attack be smashed? Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out:

. . . we should use our secondary forces to pin down several enemy columns, while our main force should launch surprise attacks (chiefly in the form of ambushes) in a campaign or battle against a single enemy column, striking it when it is on the move. . . . After smashing one column, we should shift our forces to smash another, and, by smashing them one by one, shatter the converging attack.¹⁵

Throughout the eight years of the War of Resistance Against Japan, our army resolutely adhered to these strategic and tactical principles of Comrade Mao Tse-

tung. It carried out guerrilla warfare extensively in the enemy's rear and established anti-Japanese democratic base areas. It engaged 64 per cent of the Japanese invaders and over 95 per cent of the puppet troops and smashed the enemy's ruthless "encirclement" and "mopping-up" campaigns and their "nibbling" and "blockade" operations. During the hardest times, the enemy concentrated the great majority of his forces to attack the anti-Japanese democratic base areas, employing more than 800,000 men in north China alone. In these circumstances, the main force of our army, people's militia and local guerrilla units closely co-operated with each other, devised various ingenious methods of fighting, including "sparrow warfare",¹⁶ land-mine warfare, tunnel warfare, sabotage warfare, and guerrilla warfare on lakes and rivers, and fought flexibly on both interior and exterior lines. On the one hand, part of our main force was dispersed in order to co-ordinate with militia and guerrilla units and pin down and harass the enemy, with land mines, home-made rifles, guns and hand-grenades. On the other hand, the greater part of the main force moved out of the enemy's "encirclement" and seized opportunities to engage the enemy, concentrating its forces to wipe out his columns or units one at a time and so smash his attack. During the eight years of the War of Resistance Against Japan, our army wiped out more than 527,000 Japanese invaders and over 1,180,000 puppet troops, and set up 19 anti-Japanese democratic base areas and liberated a vast territory with a population of nearly 100 million. Our army also grew from scores of thousands of men to over 900,000. All this added up to the final great victory in the war.

During the Third Revolutionary Civil War (1946-49), the Kuomintang reactionaries' troops totalled 4,300,000 men, and, of these, 106 divisions were equipped by U.S. imperialism; in addition they had taken over the equipment of one million invading Japanese troops at the end of the War of Resistance. They held an area with a population of more than 300 million and controlled all the big cities and most of the railway lines in the country. They could be considered quite strong. At that time, our army numbered only 1,200,000 men, less than one-third of the Kuomintang's. Moreover, they were dispersed in a dozen and more base areas, ill-equipped and without aid from outside. In July 1946 the Kuomintang reactionaries unleashed a civil war on a scale unprecedented in history. Making a penetrating analysis of the situation, Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out that the strength of the Chiang Kai-shek government was only temporary and superficial; in fact, it was a government outwardly strong but internally weak. Its offensives could be defeated and its inevitable fate would be rebellion by the masses, desertion by its followers and the total destruction of its army. In order to smash Chiang Kai-shek's attacks, Comrade Mao Tse-tung formulated the operational concept that "concentration of our forces for mobile warfare should be primary, and dispersal of our forces for guerrilla warfare should be supplementary". He also pointed out:

Now that Chiang Kai-shek's army has acquired more powerful weapons, it is necessary for our army to lay special stress on the method of concentrating a superior force to wipe out the enemy forces one by one.¹⁷

Furthermore, when elucidating the ten major principles of operation,¹⁸ he further explained this method of

fighting in concrete terms. By consistently implementing this basic method during the four years of war, our army put out of action over 8 million enemy troops and liberated the mainland of China.

At the start of the war, the Kuomintang reactionaries gathered together more than 1,600,000 troops to launch an all-out offensive against us. Our army then put into practice the principle of active defence. It made rapid withdrawals and advances over great distances, and abandoned some cities and places on its own initiative so as to lure the enemy in deep. Then — by concentrating an absolutely superior force and selecting weak and isolated units of the enemy — it wiped these out one by one while they were on the move. After eight months of fighting our army wiped out more than 710,000 enemy troops and forced the enemy to stop his all-out offensive. The enemy changed his strategy and started concentrated offensives against the Shantung and the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Liberated Areas. Our army wiped out 50,000 enemy troops in Shantung and more than 30,000 in seven battles in the Northwest, and smashed the enemy's concentrated offensive. Thus, in one year 1,120,000 enemy troops were put out of action and the enemy was forced to resort to all-round defence, while our army passed from the strategic defensive to the strategic offensive. In July 1947, the Shansi-Hopei-Shantung-Honan Field Army started out, crossed the Yellow River and thrust into the Tapiéh Mountains. Following this, large-scale offensives — launched successively by other field armies — culminated in a general strategic offensive. From then on, the main battlefields were carried into the Kuomintang-controlled areas. By June 1948, 2,640,000 enemy troops had been wiped out and large quantities of arms and equipment

captured. Our army not only repulsed Chiang Kai-shek's attacks, but also grew to 2,800,000 men in the course of the war. Notable changes thus took place in the balance of military forces and the strategic situation. The five strategic corps of the Kuomintang were bogged down in battlefields in northeast, east, north, central and northwest China. They found themselves in a passive position under attack and were engaged in a last-ditch struggle.

In the light of this development of the military situation, Comrade Mao Tse-tung saw that the time had arrived for strategic decisive engagements. Just before Chiang Kai-shek attempted to withdraw his troops and effect a general retreat to the south, Comrade Mao Tse-tung made a timely decision and grasped the opportunity to organize and fight three unprecedentedly large-scale campaigns, those of Liaohsi-Shenyang, Huai-Hai and Peiping-Tientsin. These were three great, strategically decisive engagements. In these campaigns, the method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one was employed at a still higher level and with excellent effect and skill. While strategically encircling the enemy troops, our army in each campaign adopted the tactics of cutting off, surrounding and wiping out enemy units, that is, strategically cutting off the enemy's strategic corps, dividing them up on several battlefields, and on each battlefield cutting them up into several isolated parts and then concentrating a superior force to destroy these parts one by one. In the 141 days from September 12, 1948, to January 31, 1949, a total of 1,540,000 enemy troops were wiped out and the whole of northeast and north China and other vast areas were liberated. Up to then the crack troops on which the Kuomintang reactionaries relied for waging their counter-

revolutionary civil war had been virtually annihilated. This enabled the main force of our army to advance to the north bank of the Yangtse River and the pace of liberating the whole country was greatly speeded up.

Practice in China's revolutionary war proved that the application of the method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one not only changed our position from inferiority to superiority when we were in an inferior position and the enemy was in a superior position, but also accelerated the final victory of the revolutionary war when the positions of the enemy and ourselves were reversed.

III. THE WAR OF ANNIHILATION IS THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEA OF CONCENTRATING A SUPERIOR FORCE TO DESTROY THE ENEMY FORCES ONE BY ONE

The war of annihilation is the fundamental idea that lies behind the concentration of a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said:

War of annihilation entails the concentration of superior forces and the adoption of encircling or out-flanking tactics. We cannot have the former without the latter.¹⁹

The war of annihilation is the basic principle and fundamental guiding thought behind all the operations of our army; it is the essence of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's brilliant strategic and tactical thinking. It is included in all the guiding principles of operation in China's rev-

olutionary war. To fight a war of annihilation means to strive to annihilate the enemy thoroughly, wholly and completely in each battle so that each company, battalion, regiment or division wiped out reduces the enemy by that much. In this way, the enemy loses manpower and matériel and heavy blows are also dealt at his morale. And even if the enemy's ranks are replenished, the more he fights, the weaker he becomes. This fighting method is the most effective way to weaken the enemy. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said:

A battle in which the enemy is routed is not basically decisive in a contest with an enemy of great strength. A battle of annihilation, on the other hand, produces a great and immediate impact on any enemy. Injuring all of a man's ten fingers is not as effective as chopping off one, and routing ten enemy divisions is not as effective as annihilating one of them.²⁰

This is a penetrating description of the concept of a war of annihilation.

The concentration of a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one is an integral and indivisible principle of operations in fighting a war of annihilation. The relation between the concentration of forces and the destruction of the enemy forces one by one is dialectical, each forming the condition of the other's existence. Only by the concentration of a superior force can the enemy forces be destroyed one by one, and at the same time, it is only by adopting this method that a superiority of forces can be easily developed and maintained. The correct application of this principle can simultaneously provide the material basis and the concrete methods of fighting a war of annihilation.

Concentration of forces is the material basis on which a war of annihilation is fought. Marx pointed out: "Concentration is the secret of strategy."²¹ Comrade Mao Tse-tung has also pointed out:

The initiative is not something imaginary but is concrete and material. Here the most important thing is to conserve and mass an armed force that is as large as possible and full of fighting spirit.²²

No matter whether the balance of forces is in our favour or the enemy's, operations must be carried out by concentrating our forces. It is only by concentrating a superior force — especially when the enemy is strong and we are weak — that we can muster sufficient strength to fight a battle of annihilation and gain a quick decision. When offensive operations are carried out in this way, we can quickly break through the enemy's defence, smash his reinforcements and counter-assaults, mass enough troops to outflank, encircle, and cut up his forces, fight one engagement after another, and swiftly exploit the victory. And when defensive operations are carried out, we can weaken and inflict great losses on the attacking enemy, win time for our side, and even shift from the defensive to the offensive. If we do not concentrate a superior force, we cannot achieve the aim of annihilating the enemy, nor can we fight quick engagements and gain a quick decision. Moreover, a situation of stalemate may arise in campaigns and battles; they may become battles in which the enemy is only routed or battles of attrition in which there is more loss than gain, and the danger of being crushed piecemeal by the enemy may even arise.

Destroying the enemy forces one by one is an important principle of operations in fighting a war of annihilation, a principle which must be consistently observed by our army both strategically and in campaigns and battles. Once our forces are concentrated, should we adopt the method of wiping out the enemy forces at one swoop or the method of destroying them gradually one by one? It is obvious that we can only wipe them out successfully by adopting the latter method. This is especially so when the enemy is strong and we are weak. In the face of an enemy superior in strength, we can only employ the method of cutting up and encircling enemy units so as to create a local superiority of forces for the destruction of the enemy forces one by one. This method must be employed even in dealing with an absolutely inferior enemy, only thus can we swiftly and thoroughly wipe out the enemy at minimum cost.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out:

In the first and second stages of the war, which are marked by the enemy's strength and our weakness, the enemy's objective is to have us concentrate our main forces for a decisive engagement. Our objective is exactly the opposite. We want to choose conditions favourable to us, concentrate superior forces and fight decisive campaigns or battles only when sure of victory . . . we want to avoid decisive engagements under unfavourable conditions when we are not sure of victory. . . .²³

This means that whenever we use the method — because of the enemy's strength and our weakness — of destroying the enemy forces one by one we must nec-

essarily begin with "titbits" by gathering together small victories into a big one. Then we must eat the enemy up with big mouthfuls. This method of gradually destroying the enemy forces requires many decisive engagements with the enemy in campaigns and battles. This is the objective process by which the enemy is wiped out despite his strength and our weakness. As the situation in which the enemy was strong and we were weak had not basically changed during the initial stage of the Third Revolutionary Civil War, we had to proceed from destroying in one battle an enemy battalion, or a regiment, or a brigade. Following the change in the balance of forces, we were gradually able to wipe out an enemy division or a corps until we could finally destroy one to several powerful enemy armies at one time and fight battles of annihilation on a much bigger scale.

By concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one, we can also deal dialectically with the relation between annihilation of the enemy's effective strength and the holding or seizing of cities. That is to say, the outcome of a war does not depend on the seizure or loss of a city or place but on the decrease or increase of effective strength of the belligerents. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said:

The principle of concentrating our forces to wipe out the enemy forces one by one is aimed chiefly at annihilating the enemy's effective strength, not at holding or seizing a place.²⁴

To concentrate our troops to annihilate powerful attacking enemy forces, we must adopt the policy of luring them in deep and abandon some cities and districts of

our own accord in a planned way, so as to let them in. It is only after letting the enemy in that the people can take part in the war in various ways and that the power of a people's war can be fully exerted. It is only after letting the enemy in that he can be compelled to divide up his forces, take on heavy burdens and commit mistakes. In other words, we must let the enemy become elated, stretch out all his ten fingers and become hopelessly bogged down. Thus, we can concentrate superior forces to destroy the enemy forces one by one, to eat them up mouthful by mouthful. Only by wiping out the enemy's effective strength can cities and localities be finally held or seized. We are firmly against dividing up our forces to defend all positions and putting up resistance at every place for fear that our territory might be lost and our "pots and pans" smashed, since this can neither wipe out the enemy forces nor hold cities or localities. In order to concentrate its troops for flexible operations and lure the enemy forces in deep so as to annihilate them one by one on the move, our army—in the first year of the Third Revolutionary Civil War—abandoned on its own initiative 105 major cities such as Yen-an, Changchiakou, Chengteh, Shenyang and Antung [now Tantung]. This placed burdens on the enemy and greatly reduced his striking force. Meanwhile, our army evaded the enemy's main offensive force, shifted its troops to the enemy's flanks and rear to seek favourable chances for battles and thus annihilated his forces in large numbers while they were on the move. As a result, not only were the lost cities recovered, but new cities were liberated.

Of course, not making the holding of cities and places our chief aim does not in any way mean arbitrarily

abandoning them and letting the enemy occupy large parts and cities of the base areas easily without fighting. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said:

. . . we must hold or seize territory wherever the balance of forces makes it possible to do so or wherever such territory is significant for our campaigns or battles. . . .²⁵

Our army firmly adhered to Comrade Mao Tse-tung's directive. Thus, at the stage of strategic defence, our army, while annihilating the enemy's effective strength, resolutely held those cities and places which had to be held as positions for launching strategic counter-offensives and offensives. At the stage of strategic offence, our army closely linked the annihilation of the enemy's effective strength with the seizing of cities and places, thus simultaneously attaining the goal of destroying the enemy and fulfilling the task of holding or seizing cities and places.

The basic principle of our army's operations is to fight a war of annihilation, but this does not imply total negation of the war of attrition. When the enemy is strong and we are weak, we advocate a war of attrition strategically but battles of annihilation in campaigns and engagements, and achieve strategic attrition through the latter. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: ". . . campaigns of annihilation are the means of attaining the objective of strategic attrition."²⁶ Therefore, wherever circumstances are favourable, we must concentrate a superior force, employ encircling and outflanking tactics and fight battles of annihilation. Under special circumstances, we may also adopt the method of dealing blows of annihilation at the enemy so as to wipe

out one part of his forces while routing another. The battle of annihilation takes the primary place in campaigns and engagements. There is also the battle of attrition which is supplementary to the battle of annihilation though this is not a "contest in attrition". For instance, when the main force of our army is used to annihilate certain enemy forces, it is sometimes necessary to fight a battle of attrition in other directions in order to intercept and pin down the enemy forces.

IV. HOW TO CONCENTRATE A SUPERIOR FORCE TO DESTROY THE ENEMY FORCES ONE BY ONE

The method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one is of vital importance for the achievement of complete victory through a battle of annihilation or battles of quick decision. In practice, then, how can this method be correctly employed and its purpose achieved?

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: "The concentration of troops seems easy but is quite hard in practice."²⁷ It is not difficult to understand why there must be concentration of troops, nor is it difficult to conceive a plan accordingly. But it is indeed very difficult to realize this in the battlefield and carry it through to the end. To accomplish this, military leaders must be cool-headed strategically; they must be able to analyse correctly the situation as between the enemy and ourselves without becoming confused by complicated circumstances; they must also be able to function independently in employing their troops under any circumstances. They must be able to tackle correctly the following major problems:

First, they must correctly choose the direction of operations. To decide the main and secondary direction of operations is the first problem which must be solved in concentrating troops and in forming a "fist" in the disposition of troops. There should be only one main direction of operations at a time. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said: ". . . when we face a powerful enemy, we should employ our army, whatever its size, in only one main direction at a time, not two."²⁸ Why should there be only one main direction of operations? This is because despite the very complicated circumstances of war and the many operational tasks that have to be done, one has to weigh advantages and disadvantages, gain and loss, choose priorities and take into account the potentialities of the forces available, so as to concentrate troops in that strategic and tactical direction which is of the greatest urgency at the moment and will have the biggest influence on the course of the war. Only in this way can we seize and retain the initiative, and form and maintain a superior force to wipe out the enemy.

Though the stress is laid on only one main direction of operations, that does not mean we confine operations in that direction only. Once the main direction is decided on, co-ordinated operations in secondary directions must be organized. Such operations are interconnected with and inseparable from the main direction. Should there be only the main direction without co-ordinated secondary directions, it would be impossible to disperse and pin down the enemy, or to enable the main direction to play its full role and ensure the victory of the operation in the main direction. But if no distinction is made between the main and secondary directions, this is military equalitarianism. Therefore, in deploying forces, we

should give bold emphasis to the main direction but at the same time give adequate consideration to the secondary directions, and do our best to economize in the use of troops in the secondary directions so as to ensure superiority in the main direction, thus unifying all operations with the common objective of destroying the enemy forces. The forces employed in the main direction must be concentrated to carry out the main assault, while those employed in the secondary directions must also concentrate their efforts in their respective main directions. Only so can they successfully perform the task of pinning down the enemy forces. In other words, there are secondary directions in the main direction and there is a main direction in the secondary directions, but irrespective of the kind of direction involved the principle of concentrating troops and economizing on their use must be strictly adhered to.

Secondly, at what point can a concentration of forces be regarded as being superior to the enemy's? This depends upon specific conditions and there is no set formula or proportion. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said:

The kind of concentration we advocate is based on the principle of guaranteeing absolute or relative superiority on the battlefield. To cope with a strong enemy or to fight on a battlefield of vital importance, we must have an absolutely superior force. . . . To cope with a weaker enemy or to fight on a battlefield of no great importance, a relatively superior force is sufficient. . . .²⁹

He further pointed out:

In every battle, concentrate an absolutely superior force (two, three, four and sometimes even five or six

times the enemy's strength), encircle the enemy forces completely, strive to wipe them out thoroughly and do not let any escape from the net.³⁰

In other words, troops should be concentrated to the extent of being sure of annihilating the enemy. One should not concentrate troops in a blind way without consideration of limitations or conditions. Instead a superiority of strength should be created over the enemy in every battle so that there are enough troops to cut up, encircle and destroy the enemy troops, to exploit the victory and pursue and wipe out the fleeing enemy, as well as a certain number of troops to intercept the enemy's reinforcements. Engels said: "It is not necessary to concentrate all of them [the troops]."³¹ Comrade Mao Tse-tung also pointed out, ". . . not all the forces of the Red Army should be concentrated."³² The degree of concentration differs according to circumstances. These relate to whether the approaching battle has a key bearing on the overall situation, whether it involves the offensive or defensive, a main or secondary direction, a disposition for engagements or break-through campaign, an initial battle or a battle being continued, a strong or a weak enemy, an enemy on the move or stationary, and so on. It also differs according to specific adversaries, time, place and conditions. In the War of Resistance Against Japan, for instance, our troops engaging the Japanese invaders were more highly concentrated than those pitted against the puppet troops. At the beginning of the Third Revolutionary Civil War, when the morale of the Kuomintang troops was relatively high and they launched an all-out offensive, our troops were more highly concentrated than when the K.M.T.

troops had been decimated and demoralized in successive engagements. In the Peiping-Tientsin Campaign, the number of troops we deployed to capture strong fortifications in Tientsin was 2.3 times as many as the enemy, while along the break-through sector in the main assault direction, the degree of concentration was even higher, amounting to a five-to-one superiority over the enemy.

It is vitally important to know when to concentrate troops. If concentration is carried out too early, our intention may be exposed; if too late the opportunities for attack may be lost. Premature or delayed concentration is both unfavourable to the development of the war and may even lead to unnecessary losses. Particularly during fighting under modern conditions it is of paramount significance to concentrate troops rapidly, in time and under cover and to disperse them rapidly and under cover when the mission is accomplished.

Correct concentration of troops depends upon whether a commander can fully develop his active role. Once the fighting is started he should shift and deploy his forces in time according to the development of the engagements, the changes in enemy situation and our tasks, so as to constantly maintain our superiority. In the course of the campaigns or battles he should constantly watch the change from the main to the secondary directions and vice versa, so that he can timely concentrate his forces in the newly transformed main direction and thus win full victory in the campaigns or battles.

Thirdly, flexible strategy and tactics must also be adopted and the method of destroying the enemy forces one by one must be correctly employed in order to attain the objective of annihilating the enemy. How can oppor-

tunities be created for destroying the enemy forces one by one? On the one hand, we must make timely use of weaknesses exposed by the enemy and seize chances to launch surprise attacks; on the other hand, we must manoeuvre and disperse the enemy by our own actions so as to create opportunities for fighting. We should employ, for instance, such methods as luring the enemy in deep, "making a feint to the east but attacking in the west" and besieging the enemy in order to strike at his reinforcements.

To make sure of wiping out the enemy, the target of our attack must be correctly selected. When facing several columns or groups of the enemy, we should, instead of attacking them all simultaneously, concentrate a superior force to attack one column or one group of the enemy first and then, when successful, tackle the others. We should attack the weak enemy units first, and the stronger units later and attack dispersed, isolated enemy forces first and concentrated, stronger enemy forces later. Meanwhile, it is preferable to attack the enemy's weak points and key military points. When dispersed and isolated, even strong enemy forces will become weak. By concentrating a superior force to attack dispersed and isolated enemy forces, we can easily develop a situation in which the strong attacks the weak. This will provide us with the best opportunity to wipe out the enemy and help us to achieve the objective of destroying the enemy forces one by one.

Fourthly, the correct application of encircling, out-flanking, thrusting in and cutting up tactics is an important means of annihilating the enemy forces one by one. By employing these tactics, we can successfully cut an integrated enemy force into several parts, deprive

them of their contacts in campaigns or battles and make them fight in isolation, thus helping us to attain the aim of total annihilation of the enemy in battles of quick decision. Encircling, outflanking, thrusting in and cutting up tactics should be employed flexibly in the light of different conditions. In dealing with an isolated, stationary enemy force, we may first encircle it and then attack it later; as for an enemy force on the move, we may block its way of retreat first and attack later, or attack and encircle it at the same time; in dealing with an enemy force holding a series of positions without exposed flanks, we may break through it first and cut up and encircle it later. When attacking encircled enemy forces, we should concentrate the greater part of our attacking forces and the overwhelming mass of firepower to form a sharp thrust backed up by a powerful reserve and carry out a main assault, while employing the rest of our troops to carry out an encirclement from two, three or four sides and launch attacks converging towards the centre in close co-ordination with the main assault forces.

V. THIS METHOD OF FIGHTING CAN ONLY BE USED EFFECTIVELY BY A PEOPLE'S ARMY

In spite of the fact that military experts in all times and in all countries have been familiar with these ideas of the "concentrated employment of troops" and "smashing the enemy forces one by one" and that a great deal of military literature has repeatedly discussed and stressed them, no one hitherto has ever viewed them as parts of an integral whole and used them dialectically.

It was none other than Comrade Mao Tse-tung who comprehensively put forward the strategic and tactical principle of "concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one" and dialectically applied it with great success to the practice of China's revolutionary war. This is because the war we waged was a people's war, our army was a people's army and its military operations were guided by dialectical materialism. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out: "The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people." He has also added: "The army must become one with the people so that they see it as their own army. Such an army will be invincible. . . ." ³³ This is the fundamental condition for the victory of the people's revolutionary war.

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has provided a masterly summary of the strategy and tactics of a people's war: You fight in your way and we fight in ours; we fight when we can win and move away when we cannot. In other words, you rely on modern weapons and we rely on highly conscious revolutionary people; you give full play to your superiority and we give full play to ours; you have your way of fighting and we have ours. When you want to fight us, we do not let you and you can not even find us. But when we want to fight you, we make sure that you cannot get away and we hit you squarely on the chin and wipe you out. When we are able to wipe you out, we do so with a vengeance; when we cannot, we see to it that you do not wipe us out. It is opportunism if one will not fight when one can win. It is adventurism if one insists on fighting when one cannot win. Fighting is the pivot of all our strategy and tactics. It is because of the necessity of fighting that we admit the necessity

of moving away. The sole purpose of moving away is to fight and bring about the final and complete destruction of the enemy. Such strategy and tactics can be successfully applied only in a people's war, by the people's army, guided by dialectical materialism.

The war waged by us was a people's war in which the principle of combining main with local forces, regular army with local armed units and people's militia, and armed with unarmed masses was put into practice. The local armed units, militia and the masses of the people took part in the war on an extensive scale; they actively supported the front and consolidated the rear, and in direct co-ordination with the operations of the main forces, destroyed communications and transport in the enemy's rear, contained and dispersed the enemy troops and harassed and threatened their rear. This made it possible for the main forces of our army to concentrate their troops to a high degree and carry out operations with great flexibility. Meanwhile, participation of the militia and masses in such activities as standing sentry, conducting reconnaissance, preventing the leakage of news and acting as guides also created favourable conditions for our army to concentrate its troops in time and in secret so as to surprise, encircle and annihilate the enemy. Take, for instance, the Pinghsingkuan Campaign fought at the beginning of the War of Resistance Against Japan. Our troops were assembled for as long as one week at places 15 to 30 kilometres away from the route of the enemy's advance, but the enemy completely failed to discover them because of the active co-operation of the masses who hid the news and thus thwarted the enemy's special agents and traitors. With the help of the masses, our army was promptly informed of the

state of the enemy and disposed its forces correctly, thus taking him by surprise and putting him out of action with lightning speed.

On the contrary, the enemy fought in isolation without the support and co-operation of the people because the war waged by them was of an anti-popular nature. Wherever the enemy occupied one of our places, they were opposed by the people and had to send in troops for defence. All this inevitably affected the concentration of their troops. Even if they succeeded in concentrating their troops in a certain area, they were always in a passive position and found it hard to carry out their plans because they failed to win the people's support, could not find out what the conditions were or locate the objectives of their attacks. At the same time their own actions were always exposed.

Our army was founded on Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory of army building; it is a new-type army wholeheartedly serving the interests of the people under the absolute leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Its nature determines its ability to give the fullest play to the power of the method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one. Strategy and tactics are carried out by men. The qualities of an army play an important role in deciding whether the correct strategy and tactics can be carried through so as to produce the greatest effect in practice. Our army has the steadfast leadership of the Communist Party and most loyally carries out the Party's Marxist-Leninist line and policies. It has a high degree of conscious discipline and is heroically inspired to destroy all enemies and conquer all difficulties. Internally there is full unity between cadres and fighters, between those in higher and those in

lower positions of responsibility, between the different departments and between the various fraternal army units. With the establishment of firm revolutionary political work, the masses of our commanders and fighters are highly class conscious and clearly aware that they are fighting for the interests of the people. Thus, when using this method of fighting, they display a vigorous fighting will and courageous spirit. When concentrating, they move quickly and have no fear of fatigue or difficulties; while on the offensive, they advance courageously and persistently and dare to outflank and cut up the enemy and fight single-handedly; on the defensive, they can resist the successive attacks of a powerful enemy, stand firm on their positions and fight doggedly. Army units are able to co-operate on their own initiative and co-ordinate their activities closely with each other. They are not afraid of sacrificing themselves for the interests of the whole. In addition, commanders and fighters can give full play to their own judgement in working out various methods of defeating the enemy. All this fully ensures that this method of fighting can be used to the best advantage and have great effect in defeating the enemy and winning victory.

The enemy's army is an anti-popular force. The great majority of the soldiers are coerced or cheated into joining. Their fundamental interests are diametrically opposed to those of the reactionary ruling classes. Deep contradictions exist between officers and men and between superiors and subordinates. Although the reactionary ruling classes do their utmost to carry out deceptive propaganda and reactionary education among the soldiers, the troops have a low morale and lack a vigorous fighting will. Such troops are afraid of fighting at close

quarters, night engagements, encirclements and casualties. Moreover, mutual distrust and strife among different corps and factions of the army stop them from co-ordinating activities on their own initiative. The enemy forces subjectively attempt to deal with us by employing the method of concentrating superior forces. But, in practice, they often fail to realize their aim — especially when conditions are difficult or critical — because of the inherent weaknesses in their forces.

We study, analyse and direct war by using the principles of dialectical materialism. We can correctly employ the method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one and get the greatest results from this, precisely because of the fact that we are able to assess the subjective and objective situation correctly, analyse comprehensively the balance of forces as between the enemy and ourselves, make good use of the contradictions within the enemy ranks and then proceed from reality. It is also because we can correctly handle the various relations confronting us in the course of using this method of fighting, such as those between the whole and the part, concentration and dispersal, main and secondary directions, annihilating the enemy and holding cities and places, advance and retreat, offence and defence. Consequently, even when engaging a powerful enemy, we are invincible and able to attain the objective of both wiping out the enemy and preserving and strengthening ourselves.

Our enemies are idealists and their method of thinking is metaphysical. They are unable to analyse the objective situation correctly and comprehensively and proceed from reality. They always over-estimate their own strength and under-estimate the revolutionary forces;

they judge the situation subjectively and thus make light of their opponents and advance recklessly. They always look at problems from a one-sided point of view and cannot correctly handle the various relations encountered in military activities. For instance, in order to cope with our method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one, the Kuomintang reactionaries put forward — at one time during the Third Revolutionary Civil War — the so-called “tactics of massing troops and advancing abreast” — “the employment of troops must be conventional rather than tricky, the stationing of troops must be concentrated rather than dispersed and the manoeuvring of troops must be slow rather than swift”. These tactics were used when their troops were asked to carry heavy weapons. At another time they formulated the so-called “tactics of making use of loop-holes” when they switched to the idea that their troops should carry light weapons and rations and use mountain paths instead of highways. They used now this and now that tactic without a definite principle. In short their strategic intentions and specific actions were always in contradiction because of the anti-popular nature of the war they waged. At the beginning of the Third Revolutionary Civil War, Chiang Kai-shek laid down a principle of “concentrated and flexible employment of troops”. But, on the other hand, he wanted to occupy a great many places including the Liberated Areas on the borders of Honan and Hupeh, north Kiangsu, Chengteh, Shenyang and Antung [now Tantung]. With his objectives so scattered and his forces limited, he put a burden on his back whenever he occupied a city because he had to send troops to defend it. The more places he occupied, the heavier his burden

and the fewer the troops for further flexible employment. That is why the principle he formulated could only remain empty words. Even if he temporarily succeeded in concentrating a relatively superior force in one particular area and making some gains, lots of loop-holes were exposed in other areas. Such contradictions were insurmountable for our enemy.

In a word, the method of concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one is based on the waging of a people's war by a people's army and on dialectical materialism; it can be employed effectively only by a people's army. No anti-popular army can fruitfully use or cope with this method. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said:

The Chiang Kai-shek bandit gang and the U.S. imperialist military personnel in China are very well acquainted with these military methods of ours. Seeking ways to counter them, Chiang Kai-shek has often assembled his generals and field officers for training and distributed our military literature and the documents captured in the war for them to study. The U.S. military personnel have recommended to Chiang Kai-shek one kind of strategy and tactics after another for destroying the People's Liberation Army; they have trained Chiang Kai-shek's troops and supplied them with military equipment. But none of these efforts can save the Chiang Kai-shek bandit gang from defeat.³⁴

* * *

Concentrating a superior force to destroy the enemy forces one by one is the materialization in military affairs

of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's strategic and tactical thinking of strategically "pitting one against ten" and tactically "pitting ten against one". Comrade Mao Tse-tung has also made a great contribution to Marxist-Leninist military science by applying the Marxist-Leninist stand, views and methods to the concrete practice of China's revolutionary war. It is the crystallization of the experience gained by the Chinese people in their prolonged armed struggle against their enemies, both internal and external. This principle is not only one for operations in campaigns and battles, but also one of guidance in strategy. It fits in with a war fought both under the condition in which the enemy is strong and we are weak and vice versa. It is a principle of offence, but as a guiding concept of operations, it holds good in defence too. Apart from the glorious role it played in the Chinese people's revolutionary wars and its great historic significance in those wars, this principle is of enormous practical significance in strengthening our national defence and making preparations to smash imperialist aggression now. As a method of thinking and work, concentrating forces to fight a war of annihilation applies not only to military struggles, but also to political and economic struggles. It is of significance in guiding all activities of our socialist construction.

Although this method of fighting took shape and developed in the practice of the Chinese revolutionary wars, it has a general significance for all revolutionary wars. This is because all revolutionary wars, including those in China, have the common characteristics of a big and strong enemy and a weak and small revolutionary force which can achieve victory only through arduous and hard struggles. Of course, this method of fighting,

like the use of other methods for directing war, must be developed according to the progress of history and war. It must be flexibly used according to different adversaries and places. Only in this way can it fulfil its role — the role of defeating the enemy and winning victory.

NOTES

¹ Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1963, p. 132.

² Mao Tse-tung, "Concentrate a Superior Force to Destroy the Enemy Forces One by One", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 315.

³ Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 133.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 234.

⁶ *Comrade Mao Tse-tung on "Imperialism and All Reactionaries Are Paper Tigers"*, 1st pocket Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 34.

⁷ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, pp. 237-38.

⁸ One *li* equals one-third of a mile.

⁹ The first stage covered the period of the enemy's strategic offensive and our strategic defensive. The second stage was the period of the enemy's strategic consolidation and our preparation for the counter-offensive. The third stage was the period of our strategic counter-offensive and the enemy's strategic retreat. (*Ibid.*, pp. 210-11.)

¹⁰ Mao Tse-tung, "Concentrate a Superior Force to Destroy the Enemy Forces One by One", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 315.

¹¹ Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 171.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁶ Sparrow warfare is a popular method of fighting created by the Communist-led anti-Japanese guerrilla units and militia behind the enemy lines. It was called sparrow warfare because it was used diffusely, like the flight of sparrows in the sky, and because it was used flexibly by guerrillas or militiamen, operating in threes or fives, appearing and disappearing unexpectedly and wounding, killing, depleting and wearing out the enemy forces.

¹⁷ Mao Tse-tung, "Concentrate a Superior Force to Destroy the Enemy Forces One by One", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 315.

¹⁸ The ten major principles of operation are:

- (1) Attack dispersed, isolated enemy forces first; attack concentrated, strong enemy forces later.
- (2) Take small and medium cities and extensive rural areas first; take big cities later.
- (3) Make wiping out the enemy's effective strength our main objective; do not make holding or seizing a city or place our main objective. Holding or seizing a city or place is the outcome of wiping out the enemy's effective strength, and often a city or place can be held or seized for good only after it has changed hands a number of times.
- (4) In every battle, concentrate an absolutely superior force (two, three, four and sometimes even five or six times the enemy's strength), encircle the enemy forces completely, strive to wipe them out thoroughly and do not let any escape from the net. In special circumstances, use the method of dealing the enemy crushing blows, that is, concentrate all our strength to make a frontal attack and an attack on one or both of his flanks, with the aim of wiping out one part and routing another so that our army can swiftly move its troops to smash other enemy forces. Strive to avoid battles of attrition in which we lose more than we gain or only break even. In this way, although inferior as a

whole (in terms of numbers), we shall be absolutely superior in every part and every specific campaign, and this ensures victory in the campaign. As time goes on, we shall become superior as a whole and eventually wipe out all the enemy.

- (5) Fight no battle unprepared, fight no battle you are not sure of winning; make every effort to be well prepared for each battle, make every effort to ensure victory in the given set of conditions as between the enemy and ourselves.
- (6) Give full play to our style of fighting—courage in battle, no fear of sacrifice, no fear of fatigue, and continuous fighting (that is, fighting successive battles in a short time without rest).
- (7) Strive to wipe out the enemy when he is on the move. At the same time, pay attention to the tactics of positional attack and capture enemy fortified points and cities.
- (8) With regard to attacking cities, resolutely seize all enemy fortified points and cities which are weakly defended. At opportune moments, seize all enemy fortified points and cities defended with moderate strength, provided circumstances permit. As for strongly defended enemy fortified points and cities, wait till conditions are ripe and then take them.
- (9) Replenish our strength with all the arms and most of the personnel captured from the enemy. Our army's main sources of manpower and matériel are at the front.
- (10) Make good use of the intervals between campaigns to rest, train and consolidate our troops. Periods of rest, training and consolidation should not in general be very long, and the enemy should so far as possible be permitted no breathing space.

(Mao Tse-tung, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks [Excerpts]", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, pp. 347-48.)

¹⁹ Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 144.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence 1857-59*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, p. 103.

²² Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 130.

²³ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, pp. 254-55.

²⁴ Mao Tse-tung, "Concentrate a Superior Force to Destroy the Enemy Forces One by One", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, pp. 315-16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

²⁶ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 249.

²⁷ Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 129.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

³⁰ Mao Tse-tung, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks (Excerpts)", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 347.

³¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Fall of Metz", *Collected Works*, Ger. ed., Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1962, Vol. XVII, p. 157.

³² Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 134.

³³ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 260.

³⁴ Mao Tse-tung, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks (Excerpts)", *Selected Military Writings*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1963, p. 348.

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