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School of Naval Warfare: Sino-Indian Border Dispute—1962

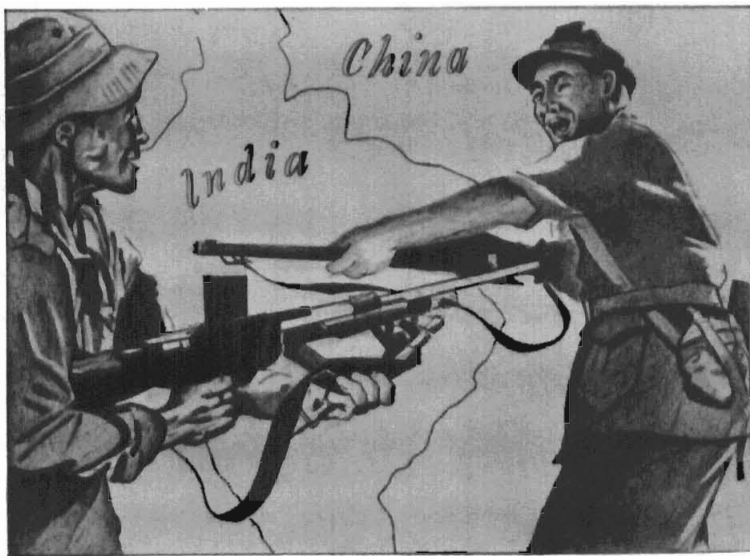
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SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE--1962

A Research Paper by

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph R. Stauffer, U.S. Army

(This paper was prepared for the study "Problems in Chinese International Relations" which was offered to students at the Naval War College by Brown University. Ed.)

INTRODUCTION

On 20 October 1962, Chinese Communist forces launched large-scale attacks against Indian outposts at several points along the northern frontier of India. It was soon obvious that the Chinese had thoroughly prepared for these attacks. It was equally obvious that the Indians had not; their Army was pushed back at every turn. By mid-November, Communist forces controlled a large portion of the Ladakh region of Kashmir and threatened to reach the Brahmaputra Valley in Northeast India.¹ Suddenly, on 20 November, the Chinese offered India a

cease-fire proposal, and, in spite of India's refusal to accept it, subsequently stopped the attacks and began to withdraw their troops.² As of this writing, no similar Chinese incursions have been made.

As will be developed in Chapter III, the official Chinese view of these military operations is that the Chinese were subjected to attack first, and that all subsequent action on their part was counterattack in self-defense. These claims are not borne out by the facts of the military situation as it developed. It appears clear that the initiative was in Chinese hands from the start and continued there right through to the surprising unilateral cease-fire on 20 November and withdrawal of troops beginning 1 December.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze a cross-section of historical and editorial opinion about this brief invasion with the aim of clarifying the motives behind the Chinese action. The subject of the Sino-Indian controversy has received the attention of a great many scholars since 1962, and a great deal has been written about it. A cross section of this writing by authors of widely different backgrounds has been examined during preparation of this paper. In Chapter IV the principal motives attributed to the Chinese by these authors are presented and analyzed.

Before beginning a discussion of the reasons for the invasion, it is helpful to review some pertinent background information concerning past relations between China and India, particularly as regards their border areas. For this reason, Chapter I contains a brief historical background, and Chapter II contains a summary of the claims and counterclaims regarding the two most important border disputes--Ladakh in the northwest and Northeast Frontier Agency (or NEFA) in the east.

I--HISTORICAL BACKGROUND³

The history of China's relations with India dates back to the distant past. Buddhism spread from India through Tibet to China in the early centuries of the

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Christian era, which led to a sort of spiritual kinship between the two countries. From about the 3rd century A.D. there were periodic exchanges of pilgrims and scholars. This interchange continued until the conquest of India by Islamic invaders in 1526 when the long period of spiritual and cultural relationships virtually came to an end. Buddhism disappeared from India, the land of its birth, during the centuries of Moslem rule (1526-1857) while continuing to flourish in China and other Asian countries.⁴ It is, however, this early relationship through religious ties that forms the basis for occasional references by both Chinese and Indian leaders to the ancient friendship between the two.

The impact of Western civilization on Asian civilizations, resulting from the colonial enthusiasms of the European powers during the 19th century, had the effect of kindling nationalistic sentiments in both China and India. During the first half of the 20th century, these nationalist, or anticolonial, trends grew rapidly, and new friendly contacts between the two giants of Asia grew up in an atmosphere of mutual sympathy and determination to throw off the yoke of Western domination. By 1950 each country had achieved complete independence, and they were launched on independent and vastly different programs of self-development as viable world powers. In 1950 there began a series of events concerning Tibet which had a direct bearing on the events of 1962. This remote and little-known region at the "roof of the world" has great significance in current Sino-Indian disputes. It will, therefore, be useful to review briefly the relationship of each major party to Tibet.

The first real political contacts between China and Tibet came during the reign of Kublai Khan, the first of the Mongol (Yuan) emperors of China (1271-1294). The "Golden Khan" was converted to Buddhism by Pak-pa, a Tibetan lama, who remained spiritual mentor to the Emperor for 12 years. As a reward for his services, Pak-pa was given sovereign powers over most of what is now Tibet. There does not seem to be any evidence that this was within the legal

prerogatives of the Mongol Emperor, except for the fact that Mongol military power and control over much of Asia was so strong at the time that there was no one to dispute the decision. From that period until early in the 18th century Tibet was almost completely autonomous. The institution of the Dalai Lama grew up during these centuries which tended to reinforce Tibetan feelings of independence. In 1717 a Mongol tribe from Turkestan invaded Tibet and ransacked the capital of Lhasa. In their distress the Tibetans called upon the Chinese for assistance, which they got! The Chinese came--and stayed. After expelling the Mongols, the Chinese left a garrison and two resident Viceroys (Ambans) in Lhasa. This relationship waxed and waned with the fortunes of the Chinese central government, but it is this relationship, established in 1720, which formed the Chinese claims for hegemony in Tibet during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

The early spiritual and cultural ties between India and Tibet were mentioned above. Buddhism, the basis for these early ties, virtually disappeared from India during the long Moslem rule. As British rule of India became consolidated during the 19th century, they sought trade relations with Tibet. It is significant that the first British efforts to negotiate treaties toward this end were made through the Chinese Manchu leadership, thus recognizing Chinese hegemony. Twice, in 1876 and 1893, the Chinese agreed to British expeditions into Tibet. Each time the *Tibetans* refused to allow these expeditions to enter. This led to a British realization of the *de facto* independence of Tibet, and permission was received from London in 1899 for direct contact between Delhi and Lhasa. At about this same time, the Dalai Lama appeared to be negotiating with the Russians. Lord Curson, then Viceroy of India, could not afford the security risk of Russian influence at the border of India, so he decided to act firmly. The expedition of 1904 under Sir Francis Younghusband was the result.⁵ A small garrison was sent to Tibet and negotiations resulted in the Lhasa Convention of 1904 which had the effect of: (1) opening Tibet to

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British trade, (2) securing for Great Britain direct control over the external policies of Tibet, and (3) eliminating the "danger of the Russian bear grimacing at India from the Roof of the World."⁶

The "special privileges" enjoyed by the British in Tibet were recognized by Russia in the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, one of the links in the famed Allied Triple Entente of World War I. It is also interesting to note that this Anglo-Russian statement of understanding preserved the near-fiction of the hegemony of China, where the imperial system of dynastic rule was four years away from its complete and total collapse. Each country agreed to deal with Tibet through the Chinese Government, except for already established British rights of direct commercial access.

During the first half of the 20th century, the British rulers of India were preoccupied by the tumultuous events of the World Wars and the ground swell of Mahatma Ghandi's independence movement. At the same time, Chinese imperial collapse in 1911 brought on nearly 40 years of chaos within that country. As a result,

. . .Tibet in 1950, when Communist China decided to invade and subjugate her, was a nation enjoying *de facto* independence without full *de jure* recognition by the Powers. It is this want of *de jure* recognition, this technical flaw in the status of Tibet, that Communist China decided to exploit so as to make this country a part of Chinese *Lebensraum*.⁷

It is not necessary, for purposes of this paper, to dwell at length on the whole of recent history concerning the Sino-Indian border controversy. There are, however, certain events and actions that need to be set down in order to place the discussion of Chinese motives for the 1962 invasion in the proper

perspective. In the interests of brevity, these major events are listed chronologically below with little or no discussion.

1950. Communist Chinese armies invaded Tibet proclaiming it to be an integral part of China. India suggested that the Dalai Lama take his case to the United Nations, then failed to support Tibet when the vote was taken.

1950-1962. Period of Indian (Nehru's) policy of friendship and appeasement of Communist China to induce her to moderation. Repeated efforts to secure recognition of the Communist Regime and admission to the United Nations.

1954. Chinese pressure on Indian-Tibet trade forced India to renegotiate former British agreements. Result was Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the *Tibet Region of China* and India. This agreement:

- a. Amounted to a recognition of Chinese *sovereignty* over Tibet in lieu of suzerainty or hegemony.
- b. Reopened Indian-Tibet trade on restricted basis.
- c. Did not come to any settlements on border issues.

1954. China published maps showing conflicting claims at various parts of the border. When queried, Chou En-lai replied that they were old maps and the new regime had not yet had time to revise them.

1955-1959. A series of border incidents and increasing hostility. Throughout this period Nehru did not release information about this friction to the Parliament, or to the public, due to his desire to stay friendly with China.

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1956-1957. The Chinese built the strategic Sinkiang-Tibet highway through the Ladakh region of Kashmir.

1959. Revolt in Tibet crushed by the Chinese. Dalai Lama given asylum in India.⁸

1959. Two serious incidents, one in Ladakh and one in Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA), brought Nehru to reveal incursions and begin to take stronger measures on frontiers. China admits claims as shown on various maps published by them, disallowing all previous agreements and treaties.

1960-1961. Continued incidents on border.

1962. Chinese launched major attacks into Ladakh and NEFA.

II--DISPUTED BORDER AREAS

A great deal of argument and discussion has taken place over the conflicting claims of China and India to the two widely separated border regions. There have been inconsistencies in the arguments from each side so it is difficult, if not impossible, to get at the true facts of the matter. In order to understand some of the motives attributed to China for the invasion of 1962, however, it is necessary to look into these arguments to some extent.

Ladakh, which originally belonged to Tibet, was conquered by Gulab Singh of Jammu, then a feudatory of the Sikhs, and annexed to his kingdom between 1832 and 1841. The annexation was confirmed by the conclusion of a treaty in 1842 between Maharaja Gulab Singh on one side and the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhasa and the representatives of the Chinese Emperor on the other. This treaty mentioned the boundary between Ladakh and Tibet, but did not clearly demarcate it on the ground,

obviously on the understanding that the boundary was well known. When the British took over the suzerainty of Jammu and Kashmir state, they made repeated attempts to arrange a clear demarcation of the frontier. The Chinese government was asked to send its representatives for the purpose, but for one reason or another it did not. On January 13, 1847, however, the Chinese Amban wrote to the British government as follows: 'I beg to observe that the borders of the territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed so that it would be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement, and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing them.' The British agreed to this suggestion, accepted the traditional boundary, and prepared their maps 'on the basis of old usage and convention.' 'These maps,' said Prime Minister Nehru in the Indian Parliament, 'have been used in India for the last hundred years or so. They include the Aksai Chin region as part of Ladakh.'⁹

The Chinese claim that the central government of China was not represented at the conclusion of the treaty of 1842, and that it was therefore not a valid treaty. (The "representative of the Chinese Emperor" was, in fact, of Tibetan birth but held a Chinese official rank.)¹⁰ Since the treaty was not valid in Chinese eyes, and, since Ladakh was once part of Tibet, the region is now a part of the Tibet Region of China.

Concerning the NEFA,

. . . the British, anxious for the maintenance of peace along India's northern frontier at a time when Europe appeared to be on the brink

of a titanic world struggle, invited the Chinese and Tibetan representatives to a tripartite conference at Simla in the fall of 1913. The conference, which met in October, continued its sessions for six months and discussed very carefully the whole Tibetan question. But the viewpoints of the representatives appeared to be diametrically opposed. The Tibetans wanted nothing less than complete independence. The Chinese wanted the restoration of their protectorate over Tibet. The British were anxious to work out a compromise that would ensure security and peace along India's vital northern frontier.

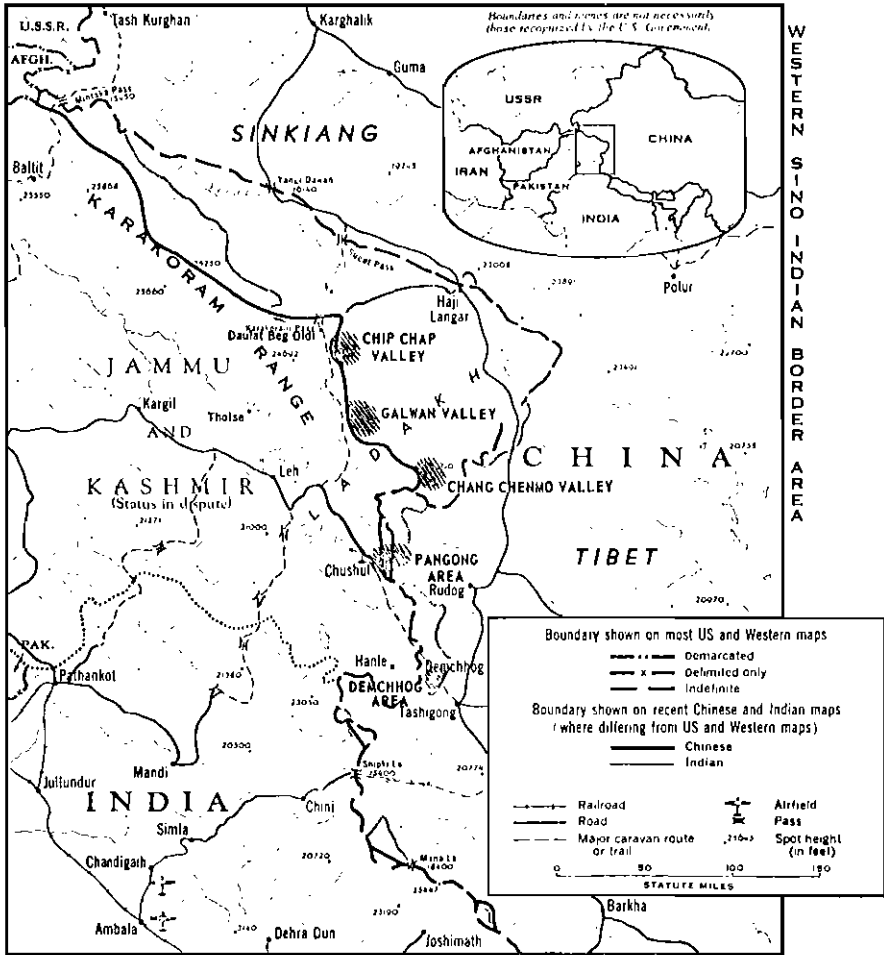
In the end it was the British view which prevailed. Britain persuaded Tibet to recognize the nominal suzerainty of China. On April 27, 1914, a convention was initialed by the plenipotentiaries of the three governments.

The Simla conference not only fixed the boundaries of Outer Tibet and set it up as a completely autonomous state having a nominal link with China; it also fixed the frontier between Tibet and northeastern India. The frontier from the east of Bhutan, along the northern and eastern border of Assam round to the meeting place of China, Tibet, and Burma--a distance of eight hundred and fifty miles--had never been clearly demarcated. In the years preceding the conference a large mass of data on geography, history, and custom had been carefully collected;

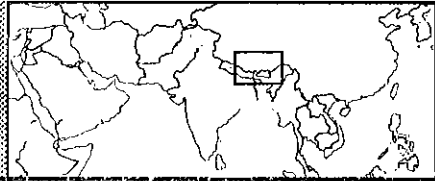
these were now considered and the frontier between Tibet and India was fixed more or less along the ridges of the mountains, following the well-known watershed principle. This frontier later came to be known as the MacMahon Line, for Sir Henry MacMahon, Secretary to the government of India in the Foreign Department, acting as the British Plenipotentiary, had signed it on behalf of his Majesty's Government. As stated above, the Convention was initialed by the plenipotentiaries representing the three governments, but the Chinese refused to ratify the convention. Britain and Tibet, while signing and ratifying the document, therefore made a declaration to the effect that so long as the Government of China withholds signature of the aforesaid Convention she will be debarred from the enjoyment of all privileges accruing therefrom. It may be noted here that some time after the conference China notified Great Britain that except as regards the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet she agreed to the convention in all respects.¹¹

Chou En-lai has referred to the MacMahon Line as a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China and therefore in illegal line. Further, the Simla convention was never ratified by China.¹² The Chinese claim a line much further to the south which would include most of the NEFA as part of Tibet. (See Figure 1.)

As stated earlier, there are inconsistencies in the details supporting the general claims outlined above. For example, there is a dispute over whether or not the Chinese delegate did, in fact, initial the final Simla convention in 1914.¹³ These details need not be of concern in this paper, however. The broader significance of the dispute derives from the

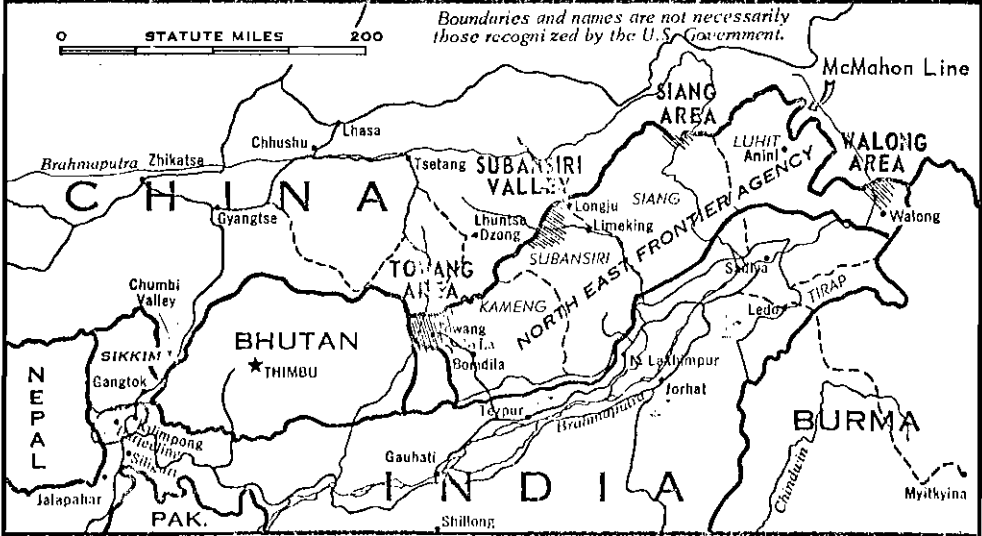


EASTERN CHINA - INDIA FRONTIER AREA



0 STATUTE MILES 200

Boundaries and names are not necessarily those recognized by the U.S. Government.



hopelessness of ever arriving at a legal settlement between the two disputants. Each party can, and has, produced maps from many varied sources to substantiate his case. It is not difficult to understand the lack of precision and consistency in these maps when one considers that they were drawn in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries in some of the most remote, difficult, and uninhabited terrain in the world. Given these unsettled border conditions then, their broad significance is that Communist China has a readymade situation to exploit along the India-Tibet border for whatever strategic or political purposes she has in mind. It is these purposes or motives which this paper attempts to clarify.

III--OFFICIAL CHINESE VIEW

The first and most obvious place to look for Chinese motivation is to China herself. Unfortunately, we do not have access to the Chinese leadership or to the conversations and memoranda which flowed within that leadership during the summer and fall of 1962. The only insight into the Chinese side of the picture is to be gained from the news media and the official documents and statements released by the government for outside publication. There is no dearth of information in this area. The *Peking Review*, *People's Daily*, and releases of the New China News Agency serve very well to establish the official government position on the whole matter. In fact, the careful wording and consistency of content of this multitude of articles leads to the suspicion that all news about the border crisis emanating from the China side came from a single source, or else it was all cleared through a single agency. In contrast to the wide range of speculation which took place outside of China, the official "line" is clearly spelled out.

In the preceding chapter, Chinese claims to the disputed areas were reviewed. In spite of the difficulty of validating any particular claim, it must be admitted that the borders were not delineated to all parties' satisfaction in either of the two areas. Hence, there was some basis for both China and India

to claim that the increasingly serious armed clashes between 1959 and 1962 occurred in their respective "sovereign" territories. Both nations consistently made such claims. The Chinese position was that all incidents were provoked by India inside the "Tibet Region of China."¹⁴ Nehru claimed Chinese forces had intruded into Indian territory.¹⁵

As the situation became more heated, the public statements on both sides grew more warlike. On 12 October 1962 Nehru announced that he had issued orders to the Indian Army to "oust the Chinese invaders from Indian Territory."¹⁶ Two days later Krishna Menon, then India's Minister of Defense, vowed to throw the Chinese out, stating: "We will fight to the last man, the last gun."¹⁷ These are genuinely inflammatory utterances by men in high places to which the Chinese reacted strongly. In an editorial titled, "Mr. Nehru Should Pull Back from the Brink," in *Rinmin Ribao* of October 14th, the Chinese reaction was evidenced. The editorial noted Nehru's order to oust the Chinese and went on to say: "In his capacity as Prime Minister of the Indian Government, Nehru has openly and officially authorized the Indian Military to attack China's Tibet Region at any time."¹⁸ The same editorial alleged that India had completed preparations for massive attacks which were imminent. In a note to the Indian Embassy made public by Peking, the Chinese Government laid the basis for their whole explanation of what was to happen. The note warned India that "any moves to 'oust' would be met by a strong counterattack" (emphasis added).¹⁹ This was the first mention of a counterattack; all previous discussion had been couched in terms of Chinese frontier guards taking defensive measures only.

On October 20th the New China News Agency released reports of "large scale frenzied attacks" being launched by India in both the northeast and the northwest. Reuter's news agency in Peking was moved to comment on the urgency with which the New China News Agency handled these particular reports. There seemed to be a special effort to insure that they got

out quickly and accurately.²⁰ Thus, the Chinese claimed initially, and never departed from the claim, that it was India which struck first and all further actions were in self-defense. In a note from China's Foreign Ministry to the Indian Embassy in Peking the Chinese summarized their case:

Finally, in the small hours of October 20, the Indian troops, in pursuance of Prime Minister Nehru's order, launched a massive general attack. Only when the Chinese frontier guards were repeatedly subjected to frenzied Indian attacks and suffered heavy casualties, was the Chinese side compelled to act in resolute self-defense. How can it be said that the Chinese frontier guards' counterattack in self-defense was kindling the flames of war?²¹

From the initial outbreak on October 20th, there was no deviation in this Chinese explanation of ensuing events. The deep penetrations into Ladakh and almost to the Brahmaputra valley in the NEFA were all part of a "counterattack." On 14 December, *Peking Review* published its first map showing the extent of these penetrations (no progress maps of the campaign were published by the *Peking Review* between 20 October and 14 December). The long and tortuous title of the map tries vainly to explain away the displayed evidence of a highly successful offensive operation-- "Sketch Map Showing the Indian Strongpoints of Aggression Eliminated by the Chinese Frontier Forces and the Positions Stationed by Them in Their Advance During Their Counterattack in Self-Defense Along the Sino-Indian Border."²²

From the official Chinese viewpoint, then there was no invasion of India. The events of October-November 1962 were initiated by Indian attacks ordered by Prime Minister Nehru. Subsequent Chinese actions

were counterattacks in self-defense which all took place within the Chinese-claimed Tibet Region of China.

Unfortunately, the facts, as reported in the open presses of India, the United States, and the rest of the free world, do not tend to substantiate the Chinese version of the story. Western observers were quick to brand China as the aggressor.²³ The obvious unpreparedness of India, their pitiful lack of equipment (there was even a shortage of rifle bullets for their outdated, single-shot rifles), and their lack of lines of communication to support their forces in either region belie the argument that they had prepared for massive attacks.²⁴ On the other hand, the efficiency and speed of Chinese operations in that very inhospitable country indicates prior planning and training. Their ability to support themselves logistically testifies to a state of preparedness.²⁵ It must therefore be concluded that the initiative for the military action was Chinese in origin. No matter how provocative the statements of Nehru and Menon in October, heads of state and defense ministers rarely send an unprepared, poorly equipped army out on offensive operations of this magnitude.

If, then, the official Chinese view of these events does not provide satisfactory answers, we must look elsewhere in order to gain an insight into Chinese motivation for their actions in 1962.

IV--CHINESE MOTIVES

Professor W. Norman Brown of the University of Pennsylvania is one of this country's leading experts on India. His book, *The United States and India and Pakistan*, when first published in 1953 won an award from the American Historical Association as "the best book on the history of India" for that year. In 1963 a new, revised edition was published which included material written as late as December 1962. Professor Brown included a "very judicious appraisal of the crisis produced by the Chinese invasion of Indian border territories."²⁶ That is, he analyzed the impact of the invasion on India and Pakistan. However,

when he came to Chinese motivation he had this to say:

The explanation for China's withdrawal after its unchecked success was as puzzling as its intentions in attacking the Asian nation that had given it great international support by promoting membership for it in the United Nations and in other ways.²⁷

This is the extent of Professor Brown's analysis of Chinese motives. In all fairness, however, it must be pointed out that a deeper analysis was not required for the purposes of that particular book. The foreword to the revised edition points out that the portions dealing with the Chinese invasion were added quickly in December 1962 just before publication in order to assess the impact upon India and Pakistan and their relations with the United States. Notwithstanding the brevity of Professor Brown's treatment, his confession of puzzlement serves as an appropriate keynote for further discussion of Chinese motives. A great many other qualified individuals have not been so reluctant to express their opinions on Chinese motivation. These range over a wide spectrum from short-range to long-range, and from sound logical reasoning to some "far-out" speculation. The paragraphs below examine this spectrum of opinion in an effort to clarify the puzzle of China's 1962 attack on her staunchest supporter in the international arena.

Without doubt, the single, most often cited reason for the 1962 aggression against India is that the Chinese felt they had to protect the highway between Tibet and Sinkiang, a portion of which runs through Ladakh. An article in the October 1962 issue of *Asian Survey*, written before the invasion, but addressed to the heightened tension of that period, explains the strategic importance of this highway and its role in Chinese control over Tibet. Margaret

Fisher and Leo Rose confess their uncertainty over what might have been China's long range motives and go on to say:

Whatever may yet unfold, however, one conclusion can be drawn with relative certainty. The road which the Chinese built in 1956-1957 across Ladakh was important to their control over Tibet. Without such a supply route, at the time unacknowledged Khampa revolt in eastern Tibet might have reached dangerous proportions Access to Tibet is easiest from the west and south. The direct route through China proper runs through exceptionally difficult terrain where ambushes can easily be prepared.²⁸

In *Military Review* of February 1963 Leo Rose further explains the utility of this road to the Chinese.²⁹ The two eastern routes from China into Tibet not only cross formidable terrain and are subject to attack by dissident tribesmen (Khampas or Khams), they are also often blocked for long periods during the winter months by snow and slides. During these same months, the route across the portion of Ladakh known as the Aksai Chin (white stone desert) is highly traversable. The region is a high alkaline plain which experiences cold but dry winters and is entirely uninhabited; thus there is no interference from unfriendly tribes. The importance of this western approach was demonstrated vividly during the larger Tibetan revolt of 1959 when the Chinese made good use of it.

After the two border incidents of 1959 which prompted Nehru to release the news of the long conflict, India began to take stronger measures to protect her interests, especially in the Ladakh area where Chinese claims had been backed up by the deepest occupation of Indian-claimed territory. By 1962 the Indian press was bragging about an impending

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offensive, and Nehru had gone so far as to publish his order to Indian military forces to oust the Chinese from Indian soil.³⁰ These measures were accompanied by the establishment of stronger Indian outposts in the region which, in some instances, threatened the supply routes to forward Chinese positions. Through Chinese eyes these moves could easily have been interpreted as a real threat to the strategic Tibet-Sinkiang highway. In any event, it is apparent that by October 1962 the Chinese decided to take action. While severe pressures were exerted in Ladakh, the main weight of the Chinese attacks was concentrated in the NEFA.

When China offered India a cease-fire in November 1962, India's forces in the NEFA had been badly shattered and had been pushed almost entirely out of the mountains and back into the Brahmaputra valley. In Ladakh, Chinese troops had advanced all the way to the limits of Chinese boundary claims.³¹ It is highly significant that the unilateral Chinese cease-fire and subsequent withdrawal were accompanied by proposals for negotiations which would have seen China agree to give up most of her NEFA claims in exchange for recognition of her position in Ladakh.³² This proposal to "swap" with India lends strong support to the argument that protection of the highway over the Aksai Chin was a paramount consideration behind the Chinese action. As stated above, this motive is the one most often attributed to the Chinese. It is also the one which is stated in most positive language. For example, Klaus Pringsheim says in his *Asian Survey* article:

The great importance attached by China to the Sinkiang-Tibet highway through Aksai Chin is unquestionably the major strategic element in Chinese motivation.³³

Werner Levi, Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii, states in an article for *Current History* that:

Control over the Aksai Chin area to protect the Tibet-Sinkiang highway was the major motivating force.³⁴

The highway must be considered an important element in any conclusions as to why China invaded India. This in itself, however, is not enough; there are questions still unanswered. Is control over Tibet the only value of the highway? Why did China alienate her staunchest supporter in the United Nations? What were China's longer range foreign policy goals? It is clear that further exploration is necessary.

Except for the Tibetan border disputes, relations between China and India had been extremely good from the inception of the Communist regime in 1949. Prime Minister Nehru seems to have had maintenance of these good relations as a primary policy until at least 1959, as evidenced by his withholding news about the border incidents and Chinese territorial claims from his own Parliament. He repeatedly championed the Chinese Communist cause in admission to the United Nations and sought recognition of the Regime by the other world powers. Why, then, was China willing to give up this support and alienate an ostensibly close friend in Asia?

Mr. V.P. Dutt, head of the Department of East Asian History and Institutions at the Indian School of International Studies in New Delhi, has expressed very well a theory advanced by many other authorities. In *Current History*, March 1963, he says:

India had done a little too well for China's liking and the democratic experiment in India had not only not failed but actually gave promise of success . . . The failure of Peking's "big leap" ruled out China as the economic polestar on the Asian horizon. Nehru had acquired a status all too disproportionate with the

military and economic strength of his country. While the Chinese, pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, were building their country through sweat and toil and tears, the Indians instead substituted foreign aid and seemed to get along merrily with both blocs A nonaligned India, as a working democracy, politically stable and economically viable (at least increasingly so), was a threat, a challenge, an enemy. It became the function of China's policy to humble and discredit Nehru, debunk India's nonalignment and destroy India's power and position.³⁵

Mr. Dutt thus sees the issue as a part of a great contest between the two giants of Asia to demonstrate the superiority of their opposing political and economic systems and their conflicting ideologies. Several other people have advanced similar ideas. The argument appears in two general categories. Some emphasize China's desire to demonstrate superiority in Asia, while others see the Chinese action as an attempt to embarrass and deflate Nehru and to disrupt Indian economic and social progress. Mr. Dutt's thesis is an example of the latter. It is understandable that he sees the Chinese action as being primarily focused against India because he is himself an Indian. His case is supported in other quarters also. Major R.W. Whitney, an officer on the Australian Army Staff, cites a major Chinese motive as being jealous of Indian material progress in light of the failure of the big leap forward. He also feels that Nehru has been a particularly effective critic of Communist ideology in Asia, and therefore needed to be humbled and discredited.³⁶ Sir Percival Griffiths, a long-time British expert on Indian affairs, in a lecture given in 1963 to the Royal United Service Institute, also suggested one of China's aims to be the humiliation of Nehru and India. He laid particular

stress on the disruption of India's third 5-year plan and the possible catastrophic effect on India's economic progress vis-a-vis the population explosion.³⁷

Sir Percival also expressed a broader view of Chinese motivation which is shared by others. He held that while humiliation and disruption of India was one objective, another was to impress the nations and people of Southeast Asia that the only way to progress in the modern world was the Communist way.³⁸ This is one example of the second broad category of argument which sees the Chinese invasion as an element of the great contest for Asia. These people hold that China used the border dispute and Indian unpreparedness as a convenient vehicle to demonstrate the superiority of China in Asia. In other words, there were third parties which were to draw conclusions from the Chinese action. Sir Percival singled out Southeast Asia as one of these third parties. A Stanford Research Institute study which also looked into this issue suggests that the Soviet Union and the West were also to draw some lessons. It proposes as one of China's short-range objectives: "to demonstrate to both the West and the Soviet Union that Communist China has a strong military capability and the will to use it."³⁹ At another point in the Stanford study the Soviet Union appears as a target in a slightly different way:

Until the recent appearance of a possible but hesitant and unrequited Soviet attempt at a *rapprochement*, developments in the Sino-Soviet "ideological" dispute showed an increasing friction between the two powers and a mounting desire on the part of China to assert herself. The hypothesis has been advanced that Communist China does not particularly relish the development of close ties between the Soviet Union and India and would not

hesitate to thwart and embarrass
Soviet efforts to aid India.⁴⁰

Chinese motives discussed thus far have been those which can be classified as short-range or immediate objectives. That is, they have their basis in the 1962 time frame and the then current international situation. There have been other theories advanced, however, which see the invasion of India as being a step toward longer-range Chinese objectives. These more speculative theories visualize various ambitions of China to expand her influence, power, and territorial holdings. Justification for these ideas is usually couched in terms of the lessons of history, citing the traditional tendency for Chinese expansionism during periods of strength of the central government. Werner Levi in his *Current History* article points out that Communist China has studiously avoided making firm commitments on border issues around her periphery, India being only one case in point. For example, he cites the Nepal-Chinese agreement on their common border which makes no mention of Mount Everest, generally assumed to be in Nepal, but to which China has made claims in the past. He also cites some unsettled border regions between China and the U.S.S.R., and goes on to say:

The overall expansionist goal expressed in this border policy has its roots in Chinese nationalism, or can be dated back even further in a Chinese tradition several thousand years old that territory once acquired and civilized by China must forever remain Chinese. Communist claims and, indeed, to some extent actions are identical with those of preceding regimes: nationalist, revolutionary, and imperial.⁴¹

This trend to associate Chinese motives with the traditional expansionism of a strong China was also

cited by Major Whitney in the *Australian Army Journal*⁴² and by Sir Percival Griffiths in his lecture to the Royal United Service Institute.⁴³ The wide advocacy of this theory leads one to ask about possible Chinese expansionist objectives toward which the invasion of India might have been a step.

Even a cursory examination of the extremely difficult terrain, the extended lines of Chinese communications, and the military capabilities of the Chinese in 1962 leads to rejection of any idea that the Chinese had planned the invasion and conquest of India. Some opinion during October-November 1962 did, however, suggest that China might have had limited territorial objectives in Northeast India. An editorial in the November 10th issue of *The Economist* points out the valuable oil and food resources of the Brahmaputra valley as a possible Communist objective. It goes further by showing that Chinese control over Assam in the northeast would have the effect of encircling North Burma and driving a wedge between India and Southeast Asia.⁴⁴ The unilateral Chinese cease-fire and subsequent withdrawal from the NEFA beginning 11 days after publication of *The Economist* article has a strong tendency to belie this as a valid motive for Chinese action, at least in 1962. There is another region, however, which bears further examination. There are several authorities who claim that behind the Chinese overt acts against India was the longer-range objective of consolidation of her position in Central Asia vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

Margaret Fisher and Leo Rose call attention to the importance of the Central Asian region in the October 1962 issue of *Asian Survey*. In their examination of possible underlying causes of the Sino-Indian border dispute appears the following:

The answers are to be found in the strategic realities and potentialities of Central Asian topography and mineral resources, prominent among the latter being oil, gold,

and uranium. Central Asia has a long history as the center of chronic turbulence, from which violent explosions have periodically erupted and spread disaster, either directly or by chain reaction, throughout enormous distances During the last few centuries, however, the process has for the most part been reversed. Pressure from the more developed civilizations has succeeded in diminishing the area and scope of this former reservoir of turbulence. Three expanding empires, Chinese, Indian, and Russian, drew ever closer together as they gradually subdued disorders on their respective frontiers through conquest, subsidy, or intimidation. By common consent, however, autonomous territories were left--until recently--as buffers between the major powers, to reduce mutual fears and minimize the danger of accidental embroilment over frontier incidents.⁴⁵

Werner Levi also advances this argument and ties it into Chinese desires to protect the Tibet-Sinkiang highway:

The growing significance of Tibet and Sinkiang is further enhanced by the importance Central Asia is assuming in general through economic development and through the gradual elimination of buffer states and tribal no-man's-lands, with the consequent meeting of the Soviet Union, China, and India. The Tibet-Sinkiang Highway thus assumes great significance as a means of influence and control not merely in Tibet and Sinkiang but in the

whole Central Asian region
It would therefore not be totally
amiss to speculate that China's
ulterior motive in making war on
India for the sake of the Aksai
Chin area is related to the Soviet
Union rather than to India.⁴⁶

These speculations concerning the desire of China to consolidate her position in Central Asia make a good deal of sense. They are consistent with history in that strong central governments of China have traditionally expended energies toward consolidation of outlying regions and advancing national frontiers.⁴⁷ Chinese interests in Central Asia are also understandable in light of her assumed role as a polestar for the Communist ideology in Asia and her bitter dispute with the Soviet Union over interpretation of that ideology.

The discussion thus far has touched upon those possible motives for China's action in 1962 which have been most frequently offered by authorities and writers on Asia. Few have ventured to project their thoughts beyond what might be termed short-range and mid-range Chinese objectives. This reluctance is understandable, given the present state of China's economic development, the dispute with the Soviets and concomitant discontinuation of assistance from the U.S.S.R., and many other factors which lead to the strong feeling that major adventures outside her borders, which would involve any appreciable expenditure of precious resources, can only be latent or long-range Chinese objectives.

One exception to this reluctance to speculate on long-range motives is the Stanford Research Institute's study on the Sino-Indian dispute.⁴⁸ This study points out recent amicable settlements between China and Pakistan concerning the ill-defined border separating Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and Sinkiang. It further cites reports that China is soon going to open similar boundary conferences with Afghanistan. From these negotiations, the study hypothesizes:

Close Chinese relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan and access to Kashmir would provide China with additional entries to the Indian subcontinent and the basis for a forward policy in the area around the southern rim of the Arabian Peninsula and along the coast of the Red Sea. Chinese interest in the area has already been manifested by assistance to Yemen in road construction and by attractive trade offers to Somali. A successful forward policy in the Middle East, *if based on secure lines of communication* in Central Asia, would permit widening Chinese influence along the Arabian coast of the Indian Ocean *Any considerable extension* of Chinese influence into the Middle East and into Central Africa would provide a link between the Chinese position in Central Asia and the Mediterranean, where Chinese influence is already paramount in Albania. Ideological competition with the Soviet Union in countries like Algeria and Egypt, *should it lead to Chinese ascendancy*, might well lead to Chinese efforts to consolidate a strong position in the Mediterranean. This could have two results: (1) it would thrust China into European politics, and (2) it would put China in a position to bring pressure on Soviet Russia from both the Middle East and Central Asia.⁴⁹ (*italics supplied*)

The Stanford study thus suggests that China's 1962 aggression was but a step in isolating and encircling India so that her ambitions toward the Middle East, Africa, and Europe would not be

threatened from the south. This appears to be "far-out" speculation. The conditions necessary for Chinese success in such a scheme (some of which are indicated by italics in the above citation) are tenuous indeed. They do not seem very closely related to the geographical, military, or economic realities of the foreseeable future.

One of the classical motives attributed to aggressors through history has been the desire of the leadership to divert the attention of their population away from domestic disorder or failure. On the surface, this is a logical motive to attribute to China in 1962. Many editorials and articles from periodicals published in November and December of 1962 cite it as such.⁵⁰ As stated above in Mr. V.P. Dutt's article, China had just experienced monumental failure in her "Great Leap Forward" when the commune system had to be virtually abandoned.

The Stanford study explored this as a possible motive by analyzing the content of the Chinese official news organ, *People's Daily*, for the 10-day period 21-30 October 1962. This examination was compared to a similar analysis of the 10-day period following Chinese intervention in Korea. The comparison showed about equal space allocated, 23 per cent of available space during Korea, 22 per cent for India. Of this space, it is significant to note that reports on the emotional reaction of the Chinese people, articles requesting popular support of the war effort, letters to the editor, and similar types of exhortation directed at the people occupied 60 per cent of the total allocated space during the Korean conflict "while the corresponding proportion in the Sino-Indian issue was exactly nil."⁵¹ The study deduces from this comparison:

On the assumption that news policy reflects the basic policy of the Communist Regime, it is deduced that while both issues occupied similar weight in the press, during the Indian issue far more attention

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and importance were attached to the factual description and international justification than to stirring up emotional reaction and corresponding war effort.⁵²

The Stanford study thus tends to discount the "diversion of popular attention" motive. At the same time, however, it suggests that China may have had the desire to demonstrate to the Soviet Union and the West that, even during periods of domestic difficulties, China was not one to be trifled with. "The entire sequence of events in the Indian affair is undoubtedly directed toward achievement of this demonstration effort."⁵³ This conclusion therefore adds further to the argument that China was attempting to impress third (and fourth) parties that she was a power to be dealt with in Asia.

V--CONCLUSIONS

As stated at the beginning of this paper, it is not possible to be truly definitive about Communist motives for the 1962 invasion. It is clear, however, that the border dispute and related incidents served as a convenient way to advance toward one or more political or strategic objectives. The discussion above has presented the opinion of a number of authorities as to what these objectives may have been.

Whenever a major nation undertakes military aggression against another, there are very nearly always two general types of justification. There are the specific, short-range reasons which relate rather directly to the immediate situation at hand. Behind these lie more remote motives which relate to broader, longer-range objectives of the aggressor. Chinese motivation in 1962 was undoubtedly conditioned by both types of justification.

There is every reason to place heavy emphasis on the importance of the Tibet-Sinkiang highway. As was shown above, the Chinese need this highway to continue their control over Tibet due to the inadequacy

of the other routes into that region, particularly at certain times of the year. During 1962 increased Indian military activity in Ladakh, together with a high-pressure press campaign and an aroused Indian populace, could easily have been interpreted by the Chinese as a real threat to their retention of this strategic route. A major conclusion of this paper is that protection of the Tibet-Sinkiang highway was the principal short-term Chinese objective and that it was this factor which led to the final decision to act.

Of all the other motives attributed to the Chinese by the various authorities, there is not one which could not have been pursued without resort to open military aggression. It is true that nearly all of them are, or could be, highly desirable from the Chinese viewpoint. Thus, it is perhaps best to consider these as "fringe benefits" which made the action taken by the Chinese to secure their strategic highway more attractive to them. In this light, the most important of these secondary motives were probably:

- (1) Assertion of Chinese supremacy in Asia in the eyes of India, Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union and the West.
- (2) Increased control over the Central Asian region.
- (3) Humiliation of Nehru and disruption of India's political, social, and economic progress.

Evidence uncovered by research could not substantiate the following as important motives:

- (1) Chinese ambitions to penetrate through the Middle East and Africa to establish a base in the Mediterranean.
- (2) Territorial acquisition of any significant portion of India.

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(3) A conscious attempt to divert Chinese attention from internal failure of the "Big Leap Forward."

FOOTNOTES

1. A map showing the principal regions of Chinese-Indian conflict and claims is shown in Figure 1.
2. Klaus A. Pringsheim, "China, India, and Their Himalayan Border (1961-1963)," *Asian Survey*, October 1963, p. 489-490.
3. Except as otherwise noted, material in this chapter is from: P.C. Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962). Although the author is Indian, and admittedly is not completely objective on all aspects of this matter, his coverage of historical background appears to be accurate and authoritative. This book is widely cited as a reference by many other authors on this subject.
4. William L. Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p. 530.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 870.
6. Chakravarti, p. 18.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
8. Lowell Thomas Jr., *The Silent War in Tibet* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), ch. XVIII.
9. Chakravarti, p. 71-72.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 127-128.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
13. Francis P. Hoerber, et. al., *Boundary Conditions of the Sino-Indian Conflict*, Stanford Research Institute Technical Report No. 4320-3, (Menlo Park, Calif.: June 1963), p. 120.
14. *Peking Review*, 19 October 1962, p. 6-7. Translation of *Renmin Ribao* editorial of 14 October.
15. *The New York Times*, 13 October 1962, p. 1:2.
16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 15 October 1962, p. 3:2.
18. *Peking Review*.
19. *The New York Times*, 14 October 1962, p. 5:1.
20. *Ibid.*, 21 October 1962, p. 1:6.
21. *Peking Review*, 9 November 1962, p. 18-20.
22. *Peking Review*, 14 December 1962, p. 10-11.
23. *The New York Times*, 21 October 1962, p. 5:1.
22 October 1962, p. 2:3-7.
23 October 1962, p. 3:2-5.
24. *Time*, Cover Story, 30 November 1962, p. 23-28.
25. *Ibid.*
26. W. Norman Brown, *The United States and India and Pakistan*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), Overleaf.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
28. Margaret W. Fisher and Leo E. Rose, "Ladakh and the Sino-Indian Border Crisis," *Asian Survey*, October 1962, p. 28.
29. Leo E. Rose, "Conflict in the Himalayas," *Military Review*, February 1963.
30. Pringsheim, p. 490.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, p. 491.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 481.
34. Werner Levi, "The Sino-Indian Border War," *Current History*, September 1963, p. 136-143.
35. V.P. Dutt, "China: Jealous Neighbor," *Current History*, March 1963, p. 140-141.
36. Major R.W. Whitney, "The Sino-Indian Border Dispute," *Australian Army Journal*, November 1962, p. 13.

37. Sir Percival Griffiths, "India during the Chinese Invasion," *The Royal United Service Institution Journal*, August 1963, p. 213-214.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Hoerber, *et. al.*, p. 4.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Levi, p. 136-137.
42. Whitney, p. 12.
43. Griffiths, p. 213.
44. "India Invaded," editorial in *The Economist*, 10 November 1962, p. 545-547.
45. Rose and Fisher, p. 27-28.
46. Levi, p. 142.
47. R.G. Boyd, *Communist China's Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 6.
48. Hoerber, *et. al.*, p. 36 ff.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 38-39.
50. For example, see editorial in *Commonweal*, 7 December 1962, p. 3-5.
51. Hoerber, *et. al.*, p. 124.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*

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BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph R. Stauffer, U.S. Army, is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University.

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*Correspondence
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The January 1967 issue of the *Review* featured an excerpt from an outstanding paper submitted for the correspondence course in *International Relations* by Lieutenant Commander Robert H. Taylor, USNR-R.

A Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, who is enrolled in the *International Relations* course, has this to say about the excerpt:

I . . . found LCDR Robert H. Taylor's article . . . most interesting and helpful. It was my first opportunity to hear what other students have had to say in response to questions in the course, and [I] hope to see more articles of a similar nature in the future.

The April 1967 issue of the *Review* contains an excerpt from a paper submitted for the course in Counterinsurgency by Lieutenant Thomas F. Murphy, U.S. Navy. These excerpts do provide a yardstick for student comparisons and indicate the high caliber of effort which is normally expected of Naval War College correspondence students.