

passing in review

BOOKS OF
INTEREST TO
OUR READERS

High Level . . .

STRATEGY—The Indirect Approach:
B. H. Liddell Hart, 420 pages, New York 1954, Frederick A. Praeger -Inc. \$5.00

Liddell Hart is the author of some 30 works on military tactics, strategy, training, organization and history. He is generally considered to be one of the most prolific and perceptive military writers in the English language, if not in the world. Testimonials by Guderian, Rommel, Patton and other successful generals attest to the correctness and applicability of his theories.

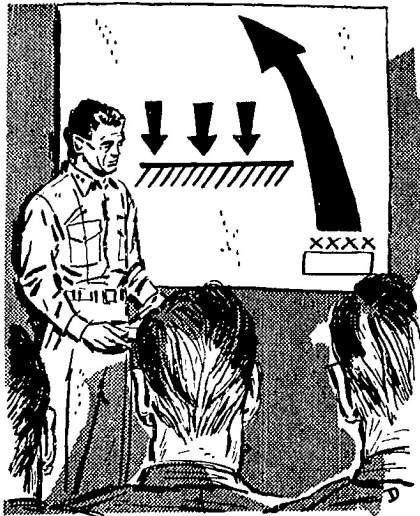
In *Strategy*, the author's thesis is that in most successful campaigns the loser's psychological and physical balance has been dislocated as an essential prerequisite to his defeat. This dislocation, in the more successful campaigns, has been exploited ruthlessly. Dislocation has been followed by a near bloodless defeat at best, or at least by a battle on vastly more advantageous terms to the side applying the dislocation.

Dislocation, the vital prelude to victory, has been brought about by a strategic indirect approach which may have been either intentional or fortuitous. The indirect approach has taken many forms: the baited move, which draws an opponent out of prepared positions or causes him to overreach himself; the maneuver to the rear, which places forces astride the enemy's line of communications or occupies key terrain; the defensive-offensive, which sets up an opponent for a crushing counterblow; in short, any move which imposes the psychological or physical shock of surprise and avoids action along the line of greatest expectation. The indirect approach, it is also shown, is equally applicable to tactics.

Liddell Hart, in three of four parts, traces in military history the application of this idea. The history of warfare up to the 20th century, World War I and World War

II are the periods covered. These principles of the indirect approach are distilled, codified and discussed in a final part. As a dividend, the appendix contains accounts by principal participants of the North African Campaign 1940-42 and the Arab-Israel War 1948-49 wherein the strategy of indirect approach, as formulated by Liddell Hart, was very consciously and successfully applied.

Liddell Hart has been much maligned for his alleged defensive doctrine prior to World War II. This doctrine is further alleged to have



been responsible for the French Maginot Line complex which is considered to have resulted in their defeat in 1940. Nothing could be further from the truth. Actually, the much maligned "defensive doctrine" of Liddell Hart was a defensive-offensive doctrine—a form of the indirect approach. In truth, the French were defeated by a German application of the indirect approach. The Germans lured the French out from the protection of the Maginot Line and into a headlong advance through Belgium. They then launched their dislocating blow through the "impassable Ardennes" against the weak joint of the French dispositions and across the French lines of communications. The re-

sult is history—a further testimony to the strategy of indirect approach.

Strategy—The Indirect Approach bids fair to become a classic in military literature embodying, as it does, the fruits of many years' careful historical research and perceptive thought, plus a hypothesis tested and proved in brilliant application by some of this generation's most accomplished military leaders.

Highly recommended reading for those who aspire to a knowledge of the art of war.

Reviewed by LtCol Brooke Nihart

Insured Loyalty . . .

POLITICAL CONTROLS IN THE SOVIET ARMY—A study based on reports by former Soviet Army officers, by Vyacheslav P. Artemyev, F. Belov, I. Dmitriev, M. Erel, M. Kolosov, and M. Tuschin. Edited by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Russian Research Center, Harvard University. 89 pages. New York: Research Program on the U.S.S.R. \$1.00

The editor of this meaty little pamphlet states its mission clearly and succinctly as early as page two. ". . . to analyze the efforts and techniques applied in the Soviet Union to insure the loyalty of the Soviet Armed Forces . . . (and) to describe in an admittedly incomplete fashion, the system of political personnel, the processes of political indoctrination, and some aspects of secret police vigilance."

Having stated the mission, the editor and his six colleagues listed above, all former officers in the Soviet Army, proceed to accomplish it in a direct, if not always smooth fashion—sketching in a dark and familiar historical background of tight control dating back to the birth of the Red Army in 1918—drawing in the broad intersecting lines of the web-like control pattern and quickly penning a few hasty illustrations from personal experience. The resultant picture is

Marine Corps Gazette • September, 1954