

ARE YOU A GUNG HO MARINE?

Well, before you leap to answer that question with a rousing "NO!" (or "Yes"), check this out.

As you probably know the term Gung Ho is from China and was introduced to the Marine Corps by Col. E.F. Carlson when he formed the 2nd Raider Battalion during WWII. Maybe you remember the movie about the battalion and the Makin raid called Gung Ho. But what you probably don't know is the true history of Carlson, the Raiders, and Gung Ho.

First off, ~~the~~ Gung Ho is from the Communist Chinese army led by Chu Teh, Mao Tse-Tung, and Chou En-Lai, all of whom were personal friends of Carlson. He met them when he was military observer for the US in China in the late 1930's. Carlson spent months marching, studying, and fighting with the Red Army. While doing so, he learned an entirely new (for him) method of running a military. When he returned, he tried to tell the American people that it was the Communist Red armies that were leading the Chinese struggle against Japanese Imperialism, and that they had a new and better way of organizing their military. Carlson called this style of military work Gung Ho, from the Chinese slogan "work together". Soon after he returned to the states the Navy Department ordered Carlson to stop talking about China, the Red Army and Gung Ho. He refused to do this and resigned from the Marine Corps, so he could continue to speak

When it became obvious in early 1941 that war with Japan was inevitable, he re-joined the corps and fought for the chance to form a guerilla battalion, organized on the basis of the Gung Ho principles he learned from Mao Tse-Tung and Chu Teh. After Pearl Harbor and the defeats in the Phillipines, Malaya ~~the~~ Wake, etc, he was given permission to form ~~the 2nd Raider~~ a new type of unit, christened the 2nd Raider Battalion.

Gung Ho meant many ~~different~~ things to the raiders, but two of them stand out as most important. The first is absolute equality between officers and men. Raider officers ate the same food, slept in the same bunks, wore the same uniform as the enlisted men. They dug their own latrines and carried their own packs. Officers did not order their men to do anything that they (the officer's) were not willing and able to do first. There were regular weekly "Gung Ho" meetings between all the officers and men, where the men were encouraged to speak their minds freely. To criticise the non-coms and officers if they deserved it. Officers and Non-Coms had to earn the respect of the men that they led. If they failed to do so, if they were chickenshit blow-hards, if they felt that they were better than the men they were to lead, they were kicked out of the raiders. The enlisted men were treated with respect. Their ideas were solicited and respected. Because of this the men trusted their officers. They obeyed commands in battle because they knew their officers were competent and would not send them into danger needlessly. ~~They knew that~~ They respected their officers because they knew that the officers respected them.

The second major element of Gung Ho was knowledge about why and how they were fighting. They repeatedly discussed why they were fighting. What the war was all about. Carlson believed that the war was against fascism, that growing out of the war would be a new era of democracy and freedom. That the purpose of the war was a better and more ~~democratic~~ democratic life for all. Since this was the purpose of the war it was only logical to begin living what they were fighting for. Thus, for the Raiders, the war aims were not mere propaganda because they were carried out in daily life. They could see democracy, respect, human dignity, and a better life being built in their battalion. ~~Thus they were ready to fight~~ Carlson had nothing to fear from free and open discussion with the troops because he practiced what he preached.

The "Gung Ho" meetings, of course covered much more than criticism of officers and what the war was about. Before each mission and whenever possible in the field a full

discussion was held with the men, ~~explaining~~ explaining why the mission was necessary, what was hoped to be accomplished, the tactics to be used, how it fit into the overall picture etc. New ideas were solicited from the ranks- for example the idea of the 3 man fire team which has become widely excepted was developed by the 2nd Raiders. The raiders went into battle knowing exactly what they were going to do, why they were doing it, what they were fighting for, and that the ~~slogans~~ ideals for which they were fighting had been made real in their own lives. This was what Gung Ho was all about. Work together, officers and men, for a common cause- democracy, justice, equality, anda better life.

The raiders and the principles of Gung Ho were very sucessfull. After the Makin raid, the batalion operated for 31 days behind enemy lines on Guadalcanal. They fought battles every day. They fought the jungle and the fever, they ate stolen rice and ~~sleep~~ t slept in the mud. They inflicted between 500-700 casualties on the enemy. Most important, while accomplishing all their missions the Raiders suffered only ~~18~~ 17 casualties out of the 1,000 man batalion. The raiders attributed their small loses and great sucess to the principles of Gung Ho. Other units began to write and ask about Gung Ho. Newspaper articles were written, E.M.'s in other units began to talk about Gung Ho.

Suddenly the brass "promoted" Carlson to the job of plans officer for the 4th Marine Division. He was never allowed to command troops again. A new C.O. was appointed for the raiders (Col. Alan Shapley). His first orders were- no more Gung Ho meetings, all E.M.'s will start saluting, etc. Very quickly all the Gung Ho reforms were dead.

Ther's an old legend about a king and how everything he ouches turned to gold. The Marine brass is almost as talented. Everything they touch turns to shit. The brass kept the label Gung Ho, but they changed it's meaning. Instead of meaning work together now it meant "do as I tell you". Instead of democracy it meant the opposite. Now it means kissing ass and mindless obediance to orders. Obediance to the insignia of rank and not to the man for what he is. In essence, the brass touched a Gung Ho made of gold and turned it into a Gung Ho made of shit. And they feed it to us every day.

The brass destroyed the true Gung Ho for two reasons. First because many of them knew thatthey could not lead men on the basis of their wisdom, courage, and ideals and that they did notwant to give up the privileges of rank. So to keep their rank and the soft beds that went with it they attacked Gung Ho. But there is a second- and more important reason for the destruction of the real Gung Ho.

Gung Ho will only work when the military is fighting a just war. A war that is supported, voluntarily, by the people, GI's and Civilians. A Way where what the leaders say is based on truth, and thus can stand up to questions and comparisions with reality.

This was the great lesson thatthe Peoples Liberation Army of China taught Carlson. When the war is just. When the military practices what it preaches, it will win no matter how great the odds against it.

Think anout the Vietnam War. A true Gung Ho outfit would have discussed the reasons for the war and decided that to fight to maintain a corrupt dictatorship over the veitnamese people so that ~~the~~ Standard Oil and other big corporations could make another hundred million wasn't a good enough reasons to die for. They ~~wouldn't~~ wouldn't have gone. If a true Gung Ho unit had been tricked into going to Vietnam by lies and deciet they would quickly have compared the reality of what they saw with the bullshit they were being fed. Eventually, of course, this happened anyway, and the ~~grunts~~ snuffies said take your war and shove it. But if there had been real Gung Ho it would have happen a lot quicker and a lot of Veitnamese and Americans would still be alive.

Hundreds of Marines were killed at Khe Sanh, so that Johnson could prove his manhood. Thousands of GI's died taking useless ~~kills~~ "objectives" like Hamburger Hill so that some brass hat could add another star to his shoulder and another ~~zero~~ figure to his "body count". A Gung Ho outfit wouldn't have stood for it.

A Gung Ho outfit would have asked "If we are fighting to help the Vietnamese why do they hate our guts? If we are fighting for freedom why don't we have it ourselves? The US military can't afford to have true Gung Ho because so much of what the US military does is UNjust, UNdemocratic, because so much of it is based on lies and trickery, and because so much of it is for the benefit of a few rich bussinessmen ~~and~~ ~~their~~ generals, admirals, presidents, and dictators and against the benefit of the average GI, the average American and the average Asian.

The truth is that all over Asia the US military is being used to prop up corrupt fascist dictators who oppress and exploit the people. The only true friend these dictators have are the big US corporations who make millions out of the misery of the Asian people. Except for Japan there isn't a single country where the US military has bases that is a democracy, and Japan is ~~getting into the~~ following the same big money path as the US. Think about the Phillipines, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam. Have you gone anywhere in Asia where you were welcomed warmly as a friend? Where you were liked because the people thought you were there to help them (you not your dollars)? Why is this? Think about ~~i~~ it.

If you are interested in the real history of Gung Ho, Carlson, and the Raiders there is a book about it called BIG YANKEE By Blankfort. Unfortunately it's not sold anymore and ~~is~~ only a few big libraries have it. But try to run it down and check it out. If you want to know more about how the Chinese army is run, or about China in general, or about the true facts about the US military in Asia, there are plenty of good books, newspapers, and phamphlets available at the Semper Fi house. For sale or for lending. Also come around and rap.

Oh yeah, and the next time you hear "Gung Ho" remember the real Gung Ho spirit and what it meant to the men of the 2nd Raider Battalion before the brass stomped on it, and them.

Judah

[Original draft, "Semper Fi," Iwakuni Japan. 1973.]